PRIAPUS'S TWO RAPES IN OVID'S *FASTI*

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Twice in Ovid's *Fasti* the god Priapus attempts to rape a sleeping female deity. Both times he is thwarted at the last possible minute by the braying of an ass. The woman wakes and Priapus's hopes are dashed.[1] The first rape appears in Book 1 and the victim is the nymph Lotis (1.391–440); the second occurs in Book 6 with the goddess Vesta as Priapus's target (6.319–48). Oddly, Ovid includes humorous elements in both scenes: the Priapus and Lotis episode ends with laughter from the assembled crowd, while the Priapus and Vesta story is explicitly introduced as funny. Priapus's second attack, on Vesta, however, is very different from the earlier one: while introduced as a joke, this attempted rape ends not with laughter but with the sight of Priapus fleeing in terror from the attacking crowd. In this paper, I begin from an obvious question, one prompted by Ovid's "light" presentation of such repulsive material: what's so funny about attempted rape? For an approach, I turn to joking discourse.[2]

Joking discourse uses that well-known rhetorical triangle of Teller,

1 Details at Fantham 1983.203; cf. Williams 1991.196–200, Richlin 1992b.170–71, Barchiesi 1997.239–46, Newlands 1995.60–62, 124–45. For the *Fasti*, I cite Alton, Wormell, and Courtney 1997. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

2 I take the term "joking discourse" from Purdie 1993: "I shall use the term 'joking' to designate all . . . occasions—including social exchanges, textual comedy, and any other event which elicits the kind of response I shall always refer to, for convenience, as 'laughter.' I term the characteristic effect created through joking and registered in laughter 'funniness,' to avoid the simply celebratory connotation of 'humour'; for my argument investigates the problems inherent in joking's inseparable, simultaneous generation of both pleasure and power" (3). "I am not proposing 'joking' as 'a discourse' in any Foucauldian sense, but rather taking it to be a mode of meaning which negotiates both psychic and cultural restraints" (125).

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Butt, and Audience in order to explore both the invention of funniness and the reception of joking. A focus on the invention of funniness in these two scenes naturally directs attention to the roles that the narrator and, ultimately, Ovid himself play. The narrator, for example, offers these rapes as humorous tales and, in so doing, shows us, Audience, the comic in both Priapus and his victims.[3] Jokes are not all that the narrator offers here, however. I also argue that, in both scenes, the narrator uses the techniques of pornographic representation in his showing and his telling. This narrative strategy allows the reader, if willing, to complete what the author only suggests, namely the rape of a sleeping woman offered as the object of that pornographic representation—just as a reader can laugh at a joke, that is, complete the exchange offered by Teller.

Both pornography and jokes have been the focus of a great deal of interest from scholars, especially feminist ones, yet so far as I know, the two topics are rarely connected; they overlap in several areas, however. For example, as I just noted, reception plays an essential role in both. More importantly, both jokes and pornography offer control of discourse, and such control yields power.[4] I refer to the effects of such control as "political." The particular political effect that I emphasize here is one shared by pornographic representation and joking discourse: both modes can be used to rewrite the power of the patriarchy by denying discursive competence to women (women as the objects of a pornographic scenario, "dumb blonde" jokes, etc.). I might, then, offer some modified formulations of my initial question: what happened when a Roman (male? female?) found a joke about attempted rape funny? What political effects are mobilized for us by a joke about attempted rape? What effects were mobilized for Roman readers?

The discussion below makes a start at answering such questions through a close analysis of Priapus's two attempted rapes in the *Fasti*. I proceed throughout under a key assumption: the nearly perfect narrative repetition plays an essential role in our experience and understanding of the second scene. Thus I read the Vesta tale in light of the expectations generated by the earlier one involving Lotis. My reading accordingly emphasizes

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3 Cf. Freud 1960.181: "A joke is made, the comic is found—and first and foremost in people, only by a subsequent transference in things, situations, and so on, as well."

4 Purdie articulates this axiom in reference to joking discourse: "Because discourse is potent, its control yields power; because joking intrinsically constructs a mastery of discourse, it always has unambiguous political effects which are produced on the back of its psychic operations" (1993.125).

the interplay of sameness within difference and difference within sameness in the second scene through a detailed discussion of the settings, participants, and actions portrayed in both scenes (cf. Brooks 1984.100–101). I precede these comparisons by laying out in some detail the models of pornographic representation and joking discourse that I use. Turning to Priapus's first attempted rape, that of Lotis, I there highlight some potential political effects generated by Ovid's use of both joking discourse and pornographic representation. I then consider Priapus's attack on Vesta and emphasize that readers are left with a choice: they can view Vesta's attempted rape as the narrator does (a joke) or as the participants in the imagined scenario do (an outrage).

Consideration of the Vesta scene in terms of joking discourse offers two distinct critical advantages. First, joking discourse is particularly interested in the dynamics of tendentious jokes, that is, jokes that have a particular aim. Any joke involving Vesta, one of Augustus's special religious interests, inevitably raises questions about whom Ovid imagined as the Audience(s) for this joke. Secondly, joking discourse elegantly explains the two responses in Ovid's text. One of the peculiar features of jokes is that they often allow Audience to break rules and, at the same time, to "mark" that break.[5] Thus the two responses to a joke about Vesta's attempted rape are, in fact, one of the hallmarks of joking discourse. Many critical readings of the Vesta scene have been troubled by the presence of the two diametrically opposed views it offers. As has been "increasingly recognized," however, Ovid often "accommodates different and indeed opposing responses to his narrative" through just such narrative choices.[6] The Vesta scene, in which the poet plainly imagines a world that accommodates both outrage and humor, therefore falls into the Ovidian "mainstream," and, as such, its tonal complexity should be embraced and explored.

In the bulk of this essay, I explore some of the consequences of choosing to take Vesta's attack as a joke. My discussion of the possible political effects raised by Priapus's assault on Lotis is the foundation for my reading of the Vesta scene. In particular, I propose that precisely those political effects can be included in the cluster of repeated elements in

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5 Purdie 1993.3; she continues: "in transgressing *and* recognising the rules, jokers take power over rather than merely submitting to them" (emphasis Purdie).

6 Wheeler 1999.6, who there offers an epitome of several excellent critical readings that explore through different lenses—philosophical, "politicized," etc.—this fundamental Ovidian characteristic.

Priapus's attempted rape of Vesta; in other words, if Priapus's first rape is read as a rewriting of patriarchal power through the representational techniques of both pornography and joking discourse, then his second can be read the same way. I argue that such a reading leads to a world that looks nothing at all like the one Augustus presented to his contemporaries. My analysis throughout hinges, as I mentioned above, on highlighting narrative repetitions and thus reading the Vesta tale in light of the expectations generated by the earlier one involving Lotis. Such a critical stance is contested by some scholars, however.[7]

PRIAPUS'S DOUBLE DATES

The narrative repetition of two sexual attempts by Priapus in the same poem has puzzled some critics and led them, unnecessarily, to label the scenes "doublets" and then argue for the "authenticity" or "priority" of one over the other.[8] Ovid here highlights an element of Priapus's essential nature, namely, serial rape. Ancient religious thought imagined Priapus as the embodiment, literally, of constant and unfulfilled male sexual desire and as a god who sought sexual fulfillment continually. The *Priapea* describe the god more crudely still: "deus Priapo mentulatior non est" (36.11).[9] In light of this ancient religious perspective, I assume that the repetition found in the second scene, far from being a "problem," is an integral part of Ovid's narrative.[10] Ovid's placement also strengthens the integrity of both scenes.

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7 Not, for example, by Williams 1991 (a superb discussion), who comes to the same conclusion as I do about the crucial role played by narrative repetition but from a different angle and for different reasons (198; cf. 197).

8 For example, Lefèvre 1976 and Fantham 1983 do so following Bömer 1957–58.

9 Priapus is an equal-opportunity rapist; see, e.g., Theocr. *Ep*. 3, where Priapus and Pan hunt for the sleeping Daphnis. One visual representation of this ubiquitous theme is an oinochoe of the last third of the fifth century depicting a related ancient "repeat offender": a satyr "creeping up on a sleeping maenad named Tragoedia" (Seaford 1988.plate IV facing 55). Fantham 1983 offers examples from Pompeian wall painting of this "classic seduction (sic) scene" (199). This theme teased the imagination of artists in the West for centuries. For one of Picasso's responses, the "Satyr dévoilant une femme" of 1936, see Headley 1979.

10 Cf. Todorov's gentle send-up of the "laws of the esthetic proper to primitive narrative . . . *The law of the priority of the serious:* Any comic version of a narrative is subsequent in time to its serious version; a corollary is the temporal priority of the good to the bad—the version nowadays considered best is the earliest . . . *The law of non repetition* (incredible as it seems that anyone could imagine such an esthetic law): In an authentic text, there are no repetitions . . . But it is difficult to imagine a description of the epic genre that does not

He relates the tale of Vesta as a part of his presentation of the Vestalia, the goddess's great feast celebrated on 9 June. Priapus's earlier attack on Lotis, as it happens, falls on exactly the same day in its month, 9 January. This risqué narrative of nymph and satyr, however, is set in Greece and explains a Lampsacene religious custom: there is no connection with the Roman religious feast falling on 9 January, the Agonalia, nor, in fact, do either Priapus or Lotis have any place whatsoever in Roman public religious cult. Ovid thus chooses where to place the earlier tale and, through the coincidence of the two dates, he subtly underlines, as it were, his other decision to narrate both tales in nearly identical ways.[11]

These two tales are not only tales of attempted rape. Both times, while pointing out that Priapus's actions were shameful or disgraceful, the narrator also highlights humorous elements. The first story offers a *causa pudenda*, to be sure, but one, "nevertheless appropriate for the god." The narrator then describes the Greek festival of Bacchus at which this episode is set as one celebrated by participants who are "sympathetic to jokes."[12] Not surprisingly, the tale ends just as expected: everyone laughs at Priapus standing alone, his *obscena pars* visible in the moonlight, while the terrified Lotis runs off (*fugiens*, 1.436).[13] The narrator is even more explicit in his introductory comments to the tale of Vesta and Priapus. The second embarrassment is again disgraceful, yet it, too, is quite humorous: "Shall I pass over or relate your disgrace, ruddy Priapus? It is a little tale with a lot of laughs."[14]

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account for repetitions, which appear to have so fundamental a role in the form . . . *The antidigressive law:* Any digression from the main action is added later, by a different author" (1977.54–55). Wills 1996 studies the repetition of words, not "themes and semantic repetition" in Latin poetry (3 n. 5); Hinds 1998, in particular 99–122, throws much light on repetition and allusion. On narrative repetition in general, I am greatly indebted to Miller 1982.

11 For Priapus as an outsider to Roman public ritual, see Fantham 1983.202. Note that there were celebrations of the Agonalia on 17 March, 21 May, and 11 December available for Ovid to treat.

12 "caeditur et rigido custodi ruris asellus; / causa pudenda quidem, sed tamen apta deo. / . . . quicumque iocis non alienus erat" (1.391–92, 96). *Iocis* is F. Dousa's conjecture for **A** and **M**'s banal *loci*(*s*). **U** has *mero* here, which replaces a four-letter erasure; might 1.403 have supplied the idea for *mero*: *vina dabat Liber*? In support of Dousa, note 2.304: **A** and **U** offer *plena ioci*, **G** and **M** *prima loci*.

13 "territa consurgit nymphe . . . / et fugiens concitat omne nemus. / at deus, obscena nimium quoque parte paratus, / omnibus ad lunae lumina risus erat" (1.435–38).

14 "praeteream referamne tuum, rubicunde Priape, / dedecus? est multi fabula parva ioci" (6.319–20). The narrator has used a similar formula to introduce the story of Hercules' attempted rape of Omphale (2.303–58): *antiqui fabula plena ioci* (2.304). That tale also

The specific mentions of laughter have led some critics to label these scenes "comic" rapes. "Comic" rape refers to two distinct yet related things. First, it describes both the humorous reactions of the characters within a narrative to a rape and the reader response that might at times mirror the reactions of those laughing characters. "Comic" rape is also shorthand for a source-critical hypothesis, namely, that a particular episode in elegy, for example, may derive from or is modeled on an episode or a plot from the comic theater. J. C. McKeown set the stage, so to speak, for this line of investigation. He focused on the possible influence on elegiac narrative of "the only type of Roman mime about which we have any substantial information," the so-called Adultery Mime, with its triangle of Furtive Lover, Deceptive Wife, and Cuckolded Husband (1979.76).[15] McKeown raises the interesting possibility that the "influence of mime, or of some other, closely related, Comic genre, may be suspected" in Lotis and Priapus, Vesta and Priapus, Faunus and Omphale (2.303–58), and Anna Perenna and Mars (3.675–96) because these episodes "are all amatory and very farcical" (1979.76). Such a drama-based approach has produced a number of extremely illuminating readings of both these and other episodes in the *Fasti*.[16] However, in general, making a conjecture about (or even discovering) a source does not provide a reading of a poem or an episode (Barchiesi 1997.65–66). Moreover, mime in particular is, as Elizabeth Rawson cautions, a "notoriously difficult genre to define: there were probably, in Rome at this period [sc. the late republic and early empire], Greek mimes and Latin mimes, mimes in verse and mimes in prose, improvised mimes and written mimes" as well pantomime, a "purely danced form with a sung accompaniment (and masks)," and *mimiambi*, "perhaps a more learned and literary form" (1993.255–56). McKeown's Adultery Mime would most likely be the type performed in Latin at various *ludi*. McKeown's lead was followed by many scholars, beginning with Elaine Fantham, who have suggested that there may be analogies between the story of Priapus and Lotis and drama. For example, T. P. Wiseman conjectures that a possible source for Priapus and Lotis could be the one-act satyric Latin mimes performed at the Floralia or the Megalesia.[17]

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ends with Hercules himself, Omphale, and all the onlookers laughing at the great hero now caught in bed with Faunus.

15 On the Adultery Mime, see Reynolds 1946.

16 Barchiesi 1997.238–51 is the most stimulating example of the drama-based approach.

17 For Fantham, the two Priapus narratives rely on "the same device of comic denouement" (1983.185), while the similar tale of Faunus, Hercules, and Omphale (2.303–58) could

The absence of laughter at the end of the attack on Vesta, however, poses some problems for the "comic" rape approach. As I shall argue, Priapus's second attempted rape often calls to mind, in form, action, and even, at times, in diction, the earlier, humorous tale of Priapus and Lotis, yet, unlike that episode, there is no laughter from the participants: the terrified Vesta calls for help while Priapus runs away (*effugit*, 6.344). He tries to slip out of the hands of the furious crowd that then attacks him.[18] This tale thus ends in a way that is at variance with its explicit introduction as a *multi fabula parva ioci*. Readers are left with two mutually exclusive views concerning the scene of Priapus and Vesta: it is humorous or it is an unspeakable outrage. Such an impasse has puzzled many critics. To some, the discordant ending of the Vesta tale is simply an artistic "failure" that would have been excised in a final edition of the poem, others have tried to figure out which is the "correct" response—the consensus is outrage—while still others have attempted, without much success, to forge some kind of compromise between the two.[19]

As helpful a heuristic as "comic" rape is, I suggest that the textual movement found in these two scenes can also be fruitfully viewed, in the terminology of some critics, as joking discourse.[20] In his 1905 treatise, *Jokes*

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have been known to Ovid "from popular drama: this could be Atellane, mime or pantomime" (200); see Wiseman 1988.11 for the Floralia-type mime suggestion. Richlin notes the concluding laughter in Priapus/Lotis (1992b.170), comments that Priapus is "interrupted in comic fashion before he succeeds" (169), and looks to the world of pantomime for analogs with the mimetic art of the whole of Ovid's poetry (174–76). Wiseman 1998.24 conjectures that the concluding laughter "may represent the audience's reaction at the end of a mime or similar risqué comedy." On Roman pantomime, McKeown notes that we know "even less . . . about [it] than about Roman mime" (1979.79). The rape of women at religious festivals was a common plot device in the comic theater; for a survey, see Pierce 1997.

18 "territa voce gravi surgit dea; convolat omnis / turba, per infestas effugit ille manus" (6.343–44).

19 To pick just one example, Williams rightly notes the stress that Ovid places on Vesta's "chaste inviolability" (1991.199), yet he still looks for a comic tone here: the "possibility that Priapus failed to recognize Vesta for who she was . . . and the vision of the crimson god (*rubicunde*, 319) left suitably blushing, still combine to make him a blundering figure of fun, but the ass now assumes a greater comic significance" (198). Priapus is not "left blushing" (an oxymoron, in any event). Williams argues that the hostile reaction here indicates a "shift in comic emphasis because . . . the attendant revellers react . . . not with laughter, but with open hostility" (198). To describe the attack on Priapus by the other revelers as a "shift in comic emphasis" is too much of an understatement.

20 Richlin is the only Ovidian interested in both approaches. She entitles one section of her paper "Rape as Joke" (1992b.170).

and their Relation to the Unconscious, Freud made a fundamental distinction between jokes and the comic. According to him, the comic involves two people, myself and "the person in whom I find something comic," while jokes involve (to use contemporary terminology) a triangle of Teller, Audience, and Butt, or "object," as Freud terms it (1960.144). In other words, there is a rhetorical relationship between Teller and Audience. Freud elegantly describes this relationship: "socially the comic behaves differently from jokes" (1960.181). Freud's insight can be applied to Priapus's two rapes: the narrator here is Teller, both Priapus and the women are Butts, while we are Audience.

I argue, however, that the narrator in the *Fasti* does not simply offer readers two humorous tales, but that he shows and tells these stories in ways that are similar to pornographic representation. I here use—without completely endorsing—Susanne Kappeler's admittedly reductive presentation of pornographic representation and her arguments about its political consequences in my discussion of the two rape scenes.[21] I do not intend this essay to solve, once and for all, the nature of pornographic representation, and I stipulate that this topic is a matter of intense scholarly debate; I simply point out that both scenes *can* be read as examples of soft-core pornography in which the reader/viewer is able, if willing, to complete what the narrator only suggests. Before analyzing both scenes, I briefly explain what I mean by pornographic representation and joking discourse.

PORNOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

In Kappeler's model, the most important structural feature of pornographic representation is the "essential" doubling of subject position between the author and reader, the author's "alter-ego" (1986.32). The woman thus becomes the "object of exchange . . . twice objectified" between

21 For important criticisms of Kappeler and others, see Wicke 1993; Wicke finds Kappeler 1986 an "excruciatingly reductive work" (76). For a more sympathetic critique of Kappeler, see Assiter 1989.104–11. Kaite 1995 (e.g., 154 n. 71) fiercely contests any approach based on "writer/creator" and "reader/viewer," offering "text" and "spectator" instead. Warner 1983 and Foster et al. 1997 offer critiques of literalist readings in general; cf., e.g., McNair 1996, Juffer 1998, and Cornell 2000. The widely-read volume edited by Richlin follows, for the most part, the critical lines laid down by Kappeler (Richlin 1992b.xvii). Kappeler's model is, as Richlin herself notes, one among a spectrum of feminist (and other) models of the relationship between pornographic representations and "reality."

author and spectator/reader: first, as the object of the scenario itself and, secondly, as the object of representation; the latter objectification is "a structural feature of pornographic representation" (1986.51–52). Kappeler's point about optional objectification within the scenario itself is crucial to my reading of Priapus and Lotis precisely because this story is not explicit, nor does Priapus complete his attempt. Seen from Kappeler's point of view, Lotis and Priapus could be classified as "soft-core" (1986.58–59):

> The so-called soft-porn, which does not depict any violent action (erotica for the feminists), which does not depict explicit sexual action (for the censorship lobby), follows an identical pattern: what is given, simply, is the object—the spread-eagled woman in the soft-core magazine, the smiling, inviting, sexy, erotic, beautiful, pretty (aesthetic) woman in the rest of our cultural products. The fantasy of porn is not fully depicted, it is not identical with the "content" of representation, it is to be completed by the active subject, the viewer-hero of the representation.

On this reading, the fact that Priapus does not complete his attempted rape of a sleeping nymph in no way makes this fantasy any less pornographic. It is conceivable that some "active subjects," some "viewer-heroes," of this representation could complete Priapus's attempt on Lotis, for example.

One of the consequences of Kappeler's model is that this type of pornographic representation encodes particular power relationships. Kappeler argues that pornographic representation is based on the axiom that the object of the representation is not, and can never be, the subject: "Patronizing the subject position, refusing to grant subjectivity to another subject in interaction, is the fundamental egotism and the fundamental solipsism of the male culture" (1986.59–60).[22] That privileged position of subject is thus only maintained at the expense of others. Kappeler's answer to "literary experts" who feel about pornography "that there is almost no plot, just sex, again and

22 Fantasy allows subjects to imagine themselves as objects (and vice versa), yet to what extent it modifies the fundamental subject-object duality of pornography is an extremely controversial question; see, e.g., Gibson and Gibson 1993, Kaite 1995, Foster et al. 1997. Richlin 1992b explores the topic yet ultimately accepts the duality as axiomatic. Skinner 1993.120 disagrees with Richlin yet, in the end, argues only that fantasy permits "alternative subject positions," a claim in no way weakening the fundamental critique here.

again and again" is that "there is a plot: the cultural archeplot of power" (1986.104; cf. 108).

THE RHETORIC OF JOKES

Jokes can also encode power relationships, as Freud himself perceived. Feminist critiques of joking discourse have drawn on Freud's insights into joking's ability to generate power and have mapped this ability onto the relations between men and women. Freud recognized that jokes can do more than just elicit pleasure; they can have a particular aim as well. Such jokes Freud labels "tendentious." He points out that this type greatly restricts the possible Audiences: "It is easy to divine the characteristic of jokes on which the difference in their hearers' reaction to them depends. In the one case the joke is an end in itself and serves no particular aim, in the other case it does serve such an aim—it becomes *tendentious*. Only jokes that have a purpose run the risk of meeting with people who do not want to listen to them" (1960.90, emphasis Freud).[23] Accordingly, "every joke calls for a public of its own and laughing at the same jokes is evidence of far-reaching psychical conformity" (1960.151). With tendentious jokes, Freud uncovers the second fundamental characteristic of jokes, that they are "psychical factors possessed of power."[24] Because they possess power, tendentious jokes are especially favored "in order to make aggressiveness or criticism possible against persons in exalted positions who claim to exercise authority. The joke then represents a rebellion against that authority, a liberation from its pressure" (1960.105). Tendentious jokes thus allow Audience to feel superior to Butt; through such jokes, Teller brings Audience over to his side.

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23 Cf. Freud 1960.100: "Generally speaking, a tendentious joke calls for three people: in addition to the one who makes the joke, there must be a second who is taken as the object of the hostile or sexual aggressiveness, and a third in whom the joke's aim of producing pleasure is fulfilled."

24 Freud 1960.132–33: "we must not forget that strictly speaking only jests are non-tendentious—that is, serve solely the aim of producing pleasure. Jokes, even if the thought contained in them is non-tendentious and thus only serves theoretical intellectual interests, are in fact never non-tendentious. They pursue the second aim: to promote that thought by augmenting it and guarding it against criticism. Here they are once again expressing their original nature by setting themselves up against an inhibiting and restricting power—which is now the critical judgement. This, the first use of jokes that goes beyond the production of pleasure, points the way to their further uses. A joke is now seen to be a psychical factor possessed of power."

Freud also examines various other ways in which Audience feels superior to Butt, that is to say, what makes Audience laugh. One way is when someone "makes too great an expenditure on his bodily functions and too little on his mental ones; and it cannot be denied that in both these cases our laughter expresses a pleasurable sense of the superiority which we feel in relation to him" (1960.195).[25] Closely related is the important procedure of "degrading": "Under the heading of 'unmasking' we may also include a procedure for making things comic with which we are already acquainted—the method of degrading the dignity of individuals by directing attention to the frailties which they share with all humanity, but in particular the dependence of their mental function on bodily needs" (1960.202).[26] "Degrading" thus appeals especially to those people who aim to attack their superiors because it offers them an extremely effective way of releasing their aggression.

Scholars have developed Freud's original insight into the nature of joking's ability to generate power. Susan Purdie, for one, focuses on the reception of joking rather than just on the invention of funniness.[27] More importantly, she argues that because joking "intrinsically constructs a mastery of discourse, it always has unambiguous political effects which are produced on the back of its psychic operations" (1993.125). Purdie is particularly helpful on some of these "unambiguous political effects" (1993.66; cf. 68–69). A joke that Purdie relates sheds light on how joking discourse can encode power relations between men and women: "A wife falls into the gorilla's cage, the gorilla 'gets on top of her,' and she cries in terror: 'George, what shall I do?' To which he answers: 'Tell *him* you've got a headache.'" Purdie's analysis of this joke bears directly on the tale of Priapus and Lotis. She argues that both the wife *and* the husband are the degraded figures here. The wife claims a "false power" over her husband for which she is "justifiably" punished, while the husband is comic because he is unable to obtain sex from his wife, that is, he does not "properly" control

25 Scholars refer to the two main hypotheses of the origin and nature of jokes as the "superiority" theory (shown here by Freud) and the "incongruity" theory that argues that funniness derives from "the manipulation of words or concepts into unlikely but suddenly acceptable juxtapositions" (Purdie 1993.6; cf. 9 n. 3 for bibliography on both theories).

26 The cross reference here (". . . with which we are already acquainted") is to 196ff.

27 She develops a model "in which discursive exchange forms the paradigm of joking . . . In taking the exchange of joking intention as the activity which actually constitutes funniness, I see the Teller's function as more than that of handily supplying material one might not find oneself, and the Audience as doing significantly more than only (as Freud suggests) confirming an already constituted joke" (1993.6).

her: "refusing sex is a refusal of male power. Hence jokes about women lacking male sex, and about their 'really' wanting it, whilst claiming not to: as in rape jokes" (1993.135).[28] Purdie pursues this line of inquiry to its logical conclusion: "The construction of women as non-speakers is exhibited and dynamically reproduced in joking, just as joking's operation to construct discursive ownership is demonstrated by patriarchy's denial of its competence to women" (1993.138). In other words, "joking's appropriation of language and patriarchy's appropriation of joking" are intrinsically connected (1993.138–39).

Feminist critiques of both pornography and jokes therefore converge at several points. Some pornographic representations and some jokes can be said to "bribe us with the gift of their yield of pleasure" as they rewrite the power of the patriarchy again and again and again.[29] Both can be used to deny discursive competency to women who are the Butt of the joke or the "object of exchange" in the pornographic scenario. Finally, the rhetorical relationship between Teller and Audience or pornographer and reader/viewer hinges on a final, crucial, step: grasping Teller's joking intention or completing the pornographic scenario.[30] The two scenes I examine in the *Fasti*, in fact, call attention to the privileged position of the reader by emphasizing that one of the characters in the imagined scenario, Priapus, does *not* complete the act; his failure is precisely what is marked as "funny." Laughter at his inability to obtain sex thus not only completes the exchange of joking intention between Teller and Audience ("I get it"), but, more importantly, can complete the act itself ("I get it") in just the same way as the "active subject" can complete, can "get," the object of the pornographic representation.[31]

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28 She also notes here that "there is no need to specify that the gorilla is male, that the gorilla then signifies an aggressive creature (which gorillas are not), and also that considerable hostility is expressed towards the 'woman'" (Purdie 1993.135).

29 "In the case of obscene jokes, which are derived from smut, it turns the third person who originally interfered with the sexual situation into an ally, before whom the woman must feel shame, by bribing him with the gift of its yield of pleasure" (Freud 1960.133).

30 This step is not simply crucial but absolutely necessary for Teller himself. Commenting on Freud's discussion of the development of the dirty joke, Weber stresses that Teller's pleasure is actually "mediated by, and dependent on" Audience (1977.21). As Freud puts it, "it is not the person who makes the joke who laughs at it and who therefore enjoys its pleasurable effect, but the inactive listener" (1960.100; cf. 222).

31 "In verbal joking, an evocation of the sexual act will also be intrinsically funny . . . The funniness is not, I think, formed simply through permitting a forbidden term, but in the public 'performance' of an imaginary copulation which the received laughter establishes

PRIAPUS AND LOTIS

The tale of Priapus's attempted rape of Lotis can be read as an example of both the kind of pornographic representation that Kappeler describes and the "politicized" joking discourse that Purdie sketches. When he reaches 9 January, the Roman Agonalia, Ovid quickly turns from any considerations of the feast itself to a long and leisurely discussion of the origin of various animal sacrifices offered by people throughout the world to various gods (1.337–456).[32] Ovid spends more time on the aetiology of ass sacrifice at Lampsacus, explained by the tale of Priapus and Lotis (1.391–440), than any other. Priapus attends a festival of Bacchus somewhere in Greece (1.393), and, by story's end, it is revealed that he condemns the donkey to death because this "author of the noise" ruined his opportunity to rape Lotis ("morte dedit poenas auctor clamoris," 1.439).[33] The festival, its participants, and their actions offer important points of comparison with the later, repeated scene of Priapus's attempt on Vesta. To begin with, all of the revelers here—nymphs, naiads, satyrs, Silenus, and, especially, Priapus—are routinely associated with Bacchus in Greek cult and in Latin poetry, and their actions at a festival honoring this orgiastic god are appropriate for the occasion—unlike the later scene, where, I argue, some of the participants do not belong.[34] Thus, as part of the regular retinue of Bacchus, these deities

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between Teller and Audience" (Purdie 1993.44). Is it therefore surprising to learn that, in the *Fasti*, "the word *iocus* is exclusively used to describe sexually licentious or farcical stories" (Newlands 1995.141)?

32 The one sacrifice that he does not bother to explain is why Janus "must be appeased" by the *rex sacrorum* at Rome (1.333–34) on the Agonalia itself ("Ianus Agonali luce piandus erit," 1.318)!

33 For which, we are supposed to believe, the Lampsacenes are offended: "morte dedit poenas auctor clamoris; et haec est / Hellespontiaco victima grata deo" (1.439–40). Note that *et* here can be taken either as implying a connection between the story of Priapus and Lotis and the sacrifice at Lampsacus ("and this victim is pleasing to the Hellespontine god") or none at all ("this victim is also pleasing . . .").

34 E.g., "The retinue [sc. of Dionysos] is composed of female maenads and most emphatically male satyrs" (Burkert 1985.166; cf., especially, Lissarrague 1993); *Naida Bacchus amat* ([Tib.] 3.6.57); satyrs and sileni are Bacchus's thiasus companions when he rescues Ariadne from Naxos (Cat. 64.251–52); Silenus is a boon companion of Bacchus (Verg. *Buc*. 6.14–15, Ovid *Met*. 11.89–90); Priapus himself is the *Bacchi . . . rustica proles* (Tib. 1.4.7), etc. Mythically speaking, Priapus and Dionysus are extremely close: Diodorus Siculus, for example, records an ancient tradition (μυθολογοῦσιν . . . οἱ παλαιοί, 4.6.1) that Priapus was the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite; Pausanias knows this tradition as Lampsacene (9.31.2). Strabo records a tradition that Priapus was the son of Dionysus and a nymph (13.1.12). Athenaeus notes that "Priapus is honored among the Lampsacenes as

belong there, enjoying that *convivium* (1.401), wearing those *coronae* (1.403), drinking that wine—wine supplied, naturally enough, by Liber himself (*vina dabat Liber*, 1.403). In fact, everyone was getting thoroughly drunk because the local brook was "niggardly providing water for the mixing" ("miscendas parce rivus agebat aquas," 1.404).[35] The god was no doubt pleased by such a fitting celebration.

Ovid shows and tells the tale of Priapus's assault on Lotis in ways that are strikingly parallel to the narrative techniques of pornographic representation. For example, the narrator, again and again, offers visual stimuli for the (male?) reader's fantasy—"the spread-eagled woman, the smiling, inviting, sexy, erotic, beautiful, pretty (aesthetic) woman"—and he represents, as Amy Richlin well notes, the voice of the woman here as "one that is 'asking for it'" (1992b.170). The narrator titillates his reader with the description of the naiads (1.405–10). He ostensibly describes their role as waitresses, but he really focuses on their bodies, that is to say, he could be said to be presenting them as sexual objects. Some of the naiads let their hair fall naturally, but others have gone to great lengths to look attractive (*arte manuque*, 1.406).[36] The narrator could be implying that the naiads "intend" to excite the male guests. Some of them show off their legs, while others loosen their blouses to expose their bosoms (1.407–08).[37] One bares her shoulder, another languidly walks through the grass (1.409).

The clearest mark of pornographic representation, though, is that the narrator does everything he can to suggest that Lotis herself actually "wants it," that she is the willing victim/libertine (cf. Kappeler 1986.135ff.).[38] Priapus sees Lotis, is captured by her, and tries to seduce her (*Priapus / . . . Lotide captus erat*, 1.415–16; *sollicitat*, 1.418: see *OLD* s.v. 5c). She responds with pride and derision (*fastus*, 1.419; *inrisum . . . despicit*, 1.420).

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being the same as Dionysus, so-called as an epithet, as Thriambus and Dithyrambus" (τιμᾶται δὲ παρὰ Λαμψακηνοῖς ὁ Πρίηπος ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν τῷ Διονύσῳ, ἐξ ἐπιθέτου καλούμενος οὕτως, ὡς θρίαμβος καὶ διθύραμβος, 1.30B).

35 As noted by the Teubner editors on *parce* (1.404): "ne nimis diluatur vinum." **A M** and **ω** clean up here with *large*, about which the editors comment: "ne corrumpantur mores legentium; cf. 2.636, 3.656" (Alton, Wormell, and Courtney 1997).

36 On the stimulating effects of arranged hair (an Ovidian fetish), see, e.g., the comments of Phoebus himself (*Met*. 1.497–98).

37 Note *dissuto* (1.408), which suggests not a violent tearing of clothes by the satyrs; the naiads have acted (presumably) of their own accord. Cf. "tales . . . amicitiae sunt . . . dissuendae magis quam discindendae" (Cic. *Amic*. 76).

38 Unlike Lotis attacked by Priapus in the *Metamorphoses* (9.346–48); see the Appendix.

Yet the narrator strongly suggests that her "no" very emphatically means "yes." After the day of drinking, most of the participants fall asleep drunk in various parts of the grove (1.421–22). The narrator insinuates that Lotis, however, might just be resting: *quievit humo* (1.424).[39] He emphasizes that she lies in (has picked?) a very secluded spot in the farthest part of the grove under the branches of a maple tree: "Lotis in herbosa sub acernis ultima ramis, / sicut erat lusu fessa, quievit humo" (1.423–24).[40] What does the narrator want us to imagine Lotis looked like? "Lotis rested on a grassy spot, exhausted from the party," is Betty Rose Nagle's unobjectionable translation of 1.424, and it is one way to visualize the scene (1995.48). There is another: "Lotis rested . . . just as (if) she was worn out by sex" (*sicut erat lusu fessa*, 1.424). *Lusus* means "party" and "sex" (cf. "Let's party!"). Propertius the voyeur, for one, cannot pull himself away from watching Gallus and his girlfriend have sex, that is to say, from the "party" that they throw ("non tamen a uestro potui secedere lusu," 1.10.9).[41] J. N. Adams notes that *fessus* can mean "weary, as a consequence of sexual intercourse," and he connects it with "other words of this semantic field" like the Ovidian favorite *lassus* (1982.196). Thus Ovid's mid-day session with Corinna ends: "et nudam pressi corpus ad usque meum. / cetera quis nescit? lassi requieuimus ambo" (*Am*. 1.5.24–25).[42]

The fantasy that the narrator offers here can be read as classic soft-core: Lotis has composed herself to give the impression of sexual satisfaction (the pose of the libertine), and she (with one eye open) acts as if she were sleeping even as Priapus approaches. It is somewhat remarkable that the drunk and excited (even more so than usually?) Priapus can walk on his tip-toes (1.426), hold his breath (1.428), and balance himself (1.429), all without making a sound (1.426, 428). Indeed, the narrator comments (with a wink?) that Lotis, "nevertheless," was fast asleep ("illa tamen multi plena soporis erat," 1.431). Lotis even stays quiet after Priapus has taken the covering off her legs (1.431) and begun to penetrate her ("ad sua felici coeperat ire via," 1.432).[43] The donkey prevents the completion of the act—by Priapus.

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39 *quiesco* can mean "to sleep" or "to rest" or "to be still" (*OLD* s.v. 2; 5).

40 Cf. *secreta cubilia* (1.427), *finitima . . . in herba* (1.429); for seclusion as setting the scene for a sexual encounter, cf. 6.113–22.

41 On *lusus,* see Adams 1982.162, 254 and Kennedy 1993.82; cf. Fantham 1972.89–90.

42 Note *requieuimus* here in the *Amores* and *quievit humo* in the *Fasti* (1.424).

43 For *pedibus* (1.431) as legs, cf. *pedes tollere* and see Adams 1982.192; for *ad . . . ire* as a euphemism for sexual penetration, see Adams 1982.175–76.

The tale of Priapus and Lotis ends in laughter. It can thus also be read as an excellent example of joking discourse, one that positively exudes aggression. Teller tells Audience a story with not one but two Butts, Lotis *and* Priapus. Like the woman in the gorilla joke analyzed by Purdie, Lotis, the denying woman, the alluring woman, is "punished" before (some?) readers' ogling eyes for her show of false power, her refusal of sex. From a Freudian perspective, Priapus is a particularly good Butt because he represents the complete and total dominance of bodily needs over mental function. Perhaps nothing delighted Roman men more than seeing Priapus himself, the embodiment (literally) of male sexual aggression, degraded and humiliated. Priapus makes an "unjustified claim to power" (to use Purdie's phrase), and, when he is delivered to humiliation, perhaps some audience members enjoyed it.[44] Is the fantasy Ovid offered here (to his male readers?) something like this: "You, reader, can become more masculine, you can have power over Priapus, you would 'get' Lotis, unlike Priapus"? Through this joke, is Teller inviting his (male?) Audience to get back at all "the smiling, inviting, sexy, erotic, beautiful, pretty (aesthetic) wom[e]n in the rest of our cultural products" who have refused them, who have "claimed false power" over them? Notice how the narrator characterizes in general terms Lotis's refusal of Priapus: "fastus inest pulchris sequiturque superbia formam" (1.419)—indeed. Is the final, and crucial, step here when Audience grasps Teller's joking intention and also laughs at Priapus? Laughter at this tale would not only complete the exchange between Teller and Audience, but, more importantly, complete the act itself ("I get it").

PRIAPUS AND VESTA

> Marital sex develops a routine, but the routines of a stranger are a novelty. Infidelities are a search for novelty . . . Don Juan's tragedy is that he finds all women the same in the dark and that they, finding novelty in his routine, are innocent enough to believe that the physical revelation is love. His tragic flaw is to choose the innocent, who pursue him to death.[45]

As has been well noted, the richly varied narrative voices of the various sections of Ovid's Vestalia (6.249–468) mirror the complex and, at

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44 Cf. Richlin 1992a.59, 124–27, 141.
45 Burgess 1990.9.

times, contradictory aspects of the goddess herself.[46] Priapus's attack on Vesta (6.319–48), part of Ovid's lavish treatment of the 9 June festival, exhibits a series of similarities and differences between it and his assault on Lotis. Once again, Priapus shows up at a divine festival and nearly rapes a sleeping female deity, this time Vesta; an ass brays, again, and wakes the goddess. The festival here is prompted by Cybele, the *mater deum*, who calls the "eternal gods," as well as satyrs and nymphs, to the valleys beneath Mount Ida in Phrygia (6.321–23, 327). Such a celebration is, in religious terms, closely related to the earlier one of Bacchus in Greece (1.393). As E. R. Dodds notes, by the fifth century B.C., the "ὄργια of Dionysus" are "intimately associated, if not identified, with those of the Asiatic Cybele."[47] Perhaps not surprisingly, there is again night-long drinking followed by sleep for some, dancing for others, and sex-play, perhaps, for still others.[48]

From an aetiological perspective, however, the Book 6 tale complicates the earlier one. For Ovid offers a second explanation for the donkey sacrifice to Priapus at Lampsacus: the animal is now said to be punished for ruining the god's chance *at Vesta* (6.345–46). Donkeys were a colorful part of the celebration of the Vestalia at Rome. Bakers honored the great goddess of the hearth by bedecking these strong workers with loaves of bread and

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46 See Williams 1991, Barchiesi 1997.133–40, Newlands 1995.127–45; more on the form and structure of the Vestalia at Gee 1997 and Gee 2000.92–125.

47 Dodds 1960 ad 78–79; cf. Burkert 1985.178–79: "Since Pindar at least, the retinue of *Meter Kybele* is seen as one with the Dionysian throng"; Roller 1999.149–53, 157, 176. As Dodds notes ad loc., the religious connection between the Mother and Dionysus grew ever closer with the development of Dionysus/Sabazius as the "Son of the Mother." The two deities will have shared similar aspects for some Romans as well. Wiseman rightly laments that if we had comparable evidence, "we might understand the *ludi scaenici* as well as we do the Great Dionysia at Athens," however, he is also correct in asserting that "the Roman games were where the citizen body met to honour its gods with dance and drama . . . the dramatic festivals were central to Rome's culture; they were a focal point, a unifying social force" (1998.18, 17). The dramatic performances of the Ludi Megalenses took place in front of the Mother's temple on the Palatine. A large hoard of terracotta figurines used in her cult there has been found buried under the foundations of the second temple; they are thus datable to the period "between 191 and 111 B.C." The "majority" of these figurines "have some direct reference to the cult of the Magna Mater. These include eleven representations of the goddess herself, three heads of Dionysos, and ninety-four images of Attis . . . a dozen or more . . . depicting the glans penis. There are several figures of dancing women and models of theater masks" (Roller 1999.275–76). Roller conjectures that the "masks and dancing figures presumably symbolize the Ludi Megalenses" (1999.277); those excavated heads of Dionysus could then honor the orgiastic aspects of both deities, the dramatic aspects, or both.

48 "in multo nox est pervigilata mero" (6.326); sleeping and dancing (328–30); sex-play is perhaps suggested by *hi ludunt* (329).

their millstones with garlands (6.311–18). Through Priapus's attempted rape, Ovid finds another way to connect the animals to the festival of the goddess: they are also the hero-saviors of Vesta and thus honored by her (6.347–48). Ovid knew two discrete pieces of information: that donkeys were sacrificed to Priapus at Lampsacus on some day (9 January? 9 June?) and that they were honored at Rome during the Vestalia. The Book 6 story explains both data, but raises a question: does the aetiology offered at Lampsacus revolve around a nymph or Rome's central goddess?[49] Narrative repetition, as I noted above, plays same off different and different off same; the world Ovid imagines allows the bodies of two different women, Lotis and Vesta, to occupy the same place at Lampsacus without a hint of contradiction. Are all women, then, to use Anthony Burgess's provocative formulation quoted at the head of this section, the same to Priapus as they are to Don Juan, all equally objects, or are they different? How, though, could Vesta and Lotis ever be the same?

Priapus's second attack is different from the first in another way as well. Four of the participants seem rather out of place at this festival of Cybele in Phrygia, while all of the revelers at the Book 1 Bacchanal belonged there. Silenus, for one, was specifically *not* invited to this festival ("Silenus, quamvis nemo vocarat, adest," 6.324). Why? While it is true, as Walter Burkert cautions, that the "macabre climax of the frenzy for the Great Goddess, the self-castration of the *Galloi* . . . is far from always part and parcel of the Meter cult," religiously speaking, the presence of an ithyphallic god such as Silenus at a festival of Cybele is nevertheless remarkable in and of itself (1985.179). Once the Mother's eunuch devotee, for example, has offered his great sacrifice, Arthur Darby Nock argues that "he is ἁγνός, *castus,*" and that he complements the women virgins who "participated in the ceremonial" of Cybele "in Caria and at Cyzicus" (1972.1.8–9; cf. 10–11). *Castus*, however, is the last adjective one would use to describe Silenus or Priapus. The attempt to exclude Silenus, in turn, raises unanswerable questions about the presence of Priapus. Was he invited along with the other satyrs (6.323) or is he as unwelcome as his boon companion,

49 Feeney notes that multiple aetiology is a "striking aspect" of Roman religious exegesis and that Ovid's use of such a method in the *Fasti* is one of the "principal ways in which [his] poem conforms to the 'rules' of Roman ritual exegesis" (1998.127–28). Note that Ovid here gives multiple aetiologies not only for the Roman custom of garlanding the donkeys (6.317–18, 347–48), but also for the Lampsacene ass sacrifice (1.339–40, 6.349–50).

Silenus? If Silenus is rather out of place at this particular party, how could Priapus be any less so?

From one perspective, for both Vesta and Cybele, the festival beneath Mt. Ida in Phrygia is a kind of "homecoming." As Russell Meiggs notes, "Though Pessinus was always regarded as the original centre of the cult, Cybele in Italy and the west was always the Idaean mother of the gods, 'mater magna deum Idaea'" (1973.356).[50] Thus, "Venus Genetrix who, as the goddess of the Julian house, of Trojan origin, has a natural place in the cult of Idaean Cybele and is associated with her in Rome" (Meiggs 1973.359).[51] Vesta, too, is ultimately Trojan. As Paul Zanker points out, one way in which Augustus emphasized her Trojan origin was through the statue in the central niche of one of the two large exedrae in his Forum, which depicted Aeneas rescuing Anchises and "the precious household gods, or Penates, held by the old Anchises. These were worshipped, along with the Palladium, in the Temple of Vesta, as guarantors of Rome's safety" (1990.201). Ovid also stresses the Trojan aspect of Vesta's origin in his discussion of 6 March, the day on which Augustus became pontifex maximus, when he calls the *penetralia Vestae* the *Iliaci foci* (3.417, 418). It was on this day in 12 B.C. that Augustus's "first act as titular head of the state religion . . . was to resign to the Vestals the old *domus publica*, the official residence of the Pontifex Maximus, and to make his own house a *domus publica*, in which he dedicated a statue and altar to Vesta" (Ryberg 1955.59). Geraldine Herbert-Brown notes that Ovid, in his treatment of 6 March, "depicts the Pontifex Maximus as a priest descended from Aeneas who had brought the Penates from Troy. The Penates too, implicitly including Vesta, are also described as his 'cognata numina'" (1994.67).[52]

Yet from another angle, the presence of both Vesta and Cybele "back home" is puzzling. The "official" narratives of these goddesses, in both the republican and Augustan periods, involved an East to West movement, not West to East. Thus certain aspects of the Magna Mater cult, especially the festival from 15–25 March that commemorated the story of Cybele and Attis, were confined to the goddess's resident Phrygian clergy in

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50 For this aspect of Cybele, cf. *Fasti* 4.249–50 and see, in general, Roller 1999.287–320.

51 Among the seven statuettes dedicated by C. Cartilius Euplus at the shrine of Attis in Ostia are "small figures of Attis, a frieze of animals associated with Cybele, and a figure of Venus Genetrix" (Meiggs 1973.359).

52 Cf. Mars's words in the very next aetiology after Priapus and Vesta, the "Baker Jupiter": "vidimus Iliacae transferri pignora Vestae / sede" (6.365–66).

Rome who ministered to her in her new home (cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.19). Indeed, even though Cybele was publicly honored with the Ludi Megalenses of 4–9 April and the Roman nobility "retained a special attachment to [Cybele's] cult until the late Empire . . . In the Republic the public performance of [the March] ceremonies had been forbidden, and, since only eunuchs could be priests of the goddess, the priesthood was barred to Roman citizens" (Meiggs 1973.356).[53] Moreover, the modulations and shifts in emphasis that allowed Cybele, the Phrygian goddess, to become the Idaean, that is to say, Trojan, Mother—that benevolent wonder-worker on behalf of Aeneas and his line—relied precisely upon the suppression of her more orgiastic features: the self-castration, the festivals centered around excessive wine drinking, and the pleasures "in love and in the labors of night-festivals."[54] The festival here on Mt. Ida, however, is plainly a festival of that "other" Cybele, a festival honoring aspects of the goddess that are legitimate and important but not central to Roman religious thought of the republic, and especially not to Rome in the time of Augustus.

As with Cybele, Vesta, too, had multiple aspects and, again, the aspect that Ovid suggests here is not necessarily the one favored by the *mos maiorum*. The aniconic Vesta of the chaste and spatially stabilized cult, the goddess who marks out, preserves, and indeed, is, the center of the city, is only dimly perceived in the woman sleeping amidst the night revels of the Mother on Mt. Ida in Phrygia. From an "official" perspective, Vesta does not belong at the festival of the "other" Cybele, which, as I have argued, is also the less traditional one in Rome. An "official" pairing of Vesta and Cybele, the two Trojan goddess par excellence, might look like the relief on the Sorrento base, which was "originally designed to support three statues, one of which was surely a representation of Augustus" (Roller 1999.310). The

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53 Meiggs continues: "This dualism in Rome's attitude to Cybele was ended by the emperor Claudius. The priesthood, which no longer was confined to eunuchs, was opened to Roman citizens, and the March festival was officially recognized and performed in public" (356); cf. Roller 1999.309–16.

54 See, e.g., Meiggs 1973.354–56, Littlewood 1981, Wiseman 1984, Becher 1988 and 1991, Herbert-Brown 1994.114, Roller 1999.287–316. The citation here is adduced by Wiseman (1984.225 n. 11) and is from Thyillus, an acquaintance of Cicero, on the dead castanet dancer, Aristion, a devotee of Cybele: οὐκέτ' ἔρωτι, / οὐκέτι παννυχίδων τερπομένη καμάτοις (*Anth. Pal.* 7.223.5–6). Note especially that Augustus did not rebuild the temple of Magna Mater on the Palatine, which had burned down in A.D. 3, "in marble, but only in tufa (peperino) and relegated the exotic cult . . . to freedmen. Apparently Augustus had not actually repaired all the old temples in 28 B.C., as he claims in the *Res Gestae*. Some projects were more pressing than others" (Zanker 1990.109).

front of this base depicts the Genius of Augustus "seated before an Ionic portico distinguished by the *corona civica* as the house of Augustus, flanked on one side by Mars Ultor with Cupid and on the other, which is lost, probably by Venus Genetrix" (Ryberg 1955.50). On one of the two long sides, "Vesta is seated on a throne with her head veiled and a patera (?) in her extended right hand" surrounded by Vestals and a lost figure (Ryberg 1955.51–52). The Vestals appear "against an architectural background . . . an Ionic portico and a circular temple" (Ryberg 1955.49–50). Arguing from the Palermo relief, Inez Scott Ryberg proposes that the lost figure here in the presence of Vesta "is undoubtedly the emperor in his capacity as Pontifex Maximus" (1955.52–53). On the other of the two long sides is a representation of the Magna Mater attended by a dancing Corybantic figure and "a standing veiled woman, probably Juno Sospita" (Roller 1999.310–11). Others have speculated that this veiled woman could "possibly be Livia" (Ryberg 1955.52).[55] The Sorrento base thus perhaps shows what an "official" pairing of Vesta and Cybele looked like, and that image looks nothing like the festival on Mt. Ida that Ovid depicts: there are no Ionic porticos or imperial figures there. The two goddesses thus join with the out-of-place ithyphallic gods to produce a rather out of tune variation on the tale of Lotis and Priapus.

After the narrator describes the assorted party goers and their various activities (6.326–30), he finally turns his attention to Vesta and Priapus (6.331–38):

> Vesta iacet placidamque capit secura quietem,
> sicut erat, positum caespite fulta caput.
> at ruber hortorum custos nymphasque deasque
> captat, et errantes fertque refertque pedes;
> aspicit et Vestam: dubium nymphamne putarit,
> an scierit Vestam, scisse sed ipse negat.
> spem capit obscenam, furtimque accedere temptat,
> et fert suspensos corde micante gradus.
>
> Vesta lies still and, without a care, takes her calm rest, just
> as she was, her head laid down, supported by the turf. But

55 In support of Ryberg's attribution, compare especially the Getty statue that, as Roller notes, "depicts a seated Magna Mater, a fairly standard pose, but with a portrait head of . . . Livia" (1999.313).

> the ruddy warden of gardens tries to catch both nymphs and goddesses, and he carries his wandering feet this way and that; he gazes at Vesta also: it is uncertain whether he thought she was a nymph or whether he knew she was Vesta, but he himself says that he didn't know. He forms an obscene hope, and tries to approach furtively, and creeps forward with a throbbing heart.

Unlike Lotis, Vesta, up to this point, has not even been mentioned. The chaste goddess is, however, at this festival, even though she does not take part in some of its more (for Vesta) unseemly aspects. She is without a doubt, fast asleep. The repetition of *sicut erat* at the start of the pentameter (6.332) recalls the earlier, more sexually ambiguous description of Lotis (*sicut erat lusu fessa*, 1.424) and, in so doing, marks out the widest difference between the goddess and the nymph. Here there is no question at all of Vesta being "in" on what follows. The earlier narrator used the titillation of pornographic representation, first, to focus on the bodies of the nymphs at the party and then to create the impression that Lotis "really wanted it." However, this time Priapus is, as Carole Newlands (1995.135) neatly puts it, "randomly on the make," unlike his earlier laser-like focus on Lotis, the *amata* to his *amans* (*surgit amans* [sc. Priapus]: 1.425).

Yet for all the differences, there is still a gesture toward pornographic representation here. Consider the description of Priapus as he sees the sleeping Vesta: *spem capit obscenam*. This *spes* is nothing less than a distillation of the kind of pornographic representation that Kappeler describes. The implications of *spes* need not be spelled out because, as Kappeler puts it, with all soft-core pornography, the "fantasy of porn is not fully depicted, it is not identical with the 'content' of representation, it is to be completed by the active subject, the viewer-hero of the representation" (1986.59). Vesta here is as clearly a sexually inviting passive object *to Priapus* as Lotis was to him earlier. But the *spes* that Priapus forms upon seeing the sleeping Vesta is further qualified as *obscena*.[56] At the very end of the earlier scene, after the thwarted rape, the god's erect member was described in this way: "obscena nimium quoque parte paratus" (1.437). There, the focalization is through the onlookers, and, in their eyes, the god's

56 For a survey of Roman concepts of obscenity, see, e.g., Richlin 1992a.1–31.

exposure is ridiculous.[57] In the Vesta scene, however, it is the narrator who labels Priapus's very intention as *obscena*. Such a characterization underlines the pornographic implications of *spes*—if they were somehow not obvious enough. More importantly, though, *obscena* plainly stains or befouls this particular *spes*.[58] The adjective, then, offers a powerful and obviously negative evaluation of the attempted rape, yet it does so by first calling up the pornographic implications of *spes,* only to reject them at once. Thus the major innovation of this repeated scene is to gesture toward pornographic representation while keeping "deniability." Yet readers are unavoidably stained because they, like it or not, draw out the implications of this particular *spes obscena*.

Nowhere is the role of readers, however, more complicated than in the area of joking discourse. To begin with, as already noted, the narrator makes his use of joking discourse here quite clear. The earlier description of the temperaments of the participants at the festival of Bacchus ("quicumque iocis non alienus erat," 1.396) is replaced by an explicit comment by the narrator that this tale is quite humorous: "est multi fabula parva ioci" (6.320). The narrator is now Teller and we, plainly, are Audience. However, the Vesta tale ends, not with laughter, but with the terrified Vesta calling for help while Priapus slips out of the hands of the furious crowd. Unlike the earlier tale, therefore, the story of Priapus and Vesta ends in a way that is at variance with its explicit introduction as a joke. The deities involved treat the affair as seriously as the onlookers. The ass, once merely the "author of the noise" ("morte dedit poenas auctor clamoris, 1.439), now becomes, through the focalization of Priapus, a hated "index" whose innards the Lampsacenes vindictively offer up in prayer: "apta . . . flammis indicis exta damus" (6.346).[59]

For Vesta, on the other hand, the ass is an unwitting and unexpected savior. Mindful of the animal's help (*memor*, 6.347), she rewards this "informer" with the best possible gift for a beast of burden, a day off: "cessat opus, vacuae conticuere molae" (6.348). Her particular reward also deftly

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57 "at deus, obscena nimium quoque parte paratus, / omnibus ad lunae lumina risus erat" (1.437–38).

58 Note, in particular, the narrator's description of Byblis's sublimated incest fantasies in the *Metamorphoses*: "spes tamen obscenas animo demittere non est / ausa suo vigilans" (*Met.* 9.468–69).

59 The last "indices" punished in such wise were the race of birds because they gave away the secrets of the gods (1.450).

highlights her own chastity; she is, after all, one millstone (*mola*) that Priapus didn't grind.[60] Readers, however, inevitably view Priapus's attempted rape in a more complicated way than either the deities or the other participants at Cybele's festival. The scene has been introduced by the narrator as a joke, and it calls to mind, in form, action, and even, at times, in diction, earlier examples of joking discourse. Readers are therefore left with two, mutually exclusive, views of this tale: it is a joke or it is an unspeakable outrage. What happens when the attempted rape of Vesta is seen as a joke?

NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PALATINE?

Content matters.[61] After Priapus and Lotis, readers cannot act as if they have never seen the path toward which the narrator points at the beginning of the story of Priapus and Vesta. By announcing that this is a funny story, Teller plainly aims to "bribe us with the gift of the joke's yield of pleasure." The particular kinds of pleasures here are well known. As discussed above, the joke about the husband, the wife, and the gorilla exhibits all of these features. Readers also know how easily the dynamics of joking discourse and its political consequences can turn into Freud's "tendentious" joke. A good example of such a joke is Woody Allen's summation of his unsuccessful attempt at dating a woman who worked in President Eisenhower's administration: "I was trying to do to her what he was doing to the country." Here again, the man is degraded for his inability to obtain sex and the woman simultaneously degraded for her refusal of sex, i.e., her refusal of male power. However, this joke is necessarily more complex than the wife and the gorilla joke because, in Freud's formulation, it "runs the risk of meeting with people who do not want to listen to it"—President Eisenhower, for one, to say nothing of some of his political supporters, for example, the very woman Allen was pursuing. Allen's joke is thus also political criticism and rather aggressive at that. It is now perhaps not surprising to note that Allen chose to represent Eisenhower's claim to

60 For this metaphor from Pomponius's Atellana, *Pappus Agricola*, see Adams 1982.152–53. The Nonius citation that preserves Pomponius is corrupt; Adams prints Ribbeck's text with the emendation of Luchs; cf. Ribbeck 1873.240.99–100, Frassinetti 1955.24.95–96, Frassinetti 1967.46.95–96 and 105. Might the chaste goddess also smile at *cessat opus*? For *opus* in the sense "penis," see Adams 1982.57; for *opus* used as "the male part in the [sex] act," see Adams 1982.157.

61 Cf. Richlin 1992b.159, Barchiesi 1997.230.

authority and exercise of power in terms of sexual intercourse. The woman, accordingly, also functions as a double for the president, for if Allen were able to "conquer" her, he would "get back" at Eisenhower himself. Those citizens who view the Eisenhower presidency as Allen does naturally complete the exchange of joking intent with Allen and can, if they like, complete the act itself.

The narrator of the story of Priapus and Vesta thus invites readers, in short, to imagine Vesta as one of the Butts of this joke, just as he did with Lotis. To be precise, the Vesta here must be identified as "Ovid's Vesta of the *Fasti*" as opposed, say, to "Augustus's Vesta," for, in many ways, she is unique to this poem. Augustus, to be sure, fostered a quite close religious and symbolic association between Vesta and himself by building a sanctuary of the goddess in his home on the Palatine (see, e.g., Zanker 1990.207). Vesta's ancient temple still stood in the Forum, and her peculiar rites continued to be performed there, yet because Augustus included her cult within the confines of his own home, the unique aspects of the Forum temple began to be blurred. Ovid in the *Fasti*, however, blurs the separation between princeps and goddess further still. As Alessandro Barchiesi puts it, "all the mentions of Vesta so far made in the poem [sc. up till Priapus and Vesta in Book 6] have by now transformed her into a household deity of Augustus" (1997.138). Indeed, Herbert-Brown points out that the Vesta of this poem introduces the "entirely new" idea that "Vesta is now explicitly 'cognata' of Augustus" (1994.71).[62] Herbert-Brown convincingly argues that this idea of relation is specifically Ovid's innovation because "it is evident that the new cult of Vesta did not replace the old one in the Forum" (1994.78). Equally innovative are, according to Herbert-Brown, the *Fasti*'s claims that Vesta "is not simply a household god of Augustus; the Pontifex Maximus is on an equal footing with the Roman goddess herself" (1994.67). Herbert-Brown rightly stresses that Ovid, for example, during his treatment of the Vestalia, goes out of his way to make associations between Augustus and Vesta clear even where Augustus himself did not (1994.79):

> Despite Ovid's conceptual unification of Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, with the fire of Vesta and her pledge of empire, it must be conceded that that unification was not represented physically in his home on the Palatine. This,

62 See 67–81 for her arguments.

> despite the fact that the poet sustains the notion of unification even where it may not be considered necessary, such as at the end of his entry for the Vestalia on 9 June, an ancient rite celebrated in the Forum and having nothing to do with the cult on the Palatine.

It is not known why Ovid "sustained the notion of unification" of Vesta and Augustus in this poem, but his choice has important implications for any reading of the scene of Priapus's attempted rape of Vesta.

A particularly helpful formulation of the critical problem here is offered by Richard Thomas. He highlights "Augustan readers," those readers who see the works of Vergil, for example, "as endorsements of the aims and achievements of . . . Augustus"; they take "from Virgil what Augustus himself would presumably have wanted a contemporary reader to take."[63] Scholars, as noted above, often invoke mime as a possible analog for the scene of Priapus and Lotis. What might an Augustan reader's reaction be to the appearance of Vesta in a mime plot? Appearance on the stage had long since been considered shameful to Romans, especially to the censors, but, on this topic, Augustus did not simply codify the *mos maiorum*, he "went beyond the practice current in the Republic." Under the *lex Iulia et Papia* (18 B.C.–A.D. 9), for example, members of the senatorial order and their descendants in the male line to the fourth generation "were forbidden to marry or to betroth themselves to freedmen, freedwomen, actors, actresses, and anyone whose father or mother was an actor or actress."[64] The minute, then, Vesta walks "on stage," her status is rather violently degraded, but her shame would only increase in the eyes of a member of the senatorial order. Moreover, if Rawson is correct, the publicly staged Latin mimes, of all the dramatic genres, were by far the most common and coarse (1993). If a mime were performed at the Floralia, say, it had room for still more sexually

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63 Thomas 2001.xii and passim, which should be closely compared with Barchiesi 1997.83–84 and passim.

64 McGinn 1998.93 (=72); for Augustus acting "beyond Republican practice," see 90–91; cf. 16, 107, 198. On Roman attitudes toward the acting profession, see, e.g., Edwards 1993.98–136; for Horace exploiting these attitudes, see Freudenburg 1993, Chapter 1 on Horace as comic "dramatist": "To play a mime actor's role is to become a slave, or, at best, a freed slave or alien. We see, then the real scandal that Horace's penchant for dramatization entails, for when he converts his opponents into stage characters, he effects their enslavement" (Freudenburg 1993.227).

explicit content because, at this festival, as Ovid himself puts it elsewhere in the *Fasti*, "the stage has the custom of more licentious joking" ("scaena ioci morem liberioris habet," 4.946).[65] Indeed, Ovid calls the women performers at this festival a *turba . . . meretricia* (5.349).[66]

But I would like to push the import of Vesta in a mime plot further, this time supposing Augustus himself to be "in the theater." Imagine writing a pornographic movie or, to be more fair to Ovid, merely a "soft-core" movie about attempted rape in which Casanova, during Mardi Gras, attacks a sleeping Virgin Mary, then showing the movie to the Pope and prefacing it with the declaration, "est multi fabula parva ioci." Would this be an approximate parallel to Ovid's poetic choice? This line can be pushed further still. The mime-type scene here is not an actual mime but part of an elegiac poem. When mimes were performed as part of the Ludi Florales their sexual frankness and license made sense within the context of the communal religious festival. The carnival setting furnished a legitimate time and space for these topics within the spiritual and moral life of the community, and their presence at those *ludi* marked them precisely as out-of-the-ordinary. Yet Ovid makes space for this mime-type scene not simply within his *Latius annus* with its celebrations of the *Caesaris arae*, but particularly here as a part of his version of the Vestalia, where it makes far less sense than, say, as a section of his presentation of the Floralia.[67] The literary code of mime, on the other hand, does not appear to make space for Vesta.[68] Thus while it is undeniable that Ovid gestures to the stage and invites us to consider it as part of the texture of this scene—*fabula* is a clear signal, for one—it is rather

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65 Mime grew ever more sexually explicit over time; see, e.g., Finkelpearl 1991.227–31.

66 "There is a famous story of Cato at the Ludi Florales in 55 B.C. [sc. Mart. 1 pref., 35.8–9]; his mere presence inhibited the audience from calling for the girls on stage to take their clothes off . . . Valerius Maximus calls the performers *mimae*, Seneca calls them *meretrices*" (Wiseman 1998.71; cf. 19–21).

67 Cf. Barchiesi 1997.247–48: "Ovid's motives for celebrating a return of the satyric element cannot be easily separated from his relationship with the Augustan voice." On Ovid's complex treatment of Vesta and Flora, see the nuanced discussion of Newlands 1995.105–10, 139–43.

68 Conte 1994.163 n. 48 rightly notes that McKeown 1979, for example, "furnishes testimonies and interesting texts, but connects them with each other by a purely mechanical relation of derivation, without any real interest for the different functions that the various literary codes exercise on the individual themes and motifs in question." For the possible interaction of what may have been the code of the *praetexta* and the *Fasti*, see Wiseman 1998.14 and 175–76 n. 96, who offers an important modification of Barchiesi 1997.247.

surprising, when we start to push a model that the poet himself suggests, how quickly this scene starts to look, to put it mildly, nothing at all like the Vesta of "official" Augustan discourse.

Joking discourse is hardly any less slippery. By including diametrically opposed reactions to the tale of Priapus and Vesta, Ovid signals that he also knows all too well how different Audiences may react to this particular joke of Teller. If we suppose, again using Thomas's schema, that Augustan readers viewed Vesta as she is portrayed on the Sorrento base, for example, then their reaction to a joke about the attempted rape of Vesta might be mirrored in the outraged onlookers' response to Priapus's attack: both reactions indicate a refusal to accept, or even to allow, Vesta as the Butt of a joke, as the object of a pornographic representation, or as the object of Priapus's lust. An Augustan reader could thus very easily be imagined as falling into the category of "people who do not want to listen to" certain (tendentious) jokes (Freud 1960.90). Freud, in fact, raises a further, intriguing wrinkle here. Logically, the princeps himself could also be an Audience for this joke, just as I imagined him to be present at a mime. In light of Ovid's peculiar emphasis in this poem on Vesta as *cognata* of Augustus, with what literal force do we then read Freud's discussion of "subjective determinants in the case of the third person" (1960.144–45, emphasis mine):

> Jokes are confronted by subjective determinants in the case of the third person too, and these may make their aim of producing pleasurable excitation unattainable . . . The third person cannot be ready to laugh at an excellent obscene joke if the exposure applies *to a highly respected relative of his own*; before a gathering of priests and ministers no one would venture to produce Heine's comparison of Catholic and Protestant clerics to retail tradesmen and employees of a wholesale business.[69]

Ovid's peculiar claims about the blood relationship between Vesta and the princeps necessarily bind, as closely as possible, the Butt of the imagined scenario and one possible Audience member. Augustus's reaction is unknown, but it could have followed the lines Freud suggests.

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69 The comparison of Heine's can be found at Freud 1960.87; cf. Purdie 1993.44–45.

CONCLUSION

In his discussion of narrative repetition, J. Hillis Miller uses an image from Walter Benjamin's essay "The Image of Proust" (*Zum Bilde Prousts*). Miller notes that Benjamin associates some similarities ("opaquely similar" ones) "with dreams, in which one thing is experienced as repeating something which is quite different from it and which it strangely resembles. ('It was a sock, but it was my mother too.') . . . It arises out of the interplay of the opaquely similar things, opaque in the sense of riddling. How is a mother like a sock?" (1982.8).[70] The comparison to dreams may not be inappropriate for this investigation. Freud is above all interested in "the psychical processes involved in the *construction* of the joke (the 'joke-work')" (1960.54, emphasis Freud). He argues that all jokes are ultimately formed in the unconscious, just as dreams are (cf. the "dream-work"). Thus dreams and jokes are actually two sides of the same psychical coin, and jokes, accordingly, are open to the same techniques of analysis as dreams.[71] Teller aims not to persuade or to instruct Audience but to delight him, or, as Freud puts it, the joke-work is "able to excite pleasure in the hearer" (1960.96). The joke-work can do this because of its "condition of intelligibility."[72]

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70 For the phrase "opaquely similar" (*undurchschaubar ähnlich*), see Benjamin 1980.338: "Die Ähnlichkeit des Einen mit dem Andern, mit der wir rechnen, die im Wachen uns beschäftigt, umspielt nur die tiefere Traumwelt, in der, was vorgeht, nie identisch, sondern ähnlich: sich selber undurchschaubar ähnlich, auftaucht" ("The similarity of one thing to another which we are used to, which occupies us in a wakeful state, reflects only vaguely the deeper resemblance of the dream world in which everything that happens appears not in identical but in similar guise, opaquely similar to one another, " Benjamin 1969.204).

71 "Dreams serve predominantly for the avoidance of unpleasure, jokes for the attainment of pleasure; but all our mental activities converge in these two aims" (Freud 1960.180). On the relation of the "joke-work" to the "dream-work" see, especially, Chapter 6, "The Relation of Jokes to Dreams and to the Unconscious," and the dense Chapter 7, "Jokes and the Species of the Comic," a non-discursive account of the comic. Note Freud 1960.208: "Jokes and the comic are distinguished first and foremost in their psychical localization; *the joke, it may be said, is the contribution made to the comic from the realm of the unconscious*" (emphasis Freud).

72 Such a condition becomes clear when jokes are compared with dreams. Jokes differ from dreams in several fundamental ways: "A dream is a completely asocial mental product; it has nothing to communicate to anyone else . . . it remains unintelligible to the subject himself and is for that reason totally uninteresting to other people . . . A joke, on the other hand, is the most social of all the mental functions that aim at a yield of pleasure. It often calls for three persons and its completion requires the participation of someone else in the mental process it starts. The condition of intelligibility is, therefore, binding on it" (Freud 1960.179).

If we accept Freud's fundamental claim that all jokes are ultimately formed in the unconscious, just as dreams are, and that dreams and jokes are indeed two sides of the same psychical coin, we may consider the repetition of joking discourse in the tale of Priapus and Vesta and Priapus and Lotis to be, from a psychological perspective, significant. The significance of both tales is certainly not to be found solely in their "contribution" to the progress of the narrative, because both are "superfluous" to the days on which they are featured: Priapus and Lotis have nothing to do with the Agonalia while, as Gareth Williams aptly characterizes it, Ovid earlier offers a "mundane" explanation for the bakers' garlanding at the Vestalia at 6.311–18 (Williams 1991.197). Rather, through the two tales—with their jokes and their rape and their pornographic representation—Ovid imagines a world in which Priapus, and all that he represents, has not been eliminated from human life, but constantly reappears without warning, yet each time he does, he is also new and different. This Priapus is a random figure, one who ranges about the year, "bribing us with his gift of pleasure" or causing trouble, depending on your perspective.

Indeed, randomness is the very note struck in the story of Vesta and Priapus. In the first tale, by contrast, the presence of the decisive figure in the plot and the very point of the aetiology itself, the ass, was motivated and organic, as it were. Silenus manifestly belongs at that festival of Bacchus. He arrives on his "arched-back ass" along with another welcome guest, Priapus (1.399–400). It is, accordingly, not surprising when that same ass later brays and interrupts Priapus's late-night designs. Silenus, the second time, is pointedly not invited, and so the role of the ass, the focus of this aetiology, also changes dramatically. The presence of the ass is now unmotivated and unexpected. We left Priapus standing, panting, over the sleeping Vesta. "By chance" (*forte*, 6.339) Silenus's donkey stops the "god of the long Hellespont" as he "was going to begin" ("ibat ut inciperet longi deus Hellesponti," 6.341). Here is a repetition of "something which is quite different" from Priapus and Lotis and yet something that it "strangely resembles." Priapus has stood over a sleeping woman before, it is quite clear what he is "going to begin," yet now the chance rescue stops a dream-like scenario from turning into a nightmarish one—what if the ass were not there?

The story of Priapus and Lotis can be read as offering nearly every element that the pornographer draws upon: titillation of the male reader, a woman in the subject position, both rapist and his victim presented as the Butts of a joke between the author and reader, thus doubly objectifying the

woman, etc. Moreover, Ovid imagines only one response to Priapus's failed attack on Lotis, laughter. With this familiar, aggressive, male fantasy of rape, Ovid does not rethink patriarchal myths.[73] Priapus's attempted rape of Vesta looks the same as his assault on Lotis—to the narrator: the god is again comic because he fails, and the woman is again comic because she refuses sex, i.e., refuses male power. Priapus's devious scheme fails both times (whence the comedy), and yet the second scene is not comic to the participants; the narrative therefore implies: "The preceding was *not* a little story with a lot of laughs." Students of jokes, however, have long stressed that just such "voluntary taboo-breaking" that is then marked as "wrong" is one of the hallmarks of joking discourse. For example, Purdie points out that "comic heroes" commit "forbidden acts—sometimes sexual." She could, in fact, be describing the second attack by Priapus: "even comic heroes rarely get away with their transgressions. The text usually confirms that such behavior is marked as 'wrong' even while we 'enjoy' it (hence its funniness), by visiting the failure of schemes and physical harm upon their perpetrators. The audience can both eat and have their cake; they commit and mark the forbidden actions" (1993.68–69).[74] The two responses to Vesta's attempted rape, then, are integral to this passage's function as a joke.

The two responses cannot be blithely dismissed as "just parts of a joke," though. The Vesta passage, as I see it, is qualitatively different from those infamous "polytonal" Ovidian "panegyrical" passages, for example, the "encomium" of Romulus on 5 February, the day Augustus assumed the title *pater patriae* (*Fasti* 2.119–44), for two reasons. Some critics have argued, I think rightly, that such passages can be read both "naively" and with "detachment." The Vesta scene, however, makes both a clear "positive" and "negative" reading explicit, unlike those other passages. More importantly, by centering his two responses *around an attempted rape of Vesta*, Ovid necessarily complicates any reductive alignment of the outrage of the participants at Cybele's festival with Augustan "praise." The audacious way

73 As he does, say, through his presentations of the rapes of Callisto in the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses*; see Johnson 1996, an article to which I owe a great debt.

74 Note also Purdie 1993.60–61 (emphasis Purdie): "Identifying the object of laughter as 'degraded' points to the *two* affective attributes of the object, in relation to the laugher: 'laughing at' is always aggressive, it 'puts people down' in signalling that they are down-put, but that could not happen unless they were originally perceived as 'up'—as in some way holding power over and thus (by definition) potentially threatening the laugher."

that Ovid elicits these responses seems to me to be much closer to "when did you stop beating your wife?" than straightforward "panegyric."

One of the more the interesting questions, then, is what it might mean that Ovid even imagines two responses to an attempted rape of Vesta. Don Fowler, for one, explores just such an area in his study of deviant focalization in Vergil's *Aeneid,* and he offers a challenging formulation of this kind of textual movement: "Whoever it is to whom we ascribe these viewpoints, they are there, in the text, and the reader has the option of looking at the world that way. Merely to allow these viewpoints to exist is an ideological act: even an 'objectively' dialogic *Aeneid* challenges Augustan order" (2000.62). The crux becomes: "What does it mean to challenge Augustan order?" However we answer that question, the following points might be considered.

I claimed above that Ovid does not rethink patriarchal myths with his telling of Lotis's attempted rape. The patriarchy itself, as is well known, was contested terrain under Augustus. For example, Augustus, the father of the fatherland, encouraged the conflation of his *domus* and the *res publica*, thus making Vesta both his own household goddess and the state's. Yet to the narrator, Vesta is, nonetheless, interchangeable with Lotis as a comic figure: both are women who refuse male power. From the narrator's perspective, then, there is still no rethinking of patriarchal myths, they are alive and well. Ovid himself might be a different matter: he imagines a narrator who views Vesta as a sexual, pornographic object, as a Butt of a joke, that is, a narrator who either knows nothing of Augustus's efforts to make this goddess special or cares nothing for them. Such a move seems to me to be a rethinking of one patriarchal myth—the one fostered by Augustus. And by rethinking, I mean attempted rape of one of Augustus's favored deities by that most mentulate of gods. What of our randy friend? He swears that he did not know that the woman sleeping before him was Vesta; he implies that, if he had, he would never have tried to rape her. Thus Ovid's text teaches its readers how revered this goddess is: even Priapus halts before her. There is comfort in that lesson for those who look for it; to others, the idea of Priapus not being Priapus might strike them as rather funny.[75]

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75 I owe a lot to the comments of the reader for *Arethusa*, Dennis Kehoe, Charles McNelis, and, in particular, Carole Newlands. I thank them all.

APPENDIX: PRIAPUS AND LOTIS IN THE *METAMORPHOSES* (9.346–48)

As has been well discussed, the *Fasti* and the *Metamorphoses* are important intertexts for each other (Hinds 1987, Hardie 1991.52–53, Myers 1994). An especially rich vein for comparison is that body of material treated in both poems. Ovid touches, ever so briefly, on the story of Lotis and Priapus in the *Metamorphoses,* and his handling of the story there sheds much light on his choices in the *Fasti*. To begin with, some readers have been troubled because attempted rapes of Lotis by Priapus appear both in the *Fasti* and in the *Metamorphoses* (Fantham 1983.202). As I noted above, however, serial rape is a part of this god's essential nature, and so two scenes of this type need not surprise. Likewise, the datum of this myth is that Priapus never actually succeeds in his devious quest for Lotis. Thus, by the "logic" of myth, Lotis escapes one time from Priapus through the intervention of Silenus's donkey, and, for all time, by metamorphosis into her eponymous flower.

More interesting for my purposes, however, is the fact that the pathetic tone of the attack in the *Metamorphoses* highlights, by its extreme contrast, Ovid's choice to present Lotis in the *Fasti* as a "co-conspirator," as a "willing victim." After the death and deification of Hercules, Alcmene tells Iole of a far greater labor, her own labor and delivery of this, the greatest of heroes. Juno, however, gets some revenge by transforming Galanthis, one of the *plebs* (*Met*. 9.306), into a weasel (9.275–323). Iole, less moved by the punishment of someone "not of our blood" (*alienae sanguine nostro*, 9.326), replies with the story of the "strange misfortunes" (*mira . . . fata*, 9.327–28) of her own half-sister, Dryope. Charles Segal (1969.36) well notes that Dryope's metamorphosis into a lotus is related "as a story of exceptional pathos," with tears flowing freely at the beginning and the end of the tale (9.328, 395–97). Dryope plucked some flowers, and Iole herself then saw something horrible (*Met*. 9.344–49):

> vidi guttas e flore cruentas
> decidere et tremulo ramos horrore moveri.
> scilicet, ut referunt tardi nunc denique agrestes,
> Lotis in hanc nymphe, fugiens obscena Priapi,
> contulerat versos, servato nomine, vultus.
> nescierat soror hoc.
>
> I saw bloody drops dripping from the flower and the branches moved with quaking horror. Obviously, as the slow rustics now finally relate, Lotis the nymph, fleeing the obscene advances (or "penis": Bömer) of Priapus, had taken her changed features for refuge into this flower while keeping her name. My sister had not known this.

Dryope is completely innocent (cf., especially, her own oath at 9.371–74), yet she is punished, nevertheless, by transformation into the lotus. Here the emotional and moral force of this tale turns precisely on her innocence. Segal contrasts the "ominously vague" *obscena Priapi* here (9.347) with the "broad and bawdy humor" of the "obscena nimium quoque parte paratus" laughed at in *Fasti* Book 1 (437), and argues that Ovid encourages his readers to imagine that Lotis herself must have originally been as wholly an innocent victim as Dryope later was to be (1969.37–38). From the perspective of Priapus's two rapes in the *Fasti*, therefore, the innocent Lotis of the *Metamorphoses* looks much more like Vesta threatened in Book 6 by the *spes obscena* of Priapus (6.337) than the "teasing" Lotis of Book 1 who "wanted it." Ovid could obviously present the nymph in either way, and he does just that.

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