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Laetitia Sansonetti

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What a difference a digraph made: phonetic spelling and the assimilation of the word “armada” in Early Modern English

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Introduction

- 1 This article aims to answer two questions: how does spelling reflect pronunciation? how does pronunciation reflect assimilation for borrowed words? This double issue becomes more complex for Early Modern English since spelling and pronunciation were not fixed and a great number of words were being imported in the early modern period. By discussing the particular case of the word ‘armada’, I intend to shed light on the interplay between spelling, pronunciation, and borrowing in Early Modern English,¹ but I also hope to provide useful insights into the phonology-lexicology interface more generally.
- 2 If we look at the definition of ‘armada’ in the etymological dictionary *Gazophylacium anglicanum containing the derivation of English words, proper and common* [1689], we find an apparently clear process of derivation and borrowing: “from the Lat[in] *Armata*, sup[ply] *Classis*; i.e. a Navy arm’d or mann’d: A word purely Spanish.” A past participle used as an adjective in Latin became a noun in Spanish by derivation and conversion, and this Spanish noun in turn became an English noun through borrowing. The actual story of the importation of ‘armada’ into English is much more complex, as it involves not only Latin and Spanish, but also the other two major Romance languages of early modern Europe with which English was in close contact, French and Italian. This mediation is reflected in the various spellings of the term beside ‘armada’ throughout the period: ‘armata’, from Italian, as well as ‘armado’ (influenced by Spanish and French), and even ‘armatho’ or ‘armatha’. It is also shaped by one major political event,

the famous episode of the “Spanish Armada”, a fleet sent from Spain in 1588 to invade England which was shipwrecked before it reached the coasts.

- 3 The variations in spelling are typical of early modern imports of words from the same grammatical category as Spanish *armada* or Italian *armata*, namely past participles turned into adjectives and converted into nouns. In the lexicon of fencing, for instance, Italian technical terms such as *stoccata* or *passata* were adapted into English via French and Spanish. While *passata* became quickly and homogeneously ‘passado’, *stoccata* can be found spelt ‘stoccado’ (the modern received form), ‘stockado’, or ‘stucatho’ (see Sansonetti [2022]). These fencing terms belong with what Carol Myers-Scotton has called “cultural borrowed lexemes”, words that “stand for objects or concepts new to the culture”, as opposed to “core borrowed lexemes”, which have equivalents in the borrowing language [1997: 5, 16]. Fencing terms were imported through translations of Italian treatises, sometimes through the mediation of French and/or Spanish texts, and popularised through the presence of Italian fencing masters in England in the late sixteenth century. While some English authors tried to find English words for these new moves, eventually the foreign forms were nativized.
- 4 What about ‘armada’? English had two words that corresponded to the meaning of ‘armada’: ‘navy’, which features in the 1689 definition quoted above, and ‘fleet’. The first one was of Latin origin (ultimately from *navis*, a ship, via Old French and Anglo-Norman) and the second of Germanic origin (a cognate of French *flotte*). While both tended to designate (fleets of) armed vessels, the “armed” element was less strong than in the Latin phrase *armata classis* (literally, an armed ship or fleet). The morphologically closest word English had to *armada* was ‘army’, a term borrowed from French via Anglo-Norman, derived (like its Spanish and Italian cognates) from the past participle of the verb meaning ‘to arm’ (*armer*, hence *armée*). Although this specific meaning has now become obsolete, in Middle English and even in Early Modern English, ‘army’ could mean “A naval armament; an armada, a fleet” [Oxford English Dictionary: ‘army, n.’, 1.3.a]. While Spanish and Italian developed another term for ‘army’ in the general sense of ‘armed forces’ (*ejército* and *esercito*, respectively, from Latin *exercitus*, an army, a body of troops), both in French and in English it was a word derived from Latin *armatus/-a*, *armée* / ‘army’, which came to be used.
- 5 The difference between French on one side and Spanish and Italian on the other may be due to the status of Spain and Italy as two great maritime powers in the sixteenth century, which needed specific words to designate their armed fleets.² I would therefore venture a double hypothesis: while the variations in spelling recorded above reflect attempts at phonetic assimilation whose features ‘armada’ shares with other words similarly derived from Romance languages in the early modern period, the distribution between ‘armata’ and ‘armada’ for Italian and Spanish armed fleets respectively is shaped by the 1588 defeat of the “Spanish Armada”. From a “core lexeme”, ‘armada’ (often spelt ‘armado’ or ‘armatho’) becomes a “cultural lexeme” and even almost a proper noun at the turn of the seventeenth century and echoes of its ironic uses can be heard for the following hundred years or so. Meanwhile, Italian ‘armata’ features more and more prominently in the numerous texts translated or derived from Italian accounts of the Ottoman Empire, testifying to the authority of the Italian language itself concerning this part of the world.
- 6 In what follows I will trace the evolution of ‘armada’ through Early Modern English according to the three main forms it took, ‘armata’, ‘armado/-a’ and ‘armatho/-a’. In

cases which do not match the spelling of the original language(s), with vocalic or consonantal change, I will discuss possible motives for the variations, arguing that they may be due to the state of the English language itself and analysing the sometimes-paradoxical resulting pronunciations as both more foreign and more typically English in relation to Latin. My corpus will be the texts digitised and made available via the “Early English Books Online” database (over 60,000 volumes with fully-searchable, SGML/XML-encoded texts), together with the “Lexicons of Early Modern English” database for dictionaries.³

1. T is for Venetian? The ‘armata’ spelling

- 7 The first occurrence of the word ‘armata’ in an English printed text as recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is to be found in the translation of Andrea Cambini’s *Libro della origine de Turchi et imperio delli Ottomanni* [1529] by John Shute, published in 1562 as *Two very notable commentaries the one of the originall of the Turcks and Empire of the house of Ottomanno*.⁴ What is particularly interesting about this use is not so much the borrowing itself, a logical enough choice in a translation to refer to realia from the source culture, as the distribution of occurrences between “navy” and “armata” to translate the word *armata* in the Italian original. While all armed fleets are designated with the word *armata* in Cambini’s text, in Shute’s translation a distinction between the Venetian fleet and all other fleets is drawn by calling the former “armata” and instances of the latter “navy”. Thus we find “they had a Nauie of two hundred great shippes at the leaste” (about Brutus and Cassius, Caesar’s murderers), “Philippe duke of Burgonye, who put to sea his navie” and “[Pope Pius II] determining to goe this jorney in person with his Navie by the sea” (Cambini [1562: Cir and Giiv]), but “the Duke of Venise with his armata”, “the Venetian armata”, “to joyne with the Venetian armata” (Cambini [1562: Hiiv-Hiir, Hiiijv, Miiir]).⁵ There are some exceptions. The first two occurrences of ‘armata’ refer to the Ottoman army besieging Constantinople in 1453. The Italian text specified “armata di mare” (literally, sea army), to make clear the distinction with the troops attacking the city from the land (Cambini [1529: 23r-v]), but the English translation has “the Armata” (Cambini [1562: Diiijv-Eir]), as if to insist on its strength (there were more than one hundred and twenty ships involved), almost turning it into a proper noun with the capital initial.⁶ In book 3, the Venetian *armata* is called “navie” twice (Cambini [1562: Liiijv, Miiir]).
- 8 Shute’s translation strategies, which were not perfectly coherent, were not emulated by later translators or adaptors of Italian texts dealing with Venice and sea warfare. For instance, the translator of Machiavelli’s *Historie fiorentine* in 1595 rendered “l’armata ancora Vinitiana havea assalito il Regno; & occupato Galipoli” (Machiavelli [1537: BBiiijr]) as “the Venetian navie had assaulted the Kingdome, surprized Galipoli” (Machiavelli [1595: 215]). Even though he was drawing on a French source that mentioned “l’armee Venitienne” [Fougasses 1608: Ddiiijr], a calque from Italian *armata*, the translator of *The generall historie of the magnificent state of Venice*, also surnamed Shute (about whom see Brennan [1988: 132-133]), wrote “the Venetian navie” (Fougasses [1612: 149v]).
- 9 The identification of Venetian or Turkish fleets with the word ‘armata’ resurfaces in the latter half of the seventeenth century, in texts translated or adapted from Italian sources, or written by people (diplomats, travellers) who had direct knowledge of

Venice and/or the Ottoman Empire. These texts reflect the importance of the Italian mediation in the transmission of knowledge about the Ottoman Empire, and more generally Eastern countries. In *The travels of Sig. Pietro della Valle*, for instance, some Portuguese names are given in Valle's Italian phrases, which were translations from the Portuguese. The English translator seems to have failed to identify them as such, proving his lack of familiarity with that language: "a Fleet of Portugal Ships, which they call *l'armata del Canarà*, because it coasts along the ruines of the Province *Canarà*; or else *l'armata della Colletta*, for that it is maintain'd with the Money of a New Impost lay'd upon, and collected by the *Portugals* in their Indian Plantations" (Della Valle [1665: Aav]). *Armata* would probably have been *armada* in Portuguese, and *colletta* would have been spelt with single consonants, *coleta*, translating respectively as "fleet" and "levy" or "collection" (as the translator's periphrasis makes clear). By contrast, when Henry Stubbe translates a short quotation from Pope Pius V in *A further iustification of the present war against the United Netherlands*, he frames the Italian word *armata* with two English equivalents, "fleet" and "navy":

A potent *Fleet* is the *least charge*, and the *best security* of these *Realms*: It carries an universal *awe* and *terrou* with it. I read it in the *Instructions* of *Pius V.* to his *Nuncio* who negotiated in *Spain* for a League against the *Turks*. In *somma un'armata potente allegerisce le spese, & assicura d'ogni periculo casa sua, [...]*. A powerful Navy doth diminish the expence of a Realm, secures the Territories at home [...] (Stubbe [1673: 83])

Stubbe combines a quotation from a figure of authority in a foreign language to buttress his claim and a clear English translation to convince his English-speaking readers (and prove his own language skills).⁷

- 10 Direct witnesses, people who had travelled in those parts of the world and were familiar with at least Italian, also resorted to translation to help readers understand the meaning of foreign words such as *armata*. Dealing with an event occurring during one of the battles of the Dardanelles, a letter written (or maybe translated) by one "N.N.M." about a Venetian victory over the Turks also calls the Ottoman fleet "Armata", and the Venetian one "fleet" (N.N.M. 1657: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6]). Another letter, printed about ten years later, starts with an allusion to the Dardanelles, praising Lazzaro Mocenigo for destroying many galleys of the Ottoman fleet with his "*Armata Sottile*, his Fleet at Oars only" (Palmer [1666: A7r]). The author, Roger Palmer, earl of Castlemaine, served for a few months with the Venetian Republic, joining its fleet in 1664 (Beddard [2008]). "*Armata sottile*", in italics, is both a foreign and a technical term, which is translated and explained immediately by Castlemaine, thus proving his expertise both in the Italian language and in technical military jargon. Jean Gailhard, a French Protestant who moved to England about 1660, also knew Italy and Italian from his travel experience. In his 1669 work *The present state of the republick of Venice*, he implements didactic strategies to introduce and define specific terms such as *armata* for a monolingual readership. The first time the word is used, it is in italics, followed by an English translation ("the use of the *Armata* or Fleet"); the second time, the English word is given first, followed by the Italian term in roman type ("a Fleet or *Armata* of 50 Gallies"); then, when "the *Venetian Armata*" is mentioned, it no longer needs a gloss (Gailhard [1669: 49, 64, 208, 250, 253]).
- 11 In John Ray's travel accounts, the term "*Armata*" is applied to the Venetian fleet and the Turkish ships, which reflects the close linguistic association between the two powers due to their rivalry on sea and their frequent naval encounters (Ray [1673: 171,

196, 310]). Likewise, another direct witness, Thomas Smith, recalls his time in Constantinople as chaplain to the English ambassador, Sir Daniel Harvey (1668 to 1671), in his 1678 *Remarks upon the manners, religion and government of the Turks*: “I remember, that when I was at *Smyrna*, I attended our *Consul* in his visit he made *Kaplan Bassa*, a *Georgian*, the Admiral of the *Turkish Armata*” (Smith [1678: 163]). Paul Rycaut was also part of an English ambassador’s retinue and had direct experience of life in Constantinople. Chapter XII of *The present state of the Ottoman Empire* is entitled “Of the Turks Armata, or Naval Forces” and features a paragraph in which the term “*Armata*” is applied first to the Turkish and then to the Venetian navy (Rycaut [1668: 215]).⁸ These examples show that “*armata*”, often italicised to indicate that it was a foreign word and sometimes with a capital initial to associate it closely with one state in particular, was predominantly used in texts dealing with the conflictual relationship between Venice and the Ottoman Empire. Because of this limited meaning, it did not become an English word. Significantly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* relegates “*armata*” to a sub-section in the entry for “*armada*”, as if it were a spelling variant [online: “*armada*, n.”, 1.a. *γ* forms].

- 12 The first recorded use of a foreign term to designate a fleet was not *armata*, but the Spanish version, *armada*, in Walter Lynne’s 1550 translation of Johann Carion’s three books of *Chronicles* and their continuation by Johann Funck. The first occurrences deal with the fleet assembled by Charles V of Spain, and a Spanish term could make sense in this context: “he departed wyth a competent and wel appointed Armada or Navye from Genua” (Carion [1550b: CCr]) (cf. Carion [1550a: EE5v], “*ingenti classe*” in the Latin version). But “*Armada*” is also used to designate the Turkish fleet (Carion 1550b: CCVr, CCXXVv), a case in which later texts more often feature the Italian word *armata*. The same year, William Thomas published his *Italian grammar*, which contained the word *armata* spelt with a -t- [1550: “*Armata*”]. Being a native of Antwerp, Lynne may have been more familiar with Spanish than Italian (although there were many Italian merchants in this cosmopolitan city). Substituting a -d- for an intervocalic -t- was not ungrounded in Italian phonetics. As Italian teacher John Florio explains in his 1578 *Firste fruites*, “the *d* in many wordes is vsed indifferently with *t*, as *padre*, *patre*, father, *madre*, *matre*, mother, *padrone*, *patrone*, patron, or maister, *lido*, *lito*, shoare, *Imperadore*, *Imperatore*, Emperour, and such other” (Florio [1578: 109]). In the second half of the sixteenth century, contact with Italians settled in England who may have pronounced *armata* as if it was *armada* as well as the intense exchanges between England and Spain during the (short) reign of Mary, who was married to a Spanish prince and soon king, Philip II, probably contributed to the circulation of the ‘*armada*’ form. It was used to refer to a French fleet, “the greate Armada of the Frenchmen”, threatening the coasts of England in the 1540s in the monumental *Chronicles* gathered by Raphael Holinshed [1577: Ffffjv].
- 13 Compared to its frequency in texts dealing with Venetian-Turkish wars in the late seventeenth-century, *armata* is seldom used in sixteenth-century texts, and ‘*armada*’ appears as a perfectly acceptable word for any type of foreign fleet, be it Spanish, Turkish, or French. One major event made ‘*armada*’ a “cultural” borrowing with negative connotations almost forty years after its first recorded appearance in print.⁹

2. The Armada and the ‘armado’ spelling

- 14 When in the summer of 1588 the fleet of ships sent by Spain to invade England sank off the coasts of Britain (mostly because of bad weather), this English victory was celebrated in countless print publications in the months and even years following the event. Several multilingual publications, issued at the same time, aimed at providing accounts of the English triumph in diverse languages so that all Europe (or at least France, Italy, and of course Spain) could read the narrative of Spain’s defeat. Issued by William Cecil, baron Burghley, Elizabeth’s most prominent adviser, *The copie of a letter sent out of England to Don Bernardin Mendoza ambassadour in France for the King of Spaine declaring the state of England* [1588] was said to have been found in two versions, one English and one French, “in the chamber of one Richard Leigh a seminarie priest, who was lately executed for high treason committed in the time that the Spanish Armada was on the seas”. The French copy, *La copie d’une lettre envoyee d’Angleterre a Dom Bernardin de Mendoze ambassadeur en France pour le Roy d’Espagne par laquelle est declare l’estat du Roiaume d’Angleterre*, was also published the same year, as was an Italian version, *Essempio d’una lettera mandata d’Inghilterra a Don Bernardino Mendoza ambasciatore in Francia per lo re di Spagna nella quale si dichiara, lo stato del reame d’Inghilterra*. In the English text, the Spanish fleet is called the “Armada”, while the French text calls it “Armade”, a fairly rare adaptation that has not survived in modern French,¹⁰ and the Italian one “Armata” (Cecil [1588a, b, c]).
- 15 A work supposedly written “in Spanish by a Spanish Gentleman” only designated by a set of initials (D.F.R. de M.), *Respuesta y desengano contra las falsedades publicadas en España enbituperio [sic] de la armada Inglesa*, was published in Spanish and in an English translation, *An answer to the untruthes, published and printed in Spaine, in glorie of their supposed victorie atchieued against our English Navie*, both printed in London in 1589. As the phrasing of the English title indicates, the English fleet is called “navie” throughout the English volume while the Spanish fleet is called “Armada”. In the Spanish version, both fleets are designated by the generic word “armada” (D.F.R. de M. [1589 a, b]). From 1588 onward, “armada” was mostly used in a derogative way to refer to the Spanish fleet that foundered off the British coasts. Even in some contexts which refer to the Venetian fleet, the word used is not Italian *armata* but Spanish *armada*. For instance, the translator of Lazzaro Soranzo’s *Ottomanno* in English, Abraham Hartwell, Englishes “l’armata Venetiana” as the “Venetian Armada” (Soranzo [1603: 76v, 100v]) and translates the Italian word *armata* with “armada” in all cases, singling out the “*Spanish Armada*” by italicising it [1603: 10r]. By comparison, the original Italian reads “l’armata Spagnuola”, without any distinguishing sign (Soranzo [1599: 16]).
- 16 From the earliest stages in the “Armada” publishing craze, another spelling appeared beside the Spanish one: “Armado”. All dictionaries and similar pedagogical publications, from Robert Barret’s *Theorike and practike of modern warres* [1598] to *Gazophylacium anglicanum* quoted above and beyond, spelt it “armada”,¹¹ but it was still deemed necessary as late as the mid-eighteenth century to remind dictionary users of the correct spelling, as appears from the “armada” entry in Samuel Johnson’s 1755 *Dictionary*: “[Span. a fleet of war.] An armament for sea; a fleet of war. It is often erroneously spelt *armado*” (Johnson [1755: “armada”]). The “armado” spelling even predates 1588, for it can be found in texts published in the early 1580s, such as William Allen’s *Briefe historie of the glorious martyrdom of XII. reverend priests*. Written from a

Catholic perspective, this work opens with a preface in which Allen evokes the rumour “that the Spanish *Armado* should be for England” only to discard it as the product of anti-Catholic propaganda used to justify a clampdown on English Catholics (Allen [1582: b]v). After 1588, anti-Spanish works tend to be unmindful of spelling, as in the epistle to the reader (signed “E.B.”) at the beginning of *A true discourse of the armie which the King of Spaine caused to bee assembled in the haven of Lisbon*, an anonymous work claiming to be a translation of a speech by Philip II of Spain: “For the lord hath caused the forces of the Spaniards, this their great Armado, to be daunted” (*True discourse* [1588: 14]). They sometimes seem to misspell the word deliberately, as Robert Greene in *The Spanish masquerado*. Apart from the word in the title, a blend of Italian *mascherata*, Portuguese *mascarada*, and French *masquerade* [*Oxford English Dictionary* online: “masquerade, n.”], and “Armado” (Greene [1589: B3v, Cr – the latter italicised]), Greene’s text features a Spanish word ending in -ado which is spelt properly: “malgrado” [1589: B4v, E2r], inserted seamlessly in English sentences for “in spite” (“malgrado of the Spaniard”).

- 17 A most extreme version of this technique can be found in an anonymous pamphlet entitled *A Skeltonicall salutation, or condigne gratulation, and iust vexation of the Spanishe nation that in a bravado, spent many a crusado, in setting forth an armado England to invado*, which was printed twice in 1589, once in Oxford and once in London. Called “Skeltonical” after John Skelton, whose fondness for macaronic rhymes was proverbial in late Elizabethan England, the work comprises two poems addressed to the king of Spain, one in English and one in Latin, which have the same meaning. The only Spanish or pseudo-Spanish words of the text are in the title, where their accumulation is aimed at triggering laughter. The form ‘bravado’ (from Spanish *bravada*) is first attested in 1562, in the translation of Cambini’s *Libro della origine de Turchi* by John Shute which I mentioned above: “una aspra battaglia” [1529: Ev] is rendered as “a great bravado and a notable charge” [1562: 25r], with an English binomial which seems to indicate that the word “bravado” was not expected to be understood by a majority of readers and was therefore in need of a gloss. A few years later, when “faire les braves” in Estienne de Maisonneufve’s French tale of *Gerileon d’Angleterre* [1581: 157]¹² is translated as “to make their *Bravadoes*”, the italics identify the word as foreign but it has an English plural in -es, and the meaning is clear from context so there is no need for further explanation (Maisonneufve [1578: 96r]). As for the term “crusado”, it could evoke both the Spanish word for “crusader” [*Oxford English Dictionary* online: “crusado, n.”] and *cruzado*, the Portuguese coin bearing the figure of a cross, a word which was most often spelt *crusado* in early modern English publications. In George Gascoigne’s *Poesies*, it is deemed sufficiently familiar to serve as a marginal explanation to a deliberately obscure (and deliberately Venetian) word in the main body of text, “*Zechines* of glistering golde”: “zechine”, or *zecchino*, a Venetian coin, is explained in a note as “a peece of golde like the Crusado” (Gascoigne [1575: xlv]). The last word ending in -ado in the title of the *Skeltonicall salutation*, “invado”, is deliberately fanciful, relying on a form of cross-lingual conversion (or anthimeria) with the addition of a Spanish ending serving to form past participles (and derive adjectives and nouns from them) to an already-existing English verb, itself borrowed from Latin in the late fifteenth century [*Oxford English Dictionary* online: “invade, v.”]. All the common nouns and adjectives in the title are of Romance or Latinate origin, which adds to the comic effect as the -ado homoeoteleuton in the second half comes to reinforce the one in -ation in the first half.

- 18 In the text itself there is no word ending in -ado, but the English version creates a deliberately approximate set of rhymes when it evokes Francis Drake, emulating Skelton in the arbitrary addition of an ending that ensures all lines rhyme in -o [*Skeltonicall salutation* 1589: A3r]:

If one Drake o,
One poore snake o,
Make vs shake o,
Tremble and quake o [...]

The addition was unnecessary to preserve the rhyme scheme since all four words end in -ake, but it makes the rhyme fuller, and of course gives the corresponding words, two nouns and two verbs, a mock Spanish look.¹³

- 19 The “armado” spelling found its way into more refined literary works, such as those quoted by Johnson in his *Dictionary*: Edward Fairfax’s translation of Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata* (“Spread was the huge Armado, wide and broad”, expanding from the past participle “armati” in the original (Tasso [1600: 1.79.5])); William Shakespeare’s *King John* (“A whole Armado of collected [convicted] sail” [1623a: 3.3.1384]); John Dryden’s *Annus mirabilis* (“He [Charles II] in himself did whole Armado’s bring” [1667: B2v]).¹⁴ The case of Shakespeare is the most interesting one because *King John* is not the only play of his in which the term “armado” appears. In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, “Don Adriano de Armado” is the name of a Spanish character who is ridiculed for his aspirations to sophisticated learning. As a Spaniard, his name is even more directly evocative of the 1588 Armada, but his attitude is not that of an aggressive foreigner, rather the opposite: in Lynne Magnusson’s words, “he comes to be cast as an aspiring immigrant, eager to assimilate” [2008: 68]. While the change in the final vowel from “Armada” to “Armado” may register a sense of grammatical gender, the -o ending seeming better suited for a man, it also reflects a general tendency in the spelling of the term, as was noted by Johnson well into the eighteenth century. I would like to suggest that the spread of the -o ending, while possibly due to the lack of grammatical gender in common nouns in Early Modern English (which made it easy to blend all Spanish, and more generally all Romance endings of this kind into the -ado form), could also be a means to preserve a more authentic pronunciation.
- 20 If we look at how the final, post-stress vowels of words borrowed from Spanish and/or Italian evolved through time, we notice a difference between -o endings and -a endings. For instance, in ‘armada’, the “correct” Spanish form that has eventually triumphed over -o variants, the final -a is now pronounced /ə/, as it is in the much later borrowing from Italian “toccata”, whereas in “bravado” and “crusado”, two borrowed words featuring in the title of the *Skeltonicall salutation* quoted above, the final -o is now pronounced /əʊ/. Paradoxically then, altering the spelling of borrowed words may have been a way to ensure that they were pronounced as closely as possible when it came to their final vowels, -o being more likely to be preserved in a slightly stronger form than -a. Considering that spelling in printed texts was the responsibility of printers and therefore not always an authorial choice, the argument can be rephrased in a descriptive rather than prescriptive way: ‘armado’ was spelt with an -o because the post-stress vowel was not completely silent in spoken usage. This may also explain why French forms, in which -o and -a became a silent -e, although influential in spreading Spanish -ado/a and Italian -ato/a words in England (in particular for the preference of intervocalic -d- instead of -t-), were not adopted piecemeal, as the French spelling

would have entailed a silent final -e. The case of the doublet ‘ambuscade’/‘ambuscado’, the first borrowed from the French (ultimately an Italian word, *imboscata*) and the second an alteration of the first through Spanish mediation (*emboscado*), which are both attested for the first time in the late sixteenth century, highlights the differences in pronunciation: in ‘ambuscade’, the final -e is silent while in ‘ambuscado’, the final -o is pronounced /əʊ/.

- 21 The name of Shakespeare’s “Armado” is also sometimes spelt “Armatho”, or even “Armathor” (Shakespeare [1598] and [1623b]). If we follow the hypothesis that this is more than the result of a copyist’s perplexity in front of bad handwriting, then we need to try and understand what kind of pronunciation feature it may have represented, and whether this particular digraph made it easier to assimilate the word into English or whether it served to identify the word as more clearly Spanish in sound.

3. The sound of -th-: the ‘armatha/o’ spelling

- 22 Shakespeare’s “Armatho” was not an isolated case in the aftermath of the Armada. For instance, in a long eulogy on the passing of Queen Elizabeth, Henry Chettle used it twice to refer to the 1588 fleet: “after the dissipation of the Spanish Armatho accounted invincible” and “When the Spaniards having their Armatho readie” [1603: B2v, C3v]. This spelling appeared in Italian contexts such as the anonymous *Newes from Rome, Venice, and Vienna, touching the present proceedinges of the Turkes against the Christians in Austria, Hungarie, and Helvetia*, published in 1595. An entry dated “From Venice the 13. of Januarie” reads: “Letters came from Syria, certifiying, the Sycalla or Admirall with the Gallies are come to Constantinople, and that a great Armatho is providing against Hungarie by Sea” [*Newes from Rome* 1595: A4v]. It also designated a Venetian fleet in the context of wars against the Turks in the 1640 *Relation of seaven yeares slaverie under the Turkes of Argeire* by Francis Knight: “Marino Capella Proveditore or generall of the Armatha, withall religious care uses more than ordinary expedition, for the Arming his Navie” (Knight [1640: 21; also 24 about the Venetian fleet and 26 about the Turkish fleet]). The context is clearly anti-Spanish in William Slatyer’s *History of Great Britanie*, a bilingual work published in 1621 which tells the history of England in a series of poems or canzones in Latin and in English. Canzone IX in the tenth section (or “Ode”) is devoted to the episode of the 1588 Armada: “Charles Howard chiefe, vice-Admirall Drake, / Made Spaines huge great Armatha quake” (Slatyer [1621: Aa3r]). In *The Flower of fidelity* [1650], the narrator recounts the first voyage of the two princely protagonists, who “reaped exquisite applause, to see the Armatho furiously cut through the surges of the Seas” (Reynolds [1650: B3r]). More than the Sicilian origin of the two princes, which would justify the use of the word *armata*, I am interested in the spelling of an English word of Germanic origin in the full title, which identifies John Reynolds as the author of a previous work entitled “God’s revenge against murther”, with the intervocalic -d- in the word ‘murder’ spelt -th-, as was not infrequent in the period covered here (see Dobson [1985: II.383]). I would like to follow two threads: the spelling -th- as closer to original Spanish (and maybe Italian) pronunciation from an English point of view (or, rather, point of hearing); the spelling -th- as typical of English pronunciation from a foreign perspective.
- 23 If we turn to early modern language manuals aimed at English learners of Spanish, we find an evolution towards more precise phonological information, and remarks more

and more tailored to English ears and mouths, even though the manuals themselves are often adaptations from French-Spanish material. Antonio del Corro's *Spanish Grammar* from 1590 is one such adaptation. Dealing with French and Spanish together, it gives the impression of a "continental" unity in pronunciation for the letter 'd': "This letter is pronounced alike in both tongues, the Spanish and the French" [1590: 5]. William Stepney's *Spanish Schoole-master* adds a detail regarding -d in post-vocalic final position, which "must be sounded as dh, in English" [1591: 3]. Richard Perceval's *Bibliotheca hispanica* and *Spanish grammar* (the latter expanded by John Minsheu) are more precise regarding final -d in Spanish, whose pronunciation as Greek delta or English -th- or -dh- is even extended to intervocalic -d-: "like, th, in these English words, Them, Then, These, as in *Ciudad, Caredad, Cordero*" [1591: B2r]; "if d come in the middest or end of a word, you must pronounce him as δ in Greeke, as dh in English, as *Cada, every, Cádha, fidelidad, fidelitie, fidelidhadh*" [1599: b3v].

- 24 It is to be noted that the Spanish grammar published in France by César Oudin (many editions between 1597 and the late seventeenth century) does not single out D as a letter whose Spanish pronunciation differs from the French (Oudin [1619: A2r-v]), but the English translation adapts it to local habits by adding the information found in Perceval: "D [...] hath his proper sound in the beginning of words [...]. But in middle syllables, and in the end, it is pronounced like th in English, as *Cadéna* a chaine, *Virtúd* virtue; say *Cathéna*, and *Virtúth*". Exceptions are words derived from Latin,¹⁵ and when -d- follows the letter -n- (Oudin [1622: Bv-B2r]). Gustav Ungerer [1956] and [1974] and, more recently, Josefina Venegas Meza [2022], have argued in favour of a Spaniolising effect for the digraph -th- in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. It is indeed true that in present-day Spanish final post-vocalic and intervocalic -d- is pronounced [ð] (see Hualde [2005: 9-10] for detailed explanations and Lloyd [1987: 326-327] on changes occurring in the sixteenth century). While I do not wish to contradict this argument, I would like to look at the digraph from the reverse perspective, which is the most common one nowadays, namely that -th- encodes a typically English sound – or, rather, pair of sounds.
- 25 If we look at treatises dealing with *English* pronunciation, we find relevant data about the digraph -dh-. From Thomas Smith's Latin treatise on the right spelling of the English language (published in Paris in 1568), we learn that -th- and -dh- are more or less equivalent, and that they correspond to Germanic -d-:
- adding *h* softens some letters: thus, first with *dh*, then with *th* were such words [containing /ð/ and /θ/] properly written, for instance *dhe, dhou, dhem, dhat*. Indeed what the Germans pronounce *die, das, or dat*, we [English] pronounce *dhe & dhat*, and thus this spelling is perfectly correct; and the later spelling *th* is not inadequate. (Smith [1568: 32], my translation)
- 26 This is an incentive to shift our viewpoint and to consider the digraph -th- in relation to the Saxon origins of the English language, as something specific to it. If we look at another treatise on orthography, John Hart's *Orthographie* published one year after Smith's, we find a reference to a passage from William Lily's Latin *Grammar*, which had been taught in all schools by royal decree since the days of Henry VIII (Hart [1569: Kiiiv-Kiiir]). In this passage, Lily criticises the typically English habit of pronouncing final t's or d's in Latin as if they were "aspirated": *amath* for *amat*, *caputh* for *caput*, *aputh* for *apud* (Lily [1540: Biiijr]). This defective pronunciation seems to have so widely spread (or maybe it was Lily's grammar that was) that when William Salesbury tried to explain the pronunciation of the letter T in Welsh by comparing it to the Latin pronunciation of

the same letter, he felt compelled to add that the pronunciation of this letter in Latin had been “depraved” by “some barbarous lispers” who pronounced it as if it were -th- [1550: Ciiijr]. A similar comment is found in John Baret’s 1580 multilingual dictionary under the letter T, with the same examples: “in times past it hath been pronounced at the end of Latin words before a vowel as if it were th: *amath, caputh, vocath*” [1580: lii iiijv].

- 27 The example of -th- shows that phonetic spelling of foreign words, while it may have been meant to facilitate a more authentic pronunciation, nativizes them in aspect, making them *look* a little less foreign, but also, paradoxically enough, in sound, since pronouncing -t- or -d- as -th- is presented by grammarians as typically English. It also highlights the status of Italian and Spanish as Romance languages, direct heirs from Latin, since the English -th- pronunciation for intervocalic -t- and -d- (“at the end of Latin words before a vowel” in Baret’s phrasing) was first spotted in Latin words. Not only was it typically English, but it was considered difficult to pronounce for foreigners. John Florio claims that H is the letter that Italians find most difficult to pronounce, and he tries to explain how to position the tongue in the mouth to pronounce it properly after t-, as in *thou, that, this* [1578: Ttir-v]. In Jacques Bellot’s manual for French learners of English, the attempt at reproducing the correct English pronunciations for the two sounds corresponding to the digraph -th-, /ð/ and /θ/, is approximative, with the letter D used for /ð/ (“Dé experience” for “The experience”) and the letter T for /θ/ (“Tursdê” for “Thursday”) [1586: A2r, A8v].
- 28 In the same paragraph where he discusses -dh- and -th-, Smith lists as examples the words ‘father’ and ‘mother’, for which he adduces a very ancient spelling with the letter ð- (“*faðir, moðir*” [1568: 32]). I think this can shed light on the apparently aberrant “Armathor” spelling. Dobson argues that “about 1400 post-vocalic [d] became [ð] before [r] or [ə] in *father, mother, together, weather, hither, &c.*” [1968: II.384]. In words which ended with -ade or -ate with a stressed -a- and a silent -e in Early Modern English, such as ‘invade’ (borrowed from a Latin form with a long -a-) and ‘mate’ (a word taken from Middle Low German *māt*, traditionally cited in accounts of the Great Vowel Shift), the [a:] sound was beginning to be raised to [ɛ:] (Lass [1999: 72, 83-84]) (or [e:] in Baugh & Cable [2013: 223], with the example of ‘name’, /ne:m/). In words such as ‘father’, the vowel was not raised (PDE /fɑ:ðə/ as opposed to /meɪt/ or /ɪnveɪd/), due to the combination of the [ð] and the final -er (cf. PDE ‘lather’, /lɑ:ðə/ or /lɑðə/, as opposed to ‘lathe’, /leɪð/). I would argue that the -th- spellings for ‘armada’ may have been an attempt at preserving not so much the sound of the original intervocalic consonant as the sound of the preceding vowel, a way to avoid turning a continental [a] into [e:] or [ɛ:] (see Dobson’s point about the orthoepists’ insistence on a continental pronunciation for the English letter A [1985: II.59 and II.101.ii]).
- 29 A note in the “pronunciation” section of the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for ‘armada’ indicates that in the late nineteenth century the received pronunciation was /ɑ:meɪdə/, according to the *New English Dictionary* [1885], and that the current pronunciation, with a stressed vowel closer to the original Spanish, is first attested a few years later in the first edition of *A Standard Dictionary of the English Language* published by Funk & Wagnalls in 1893, and found in Daniel Jones’s *English Pronouncing Dictionary* [first edition, 1917], while the older pronunciation was still mentioned as an alternative until the latter half of the twentieth century (*Oxford English Dictionary* [online: “armada, n.”]). Likewise, ‘crusado’ was pronounced /kru:seɪdə/ according to

the *New English Dictionary* [1893] [*Oxford English Dictionary* online: “cruzado, n.”]), which listed two possible pronunciations for another -ado word we have encountered, ‘bravado’ (/brävɛɪdəʊ/ and /brävɑ:dəʊ/), but late-twentieth editions of Jones’s *English Pronouncing Dictionary* only list /brəvɑ:dəʊ/ (Jones [1991: “bravado”]). We notice that final -a in Spanish *armada* gradually turned to /ə/ in English while final -o in *crusado* (original in Portuguese) and in ‘bravado’ (originally *bravada*) has become /əʊ/, which may confirm the impression that the -o ending for Romance words enabled English speakers to preserve a final sound a little more audible than a schwa, at least until they were fully assimilated and their stressed -a- was pronounced like an English stressed -a- followed by a single consonant and a vowel.

Conclusion

- 30 In following the story in print of the word ‘armada’ in early modern England I have tried to highlight the complex dynamics at work in borrowings from Romance languages throughout the period. The choice of a blanket -ado suffix for words borrowed from Italian nouns ending in -ata and Spanish nouns in -ada via French nouns in -ade reflects the basic fact that Early Modern English no longer had grammatical gender and was therefore less sensitive to gender inflections in foreign words. It also shows that English speakers were trying to determine an identity for their language, and while avidly borrowing from Romance languages and Latin, they also registered the family resemblances among those Romance languages and their common closeness to Latin as opposed to the Germanic features of the English language (on this process see Jones [1953]). Some spellings that do not correspond to “correct” spelling in the donor languages can actually testify to attempts at keeping English pronunciation as close to the original sounds as possible. But they also provide information as to the phonetic evolution of English itself through a period marked by progressive but drastic changes in pronunciation.
- 31 When spelling became standardised after the “original” orthography for ‘armada’ (but not for ‘bravado’), the stressed vowel tended to behave like English -a- in similar contexts: in the 1789 edition of Thomas Sheridan’s *Complete dictionary of the English language, both with regard to sound and meaning*, ‘armada’ and ‘bravado’ have the same stressed vocalic sound as ‘invade’ and ‘mate’, coded /a/ with Figure 2 above it, which corresponds in the opening table to the sound in ‘hate’, so assumedly IPA /eɪ/ (the “first” /a/ being the one in ‘hat’ and the “third” the one in ‘hall’) [1789: ix]. As the word reclaimed its Spanish spelling with the final -a, it came to be used in broader contexts that involved fleets from any country. Johnson’s 1755 remark that it was still “often” spelt ‘armado’ was reproduced in the 1796 *Encyclopædia perthensis; or Universal dictionary of knowledge, collected from every source*, which featured a long section on the Spanish Armada (the memory of which did not seem to have disappeared two hundred years after the events) and had an entry for the ‘armado’ form, redirecting to ‘armada’ [*Encyclopædia perthensis* 1796: 518-520].
- 32 I would like to end by insisting on the role of translations (and sometimes pseudo-translations) in importing words and spreading apparently mistaken spellings, which in turn influence meaning. By writing ‘armatho’ for *armada*, English writers were paradoxically encouraging, or at least registering, a pronunciation that may have been closer to the Spanish original than more regular spellings. It may have been due to this

persistence in spelling it with a final -o that the word 'armada' remained associated for so long with the 1588 English victory, because the -o spelling prevented it from being assimilated too quickly as a phonetically English word. I hope I have managed to show that interlingual and interphonetic approaches can shed light on the interplay between phonology and lexicology in Early Modern English and beyond.

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NOTES

1. I use the phrase 'Early Modern English' (with capital initials) to refer to the state of the English language between c.1500 and c.1700 (see Durkin [2014: 7]).
2. *Armada* as different from *ejército* was also developed in Portuguese, another major maritime power of the period.
3. See <https://textcreationpartnership.org/tcp-texts/eebo-tcp-early-english-books-online/> and <https://leme.library.utoronto.ca/> (accessed 14 November 2023).
4. On the representation of the Ottoman Empire in early modern England, see McLean [2007] and Ingram [2015].
5. See also Cambini [1562: Bbiiijr and Ffiir], from another text translated by Shute and collected in the same volume, "A COMMENTARIE OF THE WARRES OF THE TVRCKES MADE against George Scanderbeg prince of Epirro and of the victories obtained by the sayde George", for further use of "armata" applied to the Venetian army.
6. See also Cambini [1529: 47v] and [1562: Kir] for "armata" in the English translation applied to the Ottoman fleet.
7. There is no evidence that he travelled to learn Italian, and he was mostly famous for his skills in Greek and Latin (see Feingold [2008]), but to a good Latinist, the Pope's instructions in Italian were not difficult to understand.
8. See also Rycaut's history of the Turkish empire [1680, 1687, 1700].
9. The *Oxford English Dictionary* quotes an unpublished letter from 1533 with the spelling "Armado" applied to the Turks (*Oxford English Dictionary* [online, "armada, n.", 1.a. α forms]).
10. See Le Petit [1597], a volume dedicated to Maurice, Prince of Orange, which contains sonnets in French alluding to the 1588 Armada. Sonnet XX [Aviiijr] begins with: "L'Espagnol forçenant de

despit & de rage, / D'avoir devant ses yeux son Armade de mer / (Qu'invincible il croit) veu perdre & abysmer”.

11. Noting that “most of our [English] termes now used in warres are derived from straungers; as the French, the Italian, the Spaniard and the Dutch”, Barret provides a glossary at the end of his book in which “Armada” is defined thus: “Armada, a Spanish word, is a Navy of ships for warre, or one great ship of warre” [1598: T3v, T4r].

12. I have not been able to access the 1578 edition which the English translator used as his source text.

13. Although the Latin version appears after the English one, it may have been composed first, since the corresponding tercet in Latin has rhymes in *-one* [1589: B3v]:

Nam si ab uno *Dracone*,
 Pusillo homuncione,
 Tanquam a crabrone [...]
 (For if by one mere Drake [/snake],
 A small homunculus,
 As if by a hornet...) (my translation)

14. Significantly, “Armado” is spelt with a capital initial in all three texts, but Johnson spells it with a lower-case initial.

15. Both *cadena* and *virtud* derive from Latin, but the *-d-* was not in the original Latin words (respectively, *catena* and *virtus*, *virtutis*).

ABSTRACTS

This article focusses on the joint evolution of the spelling and meaning of the word ‘armada’ to refer to a(n) (armed) fleet of ships in early modern English texts, from its first uses in translations of Latin and Italian texts in the first half of the sixteenth century to *Gazophylacium Anglicanum*, a 1689 English dictionary of hard words, which explains its Latin origins and calls it “a word purely Spanish”. Rather than a word biography, I try to write the aural story of ‘armada’ by considering its variations in spelling over the period: the *-a/-o* substitution for the final vowel and the *-t/-d/-th-* substitution for the intervocalic plosive. The main argument is that these substitutions reflect the phonetic processes at work in English borrowings from Romance languages for nouns derived from past participles of first-group verbs, which have similar morphological features in Latin (*-atus*), Spanish (*-ado*), and Italian (*-ato*), and for which French adaptations of these Italian or Spanish terms may also have played a part in spelling choices.

Cet article traite de l'évolution conjointe de l'orthographe et du sens du mot « armada », utilisé pour faire référence à une flotte (armée) dans les textes anglais de la première modernité, depuis les traductions de textes italiens et latins de la première moitié du seizième siècle jusqu'à *Gazophylacium Anglicanum*, dictionnaire de mots difficiles en anglais paru en 1689, qui explique les origines latines du terme et déclare qu'il s'agit d'un mot « purement espagnol » (« a word purely Spanish »). Plutôt que la biographie du mot « armada », je tente d'écrire son histoire sonore en envisageant ses variations tout au long de la période : la substitution *-a/-o* pour la voyelle finale et le choix de *-t-*, *-d-* ou *-th-* pour la consonne occlusive intervocalique. Mon argument principal est que ces substitutions reflètent les mécanismes phonétiques qui gouvernent les emprunts par l'anglais aux langues romanes dans le cas de mots dérivés de participes passés de verbes du

premier groupe, qui ont des traits morphologiques semblables en latin (-atus), espagnol (-ado) et italien (-ato), et pour lesquels des adaptations françaises de ces termes italiens ou espagnols ont aussi pu jouer un rôle dans les choix orthographiques.

INDEX

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AUTHOR

LAETITIA SANSONETTI

Université Paris Nanterre, France

l.sansonetti@parisnanterre.fr