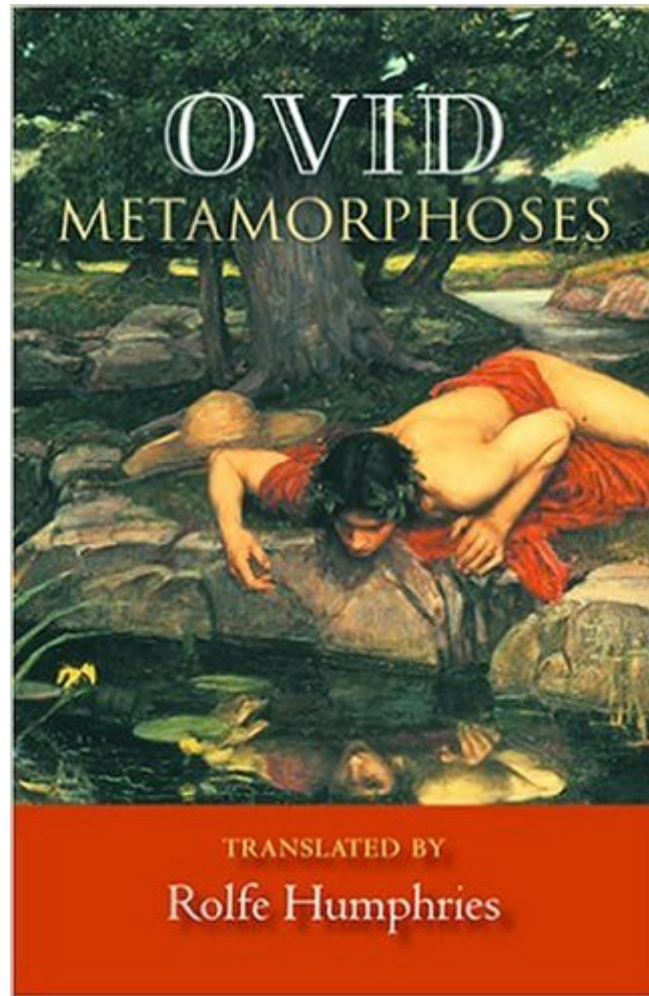


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Metamorphoses



Synopsis

"The Metamorphoses of Ovid offers to the modern world such a key to the literary and religious culture of the ancients that it becomes an important event when at last a good poet comes up with a translation into English verse." — John Crowe Ransom "... a charming and expert English version, which is right in tone for the Metamorphoses." — Francis Fergusson "This new Ovid, fresh and faithful, is right for our time and should help to restore a great reputation." — Mark Van Doren The first and still the best modern verse translation of the Metamorphoses, Humphries's version of Ovid's masterpiece captures its wit, merriment, and sophistication. Everyone will enjoy this first modern translation by an American poet of Ovid's great work, the major treasury of classical mythology, which has perennially stimulated the minds of men. In this lively rendering there are no stock props of the pastoral and no literary landscaping, but real food on the table and sometimes real blood on the ground. Not only is Ovid's Metamorphoses a collection of all the myths of the time of the Roman poet as he knew them, but the book presents at the same time a series of love poems about the loves of men, women, and the gods. There are also poems of hate, to give the proper shading to the narrative. And pervading all is the writer's love for this earth, its people, its phenomena. Using ten-beat, unrhymed lines in his translation, Rolfe Humphries shows a definite kinship for Ovid's swift and colloquial language and Humphries's whole poetic manner is in tune with the wit and sophistication of the Roman poet.

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Customer Reviews

Maidens become trees. Young hunks turn into flowers. Men become women; women become invincible warriors. And every time you blink, another poor wretch becomes a bird or turns to stone. In Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, nothing stays the same for long. A rich compendium of Greco-Roman mythology and history all ingeniously linked together by the theme of transformation, the *Metamorphosis* is a surprisingly sophisticated, erotic, and gory classic of ancient literature. Rapes, murders, wars, and all manner of perversion abound. Death is lingered over with almost forensic precision. The slaughter of arrogant Niobe's fourteen children, for example, is recounted in an exhaustive detail that would do any contemporary slasher flick justice, as one by one they're picked off in various grisly ways. This is classical gore--Ovid sounding like the Clive Barker of ancient Rome as in this excerpt from the massacre of the centaurs: [Exadius] found a weapon, a stag's antlers Hung on a pine tree... And Gryneus' eyes were pierced by those twin prongs, Eyeballs gouged out; one of them stuck to the horn, The other rolled down his beard till a blood clot caught it. This is the sort of wonderfully nauseating detail that is repeated countless times in a masterpiece that often reads like the *National Enquirer*. It's hard not to believe that Ovid, like Shakespeare, was aiming his work for the mass audience of his time, which just goes to show you that the product of one age's pop culture is another's venerated classic. One only has to read Ovid's over-the-top account of the love-sick Cyclops to realize that black comedy ala the B-movies of Herschel Gordon Lewis had already been mastered some two thousand years ago.

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