

**Queen Anna's New World of Words**  
**By Jackie Watson**

The extensively and comprehensively titled text I am to discuss today is *Queen Anna's New World of Words or Dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues, Collected, and newly much augmented by Iohn Florio, Reader of the Italian vnto the Soveraigne Maiestie of Anna, Crowned Queene of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, &c. And one of the Gentlemen of hir Royall Priuie Chamber. Whereunto are added certaine necessarie rules and short observations for the Italian tongue.*

It was published, according to the title page, in London in 1611 for Edward Blount and William Barret. In brief, the book is an expanded new version of Florio's 1598 volume, *A Worlde of Wordes*, an Italian-English Dictionary, and, as such, only the second of its kind in England and much fuller than the short work published by William Thomas in the 1550s – with 44,000 words as opposed to Thomas's 6,000. Florio's 1598 version was also published by Edward Blount, but through another printer. And the 1598 text is dedicated to Roger, Earl of Rutland, Henry, Earl of Southampton, and Lucy, Countess of Bedford.

The revised version I am looking at today had expanded content and came with 'rules for the Italian tongue'. It was dedicated to Queen Anna – James I's queen, Anne of Denmark. As she always referred to herself as Anna, the use of that name in the title is not an Italianization. The opening pages dedicate the work to her and they are followed, of course, by several epistles recommending the volume.

There are many ways of approaching this text. I could, for example, have looked more closely at the marginalia on the BL copy, particularly at that reader's interaction with the words and definitions in the dictionary. However, in this paper I intend to explore three ways, and no doubt to ask many more questions than I answer in the process. Firstly, I plan to look at the text, particularly its opening pages, as a visual object – with some trepidation in this company – and to draw some tentative conclusions that we may well discuss further after the paper. Secondly, on slightly firmer ground, as it connects more closely to my own research methods, I shall begin to explore what clues the text offers to the networks of contact and patronage, courtly and literary, in which it is situated. Finally, prompted by the range of languages used in the text, I shall begin to question Jacobean attitudes and look a little more closely at the effects of this in the prefatory material to this text.

Firstly, then, to look at *Queen Anna's New World of Words* as a visual object. The frontispiece surrounds the extensive title of the work, and its clear declaration of its patron, with an image that tells us how to read the text as a whole. The image is surmounted by two heraldic figures representing England and Scotland, with the roses and thistles on either side of the crown. At the base, are two further symbols, the harp on the right perhaps suggesting Ireland, though the portcullis on the left clearly is not an image of France, and, indeed, the historic title of Queen of France does not seem to be visually represented. Perhaps the portcullis, originally the arms of the Beaufort family, indicates James's right to inherit the English throne, his ancestry stemming back to Margaret Beaufort. However, the image of English kingship is married, in this frontispiece, with the classical imagery of Italy, columns and other architectural devices, winding vines and, I think, a Roman lamp. The combination of English, Scottish, Irish and Italian elements demonstrated in the image is only the beginning of a theme of European interaction through Anna, which the text celebrates.

Moving on, after the dedicatory letters and the long list of books Florio consulted, the other key image of the text is that of the author himself, in an engraving by William Hole. In some ways, this text is an exercise in self-aggrandizement. The image shows a successful Elizabethan writer, with the furs and ruff, chains and slashed silk doublet, allowed to a courtier of some wealth. And a slightly bemused expression! This slide from the EEBO text does not really do it justice, but Florio's image is surrounded by the key information a reader is to appreciate about him. He is 58 in 1611, suggesting his experience and the honourable position he has attained. The Italian tag, 'Chi si contenta gode' shows the happiness he enjoys at this enviable stage of his life. Around the image as a whole is a declaration in Latin emphasizing his position in life; he is 'Ioannes Florius' the 'praelector' of the Italian language to the 'Augustae' Anna, again Queen of England, Scotland, France and Ireland.

The images, together with the folio format of this text, show a quality object, product of an experienced, successful and learned author, and dedicated to the most esteemed of patrons. Visually, as well as textually, the book expresses its assumption that sophistication and learning are intrinsically bound to linguistic fluency and the reading of European texts.

The second possible approach to Florio's work is to investigate more closely the courtly and literary network it reveals. We must look again at the opening pages. The dedication to Queen Anna is more than just a way of securing her patronage. Leeds Barroll, in his 1993 essay, 'The Court of the first Stuart Queen', assesses her importance and concludes that, despite a previously underestimated political influence, 'the queen's cultural activity...is most significant'. So her patronage was clearly desirable, but before writing *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, Florio is already part of the cultural web of the Queen's court and has a position in it; he has been gentleman of her privy chamber since 1604. He is also linked into the wider connections she had formed since her arrival in England. The execution of the second Earl of Essex after the rebellion in 1601 did nothing to split apart the gathering of noble families, which had been led, initially, by Sir Philip Sidney. This circle now found in Anna a prestigious patron, and connected to the network of the Queen's court, therefore, are the Earl of Southampton, the Earl of Rutland and Lucy, Countess of Bedford – the dedicatees of Florio's 1598 *World of Wordes*. The Countess of Bedford had been a favourite since accompanying Anna from Scotland in 1603. In addition, Florio dedicated his 1603 translation of Montaigne to the wife of the second dedicatee. Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland, a writer herself and patron of writers, was the daughter of Sir Philip Sidney and stepdaughter of Essex, as well as the niece of Robert Sidney, who by this stage was Lord Chamberlain of the Queen's household.

So, these noble connections were not made *through* the queen, although they all by 1611 found themselves linked to Anna's court. Florio was the son of an Italian protestant refugee who had made his living teaching Italian, and who had moved out of England at the accession of Mary I. Florio had returned at Mary's death and became a teacher of Italian too, picking up some of his father's former clients – which included Robert Dudley, and several members of what was to be Essex's circle. Florio's father had taught in the Pembroke household, more specifically the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Pembroke, who had married Mary Sidney. So the links with the Essex circle, by 1611 connected to the Queen's court, were Florio's own before Anna's arrival in London, but they now bound him securely to the patronage of the Stuart queen.

Other writers connected to the Queen's court included Samuel Daniel, who contributes an epistle to the opening of Florio's 1611 text. He dedicated several of his works to the same circle and also wrote for the queen, and became gentleman of her privy chamber himself in 1607. Writers of the other prefatory epistles do not always sign their letters, but one who does, albeit with a *nom de plume*, is *Il Candido*. Letters from *Il Candido* also preface the 1598 text, letters which are addressed then to Rutland, Southampton and the Countess of Bedford. *Il Candido* is Matthew Gwinne, a close friend of Florio's, a scholarly physician and a playwright, with a close interest in the furtherance of Italian in England. When the young Florio, first returned to England after the death of Mary I, he had lived in Oxford, where Gwinne was then studying, and a close and lasting friendship had begun. Gwinne's own close links with the Sidney/Essex circle are clear, demonstrated not least by his editing of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* in 1590. Finally, to tie the three neatly together, Samuel Daniel was part of this Oxford friendship group, and Florio created a family bond by marrying Daniel's sister.

One final link is with the publisher of *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, Edward Blount. Born around 1562, he was son of Ralph Blount, a merchant tailor in London, and he probably studied as a result of this at Merchant Taylors' school and was taught by Richard Mulcaster. Although some 10 years earlier, Matthew Gwinne was also educated at Merchant Taylors' under Mulcaster and it is possible that he and Blount initially knew each other through school connections or their families. Blount had been apprentice to William Ponsonby, the esteemed publisher of all of Sidney's works, and he continued for some years his former master's practice of publishing only secular texts. Blount's aptitude for languages led him to publish many translations, some his own, and dictionaries in all major languages, and Florio's 1598 *World of Wordes* was only his third publication. His connection with Florio was a sustained one and Blount went on to publish Florio's translation of Montaigne in 1603 as well as *Queen Anna's New World of Words* eight years later. He was, of course, later involved in the printing of the Shakespeare first folio.

So, this second method of questioning Florio's text leads to another interim conclusion about it. It is not merely the product of an impressive author, and dedicated to an even more impressive patron, but it is the outcome of Florio's interaction with a network of highly educated and influential people, and, read correctly, shows the influence of Merchant Taylors' school, Oxford and the Sidney/Essex circle, as well as the immediate context of the queen's court.

Finally, I should like to raise a few questions on the role of languages in the opening section. It is worth taking a minute first to consider the author's name. John Florio, as he was known in England, is, in this text, variously John, Giovanni, Iohannes and Ivan. The text's linguistic multiplicity and playfulness is, surely, more than is simply merited by its being a dictionary. The enjoyment of language and the confident switching between languages marks the opening of the 1611 version of Florio's text as radically different to the earlier 1598 version. In the former, the dedicatory 'letter' by Florio is really more of an essay, in rather dense prose, with a short section of quotation in Italian which he translates beneath. His epistle to the reader is similarly dense, and the letters of recommendation, from Matthew Gwinne and Barnabe Barnes, are, equally, flattering but, apart from the final Latin verse from Barnes, in English.

By 1611, the prefatory material is in a range of languages, and teases the readers, often challenging their assumptions. He does not insult the Queen's grasp of Italian by translating material for her, and on several occasions what appears at first sight to be such a translation, is not. The two letters he addresses to Anna are a good case in point. As one turns the page from the opening letter in Italian, and sees a second letter in English, it appears to be a translation. However, a brief look at the content of the two shows that it is not. The Italian letter shows all the flattering bravura of a dedicated knight, adoring his mistress with right humility. The English letter flatters too, but here the writer compares Anna to Minerva, or Diana, and himself to her acolyte. He makes allusions to the 'New World' geographically, and to Columbus's voyages into it, to explain how the world of language has developed over the previous thirteen years too. Describing his work, rather endearingly, as his 'braine-babe', he is the father seeing the development of his offspring as it follows him in the world and now dedicating that grown child to the queen.

The references to Isabella (not Ferdinand, of course) in this letter, as well as to conquests in the New World such as Virginia, seem to hint at a more international monarchy under Anna than previously. The initial letter from Alberico Gentili in Italian looks clear enough (even though the most likely man to have written the letter died in 1608). The letters which follow from *Il Candido* play on the pair of letters from Florio, one being in English and the second in Italian, but not translating the former. There then follow two letters in English, the former from Samuel Daniel. Then an 'anagramma' in

Latin, followed by a final pair by I. Thorys, the first in English and the companion in Spanish.

Several of the letters do not simply play with Florio's Christian name; they also indulge in extended word play with his surname, with much imagery of flourishing and flowering. This echoes the Latin verse underneath Florio's own image, which begins by contrasting his birth in Italy with his heart in England, and proceeds to play again on his surname. The overall effect of the word play and the different languages is to suggest a court with confident multilingualism; a court with echoes of a great European past and parallels with classical antiquity; a court with the confidence to play its part in the new Europe, promoting peace and an outward-looking amity where previously there had been conflict and insularity.

So, to conclude, published as it was in 1611, Florio's text represents perhaps the height of the queen's court and its influence, in the year before Queen Anna was to lose two children in different ways. Both children were brought up close to the Essex circle, which was such a cultural force at the queen's court. There is a particular poignancy in these two portraits by Robert Peake the Elder. Prince Henry, pictured here with John Harington, younger brother of the Countess of Bedford, shows the promise that he would lead that circle of cultured individuals of his mother's court. But he was to die in 1612 and defeat all the expectations of the noblemen and scholars around him. Princess Elizabeth was to marry Frederick, the Elector Palatine, and travel to Europe as the champion of European Protestantism. Perhaps the optimism of the cultured, sophisticated and linguistically confident court she left behind is represented, at least partly, in what we can see of Florio's book, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*.