

Translations and Adaptations of Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini* and Natale Conti's *Mythologiae*: The Mythographic Tradition in the Renaissance

The works that the writers of an era choose to translate are often an index to the cultural values of the period, and the languages into which those works are translated also suggest the cultural background and the intellectual sympathies of the audience envisioned by the translator. The Italian mythographers of the Renaissance, Giglio Gregorio Giraldi (*Historia*, 1548),¹ Vincenzo Cartari (*Imagini*, 1556),² and Natale Conti (*Mythologiae*, 1568),³ afford an excellent example of this generalization. Giraldi, the most obscure and least accessible of the three, was not trans-

- 1 The *De deis gentium, varia & multiplex historia* first appeared in Basel in 1548. The second and fourth editions (1560 and 1580) were also published at Basel, the third in London in 1565, and the fifth and final edition, the *Opera Omnia*, was published at Leiden in 1696, forty-four years after Giraldi's death. Interestingly, no editions of Giraldi's *Historia* were being printed during the period when interest in mythological manuals was at its height, and when Conti and Cartari were constantly reprinted and re-edited.
- 2 I have examined twenty-seven editions of Cartari's *Imagini de i dei de gli antichi*, although thirty-two are reported in published bibliographies and library catalogues: eighteen in Italian, five in Latin, six in French, one in German, and a paraphrased abridgement in English. It was first published by Francesco Marcolini in Venice in 1556, reprinted by F. Rampazetto in 1566, and published in an expanded edition, with copper plates, in 1571 by Giordano Ziletti and again in the same year by Vincenzo Valgrizi, both of Venice.
- 3 The *Mythologiae, sive explicationum fabularum, libri decem* saw continuous publication from 1568 through 1653. In later editions, other works on mythology were added to the *Mythologiae* (including Conti's own *De Venatione*, Geofroy Linocier's notes to the mythology of the Muses, and the annotations to the *Mythologiae* by the classical scholar Frederick Sylburg). Indexes to plants, animals, and mythological topics were also added, and reappeared in the translation. Cartari's text and translations were treated in the same manner, but the apparatus never became quite as complicated and fulsome as it did with Conti. Cartari, however, was published with illustrations in the 1571 edition and thereafter; but even these illustrations were included (in total disregard of the context) in some of the later editions of Conti.

lated at all; Natale Conti, the most popular, and the most learned, was translated into French from Latin, but not into Italian, his native tongue, or into English.⁴ Cartari, the only Renaissance mythographer of any stature to write in the vernacular, was honored by French, German, and Latin translations, as well as by an English paraphrase.

All three are heavily indebted to the last great medieval mythography, Giovanni Boccaccio's *Genealogie*,⁵ which, as its name suggests, presented the pagan gods as derived from a genealogical tree. Their ultimate sire, according to Boccaccio, was Demogorgon, a parent god that Boccaccio created from a misreading of the ancient writer Theodontius.⁶ The mythographers of the Renaissance rejected Boccaccio's genealogical approach, while borrowing much of his scholarship. Their own approaches to the pagan pantheon were more specialized: Giraldi chose to become an historian of the gods, and to trace the symbolical significance of individual deities through etymological analysis; Cartari, the iconographer of the three, is mainly concerned with the meanings that can be derived from physical descriptions of the gods, as they appear in ancient accounts of statues and paintings; Conti is the ethicist of the group, and his emphasis lies in the relationship of the myth to the moral well-being of mankind.⁷ Although Giraldi was never translated into any of the modern languages, both Conti and Cartari borrowed freely from his *Historia*, often without acknowledgment, and those borrowings are in turn incorporated in the translations of the *Imagini* and the *Mythologiae*.

- 4 Mr. John Glenn, formerly of the University of Illinois, has pointed out to me that there is a record of an English translation of Conti in *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers 1640-1708 A.D.*, by one Robert Wood, Philo-med. ..., vol. 2 (London: Privately printed 1913), 305. I have never found any other record of a copy of this edition, or any evidence that it was disseminated during the Renaissance. I have therefore regarded the Wood translation as a *reported* and *putative* edition, rather than an actual one. I am presently engaged in completing a co-authored translation of the *Mythologiae* (with Professor Steven Brown, of the St. Bonaventure University Classics Department), which Cornell University Press plans to publish.
- 5 Boccaccio is the only mythographer whose work appears in a modern edition. Cf. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium libri*, ed. Vincenzo Romano, 2 vols. (Bari: Gius Laterza & sons 1951).
- 6 Cf. Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press 1970) 216
- 7 For an extended study of the mythographers, see my article, 'Venus, Cupid and the Italian Mythographers,' *Humanistica Lovaniensia [Journal of Neo-Latin Studies]* 23 (1974) 31-41.

Since there is no translation of the *Historia*, the focus of this paper will be restricted to a philological and cultural assessment of the translations of Conti's *Mythologiae* and Cartari's *Imagini*; I shall first discuss the format of the works in their original languages, then outline the printing history of individual translations, and finally analyze selected passages from these works for accuracy and quality of translation.

Cartari's *Imagini* and Conti's *Mythologiae* were probably the most important works of mythological commentary published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Certainly they were the most popular and ubiquitous: there were thirty-two editions of the *Imagini* in various languages, and twenty-seven of the *Mythologiae* in Latin and French. Editions appeared in the great publishing centers of Europe; Pietro Paulo Tozzi, publisher-printer at Padua, produced sumptuous editions of both authors, and Paul Frellon published editions of the French translations, perhaps motivated by the success of the French version of the *Imagini* to follow it up with the French version of Conti's *Mythologiae*. Conti's *Mythologiae* was used as a text in Elizabethan schools,⁸ and Robert Burton and Sir Thomas Browne cite Cartari as an authority on classical mythology.⁹ Conti was also cited by Thomas Nashe and by Diodati in his correspondence with Milton;¹⁰ Cartari was even recommended to artists, which may explain why Dante Gabriel Rossetti owned a copy of the *Imagini*.¹¹

A translation of either work represented a formidable undertaking, since many of the *literati* would know the original texts and might be tempted to make comparisons between versions, and the works themselves are enormous. Depending on which edition of Cartari one picks up, the work, with illustrations, can approach seven hundred quarto pages, while the expanded edition of the *Mythologiae* (Frankfurt 1581), without illustrations, amounts to 1,075 densely packed octavo pages in small print. In modern print, where the printer does not use scribal abbreviations, the texts would be even longer.

8 Cf. Thomas W. Baldwin, *William Shakespere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press 1944) I, 421-2; II, 291, 396

9 Cf. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York: Farrar & Rinehart Inc. 1927) 905. *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 6 vols. (London: Faber & Gwyer Ltd. 1928-31) [6, Letters, 309]

10 *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, rpt. from the original ed. with corrections and suppl. notes by F.P. Wilson. (New York: Barnes & Noble 1966) 3, 185; Letter # 34 in 'Miscellaneous Correspondence in Foreign Tongues,' *The Works of John Milton*, the Columbia Edition, ed. F.A. Patterson et al. (New York: Columbia University Press 1931) 12, 309

11 The copy is signed and can be located at Columbia University, in the Avery Library, # A7760 c242, the Venice 1647 edition.

Translation was rendered even more difficult because Conti and Cartari were translators themselves — over one third of the text of Conti is made up of quotations from Greek and Latin, with all the Greek quotations (over half of the total number) translated into Latin, immediately after the quotation of the Greek text. Similarly, about one third of Cartari's text consists of translation of original material, chiefly from Latin. Unlike Conti, however, Cartari did not reproduce the original classical texts and therefore had to translate both Latin and Greek texts into Italian. This in turn forced the French translator Antoine Du Verdier either to locate the originals, or to translate a translation. There is even some evidence that Cartari used at least one French source for his classical quotations,¹² thus producing the spectre of an Italian translation of a French translation of Greek and Latin texts, which had to be translated back into French, without doing violence to the original languages. The translator of Conti faced the added problem of comparing his verse translations of Greek texts with the originals, and trying to do simple justice to the style of a bewildering variety of authors. Cartari quotes over two hundred authors; for Conti, the total is closer to five hundred, ranging from Homer to obscure mythographers whose works have since been lost.

In 1581, Antoine Du Verdier (1544-1600) translated Cartari's *Imagini* into both Latin and French and, still in the same year, two different publishers (Bartholemeus Honoratus and Stephanus Michaelus) published the work in four separate issues, two in each language.¹³ *Les Images*, the French edition, was re-issued by Claude Michel in 1602, 1606, and 1610, and by Paul Frelon in 1623 and 1624. The Latin translation, the *Imagines Deorum*, reappeared under the editorship of the German historian Paul Hachenberg (1652-1681; see below for his German version of Cartari) as the *Pantheon Antiquorum* in 1683, under its original title in 1687, and finally as the *Theatrum Ethnico idoloatricum Politico-Historicum Ethnicorum Idolatrias* in 1699, the last edition of the *Imagini* to be printed in any language.

12 This was the *Discours de la religion des anciens Romains* by Guillaume du Choul (Lyon 1556). Cartari consulted Du Choul for both illustration and text. Cf. Robert L. McGrath, 'The "Old" and "New" Illustrations for Cartari's *Imagini de i dei de gli Antichi*: A Study of "Paper Archaeology" in the Italian Renaissance,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 59 (1962) 213-26. See also Don Cameron Allen, 230, 257-8, 260, 273.

13 Full titles of the translations are: *Imagines deorum, qui ab antiquis colebantur: in quibus simulacra, ritus, caerimoniae, magna[ue] ex parte veterum religio explicatur; Les images des dieux des anciens, contenant les idoles, coutumes, ceremonies & autres choses appartenans à la religion des payens*. All four issues were published at Lyon.

The *Imagines Deorum* poses some interesting problems in influence studies. This is apparently one of those instances where a translation proved to be more popular than the work in the original language. There are more references to 'Carterius' than to Cartari in contemporary sources, and occasionally 'Verdurius' is taken to be the author of the work, or as an author of a second work related to the *Imagini*. For example, in referring to the figures of the Egyptian gods, Robert Burton counsels his readers to 'see more in Carterius and Verdurius of their monstrous forms and ugly pictures.'¹⁴ And John Marston, while he is aware that Conti or 'Comes' is not the author of the *Imagini*, still uses the Latin title to refer to Cartari's work:

Reach me some Poets Index that will show.
Imagines Deorum. Booke of Epithites,
Natales Comes, thou I know recites,
 And mak'st Anatomie of Poesie.¹⁵

One reason for the appeal of the Latin translation might be the presence of the original Latin quotations instead of Cartari's Italian translations or paraphrases.¹⁶ The poet or writer who consulted the *Imagines Deorum* in lieu of the *Imagini* could appropriate from Horace or Virgil and pass them off as the products of his own learning; or he might wish to establish the context of a quotation and develop his own ideas, just as a person today might pick up an anthology of poems and be inspired to read in the complete works of an author. The Italian translations by Cartari would have proved much too difficult to adapt for these purposes, and the French translations of Cartari's translations could hardly substitute for the classical originals.

The marginal notations in the Latin translation are brief, and merely summarize the contents of the text as it moves along. In an equally terse preface the translator condemns the impiety of men for putting up statues of the gods, and praises Cartari for his work with ancient coins as well as with stories and other writings of the ancients. Du Verdier does, however, defend the translation into Latin on the basis of universal appeal: 'Quare librum in Latinum sermonem convertimus, ut nostra operatae utilitatis universae nationes participes fierent.'¹⁷

14 Burton, 905

15 Satyre II of 'Cerein Satyres,' *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1961) 72

16 D.J. Gordon says of the Latin translation of Cartari that it 'was perhaps even more widely used than the Italian original,' in his 'Chapman's Use of Cartari in the Fifth Sestiad of "Hero and Leander,"' *Modern Language Review* 39 (1944) 281, n. 2.

17 *3v, Lyon, 1581 (Stephanus Michaelus). All subsequent references are to this edition and will be supplied in the text of the paper.

The most important change from the Italian original lies in the addition of bibliographical information about Greek and Roman authors. In most of the many instances where Cartari leaves it out, Du Verdier will give the name of the work quoted and indicate the subdivisions of the work in which the quotation originally appears, e.g. Horace 'lib. iii. od. xxix.' He will also cite Greek verses to which Cartari alludes (2G3, 2G4). Some changes in chapter headings also occur: a qualifier is added to the chapter on Apollo ('De Apolline, Phoebo, *Qui Et Sol Dicitur*,' italics mine); the introductory chapter and the chapter on Bacchus are subdivided to produce new chapters, one on the images of eternity (Clv) and another on the Lares (2P1). In one instance, Du Verdier bows to the superior skill of Angelo Poliziano's translation of a Moschus poem in preference to his own (2T2v). (Conti himself adopts this practice, for there are many instances in the *Mythologiae* where he substitutes a contemporary Latin translation of a Greek text for his own, even though he was a proficient translator of Greek literature in his own right.) In Du Verdier's translation, a more rigid moral climate than that of Cartari's time requires that the genitalia be erased from the figures of Mercury (2B4v, 2E1v), and Cartari's gratuitous diatribe on women in the chapter on Fortune is expunged.

Du Verdier seems to have changed personalities when he takes up his French pen, for his approach to the pagan pantheon in his introduction to the *Images* is totally new. He is now an occultist who praises the wise men who concealed the truths of religion from the masses in the hidden recesses of fables. They did not want, he says, 'to cast their pearls before swine.'¹⁸ He finds natural philosophy, astrology, logic, theology, and dialectic in the fables of the ancients. He still speaks of impiety, but the approach to the subject matter is less sober; one can feel the pulsing energy of a writer composing in his native tongue on a congenial subject. Marginal annotations are just as brief as in the Latin text, and Du Verdier unaccountably leaves out all the bibliographical citations he had labored to insert in the Latin translation. He also uses French translations of Seneca and Virgil by Robert Garnier and Pierre de Ronsard in preference to his own (R3v, R4). In a rare admission of defeat Du Verdier cites the original Italian of Barbaro, patriarch of Aquila, and pairs it with a version on a similar theme by Joachim du Bellay. He displays remarkable

18 'Les plus sçavans d'entre les anciens Ethniques, qui pour raison de leur doctrine avoient le soing & surintendance des affaires de la Religion, ne voulans espandre les marguerites au devant des pourceaux ...' az, Lyon, 1581 (Stephans Michaelus). All subsequent references to the French translation are to this edition, and will be given in the text of the paper.

linguistic sophistication when he notes that it is impossible to translate the passage directly:

Les differentes terminaisons de cest Echo aux langues Françoise & Italienne sont cause qu'impossible est d'en faire traduction, à tout le moins nayfue, chacune langue ayant sa propriété & dictions propres, en quoy la Françoise n'est moins riche & copieuse que les autres vulgaires. Mais pour exemple de telle sorte d'echo, ie me contenteray de mettre icy quelques vers de Ioachim du Bellay, qui ont beaucoup meilleure grace, & sont d'autre substance: ... (V1v, V2).

On other occasions, Virgil (Z1v), Ovid (242v), and the famous emuleum writer Andrea Alciati (242v) are quoted in the original Latin. At one point Du Verdier quarrels with Ariosto's imitation of Virgil's treatment of the Harpies (quoted by Cartari), and argues for his own French version of the original, which he provides (2Y1v, 2Y2).

The genitalia are again removed from the illustrations of Mercury (3C2v, 3C3v), while the diatribe against women in the chapter on Fortune is restored, with the following apology in the margin:

Ceste maxime n'est telle que l'auteur la dict. Tout ce discours est de Cartari, & entierement indecent à la modestie d'un coeur vertueux aymant la pudicité. Conseil pernicieux. (4B1)

Thus the French seems to be a more spirited version of the *Imagini* than the Latin, but ultimately less useful, considering its narrower circle of potential readers and the lack of bibliographical citations. The illustrations in both the Latin and the French versions are of much poorer quality than in the originals, particularly in the later Latin versions.

The German translation by Paul Hachenberg (the '... Neu-eröffneter Götzen-Tempel ...' Frankfurt: 1692) omits more of the original text than either the French or the Italian translations. In the chapter on Venus, for example, over one fourth of the original text is omitted. References to Giraldi and Apuleius, as well as a quotation from Ovid, are deleted. A lengthy account from Athenaeus of a Venus worshiped for the beauty of her buttocks is also omitted, presumably because the translator found it offensive. Important elements of the myth of Venus that are omitted include the etymology of her name, all references to the common or popular Venus, and her relationship to the Graces or the Hours. Apparently Hachenberg trimmed parts of the text that he thought were redundant (the material on the Graces is repeated in a subsequent chapter), immoral, or uninteresting. The same procedure is followed in the chapter on Saturn, which omits the initial quotation from Virgil (C3),

some references to Macrobius, and the undignified account of Saturn's metamorphosis into a horse after being surprised with a nymph by his wife Rhea (the supporting quotation from Virgil is also omitted — 2G4v).

Although Hachenberg obviously translated from one of the later, expanded editions of the *Imagini*, he also appears to have consulted either a Latin edition, or else the first edition of 1556, for, as in the Latin translation, he maintains the separation of the Saturn and Venus accounts into two chapters, which was abandoned in the 1571 and later editions of the Italian text. His chapter on the hero (C2) was originally part of the introductory chapter, and there is no precedent for this separation in any of the editions in Italian.

The German version of the *Imagini* is therefore a selectively abridged translation of the original Italian, in which portions of the text are excised because of the moral scruples of the translator, or his desire for verbal economy. Another disadvantage of the German version is that the plates are inserted at the end of the text, and not, as in other versions, intercalated in the appropriate sections. This was the only edition in German but, as noted earlier, Hachenberg also edited three Latin editions of the Du Verdier translation, and was Cartari's last editor.

*The Fountaine of Ancient Fiction*¹⁹ by Richard Linche (fl. 1596-1601) is an unacknowledged paraphrase rather than a translation of Cartari's text. The omission of almost all Cartari's classical quotations, the concluding chapters on Cupid and the Graces, and the bulk of the chapter on Venus reduces the text to about a third of the original. While Linche never mentions Cartari, one can trace the *Imagini*'s full title in his reference in the title page to 'the Images and Statues of the gods of the Ancients, with their proper and particular expositions,' and the notice: 'Done out of Italian into English, by Richard Linche Gent.' He seems to have depended on the shorter, first edition of 1556, rather than the expanded edition of 1571 (the model for all later editions), and some phrases translated by Linche occur only in the first edition. The English is the only version, other than the Italian original of 1556, to be printed without illustrations.

Linche's own relative anonymity,²⁰ the obscure relation of the work to

19 *The Fountaine Of Ancient Fiction. Wherein is lively depicted the Images and Statues of the gods of the Ancients, with their proper and perticular expositions. Done out of Italian into English, by Richard Linche Gent* (London: Adam Islip 1599) (STC# 4691)

20 *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 11 (London: Smith, Elder 1909) attributes a group of 38 sonnets (the 'Diella') to Linche (p. 1150).

its original, its limitation to only one edition, the lack of illustrations, the omission of most of Cartari's classical quotations — all these factors render it unlikely that the *Fontaine* exerted much influence on the mythological tradition in England. In the absence of tangible evidence to the contrary, one can assume that it exerted no influence at all on the continent.

Although the *Mythologiae* had fewer translators than the *Imagini*, they boasted impressive credentials. Only one translation of the *Mythologiae* is extant, a French version by Jean de Montlyard (1530-ca.1610), historian and translator of Heliodorus, Apuleius, and Piero Valeriano Bolzani, the sixteenth-century Egyptologist whose *Hieroglyphica* was constantly reprinted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first edition of the *Mythologie* (1600)²¹ was rapidly followed by other editions in 1604, 1607, 1611, and 1612. A final, deluxe edition in 1627 was edited and revised by Jean Baudoin (ca. 1590-1650),²² a member of the French Academy and a distinguished classicist. Baudoin also translated Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, an emblematic work of immense popularity that contains numerous borrowings from Conti and the other mythographers.

Marginal notations on the text in each edition refer the reader either to the classical author being cited in a particular passage or to its subject matter. These notations, plus a few conventional remarks on allegory and on the absurdity of polytheism included in the various prefaces by Montlyard and Baudoin, make up the sum of the annotation and commentary available in the French translation. Baudoin notes that the *Mythologiae* is a work '... which the public has received with a great deal of applause ...' (a 5v). He attempts, unsuccessfully, to interpret the entire work in terms of the active, the contemplative, and the pleasure-seeking life. The substance of these remarks is borrowed from Montlyard's own preface to the *Mythologie*; he omits, however, Montlyard's defense of poetry as the oldest form of knowledge and the repository of divine wisdom, commonplace derived from Horace and Aristotle. It is both surprising and

21 *Mythologie c'est à dire, Explication des fables ... extraite du latin de Noël le Comte, & augmentee de plusieurs choses qui facilitent l'intelligence du sujet, par I. D. M.* (Lyon 1600)

22 *Mythologie ou explication des fables edition nouvelle illustree de sommaires sur chascque livre ... avec une augmentation de plusieurs belles recherches accommodees su sujet le tout recuielly des plus celebres autheurs ... par i. bavidoin* (Lyon 1627). Comparisons in the text are made with the 1612 edition by Paul Frel[on] (*Mythologie, c'est a dire, explication des fables ...* Lyon). All subsequent references to the *Mythologie* are to the 1612 and the 1627 editions, and will be given in the text of the paper.

regrettable that the translators of Valeriano (Montlyard) and Ripa (Baudoin) did not choose to embellish the translation of Conti with the wealth of information they had accumulated about Egyptology and Iconography.

The Montlyard translation (all remarks also apply to Baudoin's version, since the differences are minimal and are concerned almost exclusively with changes in polite usage), while basically accurate and often elegant, omits difficult passages, adds sections of mythological analysis where Montlyard is desirous of displaying his own learning, and sometimes expands or contracts the classical quotations that Conti provides.

Expansions and interpolations of classical texts, particularly in the Baudoin revision, are the rule rather than the exception. For example, in the 1612 (Montlyard) and 1627 (Baudoin) editions, the huge list of artists and their works that Conti provides is omitted (*Mythologiae, Frankfurt*, 1581, 2E4 fol.), as well as an important quotation from the *Argonautica* (1612, 2X5; 1627, 3K4v), but the chapter on Castor and Pollux (*Mythologiae*, V11, x) is significantly expanded. The French translators will often give the etymology of a name if Conti does not provide it; for example, Arnus, the nurse of Neptune, is '... ainsi nommee du Grec arnein, c'est à dire nier ...' (1612, L1v, 1627, N6v).

The interpolations and changes in the translation are subtle but substantial enough to distort the meaning of Conti's Latin. In the following passage from chapter two of the first book, 'Concerning the Usefulness of the Fables,' Montlyard expands selected portions of the text to achieve a rhetorical balance through the use of synonyms. He also adds his own explanation of the nature of those who do not know God in order to increase the reader's sense of their culpability. He rearranges part of the passage to emphasize the positive virtues of the God-fearing man, and adds the quality of loyalty to the list alongside religion, respectability, and temperance.

For purposes of comparison I have given the Latin passage and my English translation along with the French. Portions of the text that Montlyard has added are italicized; portions he has rearranged have been placed in brackets:

Nam profectò quis nesciat, omnia propè Deorum gentium mysteria fuisse ab antiquis sub fabulis occultata? Cùm enim turbae foeminarum & imperitae multitudini religio, & Deorum metus, & fides, & probitas & temperantia esset in animis inferenda, qui neque Dei naturam intelligerent, neque integritatem rapinae ac libidini sine aliquo Deorum metu anteponerent, non solùm fabulosae de Diis narrationes à sapientibus fuerunt excogitatae; sed etiam fabulosae imagines, &

picturae monstris propè similes introductae. ('De fabularum vtilitate,' I, 2, az – Frankfurt, 1581).

Et de faict où est celuy qui ne sçache bien que les Anciens ont affublé de contes fabuleux, quasi tous les mysteres de leurs Dieux? Car voyans qu'ils auoyent affaire à vne troupe de femmes, & à vne populace grossiere & idiote, qui n'auoit aucune intelligence de Dieu, & ne faisoit non plus d'estat ni de conscience de mener vne vie sainte & religieuse, que de s'abandonner à pilleries, larcins & toutes sortes de plaisirs desordonnez, [& que d'ailleurs il estoit expedient de planter en leurs cœurs vne religion & crainte des Dieux, foy, & loyauté; attempance & preud d'homme:] les plus sages & mieux aduisez d'entreux, controuuerent non seulement des contes fabuleux touchant leurs Dieux; mais aussi ils mirent en auant des idoles mensongeres, des peintures & pourtraits approchans fort des monstres. ('Du proufit qui revient de la conaissance des Fables,' 1612, A2; 'Du proffit qu'apporte la cognoissance des Fables,' 1627, I, 2, A2).

Everyone knows that almost all the mysteries that concerned families of gods were hidden in fables by the ancients; since religion, fear of the gods, respectability, and temperance had to be instilled in the souls of the throng of women and the ignorant multitude. Such creatures have no understanding of God's nature. Nor would they prefer integrity before theft and passion, without some fear of the gods. Not only were mythical stories about the gods devised by the sages, therefore, but they also built mythical statues and painted pictures that looked very much like monsters.

The passage may be taken as typical of Montlyard's method, typical indeed of the method of any translator of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; for these men conceived their function to be the presentation and illumination of an author's *ideas*, and not simply the rendering of a faithful translation of his text. The translator was the author's vocal partner, adding his own wit and knowledge to that of his source.

Clearly, the manuals of Cartari and Conti enjoyed an extended life through the process of translation; Cartari's *Imagini* became available both to the classicist who knew no Italian, and to the Frenchman and the German who had no abilities in either ancient or foreign modern tongues. For the English scholar, Linche's brief paraphrase would hardly suffice for serious study, but an Englishman who could not read French, German, Italian, or Latin would in any case have little appreciation for the fine points of iconography. Only the French benefited from the Montlyard translation of Conti; perhaps the formidable size of the work discouraged other would-be translators, or the lack of illustrations suggested that the *Mythologiae* would have a more limited appeal than

the *Imagini*. Unquestionably, the Latin original of the *Mythologiae* was more influential than the translation, but the numerous editions of Montlyard, and the revision of the translation by a member of the French Academy, indicate more than a passing interest in a French translation of Conti's text. Finally, the existence of Renaissance translations of both Cartari and Conti suggests the importance of their respective works, particularly considering the sustained, painstaking effort needed to bring two such enormous works into print.

The translators of the mythographers were typical of other Renaissance translators in their practice of adding or omitting passages from the original text without alerting the reader to the changes. However, compared with other translators of the period, particularly with those who were translating works of proven literary merit, their translations are relatively straightforward and extraneous commentary is kept to an absolute minimum. They did not regard themselves as artists in their own right, as did so many Elizabethan translators;²³ rather they viewed themselves as performing a service for the reader, and saw no need to supplement texts which are commentaries in themselves with additional commentary. Since no translation of either the *Mythologiae* or the *Imagini* was ever duplicated in any language, however, it would be impossible for a reader who knew only his native tongue to check for omissions or interpolations by the translator. Thus the cultural historian cannot assess the influence of either the *Imagini* or the *Mythologiae* without making a careful analysis of their different translations and then determining whether the original or a translation was being read more frequently in a given locale or by a particular author. Admittedly, a translation can distort the meaning of the original text; nevertheless, it can also give the text new life by extending its influence beyond the linguistic borders of the original tongue in which it was composed. For if we want to be precise about the importance of a given text, we must take into account all its imprecise renderings, which can sometimes assume a greater cultural importance than the original.

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23 Cf. F.O. Matthiessen, *Translation, an Elizabethan Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1931)