

PREFACE TO THE TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION IN THE literal sense is the transference of text from a source language to a target language. Doležel construes translation as a form of “transduction,” a term intended to designate both the conversion of an original text to a dissimilar one and its redirection to a new target audience for the purpose of transmission.¹ A translated text is therefore a converted text, a *transformed* text. The initial stage of translation theory in Western literature, according to Steiner, begins with Cicero and continues with Horace and Jerome up until the period of “hermeneutic inquiry,” the second stage, launched by Friedrich Schleiermacher. The final two stages, i.e., the third and the fourth, deal with machine translation.² I will very briefly discuss highlights from the first and second stages to acquaint the reader with principles and techniques I have employed in putting together my English translation of *Cons.*

In Cicero’s *De optimo genere oratorum*, the preface of his lost translation of Aeschines’s *Oration against Ctesiphon* and Demosthenes’s *Oration on the Crown*, he lays out his principles for translating these works as follows:

I have in fact translated the pair of the most celebrated, mutually counteracting speeches by the two most articulate Attic orators, Aeschines and Demosthenes; and I have not translated them with the picky accuracy of an interpreter but as an orator, retaining the essence of the same thoughts and forms of thoughts—I want to say, the organization of thoughts—but adjusting them to our own idiom. In this endeavour, I did not feel it incumbent upon me to render word for word; yet, I have retained the essence and force of the words on the whole. For I did not think it convenient to count out the words piecemeal to the reader but to pay them out in a lump sum, as it were.³

The view has been advanced that Cicero’s translation strategy and techniques laid out in the *Opt. gen.* 5.14 are dictated by his need to generate a

1 Mayordomo et al., “Hermeneia, Poiesis and Translation.”

2 Steiner, *After Babel*, 248–50.

3 Cicero, *De invention: De optimo genere oratorum*, 5.14 (hereafter *Opt. gen.*; my translation).

surrogate Latin linguistic-discursive model to dislocate and substitute for the Attic oratorical model.⁴ Still, his rejection of the literal translation mode, *verbum pro verbo* (“word for word”) in favour of translating, as it were, *ad sensum* (“according to meaning”)⁵—a term subsequently introduced by Jerome—clearly necessitates a hermeneutic reading of his Greek source text. Furthermore, his vision of adjusting his source text to his own idiom by the techniques he describes implies interpretation with a view to integrating, as well as acculturating, the source text in the context of the target language. The key components of this plan are alluded to in his foregoing trope of “paying” the words in a lump sum, or reflecting on the words’ meaning collectively instead of piecemeal as if they were coins to be counted out individually to his reader. Accordingly, considering the ethnocentric line Cicero takes vis-à-vis the target text, it is clear that some aspects of his approach align with what is known in translation theory today as “domestication.” The term was coined by Venuti to designate “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values.”⁶ When employed, domestication is commensurate with the extent to which the translator is able and willing to assimilate his source text to the diction and culture of the target language. With Cicero, this translation style apparently goes beyond catering exclusively to the need for generating an acculturated Latin oratorical model based on the Attic prototype.⁷ Presumably, guided even early on by

4 Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, 45ff.

5 The term *ad sensum* (“according to meaning”) is here broadly and loosely used as an umbrella term, encompassing the processes peculiar to the translator’s task as construed and stated by Cicero in *Opt. gen.* 5.14 in his capacity as a translating orator of Aeschines and Demosthenes, not as a servile translator. In *Fin.* 1.2.6 Cicero makes an additional statement pertinent to his task as translator—of Greek philosophical literature in this case. This statement is to the effect that there would be nothing objectionable if he chose to translate into Latin the philosophers whose opinions he endorsed but did so not mechanically as a literal-minded translator; viz., if he chose to rearrange the order of their doctrines and intermingled his own sentiments as well. This view is very comparable, even complementary, to the one expressed in *Opt. gen.* 5.14. Taken together, the two statements make it clear that in translating Greek literature Cicero does not content himself with a free-style, *ad sensum* translation alone, merely employing novel diction to render the original force of the words, thoughts, and ideas which he encounters in his source text. Rather, he aggressively intervenes in their structure by rearranging them and adding his own sentiments about them to generate not so much a free-style translation target text as, in fact, a creative, remoulded version of his source text.

6 Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 15.

7 See 57n3.

the same translating principles which he subsequently made explicit in *Opt. gen.* 5.14 and *De finibus bonorum et malorum* 1.2.6 (hereafter *Fin.*),⁸ Cicero in his *Aratea*—Aratus’s *Phaenomena*, which he translated in Latin in his late teens—“did not simply translate Aratus’ work, but changed and reshaped some aspects of it.”⁹ Likewise, his translation of Plato’s *Timaeus*, such as it remains,¹⁰ apparently conforms to the principles outlined in *Opt. gen.* 5.14 and *Fin.* 1.2.6,¹¹ but the soundness of the end product has generally been partially debated.¹²

Jerome as well takes exception to the word-for-word translation mode and justifies his choice by invoking Cicero’s authority to rebut the arguments of his opponents who champion literalism as the only legitimate translation policy. Jerome declares for translating *ad sensum* (“according to meaning” or “sense for sense”) and explains his reasons for doing so;¹³ however, in rejecting literalism like Cicero, he implies that he will not go to the extent of appropriating the source text by intervening and adding to it on Cicero’s model.¹⁴ However, while Jerome defends himself against his

8 Despite his own, formally endorsed translation mode, laid out in *Opt. gen.* 5.14 and *Fin.* 1.6, Cicero in *Fin.* 1.2.7 makes it clear that occasionally he will not take exception to the plain, unadorned, direct translation style, and goes on to say that he deserves the right to swap styles and use the latter one where he deems it appropriate.

9 Gucker, “Cicero as Translator,” 37.

10 Only a large fragment of this translation survives as well as some passages in Cicero’s works.

11 Hermann, *De interpretatione Timaei Platonis dialogi*, 6–7, 13.

12 Some of Cicero’s deviations from Plato’s text count as inaccuracies with a number of scholars. Some scholars claim that he did not entirely understand Plato’s Greek, others that it was Latin, “even Cicero’s Latin,” that failed him, while still others, such as Jerome, blame the obscurity of the original. See Petit, *Miscellaneorum observationum libri quatuor*, 157; Hermann, *De interpretatione Timaei*, 18–19, 24, 26–27, etc.; Poncelet, *Cicéron traducteur de Platon* in Gucker, “Cicero as Translator,” 37.

13 Jerome, *Letter LVII*, 114: “Each particular word conveys a meaning of its own, and possibly I have no equivalent by which to render it, and if I make a circuit to reach my goal, I have to go many miles to cover a short distance. To these difficulties must be added the windings of hyperbata, differences in the use of cases, divergencies of metaphor; and last of all the peculiar and if I may so call it, inbred character of the language. If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth.”

14 Jerome, *Letter LVII*, 113–14 (*Epistula* 57.5): “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. For this course I have the authority of Tully.... What omissions, additions, and alterations he has made substituting the idioms of his own for those of another tongue, this is not the time to say.”

censors for charging him with translation fraud—a charge which ensues from his rejection of literalism¹⁵—Cicero censors his opponents for clinging exclusively to literal translations of Greek literature and being unwilling to compromise with anything less.¹⁶ In opting to shun literalism—each from his own perspective and out of different motives—both Cicero and Jerome were presumably espousing a “deviant” cause by departing from an apparently prescriptive norm—the likely commonly endorsed, word-for-word translating mode of their times.¹⁷ This initial dichotomy model, generated in Roman antiquity by the opposite dynamics of literal and freestyle translation trends, has been variously reflected in subsequent translation theory as a permanent feature in the evolution of creative translation practice. So, for instance, in his celebrated essay *Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens* of 1813, Friedrich Schleiermacher has reduced the strategic options in translation practice to merely two: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him.”¹⁸ Qualifying further the two constituent strategies of Schleiermacher’s dichotomy, Venuti allies the former with “a foreignizing practice, an ethnodeviant pressure on cultural values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad”; and the latter with “a domesticating practice, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving those [cultural] values, bringing the author back home.”¹⁹ Put differently, in Venuti’s phraseology, domestication and foreignization are construed in terms of the extent to which the rendition of the source text into the target language resists or succumbs to the assimilation strain exerted by the targeted language and culture. Venuti construes foreignizing translation as a cultural intervention device intended to make

15 Jerome, *Letter LVII*, 112–13 (*Epistula* 57.1–2).

16 Cicero, *Fin.* 1.2.4–6.

17 In a hypothetical situation, Cicero implies that what would be expected of him would amount to filling “the office of a mere translator,” which he equates with literal, or direct, translation, i.e., the plane mode that the Roman poets employed in transferring Greek plays into Latin; see Cicero, *Opt. gen.* 5.14; and Cicero, *Fin.* 1.2.6–7. As for Jerome, the public scandal that his contempt for literalism generated, and the need he felt to defend himself by exposing the faulty premises of the word-for-word rule, not by defying “the validity of the rule as such,” imply “that the word for word rule...was strong and widely accepted”; see Hermans, “The Task of the Translator.”

18 Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 15.

19 Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 15.

“the receiving culture aware of the linguistic and cultural difference inherent in the foreign text” by way of “a non-fluent, estranging or heterogeneous translation style designed to make visible the presence of the translator and to highlight the foreign identity of the ST [source text].”²⁰ An unintentionally anticipated instance of sorts, presumably, of such “a non-fluent, estranging or heterogeneous translation style,” in the form of word-for-word translation, is sampled by Jerome in his Letter to Pammachius while illustrating the pitfalls of literal translation.²¹ Accordingly, word-for-word translation may be viewed as a foreignizing translation practice both in terms of how Venuti construes Schleiermacher’s dichotomy and how he, Venuti, qualifies it further as an ideological tool, “an ethnodeviant pressure on cultural values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text.”²² To Jerome, of course, such foreignizing would be not only absurd but also a heresy.

The brief, foregoing survey highlights of translation theory are intended to outline and share with the reader those aspects of translation strategies and theories that I have specifically considered in putting together my English rendition of *Cons.* In translating, I have opted to abide in the main by the fundamental guidelines applying to the domestication model, but moderately so and, so to speak, *cum grano salis* (“with a grain of salt”). I respect the reality of cultural dynamics between the source and target texts and appreciate the “ethnocentric,” linguistic assimilation strain exerted on the source text by the target language. Nonetheless, I have resolved to forego the temptation of looking upon the domestication mode as an ideological tool and opted to offer the reader a translation conforming to the norms and natural fluency of the English language as well as possible. Yet, it must not be assumed that in my translation foreignization was entirely disallowed. I have occasionally shifted to the foreignizing mode in fact when I thought it advisable and safe to come closer to the diction and structure of the author

20 Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, 226.

21 In giving an instance of censure involving his endorsed mode of translation according to sense, Jerome cites his Latin rendition of the Greek sentence, Ἐδεῖ ἡμᾶς, ἀγάπητέ, μὴ τῆ οἰήσει τῶν κληρῶν φέρεσθαι, as follows: “Dearly beloved, we ought not to misuse our position as ministers to gratify our pride.” Then, he goes on to juxtapose his censor’s word-for-word version—in our terms, “a non-fluent, estranging or heterogeneous translation”—“Beloved, we ought not to be carried away by the estimation of the clergy,” which makes no sense either in Latin or Greek. See Jerome, *Letter LVII*, 118. For the Latin, see Jerome, *Ep.* 57.12

22 Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, 15–16.

by reducing the space between source text and target text that domestication entails. Here again, I have used caution and moderation. English and Latin possess different rhetorical resources, idioms, syntactical structures, and registers of style. Accordingly, I have not resorted to extreme literalism of the sort that Jerome points to,²³ nor have attempted to render the “windings of hyperbata, differences in the use of cases, divergencies of metaphor; and...of all the peculiar and...inbred character of the language” word for word.²⁴ I have shifted to the foreignizing mode enough to allow for a hint of foreign accent on occasion, a technique from which an English translation of a literary text can derive substantial benefit.²⁵ In so doing, as well as in domesticating my source text, I have endeavoured not to compromise the integrity of the translation, but rather to retain “the essence of the same thoughts and forms of thoughts—I want to say, the organization of thoughts— but adjusting them” to the English idiom.

23 See 61n21 in this section.

24 See 59n13 in this section.

25 Fotheringham, “The Value of a Foreign Accent in Translation.”