1 | *"Englishing" texts: patterns of Early Modern translation and transmission*

Contact between languages . . . is the oxygen of civilization.

<div align="right">Ngugi wa Thiong'o</div>

The first book printed in English was not printed in England: William Caxton englished the *Recuyell of the Hystoryes of Troye* from the French, and he printed it in Bruges in 1473. What did it mean to "english" a book? The verb *to english* simply meant "to translate into English,"[1] but the actual practice of englishing involved much more than verbal translation. The *Recuyell*, like so many other early printed English books, came from a French-language, mediated-medieval work and was produced by a bilingual printer-translator using continental technology, typefaces, paper, and book design. Not only the literary text but also the materials and methods of its production were foreign and underwent processes of acculturation. In this, the *Recuyell* is no anomaly, no quirky experimental exile. Its francophone, Burgundian origins instead signal a crucial characteristic of early modern English literary culture: a constitutive foreignness established in translation, transformed by a new technology, and perpetuated in reprints. In a century better known for nation-formation, most of the first English printed books were "englished" in this broader, more complex sense: through appropriative acculturation performed by means of verbal translation and material-textual mediation.

Printers Without Borders investigates, from substrate to superstructure, the ways and means of this englishing, the printers and translators who accomplished it, and its implications for literary history.[2] Several

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[1] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1a., s.v. "to English," with attributions in every century from *c*.1397 (the Wycliffite Bible) to 1995 (Gore Vidal).

[2] My title is meant to suggest that these printers and their work are internationalized, and that they cause texts and textual practices alike to move across boundaries of language and nation. It is not meant to imply any humanitarian project on their part, or any resemblance to the life-saving Médecins Sans Frontières.

intertwining arguments and aims ground these investigations. First, the initial century or so of printing in England (between 1476 and roughly the end of the sixteenth century) should command the attention of literary historians, for it ushered in a new information technology and concomitant, multidimensional changes. Second, many of the works printed during this special phase are now uncanonized if not largely forgotten, but they formed the actual originating milieu of the now familiar canon of English Renaissance (or early modern) literature. The present book thus reads beyond the canonical, further into the actual historical record of printed works. A related matter is that englished books, usually read inside a monolingual national canon, can be better understood in terms of the polyglot European Renaissance. During this first century of print, the adoption of foreign textual practices and the engagement with continental vernaculars were essential to English literary culture. Third, two main kinds of textual transformation – printing and translation – were key catalysts of this special phase of literary history. The present book examines them together, as co-processes that transformed foreign works for English readers and thereby enriched English letters, lexicon, and repertoire, and even shaped English identity. Fourth, printing and translation converged to energize the grand cultural agendas of what we now usually identify, depending on our preferences for historical period- ization, as "Renaissance" (the recovery of the past) or "early modern- ity" (the creation of the future). The tussle over period terms leads to an important point: together, printing and translation animated both the recovery of the past and the creation of the future. And if a period line is to be drawn or a moment of change to be specified for literary England, it might be better found at the great textual turn of 1473 or 1476 than at historians' dates of 1509 or 1558. Furthermore, as transformative co-processes, printing and translation addressed a set of lingering prob- lems of acculturation for the island nation, which, from one view, was emerging from a long Norman colonization into what we now call an early modernity. But whether or not we view the English literary Renaissance as post-colonial with respect to what is now France, print- ing and translation were instrumental in responding to a persistent sense that English letters lagged behind those of the continent. Finally, my greatest concern here is with an apparent paradox: that what is asserted and promulgated as English literature was actually founded on and thor- oughly permeated by the foreign. These are not short-term connections;

subsequent centuries of reprints kept English readers in ongoing contact with foreign materials that had been englished using foreign techniques. This project's literary history takes seriously the technical and aesthetic means by which the foreign comes to constitute the English, and it aims at a fuller reading of the vibrant foreign presences inside English letters.

Along with a great debt to translators, the literary culture of the English Renaissance owed much to the early printers. Early printers and translators cooperated closely – indeed, sometimes so closely as to be in the same body, since many early English printers, beginning with Caxton, were themselves also translators. Today, printers (and translators) are too often misunderstood as merely mechanical, replicating drudges, churning out copies of the same old things.[3] In practice, Renaissance printers and translators were more akin to earlier-twentieth-century film producers: not faceless middlemen or technicians, but entrepreneurs, experimenters, and innovators. They played a tremendous role in artistic selection, in transforming older materials for a new medium and language, and in assessing and shaping the tastes of new audiences. The printers needed content, and translators provided it, opening a vast store of works proven popular and salable on the continent, and durable, though restricted, in manuscript. The translators, in turn, benefited from the printers' ability to reach many more readers than had ever before been possible. On both sides, translators and printers made the past and the foreign available and legible in several senses, creating not only linguistic readability but also cultural comprehensibility.[4] They brought thousands of works to expanding readerships in a relatively short span of time. The early printers' englishing of the foreign past constituted another, parallel sort of translation, involving the material re-mediation and visual redesign of medieval manuscripts and/or contemporary foreign editions. Both the literary forms and the printers' formes – that is, both the verbal and physical structures in which words were set – were also often foreign-born, with the result that the first two generations of printers in England

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[3] Translators' traditional claims to fidelity also foster our misunderstanding of them as mere replicators.

[4] And what theorists following Barthes and Kristeva called *lisibilité*. *Lisibilité* is not the same thing as literal readability; it includes the qualities in a work which create the theoretical possibility that it may be apprehended. From that view, englishing made an English literature possible, *scriptible*, as well. Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974); Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970).

were "translating" continental technology and technique as much as the translators were rendering words, styles, genres. Each form of textual transformation, printing and translation, activated potentials inherent in the other.

Printers Without Borders studies these material and verbal co-transformations and furthermore stands at a crossroads in the history of the two informing scholarly disciplines. Although printing and translation were mutually necessary co-operations in the Renaissance, the study of printing and the study of translation have largely developed separately since the nineteenth century, with printing traditionally studied as part of book history and translation studied as part of comparative literature. And yet, an important commonality emerges if we consider these two fields together: to study translation and printing together is to understand at once two crucial, synergistic processes by which cultural meanings are produced and spread. Recently each area of inquiry has undergone its own important revitalizations in method and theory, with exciting results in both fields. Since Elizabeth Eisenstein's landmark work in 1979, few discount the power of the early presses as "agents of change," whether we read the advent of print as revolution or evolution; in the three decades since then, new textual scholars (Adrian Johns, Roger Chartier, Andrew Pettegree, William Kuskin, other newer bibliographers) have focused on a McKenzian "sociology of texts" and have insisted on recontextualizing the study of every phase of book creation, distribution, and use.[5] Likewise, in translation studies, after

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[5] D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge University Press, 1999). Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1979) and *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Adrian Johns, "How to Acknowledge a Revolution," *American Historical Review* 107.1 (2002): 106–125. Roger Chartier, *Inscription and Erasure: Literature and Written Culture from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford University Press, 1975; 3rd edn., 1998). Lewis Kelly, *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979). Susan Bassnett, most recently *Translation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2014) and *Reflections in Translation* (Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2011).
Douglas Robinson, *History of Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche* (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2002). Examples of the rich range of recent translation studies are in Mona Baker, ed., *Critical Readings in*

George Steiner's classic of 1975, *After Babel*, it has been widely under-
stood that most expressive activity has a translational aspect; since then,
new translation scholars (e.g., Susan Bassnett, Douglas Robinson, Mona
Baker, Massimiliano Morini, Neil Rhodes) have raised further questions
about cultural framing and literary globalism, and indeed about all the
ways in which words cross cultures. As a result of these largely separate,
sub-specialist developments in the wake of poststructuralism and new
historicism, the wider field of literary studies is becoming increasingly
aware of how material technologies shape the literary, on the one hand,
and on the other, of how translation challenges authorship, periodization,
and the idea of national literatures. That is, considered together, these two
areas of inquiry converge to push at the very organizing categories and
assumptions of literary study.

Recent large projects have begun to develop the link between early
printing and translation. The USTC (Universal Short Title Catalogue)
and the RCCP (Renaissance Cultural Crossroads Project), for instance,
have fruitfully connected early modern printing and translation in ways
that promise enough new data to occupy generations of future scholars.
The USTC team understands print culture as inherently international;
the RCCP team understands the centrality of print technology to early
modern translation. Like the scholars working on those projects, I see
the two areas of scholarly inquiry – translation studies and the new
history of the book – as inextricably connected. Practically speaking,
early English print culture was something like a francophone subcul-
ture, in which francophone foreigners were at work using printing
(especially with Burgundian- and French-born materials and techniques)
and translation (especially from French and from Latin via French) as the
core, daily acts of book creation. The first two generations of printers in
England were mostly francophone foreigners, many of whom englished

Translation Studies (London and New York: Routledge, 2010). For focus on the
Renaissance, see among others Massimiliano Morini, *Tudor Translation in
Theory and Practice* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate: 2006) and Neil Rhodes, with
Gordon Kendal and Louise Wilson, *English Renaissance Translation Theory*
(London: MHRA, 2013), as well as essays in three recent collections:
Fred Schurink, ed., *Tudor Translation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011);
Gabriela Schmidt, ed., *Elizabethan Translation and Literary Culture* (Berlin and
Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2013); S. K. Barker and Brenda Hosington, eds.,
*Renaissance Cultural Crossroads: Translation, Print, and Culture in Britain,
1473–1640* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013).

the texts they then printed: among others, Wynkyn de Worde, Robert
Copland, Julien le Notaire, and the Norman-born King's printer to
Henry VIII, Richard Pynson. English-born Caxton, too, was a polyglot
cultural amphibian who worked in the Low Countries and francophone
Bruges during some formative years; a majority of his production was
translated from French. The Act of 1484 created favorable conditions for
foreigners in the book trades, and the machines and techniques, type sets
and paper stocks were mainly continental in origin (the types Burgundian
and French; the papers French). The "deeply ingrained English taste for
French books" signaled by Julia Boffey, combined with the englishing of
them via translation and printing, made an already-desirable literary
product more friendly to more (monoglot) readers.[6] Printing and trans-
lation generated the new englished book culture in a pragmatic sense;
theoretically speaking, these collaborative co-transformations challenge
such concepts as authorship, authority, and "national letters." To study
printing and translation as co-processes in linguistic, social, and material
transformation thus gives us direct, dual access to a moment of tremen-
dous technological change, and a moment of equally tremendous cross-
cultural interaction.

 Individual studies of major works, usually dealing in sources or
particular authors, have taught us much about foreign influence. Like
them, the present study does engage directly with foreign prior texts, but
unlike them, it is less concerned with identifying and comparing sources
and more concerned with analyzing the mechanisms and patterns by
which foreign literary elements embed themselves in English works and
texts. That is, in stepping back a bit from individual source studies, the
present book inquires instead about the general patterns of textual
transformation in the first century of printing. These patterns tell us
things that individual studies often cannot: what elements of the foreign
past were appropriated over time, how those elements were filtered or
inflected, how they were integrated (and not), and how they came to be
valued and re-valued. Patterns of printing and translation, in short,
reveal the specific contours of England's textual relations with the

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[6] Julia Boffey, "The Early Reception of Chartier's Works in England and Scotland,"
   in *Chartier in Europe*, ed. Emma Cayley and Ashby Kinch (Cambridge:
   D. S. Brewer, 2008), 105–116. For related scholarship, see Boffey's other works
   and note 19 on France's importance to England.

foreign past. The ten case studies here ask how textual alterities formed the pragmatic foundations of early modern English literature.

Nation/transnation: appropriation and English exceptionality

Such a view of englishing as both verbal-linguistic and material-textual, and as occurring via meaningful patterns, has wider implications for literary history, which has largely been written language by language, nation by nation. Most national literary histories necessarily keep foreign Others separate, excluding or minimizing any alterities within so as to self-define most clearly. Until very recently, they have not, by and large, set out to recount how the foreign enters and contacts the native tradition, nor how very formative the foreign is, either as a supporting structure of a given national literature, as a resonant echo, or as rhizome and residue underneath and within it. However, that is just how the foreign operated for early printed English literature: as structure, rhizome, residue, and resonance.[7] Even as national vernacular literatures in print gained their respective grounds – a story well told in our separate national literary histories – printers and translators were also creating transnational discourse communities by "naturalizing" (another common term for translating) works. Many of those works nevertheless remained visibly, vividly foreign: englished, but still signaling alterity. Those joint agents of textual transformation, printers and translators, in some happier version of Schleiermacher's famous dilemma of the Janus-like, forward- and backward-looking translator, served simultaneous impulses toward prior texts and future readers, toward English and foreign, toward nation and transnation. Even in building an English literary culture, the printers' and translators' work relied on residual foreignness and thus connected readerships across existing linguistic-cultural (and emergent national) boundaries. Although scholars increasingly follow Karlheinz Stierle's notion that the "co-presence of cultures"

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[7] On rhizome, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Helen R. Lane, and Mark Seem (New York: Viking Press, 1977). On residue, see Walter Ong, "Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 80.3 (1965): 145–154. On resonance, see Wai-Chee Dimock, "A Theory of Resonance," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 112.5 (1997): 1060–1071. Foreign literatures often make themselves known structurally in adapted narrative modes, poetic forms, or genres.

is a signal characteristic of the Renaissance, this messy, sometimes contra-
dictory, often paradoxical part of literary history is less well told, espe-
cially for English literature.[8]

One might well object that English readers had always had access to
transnational understanding in foreign manuscripts; Latinity and
Christianity had been strong cross-cultural connectors through the
millennium. And in early modern England, there was no shortage of
books in Latin, both imported and printed at home (including back-
translations from English into Latin).[9] Latin held an importance to the
Renaissance that can hardly be overstated: the language of education
and church, a vibrant literary culture in its own right, and a *fons* at
which translators drank to remake a substantial part of the vernacular
future. Even when it is not a translator's point of departure, Latin is still
sometimes evoked for show and/or as a synecdoche for other things (for
Catholicism, in religious works; or for authority in learned works; or as
a marker of class difference; or in one case treated below, as a signal of
misogyny). Printers of Latin books were certainly "without borders" in
a very well established way, inheritors as they were of a continuous
scribal tradition in Latin codex production. The pan-European com-
munity of Latinate readers, too, transcended national borders and
linked English readers to those on the continent.

But vernacular translation effected a different sort of border crossing;
it did not really substitute for the uniformity and community that Latin
versions had provided. Latinate book culture preserved one kind of
internationalism, but emergent vernacular texts met other kinds of
need and reached different readerships in different transmission pat-
terns. While medieval literacy had usually meant polyglot literacy, in

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[8] Karlheiz Stierle, "*Translatio Studii* and Renaissance: From Vertical to Horizontal
Translation," in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space
Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford University Press, 1996),
55–67. The "transnational" trend in recent early modern scholarship testifies to
this increased awareness.

[9] The problem with the term *back-translation* is that while it accurately measures
one part of the directional flow of early modern translations – forward from
Latin into English, and then back into Latin – it obscures the great vernacular
flux in and around that swift yet fairly singular current. For recent views among
many studies of translations from Latin, see Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation
and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History* (Chichester, UK:
Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); and Daniel Wakelin, "Possibilities for Reading: Classical
Traditions in Parallel Texts ca. 1520–1558," *Studies in Philology* 105.4 (2008):
463–486.

England most usually including Latin, French, and English, it had also usually meant a restricted, elite-culture literacy dependent on access to manuscripts. Vernacular print readerships increasingly included groups – women, monoglots, non-elites – that the more homogeneous, international, Latinate manuscript and print codices alike had typically reached in much smaller numbers. (In practice, Latin must not have sufficed for "universalizing," else why so many multi-vernacular translations? In Chapter 5 we shall see Latin as the base language of an important polyglot broadsheet about the Armada, yet vernacular variety seems to be a main purpose of the sheet.) In addition to reaching larger readerships of changing composition, what vernacular translation did provide was something like Latinity's opposite number: a transnational discourse community, reading multiple, locally inflected versions of one work, instead of reading the one work in one (Latin) version. For example, in the case explored in Chapter 3, an ostensibly unified international-Protestant readership of a single biblical book, Paradin's *True and Lyuely Purtreatures of the Woll Bible*, or *Les Quadrins historiques de la Bible* (Lyon: Jean de Tournes, editions between 1553 and 1564), turns out to involve tremendous variability across borders. In that case, Latin is the last among the seven language versions to be printed, five years later, almost as an afterthought to the multiple vernaculars. As Alastair Fowler reminds me, Latin was, and is, no one's native language, but rather a learned and secondary mode of expression,[10] one point of which was to transcend local expressive differences, not to encourage them. Translators and printers of englished books both used and competed with Latin versions, and we must always keep Latin in mind. But my greater concern here is for the means by which translators and printers cross-vernacularized local differences – how they transformed French, Italian, Spanish, and other vernacular texts in imagining a different sort of englished relation to the foreign and to the past.

Often the printers' and translators' prefaces openly registered tensions between linguistic cultures, and between the national and the transnational. Frenchman Peter Derendel, for one, says he translates so that English won't be "bastard allone" among languages. His metaphor suggests the lower status – the isolated illegitimacy – of English even as late as 1553, when he and other translators made versions of the

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[10] Personal correspondence, 2013.

Quadrins historiques in seven languages. His metaphor also figures a family of nations where translators and printers serve as border-crossing agents. Acutely aware of national differences, some translators and printers make great bridging efforts both in the translations and in their paratexts, which often act as literary passports. Not always are the printers and translators so open to difference: sometimes they elide, fake, or suppress entirely the foreign elements in a text, making alterities invisible. That, as Lawrence Venuti's work on invisibility reveals, has major consequences for ideas of authorship and literary valuation.[11] Sometimes the facts of publication reveal a transnational impulse expressed via national contrasts: even if a printer perceives enough shared elements in a given work to imagine a pan-European audience for it, he still may foreground national differences in each translation. (Chapter 3 details one such case.) Certain printer-translators' dual aim at one-"world" audience-market and also at multiple national audiences-markets may have been irenic; it was certainly profitable, as many book-trade scholars have noted.[12] The present book is not about the trade, for I assume a vibrant foreign-book trade as backdrop. Instead, this book investigates the role of foreign texts, foreign residues, and foreign textual practices in the creation and production of English, which is to say englished, books.

In any case, Derendel's well-meaning insult, "bastard allone," is telling, for it was not, or not mainly, a piece of prefatory French condescension. In England, too, we find ample evidence of something like an English inferiority complex, for which translation was thought to be chief remedy. In England, translators' and printers' paratexts contained similarly fascinating snapshots of early modern literary polysystems, with national

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[11] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995; 2nd edn. 2008; repr. 2009).

[12] James Raven and Alexandra Halasz, among others, have explored the international book trade, and ongoing research into the Frankfurt Book Fairs, for instance, will likely further reveal the nation–transnation tension in foreign books being bought and sold, imported and exported across borders. James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 1997). For more explicit connections between translation and the book trade, see the essays in *Translation and the Book Trade in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Edward Wilson-Lee and José María Pérez Fernández (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).