

RAPE AND RAPE VICTIMS IN THE METAMORPHOSES

LEO C. CURRAN

OVID'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS women may appear paradoxical. Although some of his work may give the impression of extravagant, if elegant, sexism, at other times he exhibits a sympathy for women and an effort to understand, as well as a man can, women's intellectual and emotional life rivaled by no male author of antiquity other than Euripides.¹ Ovid was a keen student of female behavior and his painstaking observation of women, despite its appearance of having originally been undertaken in the spirit of the predatory seducer, finally led him in the *Metamorphoses* to a recognition of aspects of their condition which are only now becoming common currency.

Before turning to the subject of rape, I should like briefly to consider a few examples of Ovid's perceptive insight into some other facets of the lot of women. He made his Echo a devastating delineation of the sort of woman who is nothing but an appendage of her man, totally dependent upon him, literally hanging upon his every word, and finding her identity solely in his.² His formulation of the oracle to Atalanta defines marriage as the loss of a woman's identity: "though living you will lose your own self" (10.566).³

Although the victim in the Actaeon is male, his story nevertheless exposes in all its savagery a patriarchal society's obsession with female modesty and virginity, a major cause and effect of the suppression of women in antiquity. Ovid seems to have realized that the cult of virginity, especially under the patronage of Diana, had little to do with the inviolability of a woman's body or the sacredness of her person. This exaggerated restrictiveness is not so much a positive assertion of a woman's right to control her body as a denial of the right to exercise her sexuality. That this ideal is a negative and life-denying principle is shown not only by the treatment of Actaeon but also by Diana's merciless persecution of even her own most devoted companions when, however unwillingly, they lose their virginity.⁴

The Pygmalion can fairly be read as an enactment of the male fantasy of possessing a wife who is so docile and complaisant that she might as well be his own creation; the same fantasy forms the plot of the recent film "The Stepford Wives," in which the husbands of the

town replace their wives with electronic automata indistinguishable in appearance from the real wives and superior to them in obeisance to the male ego.

However striking such anticipations of contemporary attitudes may be, I intend to devote the rest of this essay to one element in Ovid's treatment of women in the *Metamorphoses*: rape.⁵ His fascination with the experience of women and their behavior and his passion for infinite variation on a theme combine now to produce a survey of women and rape from manifold points of view. These predilections, so often misapplied by the poet elsewhere, here lead to much more than the collection of techniques for manipulating women that constitutes so much of the *Amores* and the *Ars*.

The *Metamorphoses* is not a treatise on rape, any more than it is merely a handbook of mythology, an analysis of love and desire in all their manifestations, a critique of Roman values, traditional and Augustan, an enquiry into the nature of personal identity, an affectionate parody of the *Aeneid*, or a survey of the varieties of the universal phenomenon of metamorphosis. It is more and less than any of these. Ovid has many irons in the fire and in a given story the relative emphasis on any one of these themes varies in accordance with the economy and requirements of that story and of the poem as a whole. When one stands back to look at the *Metamorphoses* from the perspective of rape (of course other perspectives are appropriate in other circumstances), one can see that by sketching a detail here and a detail there, Ovid has produced a coherent and consistent vision of rape. No single story exhibits all the elements, although some, for example the Daphne, come close; but when the tales are taken together, a unified picture emerges.

Although there are some fifty or so occurrences of forcible rape, attempted rape, or sexual extortion hardly distinguishable from rape, one would scarcely guess the fact from reading most of the commentaries on the *Metamorphoses*, Ovidian scholarship in general, or the retellings of Ovid's stories in the mythological handbooks. Traditional scholarship, systematically ignoring this fact and refusing to take rape seriously, glosses over unpleasant reality and prefers euphemism to the word rape.⁶

Rape is the dirty little secret of Ovidian scholarship. It is true that the language of ancient myth is full of euphemism (usually trans-

parent, however) and Ovid himself may give some encouragement to obscurantism since his own language is often less than explicit. However, he had as justification of his practice the artistic principles of decorum and of variety and indirection of expression. Modern scholars have no such excuse. Once we accept the fact that Ovid's subject is frequently rape, the commentators' elegant variation of nomenclature becomes either evasion or condonation.

When commentators discuss or annotate the sexual exploitation of women by, for example, Jupiter, they prettify the ugly facts of serial rape with such coy euphemisms as "amours," "loves," "courtship," or even "marriage" (the latter term may seem to betray an eccentric understanding of the institution of marriage, but is actually bowdlerism carried to the point of dishonesty), although there is occasionally a closer approximation to the truth and we may hear of a woman being "ravished." When scholars can bring themselves to utter the word "rape," it is employed as a noun and in a most imprecise sense, with connotations suggesting anything from a love affair to seduction to abduction; thus we find "the rape of Europa," rather than "Europa's rape by Jupiter" or "Jupiter raped Europa," wording which would carry some intimation that rape is a most intimate violation of a woman's person. "The rape of Europa" is as vague and figurative as the Nazis' "rape of Czechoslovakia." In fact, the second phrase conveys a greater impression of shockingness and atrocity, since the language of the literature on Ovid has made us so used to phrases like the first where the word "rape" has been thoroughly sanitized.

The commentators' arabesques of euphemism are the verbal manifestation of certain underlying prejudices and habits of mind. In the commentaries, as in society, it has not been the practice of men lightly to accuse another male of rape even if, as it turns out, the rapist is a figure in a myth thousands of years old. Classical scholars apparently require the same stringent proof of rape as do our least enlightened rape laws, police, and courts. When such proof is lacking, the reaction is disbelief or amusement.⁷ Whether it be motivated by timidity or prudery, their own sexual anxieties, or a misguided and fundamentally hypocritical reverence for the innocence of their younger readers, the conventional reticence concerning sexual matters is a badge of our profession and I will not concern myself here with what contribution it may make to the preservation of our society's patriarchal mythology of rape. However, such reticence has obstructed a full

ventilation of what Ovid has to tell us about rape in the *Metamorphoses*.

Many of the best known stories are of rape and their victims' less well known sisters are also numerous. In addition Ovid will insert rape into a myth where other versions omit it; for example, Tereus in other sources *marries* Philomela after tricking her into believing that her sister has died. Book I establishes the centrality of the theme very quickly. After the Chaos, the Creation, the Flood, and the Deucalion and Pyrrha, the latter half of the book is devoted to three tales of attempted rape, the successful rape of Io and the failed attempts upon Daphne and Syrinx. With these rape stories, comparable in length with the introductory ones, the poem has in its first book settled down into one of its dominant themes.

Raped men can be quickly disposed of, since they are very few, and violence, as in Aurora's rape of Cephalus, is virtually absent. Salmacis, so long as she retains the form of a woman, cannot use force on Hermaphroditus. Even in the case of the mighty goddess Venus, who was in a position to exercise superior power over the mortal Adonis, Ovid gives no hint of any of the violence, threats, or gross deception so dear to male rapists like Jupiter. Male homosexuality is rare in the *Metamorphoses* and force is confined to an exceptional case like Jupiter and Ganymede.

As for raped women, the varieties and strategies of violation to be found in the *Metamorphoses* are many. In the discussion that follows it will not always be necessary to distinguish between successful attempts and failures, since Ovid, as we shall see, seems to regard failure, in its consequences for the woman, almost as seriously as success.

The act of rape itself, i.e., penetration and the manner of its accomplishment, usually takes very little time to relate. This holds true both in those stories which are told at length and deal at leisure with things other than the act itself, e.g., preliminaries, concomitants such as flight of the victim, a transformation of shape, or other consequences, and in those instances which constitute little more than a mention of the occurrence of rape. Ovid is not writing pornography but a kind of epic and does not have a lickerish interest in clinical and anatomical details.

Brevity, however, is often less a concession to decorum than a means of illustrating some significant aspect of rape. The various

quick rapes have different causes and effects and, although there may be violence, actual, threatened, or implied, it is not dwelt upon in such stories.

The casualness may be on Ovid's part: he may simply not take the time to stop for details. Rape is sometimes a device to identify a character when first introduced, somewhat in the manner of: "This is X. You know, the one who was raped by Y." Narcissus is introduced with a mention of his mother Liriope, whose rape receives a mere two lines:

quam quondam flumine curvo
implicuit clausaeque suis Cephisos in undis
vim tulit. (3.342-344)

Medusa's rape takes less than two lines:

hanc pelagi rector templo vitiasse Minervae
dicitur. (4.798-799)

And Dryope's rape by Apollo is also swiftly told:

quam virginitate carentem
vimque dei passam Delphos Delumque tenentis. (9.331-332)

Offhand allusions to rapes are reminders that, in the world of the *Metamorphoses*, whatever else is going on in the foreground, rape is always present or potential in the background. Arachne's catalog of divine lechery in which most of the rapes take less than a line, depicts a universe infested by rapists dressed like Disney characters. The brevity and the need for variety of expression make it difficult here to separate rape from seduction, but Ovid calls them all *caelestia crimina* (6.131). Moreover, as I shall argue later, seduction can be so grossly deceptive or unfair as to be the moral equivalent of rape.

At other times the casualness may not be Ovid's but the rapist's: he impulsively takes a woman who momentarily catches his fancy. Syrinx is an example, although her rapist fails. Her story follows the Daphne, whose encounter with Apollo was her first and only one with a potential rapist. Syrinx is in contrast a seasoned veteran, who seems to have made a career out of evading rapists. In all previous encounters, she escapes with both virginity and humanity intact; with Pan she salvages virginity only at the cost of human nature. Pan seems to have no more than the most fleeting interest in her; Ovid does not bother to mention the god's physical arousal or emotional state.

One type of quick and easy rape is rare in the *Metamorphoses*, although it is commoner among the few rapes in the *Fasti*: the sleeping victim. In the *Metamorphoses* this happens only to Chione, whom Mercury puts to sleep with his wand before raping her, and Thetis, who is asleep when Peleus begins his assault, although she soon awakes and the assailant is denied his swift conquest after all.

At other times rape is instantaneous in order to demonstrate the helplessness of woman in the face of overwhelming male superiority. The suddenness speaks to the familiar men's fantasy of instant and effortless conquest of women (to which are directed the advertisements in men's magazines for aids guaranteeing to make women fall at the user's feet as soon as they see him). For the god in such stories it is lust at first sight, followed by immediate gratification, or gratification slightly delayed by pro forma preliminaries. In the Io verbal seduction and flight are merely a brief prelude to the swiftly accomplished act:

terras
occulit tenuitque fugam rapuitque pudorem. (1.599 f.)

The speed of the rape of Persephone is breathtaking:

paene simul visa est dilectaque raptaque Diti. (5.395)

Similar instantaneous rapes occur in the Caenis (12.189 ff.) and the Perimele (8.592).

Violence is more prominent in the longer rape stories, where it ranges from wrestling (in the Thetis) to overt sadism and killing.⁸ The rape of Orithyia is over quickly and the force of the assault itself pales before what might be called rhetorical or pictorial violence in the long and impressive portrayal of the raging fury of Boreas after the failure of his polite and proper courtship (6.685 ff.). As Ovid merges the anthropomorphic features of Boreas with a more naturalistic representation of the irresistible force of wind and storm, he creates such a vigorous poetic image of virility as aggressive potency on the scale of the forces of external nature that the actual rape becomes almost anticlimactic. At the same time there is a large measure of burlesque, although Ovid is not making a joke out of rape. For him it is no contradiction to present rape simultaneously as both an outrage committed upon a woman and as a grotesque caricature of masculinity.

In the Semele, although the act is not technically rape, the

violence of male sexuality is so enormous that it annihilates the woman.⁹ This myth and, to a lesser extent, the Orithyia illustrate some of the darkest shadows not only of rape but of certain other aggressive and sadistic forms of male sexuality. We are confronted with an especially disagreeable fantasy and one that, if modern pornography from de Sade on is a reliable guide, has an appeal to no small proportion of “normal” men: virility of such spectacular potency that it can seriously hurt, wound, or even destroy a woman in the very act of intercourse. When the most extreme version of the fantasy is acted out in real life, we have the rapist who murders not in order to dispose of a potential prosecutrix (to use the legal term for the plaintiff in a rape trial), but because it is an indispensable part of his pleasure in violating a woman.¹⁰

It was not of course Jupiter’s own wish that Semele be immolated. However, there is deliberate and undisguised sadism in the Tereus where, after having raped Philomela the first time, her brother-in-law tears out her tongue and goes on raping her. In what is probably the most repellant passage in all of Ovid, Tereus is represented as repeatedly deriving sexual pleasure from Philomela’s mutilated body and the language implies that the mutilation was itself a further sexual stimulant (6.549 ff.). Ovid understands male sexuality at its most savage.

Rape in the form of bestiality occurs in Arachne’s catalog of rapes in which gods become bull, eagle, swan, snake, ram, horse, dolphin, hawk, and lion. The theme should not be given too much weight, since this is a mere list and Ovid does not often tell a story at length in which a male god assumes animal disguise in order to rape or seduce a woman. The Europa is long enough and does evoke the familiar phenomenon of a young girl’s unconsciously sexual attraction to large and powerful beasts, but he ends the story before the point of intercourse. Among the many tales of bestiality in ancient mythology, one should note that it is rare for the female to be the animal, except when the rapist is semi-human, such as a satyr; Jupiter, for example, rapes Io and Callisto only *before* they become animals. Less fastidious in their lust than men, it is almost always women who mate with animals. Such fantasies carry at least some implication of degradation: a woman will have intercourse with anything. It is typical of Ovid’s attitude that he generally avoids such stories.

Rape can be prefaced by attempted seduction. Jupiter approaches

Io with a speech which, although it is short, manages to combine flattery, an invitation to enjoy the cool of the woods, an offer of protection against any dangers there, and a boast of his distinction as a lover; when all fails, he is ruthlessly direct and efficient in taking what he wants (1.589-600). Peleus makes a very brief effort of this kind (11.239). Apollo's very long seduction speech to Daphne is so absurd that he makes a fool of himself, but after its failure, he proves to be as ruthless as his father (1.504-552). The Pomona is one of the longest versions of this theme (14.623 ff.). Vertumnus, having tried many disguises, finally subjects the woman to a long speech of seduction. When this method fails, he resumes his true form and prepares to rape her.

The longest version of the theme of the seducer who is ready to turn to rape if persuasion fails is the Polyphemus and Galatea (13.749 ff.). In a literary equivalent of the archaeologist's Cyclopean walls, Polyphemus sings an interminable love song of ludicrously overstated rhetoric (782 ff.). The frustration of his suit drives him to kill his rival Acis and would obviously have driven him to rape Galatea had she not already plunged into the sea (870 ff.). The monstrous scale of the Cyclops' rhetoric and violence is a *reductio ad absurdum* of, respectively, the overweening confidence of some seducers and, like the fury of Boreas, an image of the headlong ferocity of exaggerated male sexuality.¹¹

In these stories in which an attempt at seduction precedes rape, Ovid seems to have in mind the kind of man who intends from the start to get what he wants, whatever the means. That he resorts to seduction first is not out of politeness or out of a wish to spare the victim pain or fear. What is more likely is that the male prefers the ego satisfaction of manipulation of the woman's will by his attractiveness, charm, or intelligence to brute physical mastery of her body. Ovid's tendency to treat his would-be seducers and their speeches in a somewhat comic way does not make their manipulative tactics any less unsavory, just as his grotesque caricature of masculine violence does not obscure his recognition of its destructiveness.

There is another kind of seduction. Germaine Greer makes the useful distinction between "grand rape" and "petit rape."¹² The former is what is usually defined legally as forcible rape. Petit rape she proposes as the proper label for certain conduct which is conventionally called seduction, but in which the seducer in fact has some

disproportionately unfair advantage over the woman. He need not threaten her, but it is his superior power which induces her to acquiesce against her will. Susan Brownmiller speaks of "unpleasant but not quite criminal sexual extortion."¹³ Examples are the employer and secretary or the professor and student, both matters to which the attention of the courts is currently being drawn in civil rights violation cases. A good specimen in Ovid is Leucothoe, who has excited the lust of the god Sol. After gaining entry to her room disguised as her mother, it takes the god less than three lines to reveal his identity in grandiloquent and self-laudatory terms and simply to announce that he finds her desirable, an indeed smug and perfunctory way to proposition a woman (4.226-228). Although absolutely no force is used or threatened and even the proposition is left unspoken, Leucothoe is seized with fear. Yet it is not so much her fear that makes her submit as it is the awesome appearance and power of the god after he has resumed his own form. Ovid makes clear the distinction between the two: "Although she was terrified, she was overwhelmed by the god's radiance and endured his assault without protest" (4.232-233). The Latin conveys her emotional state with exquisite accuracy: *posita vim passa querella est*. Although the phrase *vim passa* and its variants verge on the formulaic in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid here uses it with extreme precision. No force or threat of force is present, but the effect is the same. She recognizes that resistance or demurrer would be futile. To many jurors in a trial today this would not constitute rape at all. Ovid knows better; and so does the woman, if one were to try to imagine a modern parallel to Leucothoe's situation, who is alone in her house when a powerfully built man of supreme self-confidence enters her bedroom and announces to her that he wants her.

The Daphne combines two sorts of petit rape. In listing his attributes at length in a parody of a hymn to himself, Apollo is not only documenting his power and exploiting it in order to intimidate the woman without actually resorting to threats (1.504 ff.). His garrulousness also suggests a second kind of conduct similar in its results to rape. An unwilling woman may eventually give in to a persistent seducer who refuses to leave her home just to be rid of him and get some sleep. Apollo is a fatuous pest who will not take "no" for an answer in Ovid's burlesque of him; looked at from another point of view, he is much more formidable.

There are in the *Metamorphoses* what may be called truncated or

elliptical rape stories, in which the act itself is not mentioned and which, although longer, resemble the casual allusions to rape discussed above. Sometimes we are told only of events after the rape, as in the *Latona* and the *Alcmena*, in which Ovid relates the wandering of the pregnant *Latona* and the difficulties both women endure in giving birth of the fruit of their rape. At other times we are given only the preliminaries and the story is never finished. Such is the case in the *Europa*, which begins with a leisurely description of Jupiter in the guise of a bull, the growing passion of the deceived *Europa*, and then the gradual and literal fading into the distance (and out of the poem) of the girl on the back of the swimming bull. Since we all know the story or can easily guess how it will end, Ovid does not have to tell it all.

Along with actual rape, we sometimes find rape fantasy or metaphorical rape in which the man's "conquest" is characterized by the language and imagery of rape. The *Tereus*, in addition to actual rape, also includes a large section which is an extended rape fantasy in the mind of the rapist (6.455 ff.). As for metaphorical rape, the language used of *Hippomanes'* race with *Atalanta* has clear sexual implications and the implications are often those of conquest (10.560-685).¹⁴ Pluto's violent entry into the earth by splitting the pool of *Cyane* to its depths and the effects upon *Cyane* herself (5.492) are cast in the language of rape and shortly thereafter *Arethusa* speaks of the penetration of *Cyane* as rape: *patuitque invita rapinae* (5.492).

Of much greater moment throughout the *Metamorphoses* than the mechanics and strategies of the act of rape is the matter of the intellectual and emotional experience of the woman and her suffering. It is this aspect of rape that most deeply engages Ovid's acute observation and sympathetic imagination.

The stereotype of woman as victim, frequently with the corollary of masochism, is nowadays such a commonplace in life and so much a staple of the news and entertainment media that we may be conditioned to accept it unthinkingly as perfectly "natural."¹⁵ In soft- and hard-core pornography and in both popular as well as in much professional psychology, women are supposed to enjoy being victims, to prefer masochistic fantasies, and to want to be raped. (The degree of consciousness with which the idea of woman as victim is entertained or the degree of explicitness with which it is portrayed on a given occasion is of course variable.) We may be predisposed therefore to

overlook the significance of the fact that a major function of woman in the *Metamorphoses* is to be a victim, usually, although not exclusively, of rape. The victims are not always female, and when they are, it is not always rape that they suffer; nor are the persecutors by any means always male. Victimizers are frequently female and often the stories in which they figure have to do with divine jealousy and other subjects unrelated to rape. In spite of these qualifications, those victims who are raped females constitute a large proportion.

Ovid does not simply take the role of woman as victim for granted and get on with the story at hand; rather he draws out its implications. He shows that there are few from whom the victim can expect sympathy or comfort. She and not the rapist is the one who must bear the injury, the guilt, society's blame, and the punishment.¹⁶

Damage, physical or psychological, done to the raped woman is ignored or taken lightly by society. Jupiter dismisses Pluto's rape of Persephone as *amor* rather than *injuria* (5.525-6). The suffering of the victim is deemed by others to be secondary to that done to father or husband, since traditionally in Western and other societies, rape is perceived primarily as an offense against the property or honor of men. The rivers of Thessaly, instead of lamenting the fate of Daphne, are worried about her father and whether he should be congratulated or consoled (1.578). Perimele's father found her rape so unendurable that he cast her from a cliff to her death (8.593 f.). When the Centaurs begin raping the women at Pirithous' wedding, Theseus protests that this is an offense to the groom and to himself as a friend of the groom, not to the women being raped (12.227-229). Guilt is perhaps the most unjust burden the victim must bear. Women have been so brought up that the victim may be quite ready to believe that *she* is somehow guilty and that she must have done something to provoke or to cooperate with the rape. Daphne curses her beauty because it has made her too desirable (1.547). The raped Philomela speaks of her own *crimen* (6.541) and cannot look her sister in the eye (605 f.); she twice gives vent to her shame by using of herself the highly pejorative term *paelex* (537 and 606). In the *Fasti*, the husband and father of Lucretia *forgive* her (2.819 ff.). Society's blame is the external counterpart of guilt. A portion of society has always believed that unless a woman is beaten senseless or bound helpless, what she calls rape must always require at least minimal consent on her part. Leucothoe pleads that she was raped against her will, in vain, since no force was used and she did not

cry out for assistance (4.225 ff.). Callisto's pregnancy, when it becomes known, is called *crimen* (2.462) and she is guilty of *culpa* (452). Ovid is here speaking from the point of view of society; earlier it is Jupiter to whom he ascribes *crimen* (433). Philomela realizes that if she tells others of her rape, it will be at the cost of her own *pudor* (6.544-545).

In addition to blame, punishment is the lot of the victim, while the rapist normally suffers nothing worse than occasional embarrassment. Leucothoe's father buries her alive. Vengeance may be exacted by a deity of the victim's own sex. Minerva takes vengeance on Medusa for having the presumption to be raped in the goddess' temple with her version of a punishment fit the crime: defilement of what was most beautiful in her, her hair. Harshes of all in her persecution of rape victims is Juno. It is Juno who destroys Semele and chooses a means which, since she is at the same time delivered of her fetus, is also a travesty of childbirth, a mordant irony on the part of the deity to whom women in labor pray for easy delivery. It is Juno who torments the parturient Latona (6.232 ff.) and Alcmena (9.284 ff.). In such stories which link woman's reproductive functions so closely with extreme suffering or death and in which the expected protector of women is instead a cruel personification of the horrendous dangers of childbirth, Ovid display a sensitivity to the enormous risk women faced in exercising their sexuality in a period long before the advances in gynecology of the past century. In addition, most of his rape victims are very young virgins (a subject to be discussed below in another context) and the considerably higher incidence of complications in childbirth in the case of primiparas in their early teens cannot have escaped the notice of the Romans. It is against this grim background of medical helplessness, in which intercourse, pregnancy, and childbirth mean potential destruction for the women, that the poet sets his band of light-hearted rapists.

The punishment of the victim is not limited to her body. Ovid subordinates the physical discomforts of Io's new life as a heifer to her psychological suffering and to the indignity and degradation of her new state.¹⁷ Her ludicrous appearance expresses the humiliation and mortification to which the raped are subject. She has no privacy under the constant gaze of the many eyes of Argus, like a woman in a small town who must endure the stares of all in their knowledge that she has been raped. (One is reminded of the look in the eyes of the vil-

lagers who surround the widow in *Zorba the Greek*.) She is so terrified by the sight of herself in a reflection that she tries to flee from herself. That rape has robbed her of her very humanity is shown less eloquently in her external bovine shape than in her terrible isolation and inarticulateness. In the strange transformation rape has forced upon her, she is unable to plead with her captor by either voice or gesture; she cannot at first communicate with her father and sisters nor can they recognize her. When she does succeed in making her identity known, the reunion is short-lived since Argus soon drives her off. The psychological torture worsens when Argus is replaced by the Fury Juno sends to drive her in madness and terror all over the world. When her sanity and humanity are finally restored it is only with timidity that she can resume speech.

Callisto, before any physical punishment, must undergo the anguish of rejection by Diana, who pitilessly exiles from her company the nymph who had once been her special favorite by reason of the very virginity robbed from her by a Jupiter who had played the cruel trick of assuming Diana's own appearance. When Juno subsequently transforms Callisto's grace into the shambling awkwardness of a bear, the grotesqueness of the elaboration of the details of metamorphosis again expresses mental as much as bodily suffering in a dehumanization the victim lasting long after the rape itself.

The role of Juno requires special discussion, since it may seem anomalous for a female so often to be the one who punishes other females. One obvious reason why we find her victimizing women is that she happens to be the very jealous wife of the greatest womanizer in ancient mythology. She has, however, a much larger significance. However unhappy Juno's own experience with marriage, she was in myth and, much more importantly, in cult, the divine patroness of the social institution of marriage. In the *Metamorphoses* she is the embodiment, on the level of myth, of society's attitudes toward marriage and such related matters as virginity and adultery. As Virgil is in the *Aeneid*, Ovid is dealing with social realities not in discursive terms but through symbolic objectification of them in the figures of myth. Juno is the villain of the *Aeneid* and, as Pöschl has shown, represents certain historical, political, and social phenomena.¹⁶ Much of the *Metamorphoses* is devoted to playful, yet respectful, parody of the *Aeneid*, as Ovid merrily stands many of its characters and incidents on their heads. In his hands, the Virgilian Jupiter, that champion of order

and the values of civilized society, becomes an anarchic rapist; Virgil's Juno, the embodiment of anarchy and the breakdown of society, becomes the defender of society's rules regulating marriage and extra-marital sexuality. As such, it is altogether fitting that dehumanization be so often her way of punishing the rape victim: expulsion from the human race is the ultimate excommunication from society. That her motives are very personal and even small-minded does not diminish her credibility as an objectification of society's sexual mores. On the contrary, her character, especially her jealousy and vindictiveness, provides the handy, natural, and thoroughly human (in the sense in which the gods of ancient myth behave like humans) motivation for her behavior. Juno was appropriate because her husband's rapes constantly put her into situations in which it was natural and plausible for her to punish rape victims and thus be the agent of society in enforcing its rules.

For Ovid to take the Homeric Hera of sometimes comic jealousy and the Virgilian Juno of antisocial anarchy and turn the goddess into society's police is no harder to accept than Virgil's elevation of the rather disreputable Aphrodite of Greek myth and literature into the patroness of the loftiest of Roman and Augustan ideals. Indeed, the union of the all-too-human character of the deity as a mythological figure with a larger social reality is much more convincing in the case of Ovid's Juno than in that of Virgil's Venus. Although Ovid can hardly have conceived of it in such explicit terms, the treatment of Juno as such a prominent victimizer of women shows how a patriarchal society conditions women to punish their own sisters.

Beauty is dangerous. The victim's beauty (and, as in sensational newspaper accounts today, the victim is always beautiful) is an invitation to and a justification for rape, as in the case of Herse (2.723 ff.),¹⁹ Philomela (6.451 ff.), Caenis (12.189 ff.), or Daphne. Since Daphne does not want to be raped, she is turned into a tree. One way of reading this story is to conclude that a woman who is unwilling to accept what is the potential threat faced by every woman might as well be a tree. That way she can never be dressed in the wrong way or in the wrong place at the wrong time. Since being the inhabitant of a beautiful young female body seems to some a standing invitation to rape, Daphne is emitting misleading signals. Transforming her into a tree prevents further misunderstanding. Daphne is the kind of woman about whom a certain sort of man says, "All she needs to straighten

her out is one good rape.” Or as Ovid himself says to Daphne in apostrophe:

te decor iste, quod optas,
esse vetat, votoque tuo tua forma repugnat. (1.488 f.)

Compare the daughter of Coroneus, who prefaces the account of her rape with the words: *forma mihi nocuit* (2.572). Cephalus pays a compliment, very odd in a context other than the *Metamorphoses*, to his wife’s beauty: alluding to the rape of Orithyia, he calls his wife “more worthy of raping” than her sister (7.697). One is inevitably reminded of that hoary defense of rape, the provocative appearance or dress of the woman, which an American judge in 1977 used in his lenient treatment of a rapist who was only behaving in what it pleased the court to call a normal way.

Beauty and sexual desirability are enhanced by disarray of clothing or hair, by discomfort and embarrassment, or by fear. For the rapist these are all aphrodisiacs. Daphne’s hair and dress are attractively disordered by the breezes as she flees Apollo and Leucothoe’s “terror was becoming to her” (4.230). Of Europa we are told in the *Fasti*: “and her very fear was a source of additional beauty” (5.608). Below I will discuss the theme as the subjective, internal experience of the victim; here terror is an external attribute that further goads her attacker on.

In age the typical rape victim in Ovid is quite young, although only once does he speak of child rape as such; in the Persephone he conveys the pathos of a situation in which the girl is too young even to realize what rape is: she grieves more for the damage done to her clothing than to her person. Most of the other victims are also very young and would today be considered virtually children or what many would call Lolitas (although this is to ignore the fact that Nabokov’s heroine was only pubescent and in the event was no innocent virgin). In Ovid’s society a girl was an appropriate sex object from her earliest teens, i.e., as soon as she was actually nubile.

The premium placed on the extreme youth of the victim is closely related to, but by no means the same thing as, the exaggerated value given to virginity. The obsession with being the first man to possess a woman is dramatized sharply in the story of Chione, who is simultaneously spotted by both Phoebus and Mercury (11.301 ff.). Both desire her at once, but Apollo has at least the patience and decency to

wait until nightfall. Mercury rapes her on the spot and forces Apollo to reap *praerepta gaudia* (310). It is clear that Mercury's priority by a few hours is a major feather in his cap.

What are the implications of the fact that the victims are rarely married and almost always barely nubile virgins? We have seen that the price of beauty is rape. So too is the price of childish innocence and virginity. It is all in the nature of things, the normal.

Girls have always been taught to be passive rather than assertive and that training, along with relatively lesser size and weight, makes women physically vulnerable to rape.²⁰ Although Ovid creates some notably forceful female characters elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*, his rape stories exhibit women's weakness. As he puts it succinctly in the *Fasti*, "When a woman fights, she loses" (2.801), and in the *Callisto* he asks, "Whom can a girl overpower?" (2.436).²¹ The theme is stated over and over again in the constantly recurring similes likening women to the hapless prey of ferocious beasts and birds. Furthermore, the youth and the innocence of the typical victims enhance their weakness, as in the case of Philomela; she is exceptional, however, in her transition from helplessness at the time of her rape to immense strength in her vengeance at the end of the story.

The story of Caenis is especially instructive for an understanding of Ovid's awareness of the implications of the physical vulnerability of women. The story shows that the only totally sure way for a woman to avoid rape is to give up her own sex and become a man. Neptune, having raped Caenis, offers her a reward. The crime just committed against her determines her greatest desire, that she lose her womanhood: *tale pati nil posse; mihi da, femina ne sim; / omnia praestiteris* (12.202-203). Ovid makes clear the aggressive nature of rape and its intention to harm or hurt by having Caenis call it an *injuria* and, much more explicitly a few lines later, by identifying sexual penetration with a wound: changed from woman to man, Caeneus is now to be immune from any kind of penetration (12.206-207). The other sorts of penetration the speaker here (Nestor) has in mind are those of warfare, but the deliberate vagueness of language also includes vaginal and anal rape (which latter may be what Fränkel has in mind when he sees "a touch of dry masculine humor" in 12.201-203).²² But it may not be a joke. It may be further emphasis on the vulnerability and passivity of women. Caenis' *tale pati nil posse* reminds one of the common Latin expression for the act of the passive male homosexual: *pati muliebricia*.

So far from womanhood is Caeneus now that he is impregnable to even that one kind of rape that makes a man like a woman. When the story of Caeneus is resumed later, Ovid again sounds the theme of the physical inferiority and timidity of women by having a Centaur taunt Caeneus with his once having been a woman (12.407 ff.). In Hermaphroditus' prayer that every man who enters Salmacis' pool, as he did, *exeat inde / semivir...ut mollescat*, there is a measure of anatomical accuracy in *semivir*; but this word and *mollescat* imply in a more general way that a woman is only an incomplete and softened (not just softer) man (4.385 f.).

Rape poses a devastating threat to personal integrity and identity and can destroy a woman's sense of self and of her relationship to others. A recognition of the severe emotional damage rape can inflict upon the personality of the victim is not surprising in a poem so concerned with the nature of personal identity. Frequently the victim becomes confused as to who she is. Daphne can no longer live with her own body (a sharp distinction between self and body which is characteristic of schizophrenia). The raped Callisto has "forgotten who she is" (2.493).²³ Philomela suffers a confusion in her relation to her sister/rival and to her rapist/brother-in-law of exactly the kind being reported today by those who work with young incest victims (6.537 ff.). Io, so bewildered over her identity after her rape when she saw herself reflected in a pool as a cow-woman, "in terror fled from herself" (1.641).²⁴ The cover of a recent book on rape, Hursh's *The Trouble With Rape*, aptly carries the face of a woman in form of a mosaic disintegrating into its constituent tesserae.

Rape does worse than undermine a woman's identity; it can rob her of her humanity. Change from human to non-human is a constant occurrence in the *Metamorphoses*, and the majority of instances of course has nothing to do with rape. However, transformation into the non-human is uniquely appropriate in the case of rape, for the process of dehumanization begins long before any subsequent metamorphosis of the woman's body. The transition from human to sex object and then to object pure and simple proceeds by swift and easy stages, its onset being simultaneous with the decision to commit rape. The final physical transformation of so many rape victims is only the outward ratification of an earlier metamorphosis of the woman into a mere thing in the mind of the attacker and in his treatment of her.²⁵ The identification of rape and dehumanization is intimate and virtually immediate in the

Daphne, where the heroine begins to lose her humanity as soon as the chase begins. As Daphne runs from Apollo, the effect of the wind on her fluttering clothing and streaming hair corresponds closely to what the wind will do to the branches and leaves of the tree she is to become. After her transformation, 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. Ovid's language describing what he and Apollo choose to take as the laurel's "reactions" (1.556 and 566-567) has an eerie but psychologically correct ring to it.

The two elements perhaps paramount in Ovid's understanding of the psychology of rape are the victim's unwillingness and her terror. The women of the *Metamorphoses* do not secretly wish to be raped nor, when faced with rape, do they turn into more or less eager accomplices in their own violation, contrary to ancient and modern cliché and to the glib assumptions of the poet in his earlier works. The facile cynicism of the Ovid, where a woman's "no" means "yes," gives way to a new empathy with women and their real wishes. It is significant that he resists any temptation to exploit Tiresias' notorious appraisal of the pleasure women derive from sex (3.316 ff.).

The unwillingness of the victim is explicit or implicit in Ovid's telling of the stories I have dealt with so far. Here I wish to restate the point by way of calling attention of a special category of reluctant women. A great many of his heroines are nymphs and his seemingly eccentric treatment of them is a testimony to the significance he attached to his somewhat late discovery that women do not like to be raped. He takes such pains to make the resistance of these women unmistakable that he endows some of them with a deep-seated abhorrence of sexuality that would seem to border on the pathological. These are very special nymphs indeed.

Nymphs after all were young women who had a reputation for very active sexual lives (or "amorous propensities" as one of the handbooks discreetly puts it). Normally they did not have to be raped; nymphs played a role in myth not unlike that played in the male imagination today by the mention of airline stewardesses or cocktail waitresses.²⁶ But some of Ovid's nymphs are very different; they are totally dedicated virgins, much to the bewilderment of the satyrs they

live among, who are used to more typical nymphs.²⁷ When the nymphs of the *Metamorphoses* resist, they are not being coy; they mean it. They will more readily endure the loss of anything rather than virginity, including womanhood, humanity, or life.²⁸ We do not find that favorite modern male fantasy, the reluctant virgin who learns during or after rape that she actually enjoys it in spite of herself and becomes what is usually but illogically called a nymphomaniac. (One would expect *nymphiasis* on the analogy of *satyriasis*; it is the satyrs who were nymphomaniacs.)

With his penchant for ironic reversal, what Ovid has in fact done is to treat these nymphs as if they were those paragons of female virtue, the heroines of Roman legendary history, or the daughters of traditional, respectable Roman families, whose most precious possession was premarital virginity, a notion which, in his earlier works he had ridiculed as uncouth *rusticitas*. To state his case in the strongest and most paradoxical terms, he shows that *even nymphs* can be unwilling rape victims and chooses them as his heroines over and over again; an analogy today would be a feminist who maintained the right of even a prostitute not to be raped as an a fortiori argument in defense of all women.

Callisto and Pomona are good instances of this extraordinary hostility to sexuality, but it is conspicuous from the first book of the poem, beginning with the programmatic Daphne, where Ovid has Cupid invent for use on the heroine a novel anaphrodisiacal arrowhead, as if she had to be inoculated against her normal proclivities as a nymph. The result is to make her reject all men and not simply resist Apollo's advances (1.471 ff.). Arethusa blushes because of her unwanted beauty and thinks it a *crimen* to be desired by men (5.584).

Ovid's emphasis on the violation of unwilling young women deeply committed to the protection of their sexual integrity illuminates the psychology of rape. The victims can apparently be ranked in a hierarchy of desirability. The married or sexually mature victim, almost entirely absent from the *Metamorphoses*, ranks lower than the young, inexperienced virgin, because her innocence means that what the rapist is forcing her to undergo is totally new to her and he is the first to have her. If she is not only inexperienced and simply reluctant, but also has a positive aversion to sex and wants desperately to keep her virginity, she is an even better victim because the rapist can then enjoy his mastery over her futile resistance against what she finds

detestable and degrading. The three tiers in the hierarchy of rape might be likened to: the theft of used goods; the conquest of virgin territory, to change the metaphor to one of the many identifying woman with the land; and the rape of the will, which for many real-life rapists is much more important than anything done to the woman's body.²⁹ The third type of victim is also more likely to have still another desirable feature lacking in the other two: timidity and fear, to which we shall now turn.

Perhaps the most impressive element of Ovid's treatment of rape is his understanding of the sheer horror of the experience for the woman and his ability to empathize with her and thereby to portray her terror with compelling authenticity. I shall for the most part be concerned with fear at the time of the rape, but it should be noted that it can last long after the actual danger has passed: the Muses must live on in a state of dread with the memory of their narrow escape and Persephone remains fearful even as Queen of the Underworld.

Ovid may simply state that the woman is terrified. He also has artfully chosen techniques for dramatizing the horror for us by casting it in the form of some common dread or anxiety we are all familiar with. Arethusa is especially threatened because she is naked. Nudity makes both men and women feel more vulnerable, even when there is no overtly sexual danger. Totalitarian police are well aware of its value as intimidation in enhancing the effects of actual physical torture and the famous shower scene in Hitchcock's "Psycho" owes much of the profound effect it has on audiences, male and female, to the fact that the defenseless heroine not only faces an armed psychopath but is in addition nude.

The terror can take the form of the suffocating dread of being overwhelmed, enshrouded, engulfed, or trapped. The victim may be surrounded or caught up in some embracing substance, as Arethusa is (5.621 ff.). In the Io, in the space of a little over a line, Ovid depicts the blinding, suffocating embrace with which Jupiter encloses the girl in order to rape her (1.599 f.).³⁰ This kind of fear resembles the infantile dread of the dark, and we must remember that the victims in the *Metamorphoses* are young. When Boreas comes to rape Orithyia, the poet stresses the all-embracing dark cloud and the terror it inspires in the girl. Peleus twice *binds* Thetis. In the Tereus Ovid deals with the same fear so well evoked in Fowles' *The Collector*, that of being abducted and imprisoned far from home with no idea of where one is.

Unquestionably the most effective of Ovid's techniques for conveying the traumatizing horror of rape and to which he resorts throughout the poem is the recurring motif of flight and pursuit, of chase and the attempt to escape.³¹ Pursuit is so frequent an incident that it may strike us at times as gratuitous or automatic; in some cases, he does not even indicate why the rapist, who at least some of the time is standing close to his victim, cannot simply reach out and seize her, but must instead resort to a chase.³² Far from gratuitous, flight was for Ovid the consummate means for the expression of the terror of the rape victim, the predatory appetite of the rapist, and the dehumanizing reduction of a woman to the level of a hunted animal.³³ It is also an excellent poetic method for putting the reader in the position of the victim, since we have all experienced similar dread in our nightmares and there is a distinctly nightmarish quality in the flight scenes of the *Metamorphoses*. We know this fear not only from our dreams but also from its evocation in so many films; indeed, our familiarity with it derived from this source may lead us to underestimate the originality and perceptiveness of Ovid's choice of the motif.³⁴

I have chosen to discuss the two salient instances of the use of the flight motif to express the terror of the victim, the Daphne and the Arethusa, although the peculiar horror evoked in these stories can be experienced only by reading Ovid's text and not the critic's paraphrase, analysis, and excerpting. That in one story the rapist fails entirely and in the other succeeds only in a qualified, i.e., metaphorical, sense can be no accident on Ovid's part. If actual penetration had been achieved it would have obscured the true import of these stories: the psychological effect on the victim's mind of the ordeal of being hunted down like prey can be more damaging than any physical invasion of her body. Of course there are other stories in which the pursuer does succeed in catching and raping his prey. In such cases flight, in addition to portraying the emotional state of the victim, illustrates other aspects of rape, such as the vulnerability of woman, who must flee instead of fighting back, and rape as an exercise by men of the aggression and violent physical activity they are trained in from boyhood.

In the case of Daphne, if we wish to be generous, we may say that Apollo's actions at first are closer to seduction than to rape, for he refrains from running as fast as he can and tries to persuade her as he pursues her. Ovid makes fun of Apollo and his overblown rhetoric. For example, he has the god resort in his excess to no fewer than four

similes of animal predators chasing their prey only to claim, with transparent hypocrisy, that they do not apply to him (1.504 ff.). But the situation is no joke for Daphne and Ovid makes the frivolous Apollo spout his ridiculous similes only to lend a contrasting gravity to his own similar comparison a few lines later when Apollo abandons his slower pace and the chase begins in earnest. Now he employs the single, extended simile of a hunting hound chasing a hare (532-539). Its deadly seriousness is enhanced by language strongly reminiscent of Aeneas' final pursuit of Turnus (*Aen.* 12.749-765). Like its Virgilian model, the simile has a haunting quality. The direct description, resuming after the simile, contains two terrifying touches: the god is so close to the girl that he looms over her and breathes on her neck:

tergoque fugacis
inminet et crinem sparsum cervicibus adflat. (541-542)

As for the Arethusa, the initial question of the story at once determines the tenor of all that follows: the terror of flight.³⁵ Ceres' *quae tibi causa fugae...?* ostensibly asks why Arethusa has taken refuge in Sicily and left her home (5.573). By the choice of *fuga* to designate her exile Ovid has at once established the act of fleeing (the basic meaning of *fuga*) as the dominant motif in the story and the feeling of being a hunted animal as a central element in the emotional experience of the rape victim. The tale proceeds at a leisurely pace until, from the depths of the water in which she is innocently and nakedly bathing, Arethusa hears a strange murmuring sound. At once the tempo quickens:

territaque insisto propiori margine fontis. (5.598)

In the two words *territa insisto* we are swiftly given the emotional reaction (terror) and the immediate defensive action (flight to the river bank: *insisto* is frequently used of the alighting of birds). Her would-be rapist's brief question, insidious in its simplicity and sinister in its repetition, again speaks of fleeing:

'quo properas, Arethusa?' suis Alpheus ab undis,
'quo properas, Arethusa?' iterum rauco mihi dixerat ore.
(599-600)

Her flight is now described at some length, with similes (including the dove and the hawk), with catalogs of geographical names

and varieties of terrain, and with constant reiteration of words for flight, pursuit, and physical exhaustion (605 ff.). Such elaboration may be self-indulgent and may suffer by comparison with the chilling economy of Alpheus' succinct question, but it is simply another technique, this time perhaps a shade too mechanical, to convey the feelings of the rape victim as prey in flight.

Two motifs first used in the pursuit of Daphne appear again, now with greater elaboration: her attacker's shadow looms threateningly before her and behind her she hears the sound of his feet and feels his panting breath on her hair. Diana comes to her aid by engulfing her in darkness, a form of assistance which, as I have argued above, illustrates another, but related, side of the terror of the rape victim. Hidden and trapped in a mist around which her attacker skulks, she is in her fear turned into water. Recognizing her in her new form, Alpheus resumes his own aqueous state. She loses her identity in his in a commingling of their waters that is described in sexual terms: *se mihi misceat* (638).

"Flight" in English has an ambiguity Ovid would have relished had it been available to him: flight is flying as well as fleeing. Despite the impossibility of the word play in Latin, the flight of the rape victim in the *Metamorphoses* can take the form of flying. In this manner the Muses thwart their attempted rape (5.288). As the daughter of Coroneus runs from Neptune, she is turned into a bird (2.580 ff.). The motif of flying is displaced in the Tereus until the end of the story (6.665 ff.), long after the rape, so that the pursuit of Procne and Philomela becomes an eternal reenactment of the original violation, as if the rape victim were to have a constantly recurring dream of her terrifying experience.

Flight figures in a different way in the Herse. After introducing Herse and depicting at length the initial stages of her effect on Mercury, Ovid turns to other matters and never tells us how he thought the god got her to bed, although the description of his first seeing Herse, with its overtones of motifs habitually associated with rape, makes us anticipate rape. Flying over Athens, Mercury spies young girls engaged in sacrifice. There follows a series of three extended similes (2.715 ff.). Not ready to strike, the god is first compared to a kite circling and recircling its prey at a safe distance. The girls are the sacrificial meat the kite is patiently waiting to swoop down upon. Here the attention is focussed on the flight of the predator, since the

prey do not seem to be aware of their being watched. The simile also suggests the *modus operandi* of the type of rapist today who patiently stalks or “shadows” his intended victim in order to learn her daily routines and the safest way to attack her, while she is unaware of the activities of her surveillant. Once Mercury has selected Herse, the third simile (to ignore the second simile for the moment) conveys the increasing ardor of his passion by comparison with a leaden bullet fired by a sling and growing warmer and warmer from the friction of the air it speeds through.³⁶ The details in the simile fuse the notions of heat, flight (of the pursuer), and the headlong impetuosity of male sexuality.

The succession of similes is bravura writing. Between the leisurely *circular* motion of the first simile (male lust restrained by caution) and the *rectilinear* thrust of the third (male lust let loose), stands the static, serene, two-part simile of Lucifer outshining the stars and the moon in turn outshining Lucifer. Since Herse is not named until the last words of her simile, we are momentarily tricked into assuming that this is another comparison with the airborne Mercury and her first appearance in the poem is thus an effectively placed surprise. Instead of the more obvious device of three similes for the god, we have the calm central Herse simile, which describes the object of Mercury’s lust, framed by the two agitated similes of flight, the first describing the circumstances of his first seeing Herse and the third the result triggered by the sight of her. On the page of verse, the framing aptly mirrors the manner in which the future victim’s freedom is circumscribed by the flight of the god.

Terror, whether it be manifested by flight or in other ways, is thus placed by Ovid at the heart of the experience of the victim, which has been the major subject of my discussion. In the course of it, I have had occasion to comment on various aspects of the poet’s treatment of the rapist as well. I would like to link these observations together by way of summary in order to argue that Ovid’s habit of reverting to certain themes and motifs suggests that he was on the verge of a realization that rape is less an act of sexual passion than of aggression and that erotic gratification is secondary to the rapist’s desire to dominate physically, to humiliate, and to degrade. Among these themes the most significant are: the violation of youth, the defilement of beauty, the exploitation of vulnerability, the representation of the rapist as a predatory beast, the predilection for violence,

and the pleasure taken in the victim's terror and in the mastery of her will. Finally, Ovid's rapists are on the whole not the depraved or abnormal monsters who are the inaccurate stereotypes of the popular notion of the typical rapist today, but ordinary males, with the exception that, since most of them are devine, they enjoy greater ease and less restraint in obtaining what they desire. Jupiter and Apollo are no drooling psychopaths.

Although Ovid may not always have shown great respect for women as a sex, his fascination with them led him to an insight into their plight as rape victims almost unique in ancient literature. There are other major implications of my subject, but they cannot be discussed in this paper: 1) What role can we presume his rape stories to have played in the fantasy lives of his audience of upperclass Roman women³⁷ and men (the latter of whom had such ready accessibility to the bodies of women that any interest in rape must be explained)? 2) To what extent is Ovid himself, in the manner of a scientific analyst of society rather than an artist portraying society, consciously aware in the fullest sense of all that his stories reveal about rape? 3) Is his attitude sympathetic, indifferent, amused, or a sadistic? As for the last issue, it has not been possible to conceal my own belief, although I have not defended it, that Ovid exhibits a sympathy which, if sometimes patronizing or obscured by a lightness of surface or tone and by his love of burlesque and exaggeration, is fundamentally genuine and well conceived.

State University of New York at Buffalo

NOTES

¹ I wish to thank Ms. Margaret M. Tarajos for assistance in research for this paper and for advice and comments on matter of substance and style. I have also profited from discussions with Ms. Teri Ellen Marsh and Ms. Judy Godfrey. My female students, especially those in undergraduate courses on women in antiquity I have taught over the past few years, (some of whom have had direct or indirect experience with rape and rape victims) have also provided me with insights from perspectives far closer to those of Ovid's heroines than are personally accessible to me and with some knowledge of how women feel about rape. See also note 5 below.

The text used is Haupt-Ehwald-von Albrecht, *P. Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen* 11th ed. (Zurich 1969), with one minor orthographic change: I will use the letter *j*.

A considerably shorter version of this essay was read at the Women's Classical Caucus at the annual AIA-APA meeting in Atlanta in December, 1977.

- ² "Echo is mere otherness and is herself only an insubstantial reflection.... She has no self of her own...." E. Fränkel, *Ovid, A Poet Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley 1956) 84-85.
- ³ Cf. Anderson's note on 10.629-630 in his commentary (note 6 below).
- ⁴ For Ovid's exaggeration of Diana's cruel conception of virginity, see Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1970) 133.
- ⁵ The most accessible and useful contemporary study of rape is Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York 1975), which has also been published in a paperback edition. Some of her argument is anticipated in briefer compass by Susan Griffin, "Rape: The All-American Crime," *Ramparts* 10 (September 1971) 26-35, reprinted in Jo Freeman, ed., *Women: A Feminist Perspective* (Stanford 1975) 24-39. Other recent works are Nancy Gager and Cathleen Schurr, *Sexual Assault: Confronting Rape in America* (New York 1976) and Carolyn J. Hirsch, *The Trouble With Rape* (Chicago 1977). To those who are familiar with it, it will be obvious that contemporary literature on rape has very much influenced my approach, but this paper is about Ovid and to rehearse the evidence and parallels from such literature, except for an occasional reference, would add undue length.
- ⁶ Recently there has been an encouraging tendency to replace reticence with candor and to call a rape a rape. Some examples: Hugh Parry, "Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Violence in a Pastoral Landscape," *TAPA* 95 (1964) 268-282 deals frankly with forcible rape; C. P. Segal, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformation of a Literary Symbol = Hermes Einzelschr.* 23 (Wiesbaden 1969) which has some excellent remarks on such serious issues in the *Metamorphoses* as violence, suffering, brutality, and the violation of innocence and recognizes rape as such; W. S. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 6-10* (Norman 1972) which is candid and sensitive on the subject of rape and the victimization of women; Eleanor Winsor Leach, "Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *Ramus* 3 (1975) 102-142.
- ⁷ For a specimen of one contemporary classical scholar's treatment of rape as a matter of innocent merriment, see *Classical News and Views* 21 (1977) 63, with its translation into elegant Latin verse of a joke about rape which is most insulting to women.
- ⁸ One very violent story, the Polyphemus and Galatea, will be discussed below in another context.
- ⁹ Ovid's language is explicit in indicating that Semele's immolation takes place *during* the act of intercourse and not merely when Jupiter approaches her (3.284-286 and 308-309).

- ¹⁰ It is perhaps no accident that what Ovid chooses to emphasize in the description of Jupiter's preparing himself to go to Semele as he goes to Juno is his *arming* himself with the *weapons* of lightning and thunderbolts. In pornography, as in military and other obscenity, the penis is frequently spoken of as a weapon.
- ¹¹ The gross disproportion in size between the brutish monster and the nymph is an expression of the same sexual fantasy that lies just beneath the surface of the original film version of "King Kong," with its faintly disguised theme of the tiny woman at the mercy sexually of a subhuman creature many times her size (although Ovid's story of course lacks the racist overtones of the film); cf. also my remarks below concerning the theme of the physical vulnerability of woman.
- ¹² Unfortunately I cannot supply a bibliographical citation; it is not from *The Female Eunuch* but was an article published several years ago somewhere in the popular press.
- ¹³ Brownmiller 401.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Anderson's note *ad locc.* in his commentary (see note 6 above).
- ¹⁵ For a film critic's view of the role of woman as victim in one popular medium, see Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (New York 1974).
- ¹⁶ On guilt and society's blame, see Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born* (New York 1976) 244.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Fränkel 80. W. S. Anderson, in his article, "Multiple Changes in the *Metamorphoses*," *TAPA* 94 (1963) 1-27, and in his commentary, cited in note 6 above, is acutely sensitive to *psychological* metamorphosis.
- ¹⁸ V. Pöschl, *Die Dichtkunst Virgils: Bild und Symbol in der Aeneis* (Innsbruck-Wien 1950) 31 ff.
- ¹⁹ The language used in the Herse is instructive. As soon as Mercury catches sight of her, *obstipuit forma* (2.726). With a strong word like *obstipuit* Ovid has lapsed into the language of those who defend a rapist on the grounds that the irresistible urges of male sexuality "naturally" force a man to lose control of himself in the presence of a desirable woman.
- ²⁰ It is more than a matter of upbringing, size, and weight. Adrienne Rich (see note 16 above) 14 quotes an apparently anonymous review of Brownmiller: "...rape is the crime that can be committed because women are vulnerable in a special way; the opposite of 'vulnerable' is 'impregnable.' Pregnability, to coin a word, has been the basis of female identity, the limit of freedom, the futility of education, the denial of growth." For another supposed biological reason for vulnerability, menstruation, see Janice Delaney, Mary Jane Lupton, and Emily Toth, *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation* (New York 1976).
- ²¹ Many instances in the category of quick rape discussed above also illustrate female vulnerability.
- ²² Fränkel 222 n82.
- ²³ Cf. Fränkel 80.
- ²⁴ Fränkel 79-80.

- ²⁵ For an analysis of the importance and meaning of other than physical transformation, see the works of W. S. Anderson cited in note 17 above. I have discussed two of the best examples of the dehumanization inherent in rape, the Io and the Callisto, above in another context.
- ²⁶ For the robust sexuality of the typical nymph, cf. Pauly-Wissowa 17.2, col. 1547, *s.v. nymphae* (e.g., the preferred epithets for them of Roman poets were *salaces*, *improbae*, and *procaces*).
- ²⁷ Both kinds of nymph are represented in ancient sculpture and painting. Generally, they are the willing partners of the satyrs, but satyrs are occasionally depicted as resorting to rape.
- ²⁸ Ovid's nymphs are precursors of the female martyrs of Christian hagiology, who are also usually young, beautiful, virginal, and the objects of unwanted sexual desire. In addition it is frequently through divine intervention that virginity and modesty are preserved, e.g., by a miraculous growth of hair. The role that such unwholesome episodes from the Lives of the Saints may have played in the fantasy life of some Christians raises the question of what role the rape stories of Greek myth played in that of some Romans.
- ²⁹ There is controversy today concerning whether it is safer for a woman to resist a rapist or to submit. Some rapists are easily frightened, but others look for resistance as an opportunity for violence or may be provoked to violence they had not intended.
- ³⁰ As a bit of anecdotal testimony of the correctness of Ovid's psychology here, I might mention that a woman recently told me of having been powerfully moved by a Renaissance painting of Io being raped by Jupiter in the form of a dark cloud.
- ³¹ For the chase motif, cf. Otis 78f. As Parry (see note 6 above) puts it: "In the majority of instances, then, heterosexual relationships in the *Metamorphoses*, particularly when one party is divine, suggest violence, a chase, ultimate rape..." (273)
- ³² In the Io, where the flight is not especially prominent, Ovid nevertheless includes the theme. Jupiter ends his speech of seduction with the request that the nymph not flee, but she has already begun (1.597): '*ne fuge me!*' *fugiebat enim*.
- ³³ Flight during or just after rape attempt resembles the *punishment* of wandering that often *follows* rape, e.g., Io, Callisto, and Latona. It should also be noted that some women who are not rape victims but who are driven to sexual acts against their will (like incest) by inner psychological compulsion, pay for their deeds by the same punishment of wandering. Myrrha wanders for nine months after her father discovers the identity of his mysterious mistress. The language of 10.475-476 is sexually loaded and suggests a further connection in Ovid's mind with rape:

pendenti nitidum vagina deripit ensem;
Myrrha fugit.

Byblis wanders after her incestuous lust is revealed and so does the object

of that lust, her brother, who behaves here in a manner analogous to the female rape victim. Wandering is an endless repetition of the fearful experience of rape or an objectification of the guilt felt by the unwilling subject of incestuous desires.

- ³⁴ Ovid anticipates Hollywood, which has long capitalized on the profound psychological resonances of the theme, and film is perhaps a medium better suited to the realistic representation of the chase than is verbal narrative. The chase has become a cliché of the film, its comic variant going back beyond the Keystone Kops and what may be called its mechanical variant having become almost obligatory in so many recent films in which the spectator is more often expected to identify with the pursuer or to experience vicariously the exhilaration of controlling powerful machines at very high speeds. But the movies also have a long tradition in which the chase is chosen as the supreme expression of the terror of the victim, whether the pursuer be rapist, murderer, spy, vampire or other monster, or wild animal. Ovid was trying to do something similar in a much less tractable medium.
- ³⁵ Cf. L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge 1955) 176 on the motif of flight in the Arethusa.
- ³⁶ Note that the technical term for bullet, *glans*, which can also mean penis (cf. Martial 12.75.3) is here avoided, because its explicitness would coarsen the already strongly implicit sexuality. Contrast a shorter bullet simile, where *glans* is safely used, since the non-erotic context would not bring to mind the sexual meaning of the word, and where the increasing heat is of less importance than it is in our simile (14.825-26).
- ³⁷ Research, which I have recently started, is beginning to shed some interesting light on the reaction to Ovid's rape stories on the part of contemporary young women.