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**ARACHNEAN ENCOUNTERS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POETRY:  
HOLLANDER, LONGLEY, STALLINGS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article demonstrates the creative influence of Ovid's Arachne episode in the *Metamorphoses* (6.1–145) on twentieth-century English poetry. The analysis of the poems of Michael Longley, John Hollander, and Alicia E. Stallings reveals an intriguing engagement with Ovid's text not only on a thematic, but also on a structural and aesthetic level. We encounter different modes of application and further development of the poetics and the aesthetic underpinnings both of the Ovidian text and of the artworks described there (Arachne's and Minerva's tapestries). Moreover, the poems under scrutiny elaborate on aspects that have also been carved out as characteristics of the Ovidian text in scholarship: scholarly and poetic interpretations are affine hermeneutic processes.

Michael Longley's 'Spiderwoman' combines a close rendition of Ovid's account of Arachne's transformation with an imagined union of 'Spiderwoman' and spider-poet, refashioning the Ovidian poetics for his own purposes. In John Hollander's poem, the focus is on Arachne, the speaker: through her art, she is invested with a female gaze – and yet, she is unable to escape the confines of the Ovidian myth. The confident Arachne in Alicia E. Stallings's poem 'Arachne Gives Thanks to Athena' re-interprets her metamorphosis: she has escaped her patriarchal surroundings, as well as her former imperfection, and received the power of creating pattern-like art.