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Translating Devotion: Mary Roper Basset's English Rendering of Thomas More's *De tristitia ... Christi*

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Résumé de l'article

La dernière oeuvre de Thomas More, composée en 1534–1535 dans la Tour de Londres alors qu'il attendait son exécution, retrace l'agonie du Christ à Gethsémani dans les heures précédant son arrestation. Le *De tristitia*, tedio, pauore, et oratione Christi ante captionem eius, texte d'une grande intensité dévotionnelle et émotionnelle, n'en est pas moins marqué par les traits d'esprit et l'humour ironique caractéristiques de More. L'oeuvre est traduite en anglais quelque temps après le décès de More par sa petite-fille, Mary Roper, mais c'est seulement en 1557, après le mariage de cette dernière à James Basset, et alors qu'elle tient l'office de dame de compagnie (« lady of the privy chamber ») de la reine Marie Tudor, que la traduction est publiée. On la retrouve en effet dans l'édition des *English Works* de More par William Rastell (1557), qui présente Mary Basset comme une femme « tout à fait experte en latin et en anglais ». Bien que les notices biographiques et les ouvrages de référence sur l'écriture féminine anglaise à la Renaissance fassent mention de cette oeuvre — quoique parfois de manière erronée —, ainsi que des passages tirés de l'Histoire de l'Église d'Eusèbe que Basset avait précédemment traduits en latin et en anglais, ces textes n'ont jamais été étudiés. Afin de remédier à cette situation, cet article offre dans un premier temps une analyse détaillée de l'oeuvre remarquable que représente *Of the sorowe, werinesse, feare, and prayer of Christ before hys taking*. Il s'agit ici d'identifier les traits majeurs de cette traduction, mais aussi de les situer dans le contexte des pratiques traductologiques propres à l'humanisme européen et à l'Angleterre de l'ère Tudor.

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La dernière œuvre de Thomas More, composée en 1534–1535 dans la Tour de Londres alors qu'il attendait son exécution, retrace l'agonie du Christ à Gethsémani dans les heures précédant son arrestation. Le De tristitia, tedio, pauore, et oratione Christi ante captionem eius, texte d'une grande intensité dévotionnelle et émotionnelle, n'en est pas moins marqué par les traits d'esprit et l'humour ironique caractéristiques de More. L'œuvre est traduite en anglais quelque temps après le décès de More par sa petite-fille, Mary Roper, mais c'est seulement en 1557, après le mariage de cette dernière à James Basset, et alors qu'elle tient l'office de dame de compagnie (« lady of the privy chamber ») de la reine Marie Tudor, que la traduction est publiée. On la retrouve en effet dans l'édition des English Works de More par William Rastell (1557), qui présente Mary Basset comme une femme « tout à fait experte en latin et en anglais ». Bien que les notices biographiques et les ouvrages de référence sur l'écriture féminine anglaise à la Renaissance fassent mention de cette œuvre — quoique parfois de manière erronée —, ainsi que des passages tirés de l'Histoire de l'Église d'Eusèbe que Basset avait précédemment traduits en latin et en anglais, ces textes n'ont jamais été étudiés. Afin de remédier à cette situation, cet article offre dans un premier temps une analyse détaillée de l'œuvre remarquable que représente Of the sorowe, werinesse, feare, and prayer of Christ before hys taking. Il s'agit ici d'identifier les traits majeurs de cette traduction, mais aussi de les situer dans le contexte des pratiques traductologiques propres à l'humanisme européen et à l'Angleterre de l'ère Tudor.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of translation in early modern Europe as a means of intellectual, religious, and social exchange; nor would it be wise to downplay its contribution to the humanists' program of learning

and scholarship. Although arriving late upon the English shore, the principles of translation as articulated by scholars such as Bruni, Manetti, Valla, Vives, and Erasmus, philology-based but also taking into account the rhetorical and stylistic features of source and target languages, governed the translating practices of English humanists like John Cheke, Lawrence Humphrey, and John Christopherson, while they also informed the views on translation expressed by Thomas More in various of his works. For such Renaissance translators, theorists, and thinkers, the exigencies of semantic accuracy and transfer, often resulting in literal translation and the complete submission of the translator to the original author, co-existed, often uneasily, with the injunction to *interpret* the meanings contained in the source text and, in their own words, to reproduce or imitate as far as the target language allowed its eloquence and elegance.¹

Over and over again, the early humanist commentators on translation emphasized the rapport between translation and rhetoric, clearly articulated in the newly discovered Ciceronian *De finibus* and *De oratore*, the pseudo-Ciceronian *De optimo genere*, and Book X of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. As early as 1392, Salutati encourages a translator of the *Iliad* to go beyond rendering simply the "inventio" (content) and "verba" (words) in order to render the "res," the entire matter contained in the work, which includes both its meaning and style. Bruni put Cicero's and Quintilian's precepts to prompt use in his translation of Aristotle's *Ethics* and explained them in his theoretical treatise, *De interpretatione recta* (1424–26), illustrating his points by comparing his own translation with an earlier one full of errors. Manetti, in his mid-fifteenth-century *Apologeticus*, argued that all aspects of a text are integral to its meaning and thus must be translated. Madrigal argues in his *Comento de Eusebio* (1506–07) that the translator must exploit rhetorical strategies in order to convey the meaning that has been extracted through a philological analysis of the source text, a belief echoed by Valla in his preface to his *Pro Ctesiphonte*, where he emphasizes the translator's need to be able to exploit fully all the resources of his target language while navigating between literal and liberal translation. This important twinning of philology and rhetoric in translating is clearly described by Erasmus in his *Annotations to the New Testament*, where he is speaking specifically of Biblical translation, but it is also discernible in his renderings of earlier secular Greek texts, while on more than one occasion he referred to the conflicting difficulties of reproducing the factual meaning and the "vim ac pondus" (power and effect) of a text.² These principles were applied, not only

in the immediate context of producing translated texts for a wider readership, but also in the classroom. Translation constituted an important component of language teaching, being part and parcel of the humanist pedagogical agenda. Already recommended by Quintilian, it was incorporated into the curriculum by authors such as Perotti, Guarino, Erasmus, Mathieu Cordier, Abril, Vives, and, in England, John Anwykyll, William Horman, and Roger Ascham.

If I have begun this essay with a brief overview of some humanist writings on translation, focusing particularly on the way they emphasize the importance of understanding the meaning of a text through a rigorous examination of its language, and of transferring this meaning by way of an equally rigorous application of the target language's rhetorical resources, it is because I intend to discuss Mary Basset's English translation of her grandfather Thomas More's *De tristitia, tedio, pauore et oratione Christi* within what I consider the appropriate framework of philological and rhetorical translation. Five factors support the choice of such an approach: More's own views on translation; the place that we know it occupied in the education of his children; the nature of the translation of Erasmus's *Precatio dominica in septem partes* made by Margaret Roper, Mary's mother; the tutors that Margaret employed for her own children; and, most importantly, Mary Basset's dedication prefacing her earlier translation of parts of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, which demonstrates her familiarity with, and approval of, humanist principles of philological and rhetorical translation. Given this final factor, especially, I think it is safe to assume that such principles governed her rendition of this, More's final text. Before turning to a discussion of her translation, however, I shall deal briefly with each of these factors.

Comments on translating are scattered throughout More's writings and cover a variety of topics, but his commitment to the principle of philological and rhetorical translation is clear from both these and his own translation of Lucian's dialogues, published with Erasmus's in 1506. He is aware of the translator's difficulty, which is to express "well and lyuely the sentence of hys author / whyche is harde always to do so surely but that he shall somtyme mynyshe eyther of the sentence or of the grace that it bereth in the formare tonge."³ The integrity of the text is essential, requiring philological analysis and, if necessary, emendations. Meaning, he maintains, is imparted by context. The translator should use words of common usage that the reader will understand. Finally, in translation as in all discourse, both written and oral, eloquence, stylistic

decorum dictated by genre, and audience appropriateness are crucial, a principle he himself follows, not simply in his polemical writings but also in his devotional works such as the *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* and *De tristitia ... Christi*.

More also recognized the pedagogical value of translation, making sure that translating was practised by his own children. In his 1522 Letter to his dearest children and Margaret Gyge, he states that translating from English to Latin improved one's skill in composition.⁴ We are also told by More biographers Thomas Stapleton and Cresacre More that the children did translation every day, "in the morning from English into Latin and in the evening from Latin into English," and that More had one daughter translate his Letter to the University of Oxford into English and another retranslate it into Latin.⁵ This was a variation on the "double translation," now called "back" translation, first advocated by Quintilian, then by Vives and Ascham, where both exercises were to be done by the same student in order to improve one's Latin composition.⁶

More's belief in the value of translation as a linguistic learning tool certainly stood Margaret Roper in good stead when she came to translate Erasmus's *Precatio dominica in septem partes*, published in 1526.⁷ Moreover, the humanist principles of philological and rhetorical translation that I mentioned above are certainly discernible in her English rendering of the text. While the translation reproduces the overall "sentence" of Erasmus's commentary on the Lord's Prayer, it does not neglect its "grace"; in Patricia Demers's words, it is "not enslaved to the source language nor does it caper irresponsibly in the target language," owing much to Ciceronian principles of translation but also to Erasmus's comments on translating in his *De copia*.⁸ An earlier critic went so far as to single out the exercise of back translation as being responsible for Margaret Roper's ability to translate with both artistic freedom and accuracy.⁹

There is no reason to doubt that translation continued to be practised in the More household with the next generation of children, especially Margaret Roper's, although only Mary, her second daughter, born between 1526 and 1529, followed in her mother's illustrious footsteps as a translator and scholar gifted in the Classical languages. That she was educated to the same high standards is clear from the tutors that her mother chose. They included John Christopherson, Cambridge professor of Greek, translator, and dramatist; Henry Cole, fellow of New College, Oxford and Catholic controversialist writer; and John Morwen, Oxford professor of Greek, who wrote to William

Roper in glowing terms about his daughter's Latin and Greek orations and her "cleaving to the Muses."¹⁰ Roger Ascham was also invited by Margaret to tutor the children but, as he tells Mary later, nothing could have induced him to leave Cambridge at that time.¹¹ Of these men, Christopherson was undoubtedly the most influential in terms of forming Mary's translation habits, as he himself was not only an accomplished translator but also a commentator on the nature and practice of translation. In his prefaces to his translations of Eusebius's *Historiae ecclesiasticae* and Philo's *Iudaei libri quatuor*, he argued in favour of philological and rhetorical translation, which he said meant expressing truthfully the meaning of the original and, through imitation, reproducing its form of speech and agreeable effects in order to produce a text similar or identical to it. Eloquence, he said, was necessary to impart the "wisdom" or sense of the text, for if used properly it did not simply denote inane and almost childish verbal volubility.¹² Exploiting the target language's rhetorical resources in order to achieve eloquence should nevertheless not result in neglecting the sense and overall meaning, he warned.¹³

Basset's own translations into Latin of Book I of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and into English of Books I to V were bound together bearing the name of Mary Clarcke, as she was then, and presented to the Lady Mary, later Queen Mary, sometime between 1547 and 1553.¹⁴ The long dedicatory epistle is unique among those written by sixteenth-century English women translators in describing the difficulties of translating the Church Fathers but also in offering general comments on translation. Basset mentions five specific translating difficulties she has encountered. All reflect humanist preoccupations with philological and rhetorical translation. She complains that the state of the poorly edited first printed edition of the *Ecclesiastical History* has caused problems in understanding some of the words and sentences, which presumably she has had to emend (f. 5a). Many of the sources in this particularly allusive text, she continues, have been lost and thus cannot be translated (5a–5b), which again reflects her anxiety about translating the whole meaning of the original. The transfer of meaning is in fact uppermost in her mind in her criticism of Rufinus's previous translation into Latin, which "doth not in all poynte thorowly perfourme the offyce of a trewe interpretacion" since it adds and omits information; this, she says, justifies her making a new version (f. 8a). The concept of the translator's "office" or "duty" to translate a text "truly" was introduced by Cicero ("officium") and reiterated by Jerome, although he preferred its synonym, "munus." Both

terms occur throughout humanist treatises and comments on “true” translation which, they asserted and Basset confirms, neither omitted nor added anything to the original text and also rendered its style and expression. Most pertinently for Basset, the concept was discussed by Christopherson in his *Philo* preface, published after her Eusebius translation, where he states that when he is performing the duty (“munus”) of translator, he expresses truthfully the author’s meaning.¹⁵ Another problem Basset addresses is that of linguistic lacunae in the target language, a preoccupation of many early modern translators; these, she says, “empayrthe sence and meaning of the aucthor,” so that rather than leaving these terms and names “obscure and darke,” she has made them visible to the reader (presumably by paraphrase or gloss) (f. 5b). Finally, she points out that she has striven to reproduce Eusebius’s “profound and graue style,” diligently setting “forth the same lykenouse in englysshe” (f. 6a). Again, this echoes Christopherson’s injunction to produce a text similar or identical to the original. There is no reason to doubt that the translating principles she describes here also governed her translation of the *De tritistia*, probably composed not long after.

Basset’s *Of the sorowe, werinesse, feare, and prayer of Christ befor hys taking* enjoyed a far more public career than her Eusebius, being published in the important 1557 edition of More’s English works.¹⁶ Yet despite this, and the fact that it was the only translation by a woman to reach print in the five years of Queen Mary’s reign, it has never received any detailed attention. All of More’s early biographers (except William Roper, who rather surprisingly does not mention his daughter’s work) praise it for its “elegance and eloquence,” concurring with William Rastell’s opinions on its transparency and stylistic closeness to More’s own prose. This last is echoed centuries later by R. W. Chambers and alluded to by C. S. Lewis, who nevertheless adds the rather patronizing caveat that her style indeed “is not much inferior to his own.”¹⁷ Basset’s two modern editors are not as unanimous. In 1941, Philip Hallett calls the rendering “scrupulously accurate” and “an excellent piece of work” but his judgments of its quality remain brief, vague, and mostly unsubstantiated.¹⁸ Clarence Miller, transcribing it 35 years later in his edition of the *De tristitia*, more restrainedly qualifies it as “rather accurate and literal,” but his discussion is directed essentially to manuscript issues.¹⁹ Several critics and historians have joined the biographers and editors in reiterating these various opinions, but again without any close examination of the translation. Other writers have discussed reasons

for its inclusion in Rastell's *Workes* or its place in the More family tradition of translating.²⁰ Yet the significance and nature of the work demand a close textual examination. Such an approach will safeguard against impressionistic assessments of Basset's abilities as a translator because it will reveal her translating strategies. At the same time, a positioning of her work within the context of early modern translation will result in a better understanding of her achievement. Before turning to the translation itself, however, it is necessary to situate it in the socio-cultural context in which it was executed, for as Lawrence Venuti and André Lefevere have taught us, translations never exist in a vacuum, are rarely free of ideological constraints, and are influenced by the socio-historical context in which they are created.²¹

One question that arises immediately is why the work found its way into *The Workes ... in the Englysh Tong*, given that it was written in Latin and that the English version was not More's, but his granddaughter's. There are probably several reasons for its inclusion but two are particularly obvious. First, Basset helped to finance the publication substantially when its editor, Willam Rastell, a cousin of hers by marriage and a member of the exiled More circle in Leuven, ran into serious financial difficulties.²² As John Guy plausibly suggests, the task of publishing More's writings fell first to Margaret Roper, into whose care they had been entrusted;²³ Cresacre More, in fact, tells us that she intended to publish his works.²⁴ When she died suddenly in 1544, the responsibility must have passed to Mary, probably the most intellectually oriented of her children, or at least the only one to have left any compositions.²⁵ Second, by 1557 Mary Basset enjoyed a place of both wealth and prestige. She had been a member of Mary Tudor's entourage, riding in her pre-coronation procession in 1553 with, among others, Anne Basset. Two years later she married Anne's brother, James, private secretary to Bishop Stephen Gardiner with whom he had gone into exile in Leuven. By 1557, James had become private secretary to the queen herself, then chief gentleman to her husband, King Philip, while Mary was elevated to lady of the privy chamber.²⁶ James died prematurely in 1558, leaving Mary with one young son and pregnant with a second, but her will of 1566, made six years before her death, suggests she had been comfortably provided for. Presumably she and James could have drawn on their own finances for Rastell's publication, as well as on those of their friends at court and other well-connected acquaintances.²⁷

There was another compelling if less practical reason for including Basset's translation of the *De tristitia*. Rastell, together with the More family, took advantage of Mary Tudor's reign and the return of England to the Roman fold to rehabilitate Thomas More and remind readers that he died a martyr's death. This work, written in the Tower of London as More awaited execution in the years 1534–35, recounts Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane immediately before his capture and discusses his death within a wider consideration of martyrdom. A central topic addressed in the work is the fear Christ and the later Christian martyrs felt when faced with suffering and death. This was dealt with in some of the English writings included in Rastell's edition, particularly the *Dialogue of Comfort* and some of More's letters to Margaret in which he confesses the fear he himself felt. It would be only fitting that the *De tristitia*, which dealt with martyrdom in greater detail, also be made available—but its language was a barrier, restricting its appeal to an elite audience. An English translation, on the other hand, would greatly extend its readership. In order to underline the presentation of More as martyr, moreover, Rastell asserts in his "Prynter to the gentle reader" that he was deprived of pen, ink, paper, and books in his cell, imprisoned "more straightly" and "soone after also was putte to death himself" (1077–78). The adverb "also" and the reflexive pronoun "hymselfe" point clearly to the parallel between More, facing execution, and Christ, facing crucifixion, implicit in the text itself.

Rastell's paratext is revealing in more ways than one, especially in relation to Basset. He tells us she resisted his invitation to publish the work, which she had completed some years before, seeming "nothing willing to haue it goe abrode, for that (she seyth,) it was firste turned into englishe, but for her owne pastyme and exercyse, and so reputeth it farre to symple to come in many handes" (1078). This of course is a well-worn modesty topos in Renaissance publications, restricted to neither translators nor women, and has to be read with more than a generous pinch of salt. Here, as in the case of her Eusebius dedicatory epistle, which incidentally supplied some of the language Rastell uses, the image of the bashful gentlewoman is somewhat difficult to accept at face value. Both her Eusebius dedication and this preface state that her translations were done in private, for leisure only. Yet in the former she tells us that many had read and approved her translation (f. 1b) and that she had left aside her Latin version of the work because another had reached print (f. 8a), which suggests she had initially intended to publish hers. This, despite the fact that,

as Wendy Wall, Danielle Clarke, and others have pointed out, publishing remained even more difficult and controversial for women than for men and thus had to be even more strongly motivated.²⁸ Rastell's claim that many had admired her translation of the *De tristitia* and "fayn wold haue had it sette furth in prynt alone" before he decided to include it in the *Workes* (1078) might well simply be a marketing strategy, but it does confirm the text's public rather than private nature. Rastell must have hoped to add prestige to his edition by including a translation by a gentlewoman of the queen's chamber, wife of the royal couple's private secretary, granddaughter of Thomas More, and daughter of the internationally known Margaret Roper. This is certainly suggested by the opening sentence of his preface, which establishes Basset's pedigree, while also mentioning her father, in 1557 a magistrate, busy biographer composing his memoir of his father-in-law, and a supporter of the Catholic exiles in Flanders (1077).

Although as patron Basset must have authorized Rastell to put her name on the translation, she did not necessarily see the paratextual materials before they went to print; one cannot help feeling that Rastell is taking full advantage of her name and social standing to sell his edition and, as we shall see later, promote a cause, in much the same way that other male editors did with women's translations. Richard Hyrde, for example, had used Roper's Erasmus translation to push his agenda of educating women in the Classics, and although not mentioning her name, had coyly yet clearly hinted at her authorship in his title and preface. John Day printed the first edition of Anne Bacon's translation of some Occhino sermons anonymously in 1548, adding her initials and her dedication to her mother in 1551; however, in 1570, by which time Bacon had become a woman of no small standing, he completely re-organized the edition in order to give her full billing over Argentyne, the translator of other Occhino sermons printed in the collection. John Bale, too, certainly made full use of the Princess Elizabeth's translation of Marguerite de Navarre and of her position at court to promote both himself and the Protestant cause by publishing and prefacing an edition of it in 1548.²⁹

The remainder of Rastell's preface is given over to praise of Basset's translation, yet here too he is eager to remind readers of her link to More, which is not limited to physical kinship. Her text "goeth so nere sir Thomas Mores own english phrase" that she is "no nerer to hym in kynred, vertue, and literature, than in hys englishe tongue: so that it myghte seme to haue been by

hys own pen indyted fyrst, and not at all translated: suche a gyft hath she to folowe her graundfathers vayne in wryting" (1078). Rastell's comment is doubly significant. It reiterates the notion of a familial line passing from More through Margaret to Mary, thus validating the translation and giving it authority. It also alludes to the link between translation and imitation and to the ideal of a translated work that reproduces the form and language of the original, an ideal expressed not only by humanist theorists but also, as we saw, by Basset herself. Related to this is Rastell's claim that her translation demonstrates what today's translation theorists call "transparency," the rendering of a source text in such a way that the translation reads like an original. Venuti claims that this emerges decisively in England in the 1660s, thereafter becoming the dominant mode of translating.³⁰ Rastell's admiration of the fact that Basset's work seems "not at all translated" shows that it represented an ideal as early as the mid-sixteenth century.

We expressed some scepticism concerning Rastell's portrait of Basset as a modest and reluctant translator, but another more reliable way in which her modesty is rather called into question appears in the translation itself. She makes no fewer than four explicit interventions as translator, three in the first person; these complete and emend More's text and in one instance offer an explanation for her own rendering of a term. When a quotation from Matthew 26:31 trails off, "*hac nocte scandalum in me patiemini et simul illud prophetae uaticinium . . .*" (565/3), Basset translates it as "This night shall ye all haue occasyon in me to fall and this phrophecie lykewyse," but then adds the second half of the verse: "I will stryke the shepehearde and the shepe shall be scattered abroad." Her marginal comment explains that it "was not writen in my graundfathers cople, & therfore I do geasse that this or some other like he woulde hymselfe haue writen" (1157). Basset is here going beyond Rastell's statement that her language and that of her grandfather were indistinguishable; she is claiming to know what he would have written, the verb "guess" carrying a connotation of greater certitude in sixteenth-century English, as it still does in American English. A dozen lines earlier, she emends the Latin text, saying: "I haue not translated this place as the latine cople goeth, but as I iudge it shoulde be, because my graundfathers cople was for lacke of laysure neuer wel corrected" (1157). The emended word in question is "*diuertens*," which in the manuscript Basset was using was the erroneous "*diuerdes*," a mistake Miller calls a "slip of the pen" (981). Basset's "as I iudge it shoulde be" leaves no doubt

as to her confidence in her own ability to edit, as well as translate, in the best humanist philological tradition. At the same time she softens any implied criticism of her grandfather by blaming his mistake on having insufficient time to correct his copy. Another emendation is in a passage that More puts into Christ's mouth: "orate inquit sine intermissione" (171/7–8). Basset translates this accurately as "Pray ye sayth he without intermission" but adds a marginal comment that "Albeit these woordes here (praye ye wythout intermission) be sayncte Paules wordes, yet in effect dyd oure sauior say the same" (1098). She obviously thought it wise to follow a golden rule of translating, namely not to perpetuate source text errors by repeating them, but her comment also demonstrates a preoccupation with textual concerns.

Basset's final marginal intervention is of a different nature. Complaining that we do not get up to pray in the night, More says "sed sompnia speculantes mandragore indormimus" (307/7). Basset paraphrases this as "our mindes all occupied with mad fantastick dremes" (1119). She explains her translation in a marginal gloss: "Whereas the latine texte hath here somnia speculantes Mandragore, I haue translated it in englishe, our mindes all occupied wyth mad fantastick dreames, because Mandragora is an herbe as phisycions saye, that causeth folke to slepe, and therin to haue many mad fantastical dreames." This is all rather puzzling. Perhaps she rejected the equivalent English term, "mandragora," as being too learned, or too foreign sounding, although current at the time in England; but then she also rejected the plant's other current and less erudite name, "mandrake." The justification for her translation stems perhaps from her fear that somebody would compare the Latin and English and criticize her choice of paraphrase over the use of an equivalent term. She herself offers no real reason for her preference. Maybe the comment is intended simply to display her erudition.³¹ In any case, her marginal interventions suggest, not a modest, retiring female translator, but a self-confident and, to borrow an expression from Rastell, "wel experted" young woman. Moreover, they show Basset following in the erudite footsteps of her mother, who in her youth had emended a difficult passage in St. Cyprian and, as we have said, shown similar independence in translating Erasmus's *Precatio dominica*.

The *De tristitia, tedio, pauore, et oratione Christi ante captionem eius* is a work of intense devotion and emotion, although not without typical Morean flashes of wit and humour. Here More is making one final, and profoundly

humanist, attempt to use the written word both to describe the universal and eternal theme of suffering and death and to focus on one individual experience frozen in time, on one evening, then on one hour. Similarly, he reduces the outside world in which Christ had travelled, preached, wrought miracles, and shared his last meal with his apostles, first to the estate on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, then to one part of it where Christ prayed alone, in agony, before finally zooming in as it were on one corner where he is arrested. At this point, More breaks off the narrative with a heavy alliterative phrase suggesting a tolling bell, “tum demum primum manus iniectas in Iesum” (625/7–8); in Basset’s six monosyllabic and equally heavy words, “then ... dyd they fyrst lay handes vpon Iesus” (1165). He had brought together in this his final work two central topics of concern to himself: the fear that Christ and the later Christian martyrs felt when faced with suffering and death, and the importance of watching, praying, and submitting oneself to God’s will.

The early part of the work had probably been smuggled out of the Tower before June 12, 1535, when More’s books and writing materials were removed, according to the statement immediately following the translation (1165). In the ensuing years, several manuscript copies were made. As is often the case with early modern translations made from manuscripts, it is virtually impossible to establish which served as the source text. According to Miller, it was not the Valencia autograph manuscript, so-called because it ended up in that city’s Royal College and Seminary of Corpus Christi, where it lay undiscovered until 1963. Erroneous variations present in other manuscripts, and later in the Leuven printed works of 1565, are found in Basset’s translation. Miller concludes she might nevertheless have seen the autograph copy. This is indeed plausible, since it was most likely among her mother’s possessions in Chelsea. Moreover, Miller continues, she might well have met Pedro de Soto, the Spanish Dominican theologian who was in England in 1555–56 and took the manuscript, along with other writings by More, to Spain in 1557. However, Miller is certain that Basset based her translation on another as yet unidentified manuscript.³²

More chose his title carefully and Basset translated it with similar care: *Of the sorowe, werinesse, feare, and prayer of Christ before hys taking*. Greater the pity, then, that Rastell subverted this by placing at the head of her text, in bold type and much larger characters, “An exposition of a parte of the passion of our sauour Iesus Christe.” Compounding this error is his comment at the end of the *Treatyce upon the passion* that “Syr Thomas More wrote no more in englishe

of thys treatyce of the passion of Chryst. But he (still prisoner in the tower of London) wrote more therof in latine (after the same order as he wrote thereof in englyshe:) the translacion wherof here foloweth.”³³ Rastell also kept the words “a treatice vpon the passion” as a running title throughout the translation. The Louvain 1565 *Opera* made things worse, omitting “a parte of” and keeping only “Expositio Passionis Domini.” From then on, this is unfortunately how the work would be known. Hallet, in entitling his edition of Basset’s translation *The History of the Passion*, echoed Chambers’s contention that the text was simply the second part of More’s *Treatyce*; Lewis was still repeating this in 1954.³⁴

The result of this various mistitling is that writers on More and Basset have persisted, and continue to do so, even today, in calling the *De tristitia* a mere continuation of the *Treatyce*, and this despite the fact that the Yale editors of both texts correct the mistake. As Miller convincingly argues, the two works are very different in intention, purpose, and method, being aimed at a very different audience (741). The mere choice of Latin over English, the language of *A Treatyce vpon the passion*, points to the different nature of the two works. The *De tristitia* contains sharp criticism of the clergy that More rarely if at all included in his vernacular works; it also contains meditations on theological points such as Christ’s humanity, which perhaps More found easier to articulate in Latin, although he had argued forcefully elsewhere that there was nothing that could not be said in English.³⁵ Lastly, of course, his reason for choosing Latin for this work, which he knew would be his last, might well have been the same as had inspired one of his earliest compositions, the brilliant *Utopia*: namely, to be able to reach an international and a far larger and more learned audience. Where the *Utopia* had sought to dazzle, the *De tristitia* sought to draw Christians to proper prayer through meditating on Christ’s agony and martyrdom. At the same time, however, it directed their attention to More’s own probable fate.

As we have said, Basset’s translation has never been the object of a detailed study, a situation that the present essay proposes to remedy by examining several aspects of the rendering within the framework of philological and rhetorical translation theory and practice. It will focus on her transfer of what the humanists called the “sentence,” or meaning, of the original and the “grace,” or “harmonious,” replication of the style, and will assess the extent to which her work is representative of such practices.

Basset reproduces the overall meaning of the *De tristitia* to an admirable degree. Throughout his text, More takes sentences and phrases from the Gospel text and meditates on their significance, sometimes seeming to diverge from the subject at hand, but returning at last to his first point. This entails commenting on philological or historical issues in Scripture and the Church Fathers and discussing theological and philosophical questions. It requires erudition and familiarity with a wide range of sources. Although perhaps less intellectual in argumentation and more emotional than his controversial works, the *De tristitia* is nevertheless a rich and densely layered text that requires the talents of a skilful and learned translator. Mary Basset does not disappoint. Unlike Ruffinus, whom she criticized in her Eusebius translation for “sometyme altering the very sence sometyme omytting whole sentences togyther, sometyme addyng and puttyng to of hys owne” (f. 8a), she makes no changes to the thrust of More’s arguments, never “altering” the meaning, and she makes no significant omissions or additions.

This is not to say that there are no minor changes. A short passage from More’s opening pages will illustrate some of these but will also demonstrate how they do not detract from its overall meaning. More is explaining that Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and made their way to an estate named Gethsemane by crossing a brook and valley, both called Cedron:

hec nomina nobis (nisi sompnolentia prepedit) reuocant in memoriam quod dum (ut ait apostolus) peregrinamur A domino/ plane pertranseundus est nobis/ priusquam perueniamus in montem oliueti fructiferum et in amenam uillam Gethsemani/ uillam non aspectu tristem et squallidam sed omni iucunditate pinguissimam ... (17/5–7 to 19/1–2)

these names (but if we be to slouthful & negligent) doe put vs in remembraunce, that as long as we liue here (as the apostle saith) like straungers sequestred from our lord, we must nedes passe ouer, ere euer we come vnto the fruitfull mount of Oliuete, & the pleasant village of Gesemani, a village I say not displeaunt or lothsome to loke vpon but full of al delight & plesure ... (1080)

The first phrase in parentheses is loosely translated: “sompnolentia” (“drowsiness”) does not necessarily imply “sloth,” although elsewhere in the work More

connects the two, while Basset sometimes translates it as “slepyng”; the forceful verb “prepediat” (impede or block) is replaced by the weaker “but if we be.” While More continues with “dum (...) peregrinamur A domino,” echoing St. Paul’s words, “dum sumus in corpore peregrinamur a Domino” (2 Corinthians, 5:6), Basset’s “straungers sequestered from the lord,” on the other hand, imaginatively evokes his letter to the Hebrews, where he calls Christians “pilgrims and straungers on earth” (Heb.11:13). The verb “sequestered,” although added to the text’s simple ablative construction, “a domino,” further intensifies the sense of separation. The noun “villam” is translated by “village,” although strictly speaking it denotes an estate. However, this meaning of the English term comes into use only after 1760, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.³⁶ Moreover, both Coverdale’s Bible and his *Newe testament both Latine and Englyshe*, which Basset possibly used, also translate it as “village” (Matt. 26:36). The final two lines describing the valley of Gethsemane, which More had explained a few folios earlier meant in Hebrew “fertile valley” (13/4–5), are also rendered rather differently. Her translation of “omni iucunditate pinguissimam” by “ful of al delight & plesure” conveys both the meaning of “pinguissimam” (very fertile with) and the force of its superlative form, while the doublet “delight & plesure” emphasizes More’s description of the valley as a pleasant place. Her adjectives “displesaunt” and “lothsome” do not exactly convey the most obvious meanings of “tristem” (sad) and “squallidam” (barren or waste) but were no doubt chosen, as were More’s, for their contrastive value: as “tristem” contrasts with “iucunditate,” so does “displesant” with “pleasure”; as “squallidam” contrasts with “pinguissimam,” so does “delight” with “lothsome.” Basset thus preserves More’s overall meaning in the passage: the Christian must accept the woes of this world before passing to the joys of the next, just as Jesus passed through the sad valley of Cedron to the delightful estate of Gethsemane.

A second discussion of Basset’s methods of transferring meaning will bear on a short passage towards the end of the work. More draws a traditional parallel between the young man who, fearing he would commit an unacceptable deed, fled naked from the grasp of his captors and Joseph, who fled naked from the unwelcome advances of Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:7–12). She is the only woman to make an appearance in the *De tristitia*.³⁷ Not surprisingly, More’s portrait is unflattering, concentrating on her licentiousness and seductive wiles (611/4–613/9). Her consuming passion for Joseph is described in a passage containing no fewer than eight words with sexual denotations or connotations:

“adamauit” (fell in love with or conceive a sexual passion for); “libidine” (by violent desire); “insana percita” (aroused or excited madness); “impudens” (shameless or immodest); “illiceret” (enticed); “proh pudor” (for shame!); “veneris copiam” (troops of Venus); “adulterae” (of the adulteress). Basset’s treatment of the passage is not without interest (1163–64). Two of the eight words are translated in straightforward fashion: “impudens” by “for no shame” and “illiceret” by “allured.” Three, however, heighten the sexuality displayed by Potiphar’s wife: the verb “adamauit” is accompanied by an intensifier, “so sore annamored”; she was moved, not only by violent desire but “with outrageous sensual lust”; and rather than being a simple adulteress, she is called a “beastly woman.” One replicates the connotation of sexual shame that can exist in the set phrase “proh pudor,” which usually refers to any kind of disgrace; Basset chooses to render it by “dishonesty,” which also has a general meaning but, especially when applied specifically to women, also refers to “lewdness” and “violation of chastity,” to borrow terms from early modern writings. Only one translation fails to transfer the sexual connotation of its Latin original: “percita” can mean sexually aroused, especially here where it follows close upon the adjective “impudens,” whereas “waxed so frantic” does not. However, Basset carefully makes More’s moral judgment perfectly clear for her reader by making a Classical allusion sexuality explicit: Joseph is confronted not by “ueneris copiam” (“Venus’s troops”) but by “carnall temptacion.”

More also makes a comment on female sexual aggression that supports his view of female decorum. Noting how Potiphar’s repudiated wife flagrantly flouted the social norms, he exclaims, “uiro mulier proh pudor inferret uim” (oh how shameful for a woman to lay violent hands on a man) (613/4). Basset’s translation, “and so woulde this woman (...) by force haue rauished this manne” (1163), is doubly significant. First, while More’s verb “inferret” contains no particularly sexual connotation, the same is not true of hers. The verb “to ravish” can mean to commit violence on someone but also to take someone away by force, usually a woman, or to rape a woman. These various denotations make the exclamation both stronger and more specifically oriented towards sexuality. Moreover, the verb suggests Potiphar’s wife is guilty of a further breach of female decorum; she has committed a sexual crime usually perpetrated by a man. Given her behaviour, and the fact that Basset has heightened the sexual nature of the passage in several other ways as we have seen, the verb is suitable. While appearing to condemn the woman in harsher terms than More, Basset

nevertheless introduces a second change that redirects his disgusted comment on unwomanly behaviour. Since Latin has no definite or indefinite article to provide a clue as to its specificity, “mulier” has to be interpreted as representing “a woman,” or women in general, rather than Potiphar’s wife in particular. Basset’s translation, however, contains no such ambiguity; she clearly relates the comment only to the woman in question by using a deictic three times: “and so woulde this woman (oh what dishonesty was this) by force haue rauished this manne.” I would suggest, therefore, that while she heightens the tone of disapproval concerning sexual misbehaviour in general, she makes it clear that Potiphar’s wife constitutes a rather special example of unbridled female sexuality. More’s comment on unacceptable female behaviour is thus in her translation directed, not at womankind in general, but at one unworthy member of it.

In terms of the text’s rather technical or difficult terms, Basset acquits herself well, although she sometimes favours brief explanations, paraphrases, or simplifications. This I would suggest she does for her English audience, likely to be less educated than More’s Latin-literate one. For example, “in pascate” (5/7) is “at Easter” (1079) rather than “at Passover,” which was not yet perhaps a common term, since its first context in the *Oxford English Dictionary*³⁸ is provided by Tyndale’s 1530 Pentateuch while in 1539 Coverdale is still using “Easter.” More, in his *Treatyce upon the passion*, calls it the “fest of Pasche” (57–61). The phrase “post aequinoctium uernum” becomes simply “after the sprynge of the year” (9/3, 1079), throughout the work “skorn” is used for “ironia,” “couertly signified” for “figurare,” and “couertly shewed” for “typum gerere.” Again, a concern for her reader probably dictated her choices.

Basset’s translations of the terms used for the Jewish religious hierarchy, if to our eyes perhaps anachronistic, echo those used by her grandfather in his *Treatice upon the passion*. Caiphas the high priest is referred to in *De tristitia* as “pontifex.” Basset uses “bysshope” but also “high priest.” In one place Malchus is said to be the servant “pontificis summi sacerdotis et sacerdotum principis” (473/4–5), which she renders as “seruant to the bishop who was high Priest or Prince of the Priestes” (1143). Similarly, however, More switches between “chief prieste,” “Prynce of the pryestes,” and “bishop” in the *Treatyce* (68/28–30), demonstrating what Marc’hadour calls the “elasticity” of the term.³⁹ Later in the *De tristitia* More describes the hesiarchs who arrest Jesus, saying “cum suis sequacibus impios heresiarchas pestiferae superstitionis antistites” (509/8–10). Here, Basset opts for terms that not only reflect but also reinforce More’s criticism

of the men who come to arrest Jesus: “[they] represent vnto vs blasphemous Archheretykes with their complices, the teachers and ryngeladers of deuilishe supersticion” (1150/2–4). “Archheretykes” conveys the meaning clearly and is less esoteric than “heresiarch,” again no doubt chosen with an eye to the wider readership of the translation; “sequacibus” and “complices” each denote associates or followers on the one hand and accomplices or eagerly pliant subordinates on the other; “antistites,” another “elastic” term generally used for a presiding priest or, in Christian Latin, abbot or prelate, is rendered by “ryngeladers,” which at first seems questionable. However, More is using the term ironically in this instance, in the sense of “master of the art,” which makes Basset’s choice appropriate, especially as she reinforces it by adding “teachers.” Moreover, this preference of an English term over a Latinate one is consistent in the passage; for example, the common usage adjective “deuilish” for “pestiferae” replaces other more erudite ones she could have chosen such as “noxious,” “pernicious,” or even “pestiferous.”

Finally, a word about the “seniores” who accompanied the priests and scribes to Gethsemane. The term is usually translated as “elders.” Basset, however, borrows a term that, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, her grandfather coined in the *Treatyce upon the passion*, “auncients.”⁴⁰ In his 1532 *Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, More had waged war against what he saw as Tyndale’s use of “elder” for “presbyter” (“priest”) since this new meaning had never been sanctioned by common usage and, moreover, was being used polemically to avoid “priest.” Although he would not in fact have objected to Basset’s using “elder” for the senior members of the Jewish community, since he claimed context determined meaning, he preferred “auncients” in his *Treatyce*, and this no doubt influenced her choice.

True to the humanist principles she is putting into practice, Basset omits no long passages, although she drops words or phrases here and there, the effect of which can sometimes reach beyond that of their immediate context. For example, More says that unlike Christ and his apostles, who went out after supper to the Mount of Olives only after saying a hymn of thanksgiving, we mumble our grace, muttering through our yawns, “mussitatis et oscitanter” (7/5–6). Basset leaves out the adverb “oscitanter” (yawningly), saying simply “mumbled vp at aduventure.” True, the “at aduventure” reinforces More’s previous emphasis on the fact that we say any old words that come into our heads. However, this seemingly small omission detracts from his carefully elaborated pattern of

sleep images in the following paragraph, which it introduces. The sleep motif, as I have argued elsewhere, appears over and over again as a unifying strategy in the first half of the *De tristitia*.⁴¹ A similar example of a seemingly small omission that has an effect on a major theme in the work is in the description of the young man who escaped from the soldiers when they come to arrest Jesus by leaving his cloak behind. More says he escaped “*alacri nuditate*” (in eager nakedness *or* by being eager to be naked) (625/7). Basset translates this simply as (“naked as he was”) (1165), although she emphasizes this aspect by placing it in parentheses. Yet eagerness is a key concept in the discussion of martyrdom in the *De tristitia*, being a matter of personal concern to More since he fears that his own keenness to wear the martyr’s crown might underlie his continued opposition to Henry VIII.

Nor does Basset, again respecting humanist translating principles, make any major additions to the text that would skew or change its meaning. Rather, her additions are restricted to minor features like intensifiers and to two compositional and translational practices inherited by early modern translators from their medieval predecessors, namely the inclusion of glosses and use of doublets in order to ensure clarity of meaning and add emphasis, especially when translating from a prestige language such as Latin into a less prestigious one such as English.

Basset uses adjectival and adverbial intensifiers in a consistent fashion that contributes to reinforcing the devotional nature of the *De tristitia* and owes much to earlier English translations of such works composed in Latin and French. The most frequent uses of adjectival intensifiers occur each time that Basset translates “*passio*” and “*agonia*,” to which she adds “bitter” or “most bitter,” but there are many more instances with other key words in the narrative. Popular intensifying adverbs that she also adds frequently, this time to underline or justify a point that More is making, are “clerely,” “verily,” and “specially.”

While medieval translators often used interlinear glosses, later practitioners for the most part either placed their glosses in the margin or embedded them in the text itself. As we saw, Basset inserted four marginal glosses in her translation, all commenting on, explaining, or completing words or phrases in the original. All her other glosses, however, are woven seamlessly into her text, where they function as *étoffements* or elaborations, facilitating the reader’s understanding. They take three different forms. The first, and most frequently used, is that of the explanatory paraphrase. For example, she retains a foreign

word but explains it in English. More simply says that people are springing up who are, in St. Jerome's words, "αυτοδιδακτους" (445/3). Basset transliterates it as "Autodictons" but adds: "that is to wit, of themselues learned without anye mannes teaching" (1140). Drawing a parallel between Gerson's soothing words on the subject of prayer and physicians' painkilling medications, More tells us simply "uocant anodyna" (315/4). Basset explains: "salues and playsters in greke called *Anodina*, that serue to ease and temper the aches of the body" (1120). She also uses this technique when she deems a word or phrase, although English, difficult or perhaps obscure. Having rejected "vernal equinox" for "sprynge of the yeare," as we said earlier, she nevertheless feels the need to explain further: "when the dayes and the nightes be al of one length" (1079). An expression like "to wit" sometimes introduces words in apposition: "christi membra christianas animas" (391/3–4) becomes "Christes membres, that is to witte the soules of christen men" (1131). Elsewhere, especially in passages of theological argument, Basset makes her translation clearer than the original by repeating the subject rather than simply leaving it as understood. After discussing the question of receiving the Eucharist under two kinds, as do heretics, More says "non solum sumunt ipsi" (not only do they do [it]) (393/2–3), but Basset is explicit: "not alonely themselues receue the blessed body and bloode of Chryste vnder both kyndes" (1132).

At times she chooses to keep a Latin phrase or word in her text, adding an English explanation occasionally accompanied by a formula such as "as the lattine sayeth." For example, More quotes Gerson in explaining the dual action involved in going on a pilgrimage: "(ut Gersonis ipsius uerbis utar) *continuitate nature et continuitate moris*" (319/3–4). Basset embeds the Latin in her text and identifies it as such: "that is to witte as maister Gersonne in the latin tong termeth it, *Continuitate nature et continuitate moris*, in a naturall continuance, and in a moral continuance" (1121). A similar strategy is used when talking of the early stages of passion felt by some martyrs. More says "stoici propassiones appellat" (243/7). Basset translates: "first sodein passions which the Stoikes call in lattine *propassiones*" (1109). She might well have believed that the inclusion of the Latin would confer a certain authority on her translation; perhaps, too, she believed it would emphasize her credentials as an erudite translator, as we suggested earlier when discussing her marginal interventions.

Her third type of gloss, often used by early modern translators, explains allusions to religious and Classical texts or identifies sources for quotations.

For example, translating More's "preter ebrium uino luxuque macedonem" (147/2–3), she names the person: "Alexander when he was in his drunken & ryotous rages" (1095). More's reference to a "comic poet," Terence according to Miller (1036), is supplemented by the information that he was a "paynim poete" and author of a "commedy" (1125). The saying "uelut ereptis e Sylla par A caribdi periculum" (91/7) is rendered rather long-windedly but very explicitly for a reader who might not grasp the Classical allusion or know the Latin proverb: "as oftentimes from one daungerous peril folke straight waies fal in an other as ieopardous as the first" (1088).

Finally, Basset uses doublets, a feature of medieval and early modern composition and translation owing much to *enarratio*, the interpretation of a text through the rhetorical practice of glossing and adding exegetical commentary. They served to concentrate the mind of the reader, strengthen arguments, and clarify and reinforce meaning. In translations from prestige languages, they were also thought to compensate for any semantic losses that might occur in the "vulgar" target language. They occur throughout Basset's *Of the sorowe, werinesse, feare, and prayer of Christ*, and appear in virtually all parts of speech: "how foolish and how fond," "fyrmyly & surely," "muse and marvaile," "saw & beheld," "boldness and hardinesse." Sometimes they reflect slight nuances of meaning, although without compromising the sense of the original, but for the most part they either clarify or emphasize a point More is stressing, or reinforce the persuasiveness of his argument. For example, when he explains Jesus's incredible generosity towards Judas, which even extends to including him in celebrating the Passover, Basset translates More's "Vltima ... cena" (277/4) by the doublet "maundy and laste supper" (1115). When More tells us in a powerful passage that Jesus cautioned us to watch and pray for fear of being "torn apart" by heresy and sectarianism, he uses one verb, "dilacere" (347/6), but Basset translates it as "mangled and torne" (1125). Such pernicious danger, he continues, will make its way to us ("struat ad nos"); this is made all the more threatening by Basset's doublet, "[it] may be an entry and a beginning of ours." More evokes the danger by means of a powerful metaphor: we know how terrible the infection of a spreading plague can be ("et prouolantis pestilentiae quam formidolosa contagio") (351/1–2). Again, Basset increases the strength of the Latin by using a doublet, which she further reinforces by adding a verb that personifies the plague: we know, she says, "when the plague or pestylence reigneth, what cause there is to dread infeccion" (1125).

Some doublets are used for stylistic effect, and in this case Basset very often makes them alliterate, as seen above in “foolish” and “fond” and “muse” and “marvaile,” or reflect a word play present in the Latin: “firmitatem” and “infirmum” (163/8–9) become the alliterating “stedfaste and stronger ... feble and faynt” (1097). These last points bring us to a consideration of how she handles the stylistic aspects of the *De tristitia*.

More’s language and style in this his last work are those of devotional and meditative literature, but they demonstrate the same habits of composition as his earlier works. They are discussed in some detail by Miller in his introduction to the *De tristitia*.⁴² He emphasizes More’s efforts to achieve accuracy and precision, seen in his revisions, but also argues that this does not preclude the use of an array of rhetorical devices that will fortify his arguments and make them more persuasive. As a result, we find More favouring sentences that are sometimes long and convoluted, packed with detail, often strung out by means of multiple subordinate clauses linked by carefully chosen connectives. Sudden variations of syntax, accompanied by shifting rhythms, often mark the introduction of an opposing point of view and disrupt the harmony and logic created by adjacent balanced and parallel clauses. Their purpose is to bring readers up short and seize their attention.

Et tamen quae dei bonitas est necligentes nos/et peccatorum puluino
indormientes/ agitat interdum quatit et concutit/ac tribulationibus satagit
expergifacere. (203/1–3)

All thys notwithstanding such is the goodnes of god, that for all he seeth
vs thus neglygent, and sluggishly slepyng vppon the soft pillowe of our
iniquitie, he styrreth vs other whiles, he shoggeth vs, and shaketh vs, and
by tribulacion laboreth to awake vs. (1103)

More starts his sentence slowly, using polysyllabic words and an image of our slumbering on a pillow of sins that combine to carry the reader along in a feeling of security, as befits the thought being expressed, but he then suddenly uses a series of sharp verbs—“agitat,” “quatit,” “concutit”—only to follow this with a full, drawn-out, and slow-rhythmed completion of the sentence that evokes our slowness to wake. Basset mirrors the changing rhythms, making the first part of the sentence even longer and almost hypnotic with its alliterating

and onomatopoeic use of “s”—“sluggishly slepyng and soft”—then abruptly changing pace, as does More, with three staccato verbs—“styrreth,” “shoggeth,” and “shaketh”—before ending with a similarly long clause (1103).

Over and over again, Basset reproduces More’s balanced clauses. Note how in the following example she emphasizes the parallelism by the use of “For as” and “so” in the first half and “And as” and “so” in the second:

Sic eos in diuersum distrahunt amor magistri ne fugiant/ sui timor ne
maneant/mortis metus ut auolent/ promissi pudor ut restitent. (469/4–6)

For as the loue of theyr maister moooued them not to auoyde, so the feare
of themselues willed them to flee. And as the dreade of death draue them
fast away, so didde the shame to breake their promyse perswade them still
to tarye. (1143)

Although she is unable, partly on account of linguistic differences between synthetic Latin and analytic English, to match More’s perfect balancing of four succinct clauses of four words each, she does achieve a pattern of sorts; the four clauses alternate between long, short, short, long, with twelve, nine, ten, and thirteen words. She also partially succeeds in replicating his use of the same grammatical feature to end several clauses in a row; his four finite verbs are replaced by three infinitives.

In composing his *De tristitia*, More had at his disposal a wide range of rhetorical devices with which to concentrate the mind of the reader on a specific point of meditation, many coming from the tradition of devotional writings like the extremely popular *De imitatione Christi*. As in his other writings, he privileges some over others. The first is alliteration. Despite this being a rather difficult figure of speech to replicate in translation, Basset manages to do so, sometimes even using the same letters, but she also adds her own. In the following example, she recreates five of More’s seven alliterating “s’s” and adds two alliterating “d’s”: “sed secordiam uesaniam et stipite quouis stupidorem stuporem” (115/6–7) becomes “slothefull sluggishness can I not call it, but rather frantike madness and insensible deadly dullness” (1091). Speaking of the Jews who orchestrated Christ’s capture and calling them “homunculi,” rendered in rather strong language as “pievishe wretched doltes,” More continues: “sibi uidebantur ... callido idcurasse consilio” (529/9). Basset’s “they thought that

by their wyly wits had wilily wrought that thing” outdoes the original with a further wordplay on “wyly” and “wilily” (1152).

On the whole, Basset is also careful to respect one of More’s other favourite devices: endless repetition of a word or phrase for emphasis. One speech put into Jesus’s mouth repeats “sompnum” (sleep) and various grammatical forms of “dormire” (to sleep) eight times (289/11 to 291/1–11). Basset matches this with eight repetitions in English but again is able to outdo More since all eight are variations of the one single word, “sleep” (1117). Perhaps the most evocative series of repetitions in the *De tristitia* is contained in the final eleven lines of the work, where More is discussing the exact moment when the soldiers captured Jesus. Since he admits to disagreeing with Gerson and other scholars on this matter, he needs to impress his own opinion upon his reader; he does so very effectively by opening each of the eight clauses leading up to the moment of capture with “post.” Basset replicates this exactly, reinforcing the incantatory effect by preceding each “after” with “and”: “after Iudas had kissed (...), and after they wer (...), and after the chief priestes (...), and after he had rebuked (...), and after he had once more spoken (...), and after all the apostles (...), and finallye after the yonge manne (...), then after al this, dyd they first lay handes vpon Jesus” (1165).

While *De tristitia* is a serious and devotional work, More does at times inject a tone of wry humour or irony into his narrative, and indulges in the occasional pun. This, too, is typical of his style. Much of this Basset reproduces, catching the tone and humour. She is less successful with the puns, although this form of word play is often admittedly difficult to translate. The passage in which Jesus upbraids Simon Peter for his sloth and unworthiness of his name, Cephas (163), is extremely ironic and she captures most of this, even translating the final word, “scilicet,” a favourite of More’s, by the equally ironic “pardy” (1097).⁴³ Presenting the arguments for and against irony in Jesus’s injunction to the apostles to get up for they have rested long enough, More concedes, tongue in cheek, that it is not for a nobody like him to render a decision like an official arbitrator, an “honorarius” (301/8–9 to 303/1); this typically self-deprecatory pun on “honorarius,” which means both an honorary judge and a beast of burden, is also ironic, since More had been a lawyer, commercial arbitrator in the Court of Chancery, and undersheriff sitting as a judge in the civic courts, while his father had been a member of the judiciary.⁴⁴ His granddaughter renders it as “not to take vpon me hauing so little skil as a iuge to determine one way or

another" (1118), but replicating the pun in "honorarius" eludes her, not without reason it must be said. Other passages where More uses humour to convey his point about prayer, describing people praying lazily and carelessly (125–27) and comparing them to men hauled before a prince for treason (129–133), are rendered by Basset with equal humour (1092–93).

She is also at ease dealing with the various dramatic techniques More uses so effectively in the *De tristitia*, and indeed throughout his works, to make the narrative more vivid and his arguments more persuasive. A remarkable instance is the set speech Jesus makes to Simon Peter, using six direct questions, four addressed to him by name in order to make them more personal, and ending in similar fashion: "et tu Symon dormis?", "et tu Simon dormis?", "et nunc Simon dormis?" and "et tu Simon dormis?" (165/6–9). Basset translates all six and maintains the repetitions: "Simon ... arte thou nowe a slepe?", "Simon ... doest thou nowe sleepe?", "Symon ... dooest thou nowe sleepe?" and "Symon ... doest thou slepe?" (1097).

Effective, too, in creating a sense of drama are rhetorical questions, the great majority of which are kept in the English, and the use of an imagined adversary, which enables More to explore a point and, lawyer-like, present both sides of a question. Again, Basset retains this device. Lastly, he makes the narrative more dramatic and immediately relevant to his readers by addressing them directly, often arousing their attention by using colloquial Latin words like "age," "en," or "finge age." Basset follows suit, translating these as "look now," "loe here," and "imagyne now."

In light of the humanist translating principles we discussed, which emphasized the need to conduct both a philological and rhetorical investigation of the original text in order to be able to interpret its whole meaning and replicate its stylistic features, does Basset's translation of More's last work conform to what her grandfather, mother, various tutors, and she herself would have considered a "true" translation? She grasps the overall meaning of the work, indulges in no major omissions or additions, and is sensitive to its stylistic qualities, which in the great majority of cases she successfully reproduces, even adding flourishes of her own. Her explanatory paraphrases and glosses are clearly intended to enable the reader to come to a better understanding of the text, as is her choice of words of common rather than Latinate or esoteric usage. She was thus clearly aware of what today's theorists call audience appropriateness.

In all of the above cases, Basset practised what More had preached in his comments on translating, themselves largely based on humanist principles. She also followed the example of Margaret Roper, in her translation of Erasmus's *Precatio dominica*, where she had striven to impart the text's overall meaning rather than reproduce every word, and had made the work more suitable for an English lay or less educated readership by choosing appropriate, up-to-date, and familiar vocabulary and by clarifying meaning when necessary. Yet, also like her mother, Basset exerted a certain independence of expression born not of a disregard for or misunderstanding of the rhetorical features of the original, but of a deliberate choice of various other devices. She also most certainly bore in mind the opinions of Christopherson, the tutor who probably exerted the most influence on her understanding and practice of translation, and who also strove to reproduce the whole meaning of the original through a translation that neither adopted a word for word strategy nor ignored the "grace" of the original. In her translation of the *De tristitia*, she steered a safe course between the Scylla of slavish translation and the Charybdis of paraphrase, to borrow More's metaphors. Her explanatory glosses and *étoffements* are intended to clarify the significance of individual passages or words. Her choice of vocabulary is suited to a wide, non-Latin-literate audience, showing a preference for straightforward terms and colloquial expressions over erudite or overly formal ones. Her respect for More's direct, dramatic style, seen in his dialogues and Christ's impassioned monologues, is absolute, their liveliness and effectiveness reproduced with the intent to appeal to an English audience. Her understanding of his rhetorical skills is clear from her ability both to replicate and to match them with devices drawn from her own arsenal. She also, as is clear from her marginal and other glosses, remained faithful to her statements in her Eusebius epistle, where she criticized the Greek printed text for its corrupt readings, probably due to an "untrulye written" or "worne and perished" manuscript (f. 5). In the More text, as with the Eusebius, she was guided by the philological principles that she deemed essential for interpreting a text.

Philological translation, however, had its limitations. In Glyn Norton's words, the translator was "unable to map exact boundaries between translation proper and the articulation of a *novum opus*."⁴⁵ It had to be combined with rhetorical translation if the translator was to transfer in its totality the original's interconnected content and expression and transform it into a new work. I would submit that in her translation of More's *De tristitia*, Basset successfully

followed the humanist path along which the philological and rhetorical methods of translating merged. This is all the more impressive given that few other translators in mid-sixteenth-century England did so.

Respect for rhetorical translation took some time to penetrate English translators' consciousness, or at least to be articulated in their prefaces. Amos claims Thomas Norton was one of the first to address the question of the relationship between meaning and style in his 1560 translation of Calvin.⁴⁶ Much more recently, and more accurately, Massimiliano Morini has named, as English proponents of the humanist method of translating, Cheke, Hoby, Wilson, and Grimald, to whom "some of Bruni's knowledge was somehow handed down."⁴⁷ Their status and the dates of their comments and translations are not insignificant in assessing Basset's understanding and practice of translation. It is extremely important to realize, first, that all four were "scholarly men of University breeding," as Morini calls them, or to use Basset's words, "wel exercised men," and, second, that with the exception of Cheke, their comments and translations all postdate Basset's Eusebius and its important epistle.⁴⁸ To this we might add that her epistle also predates Christopherson's Philo by several years. In short, Basset anticipated many of the views expressed by some of England's greatest humanists. If indeed it is correct to speak of the rarity of such theory and praxis in England, as Morini asserts, Basset's writings take on even greater significance and most certainly entitle her a place beside other, better-known Tudor translators.

In conclusion, Basset's translation of the *De tristitia* provides a persuasive answer to the question raised by earlier critics concerning what they called the silent, private, safe, and secondary nature of women's translation in early modern England. As pointed out in the introduction to this volume of essays, this older view of what was after all a central cultural activity, and one practised overwhelmingly by men, has been convincingly challenged. To writers such as Micheline White, who in her article on Anne Locke first demonstrated that women translators saw themselves as powerful cultural agents, and Danielle Clarke, who reiterated her own earlier views on the significance of women's translation in her essay "Translation," we can add Suzanne Trill and Jonathan Goldberg, who have argued convincingly against the older opinions.⁴⁹ Quite clearly, Basset's views as articulated in her Eusebius epistle and practised in her More translation placed her squarely in the extremely important English humanist translation movement and demonstrate that early modern women

were able to make their mark through translating. Her marginal and textual interventions in her *Of the sorowe, werinesse, feare, and prayer of Christ befor hys taking* suggest no shrinking violet but rather a woman confident in her scholarly abilities. Even more significantly, the publication of the translation, which she obviously sanctioned, placed her work in the forefront of Catholic publishing in Mary Tudor's reign. History would conspire against its going through subsequent English editions in the manner of Anne Bacon's sermons, Katherine Parr's *Psalmes or prayers*, or even Mary Tudor's translation of Erasmus's "Paraphrase upon the Gospel of St. John," but it nevertheless remains a remarkable achievement.

Notes

1. For an excellent discussion of this subject, see Theo Hermans, "Renaissance Translation between Literalism and Imitation," in *Geschichte. System. Litterarische Übersetzung*, ed. H. Kittel (Berlin: 1992), pp. 95–116.
2. A detailed discussion of these and other humanist theoretical treatises, comments, and prefaces written in Latin is to be found in my forthcoming chapter, "Translation," in *Encyclopedia of Neo-Latin Writings*, ed. Philip Ford and Jan Bloemendaal (Leiden: Brill, 2013). See also Frederick M. Renner, "Interpretatio": *Language and Translation from Cicero to Tytler* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1989), especially part 2 devoted to rhetoric and the translator; Glyn P. Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents* (Geneva: Droz, 1984); and, for Erasmus, Erica Rummel, *Erasmus as a Translator of the Classics* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1985).
3. Thomas More, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, ed. Thomas M. C. Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour, and Richard C. Marius, 2 parts, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 15 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963–), vol. 6, pt. 1, p. 337. More's comments on translation are discussed in Brenda M. Hosington, "Thomas More's Views on Language and Translation and their Place in the Classical and Humanist Tradition," *Moreana* 40 (2003), pp. 69–98.
4. In *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. E. F. Rogers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 112–20.

5. Thomas Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More*, trans. P. Hallett, ed. E. E. Reynolds (London: Burns & Oates, 1966), p. 93; Cresacre More, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More Lord High Chancellor of England* (London: 1631), p. 319.
6. Juan Luis Vives, *On Education: A Translation of the De tradendis disciplinis*, trans. Foster Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), pp. 113–14; Roger Ascham, “The Scholemaster,” in *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham*, ed. Dr. Giles, 3 vols. (London: J. R. Smith, 1864), vol. 3, pp. 175 ff.
7. *A deuout treatise upon the Pater noster, made fyrst in latyn ... and tourned in to englysshe by a yong virtuous and well lerned gentylwoman of .xix. yere of age* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1526).
8. Patricia Demers, “Margaret Roper and Erasmus: The Relationship of Translator and Source,” *WWR Magazine* 1 (2005), pp. 3–8. For the changes Roper exerted see also Elizabeth McCutcheon, “Margaret Roper’s Translation of Erasmus’ *Precatio Dominica*,” in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Guelphbytoni: Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, ed. Stella P. Revard et al. (Binghamton, NY: SUNY University Press, 1988), pp. 659–66, and Rita M. Verbrugge, “Margaret Roper’s Personal Expression in the *Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster*,” in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), pp. 30–42.
9. John Arthur Gee, “Margaret Roper’s English Version of Erasmus’ *Precatio Dominica* and the Apprenticeship behind Early English Translation,” *Review of English Studies* 13 (1937), pp. 257–71, p. 265.
10. John Morwen, “Epistola ornatissimo viro, ac humanissimo patrono suo, Magistro Ropero Joannes Morrenus,” MS. Bodleian 439, ff. 1–11.
11. Roger Ascham, “Clarissimae feminae Dominae Clarke,” January 15, 1554, in *The Whole Works*, vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 403–04.
12. John Christopherson, “authoris sensum et sententiam vere exprimerem, tum dicendi formam et numeros ita imitatione adumbrarem, quo vel iisdem vel non valde disparibus totat astringeretur oratio ... Eloquentia enim non est illa inanis et prope puerilis verborum volubilitatis,” “Proemium interpretis in Eusebium,” *Historiae ecclesiasticae scriptores* (Louvain: 1569), f. 4^r–^v, 5^r.
13. John Christopherson, “dum sermonis elegantiae student sensum & sententiam authoris negligat,” *Philonis Iudaei libri quatuor* (Louvain: 1553), f. B3^r.

14. The manuscript is now BL Harley MS 1850. The identity of the late husband of "Mary Clarke, widow" was until recently a source of mystery, when John Guy identified him as Stephen Clarke, a member of a well-to-do and ardent Catholic Suffolk family who died before 1553 (*A Daughter's Love* [London: Harper, 2009], p. 271). The socio-historical context of the epistle and its significance is discussed by Jaime Goodrich, who also provides a transcription, in "The Dedicatory Preface to Mary Roper Clarke Basset's Translation of Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*," *English Literary Renaissance* 40 (2010), pp. 301–28.
15. For a discussion of the duty of the translator in humanist writings, and especially in Christopherson's prefaces, see Theo Hermans, "The Task of the Translator in the European Renaissance: Explorations in a Discursive Field," in *Translating Literature*, Essays and Studies 50 (1997), ed. Susan Bassnett (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 14–40.
16. Thomas More, *The Workes of Sir Thomas More, Knyght ... in the Englysh Tonge*, ed. William Rastell (London: 1557), sigs. QQ₇^v – VV₂^v. [STC 18076].
17. R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936; repr. Anne Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 315; C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 179.
18. Philip E. Hallett, *St Thomas More's History of the Passion. Translated from the Latin by his Granddaughter, Mistress Mary Basset* (London: Burns & Oates, 1941), pp. xviii–xix.
19. "Mary Basset's Translation of the 'De Tristitia,'" in *De tristitia Christi*, ed. Clarence H. Miller, 2 pts., *Yale Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 15 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), vol. 14, pt. 2, Appendix C, pp. 1077–1165. All English and Latin quotations are from this same edition and all citations are given in parentheses in the text.
20. For the More family tradition of using printed translations as a means of spreading humanist values and furthering religious and political ends, see Brenda M. Hosington, "Translation in the Service of Politics and Religion: A Family Tradition for Thomas More, Margaret Roper and Mary Clarke Basset," in *In Between Scylla and Charybdis: Learned Letter Writers Navigating the Reefs of Religious and Political Controversy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeanine De Landtsheer and Henk Nellen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 93–108. Marion Wynne-Davies focuses on the translation as a component in the establishment of a Morean familial discourse and praises

- its “fidelity,” although fleetingly, in *Women Writers and Familial Discourse in the English Renaissance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 22–24.
21. André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992) and Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995).
 22. This is first recorded by the anonymous author of a Latin chronicle discussing Henry VIII's first divorce, who refers to Mary's “assistance” given at “great cost,” describes her as “most noble” and “most learned” and states that James Basset is an “incomparable” young man endowed with “all the graces of mind and body”: “quorum magnam partem nuper folibus impressorum excussam vidimus, ope et impensis nobilissimae simul ac doctissimae feminae [Mariae], Thomae Mori ex filia neptis, quam incomparabilis ille juvenis Jacobus Bassettus, omnibus animi et corporis dotibus cumulatissimus, nuper in uxorem duxit.” The fact that the author says that James has “recently” married Mary dates the chronicle to 1554–56. Charles Bémont, *Le premier divorce de Henry VIII. et le schisme d'Angleterre: fragment d'une chronique anonyme en latin, publié avec une introduction, une traduction française et des notes par Ch. Bémont* (Paris : Honoré Champion, 1917), pp. 227–47.
 23. John Guy, *A Daughter's Love* (London: Harper, 2008), p. 33.
 24. Cresacre More, p. 364.
 25. Mary's three brothers, William, Thomas, and Anthony, were all members of Lincoln's Inn.
 26. For more on Mary's marriage to Basset and the lives of their children, see *The Lisle Letters*, ed. Muriel St. Clare Byrne, 6 vols. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), vol. 6, pp. 262–76.
 27. Hugh Trevor-Roper suggests that Roper gave financial support to the publishing project, presumably basing his opinion on the fact that Roper was taken in for questioning on the matter of financing English exile publications (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [London: Oxford University Press, 2004]); however, this did not actually occur until 1568. Wynne-Davies claims that Roper's contribution to the publication is “almost certain” but offers no proof (p. 21). Bémont, however, states only that Mary helped with the costs of the volume (p. 68).
 28. See Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 1–22, and Danielle Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education, 2010), p. 9.

29. For a detailed discussion of these texts, their print history, and the role of these male editors, see Brenda M. Hosington, "Women Translators and the Early Printed Book," in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain (1476–1558)*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: Boydell, forthcoming).
30. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 36.
31. Whether Basset intended to have these marginal comments printed, or whether Rastell decided to include them, we cannot know for certain; but it would seem improbable that he would have done so without consulting her, given her financial input in the publication.
32. Miller, pp. 724–35. Guy is less cautious about Margaret's ownership of the manuscript, claiming that it was smuggled out of the Tower and given to her, then to her daughter, although he offers no proof for this (p. 250).
33. *Treatise on the Passion, Treatise on the Blessed Body, Instructions and Prayers*, ed. Garry E. Haupt, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, 15 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), vol. 13, p. 177.
34. Hallett, p. viii; Chambers, p. 178.
35. Although in his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* More defended the principle of translating the Scriptures into English, as a member of Henry VIII's Royal Commission looking into Tyndale's translation he also criticized translating matters touching on dogma or the clergy, which would make them too widely accessible (Hosington, "Translation in the Service of Politics and Religion," pp. 96–97).
36. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, s.v. "estate."
37. The Virgin Mary is mentioned four times, although always in passing, as the mother of Jesus (49/2, 153/1, 191/3 and 571/7), while Mary Magdalen is simply named as one of those who saw Jesus after his resurrection (425/1).
38. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, s.v. "Passover."
39. Germain Marc'hadour, "The Meaning of 'Pontifex' in More's *Utopia*," in *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Hafniensis. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Copenhagen 12 August to 17 August 1991*, ed. Ann Moss et al. (Binghamton, NY: SUNY University Press, 1994), pp. 607–18.
40. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Compact Edition, s.v. "ancients."
41. Brenda M. Hosington, "'Quid dormitis?' More's Use of Sleep as a Motif in *De tristitia*," in *Miscellanea Moreana: Essays for Germain Marc'hadour*, *Moreana* 100 (26), ed. Clare Murphy et al. (Binghamton, NY: MRTS, 1989), pp. 55–69.
42. See the section "Vision and Revisions: Patterns of style and thought," pp. 754–76.

43. For a discussion of “scilicet” in the *Utopia*, see R. Monsuez, “Le Latin de Thomas More dans *Utopia*,” *Caliban* 3 (1967), pp. 35–78.
44. Guy, pp. 31–33, 56.
45. Norton, p. 42.
46. Flora Amos, *Early Theories of Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1921; repr. New York: Octagon Press, 1973), p. 123.
47. Massimiliano Morini, *Tudor Translation in Theory and Practice* (Aldershot, Hants.: Ashgate, 2006), p. 21.
48. Grimald’s translation of Cicero’s *De officiis*, accompanied by a preface, was published in 1556, Hoby’s *Book of the Courtier* in 1561, and Wilson’s translation of Demosthenes in 1571.
49. Micheline White, “Renaissance Englishwomen and Religious Translations: The Case of Anne Lock’s *Of the Markes of the Children of God* (1590),” *English Literary Renaissance* 29 (1999), pp. 375–400; Danielle Clarke, “Translation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 167–180; Suzanne Trill, “Sixteenth-Century Women’s Writing: Mary Sidney’s *Psalmes* and the ‘Femininity’ of Translation,” in *Writing and the English Renaissance*, ed. Suzanne Trill and William Zunder (New York: Longman, 1996), pp. 140–58; Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writing: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 75–131.