

THE TRAUMA OF OVID'S MYTHIC WOMEN: RAPE, CAPTIVITY, SILENCE

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ABSTRACT

Sarah H. V. Eisenlohr: *The Trauma of Ovid's Mythic Women: Rape, Captivity, Silence*
(Under the direction of Sharon L. James)

Ovid's poetry contains an inordinate number of mythic rape episodes and allusions to rape. Rape—especially divine rape—is a common topos in Graeco-Roman mythology, but not every ancient writer approaches it in the same way. Ovid, contrary to his predecessors and contemporaries, focuses especially on the female victims of rape and on the variety of their traumatic experiences. In this dissertation, I discuss select rape victims from Ovid's mythical works—the *Heroides*, the *Metamorphoses*, and the *Fasti*—and analyze his narratives through the lens of trauma theory. In his more detailed accounts of sexual violence, he describes not only the peritraumatic symptoms of female victims, but also post-traumatic symptoms. When faced with the threat of rape, Ovidian women may fight their attackers, freeze (voluntarily or involuntarily), attempt to flee, or dissociate. After rape, their responses are just as varied: Briseis becomes trauma-bonded to her captor (*Heroides* 3), Io recovers and returns to her family (*Met.* 1), Philomela takes revenge on her rapist (*Met.* 6), Lucretia commits suicide (*Fasti* 2), and the Sabine women settle into their forced marriages (*Fasti* 3).

For each of the chosen rape episodes, I perform a literary analysis of Ovid's text and compare his language to that of modern western accounts of peritraumatic experiences and PTSD symptoms associated with sexual violence. Ovid's attention to the multiplicity of rape trauma symptoms indicates a general interest in the lived experience of oppressed people, but

more specifically in the experience of women. The similarities between his rape tales and modern psychological rape trauma studies further show that he had some fundamental understanding of how rape can impact a victim's body and mind.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Ovid has long been recognized for his interest in female psychology, experiences, characterization, and particularly female vulnerability to and fear of male sexual violence. The theme of women's victimization is consistent throughout most of his poetry, appearing both as a focus of longer narratives and as subtext behind seemingly unrelated topics. It is safe to say that no other Graeco-Roman author has paid such systematic attention to women's trauma—especially as focalized from women's perspectives.¹ In this dissertation, I study three types of female trauma—rape, captivity, and loss of speech—as found in the tales of mythic and legendary women in Ovid's *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Fasti*. In studying these tales, I draw on modern trauma theory to inform my readings of female experiences and to clarify how Ovid's descriptions portray symptoms now recognized as psychological reactions to trauma.

Approaches to Rape

In the Ovidian corpus there are forty episodes where women are raped by men, rape is attempted, or rape is directly mentioned. My tally here reflects only those instances where Ovid clearly denotes an act of violence—often specifying a man's use of force alongside a woman's

¹Ovid's narratives of female trauma are disturbing and often controversial, a subject that I address below. These episodes of violence, sexual assault, and emotional abuse have historically been whitewashed by scholarship. Rape has been recast as "seduction"; violence has been elided or omitted from discussion entirely (McCarter 2022b). I do not have space to address this problematic history in my project, but I acknowledge it here as necessary background in studies of Ovidian women.

unwillingness.² Oblique mentions of male deception or stories where rape is assumed or implied would yield a much higher number, easily over a hundred. The threat of rape looms constantly in Ovid's poetic world, but in these forty episodes, he dispenses with ambiguity and euphemism, openly depicting male aggression that results in women's fear, suffering, bizarre physical transformation, and sometimes death. He frames nonconsensual acts of sex as an abuse of power, not merely as an inevitable consequence of impulsive male desire. What is more, Ovid focuses on the experience of women rather than that of their abusers. More than any other Graeco-Roman author, Ovid dwells upon the terror of rape victims and draws attention to the way that power dynamics of gender and status affect them.

These figures should suffice to demonstrate that Ovid is unusually concerned with rape and women's trauma. As I noted above, scholars have recognized for decades that his poetry focuses heavily on women's psychology and perspectives (Baca 1969; Galinsky 1975; Flaherty 1994; McKinley 2001). More recent research has included systematic studies on his rape narratives (Curran, 1978; Richlin 2014; James 2016) as well as psychological analyses of Ovidian women (Oliensis 2009; Wise 2020). I combine these two approaches by performing a thorough study of female rape victims in Ovid, employing modern psychological theories of traumatic experience and recovery.

²I have employed stringent criteria to arrive at this number. I include an episode if it falls into one of two categories. (1) The narrator employs one of four specific expressions that can be translated faithfully to "rape": forms or compounds of *rapere* (and related words, such as *rapina*), *premere*, *vitiare*, or *vim pati*. (2) The text provides linguistic evidence that the female victim is unwilling and that the man either attempts or achieves sex. Evidence of female unwillingness includes descriptions of negative emotion (e.g., *terrata*, *pavida*, *irata*), actions of avoidance and fear (e.g., *pugnare*, *fugere*, *tremere*), or evidence that she is asleep at the time of the attempt (e.g., *somnus*, *quies*). Evidence of male pursuit of sex includes chasing (e.g., *insequi*), sexual desire (e.g., *libido*, *obscenus*, *concupitus*), or any expression indicating that penetrative sex occurred (e.g., *genetrix facta est*). For a full chart of these examples with lexical evidence, see the Appendix.

My final tally differs from the figures offered by both Curran (1978) and James (2016) for the *Metamorphoses* alone. My criteria for rape episodes are stricter, and thus I rule out some of the tales that they include in their counts.

In his longer rape narratives, Ovid often describes in great detail the emotions and physical reactions of women to trauma. Some weep, some are paralyzed with fear; many flee or try to fight their attackers. Where Ovid describes the aftermath of a trauma, women's responses are equally varied. After being raped, Lucretia commits suicide (*Fasti* 2.830-832); Philomela enacts bloody revenge (*Met.* 6.619-660); Caenis asks to be turned into a man (*Met.* 12.201-203). Some women's responses are less dramatic: Io seemingly returns to her previous existence (*Met.* 1.738-746), and other women must settle into marriage with their rapists—Orithyia (*Met.* 6.711-713), Thetis (*Met.* 11.264-266), Flora (*Fasti* 5.205-206), and the Sabines (*Ars* 1.127-130; *Fasti* 3.203).

The variety of these trauma responses and the unsettling details of Ovid's descriptions paint a picture strikingly similar to modern psychological accounts of trauma patients. Judith Herman describes such symptoms in her 1992 monograph, *Trauma and Recovery*, in which she analyzes data from decades' worth of victims' statements and scientific studies to provide a comprehensive resource for understanding victims' experiences and aiding them in recovery. She focuses on traumas perpetrated by humans: rape, captivity, warfare, and complex conditions involving multiple traumas. Herman first describes each type of trauma and how it affects the victim's way of thinking and of interacting with the world; how, depending on the individual's experience and predisposition, each person responds uniquely to trauma—both in the moment and in the aftermath. She then discusses how proper treatments can ease and expedite the recovery process. One aspect of trauma is the uprooting of fundamental beliefs about oneself and about human society: rape, captivity, and warfare break down the victim's preconceived notions of how human beings are "supposed" to behave and the limits of cruelty. The dehumanization of the experience and the accompanying disillusionment with social order result in the traumatic wound. It follows that re-establishing a sense of self and rebuilding a community of support are

crucial aspects of post-traumatic recovery.

Herman's trauma theory provides the foundation for my analysis of Ovidian women. In analyzing each rape episode, I draw from her research to indicate where Ovid's descriptions align with different responses and symptoms identified in modern psychology. My analyses are limited to rape and rape-related traumas: mainly, captivity and loss of speech. In Ovid's most vividly distressing narratives, these experiences appear all together. By systematically studying rape narratives, I hope to show that modern trauma theory can further illuminate how Ovid invites sympathy for victimized women while describing their suffering with brutal detail, which some readers may find voyeuristic, and how the traumas experienced by Ovidian women encourage us to look not only at the pain of the victims, but also at the entitlement and cruelty of the perpetrators.

I have narrowed my case studies to stories of mythic women. Out of my forty examples, two involve analogues to contemporary Roman women, seven include legendary women specific to Rome, and the other thirty-one are adaptations of Greek myths. The Roman legendary stories sometimes overlap heavily with mythic narratives: for instance, three of the legends follow the standard format of "god attempts to rape nymph" (Jupiter and Juturna at *Fasti* 2.585-606, Zephyr and Flora at *Fasti* 5.195-206, and Janus and Carna at *Fasti* 6.119-130). Therefore, although foundational legends are more closely intertwined with Roman history than Greek myths are, I consider them under the umbrella of mythic rape narratives.³ The distinctions between myth and legend are ill defined, and both categories differ substantially from the third category of analogues to contemporary Roman women: the sex laborers and enslaved women of

³Some Roman legends are considered more "historical" than others. No Roman author questions the account of the Sabine women, but Livy, for one, casts doubt on certain legends, like those of Aeneas (1.1-3) and Ilia (1.4).

the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*. Because these examples are so few and are not thematically related to the more numerous mythic/legendary examples, I do not include elegiac women in this dissertation.⁴

I proceed with a chronological study of Ovid's three major mythological works, each characterized by a subcategory of mythic women: the *relictæ* of the *Heroides*, the Greek mythical women of the *Metamorphoses*, and the Roman legendary women of the *Fasti*. I apply Herman's trauma theory to each group to demonstrate how Ovid's representation of female trauma shifts over time and genre. I further consider how he recreates, in mythic literature, situations of traumatic abuse that result in recognizable peritraumatic responses and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Avoidance of Female Trauma in Classics

Trauma studies have only recently begun to appear in classical scholarship. In fact, trauma in Graeco-Roman literature, especially female trauma, has largely been avoided or glossed over. Trauma theory as a concept arose in the mid-20th century, primarily as a response to the atrocities of the Holocaust and the literature written in its wake (Karanika and Panoussi 2020, 1). In 1978, Leo Curran pointed out, for the first time, the abundance of disturbing rape narratives in the *Metamorphoses*, but he does not term the victims' experiences trauma. More recently, psychiatrist and classical scholar Jonathan Shay broke ground with his books *Achilles in Vietnam* (1995) and *Odysseus in America* (2003): he provided detailed analyses of the symptoms of combat PTSD and of how these symptoms may be mapped onto both Achilles and Odysseus. Shay was the first to introduce trauma theory to classical scholarship for a wide audience, and his

⁴It is, however, necessary for me to cite instances of mythic and legendary women whose rapes are narrated in the love poetry: specifically, the Sabine women in *Ars Amatoria* 1.

work has been fundamental to the advancement of trauma studies in classical literature.

Still, the acknowledgement and analysis of female-specific trauma in the ancient Mediterranean has been limited even now, as much trauma-related research has focused on the PTSD of warrior heroes (Crowley 2012; Meineck and Konstan 2014). Since Curran's article, scholars have certainly recognized the prevalence of rape narratives in Ovid—and throughout Graeco-Roman literature—but only within the last twenty years have scholars begun to describe classical rapes as “traumas” and analyze them as such. Andromache Karanika and Vassiliki Panoussi's 2020 edited volume *Emotional Trauma in Greece and Rome* is one of the first works to address the variety of different traumas represented in Graeco-Roman literature, including war trauma, rape trauma, and several others. In this collection, the chapters of Sharon James and Jessica Wise discuss women's trauma, respectively, in New Comedy and in Ovid's *Amores*. Erika Weiberg has also worked on ancient trauma for several years and addresses the female-specific traumas of Greek tragedy (2016; 2018; 2020). Thus far, there has been no systematic analysis of Ovid's mythical rapes through the lens of trauma theory, and few intensive analyses of Ovidian trauma overall.

A Review of Scholarship

The most common source of female trauma across Ovid's works is rape, and so it is not surprising that in the late 20th century—coinciding with the anti-rape movement of the 1970's—classical scholars became more interested in addressing the dozens of rape narratives in Ovid's poetry. Some have sought to show that Ovid was sympathetic to the plight of women in a way that his contemporaries were not. Most scholars making this argument have focused on the *Metamorphoses*: the grotesquely detailed imagery of the stories, interspersed with hints of

compassion from the narrator, have persuaded many readers that Ovid is pointing out women's suffering for the sake of critiquing brutal ideologies of patriarchy.⁵ Curran writes that despite a veneer of sexism, Ovid seems to make "an effort to understand, as well as a man can, women's intellectual and emotional life" (1978, 213).⁶ He points out the multiplicity of female experience: rape can be perpetrated in various ways and can have a variety of consequences for the victim—whether it is attempted or successful. Ultimately, Curran argues, Ovid was to some degree aware of the power of rape as a tool of dominance and terror rather than of sexual gratification, and that the constant abuse of women in the *Metamorphoses* is an acknowledgement of the disturbing patterns encouraged by male Roman society (*ibid.*, 236).

Analyzing Ovid's version of Philomela and Tereus, Patricia Joplin argues that Philomela's ability to weave, and thereby to speak, is an example of female power striving to subvert the male, so that Ovid's version of this story "testifies against its own ends" (1991, 54).⁷ Although the episode concludes with Procne's and Philomela's final act of violence against Itys, Philomela's escape—her discovery of the loom's power to communicate—is the central point of the narrative. Philomela herself comes to know how female speech can endanger male authority structures that depend upon the sexual subjugation of women.

Over time, focus has shifted away from debating whether Ovid can be called a "feminist" and toward identifying how the prominence of rape affects our reading of the *Metamorphoses*. Garrett Jacobsen has analyzed how the rape narratives of Apollo and Tereus mirror one another

⁵For an opposing view, see Richlin 2014.

⁶Sara Mack, too, argues that Ovid is matched only by Euripides in his acute understanding of the female experience (1988, 4).

⁷The story of Philomela in particular has inspired scholars to view the *Metamorphoses* as a proto-feminist text. See Bergren 1983; Marcus 1983; Marder 1992; Luce 1993; Waldman 2018.

and can be read in parallel (1984). Charles Segal writes that rape, violence, and transformation in the *Metamorphoses* showcase the arbitrariness of human suffering and indicate a Roman fear of losing autonomy (1998). James has catalogued and categorized the instances of “sexual interference” in the poem, arguing that the repetition of rape underscores and problematizes the relationship between Graeco-Roman history and women’s trauma (2016).

While the *Metamorphoses* contain Ovid’s most famous accounts of female trauma, rape of women occurs frequently in the *Fasti* as well, and both the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* are permeated by the implicit assumption that the *amator’s puella* and other subaltern women are constantly subject to male lust and violence. Amy Richlin has written about how to read these various rapes from a modern perspective by understanding Ovid’s context and by studying the details of some prominent stories (1992, repr. 2014).⁸ Unlike Curran, Richlin sees in Ovid not resistance to violence against women, but rather entertainment consistent with the predilections of contemporary Roman men. The terror of the women, often described as enhancing their beauty, is in fact meant to titillate the male audience; Ovid’s wit and humor in depicting certain rape scenes preclude any notion of sincerity; and the violation and maiming of a woman, rather than giving voice or agency to the woman herself, “propel a story not her own” (Richlin 2014, 154). She argues that modern readers, particularly women, are left to decide why Ovid’s rape narratives are worth reading and whether they can find themselves in such poems.

Scholarship of the last thirty years has moved toward a middle ground between Curran’s and Richlin’s assessments, namely that while Ovid is not a proto-feminist, he does expose more about systemic exploitation and abuse than his contemporaries—to a degree that suggests he is not doing so merely for the purpose of shock value. Writing on slave rape in Ovidian elegy,

⁸The 2014 iteration of Richlin’s article is more of an “expanded reprint” with a revised introduction, but the content is largely the same as that of the 1992 version.

James comments that the *amator/praeceptor amoris* uses every opportunity to take advantage of those vulnerable to his whims because of gender and class, but that “the picture Ovid draws is not one he endorses” (1997, 74). Although the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* exclude nearly all female expression and center male desires for sex and dominance, the very silence of the women invites speculation about their perspective.

In 2016, Fanny Dolansky made a similar argument about rape victims in the *Fasti*, though these victims are women of high status rather than sex laborers or slaves. Because the rapes in the *Fasti* are directly related to the foundation and development of the Roman state, they are inherently political. Dolansky analyzes the three major rape narratives of *Fasti* 2—those of Callisto, Lara, and Lucretia—arguing that these tales question Augustan moral authority: the *pater patriae* is not in control of the sexuality of his own family and, furthermore, his moral legislations have robbed Roman families of the right to conduct their affairs privately. For Dolansky, rape is represented as a destructive force reflective of Augustus’ impact upon the Roman family unit.

Wise moves beyond the scope of Augustan moral legislation, arguing that by centering the perspective of victims—particularly raped and silenced women—Ovid questions the violent foundations of Roman government and religion (2017). Furthermore, “he critiques the erasure of voices and perspectives that occurs in the creation of history and state” (*ibid.*, 85). Ovid’s speaker uses examples of women being brutalized and silenced to indicate that Rome is founded upon male *vis*, a destructive force that cannot be controlled.

In 2020, Wise moved to studying subaltern women in Ovid’s love poetry, building upon James’s work by applying modern trauma theory to female victims in the *Amores*. She reads closely two episodes where the *amator* speaks of brutalizing, respectively, the *puella* Corinna

and the enslaved Cypassis; she demonstrates that the behaviors of both women are consistent with symptoms now recognized as trauma responses. Each woman's response to the *amator's* threats is consistent with her gender and social status: Ovid shows each woman's reaction as corresponding to the type of violence she would experience in the Roman world. In so doing, Wise contends, Ovid invites his readers "to empathize with the female perspective and, in turn, to interrogate the power and authority of the male narrator who exploits and victimizes non-citizen women" (2020, 71).

In this work, I focus less on the sociopolitical dimensions of Ovid's rape tales and look instead toward his representation of women *qua* women. That is, I concern myself with how Ovidian mythical women reflect the traumatic experiences of real women. To that end, I rely on modern psychological studies of trauma survivors—generally, and of rape in particular. Using Herman's work as a framework, I also draw on recent scientific studies and statistics that show how scholars have come to understand the phenomenon of rape. My modern comparanda are studies primarily from the United States or other western nations, published within approximately the last fifty years.

Ann Burgess and Lynda Holmstrom wrote one of the first major articles for the study of rape psychology, identifying "rape trauma syndrome" and explaining how victims generally experience two phases of recovery (1974). The first phase is "acute," usually lasting two or three weeks, and is characterized by extreme disorganization in the victims' lives. The second phase occurs when victims begin to take control of their lives again: though they may succeed in reorganizing their thoughts and habits, usually they experience more aftereffects of the trauma, such as hypervigilance, nightmares, and paranoia. Burgess and Holmstrom stress that these symptoms vary by individual, and that each individual requires unique treatment for recovery.

The need to communicate and to be socially supported is, however, nearly universal to trauma survivors.

Since this article, researchers have performed more studies on individual trauma responses. While it is easy to understand the “fight or flight” response when a person is faced with rape, it has been more difficult to convince the general populace that a frozen or compliant individual can be raped. As Gail Abarbanel pointed out in 1986, “the prevailing public attitude is that rape victims should resist their attackers. This expectation is uniquely applied to sexual assault victims” (101). In other instances of violent assault, people are praised for inaction and compliance where those choices are more likely to result in the safety of the victim. Compliance with a rapist, by contrast, leads to both public castigation and debilitating self-blame in the victim (*ibid.*, 102-103). This pattern holds true today, nearly forty years later.⁹ Nevertheless, for victims consciously able to make the decision of whether to resist or comply, their actions will depend upon the individual situation and their goal, whether it is to prevent rape or to survive—resistance in some cases may seem the only way to escape a situation alive, whereas in others compliance is preferable (*ibid.*, 104).

In many instances, the victim is unable to make such a conscious decision, and instead suffers tonic immobility, an immediate response to trauma whereby the body shuts down and disconnects from the mind. This phenomenon has been the subject of numerous scientific studies, particularly as it pertains to rape (Suarez and Gallup 1979; Galliano et al. 1993; Griffin et al. 1997; Moor et al. 2003; Fusé et al. 2007; Bovin et al. 2008; Marx et al. 2008). Trauma victims who have experienced tonic immobility often describe themselves as losing sensation and seeming to watch themselves dispassionately while the trauma occurs (Herman 2015, 42-

⁹For recent evidence of these attitudes, we may look to E. Jean Carroll’s ongoing suits against Donald J. Trump (Tuerkheimer 2023).

44). In such instances, victims cannot explain why they did not attempt to resist or to escape, and the inability to communicate their experience often exacerbates the trauma of the rape.¹⁰ Similar feelings of self-blame and misunderstanding arise from traumas of captivity, which may or may not include rape, but usually include other dimensions of physical and emotional abuse. Victims of incest and domestic abuse, for instance, stay in threatening situations for a variety of reasons—economic stability, feelings of loyalty toward family, threats of violence, attachment to the familiar¹¹—and very often such situations lead to trauma bonding with the abuser while feelings of hatred and blame transfer onto others who either ignore or do not know of the abuse (Reid et al. 2013, 47-51; Herman 2015, 100-101).¹²

In situations of political imprisonment, some captives decide to cooperate with their captors in small ways in order to make their lives easier, believing that they will be able to resist trauma bonding or indoctrination. Many state upon later reflection that this gradual relenting led to greater concessions and, in the end, to an uncomfortably close relationship with their captors. Compliance with one's captors may, therefore, result in decreased punishment and a higher chance of survival, but it may also lead to more serious effects of PTSD (Herman 2015, 91-95). In recent decades, many researchers have noted that trauma bonding occurs often in cases of sex trafficking, wherein the traffickers or pimps use a carrot-and-stick approach to groom their

¹⁰Wise explores in detail how both Corinna and Cypassis appear to exhibit peritraumatic symptoms of tonic immobility in Ovid's *Amores* (2020).

¹¹Studies have shown that lab mice put under stress will return to the area of their container that is most familiar to them, rather than an area that will reduce stress (Mitchell et al. 1985). Galliano et al. demonstrated that peritraumatic responses in humans are similar to those of observed in lab animals (1993).

¹²The majority of people affected by domestic violence are women. According to the Domestic Abuse Shelter, "on average, a woman will leave an abusive relationship seven times before she leaves for good" (2019). Furthermore, "approximately 75% of women who are killed by their batterers are murdered when they attempt to leave or after they have left an abusive relationship" (*ibid.*). This phenomenon is now known as "separation assault" (Mahoney 1991).

victims (Reid et al. 2013; Sanchez et al. 2019; Casassa et al. 2021).

Ruth Scodel addresses the complicated psychology of female war prisoners in the context of Greek myth, noting that spear-captives “acquire a certain freedom to decide how they will negotiate the balance between loyalty to the past and manipulation of their own sexual value to improve conditions in the present and future” (1998, 142). In the *Trojan Women*, Euripides stages Hecuba trying to convince her daughters to acquiesce to their captors to ensure their good treatment. Andromache models this behavior by holding on to the memory of Hector but serving as Neoptolemus’ willing concubine for the sake of self-preservation. Scodel argues that such a response would not have been unusual in a slave-trafficking society, and that the Greeks would not have recognized such adaptation as pathological (*ibid.*, 140-141). In fact, a woman’s acclimation to concubinage would have been similar to her acclimation to marriage, since both institutions rest on the assumption that affection will grow out of the initial sexual relationship (*ibid.*, 141). Nevertheless, many spear-captives of Graeco-Roman literature exhibit behavior related to trauma-coerced bonding—like Briseis, whom I discuss below.

Although anyone can suffer sexual abuse, young women are by far the most likely victims. According to the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, “82% of all juvenile victims are female. 90% of adult rape victims are female. Females ages 16-19 are 4 times more likely than the general population to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault” (2021). While modern researchers now recognize these experiences as traumatic, it was not always easy to attach the label of “trauma” to sexual violence. Laura Brown describes how in 1991 a defense attorney refused to recognize incest as traumatic because it is so common (1995, 100-101). At that time, the criteria for PTSD in the *DSM-III* specified that the victim had experienced an event

“outside the range of human experience.”¹³ Brown’s article argues for the emendation of these criteria while introducing a feminist lens to trauma theory. One important aspect of her feminist approach is the recognition that, to some degree, all women experience symptoms of traumatization (*ibid.*, 107):

Most women in North America today are aware that they may be raped at any time and by anyone. All of us know someone like ourselves who was raped, more often than not in her own home by a man she knew. In consequence, many women who have never been raped have symptoms of rape trauma; we are hypervigilant to certain cues, avoid situations that we sense are high risk, go numb in response to overtures from men that might be friendly—but that might also be the first step toward our violation.

Although the criteria for PTSD in the *DSM-V* remain widely inclusive of a range of sexually violent experiences, it remains difficult for modern practitioners of psychology to address the complexities of systemic violence inflicted upon women.¹⁴ The recent advent of trauma studies allows for research in classical scholarship that has not been done before and for scholars to shed light on the sexual violence inherent to Latin literature. Ovid, as the author of a great number of rape narratives, offers important and fruitful examples that provide insight into the role of sexual violence in Roman ideology as well as the lived experience of Roman women.

Most of my analysis depends upon the work of Herman and these other experts on trauma and PTSD, but I also draw on those who have studied symptoms of trauma in literary characters, authors, and poets. Cathy Caruth published two important books in this area. Her 1995 collection contains essays that explore literary and historical traumas, many of which

¹³*DSM-III* refers to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition*, which was published in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association. The fifth and most recent edition of the *DSM* was published in 2013.

¹⁴Intersectionality is another complicating factor here. In the United States, marginalized women—in particular, Black and Indigenous women—experience sexual violence more than their white counterparts. Indigenous people “are twice as likely to experience a rape/sexual assault compared to all races” (RAINN 2021).

discuss the importance of testimony as a way of bearing witness—whether by the victim or a bystander. Writing a testimony is, for victims, an important part of the recovery process, whereby they can re-live an experience with a sense of control while also spreading awareness. Caruth’s 1996 monograph focuses on how works of literature may function as allegories for the process of experiencing and recovering from trauma; moreover, literary trauma is expressive of human history, which is the history of repetitive trauma. Christa Schönfelder critiques Caruth’s work, arguing that she applies the term “trauma” too broadly, more as an aesthetic than a precise label (2013, 37). For Schönfelder, study of literary trauma must be closely connected to current psychological research to avoid the risk of conflating general experience with actual trauma. My approach to Ovid aligns most closely with Schönfelder’s method and use of scientific research, though I also draw on Caruth’s view of testimony and literature as artistic expressions of processing trauma.

I will now provide brief overviews of the chapters following this introduction, including samples of the texts analyzed and topics addressed.

Relictae in the Heroides

Chapter 2 features Ovid’s earliest collection, the *Heroides*, which—unlike the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*—contain few instances of rape. The nature of these monologues by women, spurned or abandoned by men they love, requires that the women have had (in most instances) originally positive and consensual relationships with the men who later harmed them—or, rather, the men whom they later perceive as having harmed them. Furthermore, these poems hinge upon heartbreak rather than sexual violence: the speakers are primarily concerned with lost love, not lost innocence. Nevertheless, there are hints of rape trauma in *Heroides* 3

(Briseis) and 8 (Hermione), as well as other instances of related trauma throughout. In these two poems Ovid presents the perspectives of two women at the mercy of their male captors: one bonds with her captor and depends on him for survival, the other stubbornly clings to the hope of rescue by her preferred husband. Although the episodes of Briseis and Hermione are less detailed than Ovid's accounts of rape and captivity in later works, he creates nuanced characterizations of these two traumatized women.

In the opening of *Heroides* 3, Briseis addresses herself to Achilles as “snatched” (*rapta*, 1). She was, of course, originally snatched by Achilles himself: she says plainly in later lines that he destroyed her home city of Lyrnessus, killing her husband and three brothers (45-50). But in this poem, she speaks, rather, of being “snatched” from Achilles by Agamemnon. In Ovid's version, Briseis is well and truly bonded to Achilles—by necessity and by what she perceives as love. In line 5, she calls him “both master and husband” (*dominoque viroque*), alluding to her status as captive while also framing their relationship as a marriage. Later, she describes him in language reminiscent of Andromache's words to Hector at *Iliad* 6.429-430: “nevertheless, in exchange for so many lost, I gained you alone as compensation; you were my master, my husband, my brother” (*tot tamen amissis te compensavimus unum; / tu dominus, tu vir, tu mihi frater eras*, 51-52).¹⁵ As Sara Mack says, “there is something horrible in Briseis' adaptation of Andromache's words”—that a captive woman is expressing sentiments of love and dependency toward the man who has killed her family and, presumably, raped her continually (1988,75).

Briseis' feelings of hopelessness in the face of Achilles' absence would be recognized today as trauma-coerced bonding. To some extent, her loyalty to Achilles may be calculated: since she has no family left, she must make the best of her situation. But over the years of her captivity,

¹⁵All translations are my own.

she has come to view Achilles as a replacement for her dead husband. As Scodel notes, “to return to a lost status through marriage is the appropriate fantasy of a captured woman, even though the imagined husband is the man who killed her first husband and possibly her brothers too” (1998, 139). Marriage to one’s captor guarantees one’s physical safety, a good quality of life, and the safety of one’s children. Concubinage does not necessarily offer the same.¹⁶

Ovid’s Briseis, however, knows that she will never marry Achilles, so she asks to be able to follow him as a captive (69).¹⁷ Her words display no sense of calculation or survival instinct: she does not seem to worry about how to make her situation with Agamemnon more bearable, though she claims to be suffering from capture a second time (16). Her despair is so complete that she cannot imagine what fate would befall her if she does not return to Achilles, asking, “to whom will you leave me, violent man? Who will be a gentle solace for me when I have been abandoned?” (*cui me, violente, relinquis? quis mihi desertae mite levamen erit?* 61-62).

Agamemnon may not be much of a solace, but Briseis does have a place as his spear-captive. Nevertheless, she is unwilling to concede loyalty to him. As Florence Verducci points out, Briseis even views the Trojans—her own people—as enemies and a potential threat to her reunion with Achilles (1985, 106-107): “this, it would seem, is servility parading its own abasement.” Briseis may view her relationship with Achilles as genuine, but I read her desperation in *Heroides* 3 as a trauma bond with her captor and rapist.

In *Heroides* 8, Hermione describes herself as suffering from a similar situation, but unlike Briseis she is a wedded wife. Each woman communicates the same wish to be rescued from an

¹⁶Euripides proves as much in *Andromache*, in which Hermione, Neoptolemus’ bride-to-be, conspires to murder the enslaved Andromache, as well as her son by him.

¹⁷Homer’s Briseis seems to have some hopes of marriage. While lamenting Patroclus’ death, she says that he had promised Achilles would take her back to Phthia as his wife (*Il.* 19.294-296).

undesirable relationship by her preferred partner, and the two letters contain many stylistic similarities (Fulkerson 2005, 87-106; Jacobson 1974, 46-48). Hermione perceives her marriage to Neoptolemus as a form of captivity, claiming, “he dragged me into his home by my disheveled hair” (*traxit inornatis in sua tecta comis*, 10).¹⁸ As Laurel Fulkerson notes, Hermione has not actually been stolen from Orestes, the man she wants (2005, 101): “her father has simply made alternate arrangements for her.” Hermione’s relationship with Neoptolemus is socially sanctioned and exists outside the realm of warfare. Nevertheless, this relationship is not consensual, regardless of its legality. Hermione is trapped in a marriage that she did not choose with a man whom she detests and who has, presumably, raped her—at least, in a 21st century sense.¹⁹

While the marriage is Hermione’s main source of unhappiness, the poem provides evidence that she is suffering from earlier traumas. Foremost is her abandonment by her mother Helen: though she refers to her mother as “a kidnapped wife” (*abducta coniuge*, 86), she also implies that Helen chose Paris of her own volition and willingly left Hermione behind (Fulkerson 2005, 97-98). Of her childhood, she says, “as a child I was motherless, my father kept waging wars, and although both yet lived, of both I was bereft” (*parva mea sine matre fui, pater arma ferebat, / et duo cum vivant, orba duobus eram*, 89-90). Having already been abandoned by her parents, she perceives her marriage as abandonment by Orestes. Her self-characterization reflects this

¹⁸Images of women being dragged by the hair are specifically linked to instances of captivity and rape, in both art and literature (Fulkerson 2005, 104).

¹⁹A husband forcing his wife into nonconsensual sex would not have been considered rape in the ancient Mediterranean. In the 21st century United States, the same act would be called marital rape, but even today such cases often are not considered “real” rape. “Marital or spousal rape is illegal in every state, but it’s only been this way since 1993. Until 1976, every state had a ‘marital exemption’ that allowed a husband to rape his wife without fear of legal consequences. Despite being illegal now, certain states still treat spousal or marital rape differently than other rape offenses” (Pirius 2022).

abandonment: “a woman helpless and without hope, childlike in compensation for having never been a child, burdened by the feeling that her life is fated to be marked by betrayal on the part of those she loves most and hence having little trust or faith in them, too disillusioned to raise her voice in anger or invective” (Jacobson 1974, 57).

Hermione’s childhood trauma is compounded by the trauma of rape and captivity. Howard Jacobson writes that she apparently refuses to sleep with Neoptolemus, but it is safe to assume that Neoptolemus has had sex with her, with or without her consent (1974, 57). Fulkerson implies that although Hermione does not *enjoy* sex with Neoptolemus, she does engage in it (2005, 95). It is not important whether Neoptolemus rapes Hermione or she reluctantly acquiesces—her compliance is an act of self-preservation, or perhaps exhausted defeat. In either case, her symptoms indicate a complex response to the threat of sexual assault, intensified by memories of previous nights.

Their physical relationship is described only vaguely (109-116):

pro somno lacrimis oculi funguntur abortis, quaque licet, fugio sicut ab hoste virum.	110
saepe malis stupeo rerumque oblita locique ignara tetigi Scyria membra manu, utque nefas sensi, male corpora tacta relinquo et mihi pollutas credor habere manus.	
saepe Neoptolemi pro nomine nomen Orestae exit, et errorem vocis ut omen amo.	115

In place of sleep, my eyes are occupied with welling tears, and in whatever way possible I avoid my husband, as if he were an enemy.	110
I am often benumbed by my misfortunes and, forgetful of circumstance or place, I have unknowingly touched with my hand the limbs of the Scyrian man, and when I have realized my crime, I shrink from the body shamelessly touched, and I believe that I have defiled my hands.	
Often, instead of Neoptolemus’ name, the name of Orestes slips out, and I love the error of speech as if it were a sign.	115

Hermione’s insensibility to reality indicates a state of constriction: similar to tonic immobility,

constriction involves the narrowing of a victim's mental and physical senses, either in the face of acute trauma or as a later symptom of PTSD (Herman 2015, 42-47). Before Hermione touches Neoptolemus, she seems to be in a trance-like state, perhaps "participating" in sex, but not completely aware that it is happening. The movement of her hand brings back awareness of her situation. Then, the realization of her apparent complicity elicits shame that she gave in to Neoptolemus' advances. Her mistake in calling Neoptolemus by Orestes' name indicates that she is coping with the rape through an escapist fantasy, in which Orestes is her real husband.²⁰ Hermione's reactions are consistent with those of victims who experience rape in captivity.

Briseis' and Hermione's reactions to captivity and rape differ vastly. Briseis desperately clings to her captive status, her trauma bond to Achilles so strong that she would rather remain enslaved to him in a foreign land than be rescued by her allies. Hermione, though legally married, refuses to transfer familial loyalty to Neoptolemus and experiences repeated sexual assault at his hands. Her description of those nights indicates that she is not being dramatic or obfuscating the truth, but rather relating realistic trauma responses to sexual violation.

Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*

Chapter 3 explores trauma responses in the *Metamorphoses*, which, unlike the *Heroides*, are "much occupied with rape" (James 2016, 154). Tales of sexual assault are scattered throughout the entire poem; it contains twenty-one of the forty rape episodes on my list. I have selected four longer narratives to discuss in this dissertation: Daphne, Io, Callisto, and Philomela. Each of

²⁰Maladaptive daydreaming is a relatively new area of research. Eli Somer coined the term twenty years ago to refer to patients whose extensive fantasizing replaced human interaction and impeded normal functioning in other areas of life (2002). It is unclear from the text how extensive Hermione's fantasies are, but she appears to be turning toward imagined scenarios for self-soothing, similarly to trauma patients who dissociate through daydreaming.

these victims experiences a different kind of rape scenario and responds uniquely to the various traumas visited on her. What they all have in common, however, is the infliction of silence: in one way or another, each woman is robbed of the power to speak, and therefore to communicate openly about what was done to her. Most importantly, all these stories highlight the psychological and emotional suffering of the victims (Newlands 2015, 90).

Apollo's attempted rape of Daphne in Book 1 initiates a series of divine rapes that pervade the first five books of the *Metamorphoses*. Despite her father's wishes, she remains a virgin (486-488), and, even before Apollo propositions her, she flees (502). Her initial response to the threat is to find a means of escape, but when it becomes clear that he will overtake her, she consciously changes her strategy. She still aims to escape, but she now knows that she cannot avoid rape while still alive: her goal is not survival, as it were, but not to be raped. To keep from being violated, she sacrifices her body along with her humanity—a kind of suicide. Sarah Annes Brown argues that “we are encouraged to understand both [Apollo's and Daphne's] points of view—that of Daphne is not privileged” (2005, 47). I disagree. Although the poem provides equal insight into both perspectives, Daphne's fear is privileged over Apollo's desire. His desire is, in fact, rendered grotesque because of her fear. When he claims the laurel tree after her transformation, the movement of her foliage is ambiguous, nodding, but only “seeming” to act like an assenting person (566-567) (Feldherr 2010, 93; Newlands 2015, 88). Even after Daphne is no longer a person, he violates her body by claiming the laurel as a symbol of his dominance. Daphne has avoided rape, but has lost the ability to speak and to refuse—though it is doubtful whether her refusal would make much difference (De Boer 2016, 138).

As with Daphne, Io's initial reaction is flight. When Jupiter propositions her, she attempts escape, but he easily subdues and rapes her (597-600). The greater part of the narrative is

concerned with the aftermath of the rape, during which Io's trauma is continually compounded. First, Jupiter turns her into a cow, robbing her of speech as well as bodily autonomy (610-612). When she tries to speak, she "dreads the sounds and is terrified of her own voice" (*pertimuitque sonos propriaque exterrita voce est*, 638). Second, she becomes captive to the vengeful Juno, unable to regain her humanity and under constant guard (622-631). Io experiences a double isolation: she is imprisoned, and she no longer belongs to the human world—indeed, she cannot even attempt to beseech Argus for pity (635-636). She is briefly reunited with her father Inachus and reveals what has happened (639-650), but at the very moment she finds this solace, Argus drags her away again: "while he was thus lamenting, starry-eyed Argus separates them, and, tearing the daughter from her father, he drags her away into distant pastures" (*talia maerentem stellatus submovet Argus, / ereptamque patri diversa in pascua natam / abstrahit*, 664-666).

Io has the opportunity to heal by communicating with loved ones and re-establishing a safe community: crucial steps in the recovery of trauma victims. Indeed, the recovery period for victims with loving family connections is much shorter than for those who recover in isolation (Burgess and Holmstrom 1979; Kilpatrick et al. 1986). Until he is killed by Mercury, Argus stands in the way of Io's rehabilitation. In the end, however, despite her prolonged suffering, she is one of the few victims of the *Metamorphoses* who seems to return to a normal life, before finally becoming a goddess (Newlands 2015, 94).²¹

Callisto's story in Book 2 contains elements of both Daphne's and Io's. Like Daphne, Callisto has sworn celibacy, but her plans too are ruined by divine lust. Jupiter approaches her in the guise of her patroness Diana (425-431), but when he reveals himself, she fights tooth and nail

²¹Io's "happy" ending is one reason this myth has been used to help rape trauma patients during recovery. Therapists have found that patients see their struggles in Io's journey, and that her eventual transformation into a goddess offers them hope as they confront their traumas (Mayr and Price 1989; Gardner et al. 1995).

to preserve her chastity. The poem describes her struggle with striking pathos (434-437):

illa quidem contra, quantum modo femina posset,
(adspiceres utinam, Saturnia, mitior esses!)
illa quidem pugnat; sed quem superare puella,
quisve Iovem poterat?

Indeed, she, as much as a mere woman would be able,
(if only you could have seen her, daughter of Saturn, you would have been kinder!)
indeed, she fights; but whom can a girl defeat,
and who could defeat Jupiter?

The narrator's brief interjection about Juno elicits sympathy for Callisto and at the same time acknowledges the injustice of her punishment. After the rape, Callisto suffers the social ramifications of her violation: Diana, having discovered Callisto's pregnancy, banishes her from her band (451-465). Left with no support system, Callisto suffers through pregnancy and childbirth alone, only to have her misery redoubled by Juno, who transforms her into a bear (466-484). Like Io, Callisto is robbed of both humanity and community. She loses her ability to speak and therefore to testify her experience. Her loss of speech represents her powerlessness, but further symbolizes Jupiter's unwillingness to hear her: "she feels that Jupiter is indifferent" (*ingratumque Iovem . . . sentit*, 488).

Callisto experiences ostracism in the same way that many victims do today, when their families and communities blame them for being raped or claim that they are fabricating their traumas (Herman 2015, 67-69). Modern survivors have stated that the negative reaction of others to their rape—blame, indifference, disbelief—feels like a "second assault" (Ahrens 2006, 264). Callisto faces complete ostracism by losing her human form forever, not by choice as Daphne does.²² In fact, Callisto loses all agency, suffering unjustly again and again, never finding any

²²As a constellation, Callisto remains apart. Juno prevents her from following the other constellations into the sea (2.527-530), and thus she remains a pariah even among the stars (O'Bryhim 1990, 80; Johnson 1996, 19).

avenue for escape or rehabilitation.

Philomela, by contrast, finds some success in claiming agency after her rape and captivity. Her story in Book 6 is the most gruesome of my case studies, but it features the most extensive female action. Upon bringing his siter-in-law Philomela to Tiryns, Tereus isolates and rapes her. There is no indication that she attempts to fight or flee, but the poem makes it clear that he “conquers her with force” (*vi superat*, 525) and that she screams for help the entire time (525-526). When she threatens to escape and expose the crime (542-548), Tereus cuts out her tongue and continues to rape her in captivity for a year (549-571). Philomela is the only one of my examples who experiences rape, captivity, and loss of speech concurrently.²³

Another unique aspect of her story is that when Tereus violates her body he is also violating her familial relationships. She expresses despair over the incestuous union (533-538):

. . . ‘o diris barbare factis!
o crudelis!’ ait ‘nec te mandata parentis
cum lacrimis movere piis, nec cura sororis
nec mea virginitas nec coniugalia iura! 535
omnia turbasti: paelex ego facta sororis,
tu geminus coniunx! hostis mihi debita poena!’

. . . ‘O barbarous man of savage deeds!
O cruel man!’ she says. ‘The commands my father gave with
pious tears did not move you, nor care for my sister, 535
nor my virginity, nor the laws of marriage!
You have thrown everything into confusion: I am made the rival of my sister,

²³When Philomela and the other women lose the power of speech, they are unable to testify to their experiences, and this inability exacerbates their trauma. According to Herman, the first stage of recovery is always re-establishing safety, but in the second, “the survivor tells the story of the trauma” (2015, 175). Only after having established the trauma narrative can she decide how to shape the future. In reconstructing the event, the survivor must come to terms with what the traumatic event means to her, and from this point it can be properly mourned and integrated into subconscious memory.

Io begins this process by writing her name in the sand; Philomela weaves her testimony on the loom. Both women find a way to testify despite being silenced. Sahla Aroussi, researching rape survivors in Eastern Congo, notes that participants in studies of sexual violence are drawn in by their powerful need to share their experiences with someone who will listen (2020). The knowledge of being heard and understood, recognition that one is not alone, facilitates the final stages of recovery; in modern therapy, these stages usually include group sessions with people of similar traumatic backgrounds (Herman 2015, 214-218).

you a double husband! I deserve the punishment of an enemy!’

Philomela’s distress here is not unlike what modern incest victims experience. The family and household are expected to be both safe and structured, but perpetrators of incest render familial order unstable and make the home into a dangerous environment. Incest survivors often describe powerful feelings of guilt, having believed that they were the cause of disorder in their families (Herman 2015, 103-105). Philomela’s story is unusual, though, in the way it ends: with Procne helping her to escape and chopping up her own son to cook and feed to Tereus (587-660). While fantasies of revenge can be helpful for rape survivors during recovery, few have the opportunity to act on these fantasies—and actual revenge is not psychologically beneficial (Herman 2015, 229-230). Philomela does get her revenge, but her prolonged suffering and violent retaliation do not offer the chance for rehabilitation. Tereus steals her humanity long before she transforms into the nightingale (Segal 1994, 276).

These episodes of rape trauma in the *Metamorphoses* contain similar elements, but each victim responds uniquely to the variety of traumas she undergoes. All four women face the threat of rape, and all four lose the power of speech because of the rape event. In the end, they experience varying levels of recovery. Daphne succeeds in escaping rape, but must make the choice to sacrifice her humanity. Io is continually prevented from returning to her old life, but eventually regains more normalcy than any other victim, before becoming a goddess. Callisto never finds solace, nor is she allowed to choose her fate as a constellation. Although she succeeds in telling her story, Philomela cannot find peace after suffering from, and inflicting, such terrible violence. The poem exhibits many approaches to women’s trauma, but offers no consolations.

Roman Foundational Women in the *Fasti*

The *Fasti* are unique among the works I have chosen because they are intertwined with Roman politics. All the rape episodes therein are related to Roman religious festivals and thus have significance for specifically Roman ideologies—unlike the rapes of the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*, which are almost exclusively concerned with Greek myth.²⁴ Furthermore, the *Fasti*'s rapes are often pivotal moments in Roman history, as in the case of Lucretia. Like the works discussed above, the *Fasti* emphasize the victim's perspective rather than privileging that of the perpetrator. Scholars have recognized that these rape narratives appear to critique the violence of Roman masculinity. As in the *Metamorphoses*, the infliction of silence plays a critical role, and victims' trauma is exacerbated by the inability to refuse or retaliate against rape. In this chapter, I focus on the stories of Lara, Lucretia, and the Sabine women.²⁵

Lara's rape occurs as the direct result of helping her fellow divine women. When Jupiter demands that the Latin nymphs help him to trap and rape Juturna (589-598), Lara alone disobeys the order and protects her sister (603-604). She then alerts Juno of her husband's indiscretion (605-606). In both instances, she uses the power of speech to thwart male sexual violence, naming Jupiter's crime so that his guilt is exposed. For her disobedience, Jupiter cuts out her tongue and banishes her to the Underworld (607-611). Already, the poem encourages pity for Lara: "[her] speech is a vice, *vitium*, only from the perspective of the male characters. . . . Male voices condemn her, but the tale evokes sympathy for Lara by underscoring her victimization

²⁴*Heroides* 7 (Dido to Aeneas) and *Metamorphoses* 15 do include Roman foundational themes, but neither contains any of the forty rape episodes that I have identified. In *Metamorphoses* 14, however, Ovid includes a rape narrative about Pomona, who is an exclusively Roman goddess.

²⁵I have chosen to omit an analysis of the *Fasti* version of Callisto, because the narrative is generally similar to the *Metamorphoses* version that I discuss in Chapter 3. The main difference lies in the brevity of the *Fasti* version. W. R. Johnson writes that the version in the *Fasti* is also more brutal (1996, 19-20).

and her good intentions” (Wise 2017, 105). Her good intentions toward Juturna, however, cannot save her. When Mercury arrives to escort her to the Underworld, she is powerless (612-614):

dicitur illa duci tum placuisse deo.
vim parat hic, voltu pro verbis illa precatur
et frustra muto nititur ore loqui . . .

They say that she pleased the god who was leading her, then.
He prepares to use force, she begs with her expression in place of words,
and in vain she struggles to speak with mute lips . . .

Knowing what Mercury intends, Lara cannot fight or flee; she can only stare at her rapist and try to beg for mercy. By the next line, she is pregnant and giving birth to the Lares (615).

Her response here resembles modern accounts of tonic immobility or constriction, as discussed above. Faced with the threat of harm, the victim’s body refuses to move. Galliano et al. first established that the immobility response in rape victims was similar to the tonic immobility observed in animals (1993): this response consists of “gross motor inhibition, motor tremors, analgesia, suppressed vocal behavior, fixed and unfocused stare, and periods of eye closures” (Bovin et al. 2008, 402).²⁶ In a 2007 study, Fusé et al. reported that a majority of sexual assault victims they surveyed described experiencing tonic immobility during the assault. Not only is tonic immobility a common reaction to rape, but it is also strongly linked to the development of PTSD in rape victims (Griffin et al. 1997). Lara’s story ends immediately after the rape, so it is impossible to say how she copes afterward, but her wordless stare at Mercury and lack of fight or flight indicates that she is experiencing an involuntary freeze response.

Lucretia, by contrast, voluntarily freezes during her rape, having been threatened with death and blackmail. Sextus Tarquinius sneaks into her room and announces that he has a sword (792-796), and Lucretia’s speech fails her (797-799). The poem then offers a view into her thought

²⁶Suarez and Gallup first proposed the possibility of tonic immobility as a rape response in humans, but did not test this hypothesis through study (1979).

process (801-803):

quid faciat? pugnet? vincetur femina pugnans.
clamet? at in dextra, qui vetet, ensis erat.
effugiat? positus urgentur pectora palmis . . .

What should she do? Should she fight? A woman fighting would be conquered.
Should she cry out? But in his right hand was the sword, which forbade it.
Should she flee? Her chest is constrained by the hands set on it . . .

Lucretia appears to have full power over her faculties, but she knows that she has no good option. Like Daphne, she must calculate the risks and decide what her goal is: to survive or to avoid rape. Sextus' threat of blackmail, which will shame not only her but her entire family, helps her to make this decision: she submits to rape, knowing that in death she will not be able to absolve her family or herself of guilt (807-810). Unique among my examples, she consciously considers all avenues of escape, but chooses acquiescence.

Lucretia's primary responses after the rape are self-blame and shame. When attempting to relate the event to her father and husband, she loses her speech again, trying three times to speak before her fourth attempt succeeds (823-824). Even so, she cannot finish her narration.²⁷ She "hides her shame-filled face with her mantle" (*pudibundaque celat amictu / ora*, 819-820) and describes her rape as "[her] own disgrace" (*dedecus . . . meum*, 826). Although both her father and her husband forgive her and proclaim her innocence, she says, "the mercy that you give, I myself deny" (*quam . . . veniam vos datis, ipsa nego*, 830). Lucretia's self-blame and shame for her reaction in the face of rape lead her to suicide (831-832).²⁸ Like many modern rape victims,

²⁷Julia Hejduk remarks that "of all the women raped in the *Fasti*, Lucretia is the only one who is given such a speech beforehand, increasing her stature and the magnitude of her tragedy" (2011, 26). Her repeated struggle to speak shows how low Sextus has brought her.

²⁸Ovid's Lucretia differs from Livy's Lucretia in how she justifies her suicide. Ovid's Lucretia appears to be overwhelmed by the misery and shame of the rape; Livy's Lucretia believes in her innocence, but her suicide supposedly protects the integrity of Roman matronhood by ensuring that other wives will not use her example as an excuse for adultery (1.58).

she is unable to accept her inaction, which she perceives as willingness or complicity. Of those who have experienced a violent crime, rape victims are most likely to ideate and attempt suicide even years after the event (Herman 2015, 50). Moor et al. have connected the freeze response to rape with heightened feelings of dehumanization and humiliation; victims perceive themselves as allowing the attacker to treat them like an object, and therefore they are more likely to feel self-blame and shame (2013, 1063).²⁹ Lucretia's despair and suicide are consistent with modern research that shows how survivors blame themselves for not fighting against rape, even when their bodies or circumstances do not allow for resistance.

I end my discussion with the Sabine women. In *Fasti* 3, Ovid omits the rape itself, focusing instead on the women's intervention in the Sabine War. He hints at the rape by naming them *raptae* (203; 207; 217), but the actual rape narrative occurs in *Ars Amatoria* 1, published ten years prior. The *praeceptor amoris* explains that Romulus is the reason why men should pick up women at the theater and launches into the story (101-102). The most striking aspect of the episode is the variety of reactions among the Sabine women (121-124):

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 . . .

For there was a single fear, but not a single expression of fear:
some tear their hair, some sit mindlessly;
one is silent, despondent, another calls on her mother in vain:
this one laments, this one is struck senseless; this one stays, that one flees. . .

Ovid centers the fear of the girls over the desire of the Roman men. Their lewd watchfulness before the attack is, in retrospect, rendered more horrible because of the terror they have

²⁹Moor et al. found that in their study 89% of rape victims reported "some degree of behavioral inhibition during the assault" (2013, 1064).

inflicted.³⁰ The girls exhibit the many different reactions to rape that I have discussed here. Those who lose their senses and stay in place bring to mind tonic immobility and the freeze response; others try to escape or scream for help. Ovid shows an understanding that any of these actions could be a natural response to fear and that the girls' fear is appropriate. The rape of the Sabine women in *Ars 1* exemplifies his consistent approach to rape and female trauma: though each woman uniquely responds to and copes with rape, her fear is always justified.

Ovid's rape narratives of Roman legendary women follow a pattern similar to the mythic narratives in the *Metamorphoses*, but, in the above examples, attention is paid not only to the women's suffering but also to the brutal entitlement of the men who abuse them (Wise 2017, 130). Jupiter punishes Lara pitilessly for helping other divine women retaliate against his behavior; the following rape adds further, senseless injury. Sextus backs Lucretia into a corner and dehumanizes her with violence and blackmail. The Romans' violence toward the Sabines is deceptive and predatory, made more horrible by the women's outright terror. While the description of the Sabines showcases the many acute responses rape victims may exhibit, Lara and Lucretia each demonstrate specific psychological symptoms. The former appears to suffer from tonic immobility, while the latter bears the weight of self-blame and shame because of her freeze response. Ovid's rape tales of Roman legendary women are disturbingly detailed and personal: he forces the audience to acknowledge the women's fear and shame, simultaneously villainizing the men who oppress them, as well as larger structures of Roman patriarchy.

³⁰Ovid's narrative privileges the women's perspective in contrast to Livy's version, in which Romulus is the hero who both captures the women and placates them (1.9-10). The Sabines of *Ars 1* are not placated. Indeed, as Hemker argues, Ovid's focus on the terror and deceit of Romulus' ploy actively undercuts Livy's narrative of praise (1985, 44-45). Although Ovid's speaker praises Romulus' actions, Ovid himself seems to express disapproval.

In Summation

This introduction has provided a sample of rape trauma analyses from the *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Fasti*; successive chapters will go into greater detail on each work. Most of Ovid's extant works contain instances of male violence against women—particularly rape, captivity, and silencing—which underlie the gendered dynamics of the Graeco-Roman world. The *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses* depict many and various tales of traumatized women. The elegiac poems hint at the sexual violence that Roman elite men inflict upon subaltern women. The *Fasti* demonstrate through accounts of legendary rape how male authority victimizes and silences women. Throughout these works, Ovid shows concern with female trauma and psychology.

Ovid's portrayals of victimized mythic women align with psychological symptoms now associated with trauma responses and PTSD. Ovidian women faced with "hit and run" rape variously fight, flee, or freeze; in some cases, the freeze response may be identified with constriction or tonic immobility. Modern research shows that one's reaction to danger depends upon the mental "resilience" of the individual, and Ovid's literature expresses this variety (Herman 2015, 57-61). Characters' responses to prolonged trauma like captivity are similarly varied, as are their experiences of post-traumatic symptoms and recovery.

The variety and realism of victims' characterizations in these works indicate that Ovid is aware of and sensitive to the systemic violence inflicted on women by Roman patriarchal society. Furthermore, his disturbing portrayals of male cruelty and female suffering critique these patriarchal power dynamics. Viewing Ovid's rape narratives through the lens of trauma theory helps to demonstrate the extent of his awareness of and sympathy toward female trauma.

CHAPTER 2: THE *HEROIDES*: CAPTIVE WIVES

The *Heroides*, Ovid's earliest collection, are unique among Roman literature. Written as epistolary poems, they take inspiration from both Greek tragedy and Roman elegy: their narrative style is similar to that of tragic monologues, but the relationships they present are often framed as elegiac romances.³¹ Even more unusual is that most of the *Heroides* are written from the perspective of Greek mythical women.³² Ovid adopts the personae of well-known characters from epic and myth and alters their traditional stories, adding nuance and detail that dramatize the women's experiences and in some cases add hints of irony. Although violence is not central to the *Heroides*, certain poems present scenarios of bodily harm and rape. Ovid's re-imaginings show how stories take on new power and meaning when focalized from the female point of view rather than the male: even when the larger narrative is largely similar to mythic tradition, Ovid is able, through women's voices, to explore the ramifications of male violence against vulnerable women, and the trauma that results from such violence. In this chapter I analyze instances of

³¹For the genre of the *Heroides*, see: Fränkel 1945, 36-46; Jacobson 1974, 319-348; Mack 1988, 69-83; Farrell 1998; Lindheim 2003, 15-35; Spentzou 2003; Kennedy 2002; Curley 2013, 59-94.

³²There are some exceptions. The three pairs of double *Heroides* (16-21) feature one poem from the woman's perspective alongside one from the man's: Paris and Helen, Leander and Hero, Acontius and Cydippe. The majority of my discourse here focuses on the single *Heroides*, although I will outline some characteristics of the double poems where I discuss Acontius below.

Of the single *Heroides*, poem 7 is written from the perspective of Dido, who is not a character of Greek myth but rather a pseudo-historical figure of Roman legend. *Heroides* 15 is about Sappho, a historical poet whose legacy has been mythicized throughout the centuries. It is worth noting also that the authorship of poem 15 is contested, though I am inclined to believe that it is in fact Ovidian. For more on the authorial authenticity of *Heroides* 15, see: Jacobson 1974, 280-285; Tarrant 1981; Tarrant 1983, 272-273; Murgia 1985; Rosati 1996; Farrell 1998, 330-334; Rimell 1999; Lindheim 2003, 138-140; Thorsen 2007; Fabre-Serris 2009; Thorsen 2019; Nagy 2023.

trauma symptoms resulting from rape in the context of captivity—either as a concubine captured in war or as an unwilling wife.

The genre of the *Heroides* was original among Graeco-Roman literature at the time of their composition. It is possible that Ovid was in part inspired by the letter from Arethusa to Lycotas in Propertius 4.3, but no other Greek or Latin work previously was composed solely of dramatic letters (Mack 1988, 69; Newlands 2015, 49).³³ Gian Biagio Conte believes that the *Heroides* should be read primarily as works of elegy because of their tone, subject matter, and elegiac meter (1994a, 121-122); Sara Lindheim agrees and adds, however, that the *Heroides* are products equally of epistolary tradition (2003, 16-17). Sara Mack points out that the style of writing is closely related to the monologues of epic and tragedy, and furthermore that in drawing characters and traditions from drama Ovid adapts the tragic mode to elegiac conventions (1988, 69-70). Hermann Fränkel has called the *Heroides* a collection of “lyric monodrama” (1945, 45): the real action of the narrative lies before and after the character’s speech, but the speech itself is emotionally dynamic. Howard Jacobson is reluctant to label the collection with a definite genre, preferring to take an inclusive approach that acknowledges all possible literary influences from epic to rhetoric to elegy (1974, 348): “the whole is surely much more than the sum of its parts.”

Duncan Kennedy remarks that the epistolary nature of the *Heroides* has been downplayed in Ovidian scholarship up to the 21st century, citing Louis Claude Purser (1898) and L. P.

³³Although it is generally accepted that Propertius 4.3 was a precursor to the *Heroides*, the dating of Ovid’s elegies and Propertius 4 is uncertain—it is more useful, perhaps, to think of these collections as concurrent projects shared between authors over the course of their composition. J. C. McKeown suggests that Ovid was working on the *Amores* and *Heroides* simultaneously and perhaps published the double *Heroides* as late as 2 BCE – 2 CE (1987a, 78-87). If Ovid modeled *Amores* 1.8 after Propertius 4.5, as many scholars believe, it is possible that the single *Heroides* did interact with Book 4 of Propertius (*ibid.*, 80). For more on the dating of and relationship between Propertius 4 and the *Heroides*, see: Hutchinson 2006, 2-3; 100-101.

Jacobson (1974, 10) suggests that other poems of Propertius might have been equally influential upon the *Heroides*, and perhaps even those of Tibullus and Sulpicia.

Wilkinson (1955), who both argue that letters are merely a different flavor of tragic soliloquy (2002, 219). The primary precedents for the subject matter of the *Heroides* are epic and tragedy, and their format does appear to follow some conventions of dramatic monologues.³⁴ Unlike a tragic monologue, however, a letter should not be read as an expression of the speaker's truth, and in fact the *Heroides'* letters are full of deceit and manipulation. Patricia Rosenmeyer, describing the culture of letter writing in the ancient Mediterranean, comments that letters were "often viewed with some suspicion"—particularly when written by women—and associated with the "transmi[ssion] of secret or harmful information" (2001, 27). Indeed, she argues against the long-held assumption that, because of their "private" nature, letters are somehow fundamentally honest, both literary letters or epistolary narratives.³⁵ Kennedy builds on this idea with specific reference to the *Heroides*: Ovid curates a type of letter that seems to be written for an occasion—a moment of high emotion and desire—but also with a sense of rhetorical method (2002, 222-223).

The nature of these letters is uniquely personal and intimate—the heroines bare their souls to their wayward lovers with what seem carefully constructed logical arguments and, at the same time, reckless emotional abandon. Fränkel refers to the *Heroides* as "thought letters" (1945, 36-37): the type of letter someone might write for their own satisfaction or closure, without either

³⁴Ovid himself comments obliquely on the *Heroides'* genre in *Amores* 2.18. He claims that Amor dragged him away from writing tragedy (15-18), and then makes reference to various of the *Heroides* (19-34). He says that matters of epic are not a part of his poetry but rather are the province of his friend Macer (1-4; 39-40). Nevertheless, Ovid adds that Paris, Helen, and Laodamia are a part of Macer's songs (37-38)—all three of whom are included in the *Heroides*. Ovid thus recognizes in *Amores* 2.18 that the *Heroides* are composed of tragic, epic, and elegiac material.

McKeown discusses Ovid's references to the *Heroides* and how the list in *Amores* 2.18 has affected debates of authenticity (1987b, 386-387).

³⁵I have chosen to use the word "letter" to refer to the epistolary poetry of the *Heroides*, although the classification of "letters" is fraught and may encompass a multitude of formats and contexts. For more on what constitutes a letter (versus, say, an "epistle"), see: Rosenmeyer 2001, 5-12; Trapp 2003, 1-5.

the hope or intention of sending it to the addressee—whether because such a letter cannot reach them or because it would not change the situation. Jacobson and Laurel Fulkerson, among others, prefer to read them as potential *suasoriae*, a reading supported by Ovid’s extensive rhetorical training; in addition, there are certainly persuasive elements in the way each speaker pleads with or harangues her lover.³⁶ Hence, these poems are labeled as “successes” or “failures,” depending on how well each woman argues her case. While I agree with Jacobson and Fulkerson that the *Heroides* may be read as conscious attempts at *suasoriae*, I also find merit in Fränkel’s view that the letters are necessarily futile—that an ideal reader, someone familiar with Graeco-Roman mythology and literary tradition, “is expected immediately to recognize their futility” (1945, 37). Through these letters, Ovid depicts each heroine at the moment of uncertainty, when there is still hope that she will attain her desired outcome through rhetorical skill.

As a type of elegy, the *Heroides* build upon the theme of *servitium amoris*, but the focalization through the woman’s perspective reverses the usual gender roles of elegy. It is the women here who labor for the sake of love, while the men are flighty and fickle.³⁷ In this recast elegy, however, the stakes of failed relationships are high: if the *amator* of elegy fears the inconstancy of his preferred mistress, in many instances the women of the *Heroides* fear shame, abuse, and death. As Mack notes, the *Heroides* are also frozen at a certain point in time, giving perspective only at the moment when the woman’s situation seems to her most dire (1988, 70-71). By contrast, elegies like the *Amores* tell an ongoing story of shifting relationships. The

³⁶*Suasoriae* are declamatory exercises in rhetoric, in which a student takes on the persona of a mythical or historical figure and debates their options at a critical juncture.

³⁷One of Ovid’s precedents here is likely Euripides’ *Medea*, wherein the chorus comment on the fickle nature of men when Jason abandons Medea (410-414). The fact that Ovid wrote his own *Medea*—a lost tragedy praised by Tacitus (*Dial.* 12) and Quintilian (10.1.98)—indicates that he was especially interested in these themes. Catullus 64, in which Ariadne makes similar complaints about Theseus, may have been another inspiration—particularly as her lament functions as a quasi-letter.

letters also give clues about the passing of time through flashbacks and premonitions. For this reason, the serious consequences and desperate tone of the *Heroides* feel more vividly real than the dramatized misadventures of the elegiac *amator*, despite some of their more fantastical elements.

The unique genre of the *Heroides* is particularly relevant to my approach of reading female trauma, primarily because of the “absence” of a male voice. While Ovid himself is, of course, a male author, the single *Heroides* are narrated completely by women. As Carole Newlands writes, the epistolary format “gives [the women] the authority to write without the physical constraint of a male presence” (2015, 48). As in no other work by a male Roman writer, women structure the discourse: Ovid communicates their trauma not through the potentially ambiguous commentary of an omniscient narrator (as in the *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*), nor through the voice of a self-interested male character (as in drama or elegy). The women themselves are allowed to speak and claim some form of authorship. Some critics have insisted that Ovid, as a man, cannot faithfully communicate the female experience nor create an authentic voice, a point that is important to consider while analyzing examples of traumatic responses in the *Heroides*.³⁸ The serious subject matter and elevated tone erase neither the presence of irony throughout the collection nor the complications of Ovid’s generic ambiguity. The correspondence between Ovid and each letter writer is a kind of hermeneutic interplay: Ovid, the male writer, translates the experience of the female into the text, but the femaleness of the experience can never be fully extricated from the male voice (Kennedy 2002, 227-230).

³⁸See: Wyke 1987a, 1987b; Sharrock 1991a, 1991b; Wyke 1995. For discussion of critical consensus (or lack thereof), see: Spentzou 2003, 25-28; Newlands 2015, 50-51.

Elizabeth Harvey comments on the ventriloquism of the female voice in various genres of western literature. For Ovid’s ventriloquism of Sappho in *Heroides* 15, see Harvey 1989. For a more extensive treatment of feminist theory and English Renaissance literature, see Harvey 1992.

Nevertheless, because of the effectiveness of his female characterization and the pathos of the *Heroides*' narratives, scholars of the past century have postulated Ovid's profound understanding of women's psychology.³⁹ Baca (1969, 5) refers to the *Heroides* as "psycho-dramas," building upon Fränkel's idea of "thought letters" but identifying many of the female narrators as "neurotic" in their emotional responses to their circumstances. From a general psychoanalytical perspective, the *Heroides* may serve as explorations of the distressed mind and as poetic interpretations of the process of grief. Indeed, loss is the primary subject of each of the single *Heroides*. These women are *relictæ*, wronged and abandoned by the men they love—at least, as they see it. The heartbreak of abandonment is the focus of these poems, but often abandonment is only one of many misfortunes that the women have suffered. And although the narrative events of each poem vary greatly in scope and severity, common threads of traumatic experience can be identified throughout.⁴⁰

One aspect common to all the poems is heavy use of *pathos*, a constant emphasis on a woman's pain and grief. Much of the time, the writer's laments focus on the act of abandonment itself. In some of the *Heroides*, however, abandonment may happen alongside, or lead to, serious trauma, as in the case of Canace (*Heroides* 11): with Macareus gone, she lives to see her father kill her newborn child before he orders her to die as well. In other instances, the abandonment is yet another misfortune added to previous traumas, as for Briseis (*Heroides* 3), who saw her city razed and family cut down by the very man who kept her as a spear-captive and raped her repeatedly; even then, her poem focuses on her abandonment by Achilles rather than on the evils he inflicted upon her. Although the *Heroides* do not center on rape and rape-related trauma in the

³⁹For Ovid as an expert on the female mind, especially in the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*, see: Haley 1924; Baca 1969; Galinsky 1975; Flaherty 1994; Farrell 1998; McKinley 2001; Lindheim 2003.

⁴⁰For more on the trope of the abandoned woman in literature, see Lipking 1988.

way that later Ovidian works do, such experiences can be found lurking between the lines throughout the collection.

In this chapter, I look at instances of rape and rape-related trauma in the stories of Briseis (*Heroides* 3), a spear-captive, and Hermione (*Heroides* 8), an unwilling bride. My methodology combines a close reading of Ovid's text with contemporary scholarship on women's responses to rape—both peritraumatic responses and symptoms of rape-related PTSD. I first show how Ovid draws attention to each character's experience with rape, describes her symptoms, and characterizes her as a victim. From that point, I use a comparative approach to show how these symptoms and responses, as presented by Ovid, align with those recognized by modern psychologists as patterns associated with rape trauma. Through these analyses, I hope to demonstrate that reading the *Heroides* through the lens of trauma theory can expand our understanding of how Ovid characterizes his female letter writers.

Briseis writes to Achilles sometime after he has relinquished her to Agamemnon. Although she has suffered various traumas at his hands, she identifies him as her “husband” and only family.⁴¹ Her attachment to Achilles is reminiscent of trauma bonding described by modern victims of captivity, particularly those who have suffered domestic abuse and sex trafficking. Hermione, by contrast, has not been abducted, but rather was given as a bride to Neoptolemus despite her wish to marry Orestes, her cousin and former betrothed. In her letter, she frames her marriage as a form of war captivity, characterizing Neoptolemus as a soldier who has made her into a concubine. In describing her mental state to Orestes, she identifies feelings and physical responses similar to those described by survivors of various traumas, commonly associated with states of constriction and hyperarousal.

⁴¹Ovid names some of these traumas in *Heroides* 3 (e.g., the deaths of Briseis' family at Achilles' hands), while others must be inferred from clues in the *Iliad*.

In addition to Briseis and Hermione, I analyze certain aspects of *Heroides* 20, Acontius' letter to Cydippe, paired with her response in *Heroides* 21. Acontius' perspective provides a useful counterpoint to those of Briseis and Hermione: he describes his pursuit and attainment of Cydippe as a violent abduction, similar to Paris' kidnapping of Helen. He glorifies the violence of abduction and rape with his language, presenting men's subjugation of women as an appropriately virile course of action. From his perspective, men are entitled to secure the woman of their choice in whatever way is socially possible, even by underhanded means. Although Cydippe makes her unwillingness clear in *Heroides* 21, she never frames her forced marriage to Acontius as an act of abduction—Acontius is the one who creates the image of captor for himself. *Heroides* 20 is thus useful for comparing the way that women experience rape and rape-related trauma in Ovid's literature with the way he characterizes the men who inflict such trauma.

In reading these poems, I draw on studies of second-stage warfare and war captives in ancient literary culture.⁴² To supplement research on the ancient world, I also use modern studies of trauma responses to various forms of captivity: political imprisonment, human trafficking, and domestic abuse, among others. As throughout this dissertation, rape trauma must always be considered at the forefront, in addition to other traumatic experiences. Hermione and Cydippe do not choose to have sex with the men they have married, and Briseis asserts her love for Achilles after several years of forced concubinage. Briseis and Hermione have certainly suffered rape at the point when they are composing their letters; Cydippe knows that she will be forced into sex

⁴²“Second-stage warfare” refers to the actions taken in the ancient Mediterranean following the successful sack of a city: the conquering army generally killed all the men of fighting age and enslaved all surviving women and children. For more on this practice as it relates to classical literature, see: Gaca 2011; Henry 2011. For connections between ancient Mediterranean second-stage warfare and modern martial practices, see Gaca 2016.

when Acontius does bring her back to his house.

Heroides 3: Briseis

The only extant literary precedent for *Heroides 3* is the relationship of Briseis and Achilles in the *Iliad*, which sets off the events of Homer's epic but receives little direct attention. In fact, Briseis appears only twice within the work and speaks once. In *Iliad 1*, she leaves Achilles "unwillingly" (ἀέκουσ', 349) after his altercation with Agamemnon. When Agamemnon returns her to Achilles, she mourns for Patroclus and for herself (19. 288-301). She believes that without Patroclus' assistance she will not be elevated from her status as spear-captive. Her stance is ambiguous: she may leave Achilles unwillingly, but Homer provides few details about her true feelings toward him. She prefers him to Agamemnon, and her circumstances would be better if she were a wife instead of a concubine, but the poem never implies a deeper emotional connection.

Briseis does not appear as a character in any extant Graeco-Roman text from the centuries between Homer and Ovid, although many authors allude to her or mention her in passing. Oddly enough, she is not a major character in tragedy, nor in other works of the epic cycle (unlike heroines like Cassandra or Andromache), nor is there any evidence of lost texts focusing on her.⁴³ Ovid's Briseis is thus most likely a unique creation based loosely on the Homeric Briseis, one who has been given a voice and who loves Achilles effusively. The basic elements of the

⁴³The House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii offers one piece of evidence for Briseis after the time of Ovid. The building dates to the 2nd century CE, and a painting from its east wall—now on display in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples—depicts Achilles and Patroclus relinquishing Briseis to Agamemnon. This scene was fairly popular in Imperial Roman art, and three examples have been discovered in Pompeii (Bergmann 1994, 235-239, 245-246). For a discussion of the House of the Tragic Poet and this wall painting, see: Bergmann 1994; Wilkinson 2017, 196-200. For a comprehensive treatment of images of Achilles in Roman art, see: Taylor 2008, 137-168; Miller 2020.

story are the same: Ovid's Briseis is writing from Agamemnon's encampment at some point between her transfer and the death of Patroclus. Ovid extrapolates about her character, mental state, and hopes, providing details that are absent from the *Iliad*.

The Briseis of *Heroides* 3 is entirely dependent on Achilles, loves him intensely, and treats him as "both master and husband" (*dominoque viroque*, 5). Her main complaints are that he let her go too quickly and has waited too long to take her back—she has acclimated to her status as spear-captive and does not see another place for herself. She says of her seizure by Agamemnon that she was "snatched" (*rapta*, 1) and that she "seems to have been made a captive a second time" (*infelix iterum sum mihi visa capi*, 16). The irony here is that her initial capture was by Achilles, but she does not further acknowledge that he is ultimately responsible for her tenuous position. The only indication of her pain from that experience is in her comparison to being taken by Agamemnon—an oblique indication that her relationship with Achilles was not always consensual. This statement both highlights and downplays the trauma of that event. On the one hand, it draws attention to the grief of losing her family and becoming a concubine to the enemy; on the other, she compares her total loss of city, family, and safety to her—more or less—nonviolent transition to Agamemnon's tent.⁴⁴ In a way, perhaps, this simile undercuts her own conviction that she belongs with Achilles.

Briseis further highlights the unusual nature of this relationship by framing herself as an Achaean rather than a Lyrnesian and ally of the Trojans (17-20):

Saepe ego decepto volui custode reverti,

Statius' *Achilleid* would have provided a post-Augustan literary perspective on Briseis had it been finished. Statius heavily emphasizes the eroticism of Achilles' relationship with Deidamia in Book 1 (Fantuzzi 2012, 61-63); it is reasonable to suspect that he may have taken a similar approach to the relationship with Briseis.

⁴⁴Rape is a consequence in both cases, regardless of Agamemnon's repeated insistence that he has never touched Briseis (*Il.* 9.275-276; 19.261-262).

sed, me qui timidam prenderet, hostis erat.
si progressa forem, caperer ne, nocte, timebam,
quamlibet ad Priami munus itura nurum.

Often I have wished to return, with my guards deceived,
but he would be an enemy, the one who would seize me, a frightened girl.
If I could get out at night, I was afraid that I would be captured,
to go off as a gift for some daughter-in-law of Priam's.⁴⁵

As Verducci observes, “this [statement], it would seem, is servility parading its own abasement” (1985, 106-107). Rather than hope for rescue by the Trojans if she could escape Agamemnon, she fears them as an enemy, a potential threat to her reunion with Achilles. With these words, she shows that she would prefer to remain enslaved to her captor and rapist instead of returning to a life of freedom among her allies. She imagines that these allies will take her captive as if she herself were an Achaean and not a Lyrnesian spear-captive. It is strange for Briseis to expect enslavement from the Trojans, and her reluctance is an indication of the intensity of her assimilation to the Achaeans. Her self-perception incorporates two identities: she identifies simultaneously as a foreign concubine and as a loyal Achaean. The narrative of *Heroides 3* depends upon the tension between Briseis' two sides. She firmly believes that the Trojans will treat her as an enemy if they find her, but at the same time is keenly aware of the hard life she would live in Phthia with Achilles (75-80).⁴⁶

Yet Briseis consistently refers to Achilles as her lover (*amantis*, 26; *amor*, 42; *amor*, 139): as she plays a double role, so does he. He is the enemy and slaughterer of her people, but also the

⁴⁵All translations are my own.

⁴⁶Arthur Palmer, stymied by Briseis' fear of her own people, finds these lines “so feeble and unintelligible that [he] feel[s] inclined . . . to excise them” (2005, 299). Wilfried Lingenberg agrees with Verducci that Briseis now self-identifies as Greek, but rightly points out that if Briseis were to flee back to Achilles, she would be moving only within the Greek encampment without the threat of encountering Trojans at all (2003, 121-122). He suggests in this instance that Ovid is paying more attention to drama than to coherence, as in other passages of the *Heroides*.

man who provides her with sustenance and protection. One may imagine that, to some extent, Briseis' feelings for him developed from a place of necessity. For the captive woman, quality of life depends upon how she chooses to use her sexual value. Ruth Scodel explains that the willing subservience of spear-captives to their captors is not evidence of betrayal or denial, but rather a calculated and practical course to ensure their safety, as well as the safety of their children (1998, 140-141). Acquiescing to sex with a captor and burying one's resentment would not be considered symptoms of pathology; rather, such actions would allow a spear-captive to be treated kindly, to avoid negative attention, to prove her worth, and perhaps to gain more influence within her new environment. Briseis mentions that she seems to be respected among Achilles' enslaved women, since one calls her "mistress" (*domina*, 101). So there are good reasons for captive women to acclimate readily to their enslavement. Furthermore, having been raised in a society where captivity was not an unlikely fate for women, they may have been more prepared to accept such a situation.

Briseis in *Heroides* 3, however, seems to have surpassed any practical reasoning for her dedicated subservience to Achilles, to such an extent that Verducci names her behavior "parody" (1985, 103). Verducci further discusses how the Ovidian Briseis transposes the *servitium amoris* of elegiac poetry onto the captive/captor relationship. Because she continually asserts her presence while insisting upon her unobtrusiveness, her pleas to Achilles fall flat. For all her desperation, she does not have the power to force Achilles' hand; he will have the final say over her fate (Verducci 1985, 119).

His indifference to her absence is apparent to Briseis from his refusal of Agamemnon's gifts, which she lists (27-38), before despairing that he no longer loves her (41-42): "by what fault did I deserve to become cheap to you, Achilles? To where has your fickle love fled from me

so quickly?” (*qua merui culpa fieri tibi vilis, Achille? / quo levis a nobis tam cito fugit amor?*).

Although the Homeric Achilles professes to hold Briseis “dear to his heart” (ἐκ θυμοῦ φίλεον, *Il.* 9.342), there is little indication that he is truly in love with her rather than viewing her primarily as an assurance of his future glory.⁴⁷ There is only Briseis’ own assertion that he has loved her in the past, at least. Without confirmation from Achilles and with Briseis’ repeated insistence on their emotional relationship, *Heroides* 3 rings of delusion: Ovid gives the impression that Briseis is trying to convince herself of her worth to Achilles.

Fulkerson reads this aspect of Briseis’ letter as a refashioning of the Trojan War itself (2005, 91): Briseis “makes a bold move toward asserting her subjectivity” by depicting herself as a central figure within the conflict, and, by extension, crucial to the victory of the Achaeans.⁴⁸ She tries to convince Achilles that she will bring forth his renewed ferocity in battle (87-90):

arma cape, Aeacide, sed me tamen ante recepta,
et preme turbatos Marte favente viros!
propter me mota est, propter me desinat ira,
simque ego tristitiae cause modusque tuae.

⁴⁷Even when Achilles calls Briseis his “heart-suited wife” (ἄλοχον θυμαρέα, *Il.* 9.336), he is claiming her as a symbol of his own worth and also using this language to make Agamemnon’s actions seem more egregious. Furthermore, after Patroclus’ death in the *Iliad*, Achilles wishes that Briseis had died when he first captured Lyrnessus (*Il.* 19.56-62): an indication that his feelings for her are, at least, conditional.

Farron argues that by making Briseis out to be a wife, Achilles creates a situation parallel to Paris’ theft of Helen from Menelaus, but his words do not imply genuine affection (1979, 28): “these protestations of love emphasize the wrong done to him. It never occurs to him to argue that Agamemnon committed an injustice because Briseis did not want to be taken to him. Besides, in the rest of his speech, Achilles does not consider his feelings towards Briseis but regards his loss of her as significant because of the insult to his honour, as he did in book I.”

Fantuzzi thoroughly explores Achilles’ feelings toward Briseis, pointing out that although Achilles sheds tears after giving up Briseis, he explains to Thetis in *Iliad* 1.352-356 that his distress stems from the dishonor done to him by Agamemnon, not from love of Briseis (2012, 103). Interestingly, ancient scholiasts were more likely to interpret Achilles’ grief as erotic, romanticizing his tears even without evidence to support their interpretation (Fantuzzi 2012, 104). Fantuzzi agrees, too, with Farron that Achilles employs the term ἄλοχον for rhetorical purposes in order to remind Menelaus of Helen’s theft (2012, 109). Griffin makes a similar argument, but calls Achilles’ use of ἄλοχον an “exaggeration” (1995, 114).

⁴⁸Hermione’s letter, discussed below, interacts significantly with Briseis’, as Fulkerson has demonstrated.

Take up your weapons, child of Aeacus, yet only after I have been reclaimed,
and while Mars favors you, rout and subdue their warriors!
For my sake your wrath was stirred, for my sake let it abate,
and let me be the cause and measure for your melancholy.

Here she argues her usefulness to Achilles in the context of the Trojan War, seemingly to compensate for her future depreciation in sexual value as a concubine in Phthia. According to Fulkerson, Briseis' "woman-centered" view of the war convinces no one, but she herself is utterly convinced of her own importance (2005, 91).

Briseis goes on to wonder whether ill fortune has remained with her following the destruction of Lyrnessus, though Achilles has apparently promised an end to her woes. She reminisces about the fall of her city and the deaths of her family members, in exchange for whom she received Achilles as her master (45-52):

diruta Marte tuo Lyrnesia moenia vidi— 45
et fueram patriae pars ego magna meae;
vidi consortes pariter generisque necisque
tres cecidisse, quibus, quae mihi, mater erat;
vidi, quantus erat, fustum tellure cruenta
pectora iactantem sanguinolenta virum. 50
tot tamen amissis te compensavimus unum;
tu dominus, tu vir, tu mihi frater eras.

I saw the walls of Lyrnessus torn down by you in battle— 45
and I had been a great figure in my homeland;
I saw how three men had fallen, sharing equally in both
birth and death, those whose mother was also mine;
I saw, great though he was, my husband spilled upon the bloodstained
earth, heaving his blood-slick chest. 50
Nevertheless, for so many who had been lost, you alone brought balance;
You were my master, my husband, my brother.

Briseis remembers the sack of Lyrnessus with grief and horror, and does not hesitate to name Achilles as the agent of her suffering. Nevertheless, she remains steadfast in her devotion to him. Ovid incorporates in lines 51-52 the same language that Andromache uses to describe Hector in *Iliad* 6 (Palmer 2005, 301): "but you, Hector, are my father and my honored mother and brother,

and you are my sturdy husband” (Ἐκτορ ἄτὰρ σύ μοι ἔσσι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ / ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης, 429-430). Unlike Briseis’ love for Achilles, Andromache’s love for Hector is pure and genuine, not bred of violence and survival.⁴⁹ In destroying her entire life, Achilles has given Briseis no choice but to depend on him for safety and sustenance. As Mack remarks, “there is something horrible in Briseis’ adaptation of Andromache’s words” (1988, 75).

Ovid’s inclusion of these two lines seems to acknowledge that Briseis’ love for Achilles is a dark delusion, unrequited, though she believes their relationship to be genuinely reciprocal. Andromache’s family, like Briseis’, has fallen to Achilles, but she seeks refuge with her husband, an ally to her people who will die defending his family and city. Briseis tries to project the same intimate partnership onto her captor and rapist, who does not perceive her with the same importance with which she perceives herself. As Fulkerson notes, she tries to force Achilles into the role of the devoted elegiac lover, who will stop at nothing to gain his *puella* (2005, 96-97). He cannot, however, be anything other than the epic hero, whose only real devotion is to κλέος (glory).⁵⁰ Trapped as she is in concubinage, Briseis creates in her mind a profound emotional bond between herself and Achilles, attempting to give meaning to the loss of her family, as well as to assert her own significance in a situation where she has no agency indeed.

Briseis later begs that Achilles take her to Phthia, because she would rather die than remain

⁴⁹It is worth mentioning, however, that Andromache is dependent on Hector for precisely the same reason that Briseis is dependent on Achilles: Achilles has killed all the men in her family, and her mother died of illness after being ransomed (*Il.* 6.414-428).

⁵⁰Glaicar discusses how Ovid sets up Briseis for failure by implying that Achilles must retain his harsh nature rather than soften into the role of elegiac lover (2017). Although Briseis composes her arguments “correctly,” her success was never a possibility.

without him in Agamemnon's camp (59-70). She then describes what her fate will be if Achilles should take a wife (75-82):

nos humiles famulaeque tuae data pensa trahemus, 75
et minuent plenas stamina nostra colos.
exagitet ne me tantum tua, deprecor, uxor—
quae mihi nescio quo non erit aequa modo—
neve meos coram scindi patiare capillos
et leviter dicas: 'haec quoque nostra fuit.' 80
vel patiare licet, dum ne contempta relinquitur—
hic mihi vae! miserae concutit ossa metus.

I, your humble household slave, will spin out my allotted wool, 75
and my threads will lessen the full distaffs.
I beg you, do not let your wife torment me too much—
I who do not know how kind she will be to me—
nor allow my hair to be ripped out before your eyes,
and may you gently say: 'this woman was also mine.' 80
Or it is better that you allow it, so long as I am not abandoned, an
object of contempt—alas! this fear beats upon my wretched bones.

She has already accepted that she will no longer have sexual value as a concubine; her prediction assumes that he has already lost interest in her. Yet, like the *amator* of elegy with his *puella*, she desires to be a part of his life even if she knows that he neither loves nor values her.⁵¹ She offers up her labor and unobtrusiveness as compensation for the inconvenience of her request, hoping that his previous love for her will urge him to protect her from his future wife. Nevertheless, she will even accept abuse from her mistress as long as she is allowed to be near him.⁵²

In these lines Briseis' sense of self-importance wavers: the realization of her precarious situation and insignificance takes over, and she now expresses the belief that her only purpose lies in serving her captor-lover. Her continued assertions of her worthlessness are so pointed that they undercut her reasoning about why Achilles should save her and belie the exaggerated self-

⁵¹For examples of this dynamic in elegy, see: Tibullus 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6; Propertius 1.15, 1.16, 1.18, 1.19, 2.5, 2.14, 2.33a, 3.8a, 3.8b, 4.5; Ovid *Amores* 1.3, 2.5, 2.17, 3.3, 3.11b, 3.14.

⁵²Ariadne expresses the same sentiment toward Theseus in Catullus 64.158-163.

importance behind her pleas. Ovid shows the same mixture of deference and confidence in Briseis' tone when she insists that Agamemnon has not touched her but encourages Achilles to take other women to bed (103-120).

In her denouement, Briseis doubles down on her pleas and devotion to Achilles (139-146):

aut, si versus amor tuus est in taedia nostri,
quam sine te cogis vivere, coge mori! 140
utque facis, coges. abiit corpusque colorque;
sustinet hoc animae spes tamen una tui.
qua si destituor, repetam fratresque virumque—
nec tibi magnificum femina iussa mori.
cur autem iubeas? stricto pete corpora ferro; 145
est mihi qui fosso pectore sanguis eat.

Or, if your love for me has changed into disgust,
force me to die, whom you force to live without you! 140
And you do force me. My body and beauty have gone;
this thing alone sustains me, nevertheless, my hope for your affections.
If I am robbed of that, I will go after my brothers and husband—
that you have bid a woman to die will be no distinction for you.
Why, however, would you bid it? Attack my body with a drawn sword; 145
What blood I have, let it flow from my wounded chest.

Briseis ties her survival to Achilles, simultaneously lamenting and begging for her death. Yet again, her tone is a mix between self-importance and self-deprecation, and as soon as she speaks, she contradicts herself (Lingenberg 2003, 149). Her existence depends entirely on Achilles' regard for her: without him, she feels that she would no longer exist. Because her relevance relies upon his constant attention, her sense of worthlessness is palpable throughout the poem. She seems to be aware that she indeed has no relevance without Achilles, and so she struggles vainly to reassert her own significance.

This precariously balanced self-perception is one way in which Briseis resembles modern survivors of captivity and rape, particularly in instances of domestic violence and human trafficking. The specific experience of wartime concubinage does not have direct parallels, but

Briseis' situation contains dimensions of several categories. As someone enslaved for the purpose of male pleasure, she has been trafficked. As a concubine, she is a part of Achilles' household and functions in some ways as a domestic victim. She could even be considered a political prisoner, since she serves to increase Achilles' sociopolitical status. One complication in these comparisons, however, is that wartime concubinage is a fixture of ancient Mediterranean culture. As I mention above, Greek women of Homer's time would have been conditioned to expect captivity. Furthermore, rape was in many instances a legitimated way for men to claim women, whether they married them or not—throughout the Ancient Mediterranean, as well as in the Homeric sphere.⁵³ For a captive to express affection for her captor would not have been unusual and perhaps was not necessarily a response to trauma (Scodel 1998, 140-141). Even so, Ovid writes Briseis as a traumatized individual: he recognizes how horrific events can destroy someone's personhood and embodies this experience in Briseis.

If affection between captor and captive would not have been unusual, Briseis' obsession with Achilles seems to exceed what is expected of a spear-captive. Euripides' *Trojan Women* portrays a version of concubinage that straddles the line between acceptance and resistance: Andromache claims that she will never betray Hector in her heart, even if she cooperates with Neoptolemus' desires (661-668). Sophocles' *Ajax* shows a slightly more affectionate relationship between captor and spear-captive, but ultimately Tecmessa is still focused on survival: she fears Ajax's death because it will leave her and her son vulnerable to the rest of the Achaeans, enraged by Ajax's intent to kill their leaders. She repeatedly states that if Ajax kills himself, she will suffer such a terrible fate that she would rather die (392-393; 496-499; 966-967).

⁵³For more on the politics and social dynamics of rape in Ancient Greece and Rome, see: Rubin 1975; Hemker 1985; Scafuro 1990; Richlin 1992; Miles 1995; Dougherty 1998; Dixon 2001; Omitowaju 2002; Langlands 2006; Henry 2011; Henry and James 2012.

Briseis' connection to Achilles, as presented by Ovid in *Heroides* 3, is more emotional than practical: although she claims she will die if Achilles leaves her, she need not fear violence from the Achaeans in the way that Tecmessa does. Her value as a captive has been confirmed by the fact that Agamemnon took her in the first place, and so she is likely to retain a relatively high value as a γέρας (war prize). But Briseis insists that without Achilles she is doomed (139-146). She is so emotionally dependent on him that she sees him as her family as well as her master, despite the violence he inflicted upon her and her people. Ovid depicts her as a woman obsessed, frantic, and clinging to the only constant in her tumultuous life.

This type of codependence is common in trauma bonds occurring in domestic abuse and sex trafficking. In the former instance, an abused partner may harbor feelings of love for her abuser long after she begins to suffer violence; there are many reasons people stay in domestic abuse situations, but often abusers use manipulative tactics that take advantage of the victims' affection (Sanchez et al. 2019, 50). Similar tactics are used by traffickers and pimps, who secure the loyalty of their captives with carrot-and-stick techniques: survivors of sex trafficking recall that pimps pit children against each other in competition for the pimp's favor and attention (Casassa et al. 2021, 9-10). Abusers will reward obedience and docile behavior with affection, promises, and gifts in order to reinforce loyalty and dependence, whereas they may overreact to small missteps—or nothing at all—by inflicting physical or mental punishment (Reid et al. 2013, 56). Detaching from such relationships can be difficult for victims, because they are unused to healthy relationships, which cannot offer the same intensity as a pathological coercive bond (*ibid.*, 56-57).⁵⁴

This push-and-pull between the desire for love and fear of punishment results in what Judith

⁵⁴For extensive details on the tactics domestic abusers use to maintain coercive control, see Hayes and Jeffries 2015, 26-40.

Herman calls “doublethink” (2015, 101-103): the recognition and resentment of one’s abuse, combined with the urge to repress the very knowledge of that abuse in order to preserve the illusion of safety. Ovid does not reveal in *Heroides* 3 how Briseis comes to be so infatuated with Achilles, but that infatuation is apparent. One can infer that after the sack of Lyrnessus Achilles would have raped Briseis repeatedly, but it is unclear at what point Briseis begins to have sex with him, not only willingly, but happily. Ovid presents her at a stage beyond “doublethink,” where she has lost all resentment and is entirely assimilated to servitude.

Briseis’ complex view of her own worth also brings to mind studies of responses to various traumas. Modern survivors of captivity have stressed how captors/abusers wear down the humanity and self-esteem of their victims through systematic conditioning and control (Reid et al. 2013, 44-45; Herman 2015, 76-79). Coupled with physical abuse, such systems often create an inferiority complex in the victim. Simultaneously, however, in many situations the victim also develops a sense of inherent specialness. Victims of sex trafficking strive to prove their value to pimps who groom them in such a way as to instill obedience. Likewise, victims of domestic abuse come to believe that only they truly understand their abusers and therefore are the only ones who can manage them (Steiner 2009).⁵⁵ Ovid’s version of Briseis presents a similar conflict of self-perception. She insists on her worthlessness, but also believes in her importance as a central figure of the Trojan War and of some vital importance to Achilles, whether he acknowledges her or not. Her vacillations in tone and her constant uncertainty indicate a one-sided relationship founded on her insecurity and desperation.

Furthermore, Ovid’s Briseis quickly dismisses Achilles’ murder of her brothers and

⁵⁵Leslie Morgan Steiner’s experience and perspective are valuable for understanding the pathology of victims of intimate partner violence. In addition to her 2009 radio interview, see her 2010 memoir and 2012 TED Talk.

husband, citing their fate as the reason she needs Achilles. While some transfer of loyalty might not be impractical or even unusual, Euripides' *Andromache* shows that intense emotional assimilation is not the captive's ideal response to captivity. Briseis' overwhelming attachment to Achilles, then, is unusual, and perhaps disturbing even to an ancient audience. Even Cassandra, who celebrates her "marriage" to Agamemnon in the *Trojan Women*, does so because she knows that she will witness the fall of his house (353-405). Briseis has fallen in love with the man who slaughtered her people, she considers the Trojans her enemies, and she perceives no reason to exist now outside of proving her devotion to Achilles long after he has discarded her. The combination of her traumatic experiences with her obsessive codependence is reminiscent of trauma-coerced bonding, often called Stockholm Syndrome.⁵⁶

Dee Graham et al. theorize that there are "precursors" of relationship development that result in trauma-coerced bonding, and that these aspects may appear in varying degrees (1994, 33):

1. perceived threat to survival and the belief that one's captor is willing to carry out that threat
2. the captive's perception of some small kindness from the captor within a context of terror
3. isolation from perspectives other than those of the captor
4. perceived inability to escape

All of these "precursors" apply to Briseis' relationship with Achilles. She is under constant threat of rape and violence, Achilles treats her with value at least some of the time, she is trapped within his tent among his people, and an escape attempt from the Achaean camp would be inadvisable. The conditions of her situation, according to modern studies, indicate a high

⁵⁶Stockholm Syndrome is not named in the *DSM-V* and is colloquially considered an offshoot of trauma bonding. Although this term is still widely used, it has been problematized in recent years, and many experts are transitioning to new terminology. For situations where coercion and unfair power dynamics lead to victims' bonding with abusers, Sanchez et al. have proposed the term "trauma-coerced bonding," which I employ in this dissertation (2019).

likelihood of developing a trauma-coerced bond.

Graham et al. further remark that captives ultimately succumb to such a bond because of the overwhelming hope elicited by the captor's behavior (1994, 37-38): in isolation from other support systems, the captive must turn to the captor for kindness, empathy, and nurturing; any perceived act of kindness fuels the captive's hope of escape; this hope leads to denial of the captor's frequent exhibitions of rage, violence, and terror; thus, the captive intensifies pleasant feelings of hope and kindness, and adapts so that she may experience them more often by pleasing the captor.⁵⁷ Briseis, perhaps, was once hopeful of escape from concubinage to Achilles, but following years of abuse, conditioning, and adaptation, she now hopes not for her freedom but for legitimate marriage to her captor. Safety remains her first priority, but she now cannot perceive safety outside of her trauma bond, thanks to years' worth of captivity.

In writing *Heroides* 3, Ovid takes a relationship only vaguely defined in the *Iliad* and turns it into a darkly complex view into the mind of a captive woman. Through Briseis' voice he expresses the horrors inflicted upon women during wartime and illustrates how these horrors can affect their mental state. By twisting Briseis' relationship with Achilles into a pseudo-elegiac frame, he highlights the wrongness of her obsessive love. He characterizes her as a woman who has lost her identity and personhood as a direct result of captivity and rape.

***Heroides* 8: Hermione**

In *Heroides* 8, Ovid's Hermione describes a situation similar to Briseis', although the two women experience different types of captivity. While Briseis actually is an enslaved prisoner,

⁵⁷For more on trauma-coerced bonding (Stockholm Syndrome) in modern contexts, see: Graham et al. 1988; Dutton and Painter 1993; Graham et al. 1994; Reid et al. 2013; Egu 2018; Sanchez et al. 2019; Casassa et al. 2021.

Hermione is a wife in a marriage that she does not want. There are few extant precedents for her story, and their versions of her differ considerably from Ovid's in attitude and behavior. Most prominent is Euripides' Hermione as presented in *Andromache*. Here, she is eager for her marriage to Neoptolemus and goes so far as to plot Andromache's death in order to secure her place in his household. In this work, she does not seem to have strong feelings about which man ends up as her husband, but rather is depicted as something of an opportunist, conniving with her father Menelaus in an effort to elevate her sociopolitical status.

As Jacobson notes, there are no resemblances between Ovid's Hermione and Euripides', and nothing in Ovid's text seems borrowed from *Andromache*; whether the Hermione of the *Heroides* is entirely Ovid's own invention is up for debate (1974, 43). Jacobson raises the possibility that Pacuvius' lost work about Hermione may have inspired Ovid's, but states that fragmentary evidence of this work is too ambiguous to support a strong argument (1974, 44).⁵⁸ Sophocles' *Hermione* might also have been a source for Ovid, but as in the case of Pacuvius, no substantial evidence remains, and the exact nature of the plot is unknown. Euripides' Hermione is the only extant basis of comparison, and she does not resemble Ovid's character at all.

Mythical tradition holds that Hermione was betrothed to her cousin Orestes at an early age either by her grandfather Tyndareus or by her father Menelaus.⁵⁹ After Orestes' banishment from Mycenae, Menelaus negotiates a new marriage contract with Neoptolemus, Achilles' only son. Upon his return, Orestes slays Neoptolemus and reclaims Hermione as his bride. The few references to her in the *Odyssey* (4.1-19) and the *Catalogue of Women* attributed to Hesiod (fr.

⁵⁸Fulkerson is a little more confident that Pacuvius had an effect on Ovid's Hermione (2005, 89).

⁵⁹According to Ovid's Hermione, Tyndareus made the arrangement and Menelaus was completely unaware of it (*Heroides* 8.31-34). In Euripides' *Andromache*, Orestes claims that Menelaus arranged the betrothal but called it off so that he could offer Hermione to Neoptolemus in exchange for capturing Troy (966-970).

68, II.1-2; fr. 70) give no indication about her perspective on her situation. From an archaic Greek standpoint, her feelings are irrelevant to the establishment of a marriage contract; Orestes' reclamation of Hermione from Neoptolemus is merely one element of his heroic journey, and she is only another possession to be taken back from his enemies.⁶⁰ Euripides gives more attention to women's perspectives in *Andromache*, but—per its title—this work is concerned with the emotions and experiences of Andromache, not of Hermione, who plays the villain in Andromache's story and shows little emotional depth beyond spite and greed.⁶¹

By contrast, Ovid's Hermione presents herself as a damsel in distress: she views her marriage not as an opportunity to accrue power but as a form of captivity. Her basic story is the same as is found in the mythic tradition, but she describes the events of her marriage from a spear-captive's perspective. She begins her letter to Orestes by claiming that Neoptolemus “holds her imprisoned contrary to both justice and piety” (*inclusam contra iusque piusque tenet*, 4). Soon after, she states, “as I screamed Orestes' name, he dragged me by my disheveled hair into his house” (*clamantem nomen Orestae / traxit inornatis in sua tecta comis*, 9-10). In these lines, Hermione describes her wedding as a kidnapping and her marriage as bondage comparable to the plight of spear-captives taken in war. In line 11, she even claims that her fate is no better than that of “a woman captured and enslaved” (*capta . . . serva*, 45-46). Jacobson supports the possibility that Hermione was already married to Orestes but Neoptolemus stole her away (1974, 45-46). It is, however, possible that a reader is meant to interpret Hermione's claims as

⁶⁰For details on the lives of women in Classical Athens and Greek practices of marriage, see: Pomeroy 1976; Redfield 1982; Oakley and Sinos 1993; Lefkowitz 1995; Reeder, 1995; Llewellyn-Jones 2003; Mason 2006; Robson 2013, 3-35; McClure 2020.

⁶¹Jacobson attributes this treatment partially to an anti-Spartan sentiment, which Athenian playwrights often worked into dramas so that they would be better received by their audiences (1974, 43).

Pagani reads Euripides' Hermione in a more sympathetic light, arguing that her vindictive harassment of Andromache is a result of Menelaus' influence rather than her own nature (1968, 208).

hyperbole—that she merely perceives her legitimate marriage as a form of captivity. Fulkerson suggests that Orestes has not yet been married to Hermione but that she believes her current fate to be representative of Orestes’ tacit agreement to Menelaus’ arrangement with Neoptolemus (2005, 92).⁶²

The audience knows that Orestes will eventually kill Neoptolemus and take Hermione back, but Ovid presents her at a moment of complete despair at her abandonment, having lost all confidence in her familial connections. As Fulkerson notes, Hermione was abandoned by both of her parents while she was a child, and this isolation has caused her to expect the same as a young adult (2005, 92). Ovid tells us nothing about Orestes’ feelings or actions, only that Hermione believes he is indifferent to her new marriage.

She cites her lonely childhood as proof of her bad luck and doomed future. In a display of striking pathos, she writes, “when I was small, I was motherless, my father was waging war, and although both were living, I was orphaned by both” (*parva mea sine matre fui, pater arma ferebat, / et duo cum vivant, orba duobus eram*, 89-90). Having been without either parent for over ten years, Hermione is insecure and childlike, her self-image defined by her family’s persistent neglect. While Menelaus certainly chose to leave Sparta, Helen’s departure is more ambiguous: although Hermione seems to assert that her mother was abducted, throughout *Heroides* 8 her words belie her uncertainty and bitterness. She laments Helen’s absence at length (91-95), and describes the difficulty of processing her return (97-100):

obvia prodieram reduci tibi—vera fatebor—
nec facies nobis nota parentis erat!
te tamen esse Helenen, quod eras pulcherrima, sensi;
ipsa requirabas, quae tua nata foret!

I had come out to meet you when you returned—I will speak the truth—

⁶²For Hermione’s use of legal language regarding her marriage to Neoptolemus, see Palmer 2005, 351-352.

The face of my parent was unknown to me!
That you were Helen, nevertheless, I knew, because you were most beautiful;
You yourself had to ask who your daughter was!

It is not surprising that a young girl traumatized in this way would be anxious about her family's dedication to her. Jacobson describes her characterization well (1974, 57): "a woman helpless and without hope, childlike in compensation for having never been a child, burdened by the feeling that her life is fated to be marked by betrayal on the part of those she loves most and hence having little trust or faith in them, too disillusioned to raise her voice in anger or invective."

Thus, Hermione's pleas to Orestes take on a pathetic quality, as if she knows that she is worth nothing to anyone but still struggles to assert her relevance. Fulkerson argues that Hermione's letter is informed by Briseis' in *Heroides* 3, but while Briseis seems to convince herself that she is central to the Trojan War, Hermione lacks her confidence. Although she models herself as Neoptolemus' spear-captive, she diminishes her own importance when addressing herself to Orestes. She compares herself to stolen cattle herds, while also drawing a parallel between her marriage and Paris' theft of Helen (17-20):

an siquis rapiat stabulis armenta reclusis,
arma feras, rapta coniuge lentus eris?
sit socer exemplo nuptae repetitor ademptae,
cui pia militiae causa puella fuit!

But if someone should snatch your herds from stables broken open,
you would wage war; will you hesitate when your wife has been stolen?
Let your father-in-law be your example, he who demanded back his stolen wife,
he for whom a girl was just cause for warfare!

Hermione's insecurity is palpable here. Although she attempts to convince Orestes that she is a worthy cause for war, she introduces her argument by comparing herself to an animal—valuable, but inhuman, and worth less than a spear-captive. Her statement also appears to justify

Menelaus' choice to abandon her—perhaps she has convinced herself that her father was right to leave her because to win back Helen was the greater cause.

Hermione's love for Orestes, her childhood isolation, and her marriage to Neoptolemus are all interconnected. Her traumas in *Heroides* 8 are layered and complex, encompassing a history of self-doubt and insecurity, compounded by her unwanted marriage, which is functionally a betrayal by both of her parents and, perhaps more significantly, by Orestes, from whom, it seems, she expected better. For Hermione, childhood wounds and inherited trauma are as significant as her "captivity" by Neoptolemus.⁶³ Because she perceives this marriage as abduction—whether or not it really is—Neoptolemus is represented as an enemy captor, and she does not speak of him as a husband. She does not claim that Neoptolemus has treated her badly—apart from the initial "abduction"—but she is so in love with Orestes that she refuses to accept her new reality.⁶⁴

Classical Athenian literature does not often explore such scenarios, where a woman is unhappy in a legal marriage—a wife is expected to acclimate to her new situation and perform her marital duties without a fuss. While Roman conceptions of women are similar in many ways, there is evidence that women's consent and willing affection were more important to Roman men than their Greek counterparts.⁶⁵ Ovid depicts a married woman who has not chosen her

⁶³Schönfelder observes a similar dynamic in heroines from Romantic novels by Wollstone, Godwin, and Shelley, as well as postmodern works by Smiley, Michaels, and Azzopardi (2013, 315): "even if the family figures as the locus of pain and suffering, of violence and loss, the subject continues to define his or her identity and life-story through the family. The family, in these texts, functions simultaneously as the site of trauma and as the site of essential and persistent needs and desires."

⁶⁴Hermione implies that Neoptolemus rapes her, but from an ancient perspective such rape would have been legitimated by the marriage and thus would not be considered villainous, regardless of Hermione's consent or choice. She describes her own dread and anguish rather than his actions, focusing on how the rapes affect her—not claiming that Neoptolemus has done something fundamentally wrong.

⁶⁵One example of this contrast is in the ritual of Roman weddings. In order for the marriage to be publicly recognized, the bride had to give formal consent (Glazebrook and Olson 2014, 75-76). This requirement

husband and cannot acclimate in the way expected of her. As I discuss in the previous section, ancient Greek women may have been culturally predisposed to accept arranged marriages and their consequences, but such a predisposition does not lessen the trauma of moving to a strange home and of marital rape.

Jacobson writes that Hermione apparently refuses to sleep with her husband, but I believe it is safe to assume that Neoptolemus has raped and continues to rape Hermione, though it is possible that her degree of sexual participation has shifted over the course of the marriage (1974, 57). At the time of writing her letter, Hermione describes sex with Neoptolemus almost like an out-of-body experience, as if she is not quite there (105-116):

cum tamen altus equis Titan radiantibus instant,	105
perfruo infelix liberiore malo;	
nox ubi me thalamis ululantem et acerba gementem	
condidit in maesto procubuique toro,	
pro somno lacrimis oculi funguntur abortis,	
quaque licet, fugio sicut ab hoste virum.	110
saepe malis stupeo rerumque oblita locique	
ignara tetigi Scyria membra manu,	
utque nefas sensi, male corpora tacta relinquo	
et mihi pollutas credor habere manus.	
saepe Neoptolemi pro nomine nomen Orestae	115
exit, et errorem vocis ut omen amo.	

When, however, lofty Titan approaches with his radiant horses,	105
unhappily I enjoy a wretchedness more free;	
when night has brought me to the bedchamber, wailing and groaning	
bitterly, and I have lain in the sorrowful bed,	
in place of sleep, my eyes are occupied with welling tears,	
and in whatever way possible I avoid my husband, as if he were an enemy.	110
I am often benumbed by my misfortunes and, forgetful of circumstance or place,	
I have unknowingly touched with my hand the limbs of the Scyrian man,	
and when I have realized my crime, I shrink from the body shamelessly touched,	
and I believe that I have defiled my hands.	
Often, instead of Neoptolemus' name, the name of Orestes	115

was more symbolic than practical, since girls could be easily coerced into giving verbal consent, but it nevertheless reflects the Romans' concern for women's active participation in marriage. For more on women's status and autonomy, see: Balsdon 1962; Gardner 1986; Hallett 1989; Bauman 1992; McGinn 1998; Dixon 2001; Langlands 2006.

slips out, and I love the error of speech as if it were a sign.

Her language illustrates a cycle of safety and danger to which she has adjusted: during the days she remains separate from Neoptolemus—as was customary for Greek wives—and, although she laments, she can distract herself to some extent with matronly tasks. At night, however, she must suffer through sex with her husband. She explains that she has developed a sort of defensive reaction to the nightly rapes. For as long as she is able, she resists Neoptolemus' touch, but after that point when she recognizes that there is no escape, her mind wanders. She describes a kind of senselessness or unawareness that keeps her from realizing what is happening to her. This response is similar to what researchers now refer to as “constriction” or “dissociation.”

During traumatic experiences, people often find that their mental and physical senses narrow so that they are only vaguely aware of what is happening; some survivors of rape remember looking at themselves from a distance while suffering the assault and feeling a sense of dispassionate curiosity (Herman 2015, 42-47).⁶⁶ Edna Foa and Barbara Rothbaum write, “as a coping mechanism, dissociation psychologically removes the individual from an extremely aversive event when physical escape appears impossible”; they further note that outside of wartime PTSD, dissociative phenomena are most commonly witnessed in survivors of incest, physical abuse, physical and sexual abuse combined, and extreme neglect (1998, 29-30).⁶⁷ Hermione exhibits this type of constriction or dissociation, having forgotten her situation to such an extent that she touches Neoptolemus' body intimately—without thinking, perhaps instinctively.

⁶⁶A study by Griffin et al. indicates that dissociation is a common response both during rape and as a symptom of PTSD after rape (1997).

⁶⁷Foa and Rothbaum also list witnessing violent death, other abuses, and extreme poverty as causes of dissociative phenomena (1998, 30).

Hermione's unconscious "participation" may also be viewed as acceptance of the cultural expectation that a wife should submit to the sexual needs of her husband. Jennifer Bennice and Patricia Resick, speaking of the 20th century United States, write, "given the general cultural bias toward wifely duty, it is not surprising that many marital rape victims . . . report believing that it is their responsibility as wives to sexually satisfy their husbands" (2003, 237-238).⁶⁸ In a 1990 study of 33 raped wives in the United States, 61% "felt guilty about wishing or attempting to avoid sex because they believed it was their duty to consent to sex on demand. In addition, 30 of the wives reported that their husbands made it clear that they believed they were entitled to sex on demand" (Weingourt 1990, 147).⁶⁹ For Ovid's Graeco-Roman audience, expectations of wifely submission would have been even more culturally ingrained than in western culture today—particularly since some Romans believed that women would conceive more easily if they lay perfectly still during intercourse.⁷⁰ Although Hermione may not, perhaps, think of forced marital sex as rape per se, she is aware of her own suffering, as well as the dehumanization of being denied choice.

The way Hermione depicts these rapes indicates a behavioral pattern formed by habit and repeated trauma. Knowing what is coming every night, she is hyperaware of danger during the day, consumed by grief and dread. When Neoptolemus comes to her bed, she continues to show signs of hyperarousal: she cringes from his touch and tries to escape sex without endangering

⁶⁸As mentioned in Chapter 1, marital rape did not become illegal in all fifty states until 1993.

⁶⁹According to Bennice and Resick, Rita Weingourt's 1990 study is particularly important for discussions of marital rape because she "found comparable rates of marital rape among battered and nonbattered women (30% vs. 32%)" (2003, 236). These findings challenge earlier assumptions that marital rape almost always occurs alongside battering and other physical abuses. Such may be the case for Ovid's Hermione, who makes no mention of physical violence from Neoptolemus, aside from rape.

⁷⁰See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 4.1263-1277.

herself too seriously by fighting him or inflicting actual harm. By the time she has resigned herself to the inevitable rape, Hermione surrenders her agency and slips into comfortable numbness. Although she is not fighting Neoptolemus, she is not really a conscious “participant.” She is in a trance of sorts, her body acting on its own while her conscious mind observes from a safe distance. The movement of her hand and the sudden awareness of Neoptolemus’ body bring her mind back to the moment, and at this moment she is overcome by shame for having touched him, even in a state of partial consciousness.⁷¹

This cycle of hyperarousal, constriction, and shame parallels modern accounts of domestic abuse victims—particularly children. In many cases of child sexual abuse, shame for “bad” behavior (i.e., rape) is compounded by the abuser’s insistence that the victim is to blame for their assault—that they are inherently evil, or that they somehow asked to be abused (Herman 2015, 103-105). Hermione’s shame arises from her belief that she has become an adulterer by having sex with Neoptolemus. As Jacqueline Jones points out, Hermione, like Briseis, attempts to make her relationships into an elegiac love triangle, but in doing so she confuses the roles of husband and lover (2017, 42-43). She tries to make Orestes into the lover by encouraging him to commit adultery with her while she is married to Neoptolemus, and yet she perceives him to be her legal husband because Tyndareus promised her to him.

By structuring the elegiac love triangle in this way, Hermione makes Neoptolemus into the *amator* and Orestes into the *vir*, whose job it should be to prevent his *puella* from meeting other men. She has thus created a scenario in which lawful sex with her husband, rape though it may be, is actually adultery under what she sees as divine law—that is, her original betrothal. She has adapted to her abuse by indulging in a fantasy wherein Neoptolemus is not her real husband.

⁷¹The shame and self-blame felt by rape victims is of especial importance for my discussion of the *Metamorphoses* in Chapter 3.

Hermione engages in a separate kind of fantasy when she calls out Orestes' name during her nights with Neoptolemus. This narrative detail adds another dimension to her experience of trauma. She has tried to escape, she has settled into constriction, she has felt intense shame for her "participation," such as it is. In these final lines of her description, Hermione admits to, perhaps, gaining some warped kind of comfort from engaging in sex with Neoptolemus. She indicates that during the act she speaks Orestes' name by accident, presumably because she has distracted herself with a fantasy where he is her legitimate husband. Such an admission implies that—to a certain extent—Hermione could be taking pleasure from Neoptolemus, whether intentionally or not.

Ovid may be indicating one of two things: (1) that Neoptolemus elicits pleasure from Hermione though she refuses to participate, and in order to cope with the cognitive dissonance of receiving pleasure from rape her mind reconfigures the event with Orestes as her partner; (2) that Hermione chooses to participate in sex with Neoptolemus out of desperation for her own comfort, so that she may more easily fantasize about Orestes. In either case, she experiences fantasy as a coping mechanism to deal with ongoing traumatic events. She may slip into the fantasy unconsciously, or she may actively choose the fantasy and then, over time, settle into such reveries out of habit.⁷²

Ovid shows through Hermione's letter that she is suffering a series of traumas, beginning with her abandonment as a child and ending with her repeated rape by Neoptolemus. Her tone and language throughout *Heroides* 8 highlight her lack of confidence, desperation, and child-like

⁷²Maladaptive daydreaming is a relatively new area of research. Eli Somer coined the term twenty years ago to refer to patients whose extensive fantasizing replaced human interaction and impeded normal functioning in other areas of life (2002). It is unclear from the text how extensive Hermione's fantasies are, but she appears to be turning toward imagined scenarios for self-soothing, similarly to trauma patients who dissociate through daydreaming.

innocence. She faces Neoptolemus' abuse already affected by profound loneliness, and though she convinces Orestes to save her, it is clear that she herself doubts whether she is worth saving. Ovid's pathetic characterization intensifies the pity one may feel for Hermione upon reading how she copes with her childhood isolation, her perceived abandonment by Orestes, and her unwanted marriage to Neoptolemus. She responds to her compounded traumas with a variety of symptoms that mirror common symptoms of modern survivors: hyperarousal, constriction, obsessive fantasizing, intense shame, etc. Hermione's traumas are layered, building upon one another; in the same way, Ovid portrays how her responses shift and vary depending on the many stimuli around her, as well as the workings of her subconscious.

Heroides 20: Acontius

While *Heroides* 3 and 8 demonstrate how captivity and marriage intersect and lead to women's trauma, *Heroides* 20 gives a perspective from the other side, that of the captor and husband. In this section I discuss briefly Ovid's use of the male voice to demonstrate the legitimization of marriage through rape or other forceful means. The double *Heroides* at the end of Ovid's collection each consist of a man's letter to a woman and her consequent response. Of the three male authors, Acontius is the one who uses the clearest imagery of war and rape. Leander's relationship with Hero is consensual, so he has no need for violent rhetoric in his letter (*Heroides* 18). Paris' letter to Helen (*Heroides* 16)—though one might expect him to use language of violence—is more seductive and persuasive than forceful; although he wishes to win her as a prize (263-270) or to take her from Menelaus (325-330), he does so without threat of bodily harm toward her, nor with any sense that his affection is one-sided.⁷³ All his suggestions are

⁷³Paris does praise Theseus for abducting Helen, however, and speculates about what he would have done to make sure she stayed with him, had he been in Theseus' position (149-162). Paris does not threaten

predicated on the idea that Helen does want to leave with him, and Helen's response (*Heroides* 17) hints that he is not entirely wrong.

It is interesting, then, that Acontius holds up Paris as the prime example of a daring man who stole his bride through justified force (20.49-50).⁷⁴ This characterization of Paris is not consistent with Paris' self-presentation and indicates how Acontius (or Graeco-Roman men in general) erroneously use Paris' example to justify rape and other forms of violence. Alessandro Barchiesi identifies Acontius as one of the rare writers of the *Heroides* whose letter achieves its purpose (2001, 123): according to mythic tradition, Cydippe is unable to marry another man because Artemis holds her to the marriage oath that Acontius tricked her into reading. I hesitate, however, to label *Heroides* 20 a success. From Cydippe's response (*Heroides* 21), it is apparent that she still does not wish to marry him. Acontius, rather, has already succeeded in securing Cydippe with the inscribed apple, and so the letter is meant to persuade her willingness to be taken—that is, to convince her to consent to be his wife.

Barchiesi does call Acontius a victor, “not only as a lover, but also as the author of approved texts”, based upon Cydippe's response in *Heroides* 21 (1993, 358-359): “whence this favor toward you? Unless, by chance, some new letter has been discovered, which could capture the great gods when read” (*unde tibi favor hic? nisi si nova forte reperta est / quae capiat magnos littera lecta deos*, 237-238). From one perspective, Barchiesi is correct: Acontius has succeeded in acquiring Cydippe's hand in marriage, but it is ambiguous whether Cydippe is referring here to the rhetorical skills Acontius displays in his letter or to the original marriage oath inscribed on

directly, but rather hypothetically. Violence is threatened toward Menelaus and the Greeks, but not toward Helen.

⁷⁴It is impossible to say how willing Helen was in this situation, if at all, based on the evidence in Homer and extant tragedy. Important for my discussion is that Acontius *perceives* the event as a forcible abduction by Paris and uses it as justification for his own actions.

the apple. I am more inclined to believe that she is speaking of the latter, because she mentions the gods' support of his scheme: Diana holds her to the promise because her own name is invoked, while Apollo confirms that marriage to Acontius is her only solution. The letter presented by Ovid in *Heroides* 20 gives Cydippe the final push toward accepting her new circumstances, but it is the original oath, her recurring illness, and Apollo's oracle that force her hand. I contend that, although Acontius may have successfully persuaded Cydippe with his letter, she remains unwilling. She agrees to marry him under duress. Acontius obtains her through literary entrapment dressed up as violent conquest by Ovid's language in *Heroides* 20.

The only extant precedent for Acontius and Cydippe is Callimachus' fragmentary version of the story in the *Aetia* (fr. 67-75), which contains the basic narrative but omits details of either character's personal thoughts.⁷⁵ Ovid uses this story as a framework for *Heroides* 20 and 21, but has the freedom to create original voices for both Acontius and Cydippe. For Acontius, he fashions a bold and possessive persona bent on claiming what he believes belongs to him. In the early lines of his letter, he attempts to justify his entrapment of Cydippe first by claiming that she inspired his stroke of cunning (26), and then that Amor dictated to him how to capture her (27-30). He describes his actions as being driven inexorably by outside influences and thus denies responsibility: perhaps his method was underhanded, but how can he be blamed for something *love* did to *him*?

Despite his deflections of responsibility, Acontius' apologetic language reflects his desire to appear nonthreatening to Cydippe; he knows that in order to convince her he must be careful.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Aristaenetus wrote another version of this story much later, during the 5th century CE. Along with *Heroides* 20 and 21, this version allows a reconstruction of Callimachus' original written narrative and in particular the oath written on the apple (Rosenmeyer 1996, 12): "I swear by Artemis to marry Acontius."

⁷⁶Cydippe confirms Acontius' need for delicacy at the very beginning of *Heroides* 21 (1-4), when she writes that she was afraid to read his letter in case he tried to entrap her again.

He attempts to make Cydippe seem like the one with the power by fashioning her as the *domina* of elegy (75-84):

ante tuos liceat flentem consistere uultus 75
et liceat lacrimis addere uerba suis,
utque solent famuli, cum uerbera saeua uerentur,
tendere summissas ad tua crura manus.
ignoras tua iura: uoca! cur arguor absens?
iamdudum dominae more uenire iube. 80
ipsa meos scindas licet imperiosa capillos,
oraeque sint digitis liuida facta tuis.
omnia perpetiar; tantum fortasse timebo
corpore laedatur ne manus ista meo.

Let it be permitted for a man to stand, weeping, before your gaze, 75
and let it be permitted for him to add words to his tears,
and, just as household slaves are accustomed when they fear cruel beatings,
to reach out groveling hands to your legs.
You do not know your own rights: summon me! Why am I accused though
absent? Bid me come to you immediately, in the custom of a mistress. 80
It is permitted that you yourself imperiously tear at my hair,
that my face be bruised by your fingers.
Let me endure it all; I will fear, perhaps, only
lest that hand of yours be harmed by my body.

Here, Acontius makes an “abrupt switch from the macho to the masochistic mode of elegiac love,” recharacterizing himself as the self-effacing *amator* (Kenney 1996, 194). As in elegy, this scenario of a female-dominated relationship is not founded in reality; it is an invention that invites sympathy and leniency for the male speaker. By asking Cydippe to become the aggressor, Acontius subtly draws attention away from his own aggression and further diminishes his own authority in the situation. He pretends to give Cydippe a choice, when—in truth—Cydippe does not have any choice: it is her father who will make the final decision (Nesholm 2005, 165).⁷⁷

Acontius attempts to convince Cydippe that her consent is important, in that he demands both a letter in reply to his as well as for her to reveal to him what she feels (Rosenmeyer 1996, 23). But

⁷⁷And, in fact, every time she tries to marry another man, she is overtaken with sickness that may kill her (21.169-172). There is not much of a choice.

and you will be borne away, snatched, in the embrace that desires you.

In these lines, language of love blends with that of violence: Ovid uses three forms of *capere* or *captare* (“to capture”)—all in the same couplet, no less—and two forms of *rapere* (“to seize”).⁷⁸ He demonstrates that Acontius’ obsessive love for Cydippe is inextricably bound to his desire to harm her: he is “distinctly unapologetic” (Kenney 1996, 187). And just as Acontius claims that Cydippe was responsible for his initial treachery, he states that she will be responsible if he must resort to violence to win her: “or you should have been less beautiful, so that you could be sought in a measured way; by your appearance I am forced to be bold” (*aut esses formosa minus, peterere modeste; / audaces facie cogimur esse tua*, 53-54). Once again, he deflects blame and legitimates every possible action he might take to secure Cydippe as his wife. Even so, his only method of pursuit is through writing, and it is through writing that he achieves his goal (Barchiesi 1993, 360). Ovid’s Acontius uses literary rhetoric as his only weapon, yet he continues to characterize himself as a martial conqueror.

Acontius’ dogged pursuit of Cydippe reflects the widespread cultural belief that men are entitled to admiration from and sex with women. The philosopher Kate Manne explores this phenomenon in detail, using examples from the modern United States to illustrate how men enact and benefit from systemic misogyny. She writes, “when a woman fails to give a man what he’s supposedly owed, she will often face punishment and reprisal,” whether from the man himself, his cohort, or “the misogynistic social structures in which she is embedded” (2021, 11-12). This reprisal certainly occurs for Cydippe: when she refuses to give in to Acontius’ forced marriage, she faces the threat of death, caused both by Acontius’ stubborn demands and by Diana’s insistence that Cydippe must fulfill her oath. Acontius thus benefits from the legal (and

⁷⁸E. J. Kenney writes that these forms of *capere* and *captare* should be translated as “to win” or “to woo,” but I believe that such translations erase the violence inherent to Ovid’s chosen language (1996, 189).

divine) expectation that a woman must cede to a man's "rights"—even when they are not officially legitimized by her family. Although this scenario is unusual and appears to hinge upon divine power and religious strictures, it is important to remember that patriarchal misogyny runs deep through Graeco-Roman religious conventions: Cupid himself teaches Acontius an underhanded trick to entrap an unwilling woman, and no god intercedes on her behalf.

Acontius' tactics in *Heroides* 20 also mirror those catalogued in modern study as aspects of domestic abuse. First, he explains away—even glorifies—his actions as being performed in the name of love: he loves Cydippe so much that he must go to any lengths to possess her. Similarly, Dawn Bradley Berry writes of the abusive husband (1998, 32): "he insists on knowing her every move, under the guise that he loves her so much he can't stand to be apart from her." According to the logic of the abuser, love justifies any demand for control of the victim, no matter how unreasonable. The abuser's emphasis on love as a cause for his behavior inevitably leads to his blaming the victim herself, the object of this overwhelming emotion. Modern studies find that domestic abusers attribute unhappiness and other problems in relationships to the failures of the victim; repeated disparagement breaks down the victim's sense of self and discourages her from seeking escape (Berry 1998, 32-33; Steiner 2012). At the same time, however, the abuser is careful to follow up physical or psychological abuse with "loving contrition," which convinces women to stay in relationships—that they can "make it work" (Berry 1998, 36).

Acontius uses this push-and-pull technique in his letter, first threatening Cydippe with violent kidnapping and then begging her to inflict violence upon him as retribution for his actions. Ovid constructs a similar scenario in *Amores* 1.7, where the *amator* expresses remorse for having assaulted his *puella*. He describes how he shouted at her and tore her clothes off (45-48) before tearing out her hair and striking her cheek (49-50). Following the assault, he feels

regret, kneeling as a suppliant before her (59-62), and then begs her to hurt him in the same way that he hurt her (63-68). Both *Amores* 1.7 and *Heroides* 20 show the male manipulation of a female victim through violence—either threatened or perpetrated—followed by apologies, excuses, and pleas to be punished.⁷⁹ The difference is that Acontius uses his letter to try to persuade Cydippe to give in to their inevitable marriage, whereas the *amator* is already in a long-standing arrangement with the *puella*.⁸⁰

Briseis' and Hermione's examples provide unique portraits of the captive, but neither perspective gives much insight into the perpetrator's thought process. *Heroides* 20 acts as a counterpart to these poems by reversing the language of rape and conquest to fit the narrative of the male aggressor. Acontius describes his manipulation and violence toward Cydippe under the guise of heroism, reasoning that, as it were, everything is fair in love and war. For a warrior to claim a woman is natural and just; in order to claim a woman, a man must be bold and break down whatever barriers oppose him. But in *Heroides* 21, Cydippe addresses Acontius not as a warrior, but as a deceiver. In fact, she opposes his notions of martial grandeur (117-122):

non ego constiteram sumpta peltata securi,
 qualis in Iliaco Penthesilea solo;
 nullus Amazonio caelatus balteus auro,
 sicut ab Hippolyte, praeda relata tibi est. 120
 verba quid exultas tua si mihi verba dederunt,
 sumque parum prudens capta puella dolis?

I had not stood before you armed with a light shield and wielding an axe,
 as Penthesilea on the Trojan earth;
 no engraved sword-belt of Amazonian gold,
 like that of Hippolyta, was given to you as spoil. 120
 Why should you celebrate your words—that your words deceived me,
 and I, a girl of too little sense, was captured through guile?

⁷⁹Incidentally, both Acontius and the *amator* also use language of war-captives. The *amator* of *Amores* 1.7 compares himself to a general leading the *puella* as a “captive” (*captiva*, 39) in a triumph.

⁸⁰The original oath inscribed on the apple is also a type of letter employed by Acontius (Rosenmeyer 1996, 12-17).

While Acontius makes grand assertions about waging war for her love and winning her with the sword, Cydippe matter-of-factly cuts through his delusions: he may have won her, but he did so through guile, not heroism. Her allusion to Penthesilea highlights her own defenselessness and, therefore, Acontius' cowardice (Kenney 1996, 231). His inflated self-image presents a version of Graeco-Roman masculinity that glorifies the appropriation of women through deceit disguised as lawful warfare—a parallel, perhaps, to Romulus' abduction of the Sabine women as discussed in Chapter 4.

Cydippe recognizes that Acontius' trick is not heroic, even if human and divine law will legitimize their union. Although in her letter she focuses primarily on her own misfortunes, she also cuts down Acontius' self-serving metaphors of glory by naming his trickery for what it is. In the final lines of the poem (227-248), she eventually agrees to marry him, since Acontius' writing skills seem to be superior to her own, enough that he has ensnared the gods themselves, and Apollo confirms that there is no other solution to the problem (Barchiesi 1993, 354; Rosenmeyer 1996, 26). Nevertheless, she confesses the oath to her mother with her “eyes full of shame, holding fixed to the ground” (*lumina fixa tenens plena pudoris humo*, 242) and expresses a general resignation to his textual domination: although she formally consents, Ovid's Cydippe is not truly willing.

Conclusion

Although the *Heroides* do not thematically treat rape and rape-related trauma, Ovid shows the effects of prolonged sexual abuse in poems 3 and 8. Both Briseis and Hermione experience kinds of captivity, the former as a war-won concubine and the latter as an unwilling wife. In these letters, the women lament the loss of the men they love, but in doing so reveal the

psychological wounds inflicted by their captor-rapists. By taking on their voices, Ovid highlights the trauma suffered by women at the hands of men as a result of Graeco-Roman conventions of male sexual privilege and female sexual capital.

He offers subtle details about Briseis' relationship with Achilles that indicate her extreme shift of loyalty from her allies to her captor: her identity is no longer her own, and she depends entirely on Achilles to give her life meaning. Writing from Hermione's perspective, Ovid illustrates how she has been abandoned time and again her family members, only to be raped by Neoptolemus instead of marrying her preferred mate. Although Ovid dramatizes Hermione's suffering, he elicits pity from the audience by characterizing her as child-like and powerless, but nevertheless hopeful for rescue. Briseis' and Hermione's narratives reveal evidence of pathologies that modern researchers now associate with rape trauma and PTSD.

By contrast, Acontius' letter to Cydippe (*Heroides* 20) shows the male perspective, the desire of the man to possess a woman and his glorification of her capture—whether she is taken by guile or by force. Through Acontius, Ovid outlines Graeco-Roman patriarchal ideologies of sexual subjugation, as well as the way that men's entitlement results in women's trauma. With Cydippe's voice in *Heroides* 21, Ovid expresses a woman's attempts to rebuff unwanted sexual attention. *Heroides* 3, 8, 20, and 21 together depict the cycle of male sexual abuse and its effects on female victims. Ovid's pathos and detailed characterization indicate his keen awareness of how prevailing ideals of male entitlement to women's bodies affect the mental and emotional wellbeing of captive rape victims.

CHAPTER 3: THE *METAMORPHOSES*: THEFT OF BODY, SPEECH, AND SELF

While rape in the *Heroides* remains relatively understudied, in recent decades there has been much analysis of rape in the *Metamorphoses*—with good reason, as Ovid’s epic contains more narratives of and allusions to rape than the rest of his works combined. Sharon James lists forty-six instances of “sexual interference,” which range “from the standard hit-and-run assault on an unattended girl, to enforced acceptance of a son-in-law who cannot be refused (Perseus), to open attempts at stealing a bride, as when Phineus protests the marriage of Perseus and Andromeda (book 5) or Eurytus tries to abduct Hippodame (book 12)” (2016, 155). For James, the uniting factor of all these episodes is that, regardless of the attitudes of the men around her, the girl does not seek out a sexual relationship, nor does she choose it willingly when it is forced upon her—even if she offers consent under duress or coercion.⁸¹

The rape victims of the *Metamorphoses* are, for the most part, figures of traditional Greek mythology whose stories serve as historical aetiologies or as origins for the birth of heroes.⁸² These patterns of rape—usually of a nymph or mortal woman by a god—are fixtures of the myths themselves, but Ovid’s originality lies in his emphasis on violence, fear, and gruesome

⁸¹Leo Curran previously estimated instances of rape at “some fifty or so occurrences” (1978, 214).

⁸²The one major exception is the story of Pomona, an exclusively Roman goddess (14.623-771). Her story is unusual also because she does not actually suffer rape. Ovid writes that many minor gods attempt to breach her garden in order to assault her, but only Vertumnus succeeds in reaching her. He is ready to take her by force, but Pomona becomes attracted to him, and so the consummation of their relationship is consensual. Nevertheless, it is apparent that Vertumnus would have attempted rape even without her willing consent.

detail. As Katherine De Boer demonstrates in her article on rape episodes in Pindar, sexual violence associated with ktistic origin stories is often euphemized and manipulated by writers to appear consensual and even pleasurable—not only in the ancient Mediterranean, but in various cultures throughout time (2017, 1).⁸³ In retellings of Greek myths particularly, rape is reframed as seduction and justified by the love (i.e., lust) of the rapist.⁸⁴ De Boer writes of Pindar, however, that eliding violence and erasing the voices of the victims “indicates his awareness that such actions by the gods are at best morally dubious” (*ibid.*, 16). Greek depictions of divine rapes written after Pindar demonstrate a similar elision of violence, as do most Roman sources up to the Augustan period.⁸⁵

In the *Metamorphoses*, however, Ovid pays great attention to the process of rape as well as

⁸³It is worth noting that Callimachus’ version of the Acontius and Cydippe story, discussed in Chapter 2, functions as an aetiology for the clan that springs from their union.

⁸⁴This erasure of violent rape is not only an ancient phenomenon. Translations of ancient works have for centuries whitewashed the true meanings of Latin expressions that refer to rape. English translators have often recast phrases like *pati vim* and *rapere* as meaning “submit to” or “seduce,” or add details to rape scenes that alter the reader’s perspective. Such translations include Humphries 1955; Gregory 1958; Melville 1986; Mandelbaum 1993; Martin 2004; Raeburn 2004; Lombardo 2010. For details about the contents of these translations and about the issue of acknowledging rape in classical translation, see McCarter 2022b. McCarter’s recent translation of the *Metamorphoses* works against many of these problems by accurately representing sexual violence, and she discusses such issues in her introduction (2022a, xxxiv-xxxv). For commentary on the same problem in translations of Roman comedy, see Packman 1993.

There is also slippage between modern conceptions of “love” and the meaning of words like *amor*, which is a more sexual idea in Latin, but a more emotional one in English. I do not have space to address this problematic history in my project, but I acknowledge it here as necessary background in studies of Ovidian women.

⁸⁵Examples of euphemized rape narratives may be found in Pindar’s *Olympian* 1, 6, and 9, *Isthmian* 8, and *Pythian* 3 and 9. Other notable examples include Moschus’ *Europa* and Livy’s narrative of the Sabine women (*Ab urbe condita* 1.9).

Greek literature is in general focused less on the consequences of rape for female victims and more on the effects of rape on the stability of the polis. Rosanna Omitowoju discusses how rape in Athenian law was defined not by the consent of the woman, but rather by the consent of her κύριος (guardian) (2002). Greek authors rarely mention women suffering sexual assault, perhaps because citizen men considered themselves the victims if their female relatives had illicit sex, willing or not. As I discuss in Chapter 2, Roman men were somewhat more concerned with women’s sexual autonomy than their Greek counterparts.

its aftereffects. The aetiological aspects of the rape narratives are superseded by the experiences of the victims and the motivations of the rapists. While Ovid's emphasis on pain and trauma can be viewed as sympathetic to the raped women, one may also read these scenes of violent rape as a form of titillating voyeurism meant to capture the interest of a male audience.⁸⁶ Madeleine Kahn, discussing her experiences teaching the *Metamorphoses*, writes that one of her students called the poem a "handbook on rape" (2004, 440). Using the story of Philomela, Kahn demonstrated to her class that Ovid emphasizes not only female suffering but also female community and agency. Nevertheless, for some students the cruelty of the mythic rapists and Ovid's voyeuristic depictions of violence could not be justified by his more subtle hints at sympathy for women.

One can only speculate about the intended audience of the *Metamorphoses* and whether Ovid meant for his writing to be horrifying or scintillating or both. Sexuality and violence are linked both literarily and psychologically, so even if one argues that Ovid sympathizes with female rape victims, this sympathy cannot be divorced from the Graeco-Roman equation of sex and marriage to forms of domination and warfare.⁸⁷ My intent is not to argue that Ovid's

⁸⁶As Alison Sharrock writes, "all these representations could be taken as sympathetic exposure of the damage done to women—but the problem is that they could equally well be enactment and even fetishization of it. The extent of the emphasis on victimhood may perhaps suggest the latter" (2020, 45). I think the details of the text lend themselves more easily to the former than the latter, but there is not space in this dissertation to make such an argument.

⁸⁷For more on the psychology of sex and violence, see Anderson and Doherty 1997; Barak 2003, 205-237; Wang and Anderson 2010; Callaway 2011; Anderson 2012; Seffrin 2016.

Ovid links sex and warfare closely throughout the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, but the link between sex and violence can be traced much further back, to conventions of language itself. The verb *δαμάζειν*, often used in classical Greek as the term for men marrying women, literally translates to "tame," "conquer," "subdue," "overpower," or "kill" (TLG v. *δαμάζω*). This imagery of taming and subduing also occurs in Augustan poetry outside of the Ovidian corpus, as in Horace's *Ode 2.5*.

Standard language of marriage in Rome is less violent than Greek terminology, but indicates a general ideology about gendered relationships: *ducere* ("lead" with an accusative) is used for men marrying women, whereas *nubere* ("become a wife to" with a dative) is used for women marrying men. Men act upon their bride, whereas women change their identity in relation to their husband. The male experience

sympathy for these women is somehow more prominent or intentional than encouragement of male sexual violence, for such a hypothesis is ultimately unsupported. Rather, I proceed knowing that this dichotomy exists within the *Metamorphoses*, and focusing upon how Ovid presents women in a way that inspires compassion for their suffering. Furthermore, I will discuss how, in describing the process and aftermath of rape, he depicts psychological traumas in two ways: first, as realistic responses to rape demonstrated by victims within the stories; and second, as elements of mythological stories that symbolize realistic trauma responses.

Whereas Chapter 2 focuses on the specificities of rape perpetrated in captivity, my theme in this chapter is silence: how silence can be inflicted upon a victim to exacerbate the trauma of rape, how it can occur as a symptom of rape-related PTSD, or how it can be forced upon victims as a measure against the social and political consequences of rape. I am unable to include every rape episode of the *Metamorphoses* in this chapter, so I have chosen four of Ovid's more detailed narratives for close analysis: the stories of Daphne, Io, Callisto, and Philomela. Bartolo Natoli has identified speech loss as a consistent topos of Ovidian poetry, particularly prominent in both the *Metamorphoses* and the exile poetry. He catalogues in the *Metamorphoses* roughly forty episodes involving speech loss, which represents "the non-human, the emotional, and the curtailment of community" (2017, 34).⁸⁸ All three facets of speech loss correspond to the specific

of marriage is active; the female experience is passive. Other terms like *iungere* ("join") or *iugere* ("yoke together") imply a bond or partnership, like a pair of oxen working in unison.

⁸⁸Ovid's particular attention to speech loss during his exile almost certainly arises from Augustus' censorship of literature and general desire to control the morality of the Roman populace. The elegists, including Ovid, gloried in depicting the messiness of relationships with *meretrices* and other non-citizen women, but they were all keenly aware that doing so involved considerable risk. Ovid was exiled for his mysterious *carmen et error*, but Cornelius Gallus paid for his non-poetic mistakes with his rank, his property, and his life. For Ovid and his contemporaries, silence and violence were closely tied to each other and to poetry itself. It makes sense that Ovid would have personified the art of poetry as the female body: vulnerable, easily silenced, and always subject to the whims of powerful men. For more this topic, see Johnson 2008.

psychological and social consequences of suffering rape: the experience of being treated as an object for male pleasure dehumanizes the victim; destabilizes her ability to balance logic and emotion; results in her estrangement, and often ostracization, from the community. Silence itself, as Natoli describes it in the Ovidian context, is a close parallel to rape. The theft of one's voice—of one's ability to advocate for and express oneself—corresponds to the theft of one's humanity, bodily autonomy, and sense of safety.

Daphne's near-rape at the hands of Apollo, the first narrative of its kind in the *Metamorphoses*, acts as a sort of blueprint for the rape tales that follow it. Although Daphne does not suffer literal rape, she pays for her sexual safety with silence. Io and Callisto have similar narratives: both are raped by Jupiter and turned into animals who cannot communicate with human society. Io, despite her tribulations, not only returns to her original form but is also deified and reaccepted by her family. Io suffers rape and loss of speech, but seems ultimately to recover from both traumas. By contrast, Callisto must spend her life in complete silence, without hope of deliverance. The rape is only Callisto's first trauma, and a catalyst for the rest she will suffer: silence, isolation, and (metaphorical) death. Philomela suffers silence more literally, having her tongue cut out to prevent her from exposing her rapist. Nevertheless, she refuses to stay silent and successfully avenges herself upon Tereus. She is made mute but is never truly silenced.

In analyzing these episodes, I focus on the relationship between rape and loss of speech, in both ancient and modern contexts. Natoli's 2017 monograph is particularly significant to my approach, as are modern psychological studies of rape-related PTSD. In this chapter I concentrate on the symptoms of victims *after* they have suffered the trauma, rather than on symptoms displayed in the midst of trauma. While loss of speech may be experienced by or

inflicted upon someone during rape, I interrogate how Ovid portrays silence as a traumatic aftereffect, a social consequence, and a barrier to recovery from rape. The women I study experience different types of silence, which directly define the severity and lasting impact of their traumas.

***Metamorphoses* 1.452-567: Daphne**

Of the four episodes in this chapter, Daphne's is the only one in which the attacker fails to rape his victim, but as Leo Curran writes, "Ovid . . . seems to regard failure, in its consequences for the woman, almost as seriously as success" (1978, 216).⁸⁹

Daphne never speaks to Apollo once during this episode. From the point of his arrival, she is silenced by her own desperation and fear, while he spends twenty-one lines beseeching her. Her actions—running, turning into a tree, shrinking from Apollo's kisses—communicate her sentiments, but he rejects or misunderstands her; her few words are directed toward her father. This division between speech and silence reflects Daphne's power, or lack thereof, in each situation. She convinces her father to let her remain a virgin and successfully prevails upon him to change her form to escape Apollo. With Apollo, her voice holds no significance—he is occupied entirely with her body. Directly addressing Daphne, the narrator writes, ". . . but that beauty of yours forbids you to be what you wish, and your form opposes your prayer" (*sed te decor iste, quod optas, / esse vetat, votoque tuo tua forma repugnat*, 488-489). Ovid characterizes Daphne's body as the opponent of her voice and autonomy, as if these two aspects of herself are at war. Daphne becomes voiceless as soon as her body is sexualized.

Indeed, Ovid's description of Daphne's flight is reminiscent of ecphrasis. As she flees, she

⁸⁹The tale of Pan and Syrinx (1.698-712), a close imitation of Apollo and Daphne, is another instance of failed rape. Although I do not analyze Syrinx here, I recognize the connection between the two episodes.

is suspended in the moment of action when her beauty is at its height, and the reader views her through Apollo's desirous gaze (527-530):

tum quoque visa decens; nudabant corpora venti,
obviaque adversas vibrabant flamina vestes,
et levis impulsos retro dabat aura capillos,
auctaque forma fuga est.

Even then she seemed becoming; the winds were baring her body,
the oncoming gusts were making her garments flutter behind her,
and a light breeze was pushing her hair behind her,
and her beauty was made greater by her flight.⁹⁰

In the words of Patricia Salzman-Mitchell, “. . . when a woman is described [in the *Metamorphoses*], the flow of the narration is suddenly detained and everything stops in the contemplation of an immobile figure, paralyzed by the gaze of the viewer/narrator, internal and external” (2005, 68).⁹¹

It follows that Daphne escapes Apollo by removing her body from the equation. She targets her beauty specifically in her pleas to Tellus and Peneus (543-547):

. . . ‘Tellus,’ ait, ‘hisce vel istam
quae facit ut laedar, mutando perde figuram!
fer, pater,’ inquit, ‘opem, si flumina numen habetis!
qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram!’

. . . ‘Tellus,’ she says, ‘gape open, or this thing,
which makes it so that I am harmed—destroy this form with a transformation!
Help me, Father,’ she says, ‘if you rivers have divine power!
This form, because of which I pleased too greatly—destroy it with a transformation!’

In this moment, Daphne expresses powerful violence against her body with the word *perdere*.

⁹⁰All translations are my own.

⁹¹The following simile comparing Apollo and Daphne respectively to a hound and a hare, further emphasizes the horror and pathos of this moment (533-539). Daphne, having once been an avid huntress, now finds herself cornered as prey (Lee 1953, 125). Franz Bömer notes also that the hunting simile enhances the eroticism of the scene and simultaneously indicates the impossibility of a union between predator and prey (1969a, 166).

She does not ask to be changed into something other than human, but rather for her form literally to be ruined.⁹² De Boer reads this destruction as a direct consequence of Apollo's pursuit, writing that "male desire of the female body leads to its destruction" (2016, 136): the use of *perdere* emphasizes the destructive tendency of the male gaze. I argue that this word choice, in addition to highlighting the violence of Apollo, expresses Daphne's desire to punish her body—the vessel of her beauty—for endangering her.⁹³

This theme of a woman's beauty causing her destruction occurs throughout the *Metamorphoses*: the responsibility for violence against women is transposed from the rapist to the woman herself.⁹⁴ Daphne not only seeks to escape danger, but also enacts a kind of self-harm against her body, perhaps blaming her beauty for Apollo's lust. While no other rape victim in the poem makes quite the same appeal, we may observe a similar sentiment when Caenis asks of Neptune, "grant that I not be a woman" (*da, femina ne sim*, 12.202). In order to prevent rape at the hands of another man, she removes that which has made her vulnerable to rape in the first place, namely her physical femininity.⁹⁵

In modern studies, most self-harm associated with rape occurs in survivors as a symptom of PTSD. Daphne, by contrast, transforms her body as a measure against her rape. The parallel between her experience and that of modern survivors is not exact, but I read her episode as a

⁹²*Perdo* is properly a compound of *per* and *do*, and therefore may mean "particularly, to give into ruin" (*proprie in ruinam do*) (Forcellini v. *perdo*). Ludwig von Döderlein writes that *perdere* "denotes complete destruction . . . by breaking to pieces, or by any other mode of destroying" (1858, 161).

⁹³Frank Miller also notes Daphne's pointed choice of *iste* to describe her own body (1900, 315): "often used in Ovid to express contempt, disgust, or kindred feeling." Here it seems to align with disgust.

⁹⁴This theme arises particularly in the stories of Callisto (2.474-475), Cornix (2.572), and Arethusa (5.582).

⁹⁵One precursor to Ovid's Daphne and Caenis is Homer's Helen, who often wishes she had died or killed herself before becoming the object of Paris' lust and thus causing the Trojan War (*Il.* 3.173-176; 6.344-348; 24.764-766).

kind of abridged version of the survivor's narrative of rape and recovery. The connection between Daphne and modern survivors lies in the motivation for self-harm: (1) a desire to exercise control over one's body when control has been stolen, and (2) a powerful hatred of oneself, propelled by self-blame for being raped (McAndrew and Warne 2005, 178; Herman 2015, 109-113).⁹⁶

In a study of three women who practiced self-harm from an early age, Sue McAndrew and Tony Warne observed that destructive behavior arises not only from self-blame but from hatred of one's womanhood, and sometimes a desire to be a man (2005, 177). They write the following of one participant in the study (*ibid.*, 175):

At the age of 9 years old Margaret was raped on her way home from the pictures where she and a friend had gone instead of going to Brownies [Girl Scouts around ages 7-9]. Margaret was not able to tell anyone about the rape as she blamed (and still does) herself for the rape. [. . .] From 10 years old she starts inserting poles and other obstacles into her vagina as a way of 'disguising what had happened and trying to get rid of being a girl so her mother wouldn't find out what she had done (not going to Brownies)'. During adolescence she continued to try and dispense with her femaleness by dressing and identifying with boys.

Although Margaret engaged in other self-destructive behaviors (e.g., drinking to excess), her method of choice was to damage her genitals: the site of her trauma and source of her femininity. Her impulse to self-harm arose from self-blame for going to the movies instead of Brownies and self-blame rooted in her very identity as a girl. On the one hand, hurting herself was a punishment for skipping Brownies, but on the other, it was a method by which she sought to free herself from the vulnerability of femaleness. Another participant of this study, Angela, sought to

⁹⁶In practice, self-harm is usually a chronic symptom arising from early childhood sexual abuse. Because of the way Ovid constructs the *Metamorphoses*—in brief, self-contained episodes—there are few opportunities to explore the ramifications of ongoing trauma or long-term PTSD. Daphne's story (along with all Ovid's tales of transmutation) is highly metaphorical, so the connections I make between her experience and those of modern survivors are loose. Nevertheless, the emotions and motivations of rape victims, while varied, are consistent across time and culture.

destroy her femininity not with self-harm, but by performing male aggression and fantasizing about retaliating against her abusive husband (*ibid.*, 177).

By asking for Tellus and Peneus to destroy her *forma*, Daphne seeks the same outcome as survivors like Margaret and Angela: to escape from trauma by removing her femaleness. Caenis asks Neptune to become something other than a woman so that she cannot suffer rape again. Daphne desperately wishes for a transformation that will save her from Apollo, emphasizing the destruction of her beauty (*perde figuram*). In the end, she does not become a man, as Caenis does, but she succeeds in removing from herself the physical features of womanhood.

Regardless of Daphne's intentions, the result is her total loss of autonomy and voice. She can no longer escape or resist, and so must be subject to Apollo's whims (De Boer 2005, 138); she has been dehumanized to the point that she can no longer experience penetrative rape, but no longer has control over what happens to her (newly arborous) body. According to Joseph Solodow, "the limitation placed upon movement is virtually a symbol of the person's inability to grow, develop, alter. The permanence of the condition means that independence is impossible" (1988, 189). Daphne's independence is further compromised by Apollo's decision to appropriate her foliage for his own aims: a metaphorical rape, since his sexual urges have been frustrated, and, more specifically, a rape of her identity.⁹⁷ "The failed lover thus saves face" by claiming Daphne's body in a political way rather than a sexual one (Newlands 2015, 86).

Daphne's identity is destabilized in the way that modern rape victims experience a destabilized identity after suffering sexual assault. After Apollo declares his intentions, "the laurel nodded with its newly formed branches and seemed to shake its top like a head" (*factis modo laurea ramis / adnuit utque caput visa et agitasse cacumen*, 566-567). The movements of

⁹⁷Per Carole Newlands, "plucking [Daphne's] leaves for a poet's or a general's crown is . . . a symbolic act of defloration" (2015, 87).

the tree are ambiguous: Apollo interprets these motions as consent, but just beforehand “the tree nevertheless retreated from his kisses” (*refugit tamen oscula lignum*, 556). Because Daphne has sacrificed her humanity, Apollo is left to define her new role as the laurel tree. He thus twists her act of rebellion against authority into an authoritarian symbol (Feldherr 2010, 93): “to define Daphne by what she seems to be is to construct for her an identity antithetical to the one she attempts to realize for herself. And this contradiction foreshadows the crucially different ways in which the laurel itself can be read, as a symbol of Apollonian conquest or as a manifestation of the (absent) victim.” Daphne is one of the few victims in the *Metamorphoses* to avoid rape, but her example demonstrates that in order to secure one kind of autonomy (physical/sexual), one must sacrifice another (verbal/political).

Curran offers another perspective on her transformation and silence (1978, 230): “Daphne as tree is an exact analog of a victim so profoundly traumatized by her experience that she has taken refuge in a catatonic withdrawal from all human involvement, passively acted upon by her environment and by other persons, but cut off from any response that could be called human.” As discussed above, it is possible to read Daphne’s transformation as an act of resistance: even if she loses her humanity, it is her *choice* to do so. Nevertheless, we must remember that any choice Daphne makes will result in loss—she cannot survive this situation without suffering a trauma. Her silence is therefore intentional, but also a consequence of Apollo’s violence. Unlike many victims of sexual assault, ancient and modern, she is not silenced by shame or by the worry of not being believed.⁹⁸ Rather, her silence seems to communicate a larger idea: the problem of attempting to describe the horror of rape and, more broadly, of being victimized by those

⁹⁸Lori Sudderuth discusses in detail the various reasons why girls and women choose to remain silent (1998). Some want to forget the ordeal and move on, some are confused about what has happened; others fear lack of support or even open hostility from friends and family.

wielding authoritarian power.

Speechlessness, temporary or otherwise, is nearly a necessary consequence of serious trauma (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995, 172): “the experience cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level. . . .” The healing process begins as the body assimilates this experience in the absence of language, leading to early symptoms of PTSD. It follows that some of the most important recovery work centers upon the victims’ creation of a testimony, whereby they make the traumatic event their own: a tangible, manipulable narrative that can be integrated into the timeline of the victim’s life (Herman 2015, 175). By reconstructing the trauma story, the victim may reconstruct herself.

Shoshana Felman has written extensively on the importance of testimony for trauma survivors, particularly in the context of collective historical events. For Felman, testimony is not necessarily an accurate narration of the event, but rather an act of remembrance composed of subjective individual memories (1995, 17): “to testify—to vow to tell, to promise and produce one’s own speech as material evidence for truth—is to accomplish a speech act, rather than to simply formulate a statement.” In this way, testimony is intensely personal, in instances both of collective traumas and of individual traumas such as rape. In the context of the recovery process, Judith Herman writes that “testimony has both a private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect, which is political and judicial. The use of the word testimony links both meanings, giving a new and larger dimension to the patient’s individual experience” (2015, 181). By creating a testimony as a performance of personal experience, the victim in turn creates a “sort of signature” (Felman 2015, 53).

If the testimony is a signature, the proof of the victim’s selfhood, then Daphne’s choice to

cede her humanity and voice is, in effect, a sacrifice of her very identity. Daphne's transfigured body becomes an apt metaphor for the conflicted nature of the traumatized individual. As Herman writes, "the psychological distress symptoms of traumatized people simultaneously call attention to the existence of an unspeakable secret and deflect attention from it" (2015, 1). Despite Daphne's choice of silence, the laurel tree stands in evidence of the attempted rape: by choosing transformation instead of death, she has immortalized her assault and obscured it at the same time. And although Apollo may alter the narrative and symbology of the laurel for his own purposes, the myth itself proves Daphne's unwillingness and fear. Ovid's conclusion to the story further highlights the ambiguity of the outcome, as the rivers are "unsure about whether they should congratulate the father or console him" (*nescia, gratentur consolenturne parentem*, 578). Daphne's story highlights the power dynamics between men and women, sovereigns and subjects. No matter what choice Daphne makes, she will lose—silenced and violated, whether as a woman or a laurel tree. Yet, as William Anderson remarks, she is not being punished for choosing virginity, nor even for rejecting Apollo (1997, 191): Daphne's fate is merely a consequence of the "selfish violence" enacted by gods, and men in general.

***Metamorphoses* 1.583-746: Io**

Silence is not a choice for the other three women I discuss in this chapter, but Io is the only one to regain her voice after losing it. Her story most closely parallels the narrative of a rape survivor's experience, starting with the assault and ending with a successful recovery. In a 1995 study, Russell Gardner et al. recommended that the Io myth be used to help victims of sexual abuse navigate the ups and downs of psychiatric treatment (34-35):

The Io story, with its multiple, but somehow compatible, versions and its long journey ending in a positive outcome, seems a useful map for the trauma survivor to build a

narrative of his or her own experience. [. . .] The myth implies that, as Io recovered, so will the patient; although circumstances may seem to worsen during the treatment journey, the outcome will be triumphant.⁹⁹

Gardner et al. further raise the question of whether the Io myth arose in ancient Greece from observations of young girls who had suffered sexual abuse, since it so accurately depicts a survivor's therapeutic journey (1995, 37). While this supposition seems to be an example of *non causa pro causa*, the close parallels between the survivor's experience and Io's story allow an in-depth analysis of her journey as the process of recovery.

Whereas, with Daphne, Ovid dwells upon Apollo's voyeurism and the drama of the chase, in Io's story he renders the same actions in brutal brevity, emphasizing both Io's powerlessness and Jupiter's casual cruelty with an ascending triad of verbs (Bömer 1969a, 189): "the god, with a mist led in, shrouded the broad lands in darkness, stayed her flight, and stole her modesty" (*deus inducta latas caligine terras / occuluit tenuitque fugam rapuitque pudorem*, 599-600).¹⁰⁰

The first thing that happens to Io after the rape is her transformation into a cow. When Jupiter

⁹⁹The version of Io's story supplied by Gardner et al. to their patients includes two aspects that do not appear in Ovid's version (1995, 31): her abduction by the Phoenicians narrated in Herodotus 1, and her meeting with Prometheus told by Aeschylus in *Prometheus Bound*. Prometheus is an especially important figure for the treatment proposed in this article, as he is meant to represent the ideal therapist, whereas Argus and Hermes represent ineffective therapists (35): "like Prometheus, the modern therapist is 'bound' to acknowledge that he/she is neither god, giant, nor miracle worker. The therapist can, however, like Prometheus, share his knowledge and skill to help the patient learn how to be a better protagonist in her life story and to identify more clearly with the 'heroic' aspects of her struggle."

It is notable that Ovid omits Prometheus from his version of Io's story, though Aeschylus offers him precedent. It is possible that by denying Io the opportunity to meet Prometheus, Ovid purposefully exacerbates Io's loneliness.

¹⁰⁰The evocation of *pudor* is especially poignant, as Ovid draws attention not only to Io's personal loss but the loss of her family and community. As Anderson writes of this sentence, "each [verb] has its own object, but the last one, *pudorem*, transfers us from the literal into the moral sphere. Jupiter has perpetrated what Apollo failed to do, and it ceases to be amusing. Nothing in this affair suggests the ordinary process of love" (1997, 208). Where *pudicitia* denotes the physical state of purity, *pudor* denotes a moral quality and often an emotion—though there may be some small overlap (Langlands 2006, 48). By raping Io, Jupiter has stolen both from her: she is no longer a virgin, but she is also now morally and mentally tainted. Once lost, *pudor* cannot be regained; Io becomes damaged goods and a social liability to her family.

snatches away her *pudor*, he makes her less than human. For the remainder of the story, Io has little agency. She is passed from hand to hand and then abandoned with no resources. Ovid pays particular attention to how loss of human speech affects her both practically and emotionally (635-638):

illa etiam supplex Argo cum bracchia vellet
tendere, non habuit, quae bracchia tenderet Argo,
et conata queri mugitus edidit ore
pertimuitque sonos propriaque exterrita voce est.

Although she even wished to reach out her arms to Argus as a suppliant, she did not have arms that she could reach out to Argus, and, having tried to complain, she emitted lows from her mouth, and she feared the noises and was terrified by her own voice.¹⁰¹

In this passage Io experiences a sense of unstable identity. She retains her mental faculties and her sense of self, but she is displaced within her new body: she tries to move arms that are not there—as if suffering from phantom limb syndrome—and when she attempts to speak, her voice is not her own.

Hermann Fränkel describes Io’s predicament as a “case of confused and divided identity,” writing further that “we understand all too well what it means to try to escape from our own self” (1945, 79-80). This disconnection from the self is one major consequence of trauma, rooted in the shame a victim feels in response to “the violation of bodily integrity, and the indignity

For more on the social structures of *pudor* and *pudicitia* and Roman conventions of modesty and sexual capital, see Alexandre et al. 2012; Boatwright 2011; Joseph 2018; Kaster 2005; Langlands 2006; Olson 2008.

¹⁰¹A variation of lines 637-638 appears in *Heroides* 14.91-92 when Hypermnestra compares herself to the speechless Io (Natoli 2017, 55-56): both women experience isolation from their communities and turn to writing as a means of reaching out to their fathers.

suffered in the eyes of another person” (Herman 2015, 53).¹⁰² Victims of trauma (e.g., combat, rape, genocide) often say that they have both survived and not survived their ordeals, that they died when the trauma occurred, that they miss who they used to be (Brison 2003, 38). This aspect of trauma may be viewed as the result of isolation from the common experience of humanity (Brison 2003, 39-40; Herman 2015, 52-53): after trauma one does not know how to be oneself in the company of others, and, since the self is defined primarily in relation to others, the traumatized self is completely destabilized. In the words of Adria Eichner, “identity cannot be created in isolation” (2008, 26).

Io’s experience of transformation, literal and physical in the myth, is reminiscent of the rape victim’s wavering identity. Jupiter changes her internally through rape, as reflected by her bovine transformation.¹⁰³ In addition, the challenges she faces in her new shape correspond to challenges faced by victims of rape trying to cope with the aftermath of their trauma. Her laughable appearance marks her as “other” and invites humiliation; Argus’ scrutinizing eyes deny her privacy and the freedom to move through society (Curran 1978, 224). In fact, Argus decides her daily schedule, keeps her chained, and stands immune to all attempts to elicit sympathy (Sawyer 2019, 27-28): functioning as a symbol for society at large, he reinforces the trauma of the original rape while subjecting her to new, different traumas. Suzanne Mayr and Joseph Price, using Io’s story as a template on which to map modern rape experiences, write, “in

¹⁰²It is difficult to pin down one universal definition of “self,” as there are many interpretations (poststructuralist, metaphysical, etc.). For a detailed deconstruction and discussion of “self” as it relates to loss after rape, see Brison 2003, 38-66; Eichner 2008, 24-48.

¹⁰³It is generally accepted that the physical transformations of the *Metamorphoses* are precipitated by some degree of internal transformation—often psychological, but just as often having to do with the victim’s relationship to the world around them. See Anderson 1997, 6-8; Feldherr 2002; Galinsky 1975, 42-61; Gentilcore 2010. For the opposing view, that metamorphosis is in fact an expression of continuity and clarity, see Solodow 1988, 174-192.

modern language she was dehumanized, developed symptoms of anorexia, grew depressed, detached, and estranged from other people. She experienced depersonalization, self-estrangement, and perceived her extremities as changed” (1989, 37). These descriptors bring Io’s symptoms from the realm of Ovidian poetry into the world of modern psychiatry.

But Io, despite her degrading condition, is the only rape victim in the *Metamorphoses* who returns to human form after being transformed—though because she becomes a goddess, she is not quite the same as she was before.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the most important reason for Io’s recovery is her ability to reach out to her community, in spite of her bovine shape, and her community’s willingness to reach back to her. As Natoli argues, “after she communicates her identity to her family through her writing, she initiates the course of events that results in her transformation back into her human form and her reintegration into her lost community” (2017, 57). Most rape victims in the *Metamorphoses* lack community acceptance, notably Leucothoe, whose father buries her alive, and Callisto, whom I discuss below.

By contrast, Io’s family laments her fate and tries to bring her back, regardless of her lost *pudor*, and it is only because of Argus that they cannot be truly reunited (639-666):

venit ad ripas, ubi ludere saepe solebat, Inachidas ripas, novaque ut conspexit in unda cornua, pertimuit seque exsternata refugit. naides ignorant, ignorat et Inachus ipse, quae sit; at illa patrem sequitur sequiturque sorores et patitur tangi seque admirantibus offert.	640
decerptas senior porrexerat Inachus herbas: illa manus lambit patriisque dat oscula palmis nec retinet lacrimas, et, si modo verba sequantur, oret opem nomenque suum casusque loquatur; littera pro verbis, quam pes in pulvere duxit, corporis indicium mutati triste peregit.	645
‘me miserum!’ exclamat pater Inachus inque gementis cornibus et niveae pendens cervice iuvencae	650

¹⁰⁴Retransformation in general is exceedingly rare in the *Metamorphoses*. Solodow names Teiresias and Erysichthon’s daughter as the only people besides Io who return to their original forms (1988, 186).

‘me miserum!’ ingeminat, ‘tunc es quaesita per omnes
 nata mihi terras? tu non inventa reperta
 luctus eras levior. 655

.....
 at tibi ego ignarus thalamos taedas parabam,
 spesque fuit generi mihi prima, secunda nepotum:
 de grege nunc tibi vir et de grege natus habendus.’

 talia maerentem stellatus submovet Argus,
 ereptamque patri diversa in pascua natam 665
 abstrahit . . .

She comes to the banks where she was often accustomed to play,
 the banks of Inachus, and when she saw in the water her new 640
 horns, she was terrified and, greatly disturbed, fled from herself.
 The Naiads do not recognize her, even Inachus himself does not recognize
 who she is; but she trails after her father and trails after her sisters,
 and she lets herself be touched, and presents herself to them as they admire her.

The elder Inachus holds out plucked herbs: 645
 she licks his hands and gives kisses to her father’s palms
 and she does not hold back her tears, and, if only words could follow,
 she would beg for help and speak out her name and misfortunes;
 Instead of words, a letter, which her foot traced in the dust,
 revealed the sad proof of her transformed body. 650

‘Wretched me!’ her father cries, clinging to the
 twin horns and neck of the snowy heifer.
 ‘Wretched me!’ he groans. ‘Are you the daughter I have sought
 throughout all the lands? When you were lost you were a lighter
 grief than you are now that you are found. 655

.....
 But I, unknowing, was preparing for you a marriage bed and torches,
 I had hope first for a son-in-law, and for grandchildren later:
 now from the herd you must take a husband and from the herd have a son.’

Starry Argus removes him, grieving in this way,
 and he drags away into different pastures the daughter, ripped 665
 from her father . . .

Io’s initial communication with her father is just as important as Inachus’ attempt to hold on to her. She makes the choice to reveal her situation even though she has been socially disgraced by the rape. Furthermore, she overcomes her voicelessness by finding a different way to communicate—her persistence in the face of her family’s ignorance rewards her with the reunion

she seeks.¹⁰⁵ Inachus responds with equal eagerness: although he claims that he grieved less while she was lost, he continues to speak of plans for her marriage. His plans to obtain a son-in-law and grandson “from the herd” are somewhat humorous, but reflect his desire to reintegrate Io into the family. One gets the sense that he is trying to problem-solve, thinking of how she might continue to fulfill the role of his daughter within the confines of her bovine form. It is, in part, Inachus’ unrestrained acceptance that offers Io the potential for recovery.

The importance of community acceptance and belief in testimonial cannot be overstated for the psychological recovery of modern trauma survivors (unfortunately, the societal barriers preventing such acceptance and belief are significant even now). In the first place, survivors are often reluctant to speak of their experiences because of “denial, avoidance, and questioning who can be trusted”—all symptoms “normally associated with the initial stages of recovery from any type of trauma” (Sudderuth 1998, 572). When survivors do disclose to family, friends, counselors, or spiritual advisers, they are often blamed, disbelieved, or encouraged to be ashamed, as exemplified by Courtney Ahrens’ 2006 study: eight women explained why they had stopped disclosing their rapes, and most did so because their initial disclosures were met with negative reactions from friends, parents, therapists, priests, etc. Many victims choose not to disclose because they either do not understand what they have experienced as rape or are under the impression that sexual violence is a minor misfortune.

Laura Wilson and Katherine Miller have shown that, even in the past decade, well over half of rape victims do not identify their assault as rape and often do not use such vocabulary until many years after the initial event (2016). Karen Weiss, writing about teens’ ambivalence toward sexual violence, notes that many adolescents do not consider sexual assault by their peers as a

¹⁰⁵“The repetitions of *ignorat* and *sequitur* demonstrate Io’s persistence in attempts to reconnect with her family and the initial relentlessness of the rejection she faces” (Sawyer 2019, 24).

real trauma—rather, they perceive such events as normal “kid stuff” (2013). The research of Sarah Ullman and Henrietta Filipas indicates that only two thirds of survivors ever disclose their assault to even one individual, whether a formal or informal support network member (2001, 1029).¹⁰⁶ While this percentage has likely increased in the past twenty years—especially with the popularization of the #MeToo movement in 2017—recent statistics show that only 310 out of every 1,000 rapists are reported to police (RAINN 2021): a telling indication that victims of sexual assault still face great challenges in the United States today.

When victims do receive positive formal and/or informal support, the difference in recovery is measurable. Rebecca Campbell et al. report the following in a study on the impact of positive and negative reactions to rape victims (2001, 297):

Results indicated that women who had someone believe their account of what happened, and defined this behavior as healing, had lower PTS, depression, and health symptom scores than women who either did not receive this reaction or who received this reaction but considered it hurtful. Similarly, victims who were allowed to talk about the assault and defined this behavior as healing had fewer emotional and physical health symptoms than victims who either did not receive this behavior or who received this behavior but considered it hurtful. On the other hand, women who had someone tell them they were irresponsible, patronized them, wanted revenge, tell them to get on with their life, and tried to control their decisions, and defined these reactions as hurtful, had higher emotional and physical health symptoms than women who did not receive these reactions or women who received these behaviors but considered them helpful.¹⁰⁷

More simply, “recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation” (Herman 2015, 133). For the survivor to heal her disillusionment with others and her suspicion against human connection, she must strengthen bonds with family and friends, build

¹⁰⁶In the 1990 study of Fran Norris et al., it was found that survivors with greater levels of informal support were more likely to seek out formal support from counselors. Thus, positive reactions from friends and family may be considered an important encouragement for the survivor to seek therapy.

¹⁰⁷Campbell et al. (2001) are careful to take into account the survivor’s perception of the reaction: if she perceives it as negative, then it will have adverse effects on her health—even if it may seem positive from the perspective of a third party. Thus, “defining social reactions as positive or negative a priori may obscure the impact that some reactions have on survivors’ well-being” (300).

new relationships, and relearn how to trust others (and herself) with her safety. The establishment of safety—generally as well as in the context of relationships—is the first stage of the recovery process, followed by “remembrance and mourning,” and finally “reconnection with ordinary life” (155).¹⁰⁸ In order for a victim to reestablish security after her assault, she must first be convinced that she is not alone.

Inachus and Io’s sisters demonstrate acceptance when they recognize her misfortunes and mourn them with her. Their communal lamentation is Io’s invitation back, the open door that promises a return to her ordinary life. Argus may drag her away in the moment, but the initial response of Io’s family is the most important. Ovid narrates no judgment or blame from Inachus and focuses instead on his unwillingness to let his daughter go a second time. During this brief reunion, Io is assured that a return to the ordinary is possible and that she will not be cast out because of her damaged *pudor*. The presence of Io’s support system is, perhaps, the most crucial difference between Io and the other rape victims of the *Metamorphoses*. While other victims suffer further as punishment for the violation of their bodies, Io goes through the rest of her journey with the promise that her family is waiting to receive her. And, perhaps even more compelling, she is “rewarded” by becoming a goddess.

***Metamorphoses* 2.401-507: Callisto**

Callisto’s narrative shares certain aspects of both Daphne’s and Io’s stories. In characterization, she is like Daphne, having chosen to remain a virgin in order to serve Diana:

¹⁰⁸As Herman notes, “like any abstract concept, these stages of recovery are a convenient fiction, not to be taken too literally” (2015, 155). Researchers and theorists have created various models for this process that may have more stages than Herman’s, with slightly different criteria; however, the basic shape of the recovery journey remains consistent across observers. For different interpretations of the stages of recovery, see Burgess and Holmstrom 1974; Figley 1979; Horowitz 1979; Scurfield 1985; Brown and Fromm 1986; Parson 1988; Putnam 1989; van der Hart et al. 1989; Foa and Rothbaum 1998.

“she was a soldier of Phoebe, nor did anyone set foot on Maenalus who was more favored by Trivia than she; but no power is long-lived” (*miles erat Phoebes, nec Maenalon attigit ulla / gratior hac Triviae; sed nulla potentia longa est*, 415-416).¹⁰⁹ As in Io’s story, Ovid extends the narrative beyond the rape itself, describing Callisto’s journey up to the point when she becomes a constellation—her final transformation. Ovid’s assertion of the impermanence of Callisto’s favor with Diana foreshadows the betrayal she will face from her patron goddess—betrayal that neither Daphne nor Io face from their communities. It is ostracism from Diana’s cohort that makes Callisto’s path so different from Io’s: while Io’s family accepts her bovine form and welcomes her home, Diana banishes Callisto because of her unwanted pregnancy, leaving her with no home, no resources, and no protection from Juno’s wrath.

More than in Io’s story, Ovid emphasizes the symptoms of trauma following Callisto’s rape: “the grove was hateful to her, and the woods knowing; as she went away from there, she nearly forgot to bring her quiver with her arrows and the bow, which she had hung up” (*huic odio nemus est et conscia silva; / unde pedem referens paene est oblita pharetram / tollere cum telis et, quem suspenderat, arcum*, 438-440). Jupiter’s violence has rendered the grove itself an enemy to Callisto, the place darkened by what she experienced there: the forest seems to watch and accuse her. In her distress, she seeks to leave the grove immediately, so hurried and distraught that she nearly leaves behind her weapons, which represent her pride of place among Diana’s nymphs. Furthermore, when the real Diana approaches, Callisto flees out of fear that Jupiter is once again impersonating her (443-444). Rape at the hands of someone disguised as her trusted patroness has made her fearful and paranoid. When she sees Diana, Callisto immediately believes that Jupiter is trying to trick her again; when she sees the other nymphs also

¹⁰⁹ Although Trivia may be considered a distinct goddess in some instances, here the name is merely an epithet for Diana (Anderson 1997, 280).

approaching, she realizes then that *this* Diana is real. Nevertheless, Callisto's moment of doubt casts further doubts upon her own perception of her identity as Diana's companion.

W. R. Johnson remarks that the "inwardness" of Callisto's narrative following her rape is "tinged with bitter comedy," but, despite Ovid's tendency toward irreverence, I do not believe there is much humor in this story (1996, 12).¹¹⁰ In fact, he seems to go out of his way to remind the reader of how tragic Callisto's fate is, as Johnson argues. In particular, I point to the powerful apostrophe included in his description of the rape (434-437):

illa quidem contra, quantum modo femina posset,
(adspiceres utinam, Saturnia, mitior esses!)
illa quidem pugnat; sed quem superare puella,
quisve Iovem poterat?

Indeed, she, as much as a mere woman would be able,
(if only you could have seen her, daughter of Saturn, you would have been kinder!)
indeed, she fights; but whom can a girl defeat,
and who could defeat Jupiter?

Ovid's repetition of *illa quidem*, the halting rhythm of the clauses, and the narrator's direct address to Juno mark Callisto's distress. This segmented flow of thoughts represents her emotional turmoil—her determination to escape, consideration of her physical limitations, fear of retribution—followed by resigned acceptance of her powerlessness. That the narrator himself appeals to Juno on Callisto's behalf underlines the severity of the situation: he vainly reaches out to the story as if he might rewrite the ending. Thus, the narrator's apostrophe communicates compassion and recognition of injustice.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Before the rape there is some levity: when Callisto greets Diana as greater than Jupiter, and Jupiter "laughs and hears and is delighted to be judged better than himself" (*ridet et audit / et sibi praeferri se gaudet*, 429-430). As in Daphne's and Io's stories, the comic element appears primarily at the beginning, during the wooing phase of the rape. Once all pretext has been dropped, the violence of the assault takes precedence.

¹¹¹Joannes Jahn's reading of this section places the punctuation of line 437 later, so that it reads, "and who could defeat heavenly Jupiter?" (*quisve Iovem poterat superum?*) (1832, 29). Anderson and most others

As in the case of Io, Callisto's punishment is one of isolation, but she is forced to undergo this isolation over and over again. She is first isolated by the secret of her rape. Ovid signals her feelings of shame through self-conscious behaviors (Bömer 1969a, 351): "she scarcely lifts her eyes from the ground, and she is not joined to the goddess' side as she was before accustomed, nor is she first of the entire company" (*vix oculos attollit humo nec, ut ante solebat, / iuncta deae lateri nec toto est agmine prima*, 448-449). Her shame prevents her from speaking, and thus she experiences her first instance of silencing—by her own society, which demands sexual purity at all costs. Compare Callisto's guilty silence with Io's willing communication to her family through writing. Io's reliance on her family leads her to divest herself of the truth of her rape, but Callisto conceals her own rape out of fear and shame—she seems to have no biological family to support her.

Next, Callisto is excluded from Diana's company of nymphs upon revealing her pregnancy. She is dismissed without hesitation by her patroness, who was said to have favored her above any other (415-416). Diana gives Callisto no opportunity to explain her condition and takes her silence at face value, as an indication of wrongdoing. By presuming that Callisto has willingly forsaken her virginity, Diana silences her a second time—a painful betrayal for Callisto. By contrast, Io's father receives the news of his daughter's rape with grief, but also with acceptance, and actively seeks to reincorporate her into his family.

Juno enacts Callisto's next layer of exclusion, from her very humanity, by transforming her into a bear. For Curran, Juno is a representation of civilized society itself, and "expulsion from

reject this interpretation, as *superus* is not traditionally used as an epithet for Jupiter and, according to Ovid's style, works better as a descriptor for *aethera* later in the line (1997, 283).

Karl Galinsky, however, prefers Jahn's reading, which allows for wordplay with the words *superare* and *superum*, a double entendre that seems to ask who could top Jupiter "when he is on top" (1975, 196). I agree with Anderson's assessment and, though Ovid often mixes the pathetic with the humorous, I have not observed other instances where he drops a joke mid-rape.

the human race is the ultimate excommunication from society” (1978, 226). It is at this point that Callisto also loses her voice in earnest, becoming able only to groan in lamentation. Ovid pays particular attention to the transformation of her face and her loss of speech (480-484):

. . . laudataque quondam
ora Iovi lato fieri deformia rictu;
neve preces animos et verba precantia flectant,
posse loqui eripitur: vox iracunda minaxque
plenaque terroris rauco de gutture fertur.

. . . and her face, once praised,
by Jupiter, became deformed by a gaping maw;
lest her prayers and pleading words might influence minds,
her ability to speak is ripped away; a voice irritable and threatening
and full of terror comes from her hoarse throat.

As in the narrative of Daphne, Ovid draws attention to the beauty of the victim—not per se, but as the primary cause of her suffering. Here, he also hints that Juno’s jealousy has encouraged her to make Callisto *deformis*. Both Daphne and Io are described as still beautiful, even after their transformations, but Callisto’s former beauty is subsumed by her beastly shape. Callisto’s voice as a bear is now menacing, full of anger and terror; Io frightens only herself with her mooing. With her groaning voice, Callisto attempts to supplicate Jupiter, but assumes that he has not heard her—in reality, he has felt her message although she cannot speak (*nequeat cum dicere, sensit*, 488).¹¹² Like Io, Callisto is cut off from verbal communication, but unlike Io she cannot easily wander into a human settlement to interact with friends and family. First, as a bear she would be driven off or killed; second, she has no friends or family to whom she can return.

By turning Callisto into a bear—a predator—Juno divests Callisto of her victimhood and makes her into a dangerous creature, very different from a harmless tree or cow. From the moment of her rape, Callisto manifests her guilt by separating herself from the huntresses: by

¹¹²Per Anderson, “one of the sounds which human beings and animals share is that of groaning. Callisto voices her agony” (1997, 290). Jupiter may not hear any particular words, but he understands her fear.

withdrawing she is, perhaps, trying to protect Diana and her band from the stain of sexual violation. When Juno makes Callisto into a bear, she seems to externalize Callisto’s internal sense of moral threat: she is a wild creature, no longer an inhabitant of a civilized society, and must be banished to the liminal where she cannot corrupt anyone.

As Natoli observes, the trauma that accompanies Callisto’s rape is that of identity crisis and disconnection from the self, as well as “the inability to reconnect with any form of past community” (2017, 41). Callisto has no one to anchor her to the person she once was and only vaguely recalls her humanity. Although a fearsome bear, she spends fifteen years frightened by the wilderness where she resides and seeking the familiarity of civilization (489-495):

a, quotiens sola non ausa quiescere silva
ante domum quondamque suis erravit in agris! 490
a, quotiens per saxa canum latratibus acta est
venatrixque metu venantum territa fugit!
saepe feris latuit visis oblita, quid esset,
ursaque conspectos in montibus horruit ursos
pertimuitque lupos, quamvis pater esset in illis. 495

Ah, how many times, daring not to rest in the lonely forest, did she
wander in front of the house and in the fields that had once been hers! 490
Ah, how many times was she driven among the rocks by the baying of dogs
and the huntress fled, terrified from fear of those hunting her!
Often, she hid from beasts she had seen, forgetful of what she was,
and, though a bear, she shuddered at bears sighted in the mountains
and dreaded wolves, although her father was among them. 495

Without friends and family to anchor her—without the capacity to connect with any person without risk of harm—Callisto loses her humanity and her own identity: “she cannot understand why she is frightened of members of a community of which she is supposedly a part” (Natoli 2017, 40). She flees hunters because they will kill her; she flees other bears and fears sleeping in the woods because she does not perceive herself as non-human. Effectively, she belongs

nowhere. Thus, she exists in a state of limbo until Jupiter makes her a constellation.¹¹³ Contrary to Io, who was able to return to a loving community that accepted her, Callisto loses all hope of recovery because she lacks a support system to keep her tethered to her humanity and identity.

***Metamorphoses* 6.401-674: Philomela**

Philomela's story is unique among my examples from the *Metamorphoses*—and, indeed, in the poem as a whole—because it does not involve any divine intervention until the very end, once the drama has concluded. Philomela's rapist is human, and the circumstances surrounding her trauma are within the realm of ordinary possibility. Furthermore, Ovid goes into gruesome detail in his descriptions of Philomela's rapes; in the stories of Io and Callisto, the act of rape is communicated in a single line. Philomela's entire episode is more than two hundred and fifty lines—about a hundred lines longer than Io's narrative. The length, brutality, and detail of this rape set Philomela apart from the other victims in this work.

Philomela is the only rape victim in the *Metamorphoses* who experiences rape, captivity, and loss of speech at the same time: even after her tongue is cut out, she is repeatedly raped while being kept hostage (561-562). Silence, in her case, is not a consequence of rape but a condition of it. Io and Callisto experience silence after a single event of rape that leads to their subsequent isolation from society. By contrast, Tereus inflicts silence upon Philomela so that she cannot retaliate against his repeated sexual assaults: he cuts off her ties to the outside world and removes what little power she has.

Philomela's isolation begins when Tereus first brings her to Thrace, a culturally barbarian

¹¹³Even as a constellation, Callisto remains apart. Juno commands Tethys and Oceanus, “repulse her, lest my rival be bathed by your pure waters” (*pellite, a puro tingatur in aequore paelex*, 530). Juno prevents Callisto from following the other constellations into the sea, and thus extends her punishment by making her a pariah even among the stars (O'Bryhim 1990, 80; Johnson 1996, 19).

land opposed to the civilized city of Athens.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Tereus separates her from the civilized palace setting, and from humanity as a whole, by leading her into the wilderness—what Natoli calls the “animal realm,” which is “schematically associated with the isolation of speech loss” (2017, 66). Ovid emphasizes this violent transition with a simile describing Philomela’s pain and distress after Tereus rapes her (527-530):

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

She trembles like a terrified lamb, who, wounded, cast from
the jaws of a gray wolf, does not yet seem to herself to be safe,
or like a dove shudders, her feathers drenched in her own
blood, and still fears the eager claws by which she had been clutched.¹¹⁵

While other rape victims in the *Metamorphoses* literally transform into animals after being assaulted, Ovid subverts expectation here by making Philomela into an animal through simile.

¹¹⁴The stereotype of the savage Thracian barbarian existed in the Mediterranean as early as the 5th century BCE; the earliest extant literary source on the Thracians is Book 5 of Herodotus’ *Histories*, which is particularly concerned with presenting ethnographies of distinctly non-Greek societies (Pache 2001, 4-5). For Thracian barbarianism as a common topos of Athenian drama in the 5th century, see Bacon 1961; Long 1986; Hall 1989; Segal 1990; Saïd 2001; Papadodima 2020. For representations of Thracians in Classical Athenian art, see Tsiafakis 2000.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid implies that Thracians “have a proclivity for lust,” both in the story of Tereus and in the following narrative of Boreas’ unbridled passion for Orithyia (Pavlock 1991, 34). Ovid’s version of Tereus likely draws on the earlier Greek version in Sophocles’ *Tereus* and a following version by Accius, both of which are, unfortunately, inextant (Segal 1990, 110 *n.* 2).

Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos, analyzing the Tereus episode along with works of Ovidian reception, point out how Philomela and Procne seem to take on “infernal attributes” when they pass from the civilized Athens into the untamed land of Thrace (2007, 12). Furthermore, they make associations between Thracian stereotypes and the savagery of vengeance, but argue that Philomela’s and Procne’s final act of violence demonstrates “the porous interface between barbarity and civilization in (Athenian) society” (*ibid.*, 213). Similarly, David Larmour writes that “the barbarian/Greek antithesis is of dubious validity. Procne and Philomela, from Athens, are not so different from Thracian Tereus after all” (1990, 134). Patricia Joplin further notes that Tereus’ lust and violence are a poetic stand-in for politics between Athens and Thrace (1984, 33-34).

¹¹⁵These animal similes are reminiscent of descriptions of Daphne (1.505-506, 533-8), as Garrett Jacobsen notes (1984, 49-50).

This simile in turn highlights Philomela’s dehumanization—first, by her removal from civilization into wilderness, and second by Tereus’ violation of her body (Hardie 2002, 262).

According to Ovid’s usual pattern, at this point Philomela would be effectively silenced, perhaps by divine interference (like Io) or by shame (like Callisto). Again, however, she subverts the expectations set in earlier narratives by using speech to castigate and threaten her rapist (533-548):

‘o diris barbare factis!
o crudelis!’ ait ‘nec te mandata parentis
cum lacrimis movere piis, nec cura sororis
nec mea virginitas nec coniugialia iura! 535
omnia turbasti: paelex ego facta sororis,
tu geminus coniunx! Hostis mihi debita poena!
quin animam hanc, ne quod facinus tibi, perfide, restet,
eripis? atque utinam fecisses ante nefandos 540
concubitus! vacuas habuissem criminis umbras.
.....
ipsa pudore
proiecto tua facta loquar: si copia detur, 545
in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor,
inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo.
audiet haec aether, et si deus ullus in illo est!’

‘O barbarous man of savage deeds!
O cruel man!’ she says. ‘The commands my father gave with
pious tears did not move you, nor care for my sister, 535
nor my virginity, nor the laws of marriage!
You have thrown everything into confusion: I am made the rival¹¹⁶
of my sister, you a double husband! I deserve the punishment of an enemy!
Why do you not snatch away my life, faithless man, so that nothing of
your villainy remains? And would that you had done so before this abominable 540
coupling! I would have had a ghost untouched by crime.
.....
I myself, with shame
tossed aside, will declare your deeds: if the means should be offered, 545

¹¹⁶More literally, *paelex* refers to a woman installed as a man’s mistress or concubine, in addition to his lawful wife (derived from *παλλακή*, the general Greek word for a concubine). James Adams notes that because a word for the lawful wife may depend grammatically upon *paelex*, “it is the status of the mistress in relation to the wife, not to the husband/lover, which is stressed” (1983, 355). This word has no particular negative connotation: when Philomela calls herself a *paelex* it is not self-abasing, but matter-of-fact.

I will come among the people; if I am held locked up in the woods,
I will fill the woods, and I will move the listening stones.
This ether will hear, and a god—if there is any in it!

When Philomela threatens to expose Tereus, she takes no thought for how such a revelation would affect her reputation, or her family's: the risk of social stigma does not outweigh the desire for justice against Tereus. She experiences an assault, to some extent, outside of sociopolitical expectations, characterized by antisocial depravity.¹¹⁷ As she succinctly states, Tereus has “thrown everything into confusion” by violating a virginal citizen woman; by destroying the trust between father- and son-in-law; and by polluting his marriage with something close to incest.¹¹⁸ Such actions might be tolerable from a god (like the divine rapists discussed above), but as a human Tereus is subject to human consequences. Hence, Philomela can make such powerful accusations against him and lay blame upon him, rightly, for her assault.

Nevertheless, she moves quickly from blaming Tereus to speaking of her own guilt and the punishment that she deserves: as Procne's rival, she must be treated like an enemy, and in death her ghost will be tainted by this indiscretion. She establishes clearly that though Tereus has acted wrongly, she herself will bear the guilt of his crime in both life and death.¹¹⁹ Philomela's distress here is not unlike what modern victims of incestuous abuse experience. The family and

¹¹⁷Spear-captives like Briseis are well aware before their enslavement that such a fate reasonably could befall them, and wives in arranged marriages might expect marital rape, even if they do not fully understand the concept of rape separate from sex.

Divine rapes are not militaristic, nor are they built into Graeco-Roman sociopolitical systems; they are, however, a part of the foundational fabric of Graeco-Roman religion and civic identity. And, to put it plainly, the gods can rape whomever they like.

¹¹⁸Though Tereus and Philomela are not blood-related—and therefore the rape is not strictly incestuous—Philomela implies that making her the *paelex* of her sister goes a step further than simple adultery.

In another vein, allusions to father-daughter incest arise throughout Ovid's narrative, as discussed by Jacobsen 1984, 48; Oliensis 2009, 78-80; Sorscher 2017, 15-17.

¹¹⁹When Philomela tears her hair and beats her breast after the rape (531-532), she is performing the typical behaviors of bereaved women (Haupt 1966, 341). She seems to mourn her rape as a metaphorical death—certainly, she believes that she is already “dead” to Procne.

household are expected to be both safe and structured, but perpetrators of incest render familial order unstable and make the home into a dangerous environment. Incest survivors often describe powerful feelings of guilt, having believed that they were the cause of disorder in their families (Herman 2015, 103-105).

By shouldering the guilt for her assault, Philomela demonstrates a similar reaction; since there was no solid concept of rape in ancient Greece or Rome, however, she is blaming herself not necessarily for assault, but for adultery. In either case, she simultaneously believes that she is at fault and knows for certain that Tereus has committed a crime. Similarly, Herman says, of the victim of child abuse, “simply by virtue of her existence on earth, she believes that she has driven the most powerful people in her world to do terrible things. [...] The language of the self becomes a language of abomination” (2015, 105). Philomela uses such language first when she calls herself an “enemy” (*hostis*, 538), then when she calls her copulation with Tereus “abominable” (*nefandas*, 540), and finally when she refers to her ghost being touched by “crime” (*crimen*, 541).

Philomela further underscores her deep feelings of shame in 539-540 by suggesting that Tereus kill her, and when he draws his sword, “[she] was offering her throat and had taken up hope for her own death when she saw the blade” (*iugulum Philomela parabat / spemque suae mortis viso conceperat ense*, 553-554). Philomela’s suggestion in 540-541—that Tereus should have performed necrophilia upon her corpse rather than rape her while alive—indicates just how deeply this shame affects her. It is uncertain whether necrophilia would bear any less familial disgrace than rape, but Philomela herself would have died without knowing that her reputation was ruined, and therefore would bear no personal guilt in death. After Procne rescues her a year later, shame still weighs heavily on Philomela (604-609):

oraque develat miserae pudibunda sororis
amplexumque petit; sed non attollere contra
sustinet haec oculos, paelex sibi visa sororis,
deiectoque in humum vultu iurare volenti
testarique deos, per vim sibi dedecus illud
inlatum, pro voce manus fuit. 605

[Procne] uncovered the ashamed face of her miserable sister
and sought to embrace her; but this one cannot bear to raise
her eyes to face her, seeming to herself to be her sister's rival,
and with her gaze cast down to the ground, wishing to swear upon
the gods and call them as witnesses that that disgrace had been inflicted upon
her by force, her hand for her was a substitute for her voice. 605

Although Philomela at this point has communicated her situation to Procne in the hopes of being freed and has been suffering repeated rapes at the hands of Tereus, she still thinks of herself as the *paelex* of her sister. She continues to perceive herself both as victim and as wrongdoer. She is “ashamed” (*pudibunda*, 604) and cannot even look her sister in the face.

It is clear from Ovid's descriptions that Philomela shows symptoms of trauma, but of more immediate interest to me are the actions she takes in spite of her trauma and powerlessness. Despite her prevailing shame and the dehumanization she has suffered, she understands that her voice does have power, and Tereus understands the same thing. In Patricia Joplin's words, “when Philomela imagines herself free to tell her own tale to anyone who will listen, Tereus realizes for the first time what would come to light, should the woman's voice become public. In private, force is sufficient. In public, however, Philomela's voice, if heard, would make them equal” (1984, 31). Ironically, it is the rape itself which lends public authority to the female voice: the violation of a citizen woman's chastity is such a serious breach of the sociopolitical system that the assertion of the woman's voice becomes permitted—perhaps even required—for administering justice and rectifying the status quo.

Ellen Oliensis points out that Philomela's speech and threats are unconventional: “it is

regularly the woman, not the man, who suffers the stigma of rape; once her modesty has been violated, the woman's part is to repair the damage by covering herself back up, not to exacerbate it by making her injury public" (2009, 81). Such is the case even now, whether in the United States or elsewhere across the world: as mentioned above, rape victims are often hesitant to disclose their experiences even to trusted friends and family, resulting in a report rate of only about 31% in the United States. Although Philomela's verbal threats are ultimately ineffective and result in the permanent loss of her voice, her retaliation in a way does produce the desired effect: that is, Tereus' fear of reprisal. As Ovid writes, "afterward, at such words, the savage king's anger was stirred up, and his fear no less than this" (*talibus ira feri postquam commota tyranni / nec minor hac metus est*, 549-550). Tereus may rob Philomela of the power of speech when he cuts out her tongue, but in so doing he proves that her voice does have power over him.

After a year of captivity, Philomela finds a way to reach her lost community, just as Io does when she scratches her name in the sand. This renewed power of communication comes through the art of weaving. As Ovid writes, "great ingenuity is the product of pain, and cleverness comes from wretched circumstances" (*grande doloris / ingenium est, miserisque venit sollertia rebus*, 574-576). Philomela's powerful and repeated traumas lead her to an act of subversive creativity, the woven web that will secure her freedom. Ovid frames the act of weaving as her attempt to find some escape, but Joplin interprets the web as a combination of therapeutic expression and an attempt to bring her suffering before the public eye (1991, 43):

When Philomela transforms her suffering, captivity, and silence into the occasion for art, the text she weaves is overburdened with a desire to tell. Her tapestry not only seeks to redress a private wrong, but should it become public (and she began to see the connection between the private and the political before her tongue was cut out), it threatens to retrieve from obscurity all that her culture defines as outside the boundaries of allowable discourse, whether sexual, spiritual, or literary.

The desire to speak the unspeakable, to make trauma known, functions as the artistic impetus.

Philomela’s art is the product of her trauma as well as a coping mechanism—even if she could speak, there is no one in whom she can confide. Thus, the weaving is an attempt both to seek redress for her abuse and to create a physical proof of her emotional experience. Furthermore, weaving is a fundamentally female activity. Philomela reveals her experience to her fellow women through a subversive act of feminine creation that defies the male violence harming and imprisoning her.

Similarly, the modern victim of rape may express her trauma and grief through artistic media; the construction of a traumatic narrative through creative expression is, for some survivors, a pivotal step in the recovery process. Bessel van der Kolk has long espoused the belief that talking therapies—while important—are not always sufficient to treat the deeply embedded memories of traumatic events (1994; 2003a; 2003b; 2014). As he says, “traumatic events are almost impossible to put into words” (2014, 231). It is now more scientifically accepted that creative therapies like art, music, and theater can be just as effective, if not more so, than talking therapies alone, though formal studies of their efficacy are difficult and have been limited (*ibid.*, 241-242).¹²⁰

For Philomela, artistic expression is merely the first step in a recovery process that does not actually reach its ideal conclusion. The second step lies in communal mourning and the sharing of negative traumatic emotions. For the modern rape victim, such community is often found in therapy groups, which have “proved invaluable for survivors of extreme situations, including combat, rape, political persecution, battering, and childhood abuse” (Herman 2015, 215). These groups are usually small and composed of individuals who have suffered similar traumas—

¹²⁰Van der Kolk cites Krantz and Pennebaker 2007 as one potentially useful study on the efficacy of movement-centered interpretive therapies compared to that of language. Nevertheless, resources for practitioners of creative arts therapies have existed for decades—such as Lois Carey’s 2006 volume.

primarily so that the members can create new, safe relationships, but also to open the possibility for “collective empowerment” (*ibid.*, 216). One of the many ways that rape victims connect with each other in these groups is through the sharing of revenge fantasies. As Herman notes (*ibid.*, 230):

The women in [the] group are able to indulge their fantasies freely, knowing that even the quietest and most inhibited members are not frightened and are able to join in the laughter. As the fantasies are shared, they lose much of their intensity, and the women are able to recognize how little they actually need revenge.

Philomela is able to reconnect with her sister Procne, but rather than engaging in the fantasy of revenge, she is borne into the act of revenge by Procne’s outrage.

Philomela does not at first seem intent on violence. When she approaches the house of Tereus, rather, “she shuddered, unlucky girl, and her entire face turned pale” (*horruit infelix totoque expalluit ore*, 602). She is in the midst of grappling with her symptoms, when Procne interrupts her grief and commandeers the situation (609-613):

ardet et iram
non capit ipsa suam Procne fletumque sororis
corripiens ‘non est lacrimis hoc’ inquit ‘agendum,
sed ferro, sed si quid habes, quod vincere ferrum
possit. in omne nefas¹²¹ ego me, germana, paravi . . .’

Procne herself burns and does not restrain her anger, and, chiding her sister’s weeping, she says, ‘There must be no tears, now, but the sword—or if you have something else that could conquer the sword. I have prepared myself, sister, for any wicked deed . . .’

Procne first sets them on the path to revenge without acknowledging Philomela’s emotions or asking what she wants. In fact, from lines 610 to 642, Philomela’s name is not mentioned at all,

¹²¹The word *nefas* here mirrors Philomela’s use of *nefandum* in 540. These words—nominal and adjectival forms of *fari* (“to speak”) with the negative prefix—emphasize the unspeakable and impious nature of the rape, as well as Philomela’s loss of speech. Throughout Philomela’s narrative, Ovid uses five total forms of *nefas* and *nefandus*.

nor does she engage in any action. She disappears almost entirely from the narrative until she “opens [Itys’] throat with her sword” (*iugulum ferro . . . resolvit*, 643). It is unclear from the text whether Philomela plans to enact her revenge before Procne sets it in motion—perhaps Ovid intentionally obscures Philomela’s intentions by focusing on Procne’s outrage.

In the end, unlike Io, Philomela does not “recover” from her trauma, although she eventually shares her traumatic testimony and rejoins her community. The act of vengeance itself prevents her from reaching catharsis, and the hoopoe’s pursuit of the nightingale “becomes an eternal reenactment of the original violation, as if the rape victim were to have a constantly recurring dream of her terrifying experience” (Curran 1974, 235). The very nature of the Philomela myth denies her the possibility of recovery—even in Sophocles’ earlier iteration, it is Procne who orchestrates revenge on Tereus, taking the matter out of Philomela’s hands. In Ovid’s retelling, however, he dwells on Philomela’s trauma and deep feelings of shame; on the sociopolitical consequences of public testimony and speech loss; and on the unspeakable nature of violence and the trauma inflicted by such violence.

Conclusion

The *Metamorphoses* contain an astounding number of rape narratives, but more astounding, perhaps, is the nuance with which Ovid treats the various victims of rape and their individual experiences. In adapting these stories to his specific framework, he moves beyond his source material in such a way as to emphasize the humanity of the women who suffer rape at the hands of gods and mortal men alike. In the examples of Daphne, Io, Callisto, and Philomela, he presents four victims with unique psychological symptoms, experiences with voice loss, and post-rape journeys either to recovery or to further grief.

Through the story of Daphne, Ovid demonstrates how victims of violence must negotiate the terms of their safety by exchanging one type of autonomy for another. Daphne saves herself from the trauma of rape, preserving her physical/sexual autonomy, but must sacrifice her human body and power of speech to do so, thereby losing her verbal/political autonomy. Although Apollo does not succeed in raping her, the threat of rape is enough to silence her forever. To be a woman in the *Metamorphoses* is to be perpetually aware of one's vulnerability—Daphne's trauma lies not in the act of rape but in the loss of her humanity, her identity, as a consequence of her sexual vulnerability.

Io and Callisto both experience rape by Jupiter but proceed down divergent paths of post-rape development. Ovid's narrative of Io, contrary to nearly every rape account in the *Metamorphoses*, ends with a kind of recovery. At first, it appears that she may remain forever isolated and voiceless in bovine form (622-641), but a pivotal shift occurs when she returns to the river Inachus and reveals her story to her father and sisters (642-663). Despite the loss of her *pudor* and humanity both, Inachus makes every attempt to re-integrate Io into his community. He does not lay blame on her for the rape, nor does he speak of the disgrace his family will suffer because her virtue has been compromised; rather, he responds with grief and plans aloud how they may face her misfortune as a family.¹²² Although Argus separates Io from her family again and she faces further tribulations before she is restored to her body, Inachus' acceptance of her situation ultimately lays the groundwork for her recovery. Callisto, having no such support system after Diana exiles her, is denied this chance to recover. With these two narratives, Ovid shows how a victim's circumstances, communities, and willingness to connect affect the

¹²²It is unlikely that the family of a river god would practically suffer much social disgrace, but in the mortal community the rape of a citizen woman would be a serious issue—as in the case of Hippodame (*Met.* 12.210-244).

trajectory of her post-rape experiences.

Philomela's story dwells most literally on the rape victim's loss of speech—both as a consequence of sexual violation and as an act of violence in and of itself. Like Io, Philomela finds a way to communicate her trauma to her sister. By using the visual-physical medium of weaving, Philomela can express the unspeakable trauma of her abuse and simultaneously reach out for rescue. More than any other victim in the *Metamorphoses*, Philomela refuses to be silent: she threatens to expose Tereus without care for her reputation, and, even after he cuts out her tongue, she pursues justice in whatever way she can. The gruesome vengeance set into motion by Procne may preclude the possibility of recovery for Philomela, but, in the end, it is she who demonstrates most clearly the subversive power of traumatic testimony.

CHAPTER 4: THE *FASTI*: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE VIOLATED FEMALE BODY

Unlike the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's *Fasti* are concerned with Roman myth and legend—that is, stories and traditions specific to Roman culture and religion. Although some of these stories stem from older Greek variations, Ovid recasts them as foundational to the Roman calendar and to a larger Roman ideology. The *Fasti* thus allow for a deeper examination of women's trauma and the female body vis-à-vis Roman political power structures and religious tradition. The rape tales of the *Fasti* contribute to a collective ethos, which aligns the sanctity of the Roman state with the unpolluted body of a respectable citizen woman. In this chapter I discuss how Ovid problematizes Rome's nostalgia for its legendary past by drawing attention to the ways in which Roman masculinity idealizes the victimization of women.

As in the *Metamorphoses*, the rapes of the *Fasti* serve an aetiological purpose, but the two works differ significantly in scope and topic. The *Metamorphoses* trace the path of Graeco-Roman myth from the universe's origins up to Ovid's own time, addressing Rome only in the last three books. The *Fasti*, by contrast, are concerned specifically with Rome, creating both a genealogy of Roman power as well as a historical pattern by which Roman power may be continually expanded and legitimized. Ovid writes accounts of rape or attempted rape ostensibly to explain the origins of festivals in the Roman calendar or of traditional Roman institutions—institutions fundamentally fixated on gender relations and dynamics as performed and legislated in the context of the Augustan regime.

Although the *Fasti* are organized by the calendar, with a book for each month, the schema focuses on the ancestral religious and political origins of Rome's celebrations, including astronomical lore for the benefit of farmers and sailors, as well as Greek mythical elements: topics, as Fränkel says, with mass appeal for a Roman audience with a nationalistic interest in Rome's past and future (1945, 144-145). Ovid's calendrical framework provides ample opportunity to add stories where he wishes, allowing him to manipulate topic and chronology without betraying his original design. He introduces a host of narrators with varying perspectives, focuses on minor events while downplaying major ones, and plays with the multiplicity of origin theories for different aspects of Roman tradition (Newlands 1995, 12). One such example is the narrative of the Sabines, discussed below, which one would expect in the book for August with the Consualia festival, but which appears instead at the Kalends of March with the description of the Matronalia. The episode is told by Mars, who highlights aspects different from what a reader might expect from Ovid's narrator. Such temporal movement and narrative choice reflect a larger concern of the work: "engage[ment] with the evolving present as well as the past"—a poetic conversation between the contemporary Augustan regime and the storied past that Augustus was hoping to revitalize (*ibid.*, 9).

As discussed in Chapter 3, Ovid critiques the power dynamic between autocrat and artist throughout the *Metamorphoses*. In the *Fasti*, he elaborates on this theme by introducing a confrontation over the control of time, particularly its manipulation for political power (Newlands 2015, 99-100).¹²³ As in the *Metamorphoses*, though, much of the struggle between autocrat and artist, between ruler and ruled, is illustrated through rape narratives, which highlight the injustice of Roman power structures through the lens of gendered violence. In the *Fasti*,

¹²³Newlands' 2015 monograph further expounds upon the ways that Ovid interrogates traditional Roman legends. For supporting scholarship, see: Hinds 1992a, Hinds 1992b, Feeney 1992, and Barchiesi 1997.

because of his concern with Rome itself, Ovid refers to Augustus' innovations and moral conceits, directly linking the cruelty of male sexual entitlement to Augustus' bid for domestic control and linking the helplessness of the raped woman to a people unable to resist the machine of Augustan progress.¹²⁴

Still, Ovid's treatment of rape narratives in the *Fasti* goes beyond a conflict over Augustan legislation: he also looks back on the history of a Roman ideology built upon the commodification, exploitation, and destruction of the female body. Angeline Chiu hesitates to state that the whole of the *Fasti* is gendered (2016, 18), but Jessica Wise persuasively argues that the *Fasti* continue Ovid's poetic oeuvre of challenging gendered power imbalances through mythical narratives (2017). Indeed, Ovid "shows women as essential figures in the creation of the Roman state, its history, religion, and politics and thereby challenges the Augustan narrative of Roman history that resigns women to roles in the domestic sphere" (*ibid.*, 81).

Ovid's realistic representations of women's trauma and the gruesomeness of their suffering indicate some objection not only to contemporary gendered legislation but also to Roman ideology as a whole. While the *Fasti* are a creation of the Augustan Age and the specific legal issues that resulted in Ovid's exile from Rome, Ovid instills in them a timeless critique of male power structures throughout Roman history. Part of this critique involves engaging with the moralizing authors in his own cohort—primarily Livy, whose history offers up legendary Roman heroes as symbolic *exempla* of the qualities lacking in the citizens of Augustan society. Ovid, treating many of the same episodes from *Ab urbe condita* 1, challenges the reliability of such exemplars by revealing their "artificiality" and deconstructing the Livian ideal of self-fashioning

¹²⁴There is not space here to address Ovid's relationship with Augustus and with Augustan legislation, suffice to say that it was a complicated one. For details about Augustus' public and domestic programs, see: Csillag 1976; Zanker 1988, 167-192; McGinn 1991; McGinn 1998; Wallace-Hadrill 1998, 43-62; Milnor 2005, 47-93; McGinn 2008; McGinn 2013.

(Chiu 2016, 20). Livy's work, regardless of the author's personal opinions of the principate, aligns with the moral underpinnings of the Augustan regime, promoting pious, courageous men and chaste, industrious women, both of whom strive to improve the Roman state by maintaining the integrity of their bodies.¹²⁵ Ovid's versions of myth and legend in the *Fasti* highlight the injustice of male leaders in fashioning Roman ideology through the exploitation of the female body. Women, in fact, are not participating in self-fashioning in the way that Livy depicts them; rather, their bodies serve as the battleground upon which men fight to create their own identities, and it is from the destruction inherent to male power struggles that women define themselves. In many cases, however, Ovid does not depict a triumphant end for female victims of trauma.

As Wise argues, the suppression of the rape victims of Book 2 indicates that the Romans' pursuit of male desire must always result in the victimization of women and that their ideal of authority is, for this reason, problematic (2017, 130). Of the women in Book 2, I have chosen to discuss Lara and Lucretia: the former's rape results in the birth of the Lares, symbols of domestic surveillance, while the latter's is, perhaps, the most important foundational legend for defining the civic role of Roman women. I perform a close analysis of each tale, focusing on the language Ovid employs around the act of rape and, where appropriate, the symptoms of post-rape trauma. In the case of Lara, Ovid focuses on the ways that women "speak" to power by protecting each other from male sexual entitlement. Although Lara is able to prevent Jupiter from raping her sister Juturna, she is punished for practicing dissent and, as a result, becomes a rape victim of Mercury. While Ovid does not dwell on her experience post-rape, his emotionally charged description of her wordless pleas for mercy intensifies the injustice of Jupiter's and Mercury's

¹²⁵While scholars debate the exact relationship between Livy and Augustus, the early books of *Ab urbe condita* are consistent with the early moral legislation of Augustus' rule; therefore, the views and aims of Livy will not be discussed here (Wise 2017, 2 f. 2).

actions.

In Lucretia's story, Ovid builds upon Livy's earlier narrative by characterizing Lucretia as both a tragic heroine and an elegiac *puella*, a woman who loves her husband and worries for his safety, but also has an inner life of her own. Ovid narrates Lucretia's thought processes in detail during the rape itself, drawing attention to her powerlessness and emotional response to threat from Sextus Tarquinius. Following the rape, he emphasizes that her suffering is *personal*, in direct contradiction to Livy's account, which characterizes Lucretia's rape as a violation of Roman custom rather than of a human being. The rape of Lucretia for Ovid is foundational to Roman morality, but not in the nationalistic way that it is in Roman tradition; rather, her rape signifies the way in which women's trauma is historically manipulated by men in order to further a patriarchal political agenda.

In my final section, I address Ovid's narrative of the Sabine women in Book 3 of the *Fasti*, in combination with his earlier treatment of the story in *Ars Amatoria* 1. Although the account in the *Fasti* hardly touches on the abduction itself, an audience would have been invited to recall both Livy's version and the version in the *Ars*, which pays unique attention to the various peritraumatic responses of the Sabine girls. As in my previous examples, Ovid focuses on not only the victimization of women but also the brutality of male perpetrators of violence. In the *Ars*, the girls' fear and misery are juxtaposed with the triumphant cruelty of the Roman soldiers abducting them; in the *Fasti*, the shrewd initiative of Hersilia and her fellow Sabine wives is contrasted with Romulus' tendency toward thoughtless violence.

These three episodes of Ovid's *Fasti* represent a larger concern of the work with the relationship between gendered violence and Roman power structures (Feeney 1992; Newlands 1995; Chiu 2016; Wise 2017). In this chapter, I address specifically how Ovid portrays the

physical and mental experiences of female characters who suffer rape at the hands of Roman gods and leaders. He centers the perspective of these rape victims with heartbreaking detail, depicting responses and behavior patterns recognizable now as somatic reactions to trauma or symptoms of PTSD. In closely reading these episodes, I identify how Ovid draws attention to women's suffering and elicits pity from his audience. Further, I show how his descriptions align with modern accounts of rape trauma and post-rape PTSD. With his realistic depictions of rape victims, Ovid strengthens his criticism of Roman male authority with emotional weight and a keen sense of humanity shared among the oppressed.

***Fasti* 2.585-616: Lara**

At the beginning of this episode, Lara is framed not as a victim but as a protector of her fellow divine women: the crux of the story is not the trauma of her assault but the price she pays for speaking to power and thwarting Jupiter's rape of Juturna, if only temporarily.¹²⁶ As if to highlight the power differential between the king of the gods and the nymphs, Ovid begins the tale with a tongue-in-cheek comment about Jupiter's suffering: "Jupiter, overcome by an immoderate lust for Juturna, bore many things that should not be endured by so great a god" (*Iuppiter, inmodico Iuturnae victus amore / multa tulit tanto non patienda deo*, 585-586). With this initial statement, Ovid seems to be highlighting how small the inconvenience to Jupiter is of Lara enabling Juturna's escape. His sarcastic tone emphasizes Jupiter's perspective, that as the king of the gods he is entitled to the body of whatever nymph he wants, but also indicates that the true suffering of the narrative is inflicted not upon Jupiter, but upon those without the privilege of godly power and male sexual entitlement. Ovid's brief introduction communicates to

¹²⁶Vergil confirms in *Aeneid* 12 (139 ff.) that Jupiter does successfully assault Juturna at some point, and so it seems that Ovid's story acts as a prequel to Juturna's actual rape (Murgatroyd 2003).

the reader, before the narrative even begins, that the next story will address power dynamics between men and women, rulers and subjects.

When Jupiter makes the decision to rape Juturna, he cannot simply demand the nymphs' complicity. Ovid's story shows a divine king who must persuade Juturna's sisters rather than command them (Chiu 2016, 89): it takes only Lara's refusal to thwart his plans. Nevertheless, he easily convinces the other nymphs: "he had spoken; all of the nymphs of the Tiber had assented" (*dixerat; adnuerat nymphe Tibirinides omnes*, 597). Ovid's version of events here indicates not only that Jupiter is in some way fallible, but also that the traditional family structure is flawed: a husband commits adultery, sisters betray each other to their rapists. Lara alone does not participate in this familial treachery. She not only resolves to warn Juturna of Jupiter's scheme, but she also reveals Jupiter's unfaithfulness to Juno, thus pointing out the inherent instability of the Roman *familia* by refusing to take part in this double betrayal (McDonough 2004, 361).

Matthew Robinson suggests that Lara feigns pity for Juno when she reveals Jupiter's plans (2011, 385). Ovid writes, "she even approaches Juno, and, having pitied married women, she says, 'Your husband loves the Naiad Juturna'" (*illa etiam Iunonem adiit, miserataque nuptas / 'Naida Iuturnam vir tuus' inquit 'amat'*, 605-606). I do not believe that Ovid's language here implies any pretending on Lara's part, but it is possible that her feelings of pity do highlight some disapproval, or even contempt, of the traditional family structure. With the short phrase *miserataque nuptas*, Ovid sneaks in a pithy but powerful observation about how the institution of marriage affects wives.

Furthermore, Juno plays no role in the story and appears only in these two lines. Robinson correctly observes that Juno's lack of response to Lara is surprising, considering both Lara's tactlessness and the gods' history of blaming their messengers—as in the stories of Echo (*Met.*

3.336-401) and of the Crow and Raven (*Met.* 2.531-565) (*ibid.*, 385). Ovid's choice to include Juno, without ascribing Lara's punishment to her, indicates that, for once, the jealous queen is not a villain in the story.¹²⁷ All of the horrors here are committed by men. Juturna's fellow nymphs may acquiesce to Jupiter's demands, but they do so, most likely, because they understand what will happen to them if they do not—that is, what happens to Lara when she rebels. This story, unlike many other Ovidian rape stories, is divided sharply along gender lines: the women are the victims, while the men are oppressors.

It follows that Lara's punishment is in fact a "punishment of sisterhood," as Amy Richlin aptly observes (2014, 153). Lara's actions against Jupiter draw together all the women of the story to oppose his sexual entitlement: she bridges the gap between the rape victim and the betrayed wife, using her voice to unite both against Jupiter, a threat to women's sexual safety as well as to the sanctity of the marriage institution. As in the story of Philomela, discussed in Chapter 3, the power of speech proves a double-edged sword. On the one hand, Lara prevents Juturna's rape (at least for the time being), but on the other her "unfettered, unruly speech is subject to imperial repression" (Chiu 2016, 127). There is, in fact, no freedom of speech under autocratic rule; perhaps this is why Ovid includes the detail that "Almo [Lara's father] had often said to her, 'Daughter, hold your tongue'" (*saepe illi dixerat Almo / 'nata, tene linguam*, 601-602). Ovid's narration makes it clear that talkativeness—rather, lack of discretion—is a negative trait and must be managed (*ibid.*, 128). Indeed, the "talkativeness" that Lara exhibits in this story is no more than open communication between women that thwarts male sexual violence. Only

¹²⁷Indeed, Ovid's choices in this story must be considered perhaps more carefully than in his rewritings of Greek myth: no other version of Lara's story exists elsewhere in classical literature, nor is one mentioned. Some scholars have posited that Ovid fashioned this story himself, specifically to include in the *Fasti* (Frazer 1929, 453; Robinson 2011, 374).

male characters condemn her use of her voice (Wise 2017, 105).¹²⁸

Lara's punishment shows that the price for speaking to political power is loss of one's own political power. Her powers of speech threaten Jupiter's sexual entitlement, and therefore they must be removed: "Jupiter swelled with anger, and that which she had used indiscreetly, her tongue—he tore it out" (*Iuppiter intumuit, quaque est non usa modeste / eripit huic linguam*, 607-608). Jupiter understands, however, that removing her tongue is not enough to keep Lara from troubling him. Since she is a Naiad, he cannot kill her, but he can banish her to the shades of the Underworld—an exile tantamount to death (Chiu 2016, 129-130). He says to Mercury, "lead this woman to the Underworld: that place is proper for the silent" (*duc hanc ad manes: locus ille silentibus aptus*, 609). According to Jupiter's way of thinking, those without voices, without sway in society, might as well be dead—and, in fact, Franz Bömer notes that *silentes* is generally an epithet of the dead (1958, 127).

Whereas Philomela is silenced after her initial rape, Lara is raped later as a consequence of her silencing—without her voice, she loses any hope of self-protection or self-assertion (Chiu 2016, 130; Wise 2017, 106). Once Mercury takes her, things escalate quickly:

dicitur illa duci tum placuisse deo.
vim parat hic, voltu pro verbis illa precatur,
et frustra muto nititur ore loqui,
fitque gravis geminosque parit, qui compita servant
et vigilant nostra semper in urbe Lares. 615

They say that she pleased the god who was leading her, then.
He prepares to use force, she begs with her expression in place of words,
and in vain she struggles to speak with mute lips,

¹²⁸The Tacita story which precedes the tale of Lara neatly juxtaposes two types of feminine communities (Chiu 2016, 131). The old women of the Tacita story are practicing intentional silence: "[they] have bound enemy tongues and unfriendly mouths" (*hostiles linguas inimicaque vinximus ora*, 581). Peter Mark Keegan argues that these women enact a "self-censorship which complements masculinist repressions: a policing of the 'enemy within' by those who 'speak-among-women'" (2002, 143). Tacita's followers thus practice among themselves the same silence that empowers patriarchal autocracy. Lara speaks beyond this silence and suffers the ramifications.

and she becomes pregnant and bears twins, who preserve crossroads
and always keep watch in our city—the Lares.¹²⁹

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Robinson points to the importance of the passive *dicitur* leading this portion of the story: now that Lara has no tongue, she may only be spoken of by others and cannot speak her own testimony—her story no longer belongs to her, but to her oppressors (2011, 388). It is further poignant that, as a result of her uncontrolled speech and then the loss of that speech, Lara must now suffer the same fate from which she saved Juturna (Chiu 2016, 130-131). The rape itself is not narrated, and Ovid draws all attention to Lara’s pitiful entreaty of Mercury: her powerlessness, the desperation of her mouth trying and failing to speak on her own behalf. Lara is made fully into the victim, and Mercury into the pitiless attacker—Mercury, whose “association with eloquence and invention of speech” further demonstrates how the institution of language is used as a tool to silence the less powerful and privileged (Robinson 2011, 386).¹³⁰

Ovid’s description of Lara here brings to mind accounts of tonic immobility and constriction given by modern victims of rape. Tonic immobility is a common peritraumatic response to immediate danger: faced with the threat of harm, a victim’s body refuses to move. Grace Galliano et al. first established that the immobility response in rape victims was similar to the tonic immobility observed in animals (1993). This response consists of “gross motor inhibition, motor tremors, analgesia, suppressed vocal behavior, fixed and unfocused stare, and periods of eye closures” (Bovin et al. 2008, 402). Unlike the learned instinct to fight, flee, or freeze, tonic immobility is an involuntary response, which occurs when no chance of escape is perceived and

¹²⁹All translations are my own.

¹³⁰Newlands has observed that Mercury’s role in the *Fasti* seems to promote values of war and exchange associated particularly with rape: when he narrates the rapes of Phoebe and Hilaera in the Comitalis section (5.693-720) Ovid presents through him a “pragmatic view of passion” that underplays interpersonal violence, but in the case of Lara, Ovid emphasizes darkness and brutality, altering the relationship between Mercury and political rape (1995, 72-73).

the body shuts down to protect itself (Galliano et al. 1993, 110). Tiffany Fusé et al. reported in 2007 that a majority of sexual assault victims described experiencing tonic immobility during their assaults and as a result blamed themselves more harshly for being “complicit.” Lara’s wordless stare at Mercury and the absence of any other physical reaction from her indicate that she is experiencing an involuntary freeze response.¹³¹

Lara’s post-rape trauma is not explored, as Ovid moves directly from the assault to the birth of the Lares, household gods symbolic of Roman domesticity and appropriate social behavior. By associating the Lares with this brief tale of political and personal violence, Ovid draws attention to how common Roman social institutions are founded on gendered violence. These Lares are a source of neither encouragement nor pride in Roman social mores. Rather, they recall the political violence of Lara’s silence, the personal/bodily violence of her rape, the consequences of confronting power, and the ability of those in authority to restrict the autonomy of common people (Feeney 1992, 12; Newlands 1995, 161; Chiu 2016, 133; Wise 2017, 109-110). This fundamental symbol of the principate is built upon the unjustified brutalization of a woman’s body.

Lara herself is used merely as a mechanism to introduce the origin of the Lares. She disappears from the narrative halfway through a sentence, and Ovid does not even finish narrating her rape before transitioning to her sons (615). When the Lares replace her in the narrative, they coopt her name, and “her identity is erased through masculinized appropriation” (Keegan 2002, 143). The trauma of the rape occurs “offscreen,” almost as if Ovid is intentionally concealing the violence of the rape to decenter her from the narrative. Yet Ovid’s decision to emphasize the pathos of Lara’s wordless begging is more powerful than if he narrated the actual

¹³¹On tonic immobility in Ovid’s *Amores*, see Wise 2020.

assault. He juxtaposes her desolation jarringly with the sudden introduction of the Lares, so that it is impossible to separate these deities of Augustan surveillance from the suffering of their mother.

Unlike my other examples throughout this project, Lara's story offers little in the way of post-traumatic symptoms and material for modern psychological comparison. I discuss in Chapter 3 the importance of testimony and community for the recovery of rape victims, but in the case of Lara one may only speculate. Because she disappears from the narrative post-rape, her potential for recovery is concealed from the reader. It is probable, however, given her exile to the Underworld, that she would not have access to community; and without her tongue, the opportunity for speaking out about her experience would be minimal.

Ovid's omission of Lara's post-rape experience perhaps represents the effect that political silencing has upon the silenced. Philomela's rape, discussed in Chapter 3, interferes with the stability of the status quo, both domestic and political; while speaking out may affect her own reputation, it is even more damaging to Tereus. Lara, however, is a casualty of the selfish whims of the ruling class. Even if she had the ability and occasion to speak of her rape, it would have no effect on Jupiter's or Mercury's influences, nor would she be considered a victim, per se. Like other women before her, she might be regarded as fortunate, since she was chosen by god and made the mother of gods.¹³²

Lara's traumatic experience becomes fodder for the foundation of Roman institutions, but Ovid emphasizes the brutality and exploitation upon which these institutions are built and problematizes their violent beginnings (Wise 2017, 102). Although the Lares displace Lara from

¹³²Many examples of "fortunate" rape victims can be found in Pindar: Evadne in *Olympian* 6, Protogeneia in *Olympian* 9, Aegina in *Isthmian* 8, and Cyrene in *Pythian* 9. For a detailed analysis of rapes in Pindar, see De Boer 2017. Other examples in Graeco-Roman literature include Moschus' Europa and Livy's Sabine women (1.9-13).

the narrative, they forever carry the name of their mother, who bore them through mutilation and violation. Lara's rape, as Richlin writes, "propels a story not her own," but Ovid's story ensures that she is remembered as a victim of the patriarchal political system of imperial rule—silenced for preventing a rape and raped for no other reason than her vulnerability (2014, 154).

***Fasti* 2.741-848: Lucretia**

Lara's story is brief and extant only in the *Fasti*, but the story of Lucretia is well known and often retold, most famously by Livy. Ovid's version is longer than Livy's and more focused on the character of Lucretia—the experience and aftermath of her rape, as well as her personal thoughts and motivations. Livy focuses not on Lucretia herself, but rather the political consequences of her rape and suicide: the violation of her matronly chastity is merely the mechanism by which the anti-monarchic revolution is triggered. For him, Lucretia is an exemplum more than a real person, as are most of the women in *Ab urbe condita*. The female body serves as a physical avatar of Rome itself, both its land and its people (Klindienst, 1990; Joshel 1992; Dougherty 1998; Henry and James 2012). Livy never calls Lucretia's goodness into question, but the very fact of her beauty explains both her vulnerability and Sextus Tarquinius' actions: as an exemplary woman, she has the ability to affect both good and evil men (Joshel 1992, 120). Furthermore, once she has set political change into motion through her death, "she must go," so that Brutus can demonstrate his heroism (*ibid.*). Lucretia certainly suffers, but Livy draws attention away from her personal trauma and centers it on her reaction to dishonor and her expression of Roman virtue. The story as told by Livy is not so much a tragedy as it is success story of Roman ethics and tenacity. Through her suicide, Lucretia proves the extent of her virtue, and her family shows the mettle of Roman men by overthrowing the Tarquins.

Ovid's version, however, displays more overtly the trauma of the rape itself and the way Lucretia suffers as an individual rather than as a physical representation of the city (Newlands 1995, 147). Although Ovid ostensibly frames each individual myth as an aetiology for a festival, the stories of the *Fasti* feature heavily pathetic dialogue and imagery. The tone he strikes is not one of pride, nor even of sarcasm. His version of Lucretia reads like a true tragedy—the story performs its aetiological function but does not foster any sense of Roman nationalism. Nevertheless, at some points Ovid's language and narrative rhythm nearly match Livy's version. These brief imitative moments are meaningful, given that Ovid published the *Fasti* over thirty years after Livy wrote Book 1 of *Ab urbe condita*. Ovid is intentional about which elements to retain and which to alter: his decision to showcase Lucretia's innocence, her fear during the rape, and her trauma in the aftermath indicate his desire to bring her humanity into focus.

Even before the rape, the reader is invited to sympathize with Ovid's Lucretia, as she is depicted weeping for the safety of her warring husband and clinging to him lovingly (741-760). She is at the same time modest and expressive. Compare her to Livy's Lucretia, whom scholars have often described as stern and without charm.¹³³ Julia Hejduk observes, “of all the women raped in the *Fasti*, Lucretia is the only one who is given such a speech beforehand, increasing her stature and the magnitude of her tragedy” (2011, 26). When she finishes speaking, her husband is so affected by her words that he cannot contain himself: “‘set aside your fears, I have come,’ said her husband; she revived, and she hung from her husband's neck, a sweet burden” (*‘pone metum, veni’ coniunx ait; illa revixit, / deque viri collo dulce pependit onus*, 759-760). Ovid establishes that Lucretia is not only a good Roman wife, but that she has a genuinely loving relationship

¹³³A. G. Lee writes that Livy's Lucretia is “a virtuous prototype of Lady Macbeth” (1953, 116). Chiu describes her as a “plaster saint”: she is “courageous, formidable, stoic and worthy of emulation, but she is also emotionally remote and largely charmless” (2016, 53).

with Collatinus. There is an emotional charge to this scene not present in Livy's version, which describes Lucretia briefly as "busied with her wool, despite the late night, sitting among her slave-women working by lamplight in the middle of the house" (*nocte sera deditam lanae inter lucubrantes ancillas in medio aedium sedentem*, 57.9). Ovid's extension of the scene, and of Lucretia's character, invites an emotional investment in her as a person.

The rape scene begins in each narrative with similar words from Sextus. In Ovid: "there is a sword with me, Lucretia," says the son of the king, "and I, Tarquinius, speak" (*ferrum, Lucretia, mecum est, / natus ait regis, 'Tarquiniusque loquor'* (795-796). In Livy: "be silent, Lucretia," he says; "I am Sextus Tarquinius; there is a sword in my hand; you will die if you utter a sound" (*tace, Lucretia, inquit; 'Sex. Tarquinius sum; ferrum in manu est; moriere, si emiseris vocem'*, 58.2). After Sextus' threat, the differences between the two sources stand out. According to Livy, Sextus first attempts to seduce Lucretia, but finds that she is "resolute and not swayed even by the fear of death" (*obstinatam . . . ne mortis quidem metu inclinari*, 58.4). Although Livy does initially describe Lucretia as "frightened" (*pavida*, 58.3) upon waking, in his version she is depicted as steadfast in her resolve and thinking of her family's honor above her own safety. Livy's account clearly signals that his is a story about the violation not of a human being but of Roman honor: words of morality (e.g., *decus, dedecus, pudicitia*, etc.) are sprinkled throughout Chapter 58.

Ovid, by contrast, dwells on the terror of Lucretia's situation, following up Sextus' initial statement with one of his classic similes comparing Lucretia to a lamb and Sextus to a wolf (799-800). He then strengthens this tone of helplessness by drawing the reader into Lucretia's desperate mind (801-804):

quid faciat? pugnet? vincetur femina pugnans.
clamet? at in dextra, qui vetet, ensis erat.

effugiat? positis urgentur pectora palmis,
tum primum externa pectora tacta manu.

What should she do? Should she fight? A woman fighting would be conquered.
Should she cry out? But in his right hand was the sword, which forbade it.
Should she flee? Her chest is constrained by the hands set on it,
a chest then touched for the first time by a stranger's hand.

Ovid allows a brief glimpse into the victim's thought process. She runs through each option and the reason each would fail, rendering the conflict at once more personal and more vivid (Robinson 2011, 492).¹³⁴ At the end of the triad of options, Ovid throws in the extra detail that Lucretia has never been touched by anyone other than her husband. In this moment, her mind turns from practical considerations to the physicality of the moment and its personal implications. Ovid homes in on Lucretia's distress and desire to escape, focusing on the threat to her personal safety rather than Sextus' villainy or the sociopolitical implications of the rape.

As in Livy, Sextus threatens to frame Lucretia for adultery with an enslaved man, and it is fear for her *pudicitia* that drives her to "consent" to the rape.¹³⁵ In Ovid's words, "the girl surrendered, defeated by fear for her reputation" (*succubuit famae victa puella metu*, 810).¹³⁶ Lucretia's willingness to compromise her own safety to guarantee a degree of control over her sexual purity indicates, in both versions, how thoroughly she is subsumed by the Roman patriarchal value system, which "makes female chastity the highest priority" and seeks to

¹³⁴Robinson also mentions that in these lines Ovid may be responding to Livy by clarifying why she does not escape or fight back (2011, 492).

¹³⁵It is notable that in both Livy's and Ovid's versions Sextus does not merely take Lucretia by force; he seems to gain some perverse pleasure from corrupting her *pudicitia* rather than destroying it. For more on this psychological complexity, see: Langlands 2006, 88-96; Robinson 2011, 489-490.

¹³⁶The use of *puella* here to describe Lucretia highlights her youth and innocence, perhaps elevating the emotion of the text, but more pointedly it underscores the parallel Ovid constructs between this episode and the elegiac relationship (Robinson 2011, 495). For more on Lucretia's rape as a twisted elegy, see: Newlands 1995, 146-174; Fox 1996, 210-217; Keegan 2002, 146-152; Murgatroyd 2005, 191-200; Hejduk 2011, 25-26; Chiu 2016, 58.

“restrict and mold female behavior” (Newlands 1995, 152-153). Given no other choice and knowing that she will be raped—and possibly killed—if she refuses, Lucretia, by offering “consent,” may at least preserve a semblance of agency and personally explain the situation to her husband and father.

Livy’s Lucretia overtly transforms her rape into an opportunity for self-fashioning by inviting an audience to her chambers the morning after and demanding that they avenge her loss of honor (58.5-8). With her words, she crafts her own legacy and facilitates the downfall of the Tarquins by enjoining the men of her family to answer the crime against her (Newlands 1995, 151-152). But, as Newlands writes, “whereas Livy’s Lucretia is notable for her eloquence, Ovid’s Lucretia is marked by her silence” (*ibid.*, 148). The Lucretia of the *Fasti* clearly demonstrates symptoms of trauma after Sextus departs, responding to her ordeal in a more realistic, human way than the “exemplary” Lucretia of *Ab urbe condita* (Robinson 2011, 496). Ovid depicts her internalizing the rape, struggling to speak, and turning to suicide for personal reasons rather than societal or political ones (813-834):

iamque erat orta dies: passis sedet illa capillis, ut solet ad nati mater itura rogum, grandaevumque patrem fido cum coniuge castris evocat: et posita venit uterque mora.	815
utque vident habitum, quae luctus causa, requirunt, cui paret exsequias, quoque sit icta malo. illa diu reticet pudibundaque celat amictu ora: fluunt lacrimae more perennis aquae.	820
hinc pater, hinc coniunx lacrimas solantur et orant indicet et caeco flentque paventque metu. ter conata loqui ter destitit, ausaque quarto non oculos ideo sustulit illa suos.	
‘hoc quoque Tarquinio debebimus? eloquar’ inquit, ‘eloquar infelix dedecus ipsa meum?’	825
quaeque potest, narrat; restabant ultima: flevit, et matronales erubere genae. dant veniam facto genitor coniunxque coactae: ‘quam’ dixit ‘veniam vos datis, ipsa nego.’	830

nec mora, celato fixit sua pectora ferro,
et cadit in patrios sanguinolenta pedes.
tum quoque iam moriens ne non procumbat honeste
respicit: haec etiam cura cadentis erat.

And the day had already begun: she sits with her hair unbound,
just as a mother is accustomed to when about to visit her son's grave.
She summoned her aged father from the camp with her faithful husband, 815
and putting aside delay, each one came.
And as they see her condition, they asked what the cause of her grief is,
for whom she prepares the funeral procession, and by what evil she has been
struck. For a long time, she is silent and hides her ashamed face with her
garment: her tears flow like an unceasing stream. 820
On one side her father, on the other her husband soothes her tears and
beg for her to explain, and they weep and shudder with blind fear.
Thrice she tries to speak, thrice she stops, and the fourth time, daring,
she still could not raise her eyes.
'Will I owe this also to a Tarquin? Must I speak,' she says, 825
'must I myself speak of my calamitous disgrace?'
What she is able to, she tells; at last, she was silent: she wept,
and her matronly cheeks reddened.
Her father and husband forgive her the deed, that she was compelled:
She said, 'The forgiveness you offer I deny myself.' 830
There was no delay, she pierced her chest with a concealed blade,
and she falls, covered in blood, at the feet of her father.
Even then, already dying, she takes care to sink down decently:
Even this was a concern for the falling woman.¹³⁷

Ovid's description of Lucretia's grief is powerful. She sits unkempt, like a mourner, long into the morning and for the hours it takes for her father and husband to reach her.¹³⁸ She cannot bear to look at them for her shame and cannot even put into words the trauma of her rape. The very act of narrating doubles the emotional impact, as if she is raped twice (Robinson 2011, 498-499). When, on her fourth attempt, she summons speech, she can only in limited words describe the horror of the trauma, and afterward she once again falls into ashamed silence. As in Livy,

¹³⁷Lucretia's final act of modesty is almost certainly inspired by Euripides' Polyxena, who draws her garments around herself as she falls to the sword of Neoptolemus (*Hecuba* 568-570) (Frazer 1929, 508).

¹³⁸Lucretia's mourning behaviors mirror Philomela's actions of tearing her hair and beating her breast, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Bömer 1958, 137).

Lucretius and Collatinus absolve her of blame, but she chooses suicide anyway.

It is particularly Ovid's depiction of Lucretia's suicide that emphasizes her suffering and powerlessness in the face of the Roman patriarchal system. She is not at all concerned with her legacy or exemplarity in the way that Livy's Lucretia is: she simply cannot forgive herself for the violation of her marriage bed, regardless of her complicity. It is her deep shame and self-blame that drives her to kill herself. She cannot perceive a future for herself once her chastity has been compromised. In Newlands' words, "Lucretia's silence, originally a sign of her terror and her anguish, becomes in the end also a form of protection and control, a way of preserving the last shreds of decorum and decency that ensure her a place within Rome's patriarchal society" (1995, 167). In this vein, Lucretia's silence represents not only a symptom of trauma and her limited control, but also the inability of the female voice to subvert male power dynamics. Her voice deserts her when Sextus first appears and again when she attempts to confess the rape, preventing the mere expression of her desires and emotions. In death, her silence allows Brutus to use her dead body as a tool for his own political designs: a silent prop used to further male desire, as she was for Sextus (Joshel 1992, 126-127; Newlands 1995, 154).

Livy's Lucretia seemingly practices agency out of feminine pride, but on a practical level, Livy uses her character to further the masculine agenda of political revolution.¹³⁹ Her rape is not a crime against an individual, but against Collatinus' household and, therefore, the stability of

¹³⁹Many scholars see Livy's Lucretia in a more empowering light. Elizabeth Vandiver writes that "her voluntary death shows, without equivocation, the possibility of self-sacrifice and courage on the part of private Roman citizens, female as well as male, when necessity requires it" (1999, 216). While I believe her view has merit, I think she overlooks the broad patterns of women's bodies being sacrificed for the advancement of the Roman patriarchal agenda. Livy's Lucretia is offered no opportunity to grieve the loss of her innocence and fundamental value as a woman. While she appears powerful in the way she chooses Roman virtue, she does so at the expense of her humanity.

Rome itself (Joshel 1992, 122).¹⁴⁰ Ovid's Lucretia, though her death is appropriated by Brutus to serve his political purpose, is an expression of real human suffering. Ovid's description of post-rape trauma, placed in the middle of an aetiological narrative, demonstrates how the contemporary political institutions of Rome are founded upon the oppression of actual underprivileged individuals. Lucretia's character in the *Fasti* does not serve a higher Roman ideal, nor does her rape fulfill a political purpose. Ultimately, her suicide is a private, emotional choice. Livy removes Lucretia's subjectivity from the post-rape narrative, while Ovid highlights it (Wise 2017, 120).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the silence of victims following trauma is a major symptom of PTSD. Ovid's Lucretia knows that she wishes to disclose what happened to her husband and father, but her mind and body seem physically to prevent her from speaking: she weeps uncontrollably, hides her face, stops and starts three times before haltingly explaining what has happened. Her behavior mirrors the first symptom listed by Ann Burgess and Lynda Holmstrom in their seminal article on rape-related PTSD (1974, 985): "increasing signs of anxiety as the interview progresses, such as long periods of silence, blocking of associations, minor stuttering, and physical distress." One might expect the support and forgiveness of Lucretius and Collatinus—contrary to the open hostility often displayed when victims disclose rape—to aid Lucretia in recovery, but even their validation does not provide the necessary safety and security for her to see a future in Roman society.

Lucretia's suicide is, from her perspective, perhaps the only way that she can exert control in the face of her pain and shame. She denies herself forgiveness, and as she dies, she even

¹⁴⁰Sandra Joshel also reminds us that "male action against the tyrant (it should be emphasized) begins not with rape but with the woman's death" (1992, 124). After death, she constitutes no threat and can be manipulated to suit men's purposes (*ibid.*, 124-125).

controls the way she falls so as to maintain dignity. Up to the end, she attempts to curate her image—not as an exemplum in the way that Livy’s Lucretia does, but as an honorable wife and daughter. Her impetus is not the wellbeing of the Roman ethos but her grief and the reputation of her immediate family: she can exert control only over her own body, not over men’s actions nor society’s response.

A 2012 study of ten individuals demonstrated that the overall theme of a suicidal mind may be described as “being in want of control” (Pavulans et al. 2012, 4). A suicide attempt is not necessarily propelled by pain or grief, but rather by the supposition that there is no way to control those emotions, or the chaos of one’s life, other than by putting an end to the human experience. Lucretia certainly feels pain and grief in the aftermath of her rape, but it is her lack of control over the societal consequences of her violation that ultimately leads to her death. The urge to commit suicide is common in individuals with PTSD, but especially in survivors of rape. A 1985 study of victims who had suffered a variety of violent crimes showed that of rape survivors with no previous history of suicidality, nearly one in five attempted suicide, while 44% reported prolonged suicidal ideation (Kilpatrick et al. 1985, 869). Lucretia’s physical reactions to disclosure of the rape and her suicide are both realistic responses according to modern studies of rape trauma.

Ovid’s Lucretia does not have the poise and forward thinking of Livy’s Lucretia: she acts inwardly, focusing on her own body and experience, rather than outwardly in reference to the greater Roman ethos. This narrative is emotional and tragic, lacking the inspirational tone that Livy employs in his history. Rather than lauding Lucretia as an exemplary heroine, Ovid mourns her loss of innocence and autonomy, as well as the manipulation of her corpse by Brutus to serve his political agenda: like Daphne, she suffers violence from male desire and entitlement, and then

her body is appropriated as a symbol of male conquest. In the words of Joshel, “women are made dead, and men come alive” (1992, 128).

Livy tells this story in the context of a greater historical narrative, offering a chronological series of events that shows why the Roman people found the strength to overthrow the monarchy.¹⁴¹ Ovid, by contrast, freely arranges the *Fasti* to suit the overall schema of the work. His inclusion of the Lucretia narrative is a conscious decision, as the origin of the Regifugium, to which Ovid attaches her story, may have nothing to do with her at all.¹⁴² Nevertheless, Ovid includes Lucretia’s rape, lengthens the narrative to emphasize her humanity and individuality, and dwells on the emotional and physical symptoms of the trauma. Lucretia chooses suicide out of despair and loss of control in the *Fasti*, demonstrating how masculine power structures can enforce familial unity but will also tear them apart (Dolansky 2016, 45-46). The political agenda moves forward, while individual households and people must suffer for progress. As Patricia Joplin has observed, perhaps Lucretia is not the victim of sexual desire, per se, but of the “underlying cultural structure” that encourages male competition, blames victims for the violence perpetrated against them, and associates political power with the giving or withholding of the female body (1990, 53-55).

¹⁴¹Livy later repeats the same formula in the story of Verginia (1.44-48). He even compares the two women, writing that Verginia’s story is, “no less foul in its consequence than what had expelled the Tarquins from the city and from rule through Lucretia’s rape and death” (*haud minus foedo eventu quam quod per stuprum caedemque Lucretiae urbe regnoque Tarquinius expulerat*, 1.44.1). For a comparison and analysis of these two stories in Livy, see Joshel 1992.

¹⁴²Few ancient sources on the Regifugium are extant, and there is no consensus on its cultural significance in Rome. H. H. Scullard argues that the Romans may have celebrated the festival as a sort of Independence Day because of its association with the expulsion of Rome’s last king; however, its origins lie with the *rex sacrorum*, not Tarquinius Superbus (1981, 81). For more on the Regifugium, see Boyle and Woodard 2000, 203-204.

***Fasti* 3.187-234 and *Ars Amatoria* 1.101-132: The Sabine Women**

While Ovid dwells in detail on the emotionality of Lucretia's story in the *Fasti*, he is surprisingly brief and neutral when he describes the Sabine women in Book 3—or, rather, when the narrator passes the story to Mars: “although you are suited to the ministrations of men, Gradivus, tell me why matrons tend to your festivals” (*cum sis officiis, Gradive, virilibus aptus, / dic mihi matronae cur tua festa colant*, 169-170). Mars skips quickly over the actual abduction to focus on how the women intervene in the war between their fathers and husbands: “the abrupt transition from plans for abduction to the outbreak of war ignores the women so conspicuously that it calls attention to their absence from the narrative” (Miles 1992, 175). The only reference made to the violence of their marriages is the use of *raptae* (“raped”) in lines 203, 207, and 217. Otherwise, Mars' account focuses on the Sabines' choice to intervene and the importance of Roman matrons to his rites on the Kalends of March. Of the rape itself he says only, “Consus will tell you the rest of what happened on that day when he sings of his own sacred rites” (*Consus tibi cetera dicet, / illa facta die dum sua sacra canet*, 199-200).¹⁴³ In fact, Consus provides no insights, as his festival occurs in August and the *Fasti* cover only the first six months of the year.

From the perspective of Mars, the rape narrative is perhaps irrelevant to the question asked by the narrator: it is the Sabines' identity as mothers that takes precedence, not their identity as brides. From the perspective of an experienced reader of Ovid, the avoidance of the Sabines' rape narrative seems pointed and purposeful. The poet's manipulation of source material and time is especially pronounced because Mars describes more accurately the origins of the Festival of Consus—held on August 21—than those of the Kalends of March (Dance 2020). There is no

¹⁴³Ovid often uses *cetera* as a placeholder for omitted sexual violence (Heyworth 2019, 121).

specific need for Ovid to include this interlude about the Sabine women's role as matrons, nor to recall the legend of their abduction. Yet in the *Fasti*, he highlights their agency through the narration of Mars, while only obliquely mentioning the reason for them to come between their husbands and fathers: the original abduction.

As with any work of Ovid's, one must read what is *not* there just as carefully as what *is*: in this case, the absent violence implicit to the Sabines' transformation into mothers. Sharon James points out a similar redaction in the *Metamorphoses*, noting that Ovid avoids the rapes of both Rhea Silvia and the Sabine women in the final books: "this absence amounts to a conspicuous presence, a blank spot in the reader's experience," especially taken in combination with Ovid's fixation on mythological rape in the poem's early books (2016, 165). In the *Fasti*, Ovid mentions the Sabines twice—at the Lupercalia in Book 2 as well as at the Kalends in Book 3—but he chooses to pass over their rape in a work that, like the *Metamorphoses*, includes various other rape tales. Furthermore, he promises (through the voice of Mars) that Consus will reveal the details of Romulus' abduction plan, but Consus never appears, nor is the story told elsewhere (Miles 1992, 175).

A Roman reader would know the legend of the Sabine women's abduction, and likely would have also read Livy's famous version in *Ab urbe condita* 1, published circa 25 BCE. And most readers of the *Fasti* would surely be familiar with Ovid's narration of the abduction in Book 1 of the *Ars Amatoria*, published circa 2 BCE—over two decades after Livy's history and about ten years before both the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*.¹⁴⁴ Both Livy's and Ovid's descriptions focus

¹⁴⁴The *Ars Amatoria* must have been especially notorious among Roman readers because of the speculation that it contributed to Ovid's exile—based on his famous words in the *Tristia*: "two charges destroyed me, a poem and a mistake" (*perdiderint . . . me duo crimina, carmen et error*, 2.207).

It is possible also that Ovid was already looking forward to the *Fasti* while composing the mythical rape excursus of the *Ars Amatoria* (Labate 2006, 195-196).

on the act of abduction and on the reactions of the women, but Livy highlights Romulus' initiative and leadership while Ovid focuses on the individual responses of the women to their situation. As in his other works, Ovid's depiction of the Sabines' trauma is not merely a surface-level account meant to titillate male readers. The context of the narration, the overall tone of the poem, and his attention to the women's individuality communicate an acknowledgement of how women suffer as a result of male sociopolitical entitlement and violence (Hemker 1985, 45).

Throughout my discussion in this section, it will be necessary to switch between Ovid's two different accounts of the Sabine story. I will begin by discussing the background and context of the *Ars Amatoria* before I dive further into the specifics of the rape of the Sabines in Book 1. In the first two books of the *Ars*, the narrator—*praeceptor amoris*—advises men on picking up girls and keeping them interested. Although for many centuries scholars have taken the poem at face value as a sincere guide for destitute young men, most Ovidian experts now recognize the work's ironic tone and its inconsistency between frivolous function and didactic form.¹⁴⁵ The *praeceptor amoris* is “an amusing but pedantic fool” with “virtually no ethical sense and little self-knowledge” (Mack 1988, 90). The very aim of art, as expressed by the poem, is dissimulation and deception (Blodgett 1973, 322). While the *praeceptor amoris* approaches the art of love with the gravity of a philosophical treatise, behind the scenes Ovid pokes fun at Rome's obsessive nostalgia for an, allegedly, more honorable and modest past (Hollis 1977, 51).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵Sara Mack summarizes quite neatly the problems of reading the *Ars Amatoria*: “everything about the poem's form indicates that we are to read the *Ars* as a didactic poem in the serious tradition of Lucretius and Vergil. But, of course, we cannot read it seriously. Ovid has chosen a topic that is frivolous by anyone's standards, shocking by the standards Augustus was trying to revive in Rome, and he treated it in a deadpan fashion—soberly and from all angles, as if it were an important philosophical or ethical question, such as the nature and pursuit of virtue” (1988, 87).

¹⁴⁶For more on the tone and schema of the *Ars Amatoria*, see: Fränkel 1945, 53-67; Blodgett 1973; Churchill 1985; Mack 1988, 83-98; Sharrock 2002; Casali 2006; Volk 2006; Miller 2009; Newlands 2015, 29-35.

One strategy Ovid deploys to create this ironic tone of *gravitas* is the insertion of mythical excursuses throughout the poem, including the Sabine narrative. Such excursuses are often used to elevate the topic of a didactic poem and bring to mind the positive elements of a legendary past—to provide an authoritative *exemplum* from which contemporary readers draw inspiration and, perhaps, nationalistic pride.¹⁴⁷ Konrad Heldmann’s work, however, has shown that Ovid’s use of the mythological excursus reverses the original didactic effect, particularly in the case of the Sabine narrative: the story moves against the idea of an *exemplum*, working opposite the didactic dynamic originally set out by the *praeceptor amoris* (2001, 24 ff.). Mario Labate expounds on Heldmann’s observations, noting that in a work supposedly about civilized *ars*, the Sabine rape narrative offers violent control as a legitimate means of managing relationships between the sexes—despite the *praeceptor amoris*’ insistence on skillful artifice, absent the roughness of primitive virility (2006, 197-198).

The Sabine rape episode occurs when the *praeceptor amoris* offers the theater as a good place for men to meet women: “that place holds damages for chaste modesty. You first made the games worrisome, Romulus, when the raped Sabine gave pleasure to bereft men” (*ille locus casti damna pudoris habet. / primus sollicitos fecisti, Romule, ludos, / cum iuuit viduos rapta Sabina viros*, 100-102). Even in these opening lines, Ovid hints at the violence and destruction inherent to the episode with *damna* and *sollicitos*—both highlighting the negative experience of the women rather than the positive experience of the men. In lines 109-110, he describes the covetous thoughts of the Roman men and emphasizes their treachery and deceit rather than justifying their actions (Hemker 1985, 44-45).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷Such mythical excursuses can be found in Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* and Vergil’s *Georgics*.

¹⁴⁸Ovid also “amuses himself” over the primitiveness of the past, contrary to traditional reverence of Rome’s origins (Hollis 1977, 53).

Once Romulus gives the signal, Ovid launches into a description of the Sabines' responses

(117-126):

ut fugiunt aquilas, timidissima turba, columbae,
ut fugit invisos agna novella lupos:
sic illae timuere viros sine more ruentes;
constitit in nulla qui fuit ante color. 120
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 praeda, puellae, 125
et potuit multas ipse decere timor.

Just as doves, the most fearful flock, flee from eagles,
just as the newborn lamb flees from hateful wolves:
thus, those women feared the men rushing forth lawlessly;
in none of them remained the color that was there before. 120
For there was a single fear, but not a single expression of fear:
some tear their hair, some sit mindlessly;
one is silent, despondent, another calls on her mother in vain:
this one laments, this one is struck senseless; this one stays, that one flees;
the captive girls are led away, nuptial spoils, 125
and the fear itself could make many of them more beautiful.

The comparison of rape victims to doves or lambs is by now familiar to the reader of Ovid, as is the comparison of rapists to animal predators. The choice of eagles and wolves to describe wanton soldiers, however, pointedly negativizes two important animal symbols of Roman military authority (Eidinow 1993; Newlands 2015, 34). Overall, the similes signal a shift away from human civilization, hammered home by the phrase *sine more*: Romulus' soldiers are without law, their actions going against social custom.¹⁴⁹ The abduction is unexpected not only because of Romulus' deception leading up to it, but also because it is such a break from the sociopolitical conventions keeping peace between the Italic peoples. Such a violent departure

¹⁴⁹The phrase *sine more* is borrowed directly from Vergil's brief description of the rape of the Sabines depicted on Aeneas' shield (*Aen.* 8.635).

from ordinary human relations can, according to modern trauma studies, lead to more pronounced symptoms of PTSD in victims of various types of trauma: traumatic events “shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others” and “undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience” (Herman 2015, 51). In a sense, all traumatic experience is *sine more*, but the Sabines’ abduction by the Romans goes beyond customary gendered power dynamics.

Following the animal simile, Ovid draws attention to the individual reactions of the women.¹⁵⁰ In this version of events, they are not a monolith; their fear adds to their beauty in the eyes of their abductors, but it also renders them more human and more difficult to objectify. Of great importance is Ovid’s recognition that traumatic events affect different individuals in different ways. One can observe this nuance across his works on rape, taking each account in comparison with others. Philomela, for instance, does not attempt to run, but cries out for her family and the gods while the rape occurs; Daphne and Io both flee at the first moment; Callisto fights her rapist as best she can. The variety of responses to rape throughout the Ovidian corpus is extensive, but here in the *Ars* Ovid skillfully, in only four lines, illustrates the natural variety of trauma responses inherent to human individuality. Herman explains that the range of reactions to stress in the moment and after the fact can be attributed to a variety of factors, including emotional resiliency and social background (2015, 58):

In a study of combat veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, for example, each man’s predominant symptom pattern was related to his individual childhood history, emotional conflicts, and adaptive style. Men who had been prone to antisocial behavior before going to war were likely to have predominant symptoms of irritability and anger, while men who had high moral expectations of themselves and strong compassion for others were more likely to have predominant symptoms of depression.

¹⁵⁰Notably, Paul Brandt discusses Ovid’s animal simile, but skips over lines 119-124 in his commentary, avoiding the women’s trauma entirely (1902, 15).

Peritraumatic responses depend heavily upon the type of threat perceived by the victim and can influence the symptom patterns and severity of PTSD after the fact. A 2005 study of female victims of violent crime in the United States found that only about a third of rape survivors report physically fighting against their rapists; rape victims also reported responses of immobility and attempts at begging or reasoning at a higher rate than victims of other violent crimes (Kaysen et al. 2005, 1527-1528). The connections between certain responses and perceived threat are still not entirely clear; what is known is that people may respond to a traumatic event in any number of ways, influenced by personal history, natural resilience, or conscious decision-making. Ovid's description of the Sabines in the *Ars Amatoria* reflects some understanding of these variations in human response, even two thousand years in the past.

By comparison, Livy's version barely touches on the mental state of the women. Furthermore, he absolves Romulus of wrongdoing while placing blame on the Sabines for not giving in to his request of marriage (Hemker 1985, 42). The abduction begins straightforwardly: "at the given signal, the Roman youth run to and fro to snatch up the maidens" (*signoque dato iuventus Romana ad rapiendas virgines discurrit*, 1.9.10). After the action ends, the Sabines' parents are described as "grieving" (*maesti*, 1.9.13), while a bland, perfunctory line addresses the girls themselves: "hope for the captives about their situation was no better, nor was their indignation smaller" (*nec raptis aut spes de se melior aut indignatio est minor*, 1.9.14). In the following lines, he states that "the captives' emotions were softened" (*mitigate animi raptis erant*, 1.10.1). The word *animus* here is used in a general sense, denoting high spirit or passion that can take the form of anger, judgment, or even arrogance (TLL v. *animus*). Livy makes no mention of fear: he uses *indignatio* and *animi* to describe the women's overall demeanor, a concern with reputation and honor rather than a concern for personal grief. In this way, his

treatment of the Sabines matches his treatment of Lucretia: two stories of women whose private suffering is secondary to their loss of status.

I will now turn back Ovid's account of the rape in *Fasti* 3 and the political themes presented therein. In a wider context, the narrative of the Sabines' rape creates a framework for the function and establishment of Roman marriage: Roman marriage is "epitomized in the theft of the Sabine women" and ultimately revolves around "political relationships among men," which define relationships between men and women (Miles 1992, 164).¹⁵¹ It is significant to the ethos of Roman power structures that the first Roman marriage was a mass abduction and rape perpetrated, by most accounts, because of a refusal by other nations to traffic with the newly established Roman people. The women themselves are merely an excuse for the Romans to act out their indignation and revenge against their Italic rivals: through the Sabines, "Mars and Romulus codify aggressive and sexual violence as Roman" (Heyworth 2019, 121). These women's bodies—like Lara's and Lucretia's bodies—are a physical representation of the Roman state. It is through the women's reproductive abilities that the Romans gain legitimacy through offspring, and through the seizure of their bodies that Romulus effectively subjugates the Sabine tribe as a whole (Hemker 1985, 43). Furthermore, when the women interpose themselves between their fathers and husbands, "the female body becomes the vehicle through which the Roman state is unified, expanded, and fortified" (Wise 2017, 151). The rape of the Sabines is yet one more narrative in which the battle for male political progress is fought through the sexual conquest of women (Dougherty 1988, 278).

As in the case of Lucretia, the legitimacy of male progress appears to be bolstered when supported by an exemplary woman. Livy's Lucretia, as discussed above, provides the impetus

¹⁵¹Gayle Rubin discusses at length different philosophical approaches to the subjugation of women by men, and in doing so analyzes how the exchange of women factors into systems of kinship (1975, 177).

for overthrowing the Tarquins by dying with matronly dignity and demanding revenge for her besmirched *pudor*. Ovid's Lucretia does not choose vengeance, but her "blessing" is appropriated by Brutus after her death. Likewise, Livy's Sabine women take personal responsibility for the war between their fathers and husbands and intercede by appealing to the men's moral integrity (1.13.1-3). One major difference between Livy's and Ovid's versions, however, is that Livy appears to view the Sabines as necessary for the growth of the Roman state through the procreation of legitimate children, whereas both of Ovid's versions characterize the women as victims caught in the middle of a male political power struggle (Wise 2017, 148). When the Sabine wives make their pleas for peace in the *Fasti*, it is their children—as Ovid calls them, "dear hostages" (*pignora cara*, 3.218)—who persuade the Romans toward peace. The women themselves appear no longer to carry any value (Miles 1992, 177).

Ovid's version of the Sabine narrative in the *Fasti*, though told by Mars, appears to highlight the self-claimed authority of the women and their ingenuity in finding a way to end the war without bloodshed; Hersilia's shrewd leadership and strategizing, set beside the brutish violence employed by her husband Romulus, indicate the importance of women's influence in politics (Chiu 2016, 103).¹⁵² But if the *Fasti* present the possibility of women's political agency, the *Ars Amatoria* present the lack thereof, as well as the notion that the idyllic past is really no different from the present "except in being more brutal" (Mack 1988, 93). In the *Ars*, Ovid shows how women are the victims of male political aggression, whereas in the *Fasti* he emphasizes how this victimization does not minimize their influence over the men in their lives. Taken together, both narratives critique Roman male power dynamics in different ways.

¹⁵²It is important to note that Mars never actually explains how the story of the Sabines provides an aetiology for the Matronalia: there appears to be no connection between the Sabines' intervention and the Kalends of March, and furthermore the narrative revolves around ending war, not celebrating it (Heyworth 2019, 126).

The trauma of the captive women described in *Ars Amatoria* 1 and hinted at in the narrative of *Fasti* 3 indicates Ovid's recognition that Roman political progress, both real and ideological, depends upon the subjugation and exploitation of the female body. Ovid's Romulus is not the founding hero one reads about in Livy: he has no demonstrable gift for strategy, nor any eloquence in addressing the captive girls. In fact, Ovid implies that Romulus is responsible for introducing promiscuity to the Roman theater—therefore working directly against the chaste modesty of Rome's idealized past and the moral legislation so precious to Augustus (Wardman 1965, 102). By emphasizing the traumatic experience of the Sabine women and the inelegant cruelty of Roman masculinity, Ovid not only calls into question the ways in which Roman patriarchal systems harm women, but also criticizes Augustus' puritanical morality, which is built upon groundless idealism and imperialistic violence.

Conclusion

The *Fasti* are a puzzling piece of Ovidian literature to say the least: an incomplete calendar interrogating the sociopolitical forces that have developed over the course of a history that Ovid seeks to re-envision. In the rape narratives of the *Fasti*, Ovid employs many strategies familiar from the *Metamorphoses* and from his earlier writings on gendered violence. He portrays these mythical and legendary women as victims of male sexual entitlement, which puts them in constant danger of rape and moral exploitation. Ovid's heavily pathetic descriptions of their peritraumatic responses and PTSD symptoms strengthen his critique of Roman power structures and the gendered violence inherent to them. The stories of Lara, Lucretia, and the Sabine women provide three unique examples of how Ovid uses female rape trauma as a symbol of the greater injustices of Roman society.

Lara's story illustrates how women in community can challenge the unjust authority of men who seek to exploit them. Lara's decision to warn Juturna disrupts Jupiter's understanding of his own entitlement; her decision to inform Juno of her husband's plan expands the network of women's communication, disrupting male efforts to suppress female speech. Lara's talkative nature, though regarded negatively by the male figures in her life, becomes an instrument of dissent against injustice. When Jupiter robs her of speech and sends her to the Underworld, he seeks to prevent further disruption caused by female communication. Lara's rape is not part of her formal punishment, but rather an added consequence of her exile. Mercury's casual cruelty and the visceral desperation of Lara's silent pleas draw attention to the selfish callousness of both gods. Ovid's addendum about the Compital Lares creates further parallels between rape, gendered violence, and the politics of moral control.

In the story of Lucretia, Ovid reworks an already familiar narrative with an emphasis on the personal tragedy of rape. Answering directly to Livy's depiction, he creates a more human Lucretia concerned not with the moral reputation of Roman matrons, but with her own place in Roman patriarchal society and the repercussions of sexual impurity. Ovid gives his Lucretia a lengthy speech that increases emotional investment in her character, focalizes the rape through her mental reactions, and describes in detail her distress in the aftermath of the rape. By humanizing her, Ovid not only calls attention to the female casualties of male-to-male power struggles, but also challenges how male leaders like Brutus exploit the image of the brutalized female body for the benefit of political progress.

Finally, the story of the Sabines, as presented both in the *Fasti* and the earlier *Ars Amatoria*, depicts a continuous comparison between the inherent violence of male power and the victimization of women, who ultimately prove to be a vital component in Roman political

development. Ovid's account of the abduction in the *Ars* gives great attention to the lawless violence of the Roman soldiers, who elicit a variety of peritraumatic responses in their Sabine victims: some are silent, some cry out, some sit hopelessly, some try to run. Ovid's attention to detail here emphasizes, once again, the humanity of the victims and the multiplicity of traumatic experience. The abduction of the Sabines establishes a practice of legitimated rape in Roman society, through which Roman men procreate and advance the interests of the state. Ovid's telling of the rape in *Ars* 1 centers the women's suffering, but in *Fasti* 3, he appears to be more interested in how the women transform their suffering into authority. The Sabine women, however, are aware of their function and worth in the context of Roman power structures: their bodies are a tool of male violence, their value depends on their sexual purity, and any power they possess is contingent upon their ability to produce and care for children.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: WHY RAPE?

I came to this dissertation knowing that I wanted to write about the experience of women in the ancient Mediterranean, but at the start I did not realize that I would center the entire project around rape. Having studied sexual violence in literature for a long time, I had become desensitized to some degree, and when I hit on the topic of rape trauma, I was excited to learn and write about something so pivotal and topical in today's world.

To be frank: writing about rape is hard, especially as a woman. In the process of delving into Ovid and reading the personal accounts of rape victims, I have found that my relationships with literature, gender, and humanity at large have shifted in unprecedented ways. I am much more aware of the habits I have developed to protect myself from sexual violence; more critical of how I approach men's writing (and fetishization of) sexual violence. Sitting in the discomfort of these accounts can be wearing, even from the clinical distance of a scholarly researcher. For these reasons, I am more convinced than ever that now is the time for more detailed studies of Graeco-Roman rape stories, and also of rape stories in literature as a whole.

Sexism has long been, and still is, a great problem in classical studies. Emily Wilson published the first woman-translated English edition of the *Odyssey* as recently as 2018. Stephanie McCarter, the first woman to translate the *Metamorphoses* into English verse, published her work only last year, in 2022. It is frustrating to see translations by men that romanticize rape or use degrading terms for women on a whim: partially because these translations are not faithful to the original texts, but also because they speak to the historic

devaluation of femaleness in Classics. It is further frustrating to read scholarship from men that labels rape myths “charming” or implies that a victim of Zeus should be grateful for the compliment of being chosen by the king of the gods.¹⁵³ For me, writing this dissertation was a way both to honor the contributions of women scholars before me and to challenge future scholars to allow themselves to be disturbed by Graeco-Roman rape tales. When her translation of the *Metamorphoses* was published, McCarter released a companion article to discuss issues of translating rape stories (2022b): “Classical poetry is full of sexual violence. We shouldn’t hide that.” As in the case of psychological trauma, avoiding discomfort with the topic of rape does not make it disappear: recognizing and confronting it allows us to study ancient writings more honestly (Waldman 2018).

In fact, recognition of sexual violence and rape trauma in classical texts has led to important movements advocating for trigger warnings in courses that teach rape myths. In 2015, students reading the *Metamorphoses* at Columbia University published an op-ed asking their college to address such concerns, and the proposal became a lightning rod for controversy (Miller 2015). Many people believe even now that trigger warnings are merely a defense against being “offended”: one opinion letter submitted to *The Wall Street Journal* suggested that “the Columbia students who feel threatened by reading Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses’ do not belong at a great university” (Anonymous 2015). Trigger warnings, however, are not about feeling “threatened” or “offended” but rather about allowing students to confront uncomfortable material

¹⁵³Of Daphne’s aversion to men, Hermann Fränkel writes, “she was like a fine but frigid plant,” a thinly veiled criticism of her independence (1945, 78). He comments further (*ibid.*, 81): “in general, the character of the *Metamorphoses* is romantic and sentimental, and the stories of Io the cow and Callisto the bear are typical examples of that spirit.” A reader of this dissertation will know that I disagree. For another example, Arnold Bradshaw, analyzing Horace’s *Ode* 3.27, writes that Europa’s reactions to her impending rape are “hysterical exaggerations” and that “her pain, though understandable, is not the agony of death or even the despair of desertion”: in fact, “her prospects are splendid” (1978, 171).

in a way that is safe—especially for those with histories of trauma. In the Columbia op-ed, the young women cited the experience of their fellow student in a class on Persephone and Daphne in the *Metamorphoses* (Miller 2015):

As a survivor of sexual assault, the student described being triggered while reading such detailed accounts of rape throughout the work. However, the student said her professor focused on the beauty of the language and the splendor of the imagery when lecturing on the text. As a result, the student completely disengaged from the class discussion as a means of self-preservation. She did not feel safe in the class. When she approached her professor after class, the student said she was essentially dismissed, and her concerns were ignored.

Conversations about trigger warnings in university courses remain polarizing, but they must be had. Part of the challenge of speaking honestly about rape is recognizing the damage of rape trauma, and how that trauma can prevent students from learning. McCarter's new translation and outspoken support of accurate translation of sexual violence has encouraged more thought about how professors approach rape myths in college courses, particularly in the *Metamorphoses* (Mendelsohn 2022). It is important to me that scholars of Classics, especially young women new to the field, be able to confront the ugly aspects of our work with the most effective, incisive resources and methodologies. Despite the unpleasantness of reading and rereading these rape stories, I have found the experience of writing this dissertation empowering, and, in its lighter moments, even uplifting—largely because of my choice to confront these topics with Ovid.

Ovid's attention to women's trauma is remarkable. In his versions of mythic rape tales, he does not whitewash or elide the violence men inflict on women. He consistently characterizes raped women as victims undeserving of suffering, their rapists as destructive and entitled predators. In the *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Fasti*, Ovid narrates rape myths with heavily pathetic imagery, bringing to the fore female terror, grief, and self-blame: he fleshes out the character of each rape victim, highlights her desires and fears, and in doing so humanizes her as

fully as each male character. The rape accounts vary in length and structure, but in each Ovid makes clear that the man assaults—or attempts to assault—an unwilling woman. The woman's trauma is demonstrated uniquely through her initial reactions before and during the rape, as well as her symptoms in the aftermath. Ovid describes peritraumatic reactions now recognized in modern psychology as biological responses to threat: fight or flight, freeze responses, tonic immobility, dissociation. Furthermore, he often describes women's experiences post-rape, which include pathologies consistent with symptoms of PTSD like self-harm, constriction, suicidal ideation, and trauma bonding. By using trauma theory as a framework for reading Ovid's mythic rape tales, one may observe how accurately he depicts the various mental and emotional consequences of rape trauma, as well as how his writing evokes sympathy for rape victims.

In this project, I have selected a small sample of Ovid's mythic rape tales and analyzed them for content and authorial tone, then identified parallels to modern trauma studies. When Ovid writes of female trauma, it is difficult to discern an intended audience. Is the graphic suffering of women meant to titillate a male audience accustomed to legitimated rape? Or are these depictions meant to cause discomfort and sympathy in the reader? As is often the case in Ovidian studies, both are reasonable possibilities and not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, I have argued that, despite the voyeurism inherent to rape narratives, Ovid's texts show undeniable signs of sympathy toward raped women and of criticism—even contempt—toward male rapists.

A 21st century audience is more inclined, certainly, to read these rape tales with some degree of horror, especially given Ovid's tendency toward irreverence and sharp humor. One may argue that the majority of an ancient Roman audience, without the same sensitivity for issues of sexual violence, would not react in the same way. While this argument has merit, it is important to remember that the same juxtaposition between discomfort and humor occurs in the comedies of

Plautus and Terence, to whom Ovid and his fellow elegists are indebted.¹⁵⁴ Although Ovid's works are not comedies, he follows their tradition by confronting difficult topics with both harshly detailed description and lighthearted wit.

Rape is merely one of the types of traumatic injustice that Ovid addresses throughout his oeuvre, but it is prominent in each of his mythic works, as well as his elegiac ones. Violence against women looms large in his poetry, whether from gods or from men, and he emphasizes in moments of rape how gendered power dynamics both encourage and legitimate this violence. In each narrative, Ovid shows how women are made vulnerable to assault because of men's social advantages and sexual entitlement. For example, in *Metamorphoses* 1, both Jupiter and Apollo presume that their godhood is enough to persuade a nymph to submit to sex; both turn to rape when their chosen targets flee. In *Ars Amatoria* 1, Roman soldiers greedily leer at the Sabine women before kidnapping them and insisting that they will be good husbands. In these rape tales, Ovid shows unflinchingly the harm that is regularly inflicted on disadvantaged members of society by their "superiors"—in this case, the sexual violence inflicted on women by men. In the *Heroides*, instances of rape are fewer, but Ovid's chosen theme of *relictæ* necessarily highlights the ways in which male heroes have failed their female partners. Although not all the *relictæ* have experienced rape, they have all suffered some kind of trauma because they were at the mercy of men who abandoned them. In all three works included in this dissertation, Ovid shows a particular interest in how gendered power dynamics result in physical and mental harm for women, regardless of rank or social status. Nymphs and citizen women are as vulnerable to rape

¹⁵⁴Much recent scholarship on Roman Comedy has demonstrated that Latin literature can entertain and discomfit at the same time. Take, for example, the *puer*'s speech in Plautus' *Pseudolus*, wherein a young boy alone on stage expresses fear of having to sell his body to avoid punishment from his pimp. It is hard to imagine that this speech would have been funny, even to a Roman audience. Kelly McArdle has analyzed in detail how jokes about slave torture and brutality in Plautus may elicit laughter but also force a live elite audience to confront the violence they themselves inflict (2021).

as subaltern women.

Ovid's close attention to the personal toll of women's trauma makes his poetry excellent fodder for trauma theory analysis. Whereas other ancient authors like Pindar or Moschus romanticize, euphemize, or wholly omit sexual violence, Ovid focuses not only on the act of violence itself, but the physical and emotional states of the victim—so closely that the perspective of the rapist is diminished, even eclipsed, by the victim's grief. In these descriptions, women flee, tremble, beg for help, stare wordlessly, scream, tear their hair, debate their options, and fight against their attackers. No victim responds to the threat of rape in exactly the same way. Ovid creates a variety of situations that individuate and humanize each woman so that they cannot be lumped together as a monolith. Such situational and linguistic variety suggests an understanding of how different people respond differently to the same kind of trauma. In particular, Ovid's description of the Sabine women in *Ars* 1 demonstrates his sensitivity to the human—and especially the female—experience. It is surely meaningful that in 2023 one can find in Ovid descriptions of the same psychological responses to trauma recorded in modern medical journals.

Ovid makes similarly canny observations in his descriptions of women's pathology post-rape, and there is as much variety in his post-traumatic accounts as in his narrations of the rapes themselves. Briseis' repeated rapes by Achilles are not addressed in *Heroides* 3, but her abuse is a necessary consequence of wartime concubinage. Ovid writes her as a woman desperate not to be parted from her captor, with no loyalty for the people of her birth and no sense of self-worth beyond her relationship with Achilles: a victim trauma-bonded to her rapist. In *Metamorphoses* 6, Philomela goes in an entirely different direction: she experiences no attachment or trauma bonding with Tereus and refuses to accept her captivity. Rather, she spends a year plotting her

escape and eventually seeks bloody revenge that punishes not only Tereus but his innocent son as well. Lucretia, like Philomela, places blame on her rapist, but her feelings of self-blame and shame for her violation are overwhelming: she responds to her rape with suicide rather than the fantasy of revenge.

Women who are kidnapped and raped for the purpose of marriage (whether legitimate or legitimated) are also depicted variously. In *Heroides* 8, Hermione perceives her arranged marriage as a kind of abduction, and though unwilling, she has seemed to settle into a regular sexual relationship with Neoptolemus. She “participates” in marital sex but dissociates during the act and escapes into fantasies of Orestes. In *Fasti* 3, the Sabine women appear to have accepted their roles as Roman wives to the extent that they have taken it upon themselves to end the conflict between their two peoples. All the women in these examples respond uniquely to the experience of rape, their reactions and PTSD symptoms varying because of the specific situation and the victims’ individual tendencies.

What makes Ovid’s rape tales so compelling and horrifying is his attention to realism and to the diversity of human experience: the way he makes women’s suffering intimate for the reader, so that rape scenes are voyeuristic and unsettling, witty yet macabre. Whether or not he intended his writing to critique the Romans’ treatment of women and gendered ideology, he succeeds in drawing attention to the personal and social consequences of sexual violence against women. In a larger sense, he highlights the injustices inherent to uneven power dynamics: most of the mythic rapes included in this dissertation include some element of sociopolitical imbalance. The rapists of Daphne, Io, Callisto, and Lara are gods; the rapists of Briseis, Hermione, Philomela, and Lucretia are royalty. The overconfidence and sexual greed of these gods and kings are perhaps exacerbated by their elevated sociopolitical power.

Such gendered power dynamics are still very much alive in the modern western world, and this is another reason I was drawn into the topic of rape. I remember watching the coverage of *People v. Brock Turner* as a college senior and eagerly awaiting the news that he would be properly punished for sexually assaulting an unconscious girl, Chanel Miller, once known to the public only as Emily Doe. I remember even more vividly when he was let off with six months of jail time and three years of probation, as the judge Aaron Persky explained that a longer prison sentence “would have a severe impact on him” (Gersen 2023).¹⁵⁵ Fewer than ten years ago, this wealthy young man was spared the consequences of brutalizing a young woman because of his youth and his connections.

In her powerful statement to Turner, Miller criticized the hypocrisy of the judge’s decision and of those voicing their support for her rapist (Baker 2016):

Lastly you said, I want to show people that one night of drinking can ruin a life. A life, one life, yours, you forgot about mine. Let me rephrase for you, I want to show people that one night of drinking can ruin two lives. You and me. You are the cause, I am the effect. You have dragged me through this hell with you, dipped me back into that night again and again. You knocked down both our towers, I collapsed at the same time you did. If you think I was spared, came out unscathed, that today I ride off into sunset, while you suffer the greatest blow, you are mistaken. Nobody wins. We have all been devastated, we have all been trying to find some meaning in all of this suffering. Your damage was concrete; stripped of titles, degrees, enrollment. My damage was internal, unseen, I carry it with me. You took away my worth, my privacy, my energy, my time, my safety, my intimacy, my confidence, my own voice, until today.

The testimonies and statements from *People v. Brock Turner* provide merely a few examples of the pervasiveness of sexism and rape culture in our world today, as well as the predominance of male privilege and sexual entitlement. Many of Turner’s friends expressed disbelief that he could be a rapist or the opinion that his particular crime of rape was somehow less serious than violent rape by a stalker or stranger (Manne 2020, 37). Judge Persky readily believed all statements that

¹⁵⁵Following this controversial decision, Persky was recalled in 2018, making him the first California judge to be recalled in 86 years, and the first in the country to be recalled since 1977 (Elias 2018).

Turner was a “good guy,” and agreed that his character had been spotless up until the rape; Turner’s father—who complained that his son could no longer enjoy a steak because of anxiety over the lawsuit—referred to the assault as “twenty minutes of action out of his twenty plus years of life” (*ibid.*, 38). Those who take Turner’s side in this case argue that Miller is at least partially responsible because of her alcohol consumption, displacing blame onto the victim (*ibid.*, 37). All these sentiments point to the overwhelming truth that even in the United States today, a young man’s potential is worth more than a woman’s most basic wellbeing. In this way, American gender ideology resembles Roman ideology (discussed in Chapter 4), wherein the female body functions as a vehicle by which male political agendas are propelled.

Although we are over two thousand years removed from the time of Ovid, the same problems exist in his poetry that women face today. Not only does he problematize the gendered power dynamics that result in men’s sexual exploitation of women, but he also describes in extraordinary detail the trauma that women experience during and after rape. His attention to the systemic abuse of women and its physical and emotional effects on victims suggests that rape was recognized as traumatic, even if the Romans did not have the language to say so. By reading Graeco-Roman literature with trauma theory as a framework, we can see more clearly how rape and post-rape trauma were perceived by different authors and how these authors reflected larger ideologies about gender, sex, and violence.

APPENDIX: DIRECT REFERENCES TO RAPE IN OVID

A dagger indicates a narrative of twenty lines or longer which is centered on rape and its consequences. An asterisk indicates instances where a physical rape does not occur. Line citations are up for debate.

<i>Heroides</i>				
	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
(8) Hermione to Orestes	65-66*	Hermione wonders if all Tantalid women are prone to rape.	<i>rapina</i>	
(9) Deianeira to Hercules	49-52	Deianeira lists girls that Hercules has raped.	<i>temerata; crimen</i>	
(17) Helen to Paris	23-29*	Theseus captures Helen and kisses her despite her refusal; she speculates that Paris will not stop at kissing, unlike Theseus.	<i>rapta; fructum</i>	<i>passa timore; luctanti</i>
(20) Acontius to Cydippe	71-72*	Acontius obliquely threatens Cydippe with rape.	<i>frui</i>	<i>irata (x2)</i>
<i>Amores</i>				
	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
2.8	21-28	The <i>amator</i> blackmails and threatens Cypassis into having sex with him.	<i>concupitus</i>	<i>renuis; timoris; negas</i>
3.6	45-82†	Anio propositions Ilia; she attempts to flee, but when the river blocks her, she throws herself in.	<i>manus ad pectora; iura dedisse tori</i>	<i>fugam; currendi; metu; tremente</i>

Ars Amatoria

	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
Book 1	101-132†	The rape of the Sabines. The <i>amator</i> describes the various reactions of the women.	<i>rapta; virginibus cupidas iniciuntque manus; raptae</i>	<i>fugiunt; timidissima; fugit; timuere; sine more ruentes; timor; timoris; pars laniat crines pars sine mente sedet; altera maesta silet frustra vocat altera matrem; haec queritur stupet haec; haec manet illa fugit; timor; repugnaret; negabat</i>
	665-678*	The <i>amator</i> describes how girls secretly want to be raped.	<i>male rapta; vim; vis; subita violata rapina</i>	<i>pugnabit; pugnando; queri; invitae</i>
	679-680	Castor and Pollux rape Phoebe and Hilaera.	<i>vim passa; vis; raptae; raptor</i>	
	681-706†	Achilles secretly enters Deidamia's home and rapes her while disguised as a woman; the <i>amator</i> uses the example of her "enjoyment" to justify using force.	<i>stupro; viribus...victa est; vis; auctorem stupri</i>	<i>pati</i>

Metamorphoses

	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
Book 1	452-567†*	Apollo propositions Daphne, who wants to remain a virgin; he chases her until she turns into a tree; he takes her branches as his symbol.	<i>cupit conubia</i>	<i>fugit; timido...cursu fugit; fuga; timore; fugacis; expalluit; citaeque... fugae; trepidare...pectus; refugit</i>

<i>Metamorphoses</i>	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
Book 1	688-712†*	Pan attempts to rape Syrinx, but she turns into reeds; he creates a flute from the reeds.	<i>prensam</i>	<i>precibus spretis; fugisse</i>
Book 2	401-507†	Jupiter rapes the virginal Callisto and impregnates her; Diana discovers the pregnancy and banishes Callisto; after Callisto gives birth, Juno turns her into a bear; Callisto's son nearly kills her while hunting; mother and son become constellations.	<i>oscula iungit; impedit amplexus nec se sine crimine prodit</i>	<i>illa quidem contra quantum modo femina posset...illa quidem pugnat</i>
	572-588*	Neptune propositions Cornix and attempts to rape her; Minerva turns her into a crow.	<i>vim parat et sequitur</i>	<i>fugio</i>
Book 3	339-345	Cephisus rapes Liriope.	<i>vim tulit</i>	
Book 4	217-240†	Sol propositions Leucothoe; out of fear she submits to him. Leucothoe's father buries her alive.	<i>vim passa...est</i>	<i>pavet illa metuque et colus et fusi digitis cecidere remissis; timor; territa; querella</i>
	790-803	Neptune rapes Medusa in Minerva's temple; Minerva changes Medusa's hair to snakes.	<i>vitiasse</i>	

<i>Metamorphoses</i>	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
Book 5	577-641†*	Alpheus propositions Arethusa and then attempts to rape her; she flees for a long time; Diana conceals Arethusa with a cloud; Arethusa turns to water; Alpheus mingles his water with hers.	<i>premebat; misceat</i>	<i>terrata; fugio; currebam; fugere; trepidante; trepidas; currere; cursus; cucurri; timor; terrebat</i>
Book 6	412-674†	Tereus kidnaps his sister-in-law Philomela and keeps her as a rape captive; when she threatens to expose him, he cuts out her tongue; Philomela sends to her sister Procne a weaving explaining her fate; Procne frees Philomela; the sisters kill and cook Procne's son, and feed him to Tereus; the three turn into birds.	<i>nefas; virginem et unam vi superat; saepe sua lacerum repetisse libidine corpus</i>	<i>pallentem trepidamque et cuncta timentem; lacrimis; frustra clamato saepe parente saepe sorore sua magis super omnia divis; tremit; pavens; horret; timet</i>
	675-713†	Boreas propositions Orithyia; having been refused, he kidnaps and rapes her.	<i>"apta mihi vis est"; raptor; genetrix facta est</i>	<i>pavidam metuque</i>
Book 8	849-851	Mestra prays to Neptune, her rapist, to deliver her from slavery.	<i>"raptae...virginitatis"</i>	
Book 9	98-133†*	Nessus offers to carry Deianeira across a river for Hercules; while Hercules is in the water, Nessus flees with Deianeira, desiring to rape her; Hercules kills Nessus.	<i>virginis ardor; "concupitus vetitos"</i>	<i>pallentemque metu...ipsumque timentem; pavidam</i>

<i>Metamorphoses</i>	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
Book 10	329-333	Apollo rapes Dryope.	<i>virginitate carentem vimque dei passam</i>	
	346-348*	Priapus attempts to rape Lotis; Lotis turns into a lotus.	<i>obscena</i>	<i>fugiens</i>
Book 11	301-310	Mercury causes Chione to fall asleep and rapes her; Apollo also rapes her while she sleeps.	<i>vimque dei patitur; praerepta gaudia sumit</i>	
Book 11	221-265†	Jupiter orders Peleus to marry Thetis; Peleus attempts rape while Thetis sleeps; he wrestles her while she continuously changes shape; eventually she tires and submits.	<i>occupant; vim parat; potitur votis</i>	<i>repugnans</i>
	767-777*	Aesacus chases Hesperie; a snake bites her and she dies.	<i>insequitur; urget amore</i>	<i>fugit; perterrita; metu</i>
Book 12	189-209†	Caenis spurns marriage; Neptune rapes her and offers her a wish in return; Caenis becomes a man impenetrable to weapons.	<i>vim passa</i>	
	210-226*	Pirithous introduces his new bride Hippodame to the centaurs; Eurytus tries to rape her; the centaurs all attempt rape on Lapith women.	<i>libidine; raptatur; per vim; rapiunt</i>	<i>femineo clamore</i>
Book 14	634-641*	Pomona shuns men; she encloses her orchard to defend herself against rape; the woodland gods often try to rape her.	<i>quid non...fecere...ut poterentur ea</i>	<i>vim...metuens</i>

Fasti

	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
Book 1	415-440†*	Priapus propositions Lotis, but she refuses; he attempts to rape her while she sleeps; an ass brays and sends her fleeing.	<i>surgit amans</i>	<i>irrisum voltu despicit illa suo; territa; manibusque Priapum reicit; fugiens</i>
Book 2	155-192†	Jupiter rapes the virginal Callisto and impregnates her; Diana discovers the pregnancy and banishes Callisto; after Callisto gives birth, Juno turns her into a bear; Callisto's son nearly kills her while hunting; mother and son become constellations.	<i>crimen</i>	<i>invito est pectore passa Iovem</i>
	331-352†*	Faunus tries to rape Omphale while she sleeps; unknowingly he makes his attempt on Hercules instead; Hercules repels Faunus.	<i>temerarius...adulter; ascendit spondaque sibi proprio recumbit et tumidum cornu durius inguen erat</i>	<i>dant sua corpora somno</i>
	583-616†	Jupiter instructs the nymphs to help him rape Juturna; Lara warns Juturna to flee and informs Juno of Jupiter's plans; Jupiter tears out Lara's tongue and tells Mercury to lead her to the shades; Mercury rapes her.	<i>vim parat</i>	<i>latebat; desiliebat; "vitatque... summo concubuisse deo"; precatur</i>

<i>Fasti</i>	Lines	Description	Male Action/Desire	Female Unwillingness
Book 2	784-834†	Tarquinius plots to rape Lucretia; he stays as a guest at her house; he enters her room and tries to seduce her; when she refuses, he threatens her with a charge of adultery; she submits to rape; she informs her father and husband; she kills herself.	<i>ensem; ferrum; positis urgentur pectora palmis; facto coacto</i>	<i>vocem viresque loquendi aut aliud toto pectore mentis habet; tremit; pugnet?; clamet?; effugiat?; succubuit famae victa puella metu</i>
Book 3	19-24	Mars rapes Rhea Silvia while she sleeps.	<i>cupit potiturque cupita</i>	<i>quies...obrepsit</i>
Book 5	201-206	Zephyr rapes Chloris, turning her into Flora; he pays her back with marriage; she says that she cannot complain.	<i>insequitur; rapinae; vim</i>	<i>fugio</i>
Book 6	119-128	Ianus propositions Carna; she tries to trick him into leaving her; he rapes her; in return, he gives her charge of hinges.	<i>occupant amplexus speque potitus</i>	<i>comes sequitur destituitque ducem; latebras; latentam</i>
	331-344*	Priapus attempts to rape Vesta while she sleeps; an ass brays and sends her fleeing.	<i>obscenam</i>	<i>capit secreta quietem; territa</i>

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