

FOREWORD

TRANSLATION AND TRANSMISSION; OR, EARLY MODERNITY IN MOTION

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Just walk into virtually any Renaissance document, and it is liable to open in its own small ways into multiplicity, into non-identity with itself. By attending to such examples of text's [sic] mis-self-representation, we can gauge something of what I call its "transmission"—how it was transformed as it was transmitted. (And since we don't have texts that aren't transmitted, transmission should cover most everything.) (Random Clod 246)

The concept of "transmission," created by Randall McLeod, does indeed "cover most everything." It proves broadly generative for studying early modernity and is especially applicable to early modern translations, as the essays in this issue demonstrate. The most direct contribution of the idea of transmission to translation studies is procedural: when looking at translations, we should look also at changes made to their material texts. The idea of transmission, however, originated in textual studies and editorial theory, and those origins help us understand its special relevance to translation studies. This Foreword to a special issue on transmission and translation first considers briefly the textual origins of the idea of transmission, particularly examining how the perennial problem of variant versions can be reimagined through the lens of transmission and related textual-studies concepts. From there, the idea of transmission connects readily to translation studies: translations, after all, are variant versions of a work, and they, too, are transformed when transmitted. Transmission asks us in particular to consider material textuality

as a co-factor in translation, concomitant with verbal or linguistic factors. The idea of transmissiion helps us keep an eye on process, on exactly *how* material texts convey a translation's meanings, and it helps us attend differently to difference as a factor in the construction of meaning. In a final stretch, we might also connect the Heraclitean idea of transmissiion to changes in cosmography and historiography that have long been identified with early modernity/Renaissance.

206 McLeod's foundational and often hilarious essay "Information on Information," like his longer, vivid essay "Obliterature" and other works, uses the facts of textual variation to intervene in several arguments in textual studies, such as the surprisingly stubborn ones around a so-called "fixity of print." In textual studies, the idea of transmissiion can in part be understood as a sensible, enlightened extension of the work of D. F. McKenzie: if the material text uniquely inflects, shapes, or even constructs the meaning of the work it conveys, as McKenzie established, then in transmission, any other text(s) of that work will inflect, shape, or construct different meaning(s) of it. This is most obviously true of re-mediations, works that are born in one medium and reappear in another, such as transcriptions of spoken texts, or manuscripts put into print, or digitizations. In such cases of re-mediation, it is easy to see McLeod's point that when a text is transmitted, it is necessarily transformed. It is also easy, and useful, to bring other concepts in to play with the idea of transmissiion. For example, Wai-Chee Dimock's idea of resonance would apply when considering, say, *mise-en-page* as an instrument of transmissiion in early modern poetry; Walter Ong's theories of orality and residue would apply in discussing transcriptions of spoken words or written accounts of performances as transmissiions; and Walter Benjamin's notion of aura, advanced in a 1935 essay, would apply when examining transmissiions from script to print. (This notion might also apply to transmissiions from print to script, as in the case of early modern commonplace books or other manuscripts copied from printed books; my question would then be, "can aura be reinscribed in transmissiion?") McLeod, however, at least when writing as a material-bibliographer, seems more interested in cases of non-re-mediated transmissiion (i.e., of texts reiterated within the same medium, such as re-editions, reprints, or copies). Most modern readers assume such texts are identical, just as they too often assume that there should be equivalence, fidelity, or even identity between a translation and its prior foreign text. Whether or not re-mediation is involved, McLeod's essays remind anyone who needs reminding that variants abounded, and that variation was the normal textual condition of the hand-press period.

The idea of transmissiion enhances certain new ways of handling old texts, stimulating new methods and questions that turn out to link textuality, translation, and early modernity. Implicit in the idea of transmissiion is the fact that editors, too, transform texts when they transmit them. In early modern studies, Leah Marcus's *Unediting the Renaissance* brilliantly engaged us with an appeal to go back to the actual texts early modern readers were reading, instead of the texts modified, with meanings thereby remade—transmitted, as we might now say—by modern editors.¹

The theory and method of unediting, added to the increasing availability of digitized images of early modern texts, have had tremendous implications for translation studies in several ways. First, the recovery of paratexts usually excised in modern editions has given us newly broad access to the prefaces and epilogues in which Renaissance translators often explained what they were doing and why. The grand unediting that Marcus theorized and advocated has effectively uncovered a complex, rich theory of translation for the period, as Neil Rhodes and others have shown, that was unavailable to those reading only pre-Marcus modern editions.²

Those restored paratexts, too, were edited and transformitted, and a work's paratext, whether translated itself or not, may contain hints or suggestions of emphasis that turn out to emerge elsewhere in a translation. For instance, in the translated *Morale Prouerbes of Cristyne* (de Pizan), the authorship claims in the title and in the rubricated French running heads are conveyed in both English versions, albeit not in red. Although the luscious French manuscript illustration of the author *ex cathedra* does not make it into the unillustrated translations, the first early modern English translation, printed by Caxton, certainly does convey the point of that image, adding a rhyme royal colophon poem in praise of Christine as "Auctoresse... Mireur and maistresse/of Intelligence." This case of intersemiotic and/or intermedia translation transfers a claim of value from one material part of a work's paratext to another part of the translation paratext. In the Tudor reprint of this work, the claims migrate and shift further in their new textual setting: Christine is still named as author in the title, but the rhyme royal praise-poem is replaced by a brief explicit. In this second edition of the translation, the claim of high authorial status works because the *Morall Prouerbes of Christyne* are now honourably ensconced in a large Chaucerian volume, *The Boke of Fame* [1526], printed by Henry VIII's King's Printer, Richard Pynson. Transformission here operates at the editorial and social levels of codex construction and cultural capital. Meanwhile, in both English versions, the French mise-en-page is lost, almost nullifying the author's couplets as strategic poetic and rhetorical units. "Unediting" makes it possible to recover such aspects of translation, which do not appear in modern editions; the idea of transformission both accounts for such non-identities and invites our attention to them. Along the way, a post-Romantic idea of sole authorial agency behind any text is called into doubt, because in this view, translators, printers, editors, and others participate in constructing a text's meanings.

In another vein, writing from the Land of Fredson Bowers (the University of Virginia), Jerome McGann revolutionized the handling of variants in *The Textual Condition and Radiant Textuality: Literary Studies after the World Wide Web*. One chapter in the latter, "The Rationale of Hypertext," countered W. W. Greg's "Rationale of Copy-Text" by breaking from linear into radiant models of placing variants in relation to one another (*Radiant Textuality* 53-74). McGann's work on variants applies well to translation studies because it insists on "letting a thousand variants bloom," rather than stabilizing all variants against a privileged, editor-selected copytext, or worse, creating an eclectic mash of versions. If we apply McGann's equalizing,

open concept to translations, seeing them as variant versions not necessarily to be evaluated against one privileged “original,” but rather, articulated fully and put into relation with one another, we shall have to understand any translation within a larger set rather than only in a dyad. Then, we may not go quite as far as Borges went (“*El original es infiel a la traducción*”), but we’ll have to read in more than one direction. In other words, in ways related to McLeod’s notion of transmissiion, McGann’s “radiant textuality” necessarily de-fetishizes the master-text ideal in favor of an examination of differences.

To read a translation accordingly, as a variant version in potentially equal-horizontal rather than only in subservient-vertical relation to its prior foreign text, gives it a greater chance to be analyzed anew, as part of a set, in terms of all other versions, not just one, and thus to be considered as another literary work in its own right. McGann’s work inspired one of my own new models for studying early modern translation, what I call the “radiant transnational” pattern of translation. That and other
208 non-dyadic/linear patterns of translation and transmission, such as the catenary, recursive, reticulated, or compressed and hyper-compressed patterns that I explore in *Printers without Borders*, assume complex transmissiion as a fundamental textual condition.³ Reading translations in that way—as variant versions transmittied in patterns far exceeding the dyadic linear—has another advantage: it better aligns with the historical facts we have about early modern translations. After all, like other early modern texts, translations were often produced not in strict dyadic linearity, but rather in multiple-language versions connected across national borders through networks of printers, translators, owners, patrons, and readers, as well as in reprints, abridgments, collections, and other remakings. All such remakings of the material text alter the meanings of the linguistic translations.

In still other ways, transmittied material-textual features may point to the cultural effort, imposition, and risk being taken in a translation. For example, Harington’s *Orlando* imitates the folio format and implicit value-claims of certain Italian editions of Ariosto’s work. The English title page recreates almost exactly the title page from a fine Venice edition, which at first glance seems a typical, aspirational bit of material translation: the translator and printer want to retain the preexisting material signals of importance and value. But the infamous English addition of an image of a chained spaniel, and the replacement of the central *bas-de-page* figure of Copia with an image of Harington at his desk with humanist writing gear and a watch, not only announce the translator’s powerful, central presence, but perhaps also the translation’s relation to Harington’s personal situation. Is the spaniel Harington’s own dog, Bungey, mentioned in his translator’s preface, or perhaps the dog translated in the poem itself? Does it suggest Harington’s position as “faithful chained spaniel” at court as time ticks inexorably away for him? There are numerous good readings of this material-visual-linguistic-biographical translation nexus, including Jason Scott-Warren’s *Sir John Harington and the Book as Gift* and Joshua Reid’s new work on Harington.⁴

Frequently, the material composition of a translation within a volume or upon a

page may signify and/or may inflect genre. For instance, when Spenser translates Du Bellay's *Antiquitez ... et Songe* as the *Ruines of Rome* and *Visions* sonnet sequences in the *Complaints* volume of 1591, the division of Du Bellay's architectural and oneiric sequences and their relocation in a sequence-of-sequences are material and presentational changes that shift the value and meaning of the poems for a new English readership. In literary-historical terms, these transformissions expand the topical range of the English sonnet sequence, despite ostensibly very close content. At page scale, the choice of mise-en-page and typography, as well as the distribution of poems on the pages as something more like stanzas, bring those works closer to the mise-en-page of, say, the opening stanzaic complaint *The Ruines of Time*. Taken together, the material transformissions of the *Ruines of Rome* and *Visions* translations suggest a different value for each poem—and a very different mode of reading—than is suggested by, for instance, the mise-en-page of Spenser's *Amoretti* sonnets, luxuriously set, one per ornamented page. In this, the materiality of the translations underscores Spenser's conception of the poems as part of his larger oeuvre beyond their independent appearances. In a different way still, John Wolfe's famous trilingual *Boke of the Courtier* brings together on one page the versions by Hoby, Chappuys, and Castiglione. The mise-en-page and catchwords make rich suggestions about the relation of the three literary cultures and how the English reader is to navigate them (Coldiron, "Formes"; *Printers* 160-98). Typography, paratext, book format, composition, and design always convey meaning, as the work of Guyda Armstrong, Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, and others has shown.⁵ The scholar of early modern translation does well, in studying this age of rich textual variation and proliferating textual meanings, to inquire about the material-textual differences operating alongside the linguistic ones.

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Furthermore, reading translations as transformissions insists on attention to process. If we take any necessarily variable set of versions (translations, their prior foreign texts, re-editions, retranslations, adaptations, excerpts, compendia, and more) and read them for process—for how they came to be what they are—multiple agents at work in their creation emerge for analysis. When translation scholars inquire about the material processes involved at every stage between composition and reading, that post-Romantic idea of sole authorial agency is fully challenged. Translators, in this view not at all invisible, can take their place among other textual producers. To regard translations as "variant versions variously transformitted" is to expand the linear dyads and to explore that rich epitext of processes, networks, and agents. The essays in this special issue actualize certain such potentials in McLeod's concept.

A likely consequence of factoring transformission into translation studies is one I favour: translation criticism may shift further away from the previously dominant evaluative modes. (That shift, begun after the Descriptive Studies movements of the 1970s and 1980s, has been accelerated by the recent cultural turn in translation studies.) In an article for the *Times Literary Supplement*, Lawrence Venuti deplors that older mode of "instrumentalist" criticism: "An instrumental understanding of

translation: the notion that its function is to reproduce or transfer an invariant form, meaning, or effect contained in or caused by the source text” misses the whole point of analyzing translations, in missing that translations are interpretive acts (“Shift Work” 10). Until very recently, the fidelity rut that was trenched before Jerome’s “nec verbum verbo,” and that has been entrenched since then, has seemed inescapable: the critic’s job was assumed to be to judge the translation’s closeness to the source and to praise closer, “invisible” translations, an assumption that Venuti similarly deplores in *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Dryden, part of a millennia-long conversation answering Jerome and Horace on the desired similitude between a translation and its prior foreign text, famously tried a tripartite division of meta-phrase, paraphrase, and imitation; for him, the last term, too distant, “loses the name of translation.” But Venuti answers better, I think, that

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To understand translation as interpretation does not mean that anything goes. Today the meaning and style of a translation are expected to resemble those of the source text. But a poem is a complex cultural artefact, which amounts to much more than a semantic correspondence and a stylistic approximation. (“Shift Work” 10)

We have begun to see variation and variant in translation, especially at what would have been thought the “too-free” side, as important signs of cultural intervention, as symptoms, or as keys to understanding the encounter with alterity that any given translation witnesses and represents. Looking only at a linear translation dyad sets us back and reinforces those instrumentalist assumptions and the proscriptive-evaluative mode, whereas attending to transformission disrupts them. The idea of transformission, if applied to translations, promotes the kind of criticism that links particular differences in a translation to more general changes in cultures, a criticism favoured after the cultural turn. We may be led to pursue such questions as how a particular word held one connotation in one culture but its so-called “equivalent” came to hold another connotation elsewhere; how an apparently “faithful” or “equivalent” phrase in two or more language-versions came to gesture differently to the two or more different literary histories concerned; how different readers responded to each version in context; or what cultural force and value different versions acquired. Obviously, reading translations as transformissions insists on attention to their non-identity with other language versions, but instead of an evaluative or a proscriptive stance toward difference, reading for transformission encourages the analysis of process and agents: exactly by whom and in what context, exactly how, did the differences come to be? Along with increased attention to processes, to translations’ paratext and epitext, and to translations in sets of multi-versions comes this methodological opportunity for translation scholars to break with what Venuti calls the “instrumental.” Is it too much to hope that transformission may be what finally banishes the kind of criticism with which many translation scholars have lost all patience: commentary that limits itself to dualistic, proscriptive/evaluative, fidelity-based modes?

Somewhat less obviously, reading translations as transformissions draws attention

more precisely to any translation's "non-identity with itself," not only to its obvious non-identities with other versions—compelling as those are, and rightly a focus. For instance, in many of the early modern translations from French to English I have studied, such a "non-identity with itself" turns up in certain typical ways: in a varied handling of place names, proper names, point of view, and metatextuality, among other things. When a translator of an early French treatise on marriage, *Les Quinze Joyes de mariage*, translates a mention of Notre Dame Cathedral as "St Pauls" in the *Fyftene Joyes of maryage*, and yet elsewhere speaks of "our French nation," a "non-identity with itself" has appeared. What a proscriptive/evaluative critic would call an inconsistent rendering of proper names ends up pointing to some intriguing problems of acculturation. In this example, although a landmark English cathedral stands in conveniently enough for a French one, the sociopolitical liberties advocated in the French version, like the voice speaking of them, remain alien to the English nation, safely Othered as French. A similar example, but demonstrating another type of transmission difference, occurs in the latter part of an Englished gender-debate poem, the *Interlocucyon, with an Argument, betwyxt Man and Woman*, probably composed in French by Guillaume Alexis and entitled *Le débat de l'homme et de la femme*. Here, the translator and/or printer retains French speech prefixes—suddenly changing "The Woman" to "La Femme Replique"—requiring English readers abruptly to reimagine the replying speaker as a Frenchwoman and thus perhaps to reimagine the entire work as something foreign rather than native. We could call this "non-identity with itself" a compositor's error, as it may well have been, but a concept of transmission helps us see much more.⁶ Might we have here a moment of bicultural emphasis in which the English woman speaker, assumed as the default by the English reader of what does not present itself as a translation, suddenly reveals the bicultural status of her objections to misogyny? Does the English woman speaker, abruptly labeled "La Femme," universalize, or at least transnationalize, the proto-feminist protest? Is her protest alienating for the English reader, or rather, as in some other cases, is it safely distanced as foreign? Is that voice exoticized or idealized, given the higher status of the French language at the time?⁷

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In early modern poetic translations, such "transmission flags," as I now consider them, tend to pop up in the handling of phonetic elements such as rhyme and rhythm, assonance or alliteration, and particularly in complex verbal tropes such as antanaclasses or polyptoton, with their conjunctions of morphology, syntax, and semantics.⁸ Whether in poetry or prose, transmission flags often locate verbal difficulties (but not merely those) and often involve mistakes (but not merely those either). Usually, transmission flags signal sensitive sites of negotiated alterity in the process of transmission and translation, and thus signal things we should notice more closely, as they are things in motion whose meanings will change accordingly. Transmission, a Heraclitean and holistic concept, invites and rewards an attention that is not only aimed at judging and eliminating error, but is also aimed at allowing the full resonance of ever-changing cultural, literary, and linguistic differences to

emerge into understanding.

Speaking of things in motion: I close with a tangentially relevant digression about a famous misquotation. It is actually an invented quotation, a phrase paired with its translation and often re-transformitted; for a couple of centuries it was taken as an accurate, Renaissance-defining, bilingual sound-bite:

This is the celebrated Galileo, who was in the inquisition for six years, and put to the torture, for saying, that the earth moved. The moment he was set at liberty, he looked up to the sky and down to the ground, and, stamping with his foot, in a contemplative mood, said, *Eppur si move*, that is, still it moves, meaning the earth. (Baretti 52)

212 “*Eppur si move*,” Galileo was said to have said, or, for Anglophone readers, “still it moves,” now usually quoted as “and yet it moves.” Giuseppe Baretti imagined this odd, post-trial scene and published it in 1757 in London in a popular but only quasi-credible history of Italian literature. Perhaps it is not as odd that these invented words became a fictive meme persistent across Europe, in play for some two hundred sixty years since. As translated variants themselves, the faux-quotations point to several issues current in translation studies and early modern studies, related to Heraclitean transformission. The surrounding passage reinforces the Romantic idea of the stubborn individual under siege, holding to his observation-based convictions, against the hegemonic forces of religion and the state. It also reinforces a certain strand of historiography about the Renaissance and the changing epistemologies that permeated and animated European Renaissance intellectual culture itself: the new philosophy calling all in doubt.

As a defining motto of European early modernity, with “*Eppur*”/“and yet” the words assert, as a contradiction of a thousand-year, Ptolemaic *status* (or stasis) *quo*, a universe in motion. From Pico della Mirandola, who asserted in 1486 that human dignity itself resides in potential motion and self-transformation,⁹ to the seventeenth-century atomists concerned with infinite variety, motion, and what would later be called recombinnance, ideas of motion and transformation underpinned changes in every arena of human activity. (We now call a cluster of those changes a Renaissance or an early modernity.) For literary and cultural historians as well, “*Eppur si muove*” could be a motto; witness the chains of contested, moving literary historiographies of the period, beginning early (Leland, Walton, Aubrey) and continuing into the eighteenth century with opinions as different in character as Baretti’s and Samuel Johnson’s. Still, the idea of Renaissance as a set of new motions continued into the nineteenth century, most prominently in Burckhardt’s Italianate art-historical Renaissance, with its new perspectives and individuating selves. A century of antiquarians took it upon themselves to edit, to re-edit, and in the process to transformit the Renaissance they saw in their own literary mirrors.

Transformissions can cue us to the inevitable mirrors all around (and to the smoke), leading us to ask, among many other things, whose Renaissance? When? Who has revised, printed, translated, omitted, or selected, this quotation, this text, this view,

this Renaissance, this early modernity? What variants, and what agents, of a periodizing master narrative inscribed rupture on the temporal continuities of history? When people write about the past, they transform versions of history, and the idea of transformation can be a tool with which to investigate the processes and agents of historiography, as well. That is, transformation helps explain what was happening in particular early modern texts and translations, but it equally helps explain what was happening ideologically in historiographies of the period: an apt idea indeed with which to understand several levels and kinds of variable motion characteristic of early modernity and of writings about early modernity.

Baretti's little phrases themselves involve mobility, variants, versions. This micro-example captures other perennial problems, or opportunities, for translation scholars: unstable sources and motivated agents in textual transmission. Obviously, as Baretti's appositional translation admits, Galileo did not say "*eppur si muove*" in English. Yet even in Italian, each reported version suggests its own time and place, its own orthographic and lexical customs (e.g., "*E pur si muove*" or "*Eppur si muove*" or "*Eppur si move*"). Galileo most likely did not say any such thing, despite Baretti's transnationally influential image of the dramatic moment of quotation. The imagined words remind us that early modernity, too, was an age of quotation and misquotation across and within languages, of interlingual, intertextual variation, and of historical imagination flourishing unchecked in textual recoveries both reported and real.

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When *l'histoire* still meant both *story* and *history*, were variation, variety, and variant part of the fun? Or is such a question as fanciful as Baretti's concocted scene? Early modern errata pages and indignant marginalia indicate that variants were not seen as delights, but rather as errors to be amended by the printer or stricken by the reader. After all, there was long precedent: medieval scribes and religious inquisitors had long held that scribal departures from copy were woeful signs of our errant and fallen nature to be repented if discovered, and to be scraped from the stretched skins of dead beasts. So too for the early modern printers, careful about their expensive paper: when substrates are dear, variation or variant outside some usually close limit is error. Likewise, translations, until recently, were thoughtfully policed as too-literal or too-free. Even Pico's liberating potential vertical motion for human beings imposed certain moralized limits on self-transformation (or what Greenblatt made famous as "Renaissance self-fashioning"); Marlowe's Faustus is only one among the figures that staged anxiety about excessive, overreaching transformation. But still it moves: the capacity, even given certain limits and worries, for transformation—of texts, of histories, of selves—is central, defining, and essential for learning about this phase of human history. To observe the effects of motion and change as universal—to stand with Galileo and McLeod—requires a new epistemology, demands new ways of understanding, and asks us to acknowledge change at the heart of things we used to think of as fixed. The idea of transformation invites us to respond accordingly, as many translation scholars are now doing, with flexibly Heraclitean, holistic methods of analyzing translations-in-motion.

NOTES

1. Marcus later had second thoughts ("Confessions" 1072-77), particularly on "open recensions" (1074-75), and on the controversial decision to modernize the texts of Elizabeth I (1075-76).
2. For further analysis of paratext in relation to translation, see Belle and Hosington, and Batchelor.
3. See especially 20-30. On "radiant translation," see 107-57.
4. Reid's eloquent paper, "Serious Play in Sir John Harington's *Orlando Furioso in English Heroical Verse*," was presented at the "Early Modern Transmissions: Linguistic, Material, and Cultural Translation in England and France (c. 1470-1660)" conference mentioned by the editors in the introduction to this volume.
5. See also Batchelor (46-59) and Belle and Hosington's "Introduction" to *Thresholds of Translation* (Belle and Hosington 1-23), as well as several essays in their collection.
6. One could object that there is such a thing as plain error in translations, after all, and we do not want to glorify errors as signifying more than they do; yet non-identities seen in light of transmutation often prove richer signs than we usually think.
7. For other aspects of the problem, see my *English Printing* (69-85, 113-40).
8. One could also object that a poetic translation's non-identity with itself may well be a function of difficulty and of the translator's poetic skill: a translator might not be able to trans-form every sound feature in the same way, and the translation may exhibit little fissures, "non-identities" with itself, as a result. But in much prose, which is often easier to translate because it is often less dense with features to convey, the translation's non-identity with itself can be a revealing sign of cultural and linguistic alterities that the translator faced, variably, along the way.
9. "Finally, the Great Artisan [...] placing [humankind] in the middle of the world, said to him, 'Adam, we give you no fixed place to live, no form that is peculiar to you, nor any function that is yours alone. According to your desires and judgment, you will have and possess whatever place to live, whatever form, and whatever functions you yourself choose. All other things have a limited and fixed nature prescribed and bounded by Our laws. You, with no limit or no bound, may choose for yourself the limits and bounds of your nature. We have placed you at the world's center so that you may survey everything else in the world. We have made you neither of heavenly nor of earthly stuff, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with free choice and dignity, you may fashion yourself into whatever form you choose. To you is granted the power of degrading yourself into the lower forms of life, the beasts, and to you is granted the power, contained in your intellect and judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, the divine'" (Pico para. 3).

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