

"IT HURTETH MEMORIE AND HINDRETH LEARNING":  
ATTITUDES TO THE USE OF THE VERNACULAR  
IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH MEDICAL WRITINGS.

R. W. Mc CONCHIE

*University of Wollongong*

Two distinct but closely related contemporary problems occur in the deliberations of medical authors in the sixteenth century. One is the use of borrowed or exotic terms and the second is the problem of the propriety of translation, either from the classical languages or from contemporary vernaculars. There has been sporadic attention to these difficulties by modern commentators, but almost none to the changes in the positions adopted during the sixteenth century. Neither has there been much attention paid to the question of what kinds of writers concerned themselves with these problems, and who exactly were the early translators and compilers of works in the vernacular.

There were several classes of words which caused problems for medical writers. These were, broadly, recent borrowings of exotic terms, new formations of English, and long-established but non-naturalized borrowings. It was not necessarily a question of whether to accept new, exotic terms as such. Many were already well-known denizens, insulated by the contexts of their use from full naturalization, and yet familiar to the crafts of medicine. Many occur in Middle English in the pages of Guy de Chauliac or Lanfranc, or even earlier. The medical profession showed a continuing tendency to realienate these terms against the simultaneous trend towards naturalization, for example, through the re-formation of original inflexional endings. Terms for new or newly discovered medical concepts were usually not inkhorn terms, and the medical writer generally condemned such 'painted' language. Instead he tended soberly to gloss, define, or explicate new and unfamiliar, or to couple them with native ones. Although there are occasional complaints in prefaces about inkhorn words, for the medical profession it was not a real issue<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Angel Day attacked Boorde in 1586 for the use of such terms, but such references as there are to inkhornism in medical works are slight. *The english secretorie* 1586, [STC

The impression gained from the texts of the period is that the power of the conservative physicians was considerable. A decline in their ability to influence the general course of events as the century progressed probably stemmed from the combined effects of the growing publishing trade, and more particularly the rise in status and articulateness of the Barber-Surgeons in the mid and late sixteenth century, whose professional need was for works in English. I will suggest here, however, that it was in fact the physicians along with the translators and compilers rather than the surgeons who led the initial assault on the academic and vocational prerogatives of those learned in Latin and Greek.

Conventional wisdom is that in translation the conflict was between those who wished to popularize and to disseminate knowledge, to do a service to their country as they were fond of claiming, and those who wished to maintain the privileges of learning and of professional prestige, and it is generally assumed that the popularizers were not always fully learned and were not the professionals of their discipline. But in medicine this is not the case. In spite of a widely held belief to the contrary, a significant number of the earlier printed English medical works were by physicians. The following is a list of early printed medical works in English<sup>2</sup>:

- Andrewe, L. *The vertuous boke of distillacyon* 1527  
 — *The boke of secretes* n.d.  
 [Anon] *The antidotharius* 1530?  
 — *The boke of knowledge whether a sicke person ... shall lyue or dye* 1535?  
 — *The judgment of all vrynes* c. 1540  
 — *The judycyall of vrines* 1527?  
 — *A lytell boke of the xxxiii stones pryincipall, that profiteth most to a mans body* 1535?  
 — *A myrroure or glasse for them that be syke* 1536?  
 — *The ordre of the hospital of S. Bartholomewes* 1552  
 — *The practyse of cyrurgyons of Mowntpyller* 1540?  
 — *The seyng of vryns* 1525  
 — *The treasure of pore men* 1526?  
 \*Askham, A. *A lytel herball* 1550  
 Drummond, J. [Arnaldus de villa nova] *The defence of age and recouery of youth* 1540?  
 [Bacon, R.] *The beste waters artyficialles* 1530?

6401]; 39. 'Was there euer seene from a learned man a more preposterous and confused kind of writing; farced with so many and such odde coyned tearmes in so little vttering?'

<sup>2</sup> They are listed, as far as it is possible, complete up to 1552, with dates of publication where possible. Short titles only are employed, but reference to STC numbers is included. Names of the original authors are in square brackets where they have been translated into English. It has been possible to determine the profession of their authors in some cases and these are marked with an asterisk where they are known to be physicians.

- \*Boorde, A. *The boke for to lerne a man ... for the helth of body* 1540?  
 \*— *A dietary of helth* 1542?  
 \*— *The breviary of helthe* 1547  
 [Braunschweig, H.] *The noble experyence of the vertuous handywarke of surgeri* 1525  
 \*Caius, J. *A boke ... against ... the sweate* 1552  
 Caxton, W. *Gouernayle of health* 1489  
 [Guy de Chauliac] *The questyonary of cyrurgyens* [1542]  
 Elyot, Sir T. *The castel of helth* 1534 (1537)?<sup>3</sup>  
 Hales, J. *The preceptes of Plutarch* 1543  
 [Hippocrates] *Prognostication drawen out of ... Ipocras, Auicen and other notable authours ...* 1530?  
 Jonas, R. [Roesslin, E] *The byrth of mankynde* 1540  
 [Knutsson, B.] *A litil boke ... for ... the ... pestilence* c. 1485  
 \*Langton, C. *An introduction into physycke* c. 1550  
 \*Langton, C. *A uery brefe treatise, ordrely declaring the pri[n]cipal partes of phisick* 1547  
 \*Lloyd, H. [Pope John XXI] *The treasuri of health* c. 1550  
 Moulton, T. *The myrroure or glasse of helth* 1539?  
 Paynell, T. [Medioniano, J.] *Regimen sanitatis salerni* 1528  
 Paynell, T. [Hutten, Ulrich von] *De morbo gallico* 1533  
 — *A moche profitable treatise against the pestilence* 1534?  
 \*Phaer, T. [Goeurot, J] *The regiment of lyfe, whereunto is added a treatise of the pestilence with the boke of children* 1544?  
 [Plutarch] *The gouernaunce of good helthe* c. 1530  
 \*Raynalde, T. *The byrth of mankinde* 1545  
 \*Raynalde, T. *A compendious declaration of the excellent vertues of a certaine lateli inventid oile* 1551  
 \*Recorde, R. *The vrial of physick* 1548  
 \*Turner, W. *The names of herbes in Greke, Latin, English, Duch, & Frenche* 1548  
 \*Turner, W. *A new herball* 1551  
 Vigo, J. de *Lytell practyse of J. de Vigo in medyc yne* 1535? —  
*The most excellent workes of Chirurgerie* 1543  
 Wingfield, H. *A compendious or short treatise ... of physicke* 1551.

Thus the view that the physicians were less active than the surgeons needs revision<sup>4</sup>; some of them were, and they were writing in English well before the earliest surgeons.

<sup>3</sup> Elyot shows an abiding interest in and wide knowledge of medicine, but there is no evidence that he was formally qualified. See the proeme to the 1541 edition, Aiiiii<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Pelling (1986:83) who speaks of the involvement of surgeons in the

The university-trained physicians commit themselves to print sporadically throughout the century after the first three decades, e.g., Phaer, Turner, Jones, and Barrough; the views of the barber-surgeons are infrequently voiced up to the 1560s, but are heard frequently thereafter, e.g., Gale, Banister, and Clowes. Translators with no obvious professional affiliation contributed consistently from the 1520s on. The apothecaries are rarely heard; their most notable voices are those of the distillers who in the late sixties come under the influence of Paracelsus, e.g., John Hester. They do not write to propound new theories so much as to offer new techniques and remedies to the public. These less-educated practitioners<sup>5</sup> wrote rather less than those whose intention it was to popularize and to disseminate information and perhaps to make some kind of income from the profits of publishing, for example Thomas Hill, who advertised not only his previous publications in his works, but also those in the press and those still to come<sup>6</sup>. There were instances in which the publication of a book was seen as a means to expand a practice, as with the surgeon George Baker who does a little self-advertisement (Baker 1574 [STC 1209]: Div<sup>v</sup>), and the spagyrist John Hester who advises the reader that for 'the receiptes in this Booke specified, as also for many other rare thynges mentioned els where ... let them repaire to my house at Poules Wharfe, where thei shall either finde them readie made, or me at reasonable warnyng readie to make them simply and plainly without sophistication. (Hester 1582 [STC 10879]: v<sup>r</sup>).

Arguments against translation appear to have been predicated upon the belief that to translate learning out of the classical tongues must be to the detriment of learning itself. This maintained a hermetic aura about medical science and promoted a desire to keep its secrets. It was not necessarily an assumption which could apply to contemporary languages other than English, although there are some suggestions of this; neither does it equate with the argument that English was itself unworthy as a vehicle for learning, even though the two assumptions together were a powerful incentive. Thomas Hoby in the epistle to this mid-century translation of Castiglione's *The Courtier* reports that 'our learned menne for the most part holde opinion, to haue the sciences in the mother tunge, hurteth memorie and hindreth learning ...' (Hoby 1561 [STC 4778]: :Aiiii<sup>v</sup>). The physician Robert Recorde wrote in 1548 that 'it is a profanyng of lerning, & a meanes to bring it in to contempte, so to set it forth in the vulgar tonge.' (Recorde 1548 [STC 20817]: Bv<sup>r</sup>). Such a view had to be met head

<sup>5</sup> creation of a body of medical literature, much of it in the vernacular; the academically, qualified physicians of the London College lagged behind in [this respect], and were not very productive even in Latin.'

<sup>6</sup> Barber-surgeons first required their apprentices to know Latin in order to enter their indenture in 1557. (Pelling, M. and Webster, C. 1979: 177).

<sup>7</sup> A list is included in Hill's *Contemplation* (1571: Hh vii<sup>v</sup>-Ii iv<sup>r</sup>). See Johnson, Francis R. (1944: 329-51).

on or be deflected in some way, carrying as it did the weight of academic prestige.

But the translators themselves did not of course agree. Robert Recorde argues as early as 1548 that it would lead to throwing out the baby of benefits with the bathwater of abuses, and praises the efforts of Traheron and Elyot<sup>7</sup>. Thomas Raynalde praised the development of scientific co-operation in 1551. (Raynalde 1551 [STC 20779]: Biii<sup>v</sup>). Others contended that the ancient writers had set out to obscure truths from all but the uninitiated and that it was therefore incumbent upon translators to render their secrets intelligible. Neither was knowledge of these texts themselves secure in the sixteenth century, having in many cases all the textual uncertainties of scribal transmission.

The point about deliberate obfuscation is very easily conflated with the debate over the intrinsic worth of Latin as against the vernacular. To take an instance from Thomas Norton's early *The ordinall of alchemy* (c.1485)<sup>8</sup>, a misunderstood passage has been cited by R. F. Jones as evidence for the proposition that English had to be apologised for (Jones 1966: 5, fn. 8.). The arguments that knowledge was hidden by the fact of being in Latin, and that the vernacular was regarded as incapable of rendering the truths of nature have been indiscriminately conflated. But Norton intended to show that secrets are frequently concealed in whatever tongue they are expressed by the use of the flowers of rhetoric and other expressions meant to hide the plain truth, and that to reveal them to all he will use 'englishe blonte & rude' (l. 3089). Nor does he claim that English is incapable either of greater sophistication in conveying the truths of alchemy, or indeed in concealing them. He makes no mention of preferring classical languages to English. He wishes to bridge the gap between the initiated and the more general readership, not to choose between Latin and the vernacular. What was reprehensible was to write 'in poyses, parabols, & in methaphoris alle-so,/ which to scolers causith payne and wo' (ll. 63-4), not to write in an unworthy language. Neither was this point to be confused with the common argument that it should be translated simply to cater to the understanding of the unlearned. These two arguments have not always been clearly distinguished. Norton does not concede that all he can do in English is to cater to the mean capacities of the uneducated; in any case the unlearned were the unlatined, not the illiterate. A further passage from Norton shows both the kinds of terms which he saw as specialist as well as his disregard for the distinction between the capabilities of Latin and English:

It is humour solide, constant with siccite,  
Mightly medlide after some degre,

<sup>7</sup> Recorde, R. (1548: Avii<sup>r</sup>; also Bvii<sup>r</sup>): 'And yet vnto this day do not lerned wyttes sleepe. How much is all England bounde to that worthye knyght, & lerned clerke, syr Thomas Elyote, whiche tooke the paynes to buylde a castell of helth for all English men.'

<sup>8</sup> Reidy, J. (1975, 11. 54-81).

In opposid passivis commixtid dewly,  
 Engendrid bi inward & outward hete truly;  
 So nothing els is oure digestion  
 But of humour substancial a create perfeccion.  
 I pray yow lay-men haue me excuside  
 Thofe such wordis be not with you vside;  
 I most vse them, for alle Auctours affermys  
 How euery science hath his propre termys. (11. 1721—30)

Hoby himself argued forcefully for translation with the rejoinder that it 'doeth not onely not hinder learning, but it furthereth it, yea it is learning it self'. He continued by alleging that 'where the Sciences are most tourned into the vulgar tunge there are the best learned men.' (Hoby 1561: Aiiii<sup>v</sup>). Recorde argued that then 'doth ygnoraunce ... reioyce most, when lernynge reyneth in fewest.' (Recorde 1548: Bvi<sup>r</sup>).

Two responses from those translating or writing new English books were possible, apart from the ritual disclaimers about the propriety of revealing the secrets of medicine: to alleviate by using Latin and Greek terms freely in the English text one's sense of having desecrated knowledge, or to create a new body of English technical terms, thereby fostering an English register fit for learning. In practice many divergent compromises were reached. Thus some merely used Latin where it was felt to be a compromise to reveal too much (e.g., Baker), while others englished their non-english terms (e.g., Boorde). Some hedged their texts about with language designed to discourage the common reader (e.g., Clever); still others (e.g., Turner and Barrough) tried painstakingly to assess the relative merits of terms from various languages.

For these reasons medical vocabulary developed rapidly in the sixteenth century. The sheer volume of technical terms and the sophistication of the prose increased enormously between, say, the modest 1549 [?] translation of Plutarch and Phillip Barrough's treatise of 1583, which is by the standards of the day an enormous work of some three hundred odd pages, brimful of the latest professional jargon. Additions to the vocabulary had to come largely from Latin and Greek, and it was ironically the very cohesion and exclusiveness of the university-trained and largely unpublished physicians which prompted the development of the vernacular. The fact that the educational hierarchies did not always correspond with the social ones probably goes some way to explaining the tenacity with which views on the subject of the retention of classical learning were maintained.<sup>9</sup>

The division into those writing in Latin and those writing in the vernacular seems obvious nowadays, yet it was more a hierarchical distinction than a vertical fragmentation within the culture, and the channels of communication

remained open.<sup>10</sup> Popularizers often appropriated Latin and Greek terms, the academic prestige of such words probably assuring the vigorous continuance of this flow, and the confidence sometimes expressed that familiarity would come quickly was often justified.

The earliest group of publications in which the problems of an emergent vocabulary became acute and obvious was the herbals. In botany, there were no really clear conventions in phytography, pharmaco-generic rather than morphological classification predominating. Latin binomials were used, but were not universally agreed upon. The early printed herbals in English had poor and inaccurate woodcuts. However, better observation presumably called for better classification and nomenclature; thus by 1548 Turner attempted with some success to coin new English names<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, the difference between the newer herbals and those employing out-of-date and manifestly inaccurate or even fantastic illustrations must have been painfully obvious, and the shift towards a more stable, usable herbal based on reliable information was inevitable. The genre became a repository of new as well as old information and a medium for the spread of knowledge, where it had tended to be a series of recapitulations of bookish iconography. The rapidly increasing accuracy of both illustration and description in anatomy also contributed to this development<sup>12</sup>. All of this seemed at first a natural consequence of the accompanying urge to restore the verity and reliability of ancient authorities: the final result, however, was to reveal their fallibility and to make way for the more modern, skeptical, and empirical approaches to scientific discovery at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Much of the sixteenth century comment and controversy hinged upon the role of translators, especially from the classical languages. Translators from the 1540's on constantly remind their readers that those with a classical education felt that this was an undesirable and even dangerous practice; but translators saw it as a duty to inform their fellow man about whatever would be of use. The prologue to the early translation into English of Hieronymus of Bra-

<sup>10</sup> There is not much detailed work on such questions, but the situation in Strassbourg in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries has been discussed by Chrisman (1982 cf. especially 49—52).

<sup>11</sup> But cf. Rydén (1985: 12—14), whose evidence suggests that Turner may have not coined as many words as has previously seemed. Claims for authorial originality in this matter must be taken with some caution.

<sup>12</sup> Turner himself relied on the illustrations in Leonhard Fuchs's *De historia stirpium* (Basel, 1542). It had become obvious to Schoeffer, Fuchs, Weiditz, Mattioli, Belon, and others that the poor transmission of MS illustrations rendered field-trips necessary. Both the names and the descriptions of the plants had failed in many cases to secure identification. See Eisenstein (1979: 262—6, 483—8). For a thorough treatment of the subject cf. Greene, E. L. (1983).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Einstein, (1979: 1: 63—4).

unschweig by Lawrence Andrewe in 1527 asserts that where a person of high learning will not take the trouble to make a translation of so useful a work, it is the duty of someone less skilled to do so. 'For me thynke where the masters in all Science expert wyll take no suche paynes [,] [i]t is nat dysco[m]me[n]d-able for a man of more base lernynge to put to his helpynge hande.' (Andrewe 1527: C ii<sup>r</sup>). It is essential that the job be done; whether better or worse is a secondary consideration. This attack — it is not the only one — on learned indolence easily predates the claims of learned disapproval.<sup>13</sup>

Because the medical profession more than any other bridged the gap between pure science and practical performance, and because the medical practitioner of high status had so much to lose in a grossly material sense, there was violent opposition to the spread of medical knowledge in the vernacular<sup>14</sup>. But the sources of the craft were in Latin and Greek and a classical education was the prime requisite for practice, overriding even practical medical knowledge<sup>15</sup>. The resultant urge to concealment inevitably spawned the numerous titles proclaiming the revelation of 'secretes' to the public. Criticism of professional greed and inactivity was also common. Thomas Phaer attacked the base motives for concealment declaring that the use of knowledge which 'ought not to be secrete for Lucre of a few' is objectionable. Phaer demands to know why physicians should so aggrandize themselves at the expense of the common good. 'Or what make they themselves? Marchauntes of our lyues and deaths, that we shulde bye our health only of them, and at theyr pryce? no good physicio[n] is of that mynde.' (Phaer 1544: Aiii<sup>r</sup>). It is for him an act of gross uncharity to conceal the secrets of so useful an art. Forty years later George Baker rebuked those who 'cannot abyde that good and laudable Artes shoulde be common to many, fearing that their name and practise should decay.' (Baker 1576: iii<sup>r</sup>) and the translator of Nicolaus Miropsius in 1585 agreed (Mascall 1588: ii<sup>r</sup>) Thomas Gale noted a general prejudice against the pretensions of works of learning translated into English, claiming that there are critics who 'shall saie it [his translation] is not good because it is in the English tongue' (Gale 1582:258-9) and Baker spoke of 'some more curious than wyse, [who] esteeme of nothing but that which is most rare, or in harde and vnknowne languages'. (Baker 1576: \*iii<sup>r</sup>). Against this the supporters of medical works in English never tired of declaring their altruistic motives; a patriotic love of England and a concern for the poor. The point was generally not replied to.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also Turner, (1551: Aii<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Eisenstein, (1979: 2: esp. 482-4).

<sup>15</sup> Such an education was not merely an indulgent waste of time, heedless of the principles of medical practice; it was a profoundly necessary tool for the comprehension of scientific first principles. The progress of medicine beyond Galen and Hippocrates required first that they be thoroughly understood, not merely that new observations should be made.

The linguistic case for learning in English is most persuasively put by Mulcaster who insists that in considering which language should be used, it is the kind of learning which is rendered available in a language which matters, not some feature of the language itself which might better suit it for the task. He unashamedly extolls the essential virtues of English:

But why not all in *English*, a tung of it self both depe in conceit & frank in deliuerie? I do not think that anie language, be it whatsoeuer, is better able to vtter all argume[n]ts, either with more pith, or greater plainesse, then our *English* tung is... And tho we vse & must vse manie fore[n] terms, whe[n] we deal with such argume[n]ts, we do not anie more the[n] the brauest tu[n]gs do, and eue[n] verie those, which crake of their cu[n]ning.

(Mulcaster 1582 258-9).

Stylistically pith and plainness are not too far removed from bluntness and rudeness. The single substantive, documented case was for the insufficiency of certain parts of the English lexicon; the general criticism went on nevertheless into the 17th c., and John Bullokar, himself a medical practitioner, felt obliged to say that 'it is familiar among best writers to vsurpe strange words, and sometime necessary by reason our speech is not sufficiently furnished with apt termes to expresse all meanings...' (Bullokar 1616: A 3<sup>v</sup>). It was a case put even by the supporters of English, notably Turner (1568: Diii<sup>r</sup> — Dvi<sup>v</sup>), and is the only area in which specific problems are discussed, albeit infrequently.

Clearly the practitioners of the day and some translators felt that there were still compelling reasons to maintain the mystery of their craft, even though they accepted the vernacular. George Baker says of the recipes contained in his treatise of oleum magistrale 'I thought it good to write them in the *Latin* ... for ... I would not haue euery ignorant ass to be made a Chirurgicalian by my Book. (Baker 1576: Qii<sup>r</sup>). There was good precedent for the deliberate obfuscation of such matters concomitant presumably with the Hippocratic notion that physicians ought not only to be wise but godly also, a view shared also by the paracelsians like Robert Bostocke.

It seems that the trenchant criticism of putting physic into English also prompted the well-known and egregiously aureate introduction to Andrew Boorde's *Breviary* of 1547, probably composed to deflect such attacks. At the same time he saw the necessity to illuminate his science for the English reader whom he informed that

for as muche as olde auncient, and autentyke auctours or doctours of phisicke in theyr bokes doth wryte many obscure termes, geunge also to many and diuers infyrmites darke and hard names diffycyl to vnderstand some and most of al beyng greke wordes, some & fewe beyng Araby wordes, some beyng Latyn wordes, and some beyng Barbaruse word[es], [t]her fore I haue tra[n]slated all such obscure wordes and names in to englyshe, that euery man openly and apartyly may vnderstande them.

(Boorde 1547:Bi<sup>v</sup>—ii<sup>r</sup>).

Boorde satisfies his desire for secrecy by being very coy about his remedies, fearing that the repute of physic would suffer and that 'if I shulde write all my mynd eury bongler wolde practyce phisicke vpon my boke.' (Boorde 1547: Bi<sup>v</sup> — ii<sup>f</sup>). This attitude was easily justified by the ever-threatening presence of a struggling horde of quacks and empirics ready to heal any complaint with the most extraordinary of cures. 'Impudent and ignorant buffoons, prophets, astrologers and healers' hawked their skills or the lack of them everywhere if the laws passed against them, the number of handbills advertising them the complaints expressed in the accreditation act of 1511 (*Statutes at large* 1811: 2: 7), and the solemn reproaches of the physicians themselves are any guide.

The professional opposition is more frequently discussed by the translators than actually encountered in print. One has to make assumptions from remarks like Elyot's claim that 'some [physicians] haue saide in derision ... that ... I haue put in my booke diuers errors' (Elyot 1541: Aiii<sup>f</sup>). Certainly physicians were less active in publishing in the early sixteenth century; perhaps publishers thought them a poor commercial risk. Christopher Langton was able to complain that 'there is no mans Physycke so lytle regarded nowe a dayes as Galennes is, and ... it maye uery well be perceyued, by theyr doinges, that they wer neuer Galennes scholers ...' (Langton c. 1550: Bii<sup>f</sup>).

Elyot first published his extremely popular manual in 1530; by the time of the 1540 edition he felt constrained to rebut his physician critics in these terms:

But if phisitions be angry, that I haue wryten phisike in Englyshe, let theym remembre, that the grekes wrate in greke, the Romanes in Latyne, Auicena, and the other in Arabike, whiche were their owne propre and maternal tonges. And if they had bene as moche attached with enuy and couaytise, as some nowe seeme to be, they wolde haue deuysed somme particuler language, with a stronge syphere or fourme of lettres wherin they wold haue wryten their science, which la[n]guage or lettres no man shoulde haue knowen that hadde not professyd and practised phisycke: but those... wolde not haue soo necessary a knowledge as phisicke is, to be hyd frome them, whych wolde be studious aboute it. (Elyot 1541: Aiiii<sup>v</sup>).

This view recurs subsequently throughout the century, e.g., in the the work of George Baker. Phillip Barrough writes in 1583:

I shall seeme boldly to haue advertised the edition of this labour, seeing that I shall run into the babble of our countrie phisitions, who thinke their art to be discredited when it is published on so base a tongue, and againe, are loath to haue the secretes of their science revealed to euerie man... yet ... I haue followed the example of manie earned Phisitions both of our Englishmen & other countrie men also who published their practises in their mother tongue. (Barrough 1583: Avi<sup>v</sup>—vii<sup>f</sup>)

Apparently he regarded the use of the vernacular as progressive. He then draws attention to the practice of translating books from the vernacular into

Latin for the benefit of a wider audience which he sees as equally fulfilling a service to medicine. By 1583 there were before him a number of examples of Englishmen who had committed their medical knowledge to a work in English, like Langton, who had claimed with eminent reasonableness that there were cases in which English possessed no appropriate word for a particular medical concept, which he found to be a lamentable want: 'whiche I can do no lesse then count the negligence of our Phisitions to be the cause of: for yf they had wrytten of theyr arte in theyr mother tunge, as they do in other places, why shulde we lacke englysh names more then we lacke eyther Latyn names or Greke names? and yet to saye the truthe, it is better for vs English men to haue English names, then eyther Latyn or Greke.' (Langton c. 1550: Diii<sup>f</sup>).

Others, such as the surgeon Thomas Gale, were confident that whatever was unfamiliar and awkward in the first place would soon achieve an easy familiarity:

And although perchaunce at the fyrst it may seeme somewhat obscure and harde (because I put the receptes and compositions in the Latyne tongue) yet yf you doe accustomedly vse to reade them, and conferre either wyth the Apothecarie where as you doe not perfectly vnderstande the same, or elles vse the helpe of a Dictionarie, they wyll bee vnto you bothe familier and playne. (Gale 1563: Aaaiii<sup>f</sup>)

He argues further that using Latin is more consistent than to use the English equivalents, which may vary from place to place. Latin names have the advantage of widespread familiarity. Neither does he see difficulty in laying open these secrets to his countrymen, declaring that he will put in English 'the methode and way of composition of suche medicines.' (Gale 1563: Aaa-iiii.). Gale also saw medical works being in Latin as a hindrance: 'the art is longer to vs Englyshe men ... whan as we are first constrayned to learne the latine tongue before we can attayne the myndes of those who wright of Chirurgiye.' (Gale 1563: \*iii<sup>f</sup>).

Neither was it always possible to rely on texts corruptly transmitted from ancient times and as yet unpurged of error and inconsistency. Gale complains in the preface to his *Enchiridion* that authorities such as 'Guido de Cauliaco, Brunus, Lanfrancke, Vigo, or some other of our Authours in Churirgerie ... either they wryte in the tonge whiche the most of you vnderstand not, either vse they corrupt and barabarous names of sicknes and medicines ...' (Gale 1563: Av<sup>f</sup>). The possibility that the classical texts might themselves be fallible and unmanageable must have been always present, increasing the urgency of fleshing out and establishing the medical lexicon.

The view that it was a duty to spread knowledge through the press appeared very early among medical writers, and confidence in writing scientific work in English was evident in John Rastell, c. 1520:

... yf clerk[e]s in this realme wolde take payn so  
Consydering that our tonge is now sufficyent

To expoun any hard sentence euyd<sup>o</sup>ll<sup>u</sup>  
 They myght yf they wolde in our englyshe tonge  
 Wryte workys of grauyte...  
 Than yf connyng late bokys were translate  
 In to englyshe, wel correct and approbate  
 All subtell sciens in englyshe myght be lernyd...

(Rastell c. 1520:Aii<sup>r-v</sup>)

Laurence Andrewe, prefacing his translation of Hieronymus Braunschweig in 1527, was 'only beyng moued with naturall loue vnto my contre whiche surely shold want yf I were able to performe it no profytable booke for lacke of a Translatour that is in any other language wrytten.' (Andrewe 1527: Cii<sup>r</sup>). William Ward in his translation of Alexis of Piedmont in the 1560's claims that curiosity in scientific and humane matters cries out for satisfaction: 'there is no man so bestiall, so rude, or so blunt of wit, but that he is ... desirous to know things not before knowen ... and to vnderstand bokes in his maternall tonge, written first in a forein langage, to thende not to seme altogether ignoraunte in matters ... set forth for ihs rudiment and instruction.' (Ward 1558: +iii<sup>v</sup>—+iv<sup>r</sup>). This argument was later expressed in the practical endeavours of Sir Thomas Gresham who required lectures in the London college which he endowed to be in English as well as Latin.

Philip More saw his endeavours as making it possible for the reader to master the basics of medicine and the cultivation of herbs. He wished to 'exhorte bothe men and women, to preserue their healthes ... that their gardeines might bee to them and theirs, in steede of a Poticaries shoppe.' (More 1565: Aiii<sup>r</sup>). He also wished the ordinary man to understand his own body and to assist the physician if possible 'by due obseruations.' (More 1565: Aiii<sup>v</sup>). John Caius felt it necessary to satisfy the demands of both learned and unlearned readers by writing both in Latin and in English, declaring that he had 'wrate and finished one boke in Englyshe, onely for English me[n] not learned, one other in latine for men of lerninge more at large.' Caius 1552: Aii<sup>v</sup>). There is, however, little suggestion in the comments of these writers that the English lexicon would fall short of the expressions required.

Although calls for a wider dissemination of knowledge and for translations into English of learned works<sup>16</sup> for the 'great multitude that thirst, and long moche for soche aide' (Recorde 1557: Aii<sup>v</sup>) were more frequent than the counter-arguments, the physician John Securis argued in 1566 for the utter inadequacy of the English language to express the high truths of nature: 'englyshe bookes teacheth nothinge of the trewe foundation of Phisicke ... howe can it be well vnderstanded without logike and naturall philosophie.' He admitted

<sup>16</sup> Noted for instance by Jones, R. F. *op. cit.*, esp. ch. 2. The vernacular was the medium not only of scientific popularization but also of original works in the early and mid-sixteenth century elsewhere in Europe.

only an ancillary function for those works already published in English:

I doo not denye but to haue some bokes of phisicke in englyshe specially of the Simples, well and cunnyngly set foorth for Surgeons, Apothecaries... that ... know not the Latine tongue ... but ... doo you thynke to haue in youre Englyshe Bookes, all the perfecte knowedge that is required in Physicke? ... We coule neuer haue it yet in Greke and Latine perfectly ... howe thenne shoulde you haue it? 'If Englyshe Bookes could make men cunnyng Physitions, then pouchemakers, threshers ploughme[n] & coblers mought be Physitions ... a syr John lacke latin a pedlar, a weauer, and oftentimes a presumptuous woman shal take vpon them ... to mynyster Medicine... (Securis 1566:B:<sup>r</sup>—Bii<sup>v</sup>).<sup>17</sup>

The latter point was common currency. William Turner, as strong a supporter of the English language as Securis was an antagonist, feared that some would accuse him of revealing things better left to the cognoscenti and hold him responsible for the fact that 'euery olde wyfe will presume, not without the mordre of many, to praetyse Physick.' (Turner 1551: Aiii<sup>v</sup>). The Act of 1511 requiring the examination and accreditation of those wishing to practise physic claimed that 'the Science and Cuning of Physick and Surgery ... is daily ... excercised by a great Multitude of ignorant Persons ... so ... that common Artificers, as Smiths, Weavers, and Women, boldly and accustomably take upon them great Cures.' (*Statutes at large* 1811: 7, vol. 2).

The list of mountebanks wishing to practice upon an unsuspecting public receives a fine rhetorical sweep in the surgeon William Clowes's diatribe against the quacksalvers. He suggests that some had been 'Painters, some Glasiers, some Tailors, some Weauers, some Joiners, some Cutlers, some Cookes, some Bakers, and some Chandlers ... it is to appara[n]t to see how Tinkers, Tooth-drawers, Pedlers, Ostlers, Carters, Porters, Horse-gelders, & horse-leeches, Ideots, Apple-squires, Broomemen, bawds, witches, cuniurrers, South-saiers, & sowgelders, Roages, Rat-catchers, Ru[n]agates, & Proctors of Spittlehouses, with such other lyke rotten & stincking weeds ...' (Clowes 1585: Biii<sup>v</sup>) wished to practice. Gale's was another voice raised against this profusion of empirics. It seems that few trades escaped the censure of the professionals.

The power of the English language to cope with such works seems to have expanded with remarkable rapidity after about 1540; 'the prose of scientific exposition, more than any other type illustrates the remarkable development which English prose underwent during the sixteenth century ... Students whose reading is restricted to the works of [literary] writers cannot perceive the full magnitude of the transformation which took place within the course of a few decades.' (Johnson 1944: 109—35; cf. esp. 111—2). The pattern which emerges in the course of this study is, however, that the argument that the English language is inadequate becomes prominent only from about the time when the

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also Schmitt, Charles B. (1985: 1—15).

lexicon is expanding very rapidly; a time at which it might be thought that English was doing very nicely. Writers appear to have been generally content with the state of the language in the first half of the sixteenth century. By the end of the century the bookstands were heavy both with translations from other languages and with original works in English. These works were larded with a large body of terms common and familiar to the profession as a whole. At the same time it also seems that the proponents of the use of English in their anxiety to deflect attacks have created the sense of an overwhelming opposition mainly from physicians which we have consequently overestimated to some extent, while underestimating the considerable fruits of their labours. It was the physicians, Turner, Recorde, Phaer, Raynalde, Langton, Askham, and Boorde, who were the first generation of medical professionals to make their influence felt in print.

## TEXTS

- Andrews, L. *The vertuose boke of distyllacyon...* 1527, (STC 13435).  
 Baker, G. *The composition or making of the moste excellent and pretious oil called oleum magistrale* 1574, (STC 1209).  
 Baker, G. *The newe ieuell of health* 1576, (STC 11798).  
 Barrough, P. *The methode of phisicke*, 1583, (STC 1506).  
 Boorde, A. *The Breuiary of helthe...* 1547, (STC 3380).  
 Bullokar, J. *An english expositor* 1616, (STC 4083).  
 Caius, J., *A boke, or a counseill against the disease called the sweate, or sweatyng sickness* 1552, (STC 4343).  
 Clowes, W. *A briefe and necessarie treatise* 1585, (STC 5448).  
 Day, A. *The english secretorie* 1586, (STC 6401).  
 Elyot, Sir T. *The castel of helth*, (STC 7644).  
 Elyot, Sir T. *The castel of helth*, 1541 (1560?), (STC 7650).  
 Gale, T. *Certaine workes of Galens* 1586, (STC 11531).  
 Gale, T. *An antidotarie conteynyng hidde and secreete medicines simple and compounde* 1563, (STC 11529).  
 Gale, T. *Certaine workes of chirurgerie* 1563, (STC 11529).  
 Gale, T. *An enchiridion of chirurgerie*, 1563, (STC 11529).  
 Hester, J. *A compendium of the rationall secretes, of the worthie Knight and moste excellent Doctour of Phisicke and Chirurgerie, Leonardo Phiorauante Bolognese...* 1582, (STC 10879).  
 Hill, T. *The contemplation of mankinde, contanyng a singuler discourse after the art of phisiognomie...* 1571, (STC 134882).  
 Hoby, T. [Castiglione] *The Courtyer of count Baldessar Castilio* 1561, (STC 4778).  
 Langton, C. *An introduction into physycke*, c. 1550, (STC 15204).  
 Mascall, L. [Miropsius, Nichola (Prepositas)] *Prepositas his practice, wherein are approved medicines...* 1588, (STC 20180.7).  
 More, P. *The hope of health* 1564, (STC 18060).  
 Mulcaster, T. *The first part of the elementarie*, 1582, (STC 18250).  
 Phaer, T. [Goeurot], *The regiment of lyfe* 1544, (STC 11967).  
 [Plutarch] *The gouernaunce of good helth*, 1549? (STC 20060.5).

- Rastell, J. *A new interlude and a mery of the nature of the .iiii. element[es]* c. 1520, (STC 20722).  
 Raynalde, T. *A compendious declaration of the excellent uertues of a certain lately inventid oile* 1551, (STC 20779).  
 Recorde, R. *Vrinal of physick*, 1548, (STC 20817).  
 Recorde, R. *The whetstone of witte* 1557, (STC 20820).  
 Securis, J. *A detection and querimonie of the daily enormities and abuses committed in phisicke* 1566, (STC 22143).  
 Turner, W. *A new boke of... wines...* 1568, (STC 24360).  
 Turner, W. *A new herball*, 1551, (STC 23265).  
 Ward, W. *The secretes of the reverende maister Alexis of Piedmont* 1558, (STC 293).

## REFERENCES

- Beier, A. L. and Finlay, R. 1986. *Making of the metropolis: London 1500—1700*. London.  
 Bennett, H. S. 1952. *English books and readers 1475—1558*. Cambridge.  
 Chrisman, M. U. 1982. *Lay culture, learned culture: books and social change in Strassbourg 1480—1599*. New Haven: Yale University Press.  
 Eisenstein, E. 1979. *The printing press as an agent of change*. Cambridge.  
 Greene, E. L. (ed. Egerton, Frank N.) 1983. *Landmarks of botanical history*. Stanford.  
 Johnson, Francis R. 1944. 'Latin versus English: the sixteenth century debate over scientific terminology.' *Studies in Philology*, 41, 1944:109—135.  
 Johnson, Francis R. 1944. 'Thomas Hill: an Elizabethan Huxley'. *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, no. 4, Aug. 1944: 329—51.  
 Jones, R. F. 1966. *The triumph of the English language*. Stanford: University Press.  
 Pelling, M. and Webster, C. 1979. *Health, medicine and mortality in the sixteenth century*. Cambridge.  
 Reidy, J. (ed.) 1975. *Thomas Norton's 'Ordinal of Alchemy'*. EETS, no. 272, London.  
 Rydén, M. 1985. 'Antedatings and additions for OED from *The vertuose boke of distyllacyon of the waters of all maner of herbes (1527)*.' *Notes and Queries*, NS, 32, no. 1, March 1985: 12—14.  
 Schmitt, Charles B. 1985. 'Aristotle among the physicians'. In Wear, A., French, R. K., and Lonie, I. M. (eds) 1985: 1—15.  
*Statutes at Large* 1786. vol. 2, London.  
 Wear, A., French, R. K. and Lonie, I. M. 1985. *The medical renaissance of the sixteenth century*, ed. Runnington, C; Printers to the King's most excellent majesty. century. Cambridge: CUP.