

MARRIED MORTALS IN OVID'S

METAMORPHOSES

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts in the Department of Classics at Haverford College.

May 2010

Abstract

The myths of 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', 'Procris and Cephalus', and 'Ceyx and Alcyone', all tales of very different and doomed relationships between mortals in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, provide structure for the poem. Ovid uses narrative techniques, intertextual clues, tragic and epic devices, and metamorphosis, to increase emotional pull of each myth. The three myths are set against the backdrop of the famous couples of epic and the divine relationship of Juno and Jupiter. The relationships are progressively more successful with each story but end in tragedy and transformation, while Juno and Jupiter's contrasting relationship is immortal and improving throughout the work. Each of the three myths differs greatly from the others in content and themes aside from the fact that they revolve around mortal relationships. Nevertheless, the stories are not as distinct from each other as they initially appear. Each story appears as a single narrative at the end of its respective book and is introduced by a series of shorter yet related episodes and each is an example of the creative liberty that Ovid takes with familiar myths. By changing the emphasis, or picking and choosing the plot of each story, Ovid reveals that he is telling each for a specific purpose. Ovid develops and changes well-known myths to create his own moving stories driven by character, love, and revenge that explore the power dynamics between mortal husbands and wives.

MARRIED MORTALS IN OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*

Chapter I: Introduction

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* covers a wide range of topics but is loosely connected by stories of love and attraction usually involving the divine or the semi-divine and almost always ending in a transformation. Ovid links these stories in a variety of ways whether through characters, theme, or geographic location. The divine pantheon is constantly in the background as gods interact with each other and with mortals beginning with the elemental forces present in the cosmogony through each and every one of Jupiter's affairs and ending with the apotheosis of Caesar. Even as Ovid presents stories of divine intervention and retribution, he tells a few that focus purely on mortal relationships. 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', 'Procris and Cephalus' and 'Ceyx and Alcyone' each take a prominent place in Books VI, VII, and XI, respectively. In each of these stories Ovid focuses on the relationship, legitimized by marriage, between the women and men. The mortal stories ground the work in a reality of human emotion, heartbreak and revenge drawing the line between what is permitted for humans and what is allowed for gods. Even though the three myths portray very different relationships, they provide a structure for the whole poem and solidify the barrier between mortal and immortal through Ovid's individual approach to each story, language, intertextuality, metamorphosis, lack of divine presence in the lives of mortals.

'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', 'Procris and Cephalus', and 'Ceyx and Alcyone' are not the only examples of myths about married mortals that Ovid relates, but they are the only three with fully developed characters that are also free from divine influence. Ovid makes the myths his own and adapts them to his work by picking and choosing aspects of older variants that will make for the most suitable story. Ovid chooses and changes myths so that they focus on

the personal relationships between the characters rather than outside forces such as gods or fate. In 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', Ovid shifts the emphasis from the jealousy between two women to the solidarity between the sisters after one is subjected to a brutal rape. Ovid eliminates the homosexual aspect of 'Procris and Cephalus' and the double infidelity on Procris' part and chooses to focus on the couple's doomed love while still casting hints at what may have been going on outside of the story's narrative. In 'Ceyx and Alcyone', Ovid erases the theme of hubris vis-a-vis the gods and shifts to a story of marital affection. Despite Ovid's retooling of each of the myths, his reader cannot read his stories without their alternate versions in the back of his mind. The three myths stand apart from others of their kind because they do not involve the gods nor do they have a moral that suggests that all humans should be pious to specific gods or goddesses. Instead they deal with general morality and human decency and the consequences or lack thereof for the characters of the myths.

Wheeler's chapter on the relationship between Juno and Jupiter provides an excellent method of understanding the structure behind the hodgepodge of sometimes tenuously related stories¹. Wheeler argues that the beginning of the *Metamorphoses* focuses on Jupiter's affairs with a plethora of women and the consequences of his dalliances for the women. As the poem continues, Ovid shifts the focus to Juno and her revenge and Jupiter's attempts at rectifying the consequences of Hera's wrath by rewarding his offspring. Towards the end, Juno and Jupiter resolve some of their differences and transform into the divine paradigm for Roman marriage². Their changing relationship provides the continuity over which the rest of the varying plot of the poem is placed. As Wheeler says "viewed retrospectively, the sequence of episodes involving Jupiter and Juno provides a structure for understanding the passage of time in the

¹ Stephen M. Wheeler. *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. (Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tubingen, 2000): 70-106.

² Ibid.

Metamorphoses. Below the surface of the poem's seemingly divergent actions lies the master plot of an evolving family drama".³ Wheeler's article lays out the important themes that continue to appear throughout the whole poem such as infidelity, revenge and love. While Juno and Jupiter continue in their eternal marriage, mortals attempt to emulate them and other famous couples to varying degrees of success. They also serve as a reminder of the continued mortal existence through Greek and Roman history so that the arrival of the Caesars is a logical continuation of the mortal narrative. Procne and Tereus, Procris and Cephalus, and Ceyx and Alcyone provide the mortal relationships in front of the divine backdrop. They are touchstones for the reader, inviting him into the poem and revealing his place and fate as a mortal within the cosmos.

In order to reveal the continuity and also the crucial differences between the myths I will approach them from a number of different angles. As previously mentioned, Ovid makes each of the myths, which would have been already known to his reader, his own. By understanding how Ovid uses the variants of each myth it is possible to pinpoint which aspects of each myth he wants to emphasize. Additionally, the narrative of each myth and the language used to tell the stories generate pathos from the reader and indicate with whom the reader should place his sympathy. Ovid uses both epic and tragic devices and references to evoke emotion. Because the characters are central to each story, I will explore the relationship between the husband and wife with an emphasis on how the balance of power is maintained and the crossover between masculine and feminine spheres. The *Metamorphoses* is nominally about change so I will analyze the metamorphosis, or lack thereof, at the end of each myth and assess what they reveal about the nature of the characters. Despite the presence of metamorphoses, divine presence is

³ Stephen M. Wheeler. *Narrative Dynamics in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. (Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag Tubingen, 2000), 106.

limited in these three stories grounding them in the human realm and inviting a contrast with Juno and Jupiter. Therefore, I will trace the lack of divine involvement through each of the myths. Finally, I will analyze the placement of each myth within the poem and how it relates to the surrounding stories. The guiding points are crucial in understanding how Ovid meant for each of the individual myths and the poem as a whole to be read.

Analyzing the myths in such a way will reveal the links between them, the rest of the work, and other examples of married mortals in classical literature. Everything Ovid writes into each story from how he changes the myth, to the figurative language, the use of transformation and divine influence is designed to attract the reader. Any tale that involves gods automatically distances the reader; as long as the reader is aware that Jupiter is not traipsing around Greece disguised as a bull, the story will retain a degree of fantasy. Stories about only mortals remind the reader how close he is to tragedy and violence before Ovid distances him again through the transformation. For a brief moment, the reader can revel in the horror or pathos of the tale and then be rid of the characters entirely as they fly off into the woods in their transformed state. 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', 'Procris and Cephalus', and 'Ceyx and Alcyone' are all examples of the variety of potential human relationships joined by their mortality and juxtaposed against a background of immortals and mythic tradition.

Chapter II: Procne, Tereus, and Philomela

The story of Procne, Tereus, and Philomela existed in a number of forms from which Ovid drew his elaborate version of the myth. Early versions of the myth are recognizable by the birds that each character changes into. The tale of the nightingale appears in Homer's *Odyssey* as the story of a woman who accidentally kills her son Itylus and subsequently perpetually mourns as a nightingale. In Aeschylus, the familiar names of Procne and her husband Tereus appear and the motive for the mother's crime changes to wrath, but there are no specifics regarding the cause of the anger⁴. Ovid's version follows most closely the plot of Sophocles' *Tereus*, which is also mirrored in Conon's *Narratives*. Sophocles' and Conon's versions provide the intriguing plot points that Ovid works with in new ways. Ovid begins by expounding upon the wedding of Procne and Tereus, which is only a passing mention in previous versions. The marriage is arranged because it offers thanks for a military action and cements the future military alliance between Procne's father Pandion of Athens and Tereus, king of Thrace. Ovid defines Tereus as Thracian who *flagrat vitio gentisque suoque*,⁵ emphasizing his potential barbaric qualities, and then enumerates the ill omens present at the actual wedding ceremony. He sets up the relationship as doomed from the start. Ovid follows Tereus on his initially innocent voyage to bring Philomela to visit Procne and takes the reader through Tereus' thought process behind deciding to rape Philomela while giving external reasons for his actions. Ovid continues the story with the vivid description of the rape and mutilation of Philomela, her ingenuity weaving the robe to tell her story, Procne's search for Philomela and their subsequent revenge. In each of these incidents Ovid emphasizes the agency of Procne and Philomela. Philomela, realizing her predicament gives a passionate speech after the rape, chiding Tereus for breaking all bonds of

⁴ Aeschylus. *The Suppliants of Aeschylus*. Translated by T.G. Tucker. (London: Macmillan, 1889).

⁵ *Met.* VI 460.

marriage and family. Silenced, she finds another voice and when Procne receives the woven tale she immediately sets off to rescue her dear sister. With the bond between the sisters and the evil nature of Tereus established, Ovid fleshes out the characters that were once casual references in Homer.

Ovid does not only deviate from Sophocles when he expands crucial scenes, but he also changes the motives of the characters. Ovid has Procne and Philomela scheme together rather than Procne working on her own. In Sophocles, Procne kills Itys because she is driven mad with jealousy, while in Ovid she is motivated by compassion for her sister and anger at her husband. Suter singles out the compassion between the two women as one of the most notable details of the myth⁶, and she contrasts it with earlier versions that Fontenrose enumerates in “The Sorrows of Ino and Procne”⁷. Fontenrose groups the Procne story with the Ino myth and characterizes both myths by competition between women over men. Ovid, however eliminates the “other woman” aspect of the Procne myth, separates Procne from Ino and instead creates a Procne who is clever enough to understand that whatever happened to her sister is her husband’s fault. Her loyalty to her family is stronger than that to her husband, a fact which Ovid supports by emphasizing the bad omens at her wedding. Suter explains that “the sisters join forces and rebel against the gender structure of their society by avenging themselves on Tereus”⁸. She then explains that their metamorphosis prevents any chance for society’s permanent change and indicates that she believes their lack of cult status indicates society’s condemnation of their actions. Suter claims that Ovid was “apparently not interested in what powerful women did to

⁶ Ann Suter. “Myth of Prokne and Philomela.” *New England Classical Journal* 31(4) (2004): 383.

⁷ Joseph Fontenrose. “The Sorrows of Ino and of Procne.” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 79 (1948).

⁸ Ann Suter. “Myth of Prokne and Philomela.” *New England Classical Journal* 31(4) (2004): 383.

each other, only in what they did to men”⁹, and she agrees with Fontenrose that the myth is meant to be a warning to unsuspecting males. However, Suter overlooks many of Ovid’s details that prevent such a conclusion. The poet’s obvious disgust at Tereus’ actions and the final transformation of all three characters demonstrates that, while condemning all of their actions, he provides a strong enough motive for the women’s actions. Marder goes so far as to explain that, “This story thematizes a woman’s experience of violation and rhetorically enacts her inability to speak that experience”¹⁰, which places Ovid as a sympathizer with the women, not a man afraid of their power. Peek provides a way to mediate between Suter and Marder’s extremes when he points out that Ovid censures the actions of both the women and Tereus by noting that every crime committed is an abominable one. Ovid finds fault with all of the characters and still sympathizes with the women;¹¹ after all, Tereus broke the bonds of marriage, custom and family before Procne mirrored his action with an equal one. Ovid carries over the plot of ‘Procne, Tereus, and Philomela’ from tragedy, but with added emphasis on the personal relationships between the characters and the roles that the women play.

Ovid evokes the pathos of the reader by using vivid and sometimes revolting imagery, tragic themes, and by delving into the psyche of his characters. Ovid’s myth is characterized by jarring contrasts of language. Philomela gives a passionate speech berating Tereus, which cultivates the sympathy of the reader who urges Tereus to relent. Ovid not only follows Philomela’s speech with Tereus’ mocking words but also the vivid description of her newly severed tongue wriggling on the ground:

Ille indignantem et nomen patris usque vocantem
Luctantemque loqui comprehensam forcipe linguam

⁹ Ann Suter. “Myth of Prokne and Philomela.” *New England Classical Journal* 31(4) (2004): 384.

¹⁰ Elissa Marder. “Disarticulated Voices: Feminism and Philomela.” *Hypatia* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 157.

¹¹ Philip Sheffield Peek. “Procne, Philomela, Tereus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: a narratological approach.” *Antichthon* 37 (2003): 45.

Abstulit ense fero; radix micat ultima linguae,
Ipsa iacet terraeque tremens inmurmurat atrae,
Utque salire solet mutilatae cauda colubrae,
Palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit.¹²

He, with a savage sword, snatched out her tongue which was resenting and continuously calling the name of her father and struggling to speak after it was taken hold of with tongs; the farthest root of the tongue quivered, it lay and it, trembling on the dark ground muttered, and just as a tale of a lopped off snake is accustomed to leap around, it throbbed and dying seeks the footsteps of its master.

The contrast between the previously articulate girl and her tongue's desire to return to its root evokes both an emotional and visceral reaction. Peek characterizes this sort of imagery as "black humor" or the "humorous treatment of what is grotesque, morbid, terrifying...a refusal to treat what one might regard as tragic materials tragically"¹³. Peek argues that Ovid's myth is unique in its mixed tone of seemingly inappropriate humor and tragedy bolstered by irony and the grotesque. The irony that Peek references is indeed rampant in 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' partially because of its roots in tragedy; the reader is aware of the doomed wedding, of Tereus' true motives when he begs Pandion to allow Philomela to return with him and of the content of the dinner that Procne serves Tereus¹⁴. Peek interprets Ovid's vivid description of Philomela's tongue and of Itys' death as examples of the grotesque which along with irony completes his definition of black humor¹⁵. In addition, he contends that Ovid distances himself from the reader and the characters through the "seriocomic" tone¹⁶. The constant irony gives the story a tragic feel, which informs the reader that the outcome of the story will not be satisfactory to any of the characters and reminds him of its previous incarnation as a Sophoclean tragedy. While Ovid's

¹² *Met.* VI 555-560.

¹³ Philip Sheffield Peek. "Procne, Philomela, Tereus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: a narratological approach." *Antichthon* 37 (2003): 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 49-50.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

condemnation of the characters' grotesque actions and crimes directs the reader to avoid sympathy with either, the order of events forces him into siding with Procne and Philomela. Because Tereus' violence is described in such detail, the reader begs for Procne's revenge, which forces Ovid to condemn her actions as well to remind the reader that she went too far. However, Ovid's choice to tell the story from multiple perspectives with an emphasis on the women leaves the reader supporting Procne and Philomela in their final crime because Tereus deserves punishment. Ovid follows Tereus to Athens to collect Philomela and reveals the extent of his lust for her. As he explores Tereus' thought processes he reveals both that Tereus' motives are far from pure and that Philomela is dedicated to her family and will not expect or welcome Tereus' advances:

Flagrat vitio gentisque suoque.
 Inpetus est illi comitum corrumpere curam
 nutricisque fidem nec non ingentibus ipsam
 sollicitare datis totumque inpendere regnum,
 aut rapere et saevo raptam defendere bello.¹⁷

He burned with his own vice and that of his race. He has the urge to bribe her attendant and trust of the nurse and neither to not incite her with a huge gift and to threaten the whole kingdom, or to seize her and to defend the rape in a savage war.

By emphasizing Tereus' inability to control himself, Ovid ensures that the reader will not sympathize with him. Tereus' defense of his action to himself is juxtaposed with Philomela's reasoning against it:

'o crudelis' ait 'nec te mandata parentis
 Cum lacrimis movere piis nec cura sororis
 Nec mea virginitas nec coniugalia iura.¹⁸

'o cruel man' she said 'neither do the commands of the parents with pious tears nor the care for a sister, nor my virginity, nor the conjugal laws move you.'

¹⁷ *Met.* VI 460-464.

¹⁸ *Met.* VI 534-536.

Philomela's simple and rational plea gains the compassion of the reader. While Ovid does not approve of Procne and Philomela's final crime, other stories of child murder and consumption are slanted against the murderer. Atreus killed Thyestes' sons and fed them to their father and Tantalus killed his son Pelops and fed him to the gods. Tantalus is punished for eternity in the underworld while Atreus was eventually murdered; neither character had any redeeming qualities and both were known for being a part of a family marked by perpetual strife and bloodshed. In 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', the slaughter of her child is the only possible reaction to Tereus' crime. Because he violated the bonds of family and mutilated her sister, Procne has to respond with something worse violating the bonds of family by killing her son. Feeding Itys to Tereus is the worst possible revenge because nothing Tereus could do would be more horrific than consuming his own son. The reader sides with Procne and Philomela until suddenly Ovid turns the tables revealing them to be as brutal as Tereus. Ovid plays with the reader's emotions by eliciting horror and pity in turn which cause the reader to become deeply involved with the plight of the characters.

Early on, Ovid established that the relationship between Tereus and Procne was a political one, which was doomed from the start. Throughout the story, Ovid is interested in motives and thought processes which are passed over in other versions and the agency of the female characters. Ovid creates a women's world within the myth. Philomela's passionate speech to Tereus, her use of weaving, Procne's involvement in Bacchic rituals and the decision to bring down Tereus through his own child all exist in the women's sphere. Procne and Philomela obtain their revenge on Tereus through the devices available to them as women. Marder emphasizes the metaphorical silencing of Philomela after she is raped by Tereus, yet she finds a new speech

through the only medium left to her, weaving¹⁹. However, the importance of weaving extends further than that; in the *Odyssey*, Penelope demonstrates her power through weaving and her trick is only revealed through the treacheries of another woman. The trick of unraveling and reweaving proves Penelope's fidelity and her equality to her notoriously clever husband. Philomela uses weaving as her outlet because it is a typically feminine craft that Tereus will not think twice on when he visits her prison. Tereus is not versed in Homeric tradition; if he was, he would have considered the power of the loom not realizing its power of expression and deceit. Weaving is an essentially feminine activity, ready to be used for treachery which is the only outlet for female vengeance. When plotting revenge, Procne and Philomela have few options; the most obvious solution would be to castrate Tereus however, they opt for a more cruel method. Procne's murder of her own son demonstrates that a woman only has physical power over children and that she must stoop to cunning to bring down a man such as Tereus. Nevertheless, Thyestes's brother and Pelops' father who are both men, resorted to similar methods revealing that Procne's action is not purely a feminine one but one associated with men known for their cunning. Tereus, meanwhile, relies almost exclusively on force, from the rape to the armed pursuit of the two women. In one instance does he attempt guile through his concealment of Philomela and his lies about her death to Procne. Segal emphasizes Tereus' capacity as a tyrant and a barbarian and claims that "as a tyrannical man, Tereus has the tyrant's desire for unlimited and therefore sadistic power over his victim"²⁰. While he persuades Philomela's father to let her

¹⁹ Elissa Marder. "Disarticulated Voices: Feminism and Philomela." *Hypatia* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 157-158.

²⁰ Charles Segal. "Philomela's Web and the Pleasures of the Text: Reader and Violence in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid." In *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, edited by Irene J. F. De Jong and J.P. Sullivan, 257-280. (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 259.

onto his ship, he resorts to violence in his desire to possess her²¹. Ovid has set up conflicting forces in Tereus and Procne. Tereus represents male power and uncontrolled nature, while Procne, and also Philomela, represents the clever woman from the famously civilized city of Athens. Ultimately, Ovid condemns Tereus because he is mortal. In other stories of rape in the *Metamorphoses* the perpetrator is a god or has been given license by the gods. Tereus oversteps his bounds by breaking the laws of family and marriage, and therefore the gods, by violently kidnapping his sister-in-law.

‘Procne, Tereus, and Philomela’ may have been developed as an aetiological tale, yet Ovid uses the characters’ metamorphosis for a different purpose. Because the story is part of a book about changes, the final metamorphosis has undeniable significance, even if it may not be the driving force of the myth. Halliday’s work on the subject traces the myth back to its roots claiming that the only unifying factor is the transformation of the characters into birds and that all other aspects of the myth are brought in from other stories, or places and actually diffuse the original purpose²². Whatever the origins of the story are, it is impossible to say that the Procne, Tereus, and Philomela myth is always linked with a collection of birds, usually the swallow, nightingale and hoopoe. Kaufhold demonstrates how Ovid uses imagery to bring about the final transformations of each of his characters. He focuses on the use of bird imagery when describing Tereus, preparing him for his final transformation,²³ similarly, the fire imagery, Kaufhold suggests, presages the final fate of Itys. Kaufhold shows that both Itys, who is transformed into a stew, and Tereus, who is transformed into a bird, are prepared for their transformation through

²¹ Charles Segal. “Philomela's Web and the Pleasures of the Text: Reader and Violence in the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid.” In *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, edited by Irene J. F. De Jong and J.P. Sullivan, 257-280. (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 267.

²² W.R. Halliday. “Procne and Philomela.” *Indo-European Folk-Tales and Greek Legend*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1933).

²³ Shelley D. Kaufhold. “Ovid's Tereus: Fire, Birds, and the Reification of Figurative Language.” *Classical Philology* 92, no. 1 (January 1997): 71.

Ovid's tale²⁴. Like many of the characters in Ovid's work, once changed into birds, they maintain significant characteristics. Ovid does not specify which of the two women transform into which of the birds. He states *Quarum petit altera silvas,/ altera tecta subit; neque adhuc de pectore caedis/ excesserae notae, signataque sanguine pluma est*²⁵. He expects that the reader is sufficiently well versed in mythology or ornithology to know to which birds he refers. If the reader already associates the story with the nightingale, swallow and hoopoe than the reverse is also true; an Ovidian reader would immediately think of Procne, Tereus, and Philomela when he or she saw one of the birds. Otis explains that there is no other possible end for the characters because their inhuman actions rid them of the privilege of being human. Otis remarks that "Tereus, Procne and Philomela had finally sacrificed everything to lust or to vengeance; their transformations into birds enabled them in fact to perpetuate the quite animal emotions that dominated the end of their drama"²⁶. Tereus, the hoopoe chases the marked and mourning swallow and nightingale into eternity as a constant reenactment of the myth. The association between the characters and the birds reveals the purpose of the metamorphosis in the story. Once transformed, they rid the world of their sins, while existing as a constant reminder of their wrong-doing.

The transformation of the characters is the only hint of divine interference in Ovid's myth. The absence of specific gods is immediately notable at the wedding of the doomed couple. There are ill omens at the wedding and Ovid makes it known that it is not blessed by the gods because *non pronuba Iuno,/ non Hymenaeus adest, non illi Gratia lecto*²⁷. As the story unfolds with the rape, mutilation, murder and consumption of Itys, the gods remain absent even when

²⁴ Shelley D. Kaufhold. "Ovid's Tereus: Fire, Birds, and the Reification of Figurative Language." *Classical Philology* 92, no. 1 (January 1997): 70.

²⁵ *Met.* VI 668-670.

²⁶ Brooks Otis. *Ovid as an Epic Poet.* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1966), 261-262.

²⁷ *Met.* VI 428-429.

their help is requested. Philomela in her distress calls on them, particularly those guarding family and marriage, but none answer her. With the gods uninterested in their suffering, Procne and Philomela have no choice but to fashion their own revenge. Bacchus is a vehicle for Procne's rescue of Philomela, but he does not directly aid her, all of her actions and plans are her own. The women go through with the revenge unchallenged. The transformation of Procne, Tereus and Philomela into bird is the only example of divine commentary on their actions. Surprisingly, the gods are even absent from the final transformation. Ovid does not specify who is responsible for the metamorphosis making it seem like it was merely the next possible step after their complete dissolution into animal instincts as Otis had noted²⁸. The gods, so prevalent in the rest of the books have no place in the relationship between the three, mortal characters.

The 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' is the penultimate story of Book VI and is preceded by a series of stories that warn mortals not to offend the gods. Arachne, Niobe, the Lycian peasants who offended Latona, and Marsyas explore similar offenses. In the case of Niobe, her direct offense of a goddess by taunting Leto brings on the wrath of Apollo and Artemis who punish her for her affront by killing all of her children. These tales are tied to 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' through a brief account of Pelops which addresses the theme of inappropriate contests with the gods and foreshadows the familial cannibalism that follows it. In this instance, when the gods are served the horrific feast of Tantalus' own son, they punish Tantalus for his action and allow Pelops to be brought back to life. In all of these stories there is direct divine intervention marking what is wrong and what is right, whether it is sin against family, humanity or the gods themselves. By the end, the situation is rectified through metamorphosis. The preceding myths introduce some of the themes of 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' but they stand apart as examples of vengeance inflicted by the wronged gods. Before Ovid closes Book VI, he

²⁸ Brooks Otis. *Ovid as an Epic Poet*. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press), 261.

tells a brief and related story after the resolution of the Procne, Tereus and Philomela myth. In this story Boreas kidnaps Orithyia by force and whisks her away to his homeland. While Boreas is divine, it provides an interesting comparison to Tereus' relationship with both Procne and Philomela. First of all, it reveals that even though Tereus, Procne and Philomela's crimes are immortalized for all to see in the birds, their message can be ignored. Boreas' situation is different from that of Tereus, because he is not already married to his lover's sister, and presumably his violent action ends with the initial abduction after which he and Orithyia are "married". The brief story is more reminiscent of Zeus' escapades with mortal women which bring him very little harm and sets up a distinction between what is allowed for gods and what is allowed for mortals. Throughout his stories of rape and seduction Ovid reminds his readers that most take place in another type of world than the mortal universe. The two often overlap but ultimately mortals must obey certain laws of decency, family and of the gods if any sort of civilized society is going to exist. The framing of 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' by shorter, less character driven stories that the gods involve themselves in, defines the episode as the most important of Book VI. The simplicity of the surrounding stories reveal the layers of complexity within it. Ovid could have gone with a different version of the myth where Procne plays the part of the jealous wife and the entire story is about a woman angry about her husband's philandering (with her sister no less!). Instead, by introducing the fully developed character of Philomela, emphasizing Procne and Philomela's sisterly bond and making Tereus the eventual victim, Ovid sets the story apart from the evil ex-wife folk-tale trope.

Chapter III: Procris and Cephalus

Ovid's 'Procris and Cephalus' maintains a closer relationship with its variants than his version of 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' does with its prior incarnations. Many versions of the story follow a similar plot pattern. They focus on Cephalus, who tests his wife by either disguising himself or hiring someone else to seduce her. She gives in but he forgives her. Cephalus then accidentally kills his wife with his spear, in some versions because she followed him hunting believing that he was unfaithful²⁹. Many of the versions starting as early as Hesiod tie Cephalus and Procris to the tale of the Teumessian fox and the dog which Cephalus has that can catch anything it chases. The version in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* introduces several new plot elements in the form of Aurora's kidnapping of Cephalus, Procris' flight to Artemis after she gives in to the stranger (actually Cephalus in disguise), the couple's reconciliation sealed by Procris' gift to Cephalus of the hound and the spear, and finally the detailed account of Cephalus' accidental murder of Procris. Ovid's inclusion of Aurora's seduction of Cephalus demonstrates his intention for the story. In order for the tale to have sufficient tragic impact the couple has to be equal in their transgressions. In early versions in which Procris' infidelity sets the tone for the myth, her death loses some of its tragedy. Other authors expand the story in ways that Ovid chooses not to. Antoninus and Apollodorus include a description of Procris' activities when she fled from Cephalus in shame. When Procris left Cephalus, she went to Crete where she cured Minos of a genital disease and then slept with him. According to Antoninus and Hyginus she then returned to Cephalus disguised as a boy. She agreed to give up her hound and spear to him if he will submit to her as a boy would a man, at which point he agrees and she reveals

²⁹ Timothy Gantz. *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*. Vol. 1. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 245-247.

herself to be Procris³⁰. Ovid is interested in the flawed, yet loving relationship between the two mortals so he does not Procris' liaison with Minos and focuses on the relationship between Procris and Cephalus.

On the other hand, Ovid tells the story in the *Ars Amatoria* as a warning for young girls not to trust their husband's fidelity. His version in that work is a little different from the version in the *Metamorphoses*. The question that arises is whether Ovid means for the reader to read his version intertextually with alternate versions of the story in mind. The first person narrative by a main character opens up the possibility that Cephalus is not telling the whole story and that the gaps can be filled in by other incarnations of the myth. However, not all previous variants have to be relevant to Ovid's myth. The reader is left to decide whether Ovid wants to tell a completely new version of the myth or whether the poet intends for other versions to bleed through, and if so, which ones. In the process of discerning what Ovid is trying to say, most scholars are concerned with the amount of infidelity and lies surrounding the couple, which suggests that there is even more deceit present than what Ovid blatantly reveals. Green remarks that the story is an odd choice for Ovid because he believes that Ovid introduces it in the *Metamorphoses* as a paragon of mutual marital affection³¹. Green draws on Hyginus and Apollodorus whose tales of the couple include some unsavory details not addressed by Ovid. These episodes which feature Procris as well as Minos and Cephalus' homosexual act with Procris disguised as a man throw a greater shadow of doubt over Procris' fidelity and over the character of both of Cephalus and Procris. The cynical Green sums up the story as follows: "A mercenary adulterer-turned-pathic has been neatly checkmated by his whorish wife: clearly these

³⁰ Timothy Gantz. *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*. Vol. 1. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 245-247.

³¹ Peter Green. "The Innocence of Procris: Ovid A.A. 3.687-746." *The Classical Journal* 75, no. 1 (November 1979):16.

two deserve each other”³². He concludes that Ovid “introduced the concept of marital devotion into myth...for far from romantic purposes”³³. He believes that the discrepancy between Ovid’s portrayal of the Cephalus and Procris tale and other variants demonstrates the “eternal gap, in husband-and-wife relationships, between appearance and reality”³⁴. Fontenrose rips Green’s argument to shreds on the basis that Green picks and chooses which versions of the myth are “correct” and bases his insistence on Procris’ infidelity solely on an intertextual reading of the story³⁵. It should be possible to read Ovid’s version in the *Metamorphoses* on its own separate from what preceded it. Nevertheless, Green is not alone in thinking that there is more going on in Ovid’s story than the immediate text suggests. Other scholars support Green’s theory based on ambiguities in the text which demonstrate that Cephalus is leaving detail out of his story. Segal emphasizes two lines in particular, 688 where Cephalus refuses to tell Phocus the price he paid for his spear and 751 which suggests that Procris has humbled her husband³⁶. He concludes that “Ovid doubtless knew of the Minos episode and the seduction of Cephalus. Lines 687-8 and 749-50 would indicate to his more sophisticated readers that he is fully conscious of his transformation of the traditional myth”³⁷. He believes that the omission of the homosexual aspect suggests that Ovid decided to tell the myth in a new way, while still acknowledging that there are other versions, whereas Tarrant reads it as an example of Cephalus concealing information³⁸. It seems very probable that Ovid is deliberately making references to other versions of the myth,

³² Peter Green. “The Innocence of Procris: Ovid A.A. 3.687-746.” *The Classical Journal* 75, no. 1 (November 1979): 22.

³³ *Ibid*, 24.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ Joseph Fontenrose. “Ovid’s Procris.” *The Classical Journal* 75, no. 4 (May 1980).

³⁶ Charles Segal. “Ovid’s Cephalus and Procris: Myth and Tragedy.” *Grazer Beiträge: Zeitschrift für die Klassische Altertumswissenschaft* 7 (1978) :176-177 .

³⁷ *Ibid*, 176.

³⁸ R. J. Tarrant. “The Silence of Cephalus: Text and Narrative Technique in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.685ff..” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 125 (1995): 101.

but unlikely that he would do so just to prove that he can. However, Tarrant's arguments hinge on a textual disturbance that cannot be definitively resolved. Either way, the educated reader is left remembering the alternative plotlines that Ovid chose to omit.

The first person narrative of the myth calls into question many of Cephalus' statements but also makes for an emotional tale of tragic love. Peek's article on the narration of the myth makes a compelling argument for Cephalus' role as a flawed narrator. He notes that Cephalus is telling his story to Phocus, a younger man, and explains that "the ingredients of the tale Cephalus has to tell, infidelity, distrust and murder, are not the most laudatory. And he spends most of his time narrating them in such a way that he, his wife, and his marriage are to be seen not only as beyond reproach but even as admirable"³⁹. Peek claims that Cephalus' emphasis on his wife's beauty and chastity as a means for reaffirming his own greatness⁴⁰. Peek's article shares a common thread with Tarrant's and Segal's; all are concerned with what is left out of the narration. In the Procne story, Ovid clearly states who did what and which actions are wrong and condemnable. By having a first person narrator who is one of the main characters, Ovid leaves it up to the reader to make his or her own assumptions about Procris and Cephalus' relationship. Adultery and murder are both present but are accidental or excusable. Cephalus intends the story he tells Phocus to come across as a tragedy, and since Ovid is the external narrator determining how Cephalus' presents his story, it is possible that Ovid intended for it to be read as a tragedy as well. Cephalus' first person narrative actually increases the emotion of the story, because the reader sees all from Cephalus' perspective. In 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', the third person narrative allows the reader to distance himself from Philomela and Procne with whom he was initially invited to sympathize once they murder Itys. In 'Procris and Cephalus' the reader

³⁹ Philip Sheffield Peek. "Cephalus' incredible narration: *Metamorphoses* 7, 661-865." *Latomus* 63, no. 3 (2004): 102.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 103.

follows Cephalus from beginning to end of his tragic tale and beyond. Segal explains that Ovid recasts all myths in his work, and 'Procris and Cephalus' is no exception. Ovid excludes the homosexual aspect and Procris' dalliances with Minos, because they do not help present the story he wants to tell⁴¹. Segal explains that "seen through the eyes of the sufferer himself, the tale gains in emotional warmth and intensity. The first person narrative also gives Ovid ample opportunity to reveal the hero's remorse"⁴². Cephalus' story includes the tragic irony that made 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' so moving. In this case, the tragic irony holds even more weight, because in retrospect Cephalus realizes what was happening, but at the time he was unaware that it was Procris coming through the bushes, not some beast. Procris, however, is the main victim of the irony; the reader knows that Cephalus is coming to her in disguise and that he is not conducting an affair while ostensibly out hunting. The reader even knows that Procris is probably going to die before the story even begins. Cephalus' grief as he launches into the story works much in the same way that the evil omens do at Procne and Tereus' wedding; both prepare the reader for an inevitable tragedy. The irony and the misunderstandings between the husband and wife are tragic, but their reconciliations are reassuring to the reader; sometimes things do work out. The reader is drawn into the ups and downs of Procris' and Cephalus' relationship, so that the accidental death of Procris at Cephalus' hands provides the tragic culmination that Cephalus and Ovid hope for.

Cephalus and Procris benefit from a more evenly matched relationship than Procne and Tereus or Philomela and Tereus. Cephalus reiterates their mutual love again and again, and while Procris obviously never shares her side of the story, the reader assumes that Cephalus is telling the truth. Early on they are established as well matched, because they are each excusably

⁴¹ Charles Segal. "Ovid's Cephalus and Procris: Myth and Tragedy." *Grazer Beiträge: Zeitschrift Für Die Klassische Altertumswissenschaft* 7 (1978): 176

⁴² Ibid, 177.

unfaithful to each other. Cephalus consorts with Aurora, ostensibly against his will, and Procris gives in to the stranger, but only after he offers her a massive price. Ovid, Procris, and Cephalus all view Procris' transgression as worse than Cephalus'; he never displays any remorse for his actions, because he swears they were against his will, while she is so ashamed by hers that she flees. Nevertheless, once Procris returns she clearly has not fully absolved Cephalus of his dalliance with Aurora. She is constantly in doubt over Cephalus' fidelity while he is out hunting despite Cephalus' insisting that they two of them lived in complete harmony and bliss. Unlike Procne and Tereus, Cephalus and Procris do not live in completely separate male and female spheres. Cephalus' abduction by Aurora characterizes him as a weak man who is forced to beg repeatedly in order to finally be allowed home. He asserts his masculinity through his passion for hunting. On the other hand, Procris spends time with Artemis as a huntress which serves a dual purpose of reducing the masculinity of the action and removing Procris from the feminine sphere. For women, hunting is an activity limited to virgins who plan to avoid marriage usually through their dedication to Diana. Atalanta and Callistor are both examples of women whose hunting adventures end with marriage or rape. Once a girl is married, the act of hunting returns to the male sphere. In the case of Procris, her act of giving Cephalus the spear and Laelaps symbolizing her reentry into the feminine role of wife and his role as the champion hunter and provider. While Philomela and Procne parallel Penelope's ingenuity when trapped within the female role, Procris is Penelope's opposite. She leaves home, she takes action, and she does not act like Penelope, the paradigm for the perfect wife. When Penelope is faced with a beggar, her husband in disguise, she possibly suspects he is Odysseus and only wants to hear about her husband's fate and whereabouts. Her husband is first and foremost on her mind after all those years. Procris, however, when faced with her husband in disguise fails the test of fidelity that

Penelope surely would have passed. In other variants, the masculine and feminine roles are skewed even more because of Procris' cross-dressing by disguising herself as a boy in Cephalus' retinue. Ovid's choice not to include Procris' disguise and the homosexual actions reported in Hyginus and Apollodorus reveals his final evaluation of their relationship. In his version, Procris never gets her revenge on Cephalus and returns to her duties as his loving, yet suspicious wife tipping the balance of power towards Cephalus.

Procris and Cephalus stand out from the rest of the stories in the *Metamorphoses* because of the lack of an actual transformation. The story includes the brief account of Laelaps and the Teumessian fox that both are turned into stone mid-chase, but neither animal is central to the love story. However, they speak to the nature of Procris and Cephalus' relationship. Throughout the story one is pursuing the other, whether it is Cephalus disguised as a stranger or Procris following her husband on a hunt. The dog and the fox frozen mid-chase immortalize the inability of Cephalus and Procris' relationship to ever permanently reach the stage where they will be happy together forever. Cephalus transforms briefly in the middle of the story so that he may test Procris' fidelity, and in other accounts she in turn dresses up as a young male hunter. However, Ovid only includes Cephalus' brief transformation into a stranger which rings more of Odysseus' homecoming than of a metamorphosis. The expected transformation would occur right at the end, either just before or just after Cephalus' spear hits Procris. She could be turned into a flower, much like when Apollo accidentally fatally struck Hyacinthus with a discus. However, Apollo is divine and has the powers for such a transformation. Cephalus does not have that power, and it is doubtful that Aurora, the only deity he interacts with, would oblige him by transforming Procris. It seems possible that Cephalus might have prayed to Artemis because his wife was beloved enough by her to receive the gift of the spear and hound but he does not take

that route. Even without a divine figure transformations do occur in the *Metamorphoses*; Procne, Tereus, and Philomela are all transformed into birds by an unnamed deity. Perhaps, then, Cephalus and Procris are afflicted by their own normalcy. While Procne, Tereus and Philomela all committed unforgivable crimes, Cephalus and Procris' transgressions are comparatively minor. Their sins of fidelity are affronts only to each other, and by the end all is forgiven. The fact that Ovid uses their story in the *Ars Amatoria* suggests that he views it as an ordinary relationship that might be based on love, but still has its problems of distrust. Therefore, neither character deserves to be transformed into anything as a warning to future generations or as a lasting reminder of perfection in a relationship. Segal posits that "the lack of any metamorphosis at this point not only results in greater concentration upon the human motivation, but also relinquishes the alternative to a tragic outcome which metamorphosis provides. Without metamorphosis there is no escaping the 'either-or' of happiness or tragedy"⁴³. The lack of a metamorphosis makes 'Procris and Cephalus' more tragic because they are not immortalized in nature; Cephalus must live on with his crime with no hope of being reunited with Procris in some guise of plant or animal.

In 'Procris and Cephalus' the gods play ambiguous roles because while they are present, they act as little more than plot devices. Aurora is the most notable divine entity because her abduction of Cephalus sets in motion the events of the tale and it is at her suggestion that he is suspicious of his wife's fidelity and attempts to seduce her disguised as a stranger. Procris, too, has a run-in with a goddess when she flees in shame and joins Diana, receiving Laelaps and the javelin when she returns to her husband. However, neither Diana nor Aurora appears again, even at the crucial moment when Cephalus kills his wife. Aurora and Diana's divine powers are

⁴³ Charles Segal. "Ovid's Cephalus and Procris: Myth and Tragedy." *Grazer Beiträge: Zeitschrift Für Die Klassische Altertumswissenschaft* 7 (1978): 202.

irrelevant. In fact, Cephalus trusts that the reader will believe him when he claims he was abducted by a goddess. Aurora could have been just any beautiful woman; her divinity is only reinforced by her ability to abduct a loyal husband. Both the absence of gods and transformation emphasize how mundane Cephalus' story really is; their ordinary marital quarrels are only remarkable because Cephalus accidentally kills Procris. Procris and Cephalus are limited by their mortal powers; when they suspect the other of infidelity they must rely on vague gossip or cheap tricks. Whenever Juno deduces that Jupiter is conducting an affair she is quick to confirm through reliable spies or her own keen intuition. She never finds herself in the undignified situation of Procris creeping through the bushes after Cephalus, only to be killed by his spear. Jupiter may have an unlimited ability to seduce, but Juno has unlimited ability to discover and a whole slew of tricks up her sleeve when she needs revenge. Through Procris and Cephalus, Ovid emphasizes the limitations of mortals in matters of love and deceit.

Because Ovid has already introduced the complications within relationships through the Procne myth, Medea, and others, the convoluted tale of Procris and Cephalus is hardly surprising. 'Procris and Cephalus' is more tightly entwined with the rest of Book VII than 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' is with Book VI, because Cephalus is introduced as a character early on when he allies Athens with the Oenopians against Minos and Crete. What follows is a series of narratives told by Cephalus and his comrades, first the story of the Myrmidons and then Cephalus' sad tale which closes the book. 'Procris and Cephalus' transitions back into Cephalus' military campaign and into a series of stories about Minos and Crete which open Book VIII providing for continuity through the poem. The stories that follow 'Procris and Cephalus' are secondary in importance to the preceding stories. Book VII opens with the narrative of Jason and Medea from when Medea first laid eyes on Jason to her murder of her sons and the aftermath of

the crime. Medea's story, full of magic and drama, sets a precedent for Cephalus'. It challenges Ovid to make Cephalus' unusual story unique and moving even in comparison with Medea's. The gods play a secondary role in Book VII; Medea comes forward as the most powerful figure in the book. She does not need divine intervention for any of her plots, because her own powers are sufficient. Despite its divine characters 'Procris and Cephalus', is thus a tale of exaggerated but ordinary mortal affairs particularly in comparison with *Medea*. Medea looks back to 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' and through textual position, links it with 'Procris and Cephalus'. Like Procne, she murders her own child but unlike Procne, she is not punished for her action. Medea is notorious for murdering anyone who gets in her way, including her own brother with little or no consequences. Technically, Medea is mortal, but her magical powers give her almost unlimited freedom setting her apart from Procne, Philomela, Tereus, Cephalus, and Procris who are all ordinary mortals and make her harder for the reader to relate to. With the horrors and power of Medea in the back of the reader's mind the accessible but still moving story of Cephalus and Procris offers a refreshing example of flawed and ultimately powerless humanity.

Chapter IV: Ceyx and Alcyone

Prior to the version of the Ceyx and Alcyone story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* there were two different trends in the variant of the myth. Early versions in Hesiod tell of a pair of lovers, Ceyx and Alcyone, who call themselves Zeus and Hera and are turned into birds in punishment for their hubris. In Ovid's version, Ceyx and Alcyone are a happily married and pious couple. When Ceyx is killed in a shipwreck, the gods tell Alcyone of his fate through a dream and his body floats back to Alcyone. As she runs out to meet the corpse, both are turned into birds. Otis⁴⁴ gives Ovid credit for changing the story of Ceyx and Alcyone from one of hubris to one of romantic love. Griffin disagrees⁴⁵, citing an account of Pseudo-Lucian. Griffin⁴⁶ also tries to reconcile the two very different versions saying that, "it seems possible that this early version also contained the germ of the love-motif: to call one's husband Zeus may betoken love as well as hubris"⁴⁷. Ovid's version, as usual, is much more detailed than any of the hubris versions or Pseudo-Lucian. In the *Metamorphoses*, the corpse of Ceyx is returned to Alcyone before they are transformed into the birds. Fantham argues that while Ovid may not have invented the story of true love, "it must be Ovid's initiative which brings the beloved corpse of Ceyx back to a wife in human form, and permits their simultaneous metamorphosis"⁴⁸. The Pseudo-Lucian version emphasizes Ceyx's attractive physical appearance hinting at a more unbalanced relationship rather than Ovid's paragon of mutual affection. Ovid fleshes out the Ceyx character allowing him to speak and portraying him as a devoted husband. In a sense he combines the early versions of hubris which indicate an equal relationship with the later accounts of shipwrecks and lost love.

⁴⁴ Brooks Otis. *Ovid as an Epic Poet*. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1966).

⁴⁵ A. H. Griffin. "Ovid's Treatment of Ceyx and Alcyone." *Acta Conventus Omnium Gentium Ovidianis Studiis Fovendis* (August 15-31 1976).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁴⁸ Elaine Fantham, "Ovid's Ceyx and Alcyone: The Metamorphosis of a Myth." *Phoenix* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 333.

The common denominator between the two trends is the final transformation into birds which commemorate Ceyx and Alcyone's marriage. Much like in 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', some scholars seek to argue for the purely aetiological significance of the myth. Gresseth claims that "the whole story then came to be progressively romanticized until Alcyone assumed the chief role; and as in the Ovidian version, we have a complex literary work of star-crossed love with only an incidental mention of the halcyon days tagged on at the end"⁴⁹. These halcyon days refer to the couple's life as halcyon birds, a kind of kingfisher. Ovid's story has moved past the transformation to focus on the relationship between the couple that leads them to their fate.

Ovid directs his reader to sympathize with the characters by emphasizing their mutual love and piety and rewarding them with transformation. Ovid uses tragic allusions to force the reader to make mythic connections that will increase the interest in the fate of Ceyx and Alcyone. Just as in 'Procne, Tereus and Philomela', direct speech indicates to the reader who should be sympathized with. Fantham notes the effectiveness of the parting scene saying that "there is a tender scene at the last parting of Hector and Andromache, a prototype which may have influenced Ovid's portrayal of the departure of Ceyx and Alcyone waiting in innocent expectation of his return"⁵⁰. Before Ceyx departs, Alcyone implores him to stay and then begs that her take her with him. Her plea for them to face danger together summarized the depth of her affection for him:

Care, potest, coniunx, nimiumque es certus eundi,
Me quoque tolle simul. Certe iactabimur una,
Nec, nisi quae patiar, metuam; pariterque feremus,
Quidquid erit, pariter super aequora lata feremur.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Gerald K. Gresseth. "The Myth of Alcyone." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 95 (1964): 98.

⁵⁰ Elaine Fantham, "Ovid's Ceyx and Alcyone: The Metamorphosis of a Myth." *Phoenix* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 330.

⁵¹ *Met.* XI 440-443.

Dear husband, if it is possible, and you are certain you are going, take me also at the same time. Certainly we will be tossed about as one, and I shall not fear, except what I suffer; and equally we will endure, whatever it will be we will be born equally above the wide sea.

Ovid contrasts the passage beautifully with Ceyx's final moments to reveal the mutual affection between the two, which will best move the emotions of the reader:

Alcyone Ceyca movet, Ceycis in ore
Nulla nisi Alcyone est et, cum desideret unam,
Gaudet abesse tamen. Patriae quoque vellet ad oras
Respicere inque domum supremos vertere vultus,
Verum ubi sit, nescit.⁵²

Alcyone moved Ceyx, nothing except for Alcyone is on the lips of Ceyx, although he desires her alone, he rejoices however that she is absent. He desires also to look back at the shores of his country and to turn his final face homeward, truly he does not know where it is.

The two passages are separated by a vivid description of the storm and shipwreck which contrasts the impersonal violence of nature with the lovers' affection. Ceyx's relief that Alcyone is safe at home mirrors Alcyone's desire to be with him through danger and to the death. Because the story is tragic, Ovid employs irony to best manipulate emotions. In this case, the reader knows of Ceyx's fate well before Alcyone and also knows that in his dying moments he thought of her. The inside knowledge reassures the reader of Ceyx's piety so far from his wife and increases the tension of Alcyone's realization of Ceyx's death. Ceyx's departure is an interesting contrast to Tereus' in 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela'. Physical separation from one's wife, particularly overseas, creates an opportunity for other conquests. But while Tereus never considers his wife in Thrace, Ceyx remains true to his. Ovid makes an interesting choice by revealing to Alcyone the fate of her husband before his corpse washes up on shore. Her unsuspecting discovery of his body could have been more moving than a dream sequence. However, Alcyone does not need the body to know that her husband is dead; the dream

⁵² *Met.* XI 544-548.

convinces her and propels her into grief and mourning, Ovid has already employed an epic reference with the parting scene; the ghost in the dream sequence provides another link to epic. The arrival of the corpse acts as a vehicle for the two to be reunited before their transformation rather than as proof of Ceyx's death. Ovid shapes his tale with pathetic monologues and subtle references to epic form and romance in order to create the perfect example of married love.

Ovid presents the relationship of Ceyx and Alcyone as balanced because the lovers have equal affection for each other, even though they live in their separate spheres. In comparison with other versions, he increases the role of Ceyx in the story developing him as a respected king and husband with strong enough ties to his family that he journeys to the oracle asking after his brother. He maintains a very masculine role by accepting that he must do his duty as a man and leave his wife behind although it pains him to do so. Meanwhile, Alcyone waits at home caring for the household, praying to the appropriate gods as a good wife should; it is the only power she has to save her husband. Even though she begs her husband to stay, she is not a nag, giving up when she realizes she is making no progress. The couple's affection for each other does not seem to be grounded in beauty; a change from earlier versions of the myth and a notable difference from 'Procris and Cephalus'. Fantham claims that, "there are few narratives of mutual love, even married love which the poet has treated with special sensitivity"⁵³. Ovid constructs the characters to be the paragons of virtue and affection and sets their story apart from the rest of his corpus. The marriage works because the characters each play their particular parts as husband and wife without trying to bridge the gap. Ovid has covered most possible scenarios of the woes of mortal love. Procne and Tereus were bound in a loveless marriage, and Tereus forced himself on Philomela who did not share his attraction, while Procris and Cephalus shared a love based partly

⁵³ Elaine Fantham, "Ovid's Ceyx and Alcyone: The Metamorphosis of a Myth." *Phoenix* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 330.

on physical attractiveness, but neither remained true to the other. Ovid only shows a small portion of Ceyx's and Alcyone's life, unlike the more comprehensive attention to the other two myths. However, he demonstrates the true love between Ceyx and Alcyone seen together for only a fraction of the myth through their daily activities and their transformation.

The metamorphosis of Ceyx and Alcyone breaks the precedent that Ovid had set throughout the rest of the work; namely, Ceyx is transformed into a living creature after his death. Fantham notes that in Ovid Alcyone leaps into the ocean to retrieve the body, not in an act of suicide⁵⁴. Therefore, Alcyone is kept alive throughout her transformation and she is rewarded for her love by the transformation of the dead Ceyx although the transformation of tragic characters into birds is fairly common⁵⁵, Otis notes the difference between the transformation of Procne, Tereus and Philomela and that of Ceyx and Alcyone. After pointing out that the former group succumbed to their animal instincts he explains that the latter are rewarded with eternal pathos:

Ceyx and Alcyone have now passed from the realm of man into the realm of nature. But the bystanders have nevertheless witnessed the unbroken continuity of Alcyone's *pathos*...It is Ovid's ability to penetrate the *psyche* of all these elements, human and inhuman, that enables him to unite them in an emotional continuum...a divisive point in Ovid's *Carmen perpetuum* of metamorphosis.⁵⁶

Ovid achieves the "eternal pathos" by keeping Alcyone alive as she is transformed. Even though the birds do not maintain the souls of their human counterparts, Ovid's readers can be assured of their eternal happiness. If the swallow, nightingale and hoopoe are a reminder of the horror of the Procne story, the Halcyon is a reminder of married love and affection. The metamorphosis of Ceyx and Alcyone elucidates the lack of transformation in the Procris and Cephalus myth.

⁵⁴ Elaine Fantham, "Ovid's Ceyx and Alcyone: The Metamorphosis of a Myth." *Phoenix* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 342.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 335.

⁵⁶ Brooks Otis. *Ovid as an Epic Poet*. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1966), 261.

Procris' death does not preclude her from transformation because Ceyx died before being transformed. Whatever gods involved do not deem Procris' and Cephalus' love as something to be immortalized in nature because the couple was perfectly ordinary in their squabbles and infidelities. They do nothing so criminal as defiling the bonds of family, marriage, and morality as Procne, Tereus and Philomela, but neither do they represent a perfect equality in marriage like Ceyx and Alcyone. Despite the morbidity of the transformation it is preferable to death; Ceyx and Alcyone's transformation provides a happy ending to a story doomed to end in sadness. Not only does the reader hope that the pair of Halcyons preserves the spirit of the lovers, but the presence of a species of birds living in marital fidelity and happiness provides hope for mortals despite the numerous contrary instances in the *Metamorphoses*.

Much like 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela' and 'Procris and Cephalus', 'Ceyx and Alcyone' is lacking in gods in the expected places. As in the case of Procne, Philomela and Tereus, Ceyx and Alcyone turn into birds but not via any specific divine force. 'Ceyx and Alcyone' stands out from the other myths because before Ovid, the story exemplified a direct affront to the gods with Ceyx and Alcyone claiming to rival Jupiter and Juno. Ovid changes a story entirely about divine retribution into a story with minimal divine influence. While retaining only the names and changing the plot, he does keep Juno in the story as a reference to the older variants⁵⁷. As Alcyone waits for Ceyx she prays and brings offerings to the gods including Juno, but her wishes for a safe return are in vain. Juno only steps in to reveal Ceyx's fate in a dream, a plot device to bring Alcyone to the seaside. Fantham points out that Alcyone's father, a god of the winds cannot save his own son-in-law from a storm at sea which is consistent with the

⁵⁷ Brooks Otis. *Ovid as an Epic Poet*. (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press).

inability of any god, even Zeus, to save his or her mortal offspring who are fated to die⁵⁸. The lack of divine presence in ‘Ceyx and Alcyone’ and in ‘Procne, Tereus, and Philomela’ reveal the lack of power in mortal prayer. Alcyone and Philomela’s desperate pleas fall on deaf ears. In ‘Procne, Tereus, and Philomela’ Ovid never specifies that Procne and Philomela are outstandingly pious but neither are they uncultivated heathens. Alcyone, on the other hand, fulfills all her religious duties and more and is rewarded with nothing except for a disturbing dream. While gods might interfere with human concerns it is at their own whim not in response to rightful prayer.

‘Ceyx and Alcyone’ makes up the end of Book XI occupying a similar textual position to ‘Procne, Tereus, and Philomela’. By Book XI, the theme of enduring marital love is not a new concept; Book VIII concludes with the tale of Baucis and Philemon. At first glance, although it does not occupy a similar textual position as the other three stories, the myth fits into the pattern of ‘Procne, Tereus, and Philomela’, ‘Procris and Cephalus’, and ‘Ceyx and Alcyone’ because it fits into the pattern of progressively better relationships as poem moves forward. It also foreshadows the concept of spending eternity together in nature which appears again in ‘Ceyx and Alcyone’. However, ‘Baucis and Philemon’ is not wholly a story of devoted love because it concludes with the moral that gods will reward good people. Because Baucis and Philemon give their guest every comfort they can provide they are tasked with the upkeep of the temple and given an opportunity to ask for whatever their hearts desire. They ask to be buried together and as fulfillment of their wish, they turn into an intertwined tree instead of dying. Their transformation is a result of a direct request from the gods as a reward for piety. Ceyx and Alcyone are pious people but their piety does not keep Ceyx alive nor does Ovid suggest that it

⁵⁸ Elaine Fantham, “Ovid's Ceyx and Alcyone: The Metamorphosis of a Myth.” *Phoenix* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 335-336.

earns them their transformation. 'Baucis and Philemon' and 'Ceyx and Alcyone' are separated by several books which offer an array of myths about doomed and wrongful love. After a series of love stories in Book X, Book XI opens with the death of Orpheus setting the tone for the book of lost love and tragedy with particular emphasis on the violent nature of his death at the hands of Bacchantes. The next few stories, Bacchus and Midas, and Pan and Apollo warn about the power of gods over men and lesser gods. The book transitions back into the love theme with Peleus and Thetis. Here, gods orchestrate the marriage between the mortal and sea-goddess who are married out of necessity rather than love. Peleus forges the connection between his tale and Ceyx's which could otherwise seem out of place in a book that focuses on a lack of moderation and a type of world where mortals and gods meet face to face. 'Ceyx and Alcyone' is followed by a contrasting story of Aesacus who pursues a nymph, and when she is bitten by a snake mid-flight and dies, he turns into a bird. Unlike Ceyx, the dead nymph cannot be revived in avian form. The story seems insipid and almost lifeless in comparison with 'Ceyx and Alcyone' because the mutual attraction is gone and the tragic and literary devices are absent. It acts as a foil for the emotion and honesty of 'Ceyx and Alcyone' reinforcing the aptness of the transformation of the lovers and offering hope in the wake of doomed and inappropriate relationships throughout the *Metamorphoses*.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Each of the three myths differs greatly from the others in content and themes aside from the fact that they revolve around mortal relationships. Nevertheless, the stories are not as distinct from each other as they initially appear. Each story appears as a single narrative at the end of its respective book and is introduced by a series of shorter yet related episodes. Each is an example of the creative liberty that Ovid takes with familiar myths. By changing the emphasis, or picking and choosing the plot of each story, Ovid reveals that he is telling each for a specific purpose. In a book swarming with gods and demigods, 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', 'Procris and Cephalus' and 'Ceyx and Alcyone' are noticeably mundane. There are gods involved peripherally and some of the characters are of a divine parent, but the proximity to divinity is unimportant within the overall plots.

The *Metamorphoses* is rich in love stories but Ovid sets these three apart by the way that he contextualizes them. In terms of length, 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', 'Procris and Cephalus', and 'Ceyx and Alcyone' stand apart from the multitude of vignettes throughout the poem but they constantly reference each other and other stories within and outside of the poem. The themes of love, revenge, violence, and sorrow that appear in 'Procne, Tereus, and Philomela', 'Procris and Cephalus', and 'Ceyx and Alcyone' are the continuous thread within the *Metamorphoses* and all relate back to Wheeler's diachronic study of Juno and Jupiter⁵⁹. Even as they reflect the divine relationship that Wheeler reveals, they reach outside of Ovid's poem into the realms of epic and tragedy. Odysseus and Penelope and Hector and Andromache act as the examples of perfect mortal mythic couples, similar in their devotion but very different in the nature of their relationships. Penelope and Odysseus provide a template for Procne and Tereus as well as Procris and Cephalus because their marital equality is based on their respective

⁵⁹ Wheeler

cleverness. The relationships between Procne, Philomela and Tereus are a distorted version of the Penelope and Odysseus ideal because while Penelope and Odysseus use their wiles to be reunited, Philomela, Tereus and Procne use theirs for violence and destruction. Procris and Cephalus come closer to the Penelope and Odysseus ideal as they constantly keep each other on their toes to enact their domestic revenge. Odysseus and Cephalus might share a knack for storytelling but Procris falls short of Penelope because she succumbs to seduction. Penelope lives for years in a house full of eligible and probably attractive young men yet her loyalty to her husband does not waver. She, like a good wife, is confined to the home and the feminine sphere from which Procris wanders. Hector and Andromache are the second example of the ideal couple and their fate is closely mirrored by that of Ceyx and Alcyone. Hector adores both his wife and son but his duty as a prince of Troy demands that he go out and fight to the death unlike the cowardly Paris. Ovid uses the Hector model for Ceyx and Alcyone even though their story does not take place over the backdrop of war. The characters in the *Metamorphoses* are left with two models to follow; the constantly present and always rocky divine relationship of Juno and Jupiter or distant presence of the Homeric mortals.

Together the three myths pull the *Metamorphoses* into the mortal realm where the book ultimately ends and provide an explanation for why the gods are not directly involved in the lives of the mortals in Ovid's time. Each of the three stories shows humans dealing with human affairs and the gods, usually as unnamed forces, only intervening at the last moment. Ovid pays special attention to the characters in these stories, making them believable, giving them motive and emotions. These stories provide extreme examples of successful and unsuccessful relationships. Procne and Tereus do not love each other from the start, but his decision to rape and conceal Philomela was motivated by his own lust and malice, not by a misplaced arrow of Cupid.

Subsequently, Procne and Philomela are lauded for their anger at his actions, but their revenge, purely of their own concoction, must be condemned by everyone. Procris and Cephalus exemplify a more stable relationship than Procne and Tereus. While they have encounters with the divine causing their story to have epic undertones, their basic troubles with infidelity are surprisingly human. They put on a front as an attractive and happy couple but they are not without suspicion of each other's faithfulness. Their love story is tragic and romantic until one reads about Ceyx and Alcyone whose devotion makes Procris and Cephalus seem shallow. After story after story about mismatched love Ovid finally puts forth the paragon of marital devotion. There are other happily married couples such as Deucalion and Pyrrha or Baucis and Philemon, but Ovid does not plumb the depths of their relationships. The brief lifespan of each of the mortal relationships is contrasted with the ongoing affairs of the gods. Only the birds resulting from the truly pious or truly evil relationships continue as a lasting reminder of the mortals' existence a contrast with the varied forms divine figures can take in their immortal lives. Ovid's treatment of the three stories reveals that the experiences of mortal couples are as moving as the divine ones but more fleeting and finite; their trials and tribulations are accessible and their stories moving, leaving a lasting impression of the reader.

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