

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN STUDIES

*THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA: A METAMORPHIC PLAY*

CELIA JEAN MEEHAN  
Spring 2010

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for baccalaureate degrees  
in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies and Spanish  
with honors in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies

Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Stephen Wheeler  
Associate Professor of Classics  
Thesis Supervisor

Mary Lou Zimmerman Munn  
Senior Lecturer in Classics  
Honors Adviser

Paul Harvey  
Head, Department of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies  
Associate Professor of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies,  
History, Religious Studies, and Jewish Studies  
Faculty Reader

\* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona: a Metamorphic Play*, investigates the influence that the Roman poet Ovid had on Shakespeare in the writing of his comedy. Shakespeare's knowledge of Ovid is examined, providing evidence for allusions to the *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* within *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Shakespeare was particularly interested in the metamorphoses witnessed in the *Metamorphoses*. The thesis treats two types of metamorphoses: physical metamorphosis, the hallmark of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the emotional, psychological metamorphosis which interested Shakespeare. The latter type of metamorphosis is analyzed in the main characters of the play, leading to their categorization as metamorphic. These analyses are also used to categorize the play as a "metamorphic" work. Special attention is paid to the main character, Proteus. The sources for his name and his nature are investigated in classical texts, such as the *Odyssey* and the *Metamorphoses*, with the conclusion that his name and actions reflect his roots in mythology. Proteus' continual, shape-shifting metamorphoses are different from the one-way metamorphosis of each of the other main characters, who are transformed by love. Consequently, the thesis investigates the different types of metamorphoses contained in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. By examining the allusions and parallels to physical and emotional metamorphoses of characters found within Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the play is also categorized as metamorphic.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chapter 1 A “Metamorphic” Work.....	1
Chapter 2 About the Authors .....	5
Chapter 3 The Metamorphic Nature of the Character Proteus.....	8
Chapter 4 <i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> Illuminated by its Characters.....	24
Chapter 5 Shakespeare’s Allusions to Ovid.....	32
References.....	44

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Stephen Wheeler, Thesis Advisor, Associate Professor of Classics

Mary Lou Munn, Honors Advisor, Senior Lecturer in Classics

Paul Harvey, Faculty Reader, Head of the Department of Classics and Ancient

Mediterranean Studies, Associate Professor of Classics and Ancient Mediterranean

Studies, History, Religious Studies, and Jewish Studies

Patrick Cheney, Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature

## Chapter 1

### A “Metamorphic” Work

“As the soul of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the sweet, witty soul of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare.” This remark, made by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia: Wit’s Treasury* in 1598, conveys the sense of indebtedness that William Shakespeare had for the Roman poet Ovid. “He refer[red] to Ovid more often than to any other ancient writer,” and he borrowed themes, names, and even plots from Ovid for many of his plays (Adams 1923, 57). Shakespeare expressed his gratitude to the ancient author by alluding to Ovid himself, as well as to Ovid’s literary works, including the *Metamorphoses*, in many of these plays. The themes of overpowering love, mistaken identities and wicked jealousy, wound together in the *Metamorphoses*, were further developed by Shakespeare in his plays. In some instances, Shakespeare modernized and restructured the old myths contained in Ovid’s work. The parallels between Ovid’s treatment of the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe and Shakespeare’s famous play *Romeo and Juliet* have been analyzed by many scholars, but these stories are not the only tales which link the Bard and the Poet. Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* contains so many parallels to Ovid’s gory rendering of the myth of Tereus, Procne and Philomela that he included a copy of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as one of the most important props of the play. By using the text to illuminate the grisly events of the play, Shakespeare emphasized the value of the poem, and also acknowledged that the themes of rape, dismemberment, and revenge, prominent in the Tereus, Procne and Philomela episode, inspired *Titus Andronicus*. Scholars have also found parallels in Shakespeare’s other works, such as in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest* (Brown 1999, 57-84).

One play, however, has been relatively overlooked in the realm of Ovidian influence on Shakespeare. The few who have discussed the influence of Ovid on Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* have not treated the work as a whole, but have focused on original themes. One example of this is William C. Carroll's treatment of rape in the play (Taylor 2000). *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is counted among Shakespeare's earliest comedies, which accounts for many scholars' reluctance to analyze the play. Nevertheless, the relative neglect is surprising, insofar as Shakespeare himself makes clear from the first scene of the play that metamorphosis contributes largely to the development of both the characters and the comedy itself. As I will explain in this chapter, Ovid and Shakespeare each have different concepts of metamorphosis, and Shakespeare's understanding and use of the phenomenon is informed by his reading of the *Metamorphoses*. There abundant references and parallels to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and other works contained within the play. With this evidence, I will demonstrate that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a "metamorphic" play. This terminology refers not only to its indebtedness to the *Metamorphoses*, but also refers to main themes of the play. I propose that these main themes are changes and the effects of such changes on the tale and its characters. The changes discussed include those caused by love and, in the case of Proteus, those caused by selfish desire.

The best way to demonstrate the conclusion that this play is, above all, metamorphic, is to illuminate the entire play by focusing on smaller aspects. Of the many cases of metamorphoses contained in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, one of the best examples of change and its effects on the play can be seen in the main character, Proteus. By examining this character, including such facets as the meaning of and reasons for selecting his name (for Shakespeare must have had a specific purpose in naming his protagonist Proteus), associations with Ovid's character Proteus, the numerous changes which Proteus undergoes throughout the play, and the effects of these changes on himself, his fellow characters, and the events of the story, I hope to show how understanding Proteus leads to a better understanding of the play itself. In addition to Proteus, the

other main characters also experience metamorphoses, and on a smaller scale, several minor characters are associated with metamorphosis, though they are not actually transformed. An in-depth examination of the changes the other characters undergo will present a different, more Ovidian sort of metamorphosis at work in the play. By noting the differences between the metamorphoses of Proteus and each metamorphosis of the other characters, one can note the dichotomy between Shakespeare's concept of metamorphosis and Ovid's concept of the same. For Ovid, "the governing principle of change is manifested most obviously in the metamorphoses of human bodies to lower forms of life. But it also applies to 'forms' in almost every sense" (Pavlock 2009, 3). The physical, one-time metamorphosis seen in Ovid is that which the other characters in the play undergo, though they are not transformed into lower life forms. Shakespeare focuses on internal and willful metamorphosis, and uses the protagonist to exemplify these different sorts of changes.

Finally, after demonstrating how these different metamorphoses affect each character, as well as the play itself, I will highlight selections in which allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* can be seen, through which the play can be categorized as Ovidian. These include explicit references to Ovidian characters, reworking of myths, and borrowing of elements to further the plot, all of which when combined will render *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* a "metamorphic" Ovidian play. For example, the metamorphoses of characters and the problems of lovers in difficult situations are Ovidian scenarios that Shakespeare seized upon in his play. Sarah Annes Brown defined Ovidianism as "a set of characteristics identifiable in Ovid, in particular in the Ovid of the *Metamorphoses*," and English Ovidianism as a "phenomenon" wherein authors use the identifiable characteristics of Ovid and references to his stories in their own work" (Brown 1999, 3, 8, 11). Other Ovidian indicators include wordplay, paradox, and a sense of humor, which Shakespeare employed in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Brown 1999, Fränkel 1945). Before analyzing the characters, the play, and the connections with the

*Metamorphoses* and Ovid, it is helpful to include information on the authors. By relating background information on the lives of Shakespeare and Ovid, and by explaining similarities and differences in their understandings of metamorphosis, one can achieve a deeper understanding of each author's works.

## Chapter 2

### About the Authors

Ovid, or Publius Ovidius Naso, was born in 43 BCE in what is now Sulmona, Italy (Fränkel 1945). His family was equestrian, and Ovid received a good education in Rome. (Fränkel 1945) By age twenty he was already writing and reciting his poetry, and quickly found a circle of fellow poets, a patron, and a fan base. Throughout his lifetime, he composed many works; most commonly, Ovid wrote about love, and the style for which he is best known is the love elegy (Fränkel 1945). In the works which influenced *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses*, love also features prominently. Love stories and tales of love spurned comprise the majority of the episodes contained in the *Metamorphoses*, while the *Heroides* focuses on the love that each heroine has for her hero, and the issues which stem from that love. In the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid sought to entertain, and he succeeded at this by describing characters and re-telling myths which were already well-known to the Roman people.

Ovid states his purpose in writing the *Metamorphoses* in the first two verses of the poem: “In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora” (“Of shapes transformde to bodies straunge, I purpose to entreate”), which implies that he undertook the responsibility of writing this work to describe the fantastic (*Met.* 1.1-2, Golding 1567). While his aim was to amuse his audience, rather than to impart life lessons to them, he nevertheless ended many stories in the *Metamorphoses* with morals or advice to readers. This fable quality kept Ovid relevant in the Middle Ages and even into Shakespeare’s time (Fränkel 1945, Allen 1970, Maslen 2000). Though he was never able to return to Rome after being banished to Tomis in 8 CE, Ovid maintained an audience of Romans and Ancient Mediterranean people, both rich and poor, and also won the readership future generations (Fränkel 1945). Many of his writings have been

preserved, read and passed down throughout the generations to today. His poetry has shown itself to be timeless and worthy of preservation.

William Shakespeare's works have also been valued by readers since the time of their composition. Shakespeare was born in 1564, more than 1,550 years after Ovid's death in Tomis. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, in England, about 1,300 miles from Ovid's birthplace in Sulmona. His parents were also well-off, and Shakespeare likely attended a charter school in his hometown. At this time, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was "widely used as a means of introducing boys to Latin versification," and professors stressed Ovid's role as a fabulist (Maslen 2000, 17). Shakespeare studied Latin in his school, and "in spite of Ben Jonson's notorious claim that [Shakespeare] knew 'small *Latin* and less *Greek*,' he was clearly a sound Latinist with a particular affection in his younger days for Ovid" (Martin 1978, 9). Moreover, "Ovid was evidently [his] favorite Latin poet," because he "reread him in the original as well as in Golding's translation" (Parrott 1934, 185). Garry O'Connor offers this explanation for the impact Golding had on Shakespeare:

Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1567), written in 14-foot lines, in particular appealed to Shakespeare's fluid, highly suggestible imagination: the constant surge of imagery, the rapid, condensed flow of love, erotic opulence, birth, death, blood, mystery, unexpected reversal, majesty, grandeur, cruelty, and absurdity developed his instinct for antithesis. The anthropomorphic gods of ancient Greece spawned legend after legend from this volatile passion, offering Shakespeare the constant dramatic principle of change. (O'Connor 1991, 28)

In his lifetime, Shakespeare composed at least 39 plays, 5 long poems and 154 sonnets (Sammartino 1990, Cahn 1996). Many of these works contain strong Ovidian influence, for example the poem *Venus and Adonis*, which is a myth described in the *Metamorphoses*. One of Shakespeare's most addressed themes in his writings is love, just as it is in Ovid's work, and in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, as well as in the *Metamorphoses*, the authors pay close attention to the connections between love and metamorphosis, and how each can and does affect the other.

In Chapter Five, in which I highlight the allusions to Ovid, the *Metamorphoses*, and the *Heroides*, Shakespeare's familiarity with Latin words, ancient mythology, and Golding's translation will be obvious. Also in Chapter Five, Shakespeare's creativity in his interpretations of the *Metamorphoses* will become clearer. While Ovid intended for the *Metamorphoses* and the *Heroides* to be read, Shakespeare realized the dramatic potential of each story. In writing *Titus Andronicus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, among other works, Shakespeare metamorphosed Ovid's written accounts into spoken and acted plays.

Now that the backgrounds of the two authors have been illuminated, most importantly the information regarding Shakespeare's knowledge of Ovid, and Ovid's desire in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Heroides* to entertain and talk about love, it will be easier to understand the connections between the works by the two authors. It is important to note that both men were masters at their respective crafts, and are completely deserving of their prominent places in literature today. Though Ovid died almost 2,000 years ago, and though Shakespeare's direct lineage ended just two generations after his death, the numbers of works written by each, which have survived for centuries thanks to the care of those men and women who loved their poems and plays, allows both Ovid and Shakespeare to remain prominent in the lives and hearts of many individuals today.

## Chapter 3

### The Metamorphic Nature of the Character Proteus

Proteus, the main character in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is the embodiment of the play's theme of change. Throughout the play, he is metamorphosis incarnate, as he transforms himself many times. As a character, he has deep connections with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Ovid has always been credited as the source from which Shakespeare chose the name Proteus. By no means, however, was Ovid the inventor of the name Proteus, nor was he the first to describe the mythological figure Proteus. In Greek and Roman mythology, Proteus was a sea god subordinate to Neptune (Poseidon). Even as far back as the epic poet Homer's time, Proteus was considered a very old god; Homer referred to this sea god as "a certain unerring old man of the sea, the immortal Egyptian, Proteus, who knows the depths of the whole sea, a subject to Poseidon" (*Od.* 4.384-386). The name Proteus fits well with the description of an ancient god, as *proteus* in Ancient Greek contains the stem *pro-* ("before"), which, as seen in *proteros* ("earlier"), in the adverb *proton* ("first"), and in the adjective *protos* ("first"), suggests that he was one of the first gods, and existed even before time. That a god, immortal and timeless by nature, would have the name Proteus implies his inclusion from time immemorial in the long tradition of Greek religion. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Proteus, the protagonist, is the first-addressed character in the play, and has also been the first to fall in love. Additionally, the extent of his egoism, which becomes evident as the play progresses, demonstrates the Proteus is first and most important in his own opinion. However, Proteus is neither old nor does he have any other "firsts" in the play, so Shakespeare had other aims in mind when selecting his "first" character.

Another attribute of the mythological figure Proteus is his secret knowledge of all things – past, present, and future. This power made him appealing to heroes discouraged and confused

about their fates, such as Menelaus, mythical king of Sparta. According to Homer's *Odyssey*,

Proteus revealed secrets to Menelaus, but only after a fierce competition:

At full light the old man came from the sea and found his seals  
Well-nourished; he went over them all and counted their number  
And us he numbered first among the seals, nor did it occur  
To his heart that there was a trick. Then he lay down himself.  
But we rushed on him with a shout and threw our hands  
Around him. The old man did not forget his wily skill.  
First of all he became a lion with a mighty beard,  
And then a serpent, and a panther, and a great boar.  
Then he became watery wet, and a lofty-leaved tree.  
But we held on firmly with an enduring heart  
And when the old man of cunning skill was exhausted,  
He spoke out to me and questioned me with a speech:  
'Which of the gods, son of Atreus, has devised plots for you  
That you catch me in an ambush against my will? What do you need?'  
(*Od.* 4.450-463)

Shakespeare most likely did not read Homer, in Greek or in translation, but instead learned the classical tradition of Proteus through Virgil and Ovid, and thus learned Homer through Ovid.

The classical literary motif of Proteus with secret knowledge originated in the *Odyssey*. Ovid also endows the character with the ability to know all. The prophecy Proteus made to Thetis concerning the strength and power of her future child had a great effect on all those who heard it, and led to the creation of one of the greatest Greek heroes, Achilles. Thetis worried for her son's destiny, while Jupiter, in a rare show of restraint in his amorous nature, did not pursue her, but instead sent his grandson, Peleus, to her (*Met.* 11.221-228). Proteus' involvement in Achilles' birth did not end with his prophecy to Thetis; in his knowledge of all things, Proteus was able to reveal to Peleus the only way to catch Thetis, and thus make her his bride.

In his role as a god with secret knowledge, the classical Proteus has also become associated with the important function of go-between. In Homer, Proteus delivered news, both good and bad, to Menelaus. While the Spartan king learned that he could reach his home at last after sacrificing to Zeus and the gods in Egypt, he was heartbroken to learn about the plight of Odysseus, stranded on Calypso's island, as well as about the deaths of Lesser Ajax and of

Menelaus' brother, King Agamemnon of Mycenae (*Od.* 4.499-512, 535-538, 555-560). In the *Metamorphoses*, Proteus is one of many messenger figures. His biggest moment in the poem came in Book 11, in the story of Peleus and Thetis, wherein he foretold the birth of Achilles to Thetis:

Dea, undae,  
 Concipe: mater eris iuvenis, qui fortibus annis  
 Acta patris vincet maiorque vocabitur illo.  
 (*Met.* 11.221-223)

Go marry: thou shalt beare a sonne whose dooings shall excel  
 His fathers farre in feates of armes, and greater he shall bee  
 In honour, high renowme, and fame, than ever erst was hee.  
 (Golding 1567)

Later in the same book of the *Metamorphoses*, he outlined to Peleus the way to capture shape-shifting Thetis:

Donec Carpathius medio de gurgite vates  
 'Aeacide,' dixit, 'thalamis potiere petitis,  
 Tu modo, cum rigido sopita quiescat in antro,  
 Ignarum laqueis vincloque innecte tenaci.  
 Nec te decipiat centum mentita figuras,  
 Sed preme, quicquid erit, dum, quod fuit ante, reformet.  
 (*Met.* 11.249-254)

The prophet that dooth dwell within Carpathian deepe,  
 Sayd thus: 'Thou sunne of Aecus, thy wish thou sure shalt have  
 Alonely when shee lyes asleepe within her pleasant Cave,  
 Cast grinnes to trappe her unbewares: hold fast with snarling knot:  
 And though shee fayne a hundreth shapes, deceyve thee let her not.  
 But sticke unto't what ere it bee, untill the tyme that shee  
 returneth to the native shape shee erst was woont to bee.  
 (Golding 1567)

Proteus knew well how to capture Thetis, because he was a god of the same metamorphic nature as she, and normally Proteus would only reveal his knowledge if someone, such as Menelaus, could capture him in the same way. The shape-shifting quality of Ovid's Proteus, discussed in much greater detail below, is the trait that Shakespeare admired most in the classical character. Nevertheless, the effect of Proteus' function as a go-between, as well as the effect of the other

intermediary characters in the *Metamorphoses*, on *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* also deserves an analysis.

The theme of intermediaries sharing their secret knowledge figures prominently in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The main character Proteus, as well as the characters Valentine and Julia, all act as messengers or prophets at different times and for different reasons. In the first scene, Proteus predicts that Valentine, too, will someday find love: “Think on thy Proteus when thou haply seest / some rare note-worthy object in thy travel.” The fulfillment of his words comes at a drastic price to both men, however. Later, in his speech to the Duke, wherein he reveals the elopement plan of Valentine and Silvia, Proteus uses his words to conjure in the Duke’s mind a vision of a sad future, with his daughter having deserted him and married Valentine (II.vi). Just like Ovid’s sea god, Proteus is a rather important messenger: his message to the Duke precipitates the main actions of the story – that is, Valentine’s banishment from Milan, Silvia’s flight to him, and the confrontation among all the characters in the forest. He assigns himself this role of intermediary at various moments, but always with the motive of personal gain. In the beginning of the play, Proteus seems like a good person and a caring friend. Upon learning of Valentine’s imminent departure for Milan, Proteus offers to intercede with God on Valentine’s behalf should any trouble befall him:

And in thy danger,  
If ever danger do environ thee,  
Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers,  
For I will be thy beadsman, Valentine.  
(I.i.15-18)

This proposal sounds like the concern of a devoted friend, and suggests that Proteus has only his friend’s best interests at heart. When one considers the first lines of the play, though, Valentine’s words cast a shadow on Proteus’ angelic nature:

Cease to persuade, my loving Proteus:  
Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.  
(I.i.1-2)

What the audience missed, by entering the play mid-conversation, would appear to be Proteus wheedling his friend, and attempting to win Valentine over to his way of thinking, rather than wishing his friend the best in his endeavors and satisfying himself with the knowledge that Valentine will surely find love as well.

Immediately following Valentine's departure, Proteus converses with Valentine's servant, Speed, about a letter sent to Proteus' love, Julia. In this dialogue, the author makes apparent the importance of messages both to Proteus and to the play. The comic character Speed at times confuses and frustrates Proteus, whose burning desire to know his love's reaction to the letter makes him an ideal target for Speed's jesting. While Proteus hoped to gain knowledge of Julia's feelings by interrogating his messenger, he discovered no such enlightenment: Speed, taking his role as intermediary seriously, explains only what a messenger would notice, i.e., the fact that he received no payment for his message. Speed and his friend Launce, servant to Proteus, are pragmatic characters who often act as foils to Proteus; and when viewed with Proteus' later dealings as a go-between himself, the differences between Proteus' and Launce's personal motivations as intermediaries become quite obvious. Further complicating matters for Proteus, Speed did not even deliver the letter to Julia herself, but only to Julia's nurse, Lucetta. This woman, though she is often chastised by her mistress, truly wants nothing more than Julia's happiness. She, like Speed, takes her role as messenger quite seriously, and she delivers kind words about Proteus in addition to his love-letter. Lucetta, who stands to gain nothing for herself by delivering letters to Julia, is one of the only characters with selfless motivations in fulfilling her office as go-between.

The only other character who delivers information which is not in his own self-interest is Panthino, the servant of Proteus' father, Antonio. By explaining the wishes of Antonio's brother, namely for Proteus to see the world and gain experience outside of Verona, Panthino inadvertently triggers a landslide of incredible events, starting with Proteus' immediate love for

Silvia and ending with the impending marriage of Proteus to Julia and of Valentine to Silvia (I.iii). So while Panthino and Lucetta are not well-rounded, developed characters, their actions, undertaken only to improve the lives of others, make their contributions to the play important. It is interesting to note that Panthino's message to Antonio, while sound in its logic, may not have convinced Antonio to send Proteus to Milan, had Proteus been honest with his father. Instead, by hiding his love of Julia from his father, and by denying that the message he received was from his love, instead claiming it to be from Valentine, Proteus seals his own fate. Proteus knows how to play the messenger role to his advantage, as he displays in Verona, but in this instance he finds he has overplayed the part, and consequently he is sent without delay to Verona.

Once the focus of the play switches to Verona, the importance of go-betweens and the secret information they impart becomes even more prominent and, indeed, the messengers themselves become more ambitious. The first example of this is also the lightest in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Valentine, love-struck by Silvia, is commanded by her to write love-letters on her behalf to an unknown love of hers. The comedy lies in the irony of Valentine's situation: he is a messenger writing messages to himself. It is well that Silvia can find amusement in his capacity as self-messenger, for the other instances of characters acting as a messenger are motivated by jealousy, anger, deceit, or evil cunning. In most cases, she and Valentine are the characters who suffer the negative effects of such messages. The most outstanding example of this opportunistic, self-serving message delivery has already been mentioned earlier: Proteus' revelations to the Duke concerning the elopement of Silvia and Valentine. By approaching the Duke and spelling out exactly how Valentine plans to run away with Silvia, Proteus creates for himself the persona of a trustworthy, upstanding young man who genuinely wants to serve the Duke, even at the cost of betraying his friend. This is reminiscent of the loyal, "loving Proteus" depicted in the opening lines of the play, and clearly a façade masking the true intentions of Proteus. In reality, Proteus reveals in two soliloquies that he will ruin the love, reputation, and

life of Valentine, his oldest and dearest friend. That he fools the Duke is contemptible, that he perpetrates such a treachery on his best friend is despicable, but that he demonstrates such disregard for the life and welfare of Silvia, whom he has professed as his great love, shows Proteus as he really is. He is a self-serving fraud whose sole purpose for undertaking the part of go-between was to eliminate his competition and thus improve his meager chances of wooing Silvia. As a consequence of Proteus' subtle treachery, a sense of cunning is awakened in the aged Duke, whose character now assumes an aspect of slyness, previously unseen. Armed with the knowledge provided by Proteus, he sets a trap for the unwitting Valentine. Just like Proteus' refusal to show his father the love-letters existing between himself and Julia, Valentine as well is too afraid to tell the Duke of his love for Silvia, and lies about the letter he carries, claiming he is delivering a message of good tidings to his home. After the two men discourse for several minutes, the Duke slyly reveals Valentine's elopement plan. Thus, Proteus succeeds in banishing Valentine from Milan, while remaining completely unperturbed by the consequences his action had on Silvia, who is left heart-broken and even more closely-guarded in her locked tower.

Once he sees the desired effects of his message begin to unfold, Proteus delicately augments his deceptions by continuing to offer his services as go-between. Acting as a consoling friend, Proteus offers to deliver messages of love between Valentine and Silvia, thereby ensuring that he does not fall from the good graces of his friend. To further eliminate competition, while at the same time exemplifying himself as a trustworthy advisor to the king, Proteus offers to act as a sort of Cyrano de Bergerac for the Duke's preferred suitor, the churlish Thurio. Proteus' advice to Thurio in the matter of winning Silvia's heart is designed to fail miserably, but the dull-witted Thurio does not realize this, and expresses gratitude for Proteus' services to him. While playing the Duke and Thurio for fools, Proteus endeavors to win Silvia to himself by hiring a go-between of his own. However, this messenger is not what he seems to Proteus, and also has secret motivations for playing the part of intermediary. As the audience well knows, Julia has come to

Milan to be with her beloved Proteus, and by becoming his messenger she has access to his heart's secrets. She is filled with sorrow and conflicting emotions after learning that he has betrayed her, but cannot stop loving him. At the end of the play, Proteus recognizes Julia and immediately falls in love with her again, but their reunion does not erase the pain he caused her, and only proves yet again how fickle Proteus is.

Julia's internal anguish over how much Proteus has changed is lamentable, but it was her fate to fall in love with the unstable Proteus. Shakespeare clearly intended that inconstancy, as typified by Proteus' character, is to be critical not only as a main theme but also in terms of plot advancement. His nature, with his ever-changing whims, is his most important quality in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. This idea of Proteus as a shape-shifter is the most significant way in which he is based upon and tied to Ovid's character Proteus. In classical mythology, the sea god Proteus, in addition to his knowledge of all things, can change his shape into whatever form he desires. While many gods had the ability to change their looks and disguise themselves, Proteus most often used his ability to change himself to challenge others: in the *Odyssey*, Menelaus had to hold onto Proteus while the sea god changed into many shapes, including a lion, a tree, a serpent and water (*Od.* 4.456-458). Only after Menelaus succeeded in holding onto Proteus did the god answer Menelaus' questions. In the *Metamorphoses*, Proteus is most-often invoked as a shape-shifting god. This quality of his exemplifies the word "metamorphosis," and his mentions throughout the *Metamorphoses* cause him to stand out as a physical embodiment of the epic.

Proteus' name arises in four books of the *Metamorphoses*. In two instances, at the beginning of Book 2 and at the end of Book 13, Proteus is mentioned in conjunction with other sea gods, such as Triton. In that passage of Book 2, Ovid describes the beautiful palace of the Sun god, and the masterful artwork which the god Mulciber had engraved on the doors to the palace. The subject of Mulciber's work, the sea, contains a number of characters, including Proteus. Ovid refers to Proteus in Book 8 as well, to illustrate the varying degrees of

metamorphoses. In this episode, the river god Acheloüs explains Proteus' power to morph at will after Theseus expresses surprise at the conclusion of the Baucis and Philemon myth (*Met.* 8.725-737). Unlike the majority of characters in his poem, who are mortal and changed by the gods because of their wickedness, impiety, or, in some cases, their goodness, Proteus has the freedom of choice. He can select the moment to change form as well as the particular image to assume, and the length of time spent in that form:

‘Sunt, o fortissime, quorum  
 Forma semel mota est et in hoc renovamine mansit;  
 Sunt, quibus in plures ius est transire figuras,  
 Ut tibi, complexi terram maris incola, Proteu.  
 Nam modo te iuvenem, modo te videre leonem,  
 Nunc violentus aper, nunc, quem tetigisse timerent,  
 Anguis eras, modo te faciebant cornua taurum;  
 Saepe lapis poteras, arbor quoque saepe videri,  
 Interdum, faciem liquidarum imitatus aquarum,  
 Flumen eras, interdum undis contrarius ignis...’  
 (*Met.* 8.728-737)

‘There are, O valiant knyght, sum folke that had the powre to take  
 Straunge shape for once, and all their lyves continewed in the same.  
 And other sum to sundrie shapes have power themselves to frame,  
 As thou, O Protew, dwelling to the sea that cleepes the land.  
 For now a yoonker, now a boare, anon a Lyon, and  
 Streyght way thou didst become a Snake, and by and by a Bull  
 That people were afraid of thee to see thy horned skull.  
 And oftentimes thou seemde a stone, and now and then a tree,  
 And counterfetting water sheere thou seemedst oft to bee  
 A River: and another whyle contrarie thereunto  
 Thou wart a fyre...’  
 (Golding 1567)

While Acheloüs later admits that he, too, can metamorphose at will into a limited number of forms (*Met.* 8.879-880), most of the other characters in the *Metamorphoses* have been irreversibly changed to their new forms.

There is another character in the *Metamorphoses*, however, who also has the gift to change shape at will: the sea goddess Thetis. Because of his intimate knowledge of the power to

metamorphose on command as well as his foresight, Proteus, among the other gods, was an excellent choice to whom Peleus prayed for advice on winning Thetis.

Ovid's use of the adjective *ambiguus* as "of unsettled form" to describe Proteus can be contrasted to Shakespeare's interpretation of the word as "unreliable, of doubtful allegiance," which he demonstrates with the personality of his character, Proteus (s.v. 3b, 9, *OLD*). Arthur Golding's translation of *Metamorphoses* Book 2, 1-14, includes the adjective "unstable," which also focuses more on the internal aspect of Proteus rather than his outward, changeable appearance (Golding 1567). Reading Golding's translation would have provided Shakespeare with the nuance he found most suitable to his purpose when interpreting the word.

Before illustrating the many examples by which Proteus reveals himself as a metamorphic character, it is important to note here the adjective "protean," which has the Spanish cognate "proteíco" and the French cognate "protéiforme." The word "protean" is defined by the *OED* as:

Of or relating to Proteus, like that of Proteus. Hence in extended use: adopting or existing in various shapes, variable in form; variously manifested or expressed; changing, unpredictable.

The word "protean" was common enough to be included in works written just several years after Shakespeare allegedly wrote the play. Etymological dictionaries, such as the *OED*, credit the usage of "protean" to the 1590s, and to authors George Chapman and to John Marston, who used the word in *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image*. So perhaps it can be said that while Ovid solidified the identification of Proteus with "ambiguus," a physical quality of changeability, Shakespeare seized upon that connection when naming his incredibly fickle, capricious main character Proteus, and in doing so fashioned a creative new adjective, the subtle nuances for which then filtered into English usage as well as into other languages.

It is probable that members of Shakespeare's contemporary audience would have been ignorant of the metamorphic quality of the classical Proteus. In the early moments of the play,

however, he provides the audience with clues to the personality of the unstable, unpredictable protagonist, Proteus. In the opening lines of the play, Valentine entreats Proteus not to “wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness” (I.i.8). The *Metamorphoses* opens with a similar description of chaos, depicted as formless:

Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum  
 unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,  
 quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles  
 nec quicquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem  
 non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum.  
 nullus adhuc mundo praebebat lumina Titan.  
 (*Met.*1.5-10)

Before the Sea and Lande were made, and Heaven that all doth hide,  
 In all the worlde one onely face of nature did abide,  
 Which Chaos hight, a huge rude heape, and nothing else but even  
 A heavie lump and clottred clod of seedes together driven,  
 Of things at strife among themselves, for want of order due.  
 No sunne as yet with lightsome beames the shapelesse world did vew.  
 (Golding 1567)

Soon after this passage, a god enters the scene and sets the world in motion. Had Valentine been able to consider the many forms into which Proteus would change throughout the play, and the havoc these changes would wreak upon everyone involved, he probably would have reversed his stance on Proteus’ lifestyle and, indeed, have encouraged a “shapeless idleness.” Instead, like the “God and Nature” in the *Metamorphoses*, Valentine activates Proteus from shapelessness to shape-shifting (Golding 1567, 1.20). Throughout the play, Proteus acts completely in contrast with “shapeless idleness:” he moves constantly, conversing with many characters and metamorphosing to appear most pleasing to each of his acquaintances.

Valentine believes that love is the most common reason for people to change, and reveals that, in his opinion, love is something that strips men of the joys of youth and hope for a nice future. Valentine believes that Proteus has already fallen into the trap of love, and calls Proteus “a votary to fond desire” (I.i) The development of the play, in which Proteus changes constantly

depending on the object of his desire, corroborates this notion, as does Proteus himself. While Valentine left Verona for honor, Proteus says:

I leave myself, my friends, and all, for love.  
 Thou, Julia, thou hast metamorphosed me.  
 (I.i.66)

In this first open allusion to characters changed by love, Proteus chose a significant verb, “metamorphosed,” to convey that which has befallen him. Unlike the human characters in the *Metamorphoses*, however, Proteus shows that being metamorphosed once is not sufficient for him, and thus reveals that he is a metamorphic character.

Just as the main instances of Proteus’ work as a messenger occur once he arrives in Milan, so too does the protagonist undergo the majority of his transformations after his father sends him to serve Milan’s Duke. After Proteus arrives in Milan and sees Silvia, although he knows that his best friend loves her, he claims that this new love has completely changed him. When Proteus describes his feelings after first meeting Silvia, his words are reminiscent of the separation of elements in *Metamorphoses* Book 1, after the god has started to order and rearrange the shapelessness:

Even as one heat another heat expels,  
 Or as one nail by strength drives out another,  
 So the remembrance of my former love  
 Is by a newer object quite forgotten.  
 (II.iv.90-93)

Hanc deus et melior litem natura diremit.  
 nam caelo terras et terris abscidit undas  
 et liquidum spisso secrevit ab aere caelum.  
 quae postquam evolvit caecoque exemit acervo,  
 dissociata locis concordi pace ligavit:  
 ignea convexi vis et sine pondere caeli  
 emicuit summaque locum sibi fecit in arce.  
 (*Met.* 1.21-27)

This strife did God and Nature breake, and set in order streight.  
 The earth from heaven, the sea from earth, he parted orderly,  
 And from the thicke and foggie ayre, he tooke the lightsome skie,  
 Which when he once unfolded had, and severed from the blinde

And clodded heape, he setting eche from other did them binde  
 In endlesse friendship to agree. The fire most pure and bright,  
 The substance of the heaven it selfe, bicause it was so light  
 Did mount aloft, and set it selfe in highest place of all.  
 (Golding 1567)

Seeing Silvia, his love for Julia fades to nothing, “like a waxen image, 'gainst a fire, bears no impression of the thing it was” (II.iv.99-100) Loving Silvia in spite of the fact that his best friend does also, he states that his love for Valentine has been diminished as well:

Methinks my zeal to Valentine is cold,  
 And that I love him not as I was wont.  
 (II.iv.101-102)

At the end of his soliloquy, Proteus alleges that he will try to shake off his love for Silvia, but the last line implies that he has no such intentions:

If I can cheque my erring love, I will;  
 If not, to encompass her I'll use my skill.  
 (II.iv.111-112)

This closing couplet suggests that Proteus has control over his condition to a certain extent, and that he allows external sources to affect him and change him because it is more exciting. For example, Proteus later uses love as an excuse for his change in nature (“Love bade me swear and Love bids me forswear”), and, asserting that only by losing Valentine and Julia can he discover himself and Silvia, he justifies his plan to inform the Duke of Valentine and Silvia’s impending elopement (II.vi.6).

Once he betrays his best friend and new love, Proteus allows himself to degenerate from a selfish to vile. Cognizant of his ability to transform himself into whatever others desire, he uses his cunning to play both the Duke and Thurio to his advantage. The Duke, who believes that Proteus is a trustworthy man (“Proteus, the good conceit I hold of thee – / for thou hast shown some sign of good desert – / makes me the better to confer with thee”) and immutable in his love for Julia (“Proteus, we dare trust you in this kind, / because we know, on Valentine's report, / you are already Love's firm votary, / and cannot soon revolt and change your mind”), grants Proteus

unlimited access to the otherwise-inaccessible Silvia in order to further slander Valentine (III.ii.17-19, 56-59). Thurio, whom the Duke hopes to marry to Silvia, trusts Proteus and accepts without hesitation Proteus' seemingly generous offer to help woo the maiden. As a loyal servant to the Duke, he can see Silvia at all times. As a sympathizing friend to Valentine, he assures himself that Valentine continue to confide in him. As a love-coach to Thurio, he is able to sabotage that potential relationship. His metamorphic nature does not stop at these low levels, however; acting as though completely blinded by love, the character continues deteriorating as it becomes clear that Silvia will never love him.

In one particularly despicable scene, Proteus, transformed into such an egotistical, selfish, single-minded man, goes so far as to declare Julia dead, in hopes of improving his chances with Silvia. Julia, watching this spectacle from a hidden location, is horrified at his betrayal and inconstancy. In this scene, the warnings of her nurse, Lucetta, from earlier in the play, prove true. When Julia cites Proteus' thousand oaths, his ocean of tears, and his instances of infinite love as reasons why she will be welcomed by him in Milan, Lucetta, aware of how liable men are to change, advises her that of his oaths and tears, "all these are servants to deceitful men" (II.vii.72). Her characterizations of Proteus, stated in response to her nurse's warning, have proven ironic: his words are not bonds, but easily shed, his oaths, unlike those of the sea god Proteus, are not oracles, but meaningless words, his love is actually insincere, and his thoughts actually harbor unkind thoughts (II.vii.73-78). "His tears, pure messengers from his heart," are false messengers, just like Proteus himself, and because of his sly, changeable nature, Proteus can employ his calculated tears to cover up his deceit (II.vii.77). After witnessing the blandishments and oaths Proteus made to Silvia, Julia realizes what a fickle person he is. She soon learns that Silvia, too, is well-aware of Proteus' inconsistent character and continuous metamorphoses, and that Silvia is a moral maiden, unchangeable in her love for Valentine. In response to Proteus' request for Silvia's portrait, Silvia replies,

One Julia, that his changing thoughts forget,  
 Would better fit his chamber than this shadow.  
 (IV.iv.121-122)

She agrees to give him the portrait, however, because she believes his adoration of the portrait, a shadow of her true self, fits well with his false nature. When Julia next produces Proteus' letter for Silvia, she refuses to read it, as she already knows that it is

...Full of new-found oaths; which he will break  
 As easily as I do tear his paper.  
 (IV.iv.132-133)

Though she does not know that Julia is Proteus' messenger, Silvia laments the way in which Proteus has treated his first love. When Julia offers to Silvia the ring which she once gave Proteus, Silvia responds:

Though his false finger have profaned the ring,  
 Mine shall not do his Julia so much wrong.  
 (IV.iv.138-139)

Although Proteus manages to fool Valentine, Thurio, the Duke, and even himself with his protean qualities, Julia and Silvia see through his many façades and hold him in contempt.

By the final act of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Proteus has reached his wits' end. He has changed from a young man happy with Valentine and in love with Julia into a jealous, spiteful and scheming chameleon. Unable to metamorphose Silvia into a woman madly in love with him, Proteus threatens to rape her, thereby changing love into its polar opposite. In that scene, Silvia twice calls her pursuant "false Proteus," which suits his changing form. When Valentine intercedes and prevents the rape of Silvia, Proteus' fickle nature is exposed to the world. Valentine, extremely hurt by his best friend's terrible deeds, realizes then that Proteus' proclivity to change renders him untrustworthy, and that for the duration of his time in Milan, Proteus has acted like a wolf in sheep's clothing. In this final act, Proteus metamorphoses himself several more times. Jarred by Valentine's sudden appearance and extreme disappointment, Proteus repents of himself and apologizes to all for having caused so many

problems. In the forest, Proteus changes into a remorseful, sorrowful friend begging Valentine's forgiveness. Finally, when the identity of Julia is revealed, Proteus falls in love with her again. His words imply that he will never question his love for her again, and that he will remain constant: "What is in Silvia's face, but I may spy / more fresh in Julia's with a constant eye?" and "Bear witness, Heaven, I have my wish for ever" (V.iv.120-121). At this point, Proteus recognizes the character flaw which brought pain to so many: "O heaven, were man / but constant, he were perfect!" (V.iv.109-110).

So it can be said that Proteus has come full circle in the course of the play, ending where he began, in love with Julia. Proteus exemplifies the many men and women who are inconstant in their affections, and who change themselves to seem more pleasing to other people. This protean characteristic came across well in Shakespeare's Proteus. Just like Ovid's Proteus, this character was not metamorphosed one time by an external force without giving consent. Shakespeare's Proteus undergoes many changes throughout the play, and these mutations of character occur when Proteus wants something, whether it be Silvia's love, the Duke's approval, or Valentine's forgiveness.

The next chapter will show how none of the other characters in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* have this much say in how their natures turn out. Valentine, Silvia, and Julia, once metamorphosed by love, cannot be changed back or persuaded to love any other, while Proteus' servant Launce illuminates the possibility that love need not be some cataclysmic, metamorphic event, but simply finding and appreciating what is good in another person.

## Chapter 4

### *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Illuminated by its Characters

Proteus is one sort of metamorphic character in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The other characters do not have his ability to change so capriciously, but they too are metamorphic in their own ways. These characters' metamorphoses take place internally on an emotion level, revealing another metamorphic dimension of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Valentine is a character whose metamorphosis is noted by the other characters, and who has accepted his transformation graciously and without further changes. While he admits that he has been overcome by love for Silvia in Milan, it is only after his servant Speed describes the various changes he has undergone and the ways in which he has become like his friend Proteus that Valentine realizes that he has been metamorphosed by love:

Valentine: Why, how do you know that I am in love?

Speed: Marry, by these special marks: first, you have learned, like Sir Proteus, to wreathe your arms, like a malecontent; to relish a love-song, like a robin-redbreast; to walk alone, like one that had the pestilence; to sigh, like a school-boy that had lost his A B C; to weep, like a young wench that had buried her grandam; to fast, like one that takes diet; to watch like one that fears robbing; to speak puling, like a beggar at Hallowmas. You were wont, when you laughed, to crow like a cock; when you walked, to walk like one of the lions; when you fasted, it was presently after dinner; when you looked sadly, it was for want of money: and now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, that, when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master.  
(II.i.16-32)

Speed's amusing recital of changes in Valentine's habits culminates in the line "and now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, that, when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master."

Later, he refers to Valentine as a "Love chameleon" who is nourished by air alone (II.i.164-165).

Valentine is not ashamed of this metamorphosis, as can be seen when he ruefully admits to Proteus that love has changed him. Love has revenged itself upon Valentine, who once made

light of it to Proteus. Valentine attempts to conceal his elopement plans from the Duke, and upon his banishment he is uncharacteristically morose, but these different sides of Valentine are not metamorphoses. They are the results of his change into a man whose only thoughts are of love for Silvia. His anger at Proteus in the woods is justified by his love for the maiden, and when the two men reconcile, it is because Valentine's true nature is not one of deception, sadness, and ire. In Valentine, the audience sees the before and after of a character's metamorphosis, and can compare his situation – sudden, unasked for, and immutable – with that of Proteus.

Another character who is metamorphosed by love and not by choice is the virtuous Silvia. Having demonstrated great filial love and devotion to her father, Silvia is a character who wants to please her family. This desire is complicated when she meets and falls in love with Valentine, who is only an attendant to the Duke. Transformed by love for Valentine, she cannot marry Thurio, the suitor her father prefers. According to the dry remarks of Valentine's servant, Speed, who is skeptical of such overwhelming love, Silvia has been deformed ever since Valentine loved her. Valentine does not understand Speed's meaning, that both characters have been changed by their love, and that, being in love, neither sees the other clearly. Silvia is not described in terms of changes again until after Proteus' revelation to her father, the Duke.

Proteus explains to Valentine that Silvia mourns his exile from Milan:

A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears:  
 Those at her father's churlish feet she tender'd;  
 With them, upon her knees, her humble self;  
 Wringing her hands, whose whiteness so became them  
 As if but now they waxed pale for woe:  
 But neither bended knees, pure hands held up,  
 Sad sighs, deep groans, nor silver-shedding tears,  
 Could penetrate her uncompassionate sire;  
 But Valentine, if he be ta'en, must die.  
 Besides, her intercession chafed him so,  
 When she for thy repeal was suppliant,  
 That to close prison he commanded her,  
 With many bitter threats of biding there.  
 (III.i.224-236)

Silvia's metamorphosis, her change from dutiful daughter to Valentine's secret fiancée, causes her emotional anguish when her past and present conflict, and even causes physical changes, characterized by her features turning pale with worry. Her condition does not improve after Valentine leaves Milan, but the Duke does not believe that her love for Valentine is irreversible:

This weak impress of love is as a figure  
Trenched in ice, which with an hour's heat  
Dissolves to water and doth lose his form.  
A little time will melt her frozen thoughts  
And worthless Valentine shall be forgot.  
(III.ii.6-10)

Proteus heartily agrees with the Duke, as his only hope of winning Silvia lies in her forgetting Valentine: "A little time, my lord, will kill that grief" (III.ii.15). However, unlike the love Proteus has for her, Silvia's love is neither ephemeral nor capricious. Her heart and mind are no "waxen image[s] 'gainst a fire" (II.iv.99-100).

Indeed, Silvia's presence, lines and actions in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* creates a contrast to Proteus. She is true to herself and her beloved throughout the entirety of the play, and never acts falsely, even in the face of her father's preferred suitor. Unlike Proteus, who left Verona and Julia on his father's command, Silvia defied her father and pursued Valentine because she truly loved him. Silvia does "transform" herself once by wearing a mask while she flees to Valentine (V.ii.40). However, this brief physical transformation still differs from Proteus' metamorphoses. Silvia disguises herself to reach her one true love, for her own benefit as well as Valentine's, whereas Proteus changes himself only to suit his own desires. After Silvia's metamorphosis, flight to Valentine was her only option for happiness, but even in her flight, she remains a good person, concerned with her father's emotions and pain: "Urge not my father's anger, Eglamour," she tells her accomplice before the escape (IV.iv.27). Her constancy and goodness in spite of her metamorphosis as a character render her a foil to the protean Proteus.

The other main female character in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is Julia. She, like Silvia, is constant in her affections, and like both Silvia and Valentine, she could not choose whom she loved or how it happened. She acknowledges the mysterious ways of love while conversing with Lucetta, her nurse, in the first act. Already in love with Proteus, she asks Lucetta “wouldst thou then counsel me to fall in love?” and the two discuss Julia’s many suitors and what makes a suitor worthy of love (I.ii.2). Lucetta cannot offer a reason why she likes Proteus, only that she does; this is corroborated silently by Julia, who has fallen in love with him. Julia is still young and only recently has fallen in love. She does not accept her metamorphosis from carefree to lovesick as readily as did Valentine and Silvia, nor does she allow her nurse to witness that a change has taken place within her. She makes a show of spurning Proteus’ love in front of Lucetta, although she immediately regrets her actions (I.ii.98-101). This is understandable, as it shows how confusing a new and unexpected love can be. After tearing up his love-letter, she picks up the pieces and metamorphoses them herself, by changing the written words and manipulating the letter into something new. She does this by throwing down the parts that contain her name, gathering together the parts that reveal his name, and making their names, written on the torn strips of paper, kiss (I.ii.104-129).

Julia’s character can be easily identified with metamorphosis because she undergoes a radical physical transformation in the play. She tells Lucetta that she feels like a dammed river, which ran smoothly when Proteus lived in Verona, but rages since his departure (II.vii.24-38). The only way that Julia can feel at peace is to be with Proteus, but such a dangerous undertaking as the journey from Verona to Milan requires careful concealment of her identity as a woman. With Lucetta’s help, Julia changes her identity and metamorphoses herself into a page boy. She wears her disguise so well that no one, not even Proteus, suspects her true identity or even her real gender. This outward transformation was brought on by need for safety; she did not make the costume out of a desire to trick her beloved (II.vii).

After she hears Proteus betray her, Julia is filled with conflicting emotions. Though he is untrue to her – and indeed, by loving Silvia, Julia thinks he must despise her – she is trapped by her metamorphosis, and finds herself unable to stop loving him. She laments that she must love him, and by loving him she must pity him, and by pitying him she must help him. Helping Proteus means acting as his messenger, even though aiding him in his ever-changing quest for bliss means destroying her own happiness (IV.iv.92-109). Julia, who is trapped in a body that loves someone despicable, is filled with conflicting emotions, and in the battle between being true to herself or being true to Proteus – now her love and her master – her love for Proteus wins out, and she delivers to Silvia on his behalf both a love-letter and the ring she once gave him. She expresses well her internal turmoil when she says to Proteus: “Tis pity love should be so contrary; / And thinking of it makes me cry 'alas!’” (IV.iv.85-86).

On her errand to Silvia, she poses as someone close to Julia, but does not reveal her identity because she is ashamed of her present condition, rejected by Proteus yet still in love with him. Julia acknowledges to herself that, like Silvia after Valentine’s banishment, her physical appearance has degenerated since she discovered Proteus’ affections for Silvia; nevertheless, she notices many ways in which her beauty is superior to Silvia’s beauty. Proteus loves Silvia in spite of her inferior beauty, which causes Julia to affirm that “Love is a blinded god” (IV.iv.198). In a battle between “shadows” – a portrait of Silvia which Proteus desires and Julia’s wasted self – Julia believes herself to be the victor. In earlier conversations with Lucetta, Julia had proven herself capricious, and here it seems that the duress of the situation adds to her confusion over her own transformation, and brings both her best and worst feelings to the surface. She acknowledges that Silvia is a virtuous maiden, yet she swears by Jove that she would gouge out Silvia’s eyes to make Proteus fall out of love with her (IV.iv.206-207). Julia cannot be a carefree maiden anymore; her metamorphosis has left her pining for the odious Proteus. Julia demonstrates that she is a kind person, too, by obeying Proteus’ orders in Act IV, when she

delivers the letter to Silvia. Her kindness is evident in the final scene of the play as well, when she offers to Proteus the ring she was supposed to deliver to Silvia. By this gesture of selflessness in exchange for Proteus' happiness, she unwittingly reveals herself to him and causes him to fall in love with her again (V.iv.90). At the end of the play, she is finally happy with herself and her situation, though she asserts to Proteus that it is less offensive for women to alter their appearances, even dressing like men, than for men to change their minds: "It is the lesser blot, modesty finds, women to change their shapes than men their minds" (V.iv.107-108).

The four main characters have all been metamorphosed by love. Proteus is the most metamorphic character in the play, as he changes many times throughout the course of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. His internal nature best characterizes the play as metamorphic, while the character Julia characterizes the play as metamorphic by her outward transformation. Valentine and Silvia, once transformed, exemplify how characters can remain true to themselves and make the best of the changes that have overcome them.

The theme of metamorphosis also manifests itself in the personalities of the minor characters in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but they do not undergo psychological transformations themselves. Although love never transforms him, the character Thurio is sometimes associated with properties of change. Valentine, using Speed's earlier description, calls Thurio "a kind of chameleon" referring both to his change in color when angry and to the differences between his dealings with Silvia and with Valentine (II.iv.24). Thurio is neither intelligent nor in love with Silvia, but he still wishes to marry her. At one point, Thurio, wishes that he could change himself, like Proteus, to better suit Silvia's tastes:

Sir Proteus, what says Silvia to my suit?  
 ...  
 That my leg is too long?  
 ...  
 I'll wear a boot to make it somewhat rounder.  
 (V.ii.1, 4, 6)

As the play develops, hints of Thurio's true nature come out in his conversations, and it becomes apparent that Thurio would need something or someone to metamorphose him into a better man in order to woo Silvia with a chance of success. He is annoyed at her flight to Valentine, and makes it clear that he does not pursue Silvia out of love:

Why, this it is to be a peevish girl,  
That flies her fortune when it follows her.  
I'll after, more to be revenged on Eglamour  
Than for the love of reckless Silvia.  
(V.ii.49-52)

When Thurio and the Duke arrive in the forest, Thurio decides that Silvia is not worth the trouble:

Sir Valentine, I care not for her, I;  
I hold him but a fool that will endanger  
His body for a girl that loves him not:  
I claim her not, and therefore she is thine.  
(V.iv.132-135)

Although Thurio went through the motions of wooing Silvia, his attempts to win her affections can be described as futile and half-hearted. This fits well with Thurio's true character, so while he feigned for a short time, he never really metamorphosed at all.

Another character who does not undergo a metamorphosis is Proteus' servant, Launce. He and Proteus often spar with puns, and Launce, with his dry sense of humor, usually triumphs over Proteus. The two characters contrast with each other not only in terms of puns, but also in their reactions to love. Unlike Proteus and the other main characters, Launce never takes love seriously, and in doing so, he is content. Love has not metamorphosed Launce, as it has done to the others. His love for the unnamed milkmaid is pragmatic. Even though he is a "clownish servant" he has a leveler head than his master in terms of love. Another instance in which Launce finds himself untouched by change is during his soliloquy about his dog, Crab. As a dog, Crab is a cur in all situations, regardless of their gravity, and he can never even pretend to change his dog-like nature. Launce, who loves his dog, is constant in his defense of Crab, and always takes

the punishment for Crab's actions. He laments the fact that neither can change nor even pretend to change.

That so many characters are metamorphosed or noticeably unmetamorphosed in the play confirms that changes are indeed a central theme of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. All four main characters metamorphose; even the band of outlaws, who have all been banished to the forest for committing crimes, become decent fellows, with help from Valentine. They even earn themselves the Duke's offer of pardon. Shakespeare's play heavily involves the idea of changes, just like the *Metamorphoses*, and in the next section several examples will be highlighted, wherein it is possible to see other ideas and plot points which Shakespeare borrowed from the *Metamorphoses* and transformed into his own metamorphic play.

## Chapter 5

### Shakespeare's Allusions to Ovid

The previous two chapters demonstrated that the Shakespearean Proteus is informed by his Ovidian counterpart in the *Metamorphoses*, and that each of the other main characters undergoes a transformation because of love. These conclusions help to reveal how the play is a metamorphic work. It is unsurprising that Shakespeare makes many allusions to other aspects of Ovid's works, as well. Starting with the first scene and moving through the acts, I will survey the various references made by Shakespeare to the mythological stories contained in Ovid's works. These allusions refer to "star-crossed lovers," a theme prevalent in the works of both Shakespeare and Ovid, and also to characters who are punished through metamorphosis, death, or abandonment. Apart from the most obvious allusion – the use of the name Proteus – there are many direct allusions to mythological characters, as well as many examples of characters' actions and reactions that have been influenced by Ovid's poetry.

Shakespeare engages with Ovid through his references to classical mythology. The first allusion of this sort occurs in the first scene of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In this scene, Valentine mentions the myth of Hero and Leander to Proteus as a joke. Valentine, who has not yet fallen in love, does not find the story nearly as deep or romantic as Proteus, who defends Leander's actions: "For he was more than over shoes in love" (I.i.23-24). Ovid describes the tale of Hero and Leander in his work the *Heroides*. In Epistulae 18 and 19, the two lovers detail their romance and the barriers each has overcome for love in the days before Leander meets a tragic fate, drowning in the Hellespont. Valentine brings up Leander again later in the play, as he attempts to bolster the Duke's confidence in wooing a woman from Verona. In regard to the Duke reaching the window of the woman's guarded tower, Valentine assures him:

A ladder quaintly made of cords,  
 To cast up, with a pair of anchoring hooks,  
 Would serve to scale another Hero's tower,  
 So bold Leander would adventure it.  
 (III.i.117-120)

His use of the story, including words such as “bold” and “adventure,” reveals how Valentine feels about himself at this moment. By this point in the play, Valentine has been metamorphosed by love, and so has reversed his opinion of the lovers’ sad tale. Indeed, the letter that Valentine has written to Silvia, which the Duke reads aloud in the same scene, sounds like Valentine’s interpretation of Leander’s letter to Hero, wherein he laments that his thoughts, but not his physical self, can reach her. Because the two are similarly separated, Valentine fashions himself a “bold Leander” risking everything to be with Silvia:

My thoughts do harbour with my Silvia nightly,  
 And slaves they are to me that send them flying:  
 O, could their master come and go as lightly,  
 Himself would lodge where senseless they are lying!  
 My herald thoughts in thy pure bosom rest them:  
 While I, their king, that hither them importune,  
 Do curse the grace that with such grace hath bless'd them,  
 Because myself do want my servants' fortune:  
 I curse myself, for they are sent by me,  
 That they should harbour where their lord would be.  
 (III.i.141-150)

Protinus haec scribens, 'felix, i, littera!' dixi,  
 'iam tibi formosam porriget illa manum.  
 forsitan admotis etiam tangere labellis,  
 rumpere dum niveo vincula dente volet.'  
 talibus exiguo dictis mihi murmure verbis,  
 cetera cum charta dextra locuta mea est.  
 at quanto mallet, quam scriberet, illa nataret,  
 meque per adsuetas sedula ferret aquas!  
 aptior illa quidem placido dare verbera ponto;  
 est tamen et sensus apta ministra mei.  
 septima nox agitur, spatium mihi longius anno,  
 sollicitum raucis ut mare fervet aquis.  
 (*Her.* 18.17-28)

As soon as I wrote this, I said: ‘Go, happy letter!  
 Now she’ll reach out her lovely hand for you.  
 Perhaps she’ll even touch you, with her snow-white teeth,

Bringing you to her lips, when she wishes to break your seal.  
 I spoke these words to myself in a low murmur,  
 While the rest of the sheet was indicated by my right hand.  
 But how I'd prefer that this hand, that writes, might swim  
 And carry me faithfully through familiar waters!  
 However apt it is as a servant of my feelings,  
 It's better in fact at making strokes in the placid sea:  
 For seven nights, a space of time longer to me than a year,  
 I've been disturbed, as the troubled ocean raged with cruel waves.  
 (Kline 2001)

Another myth that surfaces when considering Valentine's and Silvia's predicament is that of Pyramus and Thisbe, which is told in the *Metamorphoses* and addresses the problem of lovers who are forbidden to see each other (*Met.* 4.55-127). In this myth, the parents of Pyramus and Thisbe forbid a relationship between the two; in spite of their families' wishes, the two fall in love and try to elope. Similarly, the Duke's refusal to accept Valentine as a suitor for Silvia and his banishment of Valentine frustrate the lovers. One major difference between Ovid's myth and Shakespeare's play involves the resolution of Silvia's Thisbean flight from her house. In the *Metamorphoses*, the tale ends in tragedy, with Pyramus arriving too late and committing suicide, because he believes that Thisbe has been killed by a lion. Shakespeare, however, saves his pair of lovers from a similar fate in the Italian woods by allowing Valentine to intercede in Proteus' attempted rape of Silvia. By stepping in when he did, Valentine saved himself and his fiancée from confusion, pain, and potentially death. Shakespeare reserved the painful ending of the Pyramus and Thisbe episode for his tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*.

The allusions above demonstrate Shakespeare's admiration of and appreciation for Ovid, not only for the *Metamorphoses* but for his entire literary corpus. They also reveal how Shakespeare read Ovid. In the *Heroides*, readers rely on Leander's written words to imagine the love story and painful separation between the writer and his beloved. The Pyramus and Thisbe episode of the *Metamorphoses* was also meant only to be read. Shakespeare's Leander/Pyramus character, Valentine, reenacts the love story on stage, rendering the characters more believable

and the separation of Valentine and Silvia more heartrending to the audience. Shakespeare took the Pyramus and Thisbe account even further when he wrote *Romeo and Juliet* for the stage, thereby bringing the ancient characters off of the page and allowing them to reenact their story on stage.

The following examples, which pick up at the Duke's discovery of Valentine's letter, are allusions to myths which are used as similes or parallels to Shakespeare's characters. After reading the contents of Valentine's letter to his daughter, the Duke addresses Valentine harshly. In his tirade against the young man, he refers to him as "Phaethon – for thou art Merops' son" and questions whether he

Aspires to guide the heavenly car  
And with thy daring folly burn the world?  
Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?  
(III.i.153-156)

The Duke uses the story of Phaethon, one of the first stories in the *Metamorphoses*, to emphasize Valentine's hubristic aspirations in wooing Silvia (*Met.* 2.19-328). Like the young man who insisted that he could drive the sun god's chariot across the sky, Valentine dares to love Silvia. The sun god knew that his chariot was too powerful for Phaethon; similarly, the Duke believes that his daughter is too good for Valentine. The fact of Phaethon's untimely demise is not lost on Valentine, but without hope of attaining Silvia, he wishes for such a fate. The mention of Merops, husband of Phaethon's mother, points to Shakespeare's close reading of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid used patronymics and genealogies extensively in his poetry, both to add to the grandeur of characters and to demonstrate his knowledge of mythology. Merops, a mortal man, was not as important or laudable a parent as Sol, and the Duke purposefully cites Merops to tell Valentine that he is of no worth, and only a social climber. In the *Metamorphoses*, Phaethon realizes too late that he should have contented himself with being Merops' son, and that his aspirations were too great:

Iam Meropis dici cupiens ita fertur.  
(*Met.* 2.184)

To have bene counted Merops sonne he thought it now the best.  
(Golding 1567)

Julia also uses a direct allusion to a character in classical myth to connote her emotions.

While conversing with Silvia, she invokes Theseus' betrayal of Ariadne to describe how she feels after being abandoned by Proteus. She does so cleverly, never revealing her identity, but inventing a past play in which she portrayed Ariadne, and the sorrow she felt while empathizing with that character:

I did play a lamentable part:  
Madam, 'twas Ariadne passioning  
For Theseus' perjury and unjust flight;  
Which I so lively acted with my tears  
That my poor mistress, moved therewithal,  
Wept bitterly; and would I might be dead  
If I in thought felt not her very sorrow!  
(*IV.iv.*168-174)

Shakespeare demonstrates his knowledge of mythology outside of the *Metamorphoses* by supplying Ariadne's name, which was not mentioned in the *Metamorphoses* or in Golding's translation. Ovid also alludes to Ariadne several other times in his works. In the *Heroides* 10, Ariadne writes to Theseus from her deserted island, and Books 2, 4, 6, 15, and 16 of the *Heroides* contain references to her. In none of these letters did Ovid identify Ariadne by name. Ovid also wrote another account of Ariadne, abandoned this time by the god Bacchus, in his work the *Fasti*. It is debatable whether Shakespeare would have read the *Fasti*, and here, also, Ariadne is unnamed (*Fas.* 3.459-516). Julia's words most closely echo the Ovidian description of the abandoned girl in the *Metamorphoses*:

Quo postquam geminam tauri iuvenisque figuram  
Clausit, et Actaeo bis pastum sanguine monstrum  
Tertia sors annis domuit repetita novenis,  
Utque ope virginea nullis iterata priorum  
Ianua difficilis filo est inventa relecto,  
Protinus Aegides rapta Minoide Diam

Vela dedit comitemque suam crudelis in illo  
Litore destituit.  
(*Met.* 8.169-176)

And streight he having winde,  
With Minos daughter sailde away to Dia: where (unkinde  
And cruell creature that he was) he left hir post alone  
Upon the shore.  
(Golding 1567)

Now, Julia is a contemporary Ariadne. She, like so many other women in mythology, was discarded by her hero. The pain and suffering which Ariadne and many other female characters experienced in the *Metamorphoses*, and which comprise the themes of the *Heroides*, validate Shakespeare's heavy reliance on Ovid: the anguish that Julia and Silvia feel is the saddest and most pathetic occurrence in the play. Additionally, this allusion serves as yet another example of Shakespeare's dramatic reading of Ovid. Not only does Julia experience on stage what Ariadne described in *Heroides* 10 and *Fasti* 3, but she also pretends to have actually played the part of Ariadne in a play – a play within the play. Ovid's sad words in the *Metamorphoses* are conveyed by Julia's dramatic interpretation of Ariadne.

Many actions and lines in the play evoke elements from the *Metamorphoses* as well. In the first scene, Valentine teases Proteus, telling him "Love is your master for he masters you." This line, especially when coupled with Valentine's later proclamation to Proteus –

Ay, Proteus, but that life is alter'd now:  
I have done penance for contemning Love,  
Whose high imperious thoughts have punish'd me  
With bitter fasts, with penitential groans,  
With nightly tears and daily heart-sore sighs;  
For in revenge of my contempt of love,  
Love hath chased sleep from my enthralled eyes  
And made them watchers of mine own heart's sorrow.  
O gentle Proteus, Love's a mighty lord,  
And hath so humbled me, as, I confess,  
There is no woe to his correction,  
Nor to his service no such joy on earth.  
Now no discourse, except it be of love;  
Now can I break my fast, dine, sup and sleep,

Upon the very naked name of love.  
(II.iv.126-140)

is reminiscent of the myth of Daphne and Apollo, in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*. In that myth, Apollo laughs at Cupid, and, in retaliation, Cupid strikes Apollo with one of his magical arrows, causing Apollo to fall in love with the nymph Daphne:

Filius huic Veneris 'figat tuus omnia, Phoebe,  
Te meus arcus' ait; 'quantoque animalia cedunt  
Cuncta deo, tanto minor est tua gloria nostra.'  
(*Met.* 1.559-562)

To him quoth Venus sonne againe: Well Phebus I agree  
Thy bow to shoote at every beast, and so shall mine at thee.  
And looke how far that under God eche beast is put by kinde,  
So much thy glorie lesse than ours in shooting shalt thou finde.  
(Golding 1567)

Another instance in which a scene from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* evokes memories of the *Metamorphoses* occurs in Act II, scene ii, in the farewell scene between Proteus and Julia. Neither character wants Proteus to leave, but his duty obliges him to do so. On the eve of his departure, Proteus says to Julia:

Here is my hand for my true constancy;  
And when that hour o'erslips me in the day  
Wherein I sigh not, Julia, for thy sake,  
The next ensuing hour some foul mischance  
Torment me for my love's forgetfulness!  
My father stays my coming; answer not;  
The tide is now: nay, not thy tide of tears;  
That tide will stay me longer than I should.  
Julia, farewell!  
(II.ii.9-16)

This speech and the scene as a whole are reminiscent of Ceyx's departure from Alcyone in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*. Neither Ceyx nor Alcyone wishes to be separated, and Ceyx promises to return within a reasonable amount of time, fate allowing:

Tibi iuro  
Per patrios ignes, si me modo fata remittant,  
Ante reversurum, quam luna bis inpleat orbem.  
(*Met.* 11.451-453)

By my fathers blasing beames I make my vow to thee  
 That at the furthest ere the tyme (if God therto agree)  
 The moone doo fill her circle twyce, ageine I will heere bee.  
 (Golding 1567)

Alcyone, like Julia, cannot help but cry at her loved one's departure: "horruit Alcyone lacrimasque emisit obortas" ("shee quaaekt ageine, and teares out gusshing drave") (*Met.* 11.458, Golding 1567). Those who make this association between Proteus and Julia and Ceyx and Alcyone have their expectations broken quickly, as Proteus proves to be as inconstant in his affections as Ceyx is unwavering in his love and dedication to Alcyone. Ceyx promises to return, but never promises to stay true to Alcyone, as there was never a question of inconstancy in either his nor in Alcyone's heart.

Valentine, too, can find numerous characters in the *Metamorphoses* who exemplify his assorted predicaments. For example, he is paralleled in his exile from Milan by Cadmus, Peleus, and other characters in the *Metamorphoses*, who have been banished from their homes (*Met.* 3.1-13, *Met.* 11.266-270). He can identify with Apollo's love for the nymph Daphne, and even refers to Silvia as a "gentle nymph." After Valentine's plan to run away with Silvia is found out, and he is told to leave Milan, he bemoans his fate to Proteus, and says in a soliloquy that he is nothing without Silvia:

And why not death rather than living torment?  
 To die is to be banish'd from myself;  
 And Silvia is myself: banish'd from her  
 Is self from self: a deadly banishment!  
 What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?  
 What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by?  
 Unless it be to think that she is by  
 And feed upon the shadow of perfection  
 Except I be by Silvia in the night,  
 There is no music in the nightingale;  
 Unless I look on Silvia in the day,  
 There is no day for me to look upon;  
 She is my essence, and I leave to be,  
 If I be not by her fair influence  
 Foster'd, illumined, cherish'd, kept alive.

I fly not death, to fly his deadly doom:  
 Tarry I here, I but attend on death:  
 But, fly I hence, I fly away from life.  
 (III.i.170-187)

Luckily for Valentine, he recovers his lost love a short time later, and everything ends well. In the *Metamorphoses*, characters such as Echo and Narcissus in the Narcissus myth were so consumed by love and so ravaged by their grief at not attaining this love that they actually did fade away to nothing, leaving only vestiges of their former selves behind (*Met.* 3.339-510).

Just as Valentine finds parallels to himself within the *Metamorphoses*, so too does Julia. In the *Metamorphoses*, gods disguise themselves as humans, as did Jupiter and Mercury in the myth of Baucis and Philemon; men disguise themselves as maidens, as did Achilles when trying to avoid sailing to war in Troy; maidens are metamorphosed into men, as were Caenis and Iphys; and characters use disguises to praise themselves, as did Vertumnus while wooing Pomona (*Met.* 8.624-724, 13.162-171, 12.189-209, 9.666-797, 14.623-771). The role of messengers such as Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has already been discussed, and just as in the play, go-betweens have large roles in the *Metamorphoses*. Many characters deliver important information which directs the story and informs the plot. The major deity Mercury, known as the messenger god and favorite intermediary of Jupiter, is well known in the *Metamorphoses* for delivering messages and carrying out Jupiter's orders (*Met.* 1.668-721, 2.833-842). Similarly, Iris is Juno's preferred messenger, and the queen of the gods sends Iris on many missions (*Met.* 1.270-272, 11.583-632 14.829-851). The minor characters Morpheus and Fama contribute to the advancement of plot points in the *Metamorphoses* by relaying information to other parties (*Met.* 11.633-673, 9.134-140, 12.39-66).

The character Proteus, so metamorphic, contains a number of traits which are present in certain characters of the *Metamorphoses*. His reaction upon first seeing Silvia hearkens back to when Tereus first laid eyes upon his wife's sister, Philomela, in Book 6:

Even as one heat another heat expels,  
 Or as one nail by strength drives out another,  
 So the remembrance of my former love  
 Is by a newer object quite forgotten.  
 (II.iv.90-93)

Non secus exarsit conspecta virgine Tereus,  
 Quam si quis canis ignem supponat aristis  
 Aut frondem positasque cremet faenilibus herbas.  
 Digna quidem facies; sed et hunc innata libido  
 Exstimulat, pronumque genus regionibus illis  
 In Venerem est: flagrat vitio gentisque suoque.  
 (*Met.* 455-460)

King Tereus at the sight of hir did burne in his desire,  
 As if a man should chaunce to set a gulfe of corne on fire,  
 Or burne a stacke of hay. Hir face in deede deserved love.  
 But as for him, to fleshly lust even nature did him move.  
 For of those countries commonly the people are above  
 All measure prone to lecherie. And therefore both by kinde  
 His flame encreast, and by his owne default of vicious minde.  
 (Golding 1567)

Proteus also displays characteristics of Tereus when he lies to Silvia about Julia's death, and by his false sincerity shown to Silvia's father, the Duke. In the myth of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, Tereus curries the favor of Procne and Philomela's father with his impassioned speeches and tears. In doing so, he convinces their father to entrust Philomela to Tereus' care. Tereus rapes Philomela and cuts out her tongue when she threatens to reveal his crime. Upon returning to his wife, Procne, he lies to her, saying that Philomela is dead:

At ille  
 Dat gemitus fictos commentaque funera narrat,  
 Et lacrimae fecere fidem.  
 (*Met.* 6.564-566)

He sighing feynedly  
 Did tell hir falsly she was dead: and with his suttle tears  
 He maketh all his tale to seeme of credit in hir eares.  
 (Golding 1567)

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Proteus tells a similar lie. He pretends that Julia is dead in order to increase his chances with Silvia (IV.ii.103-104). His every conversation with the Duke is

fawning and filled with false sincerity, but his convincing speeches win the Duke's confidence, and secure him access to Silvia, just as Tereus' speeches granted him access to Philomela (III.i, III.ii).

One final example of connections between Proteus and other characters from the *Metamorphoses* comes, again, in Proteus' speech to the Duke, wherein he ruins Valentine's and Silvia's plan to run away together. The motivations that Proteus has for informing the Duke of their intentions are reminiscent of many other characters in the *Metamorphoses*. Like Byblis, Myrrha and other characters in the *Metamorphoses* who have cherished forbidden loves, Proteus tried at first to shake off his love for Silvia (*Met.* 9.450-665, 10.298-502). Unsuccessful in this attempt, most likely for lack of trying, and desperate to win Silvia for himself at whatever cost to others, Proteus turns to the ancient art of tattling. By informing on his best friend and his new love, Proteus secures himself a favorable position in the Duke's mind, but Silvia knows what he has done, and despises him all the more for it. Many characters in the *Metamorphoses* commit the same act as Proteus, and they do so out of betrayal, jealous, desperation, and spite. In the *Metamorphoses*, the tales involving those who tattle on their friends, loves, and competition end badly for the tattlers, and the moral of such stories is clear: no one likes or trusts a tattletale. Examples of such characters include Sol, the sun god, in Book 4, Clytie from the same myth in Book 4, and the crow and the raven, who form parts of the same Book 2 myth. These myths exemplify the divine retribution aspect of metamorphosis contained in Ovid's poem. In Book 2, a white raven witnesses an act of adultery committed by one of Apollo's lovers. He flies to Apollo, in spite of the warnings of a crow. This crow was previously a maiden, and was metamorphosed into a bird by Athena for spying and tattling on the daughters of Cecrops. The crow attempts to save the raven from a similar fate, but the raven insists on tattling to Apollo. After the raven reveals the adultery to Apollo, the god kills his lover, and nearly kills their unborn child. Angry

at the bird for nearly causing the death of his son, Apollo turns the white raven black (*Met.* 2.531-632).

Nearly every scene in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* contains an allusion to Ovid. Each character, especially Proteus, has been informed and shaped by various characters, actions, and themes in the *Metamorphoses* or the *Heroides*. I have illustrated many examples in which Shakespeare interpreted, updated, and at times directly borrowed from Ovid's poetry. Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* has been helpful in revealing how Shakespeare read Ovid. More importantly, the existence of this play, in addition to several other plays, illuminates how Shakespeare read Ovid. He saw the potential for many Ovidian stories to come to life on the stage. Finally, the theme of metamorphosis is the driving factor of the play. The metamorphosis of each main character and the many metamorphoses of the inconstant Proteus guide the action and advance the plot. Proteus can be seen as a catalyst for the action in the play, as his changes bring about distress and turmoil for all the other characters. The metamorphoses of Proteus and the other characters are not the same as the physical transformations which befell characters in the *Metamorphoses*, but instead are Shakespeare's interpretation of Ovid's theme of change. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare metamorphosed several of Ovid's tragic and cautionary myths, described in detail in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, into an amusing play. This transformation, along with the metamorphoses of Proteus and the other characters, demonstrate how this play is metamorphic.

## References

- Allen, Don Cameron. 1970. *Mysteriously Meant: The rediscovery of pagan symbolism and allegorical interpretation in the Renaissance*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press.
- Adams, Joseph. 1923. *A Life of William Shakespeare*. Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press.
- Brown, Sarah Annes. 1999. *The Metamorphosis of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.
- Cahn, Victor. 1996. *Shakespeare the Playwright: a companion to the complete tragedies, histories, comedies and romances*. Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Carroll, William C. 2000. 'And love you 'gainst the nature of love': Ovid, rape, and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona." In *Shakespeare's Ovid: The Metamorphoses in the Plays and the Poems*, ed. by A. B. Taylor, 49-65. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fränkel, Hermann. 1945. *Ovid: A poet between two worlds*. Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press.
- Golding, Arthur. 1567. *The Fifteen Books of Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Transcribed and Edited by B. F., 2002. <http://www.elizabethanauthors.com/ovid00.htm>.
- Homer. 1967. *The Odyssey*. Translated and Edited by Albert Cook. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Martin, Fido. 1978. *Shakespeare*. Maplewood, NJ: The Hamlyn Publishing Group.
- Maslen, R. W. 2000. Myths Exploited: The *Metamorphoses* of Ovid in Early Elizabethan England. In *Shakespeare's Ovid: The Metamorphoses in the Plays and the Poems*, ed. by A. B. Taylor, 15-30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meres, Francis. 1598. *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury*.

<http://www.elizabethanauthors.com/palladis.htm>.

O'Connor, Garry. 1991. *William Shakespeare: A life*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Ovid. *Fasti*. <http://thelatinlibrary.com/ovid.html>.

———. 2001. *Heroides*. Translated by A. S. Kline.

[http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Heroides16-21.htm#\\_Toc525573659](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Heroides16-21.htm#_Toc525573659).

———. *Metamorphoses*. <http://thelatinlibrary.com/ovid.html>.

Oxford English Dictionary. <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu>.

Oxford Latin Dictionary. 1982. Edited by P.G.W. Glare. New York: Oxford University Press.

Parrott, Thomas Marc. 1934. *William Shakespeare: A handbook. A narrative, interpretive account of Shakespeare's life as a playwright and actor of his work in drama and poetry*.

New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Pavlock, Barbara. 2009. *The Image of the Poet in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Sammartino, Peter. 1990. *The Man Who Was William Shakespeare*. Massachusetts: Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corporation.

Shakespeare, William. 1994. The Two Gentlemen of Verona. In *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. by The Shakespeare Head Press, 187-212. New York: Barnes and Noble.

## VITA

### **Celia Jean Meehan**

Address: 713 Main Street, Avoca, Pa, 18641

E-Mail ID: cjm5145@psu.edu

Education: Major in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies  
Major in Spanish  
Honors in Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies

Thesis Title: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Metamorphic Play*

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Stephen Wheeler.

#### Work Experience:

- 1) Cwikla's Quality Bakery, Avoca, Pa. 2003-2009. Clerk, baker: waiting on customers, cleaning, baking, decorating. Jan Cwikla and Carl Cwikla, owners.
- 2) State Workers' Insurance Fund, Scranton, Pa. 2007. Temp: Issuing certificates of insurance, data entry, filing. John Cardamone, supervisor.
- 3) Warnock Dining Commons, University Park, Pa. 2008. Student Employee: Serving meals, food prep, checkout, cleaning. Maureen Volz, manager, Curtis Weisner, assistant manager.
- 4) Christmas Tree Shoppes, Moosic, Pa. 2008. Recovery assistant: Recovery, checkout, stocking.

Grants Received: Schreyer Ambassador Grant for Study Abroad

Awards: The Benjamin F. Keller Latin Prize  
The Reverend Thomas Birmingham, S.J. Scholarship in the Classics

Professional Memberships: Phi Beta Kappa

Community Service Involvement: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Centre County, 2007-2009

International Education: Granada, Spain: IES Institute, Universidad de Granada. Fall, 2009

Language Proficiency: Majors in Spanish and Latin