

TRANSLATING WITH BOOKS:



Leonardo Bruni as a theorist of intertextuality in translation

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Abstract: This essay employs a framework proposed by Lawrence Venuti to consider Leonardo Bruni's On the Correct Way to Translate as a theory of intertextuality in translation. The essay sheds light on Bruni's thoughts about relations between the source text and other texts, relations between the source text and the translation, and relations between the translation and other texts, particularly those between two translations of the same source text into the same target language. As regards the latter set of intertextual relations, the essay specifically emphasizes that Bruni's treatise is a seminal text not only about translation, but also about retranslation. The literature addressing On the Correct Way to Translate is primarily historicizing in its approach, positioning it within the context of Renaissance translation theory and practise. While this essay draws in part on existing research on Bruni, it also seeks to wrestle his treatise from a historicist grip by applying Venuti's framework and juxtaposing the text with other modern translation theories. The overall aim is to bring into clearer focus Bruni's awareness that translating implies engaging with numerous textual sources in both the source and target languages.

Introduction

In the 1420s the Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni (1374–1444) wrote his celebrated short treatise on how translation should be carried out, in Latin titled *De interpretatione recta* (On the Correct Way to Translate). In this text, Bruni explores Latin translations of the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, characterizing them in the following way:

Aristotle himself and Plato were, I may say, the very greatest masters of literature, and practiced a most elegant kind of writing filled with the sayings and maxims of the old poets and orators and historians, and

frequently employed tropes and figures of speech that have acquired idiomatic meanings far different from their literal meanings.¹

Aristotle and Plato were not only philosophers, in Bruni's view they were also artists with words. Their work brings together both learning and stylistic brilliance. For this reason, translating Aristotle and Plato correctly into Latin is not just a matter of rendering the content of their thoughts precisely, it also entails recreating the way these thoughts were originally communicated and perceived in Greek. The elegance of Aristotle's and Plato's style stems partly from the philosophers' use of figurative language and partly from their quotations from and allusions to Greek poetry, rhetoric and historiography. Their works are, in various ways, repositories of the linguistic and literary traditions of the source culture in which they practiced their art.

As the above quotation shows, Leonardo Bruni was highly aware that the source texts he examined were caught up in relationships with other texts. It was this fact that led him to conclude that only an extremely well-read translator would be able to understand and translate them correctly. As I shall endeavor to show in this essay, however, *On the Correct Way to Translate* is also concerned with other kinds of intertextual relations that pose a challenge to the translator and condition the way he translates.²

Intertextuality and translation

So far, intertextuality has not made its way to the top of the agenda in translation studies. 'Intertextuality' does not, for example, figure as a keyword in John Benjamins 4 volume *Handbook of Translation Studies* (2010–2013), edited by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer. This oversight might be due to the fact that translation is an all-too-obvious form of intertextuality in and of itself. After all, as Gideon Toury's notion of assumed translation suggests, to regard a text as a translation one must assume that it is dependent on another text in another language and culture, that it is derived from this text through a process of transfer and that it shares certain features with its

¹ Bruni 1987a, 218. In this article, I will quote from James Hankins' English translation of Bruni's treatise and use its English title. I have read Bruni's treatise in all existing English and Italian translations and I referenced the Latin original when encountering words or passages that were rendered very differently by translators. I would like to thank Angelina Zontine for revising my English.

² Bruni's ideal translator is an educated man, so I use the masculine pronoun when referring to the translator. Bruni does not specify this, but women would generally not have had the possibility to benefit from the long and expensive training required to learn the literary Latin that Bruni championed. See Hankins 1987, 212.

source.³ Translations are, by definition, intertextual texts. However, translation scholars' reluctance to designate relations between the source and target texts 'intertextual' might also have something to do with the slippery nature of the concept of intertextuality and the fact that scholars already have many other terms at their disposal to characterize the original-translation relationship, for example, different notions of equivalence. This latter fact may indicate that, in reality, translation scholars are already exploring various kinds of intertextual relations involved in translation, but they are doing so without relying on – or by relying on only partially – the terminology of intertextuality.⁴

In the early 1980s, however, various theorists began to write about translation in the context of theories of intertextuality. Early examples are Susan Bassnett (1980), Gérard Genette (1982), Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer (1984), Manfred Pfister (1985) and Werner von Koppenfels (1985). Bassnett refers in passing to Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality to point out that the prose translator's unit of translation is the source text, located within its specific historical context and understood in its dialectical relationship with other texts.⁵ Genette, on the other hand, sees translation as a hypertextual practice that consists of transposing a text from one language to another (linguistic transposition).⁶ Translation in Genette's view is an instance of hypertextuality in that it is derived from and would be unable to exist without its hypotext.⁷ Reiss and Vermeer term the relationship between the translation and the source text 'intertextual coherence' or 'fidelity' and argue that, while there should exist a relationship between the two texts, the exact form this relationship takes depends on "the translator's interpretation of the source text and on the translation *Skopos*."⁸ Pfister, attempting to synthesize theories of intertextuality – from 'global' poststructuralist theories to 'local' structuralist or hermeneutic ones – proposes a set of six criteria by which to gauge the so-called "intensity" of the intertextual reference, finding that translations are highly intertextual texts according to the criterion of 'structurality', that is, the criterion describing the degree to which a text

³ Toury 2012, 28-31.

⁴ For example, some kinds of so-called 'textual voices' could be considered 'intertextual traces'. See Alvstad and Rosa 2015, 6.

⁵ Bassnett 1980/2002, 82, 117.

⁶ Genette 1982, 293–299. In this article I will be quoting from the English translation of *Palimpsestes*: Genette 1997. Although Genette's key concept is that of hypertextuality, his book is generally considered a structuralist theory of intertextuality. See Allen 2011, 92-129. For overviews of theories of intertextuality I refer to Allen's book and to Pfister 1985.

⁷ Genette 1982, 13.

⁸ Nord 1997, 32. I rely on Nord's paraphrase of Reiss and Vermeer's position.

structurally depends on another.⁹ Werner von Koppenfels's 1985 article on literary translation, "Die literarische Übersetzung", is instead an attempt to demonstrate how useful the concept of intertextuality, understood as "the aesthetically fruitful tension to the foreign model", is for translation criticism.¹⁰ The history of translation criticism, von Koppenfels argues, shows that translations have often been deemed defective or secondary because they aim for but cannot completely reproduce the source text in the target language. However, since intertextuality as a mode of textual production falls under the law of both repetition and change, viewing translation as a form of intertextuality allows us to recognize that the translation, in establishing a literary relationship with the original, vigorously demonstrates its own literary worth. To escape from the impasse of traditional translation criticism, von Koppenfels insists, one must realize that the dialectic between repetition and poetical transformation is part of the essence of literary translation.¹¹

A recent attempt to combine intertextuality studies and translation studies is represented by Lawrence Venuti's 2009 article, "Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation".¹² Venuti's starting point is the observation that foreign intertexts are rarely recreated with any completeness or precision in translation, because "translating is fundamentally a decontextualizing process."¹³ In translation, the foreign text is uprooted from the various foreign-language contexts (linguistic, cultural and social) that support it and grant it meaning. However, at the same time the text is recontextualized; it is rewritten in a different language, thereby being situated in a different culture and, often, a different historical moment, and promoted and mediated differently than it was in the source culture. Translation, according to Venuti, therefore implies both an immense loss, a loss of foreign contexts, and an immense gain in that the text acquires meanings and effects through recontextualization that function only in the target language and culture.

It is Venuti's view that foreign intertexts generally cannot be reproduced in translation by what he terms 'lexicographical equivalence',¹⁴ that is, by adhering closely to the denotative meanings of words and phrases, since the

⁹ Pfister 1985, 28. According to Pfister, poststructuralist theories operate with a global model of intertextuality according to which every text is part of a universal intertext, whereas structuralist and hermeneutic models restrict the concept of intertextuality to intentional and explicit connections between a given text and other texts.

¹⁰ "Die ästhetisch fruchtbare Spannung zur Fremdvorlage." Von Koppenfels 1985, 139.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 137–140.

¹² Other recent attempts include Hermans 2003, Venuti 2004, Bassnett 2007, Federici 2007, Sakellariou 2015, Koskinen & Paloposki 2015, and Liu 2017, 10–20.

¹³ Venuti 2009, 158.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

intertextual references thus translated would prove incomprehensible to target readers. Instead, translators will often attempt to substitute foreign intertexts with intertexts that are relevant and recognizable to target readers, but in aiming for such dynamic equivalence they create a disjunction between the source text and the translation.¹⁵ The most important point made in Venuti's article, which is indebted to poststructuralism,¹⁶ is that by substituting foreign intertexts with domestic ones the translator not only interprets the source text; at times s/he also calls it into question along with texts in the translating culture. The receiving intertexts occasionally cast a critical light on both the foreign text and other target-culture texts, although translators may not have anticipated that their translations would function in this particular way. Indeed, according to Venuti, the interrogative force of the intertextual relationships established by a translation may arise from interpretive choices that were not deliberate on the part of the translator and whose effects can only be grasped after the fact by 'an informed readership.'¹⁷

In the beginning of the article, Venuti points out that translation represents "a unique case of intertextuality" in that it involves three sets of intertextual relations:

- 1) Those between the foreign text and other texts, whether written in the foreign language or in a different one;
- 2) those between the foreign text and the translation, which have traditionally been treated according to concepts of equivalence;
- and 3) those between the translation and other texts, whether written in the translating language or a different one.¹⁸

¹⁵ Venuti essentially once again takes up the attack he had levelled against Eugene Nida's concept of 'dynamic equivalence' in *The Translator's Invisibility*, that is, a type of equivalence aimed at "producing in the ultimate receptors a response similar to that of the original receptors" (Nida 1964, quoted in Venuti 2008, 16). However, in the 2009 essay, Venuti's critique is not framed by the conceptual duo of foreignizing and domesticating translation, but by his thoughts about the possibility of and strategies for translating foreign intertexts. See Venuti 2008, 16–18, and Venuti 2009, 159.

¹⁶ Venuti explicitly writes that his model reader, the reader who reads a translation as a translation and is able to grasp and critically formulate the significance of intertextual relationships in translation, "deploys and develops ideas about language and translation that have been formulated by poststructuralist thinkers like Derrida and [Philip] Lewis [...]". *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁸ Venuti 2009, 158. Translation is probably not as unique a case of intertextuality as Venuti claims, since other hypertexts, to draw on Genette's terminology, would also involve these three sets of intertextual relations. For a different view of the unique intertextual character of translation, see von Koppenfels 1985, 138. For this latter author, what distinguishes literary translation is that it ideally aims for a total reproduction of the source text, its contents as well as its form, in a new linguistic environment. The uniqueness of literary

Whereas in the 1980s scholars such as Susan Bassnett opened up new ways of understanding how the source text is surrounded by and entangled with other texts, Venuti's sets of intertextual relations highlight the fact that the translator engages explicitly and implicitly, consciously and unconsciously, with multiple texts in both the source-language and target-language environments. The translation is thus related not only to the source text but also to other texts, as when the translator quotes other translations, imitates a target-language writer or takes up a critical position vis-à-vis a previous translation of the source text.

The fact that translating requires the translator to engage with numerous other texts besides the source text he is reading and the translation he is writing was a point of which Leonardo Bruni was acutely aware. In this article, I wish to draw attention to and explore this specific feature of his thinking about translation. I will adopt the overall framework proposed by Venuti and investigate what Bruni has to say about the three sets of intertextual relations involved in translation according to the American scholar. Furthermore, I will juxtapose Bruni's treatise with other important present-day theories of intertextuality and translation, first and foremost that of Genette and a cluster of theories on retranslation, whereby I seek to highlight the specificity of Bruni's position, his dual closeness to and distance from modern thinking about translation.

In so doing, I also have a more polemical goal, namely to wrest his treatise from the historicist grip. There is an extensive body of research literature on Bruni's treatise, as documented for instance by the footnotes accompanying Stefano Baldassarri's 2003 Italian introduction to and translation of the text.¹⁹ Judging from the bibliographical references included in his notes, it would seem that contributions generally tend to follow Bruni back into his own time and culture, focusing, for example, on the identity of the medieval translator criticized by Bruni, Bruni's self-understanding as a translator, Étienne Dolet's debt to Bruni, the relationship between Bruni's treatise and other humanist theories of translation, and other similar arguments. I will rely on the existing 'specialist' literature on Bruni's treatise to some extent,²⁰ but my aim is to set

translation lies in this goal. However, this being impossible, it compensates for the loss which the foreign text undergoes during the translation process by drawing on the linguistic and aesthetic resources of the target culture.

¹⁹ Baldassarri 2003, 93–103, 193–218.

²⁰ I use the term 'specialist' here in the sense intended by David Damrosch. He argues that specialists, working for example in departments of national literature, strive to understand a literary work in the context of its home culture. In contrast, world literature scholars – of which Damrosch himself is a distinguished representative – “encounter the work not at

up a dialogue between *On the Correct Way to Translate* and modern theories and to use this dialogue to bring into clearer focus Bruni's awareness that translating implies engaging with numerous textual sources in both the source and target languages.

On the Correct Way to Translate

The point of departure for *On the Correct Way to Translate* is the debate spurred by Bruni's critique of a medieval Latin translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, one of the fundamental texts of the medieval university curriculum. In the preface to his own translation of Aristotle's work, dedicated to pope Martin V, Bruni had lambasted the previous translator for his many errors and somewhat rudely characterized his translational performance as "clumsy" and "clownish".²¹ Bruni's preface had in turn been criticized by a correspondent named Demetrius for presenting an inaccurate image of Aristotle as an eloquent philosopher and for being excessively severe in its evaluation of the previous translation.²² Furthermore, Demetrius argued that the medieval translator was actually the philosopher Boethius and not a representative of the Dominican order, as Bruni had asserted in his preface.²³ Through his treatise, Bruni sought to explain why he was convinced his previous assessment had not been excessively harsh but simply fair, detailing not only what he believed to be the essence of translation and requirements of a good translator but also once again finding fault with a medieval translation – this time Aristotle's *Politics* rather than his *Nicomachean Ethics* – on the assumption that the two works shared the same translator.

According to Bruni, "the whole essence of translation is to transfer correctly what is written in one language into another language."²⁴ Only the translator who fulfills two specific requirements will be able to produce a correct translation, however. First of all, he must have "a wide and extensive

the heart of its source culture but in the field of force generated among works that may come from very different cultures and eras." See Damrosch 2003, 300.

²¹ Bruni 1987b, 213.

²² It is not clear who Demetrius – or Demetrios – was. For attempts to determine his identity see Hankins 2003, 195 and Botley 2004, 44, note 180.

²³ Hankins 1987, 201–202. Bruni answered Demetrius' objections in a letter. According to Hankins, Bruni was upset by his criticisms and used "On the Correct Way to Translate" to elaborate and expand on many of the arguments originally contained in the letter to Demetrius. In the 1430s Bruni faced another, more sophisticated opponent to his translation of Aristotle, namely the Spanish bishop Alfonso of Cartagena (1384–1456), whose charges Bruni also refuted in a series of letters. *Ibid.*, 203–208. See also Botley 2004, 53–58.

²⁴ Bruni 1987a, 218.

knowledge of both languages.”²⁵ In Bruni’s view, the translator should even be equally proficient in the source and target languages. He does not write this explicitly, but his use of the same couple of semantically related yet distinct nouns (*iuventus/iuventa*) to illustrate the degree of lexical discernment required of the translator as regards the source and target languages indicates that he believed the translator’s knowledge of Greek should somehow mirror his knowledge of Latin.²⁶ Bruni’s ideal translator was thus a bilingual individual (or effectively trilingual, since the translator’s first language must have been a vernacular tongue). However, even though Bruni may be said to have posed the translator’s equal mastery of both languages as a condition for producing a good translation, he was clearly not interested in exploring translation in both directions; for Bruni, translation took place in only one direction: Greek was the source language, Latin the target language.

As Nike Pokorn has shown, some strands of modern translation theory assume that translators should be perfectly bilingual speakers of both the source and target languages, and in light of these theories Bruni’s requirement may appear self-evident; however, on closer scrutiny we discover that his requirement is different from the one posed by modern theorists.²⁷ In the early fifteenth century, knowledge of Greek was the privilege of a restricted intellectual elite and it took years of intense study to master the classical Latin that Bruni championed. His target language could thus only be acquired by deliberate and laborious training. Bruni’s treatise does not present the same view as that of present-day translation studies because many translation scholars today take for granted, as Pokorn has pointed out, that only translation into one’s mother tongue will guarantee a fluent and idiomatic translation. To question this assumption, she analyzed different English translations of the same source texts (written in Slovene), some translated by native speakers of English, others not, and examined responses to these translations by educated target readers. Her finding was that the translator’s mother tongue “proved not to be a criterion according to which the quality of the translation or faithfulness to the original could be accessed.”²⁸ She also emphasized that the idea that one should never translate out of one’s mother tongue – so-called ‘inverse translation’ – is not and has never been a universally accepted principle, mentioning, among other points, that all the great Greek patristical and philosophical works were translated into Latin by

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁶ Bruni 1996, 155, 159. All of Bruni’s examples of the translator’s command of the source language are Latin and not Greek.

²⁷ Pokorn 2005, 3, 28-30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xii.

translators who did not speak it natively, and that Martin Luther could be seen as the first exponent of the belief that one can only translate satisfactorily into one's mother tongue.²⁹

Since Bruni strove to revive and imitate the Latin of classical antiquity, a language which was only acquired by study, he may be said to have written a treatise about how to translate from one foreign language into another foreign language, from classical Greek to classical Latin. This fact makes *On the Correct Way to Translate* radically different from mainstream modern translation theory, if we accept Pokorn's observation that most scholars today believe that translation must be done into and never out of one's mother tongue. However, one might also say that *On the Correct Way to Translate* is indeed a treatise about translating into a mother tongue, if by this term we mean not the language one learns first as a child – little Leonardo must have spoken Tuscan with his mother or nursemaid – but the language one knows best, uses most, identifies with and is identified by, all of which are possible definitions of the term 'mother tongue' according to Pokorn.³⁰

Bruni's second requirement is that the translator be able to combine knowledge with action, comprehension with restating. There are people who are capable of understanding a concept but unable to express what they have understood. Bruni compares these people to art and music critics who know how to evaluate the quality of a painting or a song but cannot paint or sing themselves. This comparison suggests that, in Bruni's opinion, translators can be likened to painters and singers. The translator is thus not 'merely' a man with a profound knowledge of Greek and Latin gained through study; he is also a kind of artist, a person endowed with considerable literary skills of his own.³¹

Viewed in the context of Bruni's other writings from the same period such as his famous 1424 treatise dedicated to Lady Battista Malatesta of Montefeltro, his ideal translator represents but one possible example of a truly learned individual. In this text, Bruni advises Battista on how to become a woman of letters. She should not only be familiar with the best authors, first and foremost of divinity and moral philosophy, but should likewise possess

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 34, 24.

³⁰ I thank Marianne Pade for sharing her knowledge of Bruni's 'mother tongue' with me. Personal e-mail communication 27 March 2018.

³¹ Stefano Baldassarri highlights this aspect of Bruni's ideal translator by translating the title of treatise as "L'arte del tradurre" (The Art of Translating). The Italian scholar probably invokes the Greek concept of *technē*, meaning "any productive activity" and traditionally translated by 'art', 'craft' or 'technique' (Parks 2004, 5). Baldassarri's translation thus highlights how Bruni's translator does things in a certain way to obtain concrete results.

“a well-developed and respectable literary skill” of her own.³² There is no purpose in knowing many things if one cannot talk or write about them with taste and distinction, just as there is no advantage in being a brilliant writer if one has nothing interesting to say. In Bruni’s memorable phrasing: “Literary skill without knowledge is useless and sterile; and knowledge, however extensive, fades into the shadows without the glorious lamp of literature.”³³ In both texts, the treatise on translation and letter to Battista Malatesta, Bruni emphasizes individuals who are “doubly educated”, that is who have knowledge and are able to communicate what they know.³⁴ The literary skills of a woman of letters – and, one may infer, of a translator – are to some degree the byproduct of her search for knowledge, since Bruni believed she should let herself be instructed only by authors who were also paragons of literary excellence.

Given the fact that *On the Correct Way to Translate* originates from a heated debate about the quality of a previous translation of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and Bruni’s right to and ways of criticizing his predecessor’s work, the treatise is necessarily quite concerned with relations between the translation and other texts, in this case translations of the same source text. This is the third set of intertextual relations that Venuti identifies as being involved in translation, although he does not examine intertextuality between two translations of the same source text in “Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation”.³⁵ However, Bruni’s work is equally concerned with the other two relations outlined by the American scholar. Bruni is aware that the source text is surrounded by and incorporates multiple other source cultural texts and he takes pains to describe the kind of relationship which he believes should exist between the source text and translation.

a. Intertextual relations between the foreign text and other texts

What Bruni has to say about the first set of intertextual relations involved in translation is connected to his ideas about the translator’s command of the source language. The translator’s knowledge of it should, Bruni explains, be “no small or common knowledge at that, but one that is wide, idiomatic,

³² Bruni 1987c, 250.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

³⁵ In his 2004 article “Retranslations: The Creation of Value” Venuti does, however, discuss retranslations in relation to the concept of intertextuality. In this case, however, he is mostly interested in the links retranslations establish with other texts in the translating culture and not so much in the relationship between two translations of the same source text. Venuti 2004, 31–34.

accurate, and detailed, acquired from a long reading of the philosophers and orators and poets and all other writers.”³⁶ As a translator, Bruni had early on discovered that it was impossible to translate the classical Greek writers without having a solid grounding in the source culture. As Hankins has pointed out, when translating Demosthenes (between 1406 and 1412) Bruni realized that he needed to gain familiarity with Greek history and legal procedures in order to understand the Greek orator.³⁷

To be well-read in Greek literature proves important in the case of Aristotle and Plato, whose works are, in Bruni’s opinion, packed with intertextual references. This view of the two philosophers is a recurrent position of Bruni’s. He expresses this idea in the treatise on translation and in the above-mentioned treatise to Battista Malatesta, where he draws attention to the vast literary erudition of the two Greek thinkers. Aristotle, for example, “frequently cites passages of Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, Euripides, and the other poets, showing by his familiar knowledge and ready quotation of them that he was no less a student of the poets than of the philosophers.”³⁸

Bruni thus demands that the translator acquire knowledge of the source language by reading many different kinds of source-language authors. He would have agreed with Antoine Berman’s argument in his *Toward a Translation of Criticism: John Donne*, that translating requires numerous and various readings and that “[o]ne translates with books, and not only with dictionaries.”³⁹ By reading, one not only learns the foreign language but also becomes acquainted with the foreign culture and its literary traditions, and both forms of knowledge must be put to use when translating. We could therefore safely assume that Bruni’s ideal translator is not only bilingual – he is also bicultural.

Bruni supports his requirement that the translator possess an extensive knowledge of the source language by offering various examples of what might happen if this requirement were not met. He shows, for example, how an ignorant translator might misconstrue idiomatic expressions, that is, expressions that have acquired a meaning through usage not deducible from the meanings of the individual words, by reading them literally. He also emphasizes the problem of understanding allusions. They are, in Bruni’s opinion, common in Aristotle’s and Plato’s writings; to prove his point, he indicates three instances in which Aristotle references Homer.⁴⁰ An allusion,

³⁶ Bruni 1987a, 218.

³⁷ Hankins 2003, 261.

³⁸ Bruni 1987c, 246.

³⁹ Berman 2009, 52.

⁴⁰ Bruni 1987a, 219.

or a reference to something, is described by Genette as “an enunciation whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible.”⁴¹ Allusions are thus puzzling or impenetrable to readers who are not familiar with the previous text being referenced. Through these examples, Bruni highlights the fact that there is no intertextuality without a reader who can recognize these references and understand what they mean in their new textual environment. Or, to rephrase Bruni’s basic point in Venuti’s words, “reception is a decisive factor with intertextuality.”⁴²

In *On the Correct Way to Translate*, Bruni thus scrutinizes source texts which are caught up in relations with other texts and argues that this intertextuality poses restrictions in terms of who would be capable of translating them. He examines these relations at the level of what Genette calls “semantic-semiotic microstructures”, that is, at the level of words, expressions and short texts.⁴³ One might also say that Bruni is concerned with the intertextual trace, the “pictorial detail” – to use another quotation from Genette – rather than the foreign text’s more general structural dependency on other previous texts.⁴⁴

b. Intertextual relations between the foreign text and the translation

In “Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation,” Venuti argued that translation does not leave the original unaltered. Indeed, he claimed that the intertextual relations established by a translation may have a double interrogative power.⁴⁵ The informed reader, the reader who accepts that a translation is a translation and not a transparent communication of the foreign text, may discern how the receiving intertext affects both the source text and texts in the translating culture. Unlike Venuti, Bruni does not delve into the potentially undermining effects of the intertextual relationships established

⁴¹ Genette 1997, 2.

⁴² Venuti 2009, 157.

⁴³ Genette 1997, 2. I quote from the English translation, but it is worth noting that the French original has “micro-structures sémantico-stylistiques” and not, as the English translation would indicate, “sémantico-sémiotiques”. Cf. Genette 1982, 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Genette, in contrast, is interested precisely in exploring the structural dependency of texts on preexisting ones. The focus of *Palimpsests* is hypertextuality, that is, the transtextual relationship between two texts, A and B, in cases where text B does not speak of text A, but would be unable to exist at all without it. In contrast, in Genette’s terminology intertextuality is the effective presence of text A in text B. Intertextuality is therefore a less pervasive type of transtextual relationship than hypertextuality because it ‘only’ denotes the presence of shorter or longer stretches of text (quotations, allusions, etc.) in the text at hand.

⁴⁵ Venuti 2009, 167.

by the translation, but the idea that a translation may negatively influence the original – and that the intertextual relations between the two texts thus go both ways, from original to translation and from translation to original – holds a prominent place in his thinking.

I have borrowed the expression “pictorial detail” from Genette to argue that Bruni’s exploration of the intertextual relations between the source text and other texts is conducted at the level of microstructures, as if he were holding a magnifying glass up to a painting to examine a part of it in detail, as for instance when he points out that Aristotle uses a quotation from the *Iliad* about Helen’s grace and beauty as “a figure for the nature of pleasure.”⁴⁶ However, Bruni’s thinking is also informed by notions of translations as complete distorted pictorial representations of originals. He believes that translations have the power to debase, defile and destroy originals, as is clear from the way he describes the iconoclastic force of the medieval translator of Aristotle, comparing him to a vandal slashing and ruining a precious painting. The translator did not simply add a playful moustache to the portrait of a beautiful lady; he ruthlessly destroyed the masterpiece. To describe the proper attitude the translator ought to assume vis-à-vis the original author and his work, Bruni once again resorts to a comparison with painters and their creations:

Just as men who copy a painting borrow the shape, attitude, stance and general appearance therefrom, not thinking what they themselves would do, but what another has done; so in translation the best translator will turn his whole mind, heart, and will to his original author, and in a sense transform himself, considering how he may express the shape, attitude, and stance of his speech, and all his lines and colors.⁴⁷

The translator copies a literary work of art just as an artist might copy a work of visual art.⁴⁸ The real message in this comparison lies in the fact that, as

⁴⁶ Bruni 1987a, 219.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 220 Hankins’ translation has been slightly modified. The Latin original reads: “Ut enim ii, qui ad exemplum picture picturam aliam pingunt, figuram et statum et ingressum et totius corporis formam inde assumunt nec, quid ipsi facerent, sed, quid alter ille fecerit, meditantur: sic in traductionibus interpretes quidem optimi sese in primum scribendi auctorem tota mente et animo et voluntate convertet et quodammodo transformabit eiusque orationis figuram, statum, ingressum coloremque et liniamenta cuncta exprimere meditabitur,” Bruni 1996, 160.

⁴⁸ Many modern translation scholars would not agree with Bruni’s idea of the mental stance the translator ought to assume vis-à-vis the original author and his work. In *The Translator’s Invisibility*, for example, Venuti argues that the translator’s identification with the author is a negative result of the individualistic concept of authorship pervasive in Anglo-American culture, which devalues translation. See Venuti 2008, 6-7. It would also seem that present-day translators do not use metaphors from the field of pictorial arts, preferring instead

Genette writes, while there is no aesthetic value in copying a piece of literature or music, “producing a good painting or sculpture in the manner of a master requires a technical competence that is, in principle, equal to the model’s.”⁴⁹ Through this comparison, therefore, Bruni suggests that translation is difficult because the translator’s goal is to *match* the original author, and indeed he also makes this point explicitly elsewhere. However, his comparison would seem to obscure the fact that, whereas a painter copying a painting is employing the same materials as the master he is copying, the translator and the original author, although both working with language, do not share the same linguistic code. Furthermore, Bruni’s pictorial metaphor and description of the translator’s identification with the author – Baldassarri terms it the translator’s “mimetic impulse” – fails to take into consideration the fact that not only differences between the two languages but also temporal and cultural distance between the source and target texts would complicate any claim that the translation is a replica of the original.⁵⁰

However, Bruni is well aware that a translation is not a reproduction of the original text, pure and simple. The relationship between the two texts is one of analogy rather than identity. The translator’s task is to make sure that Aristotle acquires a standing in Latin that is comparable to the one he enjoyed in Greek. As Bruni puts it in the preface to his translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “[Aristotle] would surely wish to appear among the Latins as he has made himself appear among the Greeks.”⁵¹ The philosopher was, in Bruni’s view, eloquent and conceptually profound in Greek, and therefore his work should possess these same characteristics in Latin as well. To achieve this end, the translator, drawing on his wide knowledge of the target language, should imitate the best and most approved classical writers of Latin. The relationship between the original and translation that Bruni sets out to attain thus ties the translation closely to other texts in the target-language culture (the third set of intertextual relations, according to Venuti). To make Aristotle speak in a ‘pure’ Latin diction, the translator should steer clear of borrowings from Greek; he should, for example, not ‘dot’ his translation with coinages

the sphere of music (“the translator is a performer”) to describe their work. See Zanotti 2011, 81–83. The abandonment of the pictorial metaphor could be related to the fact that copying a painting has come to be seen as a beginner’s task, the kind of exercise appropriate for a novice. At least, this is the point André Lefevere makes when he translates the above-quoted passage of Bruni’s treatise in the following manner: “Those who *learn to paint by trying to copy* an existing painting ponder the problem of how to transfer the shape, the stance, the gait, and the contours of the body not as they would make them, but as somebody else did make them.” See Bruni 1992, 84 (emphasis added).

⁴⁹ Genette 1997, 386.

⁵⁰ Baldassarri 2003, 100.

⁵¹ Bruni 1987b, 213.

such as *aristocratia*, *democratia* and *oligarchia*.⁵² In Bruni's view, the translator who transliterates Greek words is, as he writes somewhat rudely, "a mongrel, half Greek and half Latin; deficient in both languages, competent in neither."⁵³ In this sense, the translation should not reveal its intertextual dependence on the source text, if by intertextual dependence we follow von Koppenfels in understanding that a translation openly communicates its intertextual nature when it consciously violates the norms of the target language by borrowing linguistic and stylistic structures from the original. This is a practise which von Koppenfels dates back to Romanticism and which, drawing on Bertold Brecht's terminology, he terms "alienating translation".⁵⁴

Bruni would not be able to claim that the translator should avoid transliterating Greek words if he did not believe that Latin was perfectly capable of rendering a message written in Greek. "There has never been anything said in Greek that cannot be said in Latin", he famously remarks, referring to a passage in Cicero's *De finibus*.⁵⁵ Given this view, it is likewise no surprise that his treatise does not contain any discussion of untranslatable words or phrases, although he admits that several of the previous translator's blunders arise from the fact that some Greek words are indeed difficult to translate.

At this point, however, a modern reader of *On the Correct Way to Translate* is bound to notice an important difference as regards the degree of explicitness with which Bruni addresses specific translation problems in his treatise. According to Finnish translation scholar Ritva Leppihalme, there are various kinds of culture-bound concepts that may create problems in translation. Some of them regard extralinguistic phenomena that are natural (e.g. topography) as well as man-made (e.g. social institutions). Leppihalme finds that extralinguistic problems are often expressed as lexical ones: "[I]s there a word in the target language (TL) for a given feature of the source-language (SL) world?"⁵⁶ In Bruni's view, there are indeed words in Latin for the political institutions of ancient Greece. Phrased differently, when he points out that the medieval translator ought to have written *paucorum potentia* instead of *oligarchia*, *popularis status* instead of *democratia* and *optimorum*

⁵² For Bruni's critique of the transliteration of Greek words, see also Marianne Pade's contribution to this volume.

⁵³ Bruni 1987b, 213.

⁵⁴ Von Koppenfels 1985, 142.

⁵⁵ Bruni 1987a, 228. Baldassarri points out Bruni's dependence on Cicero's text (*De finibus*, 1.3.10). See Bruni 2003, 216, note 47.

⁵⁶ Leppihalme 1997, 2.

gubernatio instead of *aristocratia* he insists that Latin is just as *lexically* rich as Greek.⁵⁷

In Leppihalme's view, however, there are other culture-bound translation problems which are instead primarily "intralinguistic and pragmatic", involving "implicit messages grounded in the source culture".⁵⁸ Allusions are an example of such implicit messages. As we saw, Bruni insisted that Plato's and Aristotle's works contained numerous allusions to the Greek literary tradition. However, whereas the Italian humanist explicitly writes that the translator should find Latin lexical equivalents of Greek words and also offers examples of such substitutions, he does not really indicate what should be done with the other type of culture-bound items, beyond repeatedly stating that the translator should be able to recognize them thanks to his profound knowledge of the source culture. Should the translator find equivalents for them in Latin or should he just translate them? This question raises another one: What competences did the reader of Bruni's translation have in the source culture? As we saw, in Bruni's opinion the translator should be not only bilingual but bicultural. But what about target readers?

Is it realistic to expect them to be bicultural also? Is the receiver participation which the use of allusions presupposes possible when texts are transferred from source language culture to target language culture?⁵⁹

As I will show below, it is clear from the treatise that Bruni did not imagine his reader would know any Greek. Indeed, the target reader figures in the text as someone who might be led astray by the old translation because he or she was unable to access the original.⁶⁰ Since Bruni advised against translating idiomatic expressions word for word and urged the translator to identify the meaning of the entire expression and locate Latin equivalents, he might also have favoured the substitution of Greek allusions with Latin ones, although he does not provide any examples of such substitutions. The problem of translating culture-bound items such as allusions points to the fact that the translator and his target reader have an extremely unequal degree of knowledge of the source culture, an asymmetry which would make any straightforward translation of allusions highly problematic because a reader unfamiliar with Greek would simply not be able to understand them.

⁵⁷ Bruni 1987a, 228. Marianne Pade has recently explored the origins of the terminology adopted by Bruni to render the names of Greek constitutions. See Pade 2017.

⁵⁸ Leppihalme 1997, 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁰ Bruni 1987a, 220. Bruni argues that a poor translation has two damaging effects: It "leads men into divers error" and threatens the "majesty" of the original author.

c. Intertextual relations between the translation and other texts

According to Paul Botley, Bruni did more than any other scholar to revive the typology of competitive translation known from Antiquity, when students translated Greek orators as part of their training in rhetoric in order to learn and later employ their techniques in Latin productions.⁶¹ Their translations were competitive in that they set out to equal or perhaps even excel the Greek texts. Bruni's desire for his translation to compete with the original cannot be separated from his drive to substitute the latter, however. In *On the Correct Way to Translate*, the clearest example of his belief in the translation's capacity to replace the original probably stems from what he does rather than what he says. When seeking to demonstrate that Plato's writing is rhythmic and elegant, Bruni quotes from his own translation of Plato. The translation is a stand-in for the original, and Bruni points to a specific feature of the original by pointing to a specific feature of the translation.⁶² His choice to quote from the translation does not, however, rest on sheer pride in what he has accomplished; it also reflects his recognition of the fact that his readers would not be able to appreciate the qualities of Plato's original Greek writing for themselves.⁶³

As a translator, Bruni not only competed with the original author, he also competed with other translators. Indeed, the competitive translation is typologically characterized by its agonistic relationship not only with the source text, but also with other translations of the source. As Botley points out, translators in Antiquity measured "their skill in their own language against the skill of the author of the original text, or against the virtues of other Latin versions."⁶⁴ Bruni's own translation of Aristotle's *Ethics* was meant to contend with and ultimately substitute the medieval translation.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Botley 2004, 170–173.

⁶² Bruni 1987a, 222.

⁶³ Botley points out that "neither Bruni nor Manetti had had any missionary zeal for the propagation of Greek Studies. They did not encourage, and they did not expect, their readers to learn Greek." Botley 2004, 176. However, Bruni probably expected that some of the readers of *On the Correct Way to Translate* were other translators and they, of course, would be able to understand Plato and Aristotle in Greek. By providing his own translations, Bruni demonstrated his own mastery as a translator to these fellow translators who would have recalled the various difficulties inherent in the two philosophers' texts.

⁶⁴ Botley 2004, 170.

⁶⁵ Bruni notes in a 1435 letter that Italy was soon filled with copies of his translation and that it was even "discussed at public lectures in universities." Quoted from Hankins 2003, 196. By penetrating the university institution, Bruni's translation could be said to compete with the medieval translation because it was at the universities that this text was generally read and taught. By the 16th century, the medieval translation had been supplanted by Bruni's and other translators' versions of Aristotle. *Ibid.*, 220.

The fact that Bruni both competed with a previous translator and maintained an aggressive and self-confident stance towards this predecessor is evident in *On the Correct Way to Translate*. Any reader of the treatise cannot fail to notice how Bruni's argument rests on numerous comparisons between his own work and that of the medieval translator, and how the destructive force Bruni attributes to his predecessor (as regards the latter's treatment of the source text) is somehow repeated by Bruni himself in his panning of this nameless foregoer's work.

On the Correct Way to Translate is thus also a treatise about retranslation. Admittedly, whereas Bruni explicitly lays down guidelines as to the relationship that ought to exist between the original and the translation, he does not openly reflect on the relationship that might pertain between two translations of the same source text, perhaps because Bruni believed that there were no connections at all between his own translation of Aristotle and that of his predecessor.⁶⁶ When it comes to retranslation, the Italian humanist is not so much a theorist of intertextuality in translation as a practitioner who furnishes an example, perhaps a prototypical one, of how translators may polemically represent their predecessors' work.

On the Correct Way to Translate has often been termed the very first or, more modestly, the first modern treatise on translation.⁶⁷ It is important to recognize that this text is also about retranslation, however, as this fact obliges us to understand that a strong impetus for the theory (and practice) of translation are previous translations and their perceived mistakes or misinterpretations. It is not difficult to see why the act of retranslation might give rise to theorizing about translation. As Venuti points out, "in the case of retranslations, the translator's agency is distinguished by a significant increase in *self-consciousness* that seeks to take into account the manifold conditions and consequences of translating."⁶⁸ In retranslating, or so Venuti suggests, translators are more explicitly aware of what they are doing because they have to offer not only an interpretation of the source-text but a markedly different interpretation than the one already available in the target language. This increased self-awareness on the part of retranslators may make them more prone to viewing translation in a general, 'theoretical' perspective.

According to Kaisa Koskinen and Outi Paloposki, retranslation as a product denotes "a second or later translation of a single source text into the

⁶⁶ There was, of course, at least one very important relationship between the two translations, which arose from the fact that Bruni had read the previous translation, found it inadequate, and saw his own work as an improvement on the medieval version.

⁶⁷ See for instance Hankins 1987, 210, Nergaard 1993, 34, Baldassari 2003, 99.

⁶⁸ Venuti 2004, 29 (my emphasis).

same target language.”⁶⁹ The phenomenon of retranslation has been the focus of an increasing number of studies in recent years. Scholars have investigated which texts have been retranslated, explored the differences between the linguistic and textual make-up of the first and second translations, sought to identify the causes for retranslation and so on. With the exception of so-called “passive retranslations” – a term used by Anthony Pym denoting retranslations “where there is likely to be little active rivalry between different versions and knowledge of one version does not conflict with knowledge of another”⁷⁰ – retranslation is “a polemical act by nature”, in Koskinen and Paloposki’s view.⁷¹ The decision to retranslate a text is often based on the perception that the existing translation is lacking in one or more desirable qualities. The second translation does not always represent a critique of the first, however; indeed it may be assimilative, relying heavily on the previously published text.⁷² A text the publisher labels ‘retranslation’ may in fact be a revised version of an old translation.⁷³ Furthermore, a retranslation may not only keep an eye on the source text and other previous translations into the same language, it may also refer to translations into other languages.⁷⁴ The phenomenon of retranslation thus directs our attention to the fact that translations may draw on and enter into dialogue with numerous textual sources.

Some translation scholars have explored retranslations specifically within the framework of theories of intertextuality. For example, in his 2003 article “Translation, Equivalence and Intertextuality”, Theo Hermans offers a brief but interesting discussion of intertextual relations between two English translations of Anne Frank’s diary. Hermans discusses how Frank’s childhood friend Laureen Nussbaum tried to obtain permission to publish a revised version of the translation of the diary. When she was denied permission, she decided to intersperse her own alternative renderings of the text within the translation “as a kind of running commentary.”⁷⁵ They presented the English-speaking reader with a polemical dialogue between the existing translation and the one imagined by Nussbaum. According to Hermans, however, this dialogue would also have existed, albeit in a covert manner, if Nussbaum had been allowed to print her new translation. In the latter case Nussbaum would still have spoken both for her friend and against

⁶⁹ Koskinen & Paloposki 2010a, 295.

⁷⁰ Pym 1998, 82.

⁷¹ Koskinen & Paloposki 2015, 27.

⁷² Alvstad & Rosa 2015, 10.

⁷³ Koskinen & Paloposki 2010b, 41.

⁷⁴ Alvstad & Rosa 2015, 10.

⁷⁵ Hermans 2003, 41.

the previous translator. To recognize the oppositional nature of her translation the reader would have had to engage in a “double-edged reading”, a reading that pays heed not only to the relation between the translation and the original, but also to the “translation-specific intertextuality at work in the differential choices which translators make.”⁷⁶

Another example of how translation scholars have discussed retranslations in relation to the concept of intertextuality is Koskinen and Paloposki’s 2015 article “Anxieties of Influence”. They draw on Harold Bloom’s notion of anxiety of influence in poetry to classify different attitudes adopted by retranslators vis-à-vis the first translator and argue that “the anxiety of influence is rarely if ever entirely absent, and should rather be considered one function of the field of translation.”⁷⁷ Except in the case of passive retranslations, retranslators must find a way of dealing with their precursors in order to find their own voice as translators.

Bruni’s attacks on the medieval translator were numerous and various in nature. Like Nussbaum, he compared the way he had translated specific words with his predecessor’s translational choices; unlike Nussbaum, however, Bruni’s critique constituted the central argument of the last part of his treatise instead of being relegated to brackets and footnotes. The medieval translator wrote *congregatio*, Bruni wrote *contio*; the medieval translator wrote *principatus*, Bruni wrote *magistratus*; the medieval translator wrote *praetoria*, Bruni wrote *iudicia*; the medieval translator wrote *honorabilitas*, Bruni wrote *census*.⁷⁸ His *On the Correct Way to Translate* stages a veritable boxing match of translational choices with Bruni in the role of the champion and the medieval translator as the defeated opponent, a match that enables us to witness the potential knock-out power of retranslation. However, his critique of his precursor not only regarded the way the latter translated words denoting the political institutions of ancient Greece; Bruni also found fault with the language employed in the translation more generally, as well as the style, genre and audience. We have already seen that Bruni advocated the use of ‘pure’ Latin and advised against transliterating Greek words. In fact, he reserved for himself the honour of having produced the first Latin translation of the *Ethics*, asserting that the medieval one was “not Latin at all.”⁷⁹ As for style, Bruni found that the medieval translator spoiled the “fullness and

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Koskinen & Paloposki 2015, 37. On Bloom, see Allen 2011, 130–140.

⁷⁸ Bruni 1987a, 225–227.

⁷⁹ Bruni 1987b, 217. If we were to accept Bruni’s statement, we would not be able to see his translation of Aristotle as a retranslation – and the treatise as a text about retranslation – since a retranslation is a new translation into the *same* target language.

rhythmical qualities of the original.”⁸⁰ Aristotle and Plato were prose writers, but this does not mean their works were lacking in rhythm, and the metric arrangement of their writing should, in Bruni’s view, be preserved in translation. Prose is content *and* form. In this respect, Bruni can be seen as anticipating Bassnett’s view that the translation of literary prose (novels, in her case) requires just as much careful attention to form on the part of the translator as the translation of poetry.⁸¹

By insisting on the stylistic brilliance of Aristotle and employing a translation strategy emphasizing his eloquence, Bruni was also re-classifying the Greek thinker as a “literary philosopher”⁸² and consequently erasing the boundaries between philosophy and other genres. As his debate with Alfonso of Cartagena reveals, Bruni was actually tossing out the technical language established by the scholastic tradition and substituting it with the philosophical vocabulary of Cicero and Seneca whereby he, to quote Pym, granted Aristotle “a translational voice as a stylist, a person” and made philosophy use “the same words as other genres”.⁸³ Bruni’s *Ethics* is a retranslation that undermines a social institution by offering an interpretation of a canonical text that challenges that institution’s very self-understanding. As Venuti has observed, translations that are housed in social institutions (e.g. universities) are important for the “identity formation of the agents who function within it” as well as their “acquisition of values that constitute qualifications” and can therefore profoundly impact the functioning of that institution.⁸⁴ A new translation and thus new interpretation of one of a social institution’s core texts, a translation employing a different vocabulary and threatening to remove philosophy’s terminological specificity, represents an enormous threat to that social institution.

⁸⁰ Bruni 1987a, 220.

⁸¹ Bassnett 1980/2002, 110–119. There are also conspicuous differences between Bruni’s and Bassnett’s points of view, however. Bruni focuses, among other things, on the preservation of the rhythmic qualities of the original, whereas Bassnett is interested in pointing out how a prose translator should not translate sentences “at face value”, but as “component units in a complex overall structure.” (p. 115). As regards prose, ‘form’ is not primarily meter to Bassnett, but concerns, for example, patterns of repetition, use of specific verbs, the way in which information is packaged within the sentence and how these features, located on a micro level, relate to larger wholes.

⁸² I have borrowed this term from Parks 2004, 1. He does not, however, use it with reference to Aristotle.

⁸³ On Bruni’s debate with Alfonso, see Hankins 2003, 200–207. Pym unfortunately assumes that Bruni argued with Alfonso about a translation of Plato and not, as was the case, of Aristotle. Pym 2007, 41.

⁸⁴ Venuti 2004, 26.

By making Aristotle more immediately comprehensible, Bruni also made him accessible to readers beyond the ranks of university scholars. Indeed, another reason for retranslating the *Ethics* was that Bruni sought to reach an audience of not only specialists but also liberally educated readers more generally. The latter would, according to Hankins, not have time to pore over “an obscure text with the aid of glosses and questions”; they wanted a text that was similar in language and style to the classical Latin works they had read in the humanist schools; a text they could understand straight away.⁸⁵ Bruni’s translation, therefore, served a readership created by the humanist educators who had, as Hankins points out, established themselves as teachers in the Italian city-states of the late fourteenth century. Generally, retranslations occur because of the need to address a new audience.⁸⁶ However, while in *On the Correct Way to Translate* Bruni explicitly points out the medieval translator’s mingling of languages and general lack of style and terminologic precision as reasons for criticizing his translation (and retranslating Aristotle himself) and paints a picture of Aristotle and Plato as literary philosophers (thus re-categorizing the genre of their texts), he does not in his treatise openly state that his own translation was meant for a different audience than that of his medieval precursor.⁸⁷ Such an admission might also have proved problematic in that it would open up for a relativistic concept of translation in contrast with Bruni’s insistence on the correctness of his own version; a concept according to which different audiences might need and ask for different translations.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this essay, I noted that the first attempts to include theories of intertextuality in modern translation studies, or to write about translation in the context of theories of intertextuality, appeared in the 1980s. In these early attempts, scholars put forward two arguments as to why it might prove useful to draw on theories of intertextuality in the study and practice of translation.

The first has to do with the status of translations. The fact that they are ‘derivative’ texts has often been considered an inherent flaw. However, since

⁸⁵ Hankins 2003, 197.

⁸⁶ Koskinen & Paloposki 2010a, 294.

⁸⁷ However, if Bruni does not state directly in his treatise that his translation was directed at a different readership, he does indicate as much in his 1436 preface to the *Politics*, quoted by Hankins 2003, 197. Here Bruni notes that his translation addressed his “fellow citizens” and “other who use Latin but are ignorant of Greek”; they were repelled by the medieval version and wished “to read the text of Aristotle, not *via* the enigmas and nonsense of absurd and false translations, but face to face as he wrote in Greek.”

all intertextual writing relies on previous sources to a greater or lesser extent, the derivative nature of translations is not a flaw; it is simply a condition of existence that translations share with many, if not all, other texts, depending on whether one applies a 'global' or 'local' theory of intertextuality. In fact, Genette's *Palimpsests* could be used to present such a status claim for translations, for indeed he does not use the term 'derivative' in a derogatory way.⁸⁸ The second argument has to do with providing a more realistic and comprehensive understanding of the task of the translator. As Bassnett has pointed out, the translator engages with many texts besides the original; s/he is a reader of multiple sources, not only the source text. Indeed, an ignorant translator is a deficient translator; without extensive reading, s/he will produce poor translations.

Bruni's *On the Correct Way to Translate* is evidently concerned not with the status of translations, but with the practical work of the translator. In summary, this treatise speaks to the question of intertextuality in translation as follows:

Translations respond to and dialogue with other translations. Bruni's own translation of the *Ethics* seeks to replace a previous Latin translation of Aristotle's text. The Italian humanist develops his ideas about what constitutes a correct translation by pointing out his predecessor's perceived mistakes and misinterpretations. In so doing, he constantly compares his translation not only to the source text (which is never quoted in Greek, for reasons noted above) but also to the 'old' translation. A measure of Bruni's own success is the defective character of the previous version.⁸⁹

This is one of the ways in which the translation is linked to other texts in the target culture. Another link consists of the fact that, in Bruni's opinion, the translator should imitate the best and most well-regarded Latin writers. In the view of a scholar like Venuti, such a procedure would imply the translator creating an enormous disjunction between the source and target texts, "a proliferation of linguistic and cultural differences that are at once interpretive and interrogative."⁹⁰ When Venuti points out the difficulties in recreating foreign intertexts in translation and stresses that the substitution of foreign intertexts with domestic ones forces the two texts further apart rather than bringing them closer together, he criticizes the notion of dynamic equivalence, the idea that "a translation can produce for its reader an effect that is

⁸⁸ See for example Genette 1997, 5.

⁸⁹ For examples of these comparative dynamics – the 'deficient' previous translation serves as the background for measuring the achievements of the new one – in reviews of retranslations, see Koskinen & Paloposki 2015, 27.

⁹⁰ Venuti 2009, 157.

similar to or the same as the effect produced by the foreign text for the foreign-language reader.”⁹¹ Bruni is not concerned as much with the effect that a translation might have on its audience as he is with the status of the original author. Whereas Venuti finds that domestic intertexts produce a disjunction between the source and target texts, Bruni believes that they contribute to making Aristotle, for example, an eminent Greek author, sound like an eminent Latin one in the translation.

As for relations between the source text and other texts, Bruni stresses that the translator must be an extremely well-read individual in order to successfully recognize the many ways in which source texts draw on the linguistic and literary resources of the source culture in which they were once produced. In Bruni’s view, the source text is not autonomous; it is related to other source culture texts, drawing its meaning from and incorporating them.

In Bruni’s discourse, the three sets of intertextual relations that Venuti describes as being involved in translation are not separate, they are interwoven. When positing that the relationship between the original and translation (the second set of intertextual relations involved in translation) ought to consist of granting Aristotle the same status in Latin as he enjoys in Greek, and that the translator should achieve this by imitating the best Latin writers, Bruni ties the translation closely to other target texts while also positioning it polemically vis-à-vis a previous translation (the third set of intertextual relations). According to Venuti, in the translator’s experience the interconnectedness of these three sets of intertextual relations reflects “the manifold losses and gains” the source text undergoes in translation.⁹² Bruni would have stressed the gains.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 158.

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