

... la traduzione sicuramente contender può con gli originali ... che questa parte dunque della vita della vostra charissima Vinezia sia veduta dagli Italiani uomini, bella, e pura, e leggiadra, si come ella nacque ... (from the prefatory letter of Gualtero Scotto to the Italian edition of 1552)

In 1530, at the age of 60, Pietro Bembo, famous for his vernacular dialogue *Gli Asolani* and the *Prose della volgar lingua*, in which he attempted to set a standard for the literary use of the vernacular, was called away from those concerns to the writing of Latin, by his selection as official historian of the Republic of Venice; the history was to begin where his predecessor Sabellico had left off, the end of the war with Ferrara in 1487. He had written letters and speeches in Latin prose, in particular as Latin secretary to Pope Leo X from 1513 to 1521, but this would be his first venture into writing history in Latin; his belief in a Ciceronian standard for Neo-Latin was published in his *De imitatione* of 1513. By 1544 he had brought the history to the year 1513, and by 1547 he had added an Italian translation (apparently assisted by his colleague Carlo Gualteruzzi). The two versions were separately published after his death, in 1551 and 1552, after examination by the censors by order of the Council of Ten in Venice. The Council ordered some deletions, some additions, and some softening of wording in both versions, the precise extent of which was unknown for a long time. The manuscript of Bembo's Latin original was lost, and that of the vernacular version did not emerge from the archives until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A compilation of the changes was made a century later, by E. Teza ("Correzioni alla Istoria veneziana di Pietro Bembo proposte dal Consiglio dei Dieci nel 1548," *Annali delle università toscane* 18 [1888] 75-93). A comparison of the 1552 vernacular version with Bembo's original shows that, in addition to the changes mandated by the Council, other changes were made in the Italian, mainly in those same passages, according to stylistic principles different from those evident in Bembo's original.

To illustrate the character of the translation, the revisions made, and the difference between Bembo's vernacular and the published version of 1552, I have chosen a speech reported in Book Eight, dealing with events of the year 1509. The occasion was a meeting of the Venetian senate to discuss whether to make an attempt to retake Padua from the forces of Maximilian. Alvise Molin's support of the idea is countered by doge Loredan; then Molin delivers in the senate a much longer speech. Molin's speech has been recast by the censors from Bembo's original, softening the language, omitting whole sentences, and making the speech to be addressed to the senators throughout instead of being partly addressed to the doge; the revision extends as well to ordinary linguistic features, making it more in accord with contemporary speech instead of Bembo's old-fashioned diction.

This example well illustrates the combination of censorship for political purposes with revisions of the translation for stylistic reasons. The latter revisions are especially interesting as the *Venetian History* is now being given its first English translation for the I Tatti Renaissance Library.

