The Annals of Ovidius University of Constanța: Philology Series Vol. XXVIII, 2/2017

CULTURAL TRANSLATIONS OF OVID IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

Anamaria Domnina Gînju
Ovidius University of Constanța

***ABSTRACT**: This essay draws on the concept of "cultural translation," as used by Homi K. Bhabha and Susan Bassnett, in order to examine particular allusions to Ovid's* Metamorphoses *existing in a variety of texts. The popular Elizabethan translation of Ovid's poem, translated by Arthur Golding and first published in 1567, with many subsequent editions, was not only a literary translation but also a form of cultural legitimation of the Latin poet. The introductory presentation of the poem, written in verse by Golding, is a moralizing adaptation of Ovid's work suitable for sixteenth-century English readers. Apart from this literary translation, several authors of various texts (miscellanea, philosophical, or cosmographic) used examples from or allusions to Ovid to illustrate their arguments and enliven the narrative. The miscellaneous treatise by Ortensio Landi, entitled* Delectable Demaundes, and Pleasaunt Questions *(1566, translated by William Painter); the collection of extraordinary stories* The Foreste or Collection of Histories *by Pedro Mexía (1571, translated by Thomas Fortescue); Antonio de Torquemada's* The Spanish Mandeuile of Miracles *(1600, translated by Lewis Lewkenor); and the original works by William Cuningham, entitled* Cosmographical Glasse *(1559), and by Thomas Blague, entitled* A Schole of Wise Conceytes *(1572) contain allusions to Ovid's poems embedded in the narrative. These authors produced hybrid texts that contributed to an even greater popularity of the Latin poet. These cultural rewritings of Ovid through various discourses were cultural manipulations of Ovid's classical figure, aimed at provoking the readers' curiosity and attracting them into the moralizing discourse of that particular work. Moreover, each allusion to Ovid in these texts reshapes the cultural parameters of the period and demonstrates that classical culture can be a successful manipulative tool, mainly used for education and propaganda.*

***Keywords**: Ovid, Elizabethan Age, early modern miscellanea texts, cultural translation, intertextuality*

Ovid's works in Latin and translations of Ovid had a great influence on early modern English literature. Ovid was the poet of love and mutability and his works appealed to the English poets' imagination. Moreover, his stories were an inexhaustible resource for Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, who were attracted by the pagan myth of metamorphosis, the rhetoric of the body, love and intimacy, betrayal and desertion, friendship, and exile. Next to Virgil and Horace, Ovid was one of the most quoted or alluded to classical poets in early modern English literary texts. This essay traces the allusions to Ovid in a variety of non-fictional texts—from cosmographic narratives to miscellanea texts and moralizing adaptations of Ovid—in order to show that these Ovidian allusions were a form of "cultural translation," in the sense used by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (234). Bhabha acknowledges interdisciplinarity as a sign of cultural difference, when "hybrid sites of meaning open up a cleavage in the language of culture" (234). Early modern English interpretations and uses of Ovid represent such "hybrid" sites of cultural meanings, when classical culture was made available to Elizabethan readers through a variety of texts. As Susan Bassnett observes in *Translation*, "up until Shakespeare's day, clear distinctions were not necessarily made

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between 'original' writing and translations" (11). Therefore, allusions to Ovid occurring in various types of non-fictional texts, as well as the introductions to literary translations and adaptations of Ovid, were original and hybrid forms of cultural translation. The translation of a literary text (in this case Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) was, thus, a transaction not only between two languages (Latin and English) but rather a complex negotiation between two cultures. This awareness of such a negotiation was aptly described in the General Editor's Preface jointly written by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere in the book *Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook* (1992), where the editors discuss "rewriting" and "manipulation" (xii) via translation. Therefore, as I argue, cultural translations of Ovid in early modern England were forms of cultural rewriting and manipulation of the classical figure of Ovid, with the purpose of asserting the central function of the classical poet as a cultural shaping force.

The importance of Ovid and the complexity of his influence have led to the production of many studies about his presence in English literature. Among those I have found most useful are Leonard Barkan's impressive study on the Renaissance Ovid, *The Gods Made Flesh*,[1] the wide-ranging collection of essays edited by Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor, *Shakespeare and the Classics*, and *The Metamorphosis of Ovid from Chaucer to Ted Hughes*[2] by Sarah Annes Brown. Jan Felix Gaertner's essay on Ovid and the "poetics of exile" is particularly interesting for the cultural translations of Ovid in early modern England. Gaertner's essay focuses on the two collections of literary epistles centred on the experience of the poet's exile at Tomis[3] and remarks that Ovid "adopts a generally more colloquial and prosaic style in the *Tristia* and the *Epistulae ex Ponto*" (169). This might explain, I believe, the recurrent references to these poetic works in late-sixteenth-century English non-fictional narratives, apart from the implicit assumption transmitted throughout the ages that Ovid was the eternal exiled poet. In a similar way, Gareth Williams observes the incongruence of Ovid's description of the place of his exile: "Despite Ovid's insistence on the sincerity of his exilic persona (cf. *Tr*. 3.1.5–10, 5.1.5–6, *Pont*. 3.9.49-50), the Tomis he describes bears little or no relation to its historical counterpart" (340). Williams mentions Ovid's localized "distortions" (341), arguing that the poet intends to impress his readers with lists of exotic names of savage peoples not yet subdued by Rome. The exoticism of Ovid's descriptions in *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*, therefore, exemplified by storms, cold seas and frozen Danube, or savage inhabitants (the Getae and the Sarmatians),[4] create an idealistic aura in the English poetic imagination. English writers exploited this metaphoric condition derived from the specific perception of Ovid's verses in such a way that the Latin poet's name was assimilated with the idea of mutability.

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[1] In tracing the presence of pagan myths of metamorphosis from antiquity through the Renaissance, Leonard Barkan discusses the revival of paganism in the European Renaissance and Ovid's impact on literature and visual arts in this period (171–241); as the scope of his book requires, Barkan focuses only on the *Metamorphoses* and its afterlives in poetry and painting, leaving out the influence of less frequently published Ovidian works such as *Tristia* and *Ex Ponto*.

[2] Exploring the reception of Ovid in English literature, in the chapter "Ovid and Ovidianism: Influence, Reception, Transformation" (1–21) Sarah Annes Brown aims to establish a continuous "Ovidian" tradition, but the author seems to equate "Ovidianism" only with the reception of the *Metamorphoses*, as the theme of the book requires. However, Brown identifies "a less extreme case of self-reflexivity" (17) in Ovid's *Tristia*, where Ovid's evocation of the effects of winter upon Tomis has a "surreal, alien quality" (18).

[3] The Emperor Augustus exiled Ovid to Tomis, now the city of Constanţa in Romania, in AD 8. One reason for the Emperor's decision was the licentious character of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*; another is some unspecified "error" that Ovid committed, the nature of which has never been established.

[4] Ovid's description of the Getae as Sarmatians is a "genuine mistake" (121) as noted by Peter Green in the informative essay on "Ovid in Tomis." Green argues that Ovid's picture of Tomis in his exile poetry is "both slanted and incomplete" (119) and his creative persona manipulated facts to produce a persuasive imaginary world.

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Ovid's popularity in translation in Renaissance England has been recognized by many critics. The first translation of Ovid's *Ars amatoria* was a bilingual edition (Latin and English) published in 1513, which consists of a series of quotations from Ovid and their translation. The title page illustrates a schoolteacher and three of his pupils, one of them holding a book in his hand, which indicates that this text must have been used in grammar schools for the study of Latin. However, Ovid's popularity in early modern England[5] starts after 1560, with a fragment from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[6] (the story of Narcissus), translated in verse by T. H. (Thomas Hackett or Thomas Howell) in 1560 and the first four books of the *Metamorphoses* translated by Arthur Golding (1565).[7] In the same year, the story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis from the *Metamorphoses* was translated by Thomas Peend; this is not so much a version of Ovid but rather a moral story about the temptation of licentiousness. The complete translation of all the fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses* appeared in 1567 in Golding's version. This extremely popular translation went through seven editions between 1567 and 1612. The transmigration of motifs and quotations from Ovid was common in that age of copious intertextuality and the Latin poet was a source of many allusions and aphoristic interpretations of Ovidian metaphors and characters.

The Elizabethans and Jacobeans had a habit of interpreting and refashioning classical texts to suit their moralizing purposes, a pattern inherited in the Renaissance from the medieval reception of Ovid. In reviewing the sixteenth-century readings and interpretations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, R. W. Maslen points out "the duplicitous nature of Ovid's poem" (17) and shows that the rewritings of Shakespeare's Elizabethan predecessors were more "sophisticated" and "politically engaged" (28) than we are willing to concede. Henry Burrowes Lathrop's extensive account of English translations from the classics in the period 1477–1620 notes that "Ovid was an author in whom his readers took a more intimate delight than Vergil" (125) and "Shakespeare's abundant classical mythology practically all comes from Ovid, who contributes to give Shakespeare's writing its peculiar atmosphere of romance" (125). The Elizabethans' and Jacobeans' habit of interpretations and appropriations of the classics extends to Ovid's texts as well, with an essential difference. Whereas the tenets of moral philosophy expounded in the verse translations and imitations of Ovid looked sententious and often exaggerated, the use of Ovidian allusions in non-fictional texts is generally purged of such moral lessons, while emphasis is laid on the strangeness and authenticity of Ovid's reports.

Ovid was a familiar figure for the educated English reader, although it is not certain whether the poet's text was used in grammar schools for the study of Latin. What is visible, however, is that Ovid has an important place in the early modern English imagination, so much so that, at least with reference to the mythological characters from the *Metamorphoses*, the poet's name summoned recognizable imaginary pictures. Explaining the associative and eclectic reading practices of the Elizabethans, Robert S. Miola notes the "literary culture of quotation and allusion" (3), especially from the classics and the Bible, which was triggered by

[5] Discussing Shakespeare's myths derived out of Ovid, Charles and Michelle Martindale observe the Latin poet's popularity at the most prolific time of Shakespeare's creation, noting that "in the 1590s there was a general vogue for Ovidian narrative, which waned thereafter" (82).

[6] In a study on the influence of the classics on English Renaissance poetry, Gordon Braden devotes an entire chapter (1–54) to Golding's translation of Ovid, concluding that Golding's "diffuse obliquity before the text" is caused by the fact that he was facing the reputed Latin poet; confronted with Ovid's text, the translator displayed, according to Braden, "not sophisticated detachment but a deep, naïve intimidation before its content and prestige" (54).

[7] A. B. Taylor, in the Introduction to the collection of essays on Shakespeare's Ovid (1–12), states that *The Metamorphoses*, the *Heroides*, *Fasti*, and *Tristia* "all featured on syllabi" (2). Alternatively, when surveying trends in twentieth-century scholarship on Shakespeare's use of Ovid, John W. Velz notes that it "is not clear" whether Shakespeare had access to Golding's Ovid as a translation aid in the classroom (188).

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the emphasis on memorization in Elizabethan schools. Demonstrating that the classics have a central importance in the structure of Shakespeare's imagination, Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor observe that "This was the result of the prestige of antiquity, the influence of Renaissance humanism and the character of the educational curriculum" (2). As for the consequences of Ovid's use in grammar-school education, Colin Burrow notes that Elizabethans would be able to "hybridize" (18) the classics:

> They could ornament and embellish Ovid, as Shakespeare does in *Venus and Adonis*, weaving him into a mass of textual authorities culled from a wide range of classical and post-classical reading, encrusting him so thoroughly with adages and exempla, chronographies and *sententiae*, that his original outlines were entirely obscured.
>
> (Burrow 17–18)

Because of such subsequent alterations, the "original outlines" of Ovid's work are hardly observable.

Elizabethan authors frequently allude to Ovid when issues about love and the soul transformations are debated. The Renaissance encyclopaedic and miscellaneous work entitled *Delectable Demaundes, and Pleasaunt Questions* (1566), is based on the first three books of Ortensio Landi's *Quattro libri di dubbi* (Venezia, 1556), probably through the French translation *Questions diverses* (Lyon, 1558), attributed to Alain Chartier. Landi's text was translated into English by William Painter. Landi's work belongs to the literary genre of the erudite miscellanies of the Renaissance and contains, among, many absurdities, certain valuable information on the intellectual and cultural conditions prevailing about the middle of the sixteenth century. The work expresses the Renaissance idea of the marvellous, represented in two aspects: firstly, it shows that marvellous or curious aspects are not found only within the natural world (among plants, animals, or meteorological phenomena), but also in ourselves and in our lives. According to Landi, everything around and within us can be turned to an object of curiosity and a topic for questions and explanations. Secondly, Landi's work indicates that all topics that can be treated as "problems" are also an occasion for displaying erudition, for showing how wide the culture of the compiler is, and how able he is to answer all kinds of questions. The erudite side of the *mirabile*, such as Landi's work, is also made evident by the fact that the compiler sometimes combines an apparently simple question with an explanation incorporating allusions to many reference texts, including Ovid.

In Landi's dialogue entitled "Questions of love and the answers" (3), the argument goes that love proceeds from the eyes, that idleness engenders love, and love frequently raises hatred (18). In this context, the author mentions Ovid, who writes that love "is full of feare and care" (Landi 23). We learn that the eyes are the messengers of love because of the beams that emerge from the heart (Landi 23). It is easy to recognize here echoes that probably transmigrated into the statements about love, the prevalence of the eye metaphor, and the motif of the love-flower in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In this mélange of Ovid and ideas of Neoplatonic origin, the mere mention of the popular Latin poet, who wrote about love, gives authority to other statements. Landi, the compiler of this work where Ovid is quoted, aims at extracting some curious aspects from the whole world of nature, which he discusses with the purpose of delighting his readers. In this sense, the appeal of curiosities of nature and the need to explain them seems to have lost its function as the first step for the acquisition of knowledge in order to become a strategy to offer entertainment. In this text, pleasure and erudition have substituted usefulness and pragmatic function of scientific culture; its aim is not to transform the curiosity of nature into a subject of science with the help of a rational explanation supported by the sources, but to transform aspects of natural science into curiosities through the use of an apparently wide, but ultimately superficial,

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erudite culture. To this purpose, the use of references to the "pleasant" poet Ovid is an effective tool.

The idea that love emerges from idleness and the impression that love is seated in the sight is the early modern English interpretation of Ovid's stories about love; they are coloured by the translator's moral views, in the case of Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1567), particularly by his intense and rather narrow Calvinism. In analysing the causes of the decline of Ovid's influence in the late seventeenth-century English literature, as compared to earlier Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, Richard F. Hardin explains Ovid's earlier popularity through the medieval habit of moralizing Ovid and states that "Golding is only one of many English poets who preserved the medieval tradition" (46). In the Dedicatory Epistle to the Earl of Leicester, which offers a verse summary of each of Ovid's fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses*, Golding writes that, in Book IV, in the story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, Aphrodite's son and the nymph state that "idlenesse / Is cheefest nurce and cherisher of all volupteousnesse" (Ep. 113–114).[8] Since lascivious life breeds sin, Golding's summarizing verses declare, men become effeminate and weak. Actually, Ovid's narrative in Golding's translation is not so sententious; the story is about the nymph Salmacis, who spent her "idle time" (IV.373) by the waterside and who fell in love with Hermaphroditus; when she embraced him, they became one androgynous being.

The free English translation from Ovid entitled *The Pleasant Fable of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* by Thomas Peend (1565) consists mainly of a moral written in the same verse style as the translation. According to the moralizing verses, Hermaphroditus represents the young inexperienced and credulous man, who is just about ready to know the world, but who falls prey to the temptations of vice and lust and drowns in the pool of sin. Salmacis embodies vice and sensual lust; by succumbing to her temptation, the young man becomes effeminate. Such interpretations of Ovid's stories, though they are part of the inexhaustible texts lying at the entangled roots of intertextual borrowings in early modern England, are derived from the huge hypertext provided by what Ovid had become for early modern English readers. English cultural translations of Ovid in sixteenth-century England were monumental gates through which classical learning reached the attentive readers, especially the young ones. Rather than being a mere delectable source of learned quotations, cultural translations of Ovid in sixteenth-century England are an occasion for the manifestation of creativity in the translators. Not only is Thomas Peend, for example, eager to translate sections of Ovid's story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, but he also creates an additional moralizing text, in verse, which functions as sermonizing instructions addressed to the readers.

A collection of peculiar stories and quotations is *The Foreste or Collection of Histories* by the Spanish humanist and historian Pedro Mexía, translated into English by Thomas Fortescue and published in 1571. The English translation is from a French version by Claude Gruget of an Italian translation of Pedro Mexía's *Silva de varia lección* (Sevilla, 1540). The *Silva* is of an encyclopaedic character, showing knowledge of a wide variety of subjects, such as literature, history, geography, and biography; it belongs to the genre of encyclopaedias and miscellanea cultivated by Greek and Latin authors, continued through the Middle Ages in Latin, and revived in the Renaissance tradition. Writing of the four ages of the world, the golden, silver, brass, and iron ages, Mexía notes that Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, made the same division (28^{v}). Thus, Ovid is transformed into one of the highest authorities on the origins of the world according to the ancients, next to Plato or Pliny the Elder. When he discusses the theme of labour and idleness, Mexía quotes Ovid:

[8] All subsequent English quotations to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are keyed to Arthur Golding's translation, the 1567 edition, and the pages will be given parenthetically in the text.

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> Ouid remembreth, that Venerye is nowhere thought on, but onely among nice, and delicate Idelers: for (saithe he) who so he be, lesse busied in Vertue, imagineth vnchaste thinges, and inuenteth Treasons, puttinge in execution all vice, and treachery. (Mexía 34^{v})

This statement is similar to Golding's moralizing interpretation of the story of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, set forth in the Dedicatory Epistle (Ep. 113–116), according to which love springs from idleness. This shows that early modern writers, whether Italian, Spanish, or English, did not refrain from distorting Ovid to suit their rhetoric. The role of paraphrasing Ovid in Mexía's text is to highlight the author's erudition and to make his moralizing histories more credible. The more the text relies on cherished classical authors, and Ovid is chief among them, the less likely the stories are to be dismissed as unbelievable. This kind of accreditation of truth comes from quoting a Latin poet who is famed for having written the most unbelievable stories ever.

Ovid appears to be an authority on fantastic beings, such as Satyrs, Centaurs, or Cyclops. An example of this belief appears in the English translation from Spanish by Sir Lewis Lewkenor of Antonio de Torquemada's *Jardín de flores curiosas* (Salamanca, 1570), under the title *The Spanish Mandeuile of Miracles* (1600). Torquemada's text is one of the most influential works in the wonder literature of sixteenth-century Spain, written in the form of a philosophical dialogue. In the exchange between Ludovico, Antonio, and Bernardo concerning the wonders of Nature, particularly the reports about monsters, the matters described are mostly borrowed from Caius Julius Solinus, Pliny, Strabo, and Pomponius Mela, and refer to giants, Cyclops, Arimaspes (people with one eye, according to Solinus), others called Monosceli (having only one leg, which is so large they use it for a parasol). When discussing Satyrs, Torquemada observes: "Ouid in his *Metamorphosis*, sayeth, that the Satyre is a beast like vnto a man, onely that hee hath hornes on his head, and feete like a Goate" (12). The Ovidian story in the *Metamorphoses* (VI. 480-510) is about the satyr Marsyas, who challenged Apollo to a musical contest and was punished by being flayed for the hubris of challenging a god. His brothers, nymphs, gods and goddesses mourned his death, and their tears were the source of the river Marsyas in Phrygia. Torquemada's dialogues contain many attempts at questioning the fantastic stories of classical origin, such as those derived from Ovid, but often the answers are just as fantastic as the ancient stories. In this particular issue about the satyrs, Antonio continues his argument by offering an answer to the question about the fact that nobody actually contacted the satyrs, thus raising doubts about their existence; the response is that, since they are so deformed, they avoid the company of people and do not have conversations with them.

On the matter of Centaurs, Torquemada's character Bernardo also quotes Ovid as a knowledgeable authority: "Ouid in his *Metamorphosis* entreateth hereof, say that it was at the marriage of Perithous with Hypodameya, daughter to Ixion, he nameth also many of the Centaures" (28). The Ovidian reference is to the cruel Centaur Ewritus in the *Metamorphoses* (XII. 236–560), where Ovid describes the fight of the Centaurs with the Lapithes. The fight started at the wedding of Perithous, son of Ixion, with Hippodame, where all the lords of Thessaly were invited. In the long description of the fight, Ovid provides many names of the Centaurs, and this listing gives the impression of verisimilitude. However, in Torquemada's text, the character Antonio brings historical reports in support of the argument that the Centaurs may be just humans on horseback, who were believed to have been fantastic creatures when seen for the first time by peoples who had never seen horses. Torquemada gives the example of the Spaniards in the West Indies: when the Indians first saw the Spaniards mounted on horses, they thought the horse and the man formed one creature and, in some places, they capitulated easier because of this image (Torquemada 29). Such fantastic

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stories proliferating in early modern England contributed to shaping a specific image about the worlds they did not know in the minds of the English readers of these books. As the aboriginal Indian population marvelled at the sight of the Spaniards mounted on horses, early modern English readers were attracted by the hybridized fantastic stories they read. This representation was reinforced when the unquestioned authority of Ovid's metaphors was brought forth.

Ovid's familiar stories from the *Metamorphoses* could become many things, according to what the author of the Ovidian allusion wanted them to be. In some instances, Ovid provides the inspiration necessary for invention, inscribed in the search for knowledge and the discovery of new worlds. William Cuningham, in his *Cosmographical Glasse* (1559), spices his discourse with several allusions to and quotations from Ovid. In the dedication to Sir Robert Dudley, Cuningham starts with the example of Dedalus, who "with the eyes of knowledge he did beholde that horrible Mõster Ignoráce" and devised a way to escape from the Labyrinth by means of the wings he invented. As the supreme authority for this myth, Cuningham quotes "the pleasant Poëte" with the verses: "Dedalus fabrifactis alis Coelum ipsum adiuit. / He made him winges wherewith to flie: Ascending to the sterrye Skie" (Aii^{r}). Firstly, Cuningham does not even need to mention Ovid's name and the *Metamorphoses* because his readers would know that these verses are about Daedalus and Icarus, his son, their escape from Minos's labyrinth, and Icarus's subsequent fall from the height because he rose too close to the sun (VIII. 255–318, 99^{r}–99^{v}). Secondly, the Latin verses from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are not even translated in the dedicatory epistle, assuming that educated English readers would be able to understand them. Daedalus's experience became emblematic for the reasonable and sensible approach to life, while the son's disobedience and subsequent fall are the symbols of excessive search for knowledge and making wrong use of it.

A Schole of Wise Conceytes, the translation of Greek and Latin fables with a moralizing scope by Thomas Blague, was republished in 1572, after an earlier edition in 1569. The fable entitled "Of a Lyon Being Olde," under the caption "Cruelty requited," tells of an old and powerless lion, spurned by his enemies and his former so-called friends. The moral is that one should not be lofty or fierce while in a prosperous state, for fear that, in times of weakness, the enemies should turn against them. Similarly, according to the moral drawn from this fable, certain friends are only "to thy table and to thy fortune" and, when bad times come, they desert you. In this context, Ovid is quoted with verses about false friendship: "As Ouid complayneth not without cause: When prosprous windes did driue my sailes, / of Frendes I had good store, / But all were gone, when raging Seas / by blustring windes did rore" (52r). Ovid's sea metaphors, used to illustrate the changes of fortune, confirm the Latin poet's reputation as an epitome of the sea-traveller. Blague's moralizing interpretations, extracted from the Greek and Latin fables he translated, have much in common with the Elizabethan didactic explanations of other humanists' works and displays much affinity with Golding's moralistic elucidation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the Dedicatory Epistle. These early modern uses of Ovid's work for moralistic purposes tell us a lot about the high reputation of the Latin poet among the humanists of the period, but they also illuminate on the early modern authors' expectation that the quotations from Ovid should have a high impact on their readers and probably encourage the sales of their books.

Ancient poets, historians and philosophers did not only give a plain narrative of political, military and other events, or describe places, peoples, and manners but included in their accounts digressions on a great variety of topics. Early modern English writers, too, enlivened their narratives with many digressions and examples. They were a means to supply information, explanation, or dramatic background. In addition, these digressions were also ways for the author to express his knowledge and interests to his readers or listeners, as well as to entertain, instruct them, and incite their curiosity. Ovid was a great fashioner of tales and

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his works have a specific dramatic quality, exploited by authors who drew on the Latin poet. English translators, writers, and compilers of marvel reports tended to accredit Ovid with the authority of knowledge in cosmography, mythology, or natural science. They used Ovid's works as powerful tools to fashion discourses that emerged from entangled ramifications of texts, which became part of the rich Renaissance intertextuality, based on quotations from Ovid. Rather than being merely decorative parts of several examples and digressions (philosophical, mythological, moralizing, or relating to the New World of America), quotations from Ovid or allusions to the Latin poet shaped an early modern culture of quotations. They could also be regarded as "cultural translations," hybrid texts with great impact on early modern English education.

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