Yehundi Lindeman

TRANSLATION IN THE RENAISSANCE: A CONTEXT AND A MAP

'Foole,'said my Muse to me, 'looke in thy heart and write.'
(Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*)

I

Any sampling of representative Renaissance statements about literary translation into the English and French vernacular shows at once how uncertain a tool it was thought to be. It is only a substitute garment, says Thomas Wilson (1570), mixing his metaphors in the process: 'all cannot wear Velvet, or feede with the best.[1] Any translation, says Roger Ascham, in *The Schoolmaster* (1570) is only 'a heavy stump leg of wood to go withal.'[2] It is a hazardous enterprise, says Michel de Montaigne about literary translation.[3] Translating sacred texts such as the Bible merits even less trust: Montaigne finds much more danger than utility in it.[4] (1580) Montaigne's fear is similar to the fear of all those who employ the traditional pun of *traduttore-traditore.* 'Que diray-je d'aucuns, vrayement mieux dignes d'estre appellés traditeurs que traducteurs ?' asks Joachim Du Bellay, in one of the more vituperous chapters of the *Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse.*[5] (1549) And as late as 1656 Sir John Denham, in the preface to his translation from the *Aeneid,* expresses the fear that poetry, when translated, may easily lose its 'subtle spirit' so that translator and reader will be stuck with *a 'caput mortuum.'*[6]

These positions are so clearly described and can be multiplied so readily, that it is tempting to consider them as final statements. Yet they represent only the first half of the picture; much of this paper represents an attempt to fill in the second half and show how both parts complement each other. For there are, it seems, two positions on translation. To the first, translation is no more than a crutch which shows up the loss that occurs

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[1] 'Epistle to Sir William Cecill, 'prefaced to *Three Orations of Demosthenes,* quoted in Francis Otto Matthiessen, *Translation: An Elizabethan Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1931) 28, n. 2
[2] *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham,* ed. Rev. Dr. Giles (London: John Russell Smith 1864) III, 226
[3] *Essais,* ed. Pierre Michel (Paris: Le Livre de poche 1965) II, 12, 139-40
[4] Ibid., I, 56,442
[5] In the edition of Henri Chamard (Paris; Albert Fontemoing 1904) 93
[6] Quoted in Flora Amos, *Early Theories of Translation* (New York: Columbia

between the source text and the receptor text:[7] in this process the translator is always the traitor, and the result always a weakened product. To the second position the translator is the successful conqueror, the daredevil who, in spite of the odds against him, manages to safeguard much – not all – of the spoils and bring them home. The second position is often described in terms suggesting that a strenuous effort must be made by the translating mind: the successful translation should preserve, if it can, 'ceste energie, et ne scay quel esprit' of the source text, says Du Bellay, adding that he doubts that it can be comfortably done.[8] To be properly rendered into English, a mediating 'judgement' is needed, to 'make both consent,/In sense and elocution,' writes George Chapman, the translator of Homer.[9] (1609) When pouring out of one language into another, 'a new spirit' must be added, writes Sir John Denham.[10] What is striking about these opposite stands is that they seem to be compatible. What a strange paradox: two positions, at first sight diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive, are, as a matter of course, found in the same treatise, even on the same page: that which cannot be done yet can be done, through some kind of *tour de force.* But what exactly are the requirements to fulfill the claims of 'faithful' translation and turn defeat into victory? Is it possible to describe the position in its most generalized form, after isolating it from its 'treasonous' counterpart? This, probably, is the question most worth pursuing. It is also the central question asked in this paper.

The proposal seems fair enough: to examine what Renaissance authors mean when they speak of good versus bad translation. Yet, how does one map the subject, Renaissance literary translation in England and France, without falling ridiculously short of one's goal, in what seems too gigantic a field? Or, more precisely, how can a brief survey be reasonably inclusive? Given our need for economy, I propose one sure way of limiting the inquiry. It is my suggestion that the very terminology used to describe good versus bad translation carries in it the hints of answers to my question. If, as I suspect theoretical principles are buried inside the metaphors, one should be able to get to them,

[7] The terms used in Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1974) *passim*

[8] Du Bellay, 95 f f .

[9] Epistle 'To the Reader,' which appears in the 1609 edition of the *Twelve Bookes and* the 1611 complete *lliads.* In *The Poems of George Chapman,* ed. Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (New York: Russell and Russell 1962) 392, Il. 22-3; 479, n. to 'Epistle.'

[10] Amos, 151

independent of the number of texts examined.

To indicate the effect of the translation in the receptor language, various authors use almost identical language that reflects a shared vocabulary to express commonly held notions. The result of servility is a cold, dull or dead idiom; fidelity, on the other hand, results in a work whose language is 'hot,' 'polished' (shiny) or 'quick' (alive), respectively. Du Bellay, for instance, speaks of the loss of 'heat' of which – in servile translation – results in a poem that appears 'strained' or 'cold': compared to the original, such a translation transports us from l'ardente Montaigne d'Aethne sur le froid sornmet du Caucase.'[11] Chapman, ridiculing those writers who attempt to translate Homer but lack the poetic sympathy to assimilate his 'living fire,' condemns their servility which yields only an artificial brightness: with their 'word-for-word traductions,' they 'shame their Authors, with a forced Glose.'[12]

While a new awareness of the categorical distinction between terms used to describe servility and fidelity may help unlock the meaning behind them, an understanding of the ancestry of the terms (most of them derive from rhetoric) should be equally helpful.[13] Clearly, the next question to be asked concerns the reasons for each type of translation. What singular factor or set of factors is to blame – according to Renaissance thinking on the subject – for servility? What are the conditions needed to bring about fidelity? Can we determine what exactly occurs where in the process of transmission from one language to the next?

To the men of the Renaissance there existed relatively straightforward answers to these hard questions. To do justice to their answers, we slight detour into Renaissance notions of should be prepared for a literary composition and reception that will entail,

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[11] Du Bellay, 89

[12] *The Poems of George Chapman,* 393, II. 38 and 40. 'Gloss,' one might note, is 'superficial lustre. 'Judging from the examples given in the *OED*, it was especially used, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, to describe the sheen of garments.

[13] Most of the terms are borrowed from traditional descriptions of *elocutio.* In Caxton's Prologue to the *Eneydos* (1490, a very free version of the *Aeneid)* and

Skeiton's To maystres Isabell Pennell' (early sixteenth century) the term 'polysshed' means not only shiny, but also 'aureate' or 'golden,' reflecting the ornate style, that is, which was retained in English poetry for much of the early Tudor period. Other terms used for the same include 'fyry' and 'refulgent.' Opposite to all these are the terms 'derke,' 'rude' and, especially, 'rusty.' See Elizabeth Sweeting '*Early Tudor Criticism: Linguistic and Literary* (New York: Russell and Russell 1964 [first ed. Oxford 1940]) chapter one, especially oo. 14-7. For the opposition of 'hot' and 'cold,' and, especially, the description, with examples, of the 'fault' of 'frigidity' in composition, see *On*

among other things, a brief visit to the realm of Renaissance psychology.

The handful of texts that I have chosen to consult are from treatises or prefaces dealing with translation, commonly from the classics. All the texts are by prominent authors whose words are representative of the best thinking that the period was capable of producing. In saying this, I am implying that this thinking was shared by *many* other translators too, without suggesting that all translators were affected by it. If I have, at times, utilized material dealing with literary composition rather than translation *per se,* I have done so with due discretion, and only in cases where the reference was helpful in elucidating a problem related to translation.

Finally, something about the practice of translation, a subject not covered in this paper: naturally, any valid theoretical inquiry should be followed by its practical counterpart. It was certainly my experience of the *practice* of individual sixteenth-century translators that first set me speculating about the possible theoretical guidelines for their art. Naturally, any theory deserves to be tested. Yet any attempt at applying a theory should proceed with some caution: for it is not necessary to find widespread applications, for the theory to stand. It may even happen that no practice lives entirely up to the paradigm; for a theory is not a blueprint; it may exist in the minds of those who, while engaged in trying, yet never succeeded in fully implementing their vision.[14]

II

If a consistent theory of translation exists, it hasn't been widely noticed, as a cursory glance at twentieth-century criticism will show. The traditional twentieth-century position is one of consensus: there is either no theory at all, or such theory as emerges is hopelessly inadequate to the practice. Commenting on Thomas Hoby's translation of Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1561), F.O. Matthiessen observes that Hoby came to it 'with a definite theory of translation' (p. 28) associated with the new learning and the name of John Cheke. But the result of this theory is, according to Matthiessen, that the translation is often too literal for comfort: Hoby in general 'stays even too close to the

the Sublime (Cambridge, Mass.: Loeb ed. 1927) in particular III, 4 and IV, *passim.*

[14] For 'theory' I have found *Webster's Third* (1969) quite helpful. It gives sub 4b: 'a working hypothesis given probability by experimental evidence... but not conclusively established or accepted as law. 'Those with a further interest in the matter may be referred to the article 'Laws and Theories,' by Mary Hesse, in Paul Edwards ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York and London: MacMillan 1967) IV, 404-10, which discusses at length what theories should and should not do.

Italian' (pp. 32-3). In other words, Hoby's theory doesn't help his practice. Anyway, the success of Elizabethan translators wasn't their fidelity to the source text, says Matthiessen, but their vigour and liveliness: while frequently clouding the spirit of the original (p. 4), they brought them into England 'with all the enthusiasm of a conquest' (p. 3).

Little serious attention was given to the theory of the art of translation, says Flora Amos (p. 100): the medieval attitude persisted throughout the sixteenth century, both in the translator's practice and in his critical remarks. Though some translators are guided by a 'reasonable faithfulness' to the text of the original, 'the comment of the mass of the translators shows little grasp of the new principles' (p. 130). Sixty years later an almost similar argument is put forward by Paul Chavy who, surveying the same period in France, finds that the sixteenth century prolongs most of the medieval attitudes and concludes that it provides 'rien de révolutionnaire quant à la théorie ou à la pratique.'[15] Neither Dolet nor Du Bellay has significantly advanced the theory of translation, says Chavy (pp. 9-10).

Du Bellay's theory isn't new at all, says George Steiner; the notion that translation cheapens and diminishes the energies of the source text and its luminosity, didn't originate with Du Bellay: his only achievement was that he expressed it well. Dante and St. Jerome had already deplored the impoverishment of the receptor text in comparison to the original.[16]

The earliest statement of the century comes from Charles Whibley, writing for the *Cambridge History of English Literature* (1909, often reprinted: my edition is from 1964). While praising the sentiment of conquest and bold incursion, on the part of the sixteenth century translators, Whibley emphasizes their ignorance and lack of scruple: though their works have 'the lively air of brave originals' (Vol. IV, p. 3), they themselves cared little about method or any 'theory of translation' (ibid., p. 2). Essentially the translators were as eager and talented as they were unmethodical and careless: they set about their work 'in a spirit of sublime unconsciousness' (ibid.).

With so much consensus on the matter, how can one dismiss the position? Could

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[15] Paul Chavy, 'Les Traductions humanistes au début de la Renaissance française: traductions médiévales, traductions modernes,' in *Translation in the Renaissance, Proceedings* (Ottawa 1976) 14

[16] George Steiner, *After Babel*: Aspects of Language and Translation (New York and London: Oxford University Press 1975) 240-1

one resist the weight of so much cumulative insight? Of course, one can't. Yet it is necessary to modify some of the positions or rather, to bring them in closer harmony with observable fact. Whibley's claim to the contrary, many of the translators knew extremely well what they were doing and about: the 'lively air of brave originals' which is rightly attributed to them didn't come blowing in *ex nihilo*. They were neither ignorant nor naive. Yet where did they find the resources to sound so 'original'? In the source text or (as Whibley implies) in the contemporary English idiom? Flora Amos may be right when she rejects the claim for a general translation theory based on imitation. Yet she almost gives away what she takes when she describes, in glowing terms, the 'new vitality' (p. 120) of the translators associated with St. John's College, Cambridge and the person of Sir John Cheke. Through Cheke they gained the power to feel 'the vital, permanent quality' of an original author (p. 125). In other words, through Cheke's influence (on Thomas Hoby, Thomas Wilson and Roger Ascham, among others) new attention was drawn to the powerful, living texture of the original author's text.

Finally, what about Matthiessen? Does he assume that the 'racy and vivid' diction (p. 4) of the Elizabethan translators was entirely unprompted by the original words on the page? On the contrary: The sentences [Hoby's and Castiglione's] follow each other word for word, and yet Hoby's possesses [sic] all the freshness . . . of an original expression' (p. 39). Inspired by Castiglione's text, Hoby intensifies what he finds, using verbs of action 'whenever possible' (p 41), and naturalizing the Italian in the direction of fully developed English speech. Hoby's English, says Matthiessen, is robust (p. 42), colloquial (p. 44), has 'crispness and ease' (p. 45) and a 'vividness' that 'reveals how fully he was caught by the *force of the book'* (pp. 45-6, my italics). Though some attention is paid to the loss compared to the Italian text (Hoby's lack of sophistication; his unfamiliarity with abstract terms), Matthiessen's florid description concentrates on the translation's achievement. The main picture that emerges is one of freshness and vitality that, if anything, improves upon the original from which it is drawn.

The question is, can this be the basis of a theoretical context for translation? The answer is, yes. The supreme achievement of the Elizabethan translators was their ability to be fired by the imaginative force of the original, and to rummage the living idiom of contemporary England in a determined effort to transmit something of the living force which they experienced through the original into the English language. Never was the respect for the cultured and copious languages (and this included, besides Latin and

Creek, Italian) so great; and never was the urge so strong to match the richer idiom in the scarcer, more cramped language of contemporary England. The result may not look 'faithful' when measured by twentieth century standards of stylistic similarity, but maybe we have been looking at 'fidelity' from one angle only: the one we as used in the know and recognize. We must now restore to the term Renaissance – the authentic context from which it was torn loose by our own contemporary way of thinking.

This authentic context has already been suggested by the observations of Amos and Matthiessen which reflected how strongly some translators experienced the 'vital permanent quality' (Amos, p. 125) of the original and the 'force of the [original] book.' (Matthiessen, p. 46). But how did a Renaissance translator experience this quality? What could be meant by Dolet when he speaks of perfect understanding ('il faut que le traducteur entende parfaictement') as a necessary condition of faithful translation?[17] Is it possible to give a detailed description of the process, to draw a kind of map of what happens, psychologically or mentally, in *vera imitatio?*

III

From the very large store of available descriptions we may choose a few: Sidney, in *An Apology for Poetry,* advises that the 'diligent of Cicero and Demosthenes '*devoure* them whole, and *make them wholly theirs*[18]' (my italics). The food metaphor is also utilized by Du Bellay who urges those poets who want to emulate the ancients, to do as the Romans did with the Creek authors: to devour them and digest them well. With its cannibalistic overtones, the metaphor reflects the aggressive thrust of true imitation (the opposite of the obsequiousness of servile translation); but the emphasis on good digestion also points to a servile trans Digestion involves psychological process that needs further exploration. Digestion involves transformation into blood and nourishment: 'Immitant les meilleurs aucteurs grecz, se transformant en eux, les dévorant, et, après les avoir bien digérez, les convertissant en sang et nouriture' (p. 99). It isn't an easy task either, warns Du Bellay, to make such an author your own: 'Mais entende celuy qui voudra immiter, que ce n'est chose facile de bien suyvre les vertuz d'un bon auteur, et quasi comme se transformer en

[17] Estienne Dolet, 'La Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre,' in Bernard Weinberg, ed., *Critical Prefaces of the French Renaissance* (Evanston, III.: Northwestern University Press 1950) 81

[18] G.C. Smith, ed., *Elizabethan Critical Essay*s, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1904) I, 202

luy...' (p. 104).[19] This advice, to absorb the classical model by getting to the heart of it, is directly inherited from an earlier generation of humanists. If you want to imitate Cicero, writes Juan Luis Vives, you must put yourself in Cicero's place and familiarize yourself with his rhetoric 'not by directly copying him, but by *entering into his spirit*[20]*,* (my italics). The implication from these passages is apparently one and the same: once you have fully absorbed or captured the model you plan to follow, its spirit will guide you securely, thus keeping you from betraying it. All other ways of imitating the text which lack this intervening mental process of re-orientation towards the model, are servile ways that will betray the model. The original advice comes, not surprisingly, from the Romans. In the *Brutus,* for instance, Cicero urges aspiring orators not to be content with superficial imitation, but to capture the model's essence, i.e., not only the bones but also the blood *(utinam imitarentur, nec ossa solum sed etiam sanguinem)* [21] – which explains Du Bellay's metaphor.

Another way in which the psychological process is explained, is through surgical (anatomical) or mining (quarrying) metaphors, e.g. in Du Bellay's advice to poets, to penetrate into the innermost parts of their model ('penetrer aux plus cachées et intérieures parties de l'aucteur qu'ilz se sont proposé,' p. 104). Chapman uses almost identical language when he speaks of the need to 'reach the spirit' of Homer's Creek and' with arte to pierce/His Grammar, and etymologie of words' (Bartlett, p. 392, II. 24-6), in order to produce faithful translation. The error of those unable to illustrate Homer's 'Sunne' in the English language, was their failure to search Homer's 'deepe, and treasurous hart.' (p. 393, I. 57)

The terms used by Chapman, in 1609, to describe the correct imitative process, demonstrate not only the reverence due to the source text, but also the affinity required from the translator: one needs the properly adjusted poetic temper, writes Chapman,

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[19] While Du Bellay condems all 'servile' translation outright, he is also doubtful about translation's ability, even its most loyal, to succeed in 'illustrating' (i.e.) rendering 'lustrous,' in the receptor text) the original source. Du Bellay's attitude towards translation is the more ambiguous because he believes in the usefulness of translation (it disperses knowledge, p. 90) and because he himself, in time, became such a successful translator (e.g. his translation of books four and six of Virgil's *Aeneid).*

[20] In W.H. Woodward, ed., *Studies in Education During the Age of the Renaissance* 1400-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1906) 201. The best modern reference to Vives' importance for translation theory is in H.A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1959) 255-66. Vives' 'transformation of literary studies' is unjustly neglected today, says Mason (p. 263). He had 'the right and fruitful conception of the proper way to set about the translation that is creation' (p. 265).

[21] Cicero, *Brutus,* 68

'With Poesie, to open Poesie' (p. 393 , I. 60). Besides penetration-without-violation, fidelity requires a kindred spirit. Everyone should choose the author that is best adapted to himself and to his subject, writes Du Bellay (p. 200). Thomas Wilson, the translator of Demosthenes, shares his author's preference for speaking, plainly and nakedly after the common sort of men'; hence his love for Demosthenes above all the other orators (Amos, p. 126). In short, the translator's boldness must be tempered by affinity: he must be adequate to his source.

With all his empathy, what precious goods does the faithful translator bring back to the surface, after quarrying his text? What does he find while searching his author's 'deepe and treasurous hart' (Bartlett, p. 393, I. 57)? The answer is quite specific: it is the vivid imprint upon his mind that results from the thorough absorption of his source text. The secret that he is asked to unlock, through intimate familiarity with his source, is its vivid representational power, known as *enargeia* – the next mark on our map.

Though unfamiliar to non-specialist readers in the twentieth century, *enargeia* was a well-known concept in Renaissance rhetoric. As a necessary step preceding the act of formulating, *enargeia or enargia* (sometimes erroneously confused with *energia)* refers to a mental/ psychological process, that of pre-verbal conceptualization. Puttenham *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) calls *Enargia* that which 'giveth a glorious lustre and light.' It helps give 'glosse' to a language, he adds. But his definition gets somewhat mixed up with that of *Energia* which effects a 'stirre to the mynde.'[22] Sir Philip Sidney refers to certain poet/lovers who, in their poems, 'so coldely ... apply fiery speeches' that no mistress would ever be persuaded that they were in love. Real passion, says Sidney, would easily show itself if only the poet had 'forciblenes, or *Energia'* (Smith, I, p. 20l). Most noticeable, besides the use of the familiar metaphors (lustre, gloss, cold, fiery), is the confusion regarding the definition of each term, which needs some clarification.

Enargeia proper is a technique of vivid representation to describe action. It derives from rhetoric. In the Renaissance it soon became 'entangled,' to use the terms of Peter Dixon, 'with the similar concept of *energeia or* ... activity.'[23] The *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell and Scott) gives 'vivid description' for ἐνάργεια and 'manifest to the mind's eye' for ἐνάργης; but the best definition is probably in *On the Sublime* where *enargeia* (the ability to present things vividly) is associated with mental pictures' and

[22] Smith, II, 148
[23] Peter Dixon, Rhetoric (London: Methuen, The Critical Idiom 1971) 40

'imagination' *(phantasia);* especially, as the author puts it, in passages where you seem to see what you describe and bring it vividly before the eyes of your audience.'[24] Whatever the precise channel by which it arrived into the mainstream of the Renaissance, this is exactly the meaning in which it is used in Chapman's 'Letter to Mathew Royden' attached to *Ovids Banquet of Sense* (1595). *Enargeia,* says Chapman, is 'cleerenes of representation.' It serves to give to a work not only 'luster, shaddow, and heightening,' but also 'motion, spirit and life.' Even obscurity is excusable, provided that the translation 'shroudeth it selfe in the hart of his subiect.' But obscurity resulting from 'affection of words, & indigested concets' is childish, immature, hence unacceptable (Chapman, in Bartlett, p. 49).

Enargeia then is much more than clear delivery: it is the quality of having the subject clearly printed on the mind's screen (this is what 'concets' refers to, in the passage above). As such, *enargeia or energeia,* Sidney's version of it,[25] is no longer part of rhetoric but, as Forrest Robinson has pointed out, part of a 'visual epistemology': for 'the good poet composes from a clearly visualized concept ...'[26]

It was probably easier for the men of the Renaissance than for us to realize why servility would always yield a cold or lifeless result. For the servile translator skipped the one crucial, epistemological step. Only the faithful translator, working outward from his concrete, visual images, could cause the necessary 'heat' – searching the length and depth of the vernacular to marshall from it the suitable terms that would turn inner presentation into truly faithful, external representation. In this respect the neo-Platonic paradigm (which seems to have been widely accepted; how widely is a subject for speculation) helped create a unified theoretical framework that – both for precision and psychological scope – cannot be matched by any model today.

IV

The unsolved problem of twentieth century translation theory lies precisely in the

[24] *On the Sublime,* 170-1 (XV, 1-2)

[25] The *OED* implicitly acknowledges the confusion of the two terms when it adds, to its definition of force or vigour of expression' for 'energy,' that the term derives from an imperfect understanding of Aristotle's *energia* for 'the species of metaphor which calls up a mental picture of something "acting" or moving.'

[26] Forrest G. Robinson, *The Shape of Things Unknown: Sidney's Apology in Its Philosophical Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1972) 172. Though I am indebted to Mr. Robinson for his clear discussion of 'fore-conceit' and 'conceit,' I do not share his Ramist interpretation of the terms. For further discussion, see especially pp. 108-36 and 169-74.

absence of a theoretical model for monitoring what occurs, mentally/psychologically, between reading a foreign text and reconstructing it in the receptor language. Roman Jakobson's model of 'recoding' and 'transmission,' for instance, stands out both because of its ingenuity and its omission of the intervening mental/psychological process without a word of explanation.[27]

Our only recourse, in this matter, lies in the attempts of individual critics at filling in this blank spot on our map. A passage in an article by the late Reuben Brower makes us aware that there is at least a problem. Each translator, writes Brower, must find within his own language and civilization 'some equivalents *for what he has experienced* through the language of the original'[28] (my italics). In other words, before switching into verbal action, the translator must focus on the experience caused in him by his reading of the source text. The emphasis placed by Brower on the role played by individual experience in literary translation, helps explain the absence of agreement in formulating a theory of translation for our time. The same lack of consensus also helps clarify, I believe, the reluctance of our contemporaries to credit the Renaissance with such a theory.

The last link in the chain of what amounts, in essence, to a Renaissance theory of communication, is the transmission from mental picture to finished product. This is, according to Renaissance thinking, the easiest part of the process of translation; the hardest task is not the act of composition, but the act of receiving and retaining the 'fore-conceit' on one's mental screen. The poet's real skill, says Sidney, 'standeth in that *Idea or* fore-conceite of the work, and not in the work it selfe' (Smith I, p. 157). The subsequent translation of that 'Idea' from the mind's screen into verbal actuality leads Sidney to call poetry 'a speaking picture.' (ibid., p. 158).

Imitating other poets (their 'leaves,' 'feet') was useless, says Astrophil, the protagonist of *Astrophil and Stella,* in the opening sonnet, nor were the rules of rhetoric any aid for writing about my love for Stella:

Loving in truth, and faine in verse my love to show,
That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:
Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine,

[27] Roman Jakobson, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,' in Reuben A. Brower, ed., *On Translation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1959) 232-9

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine:
Oft turning others'leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sunne-burn'd braine.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Studie's blowes,
And others'feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speake, and helplesse in my throwes,
Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,
'Foole,' said my Muse to me, looke in thy heart and write.'[29]

The reversal, in the last line, is as sudden dramatically, as it is convincing theoretically. To be able to write, Astrophil only needed to look at Stella's image as it appears to him on the screen of his own heart.

Montaigne, finally, makes the same point: all good writing is a matter of visual clarity, rather than verbal eloquence: 'Cette peinture est conduite non tant par dextérité de la main comme pour avoir l'objet plus vivement empreint en l'âme' (Essais, II, 5, p.126). Writing about himself, says Montaigne, Plutarch noted that he saw things first, and only then started to look for the proper language in which to express them (ibid). And how is this transformation achieved, from things to words? In the writer's imagination, the things are tossed about until fit words are found to suit them. It is the very sprightliness of the imagination which, playing around the pictures in the mind, 'prompts and brings out the words' ('C'est la gaillardise de l'imagination qui élève et enfle les paroles,' III, 5, p.126). And what was the great merit of the poet Horace? His ability to see the thing itself clearly and deeply. Then his mind ransacks the entire treasure house of language, in order to find fit words to match the vision: '[Horace] voit plus clair et plus outre clans la chose; son esprit crochète et furète tout le magasin des mots et des figures pour se représenter; et les lui faut outre l'ordinaire, comme sa conception est outre l'ordinaire' (ibid.).

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[28] Reuben A. Brower, 'Seven Agamemnons,' in *On Translation,* 187
[29] *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney,* ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1962) 165

V

New or not-so-new, the theory of translation that emerges from these pages may have wide-ranging implications for the study of literary composition and for the study of a psychology of mind that – though different from our own – is possibly no less valid than ours. However, these are speculations: students and scholars should be pleased to note that most of the work in these fields is yet to be done.

On the other hand, few of our insights were new to the Renaissance. The image of the mind's screen, for instance, had been used by Dante in the very first canto of *Paradiso:*

O divina virtù, se mi ti presti
tanto, che l'ombra del beato regno
segnata nel mio capo io manifesti ...

Grant me the power, writes Dante, to make manifest the 'image' of the blessed realm which is 'imprinted on my mind.' Dante knew that internal visual presentation only needed a mediating power to become representation: the transformation from mental to material presented no further problem to him.

It took the linking together of two notions from classical rhetoric before a convincing theoretical model could evolve. And it took a context: only after *enargeia* and *vera imitatio* had been joined together within the context of the popular, though age old, neo-Platonic epistemology, did a Renaissance theory of translation first have a chance to develop.

Source: *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, vol. 8, n° 2, 1981, p. 204-216.