

CULTURAL TRANSLATIONS OF OVID IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

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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*