

Narrative Conversions

University of York, June 2-3 2014

The Treehouse, Berrick Saul Building, Heslington West Campus.

A Collaborative Workshop sponsored by the Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies (University of York), the Humanities Research Centre (University of York), and Early Modern Conversions (IPLAI, McGill University)

Monday 2nd June

9.45 Welcome and brief introductions

10.30 Workshop session 1: Narrative lines, with Bronwen Wilson

In this session we will consider the significance of the line, through a combination of theoretical readings and early modern examples. We will consider the connections between travel and narrative, and ask how their relationship is thematized in pictorial forms.

Advance reading:

*Marin, Louis, 'Frontiers of Utopia: Past and Present', *Critical Inquiry* 19, no. 3 (1993): 397-420.

Gilles Deleuze, 'The Actual and the Virtual', in Gilles Deleuze, and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (NYC: Columbia University Press, 1977), 148-153.

Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, '1440: The Smooth and the Striated', in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 474-500.

Ingold, Tim, *Lines: A Brief History*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

12.30 Lunch

1.30 Five-minute presentations and questions

Confirmed presentations: Claire Canavan (York), Sheila Coursey (Michigan), Yelda Nasifoglou (McGill), Anastasia Stylianou (Warwick), Anna Reynolds (York), Lieke Stelling (Leiden), Bronwyn Wallace (Penn).

2.30 Responses to pre-circulated papers.

Brian Cummings (York), responding to Torrance Kirby (McGill), "The "Silenus of Alcibiades": Desiderius Erasmus's appropriation of the Platonic narrative of conversion in the *Enchiridion*", and Steven Mullaney (Michigan), 'Affective irony and the poetics of conversion in *The Merchant of Venice*'.

Simon Ditchfield (York), responding to Yelda Nasifoglu (McGill), '*Blame Not Our Author* and instruments of conversion', and Susan Royal (Durham), 'Historical narrative and conversion narrative in Reformation England: the case of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*'.

Peter Marshall (Warwick), responding to Robin Macdonald (York), "'Je ne sçay si vous avez receu la lestre": "lost" letters and interrupted narratives in the correspondence of seventeenth-century missionaries to New France', and Emilie Murphy (York), 'Negotiating religious change: musical conversion and evangelical melodies in post-Reformation England, 1580-1640'.

Mark Jenner (York), responding to Bronwyn Wallace (Penn), 'So strange an alternation: Mary Magdalen and the queer phenomenology of conversion', and Stephen Wittek (McGill), 'How cities tell stories: early modern London as a theatre of conversion'.

Paul Yachnin (McGill), responding to Helen Smith (York), "'May I be so converted? Much ado about love', and Lieke Stelling (Leiden), "'Most beautiful Pagan; most sweet Jew": preserving Christianity in authentic conversions'.

3.30 Coffee

4.00 Break into small groups, led by the respondents, to discuss papers.

5.30 Drinks and dinner

Tuesday 3rd June

10.00 Workshop session 2: Translation and transnationalism, with Warren Boucher

The transnational turn in modern literary and historical studies has in recent years led to a new focus on transnational literatures and processes of textual and cultural translation in early modern studies. How might this be used to throw some light on the topic of narrative conversions? Clearly caution is needed in applying this critical trend to a period in which nation-states in the modern sense did not properly exist, and in which religious affiliations and rivalries were predominant. But my own research of recent years has centered on the European migrations and travels of a text which at source both advertises its author's own religious constancy in the ancient faith and resists all narratives of conversion, from adherence to new philosophical or religious sects to the act of repentance itself: Montaigne's *Essais*.

One question I did ask is whether producers of this text in different places felt an imperative to 'convert' the text to the local version of Christianity, or at least to remove the traces of Montaigne's adherence to Roman Catholicism. In England they did not: Montaigne was warily accommodated as an 'honest Papist'. In the first edition published at Geneva they did: all signs of his Papism were removed and the de-Catholicised text was approved. The second time the text was reviewed by Genevan censors, though, it was seen as a 'cynical' work likely to 'form' readers in atheism and was called in.

In the cultures of both Protestant and Roman Catholic reform movements (both within and beyond Europe) much emphasis was placed, on the one hand, on the provision of textual aids to and narratives of Christianisation and interfaith conversion, and, on the other hand, on the institution of regulatory regimes which aimed to protect citizens against conversion to heresies and atheisms. These regimes were needed partly because it was not just the Bible and the works of Erasmus that travelled widely: the interconnected nature of the print trade made a vast body of religious and devotional texts, and of potentially atheistic texts, extremely mobile. But exactly which kinds of conversion narratives and counter-narratives in which languages achieved significant transnational circulation? Did they do so as the result of commercial demand or as of a deliberate religio-political policy on the part of particular states or exiled religious communities? How did they change and adapt as they travelled across confessional and linguistic borders? Were there even texts which did not need to undergo significant cultural translation as they moved between confessional regimes? I cannot answer these questions but I hope to chair a discussion in which the workshop participants may begin to do so.

Indicative bibliography

ALLISON, A. F., ROGERS, D. M., and LOTTES, W. (eds.), *The contemporary printed literature of the English Counter-Reformation between 1558 and 1640: an annotated catalogue* 2 vols. (Aldershot: Scolar, 1989-94)

- BURKE, PETER, 'Cultures of translation in early modern Europe', in Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural translation in early modern Europe* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7-38.
- EIRE, CARLOS M.N., 'Early modern Catholic piety in translation', in Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural translation in early modern Europe* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 83-100.
- GORDON, BRUCE and MCLEAN, MATTHEW, *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation : books, scholars, and their readers in the sixteenth century* (Library of the written word; Leiden: Brill, 2012).
- SCHILLING, HEINZ and TÓTH, ISTVÁN GYÖRGY (eds.), *Cultural exchange in early modern Europe v. 1. Religion and cultural exchange in Europe, 1400-1700* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- VON HABSBURG, MAXIMILIAN, *Catholic and Protestant translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425-1650 : from late medieval classic to early modern bestseller* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
- See also Gilmont, *The Reformation and the Book; Books in the Catholic World during the early modern period* (2013) etc

12.00 Lunch

12.45 Workshop session 3: Narrative and the unspeakable, Carla Zecher

The workshop will explore how conversion might be constituted through narrative acts. My research focuses on descriptions of music found in 16th- and early 17th-century European accounts of travel to the Levant and to North America. While none of these accounts offer tales of conversion accomplished by means of music, the question of the affective power of devotional music making - the promise or threat of conversion via listening - is a common thread. Each description of music heard may be viewed as indicating that a transformation had taken place in the listener, who then held those sounds in his or her memory. But readers could only experience the music in "translation," that is, via the text. In the session, we will consider an anthology of early modern narrative excerpts, and discuss how music functioned as a particular instance of the "unspeakable" in the early modern period.

2.45 Conversion narratives walking tour of York with Professor William J. Sheils

5.00 Closing roundtable at Grays Court, led by John Sutton