

She hath been reading late. Re-reading Ovid through Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*

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ABSTRACT

Cymbeline is a retrospective drama, brilliantly re-elaborating motifs and themes from Shakespeare's previous work. Most of its poignant scenes actually look back at classical sources. As this essay discusses, the character of Princess Innogen highlights the rich Ovidianism of the play, as well as its 'valedictory' nature: as both Philomel and Lucrece, Innogen offered the dramatist the opportunity to revise the original material in order to reverse expectations, create amazement, and discuss femininity and gender roles. Focusing on Shakespeare's re-reading of the stories of Philomel and Tereus and of Lucrece and Tarquin, the present essay considers how, at the end of his career, the playwright managed to replace the tragic effects of these myths with images of rebirth, reconciliation and repentance, genre being central in the dramatist's re-working of the Ovidian sources.

1. OVID IN SHAKESPEARE'S LAST PLAYS

Recent critical work has shown that one does not necessarily need to find textual parallels or verbal echoes in order to argue for strong relations between classical and early modern texts and thus establish a connection¹. This is especially true for Shakespeare's late plays, also referred to as romances, or tragicomedies. In this respect, Colin Burrow's words are worth quoting at length:

¹ As Burrow (2024: 64) argues, «it is potentially restrictive to treat 'narrative sources' as principally, or perhaps only, identifiable through verbal allusions or exact parallels» since «a 'narrative source' is best thought of as a summary or digest

Shakespeare's imitations of Ovid late in his career recall the sections of the *Metamorphoses* which had fascinated him from the 1590s, but these episodes are reshaped by new preoccupations. Ovid retains sinister associations with rape and archaic violence, but acquires equally strong associations with the power of the imagination. (Burrow 2002: 310)²

While reviving Ovid's work in his later plays, then, the dramatist also transforms it and references to the Latin poet become in several instances oblique and highly symbolic (see Burrow 2015: 604). As Martindale (2000: 212) puts it, «in the three romances [*Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*] there is less superficial Ovidianism». In the later plays Shakespeare alludes to Ovid at key moments, when the dramatic action can take different directions (Burrow 2015: 604). As we shall see, in *Cymbeline* the Ovidian intertext is brought onstage as a prop and the explicit reference to the Philomel and Lucrece myths increases the tragic tension in the scene where Princess Innogen is threatened with rape by the Italian villain Iachimo. Although «the contents o'th' story» (2.2.27)³ would make everyone believe that the British princess will suffer the same fate as her mythological prototypes, rape is averted and, to the audience's surprise, the allusions to the most classical narratives of violence and physical mutilation turn out to be only metaphorical.

The aim of this essay is to explore the several references to Philomel and Lucrece that are embedded in what has been defined as the «densely

of a tale which was ripe for rhetorical elaboration, and which might not come from a single origin, since 'authorities' can be multiple. A text based on such a prior narration would not be expected to register a debt in the form of verbal echoes». I heartily thank Professor Colin Burrow for giving me permission to read his article before publication.

² Similarly, Di Biase (1994: 59) observes that «Shakespeare's handling of myth [...] becomes, in the later plays, more subtle and more evocative».

³ All line-references to *Cymbeline* are from the 2017 Arden edition, ed. and intro. by Valerie Wayne (Shakespeare 2017). Act, scene, and line numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

allusive»⁴ texture of *Cymbeline* and also to consider some yet unexplored parallels with Ovid's *Fasti* that might shed further light on the character of Innogen and on the play itself. Innogen, who is one of Shakespeare's most prominent female characters⁵, highlights the rich Ovidianism of the play: as both Lucrece and Philomel, she offered the dramatist the opportunity to revise the original material in order to reverse expectations, create amazement, and discuss femininity and gender roles. Most importantly, by fusing the characters of Lucrece and Philomel in a unique way, Innogen becomes the agent of both natural and political change.

2. INNOGEN, PHILOMEL, AND LUCRECE

One particular feature of this late play, which links it to Shakespeare's early work and specifically to *Titus Andronicus* (1594), is an almost obsessive insistence on the idea of physical dismemberment (see Thompson 1979; Shakespeare 2017: 86-90). The play begins with an enraged King Cymbeline who wishes that her daughter Innogen might «languish / A drop of blood a day and, being aged, / Die of this folly» (1.1.157-159). As we learn from the play's opening scene, the British sovereign's anger derives from Innogen's decision to marry the gentleman Posthumus⁶, rather than Cloten, son to the unnamed Queen, Cymbeline's second wife. The image of a slow and painful death evoked by Cymbeline, besides recalling King Lear's irrational rage against his loyal daughter Cordelia, initiates all those images of bloodshed that are either evoked or displayed onstage. Later on, Innogen's husband, Posthumus, expresses the wish «to tear her [Innogen] limb-meal!»

⁴ As Martin Butler highlights in his introduction to Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (Shakespeare 2005: 1), «[i]ts stagecraft is multi-levelled, and its texture is densely allusive, reflecting the bewildering array of sources on which it draws».

⁵ Innogen has the third largest part of all Shakespeare's female characters (see Shakespeare 2017: 140).

⁶ The Gentleman Posthumus Leonatus, orphaned of father and mother, has been raised at the court of King Cymbeline.

(2.4.147) when he is led by Iachimo to believe that she has been unfaithful to him: «I will go there and do't i'th' court, before / Her father» (2.4.148-149). This desire for revenge and physical violence is ominously echoed in the intention expressed by the buffoon Cloten, who plays the role of Posthumus's parodic and evil double, to behead his rival and then rape the woman:

Posthumus, thy head, which now is growing upon thy shoulders, shall within this hour be off, thy mistress enforced, thy garments cut to pieces before her face; and all this done, spurn her home to her father, who may haply be a little angry for my so rough usage. (4.1.15-20)

Interestingly, the emphasis upon bodily mutilation that recurs throughout the drama is reflected in the very structure of the play, which has been defined as «a ragbag of plot-fragments from many sources, including Shakespeare's own previous work» (Thompson 1979: 23). However, rather than seeing this as a flaw or as the product of a tired dramatist⁷, Valerie Wayne highlights the «valedictory» and «retrospective» nature of *Cymbeline*⁸. The scholar points out that this drama functions as the appropriate conclusion of the 1623 Folio, the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays, just like *The Tempest* has long been recognized as its perfect opening (see Wayne 2015: 390). The two compilers of the First Folio, Shakespeare's fellow actors John Heminge and Henry Condell, placed *Cymbeline* among the tragedies and at the closing of the entire collection, thus locating it in a prominent position. As Wayne puts it, *Cymbeline*'s recapitulations and references to Shakespeare's previous work «provide a peroration for the entire First Folio» (Shakespeare 2017: 30).

⁷ As Garber (2004: 804) recalls, «[s]ome literary critics at the beginning of the twentieth century were inclined to dismiss the play as the work of a has-been, a washed-up playwright with nothing left to say».

⁸ On *Cymbeline* as a retrospective and recapitulatory drama, see Valerie Wayne's Introduction to Shakespeare (2017: 28-30) and Wayne (2015).

In light of the evident recapitulatory character of this drama, it is unsurprising that *Cymbeline* «probably exceeds any other Shakespearian play in its fecundity of classical, and especially mythological, reference» (Knight 1965 [1948]: 183). Bate (1993: 215) argues that part of this play's experimentation lies precisely in «its way of reinvoking Ovid but dramatizing his myths at one remove». In particular, the presence of a woman threatened with rape and mutilation by male characters who make attempt on her life in various ways calls to mind the myth of Philomel, the heroine from Book 6 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The latter is raped by the king of Thrace Tereus, her brother-in-law and husband to her sister Procne, and later has her tongue cut out by the same man who brutally violated her. It is well known that Shakespeare's earliest use of this myth is found at the very beginning of his career, in the tragedy *Titus Andronicus*. Here the Elizabethan dramatist exceeds his classical forebear by bringing onstage a female protagonist, Lavinia, with «her hands cut off and her tongue cut out, and ravished» (s.d. at 2.3)⁹. The reference to the Philomel narrative is made all the more explicit when a tongueless and armless Lavinia «busily [...] turns the leaves» (4.1.45) of one particular book which is carried by her nephew Lucius. At Titus's question «Lucius, what book is that she tosseth so?» (4.1.41), the boy replies that «'tis Ovid's *Metamorphosis*» (4.1.42).

Cymbeline therefore represents the third instance in which a book by Ovid is onstage, the first one being the early comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*, where the *Heroides* are quoted in the context of a school lesson (see Burrow 2013: 125), and the second one the already-mentioned tragedy *Titus Andronicus*. In order to understand the peculiar use of the Ovidian intertext in *Cymbeline*, it is worth recalling briefly the circumstances that lie behind the celebrated bedchamber scene (Act 2 Scene 2), when the Italian knave Iachimo illicitly intrudes into Innogen's room and notices that she has been reading the Ovidian story of Philomel.

⁹ All line-references to *Titus Andronicus* are taken from the 2018 revised Arden edition, ed. and intro. by Jonathan Bate (Shakespeare 2018 [1995]). Act, scene, and line numbers appear parenthetically within the text.

Earlier in the play, in a scene modelled upon Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Iachimo wagers with Posthumus, at that moment banished in Italy, that he would be able to seduce his wife and prove against her honour. Significantly, in Act 2 Scene 2 references to different Ovidian narratives intertwine. In fact, not only is Innogen obliquely associated with Philomel from the *Metamorphoses* but, upon exiting from the trunk in which he was hiding, Iachimo himself evokes the Roman Tarquin. According to Ovid's *Fasti*, which follow Livy's account¹⁰, Tarquin raped Collatine's wife, the chaste Lucrece, thus causing the fall of the monarchy and paving the way to the establishment of the Roman republic:

Our Tarquin thus
Did softly press the rushes ere he wakened
The chastity he wounded.
(2.2.12-14)

It is at this point that Iachimo, further increasing the dramatic tension, remarks that the princess has been reading a classical story of rape, i.e. the narrative of Tereus and Philomel:

She hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus; here the leaf's turned down
Where Philomel gave up.
(2.2.44-46)

Arguably, «The tale of Tereus» (2.2.45) hints at Ovid's story from the *Metamorphoses*, but also at Shakespeare's own re-reading of the

¹⁰ On the relationship between Ovid and Livy, see Murgatroyd (2005: 171-205). As the scholar (2005: 191) observes with reference to the Lucrece narrative, «[c]riticism is divided over whether Ovid succeeds in producing a powerfully moving account or overdoes things, while Livy gets the requisite emotional effect with brevity and dignity». As is known, Livy recounted the story of Lucrece in Book 1 of *Ab Urbe condita*. On the episode of Lucrece in Ovid's *Fasti*, see Landolfi (2004). For detailed and wide-ranging studies on the *Fasti* with an extensive bibliography, see, among others, La Bua (2010) and Merli (2000).

same narrative material in *Titus Andronicus*. Likewise, «Our Tarquin» (2.2.12) refers to both Ovid's *Fasti*, where the story of Lucrece is narrated, and to Shakespeare's narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, which was first published in 1594 and then reissued for a fifth time in 1607, just a few years before the composition of *Cymbeline*¹¹.

Even more significant is the fact that the volume Innogen reads is untitled. Although Iachimo remarks that «the leaf's turned down, / Where Philomel gave up» (2.2.45-46)¹² and the book is traditionally assumed to be Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it might well be one of those miscellany collections that, like Pettie's *A Petite Pallace* (1576) and Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566), gathered several narratives from different «authorities»¹³. Indeed, the fact that the text eludes definiteness suggests that it is many books at once. As Burrow (2024: 55) comments, «the elusiveness of the onstage Shakespearean book, its unidentifiability [...] evokes a wide range of prior texts». Following Burrow's argument, Boecker (2023) has recently shown that the volume that is brought onstage as a prop in *Cymbeline* is not necessarily Ovid's

¹¹ On Shakespeare's sources for the Lucrece story, see Burrow's Introduction to *The Rape of Lucrece* in Shakespeare (2002: 45-66). Critics generally agree that the Elizabethan dramatist used an edition of Ovid's *Fasti* edited by Paolo Marsi where numerous marginal notes and quotations from Livy adorn the book. On this, see also Philo (2020: 95-96).

¹² As Wayne points out in her edition of the play, the remark is inaccurate since Philomel never really «gave up» (see Shakespeare 2017: 203n).

¹³ In using the term 'authorities', rather than 'authors', I am following Burrow's statement according to which we should begin thinking of Shakespeare's narrative sources in terms of "authorities". As the scholar remarks, «[w]hat would happen if we stopped talking about Shakespeare's 'sources' (which took on its literary sense only in the late eighteenth century), and talked instead about his 'authorities' in *OED* sense 1 (which goes back at least to the thirteenth century): 'A book, passage, etc., accepted as a source or reliable information or evidence'? Using the plural form 'authorities' avoids any suggestion that one authority had a primary role in the genesis of a particular play, or that Shakespeare [...] had a simply reverential attitude to textual authority. [...] Shakespeare, like most early modern writers, was eclectic in gathering texts together in the genesis of his own» (Burrow 2018: 34-35).

original masterpiece, but, most likely, a medieval or early modern re-working of it – or perhaps both options. As I argue, there is one particular book by Ovid which, although not explicitly mentioned by Shakespeare but fusing the characters of Lucrece and Philomel in a peculiar way, can shed light on the main heroine, Princess Innogen, and on the play itself.

3. *CYMBELINE* AND OVID'S *FASTI*

We have seen that the passage in 2.2 where Iachimo spies upon Innogen begins with a reference to the story of Lucrece, «Our Tarquin» (2.2.12), and ends precisely with the myth of Philomel, «The tale of Tereus» (2.2.45)¹⁴. The legends of the two women are thus clearly and significantly paired. While the indefiniteness of the onstage book certainly suggests that the volume has «multiple identities» (Burrow 2024: 55), the explicit juxtaposition of the stories of Lucrece and Philomel is indeed Ovidian. As a matter of fact, the association between the two legendary women is part of a tradition that derives from Ovid¹⁵. At the end of Book 2 of the *Fasti*, after describing the rites celebrating the so-called *Regifugium*, i.e. the expulsion of the tyrannical kings from Rome consequent upon Tarquin's rape of Lucrece, the Latin poet resorts unexpectedly to the myth of Philomel, Procne, and Tereus. The Philomel story therefore functions as «a coda to the legend of Lucretia» (Newlands 1995: 163), just as it happens in Iachimo's speech in *Cymbeline*, where the allusion to Lucrece is followed (a few verses below) by a reference to the Philomel myth. In concluding the second book of his celebrated Roman calendar, Ovid wonders whether spring is coming

¹⁴ As Burrow (2013: 124) notes, Iachimo «has an instinctively male view of things».

¹⁵ Before Shakespeare, who pairs Lucrece and Philomel in both *Cymbeline* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, the legends of the two classical heroines are famously juxtaposed in Geoffrey Chaucer's poem *The Legends of Good Women*, very likely written between 1385-6.

and notices the appearance of the swallow (associated with Procne, Philomel's sister, in the *Metamorphoses*) as the herald of spring:

Do I err? Or has the swallow come, the harbinger of spring, and does she not fear least winter should turn and come again? Yet often, Procne, wilt thou complain that thou hast made too much haste, and thy husband Tereus will be glad at the cold thou feelest. (*Fast.* 2, 853-856; transl. Frazer 1989 [1931]: 119)

Even though Philomel is not mentioned directly here, she is implicit in any reference to the tale of Procne and Tereus (see Newlands 1995: 162). Moreover, in some versions of the myth, especially those belonging to the Greek tradition, the swallow represents Philomel's, rather than Procne's, metamorphosed form¹⁶.

As Newlands (1995: 162) comments on the quoted lines from *Fasti* 2, «Ovid describes the slow advent of spring in terms of Tereus' hatred for the swallow». In my view, the poet's words, which describe the end of the month of February, a winter state that is nonetheless a prelude to spring and to rebirth, are of particular relevance to *Cymbeline* especially if considering the seasonal imagery that permeates the play and specifically Innogen's role within the drama's regenerative pattern. The

¹⁶ As Natoli (2017: 65-66) makes clear, «[t]he most definitive form of the myth [...] is Sophocles's *Tereus*, a play based on the Attic version of the myth and not the Homeric one». In the Attic rendition, Procne is transformed into a nightingale, Philomela into a swallow, and Tereus into a hawk or a hoopoe. Natoli (2017: 66) thus attests that «[t]he Ovidian version of the myth follows the Attic version in most regards, with the exception of the assignment of transformation to the characters. The Roman authors in general changed the types of birds into which the characters were transformed, instead identifying the nightingale as Philomela and the swallow as Procne». On this, see also Monella (2005), Privitera (2007), and Trivellini (2017: 17n). In particular, Monella (2005: 195) highlights how difficulties often arise when tracing the associations between characters and birds in the Latin sources that recount the myth: «il carattere 'dotto' di buona parte dei riferimenti al mito da parte dei poeti latini sfocerà spesso nell'oscurità e nell'indeterminatezza, per cui in un numero considerevole di casi l'associazione tra personaggi e uccelli apparirà difficile, o addirittura impossibile, da ricostruire».

events in *Cymbeline* clearly unfold in relation to the «aptness of the season» (2.3.48). Its characters and actions are framed within the natural cycle of birth, decay, death, and rebirth and, therefore, in accordance with the metamorphoses of nature and time. In a scene that follows Iachimo's feigned rape of Innogen, Posthumus reflects upon his current banishment and, replying to his friend Philario's question «What means do you make to him [the king]?» (2.4.3), he evokes the Ovidian idea of endless change and positive transformation:

Not any, but abide the change of time,
 Quake in the present winter's state, and wish
 That warmer days would come. In these seared hopes
 I barely gratify your love.
 (2.4.4-7)

Resorting to the image of a tree in winter that awaits spring renewal and establishing a clear connection between the macrocosm and the microcosm, the natural and the human spheres, Posthumus clarifies that his «seared hopes» are withered and need «warmer days» to be revived.

The idea of time as a flux in continuous metamorphosis is a central theme in book fifteen of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which, as Arthur Golding writes in his popular translation of the original Latin, «implies, / A sum of all the former woorke» (*The Epistle*, 288-290)¹⁷. Pythagoras's celebrated speech actually reflects upon the way everything evolves into new forms. In the words of Bate (1993: 218), «Shakespeare alludes playfully to the opinions of Pythagoras in *Twelfth Night*, but in *Cymbeline* he is most Ovidian in his sustained use of a language which fuses the characters with the natural world». If King Cymbeline's rage is described at the beginning of the play as «the tyrannous breathing of the north, / [that] Shakes all our buds from growing» (1.3.36-37), Innogen, «th' Arabian bird» (1.6.17) and thus a symbol of new life, is

¹⁷ All quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* refer to the 1567 Arthur Golding translation, edited by John Frederick Nims (Ovid 2000). References to book and line numbers will be given parenthetically within the text.

associated more than once with spring flowers, namely cowslips and primroses¹⁸. It is therefore appropriate that it is Innogen herself who announces the arrival of the «gracious season» in the final act, when she is symbolically reborn and reunited with her father, with her husband Posthumus, and with her two seemingly dead brothers Guiderius and Arviragus. Addressing the once banished lord Belarius, now recovered as a benefactor and as a friend, the princess remarks: «You are my father too, and did relieve me / To see this gracious season» (5.5.399-400). If considering that at the end of *Fasti* 2 the menacing returning of winter is identified with Tereus's hatred for the swallow, and thus with male hostility against women, it is certainly significant that Innogen (who impersonates both Lucrece and Philomel) is associated with the triumph of the «gracious season» over 'wintry', male aggressiveness.

The etymological origin of the word 'February', as well as the symbolism related to this month in *Fasti* 2, also has a certain relevance to *Cymbeline*. As Ovid explains while illustrating the month's symbolism, «[o]ur sires believed that every sin and every cause of ill could be wiped out by rites of purgation» (*Fast.* 2, 35-36; transl. Frazer 1989 [1931]: 59). 'February' therefore means «the month of purification» (Robinson 2011: 69). More particularly, the term *februa* refers to «the means of atonement for crime» (Newlands 1995: 155). As the poet makes clear, «[o]ur Roman fathers gave the name of *februa* to instruments of purification [...]. In short, anything used to cleanse our bodies went by that name in the time of our unshorn forefathers» (*Fast.* 2, 19 and 29-30; transl. Frazer 1989 [1931]: 57-59). Forgiveness and the idea of atonement for crime are key themes in Shakespeare's romance, where the guilty characters, namely Posthumus, Iachimo, and Cymbeline himself, are reformed rather than punished. As King Cymbeline announces at

¹⁸ Flower imagery is at the core of the play. If the cowslip and the primrose are identified with Innogen, violets are associated with her brothers Guiderius and Arviragus. On this, see Wayne's critical commentary to 1.5.83 in Shakespeare (2017: 179n) and Zamparo (2024b).

the end of the drama, extending his forgiveness to all the Roman captives he intended to kill, «Pardon's the word to all» (5.5.421). In fact, the only male character who suffers an actual death is Cloten. Even though the latter does not commit any concrete act of violence against Innogen, he is more than once associated with greed and rapacity, which highlights the fact that he, rather than Iachimo, is the potential rapist of the play. As Wayne observes, Cloten's «desire for genuine harm shows that he is more dangerous than a simple buffoon» (Shakespeare 2017: 160n). This character's beastly attributes are highlighted from the very beginning of the play. In Act 1, Innogen emphasises her husband's excellence by comparing him to the king of birds, the eagle, and associating Cloten with «a puttock», i.e. «a bird of prey and a scavenger» (Shakespeare 2017: 155n): «O blessed that I might not! I chose an eagle / And did avoid a puttock» (1.1.140-41). Ironically, Cloten eventually dies as prey at the hands of the cave-dweller Guiderius during a hunting party in 4.2. Butler points out that Cloten's death «kills a part of Posthumus, without which reunion is impossible» (Shakespeare 2005: 34). In other words, the death of the former is necessary to expiate the crime of the latter. Indeed, the fact that Cloten dies wearing the clothes of his doppelgänger Posthumus makes the connection between the two characters explicit. Earlier in the play, in a passage that recalls the beastly lust of both Tarquin and Tereus, Cloten announced that he would rape Innogen wearing his rival's clothes:

With that suit upon my back will I ravish her – first kill him, and in her eyes. [...] He on the ground, my speech of insultment ended on his dead body, and when my lust hath dined – which, as I say, to vex her, I will execute in the clothes that she so praised. (3.5.137-143)

Interestingly, the scene in 4.2 where Cloten is slain «contains far more references to beheading that are strictly required by the plot» (Thompson 1979: 24). Despite the evil character's intention to behead Guiderius and display his severed head «on the gates of Lud's town» (4.2.99), it is the latter who manages to «cut off one Cloten's head, / Son to the Queen» (4.2.117-118):

I have ta'en
 His head from him. I'll throw't into the creek
 Behind our rock, and let it to the sea
 And tell the fishes he's the Queen's son, Cloten.
 (4.2.149-152)

The reference is to the Ovidian story of Orpheus as recounted in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* (see Shakespeare 2017: 293n). According to this version of the myth, Orpheus is torn to pieces by the Thracian women, or Bacchantes, during the festivals in honour of the god Bacchus, and his head is thrown into River Hebrus. The imagery of dismemberment is reinforced a few lines later, when Innogen awakes near Cloten's decapitated corpse (4.2.290-331)¹⁹. Shakespeare thus returns to, and insists upon, the mutilation theme by specifically linking it with Bacchic/Dionysian rituals. In Ovid's text, Orpheus is actually submitted to *sparagmos*, a Dionysian rite that consisted in sacrificing a victim by tearing it asunder. The parallels between Cloten and Orpheus actually go much further. Indeed, the latter's death is the ultimate result of his «disdain» for women, as the Bacchantes remark upon seeing the poet in Book XI: «Behold (sayes shee) behold yoon same is he that doth disdeine / Us women» (*Met.* 11, 7-8). It would be recalled that, in the previous book, the Thracian singer commits the fatal error of gazing upon his wife Eurydice, thus causing her to die twice. Unable to tolerate the pain, Orpheus eventually resolves to shun all women, which eventually leads to the Bacchantes lashing out at him.

That Shakespeare invites the audience to read Cloten's death as a sacrificial rite through the association with Dionysian rituals is certainly plausible. Cloten actually enacts that hostility towards women which Posthumus only articulates in 2.5 and for this reason he deserves to be punished.

¹⁹ I discuss elsewhere *Cymbeline's* metaphors of dismemberment as related to the Actaeon and Diana myth. See Zamparo (2024a).

Purificatory rituals that involved blood sacrifices were at the core of the month of February, as recounted in *Fasti* 2²⁰. The fact that Ovid evokes precisely the story of Philomel and Procne, which ends with a sacrificial rite, at the end of the second book of *Fasti* is particularly meaningful. It is during the time of Bacchus's festival that Procne and Philomel kill and dismember Itys, whose severed body parts are later served to his father Tereus during a banquet²¹. The two women thus simulate a Bacchic ritual in order to hide their plans for revenge. The emphasis on the dismemberment of a living being was one of the elements familiar of Greek rites associated with Bacchic-Dionysian expiatory rituals (see Newman 1994: 311). Crucially, as Newman (1994: 320) observes, the stories of Philomel and Lucrece both «involve cleansing rituals of blood sacrifice», which might, at least partly, explain the pairing of the two narratives on Ovid's part.

In Ovid's text, Itys «is the substitute victim, ironically offered to and consumed by the offending father» (Newman 1994: 320). So, in *Cymbeline*, Cloten has to be sacrificed in order for the regenerative pattern of the play to begin. Even though he does not shed any blood, he expresses more than once the barbarous desire that «there had been some hurt done» (1.2.32-33). Moreover, in line with Shakespeare's tendency to make secondary characters speak lines that enlighten the play's events, it is certainly worth noting that an unnamed lord foreshadows Cloten's death in Act 1 and describes it as a sort of sacrificial rite: «Sir,

²⁰ In his commentary to *Fasti* 2, Frazer explores the significance of the ceremony known as The Flight of the King, or *Regifugium*, and observes that this festival might derive from those ancient vegetation rites that, like the Saturnalia, originally entailed the sacrifice of a human being. As he explains, «if the representative of Saturn was formerly put to death at the Saturnalia, it may well be that the Flight of the mock King on February 24 was a mitigation of an older custom which compelled him to end his life with his reign. [...] both ceremonies probably had their root in the necessity of regulating the course of the agricultural year for the benefit of farmers» (Frazer 1989 [1931]: 396).

²¹ Newman (1994: 316) documents that several Renaissance editions of the *Metamorphoses* highlight the relationship of the Philomel and Procne story to Bacchic rituals.

I would advise you to shift a shirt. The violence of action hath made you reek as a sacrifice» (1.2.1-2). As Wayne highlights, the reference here is to “the smoke that comes from a sacrificial animal” (Shakespeare 2017: 159n).

In a way, Cloten's death nullifies all the violence conceived against Innogen by the play's male characters. As a matter of fact, when Posthumus returns, in 5.1, after his evil alter ego has died, he speaks words of repentance and the drama moves towards the final reunion. Significantly, all the metaphors of dismemberment and mutilation that dominate the first half of the play lead to the *re-membering* of previously dissevered characters and emphasise all the more clearly the concluding imagery of reunification.

3.1. *Womanhood, violation, and silence*

Scholars have been puzzled by the sudden mention of the Philomel story at the end of Book 2 of the *Fasti*. Among others, Robinson (2011: 516) observes that «[t]he fact that he [Ovid] mentions it here, rather than at any other point, is the result of a deliberate choice on his part; which should alert us to the possible significance of its position». This can be explained by the fact that «[t]he major themes of the myth of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus are those of the story of Lucretia: sexual violation, enforced silence, and psychological transformation» (Newlands 1995: 166)²². As Newlands (1995: 167) highlights, the two classical heroines «are punished for their defiance of social restrictions and norms by a metamorphosis that renders them [...] voiceless». In other words, both narratives effectively underline the relationship between violation and silence. If Philomel's voicelessness is reflected in a physical transformation (she is deprived of her tongue and eventually turned into a nightingale), Lucrece does not suffer the same dreadful mutilation but she is nonetheless rendered voiceless by the rape. When faced

²² On the relationship between Lucrece and Philomel in Ovid, see also Landolfi (2004).

with Tarquin's violence, the Roman matron is unable to speak, as Ovid highlights:

And when he touched the bed, 'The steel is in my hand, Lucretia', said the king's son 'and I that speak am a Tarquin'. She answered never a word. Voice and power of speech and thought itself fled from her breast. (*Fast.* 2, 795-798; transl. Frazer 1989 [1931]: 115)

Even when her father and husband «saw her plight, [and] they asked why she mourned», «[s]he was long silent, and for shame hid her face in her robe» (*Fast.* 2, 817-820; transl. Frazer 1989 [1931]: 117). The woman eventually stabs herself to death precisely because she is unable to tolerate the shame and forgive herself: «The pardon that you give, I do refuse myself» (*Fast.*, 2, 830; transl. Frazer 1989 [1931]: 117). Importantly, Ovid's emphasis upon Lucrece's silence, which further strengthens the link with the tongueless Philomel, represents a departure from Livy's account, where Lucrece is, instead, particularly eloquent (see Newlands 1995: 148; Robinson 2011: 463).

All the same, Philomel is silenced by the mutilation and also goes through a symbolical death when Tereus tells Procne that her sister has died:

Yet after all this wickednesse he keeping countenance still,
Durst unto Progne home repaire. And she immediatly
Demaunded where hir sister was. He sighing feynedly
Did tell hir falsly she was dead. (*Met.* 6, 719-22)

It would also be recalled that Philomel is relegated into a secluded place by Tereus in order to prevent her from escaping and revealing the truth. The association between silence and death is particularly evident if we consider that during the year in which Philomel remains secluded,

her family performs mourning rituals²³. Although Philomel's mutilation was already a crucial aspect of the myth, «Ovid does spend a great deal more time on speech loss» (Natoli 2017: 66). In fact, as Natoli remarks (2017: 66), the poet ties Philomel's lack of speech with her physical isolation from the community. If, before losing her tongue, «Philomela is portrayed as a woman with the power to speak and the determination to use that power to spread news of Tereus's misdeed», after the mutilation, «she becomes physically isolated from community through her inability to produce articulate speech and her physical removal from society in the woods» (Natoli 2017: 66)²⁴.

Shakespeare's Innogen suffers the same fate, although only on a metaphorical level. Just like Lucrece and Philomel, the Shakespearean heroine is (or is likely to be) a victim of violent kinsmen. As already noted, Innogen is threatened by male members of her own family, namely her stepbrother Cloten, her husband Posthumus, and the very Cymbeline. Analogously, Lucrece suffers violence from her husband's cousin, Sextus Tarquinius, and Philomel is raped by her brother-in-law. In her commentary to Book 2 of Ovid's *Fasti*, Newlands (1995: 162) points out that this element of kinship exacerbates the atrocity of the crime. Shakespeare's Innogen is isolated and silenced because of her refusal to comply with her father's injunction to marry Cloten and also for her being exceptionally talkative before a man who attempts more than once to violate her. She firmly decides to be «verbal» rather than staying silent,

²³ Natoli (2017: 71) points out that during the one year in which Philomel remains isolated, «her identity is refashioned by Tereus». Not only does he inform her family that she died during the journey, but they also perform rituals of mourning (Natoli 2017: 71), thus further highlighting the association between silence and death. As for the role of women's voices in Ovid, Newlands (1995: 166) observes that «[h]ere (in Book 6) and elsewhere in both the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, Ovid reflects on the fragility of the female voice at the same time as he identifies that voice with potential protest and subversion».

²⁴ Interestingly, Ursini (2021: 39-40) defines Philomel as an emblem of parrhesia, that is of frankness. According to the scholar, even Philomel's severed tongue, which, after the mutilation, muttered and wriggled in the attempt to reach her mistress's feet, can be seen as being a violent expression of Philomel's own parrhesia.

as she herself remarks when trying in vain to refuse her suitor Cloten: «You put me to forget a lady's manners / By being so verbal» (2.3.105-106)²⁵. And indeed, a few lines above, Innogen draws attention to the important topics of silence (traditionally associated with female modesty) and consent, commenting thus: «But that you shall not say I yield being silent, I would not speak» (2.3.94-95). The issues of silence and consent are particularly emphasised in Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*. As a matter of fact, when Shakespeare's Tarquin compels Lucrece to «Yield to [his] love» (l. 668), the woman does not offer any reply to the tyrant's command²⁶. In the words of Burrow,

[a]ll we witness suggests that Tarquin presents the non-choice – either she must 'yield', or else she will be raped and killed and defamed – and is then so overwhelmed by desire that he does not stay for an answer [...]. [...] Tarquin has staged the rape as being her choice, despite the fact that it is manifestly an act of coercion. (Shakespeare 2002: 71).

Innogen, on the contrary, chooses not to stay silent. This is the reason why she is rendered 'voiceless' by being forced to experience a symbolical death. In 3.4 the trustworthy Pisanio suggests that she should pretend to be dead in order to be spared from his master Posthumus's order to kill her:

I'll give but notice you are dead and send him [Posthumus]
Some bloody sign of it, for 'tis commanded
I should do so. You shall be missed at court,
And that will well confirm it.
(3.4.124-127)

²⁵ On this, see Butler's commentary to line 2.3.100 in Shakespeare (2005: 130). As the scholar highlights, Innogen «subsequently becomes even more verbal» (ibid.).

²⁶ As Burrow explains, «[t]he moment of the rape is a critical one in differing versions of the Lucretia story: Chaucer's heroine faints at this point; Ovid's is overcome by the fear of infamy; and in Livy 'her resolute modesty was overcome by his victorious lust'» (Shakespeare 2002: 70).

Silenced and symbolically dead, Innogen leaves the British court disguised as a male page in order to save herself. As Pisanio puts it, she must conceal what would be dangerous to reveal, i.e. her womanhood: «You must forget to be a woman: change / Command into obedience, dear and niceness / [...] into a waggish courage» (3.4.154-157). It is certainly no coincidence that in the scene where Pisanio is supposed to assassinate her, Innogen compares herself to a lamb: «The lamb entreats the butcher. / Where's thy knife?» (3.4.96). Indeed, both Philomel and Lucrece are associated with quivering lambs attacked by a wolf at the moment of rape (see Landolfi 2004: 95). If the former is described as a «wounded Lambe» (*Met.* 6, 670), the latter is «a little lamb that, caught straying from the fold, lies low under a ravening wolf» (*Fast.* 2, 799-800; transl. Frazer 1989 [1931]: 115).

Arguably, the image of the butcher who slays a lamb might have come down to Shakespeare either from George Gascoigne's *The Complaynt of Phylomene* or from George Pettie's collection *A Petite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasure*, both published in 1576²⁷. As one reads in Pettie's retelling of the story «Of Tereus and Progne», the Thracian tyrant cuts out Philomel's tongue like a bloodthirsty butcher:

Tereus not able to indure this talke, and fearyng least her words might bewray his wickednesse, made no more a do but tooke his knife, and like a *blouddy butcher*, cut her tounge forth of her head. (Pettie 1576: 32, emphasis mine)²⁸

Likewise, Gascoigne enhances the most gruesome aspects of Tereus's bloody deed:

²⁷ In Ovid's account of the story, Tereus is described as a wolf (*Met.* 6, 670) and as a «scarefull Erne» (*Met.* 6, 657), i.e. a ravening eagle, rather than a butcher. On the parallels between Gascoigne's and Pettie's rewritings of the Philomel story, see Trivellini (2017: 85-123).

²⁸ Where there are reliable signature marks or page numbers in early modern sources, I will use them; otherwise, I will refer to chapter titles or chapter numbers.

I blush to tell this tale,
 But sure best books say this:
 That yet the butcher did not blush
 Hir bloody mouth to kisse.
 (Gascoigne 1576: "The complaynt of Phylomene")

The audience is actually led to believe that Innogen will suffer the same fate as Philomel when, as «one that rode to 's execution» (3.2.70), she is escorted by Pisanio to Milford Haven, in the Welsh countryside, a place that ominously recalls the gloomy woods, or *locus horridus*²⁹, in which Philomel is violated and afterwards maimed and secluded. Even though Pisanio's intention is ultimately to save Innogen, by obliquely associating him to a potential butcher, Shakespeare generates multiple, almost kaleidoscopic projections of Tereus in a setting that evokes the violence and mutilation suffered by Philomel. The whole scene in Wales is actually permeated by images of slaughter as when, referring to Posthumus's letter, Pisanio notes that «The paper / Hath cut her [Innogen's] throat already» (3.4.32-33), a remark that is also reminiscent of Itys's gruesome death in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The emphasis upon dismemberment and bloodshed is enhanced a few lines below, when Innogen asks Pisanio to be torn apart: «I must be ripped. To pieces with me!» (3.4.53). The heroine's wish echoes back once again that moment in Book 6 from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when Philomel, in seeing Tereus's sword, «hoapt she should have dide, / And for the same hir naked throte she gladly did prouide» (*Met.* 6, 705-706). This reinforces the dramatic tension in Act 3, which traditionally functions as a turning point. However, as is typical of tragicomedies, or romances, the climax in the third act is not followed by a descent into catastrophe, but, rather, by an ascent towards the final reconciliation: the main heroine escapes all the threats of death and violation she has gone through and is eventually reunited with her penitent husband and father.

²⁹ On the *topos* of the forest as a *locus horridus* as opposed to the so-called *locus amoenus* in Ovid, see Trivellini (2017: 104n).

Wayne rightly observes that Innogen's isolation is particularly highlighted in the drama: unlike other Shakespearean plays, whose slandered heroines benefit from the support of at least another female companion, *Cymbeline* places special emphasis upon its heroine's isolated condition (Shakespeare 2017: 15). Given that the slander occurs in Italy while she is in Britain, Innogen is isolated also from a geographical point of view (Shakespeare 2017: 15). However, despite the heightened sense of loneliness and seclusion that accompanies the British princess throughout Shakespeare's play, the voices of Lucrece and Philomel constantly intertwine. As we shall see in what follows, two major themes of the Philomel story, which become essential also in *The Rape of Lucrece*, recur in *Cymbeline* and provide the background to Innogen's suffering.

4. MUSIC AND VIOLENCE

Shakespeare creates multiple parallels between the two violated women from classical antiquity throughout his canon. In a celebrated passage from *The Rape of Lucrece*, the Roman woman explicitly invokes the heroine from the *Metamorphoses*. In Lucrece's view, Philomel «on Tereus descants better skill» and therefore she wishes that she could imitate the latter's 'songs of ravishment':

Come, Philomel, that sing'st of ravishment:
 Make thy sad grove in my dishevelled hair.
 As the dank earth weeps at thy languishment,
 So I at each sad strain will strain a tear,
 And with deep groans the diapason bear:
 For burden-wise I'll hum on Tarquin still,
 While thou on Tereus descants better skill.
 (*The Rape of Lucrece*, 1128-1134)

The quoted lines skillfully combine two motives that are at the core of the Philomel narrative: music and violence. The expression «burden-wise» (l. 1133), which Lucrece employs to describe her shame, actually

fuses the meaning of «a load of blame, sin, sorrow» with the word «bourdon», which refers to «a bass or undersong which might be repeated in a chorus or when the main line of the melody pauses»³⁰. Bate (1993: 76) remarks that «[d]ialogue with the nightingale provides a way out which is not available to the isolated complainer».

The association between Ovid's Philomel and the melodious song of the nightingale, traditionally a harbinger of spring and also a metapoetic figure, was well known to Renaissance poets and artists (see Starks-Estes 2014: 161). To cite just one instance, in Gascoigne's *Complaynt of Phylomene*, Philomel-the nightingale eases her woe through singing:

And yet to ease hir woe,
She worthily can sing,
And as thou hearst, can please the eares
Of many men in spring.
(Gascoigne 1576: *The complaynt of Phylomene*)

In *Cymbeline* 2.3, however, music accentuates the most disturbing aspects of the Philomel episode, therefore increasing the audience's tension regarding the possibility that Innogen is actually raped. In a fairly recent essay, Minear (2020: 193) highlights that music «[i]n *Cymbeline*, as in Shakespeare's world in general, [...] occupies contradictory roles. It is a pure expression of the underlying order, the truth and harmony of the world; at the same time, it is a dangerous and seductive game». This is best seen in 2.3, which succeeds the bedchamber episode. It is not coincidental that the scene where references to both Lucrece and Philomel are made explicit is followed by some musical imagery that is, in turn, interwoven with metaphors of physical assault. In a scene that functions as a grotesque parody of Iachimo's attempted rape, Cloten organizes an *aubade* (or song of the morning), tuned by lovers to prolong the pleasures of the night, in order to «penetrate» (2.3.13) and «assail» (2.3.39) Innogen with music. The fact that Posthumus's doppelgänger is depicted as both «a bringer of music and a potential rapist»

³⁰ See Burrow's comment to line 1133 in Shakespeare (2002: 304).

(Bate 1993: 111) is consistent with the previous reference to Orpheus's dismemberment. In the words of Minear (2020: 191), «[t]he parallel with the revolting Cloten is disturbing». Noticing that «It's almost morning» (2.3.9), Cloten asks for some music to be played in the hope that his chosen victim will eventually yield:

I would this *music* would come. I am advised to give her *music* o' mornings; they say it will *penetrate*. [...] Come on, tune. If you can *penetrate* her with your fingering, so; we'll try with *tongue*, too. (2.3.11-15, emphasis mine)

As the repetition of the terms «penetrate» and «assail» in a few lines testifies, Cloten's only objective in having some music played is to assault Innogen sexually. In fact, the words «music» (2.3.11), «penetrate» (2.3.13), and «tongue» (2.3.15) evoke the main elements of the Philomel myth, which therefore lies in the background. Wayne actually documents that some modern productions emphasise the scene's disquieting associations with rape by performing the melody as «off-putting» (Shakespeare 2017: 205n). After the musicians play, Shakespeare's villain highlights even more clearly the connection between violation and music: «If this *penetrate*, I will consider your *music* the better» (2.3.27-28, my emphasis). And a few verses below, when Cymbeline and the Queen enter the stage, he repeatedly emphasises the sinister implications of his aubade: «I have *assailed* her with *musics*, but she vouchsafes no notice» (2.3.39-40, emphasis mine).

Once again, Gascoigne's rewriting of the Ovidian tale, which has been defined as «gory» and even «gothic» for its peculiar insistence upon the bloody elements of the myth (Boecker 2023: 12), is worth recalling. Gascoigne actually magnifies the macabre vividness of the Ovidian tale and does so precisely through music (see Trivellini 2017: 103). In the central section of the *Complaynt* (1576), entitled *The fable of Philomela*, the song of the nightingale becomes a painful sound that recalls the gruesome details of the story and specifically the mutilation. The line «*Iug, Iug, Iug*», which famously recurs also in T.S. Eliot's *The*

*Waste Land*³¹, is not only the bird's verse, but also an allusion to the Latin term *iugulator*, i.e. 'slayer', or 'butcher', as the narrator (the goddess Nemesis) suggests:

The next note to hir phy
Is *Iug, Iug, Iug*, I gesse,
That might I leaue to latynists
By learning to expresse.

Some commentaries make
About it much adoe:
If it should onely *Iugum* meane
Or *Jugulator* too.
(Gascoigne 1576: *The fable of Philomela*)

It is certainly plausible that Gascoigne's version might have influenced Shakespeare's writing (see Boecker 2023: 11). In *The Complaynt*, as in *Cymbeline*, music intensifies, rather than soothing, the pain derived from the physical injury suffered by the woman (although this is only symbolic in Innogen's case), thereby contributing to enhancing the spectators' horror for the atrocity committed by Tereus, as well as for Cloten's potential crime.

5. *THIS GRACIOUS SEASON*: NATURAL REBIRTH AND POLITICAL CHANGE

As I have suggested so far, the play's references to Lucrece and Philomel establish the link with *Fasti* 2. Here, «Ovid emphasizes the violence at the heart of Rome's formation» and «locates that violence as part of a recurrent problem in power relations between men and women» (Newlands 1995: 170). In *Cymbeline*, instead, Innogen creates political and familiar stability by challenging gender boundaries. Although it has been observed that «[h]er male disguise has reduced rather than in-

³¹ On Gascoigne as T.S. Eliot's undeclared source, see Trivellini (2017: 33n).

creased her courage» (Thompson 1979: 32), it is through values traditionally associated with femininity that the page Fidele successfully fosters the appeasement between the two previously opposed forces. As Bowling (2017: 104) rightly observes, «Innogen/Fidele does not simply adopt masculinity; she alters it, presenting an ideal of mediation and sympathy rather than militarism and competition». Disguised in male clothing, the British princess serves Lucius and his Roman army as «A page so kind, so duteous, diligent, / [...] So feat, so nurse-like» (5.5.86 and 88). In so doing, she also challenges kinship, which is the main source of violence in both the Philomel and Lucrece narratives, as already noted. Addressing her natural father, Shakespeare's heroine remarks that «He [Lucius] is a Roman, no more kin to me / Than I to your highness» (5.5.112-13). She therefore defies familiar allegiance for the sake of peace and political justice (see Bowling 2017: 105). Clearly, despite the heightened sense of misogyny that pervades the play and the attempt, in Posthumus's words, to eradicate the «woman's part»³², *Cymbeline's* concluding peace is highly dependent upon its female protagonist.

What makes the connections with the classical stories of Lucrece and Philomel as treated by Ovid in *Fasti* even more compelling is the fact that Innogen's attempted rape is connected with the very construction of Britain's identity. Likewise, as Newlands (1995: 160) recalls, «in the *Fasti* rape is not simply a matter of erotic and voyeuristic interest but is interwoven into the major founding legends of Rome». As for *Cymbeline*, scholars agree that it «is a distinctly British play» (Shakespeare 2017: 39). The drama is set in the first century AD, during the reign of Augustus Caesar, and «can usefully be considered a myth of national origin» (Garber 2004: 804). However, as Butler remarks, readers and spectators might overlook the fact that the play's heroine actually bears the name of the mother of the Britons (Shakespeare 2005: 36). It is now

³² In a misogynistic burst of rage, Posthumus reflects upon the possibility of excising the *woman's part*: «Could I find out / The woman's part in me – for there's no motion / That tends to vice in man but I affirm / It is the woman's part» (2.5.19-21).

generally accepted that the spelling «Imogen», which appears in the 1623 Folio, is a transcription error, since Shakespeare originally called her «Innogen». The dramatist actually borrowed some of the play's names from Raphael Holinshed's first volume of *Chronicles*, where he found information about early Britain (see Shakespeare 2005: 36). According to Holinshed's mythical history, Innogen was the wife of Brute, Aeneas's great grandson and the legendary founder of London. As it has been observed, «[t]he fact that Shakespeare named his heroine after the mother of the British people makes the attack on her chastity all the more clearly an issue of nationhood» (Shakespeare 2005: 37). In other words, Innogen's pivotal role in shaping her country's identity is all the more highlighted by the explicit association with the Lucrece legend.

The fact that the announcement of the «gracious season» (5.5.400) corresponds with the actual birth of a «peace» (5.5.457) between the Britons and the Romans leads us back, once again, to Ovid's text. In the concluding portion of *Fasti* 2, seasonal change (signalled by the myth of Philomel and Procne) is skillfully grafted upon the legend of Lucrece (see Newlands 1995: 163). As Robison (2011: 516) makes clear, the arrival of spring is therefore invested with political implications:

[t]he arrival of spring is not without political connotations [...]; here, as often, spring represents the end of troubled times: [...]. Spring is also the appropriate season for the beginning of the new *saeculum* which Augustus has introduced; this would be, according to some, a new Golden Age.

It might also be noted that the very King James VI and I, the patron of Shakespeare's theatre company when *Cymbeline* was written and performed, was hailed as the new Augustus: after turning England and Scotland into Britain, the Stuart monarch came to be regarded as the restorer of the *pax augusta* in Europe.

It is not surprising, then, that the restored alliance between the two armed forces in *Cymbeline* is related to the symbolical resurrection of its protagonist, who bears the name of the legendary mother of the Brit-

ish people. As «th' Arabian bird» (1.6.17) and as a spring flower, Innogen is born again at the end of the drama. Still disguised as Fidele, she appears to the other characters as one «revived from death» (5.5.119) and as a «dead thing alive» (5.5.123). Earlier in the play, in 4.2, the seeming dead body of Innogen/Fidele is buried by her brothers, Guiderius and Arviragus, in a passage that foreshadows the lady's re-birth by evoking the cyclical renewal of nature:

The ruddock would
With charitable bill – [...]

[...] – bring thee all this,
Yea, and furred moss besides, when flowers are
none,
To winter-ground thy corpse.
(4.2.223-28, emphasis mine)

As documented by *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 'to winter-ground' signifies «[t]o provide or serve as a protective winter covering for (something)». Although the term is not recorded before 1610, in his *Note on Cymbeline*, Steevens points out that the word is related to the vegetable world: «[t]o winter-ground a plant is to protect it from the inclemency of the winter-season» (see *OED*, 'winter-ground, v.').

Given the play's intertextual references to Ovid and its pervasive bird imagery, it is certainly of note that Belarius's remark «The bird is dead / That we have made so much on» (4.2.196-97), uttered at Fidele's burial, evokes the figure of Philomel as nightingale (Starks-Estes 2014: 178)³³. Seen in this light, Innogen's final, symbolic resurrection acquires even greater relevance. As «a composite Ovidian figure» (Starks-Estes 2014: 175), she reverses the tragic fates of Lucrece and Philomel and triumphs over «the furious winter's rages». In a song passage, Guiderius laments the seeming demise of Innogen and recalls the image of «the tyrannous breathing of the north» (1.3.36), initially associated with King Cymbeline's hostility towards his daughter:

³³ On *Cymbeline*'s bird imagery, see Simonds (1992: 198-232).

Fear no more the heat o'th' sun,
 Nor the furious winter's rages,
 Thou thy worldly task hast done.
 (4.2.257-59)

To say that in *Cymbeline* Shakespeare evokes the nightingale through the figure of Innogen/Philomel in order «to establish himself as an Ovidian poet-playwright, signaling his multilayered borrowings from Ovid» (Starks-Estes 2014: 162), highlights even more clearly the valedictory and retrospective nature of this play. Innogen, in particular, as the 'resurrected bird', is the climactic symbol of a play that revives Ovid while at the same time being a reflection upon Shakespeare's own previous work.

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