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Toning Down Abraham: Arthur Golding's 1577 Translation, A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice

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Article abstract

Arthur Golding was a prolific Elizabethan translator, most famous for his rendering of Ovid's Metamorphoses. In 1577, he translated Théodore de Bèze's 1550 tragedy, Abraham sacrifiant. While the Huguenot's play has been widely studied, Golding's translation has received almost no scholarly attention. This article aims to correct this oversight through a comparison of Golding's version with the original. The analysis shows that Golding in large part employs a deferential approach to the translation of Bèze's play, one that is in keeping with the religious nature of the text. However, this article also demonstrates that Golding switches translation styles in key moments of the Huguenot tragedy, in particular where Bèze emphasizes the scandalous nature of God's command and Abraham's dilemma. In these moments, Golding uses a variety of strategies to lessen the scandalous nature of the text, thereby "pre-digesting" the material for the reader. This editorial tactic will be viewed in relation both to the interpretive approach espoused by Golding in his preface to the Metamorphoses, and to John Calvin's treatise on offense (scandal), which Golding was translating at the same time as Ovid's poem.

Toning Down Abraham: Arthur Golding's 1577 Translation, *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice*

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Arthur Golding was a prolific Elizabethan translator, most famous for his rendering of Ovid's Metamorphoses*. In 1577, he translated Théodore de Bèze's 1550 tragedy,* Abraham sacrifiant*. While the Huguenot's play has been widely studied, Golding's translation has received almost no scholarly attention. This article aims to correct this oversight through a comparison of Golding's version with the original. The analysis shows that Golding in large part employs a deferential approach to the translation of Bèze's play, one that is in keeping with the religious nature of the text. However, this article also demonstrates that Golding switches translation styles in key moments of the Huguenot tragedy, in particular where Bèze emphasizes the scandalous nature of God's command and Abraham's dilemma. In these moments, Golding uses a variety of strategies to lessen the scandalous nature of the text, thereby "pre-digesting" the material for the reader. This editorial tactic will be viewed in relation both to the interpretive approach espoused by Golding in his preface to the* Metamorphoses*, and to John Calvin's treatise on offense (scandal), which Golding was translating at the same time as Ovid's poem.*

Traducteur élisabéthain prolifique, Arthur Golding est surtout connu aujourd'hui pour sa traduction anglaise des Métamorphoses *d'Ovide. En 1577, il a également traduit la tragédie de Théodore de Bèze intitulée* Abraham sacrifiant *(1550). Alors que la pièce de Bèze a été largement étudiée, la recherche a presqu'entièrement négligé sa traduction par Golding. Le présent article propose de remédier à cette lacune en comparant la traduction de Golding avec le texte original français. Notre analyse montre que Golding adopte une approche fidèle et déférente à sa traduction de la pièce de Bèze, conforme à la nature religieuse du texte. Toutefois, on montre également que Golding change de style de traduction à des moments cruciaux de la tragédie huguenote, en particulier lorsque Bèze fait ressortir l'aspect scandaleux du commandement de Dieu et le dilemme d'Abraham. Dans ces moments, Golding adopte une série de stratégies visant à réduire la nature scandaleuse du texte, offrant de cette façon au lecteur une version « pré-digérée » du récit. La tactique éditoriale de Golding est examinée en relation avec deux autres textes : l'approche interprétative qu'il présente dans la préface à ses* Métamorphoses*, et le traité de Jean Calvin,* Des Scandales*, que Golding traduisait précisément en même temps que le poème d'Ovide.*

One of the best-known literary figures of his time, Arthur Golding (1536–1606) was a prolific translator who is today most famous for his rendering of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work that had an important influence

on Shakespeare and has received significant critical attention.[1] In spite of the great success of this "Englishing" project (which went through eight editions before 1613),[2] Golding's *Metamorphoses* stands as something of an anomaly when taken in the context of his body of work as a whole, largely dedicated to the translation of religious commentaries, sermons, and treatises of the leaders of the Reform movement (John Calvin and Théodore de Bèze, among others). Golding's 1577 translation of Théodore de Bèze's tragedy, *Abraham sacrifiant* (1550), also represents something of a curiosity since it is the only dramatic work in the Englishman's corpus. Further, unlike his *Metamorphoses*, Golding's *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* has received almost no critical attention.[3] This article aims to correct this oversight through an examination of Golding's approach to the translation of a novel and hybrid genre: namely, biblical tragedy. The analysis will show that Golding in large part employs a deferential approach to the translation of Bèze's only dramatic work, one that privileges word-for-word translation and that is in keeping with the religious nature of the text. However, this article will also demonstrate that Golding switches translation style in key moments of the Huguenot tragedy, in

1. For example, see Raphael Lyne, *Ovid's Changing Worlds: English* Metamorphoses, *1567–1632* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Gary G. Gibbs and Florinda Ruiz, "Arthur Golding's *Metamorphoses*: Myth in an Elizabethan Political Context," *Renaissance Studies* 22 (2008): 557–75; Liz Oakley-Brown, "Translating the Subject: Ovid's *Metamporphoses* in England, 1560–67," in *Translation and Nation: Towards a Cultural Politics of Englishness*, ed. Roger Ellis and Oakley-Brown (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2001), 79–80; Joseph Wallace, "Strong Stomachs: Arthur Golding, Ovid and Cultural Assimilation," *Renaissance Studies* 26.5 (2011): 728–43; Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and Madeleine Forey's edition of Golding's translation: *Ovid's* Metamorphoses: *Translated by Arthur Golding* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

2. Gibbs and Ruiz, 559. Louis Thorn Golding mentions seven editions, in *An Elizabethan Puritan: Arthur Golding the Translator of Ovid's* Metamorphoses *and also of John Calvin's* Sermons (Freeport: Books for Library Press, 1937), 55.

3. Golding's translation of *Abraham sacrifiant* is invariably included in any list of sixteenth-century biblical or religious drama in England, but without commentary. Books focused on neoclassical tragedy often include a lengthy discussion of the translations of R. Garnier's plays into English, making no mention of Golding's translation at all. Rare exceptions to this scholarly oversight include the 1906 edition of *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* by Malcolm Wallace (which is the edition we will cite in this article) and a 2006 article by Richard Hillman, "Dieu et les dieux dans l'*Abraham sacrifiant* de Théodore de Bèze et sa traduction anglaise par Arthur Golding," in *Dieu et les dieux dans le théâtre de la Renaissance: actes du XLVe colloque international d'Études humanistes, 01–06 juillet 2002*, ed. Jean-Pierre Bordier and André Lascombes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 225–34.

particular where Bèze emphasizes the violent and confounding nature of God's command and the depth of Abraham's dilemma. In these moments, Golding uses a variety of strategies to lessen the scandalous nature of the text, thereby "pre-digesting" the material for the reader.[4] This editorial tactic will be viewed in relation both to the interpretive approach espoused by Golding in his preface to the *Metamorphoses* ten years earlier and to Calvin's treatise on offense (*Des scandales*), which Golding was translating at the same time as Ovid's poem.[5]

Golding's *Metamorphoses*

While the *Metamorphoses* is by far Golding's most famous work, many scholars have commented on the strange choice of Ovid's mythological and pagan poem for a man with such strident religious views. Scholars have looked to the prefatory materials[6] of the work to better understand this apparent contradiction. These prefaces have been understood as advocating an allegorical reading of the *Metamorphoses*, which would more easily insert the pagan work into a Christian context and would even task it with an edifying role, so long as the reader knew how to correctly read the poem.[7] This article argues that Golding constructs a sophisticated defence of the edifying value of Ovid's poem that goes beyond the

4. Joseph Wallace explores the metaphor of digestion in Golding's prefatory material in his article, "Strong Stomachs: Arthur Golding, Ovid and Cultural Assimilation," *Renaissance Studies* 26.5 (2011): 728–43.

5. John Calvin, *A Little Booke of John Calvines Concernynge Offences*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1566).

6. This paratextual material includes a preface "to the reader" from the 1565 edition of the first four books of the poem, and a verse epistle dedicated to the Earl of Leicester, from the 1567 edition of the complete work. Citations from this prefatory material will be given with the page number from Thorn Golding, *An Elizabethan Puritan.*

7. This is how Gibbs and Ruiz describe Golding's understanding of the edifying nature of pagan literature, from his prefaces to the *Metamorphoses*: "Pagans had created gods and goddesses to explain the phenomena that they recognized as necessarily originating in a supernatural source (Golding, preface, lines 6–10). Pagan literature might contain disguised representation of the Christian God and prove to be spiritually profitable to the informed Christian reader—so long as the informed Christian reader understood the text correctly. With this interpretative framework delineated in the preface and dedicatory epistle, Golding provided his readers with a clear cultural context for the text—a context that evoked a traditional allegorical approach" (563).

allegorizing elements of the preface, and that is carefully crafted to the poem itself, and that he does this by layering several arguments.

Golding's first argument is that the edifying value of the work is to be found in its ability to act as a mirror to reflect back to us our corrupted nature: "The Authors purpose is to paint and set before our eyes / The lyvely Image of the thoughts that in our stomackes ryse."[8] The thoughts that "rise" in the stomach are all types of passion, lust, and vice. Ovid turns these "thoughts" into "lyvely images"; that is, he brings them to life and gives them form and dynamism. All of this is done so that these thoughts brought to life might act like a mirror, reflecting our "vice" and "faultes" back to us:

> *Now when thou readst of God or man, in stone, in beast, or tree*
> *It is a myrrour for thy self thyne owneestate too see.*
> For under feyned names of Goddes it was the Poets guyse,
> The vice and faultes of all estates too taunt in covert wyse.
> And likewise too extoll with prayse such things as doo deserve.
> Observing always comlynesse from which they doo not swarve.
> (240, emphasis is mine)

Second, Golding defends the "lyvely colours" used to paint the "vice and faultes," by arguing that for any written work to be effective in its edifying role (i.e., for the mirror to do its work), it must not only instruct but also "delight," in an argument taken from Horace that is strikingly similar to what will become the principal edict of French classicism in the following century, that is, the "plaire et instruire" principal:

> For as the Image portrayd out in simple whight and blacke
> (Though well proportioned, trew and faire) if comly coulours lacke,
> Delyghteth not the eye so much, nor yet contentes the mynde
> So much as that that shadowed is with colours in his kynde:
> Even so a playne and naked tale or storie simply told
> (Although the matter bee in deede of valewe more than gold)
> Makes not the hearer so attent too print it in his hart,
> As when the thing is well declarde, with pleasant termes and art. (241)

8. Thorn Golding, 242.

In a correlated argument, Golding contends that what "delights" a reader is not only that which is "well declared" and painted with "comly coulours," but also that which has a meaning that is at least partially hidden. It is the finding of the hidden meaning that brings pleasure to the reader: "[…] it is right darke and hard theyr meening too espye. / But being found it is more sweetee and makes the mynd more glad" (241).

The hidden quality of the meaning can nevertheless also represent a hazard. In spite of his lauding of the "comeliness" or seemliness of Ovid's poem and its "comly" colours, Golding apprehends the danger of such a pleasant colouration and warns that there might be an apparent "exalting" of vice within the poem. He cautions the reader—"And if a wicked person [that is, character] seme his vices too exalt"—and clarifies what the reader's response to this apparent promotion of sin should be:

> Esteeme not him that wrate the woorke in such defautles too halt,
> But rather with an upryght eye consider well thy thought:
> See if corrupted nature have the like within thee wrought:
> Marke what affection doth perswade in every kind of matter:
> Judge it that even in heynous crymes thy fancy doo not flatter. (242)

Thus, Golding has chosen to translate Ovid not in order to laud the poet but rather to provide a demonstration or "setting before the eyes" of the corrupted nature of each person.[9] This does not mean that our translator thinks that correctly gleaning the moral lessons to be found is easy. He explains that Ovid's poem is like a "chain" and that the order and connectedness of each part is important to the correct understanding of the tales to be found within it: "whoo so meenes to understand them right, / Must have a care as well to know the thing that went before" (244).

Golding's defence of the useful value of Ovid's pagan poem thus establishes a fairly high bar for the potential reader, who in any case it is expected will be a "lerned person."[10] First, the reader needs to understand that the depiction of

9. Just as Ovid's purpose is to "set before the eyes," Golding considers himself to be "the setter out of things" (Thorn Golding, 244).

10. Thorn Golding, 243 and 265. In the first lines of his 1565 address to the reader, Golding expresses the concern that the "simple sort" might be offended by the "heathen names of feynèd Godds" found within Ovid's poem, Thorn Golding, 237.

vice is not meant to be an exaltation or encouragement but rather a mirror, whose ultimate effect will be to dissuade from vice. Second, the reader needs to know how to find the hidden moral lessons. Golding details: "And therefore whooso dooth attempt the Poet woorkes too reede, Must bring with him a stayd head and judgement too proceede" (241). Lastly, not everyone will be able to extract the proper nourishment from this poem. Our poet understands that his reader will need to have a "strong stomach" in order to properly digest and extract "nourishment" from the pagan material. Indeed, anyone with a "weak stomach" is supposed to abstain from reading the potentially dangerous material: "If any stomake be so weake as that it cannot brooke, / The lively setting forth of things described in this booke, / I give him counsel to absteine until he bee more strong" (244). The lesson that can be gleaned from this is that Golding, who was at once a humanist and Puritan, trusted the reader to be able to properly interpret and "digest" Ovid's poem (with the caveat that those who were not up to the task should refrain).[11]

Nevertheless, it is significant to note that in spite of the Englishman's intent to use Ovid's poem as a mechanism of religious reform, as a "mirror" for the vice lurking within each person, one that would ultimately have an edifying influence, Golding did not translate any other examples of obviously "pagan" literature, even after the runaway success of his *Metamorphoses*. Our translator focused instead on edifying literature of a more straightforward kind: to wit, the theological works of Calvin, Bèze, and Heinrich Bullinger.[12] Some scholars have speculated that this fact points to our author being ultimately unconvinced of his reader's ability to properly extract moral teachings from his translation of Ovid's poem.[13] Had Golding continued to translate pagan works as part of his literary project, ancient tragedy may have been a useful target for him. Indeed, Gibbs and Ruiz argue that the *Metamorphoses* (in particular as translated by Golding) can be understood as an "'Anti-Bible'—a history of people without

11. Indeed, in their article, Gibbs and Ruiz examine Golding's translation of Ovid in the context of his overall literary agenda, that of English social and religious reform, and argue that "pagan literature […] was germane to Christian England as both an admonition against spiritual corruption and as a testament for the importance of true wisdom for Godly behaviour" (575).

12. By 1577, Golding had already translated a number of Calvin's sermons (on the book of Job, and the letters from St. Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians), Bèze's *A Booke of Christian Questions and Answers* (1572), Bullinger's response to the Pope's Bull (1572), and the Life of Colignie (1576).

13. Thorn Golding, 55

God's covenant," where Golding "had shown his readers the downfall of several heroic men who dealt with beautiful, powerful, and unruly women in a world turned upside down" (575). It is not difficult to imagine that ancient tragedy, with its flawed heroes and heinous crimes, could operate in much the same way, effectively acting as a counter-example. Indeed, French playwrights will make this case in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[14]

A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice

In fact, while Golding does not return to any explicitly pagan material, in 1577 he does translate one tragedy: Bèze's *Abraham sacrifiant*. While modelled on ancient tragedy, the French play dramatizes the story of Genesis 22 and features a key figure of the Hebrew Bible, Abraham, father of the faith, in the place of the pagan hero. Bèze had recently converted to the Protestant faith and was living in exile in Switzerland when he wrote the play, a commission for the students of the Collège de Lausanne, where he had been named a professor of Greek. Just as Golding will only translate one dramatic work, *Abraham sacrifiant* will be the Huguenot author's only play.

The story recounted by Genesis 22, that is, the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham, was well known to medieval drama when Bèze baptized his play a tragedy, thereby marking a departure from the medieval versions.[15] The Huguenot's play presents a number of innovations,

14. For example, Jean Racine, in his preface to *Phèdre* (1677), argues that in his tragedy "[…] les passions n'y sont présentées aux yeux que pour montrer tout le désordre dont elles sont cause ; et le vice y est peint partout avec des couleurs qui en font connaître et haïr la difformité. C'est là proprement le but que tout homme qui travaille pour le public doit se proposer ; et c'est ce que les premiers poètes tragiques avaient en vue sur toute chose. Leur théâtre était une école où la vertu n'était pas moins bien enseignée que dans les écoles des philosophes." Jean Racine, *Phèdre* (Paris, Larousse, 2007), 25.

15. There is nevertheless evidence that the medieval plays were used as sources. For a more detailed comparison with the medieval plays see Charles Mazouer, "Abraham du Mistere du Viel Testament à l'Abraham sacrifiant de Théodore de Bèze," *Bulletin de l'Association d'étude sur l'humanisme, la réforme et la renaissance* 44.1 (1997): 55–64; Béatrice Perregaux, "Théodore de Bèze, *Abraham sacrifiant* (1550): Rupture et innovation," *Sondierungen zum Theatre. Enquêtes sur le théâtre: dix contributions à l'histoire du théâtre en Suisse*, ed. Andreas Kotte *Theatrum Helveticum* 1 (Basel: Theaterkultur Verlag, 1995): 13–49; and Anne G. Graham, "L'*Abraham sacrifiant* (1550) de Bèze ou la dispute au service de la 'vive foy,'" *Arrêt sur scène / Scene Focus* 3 (2014): 123–35, online, http://www.ircl.cnrs.fr/productions%20electroniques/arret_scene/3_2014/asf3_2014_graham.pdf.

most importantly in its apprehension of the tragic dilemma at the heart of the sacrifice story. Whereas in the medieval versions of the play, Abraham is saddened by the thought of killing his son, he does not doubt whether he should obey God's order. Bèze on the other hand, builds his play around a long monologue (114 verses) where Abraham wrestles internally with God's order and questions whether he should obey. Scholars have shown that this innovation in Bèze's dramatization stems from his modelling of ancient tragedy.[16] Thus, *Abraham sacrifiant* is truly a biblical tragedy, a hybrid of sorts, at once biblical dramatization and pagan genre.

The hybrid nature of *Abraham sacrifiant* seems to present a difficulty for our translator. While Golding obviously felt this play to be an appropriate choice for "Englishing," he also seems to have felt uncomfortable about some of the elements of the tragedy that could be cause for scandal. Abraham, the hero of the tragedy, cannot properly be constructed as an anti-model. Indeed, the Huguenot author himself holds Abraham up as a model to be followed, as indicated by the epigraph that he places on the title page of his tragedy, taken both from Genesis and Romans: "Abraham a creu à Dieu, & il luy a esté repute à justice."[17] Bèze presents Abraham as a figure who can serve to encourage and embolden the exiled Huguenots in Switzerland and those facing potential persecution in France. He does this, however, by allowing the reader to experience first-hand the agonies of the testing that Abraham endures before the patriarch ultimately triumphs over doubt and fear. In the same way that Golding argued that Ovid's purpose was "to paint and set before" the reader's eyes "lyvely Images" of passion, lust, etc., Bèze explains in the prologue to his play that the reader will see "lively representations" of Abraham's torment and struggle:[18]

> En cest endroict vous le verrez tenté
> Et jusqu'au vif attainct & tourmenté.

16. See Ruth Stawarz-Luginbühl, "*L'Abraham sacrifiant, tragedie françoise* ou comment mettre en scène l'épreuve de la foi?" in *Théodore de Bèze (1519–1605): Actes du Colloque de Genève (septembre 2005),* ed. Irena Backus (Geneva: Droz, 2007), 401–15 and Anne G. Graham, "Théodore de Bèze et la première 'Tragédie Françoise': imitation, innovation et exemplarité," *Tangence*, 104 (2014): 51–77.

17. Théodore de Bèze, *Abraham sacrifiant*, ed. Marguerite Soulié and Jean-Dominique Beaudin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), 29. All references to the French tragedy are taken from this edition, and refer to verse number unless otherwise indicated. (Hereafter cited in the main text.)

18. For a more detailed analysis of this prologue, see Graham, "L'*Abraham sacrifiant* (1550) de Bèze."

> Vous le verrez par foy justifié,
> Son filz Isac quasi sacrifié.
> Bref, vous verrez estranges passions,
> La chair, le monde, & ses affections
> *Non seulement au vif representées,*
> Mais qui plus est par la foy surmontées. (27–38; emphasis is mine)

The reference to "strange passions, the flesh, the world and its attachments" could be taken straight out of Ovid. But something is different for Golding in 1577. In spite of the Englishman's rather confident defence of the edifying value of Ovid's poem in 1565 and 1567, and of the reader's capabilities in this regard, in 1577 Golding appears to be consciously or unconsciously uncomfortable with certain elements of the story of Abraham and Isaac transformed into tragedy. The English poet addresses this, not through an instructional letter to the reader on how to interpret and digest the dramatic text (surprisingly *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* contains no prefatory material whatsoever) but rather by modifying his translation style in key moments of the play, thereby "pre-digesting" the material for the reader. This article will argue that the interplay of "pagan" genre and religious subject matter has particular consequences for the kinds of translation approaches our pious translator chooses and that a proper understanding of the myriad factors influencing Golding's translation of *Abraham sacrifiant* must take into account both literary and religious preoccupations.

John Calvin's *On offenses*

One of the religious preoccupations that is pertinent to Golding's translation of *Abraham sacrifiant* is the concept of "scandal," from the Greek *skandalon*. In its simplest form, "scandal," or "offense," refers to anything that could act as an obstacle to faith or that could cause someone to fall into sin, often referred to as "a stumbling block." Calvin published a treatise on the topic in 1550, which Golding translates in 1567, and expresses a certain urgency regarding the subject matter in relation to the growth of the still embryonic Protestant church:

> Au contraire, combine en veoit-on qui prennent couleur des scandales pour se reculer de l'Evangile comme d'un rocher dangereux aux passans?

> Ou bien après y ester venuz et avoir poursuyvy quelque temps, s'en retirent soubs ceste mesme couverture? Ainsi pource qu'à mon advis, il n'y avoit argument où je peusse mieux et avec plus grand fruict employer mon labour, je l'ay volontiers entreprins à traiter, avec la grace de Dieu.[19]

In his treatise, Calvin divides the potential stumbling blocks into three types, of which the first two are most pertinent to the subject of this article. The first type relates to "intellectual offences," and can be thought of as a stumbling block to the intellect. Calvin describes them as elements of the gospel that present an assault on human reason: "Mais plusieurs choses y [dans la bible] sont continues qui semblent desraisonnables, voire bien sottes et dignes de mocquerie au jugement humain."[20] The second type of offence is the risk to reputation, peace of mind, and family life that following the gospel can imply. These are the human costs of the gospel that can lead some people to turn away.

Bèze highlights both of these types of offenses in his dramatization of the sacrifice story. It is not difficult to see how God's order to Abraham to sacrifice his only son epitomizes the first type—an intellectual stumbling block, something that is difficult to comprehend rationally. Earlier medieval dramatizations did not, however, interpret the sacrifice story in this way; Bèze's emphasis on the "scandalous" nature of God's order represents an innovation in the depiction of the story. The apparent contradiction in God's word is a key stumbling block for the Huguenot's Abraham.[21] The patriarch cannot understand how God could have made a covenant with him based on the lineage from his son, Isaac, and then order Isaac (and the covenant's) destruction:

> Comment? comment? se pourroit-il bien faire,
> Que Dieu dist l'un, & puis fist du contraire?
> Est-il trompeur? Si est-ce qu'il a mis
> En vray effect, ce qu'il m'avoit promis. (713–16)

19. Jean Calvin, *Des Scandales*, ed. Olivier Fatio (Geneva: Droz, 2011), 54.

20. Calvin, *Des Scandales*, 62. The most famous of these is Christ himself as Paul specifies in 1 Corinthians 1:23: "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness."

21. Another intellectual stumbling block for Abraham is the proscription of murder by God, using Cain as the example (732–34).

Bèze has his hero, Abraham, come back several times to the contradiction in God's word as a reason not to obey the commandment: "Mais le faisant, je ferois Dieu menteur" (743).

The French poet also emphasizes the second type of "offence": that which is related to the human cost of following God, or more specifically in this case, of following a particular command. Abraham projects his imagination onto his life after the killing of his son and imagines his wife's reaction, "Las que feray je à la mere dolente" (777), and the reaction of his community, "Seray-je pas d'un chacun rejetté, Comme un patron d'extreme cruauté?" (781–82). This leads the Huguenot's Abraham to wonder finally, and perhaps most scandalously, whether a commandment so harsh, and so violent, will not be an irremediable obstacle to the budding monotheistic religion: "Et toy, Seigneur, qui te vouldra prier? Qui se vouldra jamais en toy fier?" (783–84).

Of course, by the end of this long, doubting monologue, Abraham will have come out the other side of the tumultuous river of doubt to affirm God's infinite wisdom and Abraham's own nothingness in the face of this:

> Mais, ô Seigneur, tu scais qu'homme je suis,
> Executer rien de bon je ne puis,
> Non pas penser, mais ta force invincible,
> Fait qu'au croyant il n'est rien impossible. (811–14)[22]

Thus, what is being celebrated in Bèze's tragedy is unmistakeably the triumph of faith over doubt; of God's wisdom over man's reason. Nevertheless, the very "lively" depiction of Abraham's struggle and doubt over many verses could be cause for concern, in the same way, perhaps, that Golding worried about those readers who would understand the depiction of vice in Ovid's poem as exaltation and not as warning.[23]

We can better understand this if we consider Calvin's comments on Genesis 22, published in 1554. While Calvin fleshes out some of the potential obstacles to faith prompted by God's unusual commandment to Abraham, he also sticks

22. Abraham has arrived at this place, in part by accepting that God will resurrect Isaac from the dead, thereby resolving the apparent contradiction in God's word.

23. Of course, one might argue that Ovid's poem and Bèze's biblical tragedy cannot properly be compared. The fact that they can be compared, in terms of Golding's attitude towards them, is the argument of this article.

much closer to the biblical narrative, which does not intimate the possibility of doubt on the part of the patriarch. As an example, here Calvin refers to the apparent contradiction in God's word and Abraham's reaction to this:

> Il est vrai qu'il a fallu qu'il ait eu le coeur transpercé et brisé quand il avait en soi ce combat entre le commandement de Dieu et sa promesse. Mais après qu'il a résolu que Dieu, à qui il avait affaire, ne peut être contraire à soi-même, bien qu'il ne trouve pas aussitôt le moyen d'ôter cette contradiction, *toutefois il accorde par espoir* le commandement avec la promesse. Parce qu'*il était sans aucun doute persuadé que Dieu est fidèle*, il laisse à sa providence l'événement qui lui est inconnu. Cependant il va où il lui est commandé, *comme à yeux clos*. La vérité de Dieu mérite cet honneur, que non seulement elle soit éminente par-dessus les moyens humains ou qu'elle suffise d'elle-même sans moyens, *mais aussi qu'elle passe par-dessus tout les encombres et empêchements.*[24] (Emphasis is mine.)

While Calvin mentions the impact on Abraham of the conflict between God's order and his promise, referring to the patriarch's "coeur transpercé," he does not dwell on it, emphasizing instead Abraham's faith ("il était sans aucun doute persuadé") and his hope, which allows the order and the promise to be held in some kind of suspended agreement, even while the contradiction cannot be resolved. Calvin stresses further Abraham's willingness to be led blindly by God (*comme à yeux clos*), since it is in the very nature of God's truth that it should be able to overcome any obstacle.

Thus, while Calvin brushes up against Abraham's doubts (or the possibility of his doubts), quickly asserting his faith in the face of them, Bèze actually brings to life (either on the stage or in the reader's mind) a doubting, anguished, even suicidal Abraham, giving breathing, living form to the scandal latent in the sacrifice story. This will have important consequences for the way that Golding chooses to translate the French tragedy.

24. Jean Calvin, *Commentaires de Jean Calvin sur L'Ancien Testament: Tome Premier, Le livre de la Genèse* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1961), 336–45, 338.

Early modern translation "theory"

While dedicating most of his life to translation, Golding did not contribute much in the way of reflection on the work of translation itself.[25] His contemporaries did, however. Much of the debate in the sixteenth century concerning the proper way to translate is focused on the crucial question of whether "to translate word for word or sense for sense."[26] While in general it is agreed that is preferable to accurately translate the meaning rather than to retain specific words,[27] an exception is made in the case of scriptural or religious texts. In his preface to his translation of Calvin's *Institutes*, Thomas Norton explains the difficulties he encountered while attempting the work,[28] owing to the "manner of writing" and the "difficulty of the matters themselves." It is worth citing Norton at some length here:

> This consideration encumbered me with great doubtfulness for the whole order and frame of my translation. If I should follow the words, I saw that of necessity the hardness in the translation must needs be greater than was in the [original] tongue. […] If I should leave the course of works, and grant myself liberty after the natural manner of mine own tongue to say that in English which I conceived to be his meaning in Latin, I plainly perceived how hardly I might escape error; and on the other side, in this matter of faith and religion how perilous it was to err.[29]

25. The recent compilation, *English Renaissance Translation Theory* (London: MHRA, 2013), by Neil Rhodes contains fifty-six extracts of Renaissance thinking on the art of translation, mostly prefaces and dedicatory letters, and only one short piece by Golding.

26. Neil Rhodes, "Introduction," *English Renaissance Translation Theory*, 16.

27. For a discussion of this, see Valerie Worth-Stylianou, "*Translatio* and translation in the Renaissance: from Italy to France," *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, vol. 3, The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 127–35, and in particular her discussion of Etienne Dolet's 1540 treatise, *La manière de bien traduire d'une langue en autre*, which specifies five "rules" for the translator, including "a refusal to be bound by word-for-word literal translation" (129).

28. The difficulty of this particular translation is highlighted if one considers that the first translation of the *Institutes*, commissioned to John Dawes, was rejected by the printer, Edward Whitchurch, and the task was then entrusted to Thomas Norton. See Rhodes, 120.

29. Cited in Rhodes, 121.

Norton continues to argue that "specifically in matters of religion," not only does the "grammatical construction of words" suffice, but one needs to retain the "very building and order."[30] As a result, he determined to "follow the words so near as the phrase of the English tongue would suffer [him]."[31]

A seemingly antithetical focus in early modern translation discourse concerned the translator's responsibility in interpreting the affective force of the original, in addition to the words. Leonardo Bruni's 1426 treatise *De Interpretatione recta* emphasized both the philological expertise and the "expressive power of rhetoric" that were necessary to the translator in order to translate the "force" of the original.[32] In keeping with this, Giannozzo Manetti's *De interpretation recta* "proposed that the closest translation of Holy Scripture should aim at a reconstruction of the meaning, texture, and affective force of the original."[33] Laurence Humphrey's 1559 treatise *Interpretatio linguarum* equally stressed fidelity (*fides*) as the primary quality of the translator of both secular and religious material—fidelity, and perspicuity, which should run through the translation "like blood," the expectation being that the "good translator will produce a living imitation of his source text."[34] In sum, there is a general understanding that the translator's role is not just to render accurately the words of a text, but to pay attention as well to "the force and form of speech," to quote Queen Elizabeth's 1598 translation of Horace's *De Arte Poetica*.[35]

Of course, particular considerations follow from the translation of metred verse,[36] which the length of the present study precludes us from entering into in any detail. Suffice it to say that in undertaking the "Englishing" of *Abraham sacrifiant*, Arthur Golding was translating a religious text, one that was written

30. Rhodes, 121.

31. Rhodes, 121. Norton also mentions that the result of this word-for-word translation is that the length of the translation should match that of the original (cited in Rhodes, 121).

32. Worth-Stylianou, 128.

33. Worth-Stylianou, 128.

34. Rhodes, 38–39.

35. Rhodes, 55. Indeed, Marie-Alice Belle refers to the "prevailing early modern conception of translation as rhetorical equivalence—in which […] faithfulness and freedom are closely interwoven." See Marie-Alice Belle, "Elizabethan Defences of Translation, from Rhetoric to Poetics: Harrington's and Chapman's 'Brief Apologies,'" in *Elizabethan Translation and Literary Culture*, ed. Gabriela Schmidt, Pluralisierung & Autorität 36 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 43–80.

36. See Rhodes, 55–59.

in metred, rhyming verse, and finally, one that was modelled on a pagan genre. All three of these considerations will have consequences for his translation. We will further see that some of these considerations actually prompt Golding to switch from one translation approach to another within the same work.

Arthur Golding as close translator of *Abraham sacrifiant*

A comparison of *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* to the French play demonstrates that Golding's is in many ways quite a faithful version, especially given the metre and rhyme restrictions that he imposed on himself. Indeed, in many places we can see that Golding chooses an almost literal translation. This translation method is in keeping with the religious nature of the text, where a word-for-word conversion was widely advocated. The general interpretive approach chosen by Golding can allow us to draw inferences with respect to a few specific passages where the poet seems to be switching his translation approach to the French tragedy. In these instances, Golding departs from a close translation style, exercises an editorial hand, and deliberately lessens the potential for scandal for the reader. We will consider first a few passages that demonstrate the Englishman's overall translation method before turning to the examples that show his departure from this.

Abraham sacrifiant begins with a prayer/monologue by Abraham who emerges from his house, addressing God—"Helas, mon Dieu" (51)—and recounting the story of his life and in particular his life as a disciple of God. This "prayer" is a mixture of complaint, "est il encor' un homme, Qui ait porté de travaux telle somme?" (51–52), and praise, "est il encore un homme, Qui ait receu de biens si grande somme?" (55–56). Abraham has moved from place to place, following God's will for the last seventy-five years and God has rewarded him in kind. Bèze inserts several autobiographical notes in this first monologue. Verses 57–58—"Voila comment par les calamitez, / Tu fais cognoistre aux hommes tes bontez"—reference the poet's own conversion after an illness. Later verses make mention of Abraham / Bèze's birth into a wealthy family (65–66) in order to ask a rhetorical question on the value of wealth if one is living in a pagan land (as Bèze was in Catholic France). This passage provides a good first example of Golding's translation of the Huguenot play, which we will analyze in detail, starting with Abraham's rhetorical question:

Mais quel bien peult l'homme de bien avoir,
S'il est contrainct, contrainct (dy-je) de veoir
En lieu de toy, qui terre & cieulx as faicts
Craindre & servir mille dieux contrefaicts? (67–70)

Golding transforms Bèze's four lines into six, illustrating his occasional tendency to amplify the original text:

But unto him that richest is in fee,
What joy or comfort could his riches be,
When he compeld, compelled was (I say)
To see, to serve, and worship every day,
A thowsand forged gods in steede of thee,
Which madst the heaven & earth which we do see? (19–24)[37]

We can further see that Bèze's highly efficient verse 67, which uses the term "bien" twice in the same verse to mean first "advantage" and then "wealthy" (in the epithet "homme de bien"), is stretched to two lines in the 1577 version. "Bien" is translated in the first case as "joy or comfort" and in the other as "riches." (The extreme efficiency of some of the French verses can perhaps explain some of the translator's need to amplify the original.) Golding's intent to deliver a very close translation is evidenced in the next line, however, which he maintains word for word—even the very idiomatic use of "dy-je" to create emphasis.

The grammatical structure of the next lines is altered. If we label each of the sections of Bèze's two verses (69–70) with the letters A, B, C, and D, we can see that Golding reassembles the parts in the order: C, D, A, and B.

A B
En lieu de toy, qui terre & cieulx as faicts
C D
Craindre & servir mille dieux contrefaicts?

37. I am using the 1906 edition of *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice*, edited by Malcolm M. Wallace and printed by the University of Toronto Library (hereafter cited in the main text; references refer to verse number.) The verses of the prologue and epilogue were numerated separately from the body of the play, which creates a discrepancy in the verses.

He also uses amplification, adding "every day" and "which we do see," which do not measurably change the meaning of the verses. Moreover, it is evident that there is an effort to maintain a close translation within sections. For example, part D—"mille dieux contrefaicts"—becomes "a thowsand forged gods." Parts A and B—"En lieu de toy, qui terre & cieulx as faicts"—are amplified slightly but the word order is largely maintained: "in steede of thee, Which madst the heaven & earth which we do see." Overall, it is fair to say that amplification and rearranging need not *a priori* result in alterations of meaning. (A tendency towards amplification can also be seen in Golding's rendering of the *Metamorphoses*: the translation runs to about 14,500 lines compared to Ovid's 12,000.)

There are nevertheless two examples of changes to sense in this passage. In the French version, the hypothetical "homme de bien" is only compelled to *see* or witness the acts of idolatry. This proximity to heathen practices is presumably enough to justify flight and exile for our French author. In Golding's version, our patriarch is not only a witness but is *himself* compelled to serve and worship the forged gods. Finally, there is one curious substitution in this passage. While Bèze uses the verbs "craindre & servir" to describe the actions and attitude of the idolaters towards their idols, Golding replaces "fear" with "worship." Taking into account the amplification and these two alterations in sense, this passage nevertheless seems to demonstrate an effort at close translation.

Abraham's monologue continues with the hypothetical "homme de bien" being clearly identified as our hero:

> Or donc sortir tu me fis de ces lieux,
> Laisser mes biens, mes parens, et leurs dieux,
> Incontinent que j'eus ta voix. (71–73)[38]

Golding expands these verses slightly, with the first verse being rendered by two verses:

> Thou then eftsoones didst will me to convey
> My selfe from those same places quite away.

38. We note here another autobiographical element: Bèze did in fact leave behind his family and considerable material goods and wealth when he fled to Switzerland.

And I immediately upon thy call,
Left Parents, countrie, goods with gods & all. (25–28)

The order of the second and third verses is also reversed. However, we again see an effort at a close translation if we look at each of the last two verses: "incontinent" is translated as "immediately" and the additions by Golding to the last verse (in italics)—"Left Parents, *countrie*, goods with gods *& all*"—cannot be considered alterations to the meaning of the original text.

I would like to consider a further seven-line passage to illustrate Golding's general approach to translating Bèze's tragedy. This passage occurs later in the play after the angel has communicated God's command to Abraham, and after Abraham and Isaac, accompanied by a troupe of shepherds, have travelled three days to reach Mount Moriah, the place of sacrifice. Isaac then points out to his father that they have brought wood, fire, and a knife, but that the sacrificial animal is nowhere to be seen. Abraham replies that God will see to that and asks Isaac to wait for him there while he goes off to pray.

This is the beginning of the long monologue (verses 705–818) where Abraham expresses for the first time his suffering in reaction to God's order:

O Dieu, ô Dieu, tu vois mon cueur ouvert,
Ce que je pense, ô Dieu, t'est descouvert!
Qu'est il besoin que mon mal je te die?
Tu vois helas, tu vois ma maladie!
Tu peux tout seul guarison m'envoyer,
S'il te plaisoit seulement m'ottroyer,
Un tout seul poinct que demander je n'ose. (705–11)

O God my God, thou seest my open hart,
And of my thoughts thou seest ech secret part,
So that my cace I neede not to declare.
Thou seest, alas thou seest my wofull care.
Thou onely canst me rid of my diseaze,
By granting me (if that it might thee pleaze)
One onely thing the which I dare not crave. (659–65)

If we compare the two passages, we see that in the first and fourth line, Golding replicates Bèze's word order, word repetition, and the rhythm of the verse. Of course, the necessity of rhyme means that occasionally the translator is required to choose a different term at the end of a line, as we see with "wofull care." However, the value that our translator places on lexical specificity, that is, the "word" over the "spirit" or meaning, is evidenced by Golding's insertion of the term "disease" (equivalent of "maladie") in line 5 of this passage, even though Bèze is using the term "maladie" metaphorically and not literally. (We must not forget that since the original tragedy was also written in rhymed verse, some of Bèze's lexical choices would themselves have been influenced by the determinants of rhyme.) It is clear that by "maladie," Bèze intends Abraham's mental anguish at the idea of killing his son[39] and not an actual disease. Golding demonstrates deference to the specific words used by the French Reformer, even when the meaning of the original could be conveyed, perhaps more efficiently, by a different expression.

A further example of this can be found at the beginning of the play when Abraham and Sara sing a song of praise to God. Bèze composed this "cantique" in six-syllable verse (hexasyllable) while the English translator uses iambic pentameter. Abraham and Sara praise God as creator of everything:

> Il fait l'esté bruslant:
> Il fait l'hyver termblant:
> Terre & mer il conduit. (123–25)

Golding uses longer verses than the Huguenot, so some extra details are added, but, significantly, there is an effort to retain the verb "tremblant" from the original French, with "quake," even when the meaning in French is just that the winters are very cold, in opposition to the "burning" summers.

> The skorching heate of sommer he doth make,
> the haruest and the spring:
> And winters cold that *maketh folke to quake,*
> in season he doth bring.

39. The following lines make clear that the "cure" that Abraham is requesting for his "illness" is that God choose someone else to do the sacrificial act.

> Both wethers, faire, and fowle, both sea & land,
> Both night and day be ruled by his hand. (80–85, my emphasis)

In short, the preceding examples provide a good representation of Golding's general translation style, which I characterize as deferential to the original. Golding's *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* demonstrates a preference for a word-for-word translation when possible and a conscious decision to use sister terms to the original, even when not in the same order, and even when these terms are being used metaphorically in the French text. Golding's religious convictions further support the idea that he would be adopting a "biblical" or literal approach to translating the works of one of the key Protestant leaders of the day.

The absence of any dedicatory or liminal material also seems to point to the effacement of the translator. While the majority of Golding's other translations contain a dedication, often to an earl or other gentleman, *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* has none. The only sign of the translator is found on the title page, where the initials A. G. are given. The reader of *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* thus begins directly with Bèze's address to the reader, as translated by Golding. The reader of Golding's text is therefore meant to be reading Bèze, through the lens of another language.

This textual set-up echoes to a certain degree Bèze's own relationship to his source material. The French poet does include a "letter to the reader," setting out his reasons for writing the play, his decision to call the play a tragedy, and other stylistic choices, and thereby establishes his authorial voice. However, in the place of the "argument," that is, the plot summary that was generally included at the beginning of a play, Bèze inserts Genesis 22 in its entirety. Many scholars have pointed to this decision as an effort by the Huguenot to establish the authority of the biblical text, of which his play is simply an amplification. Indeed, in his letter to the reader, Bèze states that "he followed the biblical text as closely as he could, while also following the conjectures that seemed to him most appropriate to the text."[40] It is important to note, however, that some of these conjectures involved imagining the patriarch's doubts, fears, and anguish, which are absent from the Genesis text, and giving voice to them. So while Bèze is clearly intending to create a faithful "translation" or paraphrase of the biblical

40. "J'ay poursuyvy le principal au plus pres du texte que j'ay pu, suyvant les conjectures qui m'ont semblé les plus convenables à la matiere" (35).

story into dramatic form, the necessities of that form and of his purpose, which was to create a work that would serve to bolster the faith of members of the Reform church, required him to expound upon the original in original ways, as we have said, using ancient tragedy as his model.

A close examination of *A Tragedie of Abraham's Sacrifice* shows that Golding struggles in places with the Huguenot's particular fashioning of the tragic hero and his tragic dilemma, and that the Puritan's squeamishness regarding scandal comes through in his translation of key moments of the tragedy.

A doubting Abraham, a squeamish translator, and a tempered translation

The next section of this article will be dedicated to an illustration of Golding's efforts to temper the scandalous nature of the French tragedy. It is perhaps not surprising that these efforts to tone down the original text are largely clustered around the key monologue of Bèze's play (verses 705–818), one that John D. Lyons has recently called "one of the strangest deliberative scenes in the French theater" and "one that is difficult to classify" either as a monologue or a dialogue.[41] This difficulty derives from the fact that Abraham alternatively addresses God and speaks to himself as he attempts to decide what he should do in relation to the harrowing command. The classification of this passage as monologue or dialogue is further complicated by the role of Satan, who is on stage, even if Abraham is not able to see or hear him, and who intervenes six times in Abraham's monologue, at times seeming to interrupt him. The dramatic role assigned to Satan implies some kind of spiritual influence on the patriarch who is in fact the subject of spiritual warfare, as Satan announces earlier in the play.[42]

Indeed, in this monologue of sorts, Bèze gives free reign to the doubting, fearful nature of the patriarch who lets his imagination run wild, going over his history with God, and then imagining worst case scenarios for his actions,

41. John D. Lyons, "*Abraham sacrifiant* and the End of Ethics," in *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama: Text, Performance, Theory*, ed. Michael Meere (Lanham: University of Delaware Press, 2015), 21–38.

42. Satan announces his intention to gain Abraham to his side in his first monologue: "Mais il aura des assaults tant et tant, / Qu'en brief sera, au moins come j'espere, / Du rang de ceux desquels je suis le pere" (252–54).

trying to come up with a reason why he should not obey God's orders. In fact, most of the originality of Bèze's version of the oft-treated story of Abraham and Isaac is his depiction of Abraham as a faithful man who is nevertheless horrified by what he is being asked to do, and who struggles with doubt.

The examples of "toning down" or pre-digestion that I have found in the English translation of this monologue take various forms. At times, Golding makes the choice of a euphemism or synonym in English rather than a closer equivalent term. Elsewhere, he dilutes the rhetorical force of the original by expanding his translation from one line to two, and sometimes by explaining things that the French poet leaves implicit. Of course, it's more difficult to say whether the rhetorical dilution is deliberate on the part of our translator, or just an unfortunate by-product of translation. However, we do know that early translators were aware of the importance of translating rhetorical force in the target language. In that sense, Golding's attempts at dilution can be seen as intentional, and perhaps a consequence of a certain Puritan squeamishness.

Toning down the contradiction in God's word and Abraham's despair

One of the key obstacles for Bèze's hero is that the angel's order seems to contradict God's earlier promises to Abraham that he would father nations through his son Isaac (from Genesis 17). It is on this promise that the covenant between God and Abraham rests. The patriarch therefore finds himself in the difficult position of needing to obey God with an act that seems likely to destroy the very basis of the relationship between God and the Abrahamic people. Bèze's protagonist sums up this state of affairs very succinctly in one declarative verse: "Isac tué, l'alliance est desfaicte" (747).[43] The monologue continues with a series of rhetorical questions that flow from this assertion and that express the despair of our hero, since God's promises seem to have all been in vain:

> Las est-ce en vain, Seigneur, que tu l'as faicte ?
> Las est-ce en vain, Seigneur, que tant de fois
> Tu m'as promis qu'en Isac me ferois
> Ce que jamais à autre ne promis ?

43. Satan expresses the same idea earlier in the play after Abraham leaves with Isaac and the shepherds, presumably to do God's will: "S'il sacrifie, Isac mourra, / Et mon cueur delivré sera / De la frayeur qu'en sa personne / La promesse de Dieu me donne" (511–14).

Las pourroit-il à néant estre mis
Ce dont tu m'as tant de fois asseuré?
Las est-ce en vain qu'en toy j'ay esperé?
O Vaine attente, ô vain espoir de l'homme! (748–55)

Golding maintains the series of rhetorical questions and the repetition of "Alas Lord":

And therefore if that Isaac once were kild,
I see not how this covenant could be hild.
Alas Lord, hast thou made him then for nowght?
Alas Lord, is it vaine that thou so oft
Hast promist me such things in Isaake,
As thou wooldst never doo for others sake?
Alas and can the things repealed be,
Which thou so oft has promist unto me?
Alas and shall my hope have such an end?
Wheto should then man's hope & trusting tend? (702–11)

However, we see a marked difference in his rendering of the first verse of this extract. In contrast to Bèze's succinct declarative statement, which equates two events—"Isac tué, l'alliance est desfaicte"—Golding's version takes two lines and uses conditional phrasing. In the Huguenot's formulation, which uses the past participle of the verb "tuer" as an attribute, Abraham simultaneously projects and realizes (at least virtually) the death of Isaac and the resulting consequences in a verse that has powerful rhetorical force. Golding, however, depicts a more circumspect Abraham, using the conditional "if," which removes any immediacy from the anticipated death of his son, and the phrasing "I see not," which inserts a level of subjectivity into the cancelling of the covenant. Bèze's formulation, "L'alliance est desfaicte," leaves no room for subjectivity.

Further, when referring specifically to the dissolution of the covenant, Bèze uses the expression "à néant être mis" (verse 752). An equivalent expression in English might be "reduced to nothing," "nullified," or "quashed." Golding uses the more tempered "be repealed." The judicial connotations of this term imply a justification for God's actions that is missing from the Huguenot's verses. Indeed, in this passage, Bèze's Abraham is specifically railing about the unjustified and incomprehensible nature of God's seeming contradiction of his

earlier promises, in clear contravention of the Calvinist edict to refrain from judging—"Que nous ayons la bouche close"—when one does not understand God's ways, as R. Stawarz-Luginbühl details in her 2012 tome on Huguenot theatre.[44] To repeal something implies a legitimate rationale, but there is no sense for the hero of the French play that such a rationale can be found. In his version, Golding subtly inserts into Abraham's complaint a justification for God's action, thereby lessening the intensity of the patriarch's revolt.

The last line in this passage seems to confirm this. In the French play, Abraham ends the series of rhetorical questions with a cry of utter despair: "Ô vaine attente, ô vain espoir de l'homme!" The patriarch, himself, thus supplies the answer to the series of questions that were ostensibly addressed to God. This is the epitome of man relying on his own understanding, again in contravention of Calvin's understanding of what the posture of the suffering faithful, or the faithful confronted with scandal, should be.

It would be difficult to downplay the theological significance of this assertion that man's hope is vain. In contrast, Golding abandons the exclamative power of the French, replacing it with a watery interrogative: "Wheto should then man's hope & trusting tend?"

In summary, there is strong evidence in the Englishman's translation of an effort to temper the nature of the challenge presented by God's order: in particular, the impact of the order on the covenant between God and Abraham, and Abraham's confusion and despair as a result of this.

Toning down a scandalous and inhuman order

The next series of examples of the translator exercising an editorial hand are perhaps the most obviously deliberate. They are aimed at toning down the scandalous quality of God's order in regards to its ethical dimensions. In describing the act requested by God, the French Abraham uses terms that highlight its violence and criminality: Abraham refers to himself as a potential "bourreau" and "meurtrier" and to the sacrificial act as "ce coup tant inhumain." Golding systematically translates these terms using euphemisms or less violent synonyms.

44. R. Stawarz-Luginbühl, *Un théâtre de l'épreuve. Tragédies huguenotes en marge des guerres de religion en France* (Geneva: Droz, 2012), 87.

A little further in the same deliberative monologue discussed above, Abraham is reviewing his past life and envisioning his projected future life (after obedience to God's order) and is appalled to think that this act will require him to be considered his son's killer:

> De deux enfans, l'un j'ay chassé moymesme,
> De l'autre il fault, ô douleur tresextreme!
> Que je sois dict le pere & le bourreau!
> Bourreau, helas! Helas ouy bourreau! (760–64)

In referring to himself as a "bourreau," Abraham effectively cancels out the sacrificial nature of the action ordered by God, turning it into an act of either senseless or justified violence. In Golding's rendering of the passage, our translator retains the repetition of the original text but replaces "bourreau" with "tormentor":

> And of the other (O hard extremitee)
> Both father I, and tormenter must be,
> Yea tormenter, yea tormenter, alas. (720–22)

A consultation of Cotgrave's 1611 French-English dictionary finds the terms "executioner" and "hangman" given as equivalents for "bourreau." If we compare Golding's choice of "tormenter" with those two terms, the distinction seems to rest on the severity of the act carried out and the final outcome for the victim: death is the necessary result of the successful practice of the profession of the "executioner" or the "hangman," whereas death seems to be precluded in considering the act of the "tormenter."[45] That the difference in the choice of translation hinges on the death of the victim is significant, given the critical importance of the death (or rather non-death) of Isaac in the biblical story and the fact that this is primarily a testing story.

Since we know that the full sacrifice will not be exacted from Abraham—his son will be saved at the last moment—the story only has meaning as an

45. We can't ignore the possibility that the choice of term was influenced in some way by the number of syllables in the word and the requirements of metre, particularly in this case since the term was repeated three times in the space of two verses. Nevertheless, when considered along with other examples of avoidance of violent expressions, the "toning down" argument seems more than plausible.

épreuve or test if Abraham truly believed that Isaac would be killed. Indeed, following St. Paul, Bèze's hero is able to reconcile the contradiction in God's word and maintain his faith in God only by accepting that Isaac will both die and then be resurrected: "Ressusciter plustost tu le feras, / Que ne m'advint ce que promis tu m'as" (809–10). If Abraham had foreknowledge of the angel's intervention, if he knew in advance that he would only be tormenting his son, and that his death would be prevented, then it seems that the meaning of the test of faith is altered.

It is unlikely, however, that our translator was attempting to make a theological statement here regarding Abraham's knowledge of the test. When read in the context of the following verses, this particular substitution can be understood as part of a pattern of substitutions aimed at downplaying the violent nature of the act. Ten verses later, still in the same monologue, Abraham asks God to let this cup pass him by:

> O Dieu, ô Dieu, aumoins fay moy la grace,
> […]
> Qu'un autre soit de mon filz le meurtrier.
> Helas Seigneur, fault-il que ceste main
> Vienne à donner ce coup tant inhumain? (772–76)

Where Bèze's Abraham requests of God: "Qu'un autre soit de mon fils le meurtrier" (774), Golding's Abraham asks instead that "Some other man my sonne to death may wound," avoiding the term "murderer." Further, while Bèze refers to the sacrificial act as "ce coup tant inhumain" (776), Golding chooses not to use the adjective "inhumane" and instead translates it as the more genteel "stroke against all kind." A likely explanation of Golding's choice of "tormentor" over "executioner" is thus his anxiety concerning Abraham's apprehension of the real and dreadful consequences for him of God's command.

Toning down through explication

Abraham follows this plea for mercy from God with a powerful passage in which the patriarch imagines what would occur after the sacrificial act and envisages in particular the reactions of his wife and community. Abraham also bemoans the injustice of the situation, given his status as a faithful servant of

God until this point. A comparison with the 1577 version shows that Golding here employs a different kind of toning down, one that occurs, paradoxically, through amplification and explication—a kind of "filling in."

Our Huguenot poet again displays great efficiency in this passage. In just two lines, his hero evokes the familial dimension of the drama: "Las que feray je à la mere dolente, / Si elle entend ceste mort violente?" (777–78). The somewhat unusual use of the verb "faire" in conjunction with the preposition "à" creates some ambiguity here. Abraham could be saying either (a) what would this news do to Sara, i.e., what would I be doing to Sara, by following this order? or (b) what could I possibly do for Sara (say to her) should she hear this news? Yet, since the following lines in Bèze's text are all focused on Abraham's suffering should he follow God's order and the costs to *him*, it seems logical that Abraham is also focused on the consequences for him once Sara hears the news, i.e., how would he comfort Sara, how would he defend himself? Golding's rendering focuses on Sarah's suffering and seems to abstract Abraham from the equation: "How will it touch his woeful mother neere, / When of his violent death she needs shal heer?" (737). Consequently, there is less focus on the tragic status of the hero and the affective force is lessened.

There follows in the French Reformer's text a whole series of rhetorical questions addressed to God, beginning with: "Si je t'allegue, helas, qui me croira? / S'on ne le croit, las, quel bruit en courra?" (779–80). These two lines in the French text are expanded to four lines in the English version. Golding here and elsewhere seems to want to spell out or explain things that Bèze's formulation leaves "sous-entendu." For example, the punchy and efficient "Si je t'allegue, helas, qui me croira?" becomes "If I allege thy will *for my defence*, / Who will believe *that thou wilt so dispence*?" (738–39; elements added by Golding are indicated in italics). In the Reformer's formulation, two elements are left unsaid that Golding chooses to voice: (a) that Abraham is alleging God "for his defence," and (b) that what will not be believed is that the order came from God ("that thou wilt so dispense"). In contrast, Bèze trusts that the reader will apprehend both that Abraham will feel a need to justify himself after the fact and that the people around Abraham may have difficulty believing that God would order the killing of a son. That Bèze takes for granted that the reader will

get this is significant, however, since in fact this interpretation of Abraham's reaction to God's order is quite novel.[46]

The other consequence of this very efficient use of language is that the French poet is able to create a rhythm that emphasizes Abraham's increasing feeling of panic:

> Si je t'allegue, helas, qui me croira?
> S'on ne le croit, las, quel bruit en courra? (779–80).

The parallel structure of the two lines, each beginning with "si," and the repetition of the verb "croire" create a chain reaction of compounding or accumulating consequences. Golding's amplified version does not maintain the intensification of the original since he chooses not to repeat the verb "believe" in his third verse (replacing it instead with "credit"):

> If I allege thy will for my defence,
> Who will believe that thou wilt so dispence?
> And if men do not credit it: what fame
> Will fly abrode to my perpetual shame? (738–41)

We can see again in the second half of this passage Golding's urge to amplify and to spell things out, which stands in contrast to Bèze's tendency to trust the reader or spectator to read between the lines and accurately assess Abraham's state of mind in this anguished monologue.[47] The Reformer's style in this tragedy is above all one of restraint. Bèze's use of the understated formulation "quel bruit" is a good example of this. The French poet provides space in his formulation, allowing the reader to use his or her imagination to conjure up the kinds of rumours to which Abraham would be subject.[48] In contrast, Golding specifies that the "fame" that would attach itself to the patriarch is one of

46. See references listed in footnotes 15 and 16.

47. Indeed, an expectation that the reader identify psychologically with the various actors in a biblical "scene" can be seen as a characteristic of the Calvinist passion narrative, as detailed by Debora Shuller Kuger in chapter 3 of *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 89–127.

48. This is true even if the next lines fill in the reader's imagination somewhat as Abraham asks: "Seray-je pas d'un chacun rejetté / Comme un patron d'extreme cruauté?" (781–82).

"perpetual shame." The translator's filling in and "naming" has the paradoxical effect of lessening the rhetorical force of the passage. Instead of allowing the reader the pleasure of finding the hidden meaning, Golding, overzealously perhaps, spells it out.

It is, of course, impossible to prove that this is done deliberately. However, when read in conjunction with Golding's instructions to the reader in his prefatory material for the *Metamorphoses* and his strong defence of the "delight" to be found in "Ovid's turnèd shapes" (243) and in particular of the pleasure of that which is hidden, it is possible to intuit an evolution in this thinking. A passage from Golding's 1567 dedicatory epistle to the Earl of Leycester can help us in this regard:

> The readers therefore earnestly admonisht are too bee
> Too seeke a further meaning than the letter gives too see.
> The travell tane in that behalf although it have sum payne
> Yit makes it double recompence with pleasure and with payne.
> With pleasure, for varietie and straungeness and the things,
> With gaine, for good instruction which the understanding brings. (263)

To paraphrase, as concerns Ovid's poem, our translator advises the reader to read beyond the text, specifying that the "pain" related to the intellectual work involved will be rewarded by both pleasure (related to the "strangeness" of the text) and moral gain from the "good instruction." Let us not forget that the "good instruction" is meant to come from the text acting as a mirror:

> The use of this same booke therefore is this: that every man
> (Endevoring for too know himself as nearly as he can
> As though he is a chariot sat well ordered) should direct
> His mynd by reason in the way of vertue, and correct
> His feerce affection with the bit of temprance. (264)

In the preface to his tragedy, Bèze also promotes the idea of getting to know oneself better by looking through the reflection of biblical figures, including Abraham, Moses, and David, "en la vie dusquels si on se mirroit aujourdhuy, on se cognoistroit mieux qu'on ne faict" (33). Bèze is thus holding up the patriarch as a mirror for the faithful, a way of reflecting back to them the struggles and

temptations inherent in faith, as well as a way of moving past the potential for scandal to a place of trust.

Conclusion

In spite of this strong defence of his translation of Ovid, at the end of his dedicatory epistle Golding refers to his possible doubts regarding the reception of his translation, and in particular his doubts "that they / Who doo excell in wisdome and in lerning" would not properly weigh "a wyse and lerned woorke" and perhaps that he should have a "special care" regarding how "all men" apply his labours to their lives (265). However, Golding ends his epistle by saying that if the reader is not able to find "good meaning," "the fault is theyrs not myne" (265). This is a defence no doubt meant to ward off critics of the pagan text, but it seems that there is some truth to it. In his prefatory materials to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Golding provides instruction to the reader, at the same demonstrating a significant amount of trust in the reader's ability to properly digest the material and retain the proper nourishment.

Ten years later, Golding translates a biblical tragedy written by one of the leaders of the Protestant church. The respect that he feels for the Huguenot poet is evident in his deferential translation style throughout the bulk of the drama. Indeed, the specific examples of editorial changes we have examined stand out all the more given the Englishman's efforts at a very close translation style. Nevertheless, the confidence that Golding bestowed upon the reader of Ovid's poem seems to have disappeared. Rather than provide an instructional letter for the reader who would be trusted to look for and glean the proper meaning from the text, Golding chooses to pre-digest some of the more controversial material. Written in 1550, just after his conversion, *Abraham sacrifiant* will be the only play penned by Bèze in his long career as a writer and shepherd of the Reform church. Likewise, this tragedy will be the only dramatic work translated by Arthur Golding. The original tragedy and its English translation stand as curious anomalies in the respective corpus of both "maker" and translator, and point perhaps to the dangers of contact with powerful pagan genres.