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Jacqueline Clarke

Rape, revenge and resurrection in Correr's Progne

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Rape, Revenge and Resurrection in Correr's *Progne**

Abstract

When Gregorio Correr selected the myth of Procne and Philomela for his c. 1427 adaptation of Seneca's *Thyestes*, he was altering what is sometimes termed 'a tragedy with no women' into one which largely focuses on female protagonists. Yet he chose to omit the scene where Philomela (or Philomena) weaves a tapestry depicting her rape and mutilation by her sister's husband Tereus. This scene, which is a key feature of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and also appears in all other medieval and Renaissance adaptations of the myth, has been interpreted by scholars as Philomena's successful attempt to find an alternative voice for her outrage after Tereus has cut out her tongue. This paper addresses the implications of Correr's omission of this important feature of the myth, analysing its effect on the portrayal of Philomena and the dynamics of her relationship with her avenger Procne. It shows how the agency in this relationship is shifted almost entirely to Procne and how Philomena is transformed into a type of ghost who is brought back by her sister's rage and dreadful act of retribution on her husband. Within this analysis attention will be given to the Christian elements of Correr's reception of the myth, in particular the motif of resurrection which permeates the play and the final scene which culminates in a distortion of the rites of the eucharist.

After Philomela has been raped and has had her tongue cut out by Tereus, she creates a cloth or tapestry that in some fashion communicates these outrages to her sister Procne; this incident has become a key feature of this influential myth in its numerous iterations since Sophocles. It seems from a remark of Aristotle in his *Poetics* that this 'voice of the shuttle', as he terms it, was probably Sophocles's innovation to the myth in his tragedy the *Tereus*.¹ It

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¹ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1454^b35, classifies Sophocles's recognition device among those 'contrived by the poet'. There is an apparent summary of this play on a papyrus fragment which mentions both the glossectomy and the weaving; see L. Coe, 'A Tale of Two Sisters: Studies in Sophocles's *Tereus*', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 143, 2013, pp. 349–84 (352). G. Dobrov, *Figures of Play: Greek Drama and Metafictional Poetics*. Oxford, 2000, p. 113, argues that 'the glossectomy was an auxiliary feature introduced [by Sophocles] to set up the recognition by means of a written message'. Sophocles's play is so fragmentary it is unclear how the tapestry is used, but D. Fitzpatrick, 'Sophocles's *Tereus*' *The Classical*

reappears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as Philomela weaving 'purple marks on a white background'; in Apollodorus as letters and in Achilles Tatius as pictures woven into a *peplos*.² In medieval literature, the pictures are woven in multi-coloured thread in the *Ovide moralisé*; in Boccaccio the story is embroidered rather than woven.³ Chaucer specifies that the cloth is wool with letters woven into it, while in Gower's *Confessio Amatis* the cloth is of white silk and displays both letters and imagery.⁴ But whether the story is woven or embroidered, whether it consists of letters or images or both, or the cloth is wool or silk, white or multi-coloured, this incident has been interpreted, particularly in feminist scholarship, as a crucial element in the myth, for Philomela responds to the male attempt to silence her through rape and mutilation by harnessing a quintessentially female craft as an alternate voice.⁵ She is thus instrumental in driving the story forward, preparing the ground for her sister's act of vengeance on her husband.

Quarterly, 51, 2001, pp. 90–101 (97–8), suggests that the cloth was embroidered with text which the barbarian Thracians could not read.

² Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI.576; Apollodorus III.14.8; Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* V.5.

³ *Ovide moralisé* 3330–48; Boccaccio *Genealogie deorum gentilium* IX.8.2.

⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women* VII.131–3; John Gower, *Confessio Amatis* 5770–1.

⁵ P. Klindienst, 'The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours', in *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World: Readings and Sources*, ed. L. McClure, Oxford, 2002, pp. 257–92 (276): 'As an instrument that binds and connects, the loom, or its part, the shuttle, re-members or mends what violence tears apart: the bond between the sisters, the woman's power to speak, a form of community and communication.' N. A. Jones, 'The Daughter's Text and the Thread of Lineage in the Old French *Philomena*', in *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. E. Robertson and C. M. Rose, New York, 2001, pp. 161–87 (161): 'Perhaps more than any other Western myth, Philomela's story articulates the link between sexual violence, the silencing of women's voices, and the alternative discourse women fashion in weaving and embroidery.' See also A. Sharrock, 'Gender and Sexuality', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. P. Hardie, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 95–107 (100). It is true that the importance that is placed on this element of the myth may, in part, be a reflection of modern preoccupations with female power; according to H. E. Joyce, 'Picturing Rape and Revenge in Ovid's Myth of Philomela', in *Receptions of Antiquity, Constructions of Gender in European Art 1300–1600*, ed. M. Rose and A. C. Poe, Leiden and Boston, 2015, pp. 305–49 (327, 335–8), the fact that the weaving scene was not represented in the visual arts until quite late (c. 1600) suggests that this episode was less important or less interesting than Philomena's violation and rape. On the other hand, the tapestry is mentioned in every one of the medieval literary versions, and there is an illustration (c. 1325–50) of Philomena giving the tapestry to the messenger in the *Ovide moralisé*: *ibid.*, p. 319.

This, however, is not the case for Gregorio Correr's Neo-Latin tragedy *Progne*, which was composed in the early fifteenth century,⁶ in imitation of Seneca's *Thyestes*, but which substitutes the myth of Philomela (or Philomena) and Procne for that of Thyestes and Atreus.⁷ Rather than making use of the device of the tapestry, Correr substitutes a scene in which Procne hears of the rape and mutilation of her sister from a man called Pistus who is the only one of Philomena's attendants who has escaped Tereus's sword. Apart from a rather different account of the myth in Hyginus,⁸ this appears to be the only extant version which doesn't contain the 'tapestry scene' and, as Correr's adaptation is largely based on Ovid, where the tapestry plays a significant role, its absence is striking.

As Sophocles contrived the device of the tapestry in the first place and playwrights subsequent to Correr made use of a tapestry or equivalent as a revelation device,⁹ the

⁶ Scholars date the composition of the play somewhere between 1427 and 1430, according to G. R. Grund, ed. and transl., *Humanist Tragedies*, Cambridge MA and London, 2011, p. viii. For the purposes of this article, determining a precise year of composition is not important.

⁷ Correr states in his introduction to the play that it imitates Seneca's *Thyestes* (*Argumentum* 29–30). The fact that he chooses to substitute the myth of Philomela and Procne for that of Tereus and Atreus is scarcely surprising, given the importance of the Philomela myth in the Middle Ages: F. T. Coulson, 'Procne and Philomela in the Latin Commentary Tradition of the Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Euphrosyne*, 36, 2008, pp. 181–96 (181), and the fact that the *Thyestes* itself heavily references Ovid's version of the myth: D. Curley, *Tragedy in Ovid: Theater, Metatheater, and the Transformation of a Genre*, Cambridge, 2013, p. 229. And Ovid's narration of this and other myths in the *Metamorphoses* was strongly influenced by drama; his depiction of Tereus's 'innata libido' at *Metamorphoses* VI.455–60, e.g., recalls lines from Accius's tragedy of the same name according to Curley (ibid., p. 29), while A. Richlin, *Arguments with Silence*, Ann Arbor, 2014, p. 158, argues that the prevalence of the Philomela myth in Roman pantomime also influenced the way in which Ovid told the story.

⁸ There is a version of the myth, narrated by Hyginus (XLV) in which Tereus after raping Philomela gives her to King Lynceus whose wife, a friend of Procne, sends Philomela back to her sister. But this version of the myth doesn't have the glossectomy either, so there is no need for the tapestry. And this was certainly not the most common or influential version of the myth.

⁹ G. Guastella, *L'ira e l'onore: forme della vendetta nel teatro senecano e nella sua tradizione*, Palermo, 2001, p. 211, mentions the 1548 *Progne* composed by Girolamo Parabosco, where the messenger recounts the mutilation of Philomena and a cloth depicts her rape; and M. Tempera, 'Worse than Procne: The Sister as Avenger in the English Renaissance', in *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama: Cultural Exchange and Intertextuality*, ed. M. Marrapodi and A. J. Hoenselaars, Newark DE, 1998, pp. 71–88 (78), discusses the 1566 production which was staged in Christ Church in Oxford; this seems to have been adapted from Correr's play by James Calphill, a canon of Christ Church, but included a 'tapestry scene' which demonstrates its importance.

omission of the tapestry cannot solely be due to the fact that the myth is presented in the form of a drama. Various theories have been proffered by scholars as to why Correr omitted the tapestry and what he wanted to achieve by this omission. According to De Vries, Correr's substitution of a messenger for the tapestry allows him to shorten the length of time which the narrative covers (a year in Ovid, a few days in *Progne*);¹⁰ she also argues that a messenger speech is better suited to a drama that was meant to be read rather than performed.¹¹

Chevalier suggests that a tapestry as a revelation device would be a little clumsy in a drama as it would have required Procne to deliver a lengthy narration of what she saw on it;¹² he also implies that Correr chose to avoid this by using a messenger narrative which was such a common device in (Senecan) tragedy.¹³ The strength of such an argument is somewhat weakened, however, by the fact that playwrights who followed Correr used both a tapestry and a messenger narrative and do not seem to have perceived any great difficulty in doing this, a fact which is observed by Guastella.¹⁴ Indeed, Guastella is inclined to pay a little more attention to the omission of the tapestry, an omission which in his opinion is because Correr wished to concentrate less on Philomena and more on the figure of Procne as avenger of the crime; he argues that Correr in this regard was influenced by the preoccupation that Senecan tragedy has with horrific acts of vengeance of characters such as Atreus or Medea.¹⁵

¹⁰ U. De Vries, *Die Progne des Gregorio Corraro und ihr Verhältnis zur Antike*, Heidelberg, 1987, p. 182. Grund, *Tragedies* (n. 6 above), p. xxx, indeed, argues that the action of the play is reduced to a *single* day. Yet when Philomena emerges from her cave, she is depicted as so filthy and emaciated that her sister can scarcely recognize her (575–8). Either the action of the play covers more than a few days or Correr is using dramatic license at this point in the play.

¹¹ De Vries 'Die Progne' (n. 10 above), p. 182. Most scholars are certain that this play, like other humanist tragedies, was composed to be read or recited rather than performed on stage by actors: W. Cloetta, *Beiträge zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, I, Halle, 1892, p. 156; J.-F. Chevalier, ed. and transl., *Trois tragédies latines humanistes*, Paris, 2010, p. 25. Correr, however, still shows strong awareness of the dramatic potential of a scene and at points in the play seems to include 'stage-directions', e.g., 563–4, 991–2. Such directions may indicate Correr's interest in manipulating audience reactions, particularly considering the fact that no other humanist tragedies from the Quattrocento seem to include them.

¹² Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. 123.

¹³ Ibid. A. Onorato, in his edition of Gregorio Correr, *Opera*, 2 vols, Messina, 1991–4, I, p. 176, is perhaps following this line when he suggests that Correr inserts the character of Pistus into the narrative to load it with suspense and tension.

¹⁴ Guastella 'L'ira' (n. 9 above), p. 223.

¹⁵ Ibid; see also p. 231. Chevalier and Casarsa to some extent follow this line, implying that one of the reasons that Correr substituted a messenger narrative for the tapestry was to give priority to Procne's vengeance:

My argument is that there is more to the omission of the tapestry than Guastella and other scholars indicate. The substitution of a messenger narrative for the tapestry may partly be for reasons of dramatic economy and it certainly enhances Procne's role as avenger and brings her character closer to that of Seneca's Medea.¹⁶ But in concentrating upon Procne's enhanced dramatic role, scholars are rather inclined to dismiss or overlook Philomena as a character, arguing that her role is downplayed or that her presence is minimized. Guastella, for instance, argues that Correr paid little attention to the figure of Philomena and the themes relating to it because he was more interested in Procne's vengeance,¹⁷ while other scholars speak of Philomena as a passive agent whose most striking features have been lost and who simply appears as an instrument of Procne's will.¹⁸ Such views are best summed up by Mariangela Tempera, who observes: 'Philomena has a minor role in Correr's tragedy ... she is stage-directed by her sister and merely figures as a helper of the real protagonist of the play.'¹⁹ Tempera goes on to argue that this is due to the fact that the removal of her tongue reduces Philomena to 'a silent presence that defies the laws of theatre'.²⁰ But a silent presence in a play can have a powerful effect as the presence of Astyanax in Seneca's *Trojan Women* Act III or Banquo's ghost in Act III, Scene 4 of *Macbeth* attest. The effect of such characters is created by how others in the scene react to them and the powerful emotions their presence

Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. 125, and to provide more incentive for it: L. Casara, 'Gregorio Correr, *Progne*', in *Il Teatro umanistico veneto: la tragedia*, Ravenna, 1981, pp. 97–236, (106).

¹⁶ Correr's interest in Procne as an avenging mother is, of course, reflected in the fact that he chose to name his play after her rather than the victim of the vengeance, as Seneca did with his *Thyestes*. The vengeance of Procne was already intertwined with that of Medea in the classical world; it was part of the literary tradition and was particularly emphasized by Ovid. On this see D. Larmour, 'Tragic "Contaminatio" in Ovid's "Metamorphoses"', *Illinois Classical Studies*, 15, 1990, pp. 131–41 (133), and Guastella, 'L'ira' (n. 9 above), p. 215, who cites Ovid, *Tristia* II.387–92.

¹⁷ Guastella, 'L'ira' (n. 9 above), p. 223, argues that because Correr was concentrating on Procne's vengeance he minimized the space assigned to the first part of the myth; see also p. 229. As we shall see, however, Correr does devote a great deal of space to Tereus's tale about Philomena's death at sea; if he isn't interested in Philomena, it is hard to understand why he would do this, and the explanation of de Vries, 'Die Progne' (n. 10 above), p. 136, that this scene mainly functions as a foil for Progne's emotions does not seem entirely adequate.

¹⁸ E.g., Grund, *Tragedies* (n. 6 above), p. 314, refers to Philomena as 'a passive agent, here as elsewhere in contrast with Ovid's presentation of her as an avid accomplice', and de Vries 'Die Progne' (n. 10 above), p. 182, expresses a similar view, while Casara, 'Progne' (n. 15 above), p. 106, comments on the portrayal of Philomena in this play: 'Il ritratto dell' eroina perde i suoi tratti più incisivi.'

¹⁹ Tempera 'Worse than Procne' (n. 9 above), p. 79.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

arouses. The silent, suffering figure of Philomena certainly arouses powerful emotions in the other characters and they react in extreme ways to her presence. In Act IV Procne is provoked to savagery against her son by the sight of Philomena (890–893) and addresses her sister before she undertakes her vengeance (897). In Act V Procne directs her sister to bring out Itys's head and place it before his father's eyes (988, 991–2) and both Procne and Tereus make reference to Philomena throughout the act (976, 993, 1021, 1023, 1032). The figure of Philomena intensifies the drama of the scenes in which she makes an appearance and her role in the play cannot be dismissed so lightly.

This article, therefore, is an attempt to redress the balance of the previous scholarship on the play, which has tended to pass over the figure of Philomena to focus on the avenging mother Procne. I will argue that Philomena's rape is represented in this play as a form of death, transforming her into a type of ghost,²¹ and that the omission of the tapestry, which helps to remove her agency, enables Correr to play on notions of *nekyia* and resurrection in Philomena's entrance half way through the play. My analysis of the play will lend support to Chevalier's arguments that Procne, in rescuing Philomena from her cave, retrieves her from a form of underworld,²² and I will show how Procne's rage is instrumental in reanimating the figure of Philomena which then exerts an uncanny presence, not only in this scene but also in the scene in which Itys is killed and cooked and the final scene in which his head is revealed to Tereus. Attention will also be paid to the devices that Correr uses to heighten the drama of Philomena's presence within the play, in particular how he combines pagan supernatural elements with allusion to and distortion of Christian rites. This culminates in the final scenes of the play in which Philomena and the other victim Itys are linked together in an horrific act of resurrection.

Before we proceed to examine the text of the play, it may be useful to sketch a brief synopsis of its background. Its author Gregorio Correr (1409–1464) was born into a patrician family in Venice which had a close relationship with the papacy.²³ Correr states in his introduction to the play that it was published at Mantua in the eighteenth year of his life ('edidi Mantuae, anno aetatis meae decimo octavo'); and in other writings he relates how the

²¹ 'Ghost' is perhaps a not entirely accurate term to describe the state in which Philomena appears in this play, as it implies a spirit without a body while Philomena seems to become a body whose soul or spirit is lacking.

²² See in particular n. 41 below.

²³ Grund, *Tragedies* (n. 6 above), p. xxvii.

encouragement of his school master Vittorino da Feltre²⁴ and rivalry with a fellow pupil who was better at composing Virgilian verse than he was led him to try his hand at writing a Senecan tragedy.²⁵ He boasts of the effect that *Progne* had on his readers, particularly Vittorino, who nurtured high hope for his pupil's literary career.²⁶ But while Correr did go on to compose quite a few satires and even some eclogues along classical lines, this early literary promise was not to be fulfilled when he was ordained as a priest and eschewed pagan literature. One of the letters he wrote later in his life to Cecilia Gonzaga, who had been a fellow pupil at Vittorino's school, advises her to give up the study of pagan authors in favour of Christian works.²⁷

Correr's play, however, reflects his youthful enthusiasm for the very pagan works of literature he later eschews; and it is full of allusions to, and contains entire lines from, not only Seneca's *Thyestes* but also other Senecan tragedies and classical poets ranging from Virgil to Claudian. Indeed, the play is so rich in allusions to classical poetry that Tempera has observed that source hunting tends to be favoured over interpretation as an approach to this text.²⁸ Such an approach tends to lose sight of Correr's innovations in this work;²⁹ we have already seen that he is not afraid to make alterations to the myth and although he does include many lines and half lines from Senecan tragedies and other Latin poets, he often uses them in unexpected ways or places. Thus, the most fruitful approach to this play is to take it on its merits rather than dismissing or overlooking it because of the youth of its author or its

²⁴ According to P. Allen, *The Concept of Women, II: The Early Humanist Reformation 1250–1500*, Grand Rapids MI and Cambridge, 2002, p. 679, Vittorino's school programme included reading aloud, memorization and recitation in Latin and Greek. W. H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, Toronto and Buffalo NY, 1996, p. 40, states that: 'Whole orations of Cicero or Demosthenes, books of Livy and Sallust, besides large portions of Vergil and Homer were recited with accuracy and taste by boys or girls of less than fourteen years of age.' Vittorino also developed a large library of sources, including Plato's dialogues, the writings of Aristotle and of the Stoics: Allen, *Concept of Women*, p. 679; Chevalier, '*Trois tragédies*' (n. 11 above), pp. 106–7.

²⁵ J. R. Berrigan and G. Tournoy. 'Gregorii Corrarii Veneti Tragoedia, cui titulus *Progne*: A Critical Edition and Translation', *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 29, 1980, pp. 13–99 (16), citing passages from Correr's writings.

²⁶ Cloetta, '*Litteraturgeschichte*' (n. 11 above), p. 155.

²⁷ Allen, '*The Concept of Women*' (n. 24 above), pp. 678 and 681; see also pp. 681–2, where Allen cautions that it is important to note that Correr is not advising her against reading secular literature because she is a woman but because she is about to enter a monastery and this is the key to pursuing a serious Christian life.

²⁸ Tempera 'Worse than Procne' (n. 9 above), p. 79.

²⁹ Tempera agrees; see *ibid.*, p. 80: 'one loses sight of the novelty in characterization that represents the play's greatest virtue'.

‘derivative’ nature.³⁰ And this article will show how skilfully Correr reshapes the classical material to enhance Philomena’s dramatic presence within the play.

Philomena as a character does not make an appearance in the play until more than half way through it (‘germana venit’, ‘a sister comes’, 561),³¹ and she occupies a non-speaking role throughout (her one speech is reported by her attendant Pistus); but her presence is very much in evidence from the prologue in which the ghost of Diomedes anticipates her arrival³² and the second act in which Tereus tells Procne that her sister has died on the voyage. Ovid does not devote much space to Philomela’s supposed death, simply observing in half a line that Tereus tells Procne a ‘made-up tale of death’ (‘commenta funera narrat’, VI.565), and in Boccaccio this element of the myth is also allocated half a sentence, although Correr does adopt Boccaccio’s embellishment that Tereus pretends Philomena has died of sea-sickness on the voyage.³³ Correr constructs an entire scene in which Tereus spins an elaborate lie to Procne about how Philomena died; this enables Correr to present two scenes in parallel: one where Tereus describes Philomena’s fictitious death to Procne and one in which Philomena’s attendant reveals to Procne what actually happened to her. By creating these parallel scenes, Correr is establishing an association between death and rape and may be playing on an assimilation between the two that already exists in Latin literature.³⁴ For although Tereus’s

³⁰ See Casara, ‘Progne’ (n. 15 above), p. 106, for a summary of the unflattering judgements on the play and the dismissal of it as the product of a school room.

³¹ All quotations from the play are taken from Chevalier’s 2010 edition: see n. 11 above. All translations are my own although they draw at times on Grund, *Tragedies* (n. 6 above), and Berrigan and Tourmoy, *Progne* (n. 25 above).

³² It is interesting that he uses the very same phrase (‘germana venit’, 64) that is later employed when Philomena makes her appearance at v. 561, although this later use of the phrase may possibly be a stage direction: see De Vries, ‘Die Progne’ (n. 10 above), p. 156 s.v. Thus the ‘actual’ ghost Diomedes, uses language that foreshadows Philomena’s appearance on stage as a ‘virtual’ ghost. Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. xxx, also comments on the correspondence between the two apparitions.

³³ Boccaccio, *Genealogie* IX.8.1: ‘Philomenam maris nausea mortuam dixit’ (‘He said that Philomena died of sea-sickness’). For the other embellishments and changes to the myth that Correr has taken from Boccaccio, see Guastella, ‘L’ira’ (n. 9 above) p. 226.

³⁴ In Latin literature deaths of mythical or legendary women are compared or associated with rape; as C. Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome*, New Haven and London, 2007, p. 206, observes: ‘A number of the most symbolically resonant female deaths in Latin literature assimilate the act of killing to rape.’ In *Metamorphoses* VI.527–30, Philomela’s rape is also associated with death by means of two similes that describe animals being caught and mangled by beasts of prey.

lengthy description of Philomena's death at sea is a lie, his tale unwittingly carries clues about her real fate.

In his speech Tereus devotes a good deal of space to depicting the violence of the sea and the storm (198–214): the rain falling from broken clouds ('pluviae, nubibus ruptis, cadunt', 203), the sea swelling ('tumescit aequor', 204) with such violence ('vis vasta', 206) that it stirs up the sand and strikes the stars ('pulsat sidera et harenas ciet', 205); he also describes how the ship trembles and is tossed about by the swell of the waves (204–7). The turbulence of the sea as a metaphor for the vicissitudes of sexual passion was one which was well established in classical poetry,³⁵ and Correr's emphasis on swelling, tossing and trembling would serve to reinforce the notion that this sea is symbolic of the storm of passion in which Philomena is engulfed and by which she is conquered ('soror/ devicta demum est', 'at last your sister is overcome', 217–18).³⁶ The language of conquest also suggests rape for it echoes Ovid's use of the phrase 'vi superat' ('He overcomes [her] by force', VI.525) to denote Tereus's rape of Philomela in the *Metamorphoses*. Correr's Tereus then proceeds to draw a comparison between the dying Philomena and a violet that has been plucked from a meadow (225–7); this simile also suggests her actual fate for the plucking of flowers, particularly from a meadow, is usually a harbinger of rape in classical poetry.³⁷ Tereus reassures Procne that while Philomena's *anima* has fled to the shades (224), even in death some of her *fulgor* remains;³⁸ his analogy with a violet which keeps its *forma* or outward appearance even after

³⁵ E.g., *Anthologia Palatina* V.190; XII.157; XII.167; Horace, *Carmina* I.5.

³⁶ The chorus unconsciously echo this language in the subsequent ode when they state 'victa quae saevis pelagi procellis/ virgo defecit' ('she who was overcome by the savage storms of the sea died a virgin', 318–19). This statement has an ironic edge to it, for to the audience it also suggests that Philomena's *virginity* has departed, destroyed by the savagery of the rape.

³⁷ E. Stigers, 'Retreat from the Male: Catullus 62 and Sappho's Erotic Flowers', *Ramus*, 6, 1977, 83–102 (94): '[A] flowery meadow is a popular setting for a seduction or rape. The flowers in their brevity and beauty reflect the victim's enticing virginity, but the meadow itself, with all its feminine associations, captures the possibility of the woman's transformation.' Correr's choice of the violet as the flower which has been plucked may not be a coincidence here, for *viola* ('violet') was not uncommonly associated with *violare* 'to violate sexually' in Latin literature, and Isidore of Seville, *Origines* XVII.9.19, stated that *viola* was a derivative of *vis*, the cognate noun to *violare*. See further H. Jacobson, 'Violets and Violence: Two Notes', *The Classical Quarterly*, 48, 1998, pp. 314–15 (315).

³⁸ A few lines earlier he described the *fulgor* fading from Philomena's cheeks as she dies: 'non is genarum fulgor ut olim decens' ('there was not that gleam in her cheeks which once was customary', 220). Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. 171, n. 9, states that this line imitates Claudian where Demeter, after her daughter Proserpine has been raped by Hades, asks 'manet ille genarum/ fulgor' ('does that gleam of her cheeks

it has been plucked prepares the audience for the state in which Philomena currently exists. Philomena is actually inhabiting a kind of life-in-death for her *forma*, her physical presence, is still above ground but everything that constitutes her real self, her *anima*, has been put to flight by the rape.

Thus, the notion of rape as death is well established in this speech and the choral odes which surround this scene also serve to convey the impression that Philomena now inhabits an underworld from which she must be retrieved.³⁹ Both odes reference the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice with the first choral ode containing an extensive description of Orpheus's journey into the underworld (91–112). The initial purpose of the chorus' allusion to this myth is, ironically, to illustrate the strength of the marriage bond that exists between Tereus and Procne (89–95). But the chorus focus mainly on the way in which Orpheus conquers the underworld (95–112), the aspect of the myth that would most remind Correr's Christian audience of the association of Orpheus with Christ.⁴⁰ The appearance of this myth in the choral odes surrounding the reported death of Philomena therefore foreshadows her rescue from the metaphorical hell to which the rape has sent her.⁴¹ So when Philomena's attendant

remain?', *De raptu Proserpinae* II.435–6); he argues that a parallel is established here between the disappearance of Philomena and that of Proserpine. The comparison between Philomena and a flower would tend to support this, for Proserpine in *De raptu* III.137–140 also gathers flowers from a meadow and crowns herself with them, acts which Claudian explicitly refers to as an 'augurium fatale tori' ('fatal harbinger of the marriage couch', 141).

³⁹ There are also underworld allusions in Ovid's version of myth, including the presence of the Furies, funeral torches and the *bubo* ('screech-owl') at the wedding of Tereus and Procne (*Metamorphoses* VI.430–2). These, however, come earlier in the narrative, and, according to I. Gildenhard and A. Zissos, 'Barbarian Variations: Tereus, Procne and Philomela in Ovid (Met. 6.412–674) and Beyond', *Dictynna*, 4, pp. 1–22 (4), such allusions invite us 'to interpret the tale of Tereus, Procne and Philomela as a figuring of hell on earth'.

⁴⁰ This association was made in early Christian art with a fusion between the figures of Orpheus and Christ occurring from the late third or early fourth century: J. B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge MA, 1970, p. 40. For the strong Orphic tradition in Christian apologetic literature, see Chapter 4 of D. J. M. Herrero, *Orphism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, Berlin and Boston, 2010. According to Friedman, *Orpheus*, pp. 125–6, in the Middle Ages, the Orpheus and Eurydice myth was interpreted in the *Ovide moralisé* as an allegory for Christ's harrowing of hell. So, while the chorus, after Tereus's announcement of Philomena's death, lament that once souls descend to the underworld, even Orpheus cannot retrieve them (319–24), Correr's Christian audience would know better.

⁴¹ As Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. 120: states, 'Quand Procné decide de libérer sa sœur de sa prison, elle doit, à son tour, traverser cet espace. Elle plonge dans l'univers infernal, comme Orphée pour délivrer Eurydice.'

Pistus appears, and Procne greets him by asking him if he has come from the underworld (367–9), it is as though he taken on the role of psychopomp but one who is aiding a soul to come from the depths of the underworld rather than to it.⁴²

In Pistus's lengthy description of Philomena's rape, glossectomy and internment, there are also some significant departures from Ovid's version. Correr devotes more space to describing the scene of the rape and the place in which Philomena is imprisoned. In Ovid, the location of the rape is simply described as Tereus's own shores ('in sua litora', 519); in Correr these shores are concealed from the city by the mountains of Rhodope and a cliff whose sides have been eaten away by the violence of the sea ('fluctu protervo rupes exesum latus/ ostendit', 'a crag revealed a side eaten out by the rough sea', 397–8). The emphasis on the wildness of the place and the destructive power of the sea adumbrates the impending rape. Correr's description of the place in which Tereus conceals Philomena also differs in subtle but significant ways from Ovid. Both Ovid and Correr refer to the place as a *stabulum* ('stable'); but in Ovid the stable is a hut which has been constructed from stone ('structa rigent solido stabulorum moenia saxo', 'the walls of the stable are built from solid stone', VI.573), while in Correr it is located within a cave in the cliff ('stabulum propinqua rupis apparet cavo', 'a stable is visible in a cave under the nearby cliff', 429). The identification of the stable with a cave brings it closer to nature and emphasizes its underworld associations.⁴³ But the term *stabulum* also has further resonance within the play, for the play's prologue is delivered by the ghost of Diomedes who tells the audience he can see the stable where Hercules fed him to his own man-eating horses.⁴⁴ Thus, from the start of the play, stables are established as places of horror, sites of uncontrolled appetite. Correr also lays greater emphasis than Ovid on Philomena's isolation within her *stabulum*. While it is true that in

⁴² Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. 177, n. 3, points out that Pistus's self-portrait at v. 372, which emphasizes his straggly unkempt hair and drawn cheeks, recalls Seneca's description of Theseus's appearance when he returns from hell in the *Phaedra*, for, in a somewhat similar fashion, Theseus's cheeks are white with exhaustion and his hair is unkempt (832–3).

⁴³ Later Procne alludes to the place in which Philomena is imprisoned as a huge cave ('immani specu', 745). In the *Aeneid*, the entrance to the underworld is described as a deep cave ('spelunca alta fuit vastoque immanis hiatu', 'there was a cave deep and huge with gaping mouth', VI.237). Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. 172, n. 3, observes that Tereus has already described the place where he lands as *infausta* ('accursed') in v. 235 which is an adjective that links it with the underworld.

⁴⁴ Correr, *Progne* 28–30: '... facinus agnosco meum/ stabulumque quo me victor Alcides feris/ obiecit ipse, pabulum armentis ducem' ('I recognize my evil deed and the stable where victorious Alcides himself threw me to the wild beasts, the leader as food for the herd').

Ovid the stable is located deep within a wood ('in stabula alta trahit, silvis obscura vetustis', 'he drags (her) into a stable hidden deep within an ancient wood', 521) and is solitary ('stabula avia', 'a remote stable', 596), Philomela still has a single attendant to whom she entrusts the tapestry ('perfectaque tradidit uni', 'having completed it, she hands it to her one [attendant]', 578); in Correr, her attendant Pistus escapes before she is imprisoned while the rest are slaughtered (438–40). Her isolation is thus complete.

And within this wilderness and isolation, it is her sister to whom Philomena turns. This is even more apparent in Correr than in Ovid, for Correr's version of the speech that Philomena delivers after she has been raped contains a direct appeal to her sister.⁴⁵ While the speeches are in other respects almost identical in the topics they cover, Correr's Philomena also uses her speech to reaffirm her strong bond with her sister and to pass on authority for avenging the crime to her. And after her tongue is cut out, it is as though she loses all agency; it seems to die with her voice.⁴⁶ In Ovid it is Philomela's *tongue* that keeps on murmuring even after it has been cut out ('ipsa iacet terraeque tremens inmurmurat atrae', 'the tongue itself lies on the dark earth quivering and murmuring', 558), and it retains strong signs of life force, twitching and seeking its mistress's feet ('palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit', 'it twitches and even in dying seeks the feet of its mistress', 560). In Correr, the murmur is transferred to Philomena's throat, the only sound she can issue in place of her voice: et murmur (heu me!) voce pro solita dedit ('and a murmur [ah me!] is produced for her customary voice', 434). The pitiful quality of this noise is stressed by Correr's interjection *heu me* in this line, which he places between *murmur* and *voce*, emphasizing the completeness of the transformation.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., 423–5: 'Germana, te, te si parum soror movet, / contaminatis aude pro thalamis aliquid/ quod ipsa laudem...' ('Blood-sister, if the title "sister" moves you too little, dare some deed which I myself may praise for the contamination of your bed'). This change is also observed by several commentators, including Casara 'Progne' (n. 15 above), p. 170, and De Vries 'Die Progne' (n. 10 above), p. 152.

⁴⁶ Chevalier, *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), pp. 118, 123, compares the removal of Philomena's tongue with the tortures performed on martyrs and draws a parallel with Prudentius's description of the martyr Romanus's tongue being removed at the prefect Asclepiades's orders in *Peristephanon* X.891–5: *ibid.* p. 340, n. 14. While the *furor* of these victims' persecutors is similar, however, martyrs like Eulalia and Romanus manage to deliver lengthy speeches even after torture and, in Romanus's case, after his tongue has been removed (*Peristephanon* III.136–40; X.928–1000, 1006–1100); but the removal of her tongue deprives Philomena of the power of speech altogether.

⁴⁷ It may also be significant that the noun *murmur* is employed in classical Latin of the song of birds: *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. def. 1b; in particular, it is used to describe nightingales' laments: e.g., it is used this way

With her loss of voice and agency, the task that falls on Procne to rescue and bring Philomena back to herself is even greater. In the *Metamorphoses*, the scene in which Procne summons her sister from the *stabulum* is dealt with in a few lines: Ovid simply states that Procne breaks down the door, seizes her sister and conceals her identity in the garb of a Bacchant.⁴⁸ In Correr the dramatic potentials of the scene are fully developed. Procne summons Philomena out of the darkness (*huc e latebris procede, soror*, ‘here from the darkness come forth, sister’, 560), bringing her forth with her cries for vengeance: *hic dies, hic est (germana venit) /quo violenti stupra tyranni/ datur ulcisci*, ‘this is the day, this is (my sister comes) on which it is given to take vengeance on the violent tyrant for his rape’ (561–3). It is as though Philomena is being resurrected by Procne’s rage and the phrase that Procne uses at this point in the play, *instigat Furor*, ‘rage is the goad’ (559), contributes to the impression that rage will be instrumental in transforming these women into avenging Furies.⁴⁹ In some respects this scene is reminiscent of a witch’s reanimation of a corpse. Like a corpse, Philomena’s body has deteriorated: the rosy glow has fled her cheeks, her bright eyes have faded, her hair is rough and her feet are grimy (574–7).⁵⁰ Rather like the corpse

in the *Octavia* 915–23. Statius, *Thebaid* VIII.616–20, is especially interesting, for in these lines an extended simile on nightingales comments that their tearful murmur sounds not unlike words: ‘... it truncum et flebile murmur;/ verba putant, voxque illa tamen non dissona verbis’ (‘a broken and tearful murmur issues forth (which) they think is words and that utterance sounds not unlike words’, 619–20). Thus, the term *murmur* may also function as a subtle allusion to Philomena’s association with the nightingale, an aspect of the myth which Correr otherwise suppresses but one which was ubiquitous during the Middle Ages; see, e.g., W. F. Hodapp, ‘The *Via Mystica* in John Peckham’s *Philomena*: Affective Meditation and Songs of Love’, *Mystics Quarterly*, 21, 1995, pp. 80–90 (80–81 and 88, n. 2).

⁴⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI.596–600: ‘...venit ad stabula avia tandem/ exululatque euhoeque sonat portasque refringit/ germanamque rapit raptaque insignia Bacchi/ induit et vultus hederarum frondibus abdit/ attonitamque trahens intra sua moenia ducit’ (‘She comes at last to the remote stable and ululates and cries “euhoe” and shatters the doors; snatching her sister, she places the accoutrements of Bacchus on her, conceals her countenance with leaves of ivy and leads her in amazement within her own walls’). Similarly, the rescue in Boccaccio, *Genealogie* IX.8.2, is described in a few phrases: ‘tyrsis et pellibus ornata intravit silvas et Phylomenam eque ornatam eduxit in regiam’ (‘she enters the woods adorned with thyrsus and animal skins and leads Philomena thus adorned back into the palace’).

⁴⁹ The comparison to Furies is developed in vv. 605–6. This is also an aspect of Ovid’s version of the myth; see C. Segal, ‘Philomela’s Web and the Pleasures of the Text’, in *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, ed. I. J. F. de Jong and J. P. Sullivan, Leiden, 1994, pp. 257–80 (276).

⁵⁰ In classical Latin poetry, shades who have died by violence often appear to those living as filthy with blood and grime and with their wounds unhealed: cf. *Aeneid* II.270–79; VI.494–7; Seneca, *Oedipus* 623–5. And

that the witch Erichtho reanimates at the close of Book VI of Lucan's *Phasalina*, Philomena seems to occupy a half-way house between the dead and the living.⁵¹ Like the corpse in Lucan, she seems dazed and fearful at her restoration to the world, weeping copiously (Correr 569; Lucan 776). And like Erichtho, Procne in a sense gives Philomena her voice from this point on in the play. Procne describes Philomena's actions as she emerges from the cave—how she covers her face (568–9), weeps (569) and keeps her eyes fixed on the ground (570–1); although she is a little puzzled by them, she interprets them as shame at the rape (570) and fear at returning home (595–6). But unlike in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which an omniscient narrator tells us what Philomena is feeling when she is rescued by her sister, in Correr's tragedy, all Philomena's actions will now be described and interpreted by Procne.⁵²

But to Correr's Christian readers the way in which Philomena emerges from her cave, might also recall Jesus's raising of Lazarus. Lazarus's tomb was also located within a cave and Jesus calls him forth from it, as Procne calls forth Philomena.⁵³ It is interesting that the

people who dwell in or emerge from the underworld are often depicted with bodies that have deteriorated. Cf. Seneca, *Phaedra* 832–3 (already mentioned in n. 42 above) and compare Demeter's dream of Proserpine's fate in Claudian, *De raptu* III.80–96, in which she envisages her daughter in chains in a dark prison with dirty hair, dim eyes and pale cheeks. Indeed, as Chevalier *Trois tragédies* (n. 11 above), p. 185, n. 4, observes, Correr appears to be directly referencing Claudian's lines here in his description of Philomena, for, Procne's question to Philomena at 576 'unde haec macies?' ('from where [comes] this thinness?') seems to echo Demeter's question to her daughter 'unde haec informis macies?' ('from where [comes] this unsightly thinness?', Claudian, *De raptu* III.93). Furthermore, Demeter in *De raptu* is so shocked by her daughter's appearance that she asks 'tu mea, tu proles? an vana fallimur umbra?' ('Are you indeed my daughter? Or am I deceived by an empty shade?', 96).

⁵¹ Lucan VI.758–60: '... nondum facies viventis in illo, iam morientis erat; remanet pallorque rigorque, et stupet inlatus mundo ...' ('... there was not yet the appearance of a living creature in that [body]; now he looked like one dying; the pallor and stiffness remained and he was dazed at being brought back to the world ...').

⁵² It is true that in *Metamorphoses* VI.601–2, 605–7 Ovid states that Philomela shakes from fear on entering Tereus's home and cannot look at her sister for shame at what she has done to her, and Correr's audience may well be reminded of these lines at this point in the play. But the fact that there is no omniscient narrator in *Progne* and that Procne at this point in the play asks her sister a series of questions that she cannot answer, casts a degree of uncertainty on Philomena's emotions in this scene; the implication could be that Procne is projecting her own emotions onto her sister.

⁵³ John 11.38–9, 43: '... venit ad monumentum erat autem spelunca et lapis superpositus erat ei ait Iesus tollite lapidem dicit ... voce magna clamavit Lazare veni foras' ('[Jesus] came to a tomb but it was a cave and a rock was placed on it; Jesus said "Raise the rock"... with a great voice he shouted "Lazarus come forth"'). The way in which Correr constructs this scene may also be influenced by biblical dramas about the raising of Lazarus which were performed in Italy and other parts of Western Europe throughout the Middle Ages and early

early Christian poet Prudentius uses similar language when describing the way in which Lazarus is summoned from his tomb, referring to him as a ‘dead man walking’.⁵⁴ This suggestion of a Christian form of resurrection may also be strengthened by the allusions to Bacchic rites at this point in the play. While these were an established part of the myth and are present in Ovid, Correr uses them more extensively and rather differently. In Ovid the emphasis is rather on the way in which the rites of Bacchus enable Procne to manifest her *furor* (*Metamorphoses* VI. 595–6),⁵⁵ while in *Progne* the summoning of Philomena is preceded by a choral ode which praises Bacchus and his exploits (487–554), an ode which gives as much attention to the gentle side of Dionysus and the benefits he bestows as it does to his vengeful aspect. It may well be significant that Correr has modelled this ode on a chorus from Seneca’s *Oedipus* which is sung as a preparation for the raising of Laius’s ghost from the underworld (401–508). Furthermore, after Philomena makes her appearance, Procne orders the Maenads to encircle her brow with ivy and don a fawn skin. Unlike in Ovid (or in Boccaccio), there is no indication that this is for the purposes of disguise; instead, by inserting the phrase *de more* (‘from custom’, 565), Correr gives the impression that this is part of a ritual. The ivy doesn’t conceal Philomena’s face as in Ovid’s version (‘vultus hederarum frondibus abdit’, ‘she concealed her face with ivy-leaves’, VI.599) but encircles her brow (‘hederis frontem cingite Bacchi’, ‘encircle her brow with Bacchus’s ivy’, 564).⁵⁶

Renaissance; see further L. R. Muir, *The Biblical Drama of Medieval Europe*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 120–21. The popularity of this miracle is also attested by the fact that it was probably the one which was most often portrayed in art, according to S. Zuffi, *Gospel Figures in Art*, transl. T. M. Hartmann, Los Angeles, 2003, p. 216.

⁵⁴ Prudentius, *Apotheosis* 752–6: ‘ante fores tumuli, quas saxa inmania duro/ obice damnarant scopulis substructa cavatis,/ stat Dominus nomenque ciet frigentis amici,/ nec mora, funereus revolutis rupibus horror/ evomit exequias gradiente cadavere vivas’ (‘Before the doors of the tomb, which great stones blocking the chambered rock with an impenetrable barrier have closed, stands the Lord and calls the name of his cold friend; no delay, the terrible grave vomits up the living relics, a dead man walking’). Prudentius, however, then goes on to describe how Jesus revives Lazarus’s corpse-like body (760–62); this does not happen with Philomena, who, presumably, throughout the play keeps her corpse-like appearance.

⁵⁵ See further Segal, ‘Philomela’s Web’ (n. 49 above), p. 275, who points out that Procne merely ‘simulates’ (*simulat*, 596) the rites of Bacchus and comments: ‘[T]he shading of maenadism into subterranean *furor* reduces the sacrality of Procne’s Dionysiac procession to pure violence.’

⁵⁶ The ivy crown was sometimes conflated with the grape vine because of its tendrils and black berries; see D. C. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*, Baltimore and London, 1970, p. 206. On the adaptation of the grape vine as a Christian symbol, see n. 57 below.

Given the ways in which early Christianity adopted the imagery associated with Dionysus and his mystery cult,⁵⁷ the crowning of Philomena's head with evergreen ivy at this point in the play seems to herald her resurrection from the grave.

The tropes of both *nekyia* and resurrection are carried through into the final scenes of the play in which the sisters kill and dismember Itys and serve him up to Tereus. In the *Metamorphoses*, Itys is slain in a remote part of the palace (VI.638), in the *Thyestes* the sons are also killed with the palace but within a sacred grove (651–65). Correr locates the place of execution in the stable where Diomedes fed human flesh to his horses. Thus stables appear three times in the course of the play: at the beginning, middle and end, contributing to the eerie sense of recurrence, of history repeating itself which heightens the atmosphere of horror. The suggestion that the stables in this play form part of the underworld is strengthened in this penultimate scene for, like the grove in the *Thyestes* (668–79) where Atreus slaughters Thyestes's children, Diomedes's stable is inhabited by shades and Furies (883–8). Correr's selection of a stable as the site of Itys's slaughter might also have additional connotations for his audience, for while the Bible does not state that Jesus was born in a stable, this was the common conception in the Middle Ages and stables were often depicted in nativity scenes.⁵⁸ So the use of a stable as the site for a hideous slaughter and dismemberment of a male child might have been interpreted by his Christian audience as a grotesque parody of the story of the nativity.

In both Seneca's *Thyestes* and *Medea* the protagonists act alone in slaughtering the children. In the equivalent scene in *Progne*, Philomena has a silent but powerful presence throughout, the sight of her spurring her sister to savagery: '... spectat hanc primum soror,/ deinde natum mater aspectu truci' ('her sister looks first at this woman, then the mother at her

⁵⁷ For the adaptation of the Dionysiac motif of the vine to Christian tombs, see C. Murray, *Rebirth and Afterlife: A Study of the Transmutation of Some Pagan Imagery in Early Christian Funerary Art*, British Archaeological Reports International Series, 100, Oxford, 1981, pp. 68–71 and 88–90. On the correspondences between the two divinities and the arguments between pagans and Christians as to who was imitating whom, see Allen *Mysteriously Meant* (n. 56 above), p. 3. On the way in which early Christian writers made use of Bacchus, see, e.g., Clement of Alexandria, who not only employs Dionysus/Bacchus as a foil for Christ but adopts and adapts the language of the *Bacchae* and Greek mystery cults to the Christian experience: e.g., *Protrepticus* II.15; XII.92–3. See further F. Jourdan, 'Dionysos dans le "Protreptique" de Clément d'Alexandrie. Initiations dionysiaques et mystères chrétiens', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 223, 2006, pp. 265–82 (78).

⁵⁸ See Pseudo-Matthew xiv, where Mary relocates the baby from a cave to a stable a few days after the birth. This gospel which was probably composed in the later 7th century was very influential in the Middle Ages; see further Zuffi 'Gospel Figures' (n. 53 above), pp. 68, 72.

son with savage glance' (892–3).⁵⁹ And while in the *Metamorphoses*, Procne and Philomena act together in both the slaughter and dismembering of Itys (640–45), in Correr Procne kills him and Philomena undertakes the dismemberment under Procne's direction (934–6; 1031–2).⁶⁰ The fact that Philomena is allocated the more passive task of dismembering the corpse serves to link the two victims more closely, just as they are linked together in death in the final scene of the play when Tereus declares that Philomena lies among the bloodless dead ('segnis inter exanguis iacet', 'she lies unmoving among the bloodless [dead]', 978), and Procne retorts that Itys lies there too ('idem inter umbras natus exanguis cubat', 'your son in the same way reclines among the shades', 979). This substitution of one victim for another contributes to the ritualistic overtones of the deed and conveys the notion that Philomena has regained her agency through a form of blood sacrifice. There are perhaps pagan supernatural connotations here, for shades in the *Odyssey* also regain a sense of themselves by drinking the blood from sacrificed animals (XI.23–50). But at this point in the play as well, the supernatural atmosphere is given a Christian colouring, for Procne goes on to declare to Tereus that she mixed Itys's blood in the holy wine: 'post haec cruorem miscui sacro mero', ('after this I mixed his blood in the holy wine', 1035). These are words that might serve to evoke the Christian rite of the eucharist: Procne has metaphorically 'transformed' the wine

⁵⁹ Medieval and Renaissance commentators made much of the fact that Procne did not avert her gaze while looking at her son, a detail that in their opinion demonstrated her impiety; see Coulson, 'Procne and Philomela' (n. 7 above), pp. 187 and 193. As scholars have observed, Correr's lines are inspired by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VI.630–31 ('... ab hoc iterum est ad vultus versa sororis/ inque vicem spectans ambos ...', '... again from this [son] she [Procne] turned to the countenance of her sister and looking at both in turn ...'), and Correr's lines seem particularly designed to illustrate Procne's conflicting roles as sister (*soror*) and mother (*mater*). That the term *soror* is used elsewhere of Philomena (as is the case at 679–80), however, lends Correr's lines a certain ambiguity as to which sister is looking at which; this helps to emphasize the fusion between the two.

⁶⁰ This alteration to the myth in which Procne alone commits the murder and Philomena assists her with the results seems to stem from the 12th-century *Philomena* attributed to Chrétien de Troyes which is preserved in the *Ovide moralisé*. P. McCracken, 'Engendering Sacrifice: Blood, Lineage, and Infanticide in Old French Literature', *Speculum*, 77, 2002, pp. 55–75 (55), argues that this is because the author wished to shift both the crime and the vengeance to the nuclear family. This alteration is also present in Boccaccio and Gower and may be part of a general inclination to make Philomena more passive; as M. E. Gillespie, 'My Voice Shall Fill the Woods: Lydgate, Poetic Authority, and the Canonization of Philomela', MA diss., University of California San Diego, 2010, p. 18, observes, in medieval English writers, 'Philomela becomes a martyr rather than an active force who sought her revenge.' So, while this aspect of the plot is not Correr's innovation, he does extend the possibilities of Philomena's passivity to give her presence in these scenes a rather unnerving cast.

that Tereus has drunk into the blood of an innocent victim.⁶¹ During the late medieval period the eucharist was a particular focus of Christian ritual and there was an increased insistence on the real presence⁶² which often manifested itself as the body of a child, not infrequently a dismembered one; sometimes even one that was served up on a platter.⁶³ Thus line 1035, particularly when it is paired with line 1032 (*partita pueri corpus in partis soror*, '[my] sister divided the boy's body into sections') may well suggest that Procne is enacting an unholy eucharist at this point in the play. And so in *Progne*, the rites of the eucharist have been desecrated by the literal killing and eating of an innocent child.⁶⁴

⁶¹ In *Metamorphoses* (VI.648), Ovid states that Procne pretends that the meal is *sacer* so that Tereus alone will attend but no reference is made to Tereus drinking his son's blood in the wine, only eating his flesh. And although in Seneca's *Thyestes*, Atreus makes reference several times to mixing the children's blood in the wine and notes that its colour will disguise the blood (913–16), at no point is this wine actually given the epithet *sacer*, even though its ritual implications are alluded to at 984. On the other hand, there is an allusion to the 'sacer Bacchi liquor' ('Bacchus's holy juice') at 687, which is the wine with which Atreus anoints his victims, and a few lines later at 700–701 the wine that Atreus pours on the fire turns to blood. Thus, Atreus in his role as high priest is, as A. Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama*, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 85–91, argues, enacting a perversion of sacrificial rites in the way in which he slaughters the children. It could well be therefore that Correr is adopting this notion from *Thyestes* and transforming it into a perversion of Christian rather than pagan rites.

⁶² M. L. Price, *Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, London, 2004, p. 26: '[T]he eucharist did not take on such critical importance until the High Middle Ages, with the eleventh century onward being marked by such developments as the coining of the term "transubstantiation," the declaration of the doctrinal status of transubstantiation at the Fourth Lateran Council, the establishment and rapid growth in popularity of a feast of Corpus Christi, and the trend toward identifying personal religiosity with the suffering humanity of Christ At some point during the twelfth century, the increased insistence on the real presence necessitated the use of the term "*corpus verum*" to refer to the host.'

⁶³ Price, *Consuming Passions* (n. 62 above), p. 27, recounts a vision that the nun Colette of Corbie had in the early 15th century of 'her Savior in the form of a serving dish filled with the body of a child, dismembered into fragments of bloody meat, while the voice of God the Father explained that the sin of the world was responsible for carving up His son'. According to Price, *ibid.*, the contents of this vision 'was far from unique, or even unusual, during the later Middle Ages'. This is confirmed by L. Sinanoglou, 'The Christ Child as Sacrifice: A Medieval Tradition and the Corpus Christi Plays', *Speculum*, 48, 1973, pp. 491–509 (491): 'In one of the most bizarre, yet very common miracles of the Middle Ages, the bread of the Eucharist is transformed between the very hands of the priest at Mass into a small living child, then slain and dismembered before the eyes of the congregation. Commentators identified the child as the Infant Jesus and often cited such miracles as proof of the Mass as an actual re-sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ.'

⁶⁴ In this regard, it is interesting that the desecration of the eucharist and the killing and eating of children were acts with which witches of this period were often associated: see G. K. Waite, *Heresy, Magic and Witchcraft in*

The notion of an unholy eucharist is also carried through to Tereus's reaction to the revelation of the crime, for Correr stresses Tereus's horrified realization that the consumption of the body and blood of his son means that they are now united as one flesh. He rewords the line from the *Metamorphoses* in which Tereus laments that he has become his son's tomb ('seque vocat bustum miserabile nati', 'he calls himself the wretched tomb of his son', VI.665), in line 1010 drawing *natus* and *pater* together at the end of the line ('tumulus est nati pater', 'the father is the tomb of the son') and reinforcing this four lines later with 'in me natus innocens iacet' ('in me an innocent son lies', 1014).⁶⁵ In a sense, Tereus's son has been resurrected inside him and the final line of the play is even more succinct than and, just as devastating as, the one in the *Thyestes*.⁶⁶ When Tereus tells Procne that the Furies will pursue her, Procne retorts with three brief words: 'Ythis solus patrem' ('Itys alone [will pursue] his father', 1060). Itys the son has been reunited with his father and will now live within him

Early Modern Europe, New York, 2003, pp. 35–7. It was also in the fifteenth century that the association of women with witchcraft started to become stronger. This was reflected in the publication of a work in c. 1437 (the *Formicarius*) by the Dominican theologian and religious reformer Johannes Nider which argued that women were more prone to become witches than men; see M. D. Bailey, 'The Feminization of Magic and the Emerging Idea of the Female Witch in the Late Middle Ages', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 19, 2002, pp. 120–34 (120). It was not, however, until the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* in 1487 that the association between women and witchcraft became pronounced; so, while it may be possible that Procne's desecration of eucharistic rites in *Progne* reflects an emerging anxiety about the rumoured practices of female witches during this period, there is not enough evidence to make any definitive claims about this.

⁶⁵ In both *Thyestes* and *Medea* more than one son is slaughtered so the father/son equation is less clear cut. In *Thyestes*, although Thyestes has consumed his sons like Tereus, there is no allusion to him being their tomb. Both De Vries, 'Die Progne' (n. 10 above), p. 169, and Casara, 'Progne' (n. 15 above), p. 174, observe Correr's emphasis on Itys's innocence and suggest that Correr has the image of the Christian martyr in mind.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Thyestes* 1112: 'te puniendum liberis trado tuis' ('For your punishment I will hand you over to your sons').

forever. But this will be an eternity of damnation rather than salvation,⁶⁷ doubly so because Correr ends the myth at this point, with no escape into bird form.⁶⁸

Correr's omission of the tapestry from this influential myth has consequences that reverberate throughout his play. The transformation of Philomena into a type of ghost does to an extent, as Guastella, argues, make Procne's role in the act of vengeance more prominent but it doesn't lessen the power of Philomena's presence within the play. The very ambiguity of Philomena's silence means that she can be viewed either as an accusing presence who spurs her sister to greater savagery or as a zombie-like figure which acts mechanically under Procne's direction.⁶⁹ In one sense, it could be argued that she becomes a substitute for the tapestry, one which Procne reads perhaps by projecting her own emotions onto Philomena's weeping as she emerges from her cave or Philomena's silent presence as she murders her own son. The Christian overtones that surround Philomena's suffering and resurrection may give additional urgency to the restitution of her wrongs but the final act of restitution, with its desecration of the rites of the eucharist, serves to underline the notion that this is a world from which God has departed. Resurrection within this play becomes a ghastly travesty, not only for Philomena but for her fellow victim Itys. With Philomena's appearance in the play

⁶⁷ The notion that the eucharist is linked with both damnation and salvation is, of course, present in the Bible as the Latin Vulgate attests: 'qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem habet vitam aeternam ... qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem in me manet et ego in illo' ('He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life ... he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him', John 6.55, 57); 'qui enim manducat et bibit indigne iudicium sibi manducat et bibit non diiudicans corpus' ('For he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the body [of the Lord]', I. Corinthians 11.29)

⁶⁸ In this, of course, he is following Seneca rather than Ovid, for at the end of *Thyestes*, although Thyestes proclaims that the gods will appear to avenge Atreus's crimes (1110), the gods never do. And in *Progne*, although Philomena is in a sense resurrected, the implication may be that she can never truly come back to herself and will continue to inhabit a kind of life-in-death. This is perhaps where the tragedy of the play lies and why Correr juxtaposes pagan and Christian notions of resurrection. According to J.-F. Chevalier, 'Neo-Latin Theatre in Italy', in *Neo-Latin Drama in Early Modern Europe*, ed. J. Bloemendal and H. Norland, transl. J. Bloemendal, Leiden and Boston, 2013, pp. 25–102 (31), the notion of a Christian tragedy is problematic because Christ's death on the cross is transcended by the resurrection (but, although there are suggestions of a Christian form of resurrection in this play, by the end it becomes apparent that the resurrection is not a true one.

⁶⁹ It is interesting that Casara, 'Progne' (n. 15 above), p. 106, does refer to Philomena in this play as a 'succuba della sorella' ('a succubus of her sister'). She does not, however, appear to expand on this remark.

being treated as both a Christian form of resurrection and a pagan act of *nekyia*, the moral conflicts of this most troubling myth are brought into even sharper relief.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ That medieval and Renaissance readers were sensitive to the moral contradictions and conflicts of this myth is shown by the Latin commentary tradition; see Coulson 'Procne and Philomela' (n. 7 above), pp. 184 and 185.