

The *Esopete ystoriado* and the Art of Translation in Late Fifteenth-Century Spain

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The remarkable success of Heinrich Steinhöwel's bilingual edition of Aesop's fables in Latin accompanied by his own translation into German (Ulm: Johann Zainer, 1476?) inspired printers in other countries with nascent printing industries to capitalize on its success by producing other vernacular translations of Steinhöwel's text. In addition to translations in Low German, Dutch, and Czech, by 1480 Julien Macho, an Augustinian monk in Lyon, had translated and edited a version in French, which in turn served as the basis for William Caxton's 1483 translation into English.¹ Until recently, it was thought that the earliest translation into Spanish appeared in 1488, published in Toulouse by Joan Parix and Estevan Clebat, followed by an edition published in Zaragoza by Johan Hurus in 1489.² Since then, however, an incomplete Zaragoza 1482 edition has been located in Pamplona, establishing it as the princeps edition.³

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- 1 Needham (no. 2). There are also other editions of the German text alone. See *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, vol. 1, no. 351-381, col. 153-73.
 - 2 See *Esopete ystoriado (Toulouse 1488)* (xxvi, nn. 26-27) for descriptions. There is a facsimile edition of the 1489 edition.
 - 3 Carmen Navarro provides a detailed description of the incunabulum, housed in the library of the Seminario Metropolitano in Pamplona. It is in quarto and is missing the first 26 folios, including most of the life of Aesop, as well as interior fols. 31-32, 51-57, 64-65, 76-77, 97, 109-15, 121, 128, 137,

In the German prologue to his bilingual edition, Steinhöwel modestly describes his text as “uss latin von doctore Hainrico Stainhöwel schlecht und verstantlich getütschet, nit wort uss wort, sunder sin uss sin, um merer lütrung wegen des textes oft mit wenig zugelegten oder abgebrochnen worten gezogen” (4) (translated from Latin by Doctor Heinrich Steinhöwel not well but clearly, not word for word, but meaning for meaning, for the greater clarification of the text, often with a few added or deleted words.) The Spanish prologue is in great part a translation and adaptation of Steinhöwel’s German prologue. It differs in that it does not identify the translator by name nor does it contain the feigned humility topos of Steinhöwel’s prologue. The Spanish translator claims to have translated “cada fabula con su titulo asignado, non que sean sacadas *de verbo ad verbum* mas cogiendo el seso rreal segund comun estilo de jnterpretes por mas clara & mas eujdente discussion & clarificacion del texto & avn algunas palabras añadidas et otras rreietas & exclusas en muchas partes por mayor ornato & eloquencia mas honesta & prouechosa”(1).⁴ One can see this method at work in the very translation just cited in which the anonymous Spanish translator adds the purpose of his not following a strictly word-for-word translation: “por mayor ornato & eloquencia mas honesta & prouechosa.”

A reference to the two basic methods of translation (*ad verbum* and *ad sensum* or *ad sententiam*) was a commonplace in prologues to works of translation in the Middle Ages, based on no less an authority than St. Jerome, who in turn had relied on the authority of Cicero and Horace (Morse 188).⁵ Jerome was faced with two respectable traditions, one stemming from the Jewish tradition of a strictly literal translation of Holy Scripture in order to best represent the contents of the original and the other from the rhetorical tradition of Cicero, who was more concerned that the translated words have much the same effect as the original words (Morse 186-88). Well aware that Horace in his *Ars Poetica* (vv. 133-34) had mocked the slavish *fidus interpres* who translates word for word, Jerome’s solution is to respect the text in the case of Holy Scripture,

139-42, 144-46, and 148-49. The final folio (150) is intact. The colophon on 147v gives the title as *Ysopete ystoriado* and states that the book was published in Zaragoza in 1482, but no printer is named. Following the *Catálogo general de incunables en bibliotecas españolas* (no. 2316, p. 361), Navarro posits Paul Hurus and Johann Planck as the printers.

4 I shall quote from *Esopete ystoriado* (Toulouse 1488).

5 See Margherita Morreale (10) for further examples in Castilian.

translating as literally as possible because the order of the words themselves may form part of the divine mystery, while in other cases he favors translating "non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu" (Hieronymus 13). Thus *ad sensum* became the accepted method of translation of secular texts, the "comun estillo de jnterpretes" as our Spanish translator calls it.

Although medieval translators often cited the dichotomy between word-for-word and sense-for-sense translation and claimed to be following the latter method, actual practice was somewhere in between (Russell 38, 44). Further complicating the matter, it was accepted practice for the medieval translator concerned with rendering the full meaning of the original to add his own explanations to his text, thus blurring the distinction between translation and commentary or gloss. Although he claims his goal in deviating from the original is the "mas clara & mas eujdente discussion & clarificacion del texto," our Spanish translator in fact does not often stray from the base text.

In addition to Jerome's distinction between Holy Scripture and other writings, another factor in choosing the method of translation was the intended reader. The few word-for-word translations in Castilian were meant to serve as companion texts for lay readers attempting to struggle with the Latin original, while the great majority of texts were translated with the non-reader of Latin in mind (Russell 22). The *Esopete ystoriado*, like the other vernacular translations based on Steinhöwel's bilingual edition, includes only the vernacular translation itself, without supplying the original Latin text for the reader who might wish to consult it. In the section of the prologue in which he dedicates the book to the Infante don Enrique de Aragón,⁶ the Spanish translator deviates from his German model, taking great pains to make it clear that its intended audience is not the Infante himself, but rather the common man who does not know Latin well enough to read it in the original:

La qual vulgarizacion & transladamjento se ordeno
por & a jntuytu & contemplacion & seruicio del muy

6 The "Enrique" referred to here is Enrique Fortuna, the son of the famous Infante don Enrique de Aragón who died in 1445 of wounds received in the battle of Olmedo several months before the birth of his only son (Morel-Fatio 568-69). Vine mistakes him for his illustrious father (106-107). Morel-Fatio observes that in 1480 Enrique Fortuna was made Viceroy of Catalonia, a title attributed to the Infante of the prologue but never held by his ill-fated father (569).

illustre & excellentissimo señor don Enrique Infante de Aragon [...], conociendo que la obra non sea rreputada por digna para que della pueda ser nformada & nstruida su esclarescida señoría, mas porque de su superhabundante discrecion & muy begnjvola nobleza rresciba auctoridad et sea distribujda alos vulgares et personas non tanto doctas & letrada, como de muy piadoso padre alos hijos. (1)

He thus avoids impugning the Infante's competence as a Latin scholar, but at the same time it would seem that he did indeed mean to orient the text to the common man, for although the prologue is written in comparatively grandiloquent style, in the fables themselves he largely eschews a Latinizing style.⁷

In this paper I would like to examine how the Spanish translator deals with different kinds of issues in the unusual situation of translating from a bilingual edition. It was initially thought that the Spanish translation was based on Macho's French translation, as had Caxton's English translation, but upon closer examination this proves to be a false assumption.⁸ While Macho often abbreviated the original (most noticeably in the life of Aesop section), the anonymous Spanish translator quite obviously follows Steinhöwel's bilingual edition. Curiously however, the fables in the *Fábulas añadidas* section appended to the 1488 edition do appear to derive from Macho's French edition, despite the fact that they are present in Steinhöwel.⁹ Although the colophon states that the book was 'sacado de latjn en rromance' (167), I believe that the Spanish

7 Russell comments that vernacular translations on the Peninsula were not nearly as Latinizing as has often been supposed, as this style is often restricted to the prologue and dedication (22).

8 This misconception seems to derive from an unsubstantiated statement made by Julia Bastin, sometimes erroneously attributed to Claude Dalbanne (10). It is propagated in Beardsley (*Hispano-Classical Translations* 20), Faulhaber (BOOST3 no. 2289, p. 193), and Keller and Kinkade (93).

9 Let us recall that the Toulouse 1488 text derives not directly from Steinhöwel, but from the Zaragoza 1482 text. The appended *Fábulas añadidas* section may reflect a desire to enhance the marketability of the Toulouse edition. The immediate source of these added tales is Macho's French translation of Steinhöwel. This is most evident in the text of Poggio Bracciolini's recounting of freaks of nature and monsters (*Añadidas* 25). Steinhöwel had placed it with other tales from Poggio among the *Fabulae collectae*, but it was eliminated from the Zaragoza editions. Macho, however, had included the tale. Where Steinhöwel adds to his German translation reports of some monsters he had heard of in Ulm, Macho substitutes a description of Siamese twins which then gets propagated into the Spanish translation of Toulouse 1488, making its source in Macho obvious.

translator relied on the German of Steinhöwel's bilingual edition to a much greater extent than might be supposed. Let us recall that the printing trade in Spain, as elsewhere in Europe in the fifteenth century, was dominated by printers from Germanic countries. The Zaragoza 1482 edition was most likely published by Paul Hurus and Johann Planck (see n. 3) and Zaragoza 1489 was published by "Johan hurus, alaman de costancia" (116v), the brother of Paul. The printers of the other two incunabular editions were likewise Germanic. The Toulouse edition of 1488 was published by Joan (Johann) Parix from Heidelberg and Estevan (Stephan) Clebat, another German. The "Fadrique, aleman de Basilea" (99r) who published the 1496 edition in Burgos is thought to be the Swiss printer Friedrich Biel of Basel. It is clear that the Spanish translator is competent in German and very aware of the content of the German text, for when Steinhöwel elaborates on, or even inserts, an original epimythium or promythium in the German, the Spanish translator usually includes it in his translation.¹⁰ In the section of tales from Avianus, in Latin verse, he follows Steinhöwel's German prose paraphrase almost exclusively. In addition, we have seen that the Spanish prologue is adapted from Steinhöwel's German prologue.

An interesting case which points to the Spanish translator's reliance on the German text occurs in the *Vida de Esopo* when Aesop interprets for his master Xanthus the hidden meaning of a series of letters three times. In the original Greek the seven letters are in Greek, to which Aesop gives a different interpretation each time, using each letter as the first letter of the words of the hidden message (Daly 71n). In the Latin version of Steinhöwel's bilingual edition, blank spaces are left for the Greek letters to be written in by hand in front of their Latin equivalents. Likewise, a blank space was left for each of the Greek words of each of the three messages in front of their Latin translation. In the German, however, Steinhöwel omitted the Greek entirely and supplied instead three different

10 On one occasion the Spanish translator even translates an extraneous comment. In three places Steinhöwel includes in his German translation an admonition to "Hainrice" (or "Haincz"), most likely a rueful reference to himself, Heinrich Steinhöwel. In the fable of Rinuccio da Castiglione d'Arezzo in which a middle-aged man has his gray hairs furtively plucked out by his young wife and the black ones by the old one (*Remicio* 16), the Spanish translator translates Steinhöwel's warning (which appears in both Latin and German): "Por ende guarda te, Enrique, porque non eres medio cano, mas de todo" (113). Neither of the other two references to "Hainrice" in Steinhöwel are found in the Spanish text. It is most probably a coincidence that the Spanish translator happened to dedicate his work to another "Enrique."

series of Latin letters appropriate to the three messages in Latin, which Aesop then translates for his master into German. The Spanish translator reflects this method, while Macho retains the same series of transliterated Greek letters for the first two messages without explaining how Aesop is able to interpret them and then switches to the Latin letters which correspond to the words of the third message in Latin (Lenaghan 241 n. 79).

The Spanish translator often includes extraneous commentary from the German as in the fable of the wolf and the idol (II, 14). In his German translation Steinhöwel adds to the epimythium a misogynist remark that beautiful women are like the idol, mere images without spirit: 'Ouch uff die schönen unkündende frowen von denen man spricht: Das is ain bild on gnad' (127). This is propagated to the Spanish translation: 'Et se puede bien adaptar alas hermosas mugeres que carescen de graciosidad, las quales se pueden dezir ymagines sin spiritu' (53).

Taking the lead of Steinhöwel, our anonymous Spanish translator occasionally adds comments of his own, as in the fable of the fisherman and the little fish (*Aviano* 16), in which he adds to the epimythium the proverb: 'Mas vale paxaro enla mano que buytre volando' (125). In the tale of the frog doctor and the fox (*Aviano* 5), he adds an epimythium absent in both the Latin and German versions, in which he explains that alchemists are likewise not to be believed because they claim to have the secret of creating wealth, but are manifestly ragged and poor themselves:

Enseña esta figura que non es de creer ligeramente a aquellos que se alavan & dizen que saben muchas cosas, mas antes es de guardar dellos, assi como delos alqujistas, los quales comunmente, ellos andando fambientos & rrotos, sin facultades, quieren enriqueçer alos otros, para si mesmos non sabiendo ganar de comer. Ca non fazen otra cosa si non por euitar la oçiosidad, echando los carbonos enel fuego, soflar deziendo que han de fazer cosas de marabilla. (120)¹¹

11 This is essentially the moral of the *exemplum* of the *tabardie* in don Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor* ("Exemplo XXo De lo que contesció a un rey con un omne quel dixo quel faria alquimia," 122-26). I am grateful to Harriet Goldberg for reminding me of this tale.

An interesting alteration occurs in the fable of the stag who flees from hunters and seeks refuge in an ox-stall (III, 19). In Steinhöwel, Macho, and Caxton, although the ox agrees to hide him, the stag is eventually detected because of his antlers. In the Latin version the owner marvels at this fortuitous find, and he and his men are said to have lived very happily for several days thereafter (presumably feasting on venison): 'gaudet dominus de cervo, quem nemo quesitum venit. Miratur, et cum suis per aliquot dies laute vixit' (167). In Steinhöwel's German the killing of the stag is explicit: 'Der herr der fröwet sich ab dem hirs und wondert in, das niemand hernach kam in ze suochen. Er nam den hirs, *erwürket in* und lebet in fröden ettlich zyt mit synen fründen und dienern" (168). The Spanish translator, however, seems to misunderstand what happens at the end and implies that the stag stays on for several days: 'E assi fue alegre el señor por el cieruo, que vino por si a menos que alguno lo traxiesse, et estuuu ende el cieruo por muchos dias" (67). The explanation for the confusion may be in the Spanish translator's misunderstanding of the Latin promythium: 'Fugientes non sunt sui, des fortuna salvantur" (167). In his translation Steinhöwel elaborates somewhat on the idea that he who flees must depend on good fortune to survive: 'Die fliehenden stand nit in ir selbs gewalt, sonder sint sie in sorgen und müsendt von dem gelük behalten werden" (167). Apparently the Spanish translator misunderstands the intent of the Latin and does not consult the German, for he translates: 'Los que fuyen non son suyos, mas por la fortuna se salvan" (67). Since the Latin is ambiguous, he assumes the stag is saved.

Another tale handled differently in the various translations is that of Venus and the hen, which appears in Steinhöwel, Macho, and Caxton as the eighth fable of Book Three, but is substituted with another in the Spanish editions. In the Toulouse edition, however, it appears as the last fable in the *Fábulas añadidas*, and it also finishes out the *Fábulas añadidas* section of the Burgos 1496 edition. Given the rather scabrous nature of the fable, which deals with women's propensity for adultery, rather than translate it into German, Steinhöwel prefers to leave it in Latin only, explaining:

Dise fabel haben vil der hochgelerten maister nit wellen in iere bücher seczen umb ursach, die ain jeder wyser in im selber finden mag, und besonder der wys tichter der latinischen vers. Dar umb habe ich ouch nit wellen ze tütsch machen. (151-52)

(Many highly learned scholars have declined to put this fable in their books because any learned person may find it for himself separately in the [book of] the wise poet of the Latin verses. Therefore I will not translate it either.)

Macho (and consequently Caxton) begins the translation but desists out of respect for the ladies, also mentioning that the learned may consult the Latin original. The Spanish version goes further into the story, but interestingly Venus does not pose the same question as in the Latin. In the Latin, Venus asks a hen scratching for grain in the the yard how much grain it would need to be satisfied and it answers that even with a crib full of grain at its disposal it would still scratch outside for grain. Venus says the same could be said of herself. In the Spanish version, however, Venus asks the hen why it is that fifteen of them are satisfied with one rooster while one woman is not satisfied with fifteen men. The hen itself discreetly refuses to answer out of respect for the ladies and admonishes the goddess to chastity. Apparently the Spanish translator, still basing himself on Macho rather than Steinhöwel in this section, mistook the fable being referred to in Macho for another in a similar vein.

Other changes in translation are language-bound, as in Avianus's fable of the crab who scolds his offspring for walking crooked, not realizing that he does too (*Aviano*, 3). Steinhöwel translated the Latin *cancer* as *krebs*, a masculine noun which means 'crab' or 'crayfish.' In the accompanying woodcut, modeled on that of Steinhöwel's bilingual edition, the crustaceans indeed look more like crayfish or lobsters than crabs. The Spanish translator, following the German as he does throughout the fables of Avianus, accordingly calls them "langostas o cangrejas." Since these nouns are feminine, his crustaceans call each other "madre" and "hija" (119) rather than *vatter* and *sun* or *kind* as in Steinhöwel's German.¹²

Another interesting change that stems from practicality rather than a desire to reflect the original at all costs occurs in the fable of the ass and the boar (I, 11, 'asino et apro' / 'esel und wilden schyn'). It seems that

12 Macho had similarly called his crustaceans "escreuices" and had them address each other as "mere" and "fille." In Caxton's translation of Macho, they are "creuysses" who call each other "moder" and "doughter."

many of the woodcuts used in Steinhöwel's edition were modeled on those of an earlier fable collection, Ulrich Boner's *Der Edelstein* (1461), in which the woodcut for this fable erroneously portrays a lion instead of a boar. The error was remedied in the 1501 edition of Steinhöwel's German text by using a new woodcut which indeed depicts a boar (Hodnett 38). The woodcuts for the early vernacular translations were close copies of the ones used in Steinhöwel's original edition. Apparently both the Spanish and French translators noticed the discrepancy but found it easier to simply change the animal in their translation rather than have a new woodcut made.

We hear our Spanish translator speak with his own voice at the end of the *Fábulas coletas*, which is the final section of the princeps edition (Zaragoza 1482). The last fable in this section does not appear in Steinhöwel nor in any of the other vernacular translations. Like several of the other tales in this section of Steinhöwel's edition, however, it derives from the *Facetiae* of Poggio.¹³ It is the well-known tale of the farmer and his son who try in vain to accommodate the criticism of everyone they pass on their way to town to sell an ass. The stated moral of the tale is that no one can escape being "reprehendido, detraydo et murmurado en sus fechos & actos" because "non puede alguno a todos complazer" (155). The insertion of this tale allows the Spanish translator to conclude his work by stating his own trepidation about the daunting task of translation. He laments that he too is bound to be criticized. In fact, he anticipates an accusation on the part of the learned and pleads that they not judge his efforts too harshly:

E por ende creo de non escapar sin rreprehension en esta translaçion deste libro en lengua llana castellana, assi por la obra non ser tan elegante como palpable para los vulgares et non doctos para solaz & doctrina delos quales fue la intencion della, como porque comunmente todos somos mas jnclinados a corregir los fechos agenos et desseosos del proprio loor que a deffender et soportar lo tollerable et defensible non proprio. Suplico a los prudentes et letrados oyan el tratado con anjmo benjvolo jnclinado a defension mas que a rreprehension & offension porque çerca del Juez

13 Tale 100 (I: 154-57), see also note 9 above.

que juzga sin testigos sean juzgados con
misericordia & pietad. (155)

The translator's statement in the prologue about striving for "mayor ornato & eloquencia" in his translation seems incongruous in light of the actual results of his efforts and his reference to "lengua llana castellana" at the conclusion. The text is certainly not entirely free of Latinate vocabulary and syntax. In fact, many of the emendations appearing in the Zaragoza 1489 and Burgos 1496 editions consist precisely in the elimination of these features in favor of what would become standard Spanish usage.¹⁴ It can be said, however, that our anonymous Spanish translator's modest defense of his use of "lengua llana castellana" in his translation anticipates the growing respect for the vernacular later to be so eloquently expressed by Spanish humanists such as Antonio de Nebrija and Juan de Valdés. The continuous commercial success of this work, which underwent numerous reprintings during the following two centuries, testifies to the appeal not only of the subject matter but also of the style in which it was translated.¹⁵

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- 14 See *Esopete ystoriado* (xxvii, n. 30) and critical apparatus. Navarro had not seen the Toulouse edition when she wrote her article on the incomplete Zaragoza 1482 edition, nor had she carried out a collation of the two Zaragoza editions. She notes in passing, however, that comparing these two "se desprende una serie de divergencias de carácter léxico: alteraciones en el uso de adverbios, adjetivos o tiempos y personas verbales" (163). On a brief visit to Pamplona after the initial preparation of this article, I was able to do a cursory examination of the 1482 text, concentrating on the variants previously discovered between the 1488 and 1489 texts. The 1482 text almost invariably agrees with the 1488 text, indicating that the variants introduced in the 1489 edition represent a conscious effort to improve the quality of the original translation.
- 15 Theodore S. Beardsley, Jr. notes that among Spanish translations of the classics this work "immediately became the number one bestseller for two centuries, appearing in 32 printings in seven different Spanish cities as well as two foreign ones" ("Spanish Printers" 27).

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