SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, FILM, AND THEATRE

ENGL 446
CLASSICAL TRADITIONS:
THE METAMORPHOSES OF OVID
2007

Conveners
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Classes: Friday 9–12 am, in VZ 808

Texts
Two course anthologies, available from Student Notes: *Book 1, Medieval and Renaissance Texts* ($38.40), *Book 2, From Dryden to 2000* ($25.40)

Aims and Objectives
This cross-disciplinary paper is a study of a central classical text and its afterlife in English literature. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a Roman poem weaving together hundreds of legendary tales around the theme of metamorphosis or transformation, was for many generations the main route by which English readers encountered classical mythology; and Ovid’s combination of romance, cynical wit, verbal brilliance, and sheer storytelling has fascinated English writers from Chaucer to the start of the 21st century.

The first half of the course (run by John Davidson), will deal with Ovid and the *Metamorphoses*, studied in A. D. Melville’s modern English translation. The second half (run by Geoff Miles) will take a series of case studies in the influence of the *Metamorphoses*,

looking at the ways in which the poem itself has been successively metamorphosed in the hands of English writers. Focuses of discussion will include Ovid’s style, his tone (or range of tones), his narrative techniques, his handling of mythology and of metamorphosis, his degree of seriousness or frivolity, his treatment of issues such as love, sexuality, violence, justice, and change. The latter part of the course will look at how these ‘Ovidian’ qualities and themes are reflected or refracted in English works which have drawn on the *Metamorphoses*, and raise larger questions about the workings of ‘influence’ and literary tradition.

By the end of the paper, students should

- be familiar with the *Metamorphoses* and the mythological stories it contains, and be able to construct a critical discussion of it (you are expected to read the entire poem, though discussion will focus on certain specified passages);
- be familiar with the English texts in the course anthologies, and be able to construct a critical discussion of them, with particular emphasis on their relationship to the *Metamorphoses*;
- be able to draw both broad and specific comparisons between the texts studied on the course, and to develop general arguments about Ovidian influence and the workings of literary tradition.

**Timetable**

- 13 July  Introduction (JD/GM)
- 20 July  *Metamorphoses* book 1 and the start of book 2 (JD)
- 27 July  *Metamorphoses* books 2–6 (JD)
- 3 Aug    *Metamorphoses* books 7–10 (JD)
- 10 Aug   *Metamorphoses* books 11–15 (JD)
- 17 Aug   Medieval: Chaucer, Gower, and others (GM)
- 7 Sept   Renaissance 1: Shakespeare and others (GM)
- 14 Sept  Renaissance 2: The erotic epyllion (GM)
- 21 Sept  Renaissance 3: Spenser and Milton (GM)
- 28 Sept  Restoration to early 19th century (GM)
- 5 Oct    20th century (GM)
- 13 Oct   Conclusion (GM/JD)

**Attendance, preparation and presentations**

All students should prepare for each class by reading the assigned texts and being prepared to discuss them in the seminar. ‘Students are expected to be well-prepared for classes, particularly in their reading, and to be ready to lead discussion’ (SEFT Postgraduate Prospectus 2007). In addition, each student will be asked to give one or two short (10-15 min) presentations in the course of the seminars. These should raise for class discussion key issues about the seminar topic. Neither the presentations nor the discussions will be formally assessed, but they may be taken into account when the final Honours grade is being considered.

You are expected, though not formally required, to attend all seminars. If for some reason you are unable to attend, please contact me as soon as possible in order to find out what you will need to do before the next meeting of the class.
Where to find additional information
Further information will be circulated in seminars, and posted on the Honours noticeboard in VZ 808.

Assessment
Two pieces of in-term work and a final examination, weighted as follows:
- **First essay (30%)**: due 8 April, around 2500 words, on a topic related to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. (Relates to first course objective.)
- **Second essay (30%)**: due 28 May, around 2500 words, on a topic related to one of the English texts. (Relates to second and third course objectives.)
- **Examination (40%)**: 3 hours, limited open book (i.e. course texts may be taken into exam). The exam will consist of 3 questions of equal value: A, an essay on some aspect of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; B, a critical analysis of a passage from an English text in the coursebook, focusing on its Ovidian qualities or connections; C, an essay on some aspect of the Ovidian tradition, referring in detail to at least 3 texts.

**Note:** The course uses a ‘double chance’ system: i.e. if your examination result is higher than your combined in-term/exam grade, the exam result will be taken as your final grade.

Written work should be presented in accordance with the SEFT style sheet, *Guidelines for SEFT Students* (available from Student Notes, $1.00, if you don’t have it already).

Extensions
If you need an extension, apply before the due date to John Davidson (first essay) or Geoff Miles (second essay). Late work submitted without an extension will be counted, as long as it is received before Friday 4 June, but comments will be minimal. In exceptional circumstances the Head of School, Associate Professor Peter Whiteford, can allow work to be submitted up to the end of the examination period (25 June); no extensions beyond that point are possible. For your own sake you are urged not to let assessed work pile up towards the end of the semester.

Workload
You should expect to spend, on average, about 22 hours per week on work for this course (including class time).

Mandatory course requirements
The minimum course requirements which must be satisfied include the completion of all in-term assessment pieces by Friday 4 June, at least one seminar presentation, sitting the final examination, and gaining a total of 50% in total assessed work. You are not formally required to attend all seminars, but we expect you to do so unless there is an overwhelming reason why you cannot attend. Failure to satisfy the course requirements will leave you with a fail grade.

This paper may form part of either an ENGL or a CLAS Honours programme.
Students with Disabilities at Victoria
The contact for students with disabilities enrolled in English courses is Helen Heazlewood, English Administrator, VZ 816, phone 463 6800.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. You commit plagiarism at any time when you take words or ideas without acknowledgment from another source and try to pass them off as your own. It does not matter whether the source is a published book or article, an Internet site, or another student’s essay. See Guidelines for SEFT Students for advice on proper handling of source material.

Minor plagiarism (i.e. the possibly inadvertent use of a few phrases, ideas, or sentences) will be penalised by a warning and a lowered grade (e.g. A- to B+). Repeated minor plagiarism, or major plagiarism (i.e. an essay wholly or substantially drawn from another source), will mean that the essay is given a grade of E, and may also result in action under the University’s Statute of Conduct (see Calendar).

The University Statute on Student Conduct and Policy on Staff Conduct
The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University’s life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps can be taken if there is a complaint. For queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor. This Statute is available in the Faculty Student Administration Office or on the website at: www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct

The policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at: www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StaffConduct

Academic Grievances
If you have any academic problems with your paper you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned or, if you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School (Assoc. Prof. David Norton, VZ 814), or the Associate Dean (Students) of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Class representatives are available to assist you with this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievances Statute which is published on the VUW website:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances

Illustrations of the stories of Actaeon and of Pyramus and Thisbe from a 1558 Italian version of the Metamorphoses.
SOME BACKGROUND READING

ON OVID AND THE METAMORPHOSES

(1) Commentaries on the Latin Text
———, Ovid’s Metamorphoses Books 6-10, Norman 1972.

(2) Commentaries on an English Translation

(3) Monographs
Albrecht, Michael von, Roman Epic: an interpretative Introduction, Leiden/Boston/Köln 1999. Chapter VI contains material on Ovid and his readers, the story of Arachne (Met. 6), similes, gods and religion, the story of the daughters of Anius (Met. 13). Latin quotations translated!
Boyle, A.J. (ed.), Roman Epic, London and New York 1993. Chapter 6 is William S. Anderson’s article ‘Form Changed: Ovid’s Metamorphoses’. This is a brief, useful overview of the nature of the Met. Latin quotations translated!
Davis, Gregson, The Death of Procris, Rome 1983. Looks at the motifs of ‘love’ and ‘the hunt’ and deals with all the other relevant stories as well as that of Procris and Cephalus (Met. 7). Latin quotations translated!
Forbes Irving, P.M.C., Metamorphosis in Greek Myth, Oxford 1992 (1990)
Galinsky, G.K. (ed.), Perspectives of Roman Poetry, Austin 1974. Contains Galinsky’s own article ‘Ovid’s Metamorphosis of Myth’. (Narcissus, Met. 3; Erysichthon, Met. 8.) Latin quotations translated!
Hardie, Philip, Ovid’s Poetics of Illusion, Cambridge 2002. Very useful discussion which ranges well beyond the Met. and indeed beyond Ovid altogether.


ON THE OVIDIAN TRADITION


———. *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Literature*. 1937; repr. New York: Pageant, 1957. Bush’s two vast surveys of classical mythology in English literature cover the span from the middle ages to the early 20th century, with a great deal of Ovidian material. Full of information, opinionated, dryly witty, assuming a lot of prior knowledge.


(Helen Cooper), Gower (Bruce Harbert), Spenser (Colin Burrow), Shakespeare (A.D. Nuttall), the Elizabethans (Lawrence Lerner), Dryden (Keith Hopkins), the 19th century (Norman Vance), and T.S. Eliot (Stephen Medcalf); also surveys of the stories of Daedalus (Niall Rudd) and Pygmalion (Jane Miller).


SOME TRANSLATIONS, ADAPTATIONS, AND SPINOFFS


