Textual Materialities, Agents of Exchange and Translational Communities[1]

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Contrary to what traditional romantic nationalism and its heirs would have us believe, a detailed study of the processes involved in the production and the networks responsible for the diffusion of literary texts demonstrates the inherently transnational nature of cultural identities, not just as far as the exchange of literary, linguistic and intellectual capitals is concerned, but also as regards its material dimensions. Within these international networks there was always a translator, an entrepreneurial printer, publisher, diplomat, or a commentator, and the communicative exchanges in which they engaged contributed to weave a heterogeneous but nevertheless common global space. Rossiter and Coldiron's books contribute to bring some of these agents, their networks and their texts into focus.

In her chapter 4 Coldiron uses the printer John Wolfe's 1588 trilingual edition of Castiglione's *Courtier* to contrast received ideas of English nationhood with the actual international nature of the book markets. This trilingual volume is also of a piece with a historical junction in the midst of which England was defining its national identity as it was also engaged in important challenges abroad like the war in the Netherlands or the Armada episode, two events around which a significant number of polyglot texts and not a few translations were produced. In chapter 5 she rehearses polysystem theory upon a polyglot broadside dedicated to Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of the defeat of the Armada.

Coldiron's book illustrates the transition from a critical outlook fundamentally based upon the phenomenon of inter-linguistic translation onto the more interdisciplinary frameworks of cultural studies and book history. This casts a fresh look upon the sort of material translation involved in refashioning the formats of manuscripts to fit the new medium of print. Attention to the material design of the volumes allows Coldiron to focus on iconographic and discursive paratexts as part of the panoply employed for the construction of virtual communities of readers—iconic components naturally facilitate connections across different national and linguistic communities. In chapter 2 Coldiron explores *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (*ca*. 1475), the first book ever printed in English. Translated by its printer, the entrepreneurial William Caxton, he gave it to the press away from England and using what at the time was still the foreign technology of print. One of Coldiron's most original contributions lie in her insights on the significance of the different sorts of typeface used for the different editions of another book printed by Caxton, the *The Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres* (1477). This and other passages where she explores different modes of representation in print highlight an area where interlinguistic and intersemiotic trans-

lation overlap and comparative literature enter into fruitful dialogue with semiotics, iconography and the history of art. Caxton's *Dictes*, whose original is the eleventh-century Arabic *Mukhtar al-Hikam*, also illustrates 'cultural transfer, gathering, framing, and re-mediation… as well as questions of authority and agency mapped onto gender issues' (p. 64). The *Dictes*, in brief, exemplifies the complexities involved in the processes of transcultural appropriation conducted through translation and print alongside the host of interdisciplinary insights that their close analysis may yield.

Like Coldiron, William Rossiter deals with French and Italian influences in early sixteenth-century England. He demonstrates that French influence was so deeply rooted in the English cultural milieu, that Sir Thomas Wyatt used 'French inflections in his Italian translations and his related original poetry, as a means of naturalizing Petrarchism at the English court' (p. 57). He also foregrounds that the cultural translation of Petrarchism into the English canon may have also taken place through transgeneric means: English Petrarchist poems were produced under the influence of alien songs and lyrics. Rossiter puts forth the polyglot Wyatt—one of Henry VIII's ambassadors—as a case study for the idea of translation as textual diplomacy as he also contextualizes his production within the contest for power among different emerging nation-states and the religious controversies of his age.

Rossiter's main strengths lie in his close readings, formal analysis and attention to historical detail—for instance, he convincingly interprets Wyatt's rewriting of his Italian sources in all its different modes as the product of the fluctuating foreign policy of Henry VIII. He stands on the shoulders of a solid critical tradition, but he also adds interesting new insights, which turns him into a Wyatt scholar of the first order. He proves that Wyatt used a controversial edition by the Italian humanist Alessandro Vellutello (1525) which rearranged Petrarch's original order in his sonnet sequence. The way in which Wyatt handled Vellutello's edition, incorporating the latter's comments, illustrates the late medieval method of *translatio*, which demonstrates the complexities involved in the processes of editorial transmission and translation. If Coldiron brings into focus formats, Rossiter successfully incorporates commentators and editors as central players in the processes of cultural translation. In his Psalms Wyatt fell under the influence of the original text but also in a fundamental way of its commentaries. These included Luther's paraphrase of the Penitential Psalms, and Aretino's less than orthodox Catholic translation, alongside Italian Protestant Antonio Brucioli's commentaries—which were themselves 'translations and paraphrases of Martin Bucer's and Martin Luther's commentaries' (p. 168).

Rossiter harnesses primary sources—e.g. certain passages in Petrarch's *Familiares* with the latter's own appropriation of Seneca—and also recent secondary literature like Thomas Greene's influential *The Light in Troy* (Yale, 1982) with its sophisticated reading of the transition between original and translations. All this adds a new dimension to the ways in which we read Wyatt's poems and their place in the larger European tradition without neglecting the domestic component—e.g. through Wyatt's intralinguistic imitative translations of Chaucer and Lydgate alongside the English

popular tradition, or through the pre-existing Anglo-Italian tradition that came to enrich and complicate the backdrop against which Wyatt orchestrated his reform of English letters. Rossiter discusses *Troilus and Criseyde* and the ambivalent strategies of occlusion and revelation of his sources in Boccaccio's *Il filostrato* employed by Chaucer in his recreation of the original poem—some of which were in turn reemployed by Wyatt himself.

Rossiter describes Wyatt's strategy of translative imitation to characterize his paraphrases of the Penitential Psalms as his greatest achievement as a translator 'or rather as a reformer, to use Puttenham's term' (p. 196). His comments on the polyvalent signification of *reform* in primary texts during this period, both in the realm of poetics as well as religious doctrine, alongside his deft use of primary doctrinal sources and historical context all contribute to some of Rossiter's happiest insights. He contends for instance that in his paraphrases Wyatt 'imports the rhetorical strategies of the ambassador into David's imprecations to his God, constituting what might be termed a soteriological diplomacy' (159).

Diplomacy also features in Coldiron's volume. Jean de Tournes' different editions and translations of the *Quadrins historiques de la Bible* illustrate not just his capacity as printer, translator, businessman and international agent of exchange, but also the question of multilingual editions and the enactment within the book business of the myth of Babel. The presence of Ambassador William Pickering as dedicatee of the English version of the *Quadrins* enriches the picture by establishing significant links between translation, the business of print and diplomacy. The different editions and translations of the *Quadrins* oscillate between the global and the local. If on the one hand it appealed to an imagined transnational and translinguistic community of international Protestantism, its dedicatees were local, and each particular rendering was attuned to the agendas and demands of its intended readership.

Among Coldiron's most original contributions is her classification of different patterns of translation and transmission, which she divides into catenary, radiant and compressed. Catenary patterns are related to the traditional concept of *translatio*. In spite of its critical and historical relevance, this merely linear pattern however fails to account for the complexity of processes which tend to be reticular more often than not, and Coldiron herself admits that reticular structures constitute a more comprehensive pattern—hence the heuristic potential of the two other types, radiant and compressed, which she puts to good use. For instance, Coldiron's last chapter is devoted to maraconic verse, its syncretist, anarchic nature and how these poems could enact the confusion of Babel for their readers. She examines the English *Discoverie of Witchcraft* as a text whose use of macaronic Latin 'puts code-switching and translation to additional satiric uses' and also displays 'stubbornly visible foreign presences' (p. 257) not just in discursive terms but also in terms of its editorial design and format.

Coldiron and Rossiter bring to the attention of their readers a collection of very interesting cases that reveal early modern English culture and its literary canon as the truly international and translational product it actually was. By emphasising the role

of translation, they also heed recent calls for a new literary history of English, and join other scholars like Fred Schurink, Stuart Gillespie and Matthew Reynolds.[2] But beyond the ken of English letters, taking these agents and authors into consideration alongside new research into the book markets, into trade and financial exchange in general, into the transfer of political as well as literary and cultural capital, should contribute to provide a more comprehensive account of the role played by translation and other forms of exchange within the early history of globalization.

Notes

1.A review of:

– Anne E.B. Coldiron. *Printers without Borders. Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

– William T. Rossiter. *Wyatt Abroad. Tudor Diplomacy and the Translation of Power*. Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2014.

2. Their respective volumes were reviewed in *Sendebar* 23(2012) 373-378.