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EARLY THEORIES OF TRANSLATION
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Chapter IV
(p. 133-178)

FROM COWLEY TO POPE

Although the ardor of the Elizabethan translator as he approached the vast, almost unbroken field of foreign literature may well awaken the envy of his modern successor, in many respects the period of Dryden and Pope has more claim to be regarded as the Golden Age of the English translator. Patriotic enthusiasm had, it is true, lost something of its earlier fire, but national conditions were in general not unfavorable to translation. Though the seventeenth century, torn by civil discords, was very unlike the period which Holland had lovingly described as "this long time of peace and tranquility, wherein... all good literature hath had free course and flourished,"[1] yet, despite the rise and fall of governments, the stream of translation flowed on almost uninterruptedly. Sandys' *Ovid* is presented by its author, after his visit to America, as "bred in the New World, of the rudeness whereof it cannot but participate; especially having wars and tumults to bring it to light instead of the Muses,"[2] but the more ordinary translation, bred at home in England during the seventeenth century, apparently suffered little from the political strife which surrounded it, while the eighteenth century afforded a "peace and tranquility" even greater than that which had prevailed under Elizabeth.

Throughout the period translation was regarded as an important labor, deserving of every encouragement. As in the sixteenth century, friends and patrons united to offer advice and aid to the author who engaged in this work. Henry Brome, dedicating a translation of Horace to Sir William Backhouse, writes on his own share of the volume, "to the translation

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[1] *Preface to the Reader*, in *The Natural History of C. Plinius Secundus*, London, 1601.

[2] *Dedication*, in *Ovid's Metamorphosis, Englished by G. S.*, London, 1640.

whereof my pleasant retirement and conveniencies at your delightsome habitation have liberally contributed."[3] Doctor Barten Holiday includes in his preface to a version of Juvenal and Persius an interesting list of "worthy friends" who have assisted him. "My honored friend, Mr. John Selden (of such eminency in the studies of antiquities and languages) and Mr. Farnaby... procured me a fair copy from the famous library of St. James's, and a manuscript copy from our herald of learning, Mr. Camden. My dear friend, the patriarch of our poets, Ben Jonson, sent in an ancien manuscript partly written in the Saxon character." Then follow names of less note, Casaubon, Anyan, Price.[4] Dryden tells the same story. He has been permitted to consult the Earl of Lauderdale's manuscript translation of Virgil. "Besides this help, which was not inconsiderable," he writes, "Mr. Congreve has done me the favor to review the *Aeneis*, and compare my version with the original."[5] Later comes his recognition of indebtedness of a more material character. "Being invited by that worthy gentleman, Sir William Bowyer, to Denham Court, I translated the First Georgic at his house, and the greatest part of the last Aeneid. A more friendly entertainment no man ever found... The Seventh Aeneid was made English at Burleigh, the magnificent abode of the Earl of Exeter."[6]

While private individuals thus rallied to the help of the translator, the world in general regarded his work with increasing respect. The great Dryden thought it not unworthy of his powers to engage in putting classical verse into English garb. His successor Pope early turned to the same pleasant and profitable task. Johnson, the literary dictator of the next age, described Rowe's version of Lucan as "one of the greatest productions of English poetry."[7]

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[3] *Dedication*, in *The Poems of Horace rendered into Verse by Several Persons,* London, 1666.

[4] *Juvenal and Persius,* translated by Barten Holyday, Oxford, 1673 (published posthumously).

[5] *Dedication of the Aeneis*, in *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker, v. 2, p. 235.

[6] *Postcript to the Reader, Essays*, v. 2, p. 243.

[7] *Rowe*, in *Lives of the Poets*, Dublin, 1804, p. 284.

The comprehensive editions of the works of British poets which began to appear towards the end of the eighteenth century regularly included English renderings, generally contemporaneous, of the great poetry of other countries.

The growing dignity of this department of literature and the Augustan fondness for literary criticism combined to produce a large body of comment on methods of translation. The more ambitious translations of the eighteenth century, for example, were accompanied by long prefaces, containing, in addition to the elaborate paraphernalia of contemporary scholarship, detailed discussion of the best rules for putting a foreign classic into English. Almost every possible phase of the art had been broached in one place and another before the century ended. In its last decade there appeared the first attempt in English at a complete and detailed treatment of the theory of translation as such, Tytler's *Essays on the Principles of Translation.*

From the sixteenth-century theory of translation, so much of which is incidental and uncertain in expression, it is a pleasure to come to the deliberate, reasoned statements, unmistakable in their purpose and meaning, of the earlier critics of our period, men like Denham, Cowley, and Dryden. In contrast to the mass of unrelated individual opinions attached to the translations of Elizabeth's time, the criticism of the seventeenth century emanates, for the most part, from a small group of men, who supply standards for lesser commentators and who, if they do not invariably agree with one another, are yet thoroughly familiar with one another's views. The field of discussion also has narrowed considerably, and theory has gained by becoming less scattering. Translation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries showed certain new developments, the most marked of which was the tendency among translators who aspired to the highest rank to confine their efforts to verse renderings of the Greek and Latin classics. A favorite remark was that it is the greatest poet who suffers most in being turned from one language into another. In spite of this, or perhaps for this reason, the common ambition was to undertake Virgil, who was generally regarded as the greatest of epic poets, and attempts to translate at least a part of the *Aeneid* were astonishingly frequent. As early as 1658 the Fourth Book is described as "translated... in our

day at least ten times into English."[8] Horace came next in popularity; by the beginning of the eighteenth century, according to one translator, he had been "translated, paraphrased, or criticized on by persons of all conditions and both sexes."[9] As the century progressed, Homer usurped the place formerly occupied by Virgil as the object of the most ambitious effort and the center of discussion. But there were other translations of the classics. Cooke, dedicating his translation of Hesiod to the Duke of Argyll, says to his patron: "You, my lord, know how the works of genius lift up the head of a nation above her neighbors, and give as much honor as success in arms; among these we must reckon our translations of the classics; by which when we have naturalized all Greece and Rome, we shall be so much richer than they by so many original productions as we have of our own."[10] Seemingly there was an attempt to naturalize "all Greece and Rome." Anacreon, Pindar, Apollonius Rhodius, Lucretius, Tibullus, Statius, Juvenal, Persius, Ovid, Lucan, are names taken almost at random from the list of seventeenth and eighteenth-century translations. Criticism, however, was ready to concern itself with the translation of any classic, ancient or modern. Denham's two famous pronouncements are connected, the one with his own translation of the Second Book of the *Aeneid*, the other with Sir Richard Fanshaw's rendering of *Il Pastor Fido*. In the later eighteenth century voluminous comment accompanied Hoole's *Ariosto* and Mickle's *Camœns.*

At present, however, we are concerned not with the number and variety of these translations, but with their homogeneity. As translators showed themselves less inclined to wander over the whole field of literature, the theory of translation assumed much more manageable proportions. A further limitation of the area of discussion was made by Denham, who expressly excluded from his consideration "them who deal in matters of fact or matters

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[8] *The Argument*, in *The Passion of Dido for Aeneas*, translated by Edmund Waller and Sidney Godolphin, London, 1658.

[9] *Dedication*, in *Translations of Horace* John Hanway, 1730.

[10] *Dedication,* dated 1728, reprinted in *The English Poets*, London, 1810, v. 20.

of faith,"[11] thus disposing of the theological treatises which had formerly divided attention with the classics.

The aims of the translator were also clarified by definition of his audience. John Vicars, publishing in 1632 *The XII. Aeneids of Virgil translated into English decasyllables*, adduces as one of his motives "the common good and public utility which I hoped might accrue to young students and grammatical tyros,"[12] but later writers seldom repeat this appeal to the learner. The next year John Brinsley issued *Virgil's Eclogues, with his book De Apibus, translated grammatically, and also according to the propriety of our English tongue so far as Grammar and the verse will permit.* A significant comment in the "Directions" runs: "As for the fear of making truants by these translations, a conceit which arose merely upon the abuse of other translations, never intended for this end, I hope that happy experience of this kind will in time drive it and all like to it utterly out of schools and out of the minds of all." Apparently the schoolmaster's ban upon the unauthorized use of translations was establishing the distinction between the English version which might claim to be ranked as literature and that which Johnson later designated as "the clandestine refuge of schoolboys."[13]

Another limitation of the audience was, however, less admirable. For the widely democratic appeal of the Elizabethan translator was substituted an appeal to a class, distinguished, if one may believe the philosopher Hobbes, as much by social position as by intellect. In discussing the vocabulary to be employed by the translator, Hobbes professes opinions not unlike those of the sixteenth-century critics. Like Puttenham, he makes a distinction between words as suited or unsuited for the epic style. "The names of instruments and tools of artificers, and words of art," he says in the preface to his *Homer*, "though of use in the schools, are far from being fit to be spoken by a hero. He may delight in the arts themselves, and have skill in some of them, but his glory lies not in that, but in courage,

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[11] *Preface to The Destruction of Troy*, in Denham, *Poems and Translations*, London, 1709.

[12] *To the courteous not curious reader.*

[13] Comment on Trapp's "blank version" of Virgil, in *Life of Dryden.*

nobility, and other virtues of nature, or in the command he has over other men." In Hobbes' objection to the use of unfamiliar words, also, there is nothing new; but in the standards by which he tries such terms there is something amusingly characteristic of his time. In the choice of words, "the first indiscretion is in the use of such words as to the readers of poesy (which are commonly Persons of the best Quality)"–it is only fair to reproduce Hobbes' capitalization–"are not sufficiently known. For the work of an heroic poem is to raise admiration (principally) for three virtues, valor, beauty, and love; to the reading whereof women no less than men have a just pretence though their skill in language be not so universal. And therefore foreign words, till by long use they become vulgar, are unintelligible to them." Dryden is similarly restrained by the thought of his readers. He does not try to reproduce the "Doric dialect" of Theocritus, "for Theocritus writ to Sicilians, who spoke that dialect; and I direct this part of my translations to our ladies, who neither understand, nor will take pleasure in such homely expressions."[14] In translating the *Aeneid* he follows what he conceives to have been Virgil's practice. "I will not give the reasons," he declares, "why I writ not always in the proper terms of navigation, land-service, or in the cant of any profession. I will only say that Virgil has avoided those properties, because he writ not to mariners, soldiers, astronomers, gardeners, peasants, etc., but to all in general, and in particular to men and ladies of the first quality, who have been better bred than to be too nicely knowing in such things."[15]

Another element in theory which displays the strength and weakness of the time is the treatment of the work of other countries and other periods. A changed attitude towards the achievements of foreign translators becomes evident early in the seventeenth century. In the prefaces to an edition of the works of Du Bartas in English there are signs of a growing satisfaction with the English language as a medium and an increasing conviction that England can surpass the rest of Europe in the work of translation. Thomas Hudson, in an address to James VI of Scotland, attached to his translation of *The History of Judith*, quotes

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[14] *Preface to Sylvae, Essays*, v. 1, p. 266.

[15] *Dedication of the Aeneis, Essays,* v. 2, p. 236.

an interesting conversation which he held on one occasion with that pedantic monarch. "It pleased your Highness," he recalls, "not only to esteem the peerless style of the Greek Homer and the Latin Virgil to be inimitable to us (whose tongue is barbarous and corrupted), but also to allege (partly through delight your majesty took in the haughty style of those most famous writers, and partly to sound the opinion of others) that also the lofty phrases, the grave inditement, the facund terms of the French Salust (for the like resemblance) could not be followed nor sufficiently expressed in our rough and unpolished English language."[16] It was to prove that he could reproduce the French poet "succinctly and sensibly in our vulgar speech" that Hudson undertook the *Judith*. According to the complimentary verses addressed to the famous Sylvester on his translations from the same author, the English tongue has responded nobly to the demands put upon it. Sylvester has shown

> ... that French tongue's plenty to be such.
> And yet that ours can utter full as much.[17]

John Davies of Hereford, writing of another of Sylvester's translations, describes English as acquitting itself well when it competes with French, and continues

> If French to English were so strictly bound
> It would but passing lamely strive with it;
> And soon be forc'd to lose both grace and ground,
> Although they strove with equal skill and wit.[18]

An opinion characteristic of the latter part of the century is that of the Earl of Roscommon, who, after praising the work of the earlier French translators, says,

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[16] In *Du Bartas, His Divine Words and Works*, translated by Sylvester, London, 1641.

[17] Lines by E. G., same edition.

[18] Same edition, p. 322.

> From hence our generous emulation came,
> We undertook, and we performed the same:
> But now we show the world another way,
> And in translated verse do more than they.[19]

Dryden finds little to praise in the French and Italian renderings of Virgil. “Segrais... is wholly destitute of elevation, though his version is much better than that of the two brothers, or any of the rest who have attempted Virgil. Hannibal Caro is a great name among the Italians; yet his translation is most scandalously mean.”[20] “What I have said,” he declares somewhat farther on, “though it has the face of arrogance, yet is intended for the honor of my country; and therefore I will boldly own that this English translation has more of Virgil’s spirit in it than either the French or Italian.”[21]

On translators outside their own period seventeenth-century critics bestowed even less consideration than on their French or Italian contemporaries. Earlier writers were forgotten, or remembered only to be condemned. W. L., Gent., who in 1628 published a translation of Virgil’s *Eclogues*, expresses his surprise that a poet like Virgil “should yet stand still as a *noli me tangere*, whom no man either durst or would undertake; only Master Spenser long since translated the *Gnat* (a little fragment of Virgil’s excellence), giving the world peradventure to conceive that he would at one time or other have gone through with the rest of this poet’s work.”[22] Vicars’ translation of the *Aeneid* is accompanied by a letter in which the author’s cousin, Thomas Vicars, congratulates him on his “great pains in transplanting this worthiest of Latin poets into a mellow and neat English soil (a thing not done before).”[23]

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[19] *An Essay on Translated Verse.*

[20] *Dedication of the Aeneis, Essays*, v. 2. p. 220.

[21] P. 222.

[22] *To the worthy reader.*

[23] *To the courteous not curious reader*, in *The XII. Aeneids of Virgil*, 1632.

Denham announces, "There are so few translations which deserve praise, that I scarce ever saw any which deserved pardon; those who travail in that kind being for the most part so unhappy as to rob others without enriching themselves, pulling down the fame of good authors without raising their own. Brome,[24] writing in 1666, rejoices in the good fortune of Horace's "good friend Virgil... who being plundered of all his ornaments by the old translators, was restored to others with double lustre by those standard-bearers of wit and judgment, Denham and Waller,"[25] and in proof of his statements puts side by side translations of the same passage by Phaer and Denham. Later, in 1688, an anonymous writer recalls the work of Phaer and Stanyhurst only to disparage it. Introducing his translation of Virgil, "who has so long unhappily continued a stranger to tolerable English," he says that he has "observed how *Player* and *Stainhurst* of old... had murdered the most absolute of poets."[26] One dissenting note is found in Robert Gould's lines prefixed to a 1687 edition of Fairfax's *Godfrey of Bulloigne.*

> See here, you dull translators, look with shame
> Upon this stately monument of fame,
> And to amaze you more, reflect how long
> It is, since first 'twas taught the English tongue:
> In what a dark age it was brought to light;
> Dark? No, our age is dark, and that was bright.
> Of all these versions which now brightest shine,
> Most, Fairfax, are but foils to set off thine:
> Ev'n Horace can't of too much justice boast,
> His unaffected, easy style is lost:
> And Ogilby's the lumber of the stall;

[24] Preface to *The Destruction of Troy.*

[25] Dedication of *The Poems of Horace.*

[26] *To the Reader*, in *The First Book of Virgil's Aeneis*, London, 1688.

But thy translation does atone for all.[27]

Dryden, too, approves of Fairfax, considered at least as a metrist. He includes him with Spenser among the "great masters of our language," and adds, "many besides myself have heard our famous Waller own that he derived the harmony of his numbers from *Godfrey of Bulloign*, which was turned into English by Mr. Fairfax."[28] But even Dryden, who sometimes saw beyond his own period, does not share the admiration which some of his friends entertain for Chapman. "The Earl of Mulgrave and Mr. Waller," he writes in the *Examen Poeticum*, "two of the best judges of our age, have assured me that they could never read over the translation of Chapman without incredible pleasure and extreme transport. This admiration of theirs must needs proceed from the author himself, for the translator has thrown him down as far as harsh numbers, improper English, and a monstrous length of verse could carry him."[29]

In this satisfaction with their own country and their own era there lurked certain dangers for seventeenth-century writers. The quality becomes, as we shall see, more noticeable in the eighteenth century, when the shackles which English taste laid upon original poetry were imposed also upon translated verse. The theory of translation was hampered in its development by the narrow complacency of its exponents, and the record of this time is by no means one of uniform progress. The seventeenth century shows clearly marked alternations of opinion; now it sanctions extreme methods; now, by reaction, it inclines towards more moderate views. The eighteenth century, during the greater part of its course, produces little that is new in the way of theory, and adopts, without much attempt to analyze them, the formulas left by the preceding period. We may now resume the history of these developments at the point where it was dropped in Chapter III, at the end of Elizabeth's reign.

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[27] Reprinted in *Godfrey of Bulloigne*, translated by Fairfax, New York, 1849.

[28] *Essays*, v. 2, p. 249.

[29] *Essays*, v. 2, p. 14.

In the first part of the new century the few minor translators who described their methods held theories much like those of Chapman. W. L., Gent., in the extremely flowery and discursive preface to his version of Virgil's *Eclogues*, says, "Some readers I make no doubt they (the translations) will meet with in these dainty mouthed times, that will tax me with not coming resolved word for word and line for line with the author... I used the freedom of a translator, not tying myself to the tyranny of a grammatical construction but breaking the shell into many pieces, was only careful to preserve the kernel safe and whole from the violence of a wrong or wrested interpretation." After a long simile drawn from the hunting field he concludes, "No more do I conceive my course herein to be faulty though I do not affect to follow my author so close as to tread upon his heels." John Vicars, who professes to have robed Virgil in "a homespun English gray-coat plain," says of his manner, "I have aimed at these three things, perspicuity of the matter, fidelity to the author, and facility or smoothness to recreate thee my reader. Now if any critical or curious wit tax me with a *Frustra fit per plura &c.* and blame my not curious confinement to my author line for line, I answer (and I hope this answer will satisfy the moderate and ingenuous) that though peradventure I could (as in my Babel's Balm I have done throughout the whole translation) yet in regard of the lofty majesty of this my author's style, I would not adventure so to pinch his spirits, as to make him seem to walk like a lifeless ghost. But on thinking on that of Horace, *Brevis esse laboro obscurus fio*, I presumed (yet still having an eye to the genuine sense as I was able) to expatiate with poetical liberty, where necessity of matter and phrase enforced." Vicar's warrant for his practice is the oftquoted caution of Horace, *Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere.*

But the seventeenth century was not disposed to continue uninterruptedly the tradition of previous translators. In translated, as in original verse a new era was to begin, acclaimed as such in its own day, and associated like the new poetry, with the names of Denham and Cowley as both poets and critics and with that of Waller as poet. Peculiarly characteristic of the movement was its hostility towards literal translation, a hostility apparent also, as we have seen, in Chapman. "I consider it a vulgar error in translating poets," writes Denham in the preface to his *Destruction of Troy*, "to affect being Fidus Interpres," and again in his lines

to Fanshaw:

> That servile path thou nobly dost decline
> Of tracing word by word, and line by line.
> Those are the labored births of slavish brains,
> Not the effect of poetry but pains;
> Cheap, vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords
> No flight for thoughts, but poorly sticks at words.

Sprat is anxious to claim for Cowley much of the credit for introducing "this way of leaving verbal translations and chiefly regarding the sense and genius of the author," which "was scarce heard of in England before this present age."[30]

Why Chapman and later translators should have fixed upon extreme literalness as the besetting fault of their predecessors and contemporaries, it is hard to see. It is true that the recognition of the desirability of faithfulness to the original was the most distinctive contribution that sixteenth-century critics made to the theory of translation, but this principle was largely associated with prose renderings of a different type from that now under discussion. If, like Denham, one excludes "matters of fact and matters of faith," the body of translation which remains is scarcely distinguished by slavish adherence to the letter. As a matter of fact, however, sixteenth-century translation was obviously an unfamiliar field to most seventeenth-century commentators, and although their generalizations include all who have gone before them, their illustrations are usually drawn from the early part of their own century. Ben Johnson, whose translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry* is cited by Dryden as an example of "metaphrase, or turning an author word by word and line by line from one language to another,"[31] is perhaps largely responsible for the mistaken impression regarding the earlier translators. Thomas May and George Sandys are often included in the same

[30] Sprat, *Life of Cowley*, in *Prose Works of Abraham Cowley*, London, 1826.

[31] *Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles, Essays*, v. 1, p. 237.

category. Sandys' translation of Ovid is regarded by Dryden as typical of its time. Its literalism, its resulting lack of poetry, "proceeded from the wrong judgment of the age in which he lived. They neither knew good verse nor loved it; they were scholars, 'tis true, but they were pedants; and for all their pedantic pains, all their translations want to be translated into English."[32]

But neither Jonson, Sandys, nor May has much to say with regard to the proper methods of translation. The most definite utterance of the group is found in the lines which Jonson addressed to May on his translation of Lucan:

> But who hath them interpreted, and brought
> Lucan's whole frame unto us, and so wrought
> As not the smallest joint or gentlest word
> In the great mass or machine there is stirr'd?
> The self same genius! so the world will say
> The sun translated, or the son of May.[33]

May's own preface says nothing of his theories. Sandys says of his Ovid, "To the translation I have given what perfection my pen could bestow, by polishing, altering, or restoring the harsh, improper, or mistaken with a nicer exactness than perhaps is required in so long a

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[32] *Dedication of Examen Poeticum, Essays,* v. 2, p. 10. Johnson, writing of the latter part of the seventeenth century, says, "The authority of Jonson, Sandys, and Holiday had fixed the judgment of the nation" (*The Idler*, 69), and Tytler, in his *Essay on the Principles of Translation,* 1791, says, "In poetical translation the English writers of the sixteenth, and the greatest part of the seventeenth century, seem to have had no other care than (in Denham's phrase) to translate language into language, and to have placed their whole merit in presenting a literal and servile transcript of their original."

[33] In Lucan's *Pharsalia*, translated May, 1659.

labor,"[34] a comment open to various interpretations. His metrical version of the Psalms is described as "paraphrastically translated," and it is worthy of note that Cowley, in his attack on the practice of too literal translation, should have chosen this part of Sandy's work as illustrative of the methods which he condemns. For the translators of the new school, though professedly the foes of the word for word method, carried their hostility to existing theories of translation much farther. Cowley begins, reasonably enough, by pointing out the absurdity of translating a poet literally. "If a man should undertake to translate Pindar word for word, it would be thought that one madman had translated another; as may appear when a person who understands not the original reads the verbal traduction of him into Latin prose, than which nothing seems more raving... And I would gladly know what applause our best pieces of English poesy could expect from a Frenchman or Italian, if converted faithfully and word for word into French or Italian prose."[35] But, ignoring the possibility of a reasonable regard for both the original and the English, such as had been advocated by Chapman or by minor translators like W. L. and Vicars, Cowley suggests a more radical method. Since of necessity much of the beauty of a poem is lost in translation, the translator must supply new beauties. "For men resolving in no case to shoot beyond the mark," he says, "it is a thousand to one if they shoot not short of it." "We must needs confess that after all these losses sustained by Pindar, all we can add to him by our wit or invention (not deserting still his subject) is not likely to make him a richer man than he was in his own country." Finally comes a definite statement of Cowley's method: "Upon this ground I have in these two Odes of Pindar taken, left out and added what I please; nor make it so much my aim to let the reader know precisely what he spoke as what was his way and manner of speaking, which has not been yet (that I know of) introduced into English, though it be the noblest and highest kind of writing in verse." Denham, in his lines of Fanshaw's translation of Guarini, had already approved of a similar method:

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[34] *To the Reader*, in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, translated Sandys, London, 1640.

[35] *Preface* to *Pindaric Odes*, reprinted in *Essays and other Prose Writings*, Oxford, 1915.

A new and nobler way thou dost pursue
To make translations and translators too.
They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame,
True to his sense, but truer to his fame.
Feeding his current, where thou find'st it low
Let'st in thine own to make it rise and flow;
Wisely restoring whatsoever grace
Is lost by change of times, or tongues, or place.

Denham, however, justifies the procedure for reasons which must have had their appeal for the translator who was conscious of real creative power. "Poesy," he says in the preface to his translation from the *Aeneid*, "if of so subtle a spirit that in the pouring out of one language into another it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *caput mortuum*." The new method, which Cowley is willing to designate as *imitation* if the critics refuse to it the name of translation, is described by Dryden with his usual clearness. "I take imitation of an author in their sense," he says, "to be an endeavor of a later poet to write like one who has written before him, on the same subject; that is, not to translate his words, or be confined to his sense, but only to set him as a pattern, and to write as he supposes that author would have done, had he lived in our age, and in our country."[36]

Yet, after all, the new fashion was far from revolutionizing either the theory or the practice of translation. Dryden says of Denham that "he advised more liberty that he took himself," and of both Denham and Cowley, "I dare not say that either of them have carried this libertine way of rendering authors (as Mr Cowley calls it) so far as my definition reaches; for in the *Pindaric Odes* the customs and ceremonies of ancient Greece are still observed."[37] In the theory of the less distinguished translators of the second and third

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[36] *Preface to Ovid's Epistles, Essays,* v. 1, p. 239.

[37] P. 239-40.

quarters of the century, the influence of Denham and Cowley shows itself, if at all, in the claim to have translated paraphrastically and the complacency with which translators describe their practice as "new," a condition of things which might have prevailed without the intervention of the method of imitation. About the year 1680 there comes a definite reaction against too great liberty in the treatment of foreign authors. Thomas Creech, defining what may justly be expected of the translator of Horace, says, "If the sense of the author is delivered, the variety of expression kept (which I must despair of after Quintillian hath assured us that he is most happily bold in his words) and his fancy not debauched (for I cannot think myself able to improve Horace) ' tis all that can be expected from a version."[38] After quoting with approval what Cowley has said of the inadequacy of any translation, he continues: "'Tis true he (Cowley) improves this consideration, and urges it as concluding against all strict and faithful versions, in which I must beg leave to dissent, thinking it better to convey down the learning of the ancients than their empty sound suited to the present times, and show the age their whole substance, rather than their ghost embodied in some light air of my own." An anonymous writer presents a group of critics who are disgusted with contemporary fashions in translation and wish to go back to those which prevailed in the early part of the century.[39]

> Acer, incensed, exclaimed against the age,
> Said some of our new poets had a late
> Set up a lazy fashion to translate,
> Speak authors how they please, and if they call
> Stuff they make paraphrase, that answers all.
> Pedantic verse, effeminately smooth,
> Racked through all little rules of art to soothe,

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[38] Dedication to Dryden, 1684, in *The Odes, Satires, and Epistles of Horace done into English*, London, 1688.

[39] *Metellus his Dialogues, Relation of a Journey to Tunbridge Wells, with the Fourth Book of Virgil's Aeneid in English*, London, 1693.

> The soft'ned age industriously compile,
> Main wit and cripple fancy all the while.
> A license far beyond poetic use
> Not to translate old authors but abuse
> The wit of Romans; and their lofty sense
> Degrade into new poems made from thence,
> Disguise old Rome in our new eloquence.

Aesculape shares the opinion of Acer.

> And thought it fit wits should be more confined
> To author's sense, and to their periods too,
> Must leave out nothing, every sense must do,
> And though they cannot render verse for verse,
> Yet every period's sense they must rehearse.

Finally Metellus, speaking for the group, orders Laelius, one of their number, to translate the Fourth Book of the *Aeneid*, keeping himself in due subordination to Virgil.

> We all bid then translate it the old way
> Not a-la-mode, but like George Sandys or May;
> Show Virgil's every period, not steal sense
> To make up a new-fashioned poem thence.

Other translators, though not defending the literal method, do not advocate imitation. Roscommon, in the *Essay on Translated Verse*, demands fidelity to the substance of the original when he says,

> The genuine sense, intelligibly told,

> Shows a translator both discreet and bold.
> Excursions are inexpiably bad,
> And 'tis much safer to leave out than add,

but, unlike Phaer, he forbids the omission of difficult passages:

> Abstruse and mystic thoughts you must express,
> With painful care and seeming easiness.

Dryden considers the whole situation in detail.[40] He admires Cowley's *Pindaric Odes* and admits that both Pindar and his translator do not come under ordinary rules, but he fears the effect of Cowley's example "when writers of unequal parts to him shall imitate so bold an undertaking," and believes that only a poet so "wild and ungovernable" as Pindar justifies the method of Cowley. "If Virgil, or Ovid, or any regular intelligible authors be thus used, 'tis no longer to be called their work, when neither the thoughts nor words are drawn from the original; but instead of them there is something new produced, which is almost the creation of another hand... He who is inquisite to know an author's thoughts will be disappointed in his expectation; and 'tis not always that a man will be contented to have a present made him, when he expects the payment of a debt. To state it fairly; imitation is the most advantageous way for a translator to show himself, but the greatest wrong which can be done to the memory and reputation of the dead."

Though imitation was not generally accepted as a standard method of translation, certain elements in the theory of Denham and Cowley remained popular throughout the seventeenth and even the eighteenth century. A favorite comment in the complementary verses attached to translations in the assertion that the translator has not only equaled but surpassed his original. An extreme example of this is Dryden's fatuous reference to the Earl of Mulgrave's translation of Ovid:

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[40] *Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles, Essays*, vol. 1, p. 240.

> How will sweet Ovid's ghost be pleased to hear
> His fame augmented by an English peer,
> How he embellishes his Helen's loves,
> Outdoes his softness, and his sense improves.[41]

His earlier lines to Sir Robert Howard on the latter's translation of the *Achilleis* of Statius are somewhat less bald:

> To understand how much we owe to you,
> We must your numbers with your author's view;
> Then shall we see his work was lamely rough,
> Each figure stiff as if designed in buff;
> His colours laid so thick on every place,
> As only showed the paint, but hid the face;
> But as in perspective we beauties see
> Which in the glass, not in the picture be,
> So here our sight obligingly mistakes
> That wealth which his your bounty only makes.
> Thus vulgar dishes are by cooks disguised,
> More for their dressing than their substance prized.[42]

It was especially in cases where the original lacked smoothness and perspicuity, the qualities which appealed most strongly to the century, that the claim to improvement was made. Often, however, it was associated with notably accurate versions. Cartwright calls upon the readers of Holiday's *Persius*,

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[41] *To the Earl of Roscommon of his excellent Essay on Translated Verse.*

[42] In Sir Robert Howards' *Poems*, London, 1660.

who when they shall view
How truly with thine author thou dost pace,
How hand in hand ye go, what equal grace
Thou dost observe with him in every term,
They cannot but, if just, justly affirm
That did your times as do your lines agree,
He might be thought to have translated thee,
But that he's darker, not so strong; wherein
Thy greater art more clearly may be seen,
Which does thy Persius' cloudy storms display
With lightning and with thunder; both which lay
Couched perchance in him, but wanted force
To break, or light from darkness to divorce,
Till thine exhaled skill compressed it so,
That forced the clouds to break, the light to show,
The thunder to be heard. That now each child
Can prattle what was meant; whilst thou art styled
Of all, with titles of true dignity
For lofty phrase and perspicuity.[43]

J. A. adresses Lucretius in lines prefixed to Creech's translation,

But Lord, how much you're changed, how much improv'd!
Your native roughness all is left behind,
But still the same good man tho' more refin'd,[44]

[43] In Holiday's *Persius*, Fifth Edition, 1650.

[44] In Creech's *Lucretius*, Third Edition, Oxford, 1683.

and Otway says to the translator:

> For when the rich original we peruse,
> And by it try the metal you produce,
> Though there indeed the purest ore we find,
> Yet still by you it something is refined;
> Thus when the great Lucretius gives a loose
> And lashes to her speed his fiery Muse,
> Still with him you maintain an equal pace,
> And bear full stretch upon him all the race;
> But when in rugged way we find him rein
> His verse, and not so smooth a stroke maintain,
> There the advantage he receives is found,
> By you taught temper, and to choose his ground.[45]

So authoritative a critic as Roscommon, however, seems to oppose attempts at improvement when he writes,

> Your author always will the best advise,
> Fall when he falls, and when he rises, rise,

a precept which Tytler, writing at the end of the next century, considers the one doubtful rule in *The Essay on Translated Verse*. "Far from adopting the former part of this maxim," he declares, "I consider it to be the duty of a poetical translator, never to suffer his original to fall. He must maintain with him a perpetual contest of genius; he must attend him in his highest flights, and soar, if he can, beyond him: and when he perceives, at any time a diminution of his powers, when he sees a drooping wing, he must raise him on his own

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[45] In Creech's *Lucretius*, Third Edition, Oxford, 1683.

pinions."[46]

The influence of Denham and Cowley is also seen in what is perhaps the most significant element in the seventeenth-century theory of translation. These men advocated freedom in translation, not because such freedom would give the translator a greater opportunity to display his own powers, but because it would enable him to reproduce more truly the spirit of the original. A good translator must, first of all, know his author intimately. Where Denham's expressions are fuller than Virgil's, they are, he says, "but the impressions which the often reading of him hath left upon my thoughts." Possessing this intimate acquaintance, the English writer must try to think and write as if he were identified with his author. Dryden, who, in spite of his general principles, sometimes practised something uncommonly like imitation, says in the preface to *Sylvae*: "I must acknowledge that I have many times exceeded my commission; for I have both added and omitted, and even sometimes very boldly made such expositions of my authors as no Dutch commentator will forgive me... Where I have enlarged them, I desire the false critics would not always think that those thoughts are wholly mine, but either that they are secretly in the poet, or may be fairly deduced from him; or at least, if both these considerations should fail, that my own is of a piece with his, and that if he were living, and an Englishman, they are such as he would probably have written."[47]

By a sort of irony the more faithful translator came in time to recognize this as one of the precepts of his art, and sometimes to use it as an argument against too much liberty. The Earl of Roscommon says in the preface to his translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry*, "I have kept as close as I could both to the meaning and the words of the author, and done nothing but what I believe he would forgive if he were alive; and I have often asked myself this question." Dryden follows his protest against imitation by saying: "Nor must we understand the language only of the poet, but his particular turn of thoughts and expression, which are the characters that distinguish, and, as it were, individuate him from all other

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[46] *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, Everyman's Library, pp. 45-6.

[47] *Essays*, v. 1, p. 252.

writers. When we come thus far, 'tis time to look into ourselves, to conform our genius to his, to give his thought either the same turn, if our tongue will bear it, or if not, to vary but the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance."[48] Such faithfulness, according to Dryden, involves the appreciation and the reproduction of the qualities in an author which distinguish him from others, or, to use his own words, "the maintaining the character of an author which distinguishes him from all others, and makes him appear that individual poet whom you would interpret."[49] Dryden thinks that English translators have not sufficiently recognized the necessity for this. "For example, not only the thoughts, but the style and versification of Virgil and Ovid are very different: yet I see, even in our best poets who have translated some parts of them, that they have confounded their several talents, and, by endeavoring only at the sweetness and harmony of numbers, have made them so much alike that, if I did not know the originals, I should never be able to judge by the copies which was Virgil and which was Ovid. It was objected against a late noble painter that he drew many graceful pictures, but few of them were like. And this happened because he always studied himself more than those who sat to him. In such translators, I can easily distinguish the hand which performed the work, but I cannot distinguish their poet from another."

But critics recognized that study and pains alone could not furnish the translator for his work. "To be a thorough translator," says Dryden, "he must be a thorough poet,"[50] or to put it, as does Roscommon, somewhat more mildly, he must by nature possess the more essential characteristics of his author. Admitting this, Creech writes with a slight air of apology, "I cannot choose but smile to think that I, who have... too little ill nature (for that is commonly thought a necessary ingredient) to be a satirist, should venture upon Horace."[51] Dryden finds by experience that he can more easily translate a poet akin to himself. His

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[48] *Preface to the Translation of Ovid's Epistles, Essays*, v. 1, p. 241.

[49] *Preface to Sylvae, Essays*, v. 1, p. 254.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

[51] *Preface*, in Second Edition of *Odes of Horace*, London, 1688.

translations of Ovid please him. "Whether it be the partiality of an old man to his youngest child I know not; but they appear to me the best of all my endeavors in this kind. Perhaps this poet is more easy to be translated than some others whom I have lately attempted; perhaps, too, he was more according to my genius."[52] He looks forward with pleasure to putting the whole of the *Iliad* into English. "And this I dare assure the world beforehand, that I have found, by trial, Homer a more pleasing task than Virgil, though I say not the translation will be less laborious; for the Grecian is more according to my genius than the Latin poet."[53] The insistence of the necessity for kinship between the author and the translator is the principal idea in Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse*. According to Roscommon,

> Each poet with a different talent writes,
> One praises, one instructs, another bites.
> Horace could ne'er aspire to epic bays,
> Nor lofty Maro stoop to lyric lays.

This, then, is his advice to the would-be translator:

> Examine how your humour is inclined,
> And which the ruling passion of your mind;
> Then, seek a poet who your way does bend,
> And choose an author as you choose a friend.
> United by this sympathetic bond,
> You grow familiar, intimate, and fond;
> Your thoughts, your words, your styles, your souls agree,
> No longer his interpreter but he.

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[52] *Examen Poeticum, Essays*, v. 2, p. 9.

[53] *Preface to the Fables, Essays*, v. 2, p. 251.

Though the plea of reproducing the spirit of the original was sometimes made a pretext for undue latitude, it is evident that there was here an important contribution to the theory of translation. In another respect, also, the consideration of metrical effects, the seventeenth century shows some advance,–an advance, however, which must be laid chiefly to the credit of Dryden. Apparently there was no tendency towards innovation and experiment in the matter of verse forms. Seventeenth-century translators, satisfied with the couplet and kindred measures, did not consider, as the Elizabethans had done, the possibility of introducing classical metres. Creech says of Horace, "'Tis certain our language is not capable of the numbers of the poet,"[54] and leaves the matter there. Holiday says of his translation of the same poet: "But many, no doubt, will say Horace is by me forsaken, his lyric softness and emphatical Muse maimed; that there is a general defection from his genuine harmony. Those I must tell, I have in this translation rather sought his spirit than numbers; yet the music of verse not neglected neither, since the English ear better heareth the distich, and findeth that sweetness and air which the Latin affecteth and (questionless) attaineth in sapphics or iambic measures."[55] Dryden frequently complains of the difficulty of translation into English metre, especially when the poet to be translated is Virgil. The use of rhyme causes trouble. It "is certainly a constraint even to the best poets, and those who make it with most ease... What it adds to sweetness, it takes away from sense; and he who loses the least by it may be called a gainer. If often makes us swerve from an author's meaning; as, if a mark be set up for an archer at a great distance, let him aim as exactly as he can, the least wind will take his arrow, and divert it from the white."[56] The line of the heroic couplet is not long enough to reproduce the hexameter, and Virgil is especially succinct. "To make him copious is to alter his character; and to translate him line for line is impossible, because the Latin is naturally a more succinct language than either the Italian, Spanish, French, or even than the English, which, by reason of its monosyllables, is far the

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[54] *To the Reader*, in *The Odes, Satires, and Epistles of Horace*, London, 1688.

[55] *Preface* to translation of Horace, 1652.

[56] *Dedication of the Eneis, Essays*, v. 2, pp. 220-1.

most compendious of them. Virgil is much the closest of any Roman poet, and the Latin hexameter has more feet than the English heroic."[57] Yet though Dryden admits that Caro, the Italian translator, who used blank verse, made his task easier thereby, he does not think of abandoning the couplet for any of the verse forms which earlier translators had tried. He finds Chapman's *Homer* characterized by "harsh numbers... and a monstrous length of verse," and thinks his own period "a much better age than was the last... for versification and the art of numbers."[58] Roscommon, whose version of Horace's *Art of Poetry* is in blank verse, says that Jonson's translation lacks clearness as a result not only of his literalness but of "the constraint of rhyme,"[59] but makes no further attack on the couplet as the regular vehicle for translation.

Dryden, however, is peculiarly interested in the general effect of his verse as compared with that of his originals. "I have attempted," he says in the *Examen Poeticum*, "to restore Ovid to his native sweetness, easiness, and smoothness, and to give my poetry a kind of cadence and, as we call it, a run of verse, as like the original as the English can come to the Latin."[60] In his study of Virgil previous to translating the *Aeneid* he observed "above all, the elegance of his expressions and the harmony of his numbers."[61] Elsewhere he says of his author, "His verse is everywhere sounding the very thing in your ears whose sense it bears, yet the numbers are perpetually varied to increase the delight of the reader; so that the same sounds are never repeated twice together."[62] These metrical effects he has tried to reproduce in English. "The turns of his verse, his breakings, his numbers, and his gravity, I have as far imitated as the poverty of our language and the hastiness of my performance would allow,"

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[57] *Preface to Sylvae, Essays*, v. 1, pp. 256-7.

[58] *Examen Poeticum, Essays*, v. 2, p. .14.

[59] *Preface.*

[60] *Essays*, v. 2, p. 10.

[61] *Dedication of the Eneis, Essays*, v. 2, p. 223.

[62] *Preface to Sylvae, Essays*, v. 1, p. 255.

he says in the preface to *Sylvae*.[63] In his translation of the whole *Aeneid* he was guided by the same considerations. "Virgil... is everywhere elegant, sweet, and flowing in his hexameters. His words are not only chosen, but the places in which he ranks them for the sound. He who removes them from the station wherein their master set them spoils the harmony. What he says of the Sibyl's prophecies may be as properly applied to every word of his: they must be read in order as they lie; the least breath discomposes them and somewhat of their divinity is lost. I cannot boast that I have been thus exact in my verses; but I have endeavored to follow the example of my master, and am the first Englishman, perhaps, who made it his design to copy him in his numbers, his choice of words, and his placing them for the sweetness of the sound. On this last consideration I have shunned the *caesura* as much as possibly I could: for, wherever that is used, it gives a roughness to the verse; of which we have little need in a language which is overstocked with consonants."[64] Views like these contribute much to an adequate conception of what faithfulness in translation demands.

From the lucid, intelligent comment of Dryden it is disappointing to turn to the body of doctrine produced by his successors. In spite of the widespread interest in translation during the eighteenth century, little progress was made in formulating the theory of the art, and many of the voluminous prefaces of translators deserve the criticism which Johnson applied to Garth, "his notions are half-formed." So far as concerns the general method of translation, the principles laid down by critics are often mere repetitions of the conclusions already reached in the preceding century. Most theorists were ready to adopt Dryden's view that the translator should strike a middle course between the very free and the very close method. Put into words by a recognized authority, so reasonable an opinion could hardly fail of acceptance. It appealed to the eighteenth-century mind as adequate, and more than one translator, professing to give rules for translation, merely repeated in his own words what Dryden had already said. Garth declares in the preface condemned by Johnson: "Translation is commonly either verbal, a paraphrase, or an imitation... The manner that seems most

[63] *Essays*, v. 1, p. 258.

[64] *Dedication of the Eneis, Essays*, v. 2, p. 215.

suitable for this present undertaking is neither to follow the author too close out of a critical timorousness, nor abandon him too wantonly through a poetic boldness. The original should always be kept in mind, without too apparent a deviation from the sense. Where it is otherwise, it is not a version but an imitation."[65] Grainger says in the introduction to his *Tibullus*: "Verbal translations are always inelegant, because always destitute of beauty of idiom and language; for by their fidelity to an author's words, they become treacherous to his reputation; on the other hand, a too wanton departure from the letter often varies the sense and alters the manner. The translator chose the middle way, and meant either to tread on the heels of Tibullus nor yet to lose sight of him."[66] The preface to Fawkes' *Theocritus* harks back to Dryden: "A too faithful translation, Mr. Dryden says, must be a pedantic one... And as I have not endeavored to give a verbal translation, so neither have I indulged myself in a rash paraphrase, which always loses the spirit of an ancient by degenerating into the modern manners of expression."[67]

Yet behind these well-sounding phrases there lay, one suspects, little vigorous thought. Both the clarity and the honesty which belong to Dryden's utterances are absent from much of the comment of the eighteenth century. The apparent judicial impartiality of Garth, Fawkes, Grainger, and their contemporaries disappears on closer examination. In reality the balance of opinions in the time of Pope and Johnson inclines very perceptibly in favor of freedom. Imitation, it is true, soon ceases to enter into the discussion of translation proper, but literalism is attacked again and again, till one is ready to ask, with Dryden, "Who defends it?" Mickle's preface to *The Lusiad* states with unusual frankness what was probably the underlying idea in most of the theory of the time. Writing "not to gratify the dull few, whose greatest pleasure is to see what the author exactly says," but "to give a poem that might live in the English language," Mickle puts up a vigorous defense of his methods.

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[65] In *Ovid's Metapmorphoses translated by Dryden, Addison, Garth,* etc., reprinted in *The English Poets,* v. 20.

[66] *Advertisement to Elegies of Tibullus*, reprinted in same volume.

[67] *Preface to Idylliums of Theocritus*, reprinted in same volume.

"Literal translation of poetry," he insists, "is a solecism. You may construe your author, indeed, but if with some translators you boast that you have left your author speak for himself, that you have neither added nor diminished, you have in reality grossly abused him, and deceived yourself. Your literal translations can have no claim to the original felicities of expression, the energy, elegance, and fire of the original poetry. It may bear, indeed, a resemblance, but such an one as a corpse in the sepulchre bears to the former man, when he moved in the bloom and vigor of life.

> Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus
> Interpres–

was the taste of the Augustan age. None but a poet can translate a poet. The freedom which this precept gives will, therefore, in a poet's hands, not only infuse the energy, elegance, and fire of the author's poetry into his own version, but will give it also the spirit of an original."[68] A similarly clear statement of the real facts of the situation appears in Johnson's remarks on translators. His test for a translation is its readability, and to attain this quality he thinks it permissible for the translator to improve on his author. "To a thousand cavils," he writes in the course of his comments on Pope's *Homer*, "one answer is necessary; the purpose of a writer is to be read, and the criticism which would destroy the power of pleasing must be blown aside."[69] The same view comes forward in his estimate of Cowley's work. "The Anacreon of Cowley, like the Homer of Pope, has admitted the decoration of some modern graces, by which he is undoubtedly more amiable to common readers, and perhaps, if they would honestly declare their own perceptions, to far the greater part of those whom courtesy and ignorance are content to style the learned."[70]

In certain matters, however, the translator claimed especial freedom. "A work of this

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[68] *Dissertation on The Lusiad*, reprinted in *The English Poets*, v. 21.

[69] *Pope*, in *Lives of the Poets*, p. 568.

[70] *Cowley*, in *Lives*, p. 25.

nature," says Trapp of his translation of the *Aeneid*, "is to be regarded in two different views, both as a poem and as a translated poem." This gives the translator some latitude. "The thought and contrivance are his author's, but his language and the turn of his versification are his own."[71] Pope holds the same opinion. A translator must "give his author entire and unmaimed" but for the rest the diction and versification are his own province.[72] Such a dictum was sure to meet with approval, for dignity of language and smoothness of verse were the very qualities on which the period prided itself. It was in these respects that translators hoped to improve on the work of the preceding age. Fawkes, the translator of Theocritus, believes that many lines in Dryden's *Miscellany* "will sound very harshly in the polished ears of the present age," and that Creech's translation of his author can be popular only with those who "having no ear for poetical numbers, are better pleased with the rough music of the last age than the refined harmony of this." Johnson, who strongly approved of Dryden's performance, accepts it as natural that there should be other attempts at the translation of Virgil, "since the English ear has been accustomed to the mellifluence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid."[73] There was something of poetic justice in this attitude towards the seventeenth century, itself so unappreciative of the achievements of earlier translators, but exemplified in practice, it showed the peculiar limitations of the age of Pope.

As in the seventeenth century, the heroic couplet was the predominant form in translations. Blank verse, when employed, was generally associated with a protest against the prevailing methods of translators. Trapp and Brady, both of whom early in the century attempted blank verse rendering of the *Aeneid*, justify their use of this form on the ground that it permits greater faithfulness to the original. Brady intends to avoid the rock upon which other translators have split, "and that seems to me to be their translating this noble and

[71] Preface of 1718, reprinted in *The Works of Virgil translated into English blank verse by Joseph Trapp*, London, 1735.

[72] *Preface to Homer's Iliad.*

[73] *Dryden* in *Lives of the Poets*, p. 226.

elegant poet into rhyme; by which they were sometimes forced to abandon the sense, and at other times to cramp it very much, which inconveniences may probably be avoided in blank verse."[74] Trapp makes a more violent onslaught upon earlier translations, which he finds "commonly so very licentious that they can scarce be called so much as paraphrases," and presents the employment of blank verse as in some degree a remedy for this. "The fetters of rhyme often cramp the expression and spoil the verse, and so you can both translate more closely and also more fully express the spirit of your author without it than with it."[75] Neither version however was kindly received, and though there continued to be occasional efforts to break away from what Warton calls "the Gothic shackles of rhyme"[76] or from the oversmoothness of Augustan verse, the more popular translators set the stamp of their approval on the couplet in its classical perfection. Grainger, who translated Tibullus, discusses the possibility of using the "alternate" stanza, but ends by saying that he has generally "preferred the heroic measure, which is not better suited to the lofty sound of the epic muse than to the complaining tone of the elegy."[77] Hoole chooses the couplet for his version of Ariosto, because it occupies the same place in English that the octave stanza occupies in Italian, and because it is capable of great variety. "Of all the various styles used by the best poets," he says, "none seems so well adapted to the mixed and familiar narrative as that of Dryden in his last production, known by the name of his *Fables*, which by their harmony, spirit, ease, and variety of versification, exhibit an admirable model for a translation of Ariosto."[78] It was, however, to the regularity of Pope's couplet that most translators aspired. Francis, the translator of Horace, who succeeded in pleasing his readers in spite of his failure to conform with popular standards, puts the situation well in a comment

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[74] *Proposals for a translation of Virgil's Aeneis in Blank Verse*, London, 1713.

[75] *Preface, op. cit.*

[76] *Prefatory Dedication*, in *The Works of Virgil in English Verse*, London, 1763.

[77] *Advertisement, op. cit.*

[78] *Preface* to *Ariosto,* reprinted in *The English Poets,* v. 21.

which recalls a similar utterance of Dryden. "The misfortune of our translators," he says, "is that they have only one style; and consequently all their authors, Homer, Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, are compelled to speak in the same numbers, and the same unvaried expression. The free-born spirit of poetry is confined in twenty constant syllables, and the sense regularly ends with every second line, as if the writer had not strength enough to support himself or courage enough to venture into a third."[79]

Revolts against the couplet, then, were few and generally unsuccessful. Prose translations of the epic, such as have in our own day attained some popularity, were in the eighteenth century regarded with especial disfavor. It was known that they had some vogue in France, but that was not considered a recommendation. The English translation of Madame Dacier's prose Homer, issued by Ozell, Oldisworth, and Broome, was greeted with scorn. Trapp, in the preface to his Virgil, refers to the new French fashion with true insular contempt. Segrais' translation is "almost as good as the French language will allow, which is just as fit for an epic poem as an ambling nag is for a war horse. ... Their language is excellent for prose, but quite otherwise for verse, especially heroic. And therefore tho' the translating of poems into prose is a strange modern invention, yet the French transprosers are so far in the right because their language will not bear verse." Mickle, mentioning in his *Dissertation on the Lusiad* that "M. Duperron de Castera, in 1735, gave in French prose a loose unpoetical paraphrase of the Lusiad," feels it necessary to append in a note his opinion that "a literal prose translation of poetry is an attempt as absurd as to translate fire into water."

If there was little encouragement for the translator to experiment with new solutions of the problems of versification, there was equally little latitude allowed him in the other division of his peculiar province, diction. In accordance with existing standards, critics doubled their insistence on Decorum, a quality in which they found the productions of former times lacking. Johnson criticizes Dryden's *Juvenal* on the ground that it wants the

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[79] *Preface*, reprinted in *The English Poets*, v. 19.

dignity of its original.[80] Fawkes finds Creech "more rustic than any of the rustics in the Sicilian bard," and adduces in proof many illustrations, from his calling a "noble pastoral cup a fine two-handled pot" to his dubbing his characters "Tawney Bess, Tom, Will, Dick" in vulgar English style.[81] Fanshaw, says Mickle in the preface to his translation of Camoens, had not "the least idea of the dignity of the epic style." The originals themselves, however, presented obstacles to suitable rendering. Preston finds this so in the case of Apollonius Rhodius, and offers this explanation of the matter: "Ancient terms of art, even if they can be made intelligible, cannot be rendered, with any degree of grace, into a modern language, where the corresponding terms are debased into vulgarity by low and familiar use. Many passages of this kind are to be found in Homer. They are frequent also in Apollonius Rhodius; particularly so, from the exactness which he affects in describing everything."[82] Warton, unusually tolerant of Augustan taste in this respect, finds the same difficulty in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* of Virgil. "A poem whose excellence peculiarly consists in the graces of diction," his preface runs, "is far more difficult to be translated, than a work where sentiment, or passion, or imagination is chiefly displayed... Besides, the meanness of the terms of husbandry is concealed and lost in a dead language, and they convey no low and despicable image to the mind; but the coarse and common words I was necessitated to use in the following translation, viz. *plough and sow, wheat, dung, ashes, horse and cow*, etc., will, I fear, unconquerably disgust many a delicate reader, if he doth not make proper allowance for a modern compared with an ancient language."[83] According to Hoole, the English language confines the translator within narrow limits. A translation of Berni's *Orlando Innamorato* into English verse would be almost impossible, "the narrative descending to such familiar images and expressions as would by no means suit the genius

[80] *Dryden*, in *Lives*, p. 226.

[81] *Op. cit.*

[82] *Preface*, reprinted in *The British Poets*, Chiswick, 1822, v. 90.

[83] *Prefatory Dedication*, in *The Works of Virgil in English Verse*, London, 1763.

of our language and poetry."[84] The task of translating Ariosto, though not so hopeless, is still arduous on this account. "There is a certain easy negligence in his muse that often assumes a playful mode of expression incompatible with the nature of our present poetry... An English translator will have frequent reason to regret the more rigid genius of the language, that rarely permits him in this respect, to attempt even a imitation of his author."

The comments quoted in the preceding pages make one realize that, while the translator was left astonishingly free as regarded his treatment of the original, it was at his peril that he ran counter to contemporary literary standards. The discussion centering around Pope's *Homer*, at once the most popular and the most typical translation of the period, may be taken as presenting the situation in epitome. Like other prefaces of the time, Pope's introductory remarks are, whether intentionally or unintentionally, misleading. He begins, in orthodox fashion, by advocating the middle course approved by Dryden. "It is certain," he writes "no literal translation can be just to an excellent original in a superior language: but it is a great mistake to imagine (as many have done) that a rash paraphrase can make amends for this general defect; which is no less in danger to lose the spirit of an ancient, by deviating into the modern manners of expression." Continuing, however, he urges an unusual degree of faithfulness. The translator must not think of improving upon his author. "I will venture to say," he declares, "there have not been more men misled in former times by a servile, dull adherence to the letter, than have been deluded in ours by a chimerical insolent hope of raising and improving their author... 'Tis a great secret in writing to know when to be plain, and when poetical figurative; and it is what Homer will teach us, if we will but follow modestly in his footsteps. Where his diction is bold and lofty, let us raise ours as high as we can; but where his is plain and humble, we ought not to be deterred from imitating him by the fear of incurring the censure of a mere English critic." The translator ought to endeavor to "copy him in all the variations of his style, and the different modulations of his numbers; to preserve, in the more active or descriptive parts, a warmth and elevation; in the more sedate or narrative, a plainness and solemnity; in the speeches a fullness and perspicuity; in

[84] *Preface* to *Ariosto*, reprinted in *The English Poets*, v. 21.

the sentences a shortness and gravity: not to neglect even the little figures and turns on the words, nor sometimes the very cast of the periods; neither to omit nor confound any rites and customs of antiquity."

Declarations like this would, if taken alone, make one rate Pope as a pioneer in the art of translation. Unfortunately the comment of his critics, even of those who admired him, tells a different story. "To say of this noble work that it is the best which ever appeared of the kind, would be speaking in much lower terms than it derserves," writes Melmoth, himself a successful translator, in *Fitzosborne's Letters*. Melmoth's description of Pope's method is, however, very different from that offered by Pope himself. "Mr. Pope," he says, "seems, in most places, to have been inspired with the same sublime spirit that animates his original; as he often takes fire from a single hint in his author, and blazes out even with a stronger and brighter flame of poetry. Thus the character of Thersites, as it stands in the English *Iliad*, is heightened, I think, with more masterly strokes of satire than appear in the Greek; as many of those similes in Homer, which would appear, perhaps, to a modern eye too naked and unornamented, are painted by Pope in all the beautiful drapery of the most graceful metaphor"–a statement backed by citation of the famous moonlight passage, which Melmoth finds finer than the corresponding passage in the original. There is no doubt in the critic's mind as to the desirability of improving upon Homer. "There is no ancient author," he declares, "more likely to betray an injudicious interpreter into meannesses than Homer... But a skilful artist knows how to embellish the most ordinary subject; and what would be low and spiritless from a less masterly pencil, becomes pleasing and graceful when worked up by Mr. Pope."[85]

Melmoth's last comment suggests Matthew Arnold's remark, "Pope composes with his eye on his style, into which he translates his object, whatever it may be,"[86] but in intention the two criticisms are very different. To the average eighteenth-century reader Homer was entirely acceptable "when worked up by Mr. Pope." Slashing Bentley might

[85] Pp. 53-4.

[86] *Essays*, Oxford Edition, p. 258.

declare that it "must not be called Homer," but he admitted that "it was a pretty poem." Less competent critics, unhampered by Bentley's scholarly doubts, thought the work adequate both as a poem and as a translated poem. Dennis, in his *Remarks upon Pope's Homer*, quotes from a recent review some characteristic phrases. "I know not which I should most admire," says the reviewer, "the justness of the original, or the force and beauty of the language, or the sounding variety of the numbers."[87] Prior, with more honesty, refuses to bother his head over "the justness of the original," and gratefully welcomes the English version

> Hang Homer and Virgil; their meaning to seek,
> A man must have pok'd into Latin and Greek;
> Those who love their own tongue, we have reason to hope,
> Have read them translated by Dryden and Pope.[88]

In general, critics, whether men of letters or Grub Street reviewers, saw both Pope's *Iliad* and Homer's *Iliad* through the medium of eighteenth-century taste. Even Dennis's onslaught, which begins with a violent contradiction of the hackneyed tribute quoted above, leaves the impression that its vigor comes rather from personal animus than from distrust of existing literary standards or from any new and individual theory of translation.

With the romantic movement, however, comes criticism which presents to up Pope's *Iliad* as seen in the light of common day instead of through the flattering illusions which had previously veiled it. New translators like Macpherson and Cowper, though too courteous to direct their attack specifically against the great Augustan, make it evident that they have adopted new standards of faithfulness and that they no longer admire either the diction or the versification which made Pope supreme among his contemporaries. Macpherson gives it as his opinion that, although Homer has been repeatedly translated into most of the languages of modern Europe, "these versions were rather paraphrases than faithful translations,

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[87] *Mr. Dennis's Remarks upon Pope's Homer*, London, 1717, p. 9.

[88] In *Down Hall, a Ballad.*

attempts to give the spirit of Homer, without the character and peculiarities of his poetry and diction," and that translators have failed especially in reproducing "the magnificent simplicity, if the epithet may be used, of the original, which can never be characteristically expressed in the antithetical quaintness of modern fine writing."[89] Cowper's prefaces show that he has given serious consideration to all the opinions of the theorists of his century, and that his own views are fundamentally opposed to those generally professed. His own basic principle is that of fidelity to his author, and, like every sensible critic, he sees that the translator must preserve a mean between the free and the close methods. This approval of compromise is not, however, a mere formula; Cowper attempts to throw light upon it from various angles. The couplet he immediately repudiates as an enemy to fidelity. "I will venture to assert that a just translation of any ancient poet in rhyme is impossible." he declares. "No human ingenuity can be equal to the task of closing every couplet with sounds homotonous, expressing at the same time the full sense of his original. The translator's ingenuity, indeed, in this case becomes itself a snare, and the readier he is at invention and expedient, the more likely he is to be betrayed into the wildest departures from the guide whom he professes to follow."[90] The popular idea that the translator should try to imagine to himself the style which his author would have used had he been writing in English is to Cowper "a direction which wants nothing but practicability to recommend it. For suppose six persons, equally qualified for the task, employed to translate the same Ancient into their own language, with this rule to guide them. In the event it would be found that each had fallen on a manner different from that of all the rest, and by probable inference it would follow that none had fallen on the right."[91]

Cowper's advocacy of Miltonic blank verse as a suitable vehicle for a translation of

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[89] Preface to *The Iliad of Homer*, translated by James Macpherson, London, 1773.

[90] Preface to first edition, taken from *The Iliad of Homer, translated by the late William Cowper*, London, 1802.

[91] Preface to first edition, taken from *The Iliad of Homer, translated by the late William Cowper*, London, 1802.

Homer need not concern us here, but another innovation on which he lays considerable stress in his prefaces helps to throw light on the practice and the standards of his immediate predecessors. With more veracity than Pope, he represents himself as having followed his author even in his "plainer" passages. "The passages which will be least noticed, and possibly not at all, except by those who shall wish to find me at a fault," he writes in the preface to the first edition, "are those which have cost me abundantly the most labor. It is difficult to kill a sheep with dignity in a modern language, to slay and prepare it for the table, detailing every circumstance in the process. Difficult also, without sinking below the level of poetry, to harness mules to a wagon, particularizing every article of their furniture, straps, rings, staples, and even tying of the knots that kept all together. Homer, who writes always to the eye with all his sublimity and grandeur, has the minuteness of a Flemish painter." In the preface to his second edition he recurs to this problem and makes a significant comment on Pope's method of solving it. "There is no end of passages in Homer," he repeats, "which must creep unless they be lifted; yet in all such, all embellishment is out of the question. The hero puts on his clothes, or refreshes himself with food and wine, or he yokes his steeds, takes a journey, and in the evening preparation is made for his repose. To give relief to subjects prosaic as these without seeming unseasonably tumid is extremely difficult. Mr. Pope abridges some of them, and others he omits; but neither of these liberties was compatible with the nature of my undertaking."[92]

That Cowper's reaction against Pope's ideals was not a thing of sudden growth is evident from a letter more outspoken than the prefaces. "Not much less than thirty years since," he writes in 1788, "Alston and I read Homer through together. The result was a discovery that there is hardly a thing in the world of which Pope is so entirely destitute as a taste for Homer. ... I remembered how we had been disgusted; how often we had sought the simplicity and majesty of Homer in his English representative, and had found instead of them puerile conceits, extravagant metaphors, and the tinsel of modern embellishment in

[92] *Preface prepared by Mr. Cowper for a Second Edition*, in edition of 1802.

every possible position."[93]

Cowper's "discovery," startling, almost heretical at the time when it was made, is now little more than a commonplace. We have long recognized that Pope's Homer is not the real Homer; it is scarcely an exaggeration to say, as does Mr. Andrew Lang, "It is almost as if he had taken Homer's theme and written the poem himself."[94] Yet it is surprising to see how nearly the eighteenth-century ambition, "to write a poem that will live in the English language" has been answered in the case of Pope. Though the "tinsel" of his embellishment is no longer even "modern," his translation seems able to hold its own against later verse renderings based on sounder theories. The Augustan translator strove to give his work "elegance, energy, and fire," and despite the false elegance, we can still feel something of true energy and fire as we read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.*

The truth is that, in translated as in original literature the permanent and the transitory elements are often oddly mingled. The fate of Pope's Homer helps us to reconcile two opposed views regarding the future history of verse translations. Our whole study of the varying standards set for translators makes us feel the truth of Mr. Lang's conclusion: "There can be then, it appears, no final English translation of Homer. In each there must be, in addition to what is Greek and eternal, the element of what is modern, personal, and fleeting."[95] The translator, it is obvious, must speak in the dialect and move in the measures of his own day, thereby very often failing to attract the attention of a later day. Yet there must be some place in our scheme for the faith expressed by Matthew Arnold in his essays on translating Homer, that "the task of translating Homer into English verse both will be re-attempted, and may be re-attempted successfully."[96] For in translation there is involved enough of creation to supply the incalculable element which cheats the theorist. Possibly

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[93] *Letters,* ed. Wright, London, 1904, v. 3, p. 233.

[94] *History of English Literature*, p. 384.

[95] Preface to *The Odyssey of Homer done into English Prose.*

[96] Lecture, III, in *Essays*, p. 311.

some day the miracle may be wrought, and, in spite of changing literary fashions, we may have our English version of Homer in a form sufficient not only for an age but for all time.

It is this incalculable quality in creative work that has made theorizing on the methods of translation more than a mere academic exercise. Forced to adjust itself to the facts of actual production, theory has had to follow new paths as literature has followed new paths, and in the process it has acquired fresh vigor and flexibility. Even as we leave the period of Pope, we can see the dull inadequacy of a worn-out collection of rules giving way before the honest, individual approach of Cowper. “Many a fair precept in poetry,” says Dryden apropos of Roscommon’s rules for translation, “is like a seeming demonstration in the mathematics, very specious in the diagram, but failing in the mechanic operation.”[97] Confronted by such discrepancies, the theorist has again and again had to modify his “specious” rules, with the result that the theory of translation, though a small, is yet a living and growing element in human thought.

[97] *Preface to Sylvae,* in *Essays*, v. 1, p. 252.