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The Latin Translation of *Philosophical Transactions* (1671-1681)

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Abstract

“The story of the Latin edition of the early volumes [of *Philosophical Transactions*] is a complex one and not easy to reconstruct” (Kronick 2004:165). The lengthiest available account (Johns 1998:514-521) is based on the edition of the Oldenburg-Sand correspondence by Hall and Hall (1973-1977). This chapter engages with the primary texts involved and provides a substantially revised account of the Neo-Latin translation of *Philosophical Transactions*, challenging previous assumptions and also revealing for the first time the presence of theologically heterodox material.

Keywords: Natural philosophy, Neo-Latin translations, Book history, Author / translator, Antitrinitarianism, Socinianism.

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Introduction

Typically, translations are done out of a *lingua franca* rather than into it (Bennett 2018:198); this helps explain why translations from vernaculars into Latin, “the *lingua franca* of early modern European science” (Dietz 2016:120), have “until recently received little attention from historians” (Cook and Dupré 2012:16). The case of the Latin *Philosophical Transactions* is in particular need of attention, since its existence is indeed not unusually referred to in scholarly literature, but available treatments perpetuate misunderstandings regarding its very bibliographical reality and scope. This chapter thus provides a further example of the need to “go to the archives” and “revisit existing histories” in the field of Translation Studies (D’hulst and Gambier 2018:10), and more particularly in the still largely unexplored field of Neo-Latin translations (Burke 2007, Hosington 2014). In what follows, a case study (Wakabayashi 2018:252) is offered focussing on a revision of the external side of the story—printing history of the translation and the related correspondence between translator and author—as well as on some paratexts of the printed translation, most notably the hitherto unnoticed preface to the first edition, which originally contained controversial theological material and was subsequently censored. An account in full detail of the whole translation, including an in-depth study of its purely linguistic aspects, is much to be desired from future research.

Acta philosophica

In the seventeenth century “Latin retained its function as the language for the international communication of science” (Fransen 2017a:633), even if that situation gradually started to change during the second half of that century. The foundation in March 1665 of the English *Philosophical Transactions*, the “first scientific journal” (Kronick 2004:153), by Henry Oldenburg (*ca.* 1619-1677), Secretary of the Royal Society of London, provides an eloquent evidence of the changing times. Notwithstanding, English was at that time generally ignored in the learned world (Burke 2007:74), while Latin, the millenary “world language” (Leonhardt 2009), still had a reputation as “the authentic medium of spiritual truth and academic knowledge in Western Europe” (Sakai 2018:63), “the intermediary and hegemonic language for science” (Fransen 2017a:635), “the ideal translation language” and “the ‘gateway’ to all languages” (Simon 2017:317-318). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that, shortly after the publication of the first issue, there was great demand for a translation of the *Philosophical Transactions* into Latin—or into French. Since Oldenburg’s own planned Latin

translation failed to materialise, independent translations¹ soon appeared in the continental market (Andrade 1965:18; Johns 1998:514-521; Hall 2002:283; Kronick 2004:164-167, 174-175; Turner 2008:343-344; Henderson 2013:108; Doherty 2017:96).

Bibliographical facts

The first known translation to be published was undertaken by John Sterpin (1671a), printed in Frankfurt, and contained *Phil. Trans.* 43-54 (January to December 1669).² The same year it was reprinted by the Amsterdam booksellers Dirk and Hendrick Boom (Sterpin 1671b), who additionally commissioned the translation of the previous issues of *Phil. Trans.* from Christoph Sand (1644-1680).

Sand's translation came to consist of six octavo volumes printed in Amsterdam and amounting in total to around 2,700 pages. Contrary to previous assumptions (Hall and Hall 1973:518; Hall and Hall 1977:116; Johns 1998:521; Kronick 2004:167), the work seems to have been interrupted only by the translator's premature death, and not as a consequence of Oldenburg's public disavowal in his thoroughly negative review (Oldenburg 1674). The first three volumes were all printed in 1672 and contained *Phil. Trans.* 1-9 (March 1665 to February 1666: Sand 1672a), *Phil. Trans.* 10-22 (March 1666 to February 1667: Sand 1672b), and *Phil. Trans.* 23-32 (March 1667 to February 1668: Sand 1672c). Two years later, the first volume (Sand 1672a) was reprinted (Sand 1674a) with the significant modification discussed below; the translation of *Phil. Trans.* 33-44 (March 1668 to February 1669) was also published that year (Sand 1674b).³ Around this time, a quarto edition appeared in Leipzig containing *Phil. Trans.* 1-54 (March 1665 to December 1669: Sand and Sterpin 1675): this consisted of a reprint of the translations available thus far (Sand 1674a, Sand 1674b:1-454, Sterpin 1671b:1-81),⁴ with the replacement of the translators' original prefaces with a dedication by the editor, probably the theologian Johann Fritzsche (1656-1699), to a number of German

¹ Of course, "translations were not included in early copyright, every publisher could start a translation project without paying any royalties to the original author and publisher or taking heed of already existing translations" (Bachleitner 2018:106).

² Sterpin disregarded the English use in the original according to which each year starts on 25 March. In the following volumes of the Latin *Phil. Trans.*, the months that in our present system are January 1666, February 1666 or March 1666 are inconsistently referred to as January 1665/6, January 1665, or January 1666; I will refer to all dates by our present use.

³ Sand 1672c bears the indication *volumen secundum* on its title page. This respects the arrangement of the original *Phil. Trans.*, the first volume of which, exceptionally, comprised two years (March 1665 to February 1667), with the second one initiating the regular order (a single English year: March 1667 to February 1668). Accordingly, Sand 1672a and 1672b were probably intended to comprise a single volume; there are certainly instances of Sand 1674a and Sand 1672b being bound together, such as the copy at the Austrian National Library.

⁴ The editor took the Latin *Phil. Trans.* 1-42 (March 1665 to December 1668) from Sand 1674a and 1674b:1-454, and *Phil. Trans.* 43-54 (January to December 1669) from Sterpin, although Sand's translation of *Phil. Trans.* 43-44 (January to February 1669) was already available in (Sand 1674b).

physicians,⁵ and with the addition of indexes. The year 1676 saw the publication of the fifth volume of the translation commissioned from Sand by the Booms, containing *Phil. Trans.* 45-56 (March 1669 to February 1670: Sand 1676a), which accomplished the editorial replacement of Sterpin 1671. This replacement had started with Sand (1674b) and implied a change of plans from the Booms' side, who had initially envisaged in 1674 a second reprint of Sterpin (1671).⁶ The sixth volume of Sand's translation, containing *Phil. Trans.* 57-68 (March 1670 to February 1671), was published in Amsterdam five years later (Sand 1681), the year following the translator's death.⁷

Copies of the first volume (Sand 1672a) are very rare, and all those I have been able to trace show an engraving dated 1674 prior to the title page, which in turn is dated 1672. Sand (1674a) includes the same engraving, with the title page dated 1674 as well,⁸ this, plus certain other factors, suggest that Sand (1672a) was indeed printed in 1672, but probably not distributed before 1674. Apart from the difference in the date carried on the title page, Sand (1672a) and Sand (1674a) differ on the arrangement of the preliminary material, which includes the crucial modification of the translator's preface without his consent.⁹

The translators

Sterpin's translation was dedicated to Peder Reedtz (1614-1674), Chancellor of Denmark, whom the translator referred to as having favoured him "for almost ten years already" (Sterpin 1671a:3r; Sterpin 1671b:3r), and who had previously carried out diplomatic missions in England (Fridericia 1899:565; Fallon 1993:102). Not much is known about John Sterpin, "a Scot born in France, educated in England and living in Denmark" (Turner 2008:343), apart from what he says himself in his apologetic letter to Oldenburg (Hall and Hall 1970:468-469): he had authored Latin medical books and was associated with Thomas Henshaw (1618-1700), alchemist and early member of the Royal

⁵ Johann Bohn (1640-1718), Johannes Jaenisch (1636-1707) and a third physician I have not succeeded in identifying.

⁶ According to Sand's letter to Oldenburg from 28 February 1673, this was already printed by then (Hall and Hall 1973:511); see (Kronick 2004:167).

⁷ I have been unable to find traces of the alleged 1680 edition of the "vol. 5" that, according to Kronick (2004:175), contained the issues of the year 1670, and which might refer to Sand (1681). The existence of Sand (1672a) is referred to by Andrade (1965:18), Kronick (2004:175) and Hall and Hall (1973:518, n. 33, in contradiction to Hall and Hall 1973:517), but with no mention to the particularities of its preface. Sand 1676 and Sand 1681 have not, to my knowledge, been identified before.

⁸ This is mentioned by Andrade (1965:18) about the copies held at the Royal Society and the British Museum respectively. In addition to the copy held at the Royal Society (RCN 24563), I have been able to identify and check copies of Sand (1672a) in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (site Tolbiac), R-14925, and Valencia (Spain), Universitat de València, BH Y-49/082. Both the French National Library and the University of Valencia own the full series of Sand's translation (Sand 1672a, 1672b, 1672c, 1674b, 1676 and 1681).

⁹ In Sand 1674a, the order of Sand's preface and Oldenburg's dedication has been changed (the dedication comes first), and the odd page preceding the beginning of the translation proper has been filled with a quotation from Aristotle.

Society (Speake 2004), to whom Sterpin would dedicate other translations in the future (Henderson 2013:112).

In a demolishing review, Oldenburg chastised Sterpin's translation of the *Transactions* on account of its "barbarisms and solecisms" (Oldenburg 1671:2270) and in private communication he even forbade him to continue with the task (Hall and Hall 1970:573). This probably explains why the Booms, who by 1671 had become interested in publishing a series of Latin translations of the *Transactions* in Amsterdam, decided to commission its continuation from someone else. They chose Christoph Sand, who has been seen as "an ominous choice" (Johns 1998:518). It is true that Sand, a native from Königsberg, was by then already known for his antitrinitarian view of Christianity, which he had expressed in a number of books published in Amsterdam:¹⁰ he contended that early Christians were Arians—that is, that they all believed Christ to have been created by God the Father and to be subordinate to Him—and he also supported a non-Trinitarian reading of Scripture; furthermore, he had expressed heterodox opinions claiming the pre-existence of the human soul. The Amsterdam publishers must have been perfectly aware of this controversial profile: Sand indeed seems to imply in his correspondence with Oldenburg that the same booksellers were involved in publishing some of his works.¹¹ On the other hand, unrelated sources report that the Booms were publishing heterodox theology in the early 1680s—apparently in the same disrespectful way that they had shown both towards the author and the translator in the case of the Latin *Transactions*,¹² as will be seen. Furthermore, eighteen months before Sand first contacted him, Oldenburg had been asked for information about Sand *qua* author of the *Nucleus*, his controversial history of ancient Christianity (Sand 1668-1669), by John Beale (1603?-1683), Fellow of the Royal Society, who had heard that "ye Ingenuous & learned do every where rise up to him [Sand]" (Hall and Hall 1971:141). As these words imply, Sand also came to enjoy a wide reputation for his learning (Shelford 2007:156-157), which became associated with his labours as a corrector and commentator of Latin texts (Zeltner 1716:482-486). These skills were what made the publishers' choice understandable, together with the fact that Sand had carried out a research stay at Oxford in 1664 (Mulsow 2005:55-57)—as Oldenburg had done eight years before (Andrade 1965:10)—where he must have acquired some knowledge of English. He must also have acquired relevant English con-

¹⁰ The most detailed treatments of Sand are those by Szczucki (2007 and 2014). References in English can be found in (Mulsow and Rohls 2005).

¹¹ In his letter of 31 March 1673, Sand tells Oldenburg: "The bookseller did not allow himself the same freedom with regard to my own writings, and if he had so indulged himself I would not have taken this patiently" (Hall and Hall 1973:546-547). I have slightly modified their translation in this and other instances. All other translations are mine unless otherwise referenced.

¹² A letter of J. B. de Rocoles to Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), dated May 1685 and transcribed by van Eeghen (1963:80), mentions that Dirk Boom had published Johannes Lyserus' (1631-1684) controversial tract favouring polygamy, *Polygamia victrix* (Amsterdam, 1682), and then had refused to hand over the profits of its sales to the author. Additionally, the Booms were involved in publishing Socinian books (Knijff and Visser 2004).

nections: by the time he first contacted the Secretary of the Royal Society (24 January 1673), Sand had left Amsterdam for Hamburg, where he was employed as Secretary of the English Resident there.¹³

As in Sterpin's case, diplomatic networks between England and the Continent played a role in the background of the translation enterprise; however, unlike Sterpin, Sand does not seem to have enjoyed any personal connections to Fellows of the Society: this is a further factor, together with others that will be pointed out below, that may have not played in Sand's favour regarding the reception of his translation.¹⁴

A rare edition and a controversial preface

The fact that Sand also wrote openly against the Trinity in his translation of *Phil. Trans.* is virtually unknown to scholars.¹⁵ However, in the preface to the first volume of his translation (Sand 1672a), Sand adds the following, after praising the empirical method promoted by the Royal Society: "But I intend by no means to deprive humans of the use of reason: she should have a place in divine things, as well as in those that we cannot submit to our senses" (Sand 1672a:[*4v]). And shortly after:

Therefore, as natural philosophers have fallen in infinite absurdities once they have neglected the senses, the same thing has happened to theologians once they have neglected reason. Since they do not endeavour to measure the truth of their traditions by reason, but rather to measure reason by their traditions, they write things that are fully contradictory. Some of them have arrived to such a degree of insanity, that they are not ashamed to state that even the first principle, according to which 'the same thing cannot exist and not exist at the same time', does not apply to divine realities (Sand 1672a:*5r).

Not satisfied with this, Sand continues more explicitly some lines below:

¹³ This person has been identified by Hall and Hall (1973:426) as Sir William Swan (d. 1678), who "had been appointed English Resident at Hamburg in 1670"; according to Brinkmann (1909:248), Swan entered this position in 1663. Some early sources (Locke 1742:3) give "Sir William Swan" as the name of the "Envoy from the English Court to the Elector of Brandenburg" whom John Locke (1632-1704) assisted "in the Quality of his Secretary, 1664"; however, more recent scholarship on Locke identifies this person as "Sir Walter Vane" (Milton 2004:218).

¹⁴ On personal connections and the translation projects of the Royal Society, see (Henderson 2013:112).

¹⁵ The single (implicit) hint at the antitrinitarian content of the original preface of Sand (1672a) that I have found was made by the German polymath Placcius (1708:259-260, no. 1033): his bibliographical description matches Sand (1672a), and he adds that he became convinced of Sand's authorship "after reading the preface, which not unclearly reveals a man very well known from elsewhere". For more on Sand's preface, see (Toribio 2020: 602-604).

If only they [theologians] would stop scrutinising and defining the way of generation or filiation in divine things! For it is easier to say how He is not, than how He is, according to the Scripture that says: ‘Who shall declare his generation?’¹⁶ If only they would also stop using their way of speaking for defining the Unity of the Trinity, and they would instead stick to the words of Scripture and would not know more things than the Holy Spirit wanted us to know! If the principles of these things are taken away, all those thorny questions will be asked in vain, they will disappear together with the vast works of the scholastics, there will be no difficulties where there seemed to be before, and it will be no longer necessary to take an oath in the words of the Pope, or Luther, or Calvin.¹⁷ But I do not intend to dwell on this any longer (Sand 1672a:[*5v]).

Sand was thus introducing a digression on theology not simply in general terms, but in explicit relation to the highly controversial field of Christology, in the very opening of his translation of the first issue of *Philosophical Transactions*. Such a discourse, linking “reason” with criticism of the Trinity, would have no doubt been labelled as “Socinian”, therefore heretic, by virtually every learned reader of those times, and would have made of the whole volume a controversial one.

Which role might this have played in the printing history of the Latin *Transactions*, and what might have been Oldenburg’s position towards it? In his letter of 28 February 1673 (Hall and Hall 1973:511-518), Sand mentions to Oldenburg that “at the bookseller’s request [he has] placed [his] preface before the whole work, which [he] would like [Oldenburg] to read” (Hall and Hall 1973:516). One month later (31 March 1673), Sand “reckon[s]” that Oldenburg “[has] already received [his] preface to the *Philosophical Transactions* delivered by Mr. Cooke” (Hall and Hall 1973:547):¹⁸ if that was the case, Oldenburg had made no comment on it in his lost letter from 11 March 1673. Oldenburg was to remain silent on the preface throughout the whole preserved correspondence. In Sand’s last preserved letter to Oldenburg, dated 21 September 1674, he openly complains that his preface, the original of which Oldenburg “will doubtlessly still have”, has been “castrated in the middle” by the publishers (Hall and Hall 1977:85-86), by which he can only mean that the paragraph containing the antitrinitarian contents discussed above had been removed. Unfortunately, Oldenburg’s reply to this letter is lost, as in turn is Sand’s reply to this; in the next and last of Oldenburg’s letters to Sand, dated 26 October 1674 (Hall and Hall 1977:114-116), he does not make any mention of the preface.

¹⁶ Isaiah 53:8 in the rendering of the Vulgate.

¹⁷ This echoes Horace, *Epistles* 1, 1, 14: “Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri” [“Not obliged to take an oath in the words of any master”], to which precisely the Royal Society’s motto referred: “Nullius in verba” (see Dear 1985).

¹⁸ Cooke was secretary of Henry Coventry (1619-1686), Secretary of State, according to Hall and Hall 1973:427.

The Secretary of the Royal Society could not have been unaware of antitrinitarianism. Apart from the contextual relevance of this form of religious dissidence, and the fact that, as has been pointed out above, he had already heard of Sand's book on Church History, he engaged in regular correspondence with Stanisław Lubieniecki (1623-1675), one of the leaders of the Socinian diaspora, mainly in relation to the latter's interests in astronomy. Their correspondence was partially published in Lubieniecki's *Theatrum cometicum* (Amsterdam, 1668); importantly, the Sand-Oldenburg correspondence contains evidence that, years later, Oldenburg was still writing to the exiled Polish nobleman: on 10 November 1673, Sand acknowledged receipt of a letter from Oldenburg to Lubieniecki, who resided in Hamburg (Hall and Hall 1975:340-343). Even if there seems to be no reason to doubt Oldenburg's own Protestant orthodoxy—his close association with Robert Boyle (1627-1691) might rather speak to the contrary—he was evidently not shy in communicating with men who were commonly regarded as heretics by the standards of their times.¹⁹

Nevertheless, damaging the image of *his* journal, and by implication the image of the Royal Society, with a translation that included polemical religious material, was a very different thing. Would it therefore be possible, especially considering the precedent of Sterpin's translation, that Oldenburg used his influence in order to suspend the distribution of Sand (1672a)? There is in fact no evidence that this edition was distributed before 1674, the copies identified so far all bearing the aforementioned engraving dated that year. If so, however, Oldenburg's influence would prove quite limited, since the Booms did eventually distribute Sand (1672a), and, what is more, also kept publishing volumes of *Acta philosophica* years after Oldenburg had strongly spoken against it. Hence I find it more probable that the removal of the controversial material from Sand's preface responded to a move from the publishers themselves, as Sand himself claimed in his last letter to Oldenburg: "This, I say, the bookseller dared to do without consulting me" (Hall and Hall 1977:86).²⁰ While they had no scruple in publishing separated polemical books, the Booms probably did not want to jeopardise the sale of a "neutral" product, with an appeal to a large readership, by including material ideologically repulsive to many.

Author versus translator?

The correspondence between Christoph Sand and Henry Oldenburg has been discussed as reflecting a broader context of "piracy and usurpation" (Johns 1998:514-521). While this framework may still

¹⁹ From an overview of Oldenburg's intellectual interests as reflected in his library see (Malcolm 2005).

²⁰ Sand refers both to the "castration" of the preface and to the addition of a final line attributing the *Transactions* to the Royal Society and not to Oldenburg alone.

be fruitfully applied in some regards, it does not account for all the complexities of the whole Sand-Oldenburg correspondence. John Sterpin had sent his apologetic letter to Oldenburg from Copenhagen when the first—and only—volume of his translation had just been printed in Frankfurt (Sterpin to Oldenburg, 24 February 1671, in Hall and Hall 1970:468-469); then Oldenburg acted in order to stop the continuation of this editorial project (Hall and Hall 1970:573; Johns 1998:517).

The case with Sand was somewhat different. He had probably started the translation when he was still in Amsterdam: in his first letter to Oldenburg, dated 24 January 1673 (Hall and Hall 1973:424-427), he states that “[f]or a long time [he had] been looking for an opportunity to present [his] services to [Oldenburg]” in relation to the translation commissioned from him (Hall and Hall 1973:425). Then he asks Oldenburg about a translation detail regarding *Phil. Trans.* 29, which implies that he was working at the moment on Sand (1672c). In his lost reply (10 February 1673), quoted by Sand in his next letter (28 February 1673), Oldenburg showed little enthusiasm about the translation project: he expressed his surprise “that continentals undertake translations of English books” (Hall and Hall 1973:511).²¹ There is no sign, however, that Oldenburg intended to prevent the continuation of Sand’s work or the distribution of the volumes that were about to be printed, as he had done with Sterpin’s translation. On the contrary, he became involved in the project by giving instructions to the translator, and proposed amendments regarding the translation of *Phil. Trans.* 10—which implies, incidentally, that he had seen proofs of Sand (1672b), sent by the publishers or by someone else.

Oldenburg’s criticisms probably caused the transition from Sand’s polite overture to his rather brusque reply: “Your comments would have been the more welcome if they had been quicker. Now almost everything is printed, for I have not started the translation from the year sixty-six (...). But the beginning of the whole work and of my translation was the same” (Hall and Hall 1973:514). “Almost everything” must mean Sand (1672a), Sand (1672b) and “more than a half” of Sand (1672c):²² this explains the fact that Oldenburg’s amendments referring to Sand (1672b) are not included in the list of *errata* of that volume, but at the end of Sand (1672c).²³

Sand’s annoyance can hardly have been caused because Oldenburg had been “slow to reply” (Johns 1998:518), but because he had not sent his amendments on Sand (1672b) earlier in spite of having already noted them. Sand was also evidently offended by the criticism of his Latinity, as confirmed by the fact that he pedantically pointed out at one case of inelegant use of Latin pronouns in Oldenburg’s letter after objecting to a number of Oldenburg’s criticisms specifically regarding

²¹ The word *susplicere*, “suspect”, printed by the editors, is a misspelling for *suscipere*, “undertake”, as the contextual sense suggests and the original manuscript letter confirms.

²² An unawareness of Sand (1672a) probably explains why Hall and Hall (1973:517) deem the whole passage “somewhat obscure”.

²³ Compare (Hall and Hall 1973:511-512) with (Sand 1672c:392) and (Sand 1672b:5, 9, 19 and 21).

pronouns (Hall and Hall 1973:512). He was a meticulous corrector: the fact that he had not been given enough time by the publishers to complete the work properly, rather than his reputation of heterodoxy, is likely to explain why he signed the translation with his initials only (“C. S.”).²⁴ However, faced with what he must have felt to have been a questioning of the quality of his text from Oldenburg’s side, he counterattacked by attaching a list of errata he had identified and corrected in the English original (Hall and Hall 1973:512-513), a rather long list, even with the exclusion of “certain breaches of Greek orthography” and “trivial or glaring printer’s errors” (Hall and Hall 1973:516).

Finally, Sand must have resented the fact that his reports on natural phenomena, to which half of his first letter was devoted, had apparently gone unremarked by Oldenburg. As Johns (1998:518) puts it, “he expected his testimony to be treated as valid by the virtuosi”. In fact, Sand usually showed himself over-involved with the contents of the works that were entrusted to his editorial care,²⁵ and since the *Transactions* dealt with natural philosophy, he apparently thought it proper to add his own input on the matter. Before realising Oldenburg’s zeal for his intellectual property, he had even allowed himself to include the report of a case of hyperdontia known to him in the *addenda* to the second volume (Sand 1674b:460, Hall and Hall 1973:425).²⁶ This, however, was in conflict with the Royal Society’s practices concerning the conferment of authority to a natural philosophical text (Dear 1985:157-159, Henderson 2013:117). Later in the correspondence Sand would have the chance to communicate this kind of observations through the proper channels: he communicated a notice on the generation of pearls (Hall and Hall 1975:409-410, 471-472, 487-488) that Oldenburg officially presented to the Royal Society and that was published, in Oldenburg’s English translation, in *Phil. Trans.* 101 (March 1674).²⁷

For all of Oldenburg’s criticisms, the attitude of the Secretary of the Royal Society throughout the preserved correspondence was far from uncooperative: at Sand’s request, he sent him the relevant original words from a Latin mathematical work reviewed in *Phil. Trans.* 35 (Hall and Hall 1975:340-341, 368, 410-411). He also gave Sand detailed explanations on the meaning of a number of English technical terms (Hall and Hall 1975:527-531). This gave occasion to reflect on the difficulty of translating vernacular technical terms into Latin: Oldenburg pointed out that the same

²⁴ “I have not had my name printed on the work in order not to lose my good name, not being able to publish the work as I would have liked” (Hall and Hall 1973:514, translation modified). He complained about the urgency pressed upon him by the editors, both privately (Hall and Hall 1973:515) and in print (Sand 1672a:[*7r]; Sand 1674a:[*8r]); he also roughly criticised the corrector employed to revise his text in the final list of *errata* of some volumes (Sand 1674b:[543], Sand 1676a:[463-464]).

²⁵ This is evident in his correspondence (1677-1680) with Pierre-Daniel Huet (1620-1721) (Shelford 2007).

²⁶ He would proceed similarly in the late volumes, for instance adding bibliography that he thought relevant to the topic (Sand 1681:236).

²⁷ Sand’s notice has found its way into modern specialised literature (Nagai 2013). As he said himself, however, he was not the author of the observation.

would have been the case even if Sand had been translating from German, which was his—as well as Oldenburg’s—mother tongue. He pointed out the example of Georg Agricola’s *De re metallica* [“On metals”] (1556), which incorporated a Latin-German glossary, and suggested that Sand might want to resort to something similar.

Attribution and disavowal

The actual mistranslation of English terms and phrases was one of the issues that did demonstrably concern Oldenburg about Sand’s translation, but it was not the main one. The most prominent criticism, stated by Oldenburg at the beginning and at the end of his contact with Sand, has been repeatedly identified by previous scholarship, and it is the fact that the Latin title (*Acta philosophica Societatis Regiae*) wrongfully attributed the *Transactions* to the Royal Society and not to Oldenburg alone. This misunderstanding was far less than exceptional: although Oldenburg “would go to great lengths to separate his journal from the Royal Society of London, it was initially received as being directly related to the Society” (Doherty 2017:91).²⁸ In the case of the Latin translation, Sand consistently put the blame for the title on the publishers (Hall and Hall 1973:511 and 546, Hall and Hall 1977:85), and he even included the attribution to the Royal Society on the list of *errata* of the third volume (Sand 1672c:392): “these words should be removed from the title: ‘of the Royal Society of England’”—“a unique erratum in the history of bibliography” indeed (Hall and Hall 1973:517). However, Oldenburg was apparently not convinced by Sand’s claims of innocence: from the latter’s reply on 31 March 1673 (Hall and Hall 1973:546-548) we can deduce that Oldenburg had urged him to resign from the job if the publishers were not willing to respect his translation of the title, apparently insinuating that otherwise Sand would show himself as a servant of the booksellers.²⁹ In his fulminating review of the translation, Oldenburg (1674:141) placed the responsibility for the wrong attribution on “the translator, or the publisher, or both”.

This review, published in the August and September 1674 issue (*Phil. Trans.* 106), put an end to Oldenburg’s cooperative, if unenthusiastic, involvement in Sand’s Latin translation. A plausible explanation for his definitive change of attitude might be that he had not seen any further proofs of the work besides those implied in his first reply to Sand (10 February 1673), and had subsequently been exposed only to Sand’s questions about particular passages. Then, when the 1674 edition came to his attention, he realised that the publishers had completely disregarded his wish,

²⁸ The *Transactions* would not become an official publication of the Royal Society until the mid-eighteenth century. Probably much to Oldenburg’s posthumous dismay, Burke (2007:66) regrets excluding “such works as the translations of (...) the first few years of the *Transactions of the Royal Society of London*” from his census of Neo-Latin translations on account of their not having “a known author”.

²⁹ To this Sand proudly replied that “[o]nly the free born can hire their labor out for money” (Hall and Hall 1973:547).

which he had fiercely stated more than once, that the *Transactions* be not ascribed to the Royal Society. He was then forced to publicly disown the translation, for reasons more institutional than personal, as he claimed at the beginning of the review. This would imply, however, that Sand (1672b) and (1672c) had not been distributed before 1674, which is not a proven fact; otherwise Oldenburg would have been forced to act earlier. The institutional developments within the Royal Society around that time, aiming at “protect[ing] the virtuosi from foreigners” (Johns 1998:520), are also likely to have played a role in Oldenburg’s public rejection.

In his last letter to Sand, in which he referred the Prussian to his review (26 October 1674, Hall and Hall 1977:114-116), Oldenburg suggested that the Booms should send subsequent volumes to London in order to be revised and corrected by him personally; the correspondence had proven an ineffective means to solve the large number of linguistic uncertainties that arose through the translation process. He nevertheless continued to acknowledge Sand as a learned man: he did so publicly, when he stated that writing such a demolishing review was the more painful to him because it was likely to offend a man “whose erudition he otherwise holds in esteem” (Oldenburg 1674:141)—he had said nothing similar when he attacked Sterpin’s translation—, and he also did so privately, mentioning Sand’s “erudition” in his last letter to him, addressed “to the most distinguished sir, Mr. Christoph Sand, his venerable friend”.

Latinity, politeness and more

Sand had written his first letter to Oldenburg, his fellow German, in French (24 January 1673, Hall and Hall 1973:424-427), a language used at the time among Germans in diplomatic and courtly rather than scholarly contexts (Burke 2007:86-87, Gordin 2015:166-168). Additionally, in this otherwise very polite letter, Sand chose a plain *Monsieur* as a form of address. Both things indicate that he was not taking this as the beginning of a learned exchange. After Oldenburg determined the switch of the correspondence to Latin, Sand consistently addressed him as *nobilissime* (“most noble”),³⁰ sometimes *clarissime* (“most famous”); never *doctissime* (“most learned”), as he usually addressed his other known correspondents. Oldenburg, in turn, called Sand *clarissime*.

Courtesy treatments were indeed another issue that concerned Oldenburg about Sand’s translation. In his first reply to Sand he had requested that “[the name of] Huygens be preceded by the word *Clarissimus* or at least *Dominus*, as it is in English”; “otherwise”, he added, “he might think that I am taking sides” (Hall and Hall 1973:514-515), since Christiaan Huygens (1629-1695) was referred to in the Latin text without further complimentary notes, while Adrien Auzout (1622-

³⁰ Regarding Oldenburg’s “nobility” see (Andrade 1965:10).

1691) was said to be a “most illustrious French astronomer”.³¹ The same concern can be observed in the final piece of the preserved correspondence (Hall and Hall 1977:114-116), where Oldenburg pointed out to Sand that the philological reasons adduced by the Prussian in a lost letter did not suffice to call an English bishop *dominus*, a title used in England between peers, instead of the customary *reverendissimus*. This is ironical: the discussion must refer to Oldenburg’s dedication of the fourth original volume (*Phil. Trans.* 45-56) to Seth Ward (1617-1689), astronomer and Bishop of Salisbury. Now, this volume had already been translated by Sterpin (1671), who had used *reverendissimus* in the translation of Oldenburg’s dedication; Sand, clearly considered by Oldenburg to be a more capable translator, nevertheless disregarded the latter’s wishes—probably scorned by the 1674 review—and retained *dominus* in his new translation (Sand 1676:3).

The last aspect that concerned Oldenburg was Sand’s Latin style. In the 1674 review, it features as a prominent criticism next to the wrongful attribution of the *Transactions* to the Royal Society: “In the second place, it is not to be ignored that the translation itself is a serious offense to the English edition, since it does not only suffer from an insipid Latin phraseology, but also, not infrequently, distorts the meaning of the original” (Oldenburg 1674:142). The following three pages display a long list of passages exclusively taken from the first and the second volumes (Sand 1674a:1-52 and 1672b:194-197), the translation of which is often criticised on stylistic grounds: “the rest of this paragraph is full of anglicisms” (Oldenburg 1674:142), “which kind of Latinity is this?”, “who could say that in Latin in this way without feeling nausea?”, “in such a way that it offends the ears used to true Latinity” (Oldenburg 1674:143), “dull Latinity” (Oldenburg 1674:144), etc.

In spite of Oldenburg’s severe review, the Latin *Transactions* did not “expire” (Johns 1998:521), Sand (1674b) was not “the last volume to be published” (Hall and Hall 1973:518), Sand did not “give up” the translation (Hall and Hall 1977:116), and the Booms do not seem to have encountered any problems in publishing and distributing two further volumes (Sand 1676a and 1681). In both of them, Sand remarked on a great many mistakes and a lack of clarity in the English originals (Sand 1676a:363, 404, 423, 451, 438, 453, 455, Sand 1681:119, 178, 406, 459, 592, 597), sometimes ascribing the errors to Oldenburg by name (Sand 1676a:76, Sand 1681:595), and once even ironically reacting to a comment made in the text on the desirability of producing Latin translations of English texts:³²

³¹ As Sand replied, this omission of titles came from the author of the Latin translation of the French passage involved from *Le Journal des Savans*, which Sand had incorporated without changes to his own translation.

³² This necessity was not infrequently stated in Oldenburg’s correspondence (Burke 2007:74, Simon 2017:316).

On the contrary, Mr. Oldenburg was usually strongly opposed to those who translate English writings into Latin, which I have experienced myself, not only in the translation of these *Transactions*, but also when I translated into Latin the *Treatise on the origin and virtues of gems* of the most noble Mr. Robert Boyle. (Sand 1681:385)

Sand's involvement in making contemporary natural philosophical knowledge available in the *lingua franca* of those days was indeed also visible in his translation of Boyle's *Essay on the origin and virtues of gems* (London, 1672), published in Amsterdam in 1673. He was contributing with this to the considerable corpus of Latin translations of Boyle, "the most translated European scientist" in the period (Burke 2007:74). Sand had mentioned and apologised for this translation in his first letter to Oldenburg: he had undertaken it "not knowing that the same thing had been done in England", probably by Oldenburg himself (Hall and Hall 1973:426-427). Hence some degree of rivalry between translators might be suspected as a further element of potential conflict in Oldenburg's difficult relationship with Sand.

Final remarks: an outdated effort

Sand had claimed in his preface that "not all of us pretend to be Cicero, since Latin is neither our mother tongue nor has been anybody else's for the last one thousand years", and therefore he preferred to use "popular" words and to include the original English ones between brackets when the sense was not clear (Sand 1672a:[viii]; Sand 1674a:[ix-x]). He later complained privately to Oldenburg that it was necessary to be "a superman" [*sesquivirum*] in order to "overcome all the difficulties" (Hall and Hall 1975:488-489) related to the translation of new scientific realities into Latin. He had apologetically insisted on this point in his preface: not only does the translator need to be "an expert, and not in a superficial way", of the topics dealt with, but also he had to face the translation of "new inventions, foreign words with foreign meanings, or involving realities unknown to the ancients, or recently discovered, not infrequently in lands that were also unknown to the Latins" (Sand 1672a:[vii]; Sand 1674a:[viii-ix]).

Sand was thus aptly applying a topos as old as the Roman poet Lucretius (Gordin 2015:23-31) in order to refer to the lexical perplexities he encountered in the English description of experiments performed under the aegis of the "new philosophy". At the same time he was taking sides in the—largely rhetorical and by then two centuries old (Helander 2014:39)—debate on the desirability of a strictly "Ciceronian" Latin. Nevertheless, beyond its topical nature, Sand's paragraph points at the core of the problems faced by Latin translations of science (Burke 2004:78),

which must be taken into account for their irrevocable decline: “once Latin was ‘demoted’ to being a scientific language like any other” (Gordin 2015:48), and once a Neo-Latin translator faced roughly the same difficulties as a vernacular one,³³ translating science into the ancient language started to seem pointless. This was not yet the case in Sand’s times, when even Oldenburg’s explicit disavowal did not prevent further volumes of the *Acta philosophica* to get in the market, as has been shown. In the long term, however, the regressive nature that came to be attached to Latin translations got most of them thrown into the box of historical oddities. It is to be hoped that their progressive recovery will not only provide us with large quantities of text opening promising perspectives for linguistic study, but also help us better understand the social and intellectual circumstances in which these translations were produced.

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³³ For claims similar to Sand’s uttered by a translator from Neo-Latin into German see (Fransen 2017b:1-3).

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