

The Task of the Translator in the European Renaissance: Explorations in a Discursive Field

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This is a purely exploratory essay, modest in its aims and scope. It does little more than explore a practical question: whether it is worth investigating in more detail what is best described, in its present state, as a hunch, hardly a hypothesis as yet. The hunch is centred on a word. The exploration circles around it, looking for connections, anchor points, tell-tale signs and traces in the immediate vicinity.

The starting point is the word *law*. The law of translation, in the sixteenth century, in Western Europe. Closely connected with it are such terms as the *duty* and the *task* of the translator, terms denoting that which translators commit themselves to when translating, what presents itself to them as obligation and imperative, what they must do to discharge their *office*, their *responsibility* as translators.

The hunch is this: when in the sixteenth-century discourse on translation reference is made to the law of translation or to the translator's duty, task, responsibility or 'office', what is meant is a form of literal or word for word translation. Literalism constitutes the law of translation. Even when it is not expected to be taken in any absolute, 'literal', compelling sense, the notion of literalism as the law remains powerfully present as the ideal of translation, translation's distant but appealing utopia, that which in essence translation ought to be or ought at least to aspire to. Literalism, more than any other form of interlingual processing, embodies the dream of translatability as an exact matching of component parts without loss, excess or deviation. It is a dream at once enticing and exacting, for it demands of the translator ascetic, humbling self-denial. In practice, various more or less pragmatic reasons may induce the individual translator to tone down the ideal or to retreat from it, but they cannot wholly extinguish or remove its appeal. This is not to say that even in theory, literalism reigns supreme. There are those who oppose the notion of literal translation on theoretical as well as on practical grounds. They draw powerful support from the Humanist tradition, and bring rhetorical standards as well as grammatical considerations into play. Their numbers increase especially in the latter half of the sixteenth century. But in the very fact that, more often than not, they too attempt to separate translation from exegesis and consequently feel the need to make taxing demands on the translator, they can be seen to pay indirect homage to literalism as the innermost core and unattainable ideal of translation and as the translator's most fundamental but impossible task. The literalist principle is not fully sidelined until the seventeenth century.

The following paragraphs seek to gather evidence to support this claim. The materials do not consist of actual translations but of statements about translation, since we are looking at the way translation is perceived, conceptualized and theorized. Whether, or to what extent, the theoretical reflections have a bearing on the practice of translation in the period, involves an additional set of issues. They will not be addressed in any detail here. The present essay merely wants to ascertain whether it is at all economical to attempt an interpretation of Renaissance concepts of translation using the notion of literalism as its cornerstone.

Let us take as our starting point two well-known French treatises on poetics from around the mid sixteenth century. They both speak of the 'law' of translation. In Book I, chapter 5, of his *Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* (1549)

Joachim du Bellay refers to all those admirable gems of eloquence, in prose or verse, which exploit the resources of a particular language in such a way that, he says, their charm and elegance (his term, in French, is ‘grace’) cannot possibly be rendered by a translator. Add to this the idiomatic differences between languages, Du Bellay continues, and the result is that ‘observant la loy de traduyre, qui est n’espacier point hors des limites de l’auteur, vostre diction sera contrainte, froide, & de mauuaise grace’ [observing the law of translating, which is not to stray beyond the limits set by the author, your diction will be constrained, cold, & lacking in elegance’] (Du Bellay 1948: 36). For this reason translation cannot contribute to linguistic refinement or enrichment, a conclusion Du Bellay draws, explicitly and aggressively, at the end of the next chapter.¹

But what does Du Bellay mean when he speaks of ‘the law of translating’? The spatial imagery in the wording (‘espacier’, ‘limites’) leaves room for speculation regarding the precise extent of the translator’s leeway, but it is clear that ‘the law of translating’ implies confinement to a narrowly circumscribed space, so much so that it produces aesthetically unacceptable results. This is spelled out in the letter to Jean de Morel with which some years later Du Bellay prefaces his French version (for despite his strictures Du Bellay, as we know, does translate) of the fourth book of Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Appealing to ‘ceux qui entendent & la peine & les lois de traduire’ [‘those who understand both the labour and the laws of translating’], he points out the utter impossibility of conveying even the original author’s shadow if the translator is held to render everywhere ‘periode pour periode, epithete pour epithete, nom propre pour nom propre, & finalement dire ny plus ny moins, & non autrement’ [‘period for period, epithet for epithet, proper noun for proper noun, and finally saying neither more nor less, nor anything different’]; for this reason he feels he has honourably acquitted himself of his task (‘son devoir’) by translating in a freer, more compensatory vein (Du Bellay 1931, VI: 249-50). The law of translating is evidently quite strict, and does not allow the translator to stray far from the words of the original.

Both the way Du Bellay here fills in the notion of the ‘law’ of translation and the terms he used in the earlier *Deffence et illustration* to describe the unattractive effect of translations carried out according to this ‘law’ – a diction deprived of eloquence and hence ‘constrained, cold, & lacking in elegance’ – resemble those employed elsewhere, by other writers in discussions unequivocally aimed at literal or word for word translation.

A case in point would be chapter 6, ‘Des traductions’, of Jacques Peletier du Mans’ *Art poetique* of 1555 (Peletier 1990: 262-65). Here Peletier considers both the effects of literal translation and its utopia. Having explained – in marked contrast to Du Bellay – that the translator subjects himself (‘s’asservit’) not only to the *inventio* and the *dispositio* but as far as possible also to the *elocutio* of his author and that in so doing he rightfully earns for translation a place in the world of art (‘aient donc les Traductions place en notre Art, puisque’elles se font par art’), he goes on to state that

¹ ‘Mais que diray-je d’aucuns, vraiment mieux dignes d’estre appelés traditeurs que traducteurs? veu qu’ilz trahissant ceux qu’ilz entreprennent exposer (...) et encore se prennent aux poètes, genre d’auteurs certes auquel, si je scavoy’ ou vouldy’ traduyre, je m’adroisseroy’ aussi peu, à cause de ceste divinité d’invention qu’ilz ont plus que les autres, de ceste grandeur de style, magnificence de motz, gravité de sentences, audace & variété de figures, & mil’ autres lumieres de poësie: bref ceste energie, & ne scay quel esprit, qui est en leurs ecriz, que les Latins appelleroient *genius*. Toutes les quelles choses se peuvent autant exprimer en traduisant, comme un peintre peut représenter l’ame avecques le cors de celuy qu’il entreprend tyrer apres le naturel.’ (Du Bellay 1948, Chap. VI).

its 'law' however is understood by few ('...que la loi en est entendue de peu de gens'). Peletier illustrates his point by offering a correct reading of the famous but frequently misinterpreted *fidus interpretes* passage in Horace's Art of Poetry, i.e. a reading that has Horace indeed affirming that the faithful translator translates word for word ('Et ne me peux assez ébahir de ceux, qui pour blâmer la traduction de mot a mot, se veulent aider de l'autorité d'Horace, quand il dit: *Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus Interpretes*: là où certes Horace parle tout au contraire de leur intention, Peletier 1990: 264). Following an aside on the metre in Virgil's third Eclogue he returns to his main point and rounds off the chapter. The concluding passage is worth quoting in full:

Suivant notre propos, les Traductions de mot a mot n'ont pas grâce: non qu'elles soient contre la loi de Traduction: mais seulement pour raison que deux langues ne sont jamais uniformes en phrases. Les conceptions sont communes aux entendements de tous hommes; mais les mots et manieres de parler sont particuliers aux nations. Et qu'on ne me vienne point alleguer Cicéron: lequel ne loue pas le Traducteur consciencieux. Car aussi ne fais-je. Et ne l'entends point autrement, sinon que le Translateur doive garder la propriété et le naïf de la Langue en laquelle il translate. Mais certes je dis qu'en ce que les deux Langues symboliseront: il ne doit rien perdre des locutions, ni meme de la privaute des mots de l'Auteur, duquel l'esprit et la subtilité souvent consiste en cela. Et qui pourrait traduire tout Virgile en vers français, phrase pour phrase, et mot pour mot: ce serait une louange inestimable. Car un Traducteur, comment saurat-il mieux faire son devoir, sinon en approchant toujours le plus près qu'il serait possible de l'Auteur auquel il est sujet ? puis, pensez quelle grandeur ce serait de voir une seconde Langue répondre à toute l'élégance de la première: et encore avoir la sienne propre. Mais, comme j'ai dit, il ne se peut faire. (Peletier 1990: 265)

[To continue, word for word Translations are unshapely. This is not because they are incompatible with the law of Translation, but merely because no two languages are the same in their expression. Concepts are common to the understanding of all, but each nation has its own words and manners of speaking. And let no-one invoke Cicero here, who does not praise the conscientious Translator. Indeed neither do I. All I mean is that the Translator should respect the propriety and idiom of the Language into which he translates. But I do say that as regards that which the two Languages express, the Translator should lose nothing of the way of speaking or even of the idiosyncratic usage of the Author, whose wit and subtlety often consist in this. And if someone were able to translate Virgil into French verse, sentence for sentence, and word for word: what glorious praise that would bring. For how could a Translator discharge his duty better, if not by sticking as closely as possible to the Author to whom he has subjected himself? And imagine how splendid it would be to see one Language echo all the elegance of the other, and still retain its own. But, as I said, that is impossible.]

Peletier's comment on the ungainly nature of literal translations obviously recalls Du Bellay's censure ('...de mauvaise grace', '...n'ont pas grace'). More striking however are the ambivalences in Peletier's words. Literal translations, for him, are not in conflict with the law of translation, which suggests that the law itself is something else. But what exactly? And where does the compatibility between the law and literal

translation begin and end? At first it looks as if Peletier puts some distance between literalism and the law of translation, hence the concessionary ‘non qu’elles soient contre la loi de Traduction’. Like Cicero, he declines to praise the ‘conscientious’ literalist translator. Later in the passage it appears however that it is only in operating as literally as possible, in rendering Virgil ‘phrase pour phrase, et mot pour mot’, in reducing the distance separating translator and author to the absolute minimum (‘en approchant toujours le plus près qu’il serait possible de l’Auteur auquel il est sujet’), that the translator can hope fully to acquit himself of his task (‘son devoir’). Such a translator would then deserve all due praise and fame (‘louange’, ‘grandeur’). But how much is that, and what does the translator’s ‘devoir’ consist in?

Earlier in the chapter Peletier had emphasized that translations are generally held in lower esteem than original writings. Having characterized translation as ‘une besogne de plus grand travail que de louange’, he observed that even if the translator works ‘well and faithfully’ (‘si vous rendez bien et fidèlement’) it is invariably the original which receives all the praise (‘le plus de l’honneur en demeure a l’original’), and however good the rendering, the difference in status between translator and original author always remains (‘Somme, un Traducteur n’a jamais le nom d’Auteur’). At the same time Peletier had asserted, paradoxically, that ‘a good translation is more valuable than a poor original’ (‘une bonne Traduction vaut trop mieux qu’une mauvaise invention’). He resolves the paradox with a reference to the perceived status of translators and original writers (‘authors’): a good translation may be more valuable than a poor specimen of *inventio*, but the translator will lose out either way. If he elects to render a poor original he will be blamed for having made the wrong choice, and if he provides a good rendering of a worthy original it is that original’s author who collects the prize. This perception only changes when translators are also themselves authors of original works, as Peletier explains in connection with the use of neologisms. As regards neologisms he recommends great caution on the translator’s part, precisely because readers have a different perception of translated and original writings. ‘Un Traducteur, s’il n’a fait voir ailleurs quelque chose du sien, n’a pas cette faveur des Lecteurs en cas de mots, combien que soit celui qui plus en a affaire. Et pour cela est moins estimé l’office de traduire’ [‘A Translator who has not published work of his own elsewhere, cannot count on the Readers’ indulgence with respect to words, even though he is most concerned with them. This is why the profession of translating is less esteemed’]. Boldness or inventiveness are not readily associated with the translator’s job. Even in translating an outstanding author the translator should resort to ‘new’ words only when there are absolutely no others available and when the persistent use of periphrasis and circumlocution would produce too great a ‘déplaisir’ in the reading

While the praise and fame a translator can hope for in Peletier’s terms thus remain a rather paradoxical point, it is clearly tied to the difference in status accorded to translator and author. It is also the difference in perceived status between translators and authors which puts the former in their place and restricts their room for manoeuvre. The more they are seen as translators and present themselves as translators, the more narrowly circumscribed their space becomes. Leaving aside those literary devices that lend a text its ‘grace’, it would seem that the core requirement is for the translator to render ‘phrase pour phrase, et mot pour mot’, effectively closing the gap between himself and his author. Such translations however are not really acceptable to the aesthetically sensitive reader. They can be squared with the law of translation, but not with artistic expression. This appears to be the rub in Peletier’s chapter. If translation is to have a place in handbooks on the art of poetry,

then it ought to do the impossible. It ought to reduce to nil the distance between original and translation by clinging to the former's every word and nuance, and simultaneously to retain the stylistic refinement of the donor text while respecting the integrity of the receptor language. This, Peletier realizes, is asking too much ('Mais, comme j'ai dit, il ne se peut faire'). Translation cannot reach beyond itself. The fact that different languages possess different grammatical and idiomatic structures and hence different rhetorical resources, renders total correspondence utopian. Yet total correspondence, the absence of distance, is what the duty of the translator and the law of translation demand.

Faced with this dilemma, Peletier ends his chapter by registering the impasse it leads into, yet without proposing a way out. Du Bellay, as we saw, solved the problem by dismissing translation as an instrument of artistic expression. In fact, whenever 'eloquence' was involved he emphatically preferred imitation to translation. Peletier leaves the impasse unresolved, and this also allows him to leave the duty of the translator and the law of translation unchallenged. Translation is still strictly circumscribed: translation in the strict sense means a strict form of translating. Deviation, allowing space between donor and receptor text, compromises the integrity of the translation and, by implication, of the translator. It cannot be reconciled with the requirement of loyal and 'conscientious' faithfulness and lays the translator open to the charge of betrayal and fraud. When he fails to pay proper attention to 'la propriété des mots et locutions' the translator 'défraude le sens de 'Auteur'.¹

The legal and moral overtones in the notions of fidelity and fraud, the translator's professional duty and translation's law, all echo Saint Jerome's famous Letter to Pammachius of ca. 395 (Letter 57), also known as *De optimo genere interpretandi* (Jerome 1953). That document is directly relevant here. It too speaks of the translator's duty, and of literal translation. It also links the two concepts, be it – as in Peletier's chapter – in a less than straightforward manner. Let us have a closer look. As is well known, Jerome's Letter was written in self-defence. The immediate cause was a public and potentially damaging attack, which Jerome puts before Pammachius in the opening paragraphs. There he explains that, shortly before, he had responded to an urgent request from a friend and, working at great speed, made a Latin translation of a Greek text, which he had further elucidated and annotated in the margin. Although the translation had been intended for strictly private use, it ended up in the wrong hands, and Jerome stood accused of unprofessional conduct. The accusation levelled against him, he says, boiled down to either professional incompetence, in that he did not know how to translate, or criminal bad faith, in that he had refused to translate properly ('...aut nescui ... interpretari, aut nolui ... alterum error ... alterum crimen'). Either way he was charged with having delivered a fraudulent product in that he had not translated word for word ('...contionentur me falsarium, me verbum non expressisse de verbo'). What was expected of a translator, clearly (or: as Jerome makes it appear), was just such a translation, a word for word rendering. The fact that Jerome's failure to produce such a version could become the cause for a public attack against him suggests that the word for word rule, as a normative expectation, was strong and widely accepted.

In the course of his defence Jerome never challenges the validity of the rule as such. The nearest he comes to it is when, speaking for the more cultured readers ('eruditi'), he sneers at the claim to truth and integrity, the supposed 'veritas interpretationis' of the literalists. His tactic, rather, is to proclaim an alternative mode, that of translating 'ad sensum' ('following the meaning'). This mode, he claims, is applicable to all types of texts with the exception of Scripture, and separates the

cultured, discerning translators for the mass of diligent but dull literalists. His declaration is famous enough: ‘Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo sed sensum exprimere de sensu’ [‘I not only declare but loudly proclaim that in translating from the Greek, except for the sacred scriptures where even the order of the words is a mystery, I translate not word for word but sense for sense’] (Jerome 1953: 59). But even after his persuasive argumentation regarding the near-impossibility of avoiding either omissions or additions when attempting to translate stylistically sophisticated source texts, Jerome still works a peculiar paradox into his key statement of the translator’s dilemma which follows a little later: ‘si ad verbum interpretor, absurde resonant; si ob necessitatem aliquid in ordine, in sermone mutavero, ab interpretis videbor officio recessisse’ [‘if I translate word for word, the result sounds absurd; if of necessity I change anything in the order or the manner of speaking, I will seem to have fallen short of the duty of a translator’] (Jerome 1953: 61).² It is Jerome’s reference to ‘the duty of a translator’ (‘interpretis officium’) which recalls Peletier’s ‘l’office de traduire’ and the ‘devoir’ of the translator. Jerome’s dilemma too is like Peletier’s. As Jerome puts it, literal translation produces unacceptable results which grate on the ear, but moving away from it means incurring censure of a different kind, as it amounts to abandoning one’s post, failing to live up to one’s responsibility, defaulting on one’s obligation – on that which is precisely what the translator should be doing. In arguing against literal translation, Jerome at the same time confirms the general validity of the rule.

Immediately after he has proclaimed his own policy of translating ‘ad sensum’ rather than ‘ad verbum’, Jerome invokes the authority of Cicero, from whose *De optimo genere oratorum* he goes on to quote. Here again something odd happens. The passage Jerome selects is the one where Cicero explains that in rendering the two Greek orations before him he did not count out the words individually but paid the whole amount at once. Surprisingly, perhaps, Jerome also repeats as part of his quotation Cicero’s remark that in so doing he was aware that he was not operating in the manner of a translator but in that of an orator (‘nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator’) – the implication of which must be, even though Jerome obviously does not draw attention to it, that in Cicero’s view going about translating in the manner of a translator (‘ut interpres’) does mean counting out the words individually, that is, translating word for word. The reason why Cicero prefers to work ‘ut orator’ rather than ‘ut interpres’ in the versions of Aeschines and Demosthenes to which *De optimo genere oratorum* serves as a preface, is that he is intent not on reproducing in Latin what the Greek orators actually said, but on creating a Latin model of the Attic style of oratory which will be able to displace the Greek sources (Copeland 1991: 45ff).

A very similar duality appears in the opening paragraphs of Cicero’s *De finibus*, which Jerome does not mention but which tie in with the comments in *De optimo genere* and additionally throw up a reference to the ‘task’ of the translator. *De finibus*, like *De optimo genere*, arises out of the desire to appropriate Greek sources in such a way as to render them redundant. Early on in this work Cicero voices his disapproval of those Roman Graecophiles who look down on their own Latin culture but delight in literal translations from the Greek (‘ad verbum e Graecis expressas’). He goes on to state that he could of course have translated in the same plain manner (‘si plane sic verterem’) but decided on this occasion to do more, to go beyond what is

² Jerome is here actually quoting from his own preface to his translation of the *Chronicles* of Eusebius, ca. 381.

expected of translators or what is regarded as part of the translators' task ('interpretum munus'). The result of this deliberate choice is a type of rendering comparable to that used in connection with the Greek orations, but now applied to the domain of philosophy and ethics. Of interest in the present context is the fact that when, both in *De optimo genere* and in *De finibus*, Cicero speaks of 'translating' he employs the same verbs ('vertere', 'convertere') but suggests that the activity they refer to can be performed in two markedly different ways, one of them 'as a translator' ('ut interpretes'), the other 'as an orator' ('ut orator') or in the similar but unnamed capacity applicable to the discursive subject of *De finibus*. The manner which he calls 'plain' because it is unadorned, which does not enjoy the cultural prestige of the 'ut orator' style, and which humbly but dutifully counts out the words one by one, is the manner 'ut interpretes', the manner associated with the task or duty ('munus') of the translator.³

The question of whether, or to what extent, Jerome deliberately reduced the complexity of Cicero's pronouncements and twisted their intent to serve the purposes of his own polemic against his anonymous detractors, need not detain us here. The relevant point is that explicitly in Cicero and somewhat more implicitly in Jerome we encounter the notion of word for word translation as most closely associated with, as actually constituting the proper task and duty ('officium', 'munus') of the translator, and of the plainly honest, faithful, loyal and therefore reliable translator in particular. That does not mean that detailing the duty of the translator in individual cases is straightforward or uncontroversial. On the contrary, the alternative 'ad sensum' mode will be a constant presence and it has cultural prestige and self-confidence on its side. But it does mean that when proponents of the more liberal line criticize the literal tendency on the grounds that its word for word method results in texts so clumsy as to be unfit for circulation in cultured society, the defence of the strict 'ad verbum' manner rests pre-eminently on moral considerations of trustworthiness, integrity, reliability and incorruptibility.

In the early Middle Ages, when the Christian mistrust of Classical rhetoric acts as a powerful spur, this line of argument in support of literalism is eagerly taken up. When Saint Augustine, in *On Christian Doctrine*, becomes aware of the potentially damaging differences between existing Latin versions of Scripture, he recommends using the most literal translations, as these must be deemed least likely to engender corrupt readings. The word for word manner which Jerome reserved as appropriate only for the Bible is subsequently adopted for other discourses as well. Boethius puts the case very forcefully, and others follow suit.⁴ Being good Christians, they happily accept the taint of being no more than faithful translators ('fidi interpretis culpa') if that allows them to lay claim to total integrity and access to the naked truth, stripped of all rhetorical embellishment and corruption, just as the Biblical word itself is both plain and true. As Boethius puts it in the early sixth century, in connection with Porphyry's *Isagoge*: 'in these writings in which knowledge of the matter is sought' ('in his scriptis in quibus rerum cognitio quaeritur'), what matters is 'not the charm of a sparkling style, but the uncorrupted truth' ('non luculentae orationis lepos, sed incorrupta veritas'), and this is achieved 'through sound and irreproachable translation' ('per integerrimae translationis sinceritatem'; Copeland 1991: 52; Schwarz 1945: 43-48).

³ For more detailed discussions, see Hoskin 1985 and Copeland 1991, Chapters 1 and 2.

⁴ See Schwarz 1985: 43-48; Copeland 1991: 52-55.

The marked emphasis on purity and integrity ('*incorrupta veritas*', '*integerrimae translationis sinceritas*') leads into paradoxes. On the one hand, because of the narrow limits which this mode of translating chooses to impose on itself, the end product clearly advertizes its status as a translated text through its forced, tormented expression – in which it takes a martyr-like, anti-rhetorical pride because it is precisely the textual ungainliness of the product which signals its integrity as a translation. The translator himself, on the other hand, does everything in his power to expunge his presence and erase his intervention by ensuring that every word of the donor text is covered so scrupulously that its integrity is never compromised. The ascetic self-restraint demanded by literalism seeks to ensure above all that the transfer from one language to another will be so close, so word for word, as to allow no slippage, no hairline crack through which meaning might ooze out or rhetorical or interpretive corruption seep in. But the double movement, in which the translated text vaunts its translated status through its deliberate hideousness and the translator does his utmost to disappear as an actively interpreting and meaning-producing subject, also guarantees that the translator has not wrongfully appropriated anything that is not his, and simultaneously – another aspect of the same issue – that he cannot be held responsible for merely handing on someone else's statements. The intermediary does not intervene in any substantive way. The ironic pride of the absent, empty-handed translator consists in the awareness, or at any rate in the ideological self-assurance, of offering the reader an absolutely clear view of the original.

Considerations like these appear to mark the dividing line between the translator on one side and, on the other, the exegete, as the provider of paraphrases, glosses, commentaries and interpretations. When, in the early medieval period, John Scotus Eriugena is criticized for the obscurity of one of his translations, he counters with the observation that he was only the work's translator, not its expositor ('*videat me interpretem huius operis esse, non expositorem*', Copeland 1991: 52, 91) – and it is an appeal to the notion of the 'faithful translator' ('*fidus interpres*') which allows him to establish the opposition. It is precisely in terms of oppositions like these that in the early Renaissance the 'office' of the translator and the domain of translation in the 'strict' sense will be determined. At the end of the fourteenth century the Greek scholar Manuel Chrysoloras, who had left Byzantium a few years earlier and settled in Florence, was recorded as disapproving of word for word '*conversio*', because it could easily pervert the thought expressed in the source text, but remarked in the same breath that departing from the words of the original and from the 'propriety' of the Greek amounted to abandoning the 'office' of translator for that of exegete ('*eum non interpretis, sed exponentis officio uti*'; Norton 1984: 35).

Around the mid-fifteenth century the Spanish Humanist Alfonso de Madrigal, translating the *Chronici canones* of Eusebius into Spanish and writing a Latin commentary on them (not printed until the early years of the sixteenth century), speaks in similar terms of two modes of translation. The first, word for word, is called '*interpretacion o translacion*'. The other, which does not follow the words, he calls '*exposicion o comento o glosa*', and this form, he says, frequently requires many additions and changes ('*muchas adiciones et mudamientos*'), so that in the end the work is no longer the original author's but the expositor's ('*por lo cual non es obra del autor, mas del glosador*', Keightley 1977:246).⁵ But additions and changes are

⁵ The quotation is as follows: '*Dos son las maneras de trasladar: una es de palabra a palabra, et llamase interpretacion; otra es poniende la sentencia sin seguir las palabras, la qual se faze comunmente por mas luengas palabras, et esta se llama exposicion o comento o glosa. La primera es de mas autoridad, la segunda es mas clara para los menores ingenios. En la primera non se añade, et porende sienpre es de*

irreconcilable with the ‘duty’ of the translator, as Madrigal indicates in his Latin commentary on Eusebius, with an unmistakable nod in Jerome’s direction: when the translator ‘changes something in the order of words or the manner of speaking, he can do so in two ways, both of which lead away from the translator’s duty; by adding something, or by changing as well as adding, and then he writes commentaries rather than a translation, so that the original work does not remain intact but a new work comes into being which is a commentary or exposition of the first one’ (‘qui mutat in ordine vel in sermone, dupliciter potest mutare, et utroque modo ab interpretis recidit officio; primo modo addendo aliud, vel mutando ordinem cum aliquali tamen additione, et tunc comentarios agit, non translationem, et iam non videtur manere opus principale, sed aliud novum opus conditur, quod prioris comentum vel expositio est’; Keightley 1977: 246). True to this principle Madrigal declares his intention to keep his translation of Eusebius separate from his commentary on this author, adding that it is translating which is the more difficult task since it has to be done word for word in the interest of the original’s integrity, even if this runs the risk of producing obscure and therefore demanding passages (ibid.: 244-45).⁶

With Madrigal we have returned to the Renaissance. In sixteenth-century pronouncements on translation the term ‘officium’ or a modern vernacular variant occurs a number of times, usually with reference to the task, responsibility, obligation or duty of *the* translator in a general or generic sense. Often it is flanked by the demand or the wish to translate literally or as literally as possible. This striving is seen as the pre-eminent quality of the ‘faithful’ translator, who discharges his ‘officium’ by translating in a manner characterized as ‘faithful’, ‘loyal’, ‘truthful’, ‘conscientious’, ‘scrupulous’, ‘religious’ or a similar adjective. The adjectives in turn appear to offer word for word translators moral compensation for the discomfort they find themselves in, since their sense of duty puts them in a position they describe as constrained, unfree, enthralled, narrowly hemmed in, bound hand and foot. If their service and sacrifice consist in this, it also grants them a degree of safety which the paraphrast has to do without. Since paraphrase, glossing and explication inevitably mean the use of words which are the commentator’s own, they increase the risk of error, misinterpretation, misrepresentation and corruption.

As for the term ‘officium’ itself, and its association with the principle of translating word for word: Erasmus uses it in a letter of 1506, which will be discussed below. In 1543 the Swiss humanist Henricus Glareanus demonstrates that contrary to prevailing opinion the famous ‘fidus interpres’ passage in Horace’s *Art of Poetry* does in fact identify the ‘verbum verbo’ manner of translating as constituting the translator’s ‘officium’ (Norton 1984: 83) – a few years later Peletier du Mans will follow Glareanus’s reading of the passage, as we saw. Even at the very end of the sixteenth century editions of Horace’s poetry appeared which had in the margin, next to the ‘fidus interpres’ lines, the gloss ‘interpretis officium’ (for instance, Horatius 1594: 150). In the preface to his Spanish version of the Song of Songs, around 1561, Luis de Leon discusses the translator’s ‘oficio’ in terms of literal translation; more about this below too. When in 1566 the Flemish translator Marcus Antonius Gillis publishes a Dutch version of the emblems of the Hungarian humanist Johannes Sambucus, he declares to have acquitted himself of ‘the office of a faithful Translator’

aquel que la primero fabrico. En la segunda se fazen muchas adiciones et mudamientos, por lo qual non es obra del autor, mas del glosador.’ The opening rubric of the translation reads: ‘Aqui comienza la interpretacion o translacion del libro *Delas cronicas o tiempos* de Eusebio cesariense, de latin en flaba castellana’ (Keightley 1977: 246, 244).

⁶ See also Norton 1984: 31-32 and Santoyo 1987:36.

(d'office eens ghetrouwen Oversetters') by translating Sambucus's very compact Latin word for word (Hermans 1996:56). In 1595 Blaise de Vigenère points out that in his rendering of Tasso he has deviated from what he calls, ironically this time, the correct way to translate, which is 'toute à la lettre, ainsi qu'on est obligé es traduction' (Horguelin 1981: 69). Around 1603 the Spanish translator Gregorio Morillo speaks of both the 'office' and the 'laws' which define the faithful translator's activity ('officio', 'las leyes del interprete fiel'; Santoyo 1987: 73-74). When the Antwerp Jesuit Andreas Schottus offers a typology of different forms of translation in his book on Ciceronian imitation (1610), he also picks up the Ciceronian term 'munus interpretis' and associates it with literalism (Renner 1989: 287).

Schottus' chapter on translation ('Liber IV: De optimo genere interpretandi Ciceronem', Schottus 1610: 268ff.) is in fact a late but powerful assertion of the literalist principle. He begins by distinguishing two kinds of 'interpretatio', one called 'metaphrase', the other 'paraphrase'. Paraphrase, which he considers to be a matter of amplification, explanation and commentary, has three subdivisions: 'historica', 'critica' or 'narrativa', and the more flowery 'artificiosa'. Metaphrase, which he regards as translation proper, comes in two kinds: 'faithful' or 'scrupulous' ('religiosa'), and 'arbitrary'. Related to the 'faithful' mode but less strict is an intermediate 'freer' kind ('liberior'), which operates on a sense-for-sense principle and is the one Cicero claimed for himself as a more learned mode. Yet Schottus uses quotations from Cicero's own works to interrogate his subject on the vexed question of what exactly constitutes the translator's 'officium' or 'munus' ('Quodnam, Marce Tulle, *munus Interpretis?*', 1610: 321), and concludes it can only be a literalist 'ad verbum' mode. Horace is then brought in to support this view. The way in which Schottus describes literalism has a familiar ring by now. The '*Fidus Interpres*' is characterized as one who 'renders word for word in such a way that he does not stray a fingernail's breadth from the author he has undertaken to translate' ('qui ad verbum sic reddit, ut ne latum quidem unguem ab auctore, quem interpretandum suscipit, discedat', 1610:318), and who is so well versed in both languages that he is able to convey the original author's sense properly and lucidly ('sit modo linguae utriusque ex aequo peritus, ut sensa auctoris Latine ac perspicue convertat'). Whereas the 'freer' mode is content, in the manner of the orators, to represent the overall sense or meaning or idea rather than counting out the individual words ('Affinis huic, sed largior, quem *liberiores* nomino, qui non tam adnumerat verba, quam appendit, Oratorum more, sententiam integre repraesentasse contentus', and 'Hanc interpretationem liberam *κατα γνώμων, φρασιν ή διάνοιαν* vocaverim, quae scriptoris sententiam incolumem magis quam verba conservat', 1610: 318, 319), the word for word method is also called – with a reference to the Roman Emperor Justinian – the 'step-for-step' method because it traces its model's every footstep and counts its every word ('Fidelis autem versio est, *κατα λέξιν*; quam *κατα πόδα* vocari a Graecis auctor est Iustinianus Imp. L. I. D. *De Jure enucleando*: cum Interpretes iisdem quasi vestigiis sic inhaerent, ut verba verbis quasi dimensa ac paria reddant', 1610: 319). This is reinforced once more when Schottus sums up the Ciceronian and Horatian view of the task of the faithful translator as consisting in 'decanting into another language, in good faith, word for word, adding nothing, omitting nothing, changing nothing' (Quodnam, Marce Tulli, *munus Interpretis?* nonne ad verbum, fide bona, in aliam transfundere linguam, nihil ut de tuo addes, demas nihil, nihil denique immutes'). For Schottus, clearly, the core of the concept of translation lies here. It is essentially a matter of counting words in a state of absolute loyalty and self-abnegation, in contrast with the sense-for-sense mode of the freer translators and,

beyond that, with both the wilful appropriation of the ‘arbitrary’ mode and the expansiveness of paraphrase.

Schottus’ book already takes us into the seventeenth century. By then the objections against the literalist principle have become loud and numerous. Of course, the objections were always there, from Saint Jerome onwards. In the Renaissance they will gain increasing force, coming primarily from Humanist translators and from those vernacular translators who take their cue from the Humanist tradition. When Jacques Amyot, for example, writes the preface to his celebrated *Lives* of Plutarch (1559) he does not even mention the word for word manner in his description of the translator’s ‘office’:

... je prie les lecteurs de vouloir considerer que l’office d’un propre traducteur ne gist pas seulement a rendre fidelement la sentence de son auteur, mais aussi à représenter aucunement et adombrer la forme du style et manière de parler d’iceluy (Horguelin 1981: 66)`a
[I ask the readers to consider that the office of a proper translator does not consist only in faithfully rendering his author’s meaning but also in somehow representing and adumbrating his style and manner of speaking]

These principles will become predominant in the seventeenth century. But let us return first to the sixteenth, to Erasmus and Luis de León.

As early as 1503, in a letter concerning his first translation, three orations by Libanius of Antiochia rendered from Greek into Latin, Erasmus shows his familiarity with Cicero’s statement, in *De optimo genere*, about translating as settling an account at once instead of counting out the words one by one like individual coins. He immediately adds, however, that as a novice translator (‘novus interpres’) he has preferred to be too scrupulous (‘religiosus’) rather than too bold (‘religiosior esse malui quam audacior’, 17 November 1503; Allan 1906, no. 177). His letter of 24 January 1506, where he discusses his translation of the *Hecuba* of Euripides, takes up the same idea. Here Erasmus says he has chosen not to avail himself of the liberty which Cicero grants the translator and that, still regarding himself as a ‘novus interpres’, he has again preferred to err on the side of scruple, even of superstition, rather than of licentiousness (‘ut superstiosior viderer alicui potius quam licentior’; Allan 1906, no. 188). As regards the ‘office’ of the translator he is dismissive both of the paraphrastic alternative, as a flight into ineptitude, like a squid enveloping itself in a dark cloud, and of the expansive rhetorical option, as being an unwarranted, self-indulgent addition.⁷

Both letters are written by a translator who emphatically acknowledges his own inexperience; and the second letter cannot be said to advocate the word for word

⁷ The relevant passage reads as follows: ‘...dum versum versui, dum verbum pene verbo reddere nitor, dum ubique sententiae vim ac pondus summa cum fide Latinis auribus appendere studeo: sive quod mihi non perinde probatur illa in vertendis authoribus libertas, quam Marcus Tullius ut aliis permittit, ita ipse (pene dixerim immodice) usurpavit; sive quod novus interpres in hanc malui peccare partem, ut superstiosior viderer alicui potius quam licentior, id est ut littoralibus in harenis nonnunquam haerere viderer potius quam fracta nave mediis natare fluctibus; maluique committere ut eruditi candorem et concinnitatem carminis in me forsitan desyderarent quam fidem. Denique nolui paraphrasten professus eam mihi latebram parare qua multi suam palliant inscitiam, ac loliginis in morem, ne depraehendantur, suis se tenebris involuunt. Iam vero quod Latinae tragoediae grandiloquentiam, ampullas et sesquipedalia, ut Flaccus ait, verba hic nusquam audient, mihi non debent imputare, si interpretis officio fungens eius quem verti pressam sanitatem elegantiamque referre malui quam alienum tumorem, qui me nec alias magnopere delectat (Allan 1906: 419-20).

mode in any exclusive sense, since he has also endeavoured to cover ‘the power and weight of the thought with the utmost faithfulness’ (‘sententiae vim ac pondus summa cum fide’). Their interest lies in the fact that they associate faithfulness with the desire to move closer to the words, and, as in the case of Alfonso de Madrigal half a century earlier, distrust the translator’s own interpretive additions. In so doing they mark the dividing line between the ‘proper’ translator on the one hand and the paraphrastic and rhetorical translator on the other. It is this distinction which is drawn also, and more sharply, by Luis de León, in the prologue to his translation of the Song of Songs (*Traducción literal y declaración del libro de los Cantares de Salomón*, ca. 1561; Santoyo 1987: 65-66; López García 1996: 77-79).

For Luis, the task of the translator is quite different from that of the commentator (‘entiendo sea diferente el oficio del que traslada ... del que las explica y declara’). The commentator should copiously explain the sense and substance of the text before him, in his own words (‘El extenderse diciendo, y el declarar copiosamente la razon que entienda ... eso quédese para el que declara, cuyo oficio es’). The translator’s task, by contrast, consists in counting out the words exactly if that were possible, supplying for each word another one possessing the same weight, value and range of meanings (‘el que traslada ha de ser fiel y cabal, y si fuere posible, contar las palabras, para dar otras tantas, y no más, de la misma manera, cualidad, y condición y variedad de significaciones que las originales tienen’). Like Peletier du Mans, who, as we saw, would have preferred to see all of Virgil translated into French in this manner but realized it could not be done, so Luis de León too has to admit in the end that due to the structural asymmetry between languages a strict word for word rendering is impracticable and he has been obliged to intervene to some extent, in the interest of intelligibility (‘Bien es verdad que, trasladando el texto, no pudimos tan puntualmente ir con el original, y la cualidad de la sentencia y propiedad de nuestra lengua nos forzó á que añadiésemos alguna palabrilla, que sin ella quedaría oscurísimo el sentido; pero estas son pocas’).

Despite this pragmatic retreat, which Luis does his best to belittle (he says he only added a few little words, ‘alguna palabrilla’, and ‘estas son pocas’), the prologue is significant for the way it posits literalism as the ideal form of translation and directly associates the task of the translator with it. Literalism in its ideal, utopian form makes the translator disappear so completely behind the words that the reader is given full interpretive freedom, the ability to generate all the meanings, and only those, that were present in the original text and from that array to select those that seem most appropriate (‘para que los que leyeren la traducción puedan entender la variedad toda de sentidos á que da ocasión el original si se leyese, y quedan libres para escoger de ellos el que mejor les pareciere’). Whereas the commentator (‘el que declara’) speaks in his own name and thus spreads a textual and interpretive layer over the primary text, obscuring as well as enlightening the reader’s view of the source but always interfering in the interpretive process, the word for word translator should ideally be able to present the reader with a painstakingly accurate, unaltered, unadulterated copy of the original, an exact double.

This view neatly circumscribes and delimits the translator’s role and responsibilities, in a way that is reminiscent of the statements by Scotus Eriugena’s separation of translation and interpretive exposition, and the less sharp distinctions made by Chrysoloras, Madrigal and Erasmus. Between Erasmus and Luis de León there stands, moreover, chronologically and geographically speaking, the further figure of Juan Luis Vives. The chapter on translation (‘Versiones seu interpretationes’) in Vives’s *De ratione dicendi* of 1532 is moderate in tone and

comes down in favour of 'ad sensum' rather than 'ad verbum' renderings, but it too declares that for certain difficult works like those of Aristotle, and for religious writings and official documents, counting out the words is the best way to proceed because it reduces to a minimum the translator's interpretive intervention and hence his responsibility for the meanings invested in the new text (Coseriu 1971; Vega 1994: 115-18).

To the extent that translation is construed as 'saying the same thing', it appears, literalism constitutes its most secure ideology. It allows the translator to negate his own presence and voice by becoming wholly transparent. This ascetic, sacrificial self-abnegation in turn forms the basis of the reader's trust in the translator as re-enunciator. If interpretive non-intervention is the rule, then any translative mode which detaches itself from the original's words and involves the translator as an interpreting and speaking subject creates room for misinterpretation, distortion, corruption of integrity, betrayal of trust. But the price for purity and rectitude is a text that is hard to read, to the point of unintelligibility, a form of expression that shames the translator, who nonetheless accepts the humiliation in a spirit of self-sacrifice. This is precisely what Jerome's dilemma consisted in: loyalty to the words makes too many and too heavy demands on the reader, but straying from the words is incompatible with the task of the translator, which is an ethical demand to transmit the original whole and unadulterated. In the course of the sixteenth century the dilemma is formulated repeatedly in these terms. As late as 1623 the Dutch writer Constantijn Huygens put it very succinctly: 'If we take liberties in Translating, the truth will suffer; if we keep closely to the words, the spirit of the expression will vanish' ('Neemtmen de ruymte in 't Oversetten, soo kan de waerheid niet vrij van geweld gaen: Staetmen scherp op de woorden, soo verdwijnt de geest vande uytspraeck'; Huygens 1892-1899, I: 284-85).

As far as the literal translators are concerned, 'the truth' takes precedence over 'the spirit of the expression'. That is after all the moral underpinning of their position. It is in the name of truth that they practise their self-denial: transmitting the original intact requires self-restraint and submission. Thus, for instance, the French translator Jacques Gohorry in 1548, in the preface to his version of Livy: he has followed his model as closely as possible, he declares, because he did not want to 'violate or tarnish' its majesty by any 'addition or diminution' coming from his own pen ('... suis efforcé de suivre de plus pres qu'il m'a esté possible, estimant telle magesté de dire n'estre a violer ne souiller par addition ou diminution venant du mien'; Norton 1984: 145). Or Denis Sauvage, translating from the Italian in 1551, who ties himself to his original's every word so as not to allow his own spirit to wander in freedom and stray ('j'ay suyvi ma copie Italienne ... presque de mot a mot, sans extravaguer, & sans m'égayer en la liberté de mon esprit'; Norton 1984: 146). The Jesuit Andreas Schottus, as we saw, defined the 'faithful translator' in 1610 as one who does not deviate a fingernail's breadth from his author ('Fidus Interpres is demum est, qui ad verbum sic redit, ut ne latum quidem unguem ab auctore ... discedat') and who does not add, omit or alter anything ('Nonne ad verbum, fide bona, in aliam transfundere linguam, nihil ut de tuo addas, demas nihil, nihil denique immutes'). In England Ben Jonson will support this position: in 1627 Jonson praises a translation 'so wrought / As not the smallest joint or gentlest word / In the great mass or machine there is stirred' (Spingarn 1908, 1:liv).

This again leads into the seventeenth century, when the word for word principle as constituting the law of translation and the duty of the translator is fast losing ground. The pressure has come from different sides, and stems both from

vernacular translators increasingly aware of the grammatical and idiomatic differences between languages, and from the Humanist or Humanist-inspired translators with their emphasis on style and rhetorical propriety. The sixteenth-century discourse on translation shows clear traces of this tension. It is evident enough in Joachim du Bellay's dismissal of translation for literary purposes: what he contemptuously called the 'law of translating', a narrowly confined space, was held responsible for texts deemed unpalatable as literature, and writers who wanted to make their mark were advised to turn to imitation rather than translation. Around the same time the translator Jean Lalement, writing in 1549, intends to stay as close as possible to his author Demosthenes, but realizes that such a 'scrupulous' rendering, 'quasi word for word', will not go down well with his readers and land him with the reputation of being 'too religious' a translator, a label he clearly regards as undesirable ('si je l'eusse voulu scrupuleusement traduire et quasi de mot à mot, à peine eusse-je-esté entendu, et mais réputé trop religieux traducteur,' Horguelin 1981: 59).

The significance of such a pronouncement lies in the fact that once words like 'scrupulous', 'religious' and other key adjectives in the literalist vocabulary acquire negative connotations, the whole arsenal of terms deployed to justify and sustain the word for word principle comes under threat. This tension can now be recognized as one of the faultlines running through the Renaissance theory of translation. Seen from this perspective it is the presence of a literalist principle which gives the vocabulary of the liberal translators its oppositional, polemical edge, its urgency and relevance. It then becomes clear that with the comments by rhetorically trained Humanist translators, from Gianozzo Manetti and Leonardo Bruni in the fifteenth century to Etienne Dolet, Jacques Amyot, Lawrence Humphrey or John Christopherson in the sixteenth, a number of new terms are introduced into the metalanguage of translation which derive their specific thrust and their surplus value from the opposition to the repertoire and the self-justification of the literalists. This is the case with the 'correct way to translate' ('interpretatio recta') of Manetti and Bruni. The emphasis which Bruni's 'De interpretatione recta' (ca. 1425) places on the need for the translator to possess a thorough knowledge and mastery of all the resources of both the original's and the receptor language, on profound familiarity with the original writers and their contexts, on the need for verbal propriety in the translated text and on the preservation of the source text's stylistic power and individuality, all this acquires added force when it is seen against the backdrop of the principle and practice of literalist translation.⁸ In the title of Etienne Dolet's 'Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre' of 1540 it is the adverb 'bien' which needs stressing, as its concern with 'translating well' echoes the 'bene dicere', the art of 'speaking well' of the Humanist rhetorical tradition. The 'Manière', then, does not list a few commonplace rules of thumb, as is sometimes thought, but presents an emphatic image of the ideal rhetorical translator, as indeed Glyn Norton has persuasively argued (Norton 1974 and 1984). Dolet's explicit rejection of word for word translation in the third of his five points has an obvious focus, but the entire treatise is informed by the polemical opposition to what he sees as the pedestrianism of the literalists. The concern for stylistic quality is evidenced not only in the sheer abundance of terms referring to 'grace', 'majesty', 'dignity', 'richness', 'perfection', 'sweetness', 'harmony of language', 'splendour', 'eloquence' and the 'properties, turns of phrase, expressions, subtleties, and

⁸ For Bruni's treatise, see Baron 1928 (Latin text) and Griffiths et al. 1987 (English translation); short extracts in English also in Lefevere 1992: 82-86. On Manetti, see Norton 1984.

vehemences' of language in what is after all a short text, but also, more than anything else perhaps, in the almost Freudian slip in the final sentence, when, at the end of his fifth and longest point, which deals with rhetorical structures and figures, Dolet seems to have forgotten he is writing about translation and concludes his brief treatise speaking of the 'orator' instead ('Qui sont les points d'ung orateur parfaict et vrayment comblé de toute gloire d'éloquence', in Weinberg 1950: 83).

Very much the same stress on the quality of the translating language over and above fidelity to the meaning of the words can be heard in the English Humanist John Christopherson's pronouncements on translation around the mid sixteenth century. When, writing from Louvain in 1553, Christopherson dedicates his Latin translation of four short works by Philo Judaeus to Trinity College, Cambridge, he first defines the task ('munus') of both translator and editor as one of exact rendering of the original's meaning, without addition or deviation: 'in translating as well as in editing ancient writers my principle is, and always has been, not to add anything of my own, not to invent anything, but, when I discharge the duty of a translator, to express truthfully the author's meaning, and when I work as a corrector, to compare carefully the printed copies with the manuscripts' ('Sed mihi certè in veteribus scriptoribus tum convertendis, tum emendandis ea religio & est, & semper fuit, ut nihil de meo addere voluerim, nihil *con*figere, sed cum munere fungerer interpretis, sententiam authoris verè exprimere, cum autem correctoris, exemplaria impressa cum manu descriptis diligenter conferre laborarim'; 1553: b2r°). However, Christopherson goes on, in translating an original that can boast pure diction, stylistic elegance, concise expression and other such qualities, the aim must be to allow the Latin reader to derive as much enjoyment from the Latin rendering as Greek readers do reading the Greek ('tum profecto qui Latina solum forte lecturi sint, tantum ex illis delectationis caperent, quantum qui Graeca', *ibid.*: b2v°). This, he adds, he could not quite manage, however hard he tried, nor in his opinion could anyone working only as a translator ('Verum nec poteram, etiam si maximè in illud incubuissem, nec quenquam, qui interpres solum esse voluerit, aliquando efficere posse arbitror'; *ibid.*: b3r°). For what is required is a text which makes full use of the grammatical and rhetorical resources of the translating language ('Danda tamen est opera ei, qui quempiam scriptorem convertere instituat, ut verbis propriis & aptis ad consuetudinem eius linguae, in quam *con*vertit, utatur'). This means that the translator should avoid two errors above all: first, that of neglecting the original author's sense and meaning in the search for an aesthetically pleasing expression, and secondly, circumlocution, which is the commentator's privilege ('Neque dum sermonis elegantiae student, sensum & sententiam authoris negligat, neque dum partes suscipit interpretis, circuitone, quae es rerum explicatoris propria, utatur: quae duo vitia in vertendo maxime omnium vitanda sunt'; *ibid.*).

Some fifteen years later, in the 'Translator's Preface' ('Proemium Interpretis') which he attaches to his Latin version of Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* (1569), Christopherson reiterates his exacting vision of a rhetorically adequate translation:

Mihi in convertendis Graecis aciem mentis acrius defigenti quatuor potissimum videntur requiri, vera sensus sententiaeque explicatio, latinitas, numerus, et ea, quam dixi, sermonis perspicuitas. Primum ad fidem, secundum ad delectationem, tertium ad aurium iudicium, quartum ad intelligentiam solet acomodari. [...] Quamvis enim in sacris literis interpretandis ordo verborum retinenda est, ut ait D. Hieronymus, quia mysterium est, tamen in aliorum Graecorum interpretatione eodem authore Cicerone et citante et imitante, non

verbum e verbo, sed sensus de sensu exprimendus. [...] Eloquentia non est illa inanis et prope puerilis verborum volubilitas, quae saepe in populo insolenter se venditat, sed diserte et copiose loquens sapientia, quae in prudentum animos cum suavitate illabitur.

[As I fix the sight of my mind intently on the translation of the Greek, four things in particular seem to be required; a true explanation of sense and meaning, good latinity, harmony, and that perspicuity of speech which I have spoken of. The first is usually held to be relevant for fidelity, the second for delight, the third for the judgment of the ears, the fourth for the understanding [...] 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 authority of that same Cicero who both cited and imitated them, we should translate not word for word, but meaning for meaning. [...] For eloquence is not that empty and almost puerile verbosity which offers itself for sale insolently among the people, but wisdom speaking eloquently and copiously which glides into the minds of the prudent with sweetness] (Binns 1978: 135-36)

As around the mid-century such Humanist-inspired, rhetorically adept translators like Amyot, Dolet and Christopherson redefine the field of translation by relocating the boundary markers and repartitioning the allotment, they decisively relegate the word for word principle to the periphery – to the translation of special classes of texts such as the Scriptures or certain pedagogical works. The literal translator's professed love of the naked, unadorned truth comes to be seen as a wrongheaded illusion, which neglects the core essence – force, genius, *esprit*, in short the power of rhetorically effective language – for the mere external husk of the word and its surface meaning. The self-justifying discourse of the literalists is here dismissed from a position of cultural superiority.

The devaluation of the word for word arsenal continues into the seventeenth century. By that time, and beginning with figures like George Chapman in England and Malherbe in France, a new, culturally self-conscious generation of vernacular translators has come to the fore. Their repeated rejections of literalism suggest that the idea is still alive, but it has been reduced from a 'religious' faithfulness to a mere 'superstition'. Sir Thomas Elyot declared as early as 1531, with reference to a sermon by Saint Cyprian, that he had 'traunslated this lytell boke: not superstitiously folowyng the letter ... but keypyng the sentence and intent of the Authour' (Baumann 1992:6). In 1616 the academic translator Barten Holyday says he has adopted 'a moderate paraphrase' rather than the 'ferulary superstition to the letter' in rendering the poems of Persius into English (Steiner 1975: 12). In the seventeenth century this is the way the 'libertine' and 'belles infidèles translators in England and France routinely use the term. In the preface to his first published translation (1637), Nicolas Perrot d'Ablancourt speaks dismissively of the 'Judaic superstition' of clinging to the words while disregarding the underlying intent and design (Zuber 1972: 111).⁹ The positive terms which these translators employ – 'spirit', 'soul', 'life',

⁹ In his edition of d'Ablancourt's prefaces Roger Zuber does not comment on the use of the term 'Judaic'. It seems likely, however, that the explanation for it will be the same as that given by Glyn Norton for the occurrence of a similar reference a century earlier, in a court case of 1534 between the Sorbonne and the *lecteurs royaux* concerning the translation and interpretation of the Bible. There it was alleged that to interpret and translate well one must 'take out the medullary and mystical sense and not adhere to the cortex of words as do the Jews' ('il faut prendre, *sensum medullarem et mysticum*, &

‘grace’, ‘elegance’, ‘eloquence’, ‘excellencies’ etc. (Steiner 1975: 24-25) – are exactly those that were introduced into metatranslational discourse by the Humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They indicate all those qualities which Du Bellay claimed could not possibly be rendered by translators because the ‘law of translating’ did not allow them the necessary room for manoeuvre.

With the rise of the ‘belles infidèles’ translators in France and the ‘libertine’ translators in England, the climate for culturally prestigious translation has shifted decisively away from the literalist principle. When around the mid seventeenth century another generation of French writers and translators begins to speak of the ‘rules’ of translation (as do, for example, Gaspar Bachet de Méziriac in 1635, Antoine Lemaistre *ca.* 1650, Gaspard de Tende in 1660; cf. Horguelin 1981; 82,98, 100), these concepts have not only a different context but also a different basis, being closer to an emerging French Classicist mode of thinking. A different cultural constellation has come into being.

To return to our starting point: if we are to make sense of the different strands of thinking about translation in the sixteenth century, it helps if we can somehow connect them, if we can read and interpret them in relation and in contrast to one another. Clearly, every construction of an overall picture joining together heterogeneous discourses remains just that, a construction. But if we ask ourselves what could be meant, or covered, by terms like ‘the law of translation’ or the ‘office’ or ‘duty’ of the translator, why writers like Dolet or Christopherson appear to state the obvious in urging rhetorically adequate translation, or what it is that the seventeenth-century ‘libertine’ translators are arguing against, we find ourselves being thrown back time and again on a network of positions, concepts and historical echoes which suggest that writers on translation are aware of other views and approaches, and engage in open or covert debate with one another and with their audiences. In responding to the cultural and socio-political agendas of their respective environments, and in pursuing their own material and symbolic interests, they build alliances and deploy arguments that reverberate across time and space. Much of the debate about the core of the concept of translation, and hence much of the debate about the definition of translation, appears to centre on what constitutes the ‘duty’ of the translator, ideally and in practice. For an understanding of Renaissance theories of translation as a single if heterogeneous discursive field, then, it will be useful to think of the contributions to that debate as being linked, and to interpret them – to translate, to gloss them – accordingly.

The principle of word for word translation remains associated with both key notions explored here, even though the validity of the literalist idea is never uncontested and becomes increasingly marginal, an ideology in retreat. To the extent that the conflicts between the rhetorical priorities of the Humanist-inspired translators and the literalist concerns of the more traditional translators are focused on exactly what constitutes the translator’s duty, however, the exploration of this cluster of key terms together with their reverberations back and forth in time seems likely to take us to the heart of those debates. Insofar as literalism is associated with the ‘law’ of translation and the ‘duty’ of the translator, it provides a privileged way into these discussions.

non reddere verbum verbo, seu adhaerere cortici verborum ut faciunt Iudaei). As Norton has shown, the idea that Jewish readings of the Bible followed the letter rather than the (Christian or pre-Christian) spirit is also attested in several fifteenth- and sixteenth-century legal works (Norton 1984: 60-62; 1987:10). I would venture that D’Ablancourt is referring to this traditional perception.

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