

# GIACOMO CASTELVETRO'S POLITICAL TRANSLATIONS: NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND LITERARY STYLE

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**Abstract** – Translations of contemporary polemical and political tracts attributed to or associated with Giacomo Castelvetro (1546-1616) show a rejection of a servile adherence to the source text and the effort to produce an autonomous, readable text, one that in many cases is stylistically elevated and hence ‘literary’. Like most Renaissance translators, Castelvetro changes the form of expression of the texts and adopts narrative strategies in order to increase their communicative potential and reinforce the message they convey. An analysis of extracts from the translations of *Discourse of the Maner of the Discovery of this late intended Treason* (1605) and Elizabeth I’s proclamation *By the Queen on the Seizure of the Earls of Essex, Rutland, Southampton* (1600) will show how, through changes in emphasis and syntax, the translations give prominence to certain ‘characters’ in the narratives such as Guy Fawkes and the Earl of Essex. The stylistic elevation of the source text, moreover, shows how Castelvetro’s translations respond to a strong rhetorical tradition.

**Keywords:** translation; Renaissance; polemical texts; narrative strategies; stylistic elevation.

## 1. Introduction

Translation is central to the Renaissance, a period which is importantly characterized, in Michael Bakhtin’s view, by an “interanimation” of languages, involving an awareness of the differences between them, and associated with “increasing linguistic inventiveness and playfulness” (in Burke 2005, p. 17). Categories of Renaissance translators, as envisaged by Peter Burke, include merchants, diplomats, teachers, people living in border regions and displaced people, exiles or refugees who could exploit a double cultural position to get or support their career. John Florio, the translator of Montaigne’s *Essais*, exemplifies, even in his name, a condition of cultural hybridity (Burke 2005, pp. 18-24).<sup>1</sup> There is no mention, in Burke’s survey,

<sup>1</sup> On Florio’s important role in the Anglo-Italian exchange see Wyatt M. 2005, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England. A Cultural Politics of Translation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

of Giacomo Castelvetro (1546-1616), an anti-papal Italian exile in England, Renaissance translator of polemical tracts, dealing with issues related to conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. Although his activity as a teacher of Italian in England and his production as a writer have been investigated, his status as a translator and as promoter of English culture in Italy still needs examination.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the whole field of Renaissance translations from English to Italian has been neglected. If the shaping force of Italian culture on Renaissance England has been discussed and documented, much is still to be done to throw light on the permeability of Italy to English culture.

There were few translations from English into Italian in a phase (late sixteenth – early seventeenth century) in which Italy was, in terms of style and poetics, the dominant model. This perhaps explains the scarce critical attention to translations into English, a scarcity which increases the importance of what was translated. Broadly speaking, in the area of Morals and Philosophy only Thomas More and Francis Bacon were translated; there was a project (which was never accomplished) to translate Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* in the field of literary texts, while there were translations of moral literature (by Joseph Hall and by John Barclay) and of travel texts (by Robert Dallington for example). One particular category of translated religious-political texts is associated with Venice, which, at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, was the seat of an English Embassy.

The translations listed below, the focus of this essay, are among the papers of Castelvetro kept at Trinity College, Cambridge: *La Grida pubblicata in Londra*, a translation of Elizabeth I's proclamation *By the Queen on the Seizure of the Earls of Essex, Rutland, Southampton* (London 1600); *Ragionamento intorno alla maniera dello scoprimento di questo ultimamente machinato tradimento*, translation of *Discourse of the Maner of the Discovery of this late Intended Treason, joined with the Examination of some of the Prisoners* (London 1605), an anonymous tract, included in the 1616 edition of James I's *Works*, concerning the Gunpowder Plot. Besides other political tracts, Castelvetro was also the translator of *Déclaration du Sérénissime roi Jacques I [...] Pour le droit des Rois et independence de leur Couronnes* (London 1615) and possibly (given the corrected draft in his papers, as well as the style and contents) of the pamphlet by William Cecil Lord Burghley *The Execution of Justice in England* (London 1584), a text which intended to support the official policy towards the Catholics. The attribution of the translations to Castelvetro is a thorny problem but, while aware of the difficulties and of the need for caution in defining their status, I

<sup>2</sup> This essay draws on and develops topics discussed in De Rinaldis M.L. 2003, *Giacomo Castelvetro Renaissance Translator*, Milella, Lecce.

assume they are his, as biographical and textual indications suggest.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, since the manuscript copies in his papers show his corrections, even if we maintain he was only revising them, he remains the author of the revised versions.

If Renaissance translators generally selected their texts for quality or field, Castelvetro's choices were also motivated by a more specific need to popularise and inform, to communicate and create empathy with his target audience in Venice.<sup>4</sup> In Venice his activity as a translator acquired polemical power, as he identified with the Pro-Reformation movement. He fuelled the enthusiasm of those, both in Venice and Europe, who wished to exploit the conflict between Venice and the Pope (conflict which had caused the Interdict in 1606) and who hoped that Venice could be won over to the Protestant cause. The two events of the *Gunpowder Plot* and of the Interdict certainly caused a convergence of interests, highlighted by translations in both directions, from English and from Italian, as a series of polemical texts were translated as soon as they appeared in the original. These translations were made to inform, but to translate also meant to take sides.

In the context of Anglo-Italian relationships at the end of the sixteenth and in the early seventeenth century Castelvetro is a key figure, shedding light, through his activity as a translator, on the Venice-London connection. In Venice, he acts to reinforce, through translation and through the spread of books, the cultural exchange with England, which in Counter-Reformation Italy was a subversive political act. His involvement in political debates and his ideological position are evident in his prefaces and metalanguage on translation.

The *Atto della Giustizia* (London 1584) is thus introduced: “Traslatato d’Inglese in vulgare, da chi desidera che gli Italiani conoscano quanto i romori, sparti artificiosamente per tutta Italia, dell’Atto sopradetto, sieno bugiardi, e falsi”.<sup>5</sup> The translation is due to urgent political-religious preoccupations, to put an end to the false news circulating in Italy about the way Catholics were treated in England. Of the translation of Robert Cecil's

<sup>3</sup> For a thorough analysis of Castelvetro's translations see De Rinaldis 2003.

<sup>4</sup> He lived in Venice from 1599 to 1611, the year in which, on September 14<sup>th</sup>, he was arrested, for the second time, by the Inquisition. The ambassador Dudley Carleton made an appeal to the Venetian government: “I am bound to interest myself in the matter which affects one of my servants, who has done nothing amiss so far as I am aware, and which touches the honour of my house, the liberty which all enjoy in this most noble city, and the satisfaction of the King my Master, who is closely bound in Love to this Republic” (*Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, XII, p. 205). As a member of the English Embassy Castelvetro was released, an event which aroused great enthusiasm among the French and Italian Protestant exiles. He went to live in Paris, then in 1613 he went back to London, then to Cambridge, where he taught Italian, to Oxford and finally he went back to London, where he died in poverty in 1616. (See *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, XXII, 1979, pp. 1-4)

<sup>5</sup> “Translated from English into Italian by someone who hopes that the Italians may know how much the rumours, artfully disseminated throughout Italy, of the aforementioned act are false and mendacious” (translation mine here and in following footnotes).

*Answers to certaine Scandalous Papers* he says: “Vulgarizzata d’Inglese a pro degli amatori del vero. In Vinetia” (Trinity MSS R.4.15).<sup>6</sup> In *Replica al Signor Coeffeteau* (a translation of Pierre du Moulin’s reply to a text by Nicolas Coiffeteau on the *Premonition* by James I) we read: “Vulgarizzato di francese da persona desiderosa di giovare a suoi patriotti”. The date is 1612 and the purpose of the translator is made explicit: “compiuta di riscrivere a netto per mandarla a fedeli che in Venetiasi dimorano” (Trinity MSS R.4.36: 139r, 191v).<sup>7</sup> In the translation *Pezzi d’historia d’Antonio Perez* Castelvetro reveals the political stance of the translator: “Di spagnolo in puro volgare recata da chi si diletta giovare a Politici” (Trinity Mss R.4.24-25, I: i).<sup>8</sup>

If Philemon Holland, the translator of Pliny, and Thomas North, the translator of Plutarch, considered the act of translating as a service to the newly-born nation,<sup>9</sup> for Castelvetro too it responded to a public function, to prevent the Italians from being cut off from the ‘truth’. The language he uses in the “Lettera del vulgarizzatore”, introducing his translation of King James I’s *Declaration*, is more than a simple statement of the usefulness of translation and reaches a metaphorical level, echoing the language of the translators of the *Authorized Version of the Bible* when they stress the essential role of translation for man’s spiritual progress: “Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may looke into the most Holy place; that remooveth the cover of the well, that wee may come by the water” (“The Translators to the Reader” 1611, p. 12).

Castelvetro conventionally offers his work to the King: “Ecco la reale opera di V.M. della mia natia favella rivestita, a lei tutta umile ritornarsi, con certa speranza di dover, sotto a questi, non vili panni, essere alla M.S. non men cara, anzi da quella dover venire con lieta fronte accettata” (Castelvetro 1615, p. 1v).<sup>10</sup> He uses here the *garment* metaphor which is very common in Renaissance metalanguage on translation, and conveys the sense of an increasing awareness of the need to change the *garments* of the texts. Such a metaphor also expressed a hierarchical vision of the relationship between the original text and the translation through the opposition rich/poor garment (Hermans 1985a). Castelvetro is aware of the quality of the translation, whose garments are presented as “non vili”, as a result of his able use of

<sup>6</sup> “Translated from English for those who love truth. In Venice”.

<sup>7</sup> “Translated from French by one who wishes to help his compatriots”; “completed in fair copy to be sent to the faithful dwelling in Venice”. Here and in the quotes from the manuscripts that follow “r” stands for “recto” (the front of the page), “v” for “verso” (the back of the page).

<sup>8</sup> “Rendered from Spanish into pure vernacular by one who enjoys helping politicians”.

<sup>9</sup> See De Rinaldis 2004. *Englishing. La traduzione nel Rinascimento inglese. Prefazioni e scritti*. Lecce: Milella, pp. 24-28.

<sup>10</sup> “Here is the Royal work of Y. H. [Your Highness] re clothed in my native tongue, which returns to Your Grace in the hope that it will be no less dear, in these by no means despicable garments, but received with joy”.

language and of the high status of Italian at that time. So he uses the metaphor but subverts its negative connotation and thus defends the translation both in terms of style and of function:

Supplico adunque humilmente V.M. a non volerla perciò sdegnare, ma più tosto farli gratia, che possa inanzi a prencipi, et a sig.ri d'Italia arditamente comparire, acciocché ignorando essi ogni altro idioma, che il naturale loro, faccia lor vedere le alte e ben fondate ragioni in lei della M.V. addotte per far palese al cieco mondo, quanto fuori di ragione i papi s'usurpino l'autorità di potere (a voglia loro) spogliare i principi delle signorie, e i re delle corone loro.<sup>11</sup> (Castelvetro 1615, pp. 1v-2r)

Whereas Florio, when he addresses the reader of his translation of Montaigne, insists on the derivative quality of the translated text: “a picture of a body, a shadow of a substance” (Florio 1603: A5v). The perception of translation as a highly effective political tool is very clear in Castelvetro, and is reflected in his translation praxis. There is, however, a conventional declaration of fidelity in the introduction to the translation of *Supplica de' catolici d'Inghilterra* in his papers: “Se questa translazione [traduttione] paresse (sì com'è in molti luoghi) aspretta; sappia chi la leggerà che il translate [traduttore] ha atteso farla piuttosto fedelmente che ornamente, essendosi per tutto attenuto all'originale inglese” (Trinity MSS R.4.37: 125v).<sup>12</sup> But, in common with other translators of religious and political texts, he manipulates the original versions. In the period of the Reformation, during which religious creeds were being defined, there was a tension between tradition and the emergence of new vernacular translations, and the responsibility of the translator in changing the texts was much debated. Susan Bassnett (1996, p. 15) writes: “[...] there was a fine line between ‘englishing’ the Bible and rewriting it from a reformist position, and it was the assessment of where a translator stood on that line that meant the difference between life and death”. Even the position of a dot could cause heresy, as Daniel Huet states (Huet 1661). An example of the visibility of the translator in the Renaissance, mirrored in the ‘visible’ status translators have today, is that of Etienne Dolet, a humanist condemned to death for his translation of a platonic dialogue, *Axiocus*, but in reality for promoting a new cultural policy

<sup>11</sup> “I humbly beg Y.H. [Your Highness, translation of *Vostra Maestà*] not to disdain it, but rather to be indulgent, that it may boldly appear before Italian princes and noblemen, so that, their being ignorant of any language other than their own, it may let them see the high and well-founded reasons herein expressed by Y.M. to reveal to the blind world how unreasonably the popes usurp (at their will) the power to strip princes of their fiefdoms and kings of their crowns”.

<sup>12</sup> In square brackets, here as in later quotes, the first version of the text. “If this translation should appear rough (as it is in many places), it is because the translator has made it faithful rather than ornate, having adhered closely to the English original”. Declarations of fidelity to the original text were common in the Renaissance metalanguage on translation, see Kelly 1979.

which recognized the importance of translation in the formation of national languages (Bassnett 1996).

## 2. Translational Strategies

What changes, what manipulation (Hermans 1985a) of the original texts do we find in Castelvetro's translations? The translation *Ragionamento intorno alla maniera dello scoprimento di questo ultimamente machinato tradimento* shows a change in perspective, which Snell Hornby (1988/1995, p. 51) defines "the viewpoint of the speaker, narrator, or reader in terms of culture, attitude, time and place". The initial phrase "While this land and Monarchie" (*Discourse*: E4v)<sup>13</sup> is translated "Mentre che l'Isola della Gran Bretagna" (*Ragionamento*: 191r).<sup>14</sup> In the source text the deictic, and in general the system of reference, includes the reader as part of the source culture, while the change from the deictic to the definite article followed by the name of the place, implicit in the source text, immediately gives the sense of a change of destination. The translator seems to distance himself from the narration, which in the target text loses the direct connection with the speaking I and shifts from a sense of immediacy and urgency to a more meditative tone. The story is re-told from the outside; through the use of modulation on a syntactical level, by changing actives into passives for example, the translator exerts a strong control over the narrative, keeping the focus on the *characters*. The translation of a text which is strongly culture-bound, for the facts, the places and the people it deals with, manages to reach the reader through the use of techniques of dynamic equivalence (oriented 'toward the receptor response'- Nida in Venuti 2000, p. 136) and of particular narrative strategies. The use of these techniques and strategies brings Castelvetro into alignment with the great Elizabethan translators (Matthiessen 1931); for example, he adds details to make the scene more vivid, as did Thomas Hoby in his translation of *Il Cortegiano*: in Castelvetro's translation of the *Ragionamento* "one of his men"-Fr<sup>15</sup>- is translated *uno dei suoi domestici* and then corrected as *uno dei suoi più favoriti servitori*-191r, which is more detailed and also shows a certain intimacy with the whole scene, thus further involving the reader.

The translation of the following passage reveals the strategies used to intensify the original at the climatic point of the discovery of Guy Fawkes outside the Houses of Parliament:

<sup>13</sup> *A Discourse of the Maner of the Discovery of this late intended Treason*, Barker, London, 1606, E2-M4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ragionamento intorno alla maniera dello scoprimento di questo ultimamente machinato tradimento al quale s'è aggiunto l'essamine d'alcuni de' prigionieri*, Trinity College Cambridge, MSS R.4.36, fols. 191-196.

<sup>15</sup> Letters are used as well as numbers in this text, and in early-modern texts, for page references.

But before his entrie in the house, finding *Thomas Percyes* alleadged man standing without the doores, his cloathes and boots on at so dead a time of the night, he resolved to apprehend him [...]. (*Discourse*: G4r)

Ma prima ch'entrasse nella casa, trovò quivi quel finto servitore di Tomaso Percy, che fermo si stava fuori della porta vestito, et inghivallato da gambali a una hora così morta – qual'era quella – di notte, conchiuse di prenderlo [...]. (*Ragionamento*: 195r)

The syntactical transposition from subordination to coordination gives emphasis to the discovery; the change from the non-finite “finding” to the finite form of the verb *trovò* alters the sentence shape giving equal weight to the discovery and to the seizure as well, which increases the sense of involvement in the character's destiny. The translation of the neutral “alleadged” [supposto, presunto] with the moral adjective *falso* again reveals the intervention of the translator.

Also, like North in his translation from Plutarch *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, Castelvetro increases the dramatic quality of the text. Fawkes, moreover, is given prominence in the translation through the shift of emphasis from things (clothes and boots) to his character through the use of two past participles used as adjectives, *vestito*, *et inghivallato*. The Italian here is more elegant and literary.

Further prominence is given to Fawkes's character again through transposition from subordination to coordination later in the text, when he is examined by the king's counsellors:

And within a while after, the Counsell did examine him; Who seeming to put on a Romane resolution, did both to the Counsell, and to every other person that spake with him that day, appear so constant and settled upon his grounds, as we all thought wee had found some Mutius Scaevola borne in England. (*Discourse*: Hr)

Un poco dopo il Consiglio lo esaminò. Ma egli dava altrui a vedere che si fosse vestito una salda diterminazione romana, fu stimato et dal Consiglio et da ogni altro, che quel giorno gli si parlò di star tanto costante et saldo, che tutti pensammo d'aver trovato un nuovo Mutio Scevola nato in Inghilterra [...]. (*Ragionamento*: 195r-v)

Fawkes' strong resolution is highlighted here:

For notwithstanding the horreur of the Fact, the guilt of his conscience, his suddain surprising, the terrour which should have beene stroken in him by comming into the presence of so grave a Counsell, and the restlesse and confused questions that every man all that day did vexe him with; Yet was his countenance so farre from being deiected, as he often smiled in scornefull maner, not onely avowing the Fact, but repenting onely, with the said

*Scaevola*, his failing in the execution thereof, whereof (hee said) the Divell and not God was the discoverer [...]. (*Discourse*: Hr)

The translation reveals significant changes:

Perchè non/ostante l'orrore del fatto, l'accusa della sua coscienza, la sua prigione improvvisa, il terrore, del quale era verosimile che dovesse rimanere percosso, comparando nella presenza d'un Consiglio così grave, insieme con le infinite, et confuse domande con [dal]le quali da ogni uno fu quel giorno travagliato; tuttavia tanto era egli [lontano] lungi da mostrar viltà nel volto, che spesse volte sorrideva in guisa di chi si fa beffe, non solamente, approvando il fatto per buono, ma mostrando solamente di pentirsi, come il predetto Scevola, di non haver potuto menare [mançar in essecutione] al desiderato fine il suo percorso [...] del quale (diceva egli) il Diavolo, et non Iddio, era stato lo scopritore. (*Ragionamento*: 195v)

Emphasis on the character is reinforced through the use of the passive – *dovesse rimanere percosso, da ogniuno fu quel giorno travagliato* – and also maintained through the translation of “his countenance” with *tanto era egli*, the use of a personal pronoun substituting an abstract noun. The change from the abstract to the concrete is, also, one of Florio’s strategies in translating Montaigne. However, Castelvetro also creates distance from the event: he weakens the sense of immediacy conveyed by “surprising” (OED: “capturing by sudden attack”; and fig. “to find or discover- something- suddenly), which is not conveyed by *prigione*, i.e. “cattura”; the use of *infinite* for “restlesse” again does not communicate the idea of movement, which could have been expressed with “incessanti”. The use of the passive *fu [...] travagliato* instead of the active “did vex him with ”reduces the sense of action, but keeps the focus on the character, while the translation of “dejected” (OED: “depressed in spirits”; “downcast”) with *mostrar viltà nel volto* shows a shift from an emotional to a moral term which strengthens Fawkes’s heroism. The stress on the character’s heroic stance is functional to the communicative power of the translation, rather than detracting from any political aim.

The sense of a greater distance from the events which are being told is, moreover, given by the translation of “in scornfull maner” with *in guisa di chi si fa beffe*, of “repenting onely” with *mostrando solamente di pentirsi*, and of “his failing” with *di non haver potuto menare*. The translation of “avowing” with *approvando il fatto per buono* signals the tendency to rewrite the story/history in moral terms. Thus, the translated text has a more meditative tone, deriving from a moral evaluation and from the interpretation of the “Fact” as an anti-establishment gesture. However, at the same time it reveals a more passionate reading of the story: the neutral word “execution” is rendered with *disiderato fine*, which corrects the first solution in the manuscript *essecutione*. This specific example clearly illustrates that kind of relationship between translator and text defined as subjective, personal, in



that it offers space for the contribution of the translator to the expressive function of the text (Kelly 1979: 206 ff).

The following extract shows another climax in the narrative, the moment in which the Lord Chamberlain tells the king about the discovery of the plot:

And at the first entrie of the Kings Chamber doore, the Lord Chamberlaine, being not any longer able to conceale his joy for the preventing of so great a danger, told the King in a confused haste, that all was found and discovered, and the Traitor in hands and fast bound. (*Discourse*: G4v)

Nell'entrar nella camera del Re, il Signore Gran Camariere, non potendo più celar la sua smisurata allegrezza per lo prevenimento di un così tremendo [grande] pericolo, disse al Re con una pressa confusa che il tutto s'era e per ispezial favor di Dio trovato, et scoperto, et che il traditore si trovava in loro potere ben guardato [legato]. (*Ragionamento*: 195r)

The adding of *smisurata* and the use of *tremendo* instead of *grande* emphasize the *pathos* of the situation, while “per ispezial favor di Dio” is clearly an interference of the translator's hand. From the plainness and immediacy of the original we get a more emotionally charged target text, which almost encourages the reader to share the feeling of joy at the discovery of the plot. Castelvetro makes history more appealing through a deeper focus on the key characters than in the original. The characters themselves become more prominent in the translation.

Besides Guy Fawkes, another subversive figure is given prominence in the translation of Elizabeth I's proclamation *By the Queen on the Seizure of the Earls of Essex, Rutland, Southampton* (9 February 1600), printed in London by Robert Barker. This proclamation was to inform the people about the betrayal of the Earl of Essex. Essex, pretending to be in danger, kept prisoners in his house, together with the Earls of Rutland and Southampton, the Great Seal of England and other nobles who had come to settle the question of his defection. Many pages in the *Calendar of State Papers* are dedicated to Essex's conspiracy, which defied order and collectivity. Essex was imprisoned in the Tower and condemned to death, while up to a hundred people were arrested. The translation shows significant changes which serve to focus on his character:

Whereas the Earl of Essex, accompanied with the Earles of Rutland and Southampton, and divers other their complices [...] did [...] not onely imprison our keeper of our Great Seal of England [...] and others both of our Nobilitie and Councill, that were sent in our name to his houses to persuade the said Earle to lay open any petitions or complaints with promise (if he would disperse his disordered company in his house) that all his iust requests woulde bee heard, and graciously considered: but also did (after strait order given by him to murder our sayd Counsellors and others, whensoever they

would offer to stirre out of that place) traitorously issue into our City of London in armes, with great numbers, and there breaking out into open action of rebellion, devised and divulge base and follish lies, That their lives were sought, spreading out divers strange and seditious inventions, to have drawn our people to their partie [...]. (*By the Queen*)<sup>16</sup>

Come il Conte d'Essex accompagnato dai Conti di Rutland, et Suthanton, et di moltri altri lor seguaci [...] anno [...] tenuto prigionie il guardiano del nostro sigillo [...] et altri nobili del nostro consiglio, li quali furono da noi mandati a casa sua per persuaderlo a lasciarsi intendere intorno a quello, ch'egli pretendeva, et di che si voleva dolere promettendo essi da parte nostra, che licenziando egli la sua disordinata compagnia, et ragunanza, et stando in casa sua si che tutte le ragionevoli sue domande sarebbero ascoltate. Et non ostante tutto questo il predetto Conte fatto primeramente stretto comandamento a predetti nostri consiglieri, et a gli altri iti a lui da parte nostra, di non moversi di casa sua sotto pena d'essere uccisi. Uscì armato et andò per la nostra città di Londra con grande quantità di armati, dando manifestissimo segno di rubelione, et divulgando bugiarde invenzioni, cioè che si cercava di farlo innocentemente morire, per tirare per questo il nostro popolo alla parte, et divotione sua [...]. (*La Grida: 10v-11r*)<sup>17</sup>

The English text is built on the opposition between the Crown and the group of Essex and his friends; an opposition which is signalled through the use of the pronouns “their” and “our”. The translation makes two significant changes in order to give prominence to Essex. The first is from reference to the group in the source text (the possessive plural “their” which points to a plural subject in the preceding clause) to the repeated use of the third singular person in the translation (*uscì, andò* – the singular pronoun *lo*, the singular possessive *sua*) which makes him stand out in the group. The second change occurs when the translator starts a new clause – *Et non ostante* – and substitutes the implicit pronoun in the source text with Essex's title, *Conte*.

If reinforcing the pathos of the events makes history more appealing to the Italian readers, on a different level two other strategies should be mentioned in order to show the effort the translator is making to render the text acceptable to his audience. One is the stylistic elevation of the source text. Manuscript 2, the corrected version, tends to improve manuscript 1 on a lexical level: in the *Ragionamento*, “to have blowen him up”(G4v) is rendered with *gittarlo in aria*; and *aria* itself is corrected with the poetical word *aere* (195r); the time phrase “being at that time nere four of the cloche in the morning” (G4v), first translated *essendo in circa alle quattro hore della mattina* is corrected with *essendo intorno alle quattro hore anzi lo*

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth I, 1600, *By the Queen, On the Seizure of the Earls of Essex, Rutland, Southampton, etc.*, Barker, London.

<sup>17</sup> *La Grida pubblicata in Londra il Nono di Febbraio 1601*, Trinity College, Cambridge, MSS R.4.37, fols 10-13.

*spuntar del giorno* (195r). Lexical choices in manuscript 2 reject, literally erase, the more direct, and thus less interventionist, equivalent deriving from the same etymological root in favour of a more thought-out solution. Some examples in the *Ragionamento* are: “absence” – *assenza* – *lontananza*; “pause” – *pausa* – *spazio*; “enformed” – *informato* – *certificato*; “desperate” – *disperati* – *precipitosi*.

The other strategy consists in the use of glosses in the margins, which also reveal that Castelvetro's texts were strongly target-oriented and meant for publication. In the glosses he clarifies the meaning of culture-specific terms, and compensates for a gap of knowledge. Words such as “Term” (session of Parliament), “Papists”, “Tower” are explained to the Italian readers:

Termine, si dee sapere, che nella città di Londra quattro volte l'anno concorre tutto il reame ad [unreadable] le cause loro tanto civili, quanto criminali, tenendosi in [que tempi ragione] e li chiamano Termini. (*Ragionamento*: 191r)<sup>18</sup>

Acciocchè i puri et buoni Catolici non si scandalizzino di questa parola vogliam che sappiamo come quel Re, et tutti quelli di quella religione fanno una distinzione tra queglii due nomi Catolico et Papista. Chiamando Catolico colui che [...] crede che la religione Catolica romana sia la vera. Papisti chiamano coloro che non pure la romana catolica religione esser la migliore ma che anchor sia loro licito zelo di quelli d'ammazzare i re et ogni altro di contraria religione. (*Ragionamento*: 192r)<sup>19</sup>

Questa torre è un castello molto antico et vogliono che fosse fatto da Giulio Cesare, nel quale è il tesoro, l'arsenale, et tutti i prigionieri di lesa maestà si mettono, è sopra il nobile fiume Tamigia, et quivi si può dire che la città cominci [...]. (*Ragionamento*: 195v-196r)<sup>20</sup>

These words have different connotations in the English and Italian systems; in the case of “Tower” these connotations in English are strongly emotional as linked to its function as a state prison, while in the case of “Term” there is specific reference to the English political system. Such glosses in the margins reveal the importance of the terms in the texts and their relevance in intercultural communication.

<sup>18</sup> “Term, one should know, that in the city of London four times a year the whole realm comes to [unreadable] their civil and criminal legal cases, taking place in [those times] and they call them Terms”.

<sup>19</sup> “In order not to cause scandal among pure and good Catholics with this word, we want them to know how that king, and those of that religion, make a distinction between those two names, Catholics and Papists. Calling Catholic someone who thinks that the Roman Catholic religion is the true one. They call Papists those who think not only that the Roman Catholic religion is the best but also that it is their righteous zeal to kill kings and any other man of a contrary religion”.

<sup>20</sup> “This tower is a very old castle and they say it was built by Julius Caesar, and herein is the treasure, the arsenal and all the prisoners kept for high treason; it is on the noble river Thames, and we may say that here the city begins”.

Whether or not he was the translator of the first version, Castelvetro reveals to us the decision to cancel the more obvious solution and to adopt more subjective choices. The desire for self-expression is evident and his changes provide us with the interpretive key to his translation praxis.

### 3. Conclusion

James Winny has thus commented on the Renaissance translators' 'creative' activity:

[translators] rather than rendering foreign works into their own language, remade them in the familiar terms of the Elizabethan experience. For them translation was a vicarious form of authorship, not to be undertaken unless they could relive the original excitement of composition (Winny 1960, p. 114)

Octavio Paz (1992, p. 154) has stressed the idea that any translation, even of scientific texts, is a literary activity:

[...] It is a mechanism, a string of words that helps us read the text in its original language. It is a glossary rather than a translation, which is always a literary activity. Without exception, even when the translator's sole intention is to convey meaning, as in the case of scientific texts, translation implies a transformation of the original. That transformation is not – nor can it be – anything but literary.

Castelvetro rejects the servile adherence to the source text that was generally promoted in the Renaissance discourse on translation (although impracticable) and produces an autonomous and readable text in Italian. The changes are intended for an Italian and particularly Venetian anti-clerical audience and mirror the higher status and solid rhetorical tradition of the Italian language at that time. The status of the Italian vernacular had been a matter of debate ever since the Bruni-Biondo controversy in the fifteenth century. For Biondo, Italian lacked grammatical stability, and Leon Battista Alberti in the first attempt to produce an Italian grammar (*Grammatichetta* was written no later than 1443) stressed the structural relationship of Italian with Latin in order to anchor the language. The most influential text in the *questione della lingua* was Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), which successfully fixed the parameters for future debates within a conservative linguistic ideology, despite the emergence of opposing visions, such as that of Trissino, who was instead promoting the potentialities of a more fluid literary Italian language.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> I am indebted to Michael Wyatt for discussion of the Italian 'question of the language'. For further references see Wyatt 2005, pp. 204-210; Campanelli 2014.

When Castelvetro was writing, literary Italian was already codified. Within a systemic approach to translation, if on a referential level the English system constituted the dominant model for the target texts in Italian, causing the translations, on a linguistic level this relationship was inverted. The Italian system thus determined translational strategies, since Castelvetro's translations emanate literariness according to a strong Italian literary model. On a lexical level Castelvetro's choices do not reproduce English words with the most direct phonological equivalent, and are moreover more learned. On a syntactical level the tendency is towards a clearer and more fluid text. Techniques of dynamic equivalence are used not only to produce a more readable text but also to create shifts of emphasis that give prominence to the characters involved, thus increasing the communicative potential of the texts. The translator subjectivizes the translation, as he inscribes his ideological viewpoint, translation thus becoming a form of self-expression.

The macrotextual features of Castelvetro's translations show, moreover, his political involvement. In the Renaissance, translations of contemporary texts oscillated between the function of conveying the message and the intent to influence behaviour, or religious beliefs, as happened with many "marketplace" translations, responsible for increasing divisions in Christendom after the Reformation (Kelly 1979, p. 104).

The source texts analyzed here are polemical in themselves, they are meant to reinforce the English establishment, thus the very act of translating them has ideological implications. Critical as he was of the clerical nature of Italy in his own time, Castelvetro perhaps was trying to change a part, if not the whole, of his country through translation, an activity which acquires a subversive character, the translations being part of a project which defied the Italian system, while reinforcing the English one. If sometimes the expressive force of the source texts is attenuated, there is also an intensification of their emotional quality, a duality of strategies which respond to the blocked atmosphere of Italy in the Counter-Reformation, and to the necessity to react to it. Castelvetro was in the middle of events, and his translations reflect his condition as an outsider, experienced both in Italy, religiously and mentally, and in England, where he was materially and physically an outsider. He worked on the margins, inscribing in the translations a sense of exclusion (detachment) and inclusion (emotional involvement), thus revealing the in-betweenness itself of translation, which "puts the original in motion to decanonise it, giving it the movement of fragmentation, a wandering of errance, a kind of permanent exile" (De Man 1986, p. 92).

Many aspects of his activity as a translator require further investigation: for example a juxtaposition of his translation work with that of Florio, as his counterpart in Oxford,<sup>22</sup> would be interesting, as would an

<sup>22</sup> Florio taught Italian in Oxford as did Castelvetro in Cambridge.

analysis of Castelvetro's role in the translation of *The Execution of Justice in England* (which could be one of the first, given the date, if not the very first translation from English). Given the scarcity of translations from English into Italian, the neglect of this aspect of Castelvetro's career is perplexing. Even more so if we consider the committed nature of his translations and the fact that he constitutes a wonderfully solid example of the passionate Renaissance translator. The scarce critical attention he has received can only be explained through the meagre attention given to minor genres, such as polemical writings, which constitute his portfolio as a translator. The discussion above should trigger a reassessment of what is considered marginal in cultural politics and in the history of translation.

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