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Introduction.

Translation and the Non-literary Text: from Early to Late  
Modern English

The decision to construct the title and contents of the present issue of *Status Quaestionis* – a journal aiming to take stock of critical debate on textual issues that have become central at a time of great methodological unrest – around a negative definition, that is, one that deals with a phenomenon or concept by stating what it is not rather than what it is, is in itself revelatory of the unstable nature of the texts we have decided to investigate: texts that are here defined as ‘non-literary’, as a way of broadening the traditional scope of translation studies while at the same time raising a debate, since it is clear that many of them exhibit stylistic features that blur the lines between the literary and the non-literary. It is the period we have decided to tackle that, on the whole, produces this uncertainty: for this issue adopts a historical-linguistic perspective to look at a time when specialized discourse in English (to use a positive definition, which is, however, not perfectly suitable for all of the text types here investigated) was in an emergent state, still largely undetermined and difficult to distinguish in specific ways (i.e., according to form and not merely content) from other types of communication.

Indeed, the emergence of specialized varieties of English is often recognized to be a profoundly early modern phenomenon, but any certainties stop there: what is more, it would be short-sighted to neglect the preceding period and the diverse kinds of texts that were written in the language since the middle ages. To briefly consider – by way of example – only one important variety of specialized language, which we would today call ‘scientific English’, we would be able to go as far back as Chaucer’s *Treatise on the Astrolabe*,

written circa 1390, to find an early example of the development of a scientific register and form, exhibiting an evolving technical vocabulary and, as M.A.K. Halliday has observed, a growing use of nominal groups, a key feature of much specialized discourse (Halliday 2004). At the same time, most scholars agree on the late seventeenth century as “the primary candidate” for the selection of “a moment as being the time when scientific English first came into being” (Banks 2008, 23). Banks considers “what was published in English” before the Scientific Revolution to have been “of a more popular nature, [...] very often on the fringes of, if not beyond, what we would now accept as genuinely scientific” (Ibid., 37). Thus the age of the Royal Society and the work of Newton in particular, as well as the development of the scientific article genre, have been most closely investigated by scholars who have diachronically analysed the formal codification processes (besides nominalization, the use of passive forms and avoidance of the first person singular, to give only a few examples) that allow one to separate a ‘scientific’ text from other text-types (on this, see Bazerman 1988, who identifies the beginning of a truly scientific register with the publication of the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society). Even Halliday, after mentioning Chaucer, almost immediately jumps to Newton’s *Treatise on Opticks* (1704, written 1675-1687), considering it the work that effectively enables one to register “the birth of scientific English” (Halliday 2004, 145).

On the other hand, it has been acknowledged that the drive to make the English language suitable to expressing different forms of knowledge with what was perceived to be the elegance and ease of more prestigious languages – Latin above all –, began well before the end of the seventeenth century. The early modern age stands out as a period of intensified interest in language: a new awareness of the potential of the vernacular meant that the need was felt to improve upon it, so that it could fully take on its role as a national language capable of dealing with a variety of disciplinary matters, even as the disciplinary boundaries themselves were still fluid. Such permeability becomes evident when one looks into the area of medical writing, well attested in English as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as the remarkable Helsinki corpus of Early English Medical Writing, covering the years 1375 to 1800, stands to prove (<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/CoRD/corpora/CEEM/>): the great

variety of text types and genres that all can be said to belong to the medical area in the period include learned treatises, new prints of early manuscripts, recipes, remedies, practical advice, texts on midwifery and general health, almanacs, pamphlets, as attested by the sub-corpus EMEMT (*Early Modern English Medical Texts*). Acker 2008 also points out the relevance of agricultural works and herbals, still in high demand in the early modern period, a good example of the connectedness of areas of knowledge that would now be considered as part of separate disciplines. Be that as it may, corpora such as these, together with the studies that have been conducted on them (see Taavitsainen and Pahta's seminal work, 2011), give evidence of the fact that as of the late medieval age "English had slowly begun to emerge from the shadow of Latin", though the phenomenon naturally began outside of the institutions (Taavitsainen and Pahta 2011, 4). Medical discourse was a facilitator in this process, with its practical emphasis and the number of practitioners working at several levels, even on the margins, of the institutions (such as, for instance, surgeons working within the Barber and Surgeon guild association, distinct figures from university-educated physicians).

While the field of medicine and more broadly the natural sciences are primary areas of specialization which had to seek for appropriate terminology beyond Latin early on in their development (see in particular Gotti 2003, 153-69, 171-93), specialized discourse is of course not limited to these categories. It is also for this reason that that, for the period(s) we are looking at, the term 'non-literary' seems to be more suitable and inclusive, enabling our contributors to take into consideration different types of discourse which, while not yet codified, in most cases, as bona fide sublanguages, were in many senses domain specific (on this see Dossena and Taavitsainen, eds, 2006) and well poised to make a contribution to the great early and late modern overhaul of English vocabulary: in particular, the authors in this issue explore travel writing, historiographical discourse, religious language, and language devoted to didactic concerns alongside medical and scientific texts – all areas of interest when investigating the rise of English as a language of learned communication, gradually replacing Latin and incentivising the translation of texts from continental languages.

For the widespread practice of translation was one of the ways that English was able to deal with its need to develop specialized vocabulary, at the same time engaging with fundamental texts written in other vernaculars as well as Latin. While the great impact of translation in the period has been often emphasized within literary studies – so much so that it has been seen as a defining feature of the early modern literary landscape (in seminal studies starting with the celebrated *Translation: An Elizabethan Art*, by Matthiessen, 1931), more recently cultural approaches have assessed the phenomenon in ways that have tried to go beyond solely linguistic or literary analysis (Burke, Po-Chia Hsia 2007; Bistué 2013). Special emphasis has begun to be placed on individual figures and stories of translators and printers who played important roles of cultural mediation, as well as networks of mobility and the journeys of people and texts (Höfele and Von Koppenfels, eds, 2005; Di Biase, ed., 2006; Barker and Hosington 2013; Hosington, ed., 2015; Montini, Plescia, Terrenato, Segala 2019); large-scale online cataloguing and digitalization projects have made texts searchable which were previously difficult to access (see in particular the *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads Catalogue*, <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/rcc/>).

Within this context, despite the issues that the ‘non-literary’ label admittedly raises – the fuzziness of literary/non-literary boundaries in early modernity; the all-too-convenient binarism of the model; not to mention the fact that threads and strategies of narrativity are currently being investigated in all kinds of text types – it importantly highlights the fact that the translation of texts that are not clearly recognized as literary is still underrepresented in translation studies. To return to the example of scientific writing, there are those who have looked at it in its relationship to Renaissance literature (Spiller 2004, Cummins and Burchell 2007, Marchitello and Tribble 2017), but it is still infrequent to find analyses of non-literary translation in broader collections devoted to the circulation of early modern texts in England. There are some notable exceptions which point to a possible shift: the scientific genre has been discussed within the larger early modern phenomenon of the rise of translation towards the vernacular (Pantin 2007); some scholars have begun to illuminate individual translators and their work, no longer regarding them as secondary characters in the history of science (for example

Gotti 2000, 2003, Boschiero 2010). It is a welcome development that the past few years have seen the appearance of an entire collection on the subject, *Translating early modern science* (Fransen, Hodson, Enekel, eds, 2018) as well as articles dealing in particular with the role of translation within early modern European scientific networks (Henderson 2013, Plescia 2017 and 2019, Spruit 2019).

Much remains to be done in terms of reconstructing pathways of textual transit as well as broadening the scope of inquiry beyond the scientific to look at the emergence of other disciplinary discourses in English that were modelled on prestigious precedents by means of translation, an explicit strategy employed to enrich the English vocabulary, mostly through borrowing (despite the best efforts of the purists who took a vehement stand against foreign language borrowing within the so-called inkhorn controversy). The phenomenon is one that connects several European sites, as has been emphasized (Montini, Plescia, Terrenato, Segala eds, 2019; see in particular Armstrong 2019), though Anglo-Italian and Anglo-French networks do tend to stand out, as the articles in the present issue confirm. The articles in this collection, then, attempt to redress the imbalance by taking stock of the translation of early and late modern texts whose main aims were not of an aesthetic nature but rather of a communicative, informative, didactic, persuasive, and/or descriptive one. At the same time, it would be impossible, even disingenuous, to argue that none of these texts exhibit any aesthetic concerns, and the authors of the collection have taken great care to point out special uses of style, narrative and rhetorical strategies, rhythm, and metaphor, among other features, that are seen as functional to the primary communicative intents.

The essays here presented rise to the challenge, assessing the degree to which translation was balanced with popularization strategies when dealing with technical concepts in established fields, as well as the creative measures involved in conveying new information to an English-speaking audience. At the same time, cultural issues are explored in depth, such as, for example, questions of linguistic prestige and the relative positions of vernaculars vis à vis Latin; culture-specific vocabulary; translational stances and concerns emerging in paratextual materials; gender issues in texts produced by women

and/or for women; educational, persuasive, spiritual aims; audience reception. The articles are organized in loose chronological fashion from the dawn of the early modern period, traditionally and conveniently associated with the date 1476 – the year of Caxton’s introduction of the printing press in England – to the full-blown prescriptivist eighteenth century: within this timeline, however, essays dealing with similar backgrounds, cultural issues and/or genres have been grouped together, both with a view to supporting a dialogic structure and in the interests of thematic coherence.

The issue fittingly opens with a discussion of the status and pedagogical role of Latin at the beginning of the early modern period as evidenced in a manuscript whose compilation began precisely in that crucial decade, the 70s of the fifteenth century, in which Caxton had published the very first volume to be printed in the English language, his own translation from the French *Recnyell of the Historyes of Troie*, by Raoul Lefèvre (1473, produced in Bruges or Ghent), and had then set up the first printing shop in England. Much has been made of the symbolic value of Caxton’s own act of translation which effectively jumpstarts the history of printing in English, and it was of course the practice of translation itself that would ultimately challenge the status of Latin as ‘global’ language. Alessandra Petrina’s analysis of MS Additional 60577 – a collection of didactic and scientific late-medieval literature, which includes love poems, medical recipes, a *lapidarium*, astrological notes, and pedagogical poems – focuses in particular on the *vulgaria* present in the fifteenth-century section of the volume (whose compilation started around 1478 and continued up to the mid-sixteenth century, with the earliest sections dating between 1429 and 1442). Not only is the collection a perfect example of the combination of literary and non-literary texts that characterized many of the volumes of the period, indeed of the very porousness of such categories in the early modern age, but the presence of *vulgaria*, i.e. sentences in Latin and English proposed as translation exercises, allows Petrina to illuminate the complexity of the relationship between the two languages in the period, and ultimately between tradition and innovation, as well as the search for a good English style, worthy of the best Latin: translation is thus very early on presented as a way of enriching, and improving upon, the target language.

A second area of inquiry in the present collection deals with travel writing, a flourishing genre in the period that has been linked with translation not only because of the English versions of exploration and expedition reports, itineraries and guidebooks that increasingly appeared, but also because of the many metaphorical and practical associations existing between the act of travelling and the act of translating (on early modern travel and translation see especially Di Biase, ed., 2006). Nicholas Brownlees adds to the picture of travel writing translation by examining the English translation of the Italian mathematician and explorer Filippo Pigafetta's *Relatione del reame di Congo et delle circonvicine contrade*, first published in Rome in 1591, and translated within a few years into English, Dutch, German and Latin. The original text proves to be particularly interesting in itself as "one of the most successful books about Africa in the early modern period" and a document attesting to the burgeoning exploration activity of the early modern period; but the English version, produced by Abraham Hartwell, also exhibits a striking paratextual framing which, Brownlees argues, deserves close analysis. Brownlees pays special attention to the title page, which highlights the "unstated commercial interests" that probably lay behind the publication of the translation, to the translator's comments (in his "Address to the Reader") on his own approach and on contemporary translation practice, and to the way marginalia are used in the text, effectively demonstrating that the translator – far from being a mere facilitator – is very much present, and conceives of his role as similar to the one played by news translators of the age, who tended to avoid textual manipulation, preferring to "entrust the reader with the task of interpretation". While the role of paratextual materials in the dissemination of knowledge through translation is the focus of this article, the following one, by Fabio Ciambella, engages directly with the translated text, which is read as an example of 'tourist discourse': Ciambella takes a close look at the English edition of Frans Schott's *Itinierarii Italiae rerumque Romanarum libri tres*, originally published in 1600 and translated into English sixty years later by Edmund Warcupp, with the bold and more commercially appealing title *Italy, in its Original Glory, Ruine and Revival*. This traveler's guidebook presents a challenge as it is indicative of the widespread early modern practice of translating from Latin thanks to the mediation of an intermediary vernacular, in

this instance a 1654 Italian version which Warcupp actually seems to have followed. After proposing to consider the Renaissance period in England as a foundational one for the emergence of English for special purposes, Ciambella constructs a multilingual parallel corpus of the three texts and analyses lexical choices and their renditions, in order to describe Warcupp's style as well as issues of contextualization and variation in translation.

The relevance of Italian scholarship – in all its 'glory', to borrow from Warcupp's title – is also at the centre of Omar Khalaf's article on the circulation of the ideas on historiography developed by Jacopo Aconcio, a sixteenth-century philosopher who moved to England in search of a more favorable milieu after embracing the Reformed faith. Khalaf reads the translation of Aconcio's historiographical treatise *Delle osservazioni et avvertimenti che haver si debbono nel leggere delle historie* (1564), dedicated to the correct interpretation of history and of stories told about history, within the context of a "close intellectual relationship" between the author and his translator, Thomas Blundeville, who worked, like Aconcio, under the prestigious patronage of Robert Dudley, first earl of Leicester, one of Elizabeth I's favourite statesmen (and suitors). It is impossible to forget, in mentioning the patronage enjoyed by Blundeville, that Elizabeth I herself was an extremely skilled translator who used her linguistic abilities to deal with highly-charged cultural, religious and political challenges (as attested by the two volumes dedicated to her translation work by Mueller and Scodel 2009; see also the recent contributions on Elizabeth as translator by Hosington, Petrina and Fusini in Montini and Plescia, eds, 2018). Khalaf's reconstruction of the historical and material conditions of the production of this text – from the religious and political atmosphere of Elizabethan England to patronage conditions – allow him to speculate about the possibility that Blundeville followed principles of freedom and re-elaboration in his translation in order to present Leicester with a text "purged" of rhetoric, thus more effective in foregrounding Aconcio's humanistic ideal of "public utility" – perhaps a case of cultural adaptation, and certainly further proof, if any were needed, of the Tudor and Elizabethan interest in the possible uses of history and the past in building national identity and a solid political legacy.



Religious discourse is brought to the fore in the two articles that follow, which deal in different ways with both the Protestant and Catholic drive to translation as a means of conquest of contested cultural spaces. Reformed England is in fact also the setting of Paola Baseotto's article – which makes a contribution to the prolific field of studies on Bible translation in a historical perspective – focused on the wildly successful publishing venture in early modern England that was the metrical translation of the Book of Psalms by Thomas Sternhold and his followers: a million copies were sold by 1640 and 1,000 editions were printed from its first publication in 1592 to its last in 1828. One would be hard pressed to argue that this text is a 'non-literary' one, but the book is read by Baseotto as a case study that cannot be ignored if, as this collection attempts to do, the wider cultural, social, and ideological functions of translation in the early modern world are to be considered. Also, and crucially, the purpose of the translation of this text type goes beyond its undoubted aesthetic qualities to play, as Baseotto argues, a "vital role in furthering the Protestant reform movement". The vast circulation of this text, as well as its complex relationship to the role of music and singing in religious experience, are taken into account together with the editorial and translation strategies that gave the book a central role in a new religious and political project, producing a clearly target-oriented text, accompanied by "an ideologically oriented and orientative paratext". It is in this sense that the text can be considered to perform a special communicative function, one that Baseotto discusses by concentrating on contexts of production and connections to other metrical psalters, such as the Anglo-Genevan *One and Fiftie Psalms*, which seem to constitute a veritable genre and offer a picture of translation as having an impact on the daily lives – and levels of literacy – of millions of people. The second article in this section on religious discourse, by Marie-France Guénette, takes us to an equally interesting moment in the history of English translation, one in which translation serves, on the other hand, to channel Catholic sentiment and religious sensibility back to England at a later period, that is at the English court of Queen consort Henrietta Maria (1625-42). The issue of religious freedom is once again at stake, as French Catholic materials were circulated in this period especially by women, who played a central role in translating and disseminating recusant materials. Guénette

builds and systematizes a corpus of printed translations destined for circulation at Henrietta Maria's English court by taking into account paratextual data in the *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads* and *Cultural Crosscurrents in Stuart and Commonwealth Britain* catalogues, as well as conducting keyword searches on *Early English Books Online* and integrating biographical data, to show how women acted as key agents in the advancement of Catholic culture under the Anglican rule of King Charles I, in various capacities: as patrons, dedicatees, intended readers, translators and even printers. This intense activity "put women squarely at the intersections of transnational cultural exchanges", giving them visibility as well as a space for political and public agency: the article thus illuminates a remarkable phase both in the creation of early modern religious culture and in early modern print culture.

A final, thematically compact group of essays deals with the popularization and dissemination of practical information in the area of medical and scientific discourse, investigating new case studies which involve a later stage in the development of the language, thus drawing closer to the late modern English period. Giulia Rovelli offers a detailed analysis of three anonymous English translations (*The Expert Doctors Dispensatory*, 1657, *Bazilica Chymica & Praxis Chymiatrica*, 1670, and *The Compleat Method of Curing Almost All Diseases*, 1694) of recipe collections first published in Latin and therefore originally aimed at the European medical elite. The three translations are analyzed by Rovelli according to a historical-pragmatic and historical discourse analytic framework which enables her to assess translation strategies at both the macro and micro-linguistic level: as is the case with many texts of the same nature, a literal translation approach seems to prevail, but Rovelli also points to a number of cases in which reformulation, amplification and partial adaptation seem to be used to make the texts more acceptable to their target audiences, in the interests of accessibility and comprehensibility. Additions and explication are also extensively used to deal with unfamiliar terminology, while in some instances Latinate terms are preserved, pointing to a still complicated relationship with the language that had not yet given up its role as the lingua franca of the scientific community. The dissemination of practical medical knowledge in late modern Europe is also the focus of Elisabetta Lonati's article on William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, first published in Edinburgh in

1769: the article in fact offers a welcome reversal of the perspective so far adopted in the collection, to evaluate a textual transit originating from English and moving into a number of European languages. Lonati investigates prefaces, introductory sections, tables of contents, indices, appendices and glossaries in the Italian and French translations, published respectively starting in 1785 and 1780. Here too, as in other cases in this collection, paratextual materials are paid special attention throughout the analysis alongside the body of the texts, as they offer insight into the rationale that guided translation choices and into specific textual and discourse features of the three languages under examination. While the texts certainly testify to the importance of the translation project that involved disseminating contemporary medical/disciplinary content throughout Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, Lonati's discussion also shows how the French and Italian versions unfolded and expanded upon what she describes as the "possibilities" offered by the original text: so that translation here becomes an "in-depth transformation", carried out in close accordance with a blueprint, but also free to expand and add where needed, in particular glosses, marginal comments, footnotes, tables, lists and glossaries. The result is an encyclopedic effort – in keeping with the spirit of the age – which can well be considered as a hypertext, in which Buchan's edition is only the starting point of a plan that was later "inflated dramatically".

The third essay dealing with the popularization and translation of disciplinary knowledge, in this case of a scientific nature, is Alessandra Vicentini's discussion of Francesco Algarotti's *Newtonianismo per le dame*, which closes the collection. The original text was published in 1737 and played an important part in the popularization of Newtonianism in eighteenth century Europe. Vicentini's analysis allows us to again take the gender perspective into account, since women are part of a fictionalized intended audience of this text, conceived as a seduction manual for ladies, following the fashion of contemporary poems and novels. Here literary elements intersect with the non-literary to create a multifaceted layer of specialized knowledge and terminology addressed to a lay audience by means of popularization strategies, with the added complication that Algarotti's text is translated into English by a woman, Elizabeth Carter (1739). Carter's mostly literal approach was

however combined with a few key instances of adaptation and reformulation which reveal a clear intent to accommodate a different readership and general purpose: Vicentini's close textual analysis, which adopts a critical discourse analytic and historical-pragmatic perspective, shows that the translator adapted the source text to the point of eliminating entire clauses and phrases dealing with taboo subjects, erotic allusions, sexist and misogynistic comments. Such a "gender-induced" approach (cf. Agorni 1998, quoted in the article), which aims to correct Algarotti's representation of women's bodies, together with other alterations having to do with the socio-political context of the original text, serve as an important reminder that there is no neutrality in the act of translation, and that careful evaluation of overarching concerns as well as localized textual strategies is always necessary in dealing with the history of translation and with specific linguistic cultures.

The essays in this collection all make a clear effort to carry out precisely this task, offering a lively, multidimensional picture of the many concerns of translators and authors from early modernity on, in and outside of England, as well as new contributions to fields of study dealing with the history of Anglo-Italian and Anglo-French relations, with the relationship of English to Latin and other prestigious continental languages, and with the interplay of specialized, literary and non-literary elements in translation.

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