



The Snake-Haired Muse: James K. Baxter and Classical Myth

Geoffrey Miles, John Davidson, Paul Millar

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Contending that James K. Baxter's use of Greek myth is close to the heart of his poetic vision, this book draws on the subject's entire career, mounting the first-ever sustained investigation of his vast corpus of unpublished poems. Baxter's mythic figures and ambiguous symbols are explored, to which he repeatedly returned in his attempts to establish patterns out of the "chaos" of his experiences. Among the figures discussed in detail are the seaborne Venus; Dionysus, the liberating and destructive god of alcohol; the alienated voyager Odysseus; Theseus in his political labyrinth; and the hideous Gorgon—who also functions as the poet's dangerous muse. Illuminating the complexity, adventurousness, imaginative energy, and unexpected wit of Baxter's dealings with classical mythology, this volume sheds a new light on New Zealand's most iconic poet. A comprehensive "Who's Who" in Baxter's work and a detailed bibliography are also included.

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