"If you do not step back a bit"

Poggio Bracciolini's Latin translation of Lucian's *The Ass*

By Marianne Pade

This article examines Poggio Bracciolini's translation practice in his Latin version of Lucian's The Ass *(c. 1440) in the light of what he himself said about translating from the Greek in connection with both this and his other translations. Although diffident about his Greek scholarship, Poggio nonetheless had coherent views on translation which took into account the differences in idiom between Greek and Latin and – I shall argue – these views informed his translation practice.*

Poggio (1380-1459) was famous as a pioneer of the development of humanist script and as a 'book hunter' who found manuscripts of several classical authors who had been unknown in Italy for centuries, notably Lucretius, Silius Italicus, Manilius, Statius' *Silvae*, several speeches of Cicero and a complete text of Quintilian.[1] He was also a prolific writer who during his long career published treatises, invectives, short-stories, letters, translations and a *History of Florence*. In the last years of his life, he became chancellor of Florence.[2] Modern scholars mostly agree that his command of Greek was not impressive,[3] but even so we have Latin versions of Lucian, Diodorus Siculus and Xenophon from his hand. Lucian's cynic world view and bawdy satire seems to have been especially compatible with Poggio's temperament: We

1 For Poggio's role in the development of humanist script, see Ullman 1960; De la Mare 1973, 72 and Petrucci 1979. For Poggio as a 'book hunter' see Gordan 1974.

2 For Poggio's life, see Walser 1914 and Petrucci 1971.

3 Cp. Walser 1914, 229-231; Mattioli 1980, 129-130; Marsh 1983 p. 190; and Sidwell 2019, 139-145.

find echoes of Lucian in various of Poggio's works[4] and we have preserved his Latin translations of *Cynicus*, or *Iuppiter confutatus*, and *Asinus*.[5]

In the following, I shall discuss Poggio's Latin version of Lucian's *Asinus*, *The Ass*. The translation has been criticised as "flat and simple", and Poggio's mention of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* in the preface has been seen as ostentatious bragging.[6] Though I cannot totally disagree with these assessments, I hope to be able to show that Poggio – both in the preface to the translation and elsewhere – describes a method for rendering Lucian's prose in Latin and in doing so shows himself to be in syntony with contemporary trends in humanist translation. I shall also attempt to demonstrate that, by and large, Poggio adhered to the method he had set forth. In short, this article will not focus on Poggio's shortcomings as a Greek scholar but on what he professed to do as a translator and how he did it.

Poggio's *Asinus*

Long a Medici sympathiser, Poggio dedicated his translation to Cosimo de'Medici, the *de facto* ruler of Florence since 1434. I follow Sidwell in dating the translation to c. 1440 (see note 5 above).

The letter of dedication

In the letter to Cosimo, Poggio tells that when he read *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, he had been convinced that Apuleius had either written about himself or invented the story – an opinion that was confirmed by what Augustine said of the matter in *The City of God* (18,18): "Just as Apuleius in the book called *The Golden Ass* either told about or invented that it had happened to him that he became an ass after he had eaten poison, but still with a human mind". However, then Poggio happened upon a volume containing works by Lucian, among them one called Lucian's Ass. Eager to find out what the work was about, Poggio discovered that what Apuleius maintained had happened to him, also happened to Lucian, and so the story

4 Sidwell 1975, 72-73 and 2019, 142-155; Marsh 1983, 191-192 and 1998, 37-40. Marsh mentioned that some of the questions examined by Poggio in his De varietate fortunae are similar to those discussed by Lucian in Cynicus. De varietate fortunae is extant in an edition by Outi Merisalo in Poggio 1992.

5 The translation of Cynicus was dated by Fubini, followed by Marsh, to 1443-44, and by Sidwell to c. 1428. Cp. Fubini in Poggio 1464-69, IV p. 661, Marsh 1983 p. 189-190, and Sidwell 1975 p. 30. However, in his forthcoming article on Lucian in Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum XII, Sidwell reexamined the existing evidence and convincingly argued that both translations should be dated to c. 1440. I am very grateful to Keith Sidwell for sharing the section on Poggio's two translations with me.

6 Gaisser 2008, 155.

had to be attributed either to him or to some other Greek. Poggio decided to translate the work into Latin, as an exercise. His intention was not to "plead a case already decided" as the proverb told one not to, but to show that this old comedy which Apuleius had reworked, should not be accepted as a true story. Rather Poggio believed that Lucian had made it up to make fun of the magic arts and ridicule both men and gods; accordingly, Poggio dedicated the work to Cosimo who was known for his humour.[7]

Models and methods of translation

As Julia Gaisser mentions, Poggio was known to rely on Latin works as an aid to translation, and she examines some of the passages where Apuleius' narrative could have provided a model for Poggio. However, Gaisser found no traces of the *Metamorphoses* in the translation – and I have myself used the program Tesserae to compare the two texts, without finding any convincing parallels.[8] Gaisser talks about Poggio using Latin texts as a help, but in fact we often see that humanist translators take a work by an ancient Latin writer as a model for their translation of a Greek work – if the Latin writer in question was known to have imitated the Greek text. Lorenzo Valla used Sallust as model for some passages of his translation of Thucydides, Leonardo Bruni inserted allusions to Cicero's second Philippic in his translation of Demosthenes' *On the Crown* and Vergil of course was much used by translators of Greek epic and didactic poetry.[9] This practise was not due to linguistic incompetence, but part of a conscious strategy for finding a suitable Latin idiom for the rendering of the specific style of the Greek author in question.

Poggio, for whatever reason, clearly did not use Apuleius as a model in his translation, but he gives us some hints about how he perceived Lucian's text in the letter to Cosimo. He calls the story of the ass "hanc ueterem et ab Apuleio ueluti innouatam comoediam" (this old comedy which Apuleius had reworked) and a *fabella* (little story), thus characterising it as a work of fiction. This may be important for the way he chose to render Lucian's text. We often find fifteenth-century humanists discussing how to translate texts in different genres. An example of this is found in George of Trebizond's (1395–1484) preface to his translation of Demosthenes' *On the Crown*

7 There is an English translation of the letter and a transcription of the Latin text in Gaisser 2008, 153-155.

8 Gaisser 2008 p. 155. Tesserae is an open-access program, developed at the University of Buffalo to trace the 'reuse' of texts, for whatever purpose. https://Tesserae.caset.buffalo.edu/. It comes with a corpus of Greek and Latin texts but allows users to add texts.

9 Pade 2018, 13-15, Pade 2019, 2020 and forthcoming.

(1444–46), written roughly at the time when Poggio translated the two dialogues of Lucian:

> There is no one way to translate; rather, the method should be varied in accordance with the subject matter. Things that are sublime and difficult to understand or to sense – things which are quite often ambiguous for the very authors themselves – [such things] the translator should express literally rather than according to the sense, lest, in following the sense as he understands it, he should happen to neglect other deeper and better senses. [...] Only the utterly ignorant will doubt that this method of translating is suitable for the Holy Scriptures and the works of Aristotle. In translating an historian, [on the other hand], the translator will not concern himself with the words but, having once understood the entire subject, he will be permitted to translate it after his fashion, more loosely or more strictly, so long as he observes the diction proper to the genre of history. The translator who wants a Greek orator to speak Latin, however, must not merely avoid misunderstanding the words, he must not only follow his author's sense, but more importantly he must reproduce in Latin, as far he can, the type of speech and the variety of [his author's] diction.[10]

George doesn't mention poetic works – or *comoediae* – but Gianozzo Manetti does in his *Apologeticus* (A Translator's Defense) from the late 1450s. He distinguishes between translations of philosophical and religious texts on the one hand, and translations of poets, orators and historians on the other. The latter should be rendered so that while the meaning was preserved, the different characteristics of the originals will seem to have been respected and set off.[11]

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10 "Non enim unus modus in traducendo est, sed pro rerum subiectarum varietate varius atque diversus. Qui ardua, sensu intellectuque difficilia, et plerumque vel apud ipsos auctores suos ambigua in aliam linguam vertit, is verba magis exprimat quam sensum ne, cum eum sensum sequatur quem ipse capiat, alios negligat forte meliores ac altiores. [...] Hanc traducendi rationem divine scripture Aristotelisque voluminibus convenire nemo nisi omnino imperitus dubitabit. Qui historicum aliquem vertit, is de verbis nihil laboret, sed cum rem totam percepit, latius strictiusve, dum historico genere dicendi utatur, eam more suo in Latinum vertat licebit. Qui autem oratoris alicuius Greci orationem Latinam facere cupit, is ignorare non debet non verba, non sensum illius solum sibi sequendum, sed multo magis orationis genus et dicendi varietatem Latine, quantum facere potest, esse exprimendam," Latin text John Monfasani 1984, 94; English translation from Hankins 1990, vol. 1, 187. I have discussed this passage in Pade 2020, 64-65.

11 "Primum est quod, licet ad verbum interpretatio, ut supra diximus, sive secularibus et profanis sive religiosis sacrisque auctoribus recta atque idonea esse non valeat, inter traductiones tamen poetarum, oratorum, historicorum ex una parte, ex altera vero manifestam philosophorum ac theologorum differentiam non parvam illam quidem, sed magnam profecto et ingentem esse fierique oportet. Tria enim illa antea posita in quavis conversione esse convenit, ut, sententia quodammodo servata, cuncta alia secundum evidentem primorum

Poggio himself does not say what the implications are for his method of translation that the original is a *comoedia*. At the end of the letter to Cosimo, he simply states: "In qua re non sum ausus sententias immutare, aut aliquid demere, ne uidear uelle uideri prudentior Apuleio qui eadem (eandem ed.) in suum opus conuertit" (I did not venture to change the sense or take away anything, lest I seem to wish to appear more skilful than Apuleius, who transformed it into his own work).[12] However, if he was at all in syntony with the viewpoints of his fellow humanists, the fact that he calls the story a *comoedia* probably implies that he allowed himself some freedom in his rendering of the Greek while preserving all the essentials of the story.

In the dedication to the more or less contemporary translation of *Iuppiter confutatus* which he called *Cynicus* or *De fato,* Poggio goes into more detail regarding the problems of translation of a text like Lucian's dialogue into (humanist) Latin. The short letter, addressed to Tomasso Parentucelli, later Pope Nicholas V, offers important insights into Poggio's thinking about translation, and I will therefore quote the central part in the original Latin, followed by an English translation:

> Conuerti autem non solum ut traductor uerborum, sed etiam sentenciarum interpres. Nam ubi lingue latine dignitas permisti, uerba transtuli, ubi uero durius id atque asperius fieri uidebatur, more meo locutus sum, ita ut sensus integer saluaretur. Est enim grecis uernaculus quidam scribendi usus admodum dissimilis a nostra loquendi consuetudine a quo nisi paululum recedas suba<b>surda reddetur scribentis oratio. Itaque non solum michi qui sum ferme infans, sed etiam uiris eloquentissimis difficillimum fuit in eiusmodi traductionibus dicendi copiam aut ornatum seruare, quod et Ciceroni nostro contigisse testis est grauis auctor, beatus Ieronymus. Sed ne uidear me ipsum aut hanc traduciunculam aliquid extimare, silebo de difficultate interpretandi. Id dicam me, quicquid hoc sit, diligenter auctoris sententiam expressisse.[13]
>
> However, I translated not just as someone who renders the words, I also brought forth the sense. When the dignity of the Latin language so

auctorum diversitatem varietatemque ornata et illustrata fuisse ostendantur," Manetti apol V 119. On Manetti's Apologeticus, see den Haan 2016 Ch 5, 110-152.

For neo-Latin texts I use the sigla adopted by Johann Ramminger in his Neulateinische Wortliste whenever possible, cp. Ramminger 2003-.

12 Gaisser 2008, 155.

13 I transcribe the letter from the only surviving witness, BAV, Vat. lat. 3082, f. 98v. It has been published twice before, in Sidwell 1975, 312-313 and Marsh 1983, 192 where there is also a short description of the manuscript. The translation is my own. Poggio refers to the opening paragraph of the preface to Jerome's translation of Eusebius' Chronicle, chron. epist. 2.

> permitted, I rendered the words, but whenever the result seemed to become too harsh and rough, I spoke in my own way, but preserving the meaning entirely. For the Greeks have their own idiomatic way of writing which is very different from our way of expressing ourselves, and if you do not step back a bit, the writer's language becomes disagreeable. So, it is not just me, who is only a beginner, it has proved difficult even for very eloquent men to keep a varied and refined language in this kind of translation. It even happened to our Cicero, as the venerable author, the blessed Jerome, testifies. However, I don't want to seem to brag about this little translation, so I shall not talk about the difficulties of translating it. But I will say this, namely that I have carefully rendered what the author intended to say, whatever that might be.

Poggio here brings up the familiar theme of the dangers of a too literal, word-for-word translation which Jerome had discussed in the preface to his translation of Eusebius' *Chronicle*. However, there is an interesting twist. When Poggio explains that he had chosen to "speak in his own way" when a literal rendering of the original would result in an unattractive prose style, he also gives a reason why this is often the case: "The Greeks have their own idiomatic way of writing which is very different from our way of expressing ourselves." There is simply something in the way at least some Greek writers express themselves which is not compatible with good Latin style, and if the translator does not distance himself from that, his own language will lose its dignity. Poggio calls it a "uernaculus … scribendi usus", an idiomatic way of writing. After Cicero's *Brutus* – in which the word is used to denote local origin (*Brut.* 170–172) – was rediscovered in 1421, *vernaculus* was increasingly used about language and style. In his *Cornu copiae* from the 1470s, Niccolò Perotti lists some of the meanings of the word:

> Also *verna*, a slave born at home ... Thence is derived *vernaculus*; we call *vernaculus* everything originating from our home. Therefore we call *lingua vernacula* the common language, that is the one born at home, and the mos *vernaculus* a domestic custom. *Vernaculus* is used also for 'proper' and 'special', as in Pliny: "In highest esteem we hold our own grapes which are proper to Italy."[14]

14"Item uerna, seruus domi natus … Ab hoc uernaculus fit; dicitur autem uernaculum quicquid domi nostrae nascitur. Unde uernaculam linguam dicimus uulgarem, hoc est domi natam, et uernaculum morem domesticum. Uernaculum etiam pro proprio et peculiari capimus. Plynius: Potissima nobilitas datur uuis peculiaribus atque uernaculis Italiae," Perotti ccopiae 3,224. English translation from Ramminger 2010, 13. In the article Ramminger discusses the word vernaculus in humanist Latin after the 1421 discovery of Cicero's Brutus. For earlier literature on the discovery, cf. Ibid. n. 24.

Poggio actually repeatedly talks about peculiarities of Greek prose style that are incompatible with good Latin: In the preface to his translation of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* from the mid-forties, Poggio explains that he had not rendered single words nor even every little sentence or conversation, because he knew that although it was not inelegantly said in Greek, it would not agree with the taste of learned men in Latin. He had followed the story, leaving out what detracted from the flow or could only with difficulty be aptly expressed in Latin.[15] Shortly afterwards, in the preface to his translation of Diodorus Siculus (I–V), he again described how the demands of good Latin made a faithful translation impossible: adhering to the laws of the target language, *noster dicendi mos*, he had rendered factual content, but omitted the circumlocutions or digressions, *ambages*, so common in Greek.[16]

Nisi paululum recedas

So how did Poggio 'step back' (see the preface to *Iuppiter confutatus* above) when he was confronted with a text written in a style incompatible with good Latin usage, i.e. when a closer translation would have rendered the Latin version harsh and unappealing?

All in all, his Latin version of *The Ass* is 25-30% shorter than the Greek original. I have compared Poggio's Latin to Lucian's Greek chapter for chapter, and though the Latin text is shorter in practically every chapter, there are marked differences, and it seems that especially dialogue and detailed descriptions are shortened.

One trait, however, is marked throughout the translation, namely that Lucian's often very paratactical sentence structure and lavish use of conjunctions which creates a rather colloquial style, is transformed by Poggio into much more hypotactical sentences.

ex. 1

1. καὶ ἁλῶν ἐκοινωνοῦμεν, καὶ οὕτως ἐκείνην τὴν ἀργαλέαν ὁδὸν ἀνύσαντες πλησίον ἤδη τῆς πόλεως ἦμεν κἀγὼ ἠρόμην τοὺς Θετταλοὺς …

15 "Non autem verba singula, non sententiolas omnes, non collocutiones, quae quidem frequentius inseruntur, expressi, quippe qui sciam multa graece haud infacunde dici quae apud nos non absque fastidio legi a doctis possent; sed historiam sum secutus, ea quandoque omittens quae neque veritati rerum detraherent et concinne dici latine vix posse viderentur," Poggio 1964-69, IV, 676. For the passage, see also Pillolla 2007, 46. For Poggio's translation of Xenophon, see also Marsh 1992, 116-121.

16 "… hoc opus absolvi, eam mihi tranferendi legem instituens que a me in Xenophontis prohemio prescripta est, ut omissa verborum qua multi Grecorum utuntur, ambage, sententiis herens nostrum dicendi morem fuerim, salva rerum fide secutus," Monfasani 2016, 96. I have discussed these two passages in Pade 2020, 60-61.

> We shared salt [*i.e. ate together and became friends*] and thus we proceeded on that difficult journey until we were near the city, and I asked the Thessalians …)
>
> Inter eundum cum uariis de rebus colloquentes [eloquentes 3154] iam urbi propinquaremus, ab Thessalis petii …[17]

Lucian's phrase consists of three main clauses each beginning with καὶ, and the second clause contains the conjunct participle ἀνύσαντες. Poggio renders the first main clause with the adverbial *inter eundum* which is part of a temporal clause that is followed by the main clause, *ab Thessalis petii.* He completely omits καὶ ἁλῶν ἐκοινωνοῦμεν (we shared salt), but the overall impression is something much less colloquial that Lucian's Greek – which was perhaps what he wanted to achieve.[18]

Throughout the translation, we see Poggio transforming Lucian's paratactical sentence structure into a much less colloquial prose style, e.g. by the use of participles and infinite nexus as in the next two examples:

ex. 2

2. κἀγὼ δὲ παρελθὼν εἶσω ἀσπάζομαι αὐτὸν καὶ τὰ γράμματα ἐπέδωκα

And going in, I greeted him and gave him the letter

Ingressus salutato homine epistulam trado.

ex. 3

3. ταῦτα εἰπόντος τὸ παιδισκάριον ἡ Παλαίστρα ἄγει με καὶ δείκνυσί μοι κάλλιστον οἰκημάτιον· καί, Σὺ μέν, ἔφη, ἐπὶ ταύτης τῆς κλίνης κοιμήσῃ …

When he had said this, the darling little Palaestra took me and showed me an excellent little room. "You will lie on this bed," she said …

Cepit me Palaestra ostensaque domo pulcherrima, "In hoc," inquit, "lecto nocte dormies."

The result is not just a different prose style, but also a much shorter rendering of the same content.

Lucian's narrative is often interrupted by short exchanges rendered in direct speech, like the following passage where Lucius knocks on the door of Hipparchus' house:

17 I quote Poggio's translation from BAV, Vat. lat. 3154, f. 37r-v (ded.), ff. 37v-51v (tr.) and Vat. lat. 5201, ff. 56r-57r (ded.), ff. 57v-88v (tr.), which have better texts than Poggio 1464-69, IV, 104-116. All translations of Lucian's Greek are based on Lucian 1967 – but I have sometimes modified it slightly to highlight the Greek sentence structure.

18 Mattioli 1980, 129-130 analysed Poggio's rendering of the first chapter of the dialogue, commenting upon his many omissions.

ex. 4

2. ὑπήκουσε δ' οὖν γυνή, εἶτα καὶ προῆλθεν. ἐγὼ μὲν ἠρόμην εἰ ἔνδον εἴη Ἵππαρχος· Ἔνδον, ἔφη· σὺ δὲ τίς ἢ τί βουλόμενος πυνθάνῃ;

eventually a woman did reluctantly answer my knock and even came out. I asked if Hipparchus was at home. "Yes," said she, "but who are you that ask? What do you want?"

Accessit uxor: quam rogo an sit Hiparcus domi? Illa et cum quis essem et quid mihi vellem quaesisset …

Poggio not only leaves out that the woman answered the knock and that she said that Hipparchus was at home, he also rewrites the women's answer into indirect speach.

In another passage Lucius talks to a friend of his mother's on the street who had invited him to stay in her house. He refused the invitation:

ex. 5

4. Ποῖ δέ, ἔφη, καὶ κατάγῃ; Παρὰ Ἱππάρχῳ. Τῷ φιλαργύρῳ; ἔφη.

"Where have you gone to stay," she said. "With Hipparchus". "The miser?" she said.

"Numquid Hiparcus auarus ille homo [homo om 3154] tuus hospes est," inquit?

Here Lucian's fast dialogue becomes one longer question put by the woman.

Lucian and Poggio both describe the trysts between Lucius and the servant Palaestra in quite some detail, as well as their humorous exchanges, as in the next example where Palaestra playfully slaps Lucius. Poggio renders the content fairly accurately, but again his Latin version is shorter than the Greek, especially in the sentence warning Lucius: "Take care …", where *ni dictis* pareas is paraphrasing the Greek very freely.

ex. 6

10. ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ κόρρης πλήξασά με, Ὡς φλύαρον, ἔφη, παρέλαβον τὸν μαθητήν. σκόπει οὖν μὴ πληγὰς ἔτι πλείους λάβῃς ἄλλα καὶ οὐ τὰ ἐπιταττόμενα παλαίων.

But she slapped my face and said, "What a chatterbox I have for my pupil! Take care that you don't get some more slaps for using different holds from the ones I ask for."

Illa me in faciem percutiens, "Quem nugatorem discipulum habeo", inquit. "Videsis ne vapules ni dictis pareas."

What is interesting in this example is also Poggio's wording. Palestra's short phrase contains all of three words, *nugator*, *videsis* (mostly *vide sis* in modern

editions), and *vapulo* which smack of Roman comedy, especially Plautus. *Vide sis*, for instance, is used 16 times by Plautus and three times by Terence. The expression is used once by Apuleius and it is not very frequent in other writers either. Poggio all in all uses *vapulo* four times in the translation.

In my last example we again see Poggio shortening Lucian's narrative while keeping to the essentials of the story:

ex. 7

46. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα κἀμὲ ἵστασαν ἔνθα κατέλυον. καὶ οὗτοι μετὰ τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ δεσπότου πολλὰ λείψανα ἄμφω εἴσω ἐκόμιζον ὁ μὲν κρεῶν καὶ ἰχθύων, ὁ δὲ ἄρτων καὶ πλακούντων. οἱ δὲ κατακλείσαντες ἔνδον ἐμὲ μετὰ τούτων καὶ φυλακὴν ἐμοὶ γλυκυτάτην περιστήσαντες ἀπήεσαν ὥστε ἀπολούσασθαι· κἀγὼ τοῖς παρακειμένοις κριθιδίοις μακρὰ χαίρειν λέγων ταῖς τέχναις καὶ τοῖς κέρδεσι τῶν δεσποτῶν ἐδίδουν ἐμαυτόν, καὶ διὰ μακροῦ πάνυ ἐγεμιζόμην ἀνθρωπείου τροφῆς.

Thereafter they established me with them in their quarters. After their master's dinner they would bring many left-overs, one of them of meat and fish, another of bread and cakes. They used to shut me up with all this and go off to have a bath, leaving a most pleasant charge in my protection. I would then say a hearty goodbye to the barley put out for me and devote myself to the proceeds of my masters' skill and would gorge myself on human food once again after so long.

hi mihi diuersorium dederunt in eo loco ubi reliquiae cenae domini ab ipsis importabantur perplures, ab altero carnes ac pisces, ab altero placentae. Inter has me inclusum relinquentes abeunt lauatum. Ego omisso hordeo humano cibo uentrem refersi.

Poggio's version of this passage is only about half as long as the original. This is partly due to the transformation of Lucian's paratactical sentences into phrases with participles and absolute ablatives instead of finite verbs – as we have seen before. But Poggio also omits elements, like the bread one of Lucius's masters brings in and that the human food Lucius enjoyed so much was "the proceeds of his masters' skill". This last detail is in the sentence which Poggio compressed the most: "Leaving the barley I stuffed my stomach with human food". ἀπήεσαν ὥστε ἀπολούσασθαι becomes *abeunt lavatum* which may again be a loan from Roman comedy: Both Plautus and Terence have *ire lavatum* twice.[19]

Poggio of course knew Plautus well. MS D of the tradition, known as *Ursinianus*, now BAV, Vat. lat. 3870 (s. XI) contains twelve plays that had

19 Plaut. Aul. 579 and Rud. 382; Ter. Eun. 600 and Haut. 655.

remained virtually unknown until it was brought from Germany to Italy in the fifteenth century. The manuscript contains notes in Poggio's hand and Poggio's apograph of it is now Vat. lat. 1629.[20] While I do not think that Poggio used Plautus as a hypotext in any meaningful way, I am convinced that he did consciously sprinkle over his text Plautine borrowings in particular. Apart from the examples already mentioned, I believe that the following expressions were meant to evoke the atmosphere of Roman comedy for the reader: 2 *occluso ostio* and 40 *ostium … occludunt*, cp. PLAUT. Most. 425 *occlude ostium* and Curc. 16 *ostium occlusissimum*;[21] 40 *cinaedi*, cp. PLAUT. Asin. 627, Aul. 422, Men 513, Mil. 668, Persa 804, Poen. 1319, and Stich. 772.[22]

Some conclusions

As I already said, I cannot completely disagree with modern critics who have called Poggio's *The Ass* "flat and simple" and doubted his competence as a translator. In spite of that I hope to have been able to show that Poggio had a fairly coherent theory of translation that in many ways echoed the views of contemporary humanist translators who, like George of Trebizond, advocated different methods of translation for different genres. Poggio himself called Lucian's *The Ass* a *comoedia* and a *fabella*, a work of fiction. According to Manetti, poetry, or works of fiction, required a freer translation which preserved the meaning, but also rendered other characteristics of the original. Poggio did follow Lucian's narrative, and so it could be said that he did what he promised in the letter to Cosimo: "I did not venture to change the sense or take away anything" (see "The letter of dedication" above). However, his method for coping with Lucian's style is different. Echoing what he had said in connection with other translations, in his *Iuppiter confutatus*, Poggio maintained that the Greeks had their own idiomatic way of writing which was incompatible with good Latin – and so he had to "step back a little" from the original. In practice this meant that Poggio transformed Lucian's rather colloquial style into much more hypotactical sentences (ex. 1-3 and 7) and rewrote some of Lucian's dialogues into indirect speech or longer phrases (ex. 4 and 5).

20 Reynolds 1983, 304.

21 According to the lemma occludo in the Thesaurs linguae Latinae, the use of the verb with an object meaning 'door' is very common in Plautus but not elsewhere in Ancient Latin, cp. Claassen 1973.

22 The article on cinaedus in the Thesaurus linguae Latinae does not list all occurrences of the word in Ancient Latin, but it shows that the only author who uses the word more often than Plautus is Martial; cp. Spelthahn 1909.

If the requirements of good Latin made Poggio render Lucian's narrative with deep-going changes to the sentence structure, the fact that he perceived *The Ass* as a *comoedia* is felt in the translation in a different way: rather than choosing Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* as a linguistic model, he sprinkled his text with allusions to Roman comedy, especially Plautus, whom he knew so well (ex. 6 and 7).

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