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Visible masters and invisible students? Educational translation in the early modern Low Countries

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ABSTRACT

In the sixteenth-century Low Countries, a market developed for a specific type of translation, designed for educational purposes. From the second half of the century onward, in particular, many bilingual editions appeared, presenting two versions of the same texts parallel to each other. These works furnished authoritative models that students could use to verify their own translation exercises. Children whose native language was Dutch, both boys and girls, used the pedagogical tool of translation to learn the prestigious French language that was crucial for a career in international trade or public service, or Latin, required for an academic trajectory. In this context, translation not only offered an authoritative published end product, but also an educational activity. This article maps the visibility of the various actors involved in these educational translations: printers, schoolmasters, and students. By analysing published schoolbooks designed for translation exercises, as well as handwritten material by schoolmasters and their pupils, it explores the involvement of different actors of translation and questions to what extent the activities of student translators can be retraced.

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In 1608, schoolmaster Jean de Moncy, originally from Arras in the French-speaking part of Flanders but living in the Dutch-speaking city of Tiel, wrote his *Dialogues rustiques*. It concerns a series of fictitious religious dialogues in French between a village priest, a shepherd, a farmer, and the farmer's wife (Briels, 1973, p. 135; Weidenbaum, 2018). The oldest known surviving edition was printed in an octavo format in 1612 by the Leiden printer Louis Elzevier, but the dedication 'to the shepherds of Artois' is dated 13 February 1608, which suggests an earlier first edition. De Moncy's work was a success: the Universal Short Title Catalogue records some 20 reprints, the latest dating from 1683.¹ This success was probably due to the fact that it was marketed as a schoolbook. In the preface, De Moncy explains that, while providing religious instruction, the *Dialogues* could also be used for French language lessons: 'en les composant en mon escholle à Tiel, i'en donnay quelque piece à aucuns de mes escoliers, les exerçant à translater de François en Flameng' ('while composing them in my school in Tiel, I gave an extract to

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some of my schoolchildren, to train them in translating from French into Dutch', De Moncy, 1612, p. 7). In the sixteenth century, the term 'Flameng' could be used to refer specifically to the Flemish dialect, but it was often used metonymically to refer to the Dutch language as a whole (van de Haar, 2019, p. 49). In the quotation by De Moncy, the term is used in its broader sense, as the Flemish dialect was not spoken in Tiel.

Translation exercises of the type described by De Moncy formed an integral part of second-language instruction in early modern Europe, and printers and publishers were eager to meet the demands of the market by providing relevant materials (Sumillera, 2014a). Many schoolmasters capitalised on the popularity of this form of language education by producing their own works that were suitable for translation in a school setting. These often took the form of bilingual editions the students could use to correct their own work. Such schoolbooks were thus the product of translation, or in some cases even self-translation, by the schoolmasters who wrote them and whose name was often explicitly mentioned on the title page. However, the publication of such a book was only the beginning of potentially years of translation activities by hundreds of schoolchildren whose work is now, for the greatest part, invisible. While many schoolbooks designed for translation exercises have been preserved, traces of the ways in which they were used by students are very rare.

Based on the paratexts of published schoolbooks and extant handwritten sources revealing the use of such books, this article maps the visibility of the different actors involved in the production and use of works designed for educational translation in the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Low Countries. It thus builds on studies by Lawrence Venuti and others on the notion of the visibility of the translator in history (Coldiron, 2012; Rizzi, 2017; Venuti, 1995), by looking not only at the production side of printed translations, but also at the user side. In contemporary translation practices, translators are often invisible, giving readers the impression they read an original text rather than a translation, as translations are considered to have less authority. In early modern times, however, translations could hold as much authority as the source text, and translators' roles were frequently emphasised rather than obscured. Translators and translation activities were made visible when they were mentioned explicitly in paratexts, which will receive much attention in this article. However, the translator's visibility could also be more implicit, for instance in bilingual editions where it was immediately clear to the reader that a text was translated.

Being a contact zone where two native vernacular languages were spoken – French and Dutch – while Latin continued to play an important role, language education was relatively widespread in the Low Countries, and so were published manuals for language instruction. In what follows, the nature of language instruction in the selected time period and geographical area will be briefly discussed, after which specific attention is given to the types and functioning of schoolbooks containing translation exercises, produced in this context. These schoolbooks are then analysed to consider the visibility of the schoolmasters and printers who created them, and to question the nature and effect of the visibility of these actors. Finally, invisible actors of translation are discussed through the obvious omissions that can be found in printed materials, which in some cases do not mention the translator, as well as the very rare extant manuscript materials that provide insight into students' translation practices. More specifically, a hitherto unstudied Ovid translation made by a schoolboy in Amsterdam in 1608 is closely

examined. This case study is highly valuable for shedding light on an omnipresent early modern translation practice, the actors of which left precious little trace.

Language education in a multilingual region

The early modern Low Countries were composed of a diversity of provinces, each constituting its own political unit, roughly covering an area that today comprises the Netherlands, Belgium, and parts of northern France. The language border between Dutch and French has not moved much since that time. It divided not only the whole of the Low Countries, but also individual provinces such as the County of Flanders and the Duchy of Brabant (Armstrong, 1965; Willemyns, 2015). French played an important role as a second vernacular language in the areas where Dutch was the native tongue, especially close to the language border. French was not only a culturally prestigious language, it was also the interregional language of commerce, and the Low Countries strongly depended on maritime trade. Moreover, French was a preferred language of the aristocracy and was often used in administrative contexts (van de Haar, 2019, pp. 38–92). The multilingual character of the Low Countries was further reinforced by the shifting, though persisting, presence of Latin as a religious and scholarly tongue. Other languages were occasionally used because of the presence of considerable numbers of foreign merchants in the area.

In light of the multilingual character of life in the larger cities of the early modern Low Countries, second-language education was key. The primary and secondary school system was, therefore, ordered by the languages that were taught. In so-called Dutch schools, children from low social orders in the Dutch-speaking areas of the Low Countries learned to read and sometimes write in their mother tongue (Boekholt & de Booy, 1987). Almost no Dutch schools existed in the francophone regions. Latin schools were available to male students from the higher echelons of society, preparing them for an academic education by becoming fluid speakers, readers, and writers of Latin (Vanhoutte & Van der Eycken, 2007). In these schools, Latin was generally the main language of instruction, and the core curriculum consisted of the so-called *trivium* courses: *grammatica*, *retorica*, and some *dialectica*. In the sixteenth century, moreover, classical or humanist drama was increasingly used to train public speaking in Latin (Bloemendal, 2003).

In the early sixteenth century, a third type of institution became increasingly widespread: the French school, which soon evolved into separate branches for male and female education respectively (Dodde, 2020). French schools were mostly frequented by members of the middle class, more specifically children from mercantile environments, and were oriented towards a more practical education besides language instruction. Here, pupils between roughly the ages of 7 and 15 learned how to read and write in both Dutch and French, as well as skills such as book-keeping and geography, supplemented with needlework and music for the girls (Dodde & Esseboom, 2000). Following the model of the Latin schools, drama was used in some establishments to train public speaking (van de Haar, 2016). The French schools were a success: in 1576, no less than 127 men and women were registered as French teachers in Antwerp alone (Bourland, 1951, p. 62). Most students were native speakers of Dutch, but some came from French-speaking families. In general, each schoolmaster taught a few dozen pupils of

various ages and levels, and teaching was done on an individual basis: each student was given a lesson to learn or assignment to prepare, which then had to be presented to the teacher. Older or more experienced children helped their peers with their work.

Fostered by the high level of language education in the Low Countries on the one hand, and the upcoming printing industry in this region on the other, schoolbooks providing language instruction and exercises were plentiful, and survive in high numbers despite their intense use. The Universal Short Title Catalogue records 159 schoolbooks containing French printed in the Low Countries between 1550 and 1600, in 553 extant copies.² Of course, not all of these are language manuals, but the majority are. It has been argued that in some cases, only the teacher possessed textbooks, from which their students could copy relevant passages (Resoort, 1989, pp. 41–42). Cases are known, however, of teachers who bought books for individual children (Heyning, 2017, pp. 56–63; Sabbe, 1929, pp. 63–118). In practice, whether a pupil possessed their own schoolbooks probably depended on their financial situation as well as on the type of book and exercise provided. The works used in the French and Latin schools included writing manuals, glossaries, and grammars, as well as various types of texts that could be used for translation exercises.

Schoolbooks designed for translation exercises

Translation was a core practice in early modern language education, and thus it comes as no surprise that many schoolbooks, such as De Moncy's *Dialogues rustiques*, promote themselves as providing translation exercises. An English source, Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), gives valuable closer insight into the actual functioning of such language training through translation. It concerns an English rather than a Dutch textbook, but it is likely that similar practices were adopted in schools in the Low Countries. Ascham recommends daily exercises in the form of double translation, that is, translating into one language and then back again (Miller, 1963; Sumillera, 2014b, p. 67). To learn Latin, for instance, Ascham recommends the works of the classical rhetor Marcus Tullius Cicero (or 'Tullie'):

[...] the childe must take a paper booke, and sitting in some place, where no man shall prompe him, by him self, let him translate into Englishe his former lesson. Then shewing it to his master, let the master take from him his latin booke, and pausing an houre, at the least, than let the childe translate his owne Englishe into latin againe, in an other paper booke. When the childe bringeth it, turned into latin, the master must compare it with Tullies booke, and laie them both together [...] (Ascham, 1570, fol. 1v, sig. C1v).

Ascham thus recommends a translation exercise that fits well within the practice of individual teaching. The student translates the assigned text from Latin into English and back again, with a break in between. The teacher, however, does not correct the first translation into English, only the final Latin. Little preparation by the teacher is required, as he can simply use the original Latin text as a correction model.

In the correction of the translation exercise, Ascham emphasises the importance of positive reinforcement. If the child did well, the teacher should give explicit praise. The teacher should not chide the child if the translation contained mistakes, as long as some effort was put into it. In the translation back into Latin, the style of the classical model was key. Ascham thus gives the following phrases as examples for the discussion with the student:

[...] Tullie would have used such a worde, not this: Tullie would have placed this worde here, not there: would have used this case, this number, this person, this degré, this gender: he would have used this moode, this tens, this simple, rather than this compound: this adverbe here, not there: he would have ended the sentence with this verbe, not with that nowne or participle. &c (Ascham, 1570, fol. 1v, sig. C1v).

For this type of translation exercise, in its most basic form, nothing more was required from the teacher than to provide a text in the second language and to take some time to compare the student's translation with the original.

Printing houses recognised the central role of translation exercises in the growing numbers of French and Latin schools in the Low Countries, and developed various types of books that facilitated the task of the teacher even further, or added pedagogical value (van de Haar, 2023). The basic principle in most of these works was that they presented the text in both languages. Not only did this make it easier for the student and teacher to correct the first translation as well as the retranslation, it also made it possible to start from the native rather than the second language if they wished to do so.

In some cases, such as De Moncy's *Dialogues rustiques*, the texts serving as both point of departure and correction model for the translation exercises were printed in separate editions. De Moncy mentions that his French dialogues were also available in Dutch, which would have been useful as a correction model; no copy of a Dutch edition is currently known, however. The major advantage of this publication strategy was that the two editions could also be sold as separate, individual works for readers who were interested in the text but did not have a translational use for them. It is likely that the strategy of printing a text in two parallel editions to serve as translation exercise was applied more widely. Several educational works were published in separate Dutch and French editions with sometimes similar lay-out, but not all of them explicitly mention the possibility of using them for translation exercises (Smith, 2005, pp. 38–39).

To scholars in the present day, it is therefore not always apparent whether certain books might have been designed (partially) for the schoolroom. The Antwerp schoolmaster Peeter Heyns, for instance, collaborated with the renowned printer Christophe Plantin to create a French writing manual, containing short poems that children learning to write could copy (Heyns, 1568a; Heyns, 1568b). They also produced a Dutch version, in which the poems are near-literal translations of the French ones. It was thus possible to use the French and Dutch books next to each other to practise not only writing, but also translating, even though the paratexts do not explicitly mention this option.

The main actors responsible for printed translation exercises were the schoolmaster-translators who will be discussed in more detail in the following section. However, the printers who recognised the demand for educational translational materials also appear to have played an important coordinating role. Schoolmaster Jan van den Velde thus produced a book of French aphorisms. In the dedication, he notes that the printer, Jan van Waesberghe II, had asked him to add a Dutch translation:

[...] il me prioit d'y vouloir adjoûter le Flameng, disant qu'il serviroit de beaucoup pour le rendre plus agreable & mieux voulu des Maistres d'Escole & Professeurs de la langue Francoise, qui s'en voudroyent servir parmy leurs Escoliers & Disciples [...] (van de Velde, 1613, fol *2r).

[He requested me to add the Dutch text, saying that this would help greatly to make it more agreeable to and wanted by the schoolmasters and teachers of the French language, who would want to use it for their schoolchildren and pupils (van de Haar, 2023, p. 41)]

The term ‘Professeurs’ should be interpreted broadly here as ‘teachers’, since French was not taught on a university level in the Low Countries in this period (van de Haar, 2019, p. 77n198). This quotation showcases that Van Waesberghe, who specialised in educational prints, saw the value of adding the Dutch text and turning the project into a bilingual one. Van den Velde, however, refused. Schoolmaster Daniel van Houcke relates a similar story in his *Cyfferboeck* (1639). His printer asked for a Dutch translation of the French original (van Houcke, 1639, fol. *3r). As it concerns a book on arithmetic, however, it is unclear whether the Dutch version was truly intended to provide the possibility of translation exercises. These examples shed precious light on the interplay between printer and schoolmaster-translator in the coming into being of such educational products: the printer could make a suggestion for translation, but apparently did not always force the author if he refused.³

Besides separate editions in multiple languages, there was also a large corpus of bi- or even multilingual pedagogical works that united the versions of the texts in their different languages.⁴ This was particularly often done for the combination of French and Dutch. A brief reflection on their typographical outlook gives some insights into their practical use. In the majority of cases these bilingual books adopted parallel formats, presenting the different languages next to each other. They were most frequently distributed over two columns per page, either containing one language in each left column and the other in each right column (abab style, see: Luython, 1548), or one language in the two central columns and the other in the two outer columns (abba style, see: Florianus & Plantin, 1566). In many books, the distinction between the two languages was immediately obvious because of a difference in the typeface that was used: as was common practice at the time Dutch was mostly printed in a gothic type, French in a roman one (Rubright, 2014, pp. 122–158). In these bilingual editions, the translator is very visible: one glance at a random page shows that someone has translated the text into the other language. In the separate editions discussed in the above, the translator’s role is much less apparent.

In some bilingual works, the placement of individual words was also consciously chosen for educational purposes. In a French-Dutch life of Aesop, the Antwerp schoolmaster Glaude Luython explains that he made an effort to ensure that the two versions of the text corresponded line by line:

Also,
dat elck woort ende sentencie deene
op dandere, altijts tusschen twee
puncten respondeert *ende* accordeert.
(Luython, 1548, sig. A2r)

tellement
que chascun mot et sentence lune
a lautre, tousiours entre deux
Pointcz respondt et accorde.

[So
That each word and sentence from one
To the other, always between two
Points corresponds and is in accordance.]

As the Dutch and French texts themselves illustrate, Luython tried hard to create a horizontal correspondence between the two versions, opting for a very literal translation. The

typesetter was able to maintain this correspondence as well. In some cases, however, Luytho's translation strategy does have serious repercussions for the natural word order of the two languages, but it made it easier for the students and their teachers to verify whether a translation was correct or not.

As the examples of Luytho's French-Dutch life of Aesop and Ascham's reference to the works of Cicero show, authoritative classical texts were popular sources for translation exercises and manuals, even those in the vernacular. There is also a case of a French-Dutch edition of the biblical stories of Tobias, Judith, Susanna, and Daniel (*Die historie*, 1557). Less authoritative but with more amusement value for the students were bilingual editions of the popular stories of Reynard the fox (Florianus & Plantin, 1566) and Pierre de Provence (*La plaisante histoire*, 1560). Bi- or multilingual editions of gnomic literature, such as the anthology of aphorisms produced by Van de Velde or the distichs attributed to Cato, were also popular for their moralising value and the concise translation exercises they offered (*Catonis disticha*, 1541; *Disticha moralia*, 1570; *Les sentences*, 1562).

Among the most popular bilingual works were schoolbooks containing examples of dialogues, such as De Moncy's *Dialogues rustiques*, in two languages. They provided students with realistic examples of everyday conversations, ranging from interactions between schoolchildren and their teacher, and trade negotiations (*La premiere*, 1567; Valery, 1599). While these dialogue books could be used for written translation exercises, it is more likely that they were mostly used in a performative manner to practice oral expression and comprehension, and perhaps simultaneous interpretation. The variety of schoolbooks that could be used for translation exercises, especially between French and Dutch, was thus quite considerable.

The visibility of schoolmasters in educational translation

The production of schoolbooks containing translation exercises relied on the dynamic between printers and schoolmasters. To what extent were these different actors and the specific role they played in the production process visible in the paratexts of these works? The names of the printers are consistently presented on the title page, partly for promotional reasons: they showed at which printing house the work in question could be purchased. In the early modern period, translators were certainly not always publicly credited for their work, but they do seem to have been relatively visible in these schoolbooks designed for educational translation.

Many language teachers had a side job as freelance translators for printing houses, translating texts that were not necessarily educational in nature. Peeter Heyns and Antoine Tiron were two schoolmasters working for the Antwerp printer Christophe Plantin, for example (Meeus, 2000, pp. 304–306; Vives, 1579). Both Heyns and Tiron were mentioned explicitly in the paratexts of some of their translations, but not all of Plantin's translations mentioned the name of the translator. While not necessarily providing any fame, these commissions did form a source of extra income for schoolmaster-translators. Studies into Plantin's archives show that translators, in cases where the original author did not have to be remunerated, were paid between 15 and 35 guilders depending on the length of the text (Sauvage, 2007, p. 821; Voet, 1992). To contextualise the significance of this extra income: a single child boarding for a full year at a school in

Antwerp around this time had to pay around 50 guilders. A child that only attended the lessons for a year brought in around 10 (Sabbe, 1929, pp. 26–27). Financially, translating one text per year thus amounted to the equivalent of teaching several children.

In educational texts, schoolmaster-translators seem to have been slightly more visible, although the name of the translator is still not mentioned consistently on the title page of these educational translations. The aforementioned works on Tobias (*Die historie*, 1557), Pierre de Provence (*La plaisante histoire*, 1560), Reynard (Florianus & Plantin, 1566), and Aesop (Luython, 1548) only present the printer on the title page. However, the latter two do contain prefaces that have been signed by the schoolmasters responsible for the translations, including in Luython's case his profession and even the location of his school: 'Glaude Luython Maistre descole de la parochie S. Andrieu en Anuers' ('Glaude Luython, schoolmaster of the parish of Saint Andrews in Antwerp', Luython, 1548, sig. A2r). Luython is not alone in giving such explicit information about the location of his school: in 1599, Magdaleine Valery opened a French school for girls in Leiden, and on this occasion published a bilingual dialogue book. The title page presents her as 'Maistresse d'escole françoise de jeunes filles en la ville de Leyden' ('mistress of a French school for young girls in the city of Leiden', Valery, 1599, sig. A1r). In these cases, the translated schoolbook not only provided an additional source of income to the schoolmaster, it also served as promotional material for their school. The reverse was also possible. Gabriel Meurier was one of the most famous French schoolteachers of the sixteenth-century Low Countries. His name is consistently mentioned on his translated works and thus promotes the schoolbooks themselves rather than his school (Meurier, 1557; Meurier, 1562).

As the cases of Valery and Luython show, these schoolbooks could be the product of different types of translation. Valery wrote her own dialogues which she then translated, and thus practised self-translation. Luython, on the other hand, used a Latin source text for his translations into French and Dutch: 'Aussi avons nous en ceste derniere impression de la dicte vie de Esope adjousté aulcunes fables exquisés, composées par le mesme autheur et moralisées au prouffict et bonne instruction des lecteurs, traduites de latin en françois et bas allemand' ('We have also added to this latest print of the aforementioned life of Aesop some exquisite fables, composed by the same author and moralised to the benefit and good instruction of the readers, translated from Latin into French and Dutch', Luython, 1548, sig. A2r–v). Luython thus explicitly states that he was the one to translate a Latin version of Aesop's texts into both vernaculars.

Although Luython's name was not mentioned on the title page, Aesop's was. In translations of (or translations of work attributed to) authoritative classical figures, such as Aesop and Cato, their names take center stage on the title page, often eclipsing the name of the translator (*Catonis disticha*, 1541). If the original author or an earlier translator was someone of lesser stature, however, their name was often omitted. This is the case for the Dutch translation of Gilles Corrozet's *Le conseil des sept sages de Grece* (1544), an anthology of maxims attributed to seven ancient Greek philosophers, edited in Latin by Erasmus and printed in French by Corrozet (Vène, 2009). Printer Jan van Waesberghe I saw its educational potential and, with the help of Plantin, printed a bilingual schooledition that named neither Erasmus, nor Corrozet or the translator of the Dutch text (*Les sentences*, 1562). Erasmus was, however, mentioned in another bilingual school text: the trilingual 1570 *Disticha moralia* printed by Willem Sylvius in Antwerp.

The title page attributes the distichs to Cato, and states they have been edited and translated into Greek by Erasmus and the Byzantine monk Maximus Planudes. It remains a mystery, however, who made the French translation. The educational translator could thus enjoy some visibility, but generally gave way to the authority of a classical or humanist author.

It is also worth mentioning that the translation practices of schoolmasters did not necessarily make it into print, and that many of their handwritten work is undoubtedly lost to us. We know, for instance, that David Beck, who led a French school in the Dutch Republic in the 1620s, made a Dutch translation of Antonio de Guevara's *Mespris de la cour* (1605). Beck wrote in his diary that he did so to 'te gebruicken onder mijne schoolieren, om daernaer te leeren overzetten' ('use them among my students, to learn how to translate', Blaak, 2004, p. 98). Beck later also translated Ronsard's 'La Grenouille' and Marot's 'Quand viendra le siecle doré'. However, no traces of Beck's translations nor of the schoolwork of his pupils seem to have been preserved.

The visibility of students in educational translation

The main actors on the production side of the dozens of schoolbooks designed for translation exercises that came on the market in the early modern Low Countries thus varied in visibility. Very little is known of the user side, however. These schoolbooks must have led to innumerable translation activities that, with very few exceptions, were not deemed worthy of conservation and are therefore lost to researchers. Some remarks can be found on children's translation practices, such as the case of Elisabeth Hoofman, born in 1664, who allegedly translated all of Horace's odes by the age of 16 (van Strien, 1997, p. 441). However, her actual translation practice remains somewhat in the dark. In the text quoted earlier, Ascham suggested that, for translation exercises, 'the childe must take a paper booke' (Ascham, 1570, fol. 1v, sig. C1v) in which the translations should be written down. It seems that the practice of writing down one's translations in a separate notebook or on an erasable tablet was indeed the most common one, as virtually no handwritten notes can be found in the printed schoolbooks themselves. The truly invisible translators were thus the schoolchildren for whom translation exercises were designed.

A few student notebooks from the early modern Low Countries do survive, however. The most famous of them is the manuscript containing the schoolwork made by Pieter Teding van Berkhout in the years 1659–1660 (Frank-van Westrienen, 2007). He attended a Latin school, and in his notebook he wrote down his Latin essays, excerpts, general notes, and drawings. While this manuscript provides important insights into daily life at the Latin school, it only deals marginally with the topic of translation. Chris Heesakkers, however, studied a manuscript from the Thysiana archive kept at the University of Leiden, that does shed more light on the translation practices of early modern students from the Low Countries (Heesakkers, 2017): a set of student notebooks belonging to David Constantijn du Tour, who from 8 September to 12 October 1674 filled 256 pages with Dutch translations of Erasmus's *Colloquia*. Heesakkers observes that Du Tour made his own translation seemingly without consulting any of the translations that were available on the market, and he could not find any handwritten interventions on the part of his teacher. This corresponds with Ascham's advice that the schoolmaster discuss the

translation with the student orally, or perhaps Du Tour checked his own translation by means of a bilingual or Dutch edition but without correcting his written text.

The Thysiana archive holds the notebooks of another schoolboy that, upon close scrutiny, confirm most of Heesakkers' conclusions about student translation, but also give a more elaborate picture. Both notebooks were kept by the young Anthoni Thijs, who frequented the French school of schoolmaster Anthoni Smyters in Amsterdam in the early 1600s (Gelderblom, 2000, p. 198; Pietersma, 2017). The first manuscript is entirely in French, and contains lessons and exercises in arithmetic (Thijs, 1605–1606). However, it seems that Thijs learned not only French, but also Latin, as he wrote down his Dutch-Latin translation exercises of books 4 and 5 of Ovid's *Tristia* in a second notebook (Thijs, 1608). Just like in Du Tour's case, this notebook gives proof of a relatively short but intense period of translating. The entire manuscript of several hundred pages is dated 1608, and Thijs wrote down he finished it on the kalends of November that year, so he spent less than a year on it.

Thijs seems to have copied the Latin original first, leaving space in between each verse where he later penned down his Dutch translation. The Latin texts are identical to the only edition of Ovid's *Tristia* printed in the Low Countries up to that point. It was printed by Franciscus Raphelengius in Leiden in 1590, and a re-edition followed in 1602. It is unclear whether Thijs used the first or the second edition. The Dutch text contains many corrections in the student's own hand, as can be seen in this example, taken from Thijs's translation of book 4, part 1:

[D]en harder vermoeyt sijnde leent [corrected: leunt] op sijn stock ende geseten es op een steen

Fessus ut incubujt baculo, saxoque resedit

Hij versaeft [corrected: vermaeckt se] sijne schaepen, met een riden pijpie

Pastor: arundineo carmine mulcet oves

Den arbeyt van den dienstmaecht wort versacht te gelijk

Cantantis pariter, pariter data pensa trahentis

Singende ende treckende, haer gegeven spinrocken.

Fallitur ancillae, decipiturque labor.

Achilles droefich sijnde om de weggevoerde Breseis, wort gheseydt

Fertur et abducta Briseide tristis Archilles

Versaeft te hebben de sorgen met de hojmonische lyer.

Haemonia curas attenuasse lyra

(Thijs, 1608, fol. 1v)

[The weary shepherd leaning upon his staff or seated upon a rock soothes his sheep with the drone of his reeds. At once singing, at once spinning her allotted task, the slave girl beguiles and whiles away her toil. They say too that when [Briseis] was taken from him, sad Achilles relieved his sorrow with the Haemonian lyre. (Ovid, 1924, pp. 158–159)]

The first correction, where Thijs changed ‘leent’ (borrows) into ‘leunt’ (lean) seems to correct a slip of the pen rather than to improve the translation. The second, however, is a correction of the translation: ‘versaeft’ (eases) has been changed into ‘vermaeckt’ (amuses).

It is improbable that Thijs used a separate Dutch translation to correct himself, as the *Tristia* were only printed in Dutch for the first time in 1612. This Dutch translation was made by Theodorus Schrevelius and set to verse by Jacob van der Schuere, a colleague of Thijs’s teacher Smyters (Schrevelius & van der Schuere, 1612). It seems unlikely that Van der Schuere provided a manuscript version of the Dutch text to the student of one of his colleagues five years before having it printed. Moreover, the printed verse of Van der Schuere deviates considerably from the Latin source text. In the version of Schrevelius and Van der Schuere, the passage quoted above reads:

[E]enen Herder moed’ die rust op stok end steen
 Vermaekt zijn Schapen zoet met een pijp lied gemeen.
 Een Dienstmaegds aerbeyd ook verg *ten* word met zinnen
 Als lievelijck zy zyngt terwijl’ zy zitt aen’t spinnen.
 Men zeyd Achilles droev’ om Brisëis ontweird
 Met een Thessalisch Lier zijn zwaerheyd héft verkeird
 (Schrevelius & van der Schuere, 1612, sig. E3v)

Thijs’s correction of ‘verlaefd’ into ‘vermaekt’ is supported by this translation, but the reference to the ‘Thessalisch’ (Thessalian) rather than ‘haemonische’ (Haemonian) lyre shows to what extent this verse translation deviates from the Latin original, making it less useful for a school context.

Thijs’s notebook gives further insight into the didactic versatility offered by translation exercises. In the margins surrounding the translations themselves, Thijs wrote down the conjugations of specific Latin verbs, as well as information on the mythological figures he encountered, such as the river Styx or Medusa. For the latter, he copied the relevant texts from Charles Estienne’s *Dictionarium historicum ac poeticum* (first edition 1553). In his notebook, for example, the translation quoted above is surrounded by annotations: a passage on Briseis quoted from Estienne’s *Dictionarium*; a series of Latin words related to ‘pastor’ and their Dutch translations, from ‘pasco’ to ‘depasco’; words derived from the verb ‘fallere’, such as ‘fallax’ and ‘fallacia’; and many more smaller notes. This shows that Thijs used reference works while working on his translation, actively learning to understand the content of what he was translating and informing himself on the historical and mythological references he encountered.

Conclusions

Thijs’s notebook showcases beautifully what made translation exercises so popular in early modern Europe: not only did they allow students to practise their linguistic skills in writing, from verb conjugations to cases and vocabulary; they also brought them into contact with the authoritative figures whose works they translated, and with the (often moralising)

content of their works. Although over the years innumerable students must have benefitted from such exercises, very little evidence remains of the fact that they comprised an enormous proportion of all the actors involved in translation in the early modern Low Countries.

The implication of the omnipresence of translation exercises at French and Latin schools in this context is that anyone with a university degree, most members of the public administration, and many merchants at the time would have had plenty of personal experience with translation, from literary texts to model dialogues. This holds true for a considerable number of women from the middle and higher social orders as well, as there were many French schools for girls. Unfortunately, their translation activities remain completely in the dark because of a lack of handwritten source material; Magdaleine Valery's bilingual schoolbook is an exceptional printed case of female self-translation in an educational context.

The only actors involved in educational translation who were consistently visible were printer-publishers. Their actual role in the production of schoolbooks designed for translation remains largely unclear, but the sources studied here suggest they could have considerable influence by asking or hiring schoolmasters or other freelance translators to create a bilingual version of a text. The visibility of the actual translators responsible varies considerably: while some schoolmasters used their translation exercises to promote their school and were therefore very visible through their schoolbooks, others remained hidden behind the authoritative figures whose works they translated, and whose names were deemed more valuable for promoting the text in question on its title page. Others still were not presented on the title page, but did sign a dedication or preface.

While in general, the schoolmasters responsible for published translation exercises were thus relatively visible, they were not always overtly credited for their work in the books for which they produced the texts. Conversely, while the students making those exercises were, on the whole, largely invisible, nevertheless, thanks to the few rare notebooks left behind by students such as Anthoni Thijs, some light can be shed on their schoolwork, showing translation as an important, everyday educational activity in early modern Europe.

Notes

1. USTC consulted in March 2024.
2. USTC consulted in March 2024.
3. There is also a case where schoolmasters requested an educational edition from a printer. In 1579, Christophe Plantin printed a new French edition of Juan Luis Vives's *De institutione feminae christianae* (1524). In the dedication, Plantin claims that the schoolmasters Peeter Heyns and Sebastien Cuypers had asked for it. As the existing French translation had been seriously abridged, he commissioned the schoolmaster Antoine Tiron (whose name is not mentioned on the title page but who did sign a dedication) to make a new translation (Vives, 1579, p. 9. 5–7).
4. The famous multilingual dialogue books based on the French-Dutch model created by Noël de Berlaimont (1527), a schoolmaster from Antwerp, have not been included in this research, as they target a mercantile rather than an educational audience and use. For further information on the rich Berlaimont tradition, see: Hoock, 2012.

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