

Quintilian
(Marcus Fabius Quintillianus)

INSTITUTIO ORATORIA

(x.v. 1-5)

[1st Century]

Our ancient orators believed that the most efficacious means of acquiring a command of their language was to translate Greek works into Latin. Crassus, quoted in Cicero, *De oratore* I, 155, says he made a practice of it; and Cicero, speaking in his own name, recommended it very often. And indeed, he published books by Xenophon and Plato he has translated. It also appealed to Messala; and he was so effective that many of his speeches achieve the subtlety of Hyperides in defence of Phryne, a subtlety that is so difficult for Romans to attain. The reason for this exercise is extremely obvious. For Greek authors abound in richness of expression bring the greatest of finesse into their oratory. And therefore those who would translate these authors must use the best of language while relying on their native resources. Because our Roman language is immensely different from Greek, we are bound by a certain need to rethink the many and varied figures with which a work is adorned.

And translation from Latin is also of immense benefit. And I am sure that nobody has any doubts about the value of verse. It is said that Sulpicius used it as his sole exercise. For its sublime spirit can give majesty to the work, and the words, more daring because of poetic licence, can not be dealt with by the conventions of good prose. But it is admissible to add oratorical strength to the original expressions, and to trim those which are diffuse.

For I do not want translation to be a mere paraphrase, but a struggle and rivalry over the same meanings.