

Culture in Translation in Early Modern England: Shakespeare, Hollyband and Florio

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This paper originated as a lecture given at Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo, and at Kyoto University, Kyoto, in November 2019, and has been minimally modified. The act of giving the lecture was itself a project of culture in translation, rendering the cultural forms of a past age into those of the present, and introducing the translational methods used by a Frenchman and an Italian aiming to teach their languages to English speakers in the England of Shakespeare's time. The accommodations made in translating between the cultural expectations of an English lecturer and a Japanese audience were instinctual rather than theorised.

The paper concerns three writers from early modern England, all engaged in different ways in a project of cultural translation; one of them, Shakespeare, is very familiar, the others lesser known. We begin by creating a context in which to consider how English people in Shakespeare's time went about learning modern foreign languages, and then to do two particular things: first, to explore the issues raised by the process and practice of translating from one language to another, as carried out in some early modern language teaching manuals (or conversation handbooks); second, to focus on the contribution made by two Protestant language teachers, Claudius Hollyband and John Florio, one a French Huguenot refugee, the other the son of an Italian Protestant refugee father, both for a time language teachers working in London, to the reception and understanding of modern foreign languages and cultures by the English.

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Our starting point is Shakespeare, who, it is fair to say, was interested in foreign languages and understood something, perhaps a good deal, of both French and Italian.¹⁾ In two scenes of *Henry V*, a play about the attempted conquest of the French nation by the English, in both military and linguistic terms, Shakespeare gives clues to some of the meanings of translation in early modern England. In the first (3.4), Princess Katherine of France is instructed by her gentlewoman Alice in the English names for the parts of the body; in the other (5.2), King Henry of England, who cannot speak French very well, woos Katherine, who speaks English even less well, the function of the scene being to end a play about division and war on a note of union and peace. Both scenes (along with the play's representation of non-English nationals) make the point that language is power, and particularly that English is the language of conquest.²⁾ Katherine's mistakes in her lesson with Alice are comic; and, her mispronunciations, repeated several times, convert plain English nouns — foot, gown — into risibly obscene and offensive French words which she is ashamed to speak: 'Ils sont les mots de son mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique, et non pour les dames d'honneur d'user' (3.4.47–9). In the wooing scene Henry as the victor in the war cannot be denied his intent to make Katherine his 'capital demand', yet he wants also to win her as a suitor, not merely to impose his desires upon her. So he woos her with a show of English virility and eloquent protestations of linguistic incompetence: 'I speak to thee plain soldier. If thou canst love me for this, take me' (5.2.149–51). Katherine, whose English has improved considerably since the scene with Alice, asks, 'Is it possible dat I sould love de enemy of France?' and Henry turns her questions skilfully: 'No, it is not possible you should love the enemy of France, Kate: but in loving me you should love the friend of France; for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it' (5.2.169–74). He translates this into comically halting French: 'Je, quand j'ai le possession de France, et quand vous avez le possession de moi — let me see, what then? Saint Denis be my speed! — donc votre est France et vous etes mienne' (5.2.181–3).

1) Kennedy (2006) argues that Shakespeare was likely to have known French and other European languages in the context of 'polyglot London' (93). For other discussions of Shakespeare's knowledge of languages, see Lambley (1920), p. 127, and Simonioni (1981).

2) For more discussion of these scenes, see Wyatt (2005), pp. 199–202, Pugliatti (1993), pp. 235–53, and Steinsaltz (2002), pp. 317–34.

Linguistic exchange is also a matter of civility; the King has no need to speak French, the language of the conquered, since he is the conqueror. That he does so, not only defines his linguistic identity in relation to his future bride's but also but also makes a point about the status of his mother tongue.

In *Henry V* French is the enemy language, the Other, refined and deceptive, spoken by women or effeminate boastful noblemen, and English the plain truthful language of men, fashioned as such in relation to the alien identity of the French. But how far does this play's representation of linguistic difference square with the reality of early modern England?

The context for teaching and learning modern foreign languages in early modern England.

In fact, the play's stress on the power and cultural prestige of English is a linguistic fantasy in the period, when English in the context of European vernaculars, both spoken and written, was poorly regarded. John Florio says of English that 'it is a language that wyl do you good in England, but passe Dover, it is woorth nothing'.³⁾ Nobody outside the British isles needed to know English. The languages (and cultures) of France and Italy enjoyed far higher status. As Florio wrote, 'Well to know Italian is a grace of all graces, without exception'.⁴⁾ The upper classes had long employed language tutors in their houses, and most courtiers would have had at least a smattering of Italian; Queen Elizabeth (who had been tutored by French Protestant refugees) spoke French among her ladies, could negotiate with Italian ambassadors in their own language, and was known for her fondness for Italian culture. French was the language of international correspondence. And while French was also a necessary social ornament for young noblemen, for men of learning Italian was the authentic voice of Renaissance humanism.

Hence, it is not surprising that when native speakers of these tongues found themselves for political reasons living in England and needing ways to make a living they turned to language teaching, thus making available to a wider constituency language skills hitherto largely restricted to the social elite. Early

3) Florio, *His Firste Fruites* (1578), p. 50.

4) Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words* (1611), p. 17.

modern England was not a monoglot society, and in many urban environments French- and Dutch- speaking migrant communities were not uncommon; and at the Royal Exchange in London, as one observer notes, buyers and sellers spoke ‘in several Languages, And (like the murmuring fall of Waters) in the hum of several businesses: insomuch that the place seemes Babell, (a Confusion of Tongues’.⁵⁾ But the English, however, were notoriously averse to learning foreign languages. As Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* says of her suitor, Faulconbridge, ‘the young baron of England’, ‘You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him. He hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian’ (1.2.64–6). The polyglot Florio notes pityingly: ‘What a shame it is, that you shall see an English man come in the company of straungers, who can neyther speake, nor understand with them, but standes as one mute, & so is he mocked of them, and despised of al’.⁶⁾ The English did need the help of the strangers, and despite Florio’s scorn, many of them did want to learn modern foreign languages. Luckily, Protestant refugees fleeing from religious persecution in Europe, especially from France and the Low Countries, were on hand to assist.

There are three major developments in 16th century which shaped the context for teaching and learning modern foreign languages in England to bear in mind: the Protestant reformation, the growth of printing, and the influence of the ideals of European humanism.

Protestant asylum seekers arrived in large numbers in England during the 16th century to avoid religious persecution in their own countries, particularly after the St Bartholomew Day massacre of French Protestants in Paris in 1572, but also earlier, since the time of Henry VIII. Regular censuses were taken of aliens living in Tudor London, revealing that by 1593 5% of the inhabitants of the city were foreign born; in 1567, there were 4700 aliens in London, rising to 5650 in 1583. French and Dutch nationals, sharing a sense of religious kinship, established their own communities and their own churches in London and elsewhere from 1550.⁷⁾ Many of them were craftsmen whose skills were more advanced than

5) Quoted in Gallagher (2019), pp. 2–3.

6) Florio *His First Fruites* (1578), p. 62v.

7) On the presence and numbers of Protestant refugees in early modern London see Lambley (1920), pp. 114–8, Pettegree (1986), Pollitt (1980), D1001–5, Randall (2013), pp. 16–26, and especially Scoulandi (1987).

those of the native English, and had received official encouragement to come; some were tradesmen whose business practices were perceived as competitive and aroused xenophobic hostility. But there was a distinct cultural space available for some of the immigrants to fill. Modern foreign languages were not taught in schools or universities, and it was not long before vernacular teachers of French saw their opportunity. While the rich had always been able to afford private language tutors, this was not possible for those of lesser means. Small private schools for teaching French to children began to spring up in the city. The established French community began to be seen as a linguistic resource for Londoners. 'If you be in a place, where the Frenchmen have a Church for themselves, as they have in London, get you a French Bible, or a New Testament, and every day go both to their lecture and sermons', Giles de la Mothe, a refugee who had to abandon his studies because of religious persecution, advised in his manual, *The French Alphabet* (1592).

The practice of translation

Some of the newcomers assimilated quickly, anglicising their names, marrying English women and bringing up families of English children. A few arrived not able to speak English, like Jacques Bellot, who came to England from Normandy in 1577/8. He learned the language very quickly, and made use of his personal experience to teach it to French refugees in England, producing two books of dialogues. The first was entitled *Le maistre d'ecole Anglais. The Englishe Scholemaister, Conteyning many profitable preceptes for the natural borne French men, and other strangers that have their French tongue, to attayne the true pronouncing of the Englishe tongue* (1580). In its sequel, *Familiar Dialogues* (1586), he wrote movingly:

The experience of having in the old time learned unto me what sorrow is for them that be refugiate in a strange country, when they cannot understand the language of that place in which they be exiled, and when they cannot make them to be understood by speech to the inhabiters of that country wherein they be retired . . . I have been (therefore) moved to compassion, so that for to drawe out of paine, an infinite number of persons, the which our last persecutions have caused to come into this cuntrye, I thought good

to put into their hands certain short dialogues in French and English.

Bellot's little books began a tradition of teaching English as a foreign language with a refugee theme that is sadly still current today.

Such works promoting cultural interaction were important in 16th century England, which was still something of a backwater, lacking in cultural capital by comparison with France and Italy, and no foreign ambassador ever knew English. While the English attitude to European languages and cultures was conflicted, there was an awareness of cultural isolation; the English increasingly wished to reach out to the wider world and to trade with European nations, particularly the French. Practical considerations were important here. Merchants and travellers needed to learn foreign languages, and books were produced which catered for this appetite and also stimulated it. The language teacher John Eliot calls French 'the only trading tongue in Europe';⁸⁾ and when London became the greatest trading city in Europe after the fall of Amsterdam in 1576, the English recognised their need to learn it.

By the time that the two language teachers, Hollyband and Florio, got to work, there was already an established tradition of pedagogy into which they could fit. The conversational dialogue, which both employed in their language textbooks, as a didactic medium — going back to Plato — was established by the work of European humanists such as Erasmus and Vives. In England grammars and conversation manuals teaching French to the English had been published since the earliest days of printing, by Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde in the 15th century. The printing trade itself was strongly influenced by Protestant refugees, 'francophone foreigners',⁹⁾ such as Thomas Vautrollier who became one of the most important printers in London. Many grammars and language books had been published by men who acted as tutors in noble families, such as Giles Du Wes (who taught Henry VIII and Mary Tudor) and John Palsgrave. But the principal forerunner of Hollyband and Florio, and the earliest recorded refugee language teacher, is Peter du Ploich, a Protestant refugee, who published *A Treatise in English and Frenche right necessary and profitable for al young children* in 1551.

8) Eliot, *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593), sig. B1.

9) The term is that of Coldiron (2014), p. 6, who stresses the role of 'foreign-born technologies' in the creation of early modern English 'literary nationhood' (p. 169).

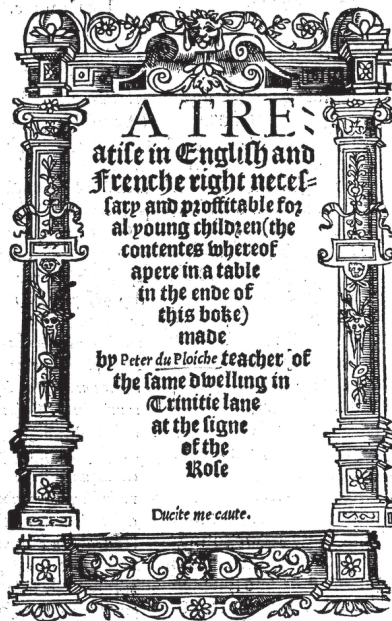


Figure 1. Title page of Du Ploich's *Treatise*, advertising his services (and the address where he taught) as a teacher.

The aims of such primers, or 'conversational manuals', as they have been termed, is to teach a foreign language by means of conversational dialogues, to represent effective and socially acceptable speech. The dialogues are supplemented by material on pronunciation and grammar, but the conversational element is central. As a parallel-text language primer Du Ploich's little book establishes the format for this genre; the parallel text superseded the earlier style of interlinear translation and was much more user-friendly, since the user could cover the first column of text and make his own translation of the second, then check it back against the first. The title is rather belied by some of the content of this little book, which gives advice in dialogue form for merchants and travellers, and includes some saucy badinage in the section on bedtime at the inn (how to chat

up the chambermaid), all of this taken up and developed by later writers.

A child is asked: 'Where goe you to schoole?' He replies: 'In Trinitie Lane, at the signe of the Rose'. And when asked his teacher's name he replies: 'He is called P.' Thus Du Ploich uses his dialogues to advertise himself and his language school, and his successors did the same.

Claudius Hollyband

Self-advertisement was an important part of the persona created by the first language teacher, who translated his French name Claude de Sainliens into an English form as Claudius Hollyband (or Holyband) in 1566, soon after his arrival in England as a religious refugee. He lost no time in becoming assimilated: in

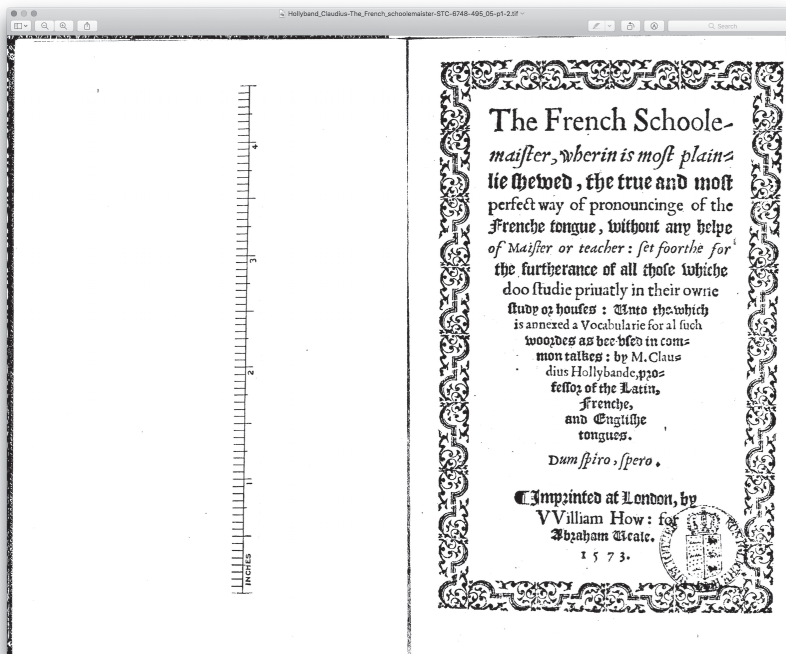


Figure 2. Title page of Hollyband's *French Schoolemaister*. Note the increasing typographical sophistication from Du Ploich's title page, which is all in black-letter. The ruler to the left indicates the size of the book.

that year he became a denizen, which gave him various legal rights, to follow a profession, and to leave property to his children, and he promptly set up as a teacher of French in London, marrying an English widow of means in 1567, and publishing his first textbook *The French Schoolemaister* in 1573.¹⁰⁾

He dedicated it as follows: ‘To all well disposed Iourneymen and Apprentises, Students of the French-tung, of this honorable Citie of London, Claudius Hollyband Gentil-home Bourbonnois, wisheth health to your persons, and all good successe in your studies’, and, already skilled in self-promotion, added (in the 1582 edition), that ‘For that which I do professe in this booke, I acknowledge myself to be perfecter than another, which hath neither been bred, nor brought up in the countrie of France’, referring to his ‘usuall, daylie, and long teaching’ in London.

The French Schoolmaster was the most successful language textbook of its time, running to 21 editions, and being reprinted, with corrections by several hands, for nearly a century. It was a self-help book, produced like Du Ploich’s book, in parallel-text format, designed to capitalise on Hollyband’s classroom experiences teaching in the various small language schools he set up in several different locations.

In his second textbook, *The Frenche Littelton* (1576) (the title refers to a popular textbook on English law, called Littelton’s *Tenures*), Hollyband noted that his first had been liked ‘both by the nobilitie and meane estate of this flourishing realme’ (sig. A2). In this book, also a bestseller, the first dialogue is entitled ‘Of Scholars and Schoole’ (pp. 10–33 in the original) between four unnamed speakers, a schoolboy, his father, the father’s ‘Gossip and the school-master. The father is taking the boy to school to learn Latin and French; he tells the gossip that the school is ‘In Paules Churcheyard, hard by the sign of the Lucrece’ and that ‘there is a Frenchman which teacheth bothe the tongues; in the morning till eleven, the Latin tongue, and after dinner, the French’. John the boy identifies him: ‘He is called M . . . Claudius Hollyband . . . He is a Frenchman: he hath wife and children’. The Father asks the cost, and, when the Master names his fee, as a shilling a week or 40 shillings a year, he objects to the price. The Master is prepared to bargain: ‘If it be to much, bate of it’, adding, ‘But I will

10) For the details of Hollyband’s life see Austin (1939) and Eccles (1986).

tell you one thing, that if your sonne learneth well, it is not to much: but if he learneth nothing, though I shoulde teache him for a groate a moneth, it would be to deare both for you, and him'. (It is interesting to note that a shorter version of this exchange had appeared earlier, in the very first edition of *The French Schoolmaster*, where the school attended by the boy is said to be 'at Lewisham, hard by the church', an outlying district where Hollyband was living in 1573, before he moved to a location within the city.)

Hollyband's self-confident persona is clearly a rhetorical choice, but also a cultural assertion. As a native speaker of French and a successful teacher he has a desirable product to offer, and no doubt that it is worth paying for. He was a successful social climber, with well-off friends and patrons, and numbered rich and famous people among his students. His first achievement as a teacher of languages was the development of a practical pedagogy. Like most language teachers of the time he employed the direct method, encouraging the mastery of conversation, vocabulary and idioms before proceeding to grammatical rules (in contrast with the methods used to teach classical languages in the grammar schools). These are books for the self-motivated learner working on his own. The full title of Hollyband's first book is: *The French Schoolemaister, wherein is most plainlie shewed, the true and most perfect way of pronouncinge of the French tongue, without any help of Maister or Teacher: set foorth for the furtherance of all those whiche doo studie privately in their own study or houses*. He was concerned to assist English speakers with French pronunciation, and notes what French sounds are especially difficult for them. Although he gives some help with French grammar, including a table of verb tenses, his emphasis was on speaking the language as soon as possible. The dialogues demonstrate language in action. The books are very small, genuine pocket-books, designed to be carried easily and used by those on the move. Being user-friendly is high on the agenda.

Hollyband learnt from his first book, which was initially crudely printed, cramming a lot of text into a small space, and the layout of *The French Littleton* is more helpful to the reader. It is significant that all the grammar is confined to the back of the book, which begins with more immediately attractive content — the dialogues. Hollyband uses headings and subheadings; different typefaces for the different languages; and alternative terms are clearly signalled.

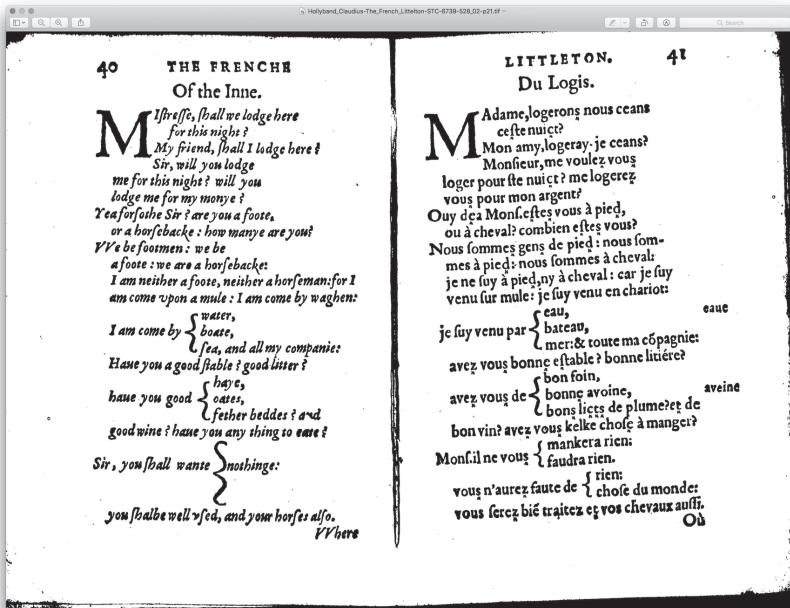


Figure 3. A page from Hollyband's *Frenche Littleton*, showing the use of different typefaces for English and French text, and indications of alternative terms. In the French text, Hollyband provides aids to pronunciation by marking silent letters with a subscript and giving pronounced forms of difficult words in the margin.

The content is lively and amusing. The topics of the dialogues are both domestic — 'Familiar talke to rise in the morning', 'Two neighbours meeting in a morning', 'The welcoming of one to his house', — and more pragmatic — 'For to aske the way', 'To ask lodging', 'To buy and sell'. A somewhat saucy bit of dialogue between a traveller and the female servant who attends to his room, in essence a seduction scene, hardly appropriate for child readers, developed from Du Ploich, was clearly popular and not confined to French language books; it was also used, for example, by William Stepney in *The Spanish Schoolmaster* (1591), and became a 'recurring scenario'.¹¹⁾

The didactic dialogue is a speech-based textual form. Linguistics experts

11) Gallagher, p. 123.

distinguish between two modes — the scholastic and the mimetic. The former is less speech-like, instructional, with less characterisation, less plot development, and less entertaining; the latter is more like natural speech, persuasive, with more characterisation, more plot development, and it is more entertaining. The former is more one-way, dominated by the question and answer format, and commonly structured as an exchange between a knowledgeable teacher and an ignorant pupil, while the latter is more interactive and inter-personal. The speakers are often identified by name and even characterised.¹²⁾ Hollyband's dialogues, like those of Florio, tend towards the latter model, using natural communicative situations and as far as possible realistic and conversational styles of dialogue rather than explicitly didactic ones, although the functional aspects of the dialogues, such as vocabulary building, are not concealed.

The section from *The French Schoolmaster* (repeated in the *Littelton*) on 'the welcoming of one to his house', which is lively and humorous, with much detail of English social life and manners, is typical. Friends are welcomed to the house by the head of the family. There is much emphasis on proper conduct: hands must be washed before dinner, children must be kept in order. The Mother addresses her son: 'Where are you? why went you not to meete your father and your uncle? I will tell your master; I will cause you to be beaten: go quickly, say grace, and take your sister by the hand: take off your cap, and make cortesie'. While the boy is questioned as to his knowledge of languages, the girl is not invited to speak, but admired for her qualities as a potential wife. Before the meal begins the boy reads from the bible, and grace is said. Servants are berated for inefficiency, and sometimes exchange insults amongst themselves: 'Wilt thou go lay the table-cloth, vile gallows? What dost thou marre here?' 'What can I tell where it lyeth? Go yourselfe'. The children eat at a separate table but the adults keep an eye on their conduct: 'Are those your good manners, to blowe your porrage at the boord? Where have you learned that? At our village? Have ye not?' The guests are urged to eat and drink in abundance, but they are not without criticism; the cabbages are 'too much peppered and salted' and the mut-ton has too much garlic. One guest jokes, 'They say commonly in England, that God sendeth us meate, and the Divell cookes'. When the wine of a particular

12) On the didactic dialogue in this period, see Culpeper and Kyto (2010), chapter 2.

shop is praised, the best French wine in London, ‘at the signe of the Rose, at Temple barre’ a servant is sent out to procure it. The overall impression is created of great abundance of food and drink, and care for methods of cooking and seasoning. This is a sophisticated gathering, with wealthy and knowledgeable participants. After supper more guests arrive and are asked for news at court; they take the opportunity to praise the queen: ‘She hath kept us a long time in peace and tranquillitie, the which ye have not read in any chronicle of England’. The hospitality is enhanced by a dessert course of cheese and fruit as the party sits by a roaring fire.

This dialogue not only provides the learner with vocabulary and idioms for particular social situations, but also flatters him in its representation of the well-to-do urban lifestyle to which he might aspire. It is didactic but not overtly so.

Hollyband was a devout Protestant, of a ‘sober Huguenot sensibility’,¹³⁾ and the religious consciousness of his works is influenced by the wars of religion taking place in Europe. His dialogues of domestic life depict the Protestant household, featuring regular prayers and Bible readings as part of the daily routine; both *The French Schoolmaster* and the *French Littelton* contain texts of prayers to be said at particular times of day, articles of faith and graces for meal-times. *The French Littelton* also has a section, in French only, denouncing dancing, as a pastime unsuitable for pious Christians, showing ‘what evil it is to dance and what good to abandon it’. (It was translated into English by Thomas Chinalls in 1598, but this was not published). Hollyband was an explicit propagandist for the Protestant faith, and in 1585 translated two political pamphlets from French, probably by commission: *The declaration of the king of Navarre touching the slaunders published against him*, dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, a fluent French speaker, and *The explanation of the true and lawfull right and tytyle, of the moste excellent Prince, Anthonie the first of that name, king of Portugall*. A Protestant identity was an important aspect of cultural assimilation.

Hollyband had a significant role as what has been termed ‘a sort of middle-man for French culture in England’¹⁴⁾ by means of his praise of French authors, his recommendations for reading, and his introduction of phrases from authors

13) Wyatt (2005), p. 165. Stein (211–36) argues that Hollyband’s lexicographical work is explicit in the expression of anti-Catholic views.

14) Austin (1939), p. 257.

such as Rabelais. His evident popularity among the fashionable set in London, his associations with important aristocratic patrons like Edward eleventh Baron Zouche, with whom he travelled in Europe, and intellectuals such as Richard Mulcaster, Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Sackville, first Baron Buckhurst, testify to his cultural influence and the breadth of his circle. His two little language books were endlessly reprinted, and used by English travellers in France and Italy up to the end of the 17th century. He did not only teach French; one of his textbooks, *Campo di Fior, or the Flowery Field of Four Languages* involves Italian and Latin, and he also wrote *The Italian schoole-Maister* (1597).

There was obviously a competitive market among London language teachers. Hollyband was reviled in print by a jealous competitor, clear evidence that he was well-known. John Eliot in *Ortho-epia Gallica, Eliots Fruites for the French* (1593), a language book written ‘in a merrie and phantasticall vaine’ by an Englishman, begins with a dialogue ‘The maner how to lerne and teach strange languages’, in which the teacher tells his pupils that ‘London is full of Italians and Frenchmen who teache their languages for wages in the Citie of London. They Italian and French who teach heare, as some say who are haunted with them, are a little too highminded, and doe not fit themselves long to the nature of us English. . . They are capricious and proud’. When payment for the teacher’s services is discussed the sums quoted (£5 for the son of a merchant, £10 for the son of a gentleman, £20 for a great lord) echo those mentioned by Hollyband; the scholar dismisses these as too dear. Eliot, who was defensive about his status as an Englishman teaching French, voices a resentment of upstart foreigners that many in early modern London would have felt. And Hollyband, ‘the most important and prolific language teacher’ in Elizabethan England’,¹⁵⁾ is not the only foreign language teacher at whom Eliot takes aim: his main target was in fact the next language teacher, John Florio.

John (Giovanni) Florio

In this portrait, from *Queen Anna’s New World of Words* 1611), Florio is depicted at the age of 58 wearing the livery of a Groom of the Privy Chamber, a black gown trimmed with velvet and fur, and sporting chains of office. The motto round

15) Gallagher (2019), p. 77.



Figure 4. Frontispiece to *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, with Florio's portrait. The words around it can be translated: 'John Florio Reader in the Italian Language to Anna Queen of England, Scotland, France and Ireland'.

the sides, 'Chi se contenta gode', means 'a contented mind is a perpetual feast'. Only writers of a certain status were accorded title-page portraits, and at the time this work was published, Florio was basking in an appointment at the court of Queen Anna. John (or Giovanni) Florio was a second generation émigré: born in London, the son of an Italian father who fled to London from Italy in 1550 as a religious refugee, and (probably) an English mother. However the family could not stay long, because the Catholic Queen Mary ascended the throne in 1554 and the climate for Protestants became very unfavourable, so the Florios went to Europe to live and did not return to London until 1565, when Florio was 12. He

had a similar though not identical linguistic skill set to Hollyband, but differed considerably in his social standing. From an early age Florio was bilingual in Italian and English, and also fluent in French; he had a background in language teaching and in translation from his father, from whom he also obtained valuable social and professional connections. He became prosperous and well-connected, a significant figure on the London scene, moving in high society, and held a position at court as Queen Anne's groom of the Privy Chamber and Reader in Italian from 1604 till 1619. He tutored the royal family in French and Italian. But when the Queen died he lost his position at court and his fortunes took a turn for the worse and he fell into poverty. As well as being a translator (into English from French as well as from Italian, and also into Italian from English), he was an educator, a diplomat, a courtier and possibly even a spy.

His sense of linguistic identity is complex; in an early publication, a language textbook, Florio's *Firste Fruites . . . a perfect Induction to the Italian, and English tongues* (1578) he says that when he arrived in London as a child he was unable to speak English; however 30 years later in the Epistle to *Queen Anna's New World of Words* he calls English 'our swete mother toong', and elsewhere says 'I am an Englishman in Italiane' (*Second Frutes*, 1591). His consciousness of the popular xenophobic prejudice against Italians in England made him defensive. (The saying of Roger Ascham, 'An Italianate Englishman is the devil incarnate' was well known.) He used both names, John and Giovanni, according to whether he wrote in English or Italian; while he probably never went to Italy all his activities in England depended on his being Italian, but his translating work is almost always from another language into English. He characterised himself as of double identity: *Italus ore, Anglus pectore* (Italian by speech, English at heart), implying that Englishness was his essence.

Florio is a very different figure from Hollyband, and of considerably broader literary and cultural significance: a more ambitious and socially aspiring figure, whose work as a teacher was primarily in tutoring upper class young men rather than running language schools for middle class boys, like Hollyband. He has a wider cultural remit and produced works in three genres: language textbooks, translations, and dictionaries, and it is his writings in the latter two that are responsible for his reputation; his translation of Montaigne's *Essays* into English was one of the great works of the age and exercised a huge influence on contem-



Figure 5. Title page of Florio's *First Fruites*. He notes the subsidiary attractions of his text ('familiar speech, merie Proverbes, wittie Sentences, and golden sayings') before its main purpose as a 'perfect Induction to the Italian, and English tongues'.

porary writers including Shakespeare, and other playwrights such as Ben Jonson, John Marston and John Webster. His connections with Shakespeare, whom he may have known personally, have kept his name in the forefront of early modern studies. Frances Yates calls him 'a very conspicuous figure in the intellectual life of the time'.¹⁶⁾

Florio wrote two works in dialogue form, his *Firste Fruites* (1578) and his *Second Fruites* (1591), to teach Italian. Their function was not only to teach the Italian language but also to teach manners and civility, discourse rather than grammar; and they possessed a social dimension, broadening the demographic

16) Yates (1934), p. 58.

for learning Italian, which had previously been restricted to the upper classes who employed private tutors and could afford foreign travel. Not only did they act as conduct books, they also introduced Italian literature to English readers. And while they were intended primarily for Englishmen wanting to learn Italian, they could equally be used by Italian speakers — Florio in his dedication targets merchants — wanting to pick up some English. Florio's work contrasts with Hollyband: it is intended for students with some knowledge of the language; it is more sophisticated; and, importantly, it is intended to assist students with reading the language as well as with speaking it. For Florio, these textbooks were a means of making a basic living; his real literary and intellectual ambitions are displayed in his other, genuinely ground-breaking works, his dictionaries and his translations.

In his *First Fruites* (1578) Florio's different tone from Hollyband, fanciful, and much less utilitarian, is evident from the start. After dedications to all English gentlemen who love the Italian language and to Italian gentlemen and merchants who love English, both in Italian, Florio addresses himself to gentlemen, who want to be able to talk of gentlemanly pursuits, hunting, fencing, playing tennis, dining well, going to the theatre and engaging with women. In chapter 9, 'To speake with a marchant', the first question asked of the merchant is 'Tel me of curtesie, women, are they fayre there, or not?' Chapter 14, 'Amorous talke', is the longest up to that point. One speaker loves a woman who does not return his feelings; the other questions him and gives sage advice:

And what is shee, a mayde, or a wife?

Shee is mayd, the daughter unto a marchant of this citie, so famous and great.

Cherish her, and make her some present, or els to her father.

I know him not.

Learne to know him.

The most interesting is Chapter 15, 'To speke of England', in which Florio combines judiciously patriotic praise of the country ('a fayre country, fruitfull, good ayre, plentiful of victualles, full of fayre women') and its queen with interesting information from a stranger's perspective; he notes there are many foreign

<i>E chi è ella, vergine, ó donna?</i>	And what is shee, a mayde, or a wife?
<i>Lei è vergine, figliola di un mercante di questa città così famosa e grande.</i>	Shee is a mayd, daughter vnto a marchant of this citie, so famous and great.
<i>Accarezzate la, fateli qualche dono, o a lei, o a suo padre.</i>	Cherish her, and make her some present; or els to her father.
<i>Io non lo cognosco.</i>	I know him not.
<i>Imparate a cagnoscerlo.</i>	Learn to know him.
<i>Hauete mai parlato a lei.</i>	Haue you euer spoken to her?
<i>Signor sì, ma lei non mi vuol sentire.</i>	Yea sir; but she wil not heare me

Figure 6. A passage from *Firste Frutes*, showing Florio's use of two typefaces, Italic for Italian and Roman for English.

merchants, all Protestants, allowed liberty to trade through the queen's favour, which extends to other foreigners:

Hath the queene Musitions?

Yea sir many, but they are almost al Italians.

Doth she love Italians?

Yea sir, vey wel.

Delightes she to speak with them?

Yea sir, and she speaketh very eloquently.

Florio loses no opportunity in his dialogues to praise Elizabeth, noting elsewhere her tolerance and skill in languages, qualities not shared by her subjects, who are said to be 'ill mannered' towards strangers, 'and few of these English men delight to have their children learne languages' (p. 51).

His *Second Frutes* (1591), which he describes as 'better, riper and pleasanter than the first', is intended for more advanced students. It opens with a combative address to the reader, in which Florio steps forward assertively: 'As for me, for it is I, and I am an Englishman in Italian; I know they have a knife at command to cut my throate, Un Inglese Italiano, e un Diavolo in carnato. Now, who the

*The first Chapter, of rising in the morning, and of
things belonging to the chamber, and to
apparrell, betweene Nolano, Torquato
and Ruspa their seruant.*

N. **VV** Hat ho, M. Torquato, will you lye a bed all day?
T. Who is there? who calleth me? who asketh for mee?
N. A friend of yours. Friends, it is I, are you vp?
T. Who are you? what looke you for? what seeke you?
N. Good morrow to you M. Torquato: are you a sleepe yet?
T. M. Nolano, I pray you excuse me: Ile be with you by and by.
N. Rise at your leisure: for I will stay for you.
T. By and by I will come and open the doore to you.
N. There is no such hast.
T. The doore is open, will it please you to come in?
N. God giue you good morrow.
T. The like to you, you are very heartely welcommte.
N. I thank you. what were you not vp till now?
T. No ruly. No sir, it is not yet too late.
N. Are you not ashamed to lie a bed so long?
T. I was not a sleepe, I was but slumbring.
N. Me think you are very drowsie still.
T. I am not very well awaked yet. (there be?
N. Oh if sluggishnes were a vertue, how many vertuous men would
T. It is pitie, for then I should be in the number of them.

Figure 7. A passage from Florio's *Second Frutes*, showing the naming of the speakers (an innovation), and the appearance of the text resembling dramatic dialogue.

Divell taught thee so much Italian?' The dialogues are set out like dramatic scripts, with named speakers.

In the first dialogue ('Of rising in the morning') Florio appears to be mocking himself in the character of Torquato, a dandy, feckless, jocular with the servant and fond of drink. Nolano is believed to refer to Giordano Bruno, who came from Nola and was a friend of Florio's.¹⁷⁾ The didactic intention, particularly in

vocabulary building, is often foregrounded, as when Torquato constantly asks his servant for quantities of clothing that cannot be provided: he wants his white satin suit, but many buttons are missing, and the servant has no needle or thread to sew them on; his gloves are lost; his taffeta suit is at the bottom of the box, and cannot be retrieved; and so on. The dialogues are situationally contextualised; chapter 2 is ‘for common speache in the morning on the way between three friends’, chapter 3 is ‘familiar morning communication, wherein many curtesies are handled, and the manner of saluting and visiting the sick, and of riding, with all that belongeth to a horse’. At the same time there is plenty of humour, and much lively domestic detail. In chapter 4, guests complain about noise in the kitchen:

Simon: What a coyle, what a coyle is there in the kitchen below?

Robert: it is the cooke, with his scolion, with his kettels, his pipkins, potts, chafers, frying pans, dripping pans and gredyrans.

S: O villenous cooke, able to anger a saint. (p. 53)

In chapter 11 ‘wherein speech is had of going to bed’, much vocabulary is introduced, amid the domesticity of the bedchamber; the servant prepares the bed with its pillows, coverlet, quilt, bolster and curtains, makes a fire in the bedchamber, gives his master the bible to read, assures him that the privy is nearby, brings in a cat to deal with rats and mice:

Matthew: what noyse is it I heare in that corner?

Limbo: Belike they are either mice, rats, or wesells.

M: Have you no cats in the house?

L: Too manie, three or foure.

M: Now I see I shall not sleepe all night.

L: Doubt you not, you shall sleepe well enough. Here is a cat.

M: I will make them afraid with my snorting.

L: if you snort aloud, they will all runne away.

17) Yates (1934), chapter 5, discusses their relationship.

The servant offers him a night-cap to keep his head warm (“I cannot sleepe without something on my head”), and eventually puts out the candle.

But Florio’s dialogues are far more than language lessons in question and answer format; as the title page of *Firste Fruites* indicates, they are multi-purpose handbooks, containing essays, proverbs, prayers, as well as grammar, lists of vocabulary and grammatical rules. They represent the work of a man devoted to an exploration and a celebration of the operations of language, interested in neologisms, in proverbs and aphorisms, and in the promotion of contemporary Italian literature, particularly ‘our gentle, learned, gallant and worthy poet Ludovico Ariosto’ (*First Fruites*, 54) and of other European writers such as the Spanish essayist Antonio Guevara.

Florio is of course much better known for his writing in other genres, particularly his translations, that of Montaigne’s *Essays* (1603), from French into English, being the most famous. He has been called ‘the least self-effacing, the least “invisible” of translators’,¹⁸⁾ making Montaigne’s style more elaborate and rhetorical, adding extra details and metaphors of his own. He also compiled two Italian/English dictionaries, *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598) and its enlarged version, *Queen Anna’s New Worlde of Wordes* (1611), wonderful demonstrations of his love of the English language¹⁹⁾ and of that quality admired in the period known as ‘copia’, the amplification of words for their own sake; his definitions of Italian terms abound in English synonyms (his entry on ‘levare’ [raise] runs to 24 synonyms, ‘ragione’ to 44); he introduced many new words into the English language and in this influenced Shakespeare. These dictionaries are what has been called ‘go-between texts’, just as much as his dialogues were, in that they served both English speakers who loved Italian, and Italians who wanted to know more English. For both, they provided ‘an instrument for understanding hidden meanings, idioms, words and phrases of dialect and proverbs in a wide range of [Italian] literary works, including those on the *Index*’;²⁰⁾ they smuggled into England what has been termed ‘a rich lexical contraband’.²¹⁾

18) Pfister (2005), p. 51.

19) Wyatt (2005) claims that Florio was responsible for the earliest appearances of 1149 words in the *OED* (p. 230).

20) Haller (2013), p. 1.

21) Pfister (2005), p. 47.

Conclusions

1. In the second half of the 16th century, a period when the English language itself and attitudes towards it were undergoing ground-breaking changes, the writings of Protestant refugees from mainland Europe, from Peter du Ploich in 1551 to John Florio in the early 17th century, did much to direct these changes. In a prefatory poem to Florio's translation of Montaigne by the poet Samuel Daniel, Daniel's praise for the translator speaks eloquently of his particular contribution. The English nation, Daniel says, should 'applaud his [Florio's] happie settling in our land', where he is 'plac'd . . . in the best lodging of our speach/ And . . . now as free, as if borne here'. As an Italian translating a French text for the benefit of the English, Florio occupies a liminal position, a go-between, mediating between languages and cultures; in Daniel's words his 'happy pen' is not 'invassal'd to one Monarchie' but freely involved in 'the intertraffique of the minde'. This praise for Florio's cultural work applies as well to Bellot, Du Ploich, Hollyband, and all those other refugees fleeing religious persecution who put their linguistic skills to use for the benefit of their host nation.

2. In doing so they contributed not only to the transmission of foreign languages and literary cultures but also to the development of English relations with other European nations, building bridges, enhancing community, assisting the culturally backward English on their journey to become a modern nation.

3. The learning of foreign languages had practical applications for conversation and travel, but the dialogues also contributed to the development of pedagogical techniques and promoted the teaching of modern languages on a systematic basis. Florio's dictionaries with their bravura linguistic inventiveness enhanced and enlarged the English language itself. Thus Hollyband, Florio and their fellow language teachers (or 'language merchants' as they have been termed)²²⁾ formed an important part of a 'thriving and innovative educational economy that equipped English-speakers for the encounter with other vernacular cultures'.²³⁾

We return, finally, to Shakespeare's language lessons in *Henry V*. His representation of the status of the English language was fanciful, based on a patriotic dream rather than a mundane reality; but it testifies to a growing confidence in

22) Wyatt (2005), p. 3.

23) Gallagher (2019), p. 11.

English and also to an understanding of the cultural rapport that can be achieved when language barriers are surmounted.

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