



*Lost (and Found) in Translation:
A Cultural History of
Translators and Translating in
Early Modern Europe*

Peter Burke

NIAS
Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study
in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy
of Arts and Sciences

Meijboomlaan 1, 2242 PR Wassenaar
Telephone: (0)70-512 27 00
Telefax: (0)70-511 71 62
E-mail: NIAS@NIAS.KNAW.NL
Internet: <http://www.nias.knaw.nl>

The first KB Lecture was held at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) -
National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague on 26 April 2005

The Dutch translation *Ik vertaal, dus ik ben* was published
by Uitgeverij Bert Bakker (c) 2005.

NIAS, Wassenaar, 2005/6

ISBN 90-71093-4-84
ISSN 1871-1480;1

(c) NIAS 2005. No part of this publication may
be reproduced in any form by print, photoprint,
microfilm or any other means without written
permission from the publisher.



Lost (and Found) in Translation: A Cultural History of Translators and Translating in Early Modern Europe

It is an honour to have been invited to hold this fellowship, a pleasure for a historian to participate in the invention of a tradition, and a privilege to be allowed to give this lecture in English. Speaking in English to listeners whose first language is mostly Dutch offers an immediate introduction to the problems of translation.

You may be wondering why a historian of early modern Europe should have chosen to lecture about translation. The subject seems to be attracting more and more interest these days, especially under the banner of 'Translation Studies', which is on the way to becoming a new discipline. I should like to argue that history deserves a large place in Translation Studies and that studies of translation deserve a large place in history.

Translation is actually central to cultural history. The role of translated texts in movements such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment is of obvious importance – to say nothing of the expansion of Europe into other continents. But I should like to go much further than that. Translation between languages is like the tip of an iceberg. It is the most visible part of an activity sometimes described as cultural translation.

If the past is a foreign country, as some scholars like to say, then historians may be regarded as translators between past and present. Like anthropologists, they translate from one culture to another rather than from one language to another. All the same, like the translators of texts, historians and anthropologists need to steer between the opposite dangers of unfaithfulness to the culture from which they translate and unintelligibility to their target audience. Concentrating as it does on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this lecture will be enacting as well as discussing the problems of translation.

I

The term 'cultural translation' was originally coined by anthropologists in the circle of Edward Evans-Pritchard, to describe what happens in cultural encounters when each side tries to make sense of the actions of the other.¹ A vivid example, famous among anthropologists, is Laura Bohannan's account of how she told the story of *Hamlet* to a group of Tiv in West Africa and heard the story 'corrected' by the elders until it matched the patterns of Tiv culture.²

The concept of cultural translation has been taken up by a group of literary scholars.³ It also has its uses in historical writing and even in everyday life. It has been suggested more than once that the act of understanding is a kind of translation, a form of domesticating the alien, of turning other people's concepts and practices into their equivalents in our own 'vocabulary' (in both the literal and the metaphorical sense of the term).⁴

An allied concept is that of 'negotiation', which has expanded in the last generation and moved beyond the worlds of trade and diplomacy to refer to the exchange of ideas and the mutual modification of meanings.⁵ Another way of discussing the consequences of cultural encounters, or the cultural consequences of encounters, is to speak of a double process of decontextualization and recontextualization, first reaching out to appropriate something alien and then adapting it to one's own culture. Translation may be regarded as a kind of litmus paper that makes the process unusually visible. It must be admitted that decontextualization and recontextualization produce losses as well as gains. What I was just describing rather glibly as 'equivalents' for alien concepts and practices cannot be assumed to exist. Some words, ideas and customs are a good deal less

¹ Thomas Beidelman (ed.) *The Translation of Cultures* (London, 1971); Gisli Pálsson (ed.) *Beyond Boundaries: Understanding Translation and Anthropological Discourse* (Oxford, 1993). Cf. W. Kissel (ed.) *Kultur als Übersetzung* (Würzburg, 1999); Douglas Howland, *Translating the West* (Honolulu, 2001); and Paula G. Rubel and Abraham Rosman (eds.) *Translating Cultures: Perspectives on Translation and Anthropology* (Oxford, 2003).

² Laura Bohannan (1971) 'Shakespeare in the Bush', rpr in *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, ed. James P. Spradley and David McCurdy (8th edn, New York, 1994).

³ Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (eds.) *The Translatability of Cultures* (Stanford, 1996).

⁴ George Steiner, 'Understanding as Translation', in *After Babel* (Oxford, 1975), 1-48.

⁵ Anthony Pym, 'Negotiation Theory as an Approach to Translation History: an Inductive Lesson from 15th-Century Castille', in Yves Gambier (ed.) *Knowledge and Translation* (Turku, 1993) 27-39; Umber to Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London, 2003).

translatable than others. Especially the important ones. So much so that the British writer Salman Rushdie once suggested, in his novel *Shame*, that to understand a culture, one should focus on its untranslatable words.

For similar reasons a Russian sociologist, Svetlana Boym, has proposed compiling a dictionary of untranslatable terms, an idea reminiscent of Milan Kundera's dictionary of misunderstandings. These untranslatable words might include the Portuguese *saudade*, the Russian *poshlost*, the Italian *sprezzatura* and perhaps the English 'gentleman' – I leave the choice of Dutch examples to you.⁶ These words are so many small signs of what is 'lost in translation', a phrase that was employed as the title of the autobiography of a Polish refugee to the United States, Eva Hoffman, before it was used by Sofia Coppola for her charming recent film.⁷

The history of the Christian missions beyond Europe is full of examples of the misunderstandings that regularly take place when people attempt to spread their ideas in a culture that is very different from their own. The Jesuits, for instance, were active in China, Japan and South India as well as in Brazil and Paraguay. Their difficulties began with the problem of translating the word 'God'. Sometimes they chose a local equivalent, like the Chinese *Tien*, which literally means 'Heaven'. In that case the Chinese were led to think that the new religion was a version of their own. Alternatively, some Jesuits refused to translate the word *Deus*, avoiding misunderstanding but paying the price of unintelligibility.

As cultural translators, the Jesuits also faced problems. In China, for example, Matteo Ricci discovered that if he dressed as a priest no one would take him seriously, so he dressed like a mandarin instead, 'translating' his social position into Chinese. He allowed the Chinese whom he converted to pay reverence to their ancestors in the traditional manner, arguing that this was a social custom rather than a religious one. When the news arrived in Rome, the Jesuits were accused of having been converted to the religion of the Chinese rather than converting them to Christianity. What appeared to be a good cultural translation in Beijing looked like a mistranslation in Rome.⁸

⁶ Svetlana Boym, *Common Places* (Cambridge, Mass. 1994), 3; cf Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (English translation, London, 1984).

⁷ Eva Hoffmann, *Lost in Translation* (London, 1989).

⁸ Jacques Gernet, *Chine et christianisme: action et reaction* (Paris, 1982); Cf George Elison (1973) *Deus Destroyed: the Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, Cambridge MA

Despite the losses, there are also huge profits in translation (I am of course referring to cultural capital). Were it not for the work of translators, most of us would be cut off not only from Homer, Dante, Cervantes and Goethe, but also from Chekhov, Machado de Assis, Ibn Khaldun and the Lady Murasaki. There are even people who deliberately read writers from their own culture in a foreign language in order to see them in a different light, as Tolstoy read Pushkin in French and some Frenchmen are supposed to read Proust in English.

So much for general reflections. In what follows, I shall adopt the point of view of a historian of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, sharing the results of recent research (particularly into the translations of historians) and offering a comparative overview of what might be called the 'culture of translation' in early modern Europe.⁹ This survey is organized around five questions. What was translated? From which and into which languages? By whom? With what intentions? In what manner were translations made? I shall end the lecture with a few reflections on the history of translation from English into Dutch.

II

What was translated? The selection of texts for translation is a valuable clue to what culture finds of interest in another, more exactly to what some individuals and groups in a given culture find of interest in another. In early modern Europe the Bible took the first place, as might have been expected. Between the invention of printing and the end of the seventeenth century, translations were published in fifty-one languages.¹⁰ After the Bible, the *Imitatio Christi* was far ahead of the rest of the field, with 52 translations in the same period into twelve languages, including Breton, Catalan, Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Swedish.

Then came the classics. Over 1000 translations from the Greek and Latin classics were published before the year 1600 alone.¹¹ Some translations became classics in their own right, the French version of Plutarch by Jacques Amyot, for example,

⁹ Catherine Tihanyi, 'An Anthropology of Translation', *American Anthropologist* 106 (2004), 739-42.

¹⁰ Eric M. North (ed.), *The Book of a Thousand Tongues* (New York, 1938).

¹¹ Robert R. Bolgar, *The Classical Tradition and its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge, 1954). Bolgar's figures concern translations into Italian, French, Spanish, German and English, omitting Dutch and other languages.

or the Dutch Tacitus by P.C. Hoofst. Among the most translated modern writers of the period, it is no surprise to find religious writers such as Erasmus, Luther and Calvin. The *Enchiridion* or 'Manual of a Christian Soldier' of Erasmus appeared in nine vernaculars in the course of the sixteenth century. In chronological order, not altogether predictably, the languages were Czech, German, English, Dutch, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Polish. That Czech came first suggests that the Hussite movement was not dead in 1500 and also that Hussites perceived an affinity between their ideals and those of the great humanist.¹²

As for the catechism written by the Italian Jesuit Roberto Bellarmino, it was translated into no fewer than 40 languages, seventeen of them from outside Europe, including Arabic, 'Ethiopian' (now known as Ge'ez), Georgian, Malagasi, Maratha, Quechua, Tagalog and Tamil.¹³ In this case, of course, the initiative to translate came from Rome.

Among modern works of history, even specialists are unlikely to guess which text was translated into most languages in the period, nine altogether. It was the account of the fall of the Ming dynasty written by the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini (the Dutch translation was used by Vondel in his play *Zungchin*). Close behind, rather more predictably, came the classic histories written by Philippe de Commines, Francesco Guicciardini and Johann Sleidan.¹⁴

Translation was also important in the Scientific Revolution. It is true that many natural philosophers, like other early modern scholars, wrote in Latin. Even Galileo followed this tradition at the beginning of his career, switching to Italian later in order to reach a wider domestic audience. One of his German admirers, unable to read Italian, wrote to Galileo to protest. However, the gap was soon filled by translation, not into German but into Latin. Newton followed Galileo's example, writing his *Principia* in Latin but his *Optics* in English, confident by this time that it would soon be translated. Thanks to his reluctance to write in any language but English, Robert Boyle was perhaps the most translated scientist in the seventeenth century, or 'natural philosopher', as they said in those days.

¹² Ferdinand van der Haeghen, *Bibliotheca Erasmi* (2 vols, Ghent, 1897-1907).

¹³ Carlos Sommervogel, *Bibliothèque des écrivains de la Compagnie de Jésus* (revised edn, 3 vols., Liège and Paris 1869-76), under 'Bellarmino'.

¹⁴ Further details in Peter Burke, 'Translating History in Early Modern Europe', forthcoming in Peter Burke and Ronnie Hsia (eds.) *The Cultural History of Translation* (Cambridge, 2006).

One advantage of a comparative approach to history is to make us more aware of absences. Machiavelli's *Prince*, for example, was not translated into Spanish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and into English only in 1640, though it appeared in Dutch in 1615 and was published in the Netherlands in Latin and French as well.¹⁵ Shakespeare was rarely translated into any foreign language before the middle of the eighteenth century. One of the leading historians of the seventeenth century was not, so far as I know, translated into any foreign language: P. C. Hooft, who suffered, like his English colleagues of the period, from writing in a language that few foreigners could understand. We ought to remember not only what is lost in translation but also what is lost when translations are not made – 'lost', we might say, 'in untranslation'.

III

From what languages into what? In this period many translations were made from ancient Greek into Latin, and even more from Greek and Latin – classical and modern – into the vernaculars. These translations have often been studied.¹⁶ Without denying their importance, what I should like to emphasize here is a movement in the reverse direction, in other words of translations from European vernaculars into Latin. I have so far discovered nearly 1200 such translations published between 1500 and 1800.¹⁷ Most of them were translations of religious and scientific books (Calvin and Luis de Granada, Galileo and Newton) but histories, travel books (beginning with Marco Polo) and even poems, plays and stories are also represented. Speakers of German contributed at least 161 known translators, some of them extremely prolific (notably Caspar Barth, Caspar Ens, Andreas Schottius and Adam Schirmbeck).

The works of the imagination translated into Latin included plays, such as Ariosto's *Suppositi* and *Negromante*, the *Celestina* of Fernando de Rojas, Tasso's

¹⁵ Adolf Gerber, Machiavelli: *Die Handschriften, Ausgaben, und Übersetzungen* (Gotha, 1912); Mario Dal Corso, *Le traduzioni del Principe* (Padua, 1994).

¹⁶ Bolgar (1954); a catalogue in Franz Schweiger, *Handbuch der classischen Bibliographie* (3 vols, Leipzig, 1830-4).

¹⁷ Details in Peter Burke, 'Translation into Latin in Early Modern Europe', in Burke and Hsia (2006). An earlier overview in W. Leonard Grant, 'European Vernacular Works in Latin Translation', *Studies in the Renaissance* 1 (1954), 120-56.

Aminta, and Giambattista Della Porta's *Astrologo*. They included epics, such as *Orlando Furioso*, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, *Os Lusíadas*, *Paradise Lost*; and other long poems, from Dante's *Divina Comedia* and Brant's *Narrenschiff* to Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* and Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. In the eighteenth century, the tradition continued, and Voltaire's *Henriade*, Klopstock's *Messiah* and Pope's *Essay on Man* were all published in Latin translation, while Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* was translated three times.

Let me now turn to what might be called the 'balance of trade' between vernaculars, the relation between linguistic imports and exports, which reveals a number of contrasts between cultures.¹⁸

Italy was obviously a high exporter in the Renaissance, but Italians also imported a great deal, especially from Spanish. French imports were high in the sixteenth century, with 1570-1600 as the peak period for translations from Italian.¹⁹ It was only in the age of Descartes, Corneille and Racine that the movement went the other way. The Germans translated a good deal from Italian, Spanish and French and after the middle of the seventeenth century, from English as well, but after Luther few German texts were translated into other languages.

East-Central Europe had very few exports and relatively few imports, among them Erasmus and Lipsius. As I mentioned earlier, Erasmus was published in Czech and Polish; while both the *Constancy* and the *Politics* of Justus Lipsius appeared in Polish and Hungarian. Scandinavia too had few exports but Sweden at least had rather more imports, especially in the age of Gustavus Adolphus.

The most obvious cases of discrepancy between imports and exports are those of Spain, Britain and the Netherlands. Spanish texts were frequently translated into other languages at this time (including those of political enemies such as the Dutch and English) but relatively few texts (most of them Italian) were translated into Spanish, and fewer in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth, suggesting that Spanish culture was becoming more closed, more insular than before.

¹⁸ With reference to the early 20th century, this problem has been discussed by Daniel Milo, 'La bourse mondiale de la traduction: un baromètre culturel?' *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 39 (1984), 93-115.

¹⁹ Jean Balsamo, 'Traduire de l'italien: ambitions sociales et contraintes éditoriales à la fin du 16e siècle', in Dominique de Courcelles (ed.) *Traduire et adapter à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1988), 89-98.

IV

By whom, then, were the translations made? Translation was sometimes a collective activity, with teams or even committees at work especially to translate Bibles, thanks not only to the length of the text but also to the need for consensus on interpretation. The well-known Dutch case of the team of scholars who translated the States Bible has its parallels in England (the Authorized Version) in Sweden (the Gustav Vasa Bible) in Bohemia (the Kralicy Bible); and in Finland.²⁰

In Finland and Sweden as well as in the Netherlands, translators were deliberately recruited from different parts of the country in order to produce a text that would be as widely understood as possible, thus contributing to the development of a standard language.

As for individuals, we know very little about the lives of the majority. There is not, so far as I know, any general survey and only a few regional ones.²¹ For example, a biographical dictionary of early modern Dutch or English translators would make a valuable contribution to cultural history. Until such volumes are compiled, the conclusions that follow should be taken as extremely provisional.

Another way of classifying translators is into amateurs and professionals, those who worked for love and those who worked for money (without excluding the possibility of some people doing both). Of the thousands of translators active in Europe in this period, the majority were amateurs, who only engaged in this activity once or twice in their lives. Some were nobles or even rulers, like James VI and I of Britain and Philip IV of Spain. Clergymen translated clergymen, physicians translated books on medicine, lawyers translated lawyers, and artists and connoisseurs translated treatises on art and architecture.

It may be significant that a number of diplomats made translations, including Abraham Wicquefort and Paul Rycaut. In their professional life they were political go-betweens, in their leisure hours they were cultural go-betweens. After all,

²⁰ Elias Wessén, 'Studier over språket i Gustav Vasas Bibel', *Nysvenska studier* 7 (1927), 251-63; A.C. de Gooyer, *Bijbeltaal en moedertaal: de invloed van de Statenvertaling op het Nederlands* (1962); Aurélien Sauvageot, *L'élaboration de la langue finnoise* (Paris, 1973).

²¹ For example Pierre Chavy, *Dictionnaire des traducteurs 842-1600* (Paris, 1988).

translation is a kind of negotiation, as Umberto Eco and others have suggested.²²

Women were also relatively prominent in this field. They made a low percentage of translators but a high percentage of female writers, apparently because translation was considered more compatible with female modesty than original writing was.²³ I am thinking, for instance, of Mary Sidney and Aphra Behn in England, Geneviève Chappelain and Anne Dacier in France, Maria Gyllenstierna in Sweden, Maria Sipayllówna in Poland, and in the Netherlands of Isabel Correa, the translator of the poet Guarini from Italian into Spanish (she was a member of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam). They were all amateurs.

On the other hand, a small minority of translators were professional or more exactly, semi-professional in the sense of devoting a considerable amount of their life to this task while also exercising other occupations, especially, teacher or clergyman. These are the people who might have said: 'I translate, therefore I am'.²⁴ François de Belleforest translated about 38 works. The Swede Eric Schroder made more than forty translations. Jan Glazemaker, who translated nearly seventy different works, holds the Dutch record but he was surpassed by the Frenchman Gabriel Chappuys, the translator of some eighty texts.²⁵

Among the more prolific translators were a number of *émigrés*. We might describe this group as cultural brokers, as amphibians or as skilled negotiators between languages and between cultures. They needed to be, since (like the Greeks and the Jews before them) they were trying to make a career out of their displacement (their 'translation' in the archaic sense of that term).²⁶ This group of *émigré* translators was dominated by Protestant refugees. There were also a few Catholic refugees, Mateo Martinez van Waucquier for example, who came from Middelburg, fled to Antwerp and translated a number of Catholic devotional works into Latin.

²² Eco, *Mouse or Rat?*

²³ Margaret P. Hannay, *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, Ohio, 1985).

²⁴ The Dutch translation of this lecture was entitled *Ik vertaal, dus ik ben* (Amsterdam, 2005), a suggestion I owe to Maarten van Bossenbroek.

²⁵ Stina Hansson, '*Afsatt på Swensko: 1600-talets tryckta översättningslitteratur* (Göteborg, 1982); Caroline L. Thijssens-Schoute, 'Jan Hendrik Glazemaker', posthumously published in *Uit de Republiek der Letteren* (The Hague, 1967), 206-61.

²⁶ Details in Peter Burke, 'The Renaissance Translator as Go-Between', forthcoming in *Renaissance Go-Betweens*, ed. Werner von Koppenfels (Frankfurt and New York, 2005).

All the same, the Protestant refugee translators were in a majority. In the mid-sixteenth century they came mainly from Italy, in the late sixteenth century from the Netherlands and in the late seventeenth century from France. The importance of these three waves of emigration for the history of translation does not seem to have been sufficiently appreciated and I should like to emphasize it here.

For example, a number of Italian Protestants fled to Switzerland and in Basel in particular a few of them, such as Nicolo Stoppani and Celio Secundo Curione, translated Italian texts (including secular works by Machiavelli and others) into Latin. Others made their way to England. Montaigne was translated into English by John Florio, an Italian Protestant who grew up in England and made his living teaching languages, both Italian and French. His hybrid name, John Florio, expresses what was probably a hybrid identity. The same might be said for Robert Gentilis, the son of a distinguished refugee intellectual (the lawyer Alberico Gentilis) and himself the translator of both English and Italian texts such as Francis Bacon and Paolo Sarpi.

The second wave of translators, that of Dutch and Flemish refugees, will be discussed later. As for the third wave, many translations from English into French and vice versa were made by members of the great Huguenot dispersion, or diaspora, around the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV. Locke and Newton, for instance, were translated into French by Pierre Coste, a Huguenot in exile who lived at one time in Amsterdam and at another time in Essex.²⁷

V

What were the intentions, projects, strategies of these thousands of translators? Bible translation by Protestants makes one obvious example of a conscious strategy. Johannes Leizarraga, for instance, translated the New Testament into Basque at the request of Calvinist synod of Pau in 1571. The teams of translators recruited to produce vernacular Bibles have already been discussed.

Again, the importance of the so-called 'Calvinist international' – the links between

²⁷ Margaret E. Rumbold, *Traducteur Huguenot: Pierre Coste* (Frankfurt and New York, 1991).

Calvinist communities in different parts of Europe – lies behind the translations of the Cambridge Puritan William Perkins into Dutch, Latin, Hungarian and even Spanish (an Amsterdam publication presumably produced for smuggling into Spain). On the Catholic side, in the case of the Jesuits in particular, it is tempting to speak of a conspiracy of translation, with one Jesuit translating the work of another, which might be a biography of a third Jesuit.

At the very least, we might speak of a Jesuit translation policy, in Europe, Asia and the New World, linked to the work of missions and the strategy (following the example of St Paul) of being *omnia omnibus*, all things to all people, in order to convert them.²⁸ The catechism written by the Jesuit Roberto Bellarmino was translated into forty languages because it was useful as a tool of religious conquest.

Publishers too followed strategies. In Venice, Gabriel Giolito hired professional writers to translate the classics as well as a few more recent texts. In sixteenth-century Paris, a substantial number of translations from Italian were published by a single printer, Abel L'Angelier, whether he was an Italophil or simply thought that the books would sell.²⁹ In Amsterdam Henri Desbordes, the publisher of Pierre Bayle (and himself a Protestant refugee from France) commissioned a number of translations from English (for example a work of piety by William Sherlock) and from Italian (including four works by Machiavelli, among them the *Prince*). The catholic tastes exhibited by Desbordes suggests that his strategy was economic rather than ideological.

Seventeenth-century governments sometimes supported the task of translation, as in the case of Gustav Adolf of Sweden, who commissioned Eric Schroder, as in that of Russia from Peter the Great onwards.³⁰ In these two cases state support was linked to the sense of being on the periphery of Europe and needing to catch up with cultural developments in the centre. In that sense, translation formed part of the political strategy of governments.

²⁸ Details in Peter Burke, 'The Jesuits and the Art of Translation in Early Modern Europe', forthcoming in *The Jesuits, II*, ed. John O'Malley et al. (Toronto, 2005).

²⁹ Jean Balsamo and Michel Simonin, *Abel L'Angelier et Françoise de Louvain*, (Geneva, 2002).

³⁰ Hansson (1982).

VI

Finally, in what manner were translations made? We have reached what might be called the 'tactics' of translation, as opposed to the 'strategy' discussed above. Once again an anthropological approach may be illuminating, distinguishing an early modern culture or 'regime' of translation from the regimes that preceded and followed it. By a 'regime' I mean a set of rules or conventions, whether they were followed consciously or unconsciously. In this context some seventeenth-century writers spoke of the 'laws' of translation.³¹

My hypothesis is that it is possible to distinguish an early modern regime of translation from the regime that prevailed before 1500, in the Middle Ages, and also from the regime that became dominant after 1800. In other words, changes in the practice of translation fit the well-known model of intellectual history proposed a generation ago by Michel Foucault in which 1500 and 1800 mark major breaks in what he called the European 'episteme'.

Simplifying for the sake of brevity, we may say that the dominant regime in the Middle Ages was translating word for word. Early modern translations, by contrast, were much freer. Translators aimed at domestication, at making the text intelligible and relevant to the reader at the expense of its foreign qualities. After 1800, on the other hand, we see the rise of what is now called 'foreignizing', in other words allowing the alien to be seen, or as Schleiermacher famously put it, bringing the reader to the text rather than the other way round.³²

These generalizations are inevitably crude. For example, 'the heterogeneity and complexity of the medieval tradition' has been emphasized by specialists.³³ In the case of early modern translations, it is necessary to distinguish between domains.

The Bible, for instance, was translated more respectfully and more literally than the classics. After all, a good deal turned on the rendering of key terms such as the Old Testament term *chasaf* (variously translated as 'witch' and 'poisoner') and

³¹ Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester, 1998).

³² Antoine Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger: culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (Paris, 1984); English translation *The Experience of the Foreign* (1995). The term 'foreignizing' comes from Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (London, 1995).

³³ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991), 222.

the New Testament term *episkopos* (translated as 'bishop' by supporters of bishops and as 'overseer' by their opponents), or *angelos* (translated as 'messenger' by those who did not believe in angels).³⁴ Still more notoriously, the Spinozist Adriaan Koerbagh claimed that the biblical term 'devil' meant no more than 'accuser' or 'libeller'.³⁵

In their turn, the Greek and Latin classics were translated more respectfully than contemporary texts. In the case of texts written in their own time, however, early modern translators allowed themselves a good deal of liberty, by modern standards a scandalous amount.

For example, translation at second hand was common and does not seem to have attracted much criticism.³⁶ Thus Sir Thomas North's now famous rendering of Plutarch into English was not made from the original Greek but from the equally famous French translation by Jacques Amyot. Jan Glazemaker translated into Dutch from French not only in the case of the Koran but also in those of the travels of the Portuguese Fernão Mendes Pinto and the description of the Ottoman Empire by the Englishman Paul Rycaut. The unashamed references on title-pages to this process indicate a different 'culture of translation' from ours (even if occasional translations into English from Chinese and Hungarian are still made via German).

Translators often seem to have considered themselves to be co-authors. At this time it was common practice to abridge the texts translated, to amplify them, to 'improve' them (as title-pages sometimes boasted), or to bowdlerize them, often without warning the reader that such changes had been made. Glazemaker, for instance, translated less than a quarter of Mendes Pinto, reducing 1200 pages of the original to 280 pages in translation. In extreme cases they shifted the action of dialogues, plays and stories from one locale to another, a process that may be described as 'transposition'. A famous example is that of the Polish rendering of Castiglione's *Courtier*, which moved the scene of the dialogue from Urbino to a palace near Cracow and removed the ladies from the dialogue on the grounds that Polish ladies would not understand the debate.³⁷ This was indeed a spectacular case of cultural translation.

³⁴ Werner Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation* (Cambridge, 1955).

³⁵ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2001), 405.

³⁶ Jürgen von Stackelberg, *Übersetzungen aus zweiten Hand* (Berlin, 1984).

³⁷ Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier* (Cambridge, 1995).

VII

In the course of this lecture I have referred from time to time to translations from English. By the eighteenth century these translations had become quite common, with over 530 known translators in Germany alone, even if a number of German translations from English were still made via French.³⁸ Before 1700, on the other hand, and especially before 1650, translations from English were scarce. This scarcity is hardly surprising, since only a few foreigners took the trouble to learn English at this time. The modern languages that most early modern Europeans studied were Italian, Spanish and French, in that order, with German coming a considerable distance behind. The first recorded teacher of English at a continental university was appointed only in the eighteenth century, John Tompson at Göttingen (at a time when England was ruled by a family from Hanover).³⁹

For this reason – however surprising or counter-intuitive this may seem today – a number of translations into French, Italian and other languages were made by Englishmen, including the French and Italian versions of the essays of Francis Bacon.⁴⁰

When foreigners did translate from English, special circumstances often explain how they came to acquire the language. The French noblewoman Geneviève Chappelain, for example, the translator of Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, lived at the English court as gentlewoman to the Countess of Salisbury. Jean Baudouin, the translator of Sidney and Bacon, was in England from 1622 to 1624, learning the language. Jean Verneuilh, a Protestant from Bordeaux, studied at Magdalen College Oxford, worked in the Bodleian and translated English works of piety into French. Pierre de Mareuil, a Jesuit who translated Milton into French, had an unusual and unwelcome opportunity to learn English – in captivity.

The increasing knowledge of English culture in France after 1700 owes a good

³⁸ Mary B. Price and Lawrence M. Price, *The Publication of English Literature in German in the 18th Century* (Berkeley, 1934); Wilhelm Graeber, 'German Translators of English Fiction and their French Mediators', in *Interculturality and the Historical Study of Literary Translations*, ed. Harald Kittel and Armin P. Frank (Berlin, 1991), 5-16.

³⁹ Thomas Finkenstaedt, 'John Tompson', in Konrad Schröder (ed.) *Fremdsprachenunterricht 1500-1800* (Wiesbaden, 1992), 57-74.

⁴⁰ Noel Malcolm, *De Dominis 1660-1624* (London, 1984).

deal to the Huguenot exiles. Coste has already been mentioned. David Mazel, a Huguenot, minister in The Hague, translated Burnet, Locke, Sherlock and Tillotson. Pierre Desmaizeaux translated Bayle and Saint Evremond. Jean Baptiste de Rosemond, religious refugee to England, entered the Anglican church and translated Barlow, Burnet, Rycout and Stillingfleet.

Into only one language, so far as I know, were translations from English made in substantial numbers before the year 1650. As you will know or have guessed by this time, that language was Dutch. Dutch accounts for a remarkable proportion of all translations from English into European languages before the year 1700, around 50 per cent.

In 1983 Cornelis Schoneveld listed 641 such translations published between 1600 and 1700.⁴¹ It is not difficult to extend this list, to include, for instance, the Dutch version of the English popular poet John Taylor's life of Thomas Parr, the *Beschrijvinge van den ouden, ouden, heel ouden man*, published in 1635. This example comes from the Dutch Short-Title Catalogue (STC), which lists over two thousand translations from English into Dutch in the seventeenth century. The STC includes both short pamphlets and successive editions of the same text, but even after making allowances for these, the total is impressive.

What kind of book was translated? Religious works for the most part, including those of puritan divines such as William Perkins, Richard Baxter and Joseph Hall (of Emmanuel College), Quakers such as George Fox and William Penn, and the Baptist John Bunyan. A number of these religious works were written by Scotsmen and they were sometimes described on the title-page as translated from the 'Scottish'.

Secular works lagged behind the religious ones but they included several works by King James VI and I (recently studied),⁴² There was also Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana*, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, Francis Bacon's *Essays*, the meditations of Sir Thomas Browne, political works by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke and a number of plays, including one by Shakespeare (*De Dolle Bruyloft*,

⁴¹ Cornelis W. Schoneveld, *Intertraffic of the Mind: Studies in 17th-Century Anglo-Dutch Translation* (Leiden, 1983). It would be good to see a reprint of this book, including a supplement of translations discovered since 1983.

⁴² Astrid J. Stilma, *A King Translated: James VI and I and the Dutch Interpretations of his Works, 1593-1603* (Amsterdam, 2005).

literally 'The Mad Wedding', in other words *The Taming of the Shrew*). There were also many news reports from the English Civil War, speeches, official documents and so on, in numbers suggesting that the Dutch public were following the war literally blow by blow. Some of these texts were also translated into German.

In what style were these translations made? It obviously varied a good deal but we can say at least that one group of translators, among them Glazemaker, were much concerned with purity of language, employing where possible words of Dutch or at least of Germanic origin, and new compounds of familiar words rather than neologisms borrowed from Greek or Latin. Glazemaker's rendering of Descartes is a particularly famous example of these tactics. By contrast, translators into English generally employed neologisms (with exceptions such as the purist John Cheke, a Cambridge professor who called a centurion a 'hundreder' in his translation of the New Testament).

VIII

About 160 different individuals made these translations from English into Dutch.⁴³ Some were self-consciously anonymous or 'invisible', hiding themselves behind initials or phrases such as '*Een lief-hebber van Gods kerck*'.⁴⁴ In other cases little is known about the translators but their names and the period in which they 'flourished', if that is the right word. All the same, a few stand out.

Let me note first a few Englishmen who translated texts into Dutch. Two examples are particularly famous. One is the bookseller Thomas Basson who lived in Leiden and translated Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*. The other is Henry Hexham, an English soldier who spent some forty years in the Netherlands and compiled a Dutch-English dictionary as well as translating divines such as Joseph Hall and Thomas Tuke and the book by John Taylor that I already mentioned.⁴⁵

There was also the English Quaker Jan Coughen, who translated George Fox. In other cases the names suggest that the translators were British: Farquarson,

⁴³ Schoneveld (1983), 125, 246-9.

⁴⁴ On invisibility, Venuti (1995).

⁴⁵ On Basson, Jan van Dorsten, 'Thomas Basson', *Quaerendo* 15 (1985), 195-224; on Hexham, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Ferguson, Fitzgerald, Fowler, Knowles, Morris, Palmer and Sanders. Once again, we find hybrids or amphibians. Johannes Grindal, who made some 30 translations, was born in the Netherlands of English parents, while Willem Séwel, who translated more than 20 English books into Dutch, had an English grandfather.

Other translators from English had personal contacts with Britain, having taken refuge there in the days of Alba and returned to the Netherlands to become Calvinist ministers. The prolific translator Vincentius Meusevoet, for instance, lived for some years in Norwich. Michael Panneel lived in Ipswich. Johannes Beverland lived in Yarmouth. Jan Lamoot went to school in London. Willem Teelinck studied in St Andrew's, lived in Banbury and married a woman from Derby. These personal experiences of Britain surely helped the translators in their task of cultural negotiation.

It is time to conclude, returning to an overview of Europe. I already made a point about the increasing supply of translators, increased by emigration, forced or otherwise. We also need to consider the question of demand. It is likely that there was also an increasing demand for translations at this period, fuelled by the expansion of the reading public to include new social groups such as women and artisans and also by the gradual decline of Latin as the common tongue of the Republic of Letters (French never completely replaced it).

That the Republic of Letters did not fragment in the seventeenth century is something that we owe to the many translators active in the period, individuals who have never received the recognition that they surely deserve. The problem is that if a translation is successful, in the sense of reading as if it was written in its target language, then its creator becomes invisible, overshadowed by the work. The translators are often lost in translation.

I am glad to have had an opportunity to speak about a few of them here, offering a small tribute to them as well as a small gesture of thanks to the KB for inventing the fellowship of which I am extremely happy to have been the first holder and to NIAS for their hospitality, allowing me to join a lively and sympathetic research community.

About the Author

Peter Burke, KB Fellow 2005, is Professor Emeritus of Cultural History at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge. He is an eminent and internationally renowned scholar who is best known for his pioneering research on folk culture. Peter Burke is the author of many books amongst which *Venice and Amsterdam: a Study of Seventeenth-Century Elites* (London, 1974), *History and Social Theory* (New York, 1992) and *The European Renaissance: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford, 1998). His current research interest is the history of translations.

The KB Fellowship is a joint venture between the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) - National Library of the Netherlands and NIAS. It is awarded to a renowned foreign scholar in the humanities and offers sustained access to the extensive collections of the National Library. The research facilities provided at both institutes allow the recipient to reap the benefits of both places: the KB's unique collections and NIAS' international and multidisciplinary environment. With the implementation of this fellowship, NIAS and the National Library hope not only to encourage and strengthen the collaboration between libraries and their collections and between scholars and their research but also to further the dissemination of knowledge in the humanities and to promote research in this area.

NIAS is an institute for advanced study in the humanities and social sciences. Each year, the Institute invites approximately 50 carefully selected scholars, both from within and outside the Netherlands, to its centre in Wassenaar, where they are given an opportunity to do research for up to a ten-month period. Fellows carry out their work either as individuals or as part of one of the research theme groups, which NIAS initiates every year. In addition, through its conference facilities, the Institute also functions as a meeting place for scientific programmes of a shorter duration and more specific character, such as workshops, seminars, summer schools, and study centres. NIAS is an institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

The Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB) - National Library of the Netherlands is located in The Hague. The KB gives access to the knowledge and culture of the past and present by providing high-quality services for research, study and cultural experience. The KB's collection constitutes the living national memory of written, printed and electronic publications. The humanities take pride of place, with special attention being given to Dutch history, language and culture in a wide international context. The KB is also a knowledge centre for the supply of scientific and scholarly information and the pivot of national and international co-operation.

