

IDENTIFICATION OF  
**ABUSIVE**  
RELATIONSHIPS AND  
PREVENTION OF



DOMESTIC  
**VIOLENCE**

**VOL.II**



EDITOR  
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## An Analysis of Rape, Silencing and Revenge in Ovid's Myth of Philomela

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The nightingale, as soon as April bringeth  
Unto her rested sense a perfect waking,  
While late bare earth, proud of new clothing, springeth,  
Sings out her woes, a thorn her song-book making,

- "The Nightingale" by Sir Philip Sidney

The "nightingale" of Sidney's well-known poem "The Nightingale", who "Sings out her woes", is an allusion to the story of Philomela retold by Ovid in Book VI of the *Metamorphoses*. Like many other stories of *Metamorphoses* which deal with the theme of rape and violence on women, the story of "Tereus, Procne, and Philomela" too portrays the misuse of male power, rape, silencing, erasure of female subjectivity and the horrific consequences. In this tale, one could witness two different aspects of women suppression. While Philomela's body becomes a site of physical violence, Procne's rage represents the anger which comes from years of suppression. Both the women suffer in their own way, but at the end Ovid shows their victory over patriarchy. The way they gain the upper hand on Tereus no matter how grotesque and gruesome their revenge is, shows that females cannot be suppressed and that they will eventually find a way to liberate themselves provided they unite and fight.

In the story, Tereus marries Procne, King Pandion's elder daughter, after liberating Athens from the barbarians and comes back to Thrace, his kingdom. Five years pass by and Procne requests to see her sister Philomela. Tereus finally agrees and goes to bring Philomela to meet her sister. However, upon witnessing her beauty, he is overcome by lust and he kidnaps her and rapes her. When Philomela threatens to speak of his crimes, he cuts off her tongue in an attempt to silence her. However, Philomela weaves a tapestry narrating everything that has happened to her and sends it as a gift to Procne. Procne, upon reading the tapestry, secretly manages to find her sister and is overcome with rage seeing what has become of Philomela. Itys, son of Procne and Tereus happens to come in front of them at the wrong time and Procne, seeing the resemblance of his father in him, kills him with Philomela's help. Not only do they murder him, but also cook and feed him to Tereus. Tereus does not know that he is eating his beloved son, but upon asking for Itys, Procne tells him that he rests in his son. Philomela brings Itys' head in a tray in