

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Ovid and the Natural World

Panel sponsored by the International Ovidian Society
SCS convention in January 2022 (San Francisco)

Ovid has arguably become the Roman poet of the moment. From fairly recent college demands that he should be kicked off a Humanities curriculum we now have Helen Morales' book, *Antigone Rising*, which, in a chapter on myth and #Me too, argues that Ovid is a poet of deep empathy who offers insight into the psychology of sexual assault and explores the effects of trauma upon the victims. But how does Ovid measure up against another great crisis of our age, climate change? Discussion of his representation of nature has tended to focus on his vivid pictorial descriptions of landscapes in the *Metamorphoses*, which inspired the dream-like landscapes of the seventeenth century French painter Claude Lorrain, for instance; in Ovid's myth of Actaeon, the statement in the description of Diana's grotto that nature had imitated art (*Met.* 3.158–9) was taken as an aesthetic credo by artists and landscape gardeners from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century. Yet that statement can be read as a subterfuge, a decoy that prevents suspicion of nature's savagery, as embodied by the angry Diana; the crystalline water of the grotto's pool is the instrument of Actaeon's cruel transformation. The poet plays here with illusion, but also shows that nature fights back against transgression.

This panel invites papers that go beyond the 'pictorial Ovid' to explore in greater depth Ovid's relationship to the natural world. Ovidian poetry offers a view of the world familiar us today, where the divide between human and nonhuman is blurred; all created beings, in Ovid's world, are related, but the breakdown between the categories of human, animal, plant, stone, mountain, etc. happens particularly at moments of crisis. But does Ovid recognize through his poetry the threats that human beings pose to the natural world through the ideology of domination? How are these ecocritical issues explored in the literary and artistic reception of Ovid?

Suggested themes are the following (other topics are welcome):

- The boundaries between human and plant, animal, or inanimate object.
- Breakdowns of boundaries between nature/culture or natural/artificial.
- The poet's relationship to the theme of the domination of nature or nature's suffering through human actions.
- The anthropomorphizing of Nature and the attribution of agency to nonhuman things and organisms.
- Philosophical influence upon Ovidian views of the natural world, e.g. his Pythagoras' view of nature's innocence before the intervention of animal sacrifice for the gods.
- The intersection of religion and history in the Ovidian landscape.
- The representation of the early landscape of Rome and the moralizing tradition.
- Perceptions of extreme environments, such as Tomis in the exilic poetry.

- Receptions of Ovid's works that illuminate his presentation of the natural world, for instance, Richard Power's *Overstory* with a view to the ecological and gendered importance of trees in Ovid's poetry.

Direct any questions to the organizer, Carole Newlands, at Carole.Newlands@Colorado.EDU.

Send your abstract for a 20-minute paper as an email attachment to lfulkerson@fsu.edu by March 15, 2021, listing Ovid and the Natural World as the subject line of the email. The text of the abstract should not mention the name of the author, but the email message should provide name, abstract title, and affiliation. Abstracts should not exceed 500 words (excluding bibliography); follow the SCS guidelines for individual abstracts (<https://classicalstudies.org/annual-meeting/guidelines-authors-abstracts>). Submissions will be reviewed anonymously.