

## A Response to F. J. Sypher\*

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In the course of his article, F. J. Sypher makes incidental reference to my interpretation of several of Golding's names for Ovid's dogs, and raises questions which require attention. He queries "Ladon" challenging the explanation that, given his known aversion to Greek and distaste for Micyllus, Golding did not bother to read the latter's note where "Ladon" is explained in terms of the Greek verb, "ladomai" ("to take, seize, or catch"), preferring the notion that he preserved the name because it carries nuances of "larone" (or "ladrone") ("thief") or even of "lay on" (56). He also rejects the established view that translator has confused the Greek "labros" ("gluttonous") with the Latin "labrosus" ("with large lips") in describing "Jollyboy" as "a great and large flewd hound," and again seeking nuances, suggests that the phrase shows "a kind of punning inspiration" (57).<sup>1</sup> Yet all this in the face of a general lack of expertise in Greek which made Golding follow Regius' Latin explanations of the Greek names for Actaeon's dogs in Ovid's text *even when they are inaccurate*. Moreover, Sypher also rejects the explanation that Golding mistranslated "Laelaps" ("Hurricane") as "Spring" because, working at speed, like other translators of the fifteen sixties, he paused only long enough to read the opening of Regius' note which begins "a *velocitate atque impetu sic est appellata*" (italics mine); "Spring," he argues, is not unrelated to "spring forward and catch suddenly" like a whirlwind (57), but the connexion is tortuous while that to the

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\*Reference: F. J. Sypher, "Actaeon's Dogs in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the Wolf Pack in *Ysengrimus*," *Connotations* 2.1 (1992): 52-57; Anthony Brian Taylor, "Arthur Golding and the Elizabethan Progress of Actaeon's Dogs," *Connotations* 1.3 (1991): 207-23.

beginning of the note with its notion of speed ("velocitate") and violent sudden assault ("impetu") is clear.

He appears to be on solid ground, however, when challenging details of my reading of "Wight, Bowman, Royster, beautie faire and white as winters snow" for "Tigris, & Alce / Et niveis Leucon . . . vilis." Because precision is not Golding's way and he does not preserve Ovid's exact order in dealing with Actaeon's dogs, I took "Wight" to represent "niveis Leucon . . . vilis" ("White with snowy hairs"), and also suggested that, thoroughly enjoying himself, he translates this name twice, thereby adding an extra dog to Ovid's pack in the shape of "beautie faire and white as winters snow." Sypher rightly points out that the *OED* records the word "wight" as an archaic term for "strong," thus making it a possible translation for the dog "Alce" ("Might") (56). However, the *OED* also points out that "wight" is an archaic form of "white," and as the use of "whyght" in the first line of Polyphemus' song quoted by Martindale and Brown shows, Golding's spelling of that word could fluctuate.<sup>2</sup>

But the conviction that "Alce" and not "Leucon" is "Wight" leads Sypher to maintain that three and not four dogs are represented by "Wight, Bowman, Royster, beautie faire and white as winters snow." According to such a reading, the third dog becomes the somewhat awkward "Royster, beautie faire and white as winters snow"; this also involves the obvious difficulty of explaining how "Royster," a word meaning "ruffian," comes to represent a white dog and Sypher has to resort to the suggestion that the word contains an echo of "the white colour of the inside of an *oyster* shell." We know, however, that Elizabethan readers of Golding did not take "Royster" as a translation for "Leucon," Ovid's white dog. Both Higgins and John Rider take "Royster" as I do, as a translation for "Alce" ("Might"); moreover, neither lists "Wight" as a possible translation for the name.<sup>3</sup> As for the issue of whether there are three or four dogs here and whether, in fact, "beautie faire and white as winters snow," with its lower case, should be taken for a dog's name, this was resolved by Golding himself when he briefly and cursorily revised his Ovid for a second edition in 1575. He replaced the attractive, but ambivalent, lower-case "beautie" with the equally attractive, unambivalent, upper-case "Blaunche,"<sup>4</sup> thereby

confirming the addition of an extra dog to the pack, the emended line reading:

Wight, Bowman, Royster, Blanche faire and white as winters snow.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For discussion of Golding's confusion of "Labros" with "Labrosus," see T. W. Baldwin, "The Pedigree of Theseus' Pups: *Midsummer Night's Dream* IV, 1, 123-30," *ShJW* (1968): 111, and Niall Rudd, "Pyramus and Thisbe in Shakespeare and Ovid," *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, eds. D. West and T. Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 175.

<sup>2</sup>"More whyght thou art then Primrose leaf my Lady *Galatee*" (13.930). See Charles Martindale and Sarah Annes Brown, "A Complementary Response to Anthony Brian Taylor," *Connotations* 2.1 (1992): 65.

<sup>3</sup>In Higgins, one finds "Alce; Stout, or royster"; in Rider, "Royster, or stoute. Alce." Reference is to *The Nomenclator or Remembrancer of Adrianus Junius Physician. Englished by John Higgins* (London, 1585), and Rider's *Bibliotheca Scholastica* (London, 1589).

<sup>4</sup>This is listed among the variants for the second edition in Rouse (*The xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman* [London, 1567], ed. W. H. D. Rouse [1904; rpt. London: Centaur P, 1961]); see 317. Both Higgins (1585) and Rider (1589) pick up Golding's emendation, the former with "Leucon; Blanch, or whitecoat," the latter with "Blanche, or white-coate. Leucon."