## Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs application guidelines at https://www.neh.gov/grants/research/fellowships for instructions.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Ovid's Homer: Tradition, Authority, and Epic Reception

Institution: Bowdoin College

Project Director: Barbara Boyd

Grant Program: Fellowships

*Ovid's Homer: Tradition, Authority, and Epic Reception*

I. Introduction

During a long and remarkably varied career, the Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE – 17 CE) experimented with, explored, and extended the boundaries of poetic genres. From his reinvention of erotic subjectivity in his early elegies (*Amores* and *Heroides*), through his didactic play with the decorum of sexual desire (*Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*) and the cultural and political arcana of the Roman calendar (*Fasti*), to his virtuoso renovation of an entire narrative tradition (*Metamorphoses*), Ovid built a legacy of enduring influence as he expanded the scope of the Roman literary imagination. Even in his exile poetry (*Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*), long seen as an uneven afterword, Rome's last great elegist forged an indelible authority that looked forward even as it looked back. There is little surprise, then, in the fact that Ovid's impact over the next two millennia has equaled, if not surpassed, that of his older colleague and model Virgil.

The comparison with Virgil is pointed—as it has been throughout the long history of the works of the two poets. Ovid himself regularly promoted the comparison, quoting the opening of the *Aeneid* at the beginning of his decidedly non-Virgilian *Amores*, suggesting in the *Remedia* that Virgil's primacy in epic was matched only by his own in elegy, and challenging Virgil's authority over the foundation story of Rome with his own version of the travels of Aeneas in *Metamorphoses* books 13-14. This comparison has likewise dominated readings of the two poets since the institutionalization of classical philology as a scholarly discipline: virtually every aspect of the two poets' work, ranging from diction, rhetorical tropes, and metrical polish to the responses of the two poets to an era of profound cultural and political change has been placed under the critical microscope.

The project I propose here and for which I request NEH support takes a very different perspective: I intend to write a book that presents and examines Ovid's engagement with the Homeric poems throughout his career. As far as I am aware, there is no sustained discussion of this sort in Ovid scholarship (and I am confident that my control of the scholarly tradition is comprehensive, given my continuing scholarly engagement with Ovid, the courses I teach on Ovid, and my work as an editor of two collections of essays on Ovid and the Ovidian tradition [résumé ##1 and 2]). A few scholars have looked at Ovid's familiarity with and use of Homer in individual poems and episodes, but no one has fully described and analyzed the programmatic importance of the Homeric intertexts for Ovid's manipulation of the innate tensions between subject matter and genre in each of his works. My book will bring this relationship to the fore, and so will shed new light both on the theory and practice of literary culture in the first century BCE and on the reception of the Homeric poems in Rome.

II. Research and Contribution

The comparisons with Virgil, productive though they have been, nonetheless run the risk of occluding other significant intertexts for Ovid's work. Though scholars have long recognized Ovid's familiarity with predecessors besides Virgil, and recent years have seen articles, conferences, and companion-chapters devoted to Ovid's appropriation and reinterpretation of the Hellenistic poets, especially Callimachus, and the Roman poets of the first century BCE, much of this work examines individual poems or episodes in Ovid rather than proposing a systematic, even programmatic, engagement with any single entity in the tradition besides Virgil. Over the past half-dozen years, however, I have become increasingly aware of the interplay between Ovid and the two great Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This awareness was transformed into delight as I suddenly realized about 18 months ago that Homer was "hiding in plain sight," so to speak, as a foundational intertext for Ovid's turn to epic in the opening four lines of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid's tantalizing if momentary substitution of himself, as prime mover of the poem, for the Muses of epic tradition has long been recognized as an arch indication of his attitude to epic predecessors. It has not before been noticed, however, that the primacy of the poet's own intellect (*animus*) in those lines not only closely mirrors the words of Odysseus' son Telemachus (*Odyssey* 1.346-47) concerning a poet's right to innovate within a tradition, but also takes on thematic

significance for the story of the disobedient Phaethon with which *Metamorphoses* book 1 closes. I have since tested my insight in a talk on the relationship between the two sons of absent fathers featured in the opening episodes of their respective poems, Homer's Telemachus and Ovid's Phaethon, suggesting that the Phaethon episode exemplifies Ovid's playful application of the myth of fatherly guidance and juvenile disobedience to his own relationship with Homer, the "father" of the epic tradition. A scholarly audience at the University of Exeter in April 2012 encouraged me to publish the talk, and a revised and expanded version was quickly accepted by *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, a leading and highly competitive peer-reviewed journal in the field of classical literature (résumé #4).

As I worked on the revision of this paper, my awareness of the Homeric continuities in Ovid began to coalesce. The Homeric poems are revisited and revised by Ovid repeatedly; the Roman poet both appropriates and reinterprets Homeric themes, characters, rhetorical structures and techniques (e.g., similes), and even language throughout his poetry, often using Homer to heighten the complex relationship between genres and to raise questions about narrative perspective. Much of this material has been brought to light in the modern commentaries on Ovid's works (several of the most important of these for my project are included in the bibliography); they have made valuable contributions to our understanding of Ovid's sophisticated and subtle familiarity with the work of his predecessors and of Ovid's enduring interest in questions of genre. My own work on a commentary on Ovid's *Remedia amoris* is no exception: in this 814-line poem in elegiac couplets, consisting almost entirely of a catalogue of "medical" advice for men wishing to free themselves from the potentially toxic effects of a love affair, Ovid not only uses the voyage of Odysseus as a frame for the narrative, but also incorporates an episode featuring the Homeric enchantress Circe, desperate to hold on to Ulysses (the Latin Odysseus) but unable to do so because of the inferiority of her magic to the medicine dispensed by Ovid. While using characters familiar from Homeric epic, this episode effectively rewrites the *Odyssey*, in which the story of Circe and Odysseus' love affair developed very differently and reached an entirely different conclusion, with the two working in harmony to plan his departure. Ovid's appropriation of Circe as an example of the inferiority of magic to medicine also entails a challenge to the authority of epic, as his didactic elegy trumps Homeric poetry. By its very nature, however, the genre of commentary focuses closely on the details of a single work, and generally refrains from sustained analysis or interpretation. *Ovid's Homer*, by contrast, will consider in depth Ovid's reception of Homer, and will give literary scholars both in and outside of my discipline new insight into the dynamics of a literary tradition.

III. Methods and Work Plan

While my article on the Phaethon episode constitutes the first component of this project to appear in print, several of my earlier publications have glanced at Ovid's Homeric appropriations. I plan to adapt some of these for the new manuscript (sections of résumé ##3, 5, 9, 13, and 16 in particular), and to develop them more fully in a series of chapters that, while loosely following the trajectory of Ovid's career, also look at connections linking earlier and later works and so reveal the development of Ovid's own ideas about his role in perpetuating and transforming a literary tradition. As I organize my ideas, I am using the following provisional outline of chapters:

*Part I: Love and War*
  Chapter 1. Elegiac Homer – Beginning with *Amores* 1.9 (*Militat omnis amans*, "Every lover is a soldier"), Ovid deploys the military metaphor that is already an elegiac convention but that takes on distinctly Iliadic features in this collection.
  Chapter 2. Homer's Women – Characters known from the Homeric poems feature prominently in several of the *Heroides*, elegiac epistles written in the voices of women abandoned by their lovers: Penelope to Odysseus (1), Briseis to Achilles (3), Oenone to Paris (5), Dido to Aeneas (7), Laodamia to Protesilaus (13), and Helen to Paris (16). Ovid uses these female speakers to revisit Homer from a decidedly non-heroic perspective, thereby feminizing the Homeric narratives and suggesting a gendering of genres.

*Part II: Epic Lessons*

Chapter 3. Didactic Homer – Ancient interpretations portray Homer as first father and teacher of literature. Ovid combines these two related figures as role models for his own role as *praeceptor amoris*, "teacher of love," in the *Ars* and *Remedia*. Ovid's thematic play with the teacher-student relationship and use of the trope equating poetry with a journey (in this instance, an epic voyage) allow him to appropriate the identities of both Homeric hero and Homeric poet.

Chapter 4. Learning by Example – In all of his didactic poems (*Ars*, *Remedia*, *Fasti*), Ovid uses *exempla* drawn from Homeric epic—both short, pointed allusions, and longer inset narratives—as a central didactic technique that miniaturizes Homeric epic and rereads it as erotic or that reframes it in distinctly Roman terms.

*Part III: Appropriating the Past*

Chapter 5. Voyages – Ovid develops and transforms the Odyssean journey into a journey through Roman time and space in the *Fasti*; he expands this into a virtuoso journey through time and space in the *Metamorphoses*, as his narrative moves from creation to Augustan Rome, from Arcadian origins to Pythagorean cataclysm and his own survival.

Chapter 6. Fathers and Sons – Stories involving fathers and sons (Phaethon and the Sun-god, Daedalus and Icarus, Apollo and Asclepius, Julius Caesar and Augustus) frame and punctuate the narrative of the *Metamorphoses* while mirroring the metatextual father-son relationship of the poets Homer and Ovid.

*Part IV: Homeric Exile*

Chapter 7. On the Edge of the Epic World – Epic and elegiac themes alternate in Ovid's exile poetry, as he reverses the trajectory of Odysseus' journey home. Paternity takes on further poetic resonance as Ovid imagines his elegies as his "children" and contemplates the fate of his own reception.

IV. Competencies, Skills, and Access

My next sabbatical is scheduled for 2014-15, and with the help of external funding I will be able to extend it to a full year. The nature of my project does not entail the need for much besides time and a complete break from college-related responsibilities; I therefore hope to be able to spend some time working in a major research library away from my home, where I can more easily avoid day-to-day interruptions and focus on writing. But my hope to take a full year's leave is not dependent upon the ability to travel; the single most important thing the NEH can make possible is time. As I believe my *curriculum vitae* illustrates, I am a productive scholar, with a diversity of interests and expertise. In spite of a busy and demanding set of teaching and administrative responsibilities, I regularly participate in conferences, and conscientiously meet publication deadlines with manuscripts that are well written, grounded in scholarship, and of value to my discipline. The project I am working on currently, a commentary on the *Remedia*, is 50% complete; I intend to devote the coming summer and academic year primarily to this project, so that I can have a first draft of the entire commentary done by the time my sabbatical begins. I welcome the opportunity to set the commentary aside at that point; among other things, I plan to teach with it in a Latin seminar upon my return from leave, and it is the sort of project that will benefit immensely from percolation. Meanwhile, *Ovid's Homer* is the ideal project for a year's sabbatical, and I expect to have a draft of the complete manuscript by the end of the period.

V. Final Product and Dissemination

I intend to submit the complete manuscript for review to a major university press that will promote its significance for the study of the European literary tradition broadly framed. I welcome this opportunity to make a case for the continuing importance to the humanities of the classical tradition and its receptions.

My ideas about the shape that the project will take are already advanced, and two courses I will teach next spring will serve as an ideal launching pad. With the support of the NEH, I intend to write a book that will say something new and important about Ovid and the intellectual tradition he transformed for his readers. I am eager to begin.

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