CLASSICISM AND MONSTROSITY

TORN BODIES

IN PICASSO'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF

FOR PLEASURE

OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*

JENNIFER STAGER

Orpheus slumps over his lyre, his left hand clasping the instrument's upper curve. The lyre seems to be used to anchor the body that sprawls across his lap, its limbs falling limply to either side. The specifics of how many bodies are being shown and to whom they belong are not immediately evident here, for Pablo Picasso's lines do not allow us to parse the figure(s) easily. This drawing, executed on September 1, 1930, is known as *The Death of Orpheus*. The study was Picasso's initial experimentation with imagery for Albert Skira's 1931 French translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to which the artist contributed fifteen full-page etchings and fifteen half-plates to use as frontispieces for each of the books of Ovid's epic.[1]

Pablo Picasso, ***The Death of Orpheus***, study for Ovid's ***Metamorphoses***, September 1, 1930; pen and ink, 10⅝ × 8¼ in. (27 × 21 cm); Musée Picasso, Paris, France (Inv. MP 1033 recto)

The Roman poet Ovid published the *Metamorphoses* in Latin in 8 CE; his text, which escapes traditional genre designations, retold more than two hundred and fifty Greco-Roman myths, stretching from the creation of the world through the deification of Julius Caesar in 42 BCE, a year after Ovid's birth. Through his focus on changing forms and bodies, on the process of becoming (often through violent means), Ovid thematizes the very acts of rewriting and reworking.[2] Surely Ovid's authorial control and revision of a vast array of familiar Greco-Roman stories appealed to Picasso, who practiced a similar selective canonical absorption and modification in his own work. Just as Ovid's text influenced and inspired later writers such as Dante Alighieri, William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Giovanni Boccaccio, so too did many visual artists, including Sandro Botticelli, Nicolas Poussin, Peter Paul Rubens, and Odilon Redon, take up specific Ovidian tales in painting, sculpture, and graphic work.[3] Picasso's choice of Ovid's text for his venture with Skira thus participates in a long-standing literary and visual tradition. For both Ovid and Picasso the appeal of tradition lay in remaking it.[4]

With the exception of an unpublished illustration of Actaeon becoming a boar, Picasso avoided depicting an actual metamorphosis. Instead, he used linear style to show bodily interaction and exchange, the movements of bodies into one another. Many of Picasso's preliminary drawings for the *Metamorphoses* work through ideas that had long engaged him in his academic training, in his attention to the inherent fragmentation of the body through Cubism, and in the pressure he places on what a classical body can be in large paintings from the early 1920s. During this time, Picasso's large-scale work engaged directly with classicism, while in the later part of the decade his large-scale painting did not quote classical art explicitly. If

1
Metamorphoses was Skira's first publication, and these were Picasso's first book illustrations. See Marilyn McCully, "Boisgeloup, l'Olympe de Picasso," in Jean Clair, *Picasso érotique*, exh. cat. (New York: Prestel, 2001), 138–52. See also Lisa Florman, *Myth and Metamorphosis: Picasso's Classical Prints of the 1930s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 16.

2
Richard Tarrant, "Ovid and Ancient Literary History," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21. On Ovid's becoming as coterminous rather than fixed, see Charles Boer, "Introduction," *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, trans. Charles Boer (Dallas: Spring, 1989), xi.

3
On the *Metamorphoses* in Western art, see Paul Barolsky, *Ovid and the Metamorphosis of Modern Art from Botticelli to Picasso* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

4
On the complication of Ovid's classicism, see Florman, *Myth and Metamorphosis*, 24, and Barolsky, *Ovid and the Metamorphosis*, 43–61.

5
On fragments and the body, see William Tronzo, *The Fragment: An Incomplete History* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2009).

6
Elizabeth Cowling, *Picasso: Style and Meaning* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 429.

7
Although *kouroi* and *korai* were types, individuation was a significant aspect of their value. As the representative of the dedicator, *kouroi* and *korai* display their individuality in terms of hairstyles (both coiffure and pubic hair), scale, color, and attributes. See Katerina Karakasi, *Archaic Korai* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003).

8
Cowling, *Picasso: Style and Meaning*, 548.

9
On inlaid eyes in ancient Greek art, see Jennifer Stager, "The Embodiment of Color in Ancient Mediterranean Art" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012). On the debate among modern artists about the sculptural gaze and whether to sculpt the eyes smoothly or drill a pupil, see Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *La Tache aveugle: essai sur les relations de la peinture et de la sculpture à l'âge modern* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 86–92.

the classical tradition up to this time had emphasized wholeness, even as fragments, Picasso played with this ideal of wholeness in paint, often flattening or compressing parts of even his most sculptural bodies.[5] However, he remained engaged throughout the 1920s with inquiries toward which he directed the classical in the period of 1921–23. What he moved away from over the decade and returned to again at its close is the deployment of imagery that bears a formal relationship to a classical poetics of the body. Of the many interwar paintings executed in this large, lumbering sculptural style, I present two as typical: *Three Women at the Spring* and *The Pipes of Pan*.

Pablo Picasso, ***Three Women at the Spring***, Summer 1921

Picasso executed at least twenty full studies for *Three Women at the Spring*, not counting the many related drawings and paintings preceding it and studies of individual body parts, in particular of hands.[6] The women's loosely modeled masses define the space taken up by their bodies. The rocks and the small water jugs place these women in an undefined, somewhat pastoral setting. Each woman is an iteration of her companions in the manner of ancient Greek *korai*, or maidens.[7] The thick, vertical drapery of their garments evokes the solid fluting of Doric columns as well as the folds of the ancient Greek *peplos* (outer garment). These women are not the sensuous female Aphrodites, the smooth bathing nudes that populate paintings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, nor are they like the three nymphs traced out by delicate lines as shown, for example, in Picasso's *Sculptor with a Sculpted Group* (*Homage to Carpeaux*) (1934) from the Vollard Suite (1930–37).[8] The women at the fountain are decidedly not graces. Picasso depicts the restrained chignons of the figures in *Three Women at the Spring* as though they are carved. Dark, almost vacant eyes look out from sculptural faces, recalling Picasso's 1906 portrait of Gertrude Stein, as well as the empty gazes of innumerable Greco-Roman sculptures.[9] Picasso depicts the semblance of sculpture, of the completed presence of the figure in the round that characterizes the plastic body, yet in certain passages he collapses the three-dimensionality of his figures. In the lower right-hand corner, for example, he drips paint from the woman's feet, flaunting the medium from which she emerged. Shading at the women's necks suggests Picasso's choice, in the later 1920s, to sever bust or face from body, both the cleaving and its reconstitution. Their bodies, however, remain solidly bounded.

In *The Pipes of Pan* (p. 116), Picasso's youths have the same angular faces as his maidens. They share their heavy-footed weight, but Picasso flattens the youths' plastic presence. The passage of dripping paint at the foot of *Three Women* that marked their medium becomes the flattened volumes of the pipes, parts of the figures' chests, and the relationship of their legs to architecture. The painted body begins to lose its

10
John Richardson suggests that Skira was responsible for Picasso's selection of myths and shifts in style from the studies to the finished products; see John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso: The Triumphant Years, 1917–1932* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 384. Yet the young publisher-to-be had no authority on which to manage the famous artist, whose contribution to his nascent publishing venture was career-making; the choice of book to publish, possibly at the casual suggestion of Pierre Matisse, and the selection of myths from that book and the styles in which they are executed were all Picasso's own. On Pierre Matisse, see Florman, *Myth and Metamorphosis*, 14–15; McCully, "Boisgeloup, l'Olympe de Picasso," 140.

11
Older illustrated editions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* often included multiple plates per myth, illustrating sequential scenes from an ongoing narrative. For example, the Latin-to-German version published in Cologne in 1607, now in the collection of the Getty Research Institute, contains over 130 engravings with elaborate borders.

sculpted integrity. Just as Picasso's women evoke ancient Greek *korai*, so do these young men recall ancient Greek *kouroi* (youths), archaic Greek dedications that play between individuation and type. Both *Three Women at the Spring* and *The Pipes of Pan* present the illusion of individual bodily integrity, of *presence* in a world constructed with and in relation to other bodies.

Not only did Picasso edit his own preliminary sketches for *Metamorphoses* to settle on a very clear, curvilinear style that joins all thirty drawings, but he also carefully selected which Ovidian tales to illustrate, reworking the style in which he responded to them.[10] His selection is as important for which stories he leaves out (such as Proteus, Pygmalion, Narcissus, and the Minotaur) but which, I would argue, he picks up in other contexts. Some of what Picasso excluded from his tightly edited 1931 edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* finds expression in both the Vollard Suite and *Guernica*.

Pablo Picasso, ***Death of Orpheus***, illustration for Ovid's ***Metamorphsis*** (first plate). September 3, 1930. Drypoint on Arches paper, 22.5 x 17.1 cm; Musée Picasso, Paris, France

In earlier editions of the *Metamorphoses*, artists matched sequential, didactic illustrations to Ovid's narrative, which often includes several connected myths in each book. Picasso, in contrast, presents a synchronic image of an event from a single myth per book.[11] The collected images still present a continuous narrative, but Picasso's tight editing gives his selection much more visual power. In the only instance of repetition within the series, he devotes two of his fifteen full plates to different components of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice (*Eurydice Bitten by a Serpent* and *Death of Orpheus*). He also includes half-sized, non-narrative frontispiece images of faces and fragments of bodies; he executes these in the same clean lines as the larger illustrations, unifying his style across all thirty final images. These half-plates of faces and fragments of bodies offer up witnesses to Ovid's account within each book. Picasso depicts both selected moments in the narrative, and fragments of an audience. In this way, Picasso departs from the didacticism of his predecessors in favor of directing a collective theatricality.

ORPHEUS

Picasso began his experiments with Ovid and Orpheus with the study from September 1, 1930, and in the following three weeks he went on to produce at least two other studies, specifically of the *Death of Orpheus*, among his many preliminary drawings for the full series. Depictions of the myth of Orpheus appear as early

12
Apollo was, among other things, the god of music, and Calliope is the muse invoked at the beginning of epic poetry, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, or Vergil's *Aeneid*. Ovid tells the story of Apollo's pursuit of the nymph Daphne, who turns into a tree to escape him, in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*.

13
In Vergil's account, Eurydice is running to escape rape by a satyr; in Ovid's account, she is dancing with the Naiads on the day of her wedding to Orpheus when the serpent bites her.

14
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.71–74. The edition cited here and below (unless otherwise noted) is *Metamorphoses: A New Translation*, trans. Charles Martin (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005).

as the fifth century BCE, such as on an ancient Attic red-figure calyx krater now in the collection of the Getty Villa: the painter has depicted a scene of maenads attacking Orpheus on one side (p. 201), while the other side shows a more generalized Dionysiac scene. Orpheus, whose story is recounted in Books 10 and 11 of the *Metamorphoses*, was the child of Apollo and Calliope, the Greek muse of epic poetry.[12] Orpheus falls in love with Eurydice, who is bitten by a serpent on their wedding day and killed.[13] Orpheus follows Eurydice into the underworld to negotiate with Hades, who, swayed by Orpheus's musical lament, agrees to return Eurydice to the living world, on the condition that Orpheus not look back at Eurydice as she follows him out of the underworld. Of course, just before they would have emerged, Orpheus indeed looks back, and Eurydice is lost to the underworld forever. Orpheus mourns Eurydice and his music arrests the natural world surrounding him until a group of Thracian maenads in a Bacchic frenzy slaughter him with stones, branches, *thyrsoi* (Dionysiac staffs), and their bare hands. Orpheus's lyre and severed head float down the river Hebrus: "the plaintive lyre makes some kind of moan, the lifeless tongue moans along with it, the moaning riverbanks respond in turn."[14]

Picasso avoids depicting Ovid's triumphant *ekphrasis* (vivid description) of Orpheus's lyre and postmortem tongue continuing their low lament. In the sketch Picasso made on September 1 (p. 163), the passage at the center, identifiable only by Orpheus's lyre, seems to show Orpheus grasping at a falling body. His lyre and head are joined in such a manner that the lyre seems to cover part of his face and mouth. The falling body in the central passage could be his own, or possibly Eurydice's, whose fall precedes and precipitates Orpheus's own death in Ovid's narrative. In the published version (p. 201), the falling body has definitely become Orpheus's, but in the study (p. 163) Picasso appears to be exploring the relationship of one death to the other. Picasso's rendering is ambiguous regarding the boundaries between bodies and body parts, a practice that he repeats in other drawings and etchings, as well as in other media. In the upper right corner, Picasso reiterates this coterminous figure of head, lyre, and body, using less shading and even more weight to depict the falling limbs. The figures remain difficult to parse, but just below the pair, Picasso depicts again the twisting, falling body, as though describing the path of its fall. Orpheus has lost his grip. The figure's slack arm merges with the raised arm of the personified wind blowing in from the right. Hatched shading highlights her profile and attack. Her right hand wields a raised blade, moving straight toward the central figure of Orpheus. She is at once a maddened maenad and the wind that scatters Orpheus's limbs and carries his lyre and head, still lamenting, down the river. Limbs and torsos fill the upper left section of the study, conveying action but not its narrative particulars. One hand grips a bow that points upward. The lowing bulls, one in the lower left foreground and the other in the upper right background, set the pastoral, Orphic setting and hint at formal qualities that Picasso would later bring to *Guernica*.

15
On Etruscan mirror engravings and Picasso, see Florman, *Myth and Metamorphosis*, 18–21, especially 18, and *Cahiers d'art* 4 (1929), edited by Christian Zervos, which featured an article on the liminal "classical" status of Etruscan art. Etruscan mirrors are traditionally cited as the source material for Picasso's style, and they are certainly relevant; ancient Greek vases were as readily available and as stylistically important for Picasso in 1930.

16
Barolsky, *Ovid and the Metamorphosis*, 112.

17
Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks: With Instructions for the Connoisseur, and an Essay on Grace in Works of Art*, trans. Henry Fuseli (London, 1765). Alex Potts notes *stille*'s connotations of the stillness and calm after death, which the typical translation "quiet" does not fully capture, but which seems relevant to Picasso's engagement with Ovid. Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1.

18
On Winckelmann and the classical tradition, see Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*.

A preliminary sketch for *Death of Orpheus*, dated September 16, 1930, deploys the heavy shading that Picasso works through some of his etchings in the Vollard Suite. Here, he takes on Orpheus's violent death directly; maenads stab Orpheus's falling body with their *thyrsoi*. His bearded head, still attached to his body, falls back as a maenad from the bottom right—a new version of the previous study's wind-like woman—claws at his jaw and mouth, about to rip his head from his neck. The lowing bulls of the earlier study are now actively put to use, with maenads grabbing their horns for use in rending Orpheus limb from limb. Like ancient depictions of the event, Picasso stays close to Ovid's text.

Pablo Picasso, ***Death of Orpheus***, unpublished plate from Book 11 of Ovid's ***Metamorphoses***, September 16, 1930; etching, 12⅝ × 8¹¹⁄₁₆ in. (31.2 × 22.1 cm); The Museum of Modern Art, New York

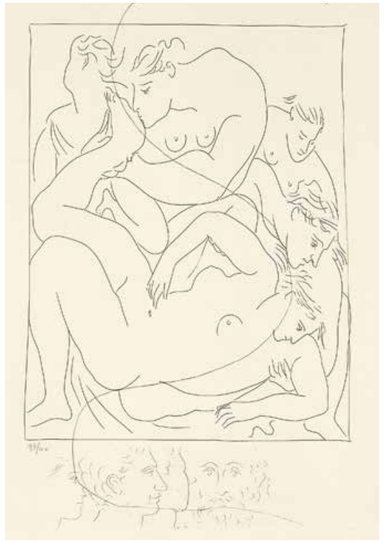
None of Picasso's preliminary drawings resemble the stripped-down published etching, a style that owes much to the sleek lines carved on Etruscan bronze mirrors and painted on Attic vases, examples of which were abundantly available at the Louvre, where Picasso would have viewed them.[15] In his initial studies of September 1930, Picasso tests his overall approach to the *Metamorphoses*, paying particular attention to the Orpheus myth. His passages of heavy shading, especially in the September 16 study, match the heaviness of Ovid's stories, which are primarily tales of change wrought by destruction, as well as of subjectivity dispersed across different and diffuse forms. Ovid, however, retells these tales of horrific abasement and transformation with masterfully deft, even light, verse.[16] Picasso, in turn, riffs on Ovid's opposition of form and content. He depicts the most gruesome myths in a classicizing style bearing the conservative weight of tradition, aligned with Winckelmann's famous mid-eighteenth-century pronouncement concerning classical Greek art's *edle Einfalt und stille Größe* (typically translated "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur"), a predicament from which classical antiquity has never fully escaped.[17] In their juxtaposition of form and content, both Ovid and Picasso contest this Winckelmannian ideal, as it has been conventionally received.[18]

In his published illustration of the *Death of Orpheus*, dated September 18, 1930, Picasso has stripped the image of its violent specifics: no blood, no torn limbs, no severed head, no murmuring, lifeless tongue. Orpheus is shown in profile as he falls downward, arms flailing over his head as his body arches in flight. A kneeling cow is shown below him and three women huddle together behind him, each clutching a branch or bow in her right hand. The three women track Orpheus's descent. The cow's hoof appears as the left leg of the crouching woman at far right. Her companion at the far left springs up and arches forward in an inversion of

[19] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.10–11.
[20] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.
[21] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2.

Orpheus's backward-arching fall. Her left leg bends at the knee and her right leg rises straight up from where her foot touches Orpheus's bent right leg. She rises as he falls, directed by her gaze.

Eurydice's death is similarly serene. She has fallen, and the torqued lines of her body from right leg through hips and spine suggest motion, even as she appears to rest in the arms of one of her attendants. Her garment spreads out beneath her. Three women attend her as a fourth turns away at far left. One woman gazes at Eurydice as she lifts her by her armpit, while behind her another figure moves forward, simultaneously a former iteration of the kneeling woman and a separate figure. The central woman kisses and clasps Eurydice's right foot, where the snake bit. A fourth woman, wearing a *peplos*, faces away; she might be an iteration of Eurydice several moments earlier, running before the fatal snake bite. Eurydice, dead or dying, looks toward the snake on the ground. Picasso reduced the snake itself to comic proportions, a mere squiggle beneath Eurydice's forearm and dying gaze.



Pablo Picasso, ***Eurydice Bitten by a Snake***, illustration for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1930; etching on Rives BFK paper, 12 5/16 × 8¾ in. (31.2 × 22.2 cm); California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Achenbach Foundation, Bruno and Sadie Adriani Collection, 1971.28.69

Picasso maintains a light, streamlined style in depicting Eurydice's violent death, just as he does with her lover's. He avoids showing the actual attacks, scenes of the underworld, or Orpheus's fatal look back. Picasso never competes with Ovid's *ekphrasis*, but his dissolution of bounded, individuated bodies, to which he gestured in his paintings of the early 1920s, responds to the death and dismemberment in Ovid's stories. In the *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus dies at the hands of Thracian women, Eurydice from a serpent bite, Semele from Zeus's thunderbolt.[19] Proteus changes rapidly—from lion to boar to serpent to bull to tree to water, and finally to flame.[20] Phaethon, intoxicated by the hubris of youth, tries to command his father's chariot, scorches the earth, and Zeus smites him dead.[21] Change is violent; love is violent; history is violent; humanity is violent. Picasso depicts it all with exquisite line. This duality of formal restraint and internal violence constitutes one of Picasso's commentaries on classicism itself. For Ovid the soul remains intact through each subsequent change in form; Picasso, in contrast, shows us the myth of a body's solidity, of its bounded individuation.

[22] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.412–674. On repetition and Picasso, see Jeremy Melius, "Inscription and Castration," in *October* (2015), 61.

PHILOMELA

Picasso executed four illustrations over a month (September 18–October 18, 1930) depicting the Thracian king Tereus's rape and disfigurement of his sister-in-law, Philomela.[22] In Ovid's narrative, Tereus travels to Athens to fetch Philomela from her father; he then brings her back to Thrace, where he takes her into the woods and repeatedly rapes her. After the first rape, Philomela says that she wishes she had died and that she will tell others what Tereus has done. Tereus cuts out her tongue and rapes her again, then abandons her brutalized body to return to her sister, his wife, Procne. Here is Charles Boer's translation of the scene:

> King drags Pandion's daughter to high stable / hidden in ancient forest; locks her in, / pale & trembling, scared of everything; she asks with tears / where's sister? He admits evil & rapes solitary / girl; she calls in vain for father, sister, great / gods above…
> Soon herself again, she tears rumpled hair / like mourner, arms cut striking / …why not take my life too? / that crime's left: I wish you had, / before evil copulation! My ghost then innocent; / …you'll pay! Shame aside, I'll tell!…
> Tyrant's anger aroused, & fear: driven by both, / he frees sword from scabbard on belt, grabs her by hair, / ties hands behind back; seeing sword, / Philomela offers throat, hoping for death; he grips / indignant tongue (struggling to speak & calling / father's name) with

LEFT Pablo Picasso, ***Tereus and Philomela***, illustration for Ovid's ***Metamorphoses***, September 18, 1930; etching on vellum, 8⅞ × 6¾ in. (22.4 × 17.2 cm); Musée Picasso, Paris (Inv. MP 2151)

CENTER Pablo Picasso, ***Struggle between Tereus and Philomela***, illustration for Ovid's ***Metamorphoses***, October 18, 1930; etching on vellum, 8¾ × 6¾ in. (22.2 × 17.1 cm); Musée Picasso, Paris (Inv. MP 2155)

RIGHT Pablo Picasso, ***Struggle between Tereus and Philomela***, illustration for Ovid's ***Metamorphoses***, Plate II, October 18, 1930; etching on vellum, 8¾ × 6¾ in. (22.3 × 17.2 cm); Musée Picasso, Paris (Inv. MP2156)

CLASSICISM AND REVOLUTION

JENNIFER STAGER

Picasso executed the series of one hundred prints known as the Vollard Suite over the decade of the 1930s, deploying a range of techniques and depicting a range of subjects (including circus performers, the Minotaur, faun and maiden scenes, and studio scenes), and yet a clear connection between prints continues to evade summary analysis.[1] Ambroise Vollard, Picasso's dealer from 1901 until Vollard's death in 1939, commissioned the series in 1931. Unlike much of Picasso's graphic work of the late 1920s and early 1930s, such as his illustrations for Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the Vollard Suite was not structured around a specific text. While diverse in technique and subject matter, the series of images that comprise the suite share a consistent integration of forms and subjects from the antique past in modern contexts.

Sculptor Reclining before Nude (p. 207), from the loose subset of images of studio sessions within the Vollard Suite, is paradigmatic: the scene depicts a classicizing sculpture that recalls, but does not strictly imitate, the Aphrodite of Knidos, reportedly the first female nude sculpture in ancient Greek art, as well as the slightly later crouching Aphrodite, also naked (p. 206).[2] A base affirms that this naked figure is a statue, although she is in the act of drying her right arm with a towel and her face turns towards the viewer over her right shoulder. A bearded man reclines naked on a bed or couch in the arms of a woman whose head is visible in profile, suggesting a bust, but for her hands clasping the man. The scene, indeed all of the Vollard Suite, plays with Pygmalion-esque boundaries between art and life. Another etching, *Masked Characters and Bird-Woman* (p. 213) literalizes the fluidity of boundary in the suite by situating the scene within the world of the theater. Three naked figures approach the sculpted bird on a pedestal. Each wears a different mask—a bearded male, a Minotaur with his cane, and a woman holding up a male mask to her face. The Dionysiac world of the theater in ancient Greece was foremost a space of religious, political, and civic expression.[3] There is a politics to Picasso's classical theater here as well—and a contemporary (but independent) etching offers a key.

In 1937, Picasso produced a standalone graphic work, *The Dream and Lie of Franco I* and *II*, against the fascist regime of Francisco Franco in Spain. Nine graphic novel–style panels, arranged in three rows of three, comprise each of two plates. The first plate depicts Franco in each panel, moving through various acts of destruction while mounted on a horse. In the third scene, upper left of the plate, Franco attacks with a pickax a classical (or classicizing) bust that looks like one of Picasso's studio images from the Vollard Suite.

Given the tyrannical hold of the classical Greek and Roman past on the history of Western art and the association of classical antiquity with a kind of conservative, elite culture in the modern West, a classical bust might seem a strange object for a fascist to attack. Indeed, elsewhere in Europe, Hitler and Mussolini put the classical past to their own use; it is, for example, that very moment of art produced under the short-lived Athenian democracy that Leni Riefenstahl coopted for Hitler in her film *Olympia* (1938). In this way, classical culture became a tool of conservative governments and social groups. Picasso, in contrast, sought out the multifaceted and ambiguous aspects of antiquity and drew them into his own modernism. Franco's axe attack could be taken at face value, as an iconoclastic act of a dictator. Picasso's classicism, however, is rarely so straightforward. Under Franco's axe is classicism itself, which for Picasso is always already multifaceted and fragmented.

In the Vollard Suite Picasso repeatedly depicts the blind Minotaur. In the version from September 22, 1934 (p. 42), the scene of the blind Minotaur is contiguous with another canvas, a variation on his July 22 linear sketch for *The Death of Marat*. The sketch is a citation of Jacques-Louis David's painting of the murdered French revolutionary. Picasso's executes this image within an image in a distinctly sparse and linear style, abandoning the curving lines of his classicizing figures. Here within these repeated depictions of ancient players and forms, Picasso eulogizes a modern revolutionary. In this way, Picasso's Vollard Suite depicts the potential for revolution within even the most classical of forms.

1 On the history of the Vollard Suite and its status as a cohesive unit, see Lisa Florman, *Myth and Metamorphosis: Picasso's Classical Prints of the 1930s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 70–73.

2 See Christine Mitchell Havelock, *The Aphrodite of Knidos and Her Successors: A Historical Review of the Female Nude in Greek Art* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

3 See Mary Louise Hart, *The Art of Ancient Greek Theater* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010).

> forceps, extracts it with sword; / last of tongue root quivers: tongue lies / trembling, murmuring on dark ground: like snake's / tail, lopped off & wanting to leap, it throbs, / & dying, seeks mistress's feet; (& they say / after this horror—I can hardly believe it— / he took her torn body for pleasure again & again).[23]

Philomela survives and weaves the events into a tapestry that she sends to her sister. In revenge, the sisters kill Itys, Tereus and Procne's son, and serve his flesh to Tereus at a banquet. After the king has eaten his son's flesh, Philomela emerges with the head of Itys on a platter. The acute violence of Philomela's story is nominally mitigated by her final transformation into a nightingale. It was no doubt significant for Picasso that Philomela's story emerge as something of an *Ur-eine* (primal being) for modern poetry. The tale reappears most famously in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[24]

While Ovid offers extreme details of the story's violence, like Philomela's severed tongue writhing on the ground and still struggling to call for her father, Picasso depicts in synchronic narrative the repeated rapes and the dissolution of the body that these rapes engender. In his four versions, Picasso works through the violent story to settle on a version in which the dissolution of the boundary between Philomela's and Tereus's bodies conveys its violence. In the September 18 study (p. 169 left), he depicts Tereus and Philomela as separate and defined bodies at rest. Only the disfiguring dagger at Tereus's hip registers any aspect of Ovid's narrative. In his three other versions, Picasso discards the direct reference of the dagger to specific tortures, focusing instead on the more generalized penetration of one body by another.[25]

Picasso's published etching (p. 200) depicts Tereus moving into a resistant Philomela, although the ambiguity or at least restraint of her resistance sets Picasso's drawing decidedly apart from Ovid's text. Tereus simultaneously stands over Philomela and lunges into her; his right leg appears both straight and bent-kneed, while his left is braced to the side. Philomela's right foot merges with Tereus's torso, pushing into him, in vain. The limb itself is not fully enclosed or defined but open to the invasion. Her left leg kicks against Tereus's standing right leg and opens against the movement of his bent right leg. Philomela fights and flails before our eyes and in the same figural moment. The lack of bodily enclosure, particularly of torsos and genitals, registers the merging of their bodies, of his movement into her. Tereus's hands clasp Philomela's back and neck, holding her to him. She averts her face. The strands of her hair recall Picasso's earlier, electric paintings from the late 1920s. Of his four studies of this story, Picasso chose the most domesticated for publication. Without Ovid's words, the image might register as sex-play, an ambiguity that pervades different episodes throughout the Vollard Suite.

23 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.6.125–26.

24 In *Titus Andronicus* (act 2, scene 4), Lavinia is raped by two men, who cut off not just her tongue but also her hands, to prevent her from weaving or writing an account of their crime, as Philomela did. Eliot references the rape of Philomela in *The Waste Land* at lines 98–103.

25 The dagger returns later in the hands of the Minotaur in a group of five etchings dated April 11, 1933. The story appears in *Metamorphoses* 8.

26
The illustrated border does not appear in Florman's *Myth and Metamorphosis*, but does appear in the 2001 exhibition catalogue *Picasso érotique*, 104–5. The catalogue includes only two studies, perhaps because the first and final versions were not sufficiently "érotique."

Picasso's third study most fully articulates the breadth of his engagement with Philomela's rape. He composed the scene within a central rectangular frame but filled the border with sketches (p. 169 right).[26] While the border images are themselves studies in some respects, they contribute to the image's overall sense of repeated movement. This study also articulates a relationship between Picasso's graphic works of 1930–31 and what he put to the test of large-scale painting in 1931–32. In the study's central panel, Picasso depicts Tereus's bulky frame pressing down on the resistant Philomela, who shoves at her attacker with her left leg. Tereus restrains her arms, pushing her to the ground. Hash marks radiate from Tereus's grip on Philomela's left arm, a feature that is not retained in the other studies. The marks add a somewhat comic urgency that counters the gravity of the violation under way. Philomela's spreading body—her navel floating to the left, Picasso's trademark composite rear-frontal view, her impossibly rotated left leg—attests to her effortful struggle. She averts her face from both Tereus's and the viewer's gaze. Philomela's turned-away face obscures the chronology of events: are we seeing the rape before or after Tereus has cut out her tongue? This chronological ambiguity registers rape's repetition, its iterative impact.

Picasso *figures* the repeated rape in the multiple faces around the border. At the bottom of the frame, he deploys a shaded, volumetric style that is entirely different from the linearity of the central frame and the rest of the border. A lush nude figure reclines at left. She lies on her right side, right leg drawn up beneath her and head propped in her right hand. Her round breasts press forward, framed by her left arm, which drapes along the curves of her torso. Her hand falls strategically to cover her genitals in a coquettish gesture that invokes the classical Venus pudica ("modest Venus"), a figure with whom Picasso feels entirely at home. Two similarly shaded busts appear at the right. At the margins, Picasso returns to the weightier presence of figures in the round. The right border begins with one hand gripping another at the wrist, with great attention paid to the lines and contours of both hands. By contrast, the hands and feet in the central frame are much less complete, their digits unfinished or open-ended. Above the hands, Tereus's bearded profile, with eyes downcast toward the hands as well as toward the defeated Philomela, appears in quadruplicate. His expression here is far less predatory, more observant, than in the main scene. The short strands of Tereus's hair give way to Philomela's averted face in triplicate along the upper right border. A fourth face attaches to a twisting, prone torso that runs along the top border. Her limbs are absent. This body bears a strong formal resemblance to the body twisting from Orpheus's arms in the September 1 study. Another averted face, in profile, appears beneath Philomela's leg. How many times must she turn away?

27
The second study, executed on the same day, resembles the third but includes only a bust along the bottom border. In its central panel, Philomela battles her attacker more animatedly than in the final version, but her body is less dispersed than in the third study.

28
Two sculptures from 1928, *Metamorphose I* and *Metamorphose II*, bear mention at this junction, for their fused limbs present a being that perpetually merges with itself.

At top left, in an inversion of the twisting Philomela at right, a lush sleeper reclines. She evokes another study from early September that Picasso executed on the back of an envelope, in which a sleeper cushions her head on outstretched arms. The organic modeling of the body, with its apple-shaped breasts and belly and scythe-like legs, reappears two years later as aspects of *Figures by the Sea*, and more calmly in the series of *Sleeping Woman* paintings of 1932. In the Philomela sketch, the sleeper's pliant sensuality is contrasted by its pendant at right and the brittle linearity of the resistant Philomela's body in the central frame. If Picasso took from his study of Philomela a preference for her sleeping figure opposite, he seems to have worked through some of that logic here at the margin. A frontal nude takes up most of the left border, and just above her head is another averted profile.[27]

Pablo Picasso, ***Figures by the Sea***, January 12, 1931; oil on canvas, 51⅛ × 76¾ in. (130 × 195 cm); Musée Picasso, Paris, France

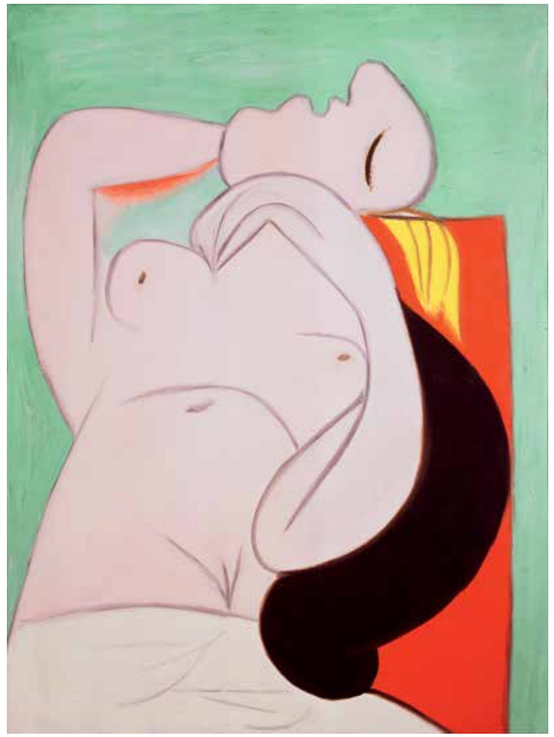
In his paintings of the early 1920s, Picasso explored light subjects—ladies by a spring, boys piping, couples on the beach—with a weighted, sculptural style, and only hinted at the illusion of a body's bounded integrity. In 1930, he brought the simplicity of line to bear on debasement. The lack of enclosure of Philomela's body articulates an idea that is similar to the one implied by the paint dripping from the foot of the woman at the right in *Three Women at the Spring*: the impossibility of individualism, of a body's bounded independence. The solid, substantial bodies of the early 1920s reappear a decade later as the merging of modular body parts at the beach, entwined and indistinguishable, as in *Figures by the Sea*. The figure(s) here work their semblance of boundedness and individuation, a semblance that is only partially performed. In *Figures by the Sea*, as in Picasso's *Metamorphoses* illustrations—especially those of Tereus and Philomela—it is impossible to isolate one body from another or to assemble the parts into a unified whole. The truth of the plastic body's nonindividuation appears before the viewer, made (barely) tolerable by paint. Picasso has captured these forms, sculpted out of the sand on which they rest, in their full, illusory presence, but at a moment whose imminent dissolution is figured in our inability to articulate individual bodies. If Picasso's paintings of the early 1920s hint at bodily replication, *Figures by the Sea* pictures that replication in terms of exchange or interchange between bodies, an interchange that occurs at the expense of individuation. Metamorphosis demands the breakdown of illusory bodily integrity.[28] While this painting bears no obvious formal relationship to classical imagery, it engages the same questions of the body's coherence and solidity. From *Three Women at the Spring* to *Figures by the Sea*, Picasso's engagement with the body and the ancient Mediterranean develops over the course of a decade.

The border of Picasso's third study for the *Rape of Philomela* allows us to understand the sleepers who make up the majority of his large-scale paintings between 1931 and 1932 within the context of his particular engagement with Ovid. The series of sleeping women makes this connection to his Ovidian figures rather obviously by depicting a sleeping body that seems to be both human and composed of ripe fruit. With this sleep sequence, Picasso approaches the process of bodily change that he distinctly avoided in his illustrations of the *Metamorphoses*, precisely because his version of metamorphosis differs from Ovid's. In an Ovidian version of the scene, the woman would become a cornucopia with womanly desires, her soul intact within her transformed body; in Picasso's depiction, she is both woman and fruit. In his *Girl with Guitar* (January 10, 1932) the paneling of the *Figure* sequence from the late 1920s is recognizable. The paneling gives way to the back of her chair, disjointed by the head in profile. The familiar white shape highlights the girl's head and its separation from her body. Picasso takes pains to suture this head to its body, to depict the imperfect process of melding a face and figure. He has smoothed the face's electric strands of hair and given it the elegant lines of his illustrations for Ovid. Her breast is both apple and fern, her belly the guitar that in an earlier incarnation stands in some relation to the face (compare with the September 1 study for *The Death of Orpheus*). Her limbs merge with the chair in which she sleeps.

In *Reading*, painted the previous day (January 9, 1932), Picasso grafts the figure's head more securely to her body, its sutures smoothed. If the Ovidian prints concerned themselves with the interpenetration of multiple bodies, or with the openness of one body to another as the sign of its fiction, the sleep sequence, which Picasso worked out in the context of illustrating Ovid, explores the reconstitution of face and body from constituent organic parts, and the penetration of a body by its own constituent parts. Guitar, fern, and face create a woman.

Pablo Picasso, ***Rest***, January 22, 1932; oil on canvas, 63¾ × 51¼ in. (161.9 × 130.2 cm); private collection

Two images in the sleep sequence painted January 22 and 23, 1932, display the all-at-once-ness toward which Picasso had been working. On January 22, he painted *Rest*. But this is hardly the body at rest. We recognize the wild profile with its electric hair and its displaced carnivorous mouth between two vertical eyes, somehow replicated in a gaping scream emanating from the profile. This head meets its body seamlessly; body and face form a monstrous, unified whole.[29] Vivid color—bright reds, yellows, greens, and blues—advertises the figure's madness, juxtaposed against jaunty parlor wallpaper. Here is the creature that stoned Orpheus. The next day, with *Sleep*, Picasso returns to the comfort of apparent legibility: clear lines, soft color, a calm moon-face, rounded breasts and belly, the closed hairless lips of prepubescent genitals. We can almost hear a light snore. In his selections for the *Metamorphoses*, Picasso deliberately depicted the most shattering of narratives with exquisite line. By the same token, Picasso painted *Sleep* one day after *Rest* not to sublimate the terrible with the beautiful but to declare the two as one, existing in a state of unending and simultaneous metamorphosis in which beauty and monstrosity inhabit the same form.



Many thanks to Diana Magaloni and Michael Govan for inviting me to participte in this exhibition in such good company, to the the indefatigable Lilly Casillas for her incredible research skills, to Sara Cody for her deft editing, to Camille Mathieu for sharing her knowledge of early archaeology, art history, and modernism so generously, and to Jeremy Melius, Shahrzade Ehya, and Tim Clark for the opportunity to begin thinking through Picasso and Ovid in their company early in my time at Berkeley. All errors remain my own.

Pablo Picasso, ***Sleep***, 1932; oil on canvas, 51¼ × 38¼ in. (130.2 × 97 cm); private collection

29 On monstrosity and Picasso, see T. J. Clark, *Picasso and Truth: From Cubism to Guernica* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 173–90.