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Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid (Classical Presences)

Maggie Kilgour

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Milton and the Metamorphosis of Ovid contributes to our understanding of the Roman poet Ovid, the Renaissance writer Milton, and more broadly the transmission and transformation of classical traditions through history. It examines the ways in which Milton drew on Ovid's *oeuvre*, as well as the long tradition of reception that had begun with Ovid himself, and argues that Ovid's revision of the past, and especially his relation to Virgil, gave Renaissance writers a model for their own transformation of classical works. Throughout his career Milton thinks through and with Ovid, whose stories and figures inform his exploration of the limits and possibilities of creativity, change, and freedom.

Examining this specific relation between two very individual and different authors, Kilgour also explores the forms and meaning of creative imitation. Intertexuality was not only central to the two writers' poetic practices but helped shape their visions of the world. While many critics seek to establish how Milton read Ovid, Kilgour debates the broader question of why does considering how Milton read Ovid *matter*? How do our readings of this relation change our understanding of both Milton and Ovid; and does it tell us about how traditions are changed and remade through time?

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