"De interpretatione recta...":
Early Modern Theories of Translation

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Abstract

Translation has been essential to the development of languages and cultures throughout the centuries, particularly in the early modern period when it became a cornerstone of the process of transition from Latin to vernacular productions, in such countries as France, Italy, England and Spain. This process was accompanied by a growing interest in defining the rules and features of the practice of translation. The present article aims to examine the principles that underlay the highly intertextual early modern translation theory by considering its classical sources and development. It focuses on subjects that were constantly reiterated in any discussion about translation: the debate concerning the best methods of translation, the *sense-for-sense/ word-for-word* dichotomy – a topos that can be traced to the discourse on translation initiated by Cicero and Horace and was further developed by the Church fathers, notably St. Jerome, and eventually inherited by both medieval and Renaissance translators. Furthermore, it looks at the differences and continuities that characterise the medieval and Renaissance discourses on translation with a focus on the transition from the medieval, free manner of translation to the humanist, philological one.

Keywords: translation studies, early modern theory of translation**,** classical translation theory, literal/ word-for-word translation, sense-for-sense translation, medieval vs. humanist translation

Translation represented a vital and central contribution to the evolution of all great cultural movements of early modern Europe, particularly in the Renaissance when, with the advent of printing, an unprecedented flurry of translation activity furthered the cultural exchange of ideas among

European nations. The two major intellectual forces of the period, Humanism with the Italian-inspired revival of classical texts and the Reformation with its various European ramifications and investment in Bible translation, promoted and mobilized translation (Delabastita 47). The emergence and development of vernacular literatures from the tenth century onwards across Europe involved the translation, adaptation and absorption of works produced in other cultural contexts, especially the newly rediscovered texts of the Greek and Latin Antiquity. Having these texts in the vernacular encouraged the growth of national literatures and the development of a national identity. Since the Middle Ages writers and translators emphasised the didactic and moral purpose of translation into the vernacular, its pre-eminent role in the dissemination of knowledge which was underlined by its power to grant access to formerly privileged and restricted information. Starting with the second half of the sixteenth century, the educational role of translation began to be gradually supplemented by another function which seemed equally significant, namely the instrumental part that translation played in the formation of a national language and identity. Like their medieval predecessors, Renaissance translators emphasised the significant role of translations in spreading understanding and knowledge among common people.

As is well known, Latin was until well into the sixteenth century the main intellectual means of communication, performing the role of *lingua franca* within the European context. However, the development of printing at the end of the fifteenth century brought about the emergence of a new audience which was not necessarily literate in Latin, by widening and facilitating access to all types of texts. Consequently, in the sixteenth century, translation became a universal, transcultural phenomenon; the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and translations from the classics began to be accompanied by translations of major works of vernacular literature (Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*), of various political treatises (Innocent Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*, Jean Bodin's *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, Justus Lipsius's *Sixe Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine*) and of contemporary historical works (Francesco Guicciardini's *History of Italy*, Machiavelli's *The Prince* and *History of Florence*). This diversification of

translation is indicative of the interest expressed by such European nations as France, Italy, Spain and England for the literature, culture and history of their neighbours. The translation of these various types of texts into the vernacular is significant as it shows that there were works that appealed across cultural boundaries in spite of the clashes that these often competing nations had in the political and cultural fields, in the early modern period.

This article sets out to investigate the heavily intertextual environment that led to the development of the early modern European translation discourse by examining the fundamental principles that underlay the early modern theories of translation of French, Italian, Spanish and English writers and translators. By surveying some of the most influential theories of translation from the Antiquity to the Renaissance I aim to highlight the manner in which certain ideas about translation inherited from the Greek and Latin Antiquity were appropriated, adapted and transmitted throughout the centuries by means of the theoretical discourses of these European writers and translators. Consequently, I focus on what I have identified to be some of the recurrent topics in the early modern discourse on translation: the debate concerning the best way to translate a text from one language into another and the confrontation regarding the distinction between the *ad verbum*/word-for-word mode of translation and the *ad sensum*/sense-for-sense alternative of rendering a text into a different language. These issues were either formulated along specific theoretical lines in treatises on the art of translating or developed in the translators' more or less authoritative prefatorial comments.

Literal versus Rhetorical Translation: From the Latin Antiquity to the Middle Ages

In order to enhance our understanding of the circumstances that led to the development of the fundamental principles – the word-for-word versus sense-for-sense method of translation and the characteristics of a good translation – that underlay early modern thinking about translation we have to follow a historical line that goes back to the Greek and Latin

Antiquity, when some of the earliest pronouncements on translation were issued. The word-for-word/ sense-for-sense topos can be traced, as has been noted by various translation scholars, to the classical discourse on translation initiated by Cicero and Horace and was further developed by the Church fathers, notably St. Jerome; this discourse has been carried over through the Middle Ages into the Renaissance.

Cicero's most famous statement on the difference between translating *ut interpres* and translating *ut orator* was to become the cornerstone of any debate about translation from the Antiquity onwards. Cicero's most frequently quoted comments on translation occur in *De optimo genere oratorum (The Best Kind of Orator)*, a treatise meant as an introduction to his non-extant translation of two speeches by Demosthenes and by his rival Aeschines. In this text, Cicero argues in favour of a sense-for-sense translation, highlighting the opposition between the two possible ways of translating – as an interpreter and as an orator:

> And I did not translate as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and the forms, or as one might say, the 'figures of thought', but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language. For I did not think I ought to count them out to the reader like coins, but to pay them by weight as it were. (Cicero 9)

To translate as an "interpreter" means, therefore, to gloss word for word, to render the text with utter fidelity, without paying special attention to its rhetorical features, while to translate "as an orator" involves not merely conveying but persuading the reader "as to what he [the translator-orator] believes the original means" (Lloyd-Jones 39); it exercises "the *productive* power of rhetoric" (Copeland 2). According to Rita Copeland, Cicero's emphasis on the importance of a sense-for-sense, rhetorical translation should be linked to his endeavour to assert Latin's linguistic and philosophical independence from its Greek sources (47). Thus, in his *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, Cicero maintains that when translating Greek philosophical terms into Latin he preserved the meaning of the source text, but added to it his own "criticism" and "arrangement":

> And supposing that for our part we do not fill the office of a mere translator, but, while preserving the doctrines of our chosen authorities, add thereto our own criticism and our own arrangement: what ground have these objectors for ranking the writings of Greece above compositions that are once brilliant in style and no mere translations from Greek originals? Perhaps they will rejoin that the subject has been dealt with by the Greeks already. But then what reason have they for reading the multitude of Greek authors either that one has to read? . . . If Greek writers find Greek readers when presenting the same subjects in a differing setting, why should not Romans be read by Romans? (Cicero 7-9)

The aim of rhetorical translation is, therefore, to re-create and subsequently substitute the Latin text for the Greek one. Augmenting and challenging the Greek source are thus turned into imperatives of the translation project, into important elements in the process of "appropriating and displacing the authority of the original so as to invent a model of Atticism within *Latinitas*" (Copeland 47). The strategy of appropriating the source text in order to displace it will be later applied by medieval and Renaissance translators to the rendition of Latin texts into vernaculars. Thus, in England, the ambition to conquer Latin literature and culture and to replace Latin with English in a process similar to the appropriation and displacement of the Greek culture and language by Latin authors becomes increasingly explicit in the sixteenth century. In the preface to his translation of Pliny's *History of the World*, Philemon Holland reprimands all those critics of translation into the vernacular for considering their native country and mother tongue inferior to Latin:

> Certes, such Moral, or critics as these, besides their blind and erroneous opinion, think not so honourably of their native country and mother tongue as they ought: who, if they were so well affected that way as they should be, would wish rather, and endeavour by all means to triumph now over the Romans in subduing their literature under the dent of the English pen, in requitall for the conquest sometime over this Island, achieved by the edge of their sword. (Holland 23)

Furthermore, he highlights the real chances for such a victory to occur by arguing that in Pliny's times Latin was a language as common and natural to the people of Italy as English was at that moment. If the Romans could

manage to cultivate their language so as to become as elegant and rich as Greek, then English could also reach the same heights (Holland 23).

Another Ciceronian quotation that will be invoked by later generations of translators in order to argue for free translation and imitation as methods to coin new words and enrich the language comes from *De oratore* ("On the Orator"):

> I decided to take speeches written in Greek by great orators and to translate them freely, and I obtained the following results: by giving a Latin form to the text I had read I could not only make use of the best expressions in common usage with us, but I could also coin new expressions, analogous to those used in Greek, and they were no less well received by our people as long as they seemed appropriate. (47)

Cicero's promotion of a sense-for-sense method of translation was later echoed in Horace's *Ars Poetica* (18 B.C.), a poem devised in the form of an epistle of advice on the pursuit of literature, whose brief references to the art of translation (e.g. "*nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus interpres*") became in the following eras an authoritative, frequently quoted landmark of translation theory. Commenting on the difficulty of treating common and familiar material appropriately, Horace offers some useful advice on these matters:

> It is hard to treat in your own way what is common: and you are doing better in spinning into acts a song of Troy than if, for the first time, you were giving the world a theme unknown and unsung. In ground open to all you will win private rights, if you do not linger along the easy and open pathway, if you do not seek to render word for word as a slavish translator, and if in your copying you do not leap into the narrow well, out of which either shame or the laws of your task will keep you from stirring or not. (Horace 461)

The meaning of these lines from *Ars Poetica* came to be understood in a variety of ways and served different theoretical purposes in different cultural contexts (Copeland 45-55). Depending on the interpretation one provided, Horace's comments were used either to support the cause of rhetorical translation or to defend an ad-verbum fidelity to the original.

One popular interpretation of Horace's quote is provided by Saint Jerome who was the author of the Vulgate Latin translation of the Bible

and one of the most important mediators of the Roman writers' legacy to the Christian Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In his *Letter 57, To Pammachius, On the Best Method of Translating*, St. Jerome invoked the authority of both Cicero and Horace to advocate a sense-for-sense method of translation in the case of non-scriptural texts:

> For I myself not only admit but freely proclaim that in translating from the Greek (except in the case of the holy scriptures where even the order of the words is a mystery) I render sense for sense and not word for word. . . . Horace too, an acute and learned writer, in his Art of Poetry gives the same advice to the skilled translator: 'And care not with over anxious thought / To render word for word'. (St. Jerome 5)

Like Cicero, St. Jerome equated literalism with utter clumsiness and claimed that a word-for-word translation rendered the meaning of the text obscure and betrayed the original:

> It is difficult in following lines laid down by others not sometimes to diverge from them, and it is hard to preserve in a translation the charm of expressions which in another language are most felicitous. . . . If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator. . . . If any one imagines that translation does not impair the charm of style, let him render Homer word for word into Latin . . . and the result will be that the order of the words will seem ridiculous and the most eloquent of poets scarcely articulate. (5)

Rita Copeland notices the possible allusion to Horace's dictum, "It is hard to treat in your own way what is common," in the first part of this quotation. She further notices that Jerome practically inverts "the Horatian principle of licensed transgression" (in order to win rights over public property, you have to be different and not linger on the trodden path, therefore not to try to render word for word), offering instead "a principle of conformity and fidelity" (in order not to diverge from your predecessor's path you have to translate sense for sense and not word for word which would impair the meaning of the text): "the difficulty of achieving difference becomes, in Jerome, the difficulty of conserving likeness" (Copeland 48).

In the late Middle Ages, St. Jerome's authoritative statements in favour of a sense-for-sense policy of translation were invoked even in the context of biblical translation although Jerome himself advocated the strictest literalism when he discussed the translation of the Bible. As Copeland points out, "the General Prologue to the Wycliffite Bible . . . uses Hieronymian arguments against literalism as part of a larger effort to ensure the 'openness' of the sacred text, to protect its meaning from the interference of verbal clutter" (51). The Wycliffite Bible's use of Jerome's pronouncements on translation is a significant example of the manner in which theories of translation were constantly appropriated or misappropriated, adapted, recontextualised and put to different uses from the ones of their original context.

A similar example is Boethius' appropriation and interpretation of Horace's *fidus interpres*. In his introduction to the second edition of the *Commentary on Porphyry's Isagoge*, he inverted the common understanding of the famous Horatian quotation, turning Horace into an advocate of literalism. Not only did he invoke Horace's authority in support of word-for-word translation, but, as Copeland argues, he also transferred Jerome's project for the literal translation of the Bible to the translation of philosophy (52). Commenting on his manner of translating, Boethius contended that in those texts which further knowledge of things, one should translate word for word so that the reader should have access to "the uncorrupted truth of the text" (in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 33).

Copeland is again helpful in understanding Boethius's twofold inversion of the terms of the translation equation: according to her, he turned both Jerome's and Cicero's *dicta* on their head. Whereas Jerome contended that a literal translation clouded and hindered the meaning of the text, Boethius maintained the opposite, namely that the uncorrupted truth of the text could not be preserved unless the text was translated respecting the exact order of the words (Copeland 53). While Cicero advocated the sense-for-sense rhetorical translation as a means of supplanting and gaining independence from the Greek culture, Boethius claimed that what was needed to replace the Greek philosophical texts was precisely a literal translation of these texts. By literally translating them, one could indeed lose the power of eloquence, "the sparkling style,"

but one secured the true meaning of the text; consequently, Greek originals would no longer be necessary.

All these theoretical assumptions about the best manner of translating were inherited, though sometimes in an altered and recontextualized form, by both medieval and Renaissance translators who founded their own arguments about the art of translation upon the theoretical precedents of Cicero, Horace, St. Jerome and Boethius.

Medieval vs. Humanist Theories of Translation

The Latin writers' legacy was transmitted to the Middle Ages and subsequently to the Renaissance, where it served as a model for the ideological confrontation between Latinity and vernacularity and also as a medium for the transmission of the sense-for-sense/ word-for-word debate. Theo Hermans defines literalism as the hard core of the medieval regime (Hermans 1992: 99), but also as the "law of translation in the sixteenth century," the "innermost core and unattainable ideal" of the sixteenth-century translator (Hermans 1997: 14). Nevertheless, he also acknowledges that towards the middle of the century the word-for-word principle started to lose ground as the duty of the translator under the pressure exerted by vernacular translators, who became more aware of the grammatical and ideological differences between languages, and by the Humanist-inspired translators, such as Jacques Amyot and Thomas Elyot, who redefined the field of translation with their insistence on style and rhetorical propriety (Hermans 1997: 35-36).

Some recent studies on medieval translation have placed the emergence and development of medieval theories of translation within the rhetorical context of the medieval commentary and exegesis. They revealed how medieval academic traditions informed the growth of the literary vernaculars as self-conscious rivals to Latinity, and to each other, in the last two centuries of the medieval period. Copeland underscores the importance of rhetoric and hermeneutics in the processes of cultural translation and their role as models for the relation between translation and original and for the assimilation of a source text through exegetic paraphrase. Thus, she contends that vernacular poets such as Chaucer,

Gower and Dante produced literary works shaped on the model of classical authors and used both rhetorical and hermeneutic modes in order to alternate the roles of poetic inventors and exegetes in their attempt to displace the cultural authority of the Latin source and replace it with their own. These texts used the techniques of "exegetical translation to produce, not a supplement to the original, but a vernacular substitute for that original" (Copeland 179). On the other hand, critics such as Nicholas Watson argue for the existence of less aggressive accounts of the relationship between medieval translation and original texts, suggesting a different approach to the study of medieval theories of translation; namely, the study of "the vernacular lexis of translation itself, as this is deployed in the translators' prologues which introduce so many texts written in the period" (75).

Notwithstanding the theoretical approach adopted, the conclusions of these studies are rather similar: most medieval translators of secular works styled themselves as innovators, poetic inventors, and amenders. A typical example of this attitude is most interestingly expressed in John Lydgate's Prologue to his *Fall of Princes* (c.1431-1438), a rendering of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* into English that used as an intermediary the expanded French version of Laurent de Premierfait's *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (1409). As Watson points out, Lydgate inherited from Laurent a pattern for his own translation method, a model that manifestly endorsed "translatorial inventiveness," envisaging translators as "craftsmen" and potters who were responsible "for *chaunging* and *turning* the form as well as the language of their originals, in pursuit of a renovation of the source material" (Watson 84). In order to attain these aims medieval translators added and omitted material at will, using their sources as means to a new ideological end which could be reached by the rhetorical means of *inventio*: "they transfer past works to the medieval present by rewriting, thus adapting the knowledge and wisdom of the past to contemporary conditions" (Summerfield & Allen 332-333).

The medieval theory and practice of translation came under scrutiny and began to be questioned in the Renaissance when the first attempts at establishing a humanist theory of translation were registered in Italy at the

end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century (Morini 8). One of the key texts of the new humanistic learning, published in the 1420s, was Leonardo Bruni's treatise *De interpretatione recta,* "The Right Way to Translate," which has been considered "the first substantial theoretical statement on translation since St. Jerome's letter to Pammachius" (Copenhaver 82). Bruni was the author of a popular Latin history of Florence and of the biographies in Latin of Cicero and Aristotle. He was also the translator into Latin of the Greek works of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Demosthenes and Æschines (Burke online).

Driven by the fact that he had been reprimanded for having criticized the mistakes made by the previous translators of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bruni drew a detailed list of the requirements and qualities of a good translator. Stating that the first condition of a good translation was "that what is written in one language should be well translated into another" (82), Bruni emphasised the importance of possessing thorough knowledge of the source and target languages and revealed the methods for attaining such a high level of knowledge. According to Bruni, a worthy translator must thoroughly read and assimilate the works of all great philosophers, orators and poets; he has to internalise them in order to be able to transform himself "into the original author with all his mind, will, and soul" (83-84). Moreover, he has to have a firm grasp of the target language too and be able "to dominate it and hold it entirely into his power" (83). Furthermore, the translator should possess "a good ear" so that he may be able to identify the harmony and elegance of the text. Since all good writers "combine what they want to say about things with the art of writing itself," a good translator has to be prepared to "serve both masters" (84). As Massimiliano Morini has noted, the novelty of Bruni's treatise resides in the fact that he demanded for secular translation the same high standards that were commonly reserved for the translation of the Bible (9).

Unlike previous translators, Bruni attached special importance to the translator's responsibility towards his readers and towards the author of the original, which is why he felt entitled to censure and reprimand those translators who made themselves guilty of countless and unforgivable blunders (84). Given that each writer uses his particular

figures of speech, a good translator has to conform to the author's manner of writing, since the most important rule of translation is to keep to the "shape of the original text" as closely as possible so that "understanding does not lose the words any more than the words themselves lose brilliance and craftsmanship" (Bruni 85). Although the translator has to preserve everything, including all the features of a text written in "a copious and ornate style," Bruni maintains that in order to keep the very essence of the text intact the translator has to modify the original text (84-85). Morini elucidates this apparent inconsistence in Bruni's theory: in spite of the translator's total identification with the original author, the source text has "to be redressed into the target text by a careful reworking of rhetorical structure and effects" (Morini 10). These ideas are clearly informed by Cicero's understanding of translation and his insistence on the merits of rhetorical translation.

Nevertheless, Bruni and most of the humanists following in his footsteps add a further dimension to the requirements of classical rhetorical translation: that of philology. Bruni's attempt "to systematize the relationship between rhetoric and philological translation" (Norton 39) was his response to the rediscovery of Cicero's *Brutus* and *De Oratore* in northern Italy, a few years before the publication of his essay. Bruni's seminal ideas were subsequently spread and rewritten first in France, Spain and Germany and much later in England by means of the literary activity and cultural influence of such humanist thinkers as Erasmus, Etienne Dolet, Juan Luis Vives, and John Christopherson.

Erasmus seems to echo Bruni when he emphasises the importance of possessing a thorough knowledge "of the two languages by accumulating an abundance of material" (Erasmus 60) at the beginning of a letter addressed to William Warham in 1506. He claims that a worthy translator has to be "an exceptional craftsman" who must be in possession of a "piercing eye that is always wakeful" (60). However, Erasmus's translator-craftsman is utterly different from Lydgate's medieval translator-"potter"/ "craftsman" who could inventively modify the text according to his own will. Erasmus's translator is very scrupulous and renders the text literally, particularly when it comes to translating the classics. Writing about his translation of two tragedies by Euripides,

Erasmus states that he aimed to translate them "verse for verse, almost word for word" (60), trying to preserve both the shape and the style of the Greek poems. Maintaining that "in translating the classics I do not completely approve of that freedom Cicero allows himself and others to excess," Erasmus strikingly echoes Boethius's defence of literal translation: the latter had argued that he preferred to "sin through excessive scrupulousness rather than through excessive license" (60).

Juan Luis Vives's "Versions or Translations" (1531) is informed by both Cicero's and Leonardo Bruni's theories of translation. Vives addresses several important and recurrent translation issues. First, he distinguishes between three types of translation and discusses their particularities: one in which only the "sense" is rendered, another in which only the "phrasing and the diction" are considered, and finally a third in which both the matter and the words are important, in which "words bring power and elegance to the senses" (Vives 50). These three categories seem to correspondent to the different types of texts translated, although the categorization of the latter is rather vague. According to Vives, when translating texts like the speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero, the translator should attend to the *dispositio* of the text and the figures of speech. Noting the inexorable linguistic and stylistic difference between one language and another, Vives argues, following Cicero and quoting Quintilian, that, in the case of texts written "with only the sense in mind," the translator should render the text "freely" and should be allowed to omit or to add in order to improve the clarity of meaning (50).

Vives also echoes Luther's recently published *Open Letter on Translation* (1530)[1] which had stressed the idiomatic nature of language and argued that one should translate as the "usage" dictated if that helped the clear representation of meaning:

> It is impossible to express the figures of speech and patterns characteristic of one language in another, even less so when they are idiomatic, and I fail to see what purpose would be served in admitting solecisms and barbarisms with the sole aim of representing the sense with as many words as are used in the original, the way some translations of Aristotle or Holy Writ have been made. (51)

Nevertheless, he concedes, there are translations of the sense, such as the Holy Bible or Aristotle's works, which, being very complex and difficult to understand, should be rendered word for word so that each reader should be left to judge by himself (51).

There are two more significant issues that Vives discusses in his essay. He takes over and reworks Bruni's idea about the responsibility of the translator towards his reader and the original author and emphasises the importance of possessing not only a good command of the source language but also thorough knowledge of the contents of the text. Eventually, Vives elaborates on the advantage of imitating and borrowing figures of speech and style, advocating the use of the language of the original as a sort of "matrix" that could help one coin new words and enrich the language of one's nation (51). Vives's extremely intertextual essay had in turn a great impact on the seminal writings of the French poet, translator and literary theorist, Joachim du Bellay.

In France, some of the most notable early modern ideas on translation were articulated in the works of Etienne Dolet and Joachim du Bellay. All of them drew heavily on their predecessors. Of these, Etienne Dolet, characterised by James S. Holmes as "not only translation's theorist but also its martyr" (73), was found guilty of heresy for erroneously translating a passage from Plato, hanged and burned at the stake in 1546. Nonetheless, as Kenneth Lloyd-Jones shows, his formulations of the principles of good translation, outlined in his treatise *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* (1540), represent on the one hand, the most elaborate reworking of Bruni's translation theory, and on the other hand, his "response to Erasmus' ideas on language, imitative writing, interpretation, and translation" (51). Dolet had engaged in a polemic with Erasmus over the latter's *Ciceronianus or, a Dialogue on the Best Style of Speaking* (1528), a text in which Erasmus made a strong case against those humanists who had come to look upon Cicero as the exclusive model for all Latin composition. These Ciceronians used only the words and constructions found in the writings of their classical master and employ any kind of circumlocution to achieve their target (Izora & Monroe 8). Erasmus's fundamental argument against Ciceronians was informed by the Christian discourse of the day and claimed that "to

express the mysteries and truths of Christianity while limiting oneself to the language of pagan Latinity is, of necessity, to fall into the promotion of pagan values oneself" (Lloyd-Jones 43). Dolet, the student of Simon de Villeneuve – one of Europe's most accomplished Ciceronians – must have embarked on this polemic "with a mixture of genuine conviction and bare-faced opportunism, as a means of making a name for himself" (Lloyd-Jones 46).

In *La manière de bien traduire*, Dolet lists five points for good translation which, despite their considerable and acknowledged debt to Cicero, rely heavily on Leonardo Bruni's *De interpretatione recta*:

> In the first place, the translator must understand perfectly the sense and matter of the author he is translating, for having this understanding he will never be obscure in his translations . . . . The second thing that is required in translating is that the translators have perfect knowledge of the language of the author he is translating, and be likewise excellent in the language into which he is going to translate. . . . Bethink you that every language has its own properties, turns of phrase, expressions, subtleties, and vehemences that are peculiar to it. . . . The third point is that in translating one must not be servile to the point of rendering word for word. (Dolet 74)

These first two points represent a reworking of Bruni's ideas and reiterate his insistence on the fact that translators should have perfect knowledge of the two languages they are using and also understand thoroughly the meaning and content of the work they are translating. The third point places Dolet in the camp of those who favoured a sense-for-sense manner of translation and evokes Horace's characterization of those who translate word for word as being "slavish" translators. The fourth point recalls Luther's and Vives's emphasis on the use of common language and avoidance of adopting Latin words "foolishly or out of reprehensible curiousness" (75). According to Dolet, the import of new words from Latin and Greek, which are much richer than vernacular languages such as French, Italian, Spanish or English, should take place only "out of sheer necessity." Still, the best practice remains "to follow the common language" (75). The fifth and final rule invokes once more the authority of Cicero's writings and refers to the observation of *elocutio*, that is, "a joining and arranging of terms with such sweetness that not alone the soul

is pleased, but also the ear is delighted and never hurt by such harmony of language" (75). Therefore, in order to serve the target language as devotedly as possible, one has to combine intellectual competence with an acute awareness of the manner in which the text is translated.

Joachim Du Bellay's highly influential *Défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549), the manifesto of the famous literary group *La Pléiade*, constitutes in its turn the adaptation and appropriation of the discourses on translation of its predecessors, notably Cicero, Bruni, Vives and Dolet. Remarking on the poor state of the French language by comparison to the copiousness and richness of Greek and Latin, Du Bellay pleads for the paramount importance of cultivating the French language which had been improperly tended to by his ancestors (in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 77). Stating that translation, although a laudable thing in itself, is not sufficient to raise the French vernacular to the heights and elegance of more famous languages, Du Bellay suggests that the Roman process of appropriating the Greek language and culture by means of imitation should also be followed by the French men of letters (in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 78-79). Being an extremely demanding goal, the process of borrowing and imitating the Greek and Latin language should be undertaken solely by skilful writers and translators who are able to "follow well the excellent qualities of a good author" (79). Echoing both Bruni and Vives, Du Bellay contends that in order to accomplish this aim one has "to transform oneself" so as to penetrate to "the secret, innermost part of an author" (in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 79). His insistence on the attention that should be paid to *what* and *how* is being imitated echoes once more Vives and Dolet, both of whom urged translators not to imitate foolishly and hastily but responsibly.

All these principles of the humanist translation made their way into England towards the beginning of the sixteenth century. The influential presence of two of the most distinguished humanists – Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives[2] – in the English cultural milieu may have facilitated the introduction of the humanist translation theories into England. Two of the leading English translators into Latin, Laurence Humphrey and John Christopherson, expressed their views on translation in theoretical terms that were considerably informed by the translation discourse of the earlier

humanists, Vives in particular, as well as by the writings of Cicero and St. Jerome.

Laurence Humphrey's *Interpretatio* Linguarum*, seu de ratione convertendi et explicandi autores tam sacros quam prophanos, libri tres* (i.e. The Translation of Languages, or On the logic of converting/ translating and explaining authors, sacred as well as profane, three books) published in Basel, in 1559, and dedicated to Sir Thomas Wroth, has been characterised as "the fullest statement of translation principles from a sixteenth-century Englishman" (Cummings 274). In this treatise Humphrey reworks Vives's classification of the three possible methods of translation and ranges each type of translation on an evaluation scale. Thus, purely literal translation is ranked as the lowest type, closely followed by overly free translations; the ideal third type which represents the middle way between these two extremes, a *via media* that is both faithful and elegant, is placed at the top of the scale (Binns 219). Humphrey also touches upon the issues of poetical imitation and Ciceronianism and argues in favour of a vernacular meaning-for-meaning translation of the Bible. Similarly, in the dedication to Sir Anthony Cave, prefaced to his translation of the *Disputatio contra Marcionistas* (attributed to Origen), Humphrey echoes Cicero, particularly his statement that he did not count the words of his translation like coins, but paid them by weight:

> I translated the work from the Greek from a manuscript codex of Froben, rendering the meaning not the words, having regard not to the number of words but to their weight, everywhere taking precautions to the best of my ability that the meaning of the Greek should not be overthrown, as usually happens, and perish in translation. (in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 103)

Humphrey's views on translation were also shared by John Christopherson, another prolific English translator into Latin, whose translations of Greek authors were gathered under the title *Historia ecclesiastica scriptores greci* and printed in Louvain in 1569 (Binns 218-221). In his introductory "Prooemium interpretis" which is actually "a miniature treatise on the Art of Translation" (Binns 218), Christopherson argues that when translating from Greek into Latin he attempted "both to

express faithfully the meaning of the text and to render its forms of speech and harmony by imitating them so that the text should not be greatly different from the source text" (in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 103). The four rules laid down by Christopherson echo the requirements made by the earlier Italian and French humanists with their emphasis on rendering the sense as well as the rhetorical features of the text. In order to support his defence of the sense-for-sense translation in the case of texts other than the Scriptures, where the order of the words should be kept due to the sacredness of the text, Christopherson invokes St. Jerome's authority:

> For although in translating the Scriptures the order of the words should be retained, as St Jerome says, because it is a mystery: yet in the translation of other Greek writings, on the same authority of Jerome (when he cites and imitates Cicero), we should translate not word for word, but meaning for meaning. (in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 103)

The right way to translate, the sense-for-sense/ word-for word dichotomy as well as the preoccupation with the enriching of the language were matters of great interest not only to Christopherson and Humphrey but to most sixteenth-century translators into English, i.e. George Chapman, John Florio, Thomas Hoby, Arthur Golding, Nicholas Grimald. Although their vocabulary and discourse were vaguer and less well-defined than that of their Italian, Spanish and French contemporaries, the ideas discussed were indebted to the same theoretical sources as the ones invoked by their foreign fellow translators and scholars. Consequently, their statements on the issue of translation testify as well to the heavy intertextuality that characterises the early modern web of texts and discourses on the theory and practice of translation.

Notes:

[1] Defending his translation of the Bible, Luther makes a strong case for using the natural and popular language of the common people in translations:

> For one need not ask the letters of the Latin language how one ought to speak German, the way these asses do, rather one should ask the mother in her house, the children in the streets, the common man in the marketplace, about it and see by their mouths how they speak, and translate

accordingly: then they understand it well and recognize that one is speaking German to them. (Martin Luther, "Open Letter on Translation" (1530), qtd. in Weissbort & Eysteinsson 61)

[2] Vives was tutor to Mary, princess of Wales, from 1523 and he lectured at Oxford until 1527.

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