

METAMORPHOSES

A NEW PLAY
INSPIRED BY OVID

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Laura Lomas
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SHAKESPEARE'S
GLOBE



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About the Authors

Copyright and Performing Rights Information

Metamorphoses was first performed at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, Shakespeare's Globe, London, on 6 October 2021 (previews from 30 September), with the following cast:

STEFFAN DONNELLY
FIONA HAMPTON
CHARLIE JOSEPHINE
IRFAN SHAMJI

<i>Co-Director</i>	Sean Holmes
<i>Co-Director</i>	Holly Race Roughan
<i>Designer</i>	Grace Smart
<i>Candle Consultant</i>	Simeon Miller

Introduction

This text was written by three writers but was shaped and influenced by two directors, a load of actors, and all the people who were part of our conversations along the way. Each writer was in charge of their own stories but these stories were developed by a whole company throughout workshops and rehearsals. We've decided not to credit individual stories to individual writers so as not to undermine the idea that this was a shared project.

The bulk of the writing was done during the summer of 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. We'd meet over Zoom every couple of weeks to discuss Ovid's stories, and our reactions to them. These conversations were informed by the events of that summer. As the UK and much of the world was in a state of lockdown, as the murder of George Floyd provoked global protests, as government incompetence in the UK led to rising death counts. It felt like a time when the structural inequalities in our societies were being laid bare. When the forces of chaos and power, and their effect on the rest of us, were exposed. The violent, tragic, sometimes humorous and often absurd nature of these events all informed our interpretation of Ovid's stories. We would like to think we have found hope amongst the chaos too.

Because of the nature of the play we want the text to be more of a jumping-off point rather than something that is set in stone. It is an invitation to play and to explore.

The stories are presented here in alphabetical order but, in any future productions, we'd want you to make your own

decisions as to the order the stories could go in (as well as which stories to include and exclude).

In some stories, we've clearly marked out who should speak which line, in others we've given a hint of how lines should be shared out, and sometimes we've just written a story as a single block of text. You should feel free to divide up lines however you wish, for as many voices as you wish.

Sami Ibrahim
Laura Lomas
Sabrina Mahfouz

A Note on Translation

Skin

23 mentions of skin

where to begin

begin with a cow

black and white

or brown

Io

a woman turned into a cow.

The Latin word for skin is pellis

or cutis or tergum or corium

or tunica or paellis or tergus

or pellicula or mastruca or

corius or tegmentum or

membrana or tegus or

folliculus or excuviae or

mastruga or paellicula or

scortum or deglubo or decorio

all with other meanings

such as armour or leather

or back or bark or peel or hide

so you begin to see that the beginning

is never that,

translation choosing the end point

but in the end

there are 22 more mentions of skin.

Next most seen in English as

‘her native whiteness’

describing Io as she returns to human form.

Latin word for white here is albus,

also meaning bright and clear
so she could have been 'native bright'
meaning
the glow of returning to her original form
after being chased around the world
for decades as a cow, by a mosquito.

Another word for white is candidus,
which also means bright and shining,
brown yellow beige black skin can be
bright and shining,
someone chose for it to not mean this.

Whiteness was decided
where it wasn't
so the translators of the time
could please their prejudice,
ancient texts to prove a racism invented.

The myths themselves came from
Libya, Ethiopia, Turkey, Syria
Greece
let's just always say Greece / Italy
and it will become the end we want
another word for white is increto
which also means chalk -
or whitewash.

Achilles

Achilles. Son of a king and a nymph. Warrior of the Trojan war.

Some say I'm the greatest warrior that ever lived.

Some say I'm a whore son of a bitch.

Both are right.

I cut off a lot of heads
and I did a lot of dodgy sex stuff.

One thing I really regret.

The whole 'sacrifice Polyxena at the foot of my grave'
demand.

I was really overwhelmed with the power of being a ghost.

A heroic ghost too, I had the whole Greek army just waiting
to do,

well, absolutely whatever I asked them to.

I know it was hard on Hecuba, to lose another daughter,
but it was Polyxena who led me to my death.

Yes, I could have asked for Paris, the man who actually shot
me in the heel,

to be sacrificed instead, but I didn't and that's what I'm
here to face.

Maybe I thought me and her... who knows.

She managed to escape in one of the tributaries of the
River Styx,