The .xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated by Arthur Golding (London: William Seres, 1567).

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Early Modern Bibliophilia: A Celebration of the Chrzanowski Collection
November 15, 2019

I begin with a confession: for most of my scholarly career I have cared much more about the disembodied insides of books than their material outsides. I was trained as a close reader at Amherst College during the last years of the rule of the New Criticism. Amherst English, haunted by the ghost of Robert Frost, was a place renowned for inventing "slow reading," the process by which students explicated English poetry in imitation of the translation of Latin and Greek. Reuben Brower, one of the main Amherst innovators in slow reading and a Pope scholar, went on to teach a famous course at Harvard called HUM 6, which indoctrinated a great many influential scholars and critics in slow reading, including Richard Poirier and Paul de Man. I was and remain a poetry person who thought of books as speaking to me and never thought much about how the words I heard with such immediacy got on the page or why particular pages mattered. In my graduate proseminar at Berkeley, an introductory course in which each student chose a text and used it as a focal point for a wide variety of scholarly approaches, I failed the scholarly editing portion. Berkeley English in the heyday of high theory, deconstruction and the New Historicism was neglectful of the history of the book. I left graduate school with a lot to learn, and it has been one of the greatest pleasures of my time at the Clark to learn so much from Paul, whose love for and knowledge of both the bodies and souls of the books he donates is without peer, and from the brilliant librarians at the Clark who have taught me and my students so much over the years.

I chose Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid, a rare 1567 first edition, because I was also once a classicist who wrote a college honors thesis on epic similes from Homer through Pope, with stops along the way for Virgil, Milton, Dryden's *Aeneid*, Pope's *Iliad* and finally Pope's brilliant mock epics *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*. I understood Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which I read in graduate school in an informal reading group with classicists, English professors, and poets, to be an outlier, an epic poem with a wittily subversive relation to the epic tradition's extremely complex, self-referential and ambivalent celebration of empire. In his *Tristia,* poems written from exile in Tomis (now Constanta, Romania), Ovid claims he was expelled from Rome for what he gnomically termed *carmen et error*. *Carmen* refers to his *Art of Love*'s defiance of Augustus's authority and strict morality laws, while the meaning of *error* is more mysterious, something he witnessed in the corridors of power. Mirroring its author's troubled relationship to Rome, the *Metamorphoses* is part of epic tradition but adjacent to it and critical of it. Ovid's extremely influential *Heroides*, epistolary poems voiced by the women abandoned and wounded by male heroes following their epic destinies—Briseis, Dido, Penelope—founded an equally transgressive and influential lyric genre in this subversive vein. The *Metamorphoses*, a generic hybrid which encompasses multiple verse forms, lives on in painting and sculpture (to which it has a special affinity), in lyric poetry, in Pope's mock-epic *Rape of the Lock*'s cave of spleen where "maids turned bottles call aloud for corks," and of

course, as Golding's translation's nickname, "Shakespeare's Ovid," demonstrates, in Renaissance drama, most especially Shakespeare. Indeed, Francis Meres, considered to have written the first critical account of Shakespeare in his commonplace book in 1589, wrote: "As the soule of Euphorbus was thought to live in Pythagoras, so the witty soule of Ovid lives in mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare." Euphorbus, it's worth noting, was a Trojan hero on the losing side.

As my brilliant friend and colleague at USC, Heather James has demonstrated in her book *Shakespeare's Troy* (Cambridge UP, 1997)*,* and a series of stunning essays soon to be a new book on Ovid's literary legacy in the Renaissance, Ovid turns seeming trifles, love lyrics and myths of transfiguration propelled by desire, into the stuff of heroism by speaking truth to power. He takes poetic liberties in the service of the ancient Greek rhetorical ideal of *parrhesia*, which Michel Foucault has reminded us was defined as free and truthful speech. The truth of parrheisiastic speech is proven by the risk the speaker is willing to take to declare it. As Foucault puts it, "If there is a kind of 'proof' of the sincerity of the parrhesiastes, it is his courage." Ovid took that risk and was exiled for his pains.

If the *Aeneid* gives us the tragedy of empire, Ovid's tragicomic wit in the *Metamorphoses* undermines serious epic's imperial project, providing Shakespeare with the quibble, the witty word play, the fatal Cleopatra, which, according to Samuel Johnson in his preface to his edition of Shakespeare, lost him the world but gained him immortal fame. That Johnson makes this criticism by drawing an analogy between Shakespeare and Mark Antony, Augustus's rival who famously fled the Battle of Actium in his lover's Cleopatra's wake, dying by his own hand in Egypt, shows what a brilliant reader of the Ovidian Shakespeare he was. It is therefore fitting that Golding's Ovid, in actual book form, should make an appearance in Shakespeare's bloodiest tragedy of tyranny and treason, *Titus Andronicus,* when the mute and limbless and violated Lavinia, tells the story of her rape by turning the pages to "the tragic tale of Philomel..Tereus's treason and his rape," using her mouth to guide a stick in the dirt to write the names of her attackers, just as Ovid's Io, transformed into a cow, uses her hoof to scratch her sad tale of rape into the ground. Ovid's many tales of violence and transformation—the story of Philomela, just to give one example, has inspired hosts of poets and feminist critics--are literalized in Lavinia's grotesquely disfigured body, just as his words are presented in embodied form as Golding's book.

I confess now that when I first saw Golding's book, my expectations were disappointed, and that's because the poet who taught me about the history of the book is looking down at us from the wall next to me, Alexander Pope. It's ironic, given the gaps in my education, that I was drawn to the poetry of Pope, a poet obsessed with print and the material text. The first real time I spent at an archive, under the starry dome of the old reading room in the British Museum in 1986, I came across a four-volume set of pamphlet attacks on Pope, many depicting what he called in his *Epistle to Arbuthnot* his "libell'd person, and…pictur'd shape." Pope, a disenfranchised Catholic and a hunchback, himself had these screeds bound into book form.
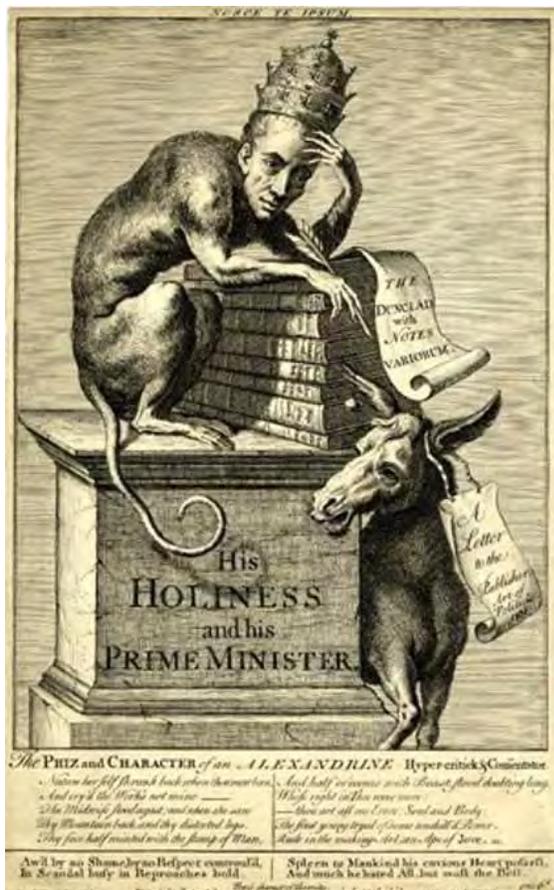
His Holiness and His Prime Minister, 1729

William Hoare, full length drawing of Alexander Pope, reproduced in Warton's *Life of Pope*, 1797

Inscribed in his hand in the first volume were these words from Job: "Behold it is my desire that my adversary had written a book. Surely I would take it on my shoulder and bind it as a crown unto me." Pope chose to dignify ephemeral pamphlets into a book of his own making, just as in his poetry he turned his curved spine into a badge of honor and literary trademark. The materiality of the book, the body, and the word all merge in Pope's imagination to make him a poet of the book par excellence. When at age 25 in 1717 Pope published his collected works, a remarkably daring move for a young living poet who was striving to claim his own epic authority by translating Homer in the aftermath of Milton, he did so extremely self-consciously in a magnificent folio edition inside of which his publisher had included a pinup pullout of the dashing young poet in a flowing wig. The last living poet to dare such a folio was Ben Jonson, almost a century earlier in 1616.
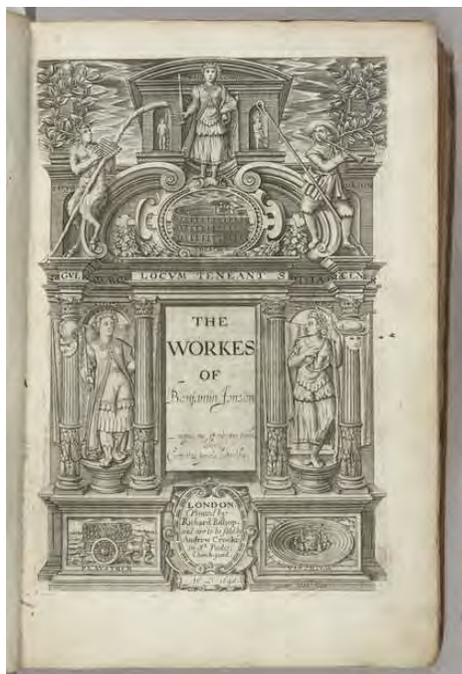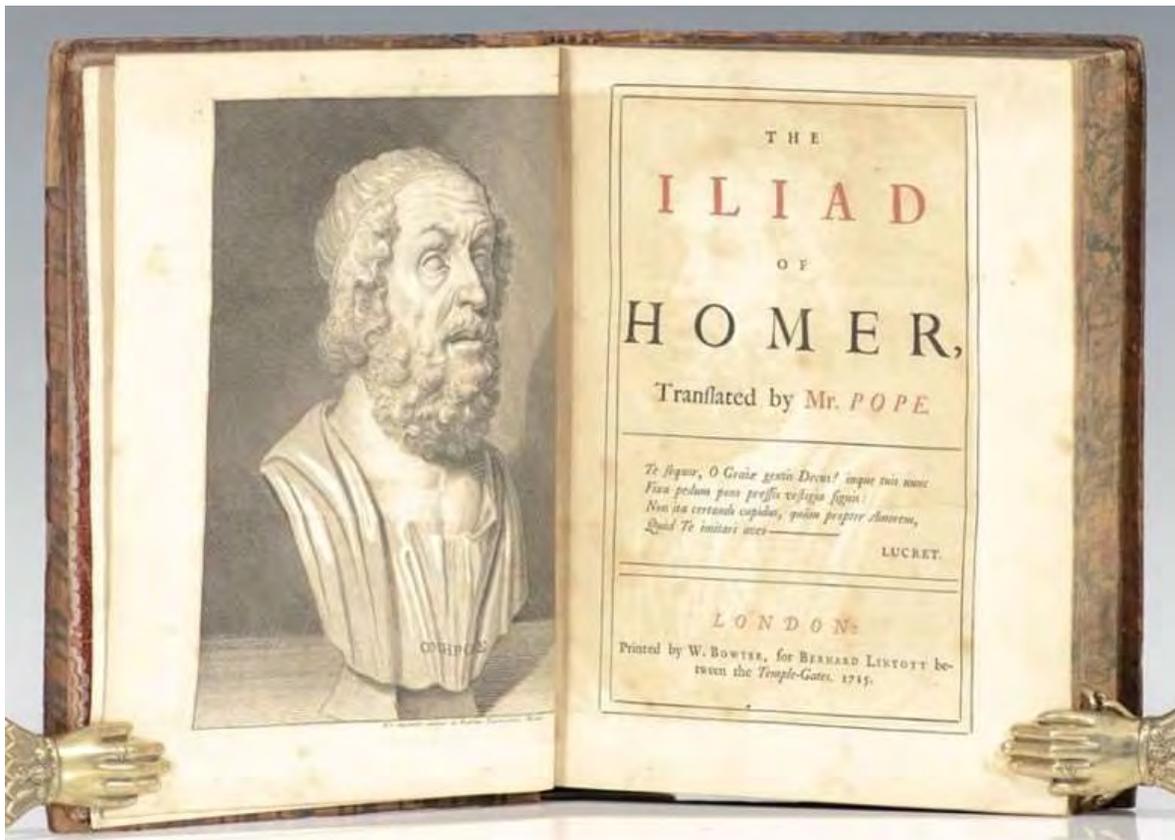
Title page to Ben Jonson's *Workes,* 1616

Frontispiece to Jonson's *Workes*, portrait of the author, 1616

Frontispiece to Pope's *Works*, 1717

Pope was the last poet in English to model his career after Virgil's, starting with pastoral, moving to georgic, and ending in epic. To write original epic after Milton was deemed impossible, at least until Wordsworth's egotistical sublime. Instead it was his successful translation of Homer that made Pope financially independent, while his mock-epics *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad* revealed a more transgressive sensibility that transformed imitation into a uniquely imitative originality. Modeling his collected works as he'd modeled himself after classical modes of authority, Pope and his booksellers were no doubt thinking about the magnificent folio editions of Chapman's Homer (1616, same year as Ben Jonson's works) and Sandys' Ovid (the definitive revised version published in 1632) that proclaimed their stateliness with elaborately illustrated frontispieces and a variety of textual adornments. It would be the subject of another paper to consider each of these poet's considerable investments in English colonial ventures; Chapman had many family connections with the East India and Virginia Companies and Sandys was the treasure and director of industry and agriculture in Virginia. When I think of Keats, to continue the imperial metaphor, like stout Cortez silent on a peak in Darien looking into Chapman's Homer, I think of such a folio.


First edition of Pope's *Iliad*, 1715

Title page to George Chapman's translation of Homer, 1517

Title page to George Sandys' translation of Ovid, 1632

Golding's quarto is not such a book. When Ezra Pound hyperbolically stated that Golding's *Metamorphoses* was the most beautiful book in the English language in his *ABC of Reading*, and goes on to qualify, "I am not here citing it for decorative purposes but for the narrative quality," he was never referring to Paul's simple and relatively unadorned quarto. Pound was interested in how Golding's fourteeners, his iambic heptameter, *moved,* and he favorably compared Golding's English "natural spoken language" with Milton's unfortunate "passion for Latinization." Never shy to state an opinion, Pound found Milton "the most unpleasant of English poets," and praised Golding's ability as a translator "to name the thing of his original author, by the name most germane, familiar, homely, to his hearers." (Pound ignores here one of the more entertaining aspects of Golding's translation, his invention of a wide range of words such as "whewl" for "howl or whine," "queach" for "thicket or grove," and "throatboll" for adam's apple. I think Golding may well have influenced Lewis Carroll's Jabberwocky!) The black letter type used in Golding' plain book similarly hearkens back to Caxton and the history of English printing. Like Golding's rustic language it is quintessentially English, just as Golding's homely fourteeners which Pound warns, are "susceptible to bad reading" and in the wrong hands are "almost certain to tub-thump," are affectionately parodied, as so many critics have noted, in the play within a play put on by Bottom and his friends in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream.* Here is Golding in Book IV describing Thisbe's death (shades of Romeo and Juliet): "This said, she took the sword yet warme with slaughter of hir love/And setting it beneath her brest, did to hir heart it shove." Here is Shakespeare paying homage to Golding's fourteeners which he breaks into three short lines (this is Bottom as Pyramus):

"Thy mantle good,/What stain'd with blood?/Approach, ye Furies fell!
O Fate, come come!/Cut thread and thrum;/Quail, crush, conclude, and quell."

I'll close with a provocative and unsupported observation that struck me as I mulled over what Golding's book actually was, because it most certainly wasn't the grand folio celebrations of empire and authorship that so influenced English poetry's first self-supporting non-dramatic author's self-fashioning in print. Golding's Ovid is vigilantly Christianized—one editor writes that the strict Protestant, even Puritan Golding, translating Ovid is itself an unlikely metamorphosis—and the book begins with a lengthy and repetitive preface that draws the moral from each book (the evils of uncontrolled lust are a recurring theme). "With skill, heeded, and judgement, this worke must be read," reads the motto on his title page, "For else to the Reader it standes in small stead."
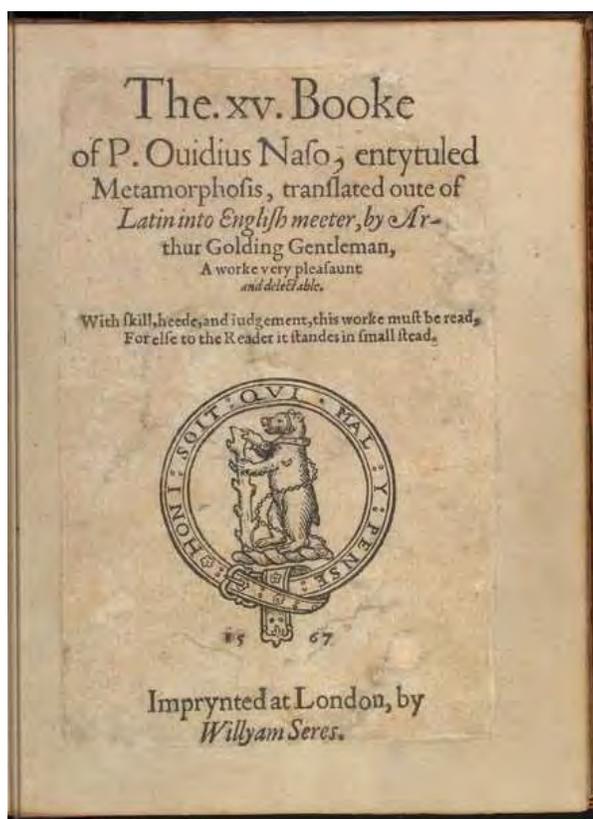
Golding's title page

It occurred to me that if Alexander Pope is a poet of the book, that Golding, who witnessed the grisly persecution of Protestants under Mary's rule during his truncated time at Cambridge, when a "purge" of the University drove out reformers, and the buried corpses of Protestant fellows were disinterred, tried for heresy, condemned, and burned at the stake, is a poet of the Word. And both his book—which looks to me like a Bible—and his translation, both disembodied inside and unadorned material outside, celebrate the power of the word to create and change the world.