

Carlo Carabba. *La prima traduzione francese del Novum organum: Dal manoscritto BNF FF 19096*.

Le corrispondenze letterarie, scientifiche ed erudite dal Rinascimento all'età moderna; Subsidia 16. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2011. xxxi + 204 pp. €26. ISBN: 978-88-222-6044-4.

Several scholars have recently investigated the reception of the work of Francis Bacon in France in the first half of the seventeenth century. Among others, Michelle Le Doeuff, Marta Fattori, and Giuliano Ferretti have started to clarify the impact of Bacon's ideas in the French circles of *libertinage érudit*, where his work was keenly read, discussed, and translated.

In particular, these studies have highlighted the importance of a group of Baconian manuscripts present at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. This monograph by Carlo Carabba is a paleographic edition of one, the first French translation of the text published by Bacon in 1620 as *Instauratio magna*. The French text contains the preliminary material to the *Instauratio*, comprising the dedication to James I, the general preface, and the *Distributio operis*. The manuscript also contains a large part of the *Novum organum* proper, including the preface, the full first book, and a partial translation of the second book, abruptly ending at aphorism 11. The translator's choice does not appear to have been accidental, as the text stops exactly at the beginning of the technical sections containing the famous preliminary derivation of the form of heat and the detailed and lengthy expositions of *Instantie prerogative*, or instances with special powers. In this sense, the translator seems to have been more interested in the parts of the *Instauratio* having a more general and programmatic character.

This monograph also contains an informative and compact introduction contextualizing the origin of the document. The catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale shows that the manuscript originally belonged to the library of Pierre Séguier, Chancellor of France and second *Protecteur* of the Académie Française (incidentally, this manuscript is listed as "Fonds Français 19092" in the catalogue, and not "Fonds Français 19096," as in the title of this volume). As Carabba states, Séguier's library was outstanding and covered Bacon's major works, including the first edition of *Novum organum*, together with titles from "Galilei, Gilbert e Descartes" (viii). Séguier also possessed copies (BNF FF 4745 and 17874) of other Baconian manuscripts, derived from those belonging to the two erudite brothers Dupuy, and initially stolen from Bacon by the soldier and man of letters Philippe Fortin de La Hoguette (BNF Dupuy 5). All of these links testify that the intellectual circles and networks of Séguier and the Dupuy brothers were crucial for the diffusion of Bacon's works and ideas in France from the 1620s and in the following decades.

The major strength of this edition is Carabba's very accurate comparison between the French text and the Latin original. The French version is often markedly divergent from the text of the *Instauratio*, showing a tendency to add rhetorical emphasis. The modern editor is meticulous in registering minor and

major liberties in the rendition, constructing in the process an indirect picture of the unknown translator. As Carabba notes in his introduction, the vocabulary of the French text reveals some knowledge of the philosophical tradition and, in particular, of Bacon's ideas. At the same time, in a few occasions the translator entirely misinterprets Bacon's philosophical conceptions. The translation is most unfaithful when the anonymous author shows caution on religious or political matters, interpolating long passages absent in the original. Moreover, as Carabba shows, the French version emphasizes the role of the senses as the main origin of human knowledge, even when Bacon's text does not.

Finally, Carabba highlights a further idiosyncrasy of the text: the extensive use of the terms *clair* and *clairement*. In fact, this specific feature may have some relevance for the dating of the manuscript. At the end of aphorism 44, the Latin expression "fusus et distinctius" ("at greater length and more clearly") is translated as *clairement et distinctement*; Carabba convincingly notices that the use of *clairement* for *fusus* can hardly be considered accidental and also suggests that the translator intended to shape this expression on the Cartesian formula, popularized in Descartes's writings at least from the *Discours de la Méthode* of 1637. Carabba indicates this date as the terminus post quem for the translation, with the death of Pierre Séguier in 1672 as terminus ante quem.

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