
A special session of the 1993 Modern Language Association Meeting in Toronto was devoted to the task which confronts a reviewer of a translation. One participant, Lawrence Venturi, editor of *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), addressed the importance which “fluency” has long had both in the translation enterprise and in a reviewer’s judging a translation. Venturi went on to raise questions about the criterion of fluency, both for the translator and for the reviewer: does it not impose constraints on the translator by limiting inventiveness? And does not the reviewer often suffer from “illusionism” with a very “fluent translation,” reading the translation as if it were the source text? Venturi’s questions and implied caveats gave great pause to this reviewer: should “fluency,” or should some other criteria be used in commenting on the translation at hand?

Echoing Yves Bonnefoy (a translation of a poem is “merely poetry re-begun”), Di Tommaso premises his translation of the *Amorum Libri*, the first complete English translation of Boiardo’s *canzoniere*, by noting that he was “not trying to recreate the original but to create a translation” (ix [emphasis mine]). The verb, I think, is significant for it not only puts translation firmly into the arena of creativity but it implies strategies and compensatory moves which allow the source text and the translation to mirror each other without claiming that the translation works in the same way as does the original. Di Tommaso is very clear on the pitfalls of rendering into another language the illocution of the source text, especially a poem: “the inevitable infelicities of translation that result from a lack of correspondence between two languages in such elements as gender differentiation, vowel frequency, assonance and dissonance, and the like would work to prove that the most poetic texts are, indeed, the most untranslatable” (ix). Consequently his overall strategy is to strive for fidelity to the collection’s ideolect and illocutionary “texture” at the macro-level: “My goal has been to be faithful to each poem and to the work as a whole (as represented by the interaction of syntax, rhetoric, mood, and sentiment) rather than to component parts, while still retaining as much of the syntax and rhetoric of the original as possible” (ix). And by eschewing rhyme and allowing for considerable flexibility with meter, he freed himself of constraints which fetter translators who elect to remain faithful to the formal structural elements of the source text.

Each text or set of texts will present unique challenges for the translator, some of which can be met by finding a compensatory, albeit not always analogous, strategy: an analogous strategy would be, for example, mirroring alliteration but not necessarily with the repetition of the same sounds as the source text. Other qualities of the source text might defy analogous strategies as, it seems to me, do Boiardo’s lyrical moments which rely on the intimacy of diminutives and other lexical elements which have a strong regional flavor: “Mira quello ocellin che par che senta / de la tua pena, misero mio core, / e tieco insieme piagne del tuo ardore, / piagne cantando, e tieco se lamenta. [Look at that little bird that seems to share / your suffering with you, my aching heart, / and weeps with you because of your own passion; / in singing weeps, and, weeping, mourns with you]” (Sonnet 106).

Certainly “little bird” and “with you” do not reproduce the illocutionary level of “ocellin” and “tieco,” which almost defy a satisfactory rendering into English. Di Tom-
maso keeps the English version "straight." In other instances he is able to bring to the English version qualities which mirror the source text, such as "freely-given" to render and to echo the dieresis of "grazioso" (Sonnet 31) or "bound from bough to bough" to reproduce the alliterative effect of "de fronda in fronda" (Sonnet 6), with the felicitous addition of the verb "bound" to give greater relief to the line's rhythmic quality.

In working at the macro-level, Di Tommaso himself discusses the type of strategies necessary in order to render the sense and the aesthetic essence of the source text, in short, in order to convey the text's ideolex in another language: "At times the translation achieves an effect which was not intended in the original, but which seems appropriate and worth retaining. The last stanza of the fourth sonnet, for example, begins and ends 'with her,' thus embodying in its form the inherent Petrarchan platonism of the poem and the idea of the cyclical return of the Golden Age which the poet identifies with the Lady's appearance on Earth" (ix). Although, as he says, the original does not intend the effect which the translation gives, the translation successfully signals to the reader thematic dimensions and poetic structures which are fundamental to the collection in general. And Di Tommaso concludes: "In the course of juggling such elements, I have invoked Accuracy . . . and Readability as my muses" (ix-x). In this regard, his accomplishments have been considerable.

The translation is prefaced by a very useful introduction to Boiardo's canzoniere, both in the context of the literary tradition which came to the fifteenth-century poet from the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance and in the socio-cultural context of the courtly environment of Quattrocento Ferrara. In this, the anniversary period of Boiardo's death, we must be grateful to Di Tommaso, as well as to Charles S. Ross, the recent translator of the Orlando Innamorato, for providing greater access to Boiardo's world.

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The idea that the Sack of Rome in 1527 effected a sudden break in the continuity of Renaissance thought is not a new one. John F. D'Amico commented in his 1983 study Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP) that the Sack "interrupted Roman life and ended the confidence of Renaissance humanism" (12). D'Amico's study, however, does not explore beyond the late 1520s, leaving a considerable gap in English-language exploration of the subject. De Caprio, here collecting together a body of previously published and unpublished work, takes up the familiar contrast between continuity and change in his discussion of humanist writing of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento in Rome — that is, before and after the Sack. The author, a well-known Italian historian whose work has previously centred largely on Viterbo, divides his collection into two parts. The first section deals with continuity: De Caprio explores the symbolism of Roman ruins in his first chapter, "The Ruins and Absence," in which he points out the strong thematic connection between ruinæ and monumenta in the writings of Poggio, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, and Petrarch. The idea of destruction