Aspects of Translation Technique
in Antiquity

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I N HIS *De optimo genere oratorum* (§14) Cicero discusses his own translations of Aeschines and Demosthenes, commenting as follows:

> *nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator, sententiis isdem et earum formis tanquam figuris, verbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis. in quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne verborum vimque servavi. non enim ea me adnumerare lectori putavi oportere, sed tanquam appendere.*

The same contrast between the work of the literary translator and that of the *interpres* is further brought out in his *De finibus* (3.15) where, in the face of criticism, Cicero defends his occasional use of neologisms, but goes on to assure the reader:

> *nec tamen exprimi verbum e verbo necesse erit, ut interpretes indiserti solent,*
> *cum sit verbum quod idem declaret magis usitatum.*

Horace expresses very much the same view of translation in his *Ars poetica* (133):

> *nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus interpres.*

In other words, the translator of a literary text went about his work in a manner totally different from that of the *fidus interpres*, the hack translator, who produced slavish renderings of legal and business documents. As Franz Blatt once observed, talking of Latin translations from Greek, "on se trouve rarement en face d'une véritable traduction préchrétienne."[1]

Jerome endorses the same view as Cicero and Horace in his influential letter 57, addressed to Pammachius:

> *ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor, me in interpretatione graecorum, absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu.*

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[1] F. Blatt, *ClMed* 1 (1938) 220.

Jerome's passing mention of "the holy scriptures, where even the word order is a mystery" indicates how the neat dichotomy between literary and non-literary translation, hitherto operative, breaks down with the advent of Christianity, or rather, as we shall see, with the advent of biblical translation. Jerome is offering no new ideal for translating the Bible here, he is simply reflecting the accumulated experience of over half a millennium of biblical translation.

Owing to the prestige of this ideal of literal biblical translation, it eventually became the norm for virtually all translation from Greek into Latin until the Renaissance. In the sixth century, when Boethius translated Porphyry's *Eisagoge*, and in the ninth century, when John Scotus translated the pseudo-Dionysian corpus, each in turn remarks in the preface to his work that the literal style of translation adopted will make him liable to incur Horace's deprecatory label of *fidus interpres*.[2] John Scotus excuses himself to the reader by explaining that he deliberately sets out to be an *interpres*, and not an *expositor*, of the work. Cicero's ideal of the translator as *orator*, and not an *interpres*, is completely reversed.

I

It is the background to this literal style of translation, *verbum e verbo*, as opposed to *sensus de sensu*, that will be examined in the present paper. Since this atomistic approach is so blatantly in contradiction to most modern ideals of translation, it is worth stressing at the outset that its practitioners did not choose this method because of any inadequacy on their part for the task: the choice is a deliberate one, and my aim here is to attempt to bring out the motivation that led to its adoption. Furthermore, we should remember that the method was capable of very considerable sophistication, and some of the men who produced these astonishing versions obviously had a very wide command of the two languages with which they were working.

The mediaeval western ideal of the word-for-word translation thus has its origin in biblical translation practice. How biblical translation came to adopt this approach in the first place is not at once obvious, and we need to go back to its inception, in the *Septuagint* (a title

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[2] See W. Schwarz, "The Meaning of *fidus interpres* in Medieval Translation," *JThS* 45 (1944) 73–78.

originally applicable only to the Greek translation of the Penta-
teuch).[3] With such a long tradition of biblical translation behind us,
it is perhaps a little too easy to overlook the remarkable character of
this earliest undertaking: no other oriental religious text of such an
extent achieved the honour of translation into Greek. This very fact
that such an undertaking was entirely without precedent, however,
posed a problem for the Jewish translators: on what were they to
model their translation?

If one turns to the available evidence for translation in the Hellen-
istic world, it would appear that Cicero's radical distinction between
literary and non-literary translation was already operative. The
Greek version of some of Asoka's edicts, found on a bilingual Greek-
Aramaic inscription of the third century B.C. at Kandahar (Afghan-
istan), treats the original with considerable liberty, and the text has
been deliberately presented *à la grecque*.[4] The same wish to present
the reader with a version in reasonably good Greek style seems also
to have guided the Greek translator of the Demotic story of Tefnut,
preserved in *P.Lond.* inv. 274.[5]

At the opposite end of the scale come the word-for-word transla-
tions of legal documents in Egypt and of *senatus consulta* and other
government missives originating from Republican Rome.[6] Dating
from rather later, the bilingual texts of Vergil and others, for
pedagogical use, with the Latin and Greek in parallel columns,
belong to the same world of very literal translation.[7]

Since the Pentateuch was both a legal and at the same time a

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[3] See my "The Phenomenon of the Septuagint," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 17 (1972)
11–36, where some of the issues raised in this paper are touched on from the point of view
of the early history of the *Septuagint*.

[4] L. Robert, *Journal Asiatique* 246 (1958) 13.

[5] See S. West, "The Greek Version of the Legend of Tefnut," *JEA* 55 (1969) 161–83.

[6] On these see P. Viereck, *Sermo graecus quo senatus populusque romanus magistratusque populi
romani...usi sunt examinatur* (Göttingen 1888), and R. J. Sherk, *Roman Documents from the
Greek East* (Baltimore 1969). From the early Empire the Greek version of the *Monumentum
Ancyranum* is of particular interest from this point of view; on this see A. P. M. Meuwese,
De rerum gestarum divi Augusti versione graeca (Amsterdam 1920). The interaction between
the two styles is discussed by H. J. Mason, "The Roman Government in Greek Sources;
the Effect of Literary Theory on the Translation of Official Titles," *Phoenix* 24 (1970)
150–59.

[7] The texts can most conveniently be found in R. Cavenaile, *Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum*
(Wiesbaden 1958); see also R. E. Gaebel, "The Greek Word-lists to Vergil and Cicero,"
Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 52 (1969/70) 284–325.

literary text, the initial translators were faced with a dilemma, and their hesitation is reflected in the inconsistent nature of their translation. Thus, for example, the Hebrew idiom *wayyiṭab b-ᶜene*, 'it pleased' (lit. 'it was good in the eyes of'), is rendered in *Genesis LXX* once idiomatically ἐχάρη δὲ Φαραω (45:16) but in the other two occurrences more literally καὶ ἤρεσαν οἱ λόγοι ἐναντίον (34:18, 41:37). More pedantically literal translations, such as ἀρέσκειν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖc or ἀγαθύνειν ἐνώπιον (= Heb. *lipne*, 'to the face of') were later to be devised.

The Pentateuch in Greek probably goes back to the first half of the third century B.C. A hundred years later there is evidence to show that general opinion had clearly come down on the side of considering the Bible as a legal rather than a literary document (the standard method of quoting scripture, "as it is written," significantly derives from a legal context). This placed the Jews of the diaspora in a difficult position: either their Greek Bible required 'correcting' on the basis of the Hebrew to produce a more literal translation, or it had to be accorded the same position of prestige as the Hebrew original; in other words, the translation too had to be accepted as inspired. The latter position was adopted by most Jews from Egypt, and it is given expression first in the treatise *Ad Aristeam*, a work of the second half of the second century B.C., containing the earliest account of the legend of the seventy translators. Later on Philo develops the idea, and in his *Life of Moses* (2.40) he asserts that the Seventy should be called ἱεροφάντας καὶ προφήτας rather than ἑρμηνέας (*i.e.* Cicero's *interpretes indiserti*).

The alternative, to bring the original translation into closer line with the Hebrew, was the answer of unhellenized Jews in Palestine, whose work of correction, covering two or three centuries, is now beginning to be better known thanks to the chance find in the Judean desert of some fragments of the Twelve Prophets in Greek, dating from the turn of the Christian era, and the brilliant interpretation of their significance by Père Dominique Barthélemy.[8]

Later on we shall be examining some of the techniques of these revisers in the light of some other literalist translations in antiquity, notably the Roman official documents in Greek, the Greek translations of Vergil and the sixth/seventh-century school of translators

[8] *Les devanciers d'Aquila* (Leiden 1963).

from Greek into Syriac. First, however, it is important to look at some of the reasoning behind the initial choice of a literal rather than a free translation for any particular text and the conditions under which it is a practical option.

In very general terms the *sensus de sensu* approach can be seen as bringing the original to the reader, whereas in the *verbum e verbo* translation the original acts, as it were, as Aristotle's unmoved mover, and the psychological effect is to bring the reader to the original. Seen in this light, it is obvious that the translator in antiquity had to make a momentous choice at the very outset. There are several different factors which condition the choice he makes, among which the most important are: the nature of the text he is translating, the relative prestige of the two languages concerned and the extent to which the source language is still widely known.

The choice of the literal approach for school texts requires no special comment. The bilingual Vergil papyri served the same purpose as schoolboy cribs and the more sophisticated, highly literal Latin translations employed today by some orientalists.[9]

Administrative and legal documents obviously need to convey to the reader the exact meaning of the original. This does not necessarily mean that the word-for-word translation is the most suitable, since the over-literal can be meaningless. In the bilingual semi-official honorary inscriptions from Palmyra, for example, it is often not possible to say whether the Greek or the Palmyrene is the translation: the essential content of the message is indeed identical but the phraseology quite different, each language following its own formulae. Thus in an inscription from the sanctuary of Bel at Palmyra, dated A.D. 120/1, we have:[10]

'Η βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος Μάλιχον
Οὐαβαλλάθου τοῦ Μανναίου
τιμῆς χάριν.
ṣlmʾ dnh dy mlkw br whblt br mˁny dy
ˁbdw lh bwlʾ   wdms lyqrh.   qm ṣlmʾ dnh
b[yrḥ   ] šnt 432.

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[9] For example, by the late J. Molitor in his Latin versions of Georgian texts.

[10] J. Cantineau, *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre* (Beirut 1933) IX, no.31; the Palmyrene text reads "This statue of MLKW son of WHBLT son of MˁNY (is that) which the *boule* and *demos* made for him, to his honour. This statue was erected in the [month?] of the year 432."

On the other hand, where the message to be conveyed is of a more detailed nature as in the Republican administrative documents from the east, the Greek version always points the reader to the official original in Latin. Obscurities resulting from excessive literalism (including the dating formulae) could be explained by Roman officials on the spot: an *expositor*, to use John Scotus' term, is at hand.

The availability of such an *expositor* is essential if the techniques of literal translation are to be pushed to the extreme. Thus the literalist school of Greek biblical translation, culminating in the work of Aquila (early second century), is only a practical proposition in Palestine, where many Jews were bilingual: this is why the Egyptian Jews, to whom Hebrew was mostly unknown, chose to regard the *Septuagint* as inspired rather than to correct it and thus render it virtually unintelligible. Likewise the Syriac school of translators of patristic and biblical literature was also the product of a bilingual culture where the source language had an overriding prestige. Once Greek disappeared from the Near East, these works for the most part[11] virtually ceased to be copied: in places they verge on being unintelligible without a knowledge of Greek. The need for a living source of *expositores* explains why literal translations from Greek into Arabic never caught on; at first the standard Syriac techniques of literal translation were applied (often with Syriac as a halfway house), but the great translators like Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq explicitly reject the *verbum e verbo* approach in favour of the *sensus de sensu*. The fourteenth-century scholar Aṣ-Ṣafadī (died 1363) has a famous passage which is worth quoting in full:[12]

> The translators use two methods of translation. One of them is that of Yuḥannā b. al-Baṭrīq, Ibn an-Nā'imah al-Ḥimsī and others. According to this method, the translator studies each individual Greek word and its meaning, chooses an Arabic word of corresponding meaning and uses it. Then he turns to the next word and proceeds in the same manner until in the end he has rendered into Arabic the text he wishes to translate. This method is bad for two reasons. First, it is impossible to find Arabic

[11] The Harklean and Syrohexaplar versions of the Syriac Bible, however, continued to be copied and read (even in lectionary texts); but for these the Peshitta translation was readily at hand to throw light on obscurities.

[12] Quoted from F. Rosenthal, *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (London 1975) 17. The point made here has in fact become something of a literary *topos* and does not correspond fully to reality.

expressions corresponding to all Greek words and, therefore, through this method many Greek words remain untranslated. Second, certain syntactical combinations in one language do not always necessarily correspond to similar combinations in the other; besides, the use of metaphors, which are frequent in every language, causes additional mistakes.

The second method is that of Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq, al-Jauharī and others. Here the translator considers a whole sentence, ascertains its full meaning and then expresses it in Arabic with a sentence identical in meaning, without concern for the correspondence of individual words. This method is superior, and hence there is no need to improve the works of Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq.

In the case of Arabic translations from Greek (and Syriac) the other important conditioning factor also enters in: the relative prestige of the source and receptor languages. Whereas for the Syriac translators of the sixth and seventh centuries the prestige of Greek was at its height, in ninth-century Baghdad the rôles were totally reversed, and Arabic is now all-important. The significance, for translation technique, of a language's cultural prestige is in fact very well illustrated by the history of Syriac translations from Greek. The earliest versions of the fourth and fifth century are almost all very free (Basil's homilies, for example, are expanded by about fifty per cent),[13] and significantly the translators adapt the Greek biblical quotations to the wording familiar to their readers from the Syriac Bible; Aramaic was, after all, the original language of mankind.[14] The rapid hellenization of the Syriac church began in the mid-fifth century, and the precise wording of the Greek original now becomes all-important, and biblical quotations are translated exactly, even when they diverge from the text of the Syriac Bible.[15] In other words, with the Greek language's new position of prestige, translation techniques change.

It is in a sacred text, however, that the need to bring the reader to the original was felt more than anywhere else. Indeed in Egypt there

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[13] See my "Basil's Homily on Deut. xv.9: Some Remarks on the Syriac Manuscript Tradition," forthcoming in the memorial volume for Marcel Richard. For the tradition of translation from Greek into Syriac, see my "Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Greek," *Journal of the Syriac Academy, Baghdad* 3 (1977) 406–22.

[14] This is the standard claim of Syriac writers; Jews of course considered it to be Hebrew.

[15] See B. M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford 1977) 96–98.

seems to have been a reluctance to translate religious texts at all, since, as Iamblichus put it:[16]

> In translation words do not preserve exactly the same sense: each people has characteristics impossible to transfer from one language to another; thus, even though one can translate these words, they still do not preserve the same force.

A living example of such a reluctance to translate a sacred text is of course provided by the Qur'ān.

A few centuries earlier than Iamblichus the translator of *Ecclesiasticus* (the author Ben Sira's grandson) uttered remarkably similar sentiments in the preface to his work (21–22):

> Things originally spoken in Hebrew do not have the same force in them when they are translated into another language.

He is excusing the differences which his contemporaries had begun to notice between the *Septuagint* of 'the Law, the Prophets and the Writings' and their Hebrew originals. Since he himself is translating Wisdom literature, he can allow himself the same freedom that the Greek translator of *Proverbs* had used. Iamblichus, on the other hand, holds that only the originals are valid (*Myst.* 7.5):

> The words of the ancient prayers should be kept exactly as they are, as though they were holy sanctuaries: nothing should be removed from them, and nothing added.

(The 'removing' and 'adding' is significantly phraseology borrowed from Greek treaties,[17] thus placing religious documents in the category of texts requiring literal translation—that is, if translation is to be made at all.)

Iamblichus' dilemma of *traduttore traditore* led an earlier pagan writer to cut the Gordian knot and claim divine inspiration for his work of translation from Egyptian into Greek—just as Philo and the Christian fathers claimed for the *Septuagint* and Luther was later to claim for his translation:[18] this anonymous writer (*P.Oxy.* XI 1381)

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[16] Iambl. *Myst.* 7.5. Compare C. Préaux, "De la Grèce classique à l'Egypte hellénistique: traduire ou ne pas traduire," *Cd'E* 42 (1967) 369–83, and (more generally) G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London 1975), ch.2 "Language and Gnosis."

[17] See W. C. van Unnik, "De la règle μήτε προσθεῖναι μήτε ἀφελεῖν dans l'histoire du Canon," *VigChr* 3 (1949) 1–36.

[18] See W. Schwarz, *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation* (Cambridge 1955) 169–72.

had begun a translation from Egyptian of a book about Imhotep, but, overwhelmed by the nature of the task, he had given up; it was only after a divine visitation that he eventually took up the work again, τὴν cὴν (the god's) ἐπικαλεcάμενοc πρόνοιαν καὶ πληρωθεὶc τῆc cῆc θειότητοc.

Once the principle of translating a sacred text was admitted, the only compromise open in Palestinian Jewish circles—torn between the need (at least in some quarters) for a Greek translation and a consciousness of the overriding importance of the source text in Hebrew—lay in the adoption of a slavishly literal approach to biblical translation. The result was this long drawn out process of revision of the original *Septuagint* translations, culminating in the astonishing refinements of Aquila in the early second century.

Later on, official Judaism turned against written translations of the Bible altogether. R.Judah b. Ilai, a pupil of R.Akiba at the end of the second century, held that "he who translates literally is a falsifier, while he who adds anything (by way of paraphrase) is a blasphemer."[19] The insistence that the Aramaic translations (*targumim*) should only be oral and not written down points to one of the factors that led to this new stance: at a time when Greek and Aramaic were gaining as vernaculars in Palestine at the expense of Hebrew, to allow a written translation into either of these languages was tantamount to encouraging the demise of Hebrew as a cultural language. The Hebrew Bible thus provided an ideal focus for cultural identity at a time when political aspirations had been effectively quashed. Many modern parallels to sensitivity on this issue will spring to mind, and it may well be that Egyptian reluctance to translate sacred books was inspired as much by these considerations as by doubts over the validity of translating a sacred text at all.

In the Christian church, literal translation acquired an importance for different reasons. In the biblical sphere, because Christians for the most part adopted the attitude of Alexandrine Jewry and regarded the *Septuagint* as itself inspired, Aquila's method δουλεύων τῇ Ἑβραϊκῇ λέξει (Orig. *Ep.* 1.2) was generally derided; nevertheless, controversy with Jews made it important for Christians to have a Greek biblical text which agreed with that current in Jewish circles.

[19] Bab. Talm. *Qidd.* 49a; Tosefta, *Meg.* 4.41.

The result of this particular need was Origen's monumental *Hexapla*,[20] the inspiration for whose format may possibly have lain in the bilingual Vergil texts.

Outside the Bible, literal translation rapidly became a requirement with the spread of heresy. Translators could—and did—interpolate their translations of orthodox writers and so pass off heterodox opinions under the auspices of some revered authority. Likewise, exact translations of works suspected of heterodoxy were required for the consideration of synods and councils. Marius Mercator produced the Latin translation of many Greek documents of the Council of Ephesus (431), and he prefaced his translation of a work of Nestorius with the following words:[21]

> As far as I was able, I have tried to translate the work *verbum de verbo*, lest I subsequently be found a falsifier rather than a true translator (*verus interpres*).

Precision in the translation of doctrinally suspect works was obviously essential. John Scotus, realizing that by translating Ps. Dionysius' works into Latin he was introducing his readers to heady stuff, is very careful to point out that he has translated *verbum de verbo*, and consequently allegations of dubious orthodoxy should be laid at the door of the original author and not the translator.[22] Literal translation has thus become a double safeguard: for the reader, against the introduction of false or heretical views by the translator, and for the translator, against accusations by the reader of falsification of the thought of the original.

The Graeco-Roman ideal of translation was primarily interested

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[20] So I have argued in "Origen's Aims as a Textual Critic of the Old Testament," *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970) 215–18.

[21] Schwartz, *Acta Conc.Oec.* I.5, pp.28–29. The passage is worth quoting as a whole: "*Nestorii quondam episcopi Constantinopolitanae urbis nonnulla ad plebem blasphemiarum dicta vel scripta ex Graeco in Latinum sermonem, fervore catholicae fidei incitatus, curavi transferre a fidelibus linguae meae fratribus cognoscenda atque vitanda, in quibus verbum de verbo, in quantum fieri potuit, conatus sum translator exprimere, ne prius falsarius magis quam verus postea probarer interpres. da igitur veniam, pie lector, si aut minus oratio luculenta est aut verborum ubicumque praesumptorum novitas aurem forte perculerit. elegi obtrectatorum linguis magis exponi quam veritate sensuum exprimenda, ubi est omne de falsitate periculum, longius aberre. occupent igitur se ex hoc idem isti nostri disertuli ad singulas syllabas nostras scrutandas et verba rimanda: non id curo nec magni pendo, securus quod mihi de hoc opere nullus falsarii nomen inponat. scio etiam ab istis exprobanda nobis esse aliqua dicta vitiosa, quae nobis vis servandae Graecae proprietas extorsit.*" (On pp.395–415 there will be found useful Greek/Latin indices to the translation.)

[22] Migne, *PL* 122.1032: ...*sin vero obscuram minusque apertam praedictae interpretationis seriem iudicaverit, videat me interpretem huius operis esse, non expositorem.*

in form and the impact this had on the reader. In total contrast, the Jewish and Christian ideal was solely concerned with the content of the original, and biblical translation, once established, provides the model for translation technique in other areas as well: only a few fields, such as hagiography and other popular forms of literature, escape the deliberately fossilizing embrace of the literalist approach. Why concern for the content of the original did not lead to a desire to communicate that content in a more intelligible form, I have already tried to indicate: to communicate the message to the reader or hearer was the task of the *expositor* and not the *interpres*. But there is also a further consideration which pointed to the atomistic *verbum e verbo* approach as the only acceptable mode of procedure. Given the view, widespread in antiquity, that what can be fully described must in some way be less than the mind that describes it,[23] to translate an inspired text *sensus de sensu* would be to imply that the *sensus* of the impenetrable mysteries of scripture had been fully grasped by the translator; he would thus be guilty of the same presumption that Eunomius displayed when he claimed to be able to give a rational description of the nature of the Logos.

Of course, in contexts where *expositores* with a knowledge of the source language were no longer readily available, tacit compromise had to be made, as Jerome's own practice in fact shows.

To borrow an analogy from another field of academic activity, the aim of the literalist translators was to produce as it were a diplomatic edition of his text and not a critical one. And as such, the modern editor of their various source texts has ample cause to be grateful to these translators for producing their mirror versions.

II

In the second half of this paper we shall look at some of the techniques of the *verbum e verbo* translators. Obviously some translations are literal because of the translator's lack of skill in either the source or the receptor language. Our concern is not with these, but with the highly sophisticated work of men who were probably bilingual in the

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[23] The point is expressed in a nutshell by the fifth-century Syriac writer John of Apamea (B.L., Add. 17167, fol.138a): "he who is contained by knowledge cannot be Lord of that knowledge which contains him"; see also Greg.Nyss. *v.Mos.*, *PG* 44.404–05. What seems to be a similar shift in emphasis from form to content can also be observed in the art of the period: see E. Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making* (London 1977) ch.1.

two languages with which they were operating. I shall take my examples primarily from translations of Hebrew into Greek (biblical) and of Greek into Syriac (both biblical and non-biblical), since these are languages whose basically different structures pose obvious problems to the literal translator. My main sources will be Aquila and his predecessors for translation from Hebrew into Greek, and, for Greek into Syriac, the work of three early seventh-century translators who probably trained at the same monastery: Paul, bishop of Tella, who translated Origen's revised *Septuagint* text into Syriac (the 'Syrohexapla'), Thomas of Harkel, the author of the so-called Harklean New Testament (a revision of an earlier revision of the Syriac New Testament made under the auspices of Philoxenus of Mabbug at the beginning of the sixth century),[24] and Paul, bishop of Edessa, who revised a sixth-century translation of the works of Gregory of Nazianzus.

For comparison's sake, however, I shall also draw upon some of the other manifestations of literal translation in the Graeco-Roman world, in particular the Republican documents from the east in Greek and the bilingual Vergil texts. In passing, it might be said that, since the late sixth and early seventh centuries witnessed the development of literalizing schools of translation from Greek into Latin and Armenian as well as into Syriac, an interesting task for the future would be to examine the respective methods of these schools.[25]

As a preliminary remark, it should be noted that, except in the case of the Roman official documents, the receptor and not the source language was the translator's first language: this at once indicates that the abuse of syntax consequent upon this method of translation is deliberate and not due to incompetence.

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[24] Whereas Philoxenus' motivation for sponsoring a revision of the Syriac Peshitta New Testament was primarily theological, the interests of Thomas (and the two Pauls) were essentially philological; on this, see my "The Resolution of the Philoxenian/Harklean Problem," forthcoming in the *Festschrift* for B. M. Metzger.

[25] For Latin see, for example, L. Szymanski, *The Translation Procedure of Epiphanius-Cassiodorus in the Historia Tripartita Books I and II* (Washington 1963), and F. Weissengruber, *Epiphanius Scholasticus als Übersetzer zu Cassiodorus-Epiphanius Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita* (*SBWien* 1972, Bd.283); for Armenian see H. Manandian, *The Hellenizing School and its Development* [in Armenian] (Vienna 1928); for Syriac see S. Rørdam, "Dissertatio de regulis grammaticis quas secutus est Paulus Tellensis in veteri testamento ex graeco syriace vertendo" (=pp.1–59 of his *Libri Judicum et Ruth secundum versionem Syriaco-Hexaplarem* [Copenhagen 1859–61]), and my *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Scholia* (Cambridge 1971) 34–44.

Translations can be literal in varying degrees, and a proper characterization lies partly in the successful identification of the translator's particular interests and concerns: most literalist translators concentrate their attention on certain features only. Manandian, in his classic study of the Armenian hellenizing school, was able to distinguish four different styles of translation there. Similar distinctions could certainly be made for the contemporary Syriac school of translation, and in the case of biblical translation from Hebrew into Greek it is now possible to isolate a number of stages of development in the work of the literalist revisers, culminating in Aquila. But details of these diachronic features are not our concern here; rather, we shall be looking at some of the limits to which literalism could be pressed.

WORD ORDER AND FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE

In the case of the biblical translator, for whom "the very word order is a mystery," reproduction of the word order of the source language is essential. The preservation of the word order of the original indeed serves as the most obvious mark of any literal translation, and in the case of the Vergil translations it is worth noting that this is more or less a requirement of the format. In most exponents of the method it is also of importance to render as far as possible each vocable with one that corresponds to it in grammatical function. This principle of formal correspondence produces many interesting refinements both in the work of Aquila and his predecessors and in that of the seventh-century Syriac translators.

Particles hitherto left untranslated by earlier translators are now carefully represented: thus the earlier Greek biblical translations render the Hebrew particles *w-*, *gam*, *w-gam* ('and', 'also', 'and also') indifferently by καί, but Aquila and his predecessors wished to distinguish between these three words[26] and so rendered *w-* by καί, *gam* by καί γε and *w-gam* by καὶ καί γε. Following the same principles Aquila neatly represents the Hebrew local suffix *he* by the Greek suffix -δε: thus οἰκόνδε for *baytah*, 'house-wards'. Aquila's choice of the Homeric οἰκόνδε rather than the Attic οἰκάδε may shed some light on the most notorious feature of Aquila's translation technique, his use of σύν+ accusative to represent Hebrew *'et*, which can serve either to

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[26] There were hermeneutical reasons for this; see Reider in *JQR* n.s. 4 (1913/4) 336 n.33.

introduce a defined object or as a preposition, 'with'. Was Aquila's starting point the adverbial use of cύν in Homer?[27] In that case it is likely that Aquila too was treating cύν as an adverb and not as a preposition when he translated the opening verse of Genesis ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ἔκτιcεν θεὸc cὺν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ cὺν τὴν γῆν.

The later Syriac translators are also careful to render all Greek particles with some regular formal equivalent: thus μέν and ἄρα are both transliterated (this in fact goes back to the fifth century), τε and γε are represented by *kit*, etc. Possibly there are traces of the same concern in some of the Vergil papyri: for the most part -*que* is represented by καί, but in a few of the texts τε is employed as a better formal equivalent.

Since every detail of the original text is potentially significant, it is not surprising that these translators are careful to distinguish between features of the original that would seem to be purely a matter of stylistic choice. Thus verbs of saying in Hebrew can take either of two prepositions, *l-* and *ʾel*. This offers no difficulties for the Greek translator, since he can represent *l-* by the dative and *ʾel* by πρόc; Syriac in turn is able to render the Greek dative by *l-* and πρόc by *lwat*, 'towards'.[28] More problematic are cases where the receptor language has only a single vocable where the source language has two. Hebrew has two forms of the first person pronoun, *ʾani* and *ʾanoki*; in order to bring out this distinction in Greek Aquila has to resort to reserving ἐγώ for *ʾani* and representing *ʾanoki* by ἐγώ εἰμι, regardless of what follows syntactically.

Whereas Hebrew parataxis can readily, if inelegantly, be reproduced in Greek, the reverse is not the case, and one can only stand back and admire the skill and ingenuity exhibited by the seventh-century Syriac translators in their work: wherever feasible the principle of formal correspondence is preserved. A few examples must suffice here. Hebrew into Greek had already made much use of the construction ἐν τῷ+infinitive to render the Hebrew 'infinitive construct' with preposition. Syriac has nothing corresponding to the Hebrew infinitive construct and so resorts to employing a preposition +*hay* (∼τό)+*d-* introducing a verb in perfect/imperfect/participle;

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[27] See Barthélemy, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.8) 16. F. Field had already drawn attention to the Homeric element in Aquila, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt* (Oxford 1875) xxiii.

[28] *lwat* with verbs of saying is a regular feature of the later translation literature only; in early translations and in native Syriac writing it is extremely rare.

thus ἐπὶ τὸ βασιλεῦσαι becomes *lwat hay d-namlek*, 'towards/that/that he reign'.[29]

The Greek verbs εἶναι and ἔχειν have no formal equivalents in Syriac, and in subordinate clauses these posed particular problems. By treating *ʾit*, 'there is, exists', as a formal correspondent to εἶναι and *ʾit l-*, 'there is to', to ἔχειν, the seventh-century translators managed to indicate the Greek subjunctive:

> *John* 14:3 (Harklean) (ἵνα ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς) ἦτε:
> ... *tehwun ʾitaykun*, 'you shall be/you are' (normal Syriac would have *tehwun* alone).
> *John* 3:15 (Harklean) (ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐν αὐτῷ) ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον: ... *nehwe ʾit leh ḥayye dal-ʿalam*, 'there shall be/there is/to him/life/which is for ever'.

The second example gives the appearance of being a soloecism in Syriac if one goes by the normal Syriac idiom for 'he will have life' (*nehwun leh ḥayye*, 'there will be/to him/life'), for in the Harklean passage quoted *ḥayye* (plural) appears to be the grammatical subject to *nehwe*; what has happened, however, is that *nehwe* is simply used as a tense indicator, with no grammatical subject, and *ʾit leh* has been taken as a syntactical unit equivalent to ἔχειν, with *ḥayye* treated as the object, totally against normal Syriac usage. That this is the correct explanation is shown beyond a doubt by the occasional further extension:

> *John* 12:8 (Harklean) τοὺς πτωχοὺς γὰρ πάντοτε ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν, ἐμὲ δὲ οὐ πάντοτε ἔχετε: *l-meskine ger bkulzban ʾit lkun ʿamkun. li den law bkulzban ʾit lkun*, 'the poor (prefixed by object marker)/for/at all times/there is/to you/with you; /me/but/not/at all times/there is/to you'. (Here *meskine*, which according to Syriac idiom should be the subject of *ʾit lkun*, has the object marker *l-* in order to correspond to the Greek accusative after ἔχετε.)[30]

One further syntactic calque involving ἔχειν with an adverb is worth noting:[31]

> ὑπομονητικῶς ἔχειν 'to behave enduringly': *da-msaybranaʾit hwa ʾit lhun*, 'enduringly/was/there is/to them'. (Here again the Greek construction is reproduced mechanically, totally against Syriac

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[29] For the benefit of non-Syriacists I give deliberately atomistic renderings of the Syriac.

[30] Other examples in the Harklean will be found at *Acts* 9:31, *2 Cor.* 7:1, *Phil.* 3:17 and *James* 2:1. Paul of Edessa uses exactly the same construction; see Brock, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.25) 39.

[31] See Brock, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.25) 39.

idiom; *hwa* is simply introduced as a tense indicator, required by the context.)

LEXICAL FEATURES; TECHNICAL TERMS

Technical terms naturally represent a very important category, and the three possibilities open—transcription, etymological translation (usually a neologism) or cultural equivalent[32]—are well exemplified in the Greek documents of the Republican administration in the east, which use all three methods, the choice depending on the particular character of each term: thus *dictator* is transcribed, *designatus* becomes ἀποδεδειγμένος, while *quaestor* is equated with ταμίας.[33] Aquila usually opts for the second method, etymological translation: *pesaḥ*, 'Passover', which is transliterated in the *Septuagint* becomes ὑπέρβασις in Aquila; *Urim* and *Tummim*, rendered by δήλωσις καὶ ἀλήθεια in the *Septuagint Exodus* and *Leviticus*, are given the more etymological translations φωτισμοὶ καὶ τελειώσεις by Aquila; the divine name Shaddai, too, is understood by Aquila as being composed of *š-+ day*, 'which/sufficient', and accordingly he renders it by Ἱκανός (earlier translators had normally employed Παντοκράτωρ). As Jerome remarked in his letter to Pammachius (§11), Aquila *non solum verba sed etymologias quoque transferre conatus est.*

Some of Aquila's predecessors in the work of revising the *Septuagint* had shown a predilection for transliterations in their treatment of at least certain technical terms:[34] thus *minḥa*, 'meal offering' (*LXX* usually θυσία), is transliterated μαναα; Aquila, in contrast, prefers δῶρον. Etymological translation for technical terms is very much a feature of the seventh-century Syriac translators: thus, for example, σκηνοπηγία (Peshitta *mṭalle*) becomes qbiʿut maškne, 'fixing of/tents', and even ὁ διάβολος becomes marmyana (based on βάλλειν: rma). In philosophical and theological translations neologisms such as hikadhiyayuta (for ταυτότης) abound. One can also observe the preference, already shown by Aquila, for replacing earlier transcriptions by etymological translations: thus Paul of Edessa removes transcriptions

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[32] *Transcriptio, interpretatio* and *comparatio* in the terminology adopted by D. Magie, *De Romanorum iuris publici sacrique vocabulis in graecum sermonem conversis* (Leipzig 1905).

[33] For details, see H. J. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions: a Lexicon and Analysis* (Am.Stud.Pap. 13, Toronto 1974).

[34] See E. Tov, "Transliterations of Hebrew Words in the Greek Versions of the Old Testament," *Textus* 8 (1973) 78–92.

of θεολογία and substitutes instead *mmallut ʾalahuta*, 'speech of/ divinity'.[35]

This preference for etymological renderings is certainly not confined to technical terms. Aquila, as we have seen, was renowned for his practice, but he had to some extent been anticipated by his predecessors, who had already replaced the *Septuagint* ἕκαστος for distributive *ʾiš* by the literal rendering ἀνήρ and associated *hora* (*yrh*, 'instruct') with *ʾur*, 'light', and accordingly rendered by φωτίζειν. Aquila in particular often takes further care to represent the various derivatives of a single Hebrew root by derivatives of a single Greek stem, as for example *ḥaqaq* ἀκριβάζειν; *ḥoq* ἀκριβασμός or ἀκρίβασμα; *mḥoqeq* ἀκριβαστής.

Elements of both these features are to be observed in the Greek translations of Vergil. There etymological renderings are chiefly to be found in compounds such as: *pervius* διοδευτικός, *circumspicio* περισκοπέω, *incomitatus* ἀσυνοδευτός. For the second feature one might adduce *laetus* ἱλαρός, *laetitia* ἱλαρία; *mora* παρολκή, *moror* παρέλκω.

Outside technical terms this etymological concern is absent from the Republican documents in Greek.

In the late Syriac translators etymological calques abound: thus *metʿamranita*, 'what is dwelt in (f.)', represents οἰκουμένη (compare κύκλος for *orbis* in the Greek Vergil), *qbiʿut ʾelpe*, 'fixing of/boats', for ναυπηγία, *lʿal men kyana*, 'above nature', for ὑπερφυής etc. Etymological extensions, totally unsuitable semantically, include *kahnaya* 'priestly' for ἱερός, *kahhen* for ἱερόω, both based on *kahna*=ἱερεύς. Some seventh-century translators, but not the two Pauls or Thomas, are careful to render the prepositional element in compound verbs— a feature of the later stages of the Armenian hellenizing school; at the end of the century Jacob of Edessa shows some concern over this in his revision of the sixth-century translation of Severus' homilies, *e.g.* ὑποστίξαι *psaq taḥtaya*, 'make a cut/what is below' (*i.e.* punctuate).[36]

REGULAR LEXICAL CORRESPONDENCE

The literalist translator also desires to achieve a one-for-one lexical correspondence, at least for what he considers the more important

[35] See *Le Muséon* 79 (1966) 424–25.

[36] Some startling examples are also to be found in the translation (probably seventh century) of Proclus' *Homily on the Ascension*; see J. M. Sauget, *Le Muséon* 82 (1969) 12. Certain compounds such as προ- had been represented by earlier translations as well (usually by another verb such as *qaddem*).

elements in the vocabulary of his source text. Aquila and the Syriac translators appear to have gone furthest in pursuit of this ideal, although none of these translators aims at being totally consistent over the whole range of the vocabulary of the source text: each has his own area of special concern. In the Greek translations of Latin administrative documents regular correspondence is confined to technical terms and phrases, but in these there is a remarkable uniformity of usage over a period of nearly two hundred years. The short extent of the Greek Vergil fragments makes it hard to judge whether the translator aimed at any sort of regular correspondence there too: in the extant material there is certainly consistency for the following: *casus* cυμφορά, *cura* φροντίς, *fama* φήμη,[37] *laetus* ἱλαρός, *limen* οὐδός, *traho* cύρω.

This practice, together with that of etymological translation, of course ignores the fact that the correspondences in either language almost certainly do not have anything like the same semantic range. There are indications that the practitioners of this method were perfectly well aware of this grave disadvantage but held that the importance of knowing that the same word was being used in the source language overrode all other considerations. Needless to say, this procedure led to some surprising results: Syriac *šubḥa*, *šabbaḥ* regularly represent δόξα, δοξάζω, 'glory', 'praise', but the seventh-century translators extend this equivalence to contexts where δόξα and δοξάζω have the meaning '(hold an) opinion'. Thus the Syriac for ὀρθόδοξοc is *triṣ šubḥa* (Armenian has an identical calque), and even in subsequent non-translation literature *šabbaḥ* is sometimes to be found with the meaning 'hold an opinion'. Just as the Hebraisms of the Authorized Version, so too the Hellenisms of the seventh-century translators proved an unexpected source of enrichment for the receptor language.

ANALOGY

It will have been noticed that time and time again the literalist school of translators develop their techniques by a process of analogy: features already existing in the receptor language which prove suitable for their purpose are sought out and then pushed to extremes.

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[37] Homoeophony, as in this case, is something for which some of the Greek translators of the *LXX* strived; see G. B. Caird, "Homoeophony in the Septuagint," in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Essays in Honor of W. D. Davies* (Leiden 1976) 74–88.

An excellent paradigm of their method is provided by the techniques developed by the late Syriac translators for rendering the Greek reflexive pronoun. In native Syriac literature, beside the much more frequent *napšeh*, *qnumeh* ('his soul', 'his person'), the reflexive pronoun *hu leh* is also occasionally found.[38] To the seventh-century translators this provides an excellent etymological equivalent to ἑαυτὸν (cφε = *hu*, αὐτόν = *leh*) and was accordingly adopted by them, and indeed this serves as one of the hallmarks of their work. Since, however, they also needed to translate cεαυτόν, ἑαυτοῖc etc., they went on to create by analogy the totally un-Syriac forms *a(n)t lak* and *hennun bhun* etc. to correspond.

One final refinement will provide a fitting conclusion. The ninth-century writer Agobard of Lyons draws the logical consequences for the translation of a text regarded as verbally inspired (Migne, *PL* 104.163):

> *spiritus apud hebraeos genere dicitur feminino, et, cum sit in latino generis masculini, nullus interpretum hebraicum sequens genere in latino ponere tentavit, etiam cum necessitas posceret.*

As a matter of fact the reverse process had taken place between Greek and Syriac: in early Syriac literature the Holy Spirit, *ruha d-qudša*, is always treated grammatically as a feminine, but from the early fifth century onwards the influence of Greek τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον led to the general adoption of the masculine (Syriac has no neuter). Further-more, the precise step envisaged by Agobard was eventually taken by a Corfiot Jew who in the twelfth or thirteenth century translated *Jonah* 1:4 by[39] καὶ ὁ Κύριοc ἔρριξεν ἄνεμο (*ruah*) μεγάλην.[40]

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[38] See Brock, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.25) 37–38.

[39] Edited by D. C. Hesseling, *BZ* 10 (1901) 209.

[40] Paper read to the Philological Society, at King's College London on 18 February 1977.