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Research Article

THE SHACKLED MUSE MEDIEVAL LATIN TRANSLATORS AND POETRY IN GREEK PHILOSOPHERS*

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Abstract

In the medieval and early modern periods, Latin translators of Greek philosophical texts were faced with the difficult task of providing renderings of the poetic quotations that their sources contained. Their approaches clearly show that their usual translation method was not adapted to the challenge that they – unwillingly – had to take on. In this article, I present a selection of illustrative samples of various methodologies applied by medieval translators. I compare the results with the efforts produced by their humanist counterparts, who typically claimed to have had a greater mastery of both source and target languages. Finally, I attempt to sketch a theoretical framework for the translators' endeavours using insights borrowed from modern translation studies

Keywords: Medieval philosophy, history of translation, translation studies.

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Zincire Vurulmuş Muse: Ortaçağ'da Latince Mütercimler Ve Yunan Filozoflarında Şiir

Öz

Ortaçağ ve Yeniçağ'da Yunanca felsefî metinleri Latinceye çeviren mütercimler, kaynaklarda bulunan manzum sözleri tercüme etmek gibi güç bir işle karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Söz konusu mütercimlerin yaklaşımı, her zaman kullandıkları çeviri yönteminin, istemeseler de üstlenmek zorunda kaldıkları bu zorluğu aşmaya uygun olmadığını açıkça göstermektedir. Bu makalede Ortaçağ'daki mütercimlerin uyguladığı çeşitli yöntemleri örneklendiren bir tercüme seçkisi sunulmaktadır. Buradan elde edilen sonuçlar, hem kaynak hem hedef dillere daha fazla hâkim olduklarını iddia eden hümanist mütercimlerin eserleriyle karşılaştırılmaktadır. Son olarak makale, modern çeviri çalışmalarından alınan bakış açısını kullanmak suretiyle, bu mütercimlerin eserlerine yönelik kuramsal bir çerçeve çizmeye çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ortaçağ felsefesi, çeviri tarihi, çeviri çalışmaları.

"The poet runs untrammelled across the meadow. The translator dances in shackles."[1]

The debate whether translators should adhere to a method *ad verbum* or rather convert their source texts *ad sensum* into the target language goes back as far as the practice of translating Greek works into Latin exists. In Antiquity, Terence, Cicero, and Horace all had their say about the subject. Without exception, they pleaded in favour of translations that follow the meaning of the original, not rigidly its exact phrasing.

The ancient views found their way into several methodological reflections on the subject in the works of Saint Jerome, practioner of the trade and as a consequence patron of the translators. His most often quoted statement comes from his letter to Pammachius on translating:

[1] R.F. Kuang, *Babel or The Necessity of Violence. An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution*. London: Harper, 2022, 148.

> *Indeed, I not only admit, but freely proclaim that in translation from the Greek – except in the case of Sacred Scripture, where the very order of the words is a mystery – I render not word for word, but sense for sense.*[2]

Jerome's views carried great authority in the Christian Middle Ages, yet later medieval translators from Greek into Latin expanded the array of texts in which special attention to the exact words and even their order should be paid. They applied the word-for-word approach to considerably more texts than the Bible. Burgundio of Pisa, the 12th-century translator of Greek philosophical, theological, and medical works phrased the most explicit statement of intent preserved from the period in the prologue to his Latin version of John Chrysostom's commentary on the Gospel of John:

> *I was afraid that if I, Burgundio, were to take the sense of the commentary of this Holy Father and write it [literally: dictate it] in my own style, I would in some way change the deep meaning in what these two most wise men [i.e., John the Evangelist and John Chrysostom] were saying, and would run the risk of falling into some deviation in such an important matter (since we are dealing with the words of the Christian Faith). So I chose the more difficult path and decided to keep in my translation both (a) words with the same meaning, and (b) the same style and order that is among the Greeks.*[3]

The challenge of accurately translating the philosophical authors and their concepts into acceptable Latin was a formidable one. Yet whenever these ancient authors had decided to incorporate quotations from older poets into their own works, the goal became virtually unattainable. For Jerome had also recorded his thoughts concerning the demanding and nearly impossible task of adequately rendering poetry into a different language:

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2 "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." G.J.M. Bartelink, *Hieronymus. Liber de optimo genere interpretandi (Epistula 57). Ein Kommentar*. Leiden: Brill, 1980, 13. Translation Kathleen Davis, in *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. 3rd edition. London–New York: Routledge, 2012, 23.

3 "Verens igitur ego Burgundio ne, si sententiam huius sancti patris commentationis meo eam more dictarem, in aliquo alterutrorum horum duorum sapientissimorum virorum sententiis profundam mentem mutarem et in tam magna re, cum sint verba fidei, periculum lapsus alicuius alteritatis incurrerem, difficilius iter arripiens et verba significatione eadem et stilum et ordinem eundem qui apud Grecos est in hac mea translatione servare disposui." Michael Angold and Charles Burnett, "Latin Translators from Greek in the Twelth Century on Why and How They Translate", *Why Translate Science. Documents from Antiquity to the 16th Century~in the Historical West (Bactria tot he Atlantic)*. Ed. Dimitri Gutas, with the assistance of Charles Burnett and Uwe Vagelpohl. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2022, 488–524, translation and Latin text on 494 and 510–511.

> *If I translate word for word, it sounds absurd; if perforce I alter something in sequence or style, I shall seem to have failed in the duty of a translator.*[4]

Jerome illustrates the absurdity of using the word-for-word method to translate poetic texts by citing the hypothetical example of a *verbatim* translation of Homer into Latin:

> *…or if it seems to someone that the grace of a language does not change in translation, let him present Homer word-for-word in Latin, – let me say something more – let it be translated into his own language in words of prose; he will see that the word-order has become ridiculous and a most eloquent poet barely readable.*[5]

Medieval translators seem to have deliberately refrained from translating any Greek versified literature into Latin, even if they had access to a collection of Greek manuscripts that included epic and tragedy, like Burgundio of Pisa, whose name was already mentioned.[6] Yet translators of philosophical works could not avoid the difficulty of getting the words and the content of the frequent quotations from poetic sources in Aristotle and other authors across to their Latin readers.

In this article, I will present the different ways in which the late-medieval Latin translators from the 12th and 13th centuries dealt with the quotations from ancient poetry that they found in the Greek texts. As far as I know, the topic has never received a separate treatment in the secondary literature on medieval Aristotle translations. My survey is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject. The search for a theoretical background for the process only remains tentative. The selection of examples centres around some significant figures from the history of philosophical translation and a few important texts from Greek Antiquity. As an additional criterion for my choice, I selected cases that provide the opportunity to compare the medieval Latin versions with the treatment of the same passages by humanist translators of the 15th century. Was their approach really the significant improvement on the efforts of their predecessors that they claimed to produce? Or were these translators all stuck between absurdity and failure, sending a shackeled Greek muse off to their Latin readers?

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4 "Si ad verbum interpretor absurde resonat; si ob necessitatem aliquid in ordine, in sermone mutavero, ab interpretis videbor officio recessisse." Text based on J. K. Fotheringham, *Eusebii Pamphili Chronici canones*. Londinii: Milford, 1923, 1. Translation Roger Pearse e.a., https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_chronicle_01_prefaces.htm.

5 "Quod si cui non videtur linguae gratiam interpretatione mutari, Homerum ad verbum exprimat in Latinum, – plus aliquid dicam – eundem in sua lingua prosae verbis interpretetur; videbit ordinem ridiculum et poetam eloquentissimum vix loquentem." Text based on J. K. Fotheringham, *Eusebii Pamphili Chronici canones*. Londinii: Milford, 1923, 3. Translation: Roger Pearse e.a., https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_chronicle_01_prefaces.htm.

6 Paola Degni, "I manoscritti dello 'scriptorium' di Gioannicio." *Segno e Testo* 6 (2008), 179–247.

We will see that most translators focus exclusively on the equivalence at word level, "a naive building-block approach", as Mona Baker calls it. Only in rare cases, their translations demonstrate that they aspire equivalence above word level, in grammar or sentence building, or pragmatic equivalence, when they address the communicative value of texts in cultural transfer.[7] Only reluctantly and in order to remain faithful to the original, they address the challenges posed by poetical quotations in the philosophical texts in which they are truly interested.

Medieval translators and quoted poetry

Around the middle of the 12th century, Burgundio of Pisa translated Aristotle's *De generatione et corruptione* into Latin. As is costumary in Aristotle's works, the philosopher starts his treatment of the subject by summarizing the views of earlier thinkers, like Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Leucippus. Already on the first page of the text (314b20–22), Aristotle quotes two (non-consecutive) verses from Empedocles literally (DK B21):

ἠέλιον μὲν λευκὸν ὁρᾶν καὶ θερμὸν ἁπάντηι

ὄμβρον δ᾽ἐν πᾶσι δνοφόεντά τε ῥιγαλέον (τε)[8]

The poetic lines quoted so early in Aristotle's prose work must have baffled the translator, and his Greek model, MS Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 87.7 (f. 201r), did not provide any help: its scribe did not indicate by any sign whatsoever that the Empedoclean lines should be understood as two hexameters. Yet the obstacle did not defeat our translator. The manuscripts that transmit his translation allow us to reconstruct how he likely proceeded.[9] In the oldest and most valuable witness, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Selden Supra 24, from the end of the 12th century, the scribe reproduced the Greek lines almost perfectly. Other manuscripts contain less successful attempts at copying the Greek characters. Alternatively, they have the Latin word *Grecum* alongside the passage, by which the scribes dutifully report that they saw text but were unable to copy it satisfactorily. However, in manuscripts that preserve mimicked Greek, Latin words written between the lines clearly indicate that Burgundio also tried to convey the meaning of the original verses to his readers:

> *solem id est ignem quidem album videre et calidum semper, imbrem autem id est aquam in omnibus nubilosum id est nigrum et frigidum*

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7 Mona Baker, *In Other Words. A Coursebook on Translation.* Third Edition. Abingdon–New York: Routledge, 2018, 4–5.

8 "…sun shining to sight and everywhere hot, … and rain, dark and chilling in everything" Translation: Daniel W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy. The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*. Part I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 357.

9 Joanna Judycka, *De generatione et corruptione. Translatio vetus*. Aristoteles Latinus IX 1. Leiden: Brill, 1986, 7.

Burgundio translated the Greek hexameters word-for-word exactly like he would have done with prose sentences, and he even persisted in his characteristic approach of offering variant readings like synonyms or explanatory notes to accompany his translated text. "It sounds absurd!" Jerome would have cried out if he could have judged the result. Yet Burgundio seemed satisfied with the solution: in the remainder of his translation, he no longer copied out the Greek poetic lines that he found in his source, but directly transferred them into very literal Latin, without even the slightest consideration for the original genre and meter.

In the 13th century, the prolific translator William of Moerbeke based his own Latin version of the same text on Burgundio's previous translation.[10] Moerbeke made translations of virtually every known Aristotelian treatise, yet he did not always judge it necessary to produce completely new ones. In many cases, he acquired a manuscript of the work of one of his 12th-century predecessors, like James of Venice and Burgundio of Pisa, entered his intended changes into that copy, and added or deleted words according to his preferences. In the case of the Homeric quotation, Moerbeke left the translated verses unchanged, including the explanatory notes. That course of action clearly implies that he was satisfied with the way in which Burgundio had translated the lines of poetry into Latin, explaining the meaning of the words that shaped them but totally ignoring their poetic form.

Another example from Moerbeke's corpus of translations demonstrates that he was not indifferent to the exact interpretation of the very content of poetic quotations. In *De motu animalium* (699b37–700a2), he returned to a passage from Homer quoted by Aristotle that he had already translated before in order to reach a more adequate equivalence between the Latin version and its Greek source. His approach can be retraced on the basis of the variant readings in the manuscripts as witnesses of the successive stages of his interpretational efforts of the three lines from the *Iliad* (8.21–22;20) that Aristotle quoted:[11]

ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἂν ἐρύσαιτ᾽ ἐξ οὐρανόθεν πεδίονδε
Ζῆν᾽ ὕπατον μήστωρ᾽, οὐδ᾽ εἰ μάλα πολλὰ κάμοιτε·
πάντές τ᾽ ἐξάπτεσθε θεοὶ πᾶσαί τε θέαιναι.[12]

[10] For an overview of Moerbeke's activity, see Pieter Beullens, *The Friar and the Philosopher. William of Moerbeke and the Rise of Aristotle's Science in Medieval Europe*. Abingdon–New York: Routledge, 2023.

[11] Pieter De Leemans, *De progressu animalium. De motu animalium. Translatio Guillelmi de Morbeka.* Aristoteles Latinus XVII 2.II–III. Turnhout: Brepols, 2011, CLXXXVII–CLXXXVIII.

[12] "Yet you could not drag to earth out of heaven Zeus the counselor most high, not even though you labored mightily, all you gods and all you goddesses." Translation: A.T. Murray, *Homer, Iliad, Books 1–12* (Loeb Classical Library 170, revised 2nd edition by William F. Wyatt). Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 1999, 351–353.

At the first attempt, Moerbeke translated word-for-word what he thought to understand from his Greek model:

> *Sed non utique effluet celitus campum autem vivere infimum omnium, neque si multo magis laborent extrudere omnes dii omnesque theanee.*

Even the most lenient judge will have reservations about some of the translator's choices. While the misunderstandings of the affix -δε and of the name Ζῆν᾽ might have been caused by readings of his lost Greek model, which possibly had the words spelled as the particle δὲ (translated as "autem") and the verb ζῆν ("vivere"), other Latin words undeniably result from a poor understanding of Homeric Greek. The transliteration of θέαιναι into Latin characters clearly reveals that the translator was incapable of providing the evident equivalent in Latin, and one can only guess at the reasons behind his selection of "infimum" to translate the Greek ὕπατον. Overall, the Latin text barely provides any assistance to its Latin readers to grasp the content of the original lines, let alone to appreciate their poetic subtleties.

While the translator consistently ignored the poetic aspect at a second attempt, it is clear that his understanding of the content had positively evolved, maybe also assisted by the use of a second manuscript of better quality of Aristotle's Greek text. Latin manuscripts that were copied after Moerbeke's revision of his earliest draft contain a significantly different passage:

> *Sed non utique amovebunt e celo in terram Iovem suppremum omnium, neque si valde multum laborent apprehendere omnes dii omnesque dee.*

Without aspiring any poetic qualities, this version at least has the merit that its gives its Latin readers an outside chance to understand the content of the original. Jupiter and the goddesses take their rightful places, while the duality of heaven and earth is restored and ὕπατον receives a satisfactory Latin equivalent in "suppremum".

Bearing Moerbeke's difficult relationship with Homer's Greek in mind, it becomes less unlikely that he did not recognize the opening line of the *Iliad* when he translated Aristotle's *Poetica*, although the editors of that Greek text seem to reject the possibility.[13]

One can hardly escape the impression that Moerbeke was only marginally interested in the poetic lines that he found in the texts and that he mainly cared about translating them because they were quoted in Aristotle's work. And indeed, the feeling gets confirmation from several passages in Moerbeke's Latin translations from outside the Aristotelian corpus. In those less authoritative texts, the translator does not shrink from omitting the odd line of poetry from his Latin version, although he is generally extremely scrupulous in rendering every Greek word with an appropriate Latin equivalent.

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[13] Leonardo Tarán and Dimitri Gutas. *Aristotle Poetics. Editio maior of the Greek Text with Historical Introductions and Philological Commentaries*. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2012, 282.

In three different passages in the commentaries on Aristotle's *De anima* by the late-antique philosophers Themistius and John Philoponus, Moerbeke leaves verses from Homer's epics untranslated. Was his intention to simplify the texts for his readers? Or was he so uncomfortable with the poetic idiom that he skipped the challenge whenever he thought it possible? The latter option seems more likely: in his Latin version of the commentary on Archimedes' *De sphaera et cylindro* by Eutocius, preserved in Moerbeke's autograph MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Ottob. lat. 1850, he axed an epigram of 18 lines, which he probably considered a superfluous poetical synopsis of the preceding content.[14]

A robustness test

As a prolific translator of Aristotelian works and commentaries, William of Moerbeke had a considerable influence on the reception of those texts in the medieval Latin world. Did his carelessness or lack of competence to accurately translate the poetic passages from his sources affect the reception among his readers in a negative way? In particular, did Moerbeke perform below par in comparison with his peers in the medieval translation business?

Moerbeke's extensive output presents an expedient opportunity to compare his endeavours with a contemporary, yet independently produced translation of one and the same text. The British scholar Robert Grosseteste translated the commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo* by the 6th-century philosopher Simplicius into Latin, just like Moerbeke did. Although Grosseteste did not complete the work, his version of the second book is extant and can be compared with Moerbeke's Latin. As an additional advantage regarding this article's topic, Simplicius was quite generous in preserving quotations from rare poetical texts, many of which would have been lost for us without his meticulousness.

A passage from Aratus' didactic poem *Phaenomena* allows for a comparison between the two medieval Latin versions: the methods applied by their respective translators were so similar that the resulting texts are almost identical.

καί μιν πειραίνουσι δύω πόλοι ἀμφοτέρωθεν·
ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν οὐκ ἐπίοπτος, ὁ δ᾽ ἀντίος ἐκ Βορέαο,
ὑψόθεν Ὠκεανοῖο.
(Simplicius, *In De caelo*, 391 Heiberg = Aratus, *Phaenomena*, 1.24–26)[15]

[14] Fabio Acerbi and Gudrun Vuillemin-Diem. *La transmission du savoir grec en Occident. Guillaume de Moerbeke, le Laur. 87.25 (Thémistius,* in De an.*) et la bibliothèque de Boniface VIII*. Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series I, Studia XLIX. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2019, 83–85.

[15] "On either side the Axis ends in two Poles, but thereof the one is not seen, whereas the other faces us in the north high above the ocean." Translation: G.R. Mair, *Callimachus,*

et quidem terminant duo poli utrimque; sed hic quidem non conspectus, hic autem contrarius ex Borea de excelso conspicitur.

(Grosseteste, MS Oxford, Balliol College 99, f. 256ra; unpublished transcription by Fernand Bossier with minor changes)

et quidem terminant duo poli utrimque[16]*, sed hic quidem non conspicabilis, qui autem ursalis ex borea desuper oceani.*

(based on Moerbeke MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2067, f. 161vb)

The differences are minimal and most divergences were likely caused by variants in the Greek models that lay in front of the two translators: the choice of "ursalis" in Moerbeke's version possibly results from the variant ἄρκτιος for ἀντίος. In Grosseteste's Latin, the following sentences clearly reveal that the absence of Ὠκεανοῖο was a deliberate adaptation by the scribe of his Greek model, if not by Grosseteste himself.[17] The two translators agree, however, in their notable failure to indicate the poetic nature of the passage to their Latin readers: they show not the slightest attempt to transfer some of its characteristics into the target language.

Further on in the same commentary, Simplicius quotes fifteen lines from the work of Empedocles, in which the presocratic philosopher illustrated the mixture of elements under the influence of Strife and Love. The process results in the generation of mortal things.

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ παλίνορσος ἐλεύσομαι ἐς πόρον ὕμνων,
τὸν πρότερον κατέλεξα, λόγῳ λόγον ἐξοχετεύων,
κεῖνον· ἐπεὶ Νεῖκος μὲν ἐνέρτατον ἵκετο βένθος
δίνης, ἐν δὲ μέσῃ Φιλότης στροφάλιγγι γένηται,
ἐν τῇ δὴ τάδε πάντα συνέρχεται ἓν μόνον εἶναι,
οὐκ ἄφαρ, ἀλλὰ θελημὰ συνιστάμεν' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλα.
τῶν δέ τε μισγομένων χεῖτ' ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν·
πολλὰ δ' ἀμιχθ' ἔστηκε κεραιομένοισιν ἐναλλάξ,
ὅσσ' ἔτι Νεῖκος ἔρυκε μετάρσιον· οὐ γὰρ ἀμεμφέως
πὼ πᾶν ἐξέστηκεν ἐπ' ἔσχατα τέρματα κύκλου,
ἀλλὰ τὰ μέν τ' ἐνέμιμνε μελέων, τὰ δέ τ' ἐξεβεβήκει.

Hymns and Epigrams. Lycophron. Aratus (Loeb Classical Library 219, revised 2nd edition). Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 1955, 209.

[16] My correction: the manuscript reads "utramque".

[17] On Grosseteste's lost Greek model, see Pieter Beullens, "Robert Grosseteste's Translation of Simplicius's Commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo*: Tracking down a Second Manuscript and the Greek Model." *Mediterranea* 8 (2023), 565–594. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21071/mijtk.v8i.15273

ὅσσον δ' αἰὲν ὑπεκπροθέοι, τόσον αἰὲν ἐπῄει
ἠπιόφρων Φιλότητος ἀμεμφέος ἄμβροτος ὁρμή·
αἶψα δὲ θνήτ' ἐφύοντο, τὰ πρὶν μάθον ἀθάνατ' εἶναι,
ζωρά τε τὰ πρὶν ἄκρητα διαλλάξαντα κελεύθους.
Simplicius, *In De caelo*, 529 Heiberg = Empedocles DK B35)[18]

The experience of decoding this unfamiliar variant of Greek must have been bewildering for the two translators. For the sake of convenience, I present their efforts here in lines broken up in agreement with Empedocles' verses, although Latin readers read the text as if it were prose. One may seriously doubt whether the translators succeeded in communicating the essence of the passage's content to those readers.

Ego autem reversus veniam dubitabilem laudans,
quorum priorem enumeravi, sermone sermonem avehens
illum; quia contentio quidem infimum invenit profundum
versione, in media autem amicitia contentio facta est,
in hac utique hec omnia convenerunt unum solum esse,
non confestim, sed voluntas constituens aliunde alia.
Mixtarum autem fiunt gentes decem milia mortalium;
multa autem immixta statuit commiscendis in ad invicem,
quecumque adhuc contentio liberavit superelevata; non enim invituperabiliter

[18] "But I shall return back to the passageway of hymns
which I recounted before, channeling this speech from
that. When Strife reached the innermost depth
of the vortex, and Love comes to be in the middle of the vortex,
there [or: under her] all these things combine to be one thing alone,
not suddenly, but joining together willingly each from its own place.
When these things are mingled the myriad races of mortal things flow out,
and many things stayed unmixed, alternating with things that were being blended,
which Strife held still suspended; for not perfectly
yet had he completely withdrawn to the uttermost bounds of the circle,
but some of his limbs remained within while some had withdrawn.
As far as he would run ahead, so far would advance
the gentle immortal onset of blameless Love.
And suddenly those things grew mortal which before were wont to be immortal,
and what was before pure became mixed, exchanging paths."
Translation: Daniel W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy. The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*. Part I. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 361. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Physica*, Simplicius quotes the same passage from Empedocles followed by two additional hexameters, so seventeen lines in total.

digerere distitit ad extremos fines circuli,
sed hec quidem firmavit membrorum, hec autem infirmavit.
Quantum autem semper providet, tantum semper inducit
mansuete sentiens amicitie invituperabilis divinus seu admirabilis motus.
Velocius autem mortalia appetunt, hec ante dicere immortalia esse
et extrema hec ante separata permutantia iussos.

(Grosseteste, MS Oxford, Balliol College 99, f. 284ra; unpublished transcription by Fernand Bossier with minor changes)

Grosseteste does not seem to grasp the concept of the Empedoclean rotation (δίνη), which he translates as "versio". He also misunderstands κελεύθους, translated as "iussos", a confusion with the root of the verb κελεύω. His choice to suggest two potential equivalents for ἄμβροτος ("divinus seu admirabilis") is similar to the approach that we already observed in the translations by Burgundio of Pisa.

While we concluded from the Aratus passage that Grosseteste's and Moerbeke's methods are so close to each other that they arrive at extremely similar outcomes in their Latin versions, in this complicated and longer quotation the final results are understandably further apart.

Equidem ego conversus remaneo[19] *ad meatum laudans*
eum qui prius comprehendi sermo in sermonem adnectans
illum; ad litem quidem perfectissimum servivit profundum.
Giravit autem media amicitia convolutione facta fuit,
in hac hec omnia conveniunt, unum solum esse
non aspicit sed voluntas constituens aliunde alia,
hiisque mixtis funduntur myrie gentes mortalium.
Multa autem simul constiterunt concathenationibus vicissim
quecumque adhuc lis invenit in altum. Non enim inquerulose
omnino destitit ad extremos fines circuli,
sed hec quidem immanserunt membrorum, hec autem prodierunt
quantum autem existere semper excurrit tantum existere subivit
benignus amicitie inquerulose immortalis[20] *impetus.*
Tarde autem gentes nate sunt que ante addiscere immortales esse
vitalesque ante indiscreta permutantias vias.

(Moerbeke, based on MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2067, f. 182va)

19 The manuscript reads "remanet".
20 The manuscript reads "immortalius".

Moerbeke gets the Empedoclean rotation right, but turns the noun into a verb ("giravit"). His "myrie" are incomprehensible in comparison with Grosseteste's clear "decem milia", while Moerbeke's "vias" are the correct equivalent for κελεύθους that Grosseteste failed to understand.

The medieval translators that have passed in front of our eyes, Burgundio of Pisa, William of Moerbeke, and Robert Grosseteste, all tried to bring the Greek source texts in general, and the poetic passages that they found quoted in them, to their Latin readers focusing on equivalence at word level. I could have added many more examples of that approach, highlighting the numerous instances where they failed to accurately understand the Greek text or criticizing where their equivalents did not fully cover the meaning of the originals. There are, however, some rare instances of medieval translators who aimed for a more pragmatic equivalence: they boldly abandoned the extremely literal rendering of the Greek words into their supposed Latin counterparts and attempted to produce a Latin translation with an identical or at least a similar communicative bearing on its Latin users to what the original delivered to its Greek readership.

Bartholomew of Messina translated from Greek into Latin in the same period as William of Moerbeke and Robert Grosseteste, i.e. in the middle of the 13th century. His output includes several (pseudo-)Aristotelian treatises, as well as medical texts from the Hippocratic corpus. His longest translation is the collection of *Problemata* preserved under the name of Aristotle, but probably composed by his students after the philosopher's death. Arguably the most famous problem in the work (in any case the one with the longest treatment) is the first of part 30, which deals with melancholy.

Near its beginning, the section contains a reference to the meeting of Diomedes with Glaucus, grandson of Bellerophon, on the battlefield of Troy described in book 6 of the *Iliad* (200–202). Aristotle (or his student) quotes three lines in full:

> αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ καὶ κεῖνος ἀπήχθετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν,
> ἤτοι ὃ κὰπ πεδίον τὸ Ἀλήϊον οἶος ἀλᾶτο
> ὃν θυμὸν κατέδων, πάτον ἀνθρώπων ἀλεείνων.
> (Aristotle, *Problemata*, 30.1 953a23–25)[21]

[21] "But when indeed he was hated by all the gods, Verily over the Aleian plain he wandered alone, Devouring his spirit, avoiding the path of men." Translation: Robert Mayhew and David C. Mirhady. *Aristotle. Problems, Volume II: Books 20–38. Rhetoric to Alexander* (Loeb Classical Library 317). Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 2011, 279. The Aristotelian text has a variant in verse 200 as compared to the transmitted text in Homer's manuscripts: ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ καὶ κεῖνος ἀπήχθετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν. The variant from the *Problemata* is often preferred to the reading of the manuscripts in editions of the *Iliad*.

Bartholomew's translation of the passage is not according to the word-for-word method, which he tends to follow in general in line with his colleagues of the period, but could be described as a mere paraphrase of the content of Homer's verses: "quoniam ille irascitur omnibus deis".[22] Bartholomew's pragmatic equivalence seems to rely on the opinion that his readers were better served by a clear and shortened summary of the content of the poetic passage than by an extremely litteral and incomprehensible translation.

More examples of pragmatic equivalence are found in the anonymously transmitted translation of Aristotle's *Rhetorica*, a challenging text for any translator with its numerous quotations from poetry and its technical explanations. The translator often had to throw in the towel and leave passages partially or completely untranslated and incomprehensible.[23] In a few instances, however, he clearly decided to adopt a pragmatic equivalence rather than a literal translation: the initial verse of the *Iliad* was rendered into Latin using the first line of the so-called *Ilias Latina*, and for the opening words of the *Odyssee* he used a Latin line taken from Horace's *Ars poetica*. An even smarter example of the translator's preference for pragmatic equivalence is his choice to replace the Greek verses that illustrate meters, like the paean, with Latin words that display the same metric patterns. In that last instance, the translator's approach emphatically focuses on the communicative value of the Greek examples used by the author, which lies in the length of the syllables, not in the meaning of the words themselves.[24]

Beyond medieval absurdity?

While many Latin translations of ancient Greek philosophical texts from the medieval period were produced by unnamed scholars, translators from the 15th century took a self-confident attitude in writing prefaces and in signing off on their output with their names in colophons. They openly stated that the aim their activity

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[22] Miguel Ángel González Marjarrés, "Belerofonte el melancólico: unos versos de Homero en la tradición latina del *Problema* 30.1 de Pseudo-Aristóteles y la *Introductio* de Pseudo–Galeno" *Estudios sobre Galeno Latino y sus fuentes*. Ed. María Teresa Santamaría Hernández. Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla–La Mancha, 2021, 273–306, reference 283. The author quotes the translation from the 1501 Venice printed edition. I checked it against the important MS Padova, Biblioteca Antoniana, 370, f. 53vb, which contains the same text.

[23] Although this approach is similar to the method used by Bartholomew of Messina in his translation of the *Problemata*, there is strong stylometric evidence to reject him as the translator of the *Rhetorica anonyma*, see Pieter Beullens, Wouter Haverals, and Ben Nagy "The Elementary Particles. A Computational Stylometric Inquiry into the Mediaeval Greek-Latin Aristotle." *Mediterranea* 9 (2024), 385–408. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21071/mijtk.v9i.16723.

[24] Bernd Schneider, *Die mittelalterlichen griechisch-lateinischen Übersetzungen der aristotelischen* Rhetorik. Berlin–New York: De Gruyter, 1971, 27–29.

was to improve on the works of their medieval predecessors, which they considered inadequate, at least if they did not simply pretend that they did not know them at all. Can we take it for granted that the humanist scholars dealt more expertly than their medieval colleagues with the difficulties presented to them in the poetic lines quoted by the old philosophers? To examine the procedures that they adopted, we can return to some of the passages that were already discussed before.

Although Bartholomew's Latin version of Aristotle's *Problemata* was widely disseminated, even in the age of printing, it was translated again, and even twice, in the middle of the 15th century. Georges Trapezuntius and Theodore Gaza, two scholars who competed openly to win the favour of Popes and dignitaries like cardinal Bessarion with their translations, were responsible. It is tempting to try and gain insight into their methodological approach of Greek poetry by looking at their treatment of the three verses from the *Iliad* that Bartholomew of Messina had compressed into one sentence of five words.[25]

Trapezuntius was the first in line. His attempt bears a vague suggestion of poetical phrasing, yet it is not metrical at all:

Postquam vero ille etiam diis omnibus odio fuit,
tunc in aviis solus campis errabat
et animum rodens suum itinera hominum fugiebat.

Gaza's effort probably meets with the technical requirements of the dactylic hexameter (although barely in the first line; an alternative version which replaces "est gravis" by "gravior" is worse). Yet to say that the lines demonstrate Gaza's poetic genius would be an outright exaggeration:

Ast hic quando etiam diis est gravis omnibus, errat
in campos solus latos inque avia rura,
ipse suum cor edens, hominum vestigia vitans.

Compared with Bartholomew's medieval paraphrase, the two renaissance colleagues and rivals show awareness of the specific characteristics of the poetic quotation, although they seem to lack the ability to grasp its content and render it adequately into Latin. In the end, only Gaza tries to propose an equivalent for its metrical format.

Trapezuntius and Gaza were in a fierce contest to win the favour of potential patrons and competed directly with each other by translating the very same texts into Latin. After they had produced their translations of the *Problemata*, they also made rival Latin versions of Aristotle's zoological corpus.

Even within the context of these works on animals, Aristotle found appropriate poetic lines to quote from his sources. A case in point is found at the end of book 8 of *De historia animalium* (633a19–28), where he reproduces ten lines

[25] González Marjarrés, "Belerofonte el melancólico", 284–285.

about the hoopoe from an unnamed tragic play. Aristotle cites Aeschylus as their author (fr. 304 Nauck[2]), although nowadays scholarly consensus tends to attribute them to Sophocles' lost play *Tereus* (fr. 581 Radt).

In an older article, I commented upon the difficulties that Moerbeke experienced to translate this extremely challenging section.[26] Only the introductory words ("poesim fecit") indicate to the readers that they are actually faced with a passage that in the original would have been perceived by its readers as poetry.

Georges Trapezuntius had the intention of catering to the metrical needs. The manuscripts of his translation that I consulted all contain three lines of text, followed by three blank lines:

Haec varias binasque affert in corpore formas

Namque ubi vere novo videas revirescere cuncta

Mutat et haec alias pennas variatque colorem

(MS Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 84.9, f. 151r; Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Urb. lat. 182, f. 108v; Urb. lat. 1320, f. 108r)[27]

The state of the transmission seems to indicate that Trapezuntius left the passage unfinished and hoped to add more when he returned to it at a later stage. The three verse lines cannot possibly convey the complete content of the quotation adequately. In addition to its brevity, the form of the Latin markedly deviates from the Greek source: dactylic hexameters replace the tragic iambic trimeters.

In the same passage from book 8, which in his version famously had become book 9, Gaza was decidedly the more scrupulous translator. He stretched his Latin rendering of the Greek quotation to nine lines and he succeeded in wrestling them into iambic trimeters to boot – although he had to take some liberties on the metrical front:

Qui fert sui spectantem et epopem mali

Colore speciem multimodo pingens suam

Saxicolamque improbum arma gestantem alitem

Adulti et infantis forma hic sese refert

Nam vere candicans ubi extitit novo

Aestate tum deinde ut recanduit seges

Alas repente varius maculatas quatit

Vagatur hic semper fastidiens locos

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[26] Pieter Beullens, "Guillaume de Moerbeke et sa traduction de l'*Historia animalium*," *Tradition et traduction. Les textes philosophiques et scientifiques grecs au moyen âge latin*. Ed. Rita Beyers, Jozef Brams, Dirk Sacré, Koenraad Verrycken. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999, 219–238, in particular 235–236.

[27] The scribe of the last manuscript omitted the blank lines.

Deserta quaerit nemorum et invias plagas.

(MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2094, f. 158r)[28]

Even Gaza's understanding of the content is remarkable: the extremely rare word λέπαργος finds a fitting equivalent in his Latin version as "candicans". In this particular passage, Gaza decidedly offers the translation that preserves most of the original's content and form.

Admittedly, the example under scrutiny is extremely problematic: the Greek manuscript tradition poses numerous difficulties that defeat even the modern editors, while premodern translators had to manage with the readings from one random Greek source manuscript, which – in the most advantageous circumstances – they could compare with a second copy of the same text, if that was available.

The same zoological treatise by Aristotle contains another very interesting passage that fits well with our stated objective. In book 6 of *De historia animalium* (578b1–2), in the context of a passage on the wild boar, Aristotle combines, shortens, and adapts three verses from the Homeric epics:

θρέψεν ἔπι χλούνην σῦν ἄγριον· οὐδὲ ἐῴκει θηρί γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι[29]

The quotation is an amalgamation of a verse from the *Iliad* (9.539: ὦρσεν ἔπι χλούνην σῦν ἄγριον ἀργιόδοντα) with two lines from the *Odyssee* (9.190–191: καὶ γὰρ θαῦμ᾽ ἐτέτυκτο πελώριον, οὐδὲ ἐῴκει | ἀνδρί γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι) about the Cyclops, which Aristotle noticeably changed to fit the context of his zoological discussion. In the process, the metrical features of the verses were lost.

As was his usual practice, Moerbeke did not attempt to retain the formal aspects of the poetic quotation and focused on the content, which proved to be demanding enough:

nutrivit umbratilem suem silvestrem; neque assimilabatur bestie triticum comedenti, sed difficili precipitio nemoroso[30]

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[28] Apart from the Vatican manuscript, which was the dedication copy to pope Sixtus IV, the *editio princeps* (Venetiis: per Iohannem de Colonia et Iohannem Manthen, 1476; *GW* 2350) is the only primary witness for Gaza's translation. MSS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 6793 (two volumes) and Sevilla, Biblioteca de la Universidad, 332.155, are handwritten copies made from the printed edition. I compared these manuscripts and the *editio princeps* with the Vatican manuscript and found two minor variants: "quin" in line 1, and the omission of "et" in line 4.

[29] "He reared against him a wild castrated boar; nor was it like a corn-eating beast, but like a forest-covered peak." Translation: A.L. Peck, *Aristotle. History of Animals, Books IV–VI* (Loeb Classical Library 438). Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 1970, 335.

[30] Pieter Beullens and Fernand Bossier. *De historia animalium. Translatio Guillelmi de Morbeka. Pars altera: Lib. VI–X*. Aristoteles Latinus XVII 2.I.2. Turnhout: Brepols, 2020, 207.

Moerbeke's choice of "umbratilem" as the equivalent of χλούνην cannot be easily explained. Yet for the translation of ῥἰος, he may have had access in some form to a definition from a lexicon similar to that in Hesychius (ρ349): ἄκρα, κορυφή, ὄρος χαλεπόν, κρημνός. The last two Greek words would become "difficile precipitium" in Moerbeke's usual idiom. The resemblance between the entry in Hesychius and Moerbeke's translation cannot be a coincidence. It confirms previous observations that he used information from a lexicograpical source, although that does not necessarily imply that he obtained it from the direct consultation of a Greek dictionary or wordlist. He might just as well have relied on the traces of scholarly work performed by the scribe or by a former owner of the Greek manuscript that he used as the source for his translation.[31]

Trapezuntius clearly understood that Aristotle quoted from Homer's poetry, as the introductory words make clear ("sicut Homerus cecinit") and therefore translated accordingly:

Enutrivit aprum cui nulla equanda ferarum

Sit quevis comedens fruges et gramina terrae

Sed qui silvoso posset contendere monti

(MS Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 84.9, f. 100r)[32]

Surprisingly, Trapezuntius did not seem to realise that he was actually dealing with truncated lines. As a result, the translation that Trapezuntius produced with its three complete Latin hexameters is longer than the original Greek quotation. Cunningly, Trapezuntius ignored the potentially hazardous word χλούνην in his version.

Gaza is the only translator to have captured its meaning of "castrated" ("exectum"). His Latin version also acknowledges that the Greek conveys three incomplete hexameters as he condenses them into two Latin lines. A benevolent reader might even consider praising him for the poetic excellence of the second line in particular, in which the threat posed by the ferocious castrated boar is emphasised by the use of a completely spondaic hexameter:

Nutriit exectum silvis horrentibus aprum.

Instar non bruti sed dorsi montis opaci.

(MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2094, f. 102r – verses not indented in the text)

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31 Beullens, "Guillaume de Moerbeke et sa traduction…", 229. Pieter Beullens and Fernand Bossier. *De historia animalium. Translatio Guillelmi de Morbeka. Pars prima: lib. I-V*. Aristoteles Latinus XVII 2.I.1. Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill, 2000, XXVIII.

32 The verses are not ordered on separate lines in the manuscript, although each one opens with a rubricated upper case letter like in the Aeschylus/Sophocles quotation discussed above.

Is it a fair conclusion, then, that a chronological order automatically entails an increasing degree of complexity in equivalence? That might be a simplistic assumption: an obvious example to counter the conclusion is provided by the same verses from the *Odyssee* (190–191) that we just examined in the Latin versions of Aristotle's *De historia animalium*.

Sextus Empiricus, the ancient author of texts on scepticism, quotes these verses (obviously without the changes that Aristotle had made in them) in his treatise *Adversus geometras* (§42). This work was translated into Latin, both in the medieval and early-modern period, which offers us the necessary material for comparison.

In the 13th century, an unnamed translator produced a Latin version of the work. It apparently was not very successful and is only preserved in a single fragmentary manuscript. Clearly, the translator's only concern lay in the equivalence on word level and he mastered the tricky Homeric vocabulary satisfactorily:

qui non assimilabatur viro triticum comedenti sed monti nemoroso

(MS Venezia, Biblioteca nazionale Marciana, Lat. X 267 [3460], f. 49r)

In view of the virtually non-existent circulation of the medieval Latin version, there is hardly any chance that the 15th-century translator of the same text, Giovanni Lorenzi, was able to consult it. Exactly like the work of his medieval colleague, Lorenzi's Latin text is preserved in a single manuscript and in an incomplete state.[33] Contrary to the medieval translation, which was clearly partly lost in transmission, it is uncertain whether Lorenzi translated more of the Greek original than what is preserved for us.

Lorenzi's stance regarding the poetic quotations in his Greek source are markedly ambiguous. A superficial glance at the *codex unicus* demonstrates that "…generally quotations from other authors found in Sextus' writings are left untranslated (i.e. in Greek) by Lorenzi. On a few other occasions he does translate such passages."[34] An example for the latter practice comes in the form of a long passage from the *Odyssee* that Lorenzi renders into Latin as nine hexameters.[35]

Yet when it comes to the same verses that we already discussed in the context of other translations, Lorenzi's approach is similar to the one that the medieval translator Bartholomew of Messina applied in the Aristotelian *Problemata*:

quem non homini sed arbori comparant poetę

(MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2990, f. 361v)

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33 Charles B. Schmitt, "An Unstudied Fifteenth-Century Latin Translation of Sextus Empiricus by Giovanni Lorenzi (Vat. Lat. 2990)". *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance. Essays in Honour of Paul Oskar Kristeller*. Ed. Cecil H. Clough. Manchester–New York: Manchester University Press–Zambelli: 1976, 244–261.

34 *Ibid*., 248.

35 *Ibid*., 252.

Lorenzi paraphrases the content of the sentence without even an attempt at retaining the exact phrasing or word order of the source text, ruthlessly sacrificing the challenging Homeric terms that refer to woodland and mountains for the sake of clarity or brevity in the Latin translation.

From our selection of these few examples, it seems safe to conclude that a clear linear evolution over time in the treatment of poetic quotations in the Greek philosophical texts by their Latin translators cannot be distinguished. Sometimes the approach is not even consistent within the work of one and the same translator, like in the case of Lorenzi.

A Latin Homer?

Why did the translators not take the easiest solution to supply a Latin version of Homer's verses: to simply quote the relevant lines from an already existing translation of the Greek epics? They would have been faced with the history of the arduous translations of Homer throughout the later Middle Ages and the early modern period. Already Petrarch had expressed the desire to have a Latin Homer at his disposal, yet in the 15th century no scholar seemed to be able to produce a complete and versified translation of these foundational epics.[36]

A 14th-century Latin prose version by Leontius Pilatus circulated quite widely (it was read by Petrarch and by Collucio Salutati), but its wording of the passage eliminates the possibility that it was the direct source for the lines presented in any of the Latin translations of the Aristotelian *Problemata*:

Sed quando iam ille in odio erat omnibus diis

Certe iste per campum erratilem solus errabat

Suum animum comedens per viam hominum errans.

(MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 7881, f. 19ra)

The attempt by Pilatus will not have satisfied the needs for a Latin translation in verses, which humanist scholars would have considered necessary to represent the Greek originals as accurately as possible. Certainly in the circle of Theodore Gaza, attempts in that direction were made: his cousin Andronicus Callistus taught the Homeric epics in Florence from 1471 onwards and apparently had prepared a litteral, non-metrical Latin translation for that purpose. It is preserved in four manuscripts.[37] We can, therefore, compare with the quotation from the *Problemata* that Trapezuntius and Gaza also translated into Latin, although the Aristotelian translations must definitely be dated prior to 1471 when Callistus started to teach

[36] Robin Sowerby, "Early Humanist Failure with Homer." *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 4 (1997), 37–63; 165–194.

[37] Luigi Orlandi, *Andronikos Kallistos: A Byzantine Scholar and His Manuscripts in Italian Humanism*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023, 188–189.

Homer. The wording of the preserved translation positively excludes any direct inspirational influence on either translator of the *Problemata*:

> *Sed quando iam ille odiosus fuit omnibus diis*
>
> *Ille quidem per planiciem solus errabat*
>
> *Suum animum devorans conversationem hominum aufugiens.*
>
> (*Iliad*, translated by Andronicus Callistus, MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1626, f. 94r)[38]

The version by Callistus is often considered a reworking of Pilatus. It can be debated whether that assessment is correct in general, yet in these particular lines it is clear that both Latin texts differ considerably.[39]

Surprisingly, the potential influence between the epic poet and the translators of Aristotle runs in the opposite direction from the one expected in the case of the Homeric verses that we investigated in Aristotle's *De historia animalium*. For Gaza's Latin version of the Aristotelian zoology became so widely read, that the Homeric lines that Gaza quoted in his Latin translation of the philosopher's work (merged and edited by Aristotle to function as illustratations in his treatment of the wild boar, although they had never figured in that combination in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssee*) were unreservedly attributed to Homer in the works of several renaissance authors of works with a wide range of subjects. My superficial search yielded the following occurrences:

- Franciscus Marius Grapaldus, *De partibus aedium*. Parmae: Angelus Ugoletus, [1494], f. e8a (GW 11331 – also numerous later editions).
- Io. Bruyerinus, *De re cibaria libri XXII omnium ciborum genera … complectentes*. Lugduni: Apud Sebast. Honoratum, 1560, 691.
- Edward Topsell, *The historie of foure-footed beastes*. London: William Iaggard, 1607, 694 (Topsell acknowledges the verses as translated into Latin: "whereunto *Homer* also yeeldeth as he is thus translated").
- Ulysses Aldrovandus, *Quadrupedum omnium bisulcorum historia*. Bononiae: Typis Sebastiani Bonomii, 1621, 1014 (posthumous first edition – Aldrovandi had died in 1605).

From this list, which probably is very incomplete since it was based on a few basic Google searches, one can safely conclude that Gaza turned out to be an influential Homer translator in a very indirect way without ever having attempted to be one – at least as far as these particular verses are concerned.

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[38] The Latin version of the *Iliad* on the recto pages of the bilingual MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1626 breaks off in the final book (24.206). The pendant volume for the Odyssee, MS Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1627, only has Greek text on the verso pages, while the rectos remained blank.

[39] Orlandi, *Andronikos Kallistos*, 186–187.

Only one critical voice stands out: the 16th-century philologist Joachim Camerarius noticed that he was unable to trace the lines translated by Gaza in the extant Homeric works, except as refering to the Cyclops instead of the boar. Consequently, it leaves him musing on the nature of the Homeric books that Aristotle had at his disposal, unless his quotations were thoroughly corrupted in transmission.[40]

Conclusion

Is possible to reach a conclusion that goes beyond the mere registration of this list of translated quotations? Can we fathom the decision process of medieval and later translators between translating *ad verbum* or *ad sensum* when they were confronted with ancient Greek poetry? We could share the glum disappointment expressed by Charles Jourdain about the literal translation of a quotation from a priamel by Pindar as preserved in a work of Sextus Empiricus:

> *All the terms of the original text are found in his translation, without the slightest modification, even as far as the word order is concerned. Yet where can one find in this servile and static copy the breath of genius …*[41]

In the preceding sentences, Jourdain had criticised the translator's inability to render a rare Greek word into Latin, which seems the only significant departure from his strict adherence to literalness. Yet that approach clearly could not satisfy Jourdain's expectations, since he laments the absence of the genius of the original verses in their Latin equivalents.

We could ask ourselves whether the French scholar is not projecting his own standards onto the method of the medieval translator. If the medieval translators intended to provide the most literal equivalence possible for the Greek original's prose sections, it is hardly likely that they would have changed their approach when poetic quotations were concerned – especially since the manuscripts from which they worked probably did not always contain clear indications where the transitions between the genres were exactly situated.

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40 Ioachimus Camerarius Pabergensis, *Commentarii utriusque linguae, in quibus est διασκευὴ ὀνομαστικὴ τῶν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ σώματι μερῶν, hoc est, diligens exquisitio nominum, quibus partes corporis humani appellari solent*. Basiliea: per Ioannem Heruagium, 1551, col. 363: "Sed si non prorsus sunt deprauata exempla Aristotelica, cuiusmodi libros Homericos ille habuerit, miror. Nam in nostris hæc quæ de granditate apri adducuntur, non legimus: uerum alibi de Cyclope."

41 Charles Jourdain, *Sextus Empiricus et la philosophie scholastique*. Paris: Dupont, 1858, 11: "Toutes les expressions du texte original se retrouvent dans sa traduction, sans le plus léger changement, même dans l'ordre des mots. Mais où retrouver dans cette copie servile et inerte, le souffle de génie…"

Surprisingly, not even the humanist translators succeeded in maintaining a consistent approach to the Greek quotations from poetry in their originals. Although they were aware of the shifts in the formal characteristics of the Greek originals, they did not arrive at a standard method. Their practice varied significantly between translators and translations, and even within one work different techniques were applied to render comparable Greek poetic quotations. In the 15th-century Latin translations that I examined in this article, we have observed every thinkable approach, from quotations that were omitted or were copied in Greek characters, over prose renderings of extreme literalness or shortened paraphrases, to poetic translations in the same or a different meter. In one particular case, the Latin version even outshone the Greek original, since it provided an equivalent in perfectly rounded verses for what in the source text consisted of a patchwork of several modified verse fragments from various Homeric contexts.

One could assert that the survey of different methodologies to present quoted Greek poetry to a Latin readership unavoidably leads to the conclusion that medieval and humanist translators were fundamentally incapable of producing satisfying translations of the Greek original texts in front of them. Yet,

> *no translation, even an interlinear 'construing', is ever 'innocent', but always an act of interpretation, of rendering readable, which might involve (for example) foregrounding some elements and erasing others.*[42]

There can be no doubt that our translators were mainly focused on the accurately rendered content of the texts that they wanted to have represented in Latin. The subjects of those texts, situated in the field of philosophy, demanded that they stuck to consistent equivalents for the words whose contents they tried to transmit from Greek into Latin.

> *Of course there are conventions of lexical equivalence, but even a simple word like panis has a quite different semantic range from "bread", and that range is itself not something fixed but subject to change. The nature of that equivalence will accordingly vary, not only between different periods, but between different speakers within the same period; there is, however, sufficient overlap for "communication", in some form, to take place. The lack of exact fit between different languages and within different languages means, as has already been noticed, that in language-use equivalence is not equivalent to sameness. Where the gap between equivalence and sameness is most strongly felt, we talk of untranslatability.*[43]

Since the search for balanced Latin equivalents of the Greek concepts in the philosophical texts under scrutiny was infinitely more delicate than the awareness that bread might take different forms or consistencies, the relation between equivalence and sameness was severely tested on the semantic level. In view of those challenges, it is hardly surprising that many medieval and humanist translators

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42 Charles Martindale, *Redeeming the Text. Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 86.

43 *Ibid.*, 87. Original emphasis.

probably considered the quotations from Greek poetry in their philosophical source texts utterly "untranslatable", especially considering the translation principles that they observed elswhere.

In that respect, most medieval and humanist translators were very "visible", as Lawrence Venuti labels those translators who produce texts in other languages in which they allow the "foreignness" of the source text to transpire in the target language.

> *A translated text should be the site where linguistic and cultural differences are somehow signalled, where a reader gets some sense of a cultural other, and resistancy, a translation strategy based on an aesthetic of discontinuity, can best signal those differences, that sense of otherness, by reminding the reader of the gains and losses in the translation process and the unbridgeable gaps between cultures.*[44]

The translators' struggles with the difficult poetic passages clearly demonstrate what can be less easily detected in the rest of their works. By stressing the "unbridgeable gaps between cultures", or the "untranslatability", the medieval translators make themselves emphatically visible. Even more markedly than the philosophical prose that they translate, the poetic quotations reveal the foreignness of their Latin versions. That foreignness is brought to an extreme level in those passages where the original Greek text was copied into the Latin translations (although it was not necessarily understood or transmitted as such by later scribes).

Self-assured humanist translators like Gaza, on the contrary, paradoxically blended into the background of their texts: they attempted to create translations with a *latinitas* that made them indistinguishable from texts originally written in the Latin language. In that manner, they created invisibility for themselves on the textual level, yet through their prefaces and even complete essays in defense of their translation method, they re-affirmed their visibility on the paratextual level.[45]

Indeed, medieval translators rarely prefaced their translations, and when they did, focussed on the usefullness of their enterprises and on the generosity of their patrons rather than on the methodological difficulties that they had to face, except for the remarkable figure of Burgundio of Pisa. In the humanist period, when readers' expectations had shifted, prefaces became part and parcel of the translators' trade. It seems fair to assume that when textual visibility decreased, the requirement of paratextual forms of compensation for the increasing visibility became the rule of

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[44] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation*. Second edition. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008, 264 (first edition 1995).

[45] J. Cornelia Linde, "Translating Aristotle in Fifteenth-Century Italy: George of Trebizond and Leonardo Bruni." *Et Amicorum: Essays on Renaissance Humanism and Philosophy in Honour of Jill Kraye*. Ed. Anthony Ossa-Richardson and Margaret Meserve. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2018, 47–68.

thumb.[46] Against that shifting backdrop on the role of translators as mediators between source and target languages, the puzzling variation in medieval and humanist approaches to the poetic passages in philosophical treatises can be painted in more nuanced shades of interpretation that go beyond the ancient division into translations *ad verbum* or *ad sensum*.

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[46] Kaisa Koskinen, *Beyond Ambivalence. Postmodernity and the Ethics of Translation*. PhD-dissertation, University of Tampere, 2000, 99–100, helpfully opened up Venuti's broad concept of the "translator's (in)visibility" into three kinds: textual, paratextual, and extratextual visibility.

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