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“The Grand Allusion: Virgil’s *Aeneid IV* and Ovid’s *Procne*”

This study is but a small part of a much larger project which argues that Ovid incorporates every line of *Aeneid IV* in his presentation of the tale of Procne and Tereus, a superficially similar tale of a marriage betrayed. These two texts - so distinct in tone, theme and consequence – are distinguished by the motivation and behavior of each husband figure, as well as by the reaction of the women he betrays (suicidal Dido can only acquiesce to the divine power which controls her fate; murderous Procne and Philomela become maniacally empowered to avenge their grievous wrongs). Ovid’s re-contextualization of *Aeneid IV* presents a Virgilian world turned inside-out: Dido and Aeneas’ world is noble, tragic, divinely manipulated (for good or for bad); Procne, Tereus and Philomela become enmired in a gritty reality ruled only by a terribly misguided, cruel and irresponsible humanity: the gods are utterly disinterested in their plight. As is true of their treatment throughout this Ovidian episode, not only are the gods absent, but their awesome power is appropriated by mere human beings.

In this paper I limit my discussion to the opening lines of Ovid’s episode (6.424-450). This pleasant domestic scene derives its horror from the many allusions to Dido’s tragic end, thereby creating a dramatic irony shared by the poet and reader, but hidden from the characters. For example, the images that accompany Ovid’s description of Procne and Tereus’ marriage (the same images that appear to suicidal Dido after she *rejects* her god-sent marriage betrayed by Aeneas in IV.472) exemplify how the consequences of Aeneas’ betrayal evoke the inevitability of Tereus’. Such allusions cast a shadow over the superficially sane beginnings of Ovid’s *Procne* and leave a steady trail of philological clues of the horrors to come. Even in this short sample passage, Ovid’s lines recall not only Virgil’s exact words, but their poetic arrangement in identical metrical cola as well. Ovid’s text is also linked to Virgil’s through choice of technique. For example, his use and placement of anaphora, authorial intrusion, and traditionally formulaic tropes all mimic Virgil’s; but while exploiting symbolic and thematic resonances with *Aeneid IV*, Ovid playfully reverses its emphasis and conflict.