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Generic Transformations

Epic: In literature, an epic is a narrative poem on the grand scale and in majestic style concerning the exploits and adventures of a superhuman hero (or heroes) engaged in a quest or some serious endeavour. The hero is distinguished above all men by his strength and courage, and is restrained only by a sense of honour. The subject-matter of epic includes myth, legend, history, and folk tale. It is usually set in a heroic age of the past and embodies its country's early history and expresses its values. Battles and perilous journeys play a large part, as do gods, the supernatural, and magic; scenes are often set in the Underworld or in heaven. (adapted from the *Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*)

Elegy: in Greek and Latin literature, any poem written in elegiacs (also called elegiac couplets), that is, in alternate lines of hexameter and pentameter. The ultimate derivation of the name is uncertain, but it was perhaps connected with a word for 'flute', an instrument which seems originally to have accompanied its recitation. In antiquity the elegiac metre was considered to be primarily the metre of lament, but it was used for a variety of poems, and the earliest lines we possess, written in Greece at the end of the eighth century BC, bear no resemblance to lament. Elegiac poetry was the medium for expressing personal sentiments (as distinct from narrative): for description, for exhortation to war or to virtue, for reflection on a variety of subjects, serious and frivolous, for epitaphs and laments, and for love-poems. (adapted from the *Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*)

A. "I'd meant in solemn metre to rehearse
A tale of arms and war and violence,
Matching the weighty matter with my verse,
All lines alike in length – no difference;
 But Cupid laughed (they say)
 And filched one foot away.

Poor me! That boy's sure arrows never stray.
I'm burning. In my vacant breast love reigns.
So in six beats my verse must rise today,
And settle back in five. Farewell, you strains/
 Of steely war! Farewell to you,
 And to your epic metre too!" (*Amores*, I.1,i-vi)

B. "Daphne, Peneus' child, was the first love
Of great Apollo, a love not lit by chance
Unwitting, but by Cupid's spiteful wrath.
The god of Delos, proud in victory,
Saw Cupid draw his bow's taut arc, and said:
'Mischievous boy, what are a brave man's arms

To you? That gear becomes my shoulders best.
My aim is sure; I wound my enemies,
I wound wild beasts; my countless arrows slew
But now the bloated Python, whose vast coils
Across so many acres spread their blight.” (I.450-60)

“...on the trunk
He placed his hand and felt beneath the bark
Her heart still beating, held in his embrace
Her branches, pressed his kisses on the wood;
Yet from his kisses still the wood recoiled.” (I. 551-55)

C. “Ah, majesty and love go ill together,
Nor long share one abode! Relinquishing
Sceptre and throne, heaven’s father, God of gods,
Who wields the three-forked lightning, at whose nod
The world is shaken, now transforms himself
Into a bull and, lowing, joins the herd,
Ambling – so handsome – through the tender grass.” (II.847-53)

D. ““Oh, I am he! Oh, now I know for sure
The image is my own; it’s for myself
I burn with love; I fan the flames I feel.
What now?? Woo or be wooed? Why woo at all?
My love’s myself – my riches beggar me.
Would I might leave my body! I could wish
(Strange lover’s with!) my love were not so near!” (II.464-69)

“... could endure no more.
But as wax melts before a gentle fire,
Or morning frosts beneath the rising sun,
So, by love wasted, slowly he dissolves
By hidden fire consumed...” (III.485-89).

E. “...What lunacy
Has stolen your wits away, you race of Mars,
You children of the serpent?’ Pentheus cried.
‘Can clashing bronze, can pipes of curving horn,
Can conjuror’s magic have such power that men
Who, undismayed, have faced the swords of war,
The trumpet and the ranks of naked steel,
Quail before women’s wailing, frenzy fired
By wine, a bestial rabble, futile drums?
You elders, you who sailed the distant seas
And founded here a second Tyre, made her
Your home in exile – shame on you, if you
Surrender them without a fight! You too,
Young men of sharper years, nearer my own,

Graced by your martial arms, not Bacchic wands,
With helmets on our heads, not loops of leaves!

.....

You for your honor must fight and win!” (II.531-49)

- F.. “They crawled for cover to a copse nearby;
And still, what they once were, they keep in mind,
Quiet snakes, that neither shun nor harm mankind.
But ample solace for their altered shape
They both found in their grandson, conqueror
Of India, worshipped in the new-built shrines
Of Greece...” (IV.601-7).
- G. “When Perseus saw her, had a wafting breeze
Not stirred her hair, her eyes not overflowed
With trembling tears, he had imagined her
A marble statue. Love, before he knew,
Kindled; he gazed entranced; and overcome
By loveliness so exquisite, so rare,
Almost forgot to hover in the air.
He glided down. ‘Shame on those chains!’ he cried;
‘The chains that you deserve link lovers’ hearts’” (IV.672-81)

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