

Excerpt of Doctoral Thesis

**LITERARY TRANSLATION IN ANTIQUITY:
– TRENDS AND PROGRESS OF LATIN LITERARY TRANSLATION SHOWING IN
ANCIENT TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER –**

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Topic and Structure of the Thesis

My doctoral thesis deals with translations of Homer into Latin during classical antiquity. Since the first longer piece of Roman literature about which (although only from fragments) we can have some grasp happens to be a translation of Homer, it can be stated that Homeric epics were of foundational importance for the Romans almost in the same way as they were for the Greeks. Rethinking and creative re-use of Homeric texts is present all along Greek and Roman literature as well. However, the main topic of my thesis is not the inexhaustible set of questions around *imitatio* and *aemulatio* but those texts that define themselves as „translations”: the translatorial methods and operations used in these texts come to be examined, in the first place, from a linguistical point of view, but attention is paid to the literary point of view as well, as being inseparable from the linguistical one.

Nevertheless I found it necessary, too, to touch upon authors that cannot be called translators of Homer, but it is a characteristic of the allusive technique used by them that in their works there can be some imitations of Homeric texts so close that they are worth being examined in the light of translation criticism. Such authors (e. g. Vergil or the Silver Age epic poets) don't feature in the thesis in the measure that their literary greatness would deserve; what's more, I haven't had a possibility even of a thorough exposition of the relation between their works and Homer. Only some of their passages are examined in order to shed some light on a few aspects of their rivalry with Homer or his earlier Latin *aemulatores*.

Authors whose life-work has been of definitive importance as to the formation of Roman view of translation are also included in my examination, although they don't belong to the translators of Homer, either. That's why I had to handle briefly Roman drama, which had been esteemed by Cicero and Hieronymus as the example *par excellence* of literary translation, and also the Neoteric poets, who had introduced new methods in translation. Without them, an examination of the history of translating Homer cannot be imagined.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with some questions of translation theory, then it deals with the role of literary translation in ancient Greek and Roman culture. The other chapters follow the chronological articulation of Roman literature. The

second chapter concerns the Archaic Age. Its first part is about the *Odusia* of Livius Andronicus, followed by Naevius and Ennius; finally, some words are said about Roman drama. The third chapter is dedicated to Golden Age literature: it begins with the Neoteric poets, then follows Cicero's translatorial work, then some passages of Vergil, Horace, and Ovid that can be viewed as translations of Homeric passages. The fourth chapter focuses on Silver Age literature: first, authors, translators, and epitomators that can be classified with epic poetry – that is, Germanicus, Baebius Italicus, Attius Labeo, Statius, Valerius Flaccus, and also the didactic poem on metrics by Terentianus Maurus –, then passages of Homer turning up in the Alexander novel translated by Iulius Valerius; finally, Gellius' principles of translation criticism, which aren't connected closely with Homer, but foreshadow the change in the view of literal translation coming with Christianity. The latter is dealt with in the last chapter: there is a brief overview of the tradition of Bible translation, which forms another branch that falls into the history of Roman literary translation; then a few words are said about passages translated from Homer which come up in the texts of some Christian authors (Hieronymus, Lactantius, Chalcidius).

I. Introduction: On Translation

I didn't aim at giving a full historical overview of every question of translation studies: this would not have been possible within this setting. But I found it important is to resume the main types of translation (and particularly literary translation) according to REISS and POLGÁR, since the aspects of examination of a translation is determined by its collocation in one of these categories. These types are the following: interlinear translation, word-for-word translation, documentary (or philological) translation, communicative translation, adaptive translation. In the history of Roman literary translation all five types have their own influence, but the last two have the greatest importance, because the drive of *aemulatio* has been alive in every Roman literary translator from the very beginning.

After this general introduction I summarized the role of translation in the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman world. While in the Greek world translation comes to have a greater role only in the age of the Emperors, for the Romans it is of definitive importance from the

beginning – so that we can even wonder why individual Roman literature was born. On the other hand, the aim of translations of Homer has never been an „instructional” one: the knowledge – if not of the text, at least of the content – of Homeric epics had been present in Italy for many centuries before the first translation was made.

II. Archaic Age

The appreciation of Livius Andronicus as a translator is greatly influenced by ideas about his life – since in this field nothing can be stated for certain –, so I began the chapter dedicated to him with the overview of biographical questions. The consensus of scholars accepts the chronology of Varro (so did I), but almost every other point of the biography can be questioned. The aim of Andronicus in preparing the *Oduvia* is also subject to debate. There is no sign of state commission; on the other hand, the literary level of the translation makes it impossible that it was meant to be a textbook for students. Maybe Andronicus passed from drama translations to epic translation as the next artistic challenge, for which there could have been a demand on behalf of the Roman audience as well, since among Rome’s many potential foundational narratives there were also Italian myths connected to the Odyssey.

The most characteristic features of Andronicus’ translation are that, on the one hand, it is based on Hellenistic literature, but on the other hand, it strives for the total Romanization of the source text. In its linguistic and stylistic shaping and in the so-called „*contaminazione a distanza*” process discovered by RONCONI can be suspected the influence of Antimachus, but in a certain fragment the knowledge of the scholia of Homer can be assumed, too. However, it is the merit of Andronicus himself that he reproduced in Latin the tension between Greek epic and spoken language, and also between epic and dramatic language, by using a language richly decorated with archaisms and possibly free from Grecisms in the *Oduvia*, while in his dramas he chose formulations closer to spoken language. His translatorial activity covered not only the transformation of Greek text into Latin text, but also the form of verse (Saturnian verse instead of hexameters), the names of the gods (freshly induced, etymologically and functionally motivated novelties alongside the identifications of long standing based

on *interpretatio Romana*), the imagery (elimination of expressions that would be abalienating to Roman audience), and sometimes the *Realien* as well. He probably made a full translation, not an anthology or an epitome, for the grammarians collecting linguistic specialities have conserved several quotations of small importance that should have not figured in a non-complete translation.

Andronicus' translatorial operations show a great degree of consciousness. He uses every kind of lexical operations listed by KLAUDY, but he applies all varieties of grammatical operations as well. Their examination, however, is made difficult by the small scale of the fragments and the fact that many of them can be connected to several different lines of the source text as their translation – so in some cases I had to extend my analysis to more than one identifications. Andronicus works with a wide text segmentation: he translates greater units at a time, and he is always aware of the source text as a whole. Those characteristics of Homeric style that could hardly be acceptable for Roman readers (e. g. *epitheta ornantia* or repetitions) aren't transferred into the target text. But Andronicus many times strives for calling forth the source text with auditive means.

Among the fragments of Naevius cannot be found many passages that can be examined as translations; but this poet is the one who begins to create Latin equivalents for Greek epic compounds. Ennius follows his path; in the Homeric allusions of the *Annals* sometimes we can find a rivalry with Andronicus himself. The choice of hexametric form can be interpreted within the setting of formal approaching of Roman epic to Greek antecedens. Ennius reproduces several features of Homeric language in his epic, e. g. the use of *epitheta* and formulaic repetitions, and the reception of bold Homeric images also begins. The hexameter reworking of the *Odisia* stands under a strong influence of Ennius. There is no overlapping between the hexameter and Saturnian fragments, so the methods of these two translators can only be compared indirectly.

Works belonging to the genres of *fabula palliata* and *cothurnata*, since their authors as well as their posterity hold them to be translations, can also be examined from a translatorial point of view – in those few cases when we can have the source and the target text both in hand. The accommodation to the original is quite jumpy: at one point one can set exact equivalences, at another point textual comparison proves to

be impossible. Fidelity to the structure of the original work as a requirement is characteristic up to the time of Terence. The standard of translation quality, however, is not equivalence but adequacy, that is, aptness to the requirements of the audience.

III. Golden Age

The Neoteric movement brought about a new view of literary translation. Alongside the reinterpretation of the original through the lyrical self, which can be exemplified by the 51st *carmen* of Catullus, there appears a kind of literary translation as a type of stylistical exercise, adhering to formal features (cf. Cat. 66). Greek phonic qualities come to be transferred into Latin translation; here belong the close following of original word order and metrical qualities – sometimes also at the cost of meaning –, and the retaining of source text proper names in the same place of the line.

Between the immediate predecessors of Neoteric poets can be mentioned Cn. Matius and Ninnius Crassus, from whose translations of the Iliad we have some fragments. Matius' method is characterized by condensation, expressivity, modernization, and free handling of the original's wealth of formulas. His language is conformed to the epic tradition.

In the next part I dealt with Cicero's translatorial activity. In the course of this I had to touch upon theoretical foundations and prose translations in the fields of rhetoric and philosophy as well. The greatest part of poetical translations is embedded in the works of the latter genre. These, unlike the literary translations examined until now, are not fragments of complete translated works, but probably poetic passages quoted as *exempla* in the Greek antecedents of Cicero's works on philosophy, transplanted into Latin, in case Cicero couldn't find any suitable Latin quotation in their place. That's why it can be often observed that a poetic passage comes to be accommodated to the prose context, or the original context is given erroneously. In translations of Homer Cicero's language is strongly influenced by the language of Ennius, which appears in the predilection for compounds and in the indulgence in the play with sounds – but the impact of rhetorical and also of personal background can be felt at least in the same measure. Cicero also works with a wide segmentation, at least of sentence level,

but he strives to anchor his text to the original at some points. Grammatical operations can often be an obstacle to perspicuity. Compared to the source text, sometimes improvement (divisions of meaning, additions), sometimes simplification (contractions of meaning, omissions) can be experienced. Cicero also dares to introduce new imagery in the text all by himself, but he creates quite different moods instead of Homeric ones.

Only some passages of Vergil's Aeneid have been examined, mostly of the type when we also have the reworking of the Homeric passage by Ennius. It can be observed in these cases that Vergil, in some way, „returns to the source”, although in a few details he leans on Ennius' version, too. Ovid reworks Cicero's translation from the 2nd book of the Iliad in a similar way, as it is expounded at the end of the chapter.

Horace translates the beginning lines of the Odyssey twice, in two different ways. In both cases it is characteristic that Odysseus becomes a moral example, which is retraceable to philosophic literature – and which is betrayed by a few translatorial additions. For Horace, the important thing is not translation but his own message, so the emphases of the source text change their places in the target text.

IV. Silver Age

In Germanicus' translation of Aratus already appears an aspect that follows through the Silver Age reworkings of Homer. In Silver Age literature the influence of Vergil is so inevadable that it plays a certain role in translations as well. The best example of it is Baebius Italicus, who writes his work as an epitome of Homer's Iliad, but in spite of this, he lays a greater stress on the imitation of Vergil and other Latin predecessors than on the source text itself. His first lines can yet be examined from the aspect of translation technique – and this is what I did.

Attius Labeo, a poet known from the satires and scholia of Persius, whose existence isn't sure, either, stands alone in the history of Latin literary translation before Christianity: he follows the method of philological translations, so far as it can be judged from the only one-line fragment left from him. He imitates the word order, the metrical cadence, the phonic means of the original; his target language is vulgar

Latin, which is possibly also a conscious decision.

As to Silver Age epic poets, the immediate textual influence of Homer can be shown mainly in Statius and Valerius Flaccus, but in macrostructural level it is present in every one of them. In Statius, especially the scene of enumeration is connected to the ship catalogue of the Iliad; in its imitation the impact of Neoteric treatment of proper names can also be felt. In Valerius Flaccus slight Homeric allusions can be spotted as well as ones comprehensive of larger textual units, some of which can be viewed as a translation (of an applicative or a closer type).

With the archaizing movement, texts became important as texts and sources, which helped translation criticism move forward. Gellius' view, which saw the value of a translation only in its complete fidelity to the original, leads on to the next age, and shows that the new trend appearing with Christianity has had pagan predecessors as well.

V. An Outlook: Translation and Christianity

Literal translation, applied to canonical texts, which was separated even by Hieronymus from other fields of translation, finds its way into literary translation. It is especially conspicuous in the poetic and prose translations of Chalcidius that can, more interestingly, be compared to Cicero's parallel translations. Chalcidius rethinks Cicero's translatorial methods in the light of the new principles, and uses the new facilities provided by the metamorphosis of Latin language in the field of word formation as well as of prosody. Later on, although not always as a result of a conscious decision, literal translation advances even more.

Most Important Results of the Thesis

The main merit of my thesis is not in the final conclusions that can be drawn, rather in the details. By those, I wished to expose that it is an unfortunate generalization to say that „in the ancient world only free translation was practised”. These „free translations” can be analysed from the aspect of translatorial operations, and interpreted in the light of different translatorial attitudes as well as modern, „faithful” translations, so it is acceptable to examine them with the same method.