Modes of appropriation: translating Greek and Latin Epic in Early Modern England (Golding’s Ovid and Chapman’s Homer)

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Resumo
Este artigo apresenta conceitos contextualizados de tradução e de tradutor na Inglaterra do início da modernidade pelo exame da teoria e da prática de tradução de épicos do grego e do latim para o inglês. As características mais relevantes da tradução, conforme então concebida, são descritas e ilustradas pela Odisséia de Homero traduzida por George Chapman, bem como por seus comentários à sua tradução da Iliada (ambos publicados como sendo a obra completa de Homero, em 1616) e pelas Metamorfoses de Ovídio (1567) traduzidas por Arthur Golding. A análise dessas traduções leva à conclusão de que a apropriação era o meio pelo qual o conteúdo do texto utilizado como fonte moldava-se aos novos modos literários.

Palavras-Chave: Tradução Poética; História da Tradução; Teoria da Tradução.

Abstract
This article provides contextualised concepts of translation and translator in early modern England through the examination of the theory and the practice of the translation into English of Greek and Latin epic. The most relevant features of translation as conceived by then are described and illustrated through George Chapman’s rendering of Homer’s Odyssey, as well as his comments to his translation of the Iliad (both published in 1616 as Homer’s complete works) and Arthur Golding’s transposition of Ovid’s Metamorphoses (1567). The analysis of these translations leads to the conclusion that appropriation was the means by which the content of the source text was shaped into new literary modes.

Key-Words: Poetic Translation; Translation History; Translation Theory.

I

In this article, I will focus on contextualised concepts of translation and translator that prevailed in early modern England, illustrating them through the theory and practice of rendering Greek and Latin epic into English. I do not intend to achieve a comprehensive description of the manifold translations published in that period. Instead, my aim is to provide a closer examination of classical epic in English by identifying their most relevant features and analysing how these features lead to the notion of appropriation in the light of the cultural context and the literary conventions that shaped translation in early modern England. My choice of epic translation is explained by the fact that it is in this genre that two of the most quoted and influential translations of the period were produced, namely George Chapman’s rendering of the Odyssey and Arthur Golding’s rendering of Ovid’s Metamorphoses (1567), from which examples of the concepts of translation as appropriation will be here drawn, as well as from Chapman’s preface to his translation of the Iliad (both epics gathered in a 1616 book after pre-prints of some of its parts).

II

Under the influence of Neoplatonism, George Chapman (?1559-1634), who may have gone up to Oxford and left without taking a degree, wrote lyric poetry, such as The Shadow of the Night (1594) and Ovid’s Banquet of Sense (1595), and several plays, amongst which Monsier D’Olive (1606) and Bussy D’Ambois (1613). Less famous by his own poetry than by the overall amount of his pieces of writing, Arthur
Golding (?1536-?1605), who has been highly regarded since his lifetime for his translations, which mostly helped make Ovid far more widely read up to this day as well as for having influenced, particularly with his phrasing, other poets, Shakespeare being one of them. He also wrote drama (A Tragedie of Abraham’s Sacrifice, 1577) and several pieces of writing on various subjects, some of a non-literary and blatantly Puritan nature such as A Discourse Vpon the Earthquake that Happned Throouge this Realme of England and Other Places of Christendom, the Sixt of April, 1580, Between the Hours of Five and Six in the Evening (1580). Both Chapman and Golding lived in a time and place, the early modern England, in which the recurring references to classical authors have already proven to be embedded in the cultural dissemination, typical of the Tudor and Elizabethan periods, of literary, historical and philosophical texts. Of these, literary translation was the most widespread outside the realm of higher education (Oxford, Cambridge and the Inns of Court). Ovid was known to belong in the syllabus of the Grammar School, the precepts of which encompassed the reading of Latin classics and biblical texts, so that students could soon be able to proceed with interpretations and discussions of the Metamorphoses, alongside Terence’s plays and other authors. According to Charles Hoole’s description in his New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole (1660), the method for doing so was ‘double translation’, as developed by the humanist Roger Ascham. The method consisted of reading Latin classics to clarify their vocabulary, finding Latin synonyms for certain words, recognising the metre and translating a Latin passage into elegant English prose, all of this before rendering the passage back into Latin, without resorting to the book, and, finally, back into English again, this time in verse.

The reception of translations of course profited from this school training, itself part of the cultural and social context that allowed the ‘conjunction of affordable print, an aspirant vernacular culture, and a ready readership’ (Lyne, 2003:249). As a consequence, manifold translations were produced not only from Greek and Latin, but also from other vernacular languages, among which Golding’s translation from the French of Philippe de Mornay’s A Woorke Concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian Religion (1587) and the highly praised rendering of Gargantua and Pantagruel by Sir Thomas Urquhart published in 1532 (see McDowell, 2005). In sum, as Stanley Wells (1995:13) explains, a reader of Golding’s Metamorphoses, Shakespeare saw, between ‘(…) his birth and his emergence on the London theatrical scene, say, the appearance of the first major translations into English of Ovid, Apuleius, Horace, Heliodorus, Plutarch, Homer, Seneca and Virgil’, besides Ariosto, Montaigne and the Bible (For details, see McDowell, 2005; and Burrow, 2003)

The role of the translator was however considered to be quite unlike the one played by the early modern poet, since the former’s activity was believed to demand no creativity. This was the common view supported by contemporaneous theoretical approaches such as Puttenham’s The Arte of English Poesie (1589), according to which the poet ‘makes and continues out of his owne braine both the verse and matter of his poeme, and not by any foreine copie or example, as doth the translator’, the latter being ‘a versifier, but not a Poet’ (I. 1.1). Functional translation was commonly regarded as fundamental to disseminating information (particularly biblical texts) among ordinary people. Indeed, it is stated in a 1545 Tudor primer that translation from Latin Scripture should be used so ‘(. . .) that men maie knowe, bothe what they praie, & also with what woordes’ (quoted in Linton, 2003:7-8).

This functional aspect of translation profited from the prevailing notion of reality as being textualised, and, therefore, liable to reading. And, of course, reading did not concern the mere interpretation of written texts, but also the broader understanding of reality through its parcelling up into textual categories often metaphorically represented as the book of the mind or the book of nature (e.g. Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra: ‘In Natures infinite booke of Secrecie, / a little I can read’, 1.2 8-9). Ancient texts were considered to be ‘(. . .) repositories of cultural memory [and to function] as interpretative guides of experience’ (Shullenberger, 2003:403), that is to say, the means by which the classical Greek and Roman realities, by being read (interpreted through the reasoning of its elements in language), as though they were major historical and cultural books, could have their content transposed into English society.

An example of how Ancient reality was read and embodied in a new textual categorisation is the gathering of some of John Milton’s Latin poems under the title Sylvarum Liber (1645), in which Liber (Latin for book) is added to the genitive case of the Latin noun silua (forest, wood) that leads, in its plural nominative form sylvarum, to Statius’s Siluae (an appropriation discernible also in the Renaissance spelling that has a ‘v’ replacing classical Latin ‘u’). This indicates Milton’s appropriation of the Roman poet’s idea of writing on various themes with several metres, as though every poem were a type of tree within a forest or wood. In this context,
in the preface to his *Iliad* Chapman states his conception of translation by describing the role of the translator:

Alwaies conceiving how pedantickall and absurd an affectation it is in the interpretation of any Author (much more of Homer) to turn him word for word; when (according to Horace and other best lawgivers to translators) it is the part of every knowing and judicall interpreter, not to follow the number and order of the words but the material things themselves, and sentences to weigh diligently; and to clothe and adorne them with words, and such a stile and form of oration as are most apt for the language into which they are converted. (Chapman quoted in Hooper, 1857:3)

This advocates the translator’s appropriation of meanings from his or her source. Part of classical culture would become a set of more or less punctual elements (‘material things’) of ancient reality thus textualised, interpreted and transposed, by the ‘judicall interpreter’ (*interpres* is the Latin word for ‘translator’), into new standards oflegibility and style (‘a stile and form of oration as are most apt for the language into which they are converted’). Chapman’s allusion is to line 131 of Horace’s *Ars Poetica* - ‘*nec uerbo uerbum curabis reddere fidus interpres*’ [you do not render word for word, like a faithful translator. My translation into English]. This belongs to the Latin tradition that Cicero describes in relation to his own translation from Greek speeches:

> … *nec conversi ut interpres, sed ut orator, sententiiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, uerbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis. In quibus non uerbum pro uerbo necessce habui reddere, sed genus omnne uerborum uimque seruaui.* (Opt. Gen. 14)

[And I have not transposed them as a translator, but as an orator, with the same ideas as well as the same forms - otherwise called figures - and with words fitting our usage. For such, I did not consider a word for word rendering to be necessary, but I have preserved the mode and the force of all the words. My translation into English]

Usually referred to as *non uerbum de uerbo, sed sensum de sensu* (not word for word, but, rather, sense from sense), this principle should be carefully considered, since it refers to stylistic writing (poetry in Horace; oratory in Cicero) and is not necessarily contrary to word for word renderings in functional translations of, say, military documents. Known and practiced in the British Isles since the renderings of Latin into Old English and alluded by King Alfred in his translation of Boethius’s *Consolatione Philosophiae* (Timofeeva, 2005:135),

this approach to translation can be illustrated through Cicero’s defence of his choice of rendering Greek *ἐπιμολογιασ* as *notatio* instead of *ueriloquium*, a coinage of his own that he dismisses for considering it to be ‘*uerum ex uerbo*’ (*Topica* 35).

The choice made by Cicero can be contrasted to Chapman’s rendering of Homer’s ‘*ῥοδοδόκτυλος Ἡνωσ*’ (*Odyssey* III. 497) as ‘rosy-finger’d Morn’, in which the Latin-through-French loan ‘rosy’ and the broad Germanic ‘finger’ reveal a word for word vernacular transposition of their Greek equivalents *ῥόδο* and *ῥοδοδόκτυλος* morphologically shaped into a structure, ‘rosy-finger’, that emulates Greek word building. On the other hand, Chapman’s choice of ‘Morn’ instead of ‘Dawn’, the *ex uerbo* translation of Ἡνωσ, approaches Cicero’s method. This actually leads to a new understanding of *word for word* in English, which could indicate either ‘literalness’ or the struggle (believed to be better avoided for musicality’s sake) for a word order arrangement that would recreate as accurately as possible the Greek or Latin syntax.

Thus equipped with awareness of method and concerned with style (mostly conceived by Renaissance adaptations of classic rhetoric), the translator took over a privileged (Chapman’s ‘judicial’) position in relation to the author of the source text, for which he would state the reasons with which he could endorse the importance of his work. This attitude towards the translated text is clear from the title of Chapman’s translation of Homer: *The Iliads of Homer, Prince of Poets, never before in any language truly translated, with a comment upon some of his chief places, done according to the Greek by George Chapman*. With ‘truly translated’, Chapman reinstates his sense-for-sense method with a claim of legitimacy over his translation, as he discloses his mystical approach to translation (usually referred to as ‘fantastic’, from the Elizabethan meaning of ‘fancy’: ‘fantasy’, ‘imagination’), which features layers of Neoplatonism, mostly drawn from medieval readings of Plotinus with echoes of Plato’s conception of inspiration:

The Platonic doctrine of the divine inspiration of poetry clearly had repercussions for the translator, in that it was deemed possible for the ‘spirit’ or ‘tone’ of the original to be recreated in another cultural context. The translator, therefore, is seeking to bring about a ‘transmigration’ of the original text, which he approaches on both a technical and metaphysical level, as a skilled equal with duties and responsibilities both to the original author and the audience. (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980:50)
Thus located between his own world and some erstwhile world (both read as overlapping texts), translators recover the ‘spirit’ of an old age into new language as they appropriate and retexualise past culture from a privileged position. In doing so, translators help enhance the reading of the past through classic texts, the main use of which being ‘to discover wisdom’ (Kermode, 1971:61) as well as, grounded on this, to further appropriation by creating or recreating myths - after all, the aim of Elizabethan authors was ‘not merely to the benefit by the power of extant mythologies, but to make significant myths of their own’ (Kermode, 1971:61). Chapman’s appropriation occurs even when he appears as a translator rather than a vernacular poet. As C. S. Lewis (1944:517) puts it, Chapman is one among translators that ‘read their own philosophy in their original’.

Influenced by Seneca as any Elizabethan playwright would have been within the developing political theories originated in the Continent, Chapman’s appropriation not only renders Homeric meanings into English, but also conveys his own Elizabethan mystical views, while framing, as practice allowed, ancient content into contemporaneous literary modes - which is not far from Shakespeare’s remodelling of the Ancient world in his Roman plays. This indicates what I here call appropriation, since the translator is seen as reshaping his theoretical views within the target text as he finds himself able to do so from his judicial interpretation of the source text.

This concept of appropriation can be better understood by assuming Golding and Chapman to be what Toury (1995) considers to be authorized spokespersons, who, as maintained throughout this paper, make use of such privileged position in order to develop strategies not only for translating a Latin or Greek source text into an English target text, but also, which underlies it, for turning the target text into a means of conveying their own concepts. These concepts are literary ones in both Golding and Chapman, as will be observed in the former’s transposed metaphors, and in the latter’s choice of metre in his dedication and in the translation itself and, also, overtly in the philosophical nature of the views of his own conveyed in his translation. Thus, observing the translation postulates as identified by Toury (1995:33-35), namely, a source text, a transfer process and a relationship between the source text and the target text, Chapman and Golding produce alterations within the transfer process in order to produce a target text that brings also their literary and/or theoretical conceptions, whereby they could make the target text to be part of their work as poets – that is, with features common to their own pieces of writing. Yet, they do so without jeopardising the fundamental concern with faithfulness regarding the source text, or lessening the scope of readership then expected from translations of this kind and, therefore, without having their work disavowed, since they do not break the translation norms as conceived in their lifetime.

For doing so, they favourably take the translation process in its entirety and, by appropriating the source text within their own work and life, privilege no particular aspect of those described by Lefevere (1975) based on Cluysenaar (1976) – namely, phonemic/phonological translation, literal translation, translation of poetry into prose, rhymed translation, metrical translation, blank verse translation and interpretation. Instead, they take over the prominent figure of the translator who features in his work cultural elements that correspond to their own intellectual/artistic concepts on art and nature, all of which is blended, beyond lexical choices only, in all the above levels of the target text.

Yet, this has also provoked in critics some misjudging of Chapman’s and Golding’s work as translators. Chapman’s rendering, for instance, tend to be viewed merely as a freely artistic process made aesthetically pleasant to his readers, which critical tendency can be epitomised thus:

. . . In the final count, however, it is art that is the key ( . . . ) so that Chapman also claimed the right to deploy his own talents. And yet the focus on narrative content rather than on fine style allowed 16th and 17th c. translators, albeit with elaborate flourishes and the provision of what foreigners today would regard as anachronistic contemporary detail, to stay quite close to the literal sense maintaining a measure, a tempo, which might sometimes have lacked stateliness but which was extremely seductive.

There is agreement on the need for the source text, its subject-matter, to be accurately or fully rendered; confidence, however, varies considerably as between a Chapman and a Pope, the former more vociferous in upholding the English language, maybe because he is less sure of it. One might say that Chapman was bolder, took greater risks than Pope, except that this would be to ignore the historical differences. In any case, he was also more emphatic about the transformative magic of art, claiming to be filled with Homer’s spirit, as if the text had been dictated to him in English by his mighty predecessor. (Weissbort, 2001:91)

The above assertions end up portraying, by and
large, a Chapman uncertain of his own language, trustful in magic and somewhat eager to show off, so to speak, his own literary talent in his translation. This contrasts to the view, presently asserted, of Chapman as the translator who, being a poet and a thinker of literature and reality, appropriates the translation process itself in order to produce a target text which, besides adequately providing the readers of it with the qualities expected from such a rendering, conveys artistic technique and philosophical views blended in the transposition of the text, which becomes, in this case, Chapman’s without ceasing to be essentially Homeric. Accordingly, Chapman, on the contrary, made use of rhetoric as understood by the Elizabethans, that is, as ‘the embodiment of an attitude toward experience (…) the major theory and practice of the arts of language including above all poetry’ (SLOAN, 1974:213). Chapman’s translations can be easily fit into what can be summarised as the rhetoric features of the ‘poet as orator’:

The rhetor assumes a stance to achieve the aims of his oratory (or writing), and stance implies not the frequent modern blunder that literature is identical to the spontaneous, highly emotive, and directly candid personal experiences which have given rise to that literary expression, but instead it indicates that the orator has chosen a point of view, a strategy, a set of techniques or devices, perhaps specific language to enhance his chances for success. What such a statement predicates is a literature that is contrived, the result of the author’s manipulation of the theme, form, and writing techniques. (SHAWCROSS, 1974:5)

Thus, drawing on translation method and technique, assuming a privileged point of view in relation to his or her source, the translator would produce new modes of significance embedded in rules of style defined in works such as Thomas Wilson’s Arte of Rhetorique (1553; reissued with corrections and improvements in 1560).

As for Golding’s Ovid, the more or less impressionistic criticism to his ‘fourteeners’ has prevailed, the gist of it being the attribution of rhythmical looseness and disregard for technique as the cause of his work being ‘unreadable’, according to Gordon Braden (1978) summarises in his essay of little originality – and, therefore, useful in portraying the critical tendency to which it belongs – on comparative literature The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry. As it occurs in the traditional approach to Chapman, little or no attention is given to Golding’s translation process as a profitable means of transposing classical texts into English according to the norms of the time and, more importantly, as an appropriation of the source text into new literary modes.

III

Phrased through rhetoric, the sense-for-sense principle allowed the translator free choice of the metre used to reshape the meanings of his source, which can be illustrated through the opening lines from Golding’s rendering of the Metamorphoses:

In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas corpora; di, coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illas) adsiprate meis primaque . . . (I. 1-3)

Of shapes transformde to bodies straunge, I purpose to entreate, Ye gods vouchsafe (for you are they ywrought this wondrous feate) To further this mine enterprise. . . (I. 1-3)

The blend of Old English (broader Germanic) and Latin stock (known through the French loans following the Norman Conquest) does not result in any philological pattern. Corresponding Anglo-Saxon words to Ovid’s ‘formas’ and ‘corpora’ (‘shapes’ and ‘bodies’, respectively) are mingled with the Latin-through-French loan ‘transformed’ which, rendering ‘mutatas’, brilliantly transposes μεταμόρφωσις in the same manner as Ovid does in Latin with mutatae formae. Lexical choices of this kind are what Raphael Lyne (2002:153) describes as ‘the feature of Golding’s style which gives his translation its character is his use of words with many English resonances’. As example, Lyne quotes Golding’s use of ‘Raspis, heppes and havews, by cornelles, plummes and cherries / By sloes and apples, nuttes and peares, and loosombe bramble berries, / And by the acorns’ (I. 119-121) as a rendering of Ovid’s ‘arbuteos fetus montanaque fraga legebant / cornaque et in duris haerentia mora rubetis’ (I.104-5) - in which ‘what were five fruits in Ovid become twelve (…) English fruits, and this is an English Metamorphoses…’ (Lyne, 2002:253-4).

An ever-growing body of literature in the vernacular concerned the discussion (not seldom made into argument) of poetic rules and nomenclature regarding Latin and Greek (e.g. should an iambic be built with a short syllable followed by a long one, as originally conceived, or through the replacement of these with a combination of unstressed and stressed syllables in a more natural fashion to the English ear?). This triggered the question of how one should conceive literary texts in
English in relation to classical modes and models. Theses issues are dealt with in treatises in English poetics by Thomas Campion, Sir Philip Sidney and Samuel Daniel, as well as Puttenham’s *The Arte of English Poesie*. The use or the avoidance of rhyme was at stake, as the rising of vernacular literature saw itself divided between those that advocated the unrhymed quantitative Greek and Latin verse to be reproduced in English and those that assumed rhyme to be essential, and therefore stylistically agreeable, to English poetry. In his *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602), Campion argues for the former view and against ‘the vulgar and vnarteficiall custome of rimeing’ (Dedication). Favourable to Golding’s choice, Puttenham, in turn, advocates rhyme by assuming that it existed in the poetry of the Hebrews and other peoples prior to the Greeks and the Romans (2.8.41), and because rhyme would presumably be more useful than quantitative verse in English, in which language there could be ‘rime and tunable concords or simphonie’ (1.2.1) as an aspect that the Ancient Greek and Roman never considered as such. (For a fuller account of this controversy, see Morris’ chapter ‘Elizabethan Conceptions of Poetry’, 1958.)

By means of formal and thematic appropriation, Golding proceeds with solutions and vocabulary structure whose complexity is grounded on sense rather than on form. This can be observed in ‘In all the worlde one onely face of nature did abide...’, which, translating Ovid’s aetiological ‘* unus erat toto naturae uultus in orbe...*’, shows Golding’s ‘one onely’ as a means of recovering the Greek notion or Pre-Socratic philosophical concept of one primeval oneness later made into fragmentary reality (see Ramalho, 2006a; and Ramalho, 2006b).

As for metre, Golding chooses syllables arranged in rhyming couplets, the length of which allows him to use a larger number of words in order to grasp the content of his source in details, thereby developing a pattern in relation to which no concern with variation has necessarily to be thought of. All of this is done regardless the risk of monotony that the sameness of rhythm can entail, which therefore contrasts to Sidney’s or Samuel Daniel’s efforts in building rhythmic changes and mood shifts, a practice that is also observed in other sonneteers, as demonstrated in Ramalho (2006c).

This makes Golding’s translation agreeable to the English ear, in spite of its lack of major rhythmic variations that might, in a better manner, render formal aspects regarding tone and mood shift that are essential to Ovid’s verse. Instead, some senses of the original are recreated according to more or less corresponding tones in English. As an example, Raphael Lyne (2002:252) quotes the legend of Pyramus and Thisbe, which in Ovid is conveyed with ‘ironic light on the epic simile, as its self-conscious gauntness puts further strain on the brittle grauitas of this tragic tale’. Golding’s use of fourteeners in translating this legend, in turn, ‘welcomes Ovid’s more melodramatic effects. So Pyramus becomes a hero who is both less logical (more absurd and hyperbolic) and more logical (more in keeping forth the general tone)’ (Lyne, 2002:252):

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 utque dedit notae lacrimas, dedit oscula uesti,
 ‘accipe nunc’ inquit ‘nostri quoque sanguinis haustus!’
quoque erat accinctus, demisit in ilia ferrum,
 nec mora, feruenti moriens et vulnere traxit. . .(IV. 117-120)
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And when he had bewept and kist the garment which he knew,
Receyve thou my bloud too (quoth he) and therewithall he drew
His sworde, the which among his guttes he thrust, and by and by
Did draw it from the bleeding wound beginning for to die. . .(IV. 143-146)

This provides further evidence to how Elizabethan poets and playwrights mastered, and their readers and audience could perceive, even if from the background of practical experience, the metrical variations fitting thematic changes in a specific mode. This was carried out according to Ovid’s *materia conueniente modis*, the inadequacy between form and content being a potential matter for the ridicule, as Shakespeare demonstrates in the mechanicals’ broken-versed attempt to stage a version of Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

In sum, Golding’s Ovid is anglicised through the appropriation that makes both a poem that is autonomous in English and a favourite of Shakespeare (a man attentive to the functioning of sense and sound on the liveliness of the stage) and to Ezra Pound, who preferred Golding’s Ovid to *Paradise Lost* (Dimmick, 2003:267) - a choice probably grounded on the assumption that the mellifluous Englishness of the former sounds better than the Miltonic Latinate syntax and rhythmic deadness identified by F. R. Leavis (quoted in Drabble, 2000:675). It is worth recalling the Shakespearean line ‘Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes’ (*Tempest*, 5.1 33) echoes Golding’s
translation of ‘auraeque et uenti montesque amnesque lacusque, / dique (. . .)’ (Metamorphoses, VII. 197-206): ‘(. . .) ye elves of hills, of Brookes, of / Woods alone / Of standing lakes’. Golding’s is an appropriation of mythic characters through Anglo-Saxon forms, since ‘di’ appears in the sense of supernatural entities and is rendered as ‘elves’, an Anglo-Saxon appropriation in it itself from the early mythology shared by the primeval Germanic tribes - in the sense of its being rendered into new cultural metaphors made to correspond with cultural elements in the language of the source text, rather than the mere transposition of lexical equivalents - that is dynamic enough to be conveyed onto the stage.

Similarly to Golding’s couplets, Chapman sticks to the appropriation of sense, which is rendered into rhyming form, although he prefers lines with eight syllables in his poetic dedication of his rhyming form, although he prefers lines with eight syllables to the appropriation of sense, which is rendered into dynamic enough to be conveyed onto the stage.

Consequence, his dedication has some of the grave Ear of Somerset, and his wife, Countess Frances. As a consequence, his dedication has some of the grave solemnity typical of the Homerlic lines:

Twelve labours of your Thespian Hercules
I now present your Lordship; do but please
To lend life means, till th’ other twelve receive
Equal achievement. (Odyssey, Dedication)

The iambic rhythm is made formal through long Greek words (‘Thespian’, ‘Hercules’) as well as the Latinate ‘equal achievement’, thereby swaying the lines from the sounds more ordinary to the English ear and towards a graver phrasing. This tone is achieved through the literary mode used in drama, but more painstakingly carried out by sonneteers (see Ramalho, 2006c) that is built through the alternation of iambi (‘present’) and trochees (‘I now’) not seldom replaced with a spondee (‘Twelve labours’) or a pyrrhic (‘with his’). Despite the same metre, these lines contrast with the argument that Chapman writes to each canto, the following being one of them:

Telemachus to court doth call
The Woears, and commands them all
To leave his house; and, taking then
From wise Minerva ship and men,
And all things fit for him beside,
That Euryclea could provide
For sea-rites, till he found his sire,
He hoists sail; when Heaven stoops his fire. (Odyssey II Argument)

The prevailing rhythm in the lines above is agreeable to what might have been a more or less artificially contrived notion of popular taste that is attested by the stanza with lines of eight syllables that, by and large, is assumed to be incompatible to epic matter according to the Elizabethan understanding of materia conueniente modis, and regardless of Ovid’s own blend of tones and genres in his epic. Iambic pentameters arranged in couplets are also Chapman’s choice in his rendering of the Odyssey:

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔνεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὡς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερον τοτολίθρον ἑπέρεσεν:
πολλῶν δ’ ἀνθρώπων ἰδεν ἀστεα καὶ νόσον ἔγνω,
pολλὰ δ’ ὦ γ’ ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὁν κατὰ θυμόν. . . (I. 1-4)

He man, O Muse, inform, that many a way
Wound with his wisdom to his wished stay;
That wandered wondrous far, when he the town
Of sacred Troy had sack’d and shivered down;
The cities of a world of nations. . . (I. 1-5)
The basic principle of Old English poetry, an artifice essential to Middle English verse and also widespread in Elizabethan literature, alliterations are kept in Chapman’s rendering either through phonemes corresponding to those in the original - ‘μοῦσα’ and ‘μάλα’/ ‘man’, ‘Muse’, ‘many’ in the first line - or with other phonemes, such as the w and d alliteration that starts in the second line (‘wound’, ‘wisdom’ and ‘wished’) and continues in the third line (‘wandered’, ‘wondrous’ and ‘when’) as a recreation of Homer’s πλάγχθη ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερον τοτολίθρον ἑπέρεσεν. No attempt is made to build dactyls, anapaest, or the variation of iambi (‘O Muse’, ‘inform’) and trochees (‘would with’) and pyrrhics (‘wisdom to’). This leads to musicality in English whereas it dismembers any correspondence or recreation of particular features, such as the interesting caesura between two short syllables (rather than after the ictus in ‘Ἄνδρα μοι ἔνεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὡς μάλα πολλὰ’), in which line the coincidence of verse ictus and word accent coincides with English accentual verse, which, nevertheless, consists of no attempt recreate this particularity as found in Greek.

IV

In conclusion, the closer examination of the early modern context in which literary translation was produced in England brings about the ambiguous role of the translator, who is: i) not considered to hold as high a position as the one of the vernacular poet – despite the
fact the not a few translators were also poets themselves, albeit their work as translators being considered apart from the rest of their work --, given that translation was believed to entail no creativity; and ii) of the utmost importance as regards the dissemination of texts (not only, but mostly, the classics), for which accuracy and readability in English were required. Not seldom also vernacular poets themselves, the translators, as illustrated through Chapman’s Homer and Golding’s Ovid, held that they took over a privileged position in relation to the classical author whose text he or she interpreted (in the Latin sense of the translator who carries senses, with necessary adaptations, over the other language) and (re)textualising it into a new reality % itself assumed to be readable against the background of antiquity that was read in translation. Thus, drawing on the Grammar School precepts, and enhanced by professional and/or academic practice, translation was carried out under the appropriation of the Ciceronian and Horatian concepts in order to transpose senses in various forms. Such an appropriation includes the method of translation itself, since Chapman’s use of word-for-word English renderings is sometimes of the type devalued by Cicero. Rhetoric and various uses of metre and rhyme (or the avoidance of the latter) resulted in various modes by several translators who shared particular modes of appropriation as an element essential to their task, whereby the translated text was assimilated within their work, disclosing common formal features no less than shared intellectual (literary and/or philosophical) viewpoints, yet safe from non-acceptance according to the historical norms of translation as known in early modern England.

References


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Notes

1 I assume the most common viewpoint that the Metamorphoses belong to the epic genre, without denying of course its particular amalgam of lyric and dramatic features in its well-known blend of styles. The epic features central to the Metamorphoses are: the length of the poem, its hexameters and the mythological material on which it draws (Harrison, 2002:87).

2 It is worth considering the curious fact that ‘Cicero describes Ennius’ Medea as a close rendering (ad verbum) of Euripides’ drama on the same subject, but it is clear from the fragments that Ennius departed widely from his original in phrase and in substance’ (Coffey & Mayer, 1999:10-11). Furthermore, it is hard to agree with the interpretation that prevailed until around the XVI century, and which is sometimes still accepted (e.g. by Bassnett-McGuire, 1980), according to which the Horatian expression ‘fidus interpres’ (Ars Poetica:133-134) means ‘slavish translator’ rather than conveying the actual sense of the translator who attempts to use exactly corresponding words instead of the transposition of sense. For a discussion of the meaning of the Horatian expression as well as of the ongoing of its misinterpretation, see GARCIA YÉBRA (1980).

3 Mathew Arnold’s criticism (itself often criticised) having that Chapman ‘renders him [Homer] ill because he is fantastic in his ideas’, ‘fantastic’ being understood as ‘the mist of fancifulness of the Elizabethan age, entirely alien to the plain directness of Homer’s thought and feeling’ (quoted in Seymour, 1886:1).

4 Milton makes this abstractedness of translation even more spiritual in A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle (otherwise known as Comus). As William Shullenberger (2003:409) explains through some of the OED meanings of the word ‘translation’ available to Milton, the Masque... conveys a religious notion of ‘(...) crucial transference (...).’ between ontological and verbal change’ that makes of translation a ‘(...) type of death-defying metamorphosis which Comus and Circe cannot practice’ and which is embodied by the Lady. Thus conceived, translation unites ‘religious mystery and poetic invention’ and reaches Milton himself, who ‘(...) by recollecting so
many poets dead and gone (. . .) revives their voices and their ghostly persons’ (Fletcher, quoted in Shullenberger, 2003:409), thereby translating them into his creation.

This leads Hallet Smith to affirm that it is drawing on moral that Chapman approaches Homer in order to make his writings useful to his contemporaries:

There is nothing fundamental to prevent the Elizabethan reader from visualizing Achilles and Ulysses as contemporary Englishmen if he wished to, for the essential of these heroes were not, in Chapman’s opinion, Greek qualities or characteristics peculiar to a more primitive heroic age but the traits which it was desirable to inculcate in young English aristocrats, traits which could even be seen represented in them occasionally by such heroes as Sir Philip Sidney, the Earl of Essex, and Prince Henry. (Smith, 1952:304)

By rendering these ideals into readable English, Chapman somehow fulfilled what was expected of the translator, namely to provide with his anglicised Homer ‘matter and instruction’, as well as models to ‘soldiers, counsellors, fathers and children, husbands, wives, lovers, friends, and allies (Smith, 1952:307).

In early modern England, ‘poems appeared not only on paper, but also on rings, on food trenchers, on glass windows (scratched with a pin or diamond), on paintings, on tombstones and monuments, on trees, and even (as graffiti) on London’s Pissing Conduit’ (Marotti, 1995:3).

The alternation of eight and six syllables as Shakespeare mocks in Bottom’s songs is typical of popular ballads (A Midsummer Night’s Dream, 3.1. 118-126). For further details, see note 47 of my translation (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 60) into Portuguese.

As Lysbeth Benkert (2001) explains: ‘Translation served functions in the Renaissance that it no longer serves today. In addition to its scholarly role, translation acted as a method of training for hopeful poets, and as a mine of conceits for the more experienced writer. It also (. . .) served as way for women to express themselves creatively while seeming to constrain their public voice safely. What little women’s writing that remains from the sixteenth century consists mostly of dedicatory poems and religious translations, forms which silence and constrain even as they allow a certain level of expression.’ In this context, translation carried out by accomplished poets who also wrote verses of their own, like Golding and Chapman, served them as a means of, along the promulgation of the Classics, affirming in undertones their own intellectual and/or artistic precepts for which the appropriated the source texts in their making of the target text.