In early modern usage, to ‘translate’ – from the Latin *translatus* (the past participle of *transferre*, literally ‘to transfer’) – was an act of cultural mediation, facilitating the movement of an integral meaning or spirit from one context to another.¹ Such a process was not necessarily textual. In an age preoccupied with clothing’s ability to shape, mould, and fashion subjecthood and virtue, translation often referred to or was conceptualised as a process of undressing and redressing. When an apprentice became incorporated into a guild as a full member, for example, they were invested with the company livery in a ceremony referred to as ‘translation’.² In a tailor’s shop, the offcuts of a sheet of cloth used to create a new suit were then ‘translated’ into a different garment.³ ‘Englishing’ a text was much the same process, in which the original was stripped and redressed into English language and cultural resonances. Underscoring this process was a series of complex negotiations between the primary text, the limitations, specifications, and nuances of the secondary language, and the cultural frame of reference of the intended readership. The result was not a wholly original composition, but rather an old idea dressed in new clothes.

Though the roles of the translator and the interpreter frequently overlapped earlier in the sixteenth century, translators were generally distinguished from the latter by the mode and form in which they conveyed information. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the state official Lodowick Bryskett recognised this literary element as a definitive feature of translation in the epistle to his 1606 English edition of Giovanni Battista Giraldi’s *Tre dialoghi della vita civil* (1565): it is to be ‘set downe in writing, as a translation must be’.⁴ As well as the mode of delivery, the translator also required a superior knowledge of the original cultural and linguistic contexts in order to correctly convey the meaning of a text and ‘rewrite’ the spirit of the work in new terms. ‘You grow Familiar, Intimated and Fond’, wrote Wentworth Dillon, fourth Earl of Roscommon, ‘Your Thoughts, your words, your Stiles, your Souls agree, / No Longer his Interpreter, but He’.⁵

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¹ *‘Translate, n. and adj.’*, *Oxford English Dictionary*.
³ Ibid.
This notion of a union of souls between original author and translator resonates with Michel de Montaigne’s celebration of Jacques Amyot’s 1572 *Vies des hommes illustres*, a translation of Plutarch’s *Moralia*, in the 1580 edition of his *Essais*:

> everywhere in his translation I see a meaning so beautiful, so coherent and so consistent with itself that either he has definitely understood the true meaning of his author or else, from a long frequentation with him, he has planted in his own soul a vigorous generic Idea of Plutarch’s, and has at least lent to him nothing which belies him or contradicts him.6

It was commonly held that translating a text into another language always resulted in some degree of intellectual and cultural forfeiture. ‘It is true that wit distilled in one language’, wrote Robert Stapylton in his *Dido and Aeneas* (1634), ‘cannot be transfused into another without losse of spirits’.7 As with Amyot’s *Vies des hommes illustres*, however, this discordance was not inevitable. Montaigne argues in platonic terms that the ‘generic Idea’ or spirit of the ‘moralia’ has imprinted itself on the translator’s soul either through a kind of transliterary, transhistorical medullary connection, or through long and frequent exposure to both the original text and the author’s wider literary corpus.

Within the translated text, this union was often conceptualised in terms of hosting or hospitality. Drawing on earlier Italian humanist tropes of love and *familiaritas*, the fifteenth-century printer and pedagogue Jodocus Badius Ascensius cultivated a paratextual presence in his translations through the use of commentaries, justifying their inclusion on the grounds that he did not wish to be ‘*hospes asymbolus*’, a guest who brings nothing to the entertainment.8 In a closing note to his translation of Giraldi, Bryskett, the son of a settled Genoese merchant, pre-emptively chastised potential critics for their ‘breach of the law of hospitalitie’ as they try ‘overruling me in mine owne house’.9 This guest/host dynamic could be weighted to either celebrate

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7 Virgil, *Dido and Aeneas the fourth booke of Virgils Aeneis now Englished by Robert Stapylton* (London, 1634; STC 24812), sig. A4v.


or minimise the translator’s involvement. For Margaret Tyler and other women writers, framing themselves as simple ‘hosts’ gave them license to bring their works into print. In the epistle to *The mirrour of princely deedes and knighthood* (1578), Tyler assures the reader that her ‘part therein none but the translation, as it were onely in giving enterteinment to a straunger, before this time unacquainted with our country guise’.10

Translation, then, was a delicate balancing act of passivity and revelation, the skilful enacting of simultaneous ‘self-erasure and self-assertion’.11 Those who took up the task often justified their presumptuousness by stressing the transcultural nature of their international careers, heritage, education, or travels. In late sixteenth-century London, individuals from the City’s diverse communities of strangers often catered to the demand for foreign language tutors and translators brought about by increased cultural and commercial exchange with the Continent.12 The most well-known of these, the linguist, translator, and lexicographer John Florio, born in London to an Italian father and (possibly) French mother, spent a career creating a composite identity that carefully asserted an authoritative Anglo-Italian national and cultural identity. A self-described ‘Englishman in Italiane’, Florio did not fully anglicise his name like his contemporary Bryskett (born Lodovico Bruschetto).13 Rather, as Manfred Pfister notes, he would present as ‘Giovanni’, a cultural Italian, in his Italian language epistles, and ‘John’, the naturalised Englishman, in the English language equivalent.14

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11 Ibid., p. 140.
13 John Florio, *Florios second frutes to be gathered of twelve trees, of divers but delightsome tastes to the tongues of Italians and Englishmen* (London, 1591; STC 11097), sig. Br.
Florio’s career offers a window into the networks of patronage that nurtured England’s nascent translation culture. After his family was expelled during the Marian persecutions, the young Florio spent his adolescence moving between Europe’s Protestant enclaves. He eventually returned to London in the early 1570s, where he set his sights on Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. As a man of letters, Leicester was an ideal prospective patron for Florio’s desired career as a linguist. A ‘noble Mecenas’ and protector of strangers, Leicester was surrounded by knowledge-gatherers who benefitted from his ‘continuall delight in setting forth of good letters’.15 Like his rival at court, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, another prolific patron of translators, Leicester’s support of the arts was underpinned by a fervent reformist agenda.16 He sponsored English editions of sermons and works of theology by Peter Martyr, Theodore Beza, and John Calvin, and was the dedicatee of John Field’s 1579 translation of Philippe de Mornay’s renowned defence of church reform, Traité de l’église (1578).17 On Leicester’s death in 1588, his extended family took up the mantle. Members of the Sidney-Herbert faction were prolific patrons of plays, poetry, and translations of Italian and French prose works, as well as more sober works of Protestant exegesis. Many were translators themselves. Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, remained a committed patron of the arts throughout her life, producing celebrated translations of Petrarch, Mornay, and the Book of Psalms.

Not all aspired to such intellectual heights, however, and in the final decades of the sixteenth century, cheap translated foreign news flooded the English book market in unprecedented numbers.18 Translators-for-hire, often unacknowledged or listed by their initials, were employed by commercially minded printers and booksellers to ‘copy’ a text from one language into another through what we might now refer to as ‘transliteration’. Yet despite both the insatiable appetite for print and the growing appreciation for translation as an intellectual pursuit in itself, few can be considered professional in the sense that their output contributed significantly to their income or

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17 Ibid., p. 176.
was the basis of their renown. Rather, paid acts of cultural mediation were often undertaken secondarily to (and in conjunction with) the individual’s official role as merchant, diplomat, teacher, scholar, churchmen, or stationer. Edward Aggas, one of the most prolific translators of the late 1580s, was first and foremost a bookseller with a shop at the sign of the Dragon in St. Paul’s Churchyard. Like his fellow prodigious booksellers/printers/translators Richard Field and John Charlewood, much of his output in this period was sponsored by Cecil as part of an orchestrated propaganda effort to shore up support for Protestant regimes abroad.

This is not to say that the translator was driven exclusively by profit or political expediency. At the heart of England’s developing translation culture was the desire to adopt and adapt continental forms of civility and humanist systems of knowledge production. Translations from classical and vernacular languages provided the means through which to engage with the scientific, philosophical, and theological debates taking place on the Continent, whilst simultaneously affirming the cultural and intellectual worthiness of the English language, feeding into emerging ideologies of nationhood. The pursuit of an exclusively English culture was entwined with the tradition of vernacular bible translation promoted by reformers. The ‘boy that driveth the plough’, William Tyndale reportedly pronounced, ‘shall know more of the Scriptures’ than the ecclesiastics who obtained their understanding of the Christian faith through the Latin apocrypha. This sentiment would come to underpin the English Protestant project, with successive monarchs authorising new translations. The 1611 King James Bible was celebrated as a triumph of both English language prose and Protestantism that ‘openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel’.

As the English turned an evangelical eye beyond Christendom in the latter half of the seventeenth century, translations of the Scripture out of English into non-European vernaculars were required. Catholic missionaries had long

22 William Tyndale, The whole workes of W. Tyndall, John Frith, and Doct. Barnes, three worthy martyrs (London, 1574; STC 24436), sig. Br. i.
recognised the effectiveness of inculturation as a means of evangelising local populations. In 1616, the Jesuit Thomas Stephens printed his Kristapurana, a biblical epic based on the Old and New Testaments in the Indian regional languages of Konkani and Marathi, in Goa. A resident in India for 40 years, Stephens was able to mediate between western Roman Christianity and local Indian cultures by incorporating elements of Marathi and Konkani literary culture into the work. The evangelical policies of the English colonial enterprises in North America encouraged the translation of religious pamphlets and the Bible into local languages, which involved transcribing the orality of Algonquian dialects into text. John Eliot, a missionary in Massachusetts, translated and printed the English Bible into Algonquian in 1663. The introduction to this Mamusse wunneetupanatamwe Up-Biblum God reveals the connection between translators, readers, and patrons, and how translations of the Bible in colonies bound Algonquians, missionaries, and English subjects together within a godly community.24 Also in the 1660s, the orientalist scholar William Seaman translated the New Testament and a catechism into Turkish with the support of the Levant Company.

An interest in translating non-Christian religious texts into English at home followed an increase in cross-cultural encounters with non-European populations overseas. The first English edition of the Quran, The Alcoran of Mahomet (1649), was a translation from André du Ryer’s French edition (1647).25 Its publication was the subject of a petition to Parliament in March 1649 by Colonel Anthony Welden, who urged the House to seize the ‘Turkish Alcoran’ and have it burnt.26 Parliament gave the translator, the Scottish clergyman and controversialist Thomas Ross, ‘a monition to meddle noe more wth any thing of yt nature’.27 This relatively light stricture was probably due to the above-board licensing of the text and the careful way

27 Ibid., p. 262.
in which Ross addressed contemporary anxieties. He included a ‘[n]eedful Caveat’ in the prefatory material which posited a series of propositions on the necessity of the translation as a means of highlighting the truth of the gospel. His role as a go-between was thus framed in evangelical terms, where the translator’s purpose is to present to ‘the publick view [...] the sight of a Monstrous mishapen creature’ to ‘induce the beholder to praise God’.28

Earlier printed works of translation from Arabic, such as William Bedwell’s *Mohammedis imposturæ* (1615), were similarly justified in the epistolary material as revelations of the illogical and heretical nature of Islam. Though Bedwell’s text was translated from a 1570s work of Catholic anti-Islam propaganda entitled the *Musahaba ruhaniya baina-l'alimain*, Bedwell also notes the value of the text for those ‘which are desirous to understand that language’.29 There was a growing interest in learning Arabic and acquiring manuscripts and printed scientific, theological, and philosophical works from the Ottoman Empire in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Several scholars and churchmen in the orbit of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, were among the first accomplished orientalists. The formidable polyglot and legal scholar, John Selden, translated numerous works from Arabic into both English and Latin, including Eutychius’s history of the early Church, *Eutychii Aegyptii, patriarchae orthodoxorum Alexandrini* (1642). Edward Pococke’s passion for languages brought him to Laud’s attention. He was studying Arabic in Aleppo (1629) and Istanbul (1636–1639) as chaplain to the Levant Company when Laud implemented a quota on company ships in 1634 to ‘bring home one Arab: or Persian MS. Booke’.30 Though poorly enforced, Pococke amassed a number of texts for the Archbishop, who then created a Chair of Arabic for the Chaplain to fill upon his return to England in 1636. Throughout a long career, Pococke used his multilingualism to translate several manuscripts on a range of subjects, including a collection of 6000 proverbs, a dual language manual on coffee consumption entitled *Nature of the Drink Kauhi*, or *Coffee* (1659), and the *Carmen Tograi*, a Latin rendering of the twelfth-century poem *Lāmiyyat al-'Ajām* (1661) by Hassan ibn ‘Ali al-Tughra’i.31

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While translating such texts was often motivated by a combination of scholarly interests or religious purposes, as well as the career strategies of some translators, the interest in translating colonial knowledge nurtured by patrons like Laud gave rise to a new generation of scholar-translators whose work was often embedded deeply in the developing imperial ambitions of the English. As the chaplain for the English ambassador at the Sublime Porte between 1628 and 1639, Seaman translated the *Tac üt-tevarih*, a history of the Ottomans commissioned by Sultan Murad III, into English. Several other former chaplains of the Levant Company became scholars at Cambridge and Oxford thanks to their proficiency in Arabic, Greek, Syriac, or Hebrew. These intellectual projects, although influenced by antiquarian perspectives, paved the way for the emergence of Orientalist disciplines that supported the development of English colonial activities later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Earlier attempts by proto-colonialists to attract potential investors reveal the role of the translator as a cultural mediator who offers access to useful industry knowledge for further expansion and investment. In 1585, the clergyman and colonial promoter Richard Hakluyt commissioned Florio to translate Jacques Cartier’s treatise on the discovery of New France, intending to promote the English discovery of the North-West Passage. In the customary translator’s epistle, Florio argues that translations of foreign works were necessary ‘to animate and encourage the Englishe Marchants’ and ‘propose unto them the infinite treasures (not hidden to themselves) whiche both the Spaniardes, the Portugales, and the Venetians have severally gained by their suche navigations and travailes’. While Hakluyt’s own monumental *Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589; expanded 1598–1600) emphasised the centrality of English ‘witnesses’ and travel accounts, it nevertheless contains a substantial body of texts in translation. The development of English trade in the Levant and South Asia and colonisation in North America advocated by individuals like Hakluyt stimulated the development of new bodies of texts and knowledge. Activity in these regions was dependent on the work of translators and interpreters, and some of this new information has left its mark on language. Turkish words such as ‘aga’ or ‘vizier’ were introduced by John Shute’s translation of Andrea Gambino’s *Commentari delle cose de

\[\text{2013}, \text{pp. 399–417 (pp. 404–405); Alison Games, Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560–1660 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 232.}\]


\[\text{33 Jacques Cartier, A shorte and brieue narration (London, 1580; STC 4699), sig. A2r.}\]
Turchi, for instance, and words such as ‘mosquito’ or ‘tobacco’ were derived from translations of Iberian colonial writing about the Americas.34

When considering both the translator’s role as a key asset to the English expansionist project and the debates over the place of translation in articulating a clear cultural or religious English identity, it comes as no surprise that the language around translation swelled with issues of migration, belonging, and difference. The translated work was itself a migrant, and its translator the one who helped them assimilate to English life. Florio compared his role in translating Montaigne’s _Essaies_ to that of a ‘fondling foster-parent’ who transports a child from France to England, clothes it in English dress and teaches it to ‘talke our tongue’.35 Stapylton was more explicit in _Dido and Aeneas_. The function of the translator, he wrote, is to transform a ‘Forraigner’ into a ‘Native’: ‘The Queene of Carthage hath learned English to converse with you: be pleased now to esteeme her as a Native, but in the erreurs of her language, still remember she was borne a Forraigner’.36 In this scenario, Stapylton is the tutor (‘In Englishing Virgil’, he wrote, ‘I have given him a Language’), and any ‘erreurs of her language’ are to be forgiven as an inevitable consequence of the translation process in the same way as one would forgive a non-native speaker.37 In an earlier translation of Lancelot-Voisin de La Popelinière’s _Dessein de l’histoire nouvelle des François_ (1571), Thomas Barrett bids his patron to give safe conduct to ‘my newe English Denizen’ and ‘entertain his broken englishe’.38 With patience, he assures them, ‘you shall finde him very delightfull’.39

Related keywords: foreigner, host, interpreter, native

34 Andrea Cambarini, _Two very notable commentaries the one of the originall of the Turcks and Empire of the house of Ottomanno_, trans. by John Shute (London, 1562; STC 4470), p. 53. For examples of words introduced from the Iberian colonial world, see Richard Perceval, _A dictionarie in Spanish and English_ (London, 1599; STC 19620), pp. 173, 225; Edward Topsell, _The history of four-footed beasts and serpents_ (London, 1658; Wing G624), p. 952.
35 _The essayes or morall, politike and militarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne_, trans. by John Florio (London, 1603; STC 18042), sig. A2r.
36 _Dido and Aeneas the fourth booke of Virgil_, sig. A2r.
37 Ibid.
38 Thomas Barrett, _The historie of France the foure first bookes_ (London, 1595; STC 11276) sigs. A2v–A3r.
39 Ibid.