

TRANSLATION AS REWRITING:



A modern theory for a premodern practice

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Abstract: One definition of translation in contemporary translation theory claims that rendering a text from one language into another is in fact a form of rewriting. Although this concept was first articulated in the early 1990s, this paper argues that it has much in common with premodern rhetorical ideas of imitation and emulation and can be usefully applied to explain medieval and humanist translation practices. To demonstrate this, I analyze premodern hagiographical and historiographical texts (primarily translations from Greek into Latin) in relation to Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextualité and André Lefevere's theory of translation as rewriting. Juxtaposing modern and premodern theories and practices, I identify and describe connections on both a synchronic level – between various premodern writing modes such as historiography and hagiography and translations of these genres – and a diachronic one, comparing conceptual frameworks from Late Antiquity, the medieval period, and in one instance the Renaissance, with that of contemporary translation theory.

I do not write, I rewrite. My memory produces my sentences. I have read so much and I have heard so much. I admit it: I repeat myself. I confirm it: I plagiarize. We are all heirs of millions of scribes who have already written down all that is essential a long time before us. We are all copyists, and all the stories we invent have already been told. There are no longer any original ideas.

Jorge Luis Borges¹

Introduction

According to modern theories of rewriting, 'translation' is the transfer of a text into a different linguistic and cultural context. Theorists of rewriting

¹ Chancel 1999, 74-75.

study this process and the ways socio-literary systems constrain it. One of the key questions this article seeks to answer is whether we can draw on the contemporary English term ‘rewriting’, as used by today’s translation scholars, to describe a range of different concepts from various periods. Can it be meaningfully related to other terms, such as Gérard Genette’s *hypertextualité*, or the Latin *rescribere* – which a medieval translator used to explain his method – or, indeed, to the term *aemulatio* found in ancient rhetoric, and particularly in Quintilian, as we will see later? By establishing connections between these terms, I do not claim that they (and the concepts underlying them) are identical, or that a genetic relationship exists between them. Instead, I focus on how we can usefully think in terms of modern theory to understand premodern translating practices more fully. Premodern texts often serve as sources only for historians and philologists who specialize in a certain period, and who rarely attempt to see such texts through the prism of contemporary translation studies. On the other hand, modern theorists of rewriting have seldom considered medieval translations.² In this paper I intend to bridge this gap by describing premodern practices with the help of Gérard Genette’s terminology and by discussing them within the context of André Lefevere’s theory of rewriting. I will first demonstrate the usefulness of my proposed approach with regard to a humanist translator, Leonardo Bruni, and then pass to a discussion of a number of medieval historiographical and hagiographical translations, focussing exclusively on those made from Greek into Latin.

A case in point

Before considering the theoretical background and practical applications of my approach in detail, I would like to indicate how fruitful such a perspective can be by presenting a case study of selected works by Leonardo Bruni. He was, among other things, both a translator and a historian, and at times scholars have struggled to distinguish between these two roles. Indeed, he himself sometimes did not; his depiction of the Gothic wars, *The Italian War against the Goths* (*De bello italico adversus Gothos gesto*), for instance, is an almost verbatim translation of Books V-VIII of Procopius’ *History of the Wars* (Περὶ πολέμων). It was completed in December 1441. In a letter to

² André Lefevere, for example, compiled a historical anthology of treatises on translation (Lefevere 1992b) but from the roughly nine centuries that separate the lives of Jerome and Roger Bacon none seems to have been worth mentioning to the modern theorist. This, however, is the period that produced the astute reflections of a Boethius, a John Scotus Eriugena, or a Burgundio of Pisa. The same blind spot for the Middle Ages is typical for most translation theory anthologies, with the notable exception of Robinson 1997b..

Ciriaco d'Ancona, written in August of the same year, Bruni mentioned his forthcoming work and stated explicitly that it was “not a translation, but a compilation made by me” (*non translatio, sed opus a me compositum*). According to ancient, medieval, and humanist historiographical practice, a compilation (*opus compositum*) was usually based on a range of written sources.³ It was still considered an author's own composition – not a case of plagiarism. Usually such works would amalgamate multiple sources and also name them. Bruni, however, had relied almost exclusively on Procopius and not acknowledged him as a source. The curial humanist Flavio Biondo noticed this. With the help of a translator (about whom nothing is known), he was able to check Procopius' original against Bruni's version. When his own work on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the *Decades of History from the Deterioration of the Roman Empire (Historiarum ab inclinatione Romanorum imperii decades)*, was published in 1443, Biondo shared this discovery with his readers. Bruni reacted to his revelations only once, in a letter to Francesco Barbaro, written in August 1443, where he admitted that he had only used one source, and that it was Procopius; yet he also insisted that his status as an author was not to be confused with that of a translator (*interpres*) because he had not simply translated the text, but ordered, organized, and rephrased Procopius' rudimentary prose. Also, in his opinion, that prose was as different from that of Thucydides (whom he, Bruni, had wanted to imitate), as Thersites was from Achilles.⁴

There are two further works by Bruni that – almost – fall into the category of rewriting. The first is his *New Cicero (Cicero novus)* of 1413, which is at the same time a translation and an expansion of the Greek life by Plutarch. In the dedicatory letter to Niccolò Niccoli, Bruni writes that he first intended merely to retranslate Plutarch's work because of the abysmal Latin of Iacopo Angeli's earlier translation. However, when he began to read the Greek original, he felt that Plutarch's account was biased against Cicero. Bruni himself describes his working method as follows:

³ See Canfora 1971, 653-670. Cf. also Momigliano 1990, 147; Mazza 1980, 344-347; Mazza 1986, 214-216; Guenée 1980.

⁴ “Scripsit enim hanc historiam ut te non ignorare puto Procopius Cesariensis grecus scriptor, sed admodum ineptus et eloquentie hostis ut apparet maxime in contionibus suis, quamquam Thucydidem imitari vult. Sed tantum abest ab illius maiestate quantum Thersites forma atque virtute distat ab Achille. Solum id habet boni quod bello interfuit et ob id vera refert. Ab hoc ego scriptore sumpsi non ut interpres, sed ita ut notitiam rerum ab illo susceptam meo arbitratu disponerem meisque verbis non illius referrem,” Griggio 1986, 49-50. In a letter written to Tortelli one year earlier, Bruni refers to his work in the same terms: Scripsi vero illos non ut interpres sed ut genitor, et auctor (Mehus 2, 157. See also Ianziti, 281).

Nos igitur, et Plutarcho et eius interpretatione omissis, ex iis, que uel apud nostros uel apud Grecos de Cicerone scripta legeramus, ab alio exorsi principio uitam et mores et res gestas eius maturiori digestionem et pleniori notitia non ut interpretes, sed pro nostro arbitrio uoluntateque descripsimus.

[H]aving discarded both *Angeli's* translation and Plutarch, I began afresh to give an account of *Cicero's* life and character and deeds, on the basis of what I had read about him both in Greek and Latin sources. My account has a more fitting disposition and is better informed, and I worked not as translators do, but using my own judgement and inclination.⁵

The second work of interest is Bruni's *The First Punic War (De primo bello Punico, 1418–1422)* in which he followed Polybius' *Histories* but supplemented his account with passages from Zonaras, Thucydides, Strabo, Florus, Eutropius, and possibly Diodorus Siculus.⁶

Bruni's *The Italian War, New Cicero* and *The First Punic War* are all historiographical works. At this point, it is significant to note that already at a very early stage in his career as a translator – in the dedicatory letter of his translation of Plutarch's *Antonius* (1404–1405) – Bruni had argued that the work of a translator of historiography was no less 'original' than that of a writer in this genre. He goes on to explain:

Nam si ea esset res, quae magnam ac difficilem haberet inuentionem, esset quidem longe impar translatoris causa, excogitatione ac doctrina rerum facile uerborum gratiam superante. In historia uero, in qua nulla est inuentio, non uideo equidem, quid intersit, an ut facta sunt an ut ab alio dicta scribas. In utroque enim par labor est, aut etiam maior in secundo.

[If it were a translation of a work that] had required much and intricate invention, the translator's merits would not be equal, because the planning of the work and the learning involved would easily require more than just a pleasant style. But when it comes to history where there is no invention, I do not see the difference between rendering what has been done and what has been said by somebody else. The effort is the same, or perhaps even greater in the latter case.⁷

Bruni's use of his source materials (especially in the case of Procopius) has attracted much attention. Scholars have struggled to acquit him of the charge

⁵ Pade 2007, I, 154–161.

⁶ Reynolds 1954.

⁷ Pade 2007, II, 155. I am grateful to Marianne Pade for her help and valuable suggestions for this section of the paper.

of plagiarism, and much effort has gone into defining these works: are they translations? Or original historiographic writings? Who is their author? ⁸ If we look at Bruni's case through the prism of the theory of rewriting, these quandaries disappear. Our attention shifts from doing justice to an 'original' text and its author/s to asking new research questions: why did one author rewrite the work of another? And how? How did readers react? How did the rewrite fit into a new context? The literary and translational theory of rewriting provides us with a language for answering these questions. Moreover, Lefevere's concept of rewriting as a theoretical framework for understanding premodern writing and translating practices enables us to set to rest once and for all the age-old, but ultimately futile, debate about fidelity versus infidelity, to revisit the discussion of originality versus plagiarism, and to address the more recent question of the re-appraisal of the roles of author versus translator.

Modern theories of rewriting

In his *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982), Gérard Genette claims that every text is a hypertext connected to an earlier hypotext that it modifies through transformation or imitation. Or, in other words, the hypertext is a text created through the modification of an earlier one. He catalogues all possible hypertextual modalities (e.g., parody, sequel, and pastiche) and also includes translation among them. Most important for our purposes, however, are the modalities that he calls quantitative transformations – excision, concision, extension, and expansion – because, as we will see later, these constituted popular premodern rewriting techniques. ⁹

Rewriting as a concept entered translation studies during the course of the so-called 'cultural turn' in the field. Its main proponent was André Lefevere, who in 1992 published the above-mentioned seminal monograph *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* and the above-mentioned collection of sources he considered key for his theories: *Translation/Culture/History: A Source Book*.¹⁰ Rewriting, he claimed, is both innovation and manipulation; it is literature's way of shaping society. While Genette focuses

⁸ See Ianziti 2012 and his bibliography on page 400.

⁹ Genette 1997.

¹⁰ Lefevere 1992a and 1992b. Two years earlier, Lefevere and his co-editor Susan Bassnett (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990) had written what was to become a famous essay introducing the main tenets of the theory and entitled "Introduction: Proust's Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights: The 'Cultural Turn' in Translation Studies". In it, they argue that translations have to perform various cultural functions. Renderings from one language into another are defined both by the audience of the target text and the status of the source text.

on the result, the *hypertext*, Lefevere is more interested in the act of creation or transformation, i.e., the process by which one text becomes another, the *rewriting*.

Lefevere also does away with the sense of doom that is associated with the analysis of translations as hopeless attempts to measure up to the original. In his view, the process of translation is much more than a linguistic exercise; it is interconnected with literary, cultural, social, and political factors.¹¹ His theory also frees the translator from being judged in terms of fidelity or deviation from the original and enables the researcher to consider the contexts of the act of translation.¹² Finally, Lefevere draws our attention to people and/or institutions in positions of power (for instance, universities or publishers), by analysing how professionals rewrite texts in various ways to serve various ends, for example, the cultural and political interests of their patrons. According to him, translation is one such rewriting technique – just like editing, criticism, anthologization, historiography (which is of particular pertinence to this essay), and other types of ‘manipulative’ literary practices.

When developing his theory of translation as rewriting, Lefevere understood literature as a system and identified two groups that control it: the first comprises critics, translators, and teachers, and is concerned with poetics; the second includes patrons and various agents of power, and is mainly concerned with ideology. Lefevere calls translation “the most obvious instance of rewriting” since, he claims, it operates under all four constraints under which all writing takes place.¹³ These, he stipulates, are ideology, poetics, the so-called universe of discourse, and language. However, rewriting, and thus translation, also operates under a fifth, that of the original.¹⁴ Lefevere also

¹¹ “Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices, and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live,” Lefevere 1992a, vii.

¹² “The most important thing is not how words are matched on the page, but why they are matched that way, what social, literary, ideological considerations led translators to translate as they did, what they hoped to achieve by translating as they did, whether they can be said to have achieved their goals or not, and why,” Lefevere 1992b, 81.

¹³ Lefevere 1985, 234.

¹⁴ Lefevere 1985, 232-233. Lefevere uses the phrase ‘universe of discourse’ as a kind of umbrella term for all the discursive elements of a source text characteristic of the culture in

places translation, which he defines as just one of many types of rewriting, in a literary system, building on ideas developed by Itamar Even-Zohar in his polysystem theory, although later deviating from them, especially in his emphasis on these constraints and his innovative claim that translation is a mode of rewriting.¹⁵ Finally, Lefevere asserts that translation, as a subverting or transforming influence on literature, works with other forms of rewriting; it therefore cannot be studied on its own, unless only one type of minor constraint is recognized, that of the “locutionary level of language.”¹⁶ Understanding translation as one of many rewriting practices also makes it possible both to analyse it *as* rewriting and to compare it with other types of rewrites.¹⁷

Furthermore, Lefevere positions his theory as an alternative to those that define translation (and various paratexts) as interpretation, which suggests there exists in the text an underlying truth that only interpretation can reveal. This relationship between a text(ual truth) and its interpretation implies a hierarchical relationship between (primary and secondary) texts. If, however, as Lefevere argues, the notion of interpretation were replaced with that of rewriting, it would become possible to perceive the nature of the connection between a primary text and a secondary text differently. In particular, one could begin to see that a translation is not just a version of the original but an independent cultural product with its own agenda. Additionally, this ‘new’ relationship between the two texts could shed light on many aspects of the translation process.¹⁸

which it originates (e.g., religious traditions, objects, and views that are alien to the target culture) and which are therefore a challenge to the translator.

¹⁵ Even-Zohar suggests that translations should be viewed as both an integral part of any literary history and a system within a larger system, that is, as a coherent unit within a socio-cultural system. In his view, translated texts are situated in a network of relations that connect them with one another and with other products of the various target language literary systems. Even-Zohar 1990.

¹⁶ “Translation [...] should be studied as part of a whole system of texts and the people who produce, support, propagate, oppose, censor them. Or, to put it differently, translation can be studied in isolation only if it is reduced to one half of one of the constraints under which it is produced: that of the locutionary level of language,” Lefevere 1985, 237.

¹⁷ In the past, the confusion between rewriting as an umbrella term on the one hand, and various types of rewriting (including translation) on the other, has led to some rather tangled distinctions and juxtapositions. Umberto Eco, for example, says in his *Experiences in Translation* (under the heading “Borderline Cases”): “I would tend to exclude rewriting from the ranks of translations because there is no doubt that it is an anomalous case of translation proper.” Eco 2001, 108.

¹⁸ “If, on the other hand, you see translation as one, probably the most radical form of rewriting in a literature, or a culture, and if you believe that rewriting shapes the evolution of a literature or a culture at least as much as actual writing, you will analyze different instances of that process in different cultures at different times, to test your heuristic model and, no

Lefevere's theory is not without its critics. In Theo Hermans' view, while Lefevere sees constraints as "conditioning factors" that translators can resist, thus allowing that translation can be potentially subversive, he analyzes his case studies in such a way that it "rarely grants translation more than a passive role, instead of seeing it as simultaneously determined and determining".¹⁹ Equally problematic is his distinction between criticism, an act of rewriting that is subject to constraints and seeks to manipulate, and scholarly study, analysis and theory, which try to explain those constraints. Although Lefevere concedes that translation contains "a bit of both", Hermans considers such a distinction hard to maintain.²⁰

This is not the only criticism that has been levelled against Lefevere. Douglas Robinson, for instance, in *What is Translation? Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions*, cautions that he "tends to see translators as more or less in the service of a single system, specifically the target-language literary system", and this is because he sees things through "the lenses of systems theory".²¹ Robinson in fact devotes his whole chapter on *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Fame* to criticising the fact that Lefevere placed his rewriting theory within the frame of systems theory, although he praises his concept of rewriting on various other accounts. His adoption of a systems theory framework, Robinson says, is problematic for several reasons, related to what he sees as flaws in systems theory in general. Such theorists claim, for instance, that people's actions are conditioned by systems, which exercise what Lefevere calls "constraints"; this implies that they are part of their own system and therefore incapable of the objectivity they claim to possess. Another weakness is that the theory describes systems, not as human constructs but as organic entities that move by themselves and constrain those who belong to them. Finally, Robinson also objects to the fact that systems theory conceives of systems as having clear, static and stable boundaries, and this raises many questions for translation, which is marked by transformations; yet despite this, Lefevere believes in the "stability of systemic boundaries".²²

doubt, to adapt it. You can do this within the cultural subsystem called literature, and investigate to what extent rewriting is responsible for the establishment of a canon of core works and for the victories and defeats of successive constellations of poetics and ideologies, or you can decide that you don't have to stop there and that translation, like other forms of rewriting, plays an analysable part in the manipulation of words and concepts which, among other things, constitute power in a culture," Lefevere 1985, 241.

¹⁹ Hermans 1999, 128-129.

²⁰ Hermans 1999, 129.

²¹ Robinson 1997a, 37.

²² Robinson 1997a, 25-42.

The points of criticism briefly revisited here are valid, especially when the theory of rewriting is applied to contemporary cases. Nevertheless, when one considers a distant historical period, one is forced to operate with temporal boundaries, however arbitrary these human constructs might be. For example, we situate our texts within Late Antiquity or the Middle Ages, even if the exact temporal limits of these constructs are often subject to debate. Identifying multiple overlapping, opposing, and parallel systems in, for instance, Byzantine and Latin medieval literary culture will present some of the same problems as those of today's world, but it will also confront the translator with others specific to its own socio-historical context.

More recently, Lefevere's theory of translation as rewriting has been taken further. Edwin Gentzler, for instance, in his recent book, *Translation and Rewriting*, says he is following on from Bassnet and Lefevere's introduction to their *Translation, History & Culture*, where they extend rewriting and translation to other written and semiotic forms such as shortened or partial versions of texts, film, music and theatre. Genette, Gentzler continues, did this for literary and cultural theory and the vocabulary he provided in *Palimpsests* is applicable to and draws examples from translation. Translation studies critical discourse, however, awaits the terms for a similar analysis.²³ Since translation is "not merely a footnote to history, but one of the most vital forces available to introducing new ways of thinking and inducing significant cultural change," the ways in which the text was received in both the source and target texts' cultural milieu must be analyzed.²⁴ Moreover, Gentzler suggests, one should include in a discussion of rewriting the borderline cases such as "transformation" and "recreation", even if they have been considered "marginal" to the central paradigm of "standard" translation, since "the margins may be larger than the center", while "the exceptions may outnumber the norm".²⁵ His following claim that "all translators transform texts to varying degrees", again based on Bassnet and Lefevere's theory of rewriting, creates a fertile territory for the study of literary transformations within the context of translation.

The approach I have chosen to adopt in this paper resembles that presented by Gentzler, insofar as I am relying on both Genette's concepts of rewriting as discussed in *Palimpsests* and Lefevere's as applied to translating. While Genette describes *how* people rewrite, Lefevere tries to explain *why* they do it. As I am going to show, the premodern texts I analyse often discuss the *how*

²³ Gentzler 2016, 12-13.

²⁴ Gentzler 2016, 3.

²⁵ Gentzler 2016, 7.

in terms that are very similar to those used by Genette.²⁶ Their authors, however, do not reflect on the context of their rewritings. Lefevere's ideas can help historians in this regard: using his notion of constraints, in particular, makes it possible to account for those rewriting techniques that are determined by the multi-layered contexts of translation. These elements include, but are not limited to, the ideological background of the translator, the exigences of the patron, and the expectations of the audience. These, of course, were discussed by translation theorists and historians before Lefevere elaborated his rewriting theory. However, the application of his terminology of constraints brings them sharply into focus and highlights their importance in the translation process.

The theory of rewriting as presented above offers a useful tool for understanding medieval translation practices, not least because it is 'optimistic'. It enables us to judge medieval translations by criteria other than those pertaining to purely linguistic or narrowly literary matters, which in older studies invariably resulted in giving medieval translation a bad press. Texts translated from Greek into Latin were generally of a so-called pragmatic nature, that is, non-literary; the translators' approach was thus more technical. In making them accessible, translators were usually driven by non-literary motivations, for example, religious interests, political incentives, ecclesiastic necessities, and requests by patrons. This is why most modern translation theories elaborated in the early decades of the discipline of translation studies, and especially before the time of the 'cultural turn,' were ill-suited to describe premodern translations. They were normative and focused almost exclusively on linguistic and textual issues or questions such as the impossibility of translation; or they offered detailed comparisons of linguistic equivalences and differences. It almost goes without saying that such approaches are particularly unhelpful when it comes to historical investigations in which context plays a central role.²⁷

Another benefit of thinking in terms of rewriting is that it makes it possible to draw connections between translation and other modes of writing. As I said above, in quoting Lefevere, translation should not be studied in isolation. Scholars such as Rita Copeland, Gianfranco Folena, Frederick Renner and Eric

²⁶ See the table on page 37.

²⁷ Criticism of translations on linguistic and literary grounds can of course also be found in premodern evaluations of translators' works, which would require a study in its own right. There, the *verbum e verbo* versus *sensum de sensu* practice of translating constituted the major theoretical concern. It should not, however, be considered a straight equivalent of the modern literal versus free translation dichotomy. Moreover, for the modern scholar this question belongs to the historical context of the translation, and thus ceases to be of a purely linguistic or literary nature.

Jacobsen have examined translation in relation, for example, to grammar, rhetoric, teaching, and exegesis.²⁸ I will demonstrate that it is also important to study it alongside unilingual compositions of the same genre. Rewriting as a practice of textual transformation is in fact not only characteristic of premodern translation but also of narrative genres such as historiography and hagiography: a medieval author/compiler of historiography and a Byzantine hagiographer, as well as a translator of any of these types of texts, would all use the same methods of rewriting. The theory of rewriting can be suitably applied to these narrative genres and their translations, since they were characterized by a certain fluidity, being circulated in numerous versions and with many manuscript variants. Moreover, rewriting, as Lefevere says, has always played an important role in literary development, starting with

the Greek slave who put together anthologies of the Greek classics to teach the children of his Roman masters, to the Renaissance scholar who collated various manuscripts and scraps of manuscripts to publish a more or less reliable edition of a Greek or Roman classic.²⁹

The authors and translators discussed in this essay are part of that long tradition of rewriting that, according to Lefevere, continues to this day. This is why modern theories such as his and Genette's can be fruitfully applied to their work, as well as to the classical and medieval rhetorical theories and methodologies of imitation and emulation that informed their compositions.

Rewriting in premodern texts

In Book X of his *Institutes of Oratory* (*Institutio Oratoria*), Quintilian discusses writing as a combination of imitation and invention, and translation as part of the orator's training in writing. While in his view it is impossible to imitate other authors completely, practicing imitation can help hone one's own writing skills. Similarly, the translation of Greek texts into Latin is, Quintilian writes, one method by which orators can improve their speeches. In Chapter V of Book X we also read that in order to acquire copiousness and facility (*copia ac facilitas*) in writing one should translate from Greek – just as Cicero himself did. While translation is here first and foremost conceived

²⁸ “A theoretical history of translation in the Western Middle Ages cannot be written as if translation represents a semi-autonomous development of stylistics,” Copeland 1991, 1. “Per noi non si dà teoria senza esperienza storica. Né si può parlare di ‘teoria della traduzione’ se non come parte di teorie generali della letteratura, della linguistica o dell’ermeneutica filosofica,” (For us, there is no theory without historical experience. One cannot talk about translation theory unless as part of general theories of literature, linguistics and philosophical hermeneutics), Folena 1991, ix. See also Renner 1989 and Jacobsen 1958, 2004.

²⁹ Lefevere 1992a, 2.

as a practice drill, the result can eventually be made public and appreciated as a literary work.³⁰ Next to translating from Greek into Latin (*vertere Graeca in Latinum*), Quintilian also recommends paraphrasing from Latin into Latin (*ex Latinis conversio*) as another good method to better one's own writing skills. He adds that paraphrase is not just interpretation (*interpretatio*) but also emulation (*aemulatio*).³¹ Interlingual and intralingual 'rewritings' are thus presented as closely connected activities. Quintilian's advice was put into practice: rhetorical school exercises called Προγυμνάσματα in Greek and *praeexercitamina* in Latin, for instance, included rewriting as a core task.³² They required a student to take a model text and rewrite it according to various guidelines.

Another author whose thoughts on rewriting may have inspired later theories, including those from the medieval period, is the fifth-century writer, Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius. Referring to Virgil's *Aeneid* as a rewrite of Homer in books IV to VI of his *Seven Books of Saturnalia* (*Saturnaliorum Libri Septem*), a collection of discussions on a wide range of subjects from history to mythology and grammar, Macrobius describes two stages of imitation: *mutuatio* and *mutatio*, borrowing and modification. The first text (the original) is written by an *auctor*, the second text by an *imitator*; however, the imitator can also become an author in his own right when he in turn is imitated by someone else – and so on. Even Macrobius' own text is a rewriting: a compilation of various authors that contains both their words and his own. By proceeding in this way, Macrobius follows, he explains, the example of bees:

Apes enim quodam modo debemus imitari, quae vagantur et flores carpunt, deinde quicquid attulere disponunt ac per favos dividunt, et sucum varium in unum saporem mixtura quadam et proprietate spiritus sui mutant.

³⁰ Cf. Jerome's testimony to this practice: "There was an old custom among scholars, that they would reduce Greek books into Latin speech for the purpose of exercising their wits, and, what is even more difficult, would translate poems by illustrious men, also showing necessary respect for the meter. For the same reason, our Cicero translated complete books by Plato word-for-word and, after he had brought forth his Roman Aratus in hexameter verses, amused himself with Xenophon's *Economics*" ("Vetus iste disertorum mos fuit, ut exercendi ingenii causa Graecos libros Latino sermone absolverent, et, quod plus in se difficultatis habet, poemata illustrium virorum, addita metri necessitate, transferrent. unde et noster Tullius Platonis integros libros ad verbum interpretatus est: et cum Aratum jam Romanum hexametris versibus edidisset, in Xenophontis *Oeconomico* lusit", Helm 1984, 6).

³¹ Butler 1920-1922, X, 5.

³² For further information on the terms *praeexercitamen*, *praeexercitamentum*, *praeexercitatio* see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, vol. 10, pt. 2, 598-599.

We ought to imitate bees, if I can put it that way: wandering about, sampling the flowers, they arrange whatever they've gathered, distributing it among the honeycomb's cells, and by blending in the peculiar quality of their own spirit they transform the diverse kinds of nectar into a single taste.³³

According to Classical rhetoric, the main strategies to use in compositions based on other writings are amplification, addition, concentration or deletion, substitution, and transposition.³⁴ These were carried over into the medieval *artes poeticae*, twelfth- and thirteenth-century medieval treatises on literary theory that focused mainly on poetry. In her recent study of medieval hagiographical texts, Monique Goulet studied these rhetorical practices, which she gathers under the term *réécriture*, using Gérard Genette's *Palimpsests* as a basis for her comparative analysis. She came to the conclusion that very strong similarities could be found between them.³⁵ The following table illustrates some of the shared features.

Genette <i>Palimpsests</i>	Twelfth- and thirteenth-century medieval <i>artes poeticae</i>
Quantitative transformation	
• abbreviation (excision, concision, condensation)	• <i>abbreviatio</i>
• amplification (extension, expansion, amplification)	• <i>amplificatio</i>
Formal transformations	
• translation	• <i>translatio</i>
• prosification or versification	• <i>alteratio</i>
• transstylisation	
• transmodalisation	
Semantic or conceptual transformation	

Both Genette and the twelfth- and thirteenth-century medieval theorists whom Goulet discusses (Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Eberhard the German, and John of Garland) identify translation as a form of rewriting. As we will see, many premodern translators also promoted this concept in their prefaces.

³³ Kaster 2011, *Prologue*, I, 5. On Macrobius and rewriting see also Kelly 1999.

³⁴ Butler 1920-1922, I, 5.

³⁵ Goulet 2005.

Moreover, when translating, they often used techniques of transformation typical of those involved in rewriting as described by Genette, and in particular those he calls quantitative, i.e., which affect the length of the text. Since these translators do not always explicitly call their works rewritings, it is difficult to discuss the Latin terminology used for the practice. Indeed, I found few cases of explicit references, such as the words *rescribere* (to write again, to rewrite), in the form *rescribendi* used by John the Monk;³⁶ *conscribere* (to compose, to write down, to compile), appearing as *conscript* in John the Monk and *conscriptissimus* in Rufinus of Aquileia;³⁷ *retexo* (to change, to revise, to correct) in the form *retextu* in Gregorius.³⁸ On the contrary, references to techniques of rewriting are many, and it is mostly thanks to them that we can identify the process: Rufinus' *omissis quae videbantur superflua* (I omitted what seemed superfluous); John the Monk's *emendate conscribit* (he wrote down the corrections); Guarimopotus' *quod deest adhibemus* (we add what is missing);³⁹ Hugh of Fleury's *deflorare* and *extrahere* (to excerpt and to extract);⁴⁰ and an anonymous author's *extrasi* (I extracted).⁴¹ On a terminological level, we can notice echoes of these premodern concepts in Genette. On a conceptual level, the premodern translations to be discussed here foreshadow Lefevere's view about the relationship between original and translation. The former is seen, not as a text inspiring reverence and authority compared with which the translation can only be considered inferior, but as a point of departure for creating something new.

Let us first consider some examples from premodern historiography. Both Rufinus of Aquileia and Cassiodorus noted that their methodology for reorganizing materials included, for instance, omission and insertion. In the preface to his translation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History* (*Historia ecclesiastica*) Rufinus remarks:

omissis quae videbantur superflua, historiae si quid habuit, nono coniunximus libro et in ipso Eusebii narrationi dedimus finem. Decimum vero vel undecimum librum nos conscripsimus partim ex maiorum traditionibus, partim ex his, quae nostra iam memoria comprehenderat et eos velut duos pisciculos supra scriptis panibus addidimus.

³⁶ Huber 1913, 1.

³⁷ Simonetti 1961, 267.

³⁸ Virgilio Franklin 2004, 307.

³⁹ Devos 154.

⁴⁰ Lake 2013, 180.

⁴¹ Lake 2013, 285.

I omitted what seemed superfluous and joined whatever historical information it contained to the ninth book, and there I brought to an end the narrative of Eusebius. I myself wrote the tenth and eleventh books, based partly upon the accounts of my predecessors and partly upon what my own memory had retained, and I joined them like the two fish to the loaves of the writings that precede them.⁴²

Rufinus' methods were based on quantitative transformations: cutting and adding. Cassiodorus used the same approach when he and Epiphanius Scholasticus compiled their *Tripartite History* (*Historia ecclesiastica Tripartita*): they excerpted passages from the Greek historians Socrates Scholasticus, Salminius Hermias Sozomenus and Theodoret of Cyrus, and then completed this composition with information taken from elsewhere.⁴³ Jerome confessed to having used a similar methodology in his translation of Eusebius' *Chronicle* (Παντοδαπή ιστορία), combining within himself the roles of two types of scholar: the historian and the translator.

Sciendum etenim est, me et interpretis et scriptoris ex parte officio usum, quia et Graeca fidelissime expressi, et nonnulla quae mihi intermissa videbantur adieci.

I fulfilled the task of both the translator, and to some extent, of an author, since I faithfully translated the Greek and added a considerable amount of material that I thought had been omitted.⁴⁴

Rufinus, Cassiodorus and Jerome all used the same rewriting techniques that were described in contemporary rhetorical theory, i.e., abbreviation and expansion. They all combined translated materials with texts written by themselves. In doing so, they did not primarily pay attention to the original they were translating, but instead focused on an extratextual entity, for example, historical truth or chronological completeness.

This approach also characterizes the methodologies used by medieval historians, including the ninth-century papal librarian Anastasius Bibliothecarius, who translated a Byzantine historiographical corpus of texts entitled the *Chronographia Tripartita*. This, at least, is the title Anastasius gave his collection of historical writings by three Byzantine authors: the

⁴² Simonetti 1961, 267, and Lake 2013, 76.

⁴³ “[...] quos nos per Epiphanium Scholasticum Latino condentes eloquio, necessarium duximus eorum dicta deflorata in unius styli tractum [...] perducere [...] Nos autem [...] cognovimus non aequaliter omnes de unaquaque re luculenter ac subtiliter explanasse; sed modo hunc, modo alterum aliam partem melius expediisse. Et ideo judicavimus de singulis doctoribus deflorata colligere, et cum auctoris sui nomine in ordinem collocare,” Jacob and Hanslik, 1952, 1-2.

⁴⁴ Helm 1984, 6 and Lake 2013, 68.

Chronographeion syntomon by Nicephorus I, Patriarch of Constantinople, the *Extract of Chronography* by George Synkellos, and its continuation, Theophanes the Confessor's *Chronicle*. Anastasius' work, a selective translation that uses the above-described compositional techniques, thus occupies a central place in a chain of rewritings. It was intended for a colleague of the translator, John the Deacon, another papal official at the late ninth-century pontifical court, who was going to incorporate it into his great ecclesiastical history. However, as John never finished it, the translation was presented as a rewrite when it began to be circulated under Anastasius' name, which replaced those of the original Byzantine authors.⁴⁵ The rationale behind Anastasius' rewriting techniques can be discerned if we consider certain factors that in Lefevre's theory of rewriting are called constraints. One in this case is crucial: the role of the patron – the papal official historiographer, and, implicitly, the institution of the papacy itself. Anastasius' translation has to comply with his expectations and produce a text well suited to be incorporated into an official papal ecclesiastical history.

The same rewriting strategies can be observed in many medieval historiographical works, even if they do not involve translation as a compositional step.⁴⁶ In the tenth century, for instance, Richer, a monk of Saint Rémi outside Rheims, in the prologue of his *Histories (Historiae)*, which was a continuation of the *Annals of Saint-Bertin (Annales Bertiniani)*, pre-empt potential accusations of plagiarism by saying that even though he has borrowed passages from another book, he has rewritten them in a different style:

Sed si ignotae antiquitatis ignorantiae arguar, ex quodam Flodoardi presbyteri Remensis libello me aliqua sumpsisse non abnuo, at non verba quidem eadem, sed alia pro aliis longe diverso orationis scemate disposuisse, res ipsa evidentissime demonstrat.

Now if I am accused of being ignorant of the unknown past, I do not deny that I took some things from a certain book of Flodoard, a priest of Rheims, but the content itself shows very clearly that I did not use

⁴⁵ Nowadays, for cases such as this, the term 'rewriting' – instead of the more problematic term 'translation' – is more often used. See, for instance, a recent publication that treats the Anglo-Saxon translation of Orosius as a rewrite: Godden 2016.

⁴⁶ Some adaptations of Saxo Grammaticus' *History of the Danes (Gesta Danorum)* provide us with an interesting example. As shown by Gustav Albeck, two very different rewritings of Saxo's work, a vernacular epic poem from the mid-thirteenth century, *The History of the Kings of Denmark (Knytlinga saga)*, and a fourteenth-century Latin abridged version (*Compendium Saxonis*), use the same principles for abbreviating the original and thus end up excerpting almost exactly the same passages from Saxo. Albeck 1946.

the same words, but different ones, and that I employed a very different rhetorical style.⁴⁷

Likewise, in the eleventh century, Adam of Bremen, when listing the sources for his *Deeds of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen (Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum)*, uses a metaphor to describe his approach that is similar to that which Macrobius employed:

[...] fateor tibi, quibus ex pratis defloravi hoc sertum, ne dicar specie veri captasse mendacium: itaque de his quae scribo, aliqua per scedulas dispersa collegi, multa vero mutuavi de hystoriis et privilegiis Romanorum [...].

I will reveal to you the meadows from which I have plucked the flowers of this garland, lest it be said that I have seized upon a lie with the appearance of the truth. Some of what I am writing I gathered from scattered pages, but I borrowed a great deal from histories and papal documents [...].⁴⁸

Similarly, Hugh of Fleury, in the prologue to his *Ecclesiastical History (Historia Ecclesiastica)*, explains that his working method is built on the principles of abbreviation and condensation:⁴⁹

Aecclesiasticam enim relegens historiam a multis historiologis per partes editam et modis uariis comprehensam, quam in hoc uno uolumine decreui coartare, et coadunatis mihi quam pluribus libris uobis deflorare, ueritatisque medullam de singulis diligenter extrahere, utens eorundem auctorum uerbis in quibusdam locis, aliquando uero sermonibus meis.

After reading over the history of the Church produced piecemeal by many historians and recounted in different styles, I decided to condense it into this one volume, and after collecting as many books as possible, to excerpt from them for you and carefully extract the kernel of truth from each one, in certain cases using the same words as the authors and sometimes using my own.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Hoffman 2000, 36 and Lake 2013, 147.

⁴⁸ Schmeidler 1917, 4 and Lake 2013, 169.

⁴⁹ As does Otto of Freising in his *Chronicle, or History of the two cities (Chronica de duabus civitatibus)*: “et ea, quae ipsi copiose profuseque dixerunt, compendio stringere” (I abbreviated what they wrote about extensively and in detail). Hofmeister 1912, 9 and Lake 2013, 226.

⁵⁰ Lake 2013, 180. Latin original Waitz 1851, 349.

It is apparent from these prologues that the rewriting strategies of adding and cutting, as well as reorganizing the material, are often found in historiographical works, whether translated or not. Using Lefevere's terminology we can say, then, that strong poetic constraints also define these rewritings.

From the passage quoted above, it is also apparent that Hugh is not interested in the wording of the original sources, but in their 'kernel of truth'. The same concern can be observed in the prologue of the fourteenth-century *Eulogy of Histories* (*Eulogium historiarum sive temporis*). Its author, an anonymous English monk, seeks the "marrow" of previous historiographical works.

Sed licet aliena assumo mea tamen reputo quae in sententiis eorum profero, ita ut quos in hoc proemio scripsero contra garrulantes istis utar pro clypeo [...] Istam igitur compilationem ex sanctorum patrum chronographorum studiis mutuatam aliquo nomine autentico nolo decorare, sed quia ex laboribus antiquorum aliqua paucula medullata extraxi, hoc libellum conglobatum Eulogium volo nominari.

Although I am using the work of others, I nonetheless believe that whatever I set down here in their words belongs to me, such that as a shield against my critics I am using the authors whose names are written in the introduction. [...] Therefore, I do not want to furnish this compilation, which is derived from the labours of the holy fathers who wrote history, with an original title, but because I extracted some little bit of the marrow from the labours of the ancients, I want the hodgepodge that is this book to be called the *Eulogy*.⁵¹

The quest for historical truth as a guiding principle for composing these texts can again be described in terms of Lefevere's rewriting theory, by referring to the constraint of ideology. The ideological character of this 'truth' is apparent in many cases. By rewriting Eusebius, Jerome managed to include more Roman material in a text too much focused on Greek history. By rewriting another work by the same Eusebius, Rufinus was aiming at blending his own ideas about Church and empire with those of the writer of the original.⁵² Anastasius' aim, as we have said, was to select from the Byzantine historians' works those materials suited for the purposes of an official papal history of the church. The twin strategies of adding and cutting enabled the translators to shape the text into the right ideological mould by taking away what does not serve the new purpose and adding elements that the new context demands.

⁵¹ Haydon 1858-1863, I, 2, 4 and Lake 2013, 285.

⁵² Humphries 2008.

As indicated earlier, hagiography is another literary genre in which re-writing techniques are applied. This becomes apparent, for instance, from the comments made by Guarimpotus, the ninth-century Neapolitan translator of hagiographical works. In his preface to the *Passion of Saint Eustrathius* (*Passio Sancti Eustrathii*, BHL 2778), he describes his working methods as follows: adding some things, leaving out others, changing and replacing parts of the text, and moving other parts of it around; in short, he does what well-known authors are known to do.⁵³ For Guarimpotus the differences between translator and author are opaque, not least since – although he says he is translating (*transtulisse*) – he considers other writers (*auctores*) his models. His other term for what he is doing is *transfundere*, perhaps a more precise description of what he does, namely ‘pouring’ a story once told in Greek into Latin. In another of his projects, the *Passion of Saint Blasius* (*Passio Sancti Blasii*, BHL 1380-1379), he took an earlier translation, the quality of which he found unsatisfactory, and tried to improve it by applying the same techniques he used in his interlingual works as in his intralingual ones. The absurd previous version he improved by cutting, adding, reordering, and removing obscurities, so that the text would no longer appear ridiculous to those who read or heard it.⁵⁴

A reverse example of hagiographic rewriting is the tenth-century Latin translation of John Moschos’ *The Spiritual Meadow* (Λειμὼν, *Pratum spirituale*) by John the Monk of Amalfi. Not only did the translator keep his interventions to a minimum, he actually apologized for this approach in the prologue, where he acknowledged that the proper way of composing (a letter) is first to draft it (*exemplat*), then correct it (*emendat*), and then rewrite it, i.e., compose the corrected version (*emendata conscribit*). However, he left the task of rewriting (*rescribendi*) to his readers. He evoked Jerome’s working methods as an example: Jerome would first dictate a draft to his scribes, then correct it, and finally hand over the revised draft to the scribes who would

⁵³ “[...] haec me transtulisse confiteor, plurimis additis, plurimis ademptis, mutatis et transmutatis dictionibus aliisque pro aliis positis, uti omnes maiores auctores nostros fecisse dinoscimus,” Devos, 1958, 154-155. The translator of the *Passion of Saint Febronia* (*Passio Febroniae*, BHL 2843) uses almost the same words: “quibusdam additis, quibusdam ademptis, mutatis transmutatisque dictionibus, aliisque pro aliis positis,” Chiesa 1990, 298. This could indicate that the two works were produced by the same translator, but perhaps also that the techniques mentioned and the terms used to describe them were in widespread use among translators.

⁵⁴ “Namque haec sancti martyris et praesulis eximii Blasii et sociorum eius adeo absurdissima extitit Passio, ut non solum non intellexeretur, verum etiam ridiculum legentibus et audientibus eius incompta denotaret obscuritas [...], inordinata componimus, superflua resecamus, quod deest adhibemus, quodque obscurum est ad liquidum ducere curamus,” Devos 1958, 158.

make a fair copy. Since he did not have access to a capable editor, he had to hand the task of polishing the text, or rather the narrative, over to his learned and pious readers.⁵⁵ The fact that John the Monk thought he must excuse himself for this shows that the opposite practice must have been the more widespread, and that translators were also expected to do a kind of editing work on the final product.

It was often the case that either the translator improved on a pre-existing version, or a team among whose members the tasks were divided executed the translation proper and the rewriting. The ninth-century Roman translator Gregorius chose the latter practice for his translation of the *Passion of Anastasius the Persian* (*Passio Sancti Anastasii* BHL 411a). He stated that the existing translation was so bad that it was necessary to produce a new one, and took the task upon himself. However, a colleague, Nicholas, assisted in this endeavour; he prepared a draft that Gregorius rewrote. Gregorius claimed that during the rewriting process he not only improved on the rough Latin version, he also corrected passages from the Greek original that he considered unsatisfactory.⁵⁶ Translators of hagiographical texts, such as Nicholas and Gregorius, seem to have felt a particular sense of obligation, not so much towards the wording of the original text – no effort seems to have been made to conserve it – but towards an ever-improving version of the story it told and also towards their readers (often patrons), who wished for a translation that

⁵⁵ “Hoc enim notum sit omnibus in quorum manibus uentura sunt hec opuscula seu narrationes, quia prima exemplaria sunt translata a greco in latinum. Et, ut scitis omnes, quia qui epistolam uult scribere alicui, primum exemplat, postea emendat et iam emendata conscribit. Michi autem non fuit ista possibilitas, quia, ut iam dixi, in ultima senectute constitutus et oculi caligant michi et renes dolent, non potui plus facere. Etenim si possibilitas rescribendi esset, et uerba consonantia inuenirem et stilum aliquem dulcem in componendo haberem. Sed hoc uobis relinquo, qui sanctiores et sapientiores estis: huius opusculi materiam et fidelem translationem uos componite, ut decet. Nam bene linquimus, quia patrem Iheronimum sic fecisse legimus: Primo quidem per scriptores notariis (notarios?) scribebat, deinde per se ipsum dictata corrigebat et emendabat et sic ad scribendum librariis tradebat. Michi autem hec omnia faciendi possibilitas non fuit, quia in loco in quo habito non solum modo notarius aut scriptor non inuenitur, uerum etiam qui latinum uerbum sciat non inuenitur. Unde precor uos omnes qui lecturi estis: quod corrigendum est corrigite, quod emendandum emendate et michi, queso, ueniam date,” Huber 1913, 1-2.

⁵⁶ “Vestrae benignitatis excellentia nos ammodum rogavit, ut beati Anastasii martyrium quod quidam grammaticae artis expertissimus de graeco in latinum confuse transtulerat, urbanus regulari digestu componerem. Nycolaum igitur praelustrem archipresbyterum, achivos quidem luculente, latinos uero ex parte apices eruditum, obnixè postulauimus, quatenus praedictum martyrium de graeco in latinum observata serie transferret ut et nos deinceps retextu promptiore illud prosequeremur. [...] Sed quia idem apud Graecos etiam ipsos in plerisque locis insulse compositum adesse prospeximus, multa quidem superflua, salvo manente sensu, penitus subtraximus,” Vircillo Franklin 2004, 307-308. For an analysis of the prologue see pages 104-115.

did justice to the holy protagonists of the text.⁵⁷ In terms of Lefevere's theory, this complaint about badly carried out earlier versions and their rewritings tells us about the limitations and constraints imposed on translations. One can be language, but also, that of audience and context. These texts were composed for church-goers, to be performed orally, in a liturgical context; translators were thus aiming at a smooth and clear narrative.

Conclusion

My starting point in this essay was a discussion of Bruni's working methods and conception of translation and rewriting, based on both the historical precedents of his methodology and a modern theoretical framework that helps explain them. As we have seen, writing in premodern times often involved reworking an existing textual base, whether in an interlingual or intralingual context. These medieval translators and/or compilers evidently thought it their responsibility to modify and improve, if necessary, on the original text. From their prologues we see that rewriting was a conscious act; translators were aware of what they did, and did not necessarily hide their rewriting in order to deceive their readers. Furthermore, as my analysis of some historiographical and hagiographical works has shown, rewriting techniques were used, not only in translations but also in other kinds of textual compositions, and, judging by the translators' and authors' paratextual comments, were considered acceptable by contemporary readers, even sometimes being requested by the patrons themselves.

A range of rewriting strategies, or to use Genette's term, modalities, is strongly present in the medieval translations and other types of literary composition that I have discussed, and I can say that from this point of view Bruni follows in the footsteps of his predecessors. Most prominent are those that Genette called quantitative, that is, techniques of shortening or lengthening the original text, but others, as we have seen, were embraced by the various translators. This suggests that the notion of improvement was not incompatible with the task of translating these types of composition, since the translators were primarily concerned with detaching the text from its original environment and fitting it into a new context. And this is where Lefevere's definition of translation as rewriting becomes relevant and helpful. The

⁵⁷ Further instances of rewriting can be found, for example, in the prologues of Petrus Subdiaconus. See D'Angelo 2002, who in his introductory section discusses translation and rewriting (*Traduzione e riscritture*, pp. CXVIII-CLIII). Also, there was a similar approach in the Byzantine hagiographical tradition. The subtitle of Christian Høgel's monograph on the hagiographer Symeon Metaphrastes reads *Rewriting and Canonization*: Høgel argues that Symeon reworked and rewrote the original stories with the aim that his version of certain lives of the saints would finally become canonical.

constraints of this new context and the expectations and limitations imposed on the translator – those of patronage, poetics and ideology, as well as those of a cultural and linguistic nature – are in correlation with the rewriting strategies used.

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