Early attempts at systematic translation theory:

Cowley, Dryden, Dolet, Tytler and Yan Fù

Abraham Cowley (1618–1667)

In his preface to *Pindaric Odes* (1640), attacks poetry that is 'converted faithfully and word for word into French or Italian prose' . His approach is also to counter the inevitable loss of beauty in translation by using 'our wit or invention' to create new beauty. In doing this, Cowley admits he has 'taken, left out and added what I please' to the *Odes*

Abraham Cowley (1618–1667)

Cowley even proposes the term 'imitation' for this very free method of translating. The idea was not, as in the Roman period, that such a free method would enable the translator to surpass the original; rather that this was the method that permitted the 'spirit' of the ST to be best reproduced

John Dryden (1631–1700)

In the preface to his translation of *Ovid's Epistles* in 1680, Dryden (1680/1992: 25) reduces all translation to three categories: (1) '**metaphrase**': 'word by word and line by line' translation, which corresponds to literal translation;

John Dryden (1631–1700)

2) '**paraphrase**': 'translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense'; this involves changing whole phrases and more or less corresponds to faithful or sense-for-sense translation;

John Dryden (1631–1700)

(3) '**imitation**': 'forsaking' both words and sense; this corresponds to Cowley's very free translation and is more or less what today might be understood as adaptation.

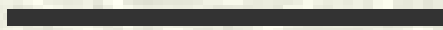| literal translation	free translation	adaptation
word for word	sense for sense	

$$\longleftrightarrow$$

| metaphrase | paraphrase | imitation |

John Dryden (1631–1700)

Dryden criticizes translators such as Ben Jonson (1572–1637), who adopts metaphrase, as being a 'verbal copier' (ibid.). Such 'servile, literal' translation is dismissed with a now famous simile: ' 'Tis much like dancing on ropes with fettered legs – a foolish task.'

John Dryden (1631–1700)

Similarly, Dryden rejects imitation, where the translator uses the ST 'as a pattern to write as he supposes that author would have done, had he lived in our age and in our country' (ibid.). Imitation, in Dryden's view, allows the translator to become more visible, but does 'the greatest wrong . . . to the memory and reputation of the dead'

John Dryden (1631–1700)

Dryden thus prefers paraphrase, advising that metaphrase and imitation be avoided. This three-part, or 'triadic', model proposed by Dryden was to exert considerable influence on later writings on translation. Yet it is also true that Dryden himself changes his stance, with the dedication in his translation of Virgil's Aeneid (1697) showing a shift to a point between paraphrase and literal translation:

Étienne Dolet

(1) The translator must perfectly understand the sense and material of the original author, although he [sic] should feel free to clarify obscurities.

(2) The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both SL and TL, so as not to lessen the majesty of the language.

(3) The translator should avoid word-for-word renderings.

(4) The translator should avoid Latinate and unusual forms.

(5) The translator should assemble and liaise words eloquently to avoid clumsiness.

Alexander Fraser Tytler

Tytler (1747–1813) defines a 'good translation' as being oriented towards the target language reader:

That in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.

Alexander Fraser Tytler

Tytler (ibid.) has three general 'laws' or 'rules'.

(1) The translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.

(2) The style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original.

(3) The translation should have all the ease of the original composition.

Yán Fù (1854–1921).

Yán Fù states his three translation principles as:
 xìn (fidelity/ faithfulness/trueness),
Dá fluency /expressiveness /intelligibility/ comprehensibility) and
yaˇ (elegance/gracefulness).
These concepts became central to twentieth century Chinese translation practice and theory.

Thank You