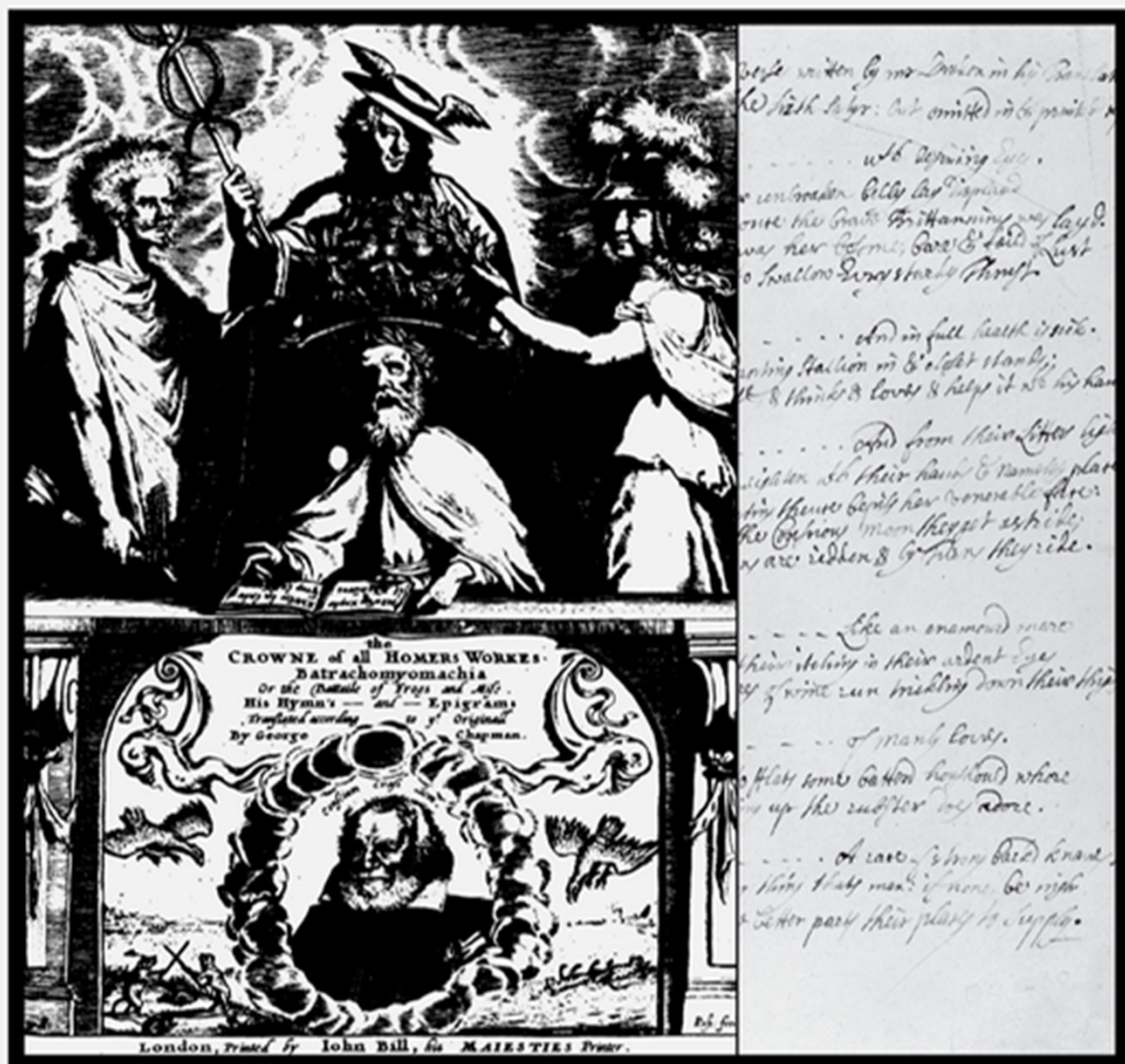


STUART GILLESPIE

ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND CLASSICAL RECEPTION

TOWARDS A NEW LITERARY HISTORY



WILEY Blackwell

English Translation and Classical Reception

Towards a New Literary History

Stuart Gillespie

This first book-length study of English translation as a topic in classical reception engages with the dialogues generated between individual translations and their source-texts, but also with the wide and deep tradition to which they belong. Mixing survey chapters with case studies, *English Translation and Classical Reception* threads its way from Shakespeare to the late twentieth century.

As lead editor of the first history of English literary translation, Gillespie has been a major force in recovering the remarkable and extensive history of translators' engagement with the classics over the centuries. This book focuses on the implications both for English literary history and for classical scholarship. But Gillespie then goes on to dig down to a new level of historical rediscovery in his analysis of a range of forgotten, unpublished, and suppressed classical translations by writers across the centuries. This important text will mark a change in the way in which the English reception of classical literature is viewed and studied.

STUART GILLESPIE is Reader in English Literature at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. His recent publications include *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources* (2001), *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture*, edited with Neil Rhodes (2006), and *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, edited with Philip Hardie (2007). He edits the journal *Translation and Literature* and is co-editor of the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*.

English Translation and
Classical Reception

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Preface

This is not a history of English translation of ancient Greek and Latin literary works, which is one component of a large-scale task that has occupied me for some years in another context. Nor is it a history of the reception of such works by English writers – another currently ongoing enterprise under other auspices. In spite of its chronological arrangement, this book is not a history of any kind, apart from the outline Chapter 1 provides by way of orientation. Instead, it is about the shape and the implications of a historical phenomenon which is in the process of being rediscovered. It first addresses more familiar parts of the English translating tradition sometimes by period and sometimes in terms of individual works, then goes on to attend to a number of unpublished, suppressed and otherwise little-known translations – albeit some of them composed by major English writers. Both the more and the less familiar sites I visit suggest, or so I propose, new ways of mapping nearby neighbourhoods. Although many of the texts I look at have received little or no previous attention, my revisionist approach is not unique in this respect. For example, those who have happened to work more intensively than myself on early modern women writers have very often found themselves contemplating unpublished translations (translation, sometimes from Latin and Greek, was one of the things writing women did), and translation has been one of the genres that has shown us we need to reorient our literary histories to accommodate women writers.

Thus the individual case studies which follow, whether they deal with writers and translators who are well known, anonymous, or at some point between those extremes, are intended to suggest the need for reconsiderations of literary history. In other chapters I engage more directly with current orthodoxies, especially what I tend to see as insular, monoglot versions of English literary history, and argue that rethinking looks to be necessary once we understand how extensive a part classical translation has played in it over time, as anglophone writers have responded to ancient writings. One orthodoxy, for example, is the oft-assumed native generation and subsequent self-propulsion of the English literary tradition itself. Another

is the supposition that the English poetic canon excludes classical poetry. Finally, I aim to offer new observations about the reception of the Greek and Latin works involved, well beyond merely pointing to the existence of translations additional to those already familiar to us. In pursuing these aims mainly through historical verse translation, with prose making much rarer appearances, I follow where English translators seem to lead. It is for similar reasons of accommodation to the historical record that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are this book's centre of gravity.

In making these ten or eleven short and non-exhaustive forays into the available material, I hope I may encourage others to follow. My conviction is that scholars and teachers of classical literature and English literature have much to learn from each other, and have been sadly impeded in this by what looks like the irresistible development of strongly subject-specific norms. This book reflects the hope that productive dialogues can happen not only between the writers involved in the kind of transactions I look at, but also between those who study their work – that is, between disciplines. At a local and personal level I have felt myself to be taking part in such dialogues for some time now, and for a large portion of my professional career I have looked after a journal, *Translation and Literature*, the continued success of which depends on the willingness of contributors and readers to engage in similar exchanges. This book will have succeeded if it encourages more such conversation to take place.

At the same time I am aware that I need to beg various kinds of indulgence from those with scholarly expertise in classical literature, expertise to which I can lay claim only patchily. My hope is that the price for this indulgence has been paid through my efforts to show my more immediate colleagues in English literary studies the importance to them of ancient Latin and Greek literary culture.

Stuart Gillespie
Glasgow, UK/Washington, DC, 2010

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As well as more specific debts acknowledged here and in footnotes, it is a pleasure to record thanks more widely for conversations over the years to Robert Cummings and Donald Mackenzie in Glasgow, and equally to another old friend slightly further afield, David Hopkins. All have made suggestions which have improved parts of this book. Chapter 3 on Renaissance translation could not have been written but for the mutually sustaining work carried out with my co-editors Gordon Braden and Robert Cummings for the Renaissance volume of the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* (Volume 2, 2010). Papers given at the University of Oxford and the University of South Carolina and hosted by Bart van Es, David Norbrook and Tony Jarrells helped me refine my ideas on early modern tropes for translation. Chapter 4 on Plutarch and Shakespeare had airings at Clare Hall, Cambridge, at Penn and at the Folger Shakespeare Library: my thanks to Elinor Shaffer, Joseph Farrell, Carol Brobeck and my audiences. Earlier versions of Chapter 7 were read under the sympathetic eyes of two old comrades: Glyn Pursglove at Swansea and Leon Burnett at Essex University. Chapter 8 on eighteenth-century translation could not have come about without the assistance of the library staffs at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, the Houghton Library and, over many years, the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. For Chapter 9 on Wordsworth I owe special thanks to the National Library of Scotland for facilitating access to manuscripts; helpful suggestions on its content came from Tim Saunders. The present version of Chapter 11 has benefited from Iain Galbraith's comments. No one but myself is responsible for remaining errors.

For the well-timed award of a fellowship which enabled me to bring my work together, I thank the Board of the Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library, Washington, DC, and for assistance on the ground, its Registrar, Erik Castillo.

Some parts of this book have appeared in previous forms. For permission to revise them here, acknowledgements are due as follows. For Chapter 5, a version of which first appeared as 'Horace's Ode 3.29: Dryden's "Masterpiece in English"' in *Horace Made New: Horatian Influences on British Writing from the Renaissance*

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Note on Texts

In quoting from printed English texts the antique use of ‘u’ for ‘v’, and vice versa, has been silently reversed; so too the use of ‘i’ for ‘j’ and decorative italic for roman font. Readers should be warned, however, that it would have been highly questionable to normalize spelling and punctuation in quoting unedited manuscripts; that Chaucer is quoted in the original Middle English; and that old-spelling texts of later (seventeenth- and eighteenth-century) printed works are often quoted in preference to modernized ones. This last policy has seemed appropriate because it would be jarring to place large quantities of unmodernized manuscript verse alongside quotations from printed texts prepared on quite different principles.

I

Making the Classics Belong: A Historical Introduction

One of the oddities of the way the academic disciplines of English Literature and Classical Studies have developed, especially given early connections between them, is that translation history, an area which could in principle be of equal interest to each field, has been largely ignored by both.¹ The book you are now reading is a sign of change and has affiliations on both sides: it is published within a series falling under a ‘Classical Studies’ rubric, while looming large in its immediate background is the ongoing *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, the first full-scale history of English literary translation and a publishing project of Oxford University Press’s Literature (not Classics, not Modern Languages) department. But these are very late omens and much remains to be done. Just as we are becoming used to reception moving towards the forefront of the study of ancient literatures,² my view is that translation should move towards the forefront of the study of reception. The increasingly monoglot nature of the Anglo-American academic world might provide some excuse for the neglect of translations within the study of English literature, but it cannot do the same for Classics.

What follows in this chapter is a historical sketch designed to provide an overall context for the discussions of individual periods and works that follow. But its further purpose is to suggest in brief compass the scale and centrality of translation from ancient Latin and Greek works in the literature of the anglophone world over the centuries. Its scale and centrality are the reasons why, as I argue from

1. A strong connective link around the time of the beginnings of English teaching in the mid-eighteenth century was the study of rhetoric. See Rhodes (2004), 189–208; Crawford (1998). A recent call for full incorporation of the analysis of translations into Classical Studies is Armstrong (2007).

2. Literally so in the case of Charles Martindale’s *Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, 1997, and even more pronouncedly in certain other recent Cambridge Companions when the proportions are weighed.

various angles below, a change in the way we write the history of this literature is needed. As things currently stand, ‘translation’ is not a heading with a lot of entries below it in literary historians’ indexes. Within the current *Oxford English Literary History*, for example, the first volume to be published, on the period 1350–1547, offers four index entries on ‘translation’ to a 600-page study. The work of Chaucer, who was thought of even by his contemporary Deschamps as a ‘grand translateur’, falls entirely within this period. The *Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* has no entry for ‘translation’, though there are entries for ‘tragedy’, ‘epic’ and even ‘imitation’.³

The activity of translation had, of course, been at the centre of western culture well before the arrival of the earliest forms of the English language. Translation was fundamental to Roman literature: it is taken for granted as much in modern as in ancient times that Latin letters grew expressly out of translations from works in the Greek epic and dramatic tradition. Livius Andronicus (c. 284–204 BCE), sometimes claimed as the ‘father of Roman literature’, introduced Greek writing to the Romans by translating the *Odyssey* into the Italian Saturnian metre and adapting Greek tragedy to the Roman stage. Others soon followed with closer or looser forms of translation and adaptation: Gnaeus Naevius with plays on the Trojan War; Ennius, Pacuvius and Accius with tragedy; Caecilius Statius with comedy. Translation, that is, had the effect of directly inaugurating Roman epic and drama at a time when these genres were barely emergent in their own right.

As a cultural phenomenon in antiquity, the history of translation is every bit as diverse as it will later become in the anglophone world. Horace’s famous claim about rendering Greek lyrics into Latin (*Odes* 3.30.13) covers what is in almost every respect a different kind of thing from the exotic Latin framing by ‘Lucius Septimus’ of the Greek *Diaries of the Trojan War* by ‘Dictys’.⁴ The Roman experience is likewise an emphatic but not unique instance of the centrality of translation. In the European Renaissance the medieval literary tradition was invigorated and the literary idiom much enriched by fresh contact with classical sources through translation and imitation, sometimes of a directly experimental kind. It can be said without qualification that in every phase of English literature, and for that matter many phases of other western literatures too, much of the innovative impulse comes directly or indirectly through translation from ancient Greek and Roman texts, and in some eras their impact is fundamental. The effect is often one that is hidden or hard to discern, partly because of the frequent difficulty of determining whether originals or translations were being used in a given instance – did Shakespeare know Ovid’s Latin epic, Arthur Golding’s English *Metamorphoses*, or

3. Simpson (2002); Ousby (1993).

4. ‘Lucius Septimus’ is the name attached to the fourth-century CE Latin rendering of an earlier Greek prose narrative purporting to be an eye-witness account of the Trojan War by Dictys of Crete, supposedly the companion at Troy of the Cretan hero Idomeneus. For an English translation, see Frazer (1966).

both? (The answer here happens to be ‘both’.) What is certain is that translations from the classics have been enormously widely read in the West, and that their readers and their creators have over the centuries included the most influential of figures (not only artistic figures). Today more than ever, the number of individuals who will read a classical text in one of the readily available series of modern English translations (Penguin Classics, Oxford World’s Classics, Everyman’s Library, and so on) is many times the number that will read it in Greek or Latin, whether as part of an educational programme or not.

It’s a good question what continuity might be said to exist in terms of individual translation practice between, say, Livius Andronicus’ Latin rendering of the *Odyssey* and a popular twentieth-century English version of the Homeric poem.⁵ In respect at least of how translation has been theorized in the West, continuity over the centuries has been ensured by the influential, though hardly extensive remarks on the subject by Cicero in *De oratore* and *De optimo genere oratorum*, Horace in the *Ars poetica*, Pliny the Younger in the letter *To Fuscus*, Quintilian in the *Institutio oratoria* and Aulus Gellius in the *Noctes Atticae*.⁶ Much Renaissance thinking on translation was done around Horace’s and Cicero’s brief statements especially; their drift is against over-scrupulous, word-for-word translation.⁷ But Christianity has successfully intervened in this tradition, with St Jerome and St Augustine, in particular, battling over the translatability of the Word in a fourth-century controversy. Many of the subsequent striations of western theory derive from Augustine’s promotion of the idea of a single, true translation.⁸

Because of its sheer scale, the growth and development over time of the corpus of classical texts translated into vernaculars is still imperfectly documented. By as early as the seventeenth century, publishing activity in this area had become so voluminous that a comprehensive bibliographical record even of translations of classical texts into English has not yet been assembled.⁹ But perhaps a few statistics will be suggestive. The latest bibliographies of English classical translations for the 250-year period 1550–1800, a period which might be held to constitute the golden age of the tradition, run to some 1,500 items for about 100 ancient authors.¹⁰ These are not comprehensive listings of every individual translation, but

5. For Livius’ *Odusia*, see Conte (1994), 40–1; Mariotti (1952). For the acclaimed twentieth-century version of the *Odyssey* by Robert Fitzgerald, see Chapter 11, below.

6. These texts are conveniently assembled in English translations in Weissbort and Eysteinnsson (2006), 20–33.

7. For continental Renaissance translation theory as derived from classical sources, see Renier (1989), esp. 261–326.

8. For the ‘striations’, see Robinson (1992).

9. There are, however, currently research programmes undertaking the cataloguing of translations, as for instance for early modern translations into English at the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance at the University of Warwick. Earlier bibliographies covering classical translation in the more manageable period to the first half of the seventeenth century are Palmer 1911 and Lathrop (1933); Bolgar (1954) is supplemented for English by Nørgaard (1958).

10. Cummings and Gillespie (2009); Gillespie (2009).

records of the more substantial and significant for these years. They may represent the complete works of an ancient writer, a selection, or a single text; the single texts may range from an epic poem to a satire, but are usually substantial enough to have been printed as a book, whether long or short, in themselves. Virgil, for instance, collects 103 entries, 95 of which are in verse. The most substantial of these are half-a-dozen complete *Works* and the same number of separate *Aeneids*, followed by nine or ten complete translations apiece of the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*. Most of the remainder are selections of one kind or another, frequently one or more Books of the *Aeneid*, with a few ‘translations’ into burlesque or parodic form thrown in. Naturally enough, because the originals are of a more manageable average length, Horace attracts more translations: some 160 are listed, with interest taking off after 1650, and with satires as popular as odes during the eighteenth century. Ovid’s total is about 100 translations for the same period. But a checklist for Ovid continuing on to the present finds a similar total again for the years 1800 to 2004, even with the more routine prose translations and school texts excluded for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also records a further 37 English translators who were responsible for short excerpts or individual items such as elegies.¹¹ That’s almost 250 Ovid translations all told, many of them by very recognizable English literary figures, and including 28 complete *Metamorphoses*. All these totals are confined to printed works, whereas I will be suggesting later that texts remaining in manuscript often made up a significant part of translating activity too. There is absolutely no shortage of material to address here.

But there is no difficulty in sketching out a general history of classical translation in post-classical times, thanks not least to the pioneering work of the *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* (soon to be joined by the *Oxford History of Classical Reception in English*). Such a narrative might begin with a prequel to the accounts such sources make available for the vernacular, which is to say with the continuing tradition of translation from Greek into Latin. The lead was given by Boethius (480–524/5 CE), who prepared literal Latin versions of the Greek philosophers which he intended would create an archive for civilization, together with Jerome (c. 341–420), whose methods of biblical translation prioritized accuracy. The Greek East and Latinate West had to communicate, and there was a Greek presence along the northern coast of the Mediterranean for much of the early Middle Ages. The Roman senator Cassiodorus (c. 480–c. 550) founded a monastery where monks were to translate works of philosophy and theology from Greek into Latin. By the eighth century it was the Muslim world that was making the running with Greek material: in Toledo and Baghdad, in Sicily and Seville, could be found Muslims active in turning classical Greek works of philosophy and physical science into Arabic. When Aristotle and other Greek philosophers were introduced into European universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it

11. Gillespie and Cummings (2004).

was through Latin versions of these Arabic translations, one result being that Aristotle was condemned by some authorities as a pagan influence.

Nevertheless, the relative marginality of translation to the ‘universalizing’ Latin culture becomes clear when this picture is contrasted with the role translation will come to play as a vehicle of cultural exchange within vernaculars. For much of the Latinate Middle Ages, down to the late fourteenth century, translation was not actually necessary, as Stephen Medcalf has recently spelled out. ‘As long as to be literate normally involved belonging to the clergy, whose language was Latin,’ Medcalf writes, ‘the Latin classics were a literary heritage to be retold, continued or imitated, like the *Aeneid* in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, but there was no great point in translating them. Nor indeed did the *Aeneid* or the works of Ovid, Lucan, or Statius have the status accorded them in the Renaissance, of works whose meaning and style needed to be recovered.’¹² Greek texts, too, were still much more often turned into Latin than other languages – the natural impulse following the recovery of ancient Greek was to resume the work of Boethius and late antiquity and translate into Latin. As Greek scholars from the Byzantine Empire reached fourteenth-century Italy, the humanist translating tradition began to take shape. Both Galen and Hippocrates were Latinized by an early figure, Niccolo da Reggio (1280–1350). The first humanist rendering of Aristotle, again into Latin, was Leonardo Bruni’s of 1423. Bruni, more than any other, made the treasures of the Hellenic world available to the Latin reader through his literal translations of Greek authors, among them Plato, Plutarch, Demosthenes and Aeschines. Marsilio Ficino, Georgio Valla, Theodore Gaza and Angelo Poliziano followed in Bruni’s footsteps. Translations of Plato, a considerable challenge, extended to the full corpus by the first half of the fifteenth century; Ficino then consolidated the work of numerous hands by preparing a humanistic *Opera omnia* in 1463–9. Direct translation from Greek into vernaculars had been occasional since the twelfth century through the agency of such figures as James of Venice (*fl.* 1125–50). In England the Anglo-Norman Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, had placed several works at the disposal of a learned European audience in this way in the 1240s, among them Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De caelo*.¹³ But it was not until the arrival of Greek instruction at Oxford during the second half of the fifteenth century, along with the contemporaneous development of printing, that English translations of Greek texts appeared in significant numbers.

Meanwhile the English language had been emerging as a literary medium. While it is evident that some classics were rendered into Old English, the limitations on our knowledge of the results are severe. A tantalizing indication of the non-survival of such texts is an early eleventh-century manuscript fragment of the Greek romance *Apollonius of Tyre*, translated into Old English. Woefully incomplete as it is, it forms the first known vernacular translation of the story and ‘arguably the

12. Medcalf (2008), 364.

13. For a recent overview of Grosseteste’s work, see Rosemann (2008).

first English romance'.¹⁴ Or again, after the Norman Conquest Marie de France claimed in the late twelfth century to have translated a collection of Aesop's *Fables* from an English rendering by King Alfred, but if anything along these lines was available to her, neither it nor other mentions of it survive. The arrival of printing naturally had the effect of ensuring a much higher survival rate for translations as for other kinds of texts.

Chaucer (c. 1343–1400) has his Man of Law say that the poet 'hath told of loveris up and down | Mo than Ovide made of mencioun'. In fact, most of Chaucer's 'loveris' are derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*. In some cases (Ceyx and Alcyone, Thisbe, Philomela) Chaucer shares Ovidian material with Gower. But Chaucer, in particular, acquired much more from Ovid than narrative material, whereas he acquired nothing from his Anglo-Saxon predecessors.¹⁵ His principal formal translation from Latin is, however, his *Boece* – one of four medieval versions of the *Consolation of Philosophy*.¹⁶ The impact of Boethius is apparent in the language and thought of several works central to the Chaucerian corpus: *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Knight's Tale*, *Troilus and Criseyde*.

On a pan-European view from the beginning of printing in the mid-fifteenth century to 1600, and speaking quantitatively, classical translation moved fastest in Italy and France, with German, Spanish and English following some distance behind.¹⁷ The material translated was broad in range, including medical, military and technical texts. In this era there are as many printed vernacular translations from Greek authors as from Latin ones overall: Plutarch is felt to stand more in need of translation than Ovid, Lucian more than Martial. But they are not often translations from the Greek language: 'secondary' (or 'indirect') translation from intermediate versions in other languages is common, especially so in England from French texts of Greek classics. Plutarch's *Lives* were expressly translated by Sir Thomas North in 1579 from Jacques Amyot's French of 1559, and not from the Greek (the relationships are explored further in Chapter 4, below). Similarly Aristotle's *Politics*, englished in 1598 by I.D. (John Dee?) from Louis Le Roi's French of 1568. Equally, the Latin versions of Greek works produced by many European translators alongside translations into the vernaculars were very often the source of English versions. Among the first direct translations from Greek texts, though, are Thomas Elyot's version of Lucian's *Necromantia* (bilingually in English with Thomas More's Latin, 1530) and Gentian Hervet's *Oeconomicus* of Xenophon (1532).

14. So Archibald (1991), 184; for a summary account of the manuscript and related scholarship, see 183–4.

15. For Chaucer and Ovid, see Calabrese (1985).

16. *Boece* draws on Jean de Meun's French prose translation, collating and supplementing it with the Latin original. For a major study of medieval receptions of Boethius, see Minnis (1993).

17. Bolgar (1954), Appendix 2, presents comparative tables for first translations of individual works into the respective European vernaculars. The French picture for the sixteenth century is well described by Hutton (1980).

Why was the acquisition of classical works a slower process for English than for Italian or French? There was clearly a ready audience: a verse translation of the *Aeneid* (by Phaer and Twine) went through six editions between 1573 and 1620. But the effort was unofficial and uncoordinated, largely a matter of individual initiative. This included the initiatives of patrons, but translation did not enjoy the kind of royal patronage provided for it in France. Nor was there in England a scholarly publishing house comparable to those of Aldus and Paulus Manutius in Venice, the Estiennes in Paris, or Plantin in Antwerp. But the tide washed in new literary translations continuously, as well as all manner of practical, technical, political, polemical and in particular doctrinal translated material, to contribute to what was by 1600 an extensive translating culture. In one bibliography of ‘literary’ English translations, broadly defined, for the period 1550 to 1660, Latin originals (classical and contemporary, along with some medieval religious texts) are estimated to account for 40 per cent of the material.¹⁸

In addition to the literary arrivals already mentioned, sixteenth-century England embarked on the vernacularization of Ovid, extending to most of the corpus in published verse translations by 1572; of Horace’s *Satires* and *Ars poetica*; of Martial and Ausonius; of Seneca’s tragedies; of Homer; of Longus, Heliodorus and Apuleius. Other new arrivals in part or whole included Euripides and Sophocles, Moschus and Musaeus, Theocritus and Achilles Tatius. The exemplary and informative works of classical historians gained them much attention: Sallust (*c.*1520), Caesar (1530, 1565), Livy (1544, 1570), Thucydides (1550), Herodian (1556), Polybius (1568), Appian (1578) and Tacitus (1591, 1598). For the sixteenth century, ‘letters’ could also include such texts as Proclus (1550), Euclid (1570) and Vegetius (1572), as well, of course, as moralists such as Epictetus (1567) and orators and rhetoricians such as Isocrates (1534, 1576, 1580) and Demosthenes (1570).¹⁹

At the most familiar level of classical learning, school texts often comprised translations of selections from suitable authors such as Aesop or Terence. These are easy to overlook. The translations are prosaic and, what (in aesthetic terms) is worse, they are often ‘grammatical’ – that is, with the English syntax following the Latin for pedagogical purposes. In terms of readership and of publishing history, however, the scale involved was large. One famous compilation is by a schoolmaster, Nicholas Udall, whose *Flours for Latine Spekyng selected and gathered oute of Terence, and the same translated into Englysshe*, first appeared in 1533. Another is *The Distichs of Cato*, used in England with the annotations of Erasmus, presented as an aid to Latin language learning in 1540 by Richard Taverner in a bilingual text reprinted in 1553, 1555 and 1562, then supplanted in 1577 by an anonymous version ‘newly englished to the comferte of all young schollers’, itself reprinted in 1584. ‘Cato’, as it was called, has been singled out as ‘*par excellence*

18. Braden, Cummings and Gillespie (2010), 9.

19. For a complete chronological listing of printed English translations of this era by classical author, see Cummings and Gillespie (2009).

the first of schoolbooks, and the elementary moral treatise of the Middle Ages'. It was edited, augmented, selected, and in time translated into a dozen European vernaculars, 'first as a means to assist in the understanding of the original, or in verse, emulating the Latin in a modern language'.²⁰ Such compilations – texts sometimes printed together with *Cato* include the proverbs of Publilius Syrus and the *Dicta Sapientum* – were in use on a scale out of all proportion to their barely perceptible profile today. Their users, we might bear in mind, will have included almost every historically identifiable male of Renaissance England. Much of Shakespeare's experience of Latin writing, like that of all other sixteenth-century grammar school boys, thus came in the first instance not in the form of complete works of verse or prose but from such collections of *sententiae*, 'dicta', and the like, in which the Latin was often accompanied by more or less literal English translations – the traces of which can sometimes be found in his own works.²¹

By the mid-sixteenth century, English vernacular writing begins consciously to seek to remodel itself according to Latin standards, whether of linguistic purity or literary quality. Translation, in fact, is often felt to reveal the poverty of the vernacular. Humanist teachers were concerned with the quality of the vernacular and not only with language learning, so that their instruction in Latin and Greek rhetoric laid the foundations of literary English from the Tudor era on. Nor was the translator's role necessarily servile, at least once training was complete. At the highest level the instinct of classical translators and imitators is competitive. Edmund Spenser's ambition is to 'overgo' his sources; Ben Jonson, translator of Horace, imitator of Martial, Virgil, Tacitus, invokes the classics as 'guides, not commanders'.²² And, as is revealed by some of the metaphors its exponents use, translation was seen not just as a method of fertilization, but, in other moods and contexts, as a form of invasion, colonization or conquest.²³

If we are to believe Thomas Warton, the 'first English classical poet' had already come and gone by 1550 in the shape of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517–47).²⁴ Surrey translated Books 2 and 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, drawing on the compelling, but isolated and posthumously published, early sixteenth-century version in Scots by Gavin Douglas.²⁵ Surrey's best original poems, with their close attention

20. Lathrop (1933), 16.

21. For Shakespeare's use of Publilius Syrus, see Smith (1963); of Aesop, Gillespie (2001), 9–13; of Taverner's *Cato*, Baldwin (1944), 603–6. A list of school translations in use in the period appears in Tuck (1950).

22. *Timber, or Discoveries*, Jonson (1975), 379. For Jonson's attitudes to classical authority, see further pp. 44–5. below.

23. See Chapter 3 for some of these tropes. For attitudes to the practice of translation in the Tudor period, see Morini (2006).

24. Warton (1774–81), III, 2: 'Surrey the first English classic poet' (section heading); Warton's discussion of his work is at III, 10–25.

25. Sources on this material include Jones (1964) for Surrey and Cummings (1995) for Douglas's *Aeneid*. Douglas's translation was completed in 1513 and published in 1553.

to individual words and phrases, are those of one who has appreciated Martial, Virgil and Horace. Thus Surrey's work reflects the effort to discover new possibilities for English writing as an impetus to translation of the classics. But translation could have many different purposes (and, as we have begun to see, different readerships). A few years after Surrey's death, Thomas Hoby suggested others in the dedication to his English rendering of Castiglione (1561):

the translation of Latin or Greeke authours, doeth not onely not hinder learning, but furthereth it, yea it is learning itselfe, and a great stay to youth ... and a vertuous exercise for the unlatined to come by learning, and to fill their mind with the morall vertues, and their bodies with civill condicions, that they may bothe talke freely in all companie, live uprightly, though there were no lawes, and be in a readinesse against all kinde of worldlye chaunces that happen, whiche is the profit that commeth of Philosophie.²⁶

Such sentiments will echo through translators' prefaces over many decades to come. Though their conventionality is apparent, their rehearsal reveals that justification for englishing the classics was felt necessary. There have perhaps been opponents of vernacularization for as long as it has gone on.

By 1600 there was still in English no full translation of Latin authors as considerable as Lucretius, Persius or Quintilian, to say nothing of some even larger Greek lacunae. But developments towards the end of the sixteenth century had been rapid. Older favourites such as Cicero were being freshly translated, but there was also a taste for later, sometimes post-classical, texts – William Aldington's Apuleius of 1566 would be one example. Some Renaissance English translators produced work which has remained squarely within the English literary canon, and indeed the translators were often well-known writers independently of their translating work: for example, the poets and playwrights Christopher Marlowe (who translated Ovid and Lucan), George Chapman (Homer, Hesiod, Juvenal and Musaeus) and Ben Jonson (Horace's *Ars poetica* line for line; Martial, Ovid, Catullus, Horatian satire and other texts more freely). In England translators usually worked outside the academic world as their contemporaries abroad did not. They were courtiers, students at the Inns of Court, gentleman-soldiers and many other things. Far from operating on scholarly principles, they are regularly found using a French or Italian intermediate text where access to a Latin or Greek original must have been feasible – and indeed sometimes seeing this as a virtue. But many of their productions have proved more durable than more scholarly undertakings.

'After the age of Jonson,' Thomas Greene writes, 'ancient culture acquired in England that straddling status it already possessed on the Continent: it was foreign but at the same time it *belonged*. It had undergone its process of reception, and

26. Hoby (1588), ¶3^r.

now it was progressively a native possession.²⁷ For ‘reception’ we could read ‘translation’, which for most readers – as contemporary discussion shows – was easily the most significant aspect of the ‘process’. That is, a classical text, author or even genre is felt to have been definitively acquired for the anglophone world once successful translations have become available. So Jonson welcomes Chapman’s Hesiod (the first in English, in 1618, following Chapman’s 1611 *Iliad*):

Whose worke could this be, Chapman, to refine
 Olde Hesiods Ore, and give it us; but thine,
 Who hadst before wrought in rich Homers Mine?

What treasure hast thou brought us! and what store
 Still, still, dost thou arrive with, at our shore,
 To make thy honour, and our wealth the more!²⁸

More metaphors than one are at work here, but the idea of ‘acquisition’ (and indeed ‘possession’, to use Greene’s word) is central. In spite of this example, however, with this period Greene’s generalization works better for Latin than Greek: Plato might have been translated into Latin by Jonson’s time, but a full-scale English version took until 1701, and even then it came by way of a French text. In the Latin-based culture of Christendom, a poem like the *Iliad* was in so many ways an ‘alien text’,²⁹ not readily accommodated to the Renaissance epic norms of moral teaching, allegory and romance. It had probably been experienced by relatively few English readers by the time Chapman began publishing his translations in 1598. But increasingly through the seventeenth century, classical texts are no longer there to be ‘discovered’ by the translator. One of the purposes of fresh translations is to broaden the range of what translators themselves wish to write about. This means, as Richard Stoneman puts it, that ‘even those works which to us read like a translation ... in fact often diverge in directions the author himself wished to expand’.³⁰ Translators speak in the person of their authors. Sometimes it is the pressures of contemporary politics that make themselves felt, as in Thomas May’s version of Lucan’s *Pharsalia* (1627), which idealizes Pompey as a republican leader and regrets Rome’s drift into empire. May’s dedications to the individual Books situate his work among a politically independent and hawkish nobility tending towards parliamentary opposition to royal policies.³¹ May’s Latin and English verse are symbiotically related: he also composed in English couplets a continuation of Lucan’s epic down to the death of Caesar which, when later

27. Greene (1982), 293.

28. Jonson, ‘To my worthy and honour’d Friend, Mr George Chapman’, in Chapman (1618), A4^v.

29. Sowerby (1994), 9. See 1–29 for his account of Homer’s Renaissance standing, with particular reference to Chapman.

30. Stoneman (1982), 10.

31. Norbrook (1999), 57–66.