

The Culture of Translation in Early Modern England and France, 1500–1660.

Tania Demetriou and Rowan Cerys Tomlinson, eds.

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Over the last few years, research on Renaissance Anglo-French relations has in many ways benefited from an increased focus on translation — whether one defines it in terms of linguistic and literary transfer, or according to the broader notion of cultural translation, which encompasses the material, political, and ideological factors that shaped the relationship between France and England in the early modern period. This comprehensive view is the one outlined by the ten short essays in Tania Demetriou and Rowan Tomlinson's collection, making it a rich and timely contribution to a vibrant field of studies.

As clearly indicated in the introduction, the editors' aim is to document the "interaction between the early modern translation cultures of France and England," an area that "has yet to be systematically explored" (3). This they do by drawing attention to the distinct yet interrelated "cultures of translation" developing in both countries, at a time when France represented a major intermediary in the shaping of England's textual culture. The approach is at once comparative, with French and English case studies alternating through the volume, and dialogical, as recurring themes and issues are shown to reverberate across the Channel, thus highlighting the variety of agents, influences, and decisions involved in such linguistic and cultural crossings.

The opening article by Warren Boutcher lays the theoretical ground of the volume by defining early modern translation cultures in terms of the communicative nature of translation, one that requires scholars to complement traditional analyses of language and style with specific attention to cultural agents such as printers, sellers, patrons, and readers. The following essays by Glyn P. Norton and Neil Rhodes discuss perceptions of Greek scholarship in France and England. Respectively focusing on the Sorbonne's opposition to Francois I's Greek readers and on the reappropriation of Lucian's dialogues by English translators, they demonstrate the potentially "subversive" (51) and "liberating" (67) impact of Greek on early modern attitudes to vernacular translation. The next two pieces examine another offshoot of humanist culture, that is, the intricate relationship between translation and commentary. Paul White's analysis of Jodocus Badius's printed translations and pedagogical glosses reveals the conceptual "fluidity" (82) between these practices to extend to their material and social uses in the developing culture of print. Tania Demetriou also highlights the seminal importance of humanist commentary, as she traces the consistent Englishing of Penelope's Homeric epithet, *periphron*, as "chaste" through a variety of sources, including French lexicographical treatises.

Issues of language and readership take a distinctly political color in the following pair of essays, as Patricia Palmer reinterprets Richard Stanihurst's 1582 idiosyncratic rendering of the *Aeneid* as an attempt to found a native, Catholic, Irish-English literary tradition; and Edward Wilson-Lee teases out the diplomatic implications of Mary Sidney Herbert's 1592 translations from Philippe de Mornay and Robert Garnier. Montaigne's dialogic relationship to ancient skepticism provides in turn a thematic link between Kirsti Sellevold's and John O'Brien's articles. While the first draws on relevance theory to assess John Florio's rendering of Montaigne's "à l'aventure" in all its epistemic ambiguity, the second explores the intertextual and philosophical ramifications of Montaigne's skeptical stance, "je ne bouge," in *Essais* 2.15. The collection closes with Anne Lake Prescott's fascinating discussion of Thomas Urquhart's extreme practices of linguistic and poetic *copia* when translating Rabelais's *Tiers-Livre*, followed by an epilogue in which Terence Cave explores the theoretical tension between translation's nature as an act of human, living communication, and its historically bound, ever-changing "ecologies" (191).

Together, these essays convey a variegated image of the linguistic, literary, ideological, and material conditions in which translations originated and circulated in the early modern Anglo-French cultural space. The editors' decision to list translations under the translator's, not the original writer's, name is particularly appropriate, given recent discussions on the authorial and cultural visibility of early modern translators. Equally relevant is their attempt to quantify the pivotal role of French, both as a source and an intermediary language, by resorting to Brenda Hosington's catalogue of English printed translations, *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads*. One should note, however, that the *RCC* is based on the Short Title Catalogue, and therefore lists translations published until 1640 — and not until 1660, as indicated in the diagrams (4–5; incidentally, the statistics for the years 1641–60 are currently being compiled as part of a similar project at the Université de Montréal). Readers of Neil Rhodes's 500-page anthology *English Renaissance Translation Theory* (2013) might also be surprised to find commonplaces about the paucity of translation theory in England uncritically rehearsed in the introduction (7). But these are minor issues, and the volume as a whole brilliantly illustrates the complex yet crucial role played by translation in “informing and transforming written culture within and between” (16) early modern England and France.

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