REPRESENTING OVID ON THE EARLY MODERN STAGE
44th Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America
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SEMINAR LEADER:

Lisa S. Starks-Estes
University of South Florida St. Petersburg

SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS AND ABSTRACTS:

Douglas Arrell, University of Winnipeg
"Ovid vs. Caxton in Heywood's *Ages*"

Heywood's main source for his *Ages* plays was Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. However, he modified Caxton's narrative significantly, often under the influence of Ovid, some of whose works he translated in the 1590s. Caxton's work sought to transform Greek myth into medieval romance; the gods became kings and queens, the heroes were knights, and the supernatural element was suppressed as much as possible. These changes reflected not only Caxton's desire to use romance conventions familiar to readers in 1475 when his translation appeared, but also his uneasiness with the pagan content. Heywood found in Caxton a convenient narrative structure for the incoherent mass of Greek tales and his humanizing of the gods also facilitated their embodiment in stage action. But his changes of Caxton under the influence of Ovid reflected changes in literature and society in the late 16th century. The pagan element did not need to be treated with the same delicacy. The fact that a significant part of the audience was likely familiar with the *Metamorphoses* meant that some of Caxton's more extreme distortions of the myths would no longer be acceptable. Most importantly an increasing literary sophistication meant that audiences were capable of a more radical suspension of disbelief than were earlier audiences. The popularity of Ovid was both a symptom and a cause of this new sophistication.

Jim Casey, Arcadia University
"Worse than Philomel, Worse than Actaeon: Dismembering Myth in *Titus Andronicus*"

This essay considers the gendering of dismemberment in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, paying particular attention to the male and female bodies of the text as sites of different but equally horrific violence. I am especially interested in the way violence against male and female bodies is authorized and legitimized in the play. Like Philomel, Lavinia is clearly portrayed as a victim, guilty only of being seen; like Actaeon, Bassianus (as well as the other men in the play) is depicted more ambivalently, albeit guilty only of seeing. Audiences watching *Titus Andronicus* witness the reported deaths of Titus' twenty-one soldier-sons, the ritualized killing of

Alarbus, the slaying of Mutius, the murder of Bassianus, the maiming of Titus, the beheadings of Martius and Quintus, the hanging of the Clown, the cooking of Demetrius and Chiron, the dual stabbings of Titus and Saturninus, and the live burial of Aaron. Yet the critical discussion of bodies in the play has been focused almost entirely on the female body. Three female bodies are dead at the end of Titus Andronicus (Lavinia, Tamora, and the Nurse), but they are accompanied by thirty-two male bodies (or pieces of them) and the promise of one more (one Moor). This essay will consider the violation of both male and female bodies in the play, connecting gender to Ovidian myths of hunter and hunted.

Eric De Barros, Clark University
"'My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls': Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, 'Black' Hair, and the Revenge of Postcolonial Education"

At the beginning of Act 2, Scene 3 of Titus Andronicus, when asked by Tamora, his adulterous lover and recently ascendant Empress of Rome, "wherefore look'st thou sad/When everything doth make a gleeful boast?" (2.3. 10-11), Aaron begins his answer with a question of his own: "What signifies . . ./My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls/Even as an adder when she doth unroll/To do some fatal execution?" (2.3.32/34-36). No critic, to my knowledge, has ever noticed this description as anything more than an obvious representation of his racial difference; and film, for its part, has either cut it from the script or presented it as an odd, performatively inconsequential line. The problem is that this treatment misses the important way in which his question figuratively describes what is already a remarkable, literal description of physical transformation. In other words, it misses the performative magic of a black man straightening his kinky hair in a Roman forest on an early modern stage. Situated within the charged discussions of race and beauty in contemporary popular culture as well as academic, specifically African American, studies, this paper will argue that Aaron's hair-straightening represents Shakespeare's appropriation of the imaginative boldness of Ovid's Metamorphoses in an effort to develop a liberating alternative to the death-obsessed literalism within the Roman literary tradition. In this regard, Titus is a postcolonial play, and Aaron its postcolonial hero. And it is through the application of Ovidian magic to his hair—like the application of a poetic hair relaxer—that Shakespeare imagines a postcolonial future for England.

Jennifer Feather, University of North Carolina, Greensboro
"Power, Sympathy, and Cruelty in the *Tristia* and *Henry V*"

Henry V is not the typical text for discussions of Ovid in Shakespeare's work, nor is the *Tristia* the typical Ovidian text to which critics turn. However, both the *Tristia* and *Henry V* are deep examinations of the workings of state power within an individual and thus, beg consideration of how human feeling influences the workings of hegemonic power. Shakespeare's Henry V is a famously ambiguous figure that embodies the two extremes of state power (one mystifying and only subtly coercive and the other autocratic and overtly aggressive), while Ovid figures Caesar alternately as exerting terrifying, divine power and as having the opportunity for mercy. Moreover, both texts analyze human feeling in terms of natural metaphors associated with particular locales. Ovid's exile to the frozen margins of the empire is a figure for Caesar's

mercilessness and his own emotional state takes the form of the tempestuous waters of the Black Sea. Henry describes the aspect of the warrior as the brow overwhelming the eyes "as doth a galléd rock / O'erhang . . . / . . . the wild and wasteful ocean" (*Henry V* 3.1.13-15) and challenges his troops to show "the mettle of [their] pasture" (*Henry V* 3.2.29). These metaphors link emotion to place and understand the operation of state power in terms at once geographical and individual.   This essay analyzes the operation of state power and human feeling in *Henry V* in terms of Ovid's *Tristia*.

Cora Fox, Arizona State University
"Ovidianism, Myth and Affect in *The Winter's Tale*"

When Hermione's statue is revealed to be living or when Perdita is found, these staged moments are often called mythic, and they are also examples of the pervasive Ovidianism of Renaissance literature. But what is the relationship between the mythic and the emotion work that such scenes carry out for Renaissance culture? In celebration of the illuminating scholarship of Rene Girard and also because it makes sense to reconsider myth criticism after the "affective turn" in the humanities, social and cognitive sciences, this essay will reassess the cultural significance and work of Ovidian representations and the myths they resignify in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*. This play has been beautifully ellucidated by literary critics focused on studies of classical intertextuality, and I will return to some of these readings to ask additional questions about the role of myth and emotion in the lived experiences this intertextual play reflects and constructs: How are Ovid's narratives in *Metamorphoses* "mythic" in their constructions and policing of emotion in the poem, and how does this mythic work change when those narratives are staged and embodied? What insights into the social constructions of jealousy, love or grief at the center of Affect Studies can be refined through analysis of this overtly mythic play? Drawing on contemporary affect theory, I will consider a few representative examples of Ovidian narratives as both stories and myths, and I will begin to retheorize the role of emotion in Ovidian mythic representations.

Edward Gieskes, University of South Carolina
"'materia conveniente modis': Ovid and Drama"

Colin Burrow's recent book *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, describes Shakespeare as a "practical humanist" who looked to the Latin tradition as a resource for his own work. Following this insight and taking up some of the issues raised in our seminar's description, this paper will investigate Ovid's place and use in stage representation. Ovid is, as many scholars have show, a central figure for early modern writing of all sorts, including drama. Despite none of his actual plays having survived antiquity, Ovid's *materia* was clearly suited to the stage. In some of my current work, I have been interested both in his appearances as a character (as in Jonson's *Poetaster*) as well as in uses of his words on stage. In addition to considering these more direct deployments of Ovid, I will be interested in further pursuing questions about dramatic writing suggested by the differing Ovids of Jonson, Marlowe, and Shakespeare.

Heather James, University of Southern California
"The Ovidian Girlhood of Shakespeare's Boy Actors: Juliet and Company"

This paper takes A Midsummer Night's Dream as paradigmatic of Shakespeare's use of Ovid to explore the scope and limits of the social ambition of Shakespeare's theatrical troupe as well as the social ambitions of the dramatis personae in terms of sex and class. The paper argues that Shakespeare presents the initial crisis of the play — the impetus that launches the increasingly wild and complex plot of sexual, social, and political desires — as arising from girls and women, who want greater voice in their own domestic futures and, more broadly and simply, want enough political and public voice to speak their minds and be heard fairly. Yet the play ends with muting if not all-out silencing of the women characters as they enter into their marital contracts, and in staging this upward arc of desires and downward turn of speech, the play hands over the plot about the liberty of speech — parrhesia in Greek and licentia in Latin — to the artisan-actors and especially to Bottom the Weaver. As much as I am behind any good feminist argument, this paper is not venturing a feminist argument per se. The argument is political, and concerns Shakespeare's vision of the scope and limits to the freedom of speech in the theater of his day. Not everyone can "win" at a given moment in history and even the vision of artists and poets of a future with more equitable liberties. My final point, which lies on the horizon of the paper, is that certain historical events — including the time a person (e.g., Shakespeare) takes to sift and respond to historical events — bring about a change in Shakespeare's claims on the liberty of speech as an instrument and virtue of his theater. The most radical of these changes may be seen in the restructuring of the part of Juliet in the second quarto of 1599: Juliet's part grows markedly in the 1599 quarto, and it takes shape in relation to Ovid and especially Ovid of the erotic elegies. In the 1599 Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare introduces his renovated figure for the boldest of Elizabethan dramatists, Christopher Marlowe: that ostensibly un-Marlovian figure is the part of a girl, performed by a boy.

Sarah Scott, Mount St. Mary's University
"Marlowe, Ovid, and *The Family of Love*"

The city comedy *The Family of Love* alludes conspicuously to the work of other dramatists of the time, which was common practice. However, the large number of references to Marlowe's plays and poetry is striking. Although Algernon Swinburne found *The Family of Love* to be "very coarse, very dull, altogether distasteful and ineffectual," such an assessment is beside the point as well as ahistorical. We can credit Barry as the first to employ *Hero and Leander* for *comic* effect in dramatic form. This essay asks how, and to what purpose, the playwright explores the erotic Ovidian tradition to which *Hero* belongs.

John D. Staines, John Jay College, CUNY
"Violated Bodies, Bloody Origins, and the Problem of Ovidian Poetics in Shakespeare"

As Lisa Starks-Estes (among others) has shown, Ovid's account of the rape and violation of Philomela generates many of Shakespeare's images for political origins and poetic creation. The myth haunts his poetry, the mark (as Starks-Estes argues) of trauma and the problem of virtus.

In this paper, I want to contend that Shakespeare pushes back against Ovid's poetics of rape, where art and politics come out of the beautiful pain of violation. We can see this from the earliest tragedies, as when Shakespeare pushes the dismemberment of Lavinia to grotesque extreme, embodied on stage for all to see and respond to. Those extreme moments confront the problem of building an art or a politics upon violated bodies, the sacrificial victims violated at moments of creation. Shakespeare draws attention to the trauma that lingers after the violation. Although Shakespeare found that traumatic narrative in Ovid's Philomela, his versions focus increasingly on the repetitions of endless violent trauma rather than the moments of stasis that can be produced when, for example, a woman is transformed into a laurel tree for the male poet to worship. This paper will explore two such moments, one tragic, one tragi-comic: *Macbeth*'s bloodied mothers and babes and *The Winter's Tale*'s lost children and wife. The endless metamorphic self-recreation of Ovidian poetics, so often figured in the rapist's pursuit of a fleeing victim, is founded on acts of violation, but in the Shakespearean retelling, there is no simple escape from the violence into beauty like Apollo's laurel or Prosperpina's annual return. Shakespeare's poetics builds upon a recognition of the ethical cost of such an aestheticizing of violation.

M. L. Stapleton, Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne
"Thomas Heywood and the Man Who Loved Women"

Thomas Heywood demonstrates a respectful empathy for women more frequently than most male English authors in the early modern period, which he reveals in plays such as *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, *The Fair Maid of the Exchange*, *The Fair Maid of the West*, and *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*. His monumental prose treatise *Gunaikeion* exhibits a similarly feminocentric perspective in its rapturous praise of historical and mythological heroines. Therefore, it may seem curious to moderns that he rendered two of Ovid's works into English that Christine de Pizan and other readers condemned as antifeminist, the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*. However, another reception tradition considered the ancient author as the ultimate respectable authority on the affliction of love, and a third recognized the ancient author's satiric distance from his *praeceptor Amoris*, who can only be described as badly misinformed, since any man who actually followed this speaker's advice about relationships with women would certainly fail, and rightly so. If Heywood subscribed to any of these opinions, he never explicitly revealed it. In his manifesto-like *An Apology for Actors*, he denounced Henry Austin for "borrowing" his translation of the *Ars*, *Loues Schoole*, and publishing it surreptitiously across the Channel under the auspices of Nicolas Janz Visscher, thus angrily repossessing his translations. And, in a more subtle way of counteracting this piracy, he frequently reclaimed his Ovid by repurposing it in his other works, much of this material about women. His modified *Ars* and *Remedia* often blunt the pseudo-misogyny of the Latin sourcetexts and enrich the rest of his corpus in which they reverberate.

William W. Weber, Centre College
"Threshold and Frame: Imagining the Structure and Goals of the *Database Of Ovid on the Renaissance Stage* (*DOORS*)"

This paper outlines the planning stages of a project tentatively called the *Database Of Ovid on the Renaissance Stage* (*DOORS*), which I envision becoming a valuable resource for scholars in many fields with interest in early modern drama, classical reception, intertextuality, book history, and more. This project will draw on a wide range of collaborative energies to bring together a comprehensive record of dramatic allusions to Ovid and his work during the early modern period, and will allow researchers to address important critical questions that, heretofore, have evaded definitive answers.

Catherine Winiarski, California State University, Fullerton
"Fractions of Ovid in *Titus Andronicus*"

Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* presents a violent confrontation between "civilization" and "barbarism" which is immediately complicated by the fact that both the Romans and the Goths possess the "civilized" cultural tradition of Greece and Rome, arguably in the compiled and teleologically ordered form of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This ironic cultural alliance between enemies is perhaps most obvious in Titus' identification with the Trojan king Priam and Tamora's identification with his wife Hecuba. Like many stories in the *Metamorphoses*, *Titus Andronicus* recounts a failed contract of adoption and social incorporation between "civilized" and "barbaric" groups, here a contract strategically motivated by concealed resentment and lust. Shakespeare's Goths and Romans use the Ovidian tradition as a rhetorical resource to express the trauma of violence, the abjection of mourning and sorrow, and the manic enthusiasm of vengeance. Understood as a privileged and totalized *whole*, this tradition is nonetheless subjected to fragmentation and decimation by characters in moments of abjection and then to multiplication and amplification in moments of vengeance. This paper will trace the play's allusions to three stories from the *Metamorphoses* that, as a series, develop increasing moral complexity and ambiguity that problematize the boundary between civilized and barbarian: the story of Athenian Triptolemus and Scythian Lyncus, with its straightforward punishment of barbaric jealousy and ingratitude; the story of Thracian Tereus and Athenian Procne and Philomela, with its punishment of both violent lust and unrestrained revenge; and the story of Trojan Hecuba, Greek Achilles, and Thracian Polymestor, with its punishment of but also sympathy for Hecuba's revenge.

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