

Beyond ‘Word-for-Word’: Gruffudd Bola and Robert Gwyn on Translating into Welsh

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The paper compares and contextualizes the comments of Gruffudd Bola (fl. 1270/1280) and Robert Gwyn (c. 1545–c. 1597/1603) on their strategies of translating (quotations from) authoritative religious texts. In the introductory section of his translation of the Athanasian Creed, which he produced for Efa ferch Maredudd, Gruffudd Bola employs the topos of ‘(sometimes) word-for-word’ versus ‘(sometimes) sense-by-sense’ to explain and justify his approach whenever the structural demands of the target language render a literal translation impossible. About three hundred years later, Robert Gwyn, the recusant author of *Y Drych Kristnogawl* (‘The Christian Mirror’, c. 1583/1584), argues that in the devotional-didactic genre the translations of quotations from authoritative religious texts such as the Bible need to be adapted to his audience’s level of understanding. He thus subordinates fidelity on the literal level to the demands of comprehensibility. Both authors insist on the priority of successful communication, but approach the translator’s dilemma in different frameworks.

Keywords: Gruffudd Bola; Robert Gwyn; *Y Drych Kristnogawl*; translation theory

Gruffudd Bola’s reflections are well-known to scholars interested in medieval Welsh translations, since they represent, to the best of my knowledge, the most explicit engagement by a medieval Welsh translator with the practice and problems of his craft. They are contained in the introductory section of his translation of the Athanasian Creed with commentary, which he produced for Efa ferch Maredudd in the second half of the thirteenth century. Efa was the daughter of Maredudd ab Owain, who died in 1265, and a sister to Gruffudd ap Maredudd, for whom Madog ap Selyf translated the *Transitus Mariae* (*Marwolaeth Mair*) and the Pseudo-Turpin Chronicle.¹ Gruffudd Bola’s text, with its introduction and colophon, in which he names himself, is transmitted in the first part of the White Book of Rhydderch (Peniarth 4 and 5).² Two passages of his prologue are relevant in our context. The

1 On Efa ferch Maredudd and her brother Gruffudd, see, for example, Huws 2000: 249.

2 The other Welsh versions of the Athanasian Creed, in Oxford, Jesus College 111 (*Llyfr yr Ancr*), Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, Peniarth 15 and Llanstephan 27 respectively, do not feature Gruffudd Bola’s introduction and colophon and are textually different, see Lewis 1930: 193.

first passage outlines his motivation and, with a humility trope, the limitations of his qualifications and achievements:

... *can dyelleis i dy uot ti, enrydedus Eua verch Varedut, yn damunav caffel Credo Anathasius Sant yg Kymraec, y kymereis i arnaf vychydic o lauwr y troy yr Credo hvnn yn ieith y gellych ti y darllein a'e dyall, o heruyd y synnyvr a rodes Duv ymi, kynny bechvn na chvbyl na pherffeith y traethu peth kyuuach a hynny, nac y wneuthur peth a vei wiw y'rh vreint titheu a'rh enryded.* (Lewis 1930: 195–196)

‘... since I understood that you, honoured Efa ferch Maredudd, wished to have the Creed of St Athanasius in Welsh, I took unto myself some small labour to turn this Creed into a language that you can read and understand, according to the understanding that God gave me, since I could not hope [?] to set out completely and perfectly something as sublime as that, or to produce something that was worthy of your rank and your honour.’³

This then leads into the second passage, in which Gruffudd Bola talks about the challenges a translator faces:

Vn peth hagen a dylyy ti y wybot ar y dechreu, pan trosser ieith yn y llall, megys Lladin yg Kymraec, na ellir yn wastat symut y geir yn y gilyd, a chyt a hynny kynnal priodolder yr ieith a synnyvr yr ymadrawd yn tec. Vrth hynny y troe[i]s i weiitheu y geir yn y gilyd, a gveith[eu] ereill y dodeis synnyvr yn lle y synnyvr heruyd mod a phriodolder yn ieith ni. (Lewis 1930: 196)

‘One thing, however, you should know to start with: when one translates a language into another, as Latin into Welsh, one cannot always replace one word with another and still retain well the property (*or* idiom) of the language and the sense of the statement. For this reason, I have sometimes translated word for word (*lit.* turned the word into another) and at other times I gave the sense for the sense, according to the mode and property of our language.’⁴

3 For a discussion of the problematic form *bechvn*, see Lewis 1930: 195. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

4 This passage has also been translated by Roberts (2011: 218) and Lloyd-Morgan (1991: 56). Roberts (2011: 218) provides an important and insightful comment on Gruffudd Bola’s achievements: ‘Gruffudd Bola has obviously given thought to what translation requires and he is familiar with the contemporary discussions. His words call to mind those of Giraldu Cambrensis [in *Expugnatio Hibernica*, finished in 1189] as he introduced his projected volume of translations of Welsh prophecies: “As far as the difference in idioms allows, I have given a word for word translation of most of the text, but in some particular instances I have given a faithful rendering of the sense of the original.” If Gruffudd Bola was the author of the commentary provided in Welsh with the translation of the Creed, he is revealed as one who knew his *auctores* and understood what he was about; if the commentary is a translation, he is able to express an intricate exegesis clearly and fluently. A distinction must constantly be drawn between translations, which are often vulgarisations of texts intended for popular audience, and the intellectual quality and training of the translators themselves.’ The Latin original of the quotation from Giraldu reads: *in quantum idiomatum permisit diversitas, verbo ad*

Gruffudd Bola's phrases *y geir yn y gilyd* and *synnyvr yn lle y synnyvr* are firmly situated within pre-modern thinking about translation and take up the (post-)classical and medieval framework of the difference between *verbum-pro-verbo* and *sensus-de-sensu* correspondences, most famously captured perhaps in Jerome's dictum in his letter to Pammachius:⁵

Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor, me in interpretatione Graecorum, absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo et misterium est, non verbo e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu.

'Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek – except of course in the case of the Holy Scripture, where even the syntax [*lit.* the order of words] contains a mystery – I render not word-for-word, but sense-for-sense.' (Munday 2016: 32)

This implies the view of (non-scriptural) texts as divided, or divisible, between word and sense.⁶ Gruffudd Bola acknowledges difficulties in the process of translating which arise from a clash between the implied ideal strategy of translating which ensures fidelity to the source, i.e., the word-for-word approach, and the structural demands of the target language, its 'mode and property'. In the end he subordinates, whenever he considers it necessary, the ideal to the practicalities, 'sometimes ... sometimes' (*weithu ... a gveith[eu] ereill*). In his reflections on translation, he thus appears to foreground linguistic concerns, but his interest is ultimately in a successful communication with his audience, since he states that he wants his addressee to be able to comprehend the target text, to 'read and understand it' (*y darllein a'e dyall*).⁷

In his thought-provoking monograph *Interpretatio. Language and Translation from Cicero to Tytler*, Frederick Rener attempted an ambitious reconstruction of a comprehensive, even if typically implicit, theory of pre-modern translation. He situates translation within a common theory of language and communication, based on the premise that '[t]ranslators during the period under study [i.e., from Cicero to the eighteenth century] embraced the theory of language which they inherited from

verbum plurima, sententias autem in singulis fideliter expressi (Scott & Martin 1978: 256, 257).

- 5 On differences between these concepts in classical and post-classical/medieval approaches to translation, see, for example, Copeland 1995: 221–223.
- 6 Compare Morini (2017: 47, 35) on 'the medieval emphasis on "sentence" [or "sense"] as the only constitutive element of a text', versus 'a more modern idea of translation, according to which sense and words are all but inseparable, and the former cannot be fully transposed without the latter', characterised (and chronologically located) by Morini as the 'humanistic theory of rhetorical translation'.
- 7 For an analysis of Gruffudd Bola's performance when translating the Creed, see the chapter 'Sometimes word-for-word, sometimes sense-by-sense: translating the Creed' in Parina & Poppe (forthcoming a).

classical antiquity' (Renner 1989: 86). He suggests that 'the translators' prefaces and letters, their comments and particularly the "commonplaces" presuppose a common set of norms with which their readers were so familiar that a "commonplace" expression was sufficient to catch their attention' (Renner 1989: 5). His study sets out to reconstruct this implicit 'common set of norms', specifically the steps of translational practice within the framework of the commonly accepted theory of language, and it thus provides valuable points of orientation for an assessment of the background to Gruffudd Bola's thoughts on translating and translation.

Renner (1989: 22) takes it as given that 'the primary objective of the translator's undertaking was to render the content of the original' and refers to the translator's topos of *verbum-pro-verbo* versus *sensus-de-sensu* in application to the problems of appropriately rendering idioms, and by implication other language-specific constructions, in his source text:

[...] even if a translator is translating word for word he must use the *ad sensum* when he encounters idioms in the original text. This situation probably accounts for a phrase which is found in the prefaces of some translations, a phrase which has all the qualities of a commonplace formula. The phrase is characterized by the doubling of the adverb of time 'now' (*nunc ... nunc*) used here as an adversative expression implying that at one time the translator used the literal approach and at another time he translated according to the sense. (Renner 1989: 126)

Renner (1989: 289) also mentions a variant *quandoque ... quandoque*—these formulae with a repetition of an adverb of time parallel Gruffudd Bola's phrase *weithu ... a gveith[eu] ereill*.

Gruffudd Bola's observations on the translator's dilemma interestingly and strikingly resemble a passage mentioned by Renner in the preface to the thirteenth-century translation by Philip of Tripoli (or Philippus Tripolitanus) of the *Secreta Secretorum* from Arabic into Latin. I quote from a fourteenth-century manuscript of English origin (the same wording is also found in Roger Bacon's edition of the *Secreta* produced around 1275 (Bacon 1920: 26)), complemented by a fifteenth-century translation of the Latin version into Middle English:

... *transtuli cum magno labore et lucido sermone de arabico ydiomate in latinum ad vestram magnitudinem et honorem, eliciens quandoque ex litera literam et quandoque sensum ex sensu, cum alius loquendi modus sit apud Arabes, alius apud Latinos ...* (Möller 1963: 1–2)

'... I have translated, and that with full grete labour, and light speche, fro Arabik speche into Latyne vnto youre magnitude and honoure, chesyng out omwhile a letter of a letter, omwhile sense of sense, that is to sey, wysedome of wisedome, sithen that Arabies have oo maner of speche, and Latyne men another.' (Manzalaoui 1977: 19)

Note the parallel references to labour in the phrases *cum magno labore/full grete labour* and Gruffudd Bola's [*b*]ychydic *o lauwr* as well as the reference to the addressee's *magnitudinem et honorem/magnitude and honour* and *y'rh vreint titheu a'rh enryded*—however, more comparative work on formulaic elements in such prologues is required.

The translator's prologue to the *Secreta* also contains a reference to his background and motivation, as does Gruffudd Bola's prologue.

Porro vestro mandato cupiens humiliter obedire et voluntati vestre sicud teneor deservire, hunc librum, quo carebant Latini eo quod apud paucissimos Arabes invenitur, transtuli ... (Möller 1963: 1)

'And forsoth Y was he that coveyted youre comaundement to obeye, and to youre wille, for the obedience that I owe to youre sage wolle serve, this boke, that Latynes lacked, and is so rare that it is hadde but with full fewe Arabies, I have translated ...' (Manzalaoui 1977: 19)

The conceptual similarities between the observations by Gruffudd Bola and the translator of the *Secreta* are striking and may simply represent Rener's 'commonplaces'. However, a tenuous and speculative connection can perhaps be constructed between the Latin *Secreta Secretorum* and Gruffudd Bola. Steven Williams has highlighted the success of Philip of Tripoli's translation between the mid-thirteenth century and the early-fourteenth century:

While the evidence for the *fortuna* of the *S[ecreta]S[ecretorum]* within both the Paris-Oxford scholastic milieu and the larger European scholarly world before 1250 is sparse, signs of the *SS*'s academic success for the next seventy-five years are abundant. What perhaps speaks most eloquently for this success are the great number of manuscripts still extant from the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries that can be definitely connected to a scholastic milieu: some twenty-five of them. Such numbers tell us that the *SS* was well known to university students and teachers throughout Europe, and much in demand. This was especially true at the universities of Paris and Oxford. For the Paris-Oxford scholarly milieu, there are sixteen manuscripts that we can say with a good deal of certainty date from the same period, with the majority of these—a good dozen—of Parisian origin. (Williams 2003: 195)

Williams (2003: 211–220) also notes the presence of manuscripts of the *Secreta Secretorum* in libraries of many religious orders, among them the Cistercians. The Parisian and wider success of the *Secreta Secretorum* in the late-thirteenth century may provide a link with Gruffudd Bola via the Cistercian community of Strata Florida: Huws (2000: 215, 226) suggested that the scribe of Stratum I of the Hendregadredd Manuscript, who was active c. 1300 and 'probably based at Strata Florida', picked up his 'very distinctive script' at a university, and he 'would look in particular at Paris manuscripts of the late thirteenth century'. Gruffudd Bola,

who produced his translation for Efa in the late thirteenth century, may have been a monk or a lay-brother in the Cistercian community of Strata Florida, according to Huws (2000: 216), and it is therefore just about possible that he there came across a copy of the *Secreta Secretorum*.⁸

Be that as it may, any immediate connections between Gruffudd Bola's observations and the preface of the *Secreta Secretorum* must for the time being remain in the realm of speculation, even though the conceptual similarities are striking. One further parallel should finally be noted, namely between the phrases and concepts *loquendi modus* (or Middle English *maner of speche*) and *mod a phriodolder yn ieith ni*. The Welsh term *phriodolder* (*yr ieith/yn ieith ni*) is furthermore reminiscent of the concept of the *proprietas* (or *proprietas*) *linguae*, of features exclusive to a specific language, which Renier (1989: 81) identified as a commonplace of medieval and early-modern thinking about translations.

These features exclusive to a specific language are the reason that Gruffudd Bola regrets that 'one cannot always replace one word with another', and this observation implies that a word-for-word translation is the ideal aspired to, as it would be most faithful to the source. Practical difficulties, however, arise whenever the attempt to replicate both words and sense of the source proves incompatible with the demands of the structural properties of the target language. These cases then require a sense-by-sense translation, because the avowed aim of translation is the achievement of a grammatically and idiomatically acceptable and accessible version of the source in the target language—a translation which hides its status as translation by successfully adhering to the properties of the target language. Ideally therefore, Gruffudd Bola's translation should evince no irritating 'traces of translation'.⁹

The Athanasian Creed is an authoritative religious text, and thus different in textual status from the *Secreta Secretorum*. It is therefore significant (even if not unexpected) to see that translators of biblical texts faced Gruffudd Bola's dilemma as well. William Salesbury referred to it in the title of his translation of the New Testament of 1567, admittedly in a different cultural context: *Testament Newydd ein Arglwyd Iesv Christ Gwedy ei dynnu, yd y gadei yr ancyfaiath, 'air yn ei gylydd*

8 For a brief survey of the impact of the Cistercians on medieval Welsh culture, see Davies 1991: 194–202. Furthermore, acquaintance in Wales with (parts of) the *Secreta Secretorum* is reflected in Welsh translations and adaptations of parts of the text—but not of the preface. For a survey of these Welsh translations, see James 1986: 141–150, 181–189.

9 For the concept of 'traces of translation' in a Welsh context, see Luft (2016); other theoretical concepts lurking in the background here are 'open translations', which aim at (a relatively high degree of) formal equivalence and whose 'status as translation is out in the open', versus 'covert translations', whose 'status as translated texts is hidden by the adaptation to T[arget]L[anguage] conventions' (Kranich, Becher & Höder 2011: 16).

or *Groec a'r Llatin* ('The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, Drawn, as far as the different idiom permitted, word for word from the Greek and Latin', Thomas 1967: 78, 79). Outside the Welsh context, but closer in time to Gruffudd Bola, Richard Rolle made a similar observation in the prologue to his *English Psalter* of c. 1345—an 'abbreviated (though still lengthy) version of Peter Lombard's standard Psalter commentary (with characteristic Rollean additions)', in which 'each verse is quoted in Latin, translated word for word so that the original can be understood [...], then paraphrased more loosely with a brief interpretation' (Wogan-Browne et al. 1999: 244). Here, Rolle says about his strategy specifically of the translation of the Latin text of the Psalms:¹⁰

In the translacioun I folow the lettere als mykyll as I may; and thare [*where*] I fynd na propire Ynglis, I folow the wit of the worde [*the meaning of the sentence*], swa that thai that sall red it thaim thare noght dred erryng[e] [*there is no need for them to fear falling into error*]. (Wogan-Browne et al. 1999: 246, 248)¹¹

Renier's general characterisation of what he calls the 'translator's dream' in the pre-modern period, and of some of the obstacles he would encounter in this translational practice, reads as if it was written specifically with Gruffudd Bola's observations in mind, which, of course, it was not;¹² the fact that it can seamlessly be applied to them, however, situates Gruffudd Bola within the larger European tradition which is the subject of Renier's study:

10 Rolle contrasts his *translacioun* with his *expounyng* 'exposition', in which, he says, he 'fologh[s] haly doctours' (Wogan-Browne et al. 1999: 246). Compare further, for example, Copeland's (1995: 225) analysis of the Prologue to the second recension of the Wycliffite Bible (end of the fourteenth century) which 'defines translation expressly in terms of a hermeneutics of access. Here accessibility is a property both of the text, which must be "open" or lucid, and of social reception, for the text will be available to all audiences, and translation becomes a socially inclusive gesture'. The Prologue takes up the conventional word-sense contrast: 'First, it is to know, that the best translating is out of Latin into English to translate after the sentence, and not only after the words, so that the sentence be as open, either opener, in English as in Latin, and go not far from the letter; and if the letter may not be sued in the translating, let the sentence ever be whole and open, for the words owe to serve to the intent and sentence, and else the words be superfluous either false' (Pollard 1964: 194, his modernised orthography). Examples given of 'resolutions [which] may make the sentence open' are various ways of rendering in English a Latin ablative absolute.

11 Wogan-Browne et al. (1999: 248) comment on the phrase *folow the lettere*: 'translate word for word (i.e., follow Latin word order and syntax), or follow the literal sense (rather than any of the passage's allegorical meanings)'.

12 An anonymous reader cautions that observations such as Gruffudd Bola's on the translator's ideal and dilemma may have been a commonplace intended to ward off criticism of the translation, rather than considered engagements with translational methods.

The translator's dream was to arrive at a text which would bring not only the content of the original but also every word used by the original author. This ideal was beyond reach for several reasons, some being intrinsic and others extrinsic. One of the major obstacles was the differences between the two languages in the vocabulary and also in many aspects of grammar and syntax. (Renner 1989: 326)

By way of illustration I quote the observations on these 'obstacles' of two translators, separated in time by about 800 years, but employing similar tropes. The first passage, from 1688, is taken from the prefatory letter of the first Welsh translation of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Taith neu Siwrnai y Pererin*.¹³

Ni chedwais i Eiriau, ond ystyr a meddwl yr Awdwr (mewn amryw fannau) yn y cyfieithiad: Canys fal y gwyr y Dysceddig yn ddigon da; nid oes un Llyfr a gyfieithir, o un iaith ir llall, Air yng Air, a dâl ei ddarllain; oblegit bod Phrases (ymadrodion) a Geiriau yn brydfêrth mewn un iaith, y rhai nid ydynt felly mewn iaith arall. (Bunyan 1688: A2v)

'I did not keep the words, but the author's sense and meaning (in various places) in the translation: since—as the learned men know well enough—there is not one book which is translated *word-for-word* from one language to the other which is worth reading, because phrases (expressions) and words are seemly in one language which are not so in another language.'

13 Wogan-Browne et al. give further examples from late-fourteenth/early-fifteenth-century English translators who engage with the same problem: John Trevisa in his 'Epistle to Thomas, Lord Berkeley, on the translation of Higden's Polychronicon and the 'Prologue' to the *Pseudo-Augustinian Soliloquies*. Trevisa writes (with repetition of the adverbial phrases *in somme place*): 'To make this translacioun cleer and pleyne to be knowe and understonde, in somme place Y shal sette worde for worde, and actif for actif, and passif for passif, arewe [*in succession*] right as thei stondesth, without chaunging of the ordre of wordes. But in somme place Y mot change the rewe [*sequence*] and the ordre of wordes, and sett the actif for the passif, and ayenward [*vice versa*]. And in somme place Y mot sett a resoun [*sentence*] for a worde and telle what it meneth. But for alle siche chaunging, the menyng shal stonde and nought be ychaunged' (Wogan-Browne et al. 1999: 134–135, 138, 430). For the passage from the 'Prologue', see Wogan-Browne et al. 1999: 225. Nearer at home, Gruffydd Robert (c. 1527–1598), in his grammar of Welsh, which he published in four instalments between 1567 and 1584 in Milan, similarly comments on the difficulties of preserving the idioms of the source language word-for-word in translation: *rhaid hefyd cadu adroqueâu'r gamraeg, a eilŷ'r groegyrr phrases, canys nid oes dim yrthunach nog ymadroq ni bo ynŷi briaud phrasau, ag arferau adroqdedion yr iaith. a diflas fyq ceisso air ynghair; gen y gymraeg [!] ateb i ieithoq eraiq bob amser* (Robert 1939: [204], 'it is also necessary to preserve the idioms of Welsh, which the Greek call phrases, since there is nothing more offensive than a clause in which there are no proper phrases and customary idioms of the language, and it will be tiresome to try word-for-word, with the Welsh corresponding to other languages all the time'). Like Gruffudd Bola, Gruffydd Robert highlights the translator's linguistic dilemma.

In the ninth century, King Alfred stated in his Old English translation of Boethius's *De consolatio philosophiae* ('Consolation of Philosophy') about his technique of translation, employing the *quandoque ... quandoque* formula (OE *hwilum ... hwilum*), as did Gruffudd Bola, and explicitly mindful of the importance of the comprehensibility of his work:

Hwilum he sette word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgite, swa swa he hit þa sweotlost 7 andgitfullicast gereccan mihte ... (Sedgfield 1899: 2)

'Sometimes he translated word for word, sometimes sense for sense, so as to render it as clearly and intelligibly as he could ...' (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 131)

From Gruffudd Bola in the late-thirteenth century we now move on three-hundred years, linguistically into the Early Modern Welsh period and culturally into the Elizabethan Age. I will here focus on *Y Drych Kristnogawl* 'The Christian Mirror' (c. 1583/1584), which is believed to be an original work of Robert Gwyn (c. 1545–c. 1597/1603). His family was one of the gentry families of the Llŷn peninsula in northern Wales, and they appear to have conformed to the Established Church. Robert Gwyn graduated from Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1568, but then embraced the Catholic faith and became a student in 1571 in the 'English College' in Douai (in the Spanish Netherlands, now northern France), which had been founded in 1568 for Catholic refugee students who intended to become missionary priests in Britain.¹⁴ He was ordained priest there in 1575 and was active in Wales from 1576 onwards as a missionary priest. He produced six original works, of which four are still extant, and two translations, from Latin and English respectively, of selections of Cardinal Francisco Toledo's *Summa Casuum Conscientiae*, a treatise on moral theology, and of *A Manuall or Meditation and most necessary Prayers with a Memorial of Instructions right requisite. Also a Summary of Catholike Religion*, a book of private daily devotions.¹⁵

Y Drych Kristnogawl 'The Christian Mirror' is one of his original works, a treatise on the Roman Church's teachings on the Four Last Things, Death, the Day of Judgement, Hell, and Heaven. Its first part was printed secretly in 1586/1587 on an illegal press in a cave at Rhiwledyn (or The Little Orme), a promontory east of the modern town of Llandudno, near Penrhyn Creuddyn, the estate of the recusant Robert Puw (or Pugh). The Catholic martyr William Davies (executed in

14 For some background and the Welsh students at Douai, see Thomas 1971: 29–33, and compare also Southern 1950: 18–21, 26–33.

15 For a survey of his life and work, see Bowen (1996) and also January-McCann (2014). For a succinct survey of the religious and literary culture of the period, see, for example, Williams 1991: 138–172.

Beaumaris in 1593) lived in Pwŵ's house and was involved in the printing.¹⁶ The text and preface were (falsely) attributed to G. R. and R. S. respectively and the book had a fictitious imprint Rhotomagi (= Rouen) 1585. The printing of Catholic literature had been prohibited by law in 1559. The only extant manuscript text is incomplete and found in Cardiff 3.240, written in 1600 by the recusant scribe and poet Llywelyn Siôn (1540–1615?).¹⁷

The passage I am interested in is found in the author's foreword (taken by Bowen from the printed text since the manuscript is defective here): *Yr awdwr nev'r gwr a wnaeth y llyfr yma at ei garedigion Gymry yn erchi phynniant a llwyddiant iddynt* (Bowen 1996: 1, 'The author, or the man who produced this book, to his beloved Welshmen, seeking success and prosperity for them'). It features a section in which Gwyn explains and justifies some faults that may be thought to be found in his book (*rai o'r beieu a ellir dybieid eu bod yn y llyfr yma*, Bowen 1996: 8). Among these he mentions three issues pertaining to his use of language and his strategy of translating: the use of foreign words,¹⁸ the mixing of words from the southern and northern dialects of Welsh,¹⁹ and an imprecise translation of quotations from Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers. His vindication with regard to the first two points—and, as we will see in greater detail, to the third as well—refers to the requirements of successful communication with his audience in order to achieve his ultimate goal, namely to give spiritual advice to the unlearned (*rhoi cynghor sprydol i'r annysgedig*, Bowen 1996: 8):

Ag er mwyn cael gann y cyphredin ddeall y llyfr er daioni iddynt, mi a ddodais fy meddwl i lawr a cheir eu bronneu hwy yn yr iaith gyphredinaf a sathrediccaf ymhlith y Cymry yr owron. (Bowen 1996: 8)

'And in order that the book can be understood by the ordinary people for their good, I set my thoughts down and before them in the most common and familiar speech among the Welsh these days.'

It should be noted that similar words and phrases are also employed by other Welsh (authors and) translators of the period, and this approach cuts across religious affiliations. Glanmor Williams (1991: 160) observes that both 'Protestants

16 For an account of the life and martyrdom of William Davies and for the historical background to recusancy in North Wales, see Thomas 1971.

17 For this background, see Bowen 1997: 222–229, Bowen 1999: 28–42, and McCann 2016: 3–10; for characteristic features of Gwyn's language and style, see specifically Bowen 1996: xxxv–xli and McCann 2016: 36–58.

18 'arfer o eirieu anghyfieith, megis o eirieu Seisnic ag o ereill ny pherthynant i'r iaith Gymraec' (Bowen 1996: 8).

19 '[c]ytgymyscu geiriau'r Deheudir a geirieu Gwynedd, pan fyddant heb gytuno' (Bowen 1996: 8).

and Catholics expressed their intention of writing in a plain, unadorned style'.²⁰ Maurice Kyffin (c. 1555–1598), for example, states in his preface to *Deffynniad Ffydd Eglwys Loegr* ('A Defence of the Faith of the Church of England', 1595), the translation of Bishop John Jewel's defence of the Anglican Church, that he used

the easiest, most accessible and well-used words that I could in order to make the run of the expressions used clear and free of stumbling blocks for those who know only habitually-used Welsh. (Jarvis 1997: 141–142.)

[...] y geiriau howssaf, rhyddaf, a sathredicca 'g allwn i wneuthur fordd yr ymadrodd yn rhydd ag yn ddirwystrus i'r sawl ni wyddant ond y gymraeg arferedig. (Hughes 1951: 89)²¹

A similar sentiment is voiced by the Puritan translator Robert Llwyd (1565–before 1660), in the introduction to *Llwybr hyffordd yn cyfarwyddo yr anghyfarwydd i'r nefoedd* ('An Easy Footpath Leading the Ignorant to Heaven', 1630), his translation of Arthur Dent's *Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven*:

Am dull yr ymadrodd, mi a wneuthum fyngoreu ar ei osod ar lawr yn wastad, yn ddigeingciog, ac yn rhwydd i w ddeall, [...] geiriau an-arferedig a ochelais yn oreu ac y medrais, gan ymfodloni a r cyfryw eiriau sathredig, ac y mae cyffredin y wlad yn gydnabyddus â hwynt, ac yn yspys ynddynt. (Hughes 1951: 130)

'Concerning the form of the discourse, I did my best to set it down smoothly, undiverted, and easy to understand, [...] I avoided, as best as I could, unusual words, being content with such familiar words as the ordinary people of the country are acquainted with and are plain to them.'

But to come back to Robert Gwyn and the third point in his vindication of his approach, which is the most relevant in the context of this discussion. With

20 See also Williams (1997: 221), '[a]lmost without exception, their authors [i.e., of Protestant works] expressed their intention of writing in a plain, unadorned style', and Williams (1997: 224), '[t]heir authors [i.e., of Catholic works] maintained that they were writing simply and clearly for the benefit of the unlearned'. These parallels require further research and contextualisation.

21 Kyffin adds, however, that for 'essential word', *ryw air angenreidiol*, which have no equivalent in Welsh, he introduces loanwords, see Jarvis 1997: 142 and Hughes 1951: 89. Maurice Kyffin also translated Terence's comedy *Andria* into English, and it is noteworthy that in his 'Preface to the courteous reader', he explained his strategies for translation with phrases which are very similar to what he says in *Deffynniad Ffydd Eglwys Loegr*: 'I have used, as near as I could, the most known, usual, and familiar phrases in common speech to express the author's meaning. [...] My chiefest care hath been to lay open the meaning of the author, especially in all hard and difficult places of this comedy, and to utter the same in such apt, plain, and familiar words as are most meet for this low style and argument' (Rhodes, Kendal & Wilson 2013: 434–435). I wish to thank Oliver Currie for reminding me of the relevance of Kyffin's translation of *Andria* into English.

regard to his strategies for translating quotations from authoritative works he has the following to say:

Atfydd hefyd y beient arnaf rhyw rai o'r Cymry dyscedigion am nad wyf yn y llyfr yma yn troi'r Scrythur Laan a doydiadeu'r saint a'i haraith yn gymhwys i'r iaith Gymraec wrth ddodi gair tra gair, ag i bob gair rhoddi ei enw anianol, megys y bydd rhaid wrth gyfieithu a throi peth o vn iaith i'r llall. Ag yn enwedig wrth gyfieithu'r Scrythur Lan a geirieu'r saint, rhaid yw bod yn bryderus i geisio geiriau cyfaddas, cynhwynawl i henw pob peth. Gwir iawn yw hynn oll. Pan fytho dyn yn cyfieithu ag yn trossi'r Scrythur Lan i iaith arall, ag yn ei dodi a'i gossod allan i ddyinion y'w darllain yn enw Scrythur Laan, yna, y bydd rhaid ymchwl bob geir yn gymhwys ag yn ei briawd anian, cyd bo tywyll i lawer. Ond pan fytho vn yn pregethu i ddyinion cyphredin ag ychydig deallt ganthynt, yna y dychon gyfieithu'r geirieu yn y modd goreu ag y gallo'r cyphredin bobl y ddyallt, drwy ei fod ef yn cadw'r vn meddwl a'r synnwyr yn y geirieu ag y mae'r Yspryt Glau yn ei feddwl a'r Eglwys Laan Gatholig yn ei ddangos. Ag am fy mod i yma yn ceisio dyscu'r cyphredin Gymry, rhaid i mi droi'r geirieu yn egluraf a goleuaf y gallwyf i gaphel ohonynt eu deallt hwy yn ddibetrus, heb ymwrthod nag ymadel ohonof ddim a meddwl yr Yspryd Glan na'r Eglwys wrth droi'r geirieu i'r Gymraeg. (Bowen 1996: 11–12)

‘Perhaps some of the learned Welshmen will also blame me because in this book I do not translate (*troi*) Holy Scripture and the sayings of the Saints and their oration exactly into Welsh, by putting word for word (*gair tra gair*), and by giving each word its natural meaning (*enw*), as it is necessary when translating (*gyfieithu a throi*) something from one language into the other. And especially, when translating Holy Scripture and the word of the saints, it is necessary to be careful to seek appropriate, proper words to denote everything. All this is very true. When a man translates (*yn cyfieithu ag yn trossi*) Holy Scripture into another language and publishes it (*ei dodi a'i gossod allan*) for men to read it as Holy Scripture, then it is necessary to translate (*ymchwl*) each word exactly and in its proper nature, although it may be opaque for many. But when one preaches to ordinary people who have little understanding, then one can translate the words in the way best for the ordinary people to understand, by keeping the same sense and meaning in the words as the Holy Ghost intends it and the Holy Catholic Church discloses it. And since I here intend to teach the ordinary Welshmen I have to translate (*troi*) the words as clearly and evidently as I can, in order that they can understand them unambiguously, without me rejecting or leaving out anything of the meaning of the Holy Ghost and the Church when translating (*troi*) the words into Welsh.’

It is at this point instructive to compare Gwyn’s position with the observations of Gregory Martin, the translator of the Rheims-Douai *New Testament* published in 1582, who translated the Bible into English at the behest of William Allen, the founder of the Douai Seminary, for the use of Catholic preachers:

[...] continually keeping our selues as neere as is possible, to our text & to the very wordes and phrases which by long vse are made venerable, though to

some prophane or delicate eares they may seeme more hard or barbarous, as the whole style of Scripture doth lightly to such at the beginning: acknowledging with S. Hierom, that in other writings it is ynough to giue in trāslation, sense for sense, but that in Scriptures, lest we misse the sense, we must keepe the very wordes. (Southern 1950: 243)

Here, accuracy in terms of closeness to the source text is advocated, even if this may alienate (some) readers. Martin also remarked on 'wordes also and phrases [in his translation] which may seeme to the vulgar Reader & to common English eares not yet acquainted therewith, rudenesse or ignorance' (Southern 1950: 243–244). This is close to Gwyn's observations on the translation of Scripture-to-be-read-as-Scripture, which may necessarily remain, at least in part, 'opaque for many', and it is tempting to speculate about Gwyn's acquaintance with Martin's position.²²

Gwyn's first priority was to reach his audience, the common, ordinary people of Wales (*cyphredin Gymry*), as part of his missionary activities, and translation is just one aspect of a larger act of communication. He refers to the translator's trope of word-for-word (*gair tra gair*),²³ but he considers it necessary to subordinate absolute fidelity to the wording of even authoritative religious sources to his overriding communicative purpose, whenever he fears that the sense may otherwise remain opaque. He realizes that he has options for translation—exact, but opaque versus best for the ordinary people to understand—and he positions his argument firmly in relation to genre and intention: the contexts, in which his translations need to function, are didactic and popular, as part of his counter-reformation missionary activities, not theological and scholarly. In this functional argument, he prioritizes the translator's communicative dilemma, whereas Gruffudd Bola prioritized the linguistic dilemma, even though ultimately both want to effect successful and smooth communication with their intended audiences.

Gwyn's insistence on successful communication connects his reflections with what Renier considers to be a typical concern of pre-modern translators: 'By profession [...] the translator was an explainer [...]. Being an explainer, the translator had to place *perspicuitas* ['clarity'] at the very top of his obligations and, consequently, regard *obscuritas* as his archenemy' (Renier 1989: 218), because he needed to mediate between the source text, and its author, and the reader (or more generally, the audience) of the target text. For this reason, 'the relationship between the translator and the reader was a permanent factor in the prefaces'

22 On the Rheims-Douai Bible, Martin's strategies for translation, and the contemporary controversy between Martin and the Anglican William Fulke, see Southern 1950: 231–262, Norton 1993: 122–138, Rhodes, Kendal & Wilson 2013: 20–24, 124–167.

23 The word-for-word trope is also referenced by Huw Lewys in 1595 in *Perl mewn Adfyd*, the translation of Miles Coverdale's *A Spyrytuall and Moost Precyouse Pearle*, when he writes: 'oni chanhlynais, fy Awdur air yngair [...]' (Lewys 1929: xxiii, 'if I did not follow my author word for word [...]').

(Renner 1989: 243), and so it is in Gruffudd Bola's and Robert Gwyn's prefaces. Renner (1989: 219) points out that 'clarity is not an absolute value but varies from reader to reader' and that '[t]he translator [therefore] relies on his judgement and on the classical categories based on the level of education, namely the learned and the simple readers'. His intended audience's level of education, and specifically its lack, has a central role in Gwyn's line of argument—see his references to the 'unlearned' and to the 'ordinary people who have little understanding'.²⁴

Building on work by A. C. Southern (1950) on Elizabethan recusant prose in English, Bowen (1997: 224) highlighted that successful communication was the priority of the authors emanating from the Douai College. Southern summarized the contribution of recusant authors of the Elizabethan period to the history of English prose in the following words:

Primarily, as must be evident, they were not concerned with literature as an accomplishment at all. Their business was to combat what they believed to be error and to expose the truth, not to produce literary masterpieces, and their writing is altogether directed towards this end. But they are not unstudied in their manner of composition. It is clear that they aimed at a simple and straightforward exposition of their themes, such as would appeal to the unlearned or at least to those not versed in the technicalities of theological niceties. As a rule, therefore, they preferred the plain style while at the same time insisting upon the dictates of reason. (Southern 1950: xii)²⁵

As mentioned earlier, Gwyn advocated the use of plain language, of the 'most common and familiar speech' (*yr iaith gyphredinaf a sathrediccaf*), for the exposition of his arguments in *Y Drych Kristnogawl*, so that his 'book can be understood by the ordinary people for their good', and he also applied the principle of successful communication to the translation of quotations from authoritative

24 In the light of his programmatic statement presented here it will be rewarding to compare Gwyn's translations of biblical passages quoted in *Y Drych Kristnogawl* with their parallels in contemporaneous (Protestant) Welsh Bibles or in other religious works. This is beyond the remit of this paper, but will be explored in the Marburg research project 'The Welsh Contribution to the Early Modern Cultures of Translation: Sixteenth-Century Strategies of Translating into Welsh', which is part of the German Research Council's (DFG) Priority Programme 'Cultures of Translation in the Early Modern Period' and within which the research on Robert Gwyn was conducted. For some preliminary results, see Parina & Poppe (forthcoming b).

25 See, for example, the assessment in 1580 of William Allen: '[...] certain books of our men in English [...] in which for the comprehension of the people, with a wonderful clarity almost all the deceits of the heretics and their consequences, their disputes, blasphemies, contradictions, absurdities, falsifying both of the Scriptures and Doctors of the Church were exposed' (Southern 1950: 30). The phrase 'wonderful clarity' connects to Renner's observations on the importance of *perspicuitas* and reader orientation, but is used here not with reference to translations, but to works in the vernacular and their presentation of the arguments.

religious works—in his specific devotional and didactic context. It is this emphasis on audience orientation that connects his approach to that of the English authors emanating from the Douai Seminary. The remarks of Maurice Kyffin and Robert Llwyd quoted above, however, indicate that the priority of accessibility was a concern of Anglican and Puritan writers as well. Williams (1997: 223) points out that ‘Welsh Catholics and Protestants, in spite of being irreconcilably opposed to another in doctrine, had more in common than might have been supposed’, and he mentions the patriotism of the two groups, their pride in the language and history of Wales, and the importance of literacy and the printed book, and he stresses that ‘neither could count on a large, enthusiastic, or literate public for their books’ (Williams 1997: 223).²⁶

As translators, Gruffudd Bola and Robert Gwyn were separated by three hundred years and by the different cultural and intellectual traditions and contexts in which they worked, but both were confronted with similar problems in their task to translate authoritative religious texts and to convey the meaning of their sources to their intended audiences—translators’ eternal challenges. Gruffudd Bola highlights the translator’s linguistic dilemma, resulting from differences in the lexicon and the grammar of source and target language, and he opts for what may be called a ‘sometimes-sometimes’ strategy. Robert Gwyn foregrounds the purpose of a translation and the respective demands of genre; because of his specifically didactic intentions in *Y Drych Kristnogawl*, he subordinates fidelity on the literal level to the demands of comprehensibility and accessibility. Their perspectives conceptually differ with regard to the perception of the location of translational problems. Both authors approach the translator’s dilemma in different frameworks, linguistic versus functional, but both insist on the priority of successful communication. To do so would appear to be the obvious and natural choice, but it must be remembered that Robert Gwyn draws attention to contexts that require the alternative—literal but opaque—approach. The history of translation in the early modern period shows, furthermore, that some translators indeed opted for this approach in their translational practice. Names that come to mind are Niklas von Wyle (c. 1415–1479), whose translations into German aim to follow the Latin source exactly (‘vf das genewest dem latine nach’), and Richard Carew of

26 See also Gruffydd (1997: 358): ‘Most [Anglican] translators, within the constraints which the practice of their art imposed upon them, aspired to as plain a style as possible in order to reach the maximum number of readers, and it is fairly clear also that they expected their books to be read aloud in company as well as privately’. The question of general trends in Welsh translational strategies in the early modern period requires further research which will be conducted in the Marburg research project, ‘The Welsh Contribution to the Early Modern Cultures of Translation: Sixteenth-Century Strategies of Translating into Welsh’.

Anthony (1555–1620), the translator of the first five canti into English of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*.²⁷

The two Welsh translators discussed here, Gruffudd Bola and Robert Gwyn, were separated by time and historical and cultural contexts, but linked by the shared burden of wanting to achieve in their translations accuracy in relation to their sources and communication with their intended audiences. Both authors insist on the priority of successful communication, but then focus on different, though related aspects of the translator's dilemma, Gruffudd Bola on the linguistic challenge and Robert Gwyn on the communicative one. Their remarks on translational strategies connect on the one side to their educational and missionary intentions (with, in Robert Gwyn's case, their own specific background) and on the other side to a larger set of traditional and contemporaneous commonplaces and tropes of thinking about translations in the pre-modern period.²⁸

27 For Niklas von Wyle compare, for example, Töpfer (2009: 109–110) and Worstbrock (1993); Worstbrock (1993: 40) notes 'die Übernahme von Eigentümlichkeiten lateinischen Satzbaus und lateinischer Wortstellung' as the most characteristic features of Wyle's style and he also stresses that Wyle decidedly refused to cater for the needs of the unlearned. For Richard Carew see Morini (2017: 118–128); compare, for example, Morini (2017: 121): 'Richard Carew's translation tries to follow almost word by word, and certainly line by line, the complicated syntax, prosody, and rhetorical texture of Tasso's original, with very few changes, inversions, and additions. That makes English syntax, not to mention English prosody, crack under the strain imposed by the Italian poem: the English reader with no knowledge of Italian is maddened by the unfamiliar constructions'. For some stanze of canti IV and V, however, Morini (2017: 127) credits Carew with 'perfect example[s] of formal-dynamic equivalence, where he seems resigned to lose what he cannot keep without enormous sacrifices'. Morini does not mention any comments by Carew on his translational strategies or purposes.

28 This article is a revised and expanded version of a paper given at the 16th International Congress of Celtic Studies at Bangor in July 2019. The research on Robert Gwyn was conducted within the Marburg research project 'The Welsh Contribution to the Early Modern Cultures of Translation: Sixteenth-Century Strategies of Translating into Welsh', a part of the German Research Council's (DFG) Priority Programme 'Cultures of Translation in the Early Modern Period'. I wish to thank Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan, Elena Parina, and Raphael Sackmann for their advice and help, James January-McCann for sending me a copy of his unpublished PhD and for allowing me to refer to it, and two anonymous readers for *Studia Celtica Fennica* for their suggestions; all remaining mistakes and infelicities are my own responsibility.

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