

Elizabeth Arnold

- Author(s)

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Abstract

Whilst only one piece of work by Elizabeth Arnold has been identified (the translation of part of Andreas de Laguna's commentary upon Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*) the dating and content locate her work within the mid-Jacobean debate about women's clothing, conduct and mien. Her translation is a preface to Thomas Tuke's *A Treatise Against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women* (1616) – a carefully reasoned theological attack on male and female cosmetics. Arnold's intervention into a broader debate about Jacobean female conduct through her translation of medical and scientific knowledge problematizes the notion that her prefatory material is simply "in service" to the male author's work.

Introduction

Thomas Tuke must have known of, or known personally, Elizabeth Arnold, to have her translate a long preface to his work, *A Treatise Against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women* (1616). Tuke's first published work was his own translation of William Perkins' *A Christian and Plaine Treatise of...predestination* (1606). Like many Puritan ministers, his sermons, essays and treatises (for example *The Christian's Looking-Glass*, 1614) focused on male and female conduct, nevertheless his work has tended to be read as sexual admonishment of women (Eales 1998). Tuke's publications included a number of translations - including Perkin's works from the Latin, and Vecentius Lorensis' *Commentary against Heretics* (1611).

Elizabeth Arnold's preface to Tuke's work is taken from Andreas de Laguna's 'Invective... against the painting of women' in his *Annotations of Dioscorides* (sig.B3r). None of Tuke's previous or subsequent translations were from Spanish, so perhaps his motivation in using Arnold was the need for a Spanish-English speaker. But it is significant that as a learned translator himself, he chose to use a woman translator's work as the key preface to this work in English: [emphasizing] and positioning as it does ('translated out of Spanish by Mist. Elizabeth Arnold', sig.B4^v) both the original language and the gender of the translator. Tuke prefaces his treatise with a number of short poems by a medley of contemporary poets (R. Jackson, Thomas Farnaby, Robert Felton, Thomas Drayton, Edward Tyleman and Joshua Sylvester sig.A3^r-B3^r), but Arnold's longer (3 and a half pages of quarto) contribution is [situated] immediately

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before the main text, given pride of place in juxtaposition with Tuke's religious polemic against 'painting' of the face and body.

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Biography

Elizabeth Arnold may have been the daughter of William Arnold of Cromer, Norfolk, whose genealogical line was recorded by the visitation of the Society of Heralds to Norfolk in 1613, although no details of her birth, death, and family are known. There is no clue as to her biography in the prefatory material, nor did she translate texts for any of Tuke's other works. Tuke was 'minister of God's word' at St Giles-in-the-Fields in 1616, and dedicated several of his works at this time to Lady Alicia Dudley, who lived in Clerkenwell, so it is possible that Arnold had some local Clerkenwell connection, although there is no documentary evidence to support this hypothesis. She was evidently well educated and literate. The prefatory contributors to the Tuke work suggest Tuke's literary connections were extensive (if minor) and that Arnold had at least access to the fringes of a literary circle, with some Puritan leanings.

Work

The opening of Arnold's translation of 'Andreas de Laguna's 'Invective... against the painting of women' in his *Annotations of Dioscorides*' (sig.B3r) does not draw attention to the gender of her activity or voice: her gendered signature is only revealed to the reader at the end of her 'entry'. Her writing exemplifies the ideal early modern notion of female writing: the vehicle of knowledge transmission is almost transparent (see Goodrich 2014). What is the impact of the translator's gender revealed at this point? Tuke's work, which follows this preface, was based predominantly on Biblical and theological invectives against cosmetics: he cites scripture (Proverbs, St. Paul, Isaiah) and several Fathers of the church (from St. Jerome to St Chrysostom), conventionally used in diatribes against cosmetics (Dolan 1993; Karim Cooper 2019). There are no women publishing, speaking or writing on this topic in this period. Men who write about feminine beauty and skin care focus on conceptions of beauty, feminine behaviour and conceptions of femininity: according to Tuke a 'painted' woman - whatever her actual marital status - will be read as a whore. Arguably, Tuke has scored an impressive marketing coup in harnessing the words of a woman to preface this polemic. Not only does he protect himself from potential charges of extreme misogyny by using a named woman's voice rather than a ventriloquized voice (Harvey 1992), he seems to give her the freedom to frame arguments on the subject in the choice to translate a Spanish humanist botanist and doctor on the medical science of cosmetics, rather than on the theological prescriptions against cosmetics' use. In using a woman's voice in this doubly authoritative position - as translator and as purveyor of medical knowledge, Arnold and Tuke place themselves within a broader Jacobean debate about women, conduct and speech (Henderson and Mcmanus). Although Arnold herself does not draw attention to her gender or the unusual and unique way in which her work is the only woman's preface to a male-authored conduct book, we become aware of that before we enter the male-authored text. The visual journey the reader makes between

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the final page of the preface and the work proper literally elides her voice and name and the authorial assertion of the book's subject: while one page ends: 'translated out of the Spanish by Mist. Elizabeth Arnold,' the next facing page begins: 'Of Painting the Face' (fo. B4^v-C1^r). Woman as author, woman as reader, and woman as object of enquiry are centered.

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The title of Tuke's work promises an equity between men and women (*A Treatise Against Painting and Tincturing of Men and Women*) and his opening theological exempla are both gender-neutral - St. Paul's letter to the Philippians ('whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure' 4.8) and St. Ambrose on painted faces as deceitful (sig. C1^v). His third example (from St. Jerome) slips into assuming that painting is a female occupation - and henceforth the argument against cosmetics conventionally links cosmetics to sexual promiscuity in women, as both 'whorish' and un-natural (Karim-Cooper, 2019; Dolan 1993).

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Tuke's initial organizing premise for his publication does avoid the overt misogynist slant which tainted the anti-women diatribes of Joseph Swetnam's *The Arraignment of Lewd, Froward and Unconstant Women* (1615). Nevertheless, within the febrile atmosphere surrounding the trial of Lady Frances Howard and Robert Carr for the murder of Thomas Overbury in 1616 (to which he refers obliquely, p.53) Tuke's attack on cosmetics veers into a broader discussion 'of murder and poisoning; pride and ambition; adulterie and witchcraft' (Titlepage) – a general mood of misogynistic outcry which many publications of the time shared (Merrit 2004, Lindley 1993).

Arnold's choice of material contrasts both this immediate context and Tuke's choice of content (wholly based on Biblical and theological writings). The Spanish author whom she translates, Andreas de Laguna, was a renowned sixteenth-century humanist and doctor (Kousoula et al 2011), whose most well-known work was his translation from Greek into Spanish of the first century physician and botanist Dioscorides's work *De Materia Medica* (as *Acerca de la materia medicinal y de los venenos mortíferos*), alongside a commentary which tested and expanded Dioscorides medical recipes and insights (1555). It is part of that commentary which Arnold translates. The first English translation of Dioscorides was much later (1655), but his work was cited in herbals, pharmacology and medical books in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century, including John Gerard's popular *Herbal* of 1597 (Francia and Stobart 2014). De Laguna's commentary was re-published over 18 times into the eighteenth century after Arnold's short extracted translation (Puigvert 1979). Arnold's use of de Laguna and Dioscorides, alongside her act of translating a medical book, situates her own knowledge as both authorised (by a great humanist medical man) and authorising (through her own act of translation). Early modern women engaged in domestic medical and herbal activities, in midwifery, and, for women in more powerful positions, on estates and for servants and tenants (Whaley 2011). Arnold's self-positioning as an expert on the medical side of the impact of cosmetics on the skin and on health, through the (translated) voices of Dioscorides and de Laguna simultaneously positions her as a female authority on the subject and shelters her from charges of immodest publication.

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Arnold's opening translated sentence begins on that conventional moral premise against cosmetics: 'The ceruse or white lead, wherewith women use to paint themselves, was without doubt, brought in use by the devil' (sig.B3^r). However, her main focus is medical ('the use of this ceruse, beside the rotting of the teeth and the unsavourie breath which it causeth' (sig.B3^v). This focus - on the damage caused by these dangerous chemicals - is repeated in a number of ways, including detailed descriptions of the damage mercury and 'soliman' do to skin, hair, fertility and mental faculties (sig.B4^{r-v}). She is explicit in choosing an extract which addresses women directly ('Wherefore let all gentlewomen and honourable matrons, that make price of their honesty and beauty, leave these base arts to the common strumpets' (sig.B3^v). But equally, she chooses an extract that reinforces positive medical advice on facial care: 'Yet I do not altogether mislike that honest women should wash themselves, and seeke too make their faces smooth, but that they should use barley water, or the water of lupines, or the juyce of lymons, and infinite other things, which Dioscorides prescibes as cleanly and delicate to cleare the face, and not goe continually with ranke smelles of ointments and plasters' (sig.B3^v-B4^r). Arnold thus appears judicious and canny in her choice of material and in her assumed reception by an audience willing to hear a woman's voice on matters of cosmetic self-care.

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Arnold uses two sections from de Laguna's commentary – the first from chapter 62, which combines the moralised invective against cosmetics as devilish and 'against nature' (sig.B3^v), with medical advice, and the second from chapter 69. Arnold introduces this latter chapter with direct words of her own ('Now that you may know he flouteth his countrywomen, heare what he saith of this Soliman in his Annotation upon the 69 chapter' (sig.B4^r). Thus the voice of the translator engages with both her source and her audience, guiding them towards a reading of de Laguna's ideas. Her two chosen sections are linked by the focus on the scientific and medical impact of poisonous and dangerous cosmetics' use - a link to which Arnold draws particular attention by using her own voice and addressing the reader directly for the only time in the translation.

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Her hand can be determined throughout the translation both directly and indirectly. Her inserted reminders that this is a translation and not her own voice occur only four times in the piece, yet suggest two perspectives to the reader – that of original author and translator. The first (in the example just cited) connects two disparate parts from the original which she wishes to bring together; the second and third are insertions of parenthetical 'saith he's' (sig.B4^r), both close to the elision between chapters; and the final is her signature at the end. These marks of her active presence remind us that translation is skilled work, and that Arnold is conscious of both her necessary modesty ('he saith') and her own skills ('translated by Mist. Elizabeth Arnold', sig.B4^v) (see 'Women and Translation').

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Tuke's choice of publisher in Thomas Creede (McKerrow 1968; Gant 2004) - the publisher of Elizabeth's Cary's play *The Tragedy of Mariam* in 1613, the first original tragedy written and published by a woman in English (Yamada 1994), and works aimed explicitly at women readers, such as D'Oliva's *The Mirror of Nobility*, (Lucas 1989) – suggests a marketing strategy self-consciously aimed at a reading audience of both men and women (Yamada, 1997).

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Conclusion

Arnold's translation highlights some key issues in early modern women's writing: first, the placing of a woman's voice as part of the prefatory address; secondly, the place of women translators in the practice and ideology of early modern publishing; thirdly, the nature of the original text from which Arnold works; fourthly, its concentration on medical and herbal arguments, in contrast to Tuke's theological content; fifthly, the authority given to her voice on the topic of female conduct and cosmetics; and finally, the broader context of mid-Jacobean debates about women, clothing and conduct.

Arnold's act of translation and publication (modestly plain in its mainly word-for-word rendition, and under the aegis of a man) situates itself within the tradition of acceptable female publication. However, at the same time, by focusing on the medical and scientific details in her two originals (de Andres and Dioscorides), Arnold discovers a confidence and authority in herbal and medical knowledge which was to become both an important outlet and source of female knowledge and practice in women's practices and publications during the seventeenth century (Whaley 2011).

The debate about cosmetics in the history of the theatre (Dolan 1994, Karim Cooper 2019) has not flagged Elizabeth Arnold as a possible source for locating women's voices. As Korda (2011) shows, women were involved in the theatrical production, supply and of stage make-up and cosmetics in early modern theatres, and although Arnold's position is clearly aligned with the anti-theatrical tradition against cosmetics (Dolan 1993), her choice of material situates her as equally knowledgeable as these workers when it comes to cosmetics, their use and impact, as well as facial and skin-care bio-treatments. This faint trace of her expertise arguably situates her as a ghostly presence amongst those other invisible Jacobean women who worked in and knew about the domestic and personal needs of women.

Cross-References

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Further Reading

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