Introduction

Translation and Transformation: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the Fashioning of Identity in Early Modern England

[...] translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some ‘transport’ of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched.1

The Terms of Translation

*Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England* argues that English versions of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* are important sites of cultural and textual difference from the fifteenth to the early eighteenth centuries. In particular, the book considers the significance of vernacular renditions of the poem for the fashioning of early modern English identities. Notably, the *Metamorphoses* is a poem which emphasizes the issues of transformation and translation from the outset. As the opening lines of George Sandys’s *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished* (1632) announce:

> Of bodies chang’d to other shapes I sing.<br>Assist, you Gods (from you these changes spring)<br>And, from the Worlds first fabrick to these times,<br>Deduce my never-discontinued Rymes. (1. 1-4)2

At the beginning of the highly influential *Shakespeare and Ovid*, Jonathan Bate states that ‘recent criticism has been much concerned with the “flexibility of the self” in Renaissance literature. Such criticism has not always recognized that the flexible self has a prime classical exemplar in Ovid.’ With Bate’s comments in mind, the starting point for my own study is that whilst much recent criticism has been concerned with transformation and the ‘flexible self’, the topic of translation
and its relationship to the profusion of English versions of the *Metamorphoses*
produced in the early modern period has been relatively ignored.

Given that the processes and practices of translation are explored in Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, one of the most thoroughly discussed books about the sixteenth century, this neglect is rather perplexing. Here Greenblatt has famously claimed that ‘self-fashioning is always, but not exclusively, in language’,4 and, at the centre of the book, he observes that

> there is no translation that is not the same time an interpretation. This conviction [was] stamped indelibly in the mind by the fact that men went to the stake in the early sixteenth century over the rendering of certain Greek and Latin words into English […].5

In this allusion to the execution of men such as William Tyndale, ‘the first biblical translator of the Reformation to die – arrested and strangled [in 1536] in his Low Countries exile by the Holy Roman Emperor’s officials with the connivance of the Bishop of London and Henry VIII’ for so-called heretical versions of the Old and New Testaments,6 Greenblatt demonstrates the political impact of translation; an impact evinced by his examples of the physical violence perpetrated against translators of religious texts. Yet translators of secular texts were also culturally significant. When Greenblatt says that by analysing Thomas Wyatt’s texts ‘we glimpse […] the central place of translation’,7 the ideological worth of this textual, secular mode of production is realised in less terrifying ways.

The importance of vernacular translation is discussed at length in Charles Tomlinson’s essay ‘The Presence of Translation: A View of English Poetry’ in which ‘the preferences displayed in editing the *Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation*’ are particularly scrutinised.8 As Tomlinson argues that ‘the story of English poetry cannot be truly told without seeing translation as an unavoidable part of that story’,9 he observes how the inclusion of translated texts into the history of English literature makes a difference to the institution of English literature itself. By considering Alexander Pope’s translation of Homer’s *Iliad* (1715), as well as translations by Geoffrey Chaucer, John Dryden and John Oldham, and by remembering his own Cambridge education where the course on Renaissance poetry took ‘a broad look at [Thomas] Wyatt and [Henry] Surrey, both translators, though the fact was never dwelt upon’,10 Tomlinson revises the history of English literature and, implicitly, reforms notions of Englishness. Since Tomlinson’s article was published in 1989 there have been considerable developments in the area of translation theory and it may now be argued with impunity that translators as ‘inventive mediators’ have played,11 and continue to play, an important role in the construction of subjectivities, foreign and domestic; other and self.12 However, Lawrence Venuti suggests that ‘although the growth of the discipline called “translation studies” has been described as “a success story of the 1980s”, the study of the history and theory of translation remains a backwater in the academy’.13 In its endeavour to make translated texts visible in the midst of institutional imperatives
which may continue to efface their influence, Tomlinson’s essay continues to offer key critical insights for the exploration of translation’s agency.

Indeed, the title of Tomlinson’s article (‘The Presence of Translation’) raises questions about the term ‘translation’ itself. The most familiar, and most narrow, use of the word is ‘to turn something from one language into another’.\textsuperscript{14} In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the post-Romantic period which sought to celebrate the status of the original author,\textsuperscript{15} translation was largely viewed as a secondary practice. The preface to Richard Blackmore’s \textit{A paraphrase on the book of Job as likewise on the songs of Moses, Deborah, David, on four select psalms, some chapters of Isaiah, and the third chapter of Habakkuk} (1700), for example, heralds the prevailing hierarchical binarism of original/translation:

The Moderns have wholly form’d themselves on the Models of the Ancients, and that we have scarce any thing but the Greek and Latin Poetry in the World. We have no Originals, but all Copiers and Transcribers of Homer, Pindar, and Theocritus, Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. Their Design, their Phrase, their Manner, and even their Heathen Theology, appear in all the Poems that have since their Time been published to the World, especially in the Learned Languages. ‘Tis therefore to be wish’d that some good Genius, qualify’d for such an Undertaking, would break the Ice, assert the Liberty of Poetry, and set up for an Original in Writing in a way accommodated to the Religion, Manners, and other Circumstances we are now under.\textsuperscript{16}

In early modern England, alongside texts such as Virgil’s \textit{Eclogues}, Cicero’s letters, selections from Sallust and Caesar and Erasmus’s \textit{Colloquies} and \textit{Parabola}, Ovid’s poem was an integral part of the humanist programme of education.\textsuperscript{17} Certainly, the pedagogical location of translation rendered it a more visible act and some translators enjoyed high status socially. Portraits of both the Greek writer and the English translator, for instance, are shown on the title page of \textit{The crowne of all Homers workes Batrachomyomachia or the battaile of frogs and mise. His hymn’s and epigrams translated according to ye. originall by George Chapman} (1624).\textsuperscript{18} But since the sixteenth century translation has been gradually isolated from other textual practices which have been deemed primary and original, and various attempts have been made to categorise and limit the term itself: ‘this is the series translatio, paraphrasis, imitatio, allusio, which tries to draw boundary lines as the version of the original becomes increasingly free’.\textsuperscript{19} An early modern example of such pronouncements, based on Cicero’s \textit{De oratore}, can be found in Roger Ascham’s \textit{The Schoolmaster} (1570):

Paraphrasis is, to take some eloquent Oration, and some notable common place in Latin, and expresse it with other wordes: Metaphrasis is, to take some notable place out of a good Poete, and turn the same sense into meter, or in other wordes in Prose [...]. But to our purpose, all language, bothe learned and mother tonges, be gotten, and gotten onelie by Imitation.\textsuperscript{20}
Arguably, the desire to construct an organizing method for translation gains momentum throughout the early modern period until, in the late seventeenth century, John Dryden’s ‘Preface Concerning Ovid’s Epistles’ (1680) sought to divide translation processes into three, as illustrated by the ‘three heads’ of translation – ‘metaphrase’, ‘paraphrase’ and ‘imitation’. Still later, in the twentieth century, Roman Jakobson defined translation as another tripartite textual and cultural enterprise: interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic. There are much wider implications, however, to translation than organization and method.

In the words of Terry Eagleton, ‘what we are coming to understand, not least through the notion of intertextuality, is that every text is, in some sense, a translation’. Further, José Lambert has argued that ‘the borderlines between [translation] and related concepts such as adaptation and rewriting are not necessarily clear or uniformly drawn. […] not only entire texts but also text fragments and discursive patterns may be imported into the target literature’. The English versions of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* which are explored in this book may be defined in terms which move from *translatio* to *allusio*. To be sure, a variety of terms could be used to define the texts discussed here, such as ‘adaptation’ or ‘rewriting’. However, these and their related terms often function as a taxonomy which undermines the cultural politics of translation. As Susan Bassnett concludes:

> It is probably more helpful to think of translation not so much as a category in its own right, but rather as a set of textual practices with which the writer and the reader collude. This suggests that literary studies […] need to look again at translation, for the investigation of translation as a set of textual practices has not received much attention […]. It is time to free ourselves from the constraints that the term ‘translation’ has placed upon us and recognise that we have immense problems pinning down a term that continues to elude us. For whether we know it or not, we have been colluding with alternative notions of translation all our lives.

Thus, with Bassnett’s cogent observations in mind, I use the word ‘translation’ as a means of recalling the ideological facets embedded in the term itself. Jeanette Beer comments that ‘translation never was, and should not now be, envisaged as a genre’; a genre implies stasis, whereas translation, as the etymology of the word suggests, is a dynamic process. Nonetheless, as Catherine Belsey explains, translation practices attempt to transport meaning from the place of the other and secure it within the new system and to fix stability in signification:

> When Ferdinand de Saussure drew attention to the problem of translation, he enabled his readers to recognise the inevitability of cultural difference and the impossibility of legislating for its resolution. Words, Saussure pointed out, do not necessarily have exact equivalents from one language to another. As any practising translator knows, not only nuances but pronouns, genders, tenses, and distinctions can be untranslatable. It follows that meanings are not held in place by objects in the world or by concepts independent of language. The signified (meaning) resides in language or, more broadly, in signifying systems (including visual images, for instance) and it is to be found nowhere else. Signification is differential, but the differences are not guaranteed by the world or by ideas. The world may be
Introduction

... encountered as resistance, but it cannot be known outside the systems of differences which define it [...]. Ideas are, moreover, deferred by the signifier which produces them. Differed and deferred, supplanted, relegated by the signifier, the signified has no autonomy, no substance.27

In Belsey’s description of Derridean *différence*,28 what becomes visible in translation, as Edwin Gentzler has stated, ‘is language referring not to things, but to language itself’.29 Viewed in this way, translation becomes a thoroughly disturbance process at the level of the signifier: a disturbing process that a variety of textual strategies has tried to repress. Most obviously these repressive strategies are inscribed in notions of equivalence – a phrase first popularized by Eugene Nida30 – where critical approaches to translated texts tend to concentrate on whether the translator has produced a version of the original in terms of a ‘word for word’ or a ‘sense for sense’ translation. However, in the words of the epigraph above: ‘we will never have, and never have had, to do with some “transport” of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched’.31 In the processes of translation boundaries and borders are disrupted and frames of signification are ruptured. For Tomlinson, exposing translation’s presence fragments conventional notions of English Literature; for the purpose of my book, acknowledging the processes and practices of translation provides further arenas for the exploration of early modern identities.

The foregoing remarks provide the analytical context for the argument that follows. I do not propose to read the vernacular translations of the *Metamorphoses* through a specific theoretical frame, of which there are a large, and increasing, number and which, as Terence Cave has observed, would ‘reduce the texts to the status of local illustrations of a modern theory’.32 Nevertheless, my critical position has undoubtedly been informed by post-Saussurean perspectives on signifying systems and translation. It is this type of thinking about translation which has influenced Tejaswini Niranjana’s *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context*. In Niranjana’s argument, translation ‘becomes a significant site for raising questions of representation, power and historicity’.33 In her discussion of the asymmetrical relationship between England and India from the eighteenth century to the present,34 translation functions as interpellation, a term derived from Louis Althusser describing ‘the “constitution” of subjects in language by ideology’.35 By theorizing translation in this way, Niranjana posits an important, post-colonial agenda which is pertinent for my own views on translation. The notion of ‘translation as interpellation’ is not only relevant in the context of translation between languages; the political dimension of ‘translation as interpellation’ can also be applied to intralingual translations.

For many post-Saussureans the construction of identity is perceived as being ‘produced from within language’ and depending ‘upon both difference (between the self and the other) and accession to the position of a [provisional] “I” within discourse’.36 In this theoretical context, the translator and the translated text, thoroughly absorbed in issues of signifying systems and difference, are pivotal in
constructing and deconstructing the subject. Certainly, there have been arguments which have employed Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as a significant text in the construction of the Petrarchan subject. For example, Lynn Enterline is concerned with the shaping of Petrarch’s voice, via Ovid, in the *Canzoniere*:

Petrarch’s complex encounter with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, as Renaissance literary critics know well, left an indelible mark on the history of European representations of the poet – particularly as that poet represented himself, or herself, as the subject of language and of desire.

Somewhat differently, the overarching project of *Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England* is to examine the ‘complex encounters’ between the *Metamorphoses* and its English translators in order to consider ways in which the translator ‘represented himself, or herself, as the subject of language and of desire’.

**Figuring Translation**

Bate suggests that Ovidian myths allow us to make sense of the world. In the introduction to *Shakespeare and Ovid* he argues that his aim has been to present the material in the terms of Ovid and his Renaissance readers, not to translate it into those of some later theorist. There may be a book to be written on Shakespeare and the *Metamorphoses* in relation to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s theory that myths encode the deep binary structures of all cultures, but this is not it. Jacques Derrida’s essay on Lévi-Strauss, ‘Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, is one of the foundation texts of deconstruction, but my aim is to reconstruct, not deconstruct, Renaissance mythography […]. In order to understand the work that myth does for Shakespeare – and to try out for ourselves whether it can do any work for us – we have to suspend our disbelief in the possibility of words and stories referring to a reality beyond themselves. […] we do have to believe in the reality of the human conditions and aspirations that are stored in myth […].

Belsey reminds us, however, that ‘language is not transparent, not merely the medium in which autonomous individuals transmit messages to each other about an independently constituted world of things’. Meaning in language, ‘differed and deferred’, is held in place by the ideological concerns of the historical context in which it is employed. Thus the ‘human conditions and aspirations’ which Bate claims are ‘stored in myth’ are specific to the culture in which they are produced; identity itself is deconstructed and reconstructed in and through texts. Indeed, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the English translations of the poem are emblematic representations of the desire for presence in language and are arenas in which the problematic transformation of the subject, through and in history, can be rehearsed.
In the early part of the sixteenth century the vernacular was perceived as a site of lack. According to Thomas M. Greene:

The focus of England’s sense of disjuncture lay most visibly in its embarrassment over its rude vernacular. Translators of the earlier Tudor period ritually deplored ‘our own corrupt and base, as al men affyrme it: most barbarous Language,’ and comparable expressions are found in so many other contexts as well that the attitude has to be taken seriously. The embarrassment of the English with their language should be read, I think, synecdochically, as an oblique lament over a broader cultural poverty. Not only the language was inadequate; the nation as a whole was seen as suffering from a kind of privation which translations from antiquity or even from the continental vernaculars could only underscore.41

As the compulsion to produce texts in the vernacular increased, writers such as George Puttenham in the Arte of English Poesie (1589) acknowledged the importance of translations as they simultaneously denounced them:

It appeareth by sundry records of bookes bot h printed and written, that many of our countreymen have painfully travelled in this part: of whose works some appeare to be but bare translations, other some matters of their owne invention and very commendable, whereof some recitall shall be made in this place, to th’intent chiefly that their names should not be defrauded of such honour as seemeth due to them for having by their thankefull studies so much beautified our English tong [...].42

Puttenham’s use of the adjective ‘bare’ in describing contemporaneous translation practices is telling since it suggests that the translated text is a site of lack compared with other texts which are the products of ‘invention’. But behind such emphatic assertions resides a certain lack of confidence in language which, arguably, might be tested by translation. Thus the transmission of culture from either past or present sources is undertaken in order to enrich the status of the English language and, in turn, the nation state. This translative agenda was undertaken so forcefully that, in 1688, John Wilkins could assert that that:

Since learning began to flourish in our Nation, there have been more than ordinary Changes introduced in our Language: partly by new artificial compositions; partly by enfranchising strange forein words, for their elegance and significancy, which now makes one third part of our language; and partly by refining and mollifying old words, for the more easie and graceful sound: by which means this last Century may be conjectured to have made a greater change in our Tongue, than any of the former, as to the addition of new words.43

These ‘more than ordinary changes’, as Paula Blank has argued, meant that linguistic differences within the English language in terms of dialect (‘competing Englishes’ in fact) were also manifest.44

From Plato’s Cratylus onwards, history has been troubled by ‘the scandal of mutability, the ungrounded contingency of language’.45 There have been numerous allegorical and emblematic representations about these concerns in the early
modern period, figured, for example, as Proteus, Mercury or the dismemberment of Orpheus. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a narrative featuring these classical emblems of linguistic mutability, is a text which thoroughly explores the difficulties inherent in making meaning not only in language but in all forms of communication. The epigraph from Jacques Derrida at the head of this chapter has a particular relevance for this discussion as it plays with notions of translation and transformation; issues which are central to English versions of Ovid’s poem. In this quotation Derrida seeks to shift concepts of translation (the carrying across of signs from one system of signification into another) towards notions of transformation – a term which suggests a more intertextual relationship between systems of signification. The *Metamorphoses* is a text which provides a variety of etiologies for a single object as well as for the world at large and thus contributes to an ongoing debate about the relationship between the language and representation:

> Without our cultural and personal derivation, our etiology, the sound of the word has no meaning. Given the etiology, the word acquires a kind of ballast and tendency in its drift.

Although words are given stability through the construction of these histories, the very emphasis of that history serves to undermine meaning and much of Ovid’s text points to the arbitrariness of language and the gap between the sign and the signified. Indeed, it is a poem thoroughly concerned with the processes, products and politics of signification, and the ways in which humankind is made subject through and in language.

Part of the political project of the *Metamorphoses* is to recount the construction of Rome. But Ovid’s version of Roman history offers an important counterpoint to the conventions of a more typical epic such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*. As Ovid tells the history of the nation state, from its beginnings in the primeval chaos to the reign of Augustus Caesar, the narrative undermines the teleological structure of the earlier epic. Moreover, it is a text which draws attention to the intertextuality of its own construction. Amongst the several hundred or so myths enclosed within its narrative frame, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* employs translation in its rewriting of other narratives which derive mostly from Greek. Karl Galinsky notes that Ovid’s poem can be likened in form to the collective poems of Hesiod and Homeric epic; in terms of content, it has some similarities with the *Ornithogonia* of the Greek poet Boios which deals with the transformations of men into birds and which was translated into Latin by a contemporary of Ovid, Aemilius Macer. Apart from the three attested *Metamorphoses* by later Greek poets, including Parthenius, perhaps the best-known Greek precedent for Ovid’s narrative is Nikander of Colophon’s *Heteroeumena*. Particularly from the first century BC through to the beginning of the second century AD, as Rita Copeland has shown, the Greeks acknowledged their language as ‘the more illustrious language [such that] translation from Greek into Latin can be described as a vertical movement from greater to lesser prestige’. However, this hierarchical model is reversed by the time that Ovid’s
Metamorphoses is produced, and the cultural and textual supremacy of Rome is affirmed by Horace in the Ars poetica:

Our own poets have left no style untried, nor has least honour been earned when they have dared to leave the footsteps of the Greeks and sing of deeds at home, whether they have put native tragedies or native comedies upon the stage.53

The appropriation of Greek texts remains unacknowledged by Ovid. If these interlingual translations are silently revised, then so too are the intralingual reworkings of Virgil’s Aeneid and of Ovid’s own Amores and Heroides.

A useful contrast may be made between the beginning of Ovid’s text and the opening of Apuleius’s Metamorphoses. Apuleius begins:

Who am I? I will tell you briefly. Attic Hymettos and Ephyrean Isthmos and Spartan Taenaros, fruitful lands preserved for ever in even more fruitful books, form my ancient stock. There I served my stint with the Attic tongue in the first campaigns of childhood. Soon afterwards, in the city of the Latins, as a newcomer to Roman studies I attacked and cultivated their native speech with laborious difficulty and no teacher to guide me. So, please, I beg your pardon in advance if as a raw speaker of this foreign tongue of the Forum I commit any blunders. Now in fact this very changing of language corresponds to the type of writing we have undertaken, which is like the skill of a rider jumping from one horse to another. We are about to begin a Greekish story. Pay attention reader and you will find delight.54

Although produced in a different historical context, Apuleius’s Metamorphoses rehearses some familiar problematics of translation. Employing the topos of the humble translator, the formula of humility which will become a common feature of many translations produced in the early modern period, Lucius, the narrator of Apuleius’s text, uses the metaphor of a circus rider leaping from one horse to another in order to describe the linguistic move from Greek to Latin. This figure, which undermines any modern notion of equivalence in translation, clearly illustrates the inherent semiotic instability of translation. Apuleius’s text was translated by William Adlington in the sixteenth century as The xv. Bookes of the Golden Asse, Containing the Metamorphosie of Lucius Apuleius (1566) and its employment in Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream (c. 1595) confirms its popularity.55 But the later classical text does not possess the complex translative genealogy of Ovid’s Metamorphoses and, intriguingly, Adlington’s prose translation remained the only complete English translation in circulation throughout the early modern period. By simply avoiding its intertextual debts, Ovid’s Metamorphoses immediately authorises its own status; this is a poem which seeks to ‘bring down [its] song in unbroken strains from the world’s very beginning even unto the present time’ (1. 2–4).56

Described by Quintilian as a text which ‘welds together subjects of the most diverse nature so as to form a continuous whole’,57 Ovid’s Metamorphoses is framed by a linear, translative impetus that will take the reader from the creation of the world out of chaos to the formation of Rome as a nation state. In the beginning:
Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation

Golden was that first age, which, with no one to compel, without a law, of its own will, kept faith and did the right. There was no fear of punishment, no threatening words were to be read on brazen tablets; no suppliant throng gazed fearfully upon its judge’s face; but without defenders lived secure. Not yet had the pine-tree, felled on its native mountains, descended thence into the watery plain to visit other lands; men knew no shores except their own. (1. 89-96)

Linguistic difference is not explicitly discussed. From the moment that Lycaon’s contempt for the gods is shown in book 1 and the reader is offered the first tale of human transformation into beast, however, myths appear which are concerned with issues of signification and translation. Mercury and Iris, the messengers of Jupiter and Juno respectively, are shown to mediate between the gods and mortals; a number of seers and augers show the necessity for the interpretation of signs as either good or bad omens. As Leonard Barkan has described:

Many of the great figures of Ovid’s poem define themselves by their struggle to invent new languages. That is clearest in the case of metamorphic victims like Actaeon or Io, who must labour to use human language fitting their consciousness once their shape has turned beastly.

Whilst Barkan is typically astute in his observation, these two examples are not completely parallel. For Actaeon, transformed into a deer by Diana for spying on her as she bathed, ‘words fail his desire’ and he is torn to pieces by his own hounds (3. 230 ff.). Io is in a different plight. First ravished by Jupiter, changed by the god into a white heifer and then given as a gift to the jealous Juno (who confers her to Argus to guard), Io’s initial attempts to communicate are thwarted:

When she strove to stretch out suppliant arms to Argus she had no arms to stretch; and when she attempted to voice her complaints, she only mooed [...] if only she could speak, she would tell her name and sad misfortune, and beg for aid. But instead of words, she did tell the sad story of her changed form with letters which she traced in the dust with her hoof. (1. 635–50)

Eventually, Io is more successful in her efforts to convey events to her father, Inachus. Either through speech, symbolic gesture, or written text, transformed figures such as Actaeon and Io, and others (for example, Callisto and Ocyrohoë), express the desire to translate. In this context of translation one of the most interesting moments of the Metamorphoses occurs in book 6 when the poem describes its own revision. In her contest with Minerva, Arachne, the low-born Maeonian weaver who denied the goddess as her teacher, produces a text full of the ‘heavenly crimes’ (6. 132) of the gods. Several of these incidents – Jove’s abduction of Europa and his violation of Danaë, Pluto’s rape of Proserpine and Neptune’s rape of Medusa – appear as part of the main narrative frame of the Metamorphoses itself. This narrative mise-en-abîme is an effective means for exploring the endless play of signification inscribing and circumscribing Ovid’s text. The contest between Minerva and Arachne, however, also emphasizes the way
in which meaning is held in place by ideological forces as Minerva destroys Arachne’s text depicting the nefarious aspects of the gods, and transforms the girl into a spider.

The Latin word lingua can be translated as ‘tongue’ and as ‘language’. Significantly, the violent cultural and political implications of translation are taken further in the Ovidian tales which deal with images of the tongue, the border between the body and language, which appears in the central books of the Metamorphoses. After scorning Diana’s beauty, Chione’s tongue is pierced by the goddess’s arrow (11. 301). In book 5, Emathion, an old man ‘who loved justice and revered gods […]. [and] since his years forbade warfare, fought with the tongue’ (5. 99 ff.) is decapitated by Chromis. The final moment of Emathion’s life is thrown into relief as the narrative focuses on the head which ‘fell straight on the altar, and there the still half-conscious tongue kept up its execrations’ (5. 105). There is a similar image of the autonomous tongue in the episode of the death of Orpheus. Dismembered by the scorned Ciconian women, his head and lyre floated in the stream while ‘mournfully the lifeless tongue murmured’ (11. 52). One of the most grotesque and brutal episodes of the poem is found in book 6 when Tereus attempts to conceal his rape of his sister-in-law Philomela by cutting out her tongue (6. 549-62). Comparison with the deaths of Emathion and Orpheus clearly shows the explicit nature of the violent act upon the woman. Though the men suffer undeniably cruel deaths, the tragic tenor of this Ovidian narrative is intensified because Philomela does not die. The severity of Tereus’s violation is conveyed through the personification of Philomela’s tongue which, metonymically, displaces her body. Denied the capacity of speech, Philomela has to translate her mutilation and rape through the woven image delivered to her sister.

These myths, many of which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of this book, justify Richard Lanham’s observation that the Metamorphoses is a terrifying world with anger and violence everywhere. As Ovid depicts Rome’s inauguration, the narrative is interspersed with violent episodes which focus on the individual, identity and language. However, the narrative voice of the Metamorphoses, a ‘diffuse authorial self’, does not offer these episodes as didactic political propaganda; “the point is not to hierarchise – there are no hierarchies here, and no perspectives either”. Rather, the reader is confronted with a series of situations which encourage interpretations regarding the construction of identity in terms of nation and gender. Importantly, the type of hermeneutic that Ovid’s narrative invites is one placed within the context of translation and transformation: a context taken up and developed by translators in the early modern period.

Translation and Nation

The building of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, a bid by the sons of Shem to match God’s transcendence, was punished by the multiplication of languages. Before its construction there was only one tongue; following the divine prohibition of God there were many. In England during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth
centuries, the ruptured dominance of Latinate Church culture, the re-establishment of Greek and Hebrew and the influx of texts from other contemporary vernacular languages gave rise to what might be termed as a Babel-ling epoch:

‘Babel’ [...]. Telling at least of the inadequation of one tongue to another [...] of language to itself and to meaning, and so forth, it also tells us of the need for figuration, for myths, for tropes, for twists and turns, for translation inadequate to compensate for that which multiplicity denies us.69

As Derrida suggests, the Christian narrative of Babel delineates translation’s semantic limits. The political and cultural dimensions of translation practices in the early modern period are clearly evident, of course, in the texts of the period which are concerned with religious debate.70 The English Reformation, as Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning expertly shows, is largely constructed as well as contested around translations of the Bible in the vernacular. The continual recitation of Ovid’s secular myth of creation, a less dangerous task than the translation of sacred texts, also ‘tells us of the need for figuration, for myths, for tropes, for twists and turns, for translation inadequate to compensate for that which multiplicity denies us’. One of the most influential translations of Ovid’s poem, Arthur Golding’s Metamorphosis (first four books published in 1565; completed 1567),71 domesticates the text ‘in language and in cultural context’72 and is underpinned by ‘Calvinist policy and polity’.73 During this period of political and cultural upheaval, a time when the English language itself is transforming rapidly, it seems to be no coincidence that this historical moment is punctuated by English translations of the Metamorphoses.

Scholars of English Literature have long regarded the Metamorphoses as important source material for many medieval and early modern texts;74 many have employed topoi from Ovid’s poem in order to stimulate new readings of works by canonical English writers such as Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser and John Milton.75 A rather different attitude to Ovid’s texts begins with Lee T. Pearcy’s The Mediated Muse: English Translations of Ovid, 1560–1700.76 As the title of the book indicates, the focus of Pearcy’s discussion is on the relationship between the vernacular versions of the Metamorphoses; a critical approach which has recently been advanced by way of a range of theoretical perspectives. In terms of reception studies, Sarah Annes Brown’s The Metamorphosis of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes has made an important contribution to the understanding of English Ovidianism.77 Though Brown includes a discussion of Samuel Garth’s collaborative translation of the Metamorphoses (1717) in her impressive survey, the cultural politics of translation are not the overt concern of her work. My book shares some common ground with Raphael Lyne’s Ovid’s Changing Worlds: English Metamorphoses 1567–1632; a critical exploration of Ovid’s poem which has more obvious connections to recent developments in translation studies. In a careful consideration of the English translations by Golding, Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton and George Sandys, Lyne begins to discuss the Metamorphoses in a way that I develop further.
Introduction

Primarily concentrating on the ‘four works that are […]’ the four most substantial meditations on Ovid’s greatest work in the period […]’, Lyne’s analysis does not set out to ‘tackle numerous offshoots of the Metamorphoses tradition that have a vibrant but different life in English’. 79 Whereas Ovid’s Changing Worlds focuses on texts that are united by ‘their relationship as a whole’ to Ovid’s epic poem, 79 Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England explores a range of translations produced in the early modern period which engage with the Metamorphoses both in its entirety and as textual fragments.

If the term ‘translation’ is problematic, then trying to define early modern Ovidian translations is equally difficult. Recalling the enigma of Ovid’s exile, Fausto Ghisalberti observes that the Metamorphoses belongs to the period both of the author’s greatest fame and of his greatest disgrace – in AD 8 Augustus banished Ovid from Rome for an unknown offence, and the poet spent the final years of his life in exile on Tomis – which makes it a text eminently suitable for adaptation to Christian purposes. 80 Inheriting much of its didacticism from the medieval accessus to the Metamorphoses, 81 the early modern moralized tradition of Ovidian translation is obviously represented by the anonymous Fable of Ovid Treteng of Narcissus translated into Englysh mytre, with a moral there unto (1560) and, in part, by Golding’s translation. Ovid’s myths were also transposed into playful and erotic epyllia, effectively illustrated by Shakespeare’s Venus and Adonis (c. 1593) or the numerous versions of the Salmacis and Hermaphroditus narrative that were produced throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. 82 To be sure, the influence of the Metamorphoses upon English literature is so great that any number of texts could have been examined in this study, for example Thomas Hedley’s broadside ballad The Judgement of Midas (1552), the first known Ovidian myth to be printed in England; John Lyly’s Gallathea (c. 1592) or Charles Cotton’s Chaucer’s Ghost, or, a Piece of Antiquity. Containing twelve pleasant Fables of Ovid penn’d after the ancient manner of writing in England (c. 1672). 83 Charles Martindale’s anthology of essays, Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century, is witness to the wide and varied dissemination of Ovid’s poem. 85 Mindful that my project can only present a partial scene of Ovidian translation, my choice of texts has been determined by those versions of Ovid’s poem which engage with the construction of early modern English identities in specific ways, some of which are eccentric to the usual canon.

My book begins, however, with a play which is often invoked whenever the subject of Ovid and early modern England is discussed and in which a translation of the Metamorphoses takes a central role: Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus (c. 1594). Adam McKeown has observed that ‘not enough critical work has explored the tension surrounding the strange cameo of “Ovid’s Metamorphosis” in Act 4’. 85 Thus, in Chapter 1, I consider McKeown’s perceptive comment in detail by suggesting that the material invocation of the Metamorphoses in Titus Andronicus initiates an interrogation of the cultural politics of translation and the construction of Elizabethan notions of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Entitled ‘Titus Andronicus and the Sexual Politics of Translation’, the critical focus of this section is on the relationship between Lavinia and Ovid’s book and the ways in which the processes
and products of translation construct the gendered subject; a critical thread which underpins much of the ensuing argument.

Accordingly, in Chapter 2, ‘The Heterotopic Place of Translation: The Third Part of the Countesse of Pembroke’s Yvychurch. Entituled, Amintas Dale’, I continue the discussion of the sexual politics of translation which began with Shakespeare’s Lavinia. The first known appearance of the Metamorphoses in English is the myth of Ceyx and Alcyone in Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess (c. 1368–72), a narrative focusing on Alcyone’s grief following the death of her husband. This gendered notion of loss extends to other English translations of Ovid’s Metamorphoses, notably Abraham Fraunce’s poem. In sum, I suggest that the use of Ovidian myths in this complex pastoral poem, produced for Fraunce’s patron Mary Sidney, not only questions the fashioning of the woman translator; Fraunce’s text also disrupts the male translator’s subject position.

The second chapter, inter alia, raises questions about translation and patronage. In Chapter 3, which explores a translation of Ovid’s poem produced cum privilegio, ‘Violence in Translation: George Sandys’s Metamorphosis Englished’, I consider the difficulties faced by a translator who appropriates Ovid as a means of disseminating the policies of Charles I. One of the interesting points about this translation is that Sandys worked on the text whilst he was Treasurer of the Jamestown colony. Lyne has suggested that the cultural politics of this ‘Virginian Ovid’ can be read as an ‘interplay between a classical text and the New World’. Rather differently, I argue that Sandys’s translation unwittingly discloses anxieties about English Royalist identity and the fragile nature of the domestic body politic.

The importance of Sandys’s translation is demonstrated in the large number of editions through which it passed and in the way later translators worked in his shadow. Chapter 4, ‘From Sandys’s Ghost to Samuel Garth’, looks at ways in which Garth’s collaborative translation of 1717, the text which heralds the end of this current aetas Ovidiana, is haunted by the earlier translation. By contrast with Sandys’s Ovid produced cum privilegio, this new translation is motivated by changes in commercial publishing and is distinctive for its use of the editorial process as part of its translative strategy. By alluding to contemporaneous scientific discourses in his Preface, Garth attempts to take his reader out of the frame of early modern Christian humanism and into one which is concerned with the kind of empirical enquiry appropriate for its Enlightenment context. Featuring translations by well-known writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for example John Dryden, Joseph Addison, William Congreve, Alexander Pope and John Gay, Garth’s composite translation attempts to fashion a unified edition out of a clearly dialogic and fragmented text.

From the opening chapters of this book it is clear that the relationship between women and Ovid’s poem is rather different to that of men. Chapter 5, ‘In Arachne’s Trace: Women as Translators of the Metamorphoses’, as the title suggests, considers the ways in which early modern women treat Ovid’s myths; a hitherto neglected area of research. As Valerie Traub notes in her Afterword to Ovid and the Renaissance Body, with the exception of Louis Labé, markedly a French writer, ‘the volume is silent about women’s engagement with Ovid, either as readers or
Introduction

[278x698]Introduction

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[130x677]writers’.88 In the light of Traub’s comments, this penultimate chapter examines
Elizabeth Talbot’s tapestries depicting the myths of Phaeton, Europa and Actaeon
(c. 1601), Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s ‘The Fable of Phaeton’ (1696), Mary, Lady
Chudleigh’s ‘Icarus’ (1703) and Mary Wortley Montagu’s juvenile translations of
Ovidian myths (c. 1704).

Throughout the book, I largely explore Ovidian translation by way of the
variable relationships between translator, patron, publisher, readership and critical
reception in order to ‘critique the violence of my own language’.89 My aim, then, is
not to conduct prescriptive comparative analyses between source and target
languages. According to Michael Cronin:

this prescriptive approach [...] has tended to conceal as much as it reveals.
Prescriptive commentary practised by scholars who are proficient in both source and
target language tends to be retrospective, i.e. primarily concerned with faithful
translation of the source language. This ignores the fact that most people who read a
translation do so because they do not speak the source language and therefore that
questions of reception and target-language acceptability are central to the
translator’s practice.90

A prescriptive approach also assumes a fixed, textual origin for a translation. The
attempt to secure an originary source text for the early modern English translations
of the Metamorphoses, however, is continually thwarted. The number of
manuscripts and printed editions in circulation throughout the early modern period
make a convincing philological comparative project almost impossible.91 Hence,
modern scholarship has yet to secure a single source text for Golding’s
translation.92 Deborah Rubin’s thesis on Sandys’s Metamorphosis Englished cannot
locate a specific Latin text from which it is translated.93 Yet modes of prescriptive
comparative analyses are really tested by the text which is the focus of Chapter 6;
William Caxton’s prose manuscript version of the Metamorphoses (c. 1480). To
some, it may seem anomalous to end with a discussion of the earliest complete
English translation of Ovid’s poem. In many ways, however, this text provides a
fitting point of departure for this study. Though produced by a well-known male
translator, this rendition of the classical poem (critically overlooked by many recent
studies of Ovid in English) inhabits the margins of early modern England. As the
concluding chapter contends, however, Caxton’s Ovid engages with the cultural

Notes

2 George Sandys, Ovid’s Metamorphosis Englished, mythologiz’d, and represented in
cites the title of Thomas M. Greene, ‘The Flexibility of the Self’, in The Disciplines of
Notes


9 Tomlinson, ‘The Presence of Translation’, p. 272. Tomlinson seemingly responds to Itamar Even-Zohar’s argument: ‘As a rule, histories of literature mention translations when there is no way to avoid them, when dealing with the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, for instance […]. As a consequence, one hardly gets any idea of the function of translated literature for a literature as a whole or of its position within that literature. Moreover, there is no awareness of the possible existence of translated literature as a particular literary system’. Itamar Even-Zohar, ‘The Position of Translated Literature Within the Literary Polysystem’, *Poetics Today*, 11 (1990), 45–51, 45.


Introduction

21 Roman Jakobson distinguished ‘three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: it may be translated into other signs of the same language [intralingual], into another language [interlingual], or into another, nonverbal system of symbols [intersemiotic]’. Roman Jakobson, Language in Literature (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 429. However, as Theo Hermans observes, Jacques Derrida has complicated the apparent coherence of Jakobson’s tripartite division, ‘pointing out that if for Jakobson intralingual translation is a form of translation, then in the essay itself the term “rewording” is a translation of the term “intralingual translation”’. See further Theo Hermans, ‘Translation’s Other’ (London: University College London, 1996), p. 23.
31 With reference to Derrida’s notion of translation and transformation, Ruth Evans inserts an important caveat: ‘[His] position is however very different from the idea that “pure translatability” is an impossible ideal, but nevertheless an ideal; it is precisely this desire for presence that Derrida critiques’. Ruth Evans, ‘Translating Past Cultures?’, in The Medieval Translator 4, ed. by Roger Ellis and Ruth Evans (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), pp. 20–45, p. 32.
33 Niranjan, Siting Translation, p. 1.
34 Niranjan, Siting Translation, p. 1.
Niranjan, Siting Translation, p. 11, n. 16.
Lawrence Venuti argues for a ‘translation hermeneutic’ which ‘assumes a notion of agency that allows for the full complexity of the translator’s work [...] [treating] the translating subject as discursively constructed in self-presentations, theoretical statements, legal codes, the very process of developing a translation strategy, of selecting and arranging signifiers’. Lawrence Venuti, Introduction, in Rethinking Translation, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1–17, p. 11.
Greene, The Light in Troy, p. 33. Greene’s quotation is from the dedication which accompanies Alexander Neville’s translation of Seneca’s Oedipus (1563).
George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poetry, ed. by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 59. Although Puttenham concentrates on the achievements of texts which are of the poets’ own invention, it is significant that one translation which is commended is Arthur Golding’s Metamorphoses (1567), p. 61.
Greene, The Light in Troy, p. 5.
Greene, The Light in Troy, p. 16.
Karl Galinsky has stated that ‘the Metamorphoses cannot be properly understood without the realisation that they were meant to be Ovid’s answer to Virgil’s Aeneid’. Karl Galinsky, Ovid’s Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 15. See further the excellent analysis by Stephen Hinds in his chapter entitled ‘Repetition and Change’ which takes careful account of the shifting relationship between the Aeneid and the Metamorphoses. Writers have often viewed Ovid as the subordinate term in this classical binarism; within a poststructuralist context, however, Hinds states that his ‘mid-90’s spin on this [relation] would be that Ovid is engaged in a tendentious poetic appropriation of his predecessor [...]. Rather than construct himself as an epigonal reader of the Aeneid, Ovid is constructing Virgil as a hesitant precursor of the Metamorphoses’. Stephen Hinds,

The last six books of the Metamorphoses clearly support this view of the whole work. As Leonard Barkan explains, ‘the apotheosis of Hercules in book 9 prefigures a sequence of similar events in books 14 and 15, the apotheosis of Aeneas, Romulus and Julius Caesar, who were often identified with Hercules. The culminating figure is Augustus, whose apotheosis (15. 869–70) is inevitable but outside the poem’s time span’. Leonard Barkan, The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 83.

Galinsky, An Introduction, p. 4.


Quotations from the Latin text are from Ovid: The Metamorphoses, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1984). All subsequent references to the Metamorphoses in the introduction refer to this translation.


Calchas interpreted the omen of the snakes and birds at Aulis (12. 19 ff.). Mopsus is presented as the figure who killed Hodites, but he is also known as a seer (8. 316 ff.).


Callisto is changed into a bear and ‘with constant moanings she shows her grief, stretches up such hands as are left her to the heavens’ (2. 484–7; Ocyrhoē is transformed into a horse. As she changes, Ocyrhoē observes that ‘the last part of her complaint became scarce understood and her words were all confused’ (2. 665–6.).

2. 833 ff.; 4. 611; 5. 385 ff.; and 4. 798 respectively.
The tongue is an important emblem in the early modern period. Apart from Thomas Tomkis’s play *Lingua* (1607), the use of the tongue in the representation of Rumour in the induction of Shakespeare’s *II Henry IV* is noteworthy, so too is George Wither’s emblem featuring ‘the tongues unruly motion’ (1635). For a stimulating argument focusing on the Erasmian treatise ‘On the Use and Abuse of the Tongue’ (1525), see Patricia Parker, ‘On the Tongue: Cross-Gendering, Effeminacy and the Art of Words’, *Style*, 23 (1989), 445–65. See also Carla Mazzio, ‘Sins of the Tongue’, in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 53–80.

I am drawing here on an essay by Louise O. Fradenburg in which she discusses the image of the severed tongue in the twelfth-century *Sefer Zekirah*, *The Book of Remembrance*: ‘The eloquent tongue, subjected to pain, now licks the dust, is now cut off; it is at once mutilated and reduced to embodiment, denied those physical movements that make the tongue something to speak with as well as to eat with, that make the tongue itself capable of the symbolic, the fictive, the creative: that make the tongue itself a subtle and shifting borderline between the body and its meanings’. Louise O. Fradenburg, ‘Criticism, Anti–Semitism and the *Prioress’s Tale*’, *Exemplaria*, 1 (1989), 69–115, 80.


See further Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, p. 15.


I am indebted to Rita Copeland’s following observation: ‘The *Ovide moralisé* has usually been read as a source for other texts, as an inert repository of information about the sources of “canonical” vernacular works, or at best as an instantiation of late mythographical interests’. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages*, p. 108.

Introduction

78 Lyne, Ovid’s Changing Worlds, p. 21.
79 Lyne, Ovid’s Changing Worlds, p. 21.


82 Thomas Hedley, The Judgement of Midas (London: 1552); John Lyly, Gallathea. As it was playde before the Queenes Majestie at Greene-wiche, on Newyeeres day at Night. By the Chyldren of Paules (London: 1592) and Charles Cotton, Chaucer’s Ghoast, or, a Piece of Antiquity. Containing twelve pleasant Fables of Ovid penn’d after the ancient manner of writing in England (London: 1672). Cotton’s text actually contains the following ten tales from the Metamorphoses: the myths of Pygmalion; Diana and Actaeon; Jupiter and Juno; Apollo and Coronis; Polyphemous and Galatea; the battle between Hercules and Achelous for the love of Deianira; Mars and Venus; Jupiter and Io; Leucothea and Phoebus and Calisto and Jupiter. As I was completing Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England, Stuart Gillespie and Robert Cummings published an extremely useful catalogue which gives a sense of the range of interest in Ovidian translation. See Stuart Gillespie and Robert Cummings, ‘A Bibliography of Ovidian Translations and Imitations in English’, Translation and Literature, 13.2 (2004), 207–18.


86 Lyne, Ovid’s Changing Worlds, p. 256.


Whilst William MacIntyre’s unpublished Ph.D thesis on Golding’s version of the *Metamorphoses* states that the Latin source for the translation, the Regius–Micyllus text (1543), has been established, there is no certainty about the exact edition that Golding used. William Myron MacIntyre, ‘A Critical Study of Golding’s Translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, 1965), p. 15. Grundy Steiner asserts that his discussion of the relationship between the Regius-Micyllus text and Golding’s Ovid is ‘intended […] only as the initial treatment of a single strain of source material. It is to be followed by a detailed study (now in preparation) of the bibliographic sources employed by Golding, in so far as they can be identified and recovered’. Grundy Steiner, ‘Golding’s Use of the Regius-Micyllus Commentary Upon Ovid’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 49 (1950), 317. To my knowledge, no such study has been completed.

Deborah Rubin states that she has ‘compared all Latin passages […] to those in the three editions Sandys claims to have used: Regius–Micyllus, Sabinus, and Pontanus’, but she can only conclude that ‘Sandys probably used the text of either Regius–Micyllus or Sabinus’ [my emphasis]. Deborah Rubin, *Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses Englished’: George Sandys as Translator and Mythographer* (New York: Garland, 1985), pp. 178–9.