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Ranger, H.

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WHY ARE WE STILL READING OVID'S RAPES?

Holly Ranger

Ovid was conspicuous by his absence from *Rape in Antiquity*.¹ By any calculation the works of the Augustan poet offer a rich resource for an analysis of the literary representation of sexual violence in the ancient Roman world: in addition to the thematic aestheticized presentation of sexual violence in *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria*, over fifty acts of rape comprise one third of the text of *Metamorphoses*. Indeed, 'the rape motif can infiltrate even into those quarters of the poem in which the thread of sexual violence appears, for once, to be gone'.² Ovid's absence from the 1997 volume may have been due, in part, to the material problem posed by the textual artefacts of an elite male to the feminist historian's pursuit of the lived experience of ancient women, for, as Culham had contended in 1985, the lives of 'real' women are not to be found in Ovid's texts.³ Culham's insight was to identify that 'the case of Ovid' presented not only a material problem to the feminist historian but a methodological dilemma to the feminist philologist: as feminist praxis (recovering women's lives) is fundamentally incompatible with the work of classical philology (reading male texts) then the analysis of Ovid's texts must be abandoned. Culham's inference that philological scholarship reproduces the sexual violence of the source text was echoed in Richlin's 1992 argument that Ovid's critics are engaged in metapornography.⁴ Moreover, Richlin argued, Ovid's readers are complicit in the violence of the text. The appearance of Richlin's 'Reading Ovid's Rapes' only two years before Deacy and Pierce's 1994 conference may also account for Ovid's absence from *Rape in Antiquity*, as it took a number of years for feminist philologists to formulate responses to

Richlin's powerful essay and, by extension, to extricate the feminist philologist from complicity in textual sexual violence. My argument in this chapter is that the failure to recognise one's continued complicity in the sexual violence of the text – despite one's critique – entails the failure of any liberal feminist reading of Ovid's poetry.

In the absence of an essay from the original volume with which to engage, I will use Richlin (1992) as a reference point for the review of the philological and pedagogical literature which comprises the first section of this chapter. In the second section, I employ a social-psychological framework to offer a critique of the existing liberal feminist pedagogical literature by interpreting the effects of this guidance on students – and the motivations of teachers who implement this guidance – in terms of processes of acculturation and system-justification. In the final section of the chapter, I discuss a novel that informed my thinking on reading Ovid's rapes, Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, a darkly erotic novel about a woman's attempt to metamorphose into a tree. I do not discuss this work as Ovidian but rather consider the implications for the feminist philologist of the novel's working through of 'reading' sexualized violence, which suggests, finally, that there is no uncompromised feminist reading of textual violence.

In 2014 and 2019, Richlin and Rimell respectively surveyed feminist Ovidian scholarship 'after Richlin'; both identified two traditions in the philological literature divided by theoretical standpoint.⁵ The first tradition follows the radical feminist approach pioneered by Culham and Richlin and is exemplified – to both Richlin and Rimell – by Enterline's *The Rhetoric of the Body*, which argues that rape is both the act that interpellates 'woman' in *Metamorphoses* and the act around which Ovid constructs a masculine *ars poetica*.⁶

The second and more sizeable tradition of scholarship adopts a liberal feminist framework that resists Richlin's pornographic model.⁷ This tradition argues that reading 'against the grain' can recuperate the subjectivity and agency of Ovid's female characters, thereby rescuing Ovid as an object of study for feminist philologists.⁸ Responding to this second body of scholarship directly, Richlin gently dismisses the split in traditions as illustrative of 'an axiom in intellectual history' that each generation must reject the philosophy of their foremothers; here, the pessimistic epistemology of second-wave feminisms has been inexorably superseded by the optimistic epistemology of third-wave feminisms.⁹ Yet for Richlin 'the case of Ovid' has been abandoned without a satisfactory resolution. Radical feminists remain sceptical about the ability to recuperate the subjectivity of women in a male-authored text, while resisting readers continue to reject the radical feminist standpoint as too literal – a naïve and reductive surface reading of Ovid's politically subversive poetry. With the debate abandoned, Richlin observes 'a somewhat disturbing return to business as usual', citing Hejduk on *Fasti* as demonstrative of scholarship's (re)turn to the intellectualization of rape as a metaphor for or thematic parallel to the 'generic struggles of the poem – and the poet'.¹⁰

Rimell similarly identifies a stagnation of the debate, reflective of the impasse between competing twentieth- and twenty-first century feminisms. She observes that the opposition between Ovid's liberal feminist readers and his radical feminist critics 'out to spoil everyone's fun, has been less worked through than softened in the dissemination of slightly varying approaches' – a postmodern entropic movement that has neutered each critique's efficacy.¹¹ Rimell calls for a compromise, proposing a reading strategy that both concedes a little ground to the feminist killjoys – namely, an admission that a wholesale

resistant reading strategy is as equally naïve as the radical feminist's '(as Richlin reminded Curran, when the poet depicts Daphne's terror that's not empathy, it's domination's necessary turn-on)' – and looks to Ovid's cubist epic for angles from which a gendered perspective explicitly invites a resisting reading.¹² She concludes by asking 'To what extent is Ovid himself a "resisting reader"?'¹³

In addition to the trends in philology outlined by Richlin and Rimell, pedagogical literature has also taken up 'the case of Ovid'. The guidance on teaching Ovid's rapes is similarly divided into two traditions, which respectively employ a purportedly depoliticized philological approach and a liberal feminist approach. The 'depoliticized' philological approach, which encourages the teacher to emphasize the aesthetic and rhetorical qualities of Ovid's texts, tends neither to entertain the possibility that Ovid poses a problem in the twenty-first century classroom, nor to cite the extensive philological and pedagogical literature occupied with this problem. The articles in *The Classical World* 'Paedagogus: Special Section on Ovid', for example, while providing an overview of the resisting reader approaches, do not engage directly with the question of sexual violence; and the MLA pedagogical crib *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Ovid and the Ovidian Tradition* omits Richlin's important article from its bibliography and neglects to include the terms 'rape', 'sexual violence', and 'women' in its index.¹⁴ The omission of dissenting voices in the *Approaches* volume is compounded by the chapter, 'Gender and Violence in *Amores*', which both refuses to engage with the pedagogical issues at play in the chapter's titular topics and explicitly distances itself from 'mere feminist hyperbole'.¹⁵

The essays in *The Classical World* special and the MLA crib collectively argue for Ovid's utility 'as a primer in the art of reading well'; here, 'learning to read through Ovid'

is outlined as an exercise in learning to overlook poetic content to focus on literary strategies.¹⁶ Both collections hang their arguments for a depoliticized philological reading on this appeal to Ovid's rhetorical virtuosity, an approach which fails to consider that for some readers the violence of the text detracts from – if not outweighs – any of its aesthetic qualities. (The claim that aesthetic qualities are politically neutral can only be made from a position of unrecognized political and social privilege; for some of us, sexual violence is not merely an intellectual exercise.¹⁷ One facile argument often made is that educators must 'challenge' their students with 'difficult' material. Yet when a student has been raised in a white supremacist patriarchal world, exposed daily to discourses of racism and misogyny, we are not challenging students when we present them with decontextualized textual representations of classed, raced, and gendered sexual violence, but simply giving them more of the same). Neither collection identifies nor attempts to address why it is the case that women's bodies are the particular sites of learning, why it is, 'from Heinze to Hinds', that rape has served 'as a textbook case for the discussion of the interplay of and variation in style and genre in Ovid'.¹⁸ Richlin's provocation remains unresolved: *why is it always a lady in the magician's box?*

In contrast, the liberal feminist pedagogical literature accepts the premise that Ovid's representations of sexual violence need to be explicitly addressed in the classroom. Educators are instructed to anticipate emotional reactions from students and are provided with examples from colleagues of practical teaching strategies to overcome these initial responses.¹⁹ Kahn, for example, uses metamorphosis as a metaphor to describe the classroom transformation of a student's highly sensitive and personal disgust response to Ovid's texts 'into the beginning of a learning process, instead of the end of

one'.²⁰ The articles also detail successful methods for teaching students resisting reader strategies, for example, by appealing to persona theory and the multiple-subjectivities scholarship, or by providing instructions for reading to 'contextualize' or 'frame' the rape scenes 'for understanding that Ovid is not actually advocating rape'.²¹ (An important exception is Hong, who is sensitive to the ways in which Ovid's shifting narrative perspective leads a reader's sympathies to fall with the perpetrator of the rape).²² Yet, as D'Angelo and Stewart identify, these approaches all frame students as the origin of the 'difficulty' in the teaching of 'difficult subjects': 'Whether due to their ignorance, obstinance, politics or even their trauma, students are imaged as pedagogical obstacles to the all-important teaching of the text'.²³ Following Freire, D'Angelo and Stewart show how this pedagogical deficit model, in which the teacher must both manage difficulty in the classroom and transfer knowledge, frames a systemic issue as an individual defect. They argue that the failure of the classical pedagogical literature to engage with social-psychological educational theory and thus perceive 'the banking model of education' which the discipline employs 'is the primary problem of... the well-meaning or 'progressive' classics educator'.²⁴

More practically, Gloyn advocates an historicized approach, reading Ovid's tales of Proserpina and Philomela with her history students in the context of the ancient terminology of rape (*raptum*, *stuprum*, *vim*), and the Roman laws on chastity, rape, and abortion.²⁵ Gloyn's approach could be usefully complemented in the classroom with a consideration of the ancient female reader of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, the *puella*, who, 'particularly alert' to the moments of the *praeceptor's* animus towards women and his instruction to rape, 'will not find them humorous'.²⁶ While she is engaged in the search for

real women, the teacher could also foreground the social and economic dynamics of enslavement and sex work that pertain to any discussion of Ovid's presentation of gendered sexual violence against the *puella*. Teachers could ask students to consider the gap between the protections enshrined in Roman rape law for the *matrona* and the liminal position of the sex worker, and to assess the implications of that gap for reading Ovid's 'joke'.²⁷ This historicized approach – using Ovid as an opportunity to think about real women – seems closest to reconciling feminist praxis with masculinist philology; but it is a reconciliation in which Ovid is treated as an historical source text only, and one which does not resolve the problem posed by Ovid-as-art in a philology class. Moss attempts to address this issue directly when she reminds us that '[w]hen we cover something in class, that communicates to our students that it's important. So we should be able... to identify that importance'.²⁸ Using Livy's tale of the rape of Lucretia as a case study, Moss calls on teachers to consider carefully why they are teaching textual representations of sexual violence beyond their obligation to a syllabus – why is a rape text used to teach the third declension? – and to use their answer to that question to guide how they teach such material. Moss argues for the importance of setting pedagogy goals that are critical and trauma-aware, and of reserving time in language classes for socio-cultural contextualization.

The liberal feminist pedagogical literature thus evades a (feminist) consideration of the correlative link between representational and actual gendered sexual violence, and repeats the dictum of focusing classroom attention on the poet's wit and rhetorical virtuosity, ultimately concurring with the 'depoliticized' philological argument that reading Ovid presents an opportunity to learn to read 'well'.²⁹ It also shares with the purely

aesthetic approach an acceptance of the ‘aesthetic qualities’ to which it appeals, qualities which explicitly or implicitly reify Ovid’s texts as worthy objects of literary study; even Wardrop, who recognises Ovid’s potential for retraumatizing survivors, speaks of balancing the need to create a safe space for students in the classroom with ‘my responsibilities to the curriculum’.³⁰ While conducting the literature review for this chapter, I could not find in any of the feminist pedagogical literature a critique of the discipline’s normative aesthetic values; nor could I find any problematization of disciplinary methodologies of reading, nor any assessment of the ways in which the development of classical philology, and the institutionalization of its canonical texts and aesthetic value judgements, has been inextricably intertwined with misogyny, elitism, and white supremacism.³¹ The liberal feminist literature’s focus on gendered sexual violence alone fails to consider intersecting forms of structural oppression, both ancient and modern, and is thus instructive in the kind of mainstream white feminism that dominates feminist classical pedagogical scholarship, in which an alertness to sexualized threat to the body – the bourgeois white women’s sole marker of marginalization – is prioritized over an alertness to racism or classicism.³² The tale of Philomela and Procne, for example, is often invoked in the feminist pedagogical literature as an empowering example of ancient myth and a revenge fantasy that invites a resisting reading.³³ Yet such a reading passes over the fact that the only rapist punished in Ovid’s text is explicitly racialized: ‘*Threicius Tereus... sed et hunc innata libido | exstimulat, pronumque genus regionibus illis | in Venerem est: flagrat vitio gentisque suoque* (‘Thracian Tereus... his own passionate nature spurred him on, and besides, the men of his region are quick to lust: his own fire and his nation’s burned in him’, *Met.* 6.424, 458-60).³⁴

The liberal feminist pedagogical strategy also requires the introduction of a significant academic framework to enable the ‘untrained’ student to ‘read as a woman’ and to find in Ovid’s texts more than a ‘handbook on rape’.³⁵ This training, focused on changing students’ minds about Ovid, even in Kahn’s student-centered pedagogy, is particularly concerning given the commitment of feminist pedagogy to the creation of non-hierarchical learning environments which value subjective knowledge.³⁶ I found no appreciation in the literature of the power imbalance in the situation of an authority figure (the lecturer, despite her marginalization within the academy) invoking disciplinary methodologies steeped in racism, misogyny, and elitism to teach her class of predominantly fem* late teens to overcome their primary subjective reading of a text.³⁷ Taking the dynamics of power into account re-casts the liberal feminist pedagogical strategy as a process of acculturation, an induction of our students into the correct way to read patriarchy’s texts, and a replication of the violent processes of acculturation to which we, too, have been exposed: *this is what great art looks like*.³⁸

Within classical philology, the process of acculturation crystallizes around Ovid’s rapes generally and around the myth of Daphne in particular, an episode to which most undergraduate ‘Classics’ students are exposed.³⁹ By programming students how to ‘correctly’ read the first rape of *Metamorphoses*, the liberal feminist teacher thus encodes in the student the algorithm for justifying in aesthetic terms the subsequent series of increasingly traumatic and bloody acts of sexual violence in the text. Although one pedagogical article asks teachers to ‘make a decision about whether you think the poetry is exposing or colluding with male violence and prepare carefully and accordingly’, I could find no pedagogical literature addressed to those who make that second choice –

naturally, for why teach patriarchy's texts at all?⁴⁰ This process of acculturation is not only facilitated at the individual level in the classroom but enforced at the departmental and institutional levels, and feminist classicists should be troubled by the mockery targeted at the students of colour at Columbia University who called for trigger warnings on Ovid's texts (their petition was rejected by the university).⁴¹ At the same time, there is a great deal of irony, not to mention cognitive dissonance, in the feminist philologist's careful appending of trigger warnings to modules that simultaneously reify the unproblematized aesthetic 'value' of Ovid's rape texts as objects of study.

I have found it useful to think about the cognitive dissonance of the feminist philologist and her individual role as an extension of (enforcer of) the institution with reference to system-justification theory, a social-psychological model of false consciousness.⁴² System-justification theory is predicated on the thesis that individuals and groups are psychologically motivated to defend and justify the societal status quo for reasons of safety and security, and to meet epistemic, existential, and relational needs to share reality with others. Within social psychology, the theory has been used to account for why those who are most disadvantaged by a system can display an enhanced motivation to defend and justify the status quo, even when doing so goes against their own self-interest and maintains their disadvantaged status.⁴³ In an institutional setting, it may be said that the feminist philologist, marginalized within the academy and in receipt of less pay than her departmental male colleagues for a greater teaching and administrative workload, may display an enhanced motivation to justify her continued participation in the teaching of culturally hegemonic texts whose ideological content has been and continues to be employed to maintain the systemic inequalities by which she is

oppressed.⁴⁴ After all, as Marturano's chapter in this volume demonstrates, Ovid teaches the feminist philologist that women who refuse to perpetuate cycles of misogyny are always punished.

System-justifying beliefs increase mental well-being by reducing the dissonance between being treated unfairly by a discipline traditionally associated with patriarchy, elitism, misogyny, and racism, and the epistemic, existential, and relational needs to see the discipline in which one participates as fair. System-justifying beliefs can thus be conceptualized as a psychic self-defence mechanism; yet it has the concrete effect of preventing both individual challenges to the status quo and group political agitation. It has been shown by Calogero, for example, that system-justifying beliefs and behaviours held or exhibited by women particularly disrupt women's participation in gender-based social activism: 'It seems that once the lens of self-objectification is in place, women become less likely to object to the system that constructs and sustains this harmful lens. Women's bodies effectively become the site for system justification.'⁴⁵ Calogero's conclusion speaks to the ways in which women's bodies in Ovid's texts are the sites of an ideological battleground in classical philology, and the sites for system-justification within feminist philology. This second battle has resulted in a 'lean in' version of philology in which liberal feminist readings of Ovid that work to assuage false consciousness and cognitive dissonance by reading the 'right' way operate within existing disciplinary structures and aesthetics without fundamentally challenging those structures or aesthetics.⁴⁶ Although I recognise that some feminists knowingly seek proximity to patriarchy and power, the lens of system-justification theory helps to explain why the most radical critiques of Ovid have emerged from ancient history (Culham, Richlin) and English literature (Enterline), that is,

from scholars less psychically entangled in classical philology. The missing element in the existing philological and pedagogical feminist literature is an acknowledgement that classicists and philologists are not cool observers of problematic texts, but active and complicit participants in the perpetuation of ancient literature and its ideologies.⁴⁷

The ethics of reception and the positionality of the feminist critic are central to both traditions of feminist philology identified by Richlin and Rimell: *we are reading* Ovid's rapes. These concerns naturally reflect feminism's emphasis on subjectivity against the objectivity claimed by masculinist traditions of knowledge production, and the distinctly feminist characteristic of both radical and resistant scholarship is the centring of the reading subject. The crucial distinction between the radical and the liberal feminist traditions is the acknowledgement or refutation of the feminist reader's complicity in Ovid's textual sexual violence. A novel which stimulated my own thinking on readerly and disciplinary complicity, and which I have found useful for its working through of 'reading' sexualized violence is South Korean writer Han Kang's Man Booker International Prize-winning novel, *The Vegetarian*, translated into English by Deborah Smith.⁴⁸ At the centre of this novel in three parts is a young woman whose decision to stop eating meat precipitates an increasingly violent series of events. Although her vegetarianism is intended as an attempt to extricate herself from the world of violence in which she finds herself complicit, as the novel progresses Yeong-hye is force-fed and raped in graphic scenes. In the central section of the novel, Yeong-hye is sexually exploited by her brother-in-law, a videographer obsessed with painting her body with obscene flowers. In the fallout from this event, Yeong-hye's sister, In-hye, takes on formal caring responsibilities

for Yeong-hye, and the two sisters are ostracized by their family. Finally, institutionalized in a psychiatric hospital, Yeong-hye refuses all nourishment except sunlight, steadfast in her conviction that she is metamorphosing into a tree. The novel was published to critical acclaim in the UK, although the Korean literary critical establishment labelled *The Vegetarian* 'bizarre and extreme'; as Han's translator writes, '[p]erhaps the overwhelming focus on *The Vegetarian*'s aesthetics is a way of avoiding talking about its politics' – an observation with which Richlin would surely agree.⁴⁹

The novel's plot appears to be shadowed by the tale of Daphne, who runs from sexual violence and towards a metamorphosis; but while the novel's themes share with Ovid's *Metamorphoses* an interest in sexual violence and the violated woman as art, it is not a work of Ovidian reception. In her translator's note to Han's short story 'The Fruit of My Woman' – a direct precursor to *The Vegetarian* and a tale in which a woman physically transforms into a plant – Smith is alert to the fact that the story gains much of its power for an Anglophone audience from the balance between the apparent 'universality of these mythical archetypes and the specificity of its setting in contemporary South Korea'.⁵⁰ Yet Smith is also careful to emphasize that Korea has no metamorphic tradition comparable with Ovid (or, later, Kafka), and that 'Greek mythology has not been a major influence on [Korea's] literature'.⁵¹ Discussing her inspiration for *The Vegetarian*, Han herself notes the influence of a line of poetry from the Korean modernist Yi Sang, which conveys the violence and collective psychic trauma suffered by Koreans under the colonial rule of Japan: 'I believe that humans should be plants'.⁵² For Korean-language readers, then, the novel's references to the aftermath of the colonial era and the subsequent Korean War are far more distinct than any Ovidian resonance. Despite its foregrounding of

gendered sexual violence and its exploration of the links between artistic representations of sexual violence and tangible violence, *The Vegetarian* should be understood as a richer work of commentary on the intersection of oppressions and the (sexual) politics of meat, art, warfare, colonialism, and mental health.⁵³

It is the novel's politics of form which pertain to a working through of readerly complicity. Originally published in Korean as three separate novellas, *The Vegetarian* comprises three narrators' perspectives on Yeong-hye's story: those of her husband, her brother-in-law, and her elder sister. The book's tripartite structure explicitly stages the act of reception as the reader reads and re-reads the scenes of rape and sexual exploitation. The first rape in the novel is narrated in the first section in the first person by Yeong-hye's husband. As Yeong-hye's mental and physical health deteriorates, he explains to the reader in a cool tone that it is 'no easy thing' for a married man to have his physical needs go unsatisfied: 'So yes... I would grab my wife and push her to the floor... After the first time, it was easier for me to do it again'.⁵⁴ (At the time of the book's publication, marital rape was not recognised as a crime in South Korea). The second scene of marital rape occurs in the second section, narrated from the perspective of Yeong-hye's brother-in-law, 'J'; after forcing himself on his wife, J then sexually exploits Yeong-hye in a metamorphic scene, capturing on film the vegetal tropisms of their two painted bodies. This sequence is ambivalently presented by the author in its explicit eroticism. At first, although Yeong-hye explains to J that she is aroused only by 'the flowers' depicted on her body, he grasps her and pulls down her jeans: "No." It wasn't just verbally that she rejected him – she shoved him away roughly'.⁵⁵ The sex act occurs only once J, too, is painted with flowers; and to his explicit request for sex Yeong-hye 'gave no sign of assent,

but none of refusal either... [J] understood her gaze to be one of complicity'.⁵⁶ In the third section, the reader watches the video-taped scene through the eyes of Yeong-hye's sister and J's wife, In-hye, who re-reads this highly eroticized moment as one of exploitation.

Han's formal structure manipulates narrative perspective to implicate the reader in the stylized violence depicted in the novel, and explicitly invites the reader to consider subjectivity and positionality, the ethics of reception, and the reader's complicity in the sexualized violence of the text.⁵⁷ (This effect of form and perspective is heightened in Korean, in which the pronouns 'I' and 'we' can elide). In a simplified reading, the first two sections of the novel perform two ways of 'reading as a man'; the first is a detached, 'objective' reading, and the second is a pornographic reading. In the third chapter, we 'read as a woman'; the violence is now mediated and recontextualized by a female gaze, and the reader must reconsider the themes of art, consent, and complicity that have been posed in the novel's preceding chapters. While J reads Yeong-hye's silence as consent, for example, her sister re-reads this silence as one of incapacity and vulnerability. In-hye however understands that her acceptance of the burden of care for her sister is both a compromise and a reprise of her habitual response to historic familial, patriarchal violence. In flash-back scenes the reader sees that sisterly action was not In-hye's instinctive response to the sexual violence she experienced and witnessed. And in the final section of the novel In-hye consciously and iteratively works to overcome her primary subjective reading of the text of her life. In addition to the three models of response outlined above, then, In-hye's initial response offers a fourth model: abandonment (and we return full circle to Culham).

The Vegetarian's discussion of sexual violence and art, language and consent, subjectivity and readerly complicity metafictionally comments on and reflects the methods of self-justification employed by Han's readers to rationalize their ongoing implication in the text's sexual violence. The novel thus speaks to the attempts of liberal feminist philologists to posit 'resisting' readings of Ovid within pre-existing disciplinary structures. This is an intellectual move which I have identified as both system-justifying and lacking in a recognition of the feminist's complicity in processes of acculturation and the perpetuation of systemic violence. Perhaps the optimistic epistemology of third-wave feminism will be superseded in turn by the critical epistemology of millennial feminisms and these movements' reassessment of the compromises and lacunae of white liberal 'civilisational feminism'.⁵⁸ One consequence of this epistemic shift for philology is that the third-wave acceptance of disciplinary structures and ideologies, and the third-wave appeal to unproblematized aesthetic value no longer holds. If the feminist philologist decides not to abandon Ovid, then she must recognise that by her continued presence in a discipline fundamentally unchanged she is complicit with and participates in the perpetuation of anti-feminist methodologies and ideologies that reinforce the disciplinary and institutional status quo – despite her critique. As the discipline moves towards 'critical classics', the twenty-first century feminist philologist must engage both in a critical reassessment of the accepted methodologies and canonical texts of her discipline, and in a reflexive assessment of her compromised position vis-à-vis feminism and her complicit position vis-à-vis 'Classics'.⁵⁹ If Ovid remains on the syllabus, a feminist pedagogical strategy must be one in which disciplinary histories of canonization are explicitly discussed in the classroom, and in which students are invited to question the

ways in which the inherited 'value' of Ovid's poetry and aesthetic has been (re)constructed, (re)valorised, and (re)produced by generations of philologists, including by the teacher facilitating the lesson. Or can we radically reimagine what the discipline of 'Classics' and its texts are?

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¹ Ovid's poetry appeared only as additional textual evidence or comparanda in two chapters treating rape in Livy (Arieti) and Chaucer's Philomela (Saunders); in her opening address to the 20th anniversary conference, Susan Deacy noted Ovid's absence from the original volume. Sincere thanks are due to Susan, whose generosity towards postgraduates and early career researchers is exemplary; 'thank you' also to the audience and participants at the 20th anniversary conference for their provocations and responses.

² McPhee (2019: 775).

³ On the importance to 'feminist classics' of the unauthorized 1985 Women's Classical Caucus APA panel 'Re-appropriating the Text: The Case of Ovid', see Liveley (2006) and Richlin (2014).

⁴ Richlin (2014a: 134), after Lorde (1984).

⁵ Richlin (2014a); Rimell (2019).

⁶ Enterline (2000). Richlin also finds her concerns reflected in Fear (2000) and Ancona and Greene (2005); also sympathetic are Segal (1998) and Fredrick (2002). Salzman-Mitchell (2005) is claimed by both camps.

⁷ That is, the definition of pornography on which Richlin built her case by Kappeler (1986): that pornography is any representation – visual or literary – of a woman fetishized under a male gaze.

⁸ Liveley (1999); also Liveley (2006), Spentzou (2003), Lindheim (2003), Fulkerson (2005), and Rimell (2006). A subset of this strand of scholarship advances a thesis centred on the shifting subjectivities of the poem, which, it is argued, creates space for internal as well as external reading perspectives sympathetic to – or exploitative of – the texts' rape victims; see Segal (1994), Johnson (1996, 1997), Fabre-Serris (2018), Newlands (2018), Zissos (1999), and Mower (2016).

⁹ Richlin (2014b: 33).

¹⁰ Richlin (2014a: 135, n. 1); Hejduk (2011); also Kuhlmann (2000), Murgatroyd (2000, 2001), Freas (2018), and Giusti (2018). Cf. Gildenhard and Zissos (2004) on the 'genealogical' function of rape to propel the narrative, and Curtis (2017) on the aetiological function of rape; Miller (2010) returns to the persona theory Richlin sought to combat, which separates the poet from the *praeceptor*; Myerowitz (2006) redeems the *praeceptor* himself. One exception can be found in James (2016), which draws out the implications of Ovid's intertextual misogyny for *meretrices*. On the *puella*'s hair as metaphor for relationships of power, see Pandey (2018).

¹¹ Rimell (2019: 454).

¹² *Ibid.* Cf. the compromise attempted at Jones (2001: 361), where the resolution of the tale of Pomona (*Met.* 14.623-771), in which an attempted rape becomes a welcomed sexual advance, read alongside the episode's allusions to the resolution of the tale of the Sabine women who 'change their minds' (Livy 1.9.16-10.1), is posited as happy and troubling 'both at once'; ultimately, this analysis fails to account for the rape myths employed in the text and which must be accepted in a 'happy' reading: that 'no means yes', and that women's 'emotional responses' are merely feints to be overpowered by the physical

attractiveness or blandishments of an assailant. A similar balance is attempted in James (1997), which both attends to the violent sexual exploitation of enslaved women that lie behind the poems and argues that the poet invites the reader to mark the imbalanced power dynamics of his rape scenes. Similarly, Zuckerberg (2018: 108) locates the appeal of the *Ars* to contemporary predatory misogynists in the ancient poems' project – all irony aside – 'of gradually intensifying the violation of women's boundaries'. For the trope of victim-blaming in scholarship, see Murgatroyd (2002: 624), which draws the reader's attention to how 'comically naïve' it is of Vesta to fall asleep at a party and risk rape at *Fasti* 6.331-2.

¹³ Rimell (2019: 455).

¹⁴ Katz, Miller, Newlands and Pavlock (2009); the exception is Newlands, who footnotes Richlin (1992); Boyd and Fox (2010).

¹⁵ Miller (2010: 162).

¹⁶ Chapman Peek (2010).

¹⁷ Anonymous (2021); the anonymous author offers a bitterly wry observation on teaching sexual violence in the *Iliad*: 'Years later, you'd start to realize that words like assault and rape fit what happened to you that night... You haven't taught the *Iliad* since that day, but presumably you will have to again one day, and the thought is terrifying. Your body still holds the grief and the rage that you like to think your brain has processed, and what kind of a classicist can't teach Homer anymore?'

¹⁸ Weiden Boyd (2000: 190-1).

¹⁹ James (2012: 554).

²⁰ Kahn (2004: 458).

²¹ James (2012); see also James (2008a, 2014), Liveley (2012), and Thakur (2014). I wonder whether liberal feminist classicists would also use this argument to defend a modern male writer's depictions of sexual violence, such as those of Charles Bukowski.

²² Hong (2013); see n.8 above on the shifting subjectivities scholarship.

²³ D'Angelo and Stewart (2021).

²⁴ D'Angelo and Stewart (2021).

²⁵ Gloyn (2011, 2013).

²⁶ James (2008b).

²⁷ Students could also be asked to consider how Sulpicia's use of the language of shame and chastity at [Tibullus] 3.13.1-2, and the metaphor of rape at [Tibullus] 3.14.7 (*hic animum sensusque meos abducta relinquo*, 'snatched away, I leave behind my spirit and my senses'), inflects a reading of Ovid's own discourse of rape.

²⁸ Moss (2020).

²⁹ This is to forget Richlin's (2014b: 10) caveat 'to not be beguiled by the packaging'.

³⁰ Wardrop (2010: 18).

³¹ Rankine (2019) problematizes the notion of 'pure' philology, uncoupled from the historical and social factors that have shaped it.

³² Phipps (2020: 59).

³³ Most recently Morales (2020: 70).

³⁴ On the myth of the black rapist and its employment in enforcing white supremacy, see Davis (1981). A focus on the individual punishment of Tereus also deflects attention from the text's structural systems of oppression, which continue unchanged.

³⁵ This strategy obfuscates the fact that, as Zuckerberg (2015) notes on the invocation of Ovid's advocacy of rape by the 'seduction community', unironic readings are not just possible but probable. This is also not to mention the elite level and restricted availability of this academic training at only 26 university 'classics' departments in the UK, wholly out of reach of economically disadvantaged students after the tripling of university fees in 2004 and the removal of maintenance grants in 2015.

³⁶ See now Libatique (2019), who takes an explicitly feminist pedagogical student-centred approach, but one which nevertheless reifies Ovid as an object of study.

³⁷ In UK classics, the student body is 'balanced or predominantly [40-80%] female', Leonard and Salvo (2016).

³⁸ In classics, processes of aesthetic and patriarchal acculturation intersect with an acculturation into whiteness; see Umachandran (2017) and Wong (2019).

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- ³⁹ 78% of college Ovid courses included *Metamorphoses* as a core text, of which 100% included Book 1, with Apollo and Daphne as a 'stand out' course staple, Boyd and Fox (2010: 41-2); the episode also recurs in the pedagogical literature.
- ⁴⁰ James (2012: 555).
- ⁴¹ Johnson, Lynch, Monroe and Wang (2015).
- ⁴² Contra the 'double consciousness' of the feminine subject proposed by Winkler and reprised in Deacy's chapter in this volume.
- ⁴³ Jost and Banaji (1994), Jost, Banaji and Nosek (2004).
- ⁴⁴ The gender pay gap in the UK higher education sector is 15.9%; this rises to 26% for BAME colleagues. Statistics from the University and College Union, available online: <https://www.ucu.org.uk/genderpay> and <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/4765/Equality-research-and-policy> (accessed 5 July 2019).
- ⁴⁵ Calogero (2013).
- ⁴⁶ Osborne, Sengupta and Sibley (2019). This reflects a broader pattern in the work of liberal white feminism, in which predominantly poor, brown, and black women's bodies are sites for ideological battles: France's burkini ban returns to the news every summer. For critiques of 'lean in' feminism, see hooks, b. (2013) and Foster (2016); for a critique of white liberal 'lean in' feminism in Classics, see Ranger (forthcoming).
- ⁴⁷ See Minus Plato (2019: 133) on art critics' simplification of ambivalent modes of reception as feminist revisioning: 'The question remains whether the critics who focus on the use of myth to make these critiques are equally aware as the artist that *they* too are complicit in them?'
- ⁴⁸ Han (2018).
- ⁴⁹ Smith (2018).
- ⁵⁰ Smith (2016).
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Fan (2018).
- ⁵³ On consistent anti-oppression as a central tenet of the veganism of colour movement, see Feliz Brueck (2017, 2019), and Deckha (2012).
- ⁵⁴ Han (2018: 30-1).
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 106.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 79; 107.
- ⁵⁷ Resinski (2014) argues that Ovid's shifting perspectives are heightened in works of reception, comparing two versions of the Myrrha tale which take contrasting condemnatory and empathetic narrative perspectives.
- ⁵⁸ Vergès (2021: vii).
- ⁵⁹ In line with the epistemic shift signalled by the move from Heritage Studies to Critical Heritage Studies; see <https://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/history> (accessed 5 July 2019).