

**IO AND TRAUMA IN OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*:
RAPE AND TRANSFORMATION**

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Abstract

This close reading of the Io episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* encourages an interdisciplinary dialogue between classical studies and psychology by examining indicators of trauma in the character Io. Unlike previous studies that attempted to extrapolate claims about Ovid's perceptions of rape, this reading emphasizes the subject's (Io's) experience and reveals how her transformations themselves are significant elements of her trauma. This thesis builds on the work of psychologists who have explored how reading ancient myths can augment our understanding of the narratives of modern survivors of sexual trauma. Caregivers, psychologists, and even the survivors themselves can identify with the portrayals of universal human suffering in these myths; in this way, reading ancient texts can help uplift marginalized voices of antiquity and today, even when the texts' authors might not have been marginalized persons themselves. Lastly, this close reading methodology follows in the theoretical footsteps of classicist Leo Curran and encourages classicists to engage more deeply with the text's thematic representations of women's suffering. Both unique themes in Io's story (*e.g.* Argus as a subjugator) and programmatic themes that recur throughout the *Metamorphoses* (*e.g.* fear, loss of agency, loss of voice, and the punishment of female rape survivors by female goddesses) are explored.

I. Introduction

Io undergoes suffering in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that is simultaneously unique to her own experience and also all too easily relatable to today's survivors of sexual assault.¹ Some of the most unique parts of Io's story are also the most relatable, such as her assigned watchman, Argus, the death of whom she gets unjustly punished for, or her transformations first into a cow body and then back into human form, transformations over which Io has little or no control. The classical literature has frequently examined rape and women in Ovid and the ancient world, but it too often overlooks Io and the complexities of her tale. Sometimes the conversation turns briefly to Io's suffering, such as her lack of agency and primacy in the story, as well as her voice and expressions of fear (especially of her own body); however, the traumatic nature of these experiences, and the traumatic nature of her transformations particularly, ought to be considered further. To accomplish this, psychological conceptions of sexual trauma may provide new insights to this ancient text, which depicts emotion and pain that reach through culture and time.

Rather than attempt to assert anything about Ovid's moral outlook or the social climate in which ancient Roman women lived, my close reading of the Io episode in Book 1 of the *Met.* focuses what one might ascertain about the psychological and emotional state of the subject: the character of Io. This type of subject-focused research is uncommon in Classics, but it is harmonious with psychology practices that centralize patient narratives. This thesis strives to engage both Classics and psychology in bidirectional dialogue and growth: both can learn from the other. Modern research into sexual trauma, its prognosis, and treatment might help illumine

¹ While the term "survivor" is controversial and leaves a somewhat disingenuous taste in my mouth, it shall be used throughout this piece for the sake of brevity, but I feel that "one who has undergone sexual assault" or something similar would be a phrase with the most appropriate connotations. Additionally, I do not mean to imply by using the term "survivor" that if someone has undergone sexual assault, this becomes the sole defining aspect of their identity; it is merely for specificity purposes.

and identify some behaviors and emotions Io exhibits in the text, and ancient myths can provide modern readers (both survivors and non-survivors alike, patients, caregivers, practitioners, and the general public) with alternative narratives that articulate universal experiences of pain. This thesis also fits into the overall current movement in Classics that encourages including more progressive, representative narratives and confronting the historically pervasive elitism and homogeneity of the field.

The primary focus of this thesis is a close reading of Io's story in Ovid's *Met.* While Ovid features rape prominently in many of his other works, such as the *Fasti*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Amores*, these are not considered for the specificity and subject-focused purposes of this research. Similarly, I would like to acknowledge briefly other accounts of Io's story here, such as the Io of *Prometheus Bound*, but to avoid any confusion or misconstruing of assumptions across various authors, only the Io of the *Met.* is examined at length for the rest of this thesis. As for the rest of the *Met.*, some aspects of Io's story are programmatic—given its early position in the work's fifteen total books, Ovid likely is acclimating the reader to his novel form of writing (an epic sort of poem that serves as a mythological catalogue, sort-of-history, and parody all at once), and some themes in Io's story repeat throughout the *Met.*'s numerous rape narratives. When thematically appropriate, other connected figures the *Met.* are mentioned.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge that while not all rape survivors are women, and not all rapists are men, the vast majority of people who are raped in the *Met.* are women, and this also reflects the case in reality (today and assumedly in antiquity), as both we and the Romans live in cultures that promote power structures which advantage men. Most of the research of raped people in the *Met.* also focuses on women. Accordingly, the research and themes I will explore and consider are predominantly tailored towards this gendered,

heteronormative understanding, but I am personally sympathetic to diverse narratives and discarding gender dichotomies. Although much of this research and the body of literature focuses on objectifying beautiful, young women, it is also important to recognize that rape also threatens women of any age who live in patriarchal societies: disturbingly, the age of survivors of rape and incest range from infancy to their nineties.²

Finally, it can be both exhausting and uncomfortable to read at length about such terrible crimes, and I am exceedingly empathetic to the reader who bears this onus; however, being relentlessly exposed to rape matters can also be desensitizing to a degree. Therefore, I would also like to briefly address the grim necessity of continuing scholarship related to rape and the history of women. The first week I began my thesis research, a man accused of multiple cases of sexual assault was approved to hold a lifelong term in the United States' national court of law. While in one internet browser window I was reading articles about Ovid, in the neighboring window, the #MeToo movement was plastered across my Facebook feed. Time and again, narratives of men in power sexually abusing women persist; and yet, some people mistakenly think we share nothing with the ancients just because we have, for example, abandoned the practice of throwing people to wild animals for sport. Rape is a human crime unlike any other, and the pain and horror of it transcend time, part of which makes Io so sympathetic and identifiable to survivors today.³

Yet simultaneously, we live in a culture that is also very different from the ancients', and I do not feel justified in imposing modern research onto just one fictitious account from a culture that did not conceptualize sexual assault, gender, power, or morality the same way modern psychologists do. While I shall never strive to professionally "diagnose" Io in any way, I think

² Katz & Mazur 1979, as cited in Mayr & Price 1989, 37.

³ For more on rape as a "manifestation of human destructiveness" and this being particularly troubling, see Mayr & Price 1989, 38.

that it is reasonable to assume there exists some of that common human suffering that reaches through time. Any two people experience emotion and judge beauty subjectively, thus separating the two people to some amount, regardless of time and place. Even so, I shall apply modern conceptions like dissociation to understanding Io's state, recognizing my modern biases, and demonstrate connections to psychology research only when it is most relevant.

II. Survey of Psychology and Classics Literature Related to Rape and/or the *Metamorphoses*

Classics

Research in Classics about women generally and rape particularly has increased in recent years. Rape itself often was censored or euphemized with words like “ravish” or “lover,” but recent scholarship more frequently confronts directly and acknowledges the severity and reality of sexual violence, both ancient and modern.

One of the first and most notable scholars to write on these topics is Leo Curran, who published “Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*” in 1978.⁴ Before Curran, the most relevant research to rape in Ovid is primarily restrained to the work of scholars such as William Anderson and Barbra Stirrup.⁵ These kind of articles prioritize textual analysis, limiting themselves to identifying literary devices and counting word frequencies, and they make extremely limited or no claims whatsoever about implications for literary or actual (or ancient or contemporary) women’s emotional or psychological experience following the trauma of rape. Contrastingly, Curran rejects euphemizing rape and considers the gendered implications that Ovid explores by using rape as a serious and deliberately chosen topic throughout the *Met*. His research moves categorically through episodes: first by describing types of rape, then moving to women’s experience as the victim of injury, guilt, blame, and punishment; the characterization of women as beautiful and weak figures; the loss of women’s humanity and identity; and the overwhelming prevalence of fear being expressed or experienced by the women in rape episodes. Like many other classical researchers, Curran endeavors to make an assertion about Ovid from his writing, and he concludes that “Ovid exhibits a sympathy which, if sometimes patronizing or

⁴ Curran 1978, 213-241.

⁵ Anderson 1963, 1–27 and Stirrup 1977, 170–184.

obscured by a lightness of surface or tone and by his love of burlesque and exaggeration, is fundamentally genuine and well-conceived.”⁶ While Curran frequently acknowledges that women suffer from dehumanization in their transformations, he does not often treat the transformations themselves as instances of a trauma that is equivalent to (rather than merely another consequence of) rape itself.⁷

Amy Richlin is another prominent scholar in Classics whose work on trauma in Ovid is essential to this thesis. Her book, *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, includes a notable chapter about Ovid and rape. Publishing in 1992, it is clear that more nuanced, modern understandings of gender augment her research in comparison to Curran’s.⁸ Like Curran, Richlin criticizes some of the past shortcomings of classicists in downplaying rape in antiquity, and she also implicates Ovid and his audience, questioning Ovid’s views on rape and what effects his writing may have had on ancient readers. She organizes her writing about the *Met.* episodically, emphasizing themes within each narrative, and explores at greater length than average the atypical story of Hermaphroditus’ rape by Salmacis before she progresses to examining the *Ars Amatoria* and *Fasti* as other problematic texts from Ovid. She concludes by exploring three theoretical models of rape (pornographic, cross-sex fantasy, and political) and calls for classicists, readers, and oppressed persons generally to reclaim texts in a political resistance that fights to retell old stories that “haunt our language anyway.”⁹ She attests, “if the only names we have to speak are in names of blood, maybe we can speak the blood off them,”

⁶ Curran 1978, 237.

⁷ Research in Classics about trauma generally focuses more on militaristic trauma that ancient men would have suffered from war. This is logical and harmonious with psychology’s research into trauma, given that PTSD was first identified in veterans, and subsequent trauma research was later applied to survivors of sexual assault and other traumatic experiences. For a general background on the history of PTSD research, see Friedman’s “History of PTSD in Veterans: Civil War to DSM-5.”

⁸ In fairness to Curran, however, he does seem to write with the most innovative contemporaries of his (when it comes to gender study) in mind, as he mentions himself in the article’s footnotes (238).

⁹ Richlin 1992, 179.

and I hope that my research here, which reexamines the trauma Io suffers particularly from her transformations, is in line with this vision.¹⁰

These two scholars are the most notable when examining rape in the *Met.* specifically, but topics of women's voice and sexual assault are increasingly topics of interest within Classics, a movement which includes the book *Silenced Voices: The Poetics of Speech in Ovid* by Bartolo Natoli.¹¹ Some classicists, such as Madeleine Kahn, continue asking how we can justify teaching such sexist texts today and how we can better classics as a field, and they challenge fellow classicists to identify power discrepancies in both ancient and modern social structures.¹² Other classical texts explore broader related topics, such as the subject of immortals mating with mortals or lesser deities (in across both male/female and female/male pairings) in Euripides' *Ion* and Calypso in the *Odyssey*. Ion denounces these pairings, and a frustrated Calypso notes the gender inequalities that allow for a male god to commonly defile any mortal female but seemingly punish her, a female deity, for wanting to retain her seduced Odysseus.¹³

Critical Interdisciplinary Text: Mayr & Price

Across literature in psychology and classical studies, one article stands out as the best attempt to blend the social sciences and humanities in an interdisciplinary fashion. Although their article has significant limitations due to the authors' lack of training in the Classics, Susanne Mayr and Joseph Price nobly endeavor to provide research that supports how both classical and psychological disciplines can draw stronger conclusions from texts and support patient narratives by working with each other.¹⁴ Given that Mayr and Price are psychologists

¹⁰ Richlin 1992, 179.

¹¹ Natoli 2017.

¹² Kahn 2005.

¹³ Euripides, *Ion* 431–446 and Homer, *Odyssey* 5.117–140.

¹⁴ Mayr & Price 1989, 36-39.

writing for a general psychiatric audience, their limited classical literacy is understandable, and their arguments regarding why clinicians, survivors, and compassionate civilians alike ought to study Io's rape (still even today, nearly three decades after Mayr and Price's publication) are sound.

Most convincingly, Mayr and Price identify Io's psychological symptoms and promote why this specific myth and subject matter are worthy of investigation to psychologists. The authors are likely sensitive and empathetic to trauma survivors, as they have personally counseled such individuals in crisis. This could be why they do an effective job at conveying Io's emotional and psychological suffering, drawing both from empirical data and the text itself. The psychologists emphasize the horror of Jupiter's dark cloud with which he envelops Io,¹⁵ an image often portrayed in artwork of this scene, and they relate this cloud to the hopeless, fearful feelings of actual survivors.¹⁶ The authors clinically identify Io becoming "dehumanized ... depressed, detached, and estranged from other people," as well as experiencing "depersonalization, self-estrangement, ... and varying degrees of dissociation."¹⁷ These symptoms are accurate and perhaps easier to see in Io's story compared to an actual patient's life: Io's struggle with her physicality come after a physical metamorphosis that traps her in an entirely new body with four legs, hooves, and a mouth that can only moo, whereas true survivors' psychological conflict manifests in narratives of their trauma that often seem inconsistent while the survivor's brain attempts to process what injustice has occurred.¹⁸ The

¹⁵ Ovid, *Met.* 1.599-601.

¹⁶ Mayr & Price 1989, 37.

¹⁷ Ibid. The identification of Io's "symptoms of anorexia" has been excluded because the primary text might support Io's suffering through a cow's diet, but there are no explicit primary examples in the *Met.* of her restricting her diet. Perhaps the authors were only drawing from Io's body dysmorphia as proof of her "symptoms of anorexia," but I find this to be insufficient and failing to conform to the other prototypical symptoms of anorexia, such as restricting eating behaviors, ritualistic eating, and abnormal weight loss. However, this does bring up the notable point that sexual abuse is strongly related to the development of eating disorders.

¹⁸ Halligan, Michael, Clark, and Ehlers 2003, 419.

mixed feelings, such as disorientation, guilt, confusion, and fear, that a true survivor might experience simultaneously can result in the survivor feeling foreign in their own body or mind, resulting in disassociation or depersonalization, but Io's distressing out-of-body experience is literal. Similarly, the authors effectively equate Argus to a personification of real survivors' feelings of paranoia, public humiliation, or shame, which reminds classicists that Argus is an inescapable and threatening reminder to Io of her rape.

The authors could have pushed other symptoms they identified to having more significance, which would have strengthened their analysis. First, the feeling that one's assaulter is "always there ... a continuing horror," as a result of the psychic pain of coming to grips with rape being a "manifestation of human destructiveness," and not a natural disaster, is one potentially present in the text given that Io is raped by an omnipotent god, not a mortal.¹⁹ Perhaps Jupiter's ability to totally overpower Io in his godliness could also speak to Io or an actual survivor's feelings of utter helplessness. The authors begin by emphasizing the importance of Io's voice multiple times. Mayr and Price identify Io's suffering in silence, being unable to express herself through human communication, as highly symptomatic and a significant cause of her suffering.²⁰ The authors later return to emphasizing Io's voice at the end of their argument, as they postulate that Io talking to Prometheus (problematic evidence in itself because this version of the myth is not part of Ovid's retelling, nor is it one that Curran, the primary classicist that Mayr and Price cite, includes in his article) is the primary reason, a "talking cure," that leads Io to recovery and regaining of her original body.²¹ The authors' argument fails here, for they

¹⁹ Mayr & Price 1989, 38.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 39.

emphasize Io's voice as a crucial symptom to consider but fail to link Io's voice with her agency, which is what she truly loses in her rape and transformation.

The lack of considering Io's agency is the most problematic element of this article. When interacting with a survivor of sexual assault, it is crucial to restore their agency in any way, such as giving them time after the incident to first process their internal state before retelling any narrative, or not blaming them for the incident (something Jupiter fails to do even up to his last plea to Juno, which returns Io to her human form); thus, it is surprising that Mayr and Price fail to acknowledge evidence that indicates Io never truly regains agency over herself in her story. Through the middle of the story, as Mayr and Price acknowledge, she despairs and struggles to communicate. Then at the end of the myth, Io pleads with Jupiter again to save her, causing him to send Mercury to kill Argus. Unjustly, Juno punishes Io for this, causing her to undergo yet further removal of agency as a result of her beseeching Jupiter, which thus incurs for her totally opposite effects than any "talking cure" would. As Curran writes:

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 (Curran 1978, 225).

Io fears her own voice at the end of her story, and no epilogue follows to further clarify her psychological or emotional state. Because Io never truly regains her agency, she therefore cannot be labeled as "recovered" or "cured" at the end of her story, and she continues living in fear, as far as the reader is aware. Conflating her return to human form with her psychological recovery is incorrect and neglects to acknowledge her emotional wellbeing.²² This matter will be explored further in the close reading section.

²² While one might suggest that Ovid's slightly more elaborate description of her metamorphosis back into human form indicates that this metamorphosis is more significant than the first, nine lines compared to three still seem

The endeavor Mayr and Price undertake is noble in its use of both social sciences' data and textual analysis to elucidate evidence of Io's suffering, which they also effectively relate to real survivors' experiences. The strengths in their article stem from their diagnostic capabilities and compassion as psychologists for the human condition. The lack of emphasis regarding how central Io's agency is towards understanding her emotional state leads the authors to the misguided conclusion that by the end of the poem, Io is fully recovered. More thorough interdisciplinary research within this thesis will ameliorate the inadequacies of their classical analysis and give readers even more insight to the text.

Psychology

Other, more recent psychology research emerged that attempts to use the classics to enhance modern understanding of rape and trauma. While more recent studies benefit from utilizing more modern understandings of trauma and treatment of PTSD, much of this research is far less interdisciplinary than Mayr and Price's endeavor, and focus tends to be on treatment methods for PTSD. While this is not necessarily a weakness of these studies, it does leave Mayr and Price as the most closely related psychology article to this thesis. Unsurprisingly, one of the psychologists seeking to utilize the humanities is an art therapist, David Nez, who identified themes similar to Proserpina's story in the artwork of a patient and rape survivor of theirs. In this case study, Nez successfully uses an archetypal approach to therapy to help the patient identify and express aspects of her trauma: "The use of myth seemed to help [the patient] appreciate the universality of her images, seeing their archetypal connections with the experience of humanity.

somewhat paltry for an author who is capable of expanding on the thematic metamorphoses at greater and more gruesome lengths.

At the same time her individuality was nurtured through her unique approach to telling her story.”²³

Similarly to Nez, Russel Gardner, Sharon Wills, and Jean Goodwin write about how when they exposed their own patient rape survivors to Io’s myth, they found that both their patients and themselves as therapists gained new understandings of articulating traumatic experiences, which will be examined later and interlaced during the close reading of Io’s episode.

Lastly, Judith Greenberg wrote in “The Echo of Trauma and the Trauma of Echo” about how the story of Echo in Ovid’s *Met.* shares narrative similarities with accounts of PTSD. Greenberg also promotes that the classics and psychology can both learn from each other: models of trauma can help us understand the emotional stakes and interpersonal dynamics of Ovid, and Echo’s myth can “provide a paradigm for listening to survivors’ stories.”²⁴ She considers themes such as the frequency of repetition of narrative and fragmentations of both narrative and self in Echo and survivors’ stories. The effort to engage in interdisciplinary research evidently relevant and beneficial, particularly in how it values uplifting survivor narratives, but she does not explore as broad of expressions or modes of suffering as Curran or even Mayr and Price do in their works.

Many of these such studies in psychology occur in specified fields, *e.g.* art therapy, or are published in somewhat marginal or psychodynamic journals. Even though this may seem outlandish to consider at first glance, considering psychodynamic research within the category of trauma is valid. While specific cognitive behavioral and behavioral interventions remain the most well-supported methods for treating PTSD and related traumatic symptoms/disorders in

²³ Nez 1991, 130.

²⁴ Greenberg 1998, 320.

rape survivors, psychodynamic-rooted therapies also persist as accepted (though minority and alternative) sources for treatment. Additionally, many classical scholars have utilized psychoanalytic thinking to examine ancient texts in a gesture towards interdisciplinary methodology, such as Charles Segal and his study of Euripides, which utilizes psychoanalysis and structuralism.²⁵ However, none of the aforementioned psychology researchers (including Mayr and Price) have published extensively on linking the Classics or mythology and therapy, so it is clear that this interdisciplinary approach remains relatively rare within psychology.

More broadly, trauma research has increased significantly in the last few decades, and trauma research related to rape survivors has increased especially in the last twenty years. The most empirically supported and popular trends in general psychology treatment within the United States lean favorably towards empirically supported methods that are tailored to conditions, *e.g.* prescribing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to treat depression or anxiety, pharmaceutical remedies for more genetically based conditions like schizophrenia, or Dialectical Behavioral Therapy for borderline personality disorder. For women who are rape survivors and suffer from PTSD, depression, or anxiety, the most effective clinical treatments are Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure, but the less common Stress Inoculation Training and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing show some promise.²⁶ Trauma research generally suffers from a frequent lack of specificity of population, *e.g.* failing to differentiate between adult, adolescent, and child survivors of trauma, or failing to specify what sort of traumatic event a person has experienced. Additionally, while there appears to be much similarity in the symptomology of survivors of many forms of trauma, rape survivors specifically face a unique

²⁵ Segal 1978, 129–148.

²⁶ Vickerman & Margolin 2009, 16.

trauma given the increased elements of self-blame, the higher rates of concurrent depression, and increased risks of suicide among this population.²⁷

Lastly, it is important to note the difference between behavioral or psychological symptoms, the disorder PTSD, and rape/trauma. Not everyone who has survived rape will develop severely impaired psychological or emotional functioning, and it is common for the severity of symptoms of survivors of sexual assault to decrease naturally over time with little or no formal intervention.²⁸ Lastly, while many who have survived rape may experience symptoms such as depression, disorganized thinking, anxiety, withdrawal, dissociation, intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, or sleep disturbance, many of these symptoms occur as part of an acute stress reaction to trauma (which is differentiated from PTSD in its timeline occurring only for one month or shorter following the traumatic event), and none of these symptoms alone or in mild enough forms constitute a diagnosis of either kind, PTSD or acute stress. In fact, the majority of people who have experienced a traumatic event do not meet diagnostic criteria for PTSD.²⁹ (However, on a related note, some evidence also shows that women are more susceptible to developing PTSD than men.)³⁰ At no point will I attempt to formally diagnose Io with any sort of mental illness, ancient or modern.

²⁷ Regehr, Alaggia, Dennis, Pitts, & Saini 2013, 258.

²⁸ Rothbaum, Foa, Riggs, Murdock, & Walsh 1992, 455–457.

²⁹ Wosu, Gelaye, & Williams 2015, 61–63

³⁰ Ibid.

III. Close Reading of the Text

A closer look at the primary source of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*' telling of the Io myth leads to significant, necessary critique regarding Io's agency, psychological and emotional states, and whether or not she ultimately "recovers" at the end of her story. The following close reading of Io's story in the *Met.* progresses roughly in order the of the lines of the work, spanning the entire episode. I strive to emulate loosely the structure of Curran's analysis, which is organized thematically; thus, some sections of the text are revisited or overlap between the sections, particularly because the themes in this story (and the *Met.* as a whole) also frequently recur and overlap. This close reading also serves as a response to Mayr and Price's work, as I hope to augment the general understanding of Io by utilizing more sound classical research and knowledge. Insertions of other and particularly more recent psychology research occur where appropriate. English for the Latin passage excerpts are largely based on Melville's 1986 translation, but I have made changes intermittently.

Fear and Persistent Loss of Agency

Even though this myth revolves around Io, she often feels absent from her own story. Io loses much of her agency throughout the passage, at times being stripped of her bodily, vocal or expressive, and narrative control. The underlying emotions that accompany Io's loss of power throughout the passage are fear and sorrow, which are both set up from the very first few actions of the story. The initial idyllic description of the vale is disrupted by the absence of Inachus, who has withdrawn himself to mourn his lost daughter:

Inachus unus abest imoque reconditus antro
fletibus auget aquas natamque miserrimus Io
luget ut amissam. nescit vitane fruatur
an sit apud Manes, sed quam non invenit usquam
esse putat nusquam atque animo peiora veretur.

But one is absent, Inachus, withdrawn
Deep in his cave and weeping tears that swell
His current, as he mourns in bitter grief
Io, his daughter lost. He cannot tell
Whether she lives or dwells among the shades,
And finding her nowhere thinks she must be
Nowhere and fear feeds fear when knowledge fails (*Met.* 1.583–585).

Although the fear that Inachus experiences as a father who has seemingly lost his daughter is different from the subsequent fear that Io experiences as a young woman at the hands of gods, this introductory selection resounds with sorrow in Inachus' withdrawal from the other river deities, *miserrimus*, and *luget ut amissam*, and the feeling of fear for the helpless echoes in *nescit* and *quam non invenit usquam/ esse putat nusquam atque animo peiora veretur*.

As for Io's experience of fear, the first action Io herself takes in the story is fleeing in fright from Jupiter³¹ (she does not even receive Ovid's objectifying treatment of being spied on while picking flowers or engaging in some other innocent activity); preceding this incipient *fugiebat*, Io's state is only related to the reader through the perspective of men, *i.e.*, her father and Jupiter.³² Thus, Io lacks narrative agency throughout much of the beginning of her myth, culminating in the aura of terror that Jupiter augments with his physical manifestation as a shroud of darkness. Her rape itself is mentioned in very few words, *tenuitque fugam rapitque pudorem*,³³ again associating Io with the only the verb *fugio*, and the narrative focus after the

³¹ Ovid, *Met.* 1.597. To clarify, this is the first main, active verb for which Io is the subject.

³² Curran finds Io's flight to be "not especially prominent" (1978, 240). While the romanticizing of Io's flight is limited compared to other myths of assault in the *Met.*, I think that its primacy as her action in the narrative, as well as how it is echoed throughout her wanderings, are worth note and not dismissal as "introductory."

³³ Ovid, *Met.* 1.600.

assault is immediately shifted to Juno and her jealous wrath. Io is described in her dichotomous forms: *fugam* and *pudorem*. The former references her physical self that Jupiter seizes, and the latter represents a broader, more abstract, and euphemistic sense of chastity and highly gendered societal standing of which Io suddenly is deprived. Any happy future she imagined of being married in good standing, the lucky daughter of mighty Inachus, disappears before her eyes. Io is caught between the two gods as a mere pawn. Her metamorphosis into a cow—itsself another trauma undergone so quickly after the first—is confined to barely three lines in which she still is objectified for her beauty:

coniugis adventum praesenserat inque nitentem
Inachidos vultus mutaverat ille iuencam;
bos quoque formosa est.

Jove had fore-sensed his spouse's visit
And transformed poor Io into a shining white heifer;
And even still, a beautiful cow (*Met.* 1.610–612),

and immediately following her transformation, once again Io is reduced to her appearance, *speciem vaccae*, that Juno judges by sight in a continual objectification of the maiden.³⁴ Notably, Io's splendid beauty (*candor*) is again the focus after her transformation back into a human, showing that Io is persistently objectified throughout her story in both cow and human forms, pre- and post-rape.³⁵ While she is supposedly a gift cow, the reader of any time would be aware of how valuable cows were in antiquity for their utility; however, none of Io's potentially valuable other bovine attributes are mentioned. Io becomes even further removed from any narrative power when, as a speechless cow, she is implicated in Jupiter's lie to Juno, *Iuppiter e*

³⁴ Ovid, *Met.* 1.612–613.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 742.

terra genitam mentitur,³⁶ which also serves as an attack, threatening to erase whatever might linger of Io's identity in her mind.

Pervasion of Fear of Body and Voice

Following her transformation into a cow, Io experiences fear tied to her discomfort in a new body. Reeling from one total invasion of her physical being, she is subjected to a second that also expulses her from the human race. Her psyche reflects the fear that would naturally accompany such a denial of physical agency.

Io begins by pathetically and awkwardly trying to adjust to the life of a cow. She eats ruffage, drinks muddy water, and tries her best to make a bed comfortable for a cow.³⁷ The first time Io hears her new voice and sees her new body, she is driven to terror again and again:

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.
Venit et ad ripas, ubi ludere saepe solebat,
Inachidas ripas; novaque ut conspexit in unda
cornua, pertimuit seque exsternata refugit.

And when, to plead with Argus, she would try
To stretch her arms, she had no arms to stretch.
Would she try to complain, a moo came from her throat,
A startling sound—her own voice frightened her.
She reached her father's river and the banks
Where often she had liked to play and, in the water,
Mirrored she saw her muzzle and her horns,
And fled in terror from the self she saw (*Met.* 1.634–640).

Inhabiting the solely reactive space she is allowed to occupy in this narrative, Io flees once more, suffering the consequences of Jupiter's actions yet again, even when the god himself is no longer

³⁶ Ovid, *Met.* 1.615.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 631–633.

physically present in Io's daily life. Ovid progresses and describes piece by piece how Io's body is transformed: she no longer has arms, her voice has changed into a cow's moo, and she has new horns. Continually throughout this description is the undertone of objectification, as the focus is on Io's body changing into another body, which is repeated in the description of Io's transformation back into a human, where Ovid notes the changes in Io's hair, eyes, mouth, arms, and feet.³⁸ In place of a detailed description of her physical metamorphosis into a cow when the event occurred, Ovid delays his catalogue until now in the story, where Io's psychological and emotional reactions to her new state augment the physical descriptions.³⁹ The theme of Io's powerlessness unites each of Ovid's descriptions: each attempt she makes (to raise her arms, to speak, to play or drink from the water) is denied to her by her new body in which she is trapped.

Unlike the account one might receive from a real woman who has survived rape by a man, the uncomfortable physical adjustments that it is noted Io makes after her transformation are not clearly tied to her gender or reproductive anatomy. Naturally, there are more evident and immediate adjustments that one might imagine would have to be made when being transformed into a cow, like the mentioned basal eating and sleeping needs. In addition, as Richlin proposes, while Ovid does include some truly shocking and explicit passages in the *Met.*, his ultimate aim is not often to merely disgust or entertain with physical horrors, and he utilizes rape seriously and deliberately in order to explore larger themes related to power, gender, and suffering.⁴⁰ Even so, in the following passage, Io does confront somewhat gendered aspects of her transformation when she reunites briefly with her family:

³⁸ Ovid, *Met.*, 1.737–742.

³⁹ For an example of a more grotesque physical description of metamorphosis at the time of it occurring, see Arachne's change into a spider (6.140–145).

⁴⁰ Richlin 1992, 158–179.

Naides ignorant, ignorat et Inachus ipse,
 quae sit; at illa patrem sequitur sequiturque sorores
 et patitur tangi seque admirantibus offert.
 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.
 ‘Me miserum!’ exclamat pater Inachus inque gementis
 cornibus et niveae pendens cervice iuvencae
 ‘me miserum!’ ingeminat, ‘tunc es quaesita per omnes
 nata, mihi terras? tu non inventa reperta
 luctus eras levior. Retices nec mutua nostris
 dicta refers, alto tantum suspiria ducis
 pectore, quodque unum potes, ad mea verba remugis.’

The Naiads did not know—not even her father
 Knew who she was, but she, disconsolate,
 Followed her sisters, followed her father, let
 Them stroke her, offered herself to be admired.
 Old Inachus picked grass and held it out;
 She licked her father’s hand, cow-kissed his palms;
 Her tears rolled won; if only words would come,
 She’d speak her name, tell all, implore their aid.
 For words her hoof traced letters in the dust—
 I, O—sad tidings of her body’s change.
 ‘Alas, alack!’ her father cried, and clasped
 The moaning heifer’s horns and snow-white neck.
 ‘Alas, alack!’ he groaned: ‘Are you the child
 I sought through all the world? Oh, lighter grief
 You were unfound than found. You give no answer;
 Silent, but from your heart so deep a sigh!
 A moo—all you can say—is your reply!’ (*Met.* 1.641–656)

As Io briefly reenters her familial sphere that was formerly so comforting to her—a domestic life that would be sympathetic to an ancient female reader given her own societally-imposed domestic duties—she experiences both sadness in her loss of voice, as well as hope in her sudden ability to express herself in what limited ways she is able. The passage is saturated with familial words, such as *Inachus ipse*, *pater* thrice, *sorores*, and *senior*, which emphasize Io’s familial relationship with the figures (rather than words that might instead have emphasized Inachus’

powerful river deity status). Io yearns to reconnect with the warmth of her family that reminds her of her former life. 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. Io exercises her remaining voice powerfully when vivid and rather creative imagery describes Io's successful attempt to both utilize and relay her sad condition (*corporis indicium mutati triste peregit*) to her family.

The matter of women's voices and means of expression in antiquity is popularly studied, particularly in the *Met.*, where rape frequently is the cause for depriving women of voice and agency, and other means of feminine expression are explored. Within the *Met.*, one particularly notable example includes the interlaced story of Syrinx, whose fearful pleas to her family are granted but result in her literal objectification by her threatened rapist,⁴¹ Pan, who uses her transformed (and again, dehumanized) body at his own will, blowing his own breath through her. Notably also is the story of Philomela, who both expresses herself in direct speech at far greater lengths than Io and suffers more graphically and violently for having done so. Women also express themselves through the gender-appropriate means of weaving, such as the *Met.*'s examples of Arachne's demonstration of her illustrative prowess (a boastful expression for which she is punished by the female goddess Athena), Philomela using weaving to tell Procne about her rape and bodily mutilation, and Penelope's wily weaving and unweaving in the *Odyssey*.

Notably, Io's reunion with her family is the primary example of Io exhibiting direct, successful communication in her story: when Jupiter later decides to entreat Juno and Io is transformed back to a human, it is only after Io suffers and beseeches Argus and the gods fruitlessly; at that point, Jupiter is the one who can no longer bear Io's suffering, so from Io's

⁴¹ I agree with Curran in his lack of discrimination between the severity of completed or incomplete (attempted) rape. For more on this, see Curran 1978, 216.

perspective, she is not exerting any direct power over the situation.⁴² Additionally, while Ovid initially attests that the only physical remnant of Io's bovine form after her transformation back to a human is her beauty, the following line reveals that the fear of her own voice lingers:

De bove nil superest formae nisi candor in illa.
Officioque pedum nymphae contenta duorum
erigitur metuitque loqui, ne more iuvencae
mugiat, et timide verba intermissa retemptat.

Nothing remained of her heifer form, save her fair white grace.
The nymph, content to use two legs again,
Now walked erect, yet she still feared to speak
Lest she moo like a cow, and with fear
She tried again to speak those long-forgotten words (*Met.* 1.742–745).

While her physical form might be restored, one of the final actions Io takes in her story is yet again one of fear, and her loss of voice haunts Io the longest. She may begin speaking again, but it is qualified with *timide*, as the experiences of her suffering continue to threaten her from within her mind. This is highly characteristic of anxious, paranoid, or hypervigilant responses that accompany acute stress conditions or PTSD.⁴³

Subjugator Argus

Far from simply Juno's mythical pet, the conquest of Mercury, or the source of a quaint story of how the boy peacock got its plumage, Argus plays a much more sinister role in Ovid's *Met.* I challenge modern readers to invert their temporal understanding of the mythological beast: rather than associating him with a charming origin story, he occupies a terrifying aftermath of Io's rape and transformation in the *Met.* After Jupiter rapes and transforms Io, Juno assigns Argus as the cow's omnipresent watchman. Closely reading Io's interactions with Argus reveals

⁴² Ovid, *Met.* 1.728–732.

⁴³ Regehr *et al.* 2013, 257–258.

that Argus holds tremendous power over Io, stripping her of bodily agency and family, as well as serving perpetually as a fearful reminder of Io's rape and the continually subjugated role she is forced to play in her own story. The monster's role in the story particularly resonates with modern readers of the myth who are rape survivors, which highlights how embodies the social consequences that accompany sexual trauma.

Argus' arrival in Io's life removes power even further from her, particularly from her body, and the passage resounds with the motif of imprisonment:

Centum luminibus cinctum caput Argus habebat:
inde suis vicibus capiebant bina quietem,
cetera servabant atque in statione manebant.
Constiterat quocumque modo, spectabat ad Io:
ante oculos Io, quamvis aversus, habebat.
Luce sinit pasci; cum sol tellure sub alta est,
claudit et indigno circumdat vincula collo.
frondibus arboreis et amara pascitur herba,
proque toro terrae non semper gramen habenti
incubat infelix limosaeque flumina potat.
Illa etiam supplex Argo cum bracchia vellet
tendere, non habuit, quae bracchia tenderet Argo,
et conata queri mugitus edidit ore ...

Argus of the hundred eyes,
All watching and on duty round his head,
Save the two which took in turn their sleep and rest.
Whichever way he stood he looked at Io,
Io before his eyes and behind his back!
By day he let her graze, but when the sun
Sank down beneath the earth he stabled her
And tied—for shame!—a halter round her neck.
She browsed on leaves of trees and bitter weeds,
And for her bed, poor thing, lay on the ground,
Not always grassy, and drank the muddy streams;
And when, to plead with Argus, she would try
To stretch her arms, she had no arms to stretch.
Would she complain, a moo came from her throat ... (*Met.* 1.625–639).

Firstly, no matter where Io is, Argus sees everything Io does with his startlingly numerous hundred eyes.⁴⁴ Io has no privacy, all her actions are subject to a masculine observer, and her animal state is one of extreme discomfort, indignity, and degradation.⁴⁵ The emphasis of Argus' eyes may also bring to the reader's mind other ancient associations of the gaze with power and phallic imagery combating the evil eye.⁴⁶ Furthermore, she is bare and has not adjusted herself yet to her new cow's body. Her daily schedule is controlled by Argus (*sinit*), who decides when Io is allowed the physical freedom to roam, eat, or sleep.⁴⁷ A foreign, animal body imprisons Io's psyche, and that body is additionally prisoner to a foreign, terrifying monster. Other sections of the text also build on this atmosphere of imprisonment, such as *claudit*, echoing the same verb form that earlier described the trees enclosing *locus amoenus* that begins Io's passage.⁴⁸ Even Argus' eyes themselves, *cinctum*, encircle his head with the connotations of both crowning and fencing-in.⁴⁹ Io has no agency and is restrained like a wild animal, *indigno circumdat vincula collo*, again repeating the encircling imagery with *circumdat*.⁵⁰ Here Argus continues demonstrating his dominance over Io's physical form, chaining her neck cruelly, while *indigno* evokes sympathy for Io's suffering. Next when Io tries to stretch her arms out to Argus, she does so as a *supplex*, a subordinate to the monster, her new master.⁵¹ The fear of her new, mooing voice and lack of arms overpower her attempt to voice her suffering.⁵² Io's lack of control over

⁴⁴ Ovid, *Met.* 1.624–628.

⁴⁵ Curran 1978, 224.

⁴⁶ Whitmore 2018, 17–32.

⁴⁷ Ovid, *Met.* 1.629–630.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 567–568, 630. The *locus amoenus* itself is extremely programmatic throughout the *Met.* Idyllic forest glades or similar natural scenes of beauty frequently preface and serve as contrast against subsequent descriptions of violence, sexual or otherwise. For one example, see Proserpina picking flowers innocently beside a beautiful lake (5.385–399).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.624. In military contexts, Virgil and Livy also use *cingo* to mean surrounding a city to besiege it (Lewis & Short).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 630.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 634–635.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 635–637.

her own body here mirrors the recent total revocation of agency that occurred when she was raped by Jupiter, and it is reasonable thus to consider that Io might be replaying such painful memories in her own mind—Argus then holds further power over Io as he reinforces images of her rape.

In the next passage, Argus interrupts a tearful meeting between Io and her father, thus continuing to demonstrate his total power over Io's life in the familial domain as well as the sexual:

Venit et ad ripas, ubi ludere saepe solebat,
Inachidas ripas ...

Talia maerentem stellatus submovet Argus
ereptamque patri diversa in pascua natam
abstrahit. Ipse procul montis sublime cacumen
occupat, unde sedens partes speculatur in omnes.

She reached her father's river and the banks
Where often she had played ...

As thus they grieved, Argus, star-eyed, drove off
Daughter from father, hurrying her away
To distant pastures. Then himself, afar,
High on a mountain top sat sentinel
To keep his scrutiny on every side (*Met.* 1.639–640, 664–667).

When Argus disrupts Io and Inachus, Argus again is the nominative subject driving the action, while Io, *natam*, is subjected to the action.⁵³ Here the severed familial relationship between Io and her father is highlighted by *natam* and the dative of separation, *patri*.⁵⁴ The many-eyed beast's power thus encroaches on another area of Io's life that was once a comforting reminder of the livelihood she enjoyed before Jupiter's crime, alluding back to how the passage began, *Viderat a patrio redeuntem Iuppiter illam/ flumine*.⁵⁵ One might argue that Io is continually

⁵³ Ovid, *Met.* 1.663–665.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 664.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 588–589.

objectified in *partes specularur in omnes*: while *omnes* could mean everything within Argus' purview, it might also reference the dehumanized Io herself.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, as Io is objectified, Argus is deified in his frequent descriptor *stellatus*, associating him with the heavens and gods, *i.e.* the causes of all of Io's grief, Jupiter and Juno.⁵⁷ Following this episode, Jupiter takes action, unable to bear Io's suffering any longer, and sends Mercury to kill Argus.⁵⁸ With the introduction of Mercury comes yet another divine figure relegating Io's role in the story to the margin, particularly as the poem digresses for 35 lines to tell how Mercury lulled Argus to sleep with the story of Syrinx and Pan.⁵⁹ Juno punishes Io for the slaying of Argus, despite Jupiter still holding the power of when and how this occurred.

Much of the tragedy in Io's story stems from the complete lack of control she has over her own narrative. Jupiter rapes her, Juno punishes her, and Argus watches and drives her away from one of her only remaining comforts, her family. Of these three, Argus' role is perhaps the most insulting (and mythologically unique) in that he perpetuates the pain of Jupiter's assault through being a powerful reminder even in just his presence. The text itself in this passage consistently reminds the reader of what a passive role Io takes, only ever really running away, suffering, or begging as her primary actions in the story, particularly when she is under Argus' control.

Many modern survivors of rape have expressed Argus as a particularly salient character in Io's story, as he embodies many of the social consequences of rape for a survivor. Curran alludes to how Io's lack of privacy under Argus' watch might resonate with "a woman in a small

⁵⁶ Ovid, *Met.* 1.666.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 663, 723. I do also acknowledge the clearer association of this being his eyes as lights (especially given that *lumina* is more frequent).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 668–670.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 678–712. Telling stories within other stories is common in the *Met.* Perhaps Ovid is suggesting wryly that although it is only book one for now, the reader themselves will be drifting off to sleep, tired of trying to keep track of which of Ovid's many narrators is telling the story now.

town who must endure the stares of all in their knowledge that she has been raped.”⁶⁰ While valid, this assertion seems limited because part of the experience of undergoing sexual trauma includes social fears, such as feelings of shame or paranoia that might follow regardless of whether anyone knows that the person has been raped.⁶¹ Survivors of rape and molestation have reported feelings of suspicion and paranoia of everyone, or feeling that everyone is looking at them and can perceive their guilt, not just persons related to their rapist or who are aware of their rape. One survivor remarked, “I felt so different from the other kids in school. I was sure that if I wasn’t very careful they would be able to tell about me ...”⁶² After reading Io’s story, other survivors see their abuser in Argus, as “even in a crowd ... [the abuser’s] eyes had invaded [the survivor].”⁶³ Fascinatingly, multiple other survivors were struck by Mercury, as his role in the story prompted them to describe those in their life (*e.g.* well-intentioned caregivers, therapists, or loved ones) who wrongly presumed that somatic remedies could help end their manifold suffering.⁶⁴ Gardner suggests that therapists themselves also might learn from Argus and take his panoptic nature as a warning against unduly curious, voyeuristic, or unrelenting therapeutic practices that needlessly focus on survivors’ symptoms rather than their potential for growth and healing.⁶⁵

Punisher Juno

In a myth populated by powerful male figures, Io finds no solace in the female deity, Juno, who instead inflicts woman-on-woman violence on the story’s heroine and shows no signs

⁶⁰ Curran 1978, 224.

⁶¹ Foa, Rothbaum, Riggs, and Murdock 1991, 715.

⁶² Mayr & Price 1989, 37.

⁶³ Gardner, Wills, and Goodwin 1995, 36.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

of empathy with the young girl.

From start to finish, Juno's only concern is herself, never Io. When Juno initially spies the unnatural dark mist that Jupiter has conjured, her immediate reaction is to fear for herself, suspecting, "*aut ego fallor,/ aut ego laedor.*"⁶⁶ Juno clearly is knowledgeable about Jupiter's habits of raping young women, but rather than considering the mortal girl who has far more to lose (including her shame, her livelihood, even her life), she preoccupies herself with the potential loss of her own status. To ease her own mind, which continually fears Jupiter's tricks, Juno assigns Argus to the *paelice*, her rival.⁶⁷ Rather than being named by her own name, Io is characterized only by her relationship to the divine beings as Jupiter's mistress, and being the direct object in *servandam tradidit*.⁶⁸ The relationship between Juno and Io is reiterated again with *paelicis* near the story's end, after Argus is slain:

Protinus exarsit nec tempora distulit irae
horriferamque oculis animoque obiecit Erinyn
paelicis Argolicae stimulosque in pectore caecos
condidit et profugam per totum terruit orbem.

At once her wrath
Flared up and soon her anger was fulfilled.
Before her rival's eyes and in her mind
She set a frightful Fury and deep down
Plunged blinding goads of fear; and Io fled
A cowering fugitive through all the world (*Met.* 1.723–726).

The role which Juno inhabits is strikingly mortal. She sets aside her divine status and instead focuses on her relationship to Jupiter and her standing as his wife as the most salient aspects of her identity. By describing Io as her rival, she somewhat lowers herself to Io's level, equating

⁶⁶ Ovid, *Met.* 1.607–608.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 621–623.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 623.

herself with the girl in their womanhood.⁶⁹ This role echoes through time to today's unfortunate model of female rivalries and the shaming and blaming that festers when, as Curran writes, "a patriarchal society conditions women to punish their own sisters" into taking action out of internalized misogyny.⁷⁰

Engulfed in rage, Juno sets Io about wandering in animalistic, senseless fear. While she had previously appointed Argus to Io, she meant only for him to guard her (*servandam*) rather than inflict harm;⁷¹ therefore, unleashing the Fury counts as the first instance of Juno inflicting direct violence on Io. During this time, Juno still has yet to hear any confession from Jupiter that the cow is anything but a normal gift, so all the goddess has are her suspicions. The punishment is so terrible and gives Io so much grief that it prompts Jupiter to embrace Juno and finally confess:

Coniugis ille suae complexus colla lacertis,
finiat ut poenas tandem, rogat "in" que "futurum
pone metus" inquit; "numquam tibi causa doloris
haec erit:" et Stygias iubet hoc audire paludes.
Ut lenita dea est ...

And Jove pleaded with Juno, throwing his arms
Around her neck, to end the punishment
At last. 'Lay fear aside; never again',
He swore, 'shall Io give you cause to grieve',
And charged the pools of Styx to attest his oath.
The goddess was appeased ... (*Met.* 1.734–738.).

Yet, given that when she was punishing Io with the Fury, Juno did not know for sure whether Io was another victim to Jupiter's desire, the reader may come to two conclusions: first, either the

⁶⁹ This entire passage concerning Io's story may strike the reader as being rather mundane and somewhat similar in plot to a Roman new comedy, complete with its jealous and suspicious wife, an unfaithful husband who contrives a bumbling plot to fool her, and his mistress. Even Argus might be reimagined as some cruel eunuch guardsman character. The transformations themselves remain as the most supernatural elements of the story.

⁷⁰ Curran 1978, 226.

⁷¹ Ovid, *Met.* 1.624.

goddess was primarily upset by the loss of her pet, Argus, but the terrible nature of the punishment can still be seen in how it moved even Jupiter to confess; or second, that Juno is primarily upset by her continual and ever-growing suspicions of Jupiter, which leads her to intentionally torture someone with a female human's psyche, who she must suspect to an equally great degree of having suffered rape, for the purpose of pettily acquiring a confession for her own self-interest. The aforementioned characterization of Io as Juno's rival, as well as Jupiter's confession (a confession that completely omits the poor, dead Argus) being what finally appeases the goddess, both suggest that the latter interpretation of Juno's punishment is closer to truth.

Io's pregnancy status lingers as another ambiguity during this scene of Juno's rage. At the conclusion of her passage, Io gives birth to Epaphus; while childbirth following rape in classical literature is not certain, and while mythological physiology does not always reflect realistic processes, the birth of her son compels the reader to consider whether or not Io was bearing a child in some sort of unnatural gestation throughout her forced wanderings. Io's transformed role into a mother at the end of her story highlights both the cruelty of the female deity and the salient physical risks that females who are raped suffer. Curran observes:

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 [*sic*] 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 ... and the considerably higher incidence of complications in childbirth in [these cases] ... 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 (Curran 1978, 224).

Io's story is programmatic in that it primes the reader for subsequent instances of female deities inflicting violence on female humans who have been raped. Juno's jealousy of other women whom Jupiter has raped is more clearly directed towards or exacted upon their offspring in subsequent books, those victims of Juno including Callisto—whom Juno dehumanizes and transforms into a bear upon learning that she has had a child with Jupiter, and whose story both directly mentions Io and includes Argus—Semele, Latona, and Alcmena.⁷² In a classic Ovidian inversion, the common association of Juno as the protector and goddess of motherhood is wholly reversed, and the temptress nymph instead becomes a model for female virtue.⁷³ Lastly, clinical modern psychology has observed that sexual trauma affects pregnant women particularly: for women who have experienced adult sexual or physical abuse, the rates of PTSD during pregnancy are nearly three times the rate of pregnant women who have never experienced abuse.⁷⁴ Thus, the matter of Io's pregnancy status is worthy of consideration for the sake of multiple different viewpoints.

Once Jupiter confesses, Juno's suspicions are appeased enough, and Io's transformation back into a woman is set into motion. The emphatic *ut lenita dea est* beginning the line that continues with Io's transformation back into a human woman demonstrates that while Io has suffered greatly and even suffered so greatly to perhaps move Jupiter's heart, what decides the girl's fate ultimately is Juno's pride that extracts a confession and pledge of faithfulness from her husband. Additionally, when Io's pleas to turn back into a human are granted at last, it is only

⁷² Ovid, *Met.* 2.466–541 (Callisto), 3.253–315 (Semele), 6.337–338 (Latona), and 9.280–323 (Alcmena). For other vengeful female deities, consider Diana, who also punishes Callisto (2.448–465), and Minerva's transformation of Medusa (4.798–803).

⁷³ For a more extensive commentary on nymphs as virtuous in the *Met.* and Juno's role reversal, particularly in contrast to the Juno of the *Aeneid*, which Ovid deliberately parodies in the whole of the *Met.*, see Curran 1978, 231 and 225–226, respectively.

⁷⁴ Wosu, Gelaye, & Williams 2015, 61–63. Pregnant women who have experienced both childhood and adult physical or sexual abuse reported PTSD rates of 39%, compared to the aforementioned women with no history of abuse reporting 4.1%.

under the condition that Jupiter promises Juno, “*numquam tibi causa doloris haec erit,*” she will never be the cause of pain *to you* again,⁷⁵ once again prioritizing the gods’ concerns above the girl’s suffering. For all that she has gone through, Io remains a pawn with no power, merely collateral damage between the gods; Io sets into motion none of her story’s primary events, yet she suffers the most consequences of them.

⁷⁵ Ovid, *Met.* 1.736–737.

IV. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate how both classics and psychology can gain understanding from one another through a close reading of Io's story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Instead of taking the typical approach of attempting to make sweeping assertions about Ovid's beliefs about rape or ancient societal standards about rape, I have tried to focus on the subject, Io, and her experience throughout the narrative.

Similarly to Curran's research, my close reading of the episode thematically followed the suffering of the survivor, moving roughly through the story as it appears in the text, beginning with the onset of fear and loss of agency, then examining the subsequent fear of body and loss of voice, the unique and sinister subjugator Argus, who is particularly relatable to modern survivors of sexual assault in various ways, and finally Juno as a fellow female and exacter of vengeance. Throughout her own story, Io is marginalized and stripped of nearly all power in both the plot, narrative, and Latin text itself. The only instance where she directly expresses her needs and then has them met are when she briefly reunites with her family; however, even this scene is tainted with sadness from her cow body's limitations, and Argus prematurely forces the family apart once again.

I hope that this close reading serves as a supplement to Mayr and Price's article and provides the detailed classical knowledge that brings their already sound psychological theorization to another level. Particularly, I hope that my attention to the issues of Io's persistent lack of agency and fear of speaking even after her metamorphosis back into a human help illuminate some of the blind spots in their article. Even though Io is deified and has a famous son at the end of her story, the vast majority of her narrative focuses on her suffering, and it is not

unreasonable to imagine that like most survivors of rape, Io never forgot what anguish she endured at the hands of the gods.

Overall, this thesis rejects censorship and euphemistic language in the Classics and urges the field to encourage research that promotes narratives of marginalized people in antiquity, such as women and rape survivors, in plain language that acknowledges the pain such people endured and continue to endure today. As I have demonstrated, this is possible to do while continuing to study canon texts and while neither exonerating nor vilifying the author within or beyond the context of his time.

In future research, the specific symptoms of dissociation, feeling foreign in one's own body, and disjointed narrative might be examined further in both the Latin text and the psychology literature. Both I and Mayr and Price touched briefly on this, but dissociation as a symptom with potentially unique pathology might be disentangled further in both fields' literature.⁷⁶

For further consideration, one might also consider the implications of studying rape in the *Met.* for other fields in conjunction with Classics, such as education and art. Educators and classicists such as Madeleine Kahn and Elizabeth Golyn have wrestled with questions of justifying teaching difficult texts in schools (including texts about rape but also spanning texts concerning slavery, abuse and violence, war, death, and sex generally) in a social climate that increasingly promotes sensitivity to students' reactions to such texts.⁷⁷ Their questions were echoed just a couple years later when students at Columbia University argued in 2015 for the inclusion of trigger warnings to accompany class materials about the *Met.*⁷⁸ Indeed, when

⁷⁶ For a background on psychological dissociation, see Halligan *et al.* 2003, 419–431.

⁷⁷ Kahn 2004, 438–495, Kahn 2005, and Golyn 2013, 676–681.

⁷⁸ Waldman 2018.

searching “*Metamorphoses*” on social media websites, most of the results that return are grappling with the portrayal of rape in the *Met.*, penned by either shocked people, slightly distanced from the Classics community, who were only now coming to realize that this is what all the business about Jupiter’s “lovers” is, or by classicists writing opinion pieces.⁷⁹ What is the best way to teach students these texts, and what might Classics as a field learn from these new voices entering academia?

As for art, further investigation into the romanization of rape is worthwhile. Beyond just objectification, which was mentioned in this thesis, how is rape romanticized in Ovid? Are these elements reflected in contemporary and ancient art, or do new trends emerge from the artists themselves? In one instance, Kate Nichols examines a portrayal of Syrinx, and her research touches on many of the motifs of fear, beauty, agency, and transformation that have been mentioned in this thesis.⁸⁰ Exploring artistic portrayals of rape seems like a particularly fruitful endeavor given that within cross-cultural psychology research, art has been used as a reliable indicator to measure culture’s beliefs.⁸¹

Beyond what I have laid out here, there is far more to say about Io’s fascinating and sad story, as well as about rape narratives and power structures generally, and I hope that this thesis has helped open the door to some of these discussions. Let us begin, as Richlin wrote, to speak the blood off her story.

⁷⁹ Beek 2016.

⁸⁰ Nichols 2016, 107–126.

⁸¹ Senzaki, Masuda, & Nand 2014, 1297–1316. For one particularly striking portrayal of Io’s rape, see Tony Scherman’s paintings in *The Rape of Io* (Crone, Moos & Scherman 1992).

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