



Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid

Lisa S. Starks-Estes

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Ovid's tale of sexual violence and trauma—Philomela—is pivotal throughout Shakespeare's works, along with other myths dealing with savage brutality and erotic desire. This book argues that Shakespeare appropriates Ovid's poetry to explore violence, trauma, and virtue in his Roman poems and plays. Following a discussion of Renaissance Ovidianism, Lisa Starks-Estes defines 'trauma' and traces its history in psychoanalysis, trauma theory, and Renaissance studies. She relates trauma to early modern notions of melancholy and lovesickness, showing its connections to sadomasochism, psychoanalytic theory, and literary tradition in chapters on Venus and Adonis, Titus Andronicus, Antony and Cleopatra. She then discusses cultural trauma resulting from shifting notions of selfhood, the female body, and masculinity in The Rape of Lucrece, Julius Caesar, and Coriolanus. She concludes with a coda—'Philomela's Song'—that explores Ovid's poetry, trauma, and masochism in two 'bookmark' plays of Shakespeare's Ovidian career: A Midsummer Night's Dream and Cymbeline.

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