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The “Sternhold and Hopkins” Project: A Case Study of the Impact of Translation on Culture, Society, Mentalities, Book Production and Circulation

Abstract

This article examines an interesting case study of the cultural, social, and ideological functions of translation. My discussion focuses on the most successful editorial initiative in early modern England: the metrical translation of the Book of Psalms by Thomas Sternhold and his followers. Printed in 1,000 editions from its first publication in 1562 to its last in 1828, the “Sternhold and Hopkins” metrical psalter was immensely popular; a million copies were sold by 1640. At the centre of public, personal and family devotion, often appended to the Geneva Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, this translation had a remarkable impact not just on theology, but on literacy and on language, as well as, more broadly, on mentalities and social interactions.

1. Introduction

A collection of essays on English versions of non-literary texts must of necessity, I believe, include a discussion of some aspects of Bible translation. The centuries-old, crucial position of the Bible in the religious, cultural and social life of Hebrew and Christian communities is beyond question. Considering the almost unmatched size of its audience, the multitude of people exposed to it in the course of personal and congregational worship, the vastness of its circulation in manuscript and print, the almost innumerable editions and translations in any language, its role in the development of vernaculars and national literatures, the biblical text is of exceptional relevance for studies of cultural history, literature and linguistics, book circulation and translation.

With reference to England, Bible translation has certainly played an essential role in the shaping of English culture and in the definition of a distinctive English Protestant identity. The translation of the Scriptures has greatly contributed to the development of English and to its acquisition of linguistic and literary prestige. Yet, while the role of translation in the rise of English as a language of science, law and medicine is presently a pre-eminent theme in studies of specialized English, the crucial phenomenon of the elevation of English as a language of theology, of liturgy, of personal and collective piety, a language worthy of translating God’s own words as registered in the Scriptures and human responses to them, attracts less consideration than it deserves. The omnipresence and centrality of religious discourses and practices in the lives of early modern English people across the age, class and literacy divide, the degree of familiarization with translated biblical texts entailing generalized acquisition of vocabulary, imagery and concepts that one notices in connection with English Bibles and especially with English translations of the Book of Psalms is perhaps a unique case of universal access to and use of specialized language, of its infiltration in collective mentalities.

Within the very wide area of study of the translation and circulation of biblical texts in early modern England, I have selected a paradigmatic example of their immense impact on polysystems:¹ I shall discuss the most widely circulated translations of the Book of Psalms in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My discussion outlines the genesis and development of a great project that epitomizes the profound and enduring ideological and cultural potential of the act of translation. My focuses are the historical, cultural and social circumstances and consequences of the translation, publication and circulation of metrical psalms² from Thomas Sternhold’s first paraphrases printed in 1549 to the immensely popular edi-

¹ My reference is to Itamar Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory (1979).

² Ruth Ahnert defines “metrical psalms” as “a genre that includes paraphrases of psalms in English, printed as poems or set to music” (2015, 494). Regarding “metrical psalmody”, Brown specifies that it is “not psalms in the chanted prose version of an accepted Bible translation, but psalms paraphrased in verse to be sung to a variety of tunes” (2014, 571).

tions of “Sternhold and Hopkins” complete psalters published by John Day in the second half of the sixteenth century and reprinted until the 1820s.³ I devote specific attention to the motives and aims of translators, editors and publishers that determine the quality of the translated text and the extent and nature of the paratext. Mine is therefore a multidisciplinary approach: my methodological instruments are borrowed from descriptive and historical criticism as well as stylistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic analysis.

2. *The popularity of psalms and their centrality in the Reformation*

The Book of Psalms is a fundamental text for both Judaism and Christianity. It is the most frequently transcribed and translated biblical book,⁴ the most frequently quoted text from the Old Testament in the New,⁵ the first biblical text to issue from the newly devised movable-type printing press (Brown 2014, 1, 6). Used for millennia as the Jewish hymnbook,⁶ it is central in early Christian church worship and personal devotion, in daily monastic cycle of prayers and in the Reformed liturgy. The psalter is the textual mainstay and generator of Protestant culture and identity. Described by Luther as “a fine *enchiridion* or Hand Manual”, “a short Bible” penned by the Holy Ghost (1903, 10), the Book of Psalms according to Calvin (also, as Luther, a translator and commentator of the psalter), is a “treasury” of “varied and resplendid riches”: “whatever may serve to encourage us when we are about to pray to God,” Calvin affirmed, “is taught us in this book” (1845, xxxvi-xxxvii). In early modern Protestant countries psalms were used

³ The various editions of *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* were generally indicated as “Sternhold and Hopkins” until the publication in 1696 of Nahum Tate and Nicholas Brady’s *A new version of the Psalms of David*: thereafter they were often referred to as “the Old Version”.

⁴ Becking notes that “it is telling that the Dead Sea scrolls contain relatively so many texts with psalms and prayers, that there are many more Greek manuscripts of the psalter available than of any other Old Testament book” (2007, 2).

⁵ Seybold indicates around fifty-four New Testament references; Isaiah comes next with forty-eight (1990, 10).

⁶ “Together the Mosaic Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) and the Davidic Psalms came to be seen as the two essential poles of ancient Israel’s faith: the word of God from on high and Israel’s response in prayer, praise, and instruction” (Brown 2014, 3).

to further at once piety and literacy, conveying general, moral and religious instruction at home and at school; they functioned as models for personal prayers, as patterns for spiritual autobiographies, as markers of confessional identification and differentiation, as weapons of resistance to Roman Catholic persecution.⁷

Of all devotional practices, psalm singing has the most explicit and widest scriptural endorsement. Paul repeatedly exhorts fellow Christians to engage in “teaching and admonishing your own selves, in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with a grace in your hearts to the Lord” and Peter affirms that the Holy Ghost speaks “by the mouth of David” (Colossians 3:16; Acts 1:16; see also Ephesians 5:19). The message was well received and by the fourth century early communities made regular use of the psalter in private and public worship. Contrary to established Hebrew and Christian uses, however, the Roman Catholic Church would then disregard for centuries the various scriptural invitations to all believers to engage in psalm singing, taking away from congregations this poetic common treasure of the spirit and turning it into the Latin prose script of the daily prayers and antiphonal reciting of priests, friars and nuns.⁸

The psalms were not the only target of ecclesiastical appropriation of the word of God. The secular withholding from universal access, understanding and use of the keystone of the Christian faith, the Bible, shrouded in Latin and kept from lay hands and minds, had considerable religious, cultural and social consequences. Equally remarkable was the positive impact of the Reformation’s unveiling of the biblical text through vernacularization and universal accessibility. The vital role of Bible translation in furthering the Protestant reform movement and its function as a marker of distinction from Roman Catholic attitudes can hardly be overstated. Norton emphasizes the epoch-making shift from Roman Catholic views of the Church as the “source of truth”, the “infallible guardian and interpreter” of the content of the Scriptures preserved “in an occult language to which it

⁷ On the use of psalms as battle hymns, see the often cited article by Stanford Reid (1971).

⁸ A rigid Roman Catholic ban on lay singing during worship was decreed on the occasion of the Council of Trent (1545-63).

alone had access”, to the Protestant idea of the Bible itself as the true and only “source of truth” (2004, 2). That “source of truth” was made finally accessible to all thanks to translation.⁹

The Copernican revolution of the topography of the spirit produced by Protestant doctrines entailed new views of the intersection of human and divine spaces. Removal of the distance created by ecclesiastical mediation issued in a new sense of proximity of human beings to God, thus encouraging direct communication. People addressing God needed words and found them in the psalter – a dialogic text – in their own language.

Great historic changes, and especially turning points in the history of human practices, seem often marked by new sounds and new voices. Perhaps the historic modification of the theological, cultural and social contexts brought about by the Reformation is expressed in the shift from the antiphonal repetition of prose psalms in monasteries to the powerful voice of whole congregations singing in unison the same psalms, finally accessible to all thanks to target-oriented, easily memorized and singable metrical versions, a nation-wide choir singing its way to a better definition and consolidation of a new political, social and confessional identity.¹⁰

3. Psalm translation in England

From the Anglo-Saxon metrical paraphrases of some psalms and Old English interlinear glosses in thirteen-century manuscript Latin psalters, to Middle English versions like the Surtees Psalter and the literal rendering by the hermit of Hampole, Richard Rolle, in the fourteenth century, psalm

⁹ Indeed, in early modern Europe Bible translation became a theological, confessional, cultural, social and political battlefield. Norton rightly points out that whereas “older translators such as Jerome had worked within the Church, facing scholarly and linguistic challenges only”, in Reformed Europe “language and the possession of the Bible were a major religious battlefield and the translators were in the front line [...]. The religious responsibility of translating had never been higher” (2004, 3).

¹⁰ One can only guess the auditory effect of thousands of voices joining in metrical psalmody. Concerning England, in a letter dated 5 March 1560 Bishop John Jewel describes psalm singing at Paul’s Cross in London with “six thousand persons, old and young, of both sexes, all singing together and praising God” (*Zurich Letters* 1842, 71).

translation has always had its keen practitioners in England (Norton 2004, 5-6; Quitslund 2008, 11-12; Zim 1987, x). However, as Norton reflects (2004, 6), owing to the cost of manuscripts and the high level of literacy required in order to copy a text for oneself, these were all versions for the cultural and economic élites, not in the least meant for wide circulation and use.

The psalter is a central text for studies of the history of translation in early modern England: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was translated more often than any other biblical book by a heterogeneous group of authors in a variety of literary styles, for multiple purposes and various types of readers.¹¹ One eminent translator of the book of psalms was Myles Coverdale, who authored the first complete vernacular Bible of Reformed England. In the prefatory address to “the Christian Reader” of his own version of the psalter, Coverdale hoped for an exclusive and universal practice of psalm singing.¹² His *Goostly Psalmes and Spirituall Songes* (1535), as a matter of fact, by reason of their inclusion in the Book of Common Prayer and the Great Bible of 1539, were no doubt very popular. However, his wish to hear each and every person in England sing psalms was to be fulfilled thanks to the initiative of a courtier, Thomas Sternhold. His first paraphrases of some psalms and the following augmented editions with translations by John Hopkins and others, which for almost three centuries would include Sternhold’s name in the title as a trademark, are seminal for the shaping of the English version of the Reformation and have left an indelible mark in the linguistic, literary, musical, ecclesiastical and social

¹¹ The very long list of authors includes theologians like Parker, poets and aristocrats (Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Earl of Surrey, Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke, among others). A survey of the very informative section on psalms (bibliographies, collections, versions, complete editions and studies) in *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature 600-1660* gives an idea of the immense attention devoted to psalm translation and commentary in early modern England. Zim (1987, 211-259) considers all prose and metrical psalm versions printed in England from 1530 to 1601. An important discussion of psalm translation by poets and its relevance for the development of English poetry is found in Hamlin’s *Psalms Culture and Early Modern English Literature*.

¹² “Yea, would God that our minstrels had none other thing to play upon, neither our carters and ploughmen other thing to whistle upon, save psalms, hymns, and such godly songs as David is occupied withal” (Coverdale 1846, 537).

life of the nation. Of universal use for a very long time, the “Sternhold and Hopkins” metrical psalter with sales of over a million copies in 400 different editions by 1640 (Green 2000, 509), is the “most printed book in England during the early modern period” (Quitslund 2008, 239),¹³ hence its crucial importance also for the history of book production and circulation in England.

4. *Thomas Sternhold’s political and evangelical agendas*

Sternhold and his followers (the translators who revised and completed his work, and John Day, the publisher who held the monopoly of the “Sternhold and Hopkins” psalters) endowed the Book of Psalms, that ancient Hebrew poetic text composed in very different historical and cultural circumstances from those of early modern England, with new linguistic and literary form, as well as with new functional and confessional traits. Through their strategic editorial and translation choices (mainly, as we shall see, through a clearly target-oriented version and the addition of an ideologically oriented and orientative paratext) they turned this ancient prayer book into a vocal and musical manifesto of a new religious and political project, as well as a very effective instrument of identity formation and consolidation.

Thomas Sternhold’s metrical paraphrases of psalms in two collections titled *Certayne Psalmes* and *Al such psalmes*, both published in 1549, started the vogue of metrical psalm singing in England. As the historical and cultural contexts, along with the intended audience of a translation, largely determine its strategies and the nature and extent of paratextual material, consid-

¹³ Beth Quitslund’s *The Reformation in Rhyme: Sternhold, Hopkins and the English Metrical Psalter, 1547-1603* is the most authoritative study of Sternhold’s work and “Sternhold and Hopkins” psalters. See also her 2018 edition with Nicholas Temperley of *The Whole Book of Psalms Collected into English Metre by Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins, and Others: A Critical Edition of the Texts and Tunes* which includes the contemporary musical setting of these psalms. Zim’s 1987 thorough and well documented discussion of the cultural relevance of metrical psalms in England is still a reference text.

eration of the personal and professional circumstances of Sternhold and the political role of his addressee is useful.¹⁴

Thomas Sternhold (d. 1549) was a crown servant and a court favorite, a bureaucrat acting as a groom of the King’s Robes for Henry VIII and Edward VI, thus enjoying valuable proximity to his monarchs. Curiously enough, the French Clément Marot who, around 1532, began composing metrical psalms later to become greatly popular with Protestants in France and in Geneva, held a similar position at the French court as *valet de chambre* to Francis I. Both dedicated their psalm translations to their kings, though no evidence survives regarding personal relations between the two courtiers or their knowledge of each other’s work (Zim 1987, 122).

Combining poetry and song, two highly appreciated forms of entertainment in early Tudor courtly circles, Sternhold was the first to compose metrical psalm paraphrases in the form of holy songs for use at the English court. His début as psalm translator is a small collection of metrical versions of nineteen Psalms published by Edward Whitchurch. The first undated edition (the dedication to Edward VI rules out dates prior to his accession in 1547) was followed by a second edition in 1549. The title, *Certayne Psalmes chose out of the Psalter of Dauid and drawe into Englishe Metre by Thomas Sternhold, grome of ye Kynges Maiesties Roobes* (hereafter *CP* in parenthetical references), includes interesting elements worth close scrutiny. The opening adjective, “certayne” which announces a partial rendering of the psalter and the prominent position of the past participle “chosē” (chosen) seem to me to lay stress on the deliberate nature and important meaning of Sternhold’s choice of texts for his paraphrases: the nineteen non-consecutive psalms in the collection are the fruit of no random selection; instead, they have been purposely chosen to serve Sternhold’s intentions. The specific content of these psalms, in fact, allows Sternhold to introduce a political discourse and articulate his contribution to Edward’s education. The following section of the title calls attention to the language and genre

¹⁴ Bassnett and Lefevere famously reflected that “A writer does not just write in a vacuum: he or she is the product of a particular culture, of a particular moment in time [...] Moreover, the material conditions in which the text is produced, sold, marketed and read also have a crucial role to play” (1998, 136).

of Sternhold's paraphrases: the *Certayne Psalmes*, "drawē into Englishe Metre", are given in the vernacular and in the form of poetic compositions. Finally, reference to his position in the king's household as "grome of ye Kynges Maiesties Roobes" underlines the courtly environment of Sternhold's initiative. This reminder of his specific role and his closeness to Edward and his Council serves also to cast the author as a worthy, professional and well-informed counsellor to the king.

The Preface of *Certayne Psalmes* is a clear announcement of Sternhold's ideological orientation, as well as a condensed statement of his aims as a psalm translator. Sternhold expresses deep appreciation of the young king's pious wisdom (his "tender and Godly zeale") which leads him to prefer metrical psalms to secular songs and poetry:¹⁵ the king takes "more delyghte in the holye songes of veritie than in anye fayned rimes of vanitie" (*CP*, sig. A3). Sternhold's stress on the king's familiarity with the psalter, "ye haue ye psalme it selfe in youre mynde" (*CP*, sig. A3), and, more generally, with the whole Bible, "your maiestie hath so searched ye fountains of the scriptures, that yet being young you understande theym better then manye elders" (*CP*, A2^v), is a central item (from a graphic point of view as well, given its position halfway in the preface) in Sternhold's casting of Edward as a worthy delegate of God on earth and a creditable head of the Church of England, hence a receptive addressee of the discourses of *Certayne Psalmes* in which religion and politics are intertwined as they are in Edward's dual responsibility. In my view, references to Edward's knowledge of the psalter and the whole Scriptures serve not only the obvious function of major strokes in the portrait of Edward as a pious monarch, but are also and mainly useful as pointers to the purposeful nature of Sternhold's choices of texts for his translations. Knowing the entire psalter by heart, "as ye haue ye psalme it selfe in youre mynde", Edward is a competent reader of Sternhold's translation, "so ye maye iudge myne endeuoure by your eare" (*CP*, sig. A3). This seems less an invitation to the king to assess the literary value of Sternhold's paraphrases or his competence as a translator by comparing his work

¹⁵ On Edward's religious fervor and his role in the English Reformation, see MacCulloch 2002.

with the versions of the psalter Edward had in his “mynde”, than a call for royal close scrutiny of *Certayne Psalmes* and reflection on the motives of Sternhold’s choice of specific Psalms. Being well aware of the topics dealt with in each of the 150 psalms in the psalter, Edward would easily guess the reason behind Sternhold’s apparently random choice of nineteen mainly non-contiguous psalms: psalms 1-5, 20, 25, 28, 29, 32, 34, 41, 49, 73, 78, 103, 120, 123, 128 are in fact a coherent collection of psalms variously touching on issues linked to political responsibility, the use and abuse of power, human and divine justice, thus offering guidance in relation to what Sternhold views as crucial instruction to the young king who should absorb scriptural lessons regarding “the verye meane to attayne to the perfyte gouernement of this your realme, to goddes glory, the prosperitie of the publique wealthe, & to the comferte of all youre maiesties subiectes” (CP, sig. A2). It is worth noting how in that period a large number of sermons – many of which were interestingly published by John Day, later to hold exclusive printing rights to several editions of metrical psalters featuring Sternhold’s name in their titles – were equally aimed at the instruction and orientation of Edward and his Council. By engaging in psalm translation, Sternhold offered a very important contribution to this collective educational effort.

In the Preface Sternhold is very open regarding the political agenda of his translation which he presents as a work in the “mirror for princes” or “advice for governors” tradition. Quitslund rightly sees Sternhold’s rendering in psalm 78 of the Ten Commandments as divine “counsel” as an example “of one of the most persistent topoi in Sternhold’s work: advice itself” (2008, 40).¹⁶ The advice discourse suited Edward particularly well in light of his minority.¹⁷

Sternhold’s choice of psalms makes a reasoned collection of scriptural lessons on the personal and public duties of Edward as a pious Christian and a godly governor. The political significance of Sternhold’s selection of psalms is reinforced and expanded by specific translation strategies and an

¹⁶ Quitslund notes that “Sternhold uses the words ‘counsel’ and ‘counselors’ with far greater frequency than his sources, either English or Latin” (2008, 42).

¹⁷ When *Certayne Psalmes* was published, Edward (1537-d.1553) was twelve years old.

ideologically dense paratext. One representative example of a translation choice determined by a particular aim is Sternhold's use in his paraphrase of psalm 1 of the term "counsel" in its meaning as council, (*CP*, sig. A4^v). Quitslund (2008, 44) notices that whereas the ecclesiological intentions of the translators of the Great Bible is expressed in their use of the term "congregation", Sternhold's introduction of the discourse of politics is conveyed by his choice of "counsel": "Therefore shall not the wicked men / in iudgement stande upright, / Ne yet in counsel of the iust, /but shalbe voide of myght" (*CP*, sig. A4^v).

Regarding the paratext, the dedication to Edward and the Preface are not the only attestations of the author's intentions: the often markedly opinionated quatrain summaries prefacing each psalm are also very important. It is mainly here that the dominant theme of Sternhold's advice to his king is developed. Within the general discourse of social equity and economic justice articulated in the psalms chosen for translation in *Certayne Psalmes*, Edward, as God's delegate on earth, is reminded of his specific responsibilities toward his people. Announced in the Preface which highlights Edward's duties in relation to "the prosperitie of the publique wealthe" and "the comferte" of his subjects (*CP*, sig. A3), Sternhold's idea of the intertwining of spiritual, social and political reformation and its dependence on the monarch's reception and implementation of scriptural teachings is clearly visible.

Convinced, like other Edwardian evangelicals, of the crucial role of governors in furthering social justice and peace,¹⁸ for his translations and prefatory comments Sternhold chooses psalms that suggest the imperative, both ethical and political, to cater for the needs of poor people abused by the rich and powerful. Sternhold's reflection in the prefatory quatrain to psalm 41, for instance, reinforces the social intention of his choice of text: he introduces his version of the psalmist's praise of those who help the needy by commenting that "The Lord will helpe that manne agayne, / that helpeth poore and weke" (*CP*, sig. B8^v).

¹⁸ On the "Commonwealth ideology" of Edwardian evangelicals such as Sternhold, see Shagan 2003, 270-310.

The next paraphrase in Sternhold’s collection of non-contiguous psalms, number 49, expands further on the foolishness of selfish rich people who hold tight to their wealth and trust in the unperishable nature of their “name” and “fame” (CP, sig. C2^v). Introducing the terrible psalmic curse on such people whom “death wyll soone deuour like shepe, / whan they are broughte to hell / Then shall the iust in lyght reioyce / whan they in darkenes dwell” (CP, sig. C2^v), Sternhold laments the fact that in Edwardian society “riche men doe oppresse the poore” and warns of divine retribution for such behaviour: selfish wealthy people “vaynly trustyng in their goodes, / [...] peryshe euermore.” (CP, C^v).

Sternhold’s paratext gives emphasis to the intersection of the social and political responsibilities of the monarch with the religious duties inhering in his dual status as head of state and church, secular and spiritual guide. The religious agenda of Sternhold, which likewise interlaces with his political one, is first revealed by the stress in his dedication of *Certayne Psalmes* to Edward on the royal supremacy which confers on the young king the power and the obligation – political as well as religious – to fully reform the English Church and the nation. Edward’s understanding of the utterly challenging title of “defender of the faith” is expressed in his encouragement of universal access to and knowledge of the Bible. He, in fact, “forbiddeth not lay men to gather and leaze in the Lord’s harvest, but rather commandeth the reapers to cast out of their handfuls among us, that we may boldly gather without rebuke” (CP, sig. A2^v). Sternhold casts himself as one of those “reapers”, translators, editors and publishers of the Scriptures in English, and presents the *Certayne Psalmes* as the product of his desire to contribute something to the “lords barne”, lest he appears “in the haruest utterly ydle” (CP, sig. A2^v). Sternhold seems proud of his own contribution to a nationwide and royally led crucial effort at perfecting the Reformation mainly by facilitating ordinary people’s access to God’s word. One finds here, I think, the announcement of Sternhold’s wider plan to widen his audience, from the king and court of the *Certayne Psalmes*, to the entire Reformed national community to which he plans to offer metrical translations of the entire psalter (he plans to “trauail further in the said boke of Psalmes” and offer paraphrases of “the residue”, CP, sig. A3). If the king

and his Council, well-acquainted with the entire Bible, were the receptive addressees of Sternhold's first translation project limited to a small collection of psalms chosen as props for specific discourses, ordinary people needed something else. Sternhold's declared intention to translate the whole psalter confirms his wider instructional aims and suggests his evangelical zeal.¹⁹ Reference in the Preface to the fact that the psalter "comprehendeth the effect of the whole Byble" is revealing in this sense. Sternhold points to authoritative and long-established views of the psalter as a compendium of the whole Scripture, a little Bible that provides all the necessary religious knowledge to people unacquainted with the whole text. The "many learned men" (*CP*, sig. A2) who have declared this crucial function of the Book of Psalms include the likes of Basil, Origen, Athanasius, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and the beacons of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin. An enjoyable, poetic, easy singable and linguistically accessible version of this brief biblical book would provide a quick, cheap and entertaining vehicle of general religious instruction for the ordinary people ("laye men", *CP*, sig. A2^v) mentioned in Sternhold's Preface.²⁰ Indeed, Sternhold's linguistic and metrical choices in the first nineteen paraphrases of *Certayne Psalmes* and in the later ones included in the posthumous collection titled *Alsuch psalmes of David*, are clear indications, as will be shortly shown, of a target audience well beyond the restricted circle of England's cultural and political élite. This shift in intended audience is no sign, in my view, of the substitution of one authorial aim with another; it is rather the product of a coherent development of a wide-ranging project. Sternhold's wish to offer instruction to ordinary people adds to his educational effort aimed at the powerful: the intended impact of his translation is reoriented in scope and direction from a vertical and restricted compass, to a horizontal and wider expanse.

¹⁹ Sternhold had openly manifested his religious fervor in 1543, when he spent some months in prison for his support of Anthony Parson who was charged with heresy and was burnt because of his radical Protestant views and criticism of the sacrament of Communion (Zim 1987, 85).

²⁰ Discussing early sixteenth-century reading practices in relation to vernacular Bibles, Wooding observes that it was very difficult to convey "Bible-based doctrine to largely illiterate and uneducated congregations" (2018, 44).

Sternhold’s premature death on 23 August 1549 prevented him from fulfilling his plan of translating the whole psalter: a new edition of his paraphrases, printed by Edward Whitchurch four months after his death, includes a reproduction of the prefatory address to Edward and of the Preface from the earlier *Certayne Psalmes*, eighteen new psalms by Sternhold and seven by the clergyman John Hopkins. The title of this collection, *Al such psalmes of Dauid as Thomas Sternehold late grome of [the] kinges Maiesties Robes, didde in his life time draw into English Metre*, with its focus on Sternhold’s authorship of the additional psalms (and no mention of Hopkins’s contribution), complete with reference to his important role in the royal household and to the poetic form of the paraphrases, as well as the fact of the prompt publication of the volume soon after Sternhold’s death, seem suggestive of the publisher’s desire to capitalize on Sternhold’s name and is likely to be indicative of a lively market for Sternholdian metrical psalmody.²¹ In fact, we have at least twelve editions from the years 1549-1553: as Temperley remarks, it is “an astonishingly high figure for a book that lacked any kind of official standing” (Temperley 2015, 532). The two Sternholdian collections, *Certayne Psalmes* and *Al such psalmes*, were printed in fourteen editions by 1554, making them “the most reprinted text[s] of any kind in Edwardian England (excluding official ecclesiastical publications)” (Quitslund 2008, 59).

Sternhold’s wish for inclusive lay access to the Book of Psalms, his desire to “publishe among the people playn, / his [God’s] counsels and his will” as expressed in the psalter (psalm 9, *Al such psalmes*, sig. B4^v), clearly determine the quality of his translation, a pattern almost unmodified by translators, editors and publishers of the numerous later revised and enlarged editions of his work. Despite freely drawing on the various versions of biblical translations at his disposal, from the Vulgate to Coverdale’s, Sternhold found his own distinct voice as a translator, guided by very clear

²¹ The publication in December 1549 and in the years 1550 and 1553 of collections of psalm paraphrases by Wyatt, Hunnis and Seagar with titles that openly recall Sternhold’s (*Certayne psalmes chosen out of the psalter*, *Certayne Psalmes chosen out of the Psalter* and *Certayne Psalmes select out of the Psalter*) seems to confirm the popularity and appreciation, as well as the economic value, of Sternhold’s *Certayne Psalmes*.

aims which decide the linguistic and metrical style of his paraphrases and the nature of paratextual materials.

Sternhold's linguistic and poetic choices made his literal version of the psalmic text largely accessible (by early modern English standards), enjoyable and suited to memorization and singing. The target-oriented quality of Sternhold's translation finds expression in a remarkable abundance of monosyllabic words and plain statements and in an equally notable paucity of inversions. Duguid remarks that Sternhold uses "a simple and accessible vocabulary that people of all educational levels could understand" (2014, 5). Sternhold's domesticating techniques and his acute sense of the needs of intended users of his translations determine his immensely influential metrical choices; their impact was such, that the meter used in *Certayne Psalmes*, *Al such psalmes* and all later collections titled *The Whole Psalmes* was named "Sternhold's meter" ("Common Meter" in the eighteenth century). Adopted for the majority of English and Scottish psalmody and hymnology, its effect on English poetry was also great. In a not recent, but still important discussion of the literary significance of Sternhold's innovations, Hallett Smith highlights the connection of the predominantly iambic meter used by Sternhold and his followers with the transition in the 1550s from "somewhat loose, syllabic versification, Skeltonics, and degenerated accentual alliterative poetry to the prevailing Elizabethan iambic manner first prominent in *Tottel's Miscellany*" (1946, 254).

With only two exceptions, Sternhold uses *abcb* quatrains in alternating lines of eight and six syllables, the first to do so in psalm paraphrases. Given its established association with memorized poems, Sternhold's choice is indicative of his aim to make his paraphrases familiar to and used by as large a portion of the population as possible.²² Facility of memorization, in fact, was crucial for the illiterate who could not read the psalter directly but, by having it regularly read by others and by constant repetition at home and in church, learned it by heart, therefore absorbing its theological instruction

²² Sternhold's attention to the needs of a wide audience did not deter more sophisticated users: indeed, "the song form that he chooses is appropriate to a reasonably wide audience without alienating elite readers" (Quitslund 2008, 71).

as well as its vocabulary and imagery.²³ The religious, linguistic, cultural and ideological impact of Sternholdian psalm versions on the mass of the population can hardly be overstressed.

The dynamic pace of Sternhold’s stanza alternating lines of eight and six syllables with four and three beats and the simplicity and regularity of its rhyme make his paraphrases ideal for pleasant and easy singing. According to Zim, Sternhold’s rhythmic and metrical choices largely derive from his adaptation of his renderings to preexistent or impromptu tunes (thus also making different texts singable to the same tune) (Zim 1987, 117). The fact that “such metrical regularity would also have assisted a moderately literate singer to read and remember these holy songs, and to sing them to brief melodies repeated stanza by stanza” (Zim 1987, 117) is crucial in view of a universal use of psalms in liturgy. In a similar way to Edward VI who was delighted by Sternhold’s singing of his psalm versions (“as your grace taketh pleasure to heare them song sometimes of me”, *CP*, sig. A3), millions – literally – of persons would for a century and a half not only gladly hear Sternholdian psalm singing, but would also, and more importantly, join in a universal choir.

Sternhold’s early intention to complete his translation and expand its use and audience – already announced, as shown above, in the preface to his first collection –, determines his linguistic and metrical choices. The sharpening of his attention to general reformation surfaces in his selection of additional psalms characterized by apposite topics and in the pedagogic and informative nature of the introductory quatrains in the posthumous *Al such psalmes*.²⁴ These target-oriented textual and paratextual features were to become the distinguishing marks of the large number of editions published by John Day of metrical psalters in the sternholdian tradition and with his name as a trademark in the title (and that of Hopkins from 1562). Indeed,

²³ “In many English parishes, the parish clerk (lay or ordained) recited or intoned the Psalms by single verse, which the congregation then repeated” (Austern, McBride, and Orvis 2011, 13).

²⁴ *Al such psalmes* includes eighteen new translations by Sternhold of psalms 6-17, 19, 21, 43, 44, 63 and 68.

Sternhold's concern for use, users and function of his paraphrases is magnified in Day's re-creation of his work.

5. *The Anglo-Genevan metrical psalms*²⁵

The death in 1553 of sixteen-year-old Edward VI was followed by the religious upset of Mary Tudor's restoration of Catholicism. Persecutions led many among the most fervent and visible Protestants to leave England for safe havens mainly in Frankfurt and Geneva; the Genevan experience in the years 1553-1558 is of great relevance for the purposes of this article.

An intensification of personal religious enthusiasm and an acute need for the shaping and expression of clearly defined individual and communal identities were unsurprising products of the peculiar condition of the Marian exiles. A key instrument and document of this crucial process of self- and collective-fashioning is the thorough revision and expansion of *Al such psalmes* – the Sternhold-Hopkins psalm collection of 1549 – and its use as the mainstay of a new order of worship centred on congregational psalm singing which became a mark of confessional distinction.

The Anglo-Genevan psalter edited by William Whittingham – one of the translators of the Geneva Bible who succeeded Knox as minister of the English congregation in Geneva – and others, published in 1556 under the title *One and Fiftie Psalmes of David in Englishe metre, wherof 37 were made by Thomas Sterneholde, a[n]d the rest by others; co[n]ferred with the hebrewe, and in certeyn places corrected as the text, and sens of the prophete required* is characterized by text revisions and paratextual additions dictated by theological motivations and functional to liturgical use. As well as progressively adding new paraphrases until finally reaching the number of 87 (most additional psalms dealing with exilic feelings or including examples of and exhortations to resilience, resistance and faith), the Geneva revisers brought into play their scholarly skills to make translations by Sternhold and Hopkins more faith-

²⁵ I follow Quitslund's use of the term "Anglo-Genevan" to indicate psalters produced within the Genevan community of Anglo-Scottish exiles: most, if not all, of the translators and editors were English (2008, 155). The expression "Genevan Psalter" usually indicates the Marot-Beza versions of psalms.

ful from a philological point of view²⁶ (this is clearly advertised in the title: “*in certeyn places corrected as the text, and sens of the Prophete required*”). More importantly, their confessional orientation impressed a decidedly Calvinist tone to their new marginal annotations, as well as to existing paraphrases and introductory quatrains which were also made notably longer.²⁷ That they felt the need to revise, indeed to re-create the psalter which became the fundamental text of the personal, collective and liturgical life of the diasporic community is symptomatic of the ideologically loaded nature of the act of translation, of its adaptability to changing cultural, political and social contexts and its power in shaping new versions of these contexts.²⁸

While the confessional motive is manifest in the new introductory quatrains and marginal notes, the addition of verse numbers and unison tunes signals editorial attention to the specific use of the Anglo-Genevan psalter. In compliance with Calvin’s view that only practices established in the Scriptures were acceptable, the spiritual leaders of the Marian exiles put psalm singing at the core of the liturgy, thus adopting a well-established continental praxis. Appropriately, the metrical psalter was included in the

²⁶ The title page of this psalter lays stress on the philological rigor of the revision of psalm translations which are “Conferred with the hebrewe” and the Preface includes an interesting editorial note, “we thoght it better to frame the ryme to the Hebrewe sense, then to bynde that sense to the Englishe meter” (*OFP*, 21). However, revisers seem not to have used Hebrew-language sources, relying instead on Latin and French versions (Duguid 2014, 25).

²⁷ “Overall, the 1556 Genevan edition of the psalter replaces about 26 per cent of Sternhold’s language, and supplies 16 additional quatrains that do not correspond to anything in Sternhold’s originals. Only one psalm (Ps. 123) escapes with no emendation. The changes to Hopkins’s versifications are much less dramatic, amounting to less than 8 per cent of the language and only one additional quatrain” (Quitslund 2008, 155). A comparative analysis of the Genevan philological and ideological revisions of Sternhold and Hopkins is beyond the scope of the present article; it requires a full-length study which I hope to complete and publish in the future.

²⁸ Another excellent exemplification of the markedly ideological nature of translation is the new version of the psalter produced by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1640. This revised translation under the title *The Whole Book of Psalms Faithfully Translated into English Metre* was the first book printed in America. The “Bay Psalm Book” is rightly defined in Austern, McBride, and Orvis as “an exemplary text of immigration: an instance of transatlantic self-fashioning, articulating a new, colonial identity within Anglo-American Protestantism” (2011, 116).

Form of Prayers of the Anglo-Genevan Church (a mark of differentiation with Marian devotional practices and church orders) and was only published as part of it, hence its tight link with liturgical worship. Following Calvin very closely, the author (almost certainly Whittingham) of the prefatory epistle in the 1556 edition of Form of Prayers describes the volume including the metrical psalms as “a forme and order of a reformed church, lymited within the compasse of gods woorde”: “what so euer is added to this worde by mans deuce, [...] is euell, wicked, and abominable” (*One and Fiftie Psalmes*, 9-10; hereafter *OFP* in parenthetical references). “Olde and receyued ceremonies”, viz, Catholic liturgical practices and church rituals based on the Prayer Book, top the list of “abominable” additions to Bible-based worship (*OFP*, 12). The singing of psalms, “which the holy ghoste hath framed [...] and commended to the church” (*OFP*, 19), is indicated in the Preface as part and parcel of the orders “approued to the increase of godes glorye, and edification of his holye people” (*OFP*, 16). Liturgical psalm singing in unison with the whole congregation fully activates the function of metrical psalmody as collective mark of distinction and identification, as well as community cement.

As songs “containinge the effect of the whole scriptures” (*OFP*, 19), psalms were the most compact vehicle of evangelization and the ideal script for private and public devotion, their congregational singing a pleasant liturgical discipline expressing and consolidating a specific communal confessional identity. They were also a powerful weapon of resistance to persecution. The combative Genevan diasporic community, however, made more peaceful use of psalmody than, for instance, the Huguenots in France. In both cases, as in many other occasions, the psalms were employed as battle hymns: in France and elsewhere on the Continent they were sung in actual conflicts, in Switzerland they were used in confessional confrontations between Anglo-Geneva and Marian England (Stanford Reid 1971).

6. *John Day and* The Whole Booke of Psalmes

At the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, the diasporic experience was over and a new national reformed identity had to be shaped at home. Metrical psalmody lost its tone of exilic cry and became the musical score of the whole nation singing its proud announcement of religious independence and distinctiveness. It was the religious militancy and commercial awareness of the London publisher John Day (also spelled Daye, c.1522-1584) which made metrical psalms universally accessible and generally used. Whereas Sternhold’s *Certayne Psalmes* was composed for the eyes and ears of Edward VI and his power circle, the posthumous *Al such psalmes of David*, while widening the readership, was still intended for limited use for private and domestic devotion, and the Anglo-Genevan augmented and revised editions became the marrow of Reformed liturgy and the distinguishing mark of diasporic resistance to Marian Catholic restoration, Day’s numerous editions of the psalter made a very great impact on the private and public life of literally every person in Elizabethan and Stuart England.

A convergence of religious and political motives unites Thomas Sternhold and John Day: the publisher shared Sternhold’s evangelical zeal and his agenda of religious and political reformation. Both men, as suggested earlier, contributed to the efforts to orientate Edward VI’s policies, the courtier by producing versions of specific psalms together with open advice in the form of a preface to his work, the publisher by printing numerous pieces of instruction for the king in the form of sermons. Day’s religious fervor and his commitment to the cause of the Reformation are expressed in his active participation in the anti-Marian resistance as he secretly printed confessional and militant works, which occasioned his imprisonment in the Tower in 1554 (Evenden 2016, 36). He also experienced exile on the Continent, hence perhaps his interest for and resonance with the Anglo-Genevan psalter, that diasporic work that would form the basis of his major publishing enterprise, the publication of the complete metrical psalter.²⁹

In November 1559 John Day secured the royal privilege of metrical psalm printing in English and Dutch, with and without music. Holding this

²⁹ Helpful contributions on John Day are Evenden 2016, King 2001 and 2002. King rightly depicts Day as an “ideologically motivated publisher” (2002, 180).

type of monopoly in the founding period of the Elizabethan Church was strategic. With negligible opposition, firm ecclesiastical support and despite Elizabeth's halfhearted enthusiasm, the Genevan order of worship with its related pivotal element of congregational psalm singing was soon implemented in England.³⁰ One cannot overemphasize the ideological and cultural consequences of the introduction in the aftermath of Elizabeth's succession to the Catholic Mary of the markedly confessional Anglo-Genevan psalter along with the habit of liturgical psalmody that had meant so much for the construction and strengthening of a distinguished Protestant identity in the exilic period.

In 1560 Day published *Psalmes. Of David in English metre, by Thomas Sternholde and others: conferred with the Ebrue, and in certeine places corrected, as the sense of the Prophete required: and the Note ioyned withal. Very mete to be used of all sorts of people privately for their godly solace and confort, laying aparte all ungodly songes and ballades, which tend only to the nourishing of vice, and corrupting of youth. Newly set fourth and allowed, according to the order appointed in the Quenes Majesties Injunction.*³¹ The Anglo-Genevan metrical psalms from the 1558 Form of Prayers figure prominently in this collection of devotional material, some of which of continental (mainly German) origin. Next to the obvious mention of David, the name Thomas Sternhold occupies a conspicuous position in the title. The philological quality of the collection is advertised by the "conferred with the Ebrue" statement and by reference to the Genevan revision of the paraphrases by "Thomas Sternholde and others". The presence of "Note", i.e., music, indicates the proposed use of psalms as holy songs and points to the usefulness of the book. The closing mention "newly set fourth" adds to the commercial pull of the book. Day's title designates the intended audience and the benefits deriving from singing David's psalms in this new revised version: they are "Very mete to be used of all sorts of peo-

³⁰ Queen Elizabeth's Injunctions of 1559 did not openly mention psalm singing, vaguely allowing the singing of hymns and similar songs in praise of God (Injunction n. 49). Very interesting discussions of the function and significance of church music, psalmody and hymnology in Elizabethan England are found in Willis 2016.

³¹ The reference here is to Injunction 51 of 1559 which stated that all published texts had to be approved by the Queen, the Privy Council and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (Clegg 2004, 28).

ple privately for their godly solace and comfort, laying aparte all ungodly songes and ballades”. The key term, I think, is “all”. Day’s aims regarding his intended audience could hardly have been stated more openly: his work is for universal use by “all sorts of people”. Day’s perspective as editor and publisher comprises wide popular evangelization and economic success.³² The metrical psalms are recommended for private devotion; moreover, they offer “godly solace”, a holy form of entertainment preferable to that afforded by popular secular songs and ballads, and “comfort” in life’s hardships.

Day’s entrepreneurial drive and evangelizing intention emerge more neatly from a second collection dated 1560 on the title page and 1561 on the colophon. The coincidence of date and title with the first print is misleading, as this volume, far from being another reprint of existing texts, is the fruit of Day’s active commissioning of new psalm paraphrases: his ambitious project of a whole singing psalter was thus launched.

1562 is a landmark date in the history of metrical psalm singing in particular and, more generally, in the history of ecclesiastical and social practices, as well as in the history of book production in England. Day published a complete psalter with the revised psalms by Sternhold and Hopkins in their Genevan revised form and new paraphrases by the likes of John Hopkins himself, William Whittingham, Thomas Norton and John Pullain: *The Whole Booke of Psalmes, collected into Englysh metre by T. Starnhold I. Hopkins & others: conferred with the Ebrue, with apt Notes to synge the[m] with al, Faithfully perused and allowed according to thordre appointed in the Quenes maiesties In-iunctions. Very mete to be used of all sortes of people priuately for their solace & comfort: laying apart all vngodly Songes and Ballades, which tende only to the norishing of vyce,*

³² Day’s choices as editor and publisher seem clearly indicative of an interesting convergence of genuine desire to convey biblical knowledge to all, the uneducated and the scarcely literate included, and economic calculation. With regard to Day’s strategies in relation to type and extent of paratextual material or book format, therefore, it is always difficult, and probably wrong, I think, to pinpoint a single motivation. The coexistence of economic drives and concern for popular evangelization is suggested by Day’s epitaph at Little Bradley in Suffolk: “Here lies the Daye that darkness could not blynd / when popish fogges had ouer cast the sunne: [...] Day spent in print his wealth / But God with gayn returnd his wealth agayne” (Durstun and Eales 1996, 198).

and corrupting of youth (henceforth abbreviated *WBP*). Day adapted his material to the new geographical, political and theological circumstances, as Elizabeth's accession in 1558 had occasioned the return of the Genevan exiles who carried with them their extreme religious fervor and a new church order. The 1562 *WBP* is a complex and complete collection for personal and communal, private and public devotion. Along with hymns and prayers, the volume includes three sections indicative of its intended universal and frequent use: "A shorte Introduction into the Science of Musicke", a reproduction of "A Treatise made by Athanasius the great, wherin is set forth, how, and in what manner ye may Vse the Psalmes, according to th'effect of the minde" and "The vse of the rest of the Psalmes not comprehended in the former Table of Athanasius". The very popular treatise by Athanasius offered guidance on how to adapt psalms to personal circumstances, the addition of further situations with instruction on how to apply psalms to them, made the *WBP* a handy guide for everyday life.

The first element of the paratext is plainly suggestive of the collection's intended audience and circulation and hence deserves close scrutiny. Day prefaces the volume with "A shorte Introduction into the Science of Musicke, made for such as are desirous to haue the knowledge therof, for the singing of these Psalmes": the paraphrases he is publishing are proposed for singing and singing by all, even those with little or no musical skill. The introduction of this concise handbook indicates Day's instructional aim and at the same time his business talent, as this handy and simple lesson in sight-singing was likely to increase sales. The affixing of "A form of prayer to be used in private houses, every morning and evening" further added to the appeal of the volume.

The "Introduction into the Science of Musicke" includes significant passages. The short treatise offers ABC instruction to beginners: the aim is that even "the rude & ignorant in Song" will learn "the godly exercise of singing of Psalmes" (*WBP* 1562, sig. A2). The advertising technique centres on the efficacy and straightforwardness of the instruction: it is "an easie and moste playne way and rule, of the order of the Notes and Kayes of singing"; thanks to this concise manual, "euerye man may in a fewe dayes: yea, in a few houres, easely without all payne, & that also without ayde or

helpe of any other teacher, attayne to a sufficient knowledge, to singe any Psalme contayned in thys Booke” (*WBP* 1562, sig. A2). The open statement that people should perform “the godly exercise of singing of Psalmes, as well in common place of prayer, where altogether with one voyce render thankes & prayes to God, as priuatly by themselues” (*WBP* 1562, sig. A2) is of paramount significance: Day clearly has the continental and especially Anglo-Genevan practice of congregational psalm singing, with its inherent function as confessional and identity sign, in mind. Whereas the title, perhaps reflective of the still incomplete definition of liturgical orders in the newly established Elizabethan Church, mentions only private use of the metrical psalms, reference to their employment in public worship is openly referred to in the treatise on singing placed in a prominent position as the first item of the paratext. The initiative of offering instruction in the art of singing psalms is important in the perspective of the development of congregational psalmody as the core of English church practices for a very long time.³³ Day is a determined and dedicated protagonist of the shaping of reformed worship.

The 1566 edition of *WBP* is worth attention for its introduction in the title of a clear reference to congregational psalmody: “*Newlye set foorth and allowed to bee soong of the people together, in churches*”. The title page of the edition of 1567 further specifies “*to be song in all churches, of all the people together*”. The repetition of “all”, “all churches”, “all the people”, is the linguistic mark of the intended universality of access and use by everybody in all churches throughout the country. “Together” is also a crucial item, as it points to congregational singing, suggests a common reformed identity and projects the image of a cohesive community, inclusive of all orientations, from the more conservative to the more radical. This general declaration of intended

³³ Day’s attention to music and congregational singing is shown, as Zim suggests, by the fact that “Harmonized vocal and instrumental settings of the ‘church tunes’ for the Anglo-Genevan psalter were first published by John Day in about 1563” (1987, 143). Temperley underlines that “the tunes printed in the *Whole Book of Psalmes* [...] would become the foundation of congregational singing in England. They embody an idea and a mode of singing in church that were revolutionary when they began, but soon became permanent and have lasted through all the political, religious, and musical changes that have occurred since they were first introduced” (2015, 531).

audience and use is followed by an accurate description of desired frequency of use and extended context. After a first mention of the foremost liturgical function of psalm singing in “all churches” (in effect, the *WBP* was used in all parochial churches until 1696), comes the indication that psalms are to be sung “before & after morning & euenyng prayer, as also before and after the sermo[n]”, thus representing a substantial portion of communal worship. While the liturgical use of psalm singing receives great stress, attention is also devoted to its employment in “priuate houses” for “godly solace and comfort”, for individual and family prayer: metrical psalmody is a universal and daily experience characterizing the public and private lives of people. Indeed, from the 1560s to the end of the seventeenth century there seems hardly to exist a single aspect of people’s life or an environment not influenced by the omnipresence, general use and knowledge of the *WBP*.

By teaching psalm singing for private and church use, giving versions of the whole Book of Psalms, texts of hymns and prayers to be used in church and at home and a handbook on daily use of psalms for personal circumstances, Day’s collections were clearly meant to offer in one small, inexpensive, easily portable volume the spiritual daily bread of each individual and of the Reformed English Church.

Day’s printing exploits contributed significantly to the shaping of the then embryonic Elizabethan Church. From the date of the first print of *WBP* to 1603 only two complete metrical psalters were published, the *WBP* and Matthew Parker’s *The Whole Psalter translated into English metre*, 1567, also from Day’s press. Since this last was published in just one edition against scores of the *WBP*, it is fair to say that in the crucial decades of the definition of a specific Church of England discipline and a collective reformed identity, the *WBP* was a powerful propeller which filtered into people’s mentalities and monopolized the book market. The success of the *WBP* is

certainly an unprecedented and unequalled publishing phenomenon in the history of early modern English book trade.³⁴

Printing statistics give an idea of the extraordinary circulation (in terms of the number of copies sold and the very long printing period) of the *Whole Book of Psalms*, making it one of the most popular publications in early modern England, in fact, the most successful, according to some studies (Green 2000, 509, 520; Quitslund 2008, 1; Duguid 2014, 105, 186). From its first print run in 1562 to its last in 1828 by Oxford Clarendon Press, the *WBP* was published in about 1,000 editions. The Elizabethan period saw 150 editions and in Jacobean England the *WBP* was the bestseller among single book titles. By 1640 over a million copies in more than 400 editions had been sold (Green 2000, 509).³⁵ This figure is exclusive of all copies sold in America until 1640 when the Bay Psalm Book was printed and in Scotland where it was used until 1650. Considering literacy rates and the dimension of the printing market in that period,³⁶ the *WBP* is a case study of the utmost relevance for analyses of early modern print history in general and the circulation of translated texts in particular. One must be aware that the above data refer only to separate editions of the *WBP*: after 1560 the *WBP* was also appended to the Geneva Bible, the mass-produced, most widely circulated Bible among ordinary people, a fact that further widened the spread and use of the *WBP*.³⁷ Moreover, the frequent inclusion of the metrical *WBP* in the Book of Common Prayer alongside prose versions of psalms from the Great Bible made the *WBP* truly ubiquitous.

In England one has to wait until 1696 with the publication of the Tate and Brady ‘New Edition’ of metrical psalms for the popularity of the ‘Old’,

³⁴ Upon the authority of documents in the National Archives, Evenden and Freeman remark that Day’s business was “at the top end of the trade” and that his wealth “was estimated by staff and family members as amounting to at least £ 5,000” (2011, 13).

³⁵ For more detailed data, see “Early Sales of ‘Sternhold and Hopkins’” and “Sales in the Later Seventeenth Century” in Green 2000, 506-525.

³⁶ On the early modern English book trade, see Evenden 2016, Kesson and Smith, and Part 1 of Feather 2005. Interesting discussions of literacy rates are found in Sanders 2002 and Brayman Hackel 2005.

³⁷ “Over 140 editions of the Geneva Bible were published between 1560 and 1644, with at least one per year between 1575 and 1618” (Armstrong and Ó hAnnracháin 2018, 4).

the *WBP*, to be rivalled but not matched: as Hamlin remarks, “the 1790s was the first decade in which the number of surviving editions of the *New Version* exceeded that of the *WBP*” (2015, 553).

7. Conclusions

From its genesis at the court of Edward VI to its notable publishing life, the “Sternhold and Hopkins” project is a paradigmatic case study of the great generative power of translation, of its ideological nature and its role in cultural and social identity formation and transformation.

The production, revision, completion and dissemination of metrical psalters – from Sternhold’s *Certayne Psalmes*, through the liturgical and militant Anglo-Genevan *One and Fiftie Psalmes* and unto Day’s publication of multiple editions of *The Whole Booke of Psalmes* – have left indelible marks on English minds, hearts and practices. The cultural and religious empowerment of early modern English laity is the crucial consequence of Thomas Sternhold’s commitment to the education of the power circle of his time and the sociopolitical and religious reformation of the whole country, of the Genevan exiles’ infusion of radical fervor to psalmody adopted as group self-identification and spiritual weapon of resistance, of John Day’s conjugation of entrepreneurial and evangelical drives. The story of the “Sternhold and Hopkins” psalters is an important example of the penetration of a translated text in the daily life of millions of people, for an extended period of time, impacting at the level of microsystems, on the devotional habits of individuals across the sex, age, economic and literacy spectrum, and of macrosystems, families, households, congregations, communities, the whole nation. The history of the Sternholdian psalters is relevant for translation studies, the history of book production, of ecclesiastical practices, of family and social interactions.

The development of the English language, the creation of an English cultural and literary distinctiveness originate from the great Renaissance translations of the religious and secular founding texts of the Hebrew and classical traditions. Metrical versions of the Book of Psalms are no doubt central in this propagative process.

Note on texts

Quotations in the article are from the following editions of metrical psalms:

Sternhold, Thomas. 1549. *Certayne Psalmes chose[n] out of the Psalter of David, and drawe[n] into Englishe Metre by Thomas Sternhold, grome of ye kynges Maiesties Roobes*. London: Edward Whitchurch.

Sternhold, Thomas, and John Hopkins. 1551. *Al such psalmes of David as T. Sternehold didde in his life time draw into English Metre*. London: Edward Whitchurch.

One and Fiftie Psalmes of David in Englishe metre, wherof 37 were made by Thomas Sterneholde, a[n]d the rest by others; co[n]ferred with the hebrewe, and in certeyn places corrected as the text, and sens of the prophete required. 1556. In *The forme of prayers and ministration of the Sacraments, & c., used in the Englishe Congregation at Geneua; and approued by the famous and godly learned man, Iohn Caluyn*. Geneva: Iohn Crespin.

Psalmes. Of David in English metre, by Thomas Sternholde and others: conferred with the Ebrue, and in certeine places corrected, as the sense of the Prophete required: and the Note ioyned withal. Very mete to be used of all sortes of people privately for their godly solace and confort, laying aparte all ungodly songes and ballades, which tend only to the nourishing of vice, and corrupting of youth. Newly set fourth and allowed, according to the order appointed in the Quenes Majesties Injunction. 1560. London: John Day.

The Whole Booke of Psalmes, collected into Englysh metre by T. Starnhold I. Hopkins & others: conferred with the Ebrue, with apt Notes to synge the[m] with al, Faithfully perused and allowed according to thordre appointed in the Quenes maiesties Iniunctions. Very mete to be used of all sortes of people priuately for their solace & comfort: laying apart all vngodly Songes and Ballades, which tende only to the norishing of vyce, and corrupting of youth. 1562. London: John Day.

The whole booke of psalmes collected into English metre by Thomas Sternhold. Iohn Hopkins, and others: conferred with the Ebrue, with apt notes to syng them wyth all; Newly set foorth and allowed to bee soong of the people together, in churches, before and after morning and euening prayer: as also before and after the sermon, and moreouer in priuate houses, for their godlye solace and comfort, laying apart all vngodly songes and balades, which tend onely to the nourishing of vice, and corrupting of youth. 1566. London: John Day.

The whole booke of psalmes collected into Englishe meter by Thomas Sternhold. Iohn Hopkins, and others; conferred with the Hebrue, with apt notes to sing them withal; newly set forth and allowed to be song in all churches, of all the people together, before & after morning & euenyng prayer, as also before and after the sermo[n], and moreouer in priuate houses, for their godly solace and comfort, laying aparte all vngodly songes and balades, which tend onely to the nourishing of vice, and corrupting of youth. 1567. London: John Day.

Quotations from the Bible are from the Geneva version in the edition of 1599. London: Christopher Barker.

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