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Cultural translations and glocal dynamics between Italy and the Low Countries during the sixteenth and seventeenth century

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In May 1534, a certain ‘Michele, pittore tedesco’ was admitted to the prestigious Roman Compagnia di San Luca. This entry in the records of the guild of painters and miniaturists refers to Michiel Coxcie, probably the first artist from the Low Countries to receive this honour. After his arrival in Rome in 1530, Cardinal Willem van Enckenvoirt gave him the task of painting several frescoes in the Santa Maria dell’Anima, the church of the German and Netherlandish community.¹ Numerous *fiamminghi* had flocked to the eternal city when the first Netherlandish pope Adrian VI (1522-3) had been elected.² Thanks to this network of compatriots and their Roman connections, Coxcie had access to the major collections of antiquities, became acquainted with the techniques and style of the Italian Renaissance. He met Michelangelo and learned to paint *al fresco*, perhaps under the influence of Sebastiano del Piombo.³ After a period of ten years, Coxcie returned to the Low Countries and became known as the ‘Flemish Raphael’, because he combined Italian Renaissance style with the Flemish visual language. This immersion into the vibrant Roman cultural scene made him an artistic mediator upon his return. Coxcie’s career is illustrative of the ways in which different goods and ideas were transferred from one culture to another, and is therefore a good example of cultural transfer.

Artists like Coxcie were important actors within the large and heterogeneous group of cultural mediators who were responsible for the development of close ties between the Low Countries and Italy. Due to an economic and artistic boom in Italian

^{*} In 2013-2014 Museum M in Leuven organized a large exhibition dedicated to Michiel Coxcie’s life and art. The Italian Studies Working group (Werkgroep Italië Studies) dedicated a seminar to Coxcie’s cultural contacts with Italy, which was the occasion for the present special issue on cultural exchange between both regions.

¹ In early modern Italy the term ‘fiamminghi’ was used to refer to the inhabitants of the Low Countries and not specifically for inhabitants of the County of Flanders. We will refer to people from the Low Countries as Netherlandish rather than Dutch or Flemish. We will use Flemish to refer to the specific artistic style also known as the Flemish school. For the terms used in early modern Italy see: P.J. Kessel, *Van Fiandra naar Olanda. Veranderende visie in het vroegmoderne Italië op de Nederlandse identiteit*, Amsterdam, Noord Hollandse Uitgeverij, 1993. We will use the general term Italian for people coming from the Italian peninsula.

² On the importance of the networks of compatriots in Rome, see: J. Touber, ‘Willem van Enckenvoirt and the Dutch network in Rome in the first quarter of the sixteenth century’, *Fragmenta*, 4 (2010), pp. 121-143 and A. Gnann, ‘Cardinal Wilhelm van Enckenvoirt as Patron of the Arts in Rome’, *Fragmenta*, 4 (2010), pp. 149-160.

³ E. Leuschner, ‘The young talent in Italy’, in: K. Jonckheere (ed.), *Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592) and the Giants of his Age*, London-Turnhout, Brepols/Harvey Miller, 2013, pp. 56-57.

cities and the Low Countries in the fifteenth century, both regions became vital interactors in the two subsequent centuries. However, despite their shared and interconnected history, the relationship between Italy and the Netherlands in early modern Europe is seldom explicitly studied from a cultural exchange point of view.⁴ Most attention has been dedicated to the beginnings of artistic and economic interactions in the fifteenth century. Therefore, this special issue explores, through a number of case studies, the dynamic processes of cultural exchanges between the Italian states and the Low Countries during the sixteenth and seventeenth century: a period of changing power relations and of wide-scale implementation of Renaissance thought and practices. By focusing on these two centuries, we intend to explore changes in the interactions between the different regions of these complex political entities. In taking this approach, we aim to contribute to the renewed scholarly interest in both regions as well as to the literature on cultural exchange.

Cultural transfer developed as a concept in the mid-1980s following the research conducted by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner; it has since become a popular and much debated term in scholarly literature.⁵ Cultural transfer studies deal with a wide range of phenomena: the movement of people, the circulation of objects, the transmission and influence of ideas, discourses, images, forms and styles. According to Wolfgang Schmale, cultural transfer concerns the multiplicity of acts or processes in which elements of culture, or 'cultural goods', are moved from one cultural space or structure to another.⁶ He compares this system of exchanges to a hypertext, considering history as one uninterrupted flow of cultural transfers in which the boundaries of concepts such as nations, regions or social groups become particularly blurred.⁷ The study of such exchanges yields important insights into the formation and demarcation of groups and collective identities.

While increasingly looking for a dynamic interpretation of the concept of transfer, scholars in Germany and France have stressed the importance of movement and change. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann have insisted on shifting from notions of transfer and historical comparative studies to *histoires croisées*, taking into account the multileveled, reciprocal and transforming character of exchanges.⁸ In a similar vein, Peter Burke has argued that the term 'cultural transfer' suggests a rather static process whereby elements of one culture move to another. His approach in terms of 'cultural translations' emphasizes the active and dynamic character of reception processes, implicitly connecting a historical approach with a functionalist equation of transfer and translation:⁹

⁴ A recent exception is I. Alexander-Skipnes (ed.), *Cultural Exchange between the Low Countries and Italy (1400-1600)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007, in which artistic exchanges between the two regions are examined.

⁵ For a good overview of the literature on this topic for the early modern period see the contributions in W. Schmale (ed.), *Kulturtransfer. Kulturelle Praxis im 16. Jahrhundert*, Innsbruck, StudienVerlag, 2003; M. North (ed.), *Kultureller Austausch. Bilanz und Perspektiven der Frühneuzeitforschung*, Köln, Böhlau Verlag, 2009; R. Muchembled (ed.), *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, 4 vols, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁶ Schmale, 'Das Konzept "Kulturtransfer" und das 16. Jahrhundert', in: Schmale (ed.), *Kulturtransfer*, cit., p. 45,

⁷ Ivi, p. 13.

⁸ M. Werner & B. Zimmermann, 'Beyond comparison: histoire croisée and the challenge of reflexivity', in: *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), pp. 30-50.

⁹ I. Even-Zohar, 'Translation and Transfer', in: *Polysystem Studies, Poetics Today*, 11, 1 (1990), pp. 73-78.

Ideas, information, artefacts and practices are not simply adopted but on the contrary, they are adapted to their new cultural environment. They are first decontextualized and then recontextualized, domesticated or “localized”. In a word, they are “translated”.¹⁰

Michiel Coxcie serves as a case in point for this kind of recontextualizations, as he was one of the first to create an altarpiece in which he combined the “visual idiom” of Italian Renaissance masters such as Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo with features of Netherlandish painters like Van Eyck, Van der Weyden, Metsys.¹¹ As a court painter to Charles V and subsequently to Philip II he imported Renaissance visual language *all’antica* which suited the Habsburg desire for a strong Roman imperialist symbolism.

The recent interest in Coxcie’s career stands in a long art historical research tradition dedicated to the study of the formative journeys of artists coming from the Low Countries to Italy. Yet cultural exchanges between the Netherlands and the Italian states did not occur in a one-way direction. Most articles in this number therefore study cases of Italians involved in cultural transfers in the Netherlands. In the complex web of exchanges, mediators – literally, something or someone in the middle between two places or instances – played a crucial role. People, but also texts, ideas or objects transferring a message, are mediators in their own right.¹² The wide range of transfers between Italian and Netherlandish communities involved a great variety of mediators other than artists and merchants. Throughout the contributions to this issue the role played by members of religious orders, publishers, rulers, history writers, diplomats and members of the Republic of Letters are discussed, but one could think of many other examples. Taken as a whole, the different analyses in this number demonstrate the diverse ways in which Italians and *fiamminghi* influenced, observed and used each other’s cultures in the early modern era. In sketching the evolution of their mutual interests and relationships, this introduction argues that their shared history manifests a common thread: the connections between local communities within global, or transnational dynamics, add a “glocal” nature to their transactions.¹³ Moreover, exchanges often occurred thanks to specific institutionalized groups, such as mercantile trading nations and communities or networks like the republic of letters.

¹⁰ Burke, ‘Translating Knowledge, Translating Cultures’, in: North (ed.), *Kultureller Austausch* cit., p. 70.

¹¹ K. Jonckheere & R. Suykerbuyk, ‘The Life and Times of Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592)’, in: Jonckheere (ed.), *Michiel Coxcie (1499-1592)*, cit., p. 29.

¹² For this interpretation see A. De Vries (ed.), *Cultural Mediators: Artists and Writers at the Crossroads of Tradition, Innovation and Reception in the Low Countries and Italy 1450-1650*, Leuven, Peeters, 2008. The introduction does not explicitly discuss the cultural ties between the Low Countries and Italy.

¹³ ‘Glocal’ is commonly used in a twentieth-century context concerning global commercial and sociocultural exchanges. The concept emphasizes the local interests of global traffic and the ‘creation and incorporation of locality’ in a globalizing web of interdependences; see: R. Robertson, ‘Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity’, in: M. Featherstone, S. Lash & R. Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London, Sage, 1995, pp. 25-44, esp. 40; *Idem*, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London, Sage, 1992. The term also stresses the porosity of borders in exchanges and the importance of local rather than ‘national’ interest. See: T. Luke, ‘New World Order or Neo-World Orders: Power, Politics and Ideology in Informationalizing Glocalities’, in: Featherstone, Lash and Robertson, *Global Modernities*, cit., 1995, pp. 91-107, esp. 101. For an example of the concept in an early modern context see: D. Freist, ‘Lost in time and space? Glocal memoryscapes in the early modern world’, in: E. Kuijpers, J. Pollmann, J. Müller & J. van der Steen (eds.), *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe*, Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 203-221.

Cultural mediators

During the Middle Ages Italian states and the Low Countries developed long-standing commercial and cultural ties. Both regions were highly urbanized and the movement of commodities, people and ideas was stimulated by a flourishing international trade.¹⁴ The cities played an essential role in the exchange of cultural practices, tastes and artefacts.¹⁵ Merchants from Genoa, Florence, and Venice settled in Bruges and encountered new artistic styles, exemplified by painters such as Rogier van der Weyden or Jan van Eyck. These merchants functioned as purveyors of art to Italian courts, but also competed with their patrons as art collectors in their own right.¹⁶ Tommaso Portinari, the representative of the Medici bank in late fifteenth-century Bruges who commissioned Hugo van der Goes to paint an altarpiece, is illustrative of this phenomenon.¹⁷

The connections between Italy and the Low Countries have been studied mainly from two perspectives: firstly from an artistic point of view and secondly from an economic one. Art historians have devoted ample attention to the adaptation of Netherlandish taste, style and techniques at Italian courts as well as to the influence of Italian Renaissance ideals in arts produced in the Low Countries.¹⁸ The notion of *cultural or artistic transfer* within the discipline of art history often refers to the idea of an all-encompassing dominant model, such as the one represented by the canon of painters of the Italian Renaissance, influencing other artistic traditions.¹⁹ Although this approach in iconographic and stylistic research still receives broad attention, increasingly the focus is shifting towards the study of networks and the geographic or social mobility of artists.

Shifting our attention to the other traditional cornerstone of Italo-Netherlandish studies we are equally brought back to fifteenth-century Bruges and to the Burgundian court. The commercial contacts, trade and presence of Italian merchants in Bruges have been well examined and documented for this period.²⁰

¹⁴ For literature exploring the similarities between the developments in the Low Countries and the Italian states see: H. van der Wee (ed.), *The Rise and Decline of Urban Industries in Italy and in the Low Countries: Late Middle Ages-Early Modern Times*, Louvain, Leuven University Press, 1988; E. Crouzet-Pavan & E. Lecuppre-Desjardin (eds.), *Villes de Flandre et d'Italie, XIIIe-XVIe siècle: les enseignements d'une comparaison*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2008; B. Boutte & M-A. Visceglia, 'Cultura e prassi politiche tra Fiandra e Italia nel Seicento. Note introduttive', in: *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2 (2009), pp. 1-17.

¹⁵ On the importance of urban centres for cultural exchange see: D. Keene, 'Cities and cultural exchange', in: D. Calabri & S.T. Christensen (eds.), *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe, II. Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe 1400-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 2-27.

¹⁶ P. Nuttall, *From Flanders to Florence: The Impact of Netherlandish Painting, 1400-1500*, London-New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004, p. 3.

¹⁷ M.L. Koster, 'New documentation for the Portinari altarpiece', *The Burlington Magazine*, 1200 (2003), pp. 164-179 and D. Wolfthal, 'Florentine Bankers, Flemish Friars, and the Patronage of the Portinari Altarpiece', in: Alexander-Skipnes (ed.), *Cultural Exchange*, cit, pp. 1-23.

¹⁸ Alexander-Skipnes (ed.), *Cultural Exchange*, cit.; E. Parma, *Rapporti artistici tra Genova e le Fiandre nei secoli XV e XVI*, Genova, Compagnia dei librai, 2002.

¹⁹ R. Dekoninck (ed.), *Relations artistiques entre l'Italie et les anciens Pays-Bas (16e-17e siècles): bilan et perspectives. Artistieke relaties tussen Italië en de Nederlanden (16de-17de eeuw): Status quaestionis en vooruitzichten*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2012.

²⁰ R. Doehaerd & C. Kerremans (eds.), *Les relations commerciales entre Gênes, la Belgique et l'Outremont, d'après les archives notariales génoises, 1400-1440*, Bruxelles, Académica Belgica, 1952; G. Petti Balbi, *Mercanti e nationes nelle Fiandre: i genovesi in età bassomedievale*, Pisa, GISEM: ETS, 1996; L. Galoppini, *Mercanti Toscani e Bruges nel tardo medioevo*, Pisa, Pisa University Press, 2009; B. Lambert, *The City, the Duke, and Their Banker: The Raponi Family and the Formation of the Burgundian State (1384-1430)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006; H. Lang, 'Networks and Merchant Diasporas:

Federica Veratelli has unearthed a wealth of documentation concerning these merchants and their relationships to the Burgundian court in the *Chambres des comptes* in the archives of Lille.²¹ They played a significant role in the trade of luxury goods such as cloths, sculptures, animals and works of art to and from the Burgundian court and Bruges. Various scholars have paid attention to the role of merchants as cultural brokers in later periods as well. Marika Keblusek describes the convergence of cultural, political and intellectual mediation in one chameleon-like figure as *double agency*: artists, merchants, diplomats, military men and members of the clergy had multiple and interconnected functions that were not necessarily part of their profession.²² Merchants could at the same time be brokers and collectors, as Maartje van Gelder has shown in her article on the Netherlandish merchant Daniel Nijs, who resided in Venice and organized the sale of the Gonzaga art collection in 1628.²³ Another example of such a cultural broker was Francesco Feroni, one of the wealthiest and most prominent Florentine merchants in Amsterdam.²⁴ Feroni acted as an important agent and broker for the future Cosimo III de' Medici, who stayed in Feroni's house in 1667 and 1668, during his travels through Europe.

In many early modern trading centres foreign merchants were grouped according to the city or region they came from.²⁵ This was the case in Antwerp, which had become the most flourishing trading city of Europe during the first half of the sixteenth century. Attracting merchants from all over the world, Antwerp functioned as an early modern 'world space', where different communities met without losing their cultural identity and practices.²⁶ Italians were not united in one single trading community, but were organised in 'nations' according to their city or region of origin; the Florentine and Genoese, for instance, belonged to separate trading nations. These foreign merchant communities participated in urban life in Antwerp but were at the same time relatively closed groups with their own cultural institutions. The best known example is the *Accademia dei Confusi*, founded in the late 1550s by the Genoese merchants and poet Stefano Ambrosio Schiappalaria according to the Italian literary academy model. Membership of the *Confusi* was

Florentine Bankers in Lyon and Antwerp in the Sixteenth Century', in: A. Caracausi & C. Jeggle (eds.), *Commercial Networks and European Cities, 1400-1800*, London, Pickering & Chatto, 2014, pp.107-120.

²¹ F. Veratelli, *À la mode Italienne. Commerce du luxe et diplomatie dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux 1477-1530. Édition critique de documents de la Chambre des comptes de Lille*, Lille, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2013.

²² M. Keblusek, 'Introduction: Double Agency in Early Modern Europe', in: M. Keblusek & B. Noldus (eds.), *Double Agents. Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe*, Leiden, Brill, 2011, p. 7.

²³ M. Van Gelder, 'Changing Tack: The Versatile Allegiances of Daniel Nijs, a Netherlandish Merchant and Information Broker in Early Modern Venice', *Dutch Crossing. A Journal of Low Countries Studies*, 30, 2 (2006), pp. 243-51; Eadem, 'Acquiring Artistic Expertise: The Agent Daniel Nijs and his Contacts with Artists In Venice', in: Keblusek & Noldus (eds.), *Double Agents*, cit., pp. 111-24. See also: C. Andersson, *The Flemish Merchant of Venice: Daniel Nijs and the Sale of the Gonzaga Art Collection*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015.

²⁴ H. Cools, 'An Italian in the Metropolis: The Amsterdam Career of Francesco Feroni (ca. 1640-1672)', in: D. Vanysacker e.a. (eds.), *The Quintessence of Lives. Intellectual Biographies in the Low Countries presented to Jan Roegiers*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2010, pp. 227-247; *Idem*, 'Francesco Feroni, Broker in Cereals, Slaves and Works of Art', in: M. Keblusek, H. Cools & B. Noldus (eds.), *Your Humble Servant. Agency in Early Modern Europe*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2006, pp. 39-50.

²⁵ On these merchant nations see: B. Blondé, P. Stabel & O. Gelderblom, 'Foreign merchant communities in Bruges, Antwerp and Amsterdam c. 1350-1650', in: Calabri & Christensen (eds.), *Cities and Cultural Exchange*, cit., pp. 154-174.

²⁶ For the notion of 'world space', which was designed in a twentieth century context, see E. Balibar, 'Es Gibt keinen Staat in Europa: Racism and Politics in Europe Today', in: *New Left Review*, 186 (March/April 1991), pp. 5-19.

restricted to Genoese citizens. Schiappalaria praised in his poems above all the Genoese elite, but also local merchants. His works were published in Antwerp by printers such as Christophe Plantin, Andreas Bax and Hans Laet. Schiappalaria played a mediating role in transferring Italian poetic models to the Antwerp poet Jan Baptist Van der Noot, who dedicated a large proportion of his Petrarchist poems to Genoese patrons, and who exceptionally might have been admitted as a member of the *Confusi*. Schiappalaria's cultural activities thus show important ties to local intellectuals. The Genoese trading nation also participated in local events of particular international importance; for example they created a triumphal arch, following Schiappalaria's design, for the joyous entry of prince Philip in 1549. Notwithstanding some scholarly explorations on Schiappalaria and the *Confusi*, recent substantial studies on the cultural roles of Italian merchants in sixteenth-century Antwerp are lacking.²⁷ Christophe Schellekens therefore looks at the Florentine nation's cultural role in Antwerp, zooming in on Florentine correspondence on the conflict over priority with the Genoese nation at the joyous entry in 1549. He shows that the merchants of the Florentine nation requested help from the Medici government in Florence and functioned, at the same time, as a local extension in Antwerp of their hometown, defending the status and prestige of the Duchy of Florence. As mediators between the Medici court and the authorities in the Netherlands, they tried to establish Florentine precedence on a transnational level. The information on recent historical examples of Florentine precedence transmitted between Italy and Antwerp served Florentine 'intracultural' purposes, but it also had an important 'external' function in repeated encounters with rival communities, such as the Genoese nation.

Transfers in Habsburg Europe

The relations between Italian states and the Netherlands transformed profoundly during the sixteenth century. After the peace treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, both the Low Countries and a large part of Italy belonged to the Habsburg Empire. This new geopolitical reality shaped the interactions between the two regions. In Habsburg Europe, notwithstanding crucial internal differences and identities, the Catholic Counter-Reformation ideas had a uniting effect. Translators played an important role in spreading shared religious values across the different regions of this vast empire.²⁸ Alexander Soetaert examines the diffusion of Italian texts in late sixteenth-century Cambrai, a French-speaking border region in the Habsburg Netherlands. France, with which the Southern Low Countries partially shared the same language, emerges as an important intermediary in the spreading of 'Italianising tendencies' in the Habsburg Netherlands, highlighting the diffusion of texts as a *transcultural* phenomenon. Translators, however, also had direct contacts with Italy; several of them had studied there. Their interest in translating Italian

²⁷ See C. Beck, *La nation génoise à Anvers de 1528 à 1555: étude économique et sociale*, Doctoral Dissertation, Florence European University Institute, 1982; P. Subacchi, 'Italians in Antwerp in the second half of the Sixteenth Century', in: H. Soly & A.K.L. Thijs (eds.), *Minderheden in Westeuropese Steden (16de - 20ste Eeuw)*, Rome, Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1995, pp. 73-90; J. Denucé, *Italiaansche koopmansgeslachten te Antwerpen in de XVIe-XVIIIe eeuwen*, Mechelen-Amsterdam, Het Kompas-De Spieghel, 1934.

²⁸ This is a vast and expanding field, see for instance S. Stockhorst (ed.), *Cultural Transfer through Translation. The Circulation of Enlightened Thought in Europe by Means of Translation*, Amsterdam, Brill-Rodopi, 2010; J. Maria Pérez Fernández & E. Wilson-Lee (eds.), *Translation and the Book Trade in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014; A. Coldiron, *Printers without Borders. Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

texts either came from religious concerns or from a desire to transmit knowledge concerning the latest intellectual developments.

By shifting our focus from the mediators to the transfers, religious and political concerns emerge as dominating themes in the second half of the sixteenth century. In his *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi*, which was published right before the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt, the Florentine writer Lodovico Guicciardini had made a vivid description of the bustling commercial and cultural atmosphere of the Low Countries, and of Antwerp in particular.²⁹ In contrast, later contemporary observers and writers focused on political and military events of the devastating and Eighty Years war. Numerous Italian soldiers came to fight in the Low Countries, which they regarded as the excellent place to gain military experience. Current scholarship dedicates renewed attention to Italian soldiers and generals of the Habsburg army in the Low Countries during the Revolt, revealing how these military men maintained important ties with their home country as news agents for their Italian patrons.³⁰ This strong non-mercantile Italian presence created new circuits for the circulation in Italy of images and ideas on the Low Countries.³¹

Discourse on the Revolt could serve to inform Italians about the circumstances abroad, to influence decisions of rulers on the international political scene, and also to discuss or criticize internal problems in Italian states. In the latter case in particular, authors 'translated' a distant contemporary conflicts to their own context by narrating it from an Italian perspective. Cees Reijner examines to what extent Italian authors referred in their historical descriptions of the Dutch Revolt to their own issues, heroes and enemies. In his view, Genoese history writers appropriated the Republican ideas propagated in the Dutch Republic, whereas in Florence the Revolt was used to critique Spanish war practices. Reijner argues that the history writers Bocchi, Costa and Conestaggio exemplify how transfers of ideals and ideas were in the first place conditioned by the locally determined political agenda of the authors, as well as by the interest of celebrating heroes who were seen as 'Italian'.

Referring to Netherlandish events in function of a political or personal agenda is also a central theme in Raviola & Bianco's study of the fourth book of Emanuele Tesauro's *Campeggiamenti di Fiandra* (1639). Although Tesauro does not refer directly to circumstances in Piedmont and does not explicitly choose the side of either France or Spain, the narration of the siege of Saint-Omer (1638) did serve the need in Turin for a success story of Thomas of Savoy at a moment when tensions between France and Spain heavily disturbed local politics. The siege of Saint-Omer was not only important in Savoy; in other Italian states the role of their own participating generals was highlighted as well. Stefano della Bella's incision was probably dedicated to the commander of the Habsburg troops Ottavio Piccolomini, member of an important Tuscan family and a fervent art collector.³² Both Tesauro and the incisor of the first frontispiece of his book demonstrate the interest in

²⁹ D. Aristodemo (ed.), Ludovico Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania inferiore*, University of Amsterdam (doctoral thesis), 22 April 1994. See P. Jodogne (ed.), *Lodovico Guicciardini (1521-1589)*, Louvain, Peeters, 1991 for an interdisciplinary volume on Guicciardini's life and works.

³⁰ N. Lamal, 'Le orecchie si piene di Fiandra'. *Italian news and histories on the Revolt in the Low Countries (1566-1648)*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Leuven and St Andrews, 2014; G. Bertini, *Ottavio Gonzaga di Guastalla. La carriera di un cadetto al servizio della monarchia spagnola (1543-1583)*, Guastalla, Biblioteca Maldotti, 2007; *Idem* (ed.), *Militari Italiani dell'esercito di Alessandro Farnese*, Guastalla, Mattioli, 2013.

³¹ Lamal, *Le orecchie si piene di Fiandra*, cit., pp. 142-181.

³² A. Becucci, 'Ottavio Piccolomini (1599-1656): A Case of Patronage from a Transnational Perspective', *The International History Review*, 33:4 (2011), pp. 585-605.

Flemish artists and artistic discourse. By citing Flemish sources, they opened them to an Italian public: they acted, in this way, as cultural mediators of ideas and artistic styles.

In sum, these contributions demonstrate the extent to which the conflict in the Netherlands articulated the different priorities of Italy's semi-independent states and their changing relationships with the Spanish-Habsburg Empire during the seventeenth century. All Italian states were Catholic, but some were firmer supporters of Habsburg power than others. This is true both for duchies, like Savoy, which was torn between pro-French and pro-Habsburg factions during the 1640s, and republics, like Genoa and Venice, which shared the republican ideals with the Dutch Republic.³³

Glocal differentiation

The Dutch Revolt changed the dynamics of cultural transfer between the Netherlands and Italy significantly. The two separate political entities emerging in the Low Countries had quite different relations with the Italian states. Power balances in Europe shifted with the conclusion of a peace treaty between Habsburg Spain and the Dutch Republic in 1648. The United Provinces, officially and internationally recognized as a state, were now in a better position to establish new relations with Italian states. The new trading relationships and burgeoning cultural life makes the Dutch Republic a popular research subject for scholars. Moorman's, Cools' and Touber's articles in this volume show how the political and cultural relationships with Florence intensified significantly during the 1660s, the period of Cosimo de' Medici's visits to the Dutch Republic.

This princely tour of Cosimo is an example of the Italian curiosity about the prospering commerce and maritime power of this newly established state.³⁴ During his stay in Amsterdam, Cosimo regularly visited the bookshop of the enterprising Amsterdam publishers and booksellers Blaeu. Pieter Blaeu planned the publication of a *Theatrum Italia*, an enormous printing enterprise studied by Gloria Moorman. Blaeu realised his *Theatrum* with the help of a broad Netherlandish-Italian network, as he aspired to base the descriptions and maps of Italy on local and primary sources, *i.e.* correspondence with and accounts given by local inhabitants. In order to obtain such valuable material Blaeu successfully established and maintained contact with the Florentine Grand Ducal librarian Antonio Magliabechi. The actual publication of the volumes was also determined by agreements between Blaeu and local authorities: a contract with the Dukes of Savoy resulted in the publication of a volume on Piedmont in 1682. The Medici also collaborated for the creation of a volume on Tuscany that, however, was never published by Blaeu.

Since scholars have primarily focused upon Cosimo's stay in Amsterdam, Hans Cools explores why Cosimo visited Friesland during his journey. This short trip was an event quite out of the ordinary for Cosimo and his entourage. Cools argues that the excursion reflected the ideas of Dutch intellectuals and politicians about Friesland. In his analysis of various travel accounts, Cools states that the Tuscan courtiers did not interpret what they saw in Friesland in the same vein as their hosts had

³³ On the shared ideals see S. Mastellone, 'Holland as a Political Model in Italy in the Seventeenth Century', *BMGN*, 98 (1983), pp. 568-582 and S. Mastellone, 'I Repubblicani del Seicento ed il modello politico olandese', *Il Pensiero Politico*, 18 (1985), pp. 145-163.

³⁴ See H.Th. van Veen, 'Cosimo de' Medici's reis naar de Republiek in een nieuw perspectief', *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden (BMGN)*, 102 (1987), pp. 44-52 and H.Th. van Veen & A.P. McCormick (eds.), *Tuscany and the Low Countries. An Introduction to the Sources and an Inventory of Four Florentine Libraries*, Florence, Centro Di, 1985, p. 32.

suggested, *i.e.* to see the Frisians as authentic and primitive inhabitants of a rather isolated part of the United Provinces. This case gives an interesting example of incomplete transfer of regionally determined perceptions.

Moorman's and Cools' contributions confirm how stereotypes or images associated with a specific region are, as is typical in glocalizing dynamics, to a large extent created from the outside. Traveller's perceptions are the result of negotiations between different transregional visions.³⁵

Other destinations on Cosimo's journey were the large cities in the Habsburg Netherlands such as Antwerp and Brussels. There he was welcomed by his Tuscan agents, marquis Stefano Spinola and Colonel Alamanni. Like the Tuscan merchants in Amsterdam, Stefano Spinola played an important role in the transmission of goods to the Tuscan court. Scholars have barely taken into consideration the relations between the Southern Netherlands and the several Italian states during the second half of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century. An important reason for this lack is the tendency to consider both the Habsburg Netherlands and Italy at the periphery of new scientific, economic and cultural developments. Yet this lack of scholarly attention need not imply any absence of close ties between Italians and the Southern Netherlands. More research is needed to understand how the changing ties between these regions, both connected to the Habsburg monarchy, affected the transmission of goods and ideas., In several respects a case can be made for enduring exchanges and transfers between those communities.

One example is the presence of students from the Southern Netherlands at Italian universities in the seventeenth century. During the fifteenth and sixteenth century many Netherlandish students had undertaken a *peregrinatio academica* to Italy, but in the seventeenth century the prestigious Italian universities started to lose their international reputation and appeal.³⁶ In addition it was neither possible nor desirable for Protestant students to study at Catholic universities and certainly not in papal Bologna. As a result of these two trends the overall numbers of foreign students at Italian universities decreased.³⁷ In stark contrast to this downward trend, many students from the Southern Netherlands studied law, medicine, philosophy or theology at Italian universities such as Bologna until the end of the seventeenth century. The *Collegio dei Fiamminghi*, which still exists today, was founded in 1650 by the Brussels goldsmith Jean Jacobs to provide support for citizens of Brabant and allow them to study at the Bolognese Alma Mater.³⁸ Ranging from the selection of suitable candidates in the parishes of Brussels to the observance of the Catholic liturgical calendar in the apartment, university life in Bologna was structured according to shared Catholic values and rules. The connection with their own nation and their organisation in an *universitas ultramontanorum* did not prevent the students at the Collegio from integrating within the Bolognese university culture, as is documented in seventeenth and eighteenth-century booklets collecting poetry in honour of the students' graduation, written primarily by Italian friends and lectors.³⁹

³⁵ Robertson, 'Glocalization', cit., p. 26.

³⁶ H. de Ridder-Symoens, 'Italian and Dutch Universities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in: C. Maffioli & L. Palm (eds.), *Italian scientists in the Low Countries in the XVII-XVIIIth century*, Amsterdam, Atlanta, 1989, pp. 31-64.

³⁷ See De Ridder-Symoens, 'Italian and Dutch Universities', cit.

³⁸ A.M. Bertoli Barsotti, *Joannes Jacobs Bruxellensis (1575-1650). Orefice a Bologna, fondatore del Collegio dei Fiamminghi*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2014.

³⁹ *Fiori poetici raccolti in Pindo nel dottorato del molt'illust. & eccell. sig. Gio. van Nyverseel brussellese alunno del Collegio Belgico di Bologna*, Bologna, Gio. Battista Ferroni, 1657 ; *Fiori poetici*

In this period scientific experimentation and research had shifted from universities to academies, such as the Cimento in Florence (1657) and the Royal Society in London (1660). Scientists from Florence, but also from Rome and Bologna, sought to establish contacts with their colleagues in Western Europe in order to keep abreast of the most recent discoveries and discussions.⁴⁰ They participated in those debates by trying to publish their works in journals of learned societies or on the printing presses of London and Amsterdam. Some of Marcello Malpighi's works were republished in Amsterdam in 1669, when he became renowned in learned European circles as an experimental anatomist. The visibility of Bolognese scientists in Malpighi's medical circle in seventeenth century Europe can be attributed to the importance of contacts with Dutch scientists as Jan Swammerdam, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek and Herman Boerhaave.

Although the organization of intellectual institutions, academies and journals facilitated the diffusion of knowledge in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, personal networks remained the cornerstone of cultural exchanges in the Republic of Letters. The aforementioned Florentine librarian Antonio Magliabechi was an important mediator between Dutch correspondents and Italian intellectuals. He played a key role in the transmission of knowledge and news on newly published Italian books to intellectuals abroad.⁴¹ Dutch scholars, like Isaac Vossius and Nicolaas Heinsius, were interested in the intellectual developments in the Grand Duchy and travelled to Florence, in order to visit its illustrious libraries, copy manuscripts and meet Magliabechi.

The Dutch intellectual Gijsbert Cuper, who maintained contacts all over Europe, was one of Magliabechi's correspondents for more than 35 years. Jetze Touber discusses how Cuper's epistolary exchanges on geography, astronomy, antiquities and medieval history with Italians, of which most were active in the Papal orbit, illustrate the participation of Italians in intellectual debates of which the centre of gravity was in Northern Europe. Touber counters the general idea that Italy was closed to scientific innovation in the period between Galileo and Vico. While showing how Cuper functioned as a mediator within his network in culturally distinct areas of Northern and Southern Europe, he also sheds light on the intellectual exchanges as examples of Burkes 'cultural translations': correspondents discussed the same topics from the viewpoint of different political, religious and cultural ideas. Cuper could agree with Vignoli's analysis of medieval coins, but openly refused his political conclusion in favour of papal claims to the authority over Rome. Touber thus demonstrates how a social and political positioning of authors is clearly discernible when erudite debates touched upon contemporary issues. After all, the extent of the transfers continued to be determined by the mind set of authors, which depended in its turn not only on individual positions, but also on the adherence to ideologically marked social circles.

In conclusion, these case studies enable us to look more closely at the meaning of cultural transfer involving Italian or Netherlandish actors and objects. In the multi-faceted web of early modern exchanges, the locally determined perspective of

raccolti in Pindo per la felicissima laurea dottorale in ambedue le leggi conferita dalla celebre Università di Bologna al merito de' signori Francesco Alberto Fiquaert Everardo Pietro Van Veen Pietro Vanden Sande convittori dell'almo Collegio Jacobs detto de' fiaminghi, Bologna, Peri-All'Angelo Custode, 1718.

⁴⁰ M. Cavazza, 'The Editorial Fortune of Bolognese Scientists in Holland (1669-1726)', in: Maffioli & Palm (eds.), *Italian scientists in the Low Countries*, cit., pp. 165-188.

⁴¹ L.C. Palm, 'Italian influences on Antoni van Leeuwenhoek', in: Maffioli & Palm, *Italian scientists in the Low Countries*, cit., p. 159.

mediators or agents is of the utmost importance. When Cosimo visited Amsterdam, he was in the first place the political representative of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and relied on a network of loyal Tuscans who lived and worked in Amsterdam. Perceptions varied according to locally determined cultural differences, counteracting any approach in terms of 'national culture'. The importance of local perspectives is present in the histories written by Francesco Bocchi, Giovanni Costa, Girolamo Conestaggio and Emanuele Tesauro as well. They used the events in the Netherlands in favour of their own political agenda and local viewpoint, as did the Florentine merchant nation in Antwerp during its conflict with the Genoese nation.

The case studies point to the significance of a diverse range of connections of mediators with specific geographical and political entities or regions in the transfer of ideas and goods. In several contributions emerges the reliance on patronage and groups of compatriots and coreligionists in cultural transfers. This importance of networks within which mediators were active gives, to use a contemporary term, a *glocal* character to cultural transfers between Italy and the Low Countries: very often transnational tendencies intersected with a strong attachment to actors and values of the communities with which mediators were associated, and therefore corresponded to a regionally determined 'mental map'.

Keywords

Cultural transfer, Italy, Low Countries, glocal, early modern exchanges

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RIASSUNTO

Traslazioni culturali e dinamiche *glocal* tra l'Italia e i Paesi Bassi nel Cinque-Seicento

Questo contributo serve da introduzione alla sezione tematica del numero di *Incontri* 2015-2, dedicata agli scambi culturali tra l'Italia e i Paesi Bassi nel Cinque- e Seicento. L'articolo offre pertanto una visione d'insieme in cui i casi analizzati nei singoli contributi sono contestualizzati e connessi tra di loro alla luce dello sviluppo cronologico degli scambi. Dall'insieme degli studi emerge un'ampia varietà di connessioni tra l'Italia e i Paesi Bassi, motivate da ragioni letterarie e artistiche, ma anche politiche, economiche, religiose. Un ruolo privilegiato negli scambi è riservato ai mediatori, che partecipano attivamente nel processo transnazionale di trasferimento e di adattamento, ossia di *traslazione*, di elementi culturali. L'appartenenza a un determinato gruppo sociale, religioso o professionale si rivela fattore fondamentale nelle attività di tali mediatori. Spicca, inoltre, la prospettiva locale su cui i contatti tra l'Italia e i Paesi Bassi s'impennano: fiorentini, genovesi, romani, così come i cittadini dei Paesi Bassi meridionali e settentrionali, agivano con interessi divergenti che dipendevano dalla loro comunità di riferimento, e che condizionavano la loro percezione dell'altro. In questo senso, gli scambi riflettono non solo l'espansione geografica degli interessi e delle reti sociali nella modernità, ma anche il loro condizionamento locale.