Preface

People who are interested in Shakespeare are likely at some point to ask themselves about his reading. If you admire a writer, it is natural to wonder which writers that writer admired. For a long time it has been widely agreed that Shakespeare's favourite classical author, probably his favourite author in any language, was Publius Ovidius Naso. Readers who wish to pursue the relationship can consult a large number of specialized studies of particular aspects of it, but no single book which explores it in a variety of ways and across a broad range of works. That is the gap which this study aims to fill.

As will be clear from the length of my bibliography, a single book could never exhaust the subject. By its nature it invites many different approaches, ranging from the minutely linguistic to the broadly conceptual, from consideration of little words which Shakespeare snapped up from Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* to reflection upon such large matters as the representation of sexuality and the function of myth. This book is deliberately eclectic in its approach—sometimes it dwells on particular verbal details, while at other times it proposes less tangible infusions; sometimes it unweaves complex intertextual entanglements, while at others it simply helps the student or theatre-goer to see what Shakespeare is getting at when he alludes to Actaeon or Proserpina. It must, however, be stressed that the aims of the book are more ambitious than those of positivistic 'source-study' often are: what we read does much to make us what we are (or so Renaissance educational theorists believed), so by reading Shakespeare's reading of Ovid we may come to a remarkably full—though not, of course, complete—picture of the sort of artist that Shakespeare was.

Chapter 1 is an introduction to Shakespeare's Ovid and the sixteenth-century Ovid more generally; after what in the Renaissance would have been called an exordium, it surveys Shakespeare's classical education and then the Ovidianism of his immediate forebears in the theatre, John Lyly and Christopher Marlowe. Chapter 2 reads Shakespeare's most directly Ovidian works, his narrative poems, in relation to their sources in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*.

Chapter 3 considers the Sonnets in the light of Renaissance theories of imitation; it then demonstrates how Shakespeare's first tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, is explicitly 'patterned' upon Ovid. Chapters 4 and 5 explore the processes of metamorphosis and the uses of mythological allusion in comedy and tragedy respectively. Chapter 4 examines *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Merchant of Venice* in some detail, while treating *As You Like It* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* more selectively and mentioning the other comedies only in passing (I have written less about the Ovidianism of the comedies than I might have done because others have written about it more); the broad argument of the chapter is supported by a reading of Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, a play in which Ovid actually appears as a major character. Chapter 5 concentrates on five tragedies which I take to be Ovidian to varying degrees and in a range of ways, *Richard II*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Finally, Chapter 6 argues that the 'late romances' may be considered as dramatic transformations of mythical matter derived from Ovid; after summary discussions of *Cymbeline* and *Pericles*, there are fuller readings of *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, which I take to be two of the most subtly Ovidian works in the English language. The chapter, and with it the book, ends with a brief discussion of Ovidianism in Shakespeare's collaborations with Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *Henry VIII*.

In recent years, the possibility of disinterested scholarship has been called into question and it has become customary for critics to stake out a position within or between the competing discourses into which literary studies have disintegrated. So: my orientation is broadly historical, in that the book is an attempt to reconstruct an aspect of the mentality of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Recent critical developments have helped me to see what I did not see when I began work on the project twelve years ago, that the subject has a political dimension. The so-called New Historicism in Renaissance studies is interested above all in power; for the Renaissance, Ovid was an exemplar of poetic power, a narrator of sexual power, and a victim of political power, so he would seem to be fertile ground for a New Historicist reading. However, it seems to me that the problem with the New Historicism is that it collapses these three different kinds of power into one; Ovid and Shakespeare sometimes do this, but more often they keep them apart and I have followed them in this. Indeed, one of the arguments of the book is that Shakespeare sometimes viewed

Ovidianism as a means to transcend contemporaneity, and in this his Ovidianism is different from that of Spenser and Jonson.

With regard to its own hermeneutical procedures, the book is pluralistic but not radically sceptical, in so far as it follows the Renaissance commentator on Ovid, George Sandys, in the direction of multiplicity—'But why may not this fable receave a double construction? Those being the best that admit of most senses'—but also wants interpretation to be historically grounded. Thus I accept that my interpretations come from me as a reader, but by making a leap of faith and bringing forward a body of evidence I believe that they could also have been Shakespeare's interpretations or those of certain members of his original audience and readership. I like to think of the book as a kind of conversation between Shakespeare and Ovid. It doubles as a conversation between myself and certain current trends in Shakespearian criticism. The first of these conversations is much the more interesting, so the second one takes place between the lines. I have therefore avoided the temptation to translate the shared language of Ovid and Shakespeare ('the myth of Actaeon') into the jargon of the modern academy ('Cixous's feminist revision of Lacan's theory of the gaze').

Among other things, the book is an attempt to salvage a tradition that is rapidly disappearing. I recently encountered a roomful of first-year university students none of whom had heard of Narcissus; nearly all teachers of the humanities in both Britain and America will have had similar experiences. Does that matter? Who cares about old stories in dead languages? In reply to such questions, I want simply to say that it is a fact that not so many centuries ago there was a series of revivals of classical learning in Europe, which for convenience we call the Renaissance, and that those revivals made a major contribution to the spread of literacy, scientific advancement, and political change (in England, these three developments are exemplified by the founding of grammar schools, the method of Bacon, and the seventeenth-century experiment with republicanism, which would not have been possible without the example of Rome). It is modish for criticism to dwell on the barbarisms committed in the name of high culture during the Renaissance, but it seems to me that such an emphasis runs the risk of being counter-productive at a time when the institutional survival of the humanities is something that has to be struggled for. It is no longer easy to make the old high moral claims for the humanities, but I hope to show that Shakespeare's and Ovid's

representations of myth, metamorphosis, and sexuality can still work the traditional magic of poetry by moving us—to tears, to laughter, and to thought—and by awakening our wonder.

Acknowledgements

A synoptic treatment such as this will inevitably draw heavily on the work of the many previous scholars who have addressed various aspects of it: my bibliography should accordingly be considered as, among other things, a list of acknowledgements. There has seemed little point in recording specifically which editor or commentator first noted each individual correspondence; but when I am especially indebted to another scholar or I wish to suggest where the reader might go for further development of a particular argument, I have included footnotes. My greatest scholarly debt is to T. W. Baldwin's monumental *William Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*; my critical thinking has been especially stimulated by four books, Leonard Barkan's *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism*, William Carroll's *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearian Comedy*, Thomas M. Greene's *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, and William Keach's *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives: Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe and their Contemporaries*.

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For their comments on all or part of the typescript, I am deeply indebted to Leonard Barkan, Catherine Belsey, Warren Boutcher, Edward Burns, Tom Craik, Richard Gaskin, Peter Holland, John Kerrigan, and Tony Taylor. I would also like to thank Christopher Ridgway for more general critical advice and Hilary Gaskin for constancy in change. This book is partly about Shakespeare's debt to his grammar-school education, so the dedication reflects my debt to

mine. Oscar Wilde said in *The Critic as Artist* that criticism is the only civilized form of autobiography, so I shall record that my father was a teacher of the classics and that of all my books this is the one that I wish he could have lived to read.

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Abbreviations

Aen.	Virgil, *Aeneid*
Ars Am.	Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*
CL	*Comparative Literature*
ELH	*ELH: Journal of English Literary History*
ELN	*English Language Notes*
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
Her.	Ovid, *Heroides*
HLQ	*Huntington Library Quarterly*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JMRS	*Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
Met.	Ovid, *Metamorphoses*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MP	*Modern Philology*
N&Q	*Notes and Queries*
NS	new series
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
RenQ	*Renaissance Quarterly*
RES	*Review of English Studies*
SEL	*Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*
ShS	*Shakespeare Survey*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
SQ	*Shakespeare Quarterly*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
Trist.	Ovid, *Tristia*
TSLL	*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*

Abbreviation of titles of Shakespearian works follows standard practice.

A Note on References

Quotations from Shakespeare are followed by line reference to the Oxford *Complete Works* of Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (1986; quoted from Compact Edition, 1988), though occasionally, when I disagree with their editorial decisions, I have silently emended. So, for example, the Oxford edition's 'seamews' revert to the 'scamels' given to Caliban in the First Folio. In particular, it should be noted that I use the names Iachimo and Imogen rather than Giacomo and Innogen, since even if the Oxford renamings are true in the first case to the principle of modernization of spelling and in the second to the first performance of *Cymbeline* (and I have doubts on both these fronts), the received names have entered so deeply into English culture that it seems to me fruitless to undo them now. Having said this, I would wish to add that I find the Oxford edition especially valuable precisely because it forces the attentive reader to rethink detail after detail in Shakespeare's text. Readers using other texts will find that the Oxford scene divisions sometimes vary from the customary practice of earlier editions; *King Lear* is quoted from the Folio version unless otherwise stated.

Quotations from Ovid are also followed by line reference; I have used the Loeb texts. Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* is quoted from the edition of W. H. D. Rouse, which went under the title of *Shakespeare's Ovid* (1904, repr. 1961); Golding's touch is sometimes heavy, so on some occasions when Ovid's lightness is important to my argument I have quoted from A. D. Melville's splendid Oxford World's Classics translation (1987). One aim of my book is to convince those who enjoy Shakespeare that they will also enjoy Ovid; fascinating as it is to read the translation which Shakespeare read, the Latinless may well find Melville's the most accessible version. Translations into prose are my own, though they frequently make use of the Loeb.

Quotations from Shakespeare's other sources are followed by reference to Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (8 vols., 1957–75).

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