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## Introduction

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### Abstract & Keywords

Keywords:

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*tam multa ut puta genera linguarum sunt in mundo et nihil sine voce est*  
1 Cor 14, 10.

The aim of this special multidisciplinary issue of *IntrAlinea* is to take a close look at the circulation of European Renaissance texts between Italy, Great Britain, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. Recent studies have begun to shift attention to the vast historic and cultural significance of translation in early modern Europe, with the aim of balancing the traditional tendency of looking at translated texts from a solely linguistic or literary perspective (Burke, Po-Chia Hsia 2007). The last twenty years have seen the rise of a new interest in the practices and theories of early modern translation (Hermans 1996; Bistué 2013), the role of cultural mediators played by translators and printers (Höfele-Von Koppenfels 2005), the innovative function of translated works with regard to specific aspects of culture in the early modern period (Di Biase 2006; Scarsi 2010) and in the history of print culture, including translated books (Barker-Hosington 2013). The improvement of technologies for online and data-base cataloguing (see for instance the *Renaissance Cultural Crossroads Catalogue*[1]), together with the possibility of directly accessing digitized primary sources, have opened up new avenues of exploration, which have so far produced interesting results that are mostly limited to individual authors[2].

This issue hopes to add to this evolving debate by outlining the field of inquiry, in the interests of looking at a well-defined phenomenon in terms of space and time: textual relationships, that is, between Italy, the Netherlands, the British Isles and the Scandinavian countries in the early modern age. In effect, the early modern translation practices in these regions had a similar aim to contribute to the linguistic and cultural enrichment of the vernaculars, which were seeking to establish a primary role for themselves in the emerging process of construction of national identities, in dialogue and confrontation with the prestigious models of Latin, Italian, and French culture. The essays presented here thus connect different early modern European cultures and assess common and distinctive traits among them, also illustrating overarching practices and trends: the presence and role of mediators, translators, printers, authors of paratexts are investigated alongside the actual translation processes, including imitation, reworking, rewriting, and adaptation. Historical, intercultural and literary perspectives have been variously adopted to evaluate the impact of content, style and vocabulary on target cultures, as well as the wider dynamics of textual adaptation and translation strategy.

As may be expected, contact with Italian culture plays a special role in the regions focused upon. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, hundreds of Italian texts were translated into English alone, dealing with narrative, theatrical, religious, theological, scientific, and artistic subjects, as well as grammar-books, travel narratives, historical, political, moral treatises, and etiquette manuals; and the flow of translated Italian works into the Dutch Republic is equally astounding. The Dano-Norwegian kingdom, which shares important features with the English context, such as the advent of the Reformation, the consolidation of the monarchy and the growing book market, is also seen gradually abandoning Latin in favour of original works and translations in the vernacular.

The Dano-Norwegian kingdom was very receptive towards the Italian Renaissance, and Denmark in particular was marked by a decided *Italophilia*, a fascination that included the rise of Italian as a privileged language at court, as testified for example by the influential presence in the late sixteenth century of Giacomo Castelvetro, an Italian protestant who played a fundamental role in mediating Italian language and culture both in England and in Denmark as a professional editor. The Italian model in Danish culture and court life in the sixteenth and seventeenth century is precisely the focus of Anders Toftgaard's essay, which opens this collection: Toftgaard looks into two early Renaissance literary translations by the eminent humanist Anders Sørensen Vedel, the first produced in 1577 and dealing with Petrarca's penitential psalms in Latin, the second (1593) proposing a version of Sannazaro's love sonnet "O vita, vita no, ma vivo affanno", in which the target text acquires a religious import which resonates more fully with the Lutheran context.

Within the same regional area, Anna Maria Segala's essay focuses on a Danish translation of Machiavelli's tale *Belfagor* (1549), dated approximately 1660. The paratextual materials as well as the translation itself provide insight into the reception of the source text: what emerges is that Machiavelli's historical relevance was acknowledged within learned circles in spite of the official censorship of his main work, *The Prince*; on the other hand, the emphasis in *Belfagor* on the popular topic of marital quarrels was in tune with a widespread misogynous attitude, which probably lent it a certain commercial appeal and might explain the cheap format of the print.

While the Dano-Norwegian kingdom showed great interest in the Italian Renaissance, in Sweden Italian humanism did not take root until the eighteenth century. Paolo Marelli deals with the cultural climate in which the first Swedish – indeed Nordic – translation of Machiavelli's *Prince* was published in 1757 by Carl von Klingenberg, together with the translation of its confutation, *The Anti-Machiavel* by Frederik II of Prussia. This essay examines the contradictory circumstances in which Machiavelli's text, albeit carefully mediated, and deprived of its dedication to Lorenzo de' Medici (and therefore of the Italian historical context), was considered necessary reading for the future king Gustavus III. Klingenberg's translation was certainly an elitist enterprise, but it was

intended at the same time to reach a wider reading public, favoured once again by the rapid growth of the book market.

Diversity in genres and approaches characterizes the articles dealing in this collection with the open, uncensored world of cultural transfer through translation and adaptation in the Dutch Republic. 'It soon becomes clear to anyone who spends some time reading around in the discourse on translation in the Dutch Renaissance', writes Theo Hermans 'that, despite its fragmentary nature, there are patterns and traditions in it, central issues and international echoes, synchronic oppositions and diachronic shifts' (Hermans 1991: 155). In the wake of this emphasis on the necessity of taking both the poetics and the socio-cultural contexts of translation into account, the picture offered by the essays in this issue devoted to the Dutch area reflects the rich landscape of cultural appropriation in the period. The Dutch texts discussed, considered within the context of the well-established printing activity of the mid-seventeenth century Netherlands, testify to the rising profile of translators and other mediators, who began to discuss choices and positions in a more self-asserting manner.

Machiavelli features prominently in the Dutch area as well, as Francesca Terrenato's analysis shows. Terrenato reads Machiavelli's novella *Belfagor* against the background of popular misogynist literature which gave rise in France, England and the Netherlands to the debate known as 'querelle des femmes'. Machiavelli's tale, appearing in a miscellaneous chapbook, integrates the anti-uxorial theme with a strong anti-absolutist strain and a polemical vein against the clergy, a particularly appealing combination for Dutch readers. The texts also represent an interesting case of 'middle style' in Dutch prose, which had been developed over the period with the help of translations from such Italian classics as the *Decameron*.

The theatre is also a powerful catalyst of cultural and social debate in the Dutch Golden Age. As Marco Prandoni points out, the repertoire of the Amsterdam Theatre (Amsterdamse Schouwburg, founded in 1637) consisted in a great deal of translations and adaptations of foreign plays, both classic and contemporary. His essay focuses on a topical debate for and against translation for the stage which broke out between ca. 1665 and 1680, as well as on the cultural and social implications of this struggle in which translation was foregrounded.

Another centrally important cultural phenomenon characterizing the age, that is the rise of the experimental method and the dissemination of scientific knowledge throughout early modern Europe, is the subject of Leen Spruit's essay, which specifically deals with scientific exchange among Italy, the Dutch Republic, and England, the cradle of Newtonianism. The circulation of the works of such Dutch scientists as Willem's Gravesande and Petrus van Musschenbroek is particularly revealing when considered in the light of the controversies provoked by the spread of Newtonian science and philosophy around the turn of the century. It is through their handbooks that a more accessible version of Newtonianism was able to reach Italy: such an example is only one of many which point to unexpected trajectories of knowledge in the European cultural space of the early modern period.

The Dutch section closes by introducing yet another strand of cultural transfer, that is the dissemination of foreign news in England: principally European in content, news coming from the Dutch Republic was in high demand, and Nicholas Brownlee's essay examines both the significance of this crucial transit of news discourse and the translation strategies adopted in the English-language corantos and pamphlets published between 1600 and 1630.

The three essays which make up the final section of the issue are devoted to the circulation of texts between Italy and the British Isles, and further elaborate on a number of far-reaching cultural and ideological questions underpinning early modern European culture. Iolanda Plescia takes into consideration the emergence of a new linguistic culture at the end of the seventeenth century in England, when the experimental scientific method posed the question of linguistic standardization more strongly than ever before, in a quest for a clear, less ambiguous language capable of scientific expression. Within this context, the essay focuses on the entry points of Galilean and post-Galilean thought into England, in particular Richard Waller's English translation of the experiments of the *Accademia del Cimento*, showing how the English vernacular was undergoing both a process of emulation and emancipation from the Italian models.

Brenda Hosington reconsiders the role of translation in promoting and spreading texts belonging to the *querelle des femmes*, from its appearance in late fifteenth-century France to its later status as a transnational European cultural phenomenon. She investigates the ways in which such texts were inevitably re-worked and usually domesticated during their transit, discussing in detail the paths by means of which translations moved across boundaries – undergoing transformations both through paratextual and material changes – and focusing in particular on nine *querelle*-related Italian texts that made their way to England in the period 1579-1615.

The third essay in this section proposes to reconsider political issues which were particularly relevant in light of the role and power of monarchy in early modern Europe: the study of political theory coincided with the royal exercise of power itself and the writings of a Renaissance sovereign were privileged objects of translation, to be used also as propaganda. Donatella Montini's essay focuses on King James VI and I's *Basilikon Doron* and its translation in Italian by John Florio, well known as one of the most outstanding interpreters of Italian humanistic culture in Elizabethan England. The essay argues that Florio's translation worked as both linguistic exercise and a meditation on politics, and tries to establish some measure of the influence exercised by a major player of Italian culture in Elizabethan England on the political lexicon of the country.

The issue is closed by the afterword by Guyda Armstrong, in which she offers both a stimulating response to all of the essays collected here, and a challenge for the future, positing the need for a more marked 'spatial turn' in translation studies: in such an approach 'relationality and connectedness' are privileged 'over simple geographic connection', and space, as well as place, are defined in terms of flow and dynamics rather than as mere points on a map. Armstrong revisits the question of geographical textual transits by also raising the issue of possible future methodological developments at a time, such as ours, when new GIS tools and technologies are rapidly becoming available, arguing for the importance of 'an awareness of the potential of a place-based, multiscalar early modern translation studies'.

Indeed, although for the sake of clarity the essays are grouped here according to their regional identity, the authors collectively show how fruitful it is to look at the circulation of these texts from a perspective in which common themes and social issues emerge in a largely interconnected transnational corpus, hosting translations and remediations besides original contributions. The controversy on women, the debate on the relationship between monarchy and the common weal, the rise of experimental science, the emerging construction of public opinion: all of the most important debates of the day emerge in the cultural mediators' selection and disposition of texts to be

translated and disseminated across the early European landscape. Taken together, the essays included in this issue add to the known picture of early modern textual circulation, not only by revisiting the classics but also by taking into account less studied works which clearly responded either in form or content to particular needs expressed by the target cultures in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The thriving book industry in Northern Europe contributed to the formation of a borderless space in which diverse texts, from the domain of science to that of politics, from news to history, from plays to novellas, were appropriated and shared by different cultures.

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## Notes

[1] <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/rcc/>

[2] See for example the work done on translations of Machiavelli in Europe on [www.hypermachiavellism.net](http://www.hypermachiavellism.net).

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