



## TRANSLATION, THE VERNACULAR DEBATE, AND THE EVOLUTION OF LITERARY WRITING STYLE BETWEEN ITALY AND GERMANY: PRINCE LUDWIG VON ANHALT-KÖTHEN AND HIS TRANSLATION OF GIOVAN BATTISTA GELLI'S *CAPRICCI DEL BOTTAIO*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

In the 17th century, Latin was still the language of culture in the German-speaking world, and it dominated church and state administration, as well as science and literature (von Polenz 2000: 828). At that time, the functional expansion of German to new genres had to contend with the widespread prejudices about the German vernacular being unsophisticated and uncouth. Supporters of the German vernacular had to defend their position against the growing prestige of French as the emergent international language of culture and communication, while also having to deal with late Humanists who considered Latin to be the only suitable language for science (and literature) and who continued to publish scientific texts in Latin until well into the 18th century (von Polenz 2000: 828, von Polenz 2013: 54–62, Riecke 2016: 165–166).

This situation was common throughout Europe. After the centuries-long dominance of Latin as a cultural language, all European vernaculars had to prove themselves worthy of substituting Latin in literature and science. In Italy,<sup>1</sup> a heated debate about the validity and norms of the vernacular, known as *Questione della Lingua*, had already taken place in the 16th century (Marazzini 2002: 257ff.). In Germany, the vernacular debate begun in the first half of the 17th century with the founding of academies such as the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* ('Fructifying society'), which received the arguments in favour of the vernacular circulating in Europe and applied them to the German-speaking context. The influence of the Italian vernacular debate was particularly evident: not only were German academies inspired by Italian ones, but Italian texts concerning linguistic topics also circulated in Germany through Latin and German translations.

This article discusses the contact between the Italian and German vernacular debates by using a concrete example: the translation of Giovan Battista Gelli's *Capricci del Bottaio* (1546) by Prince Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen (*Anmutige Gespräch*, 1619), the co-founder and patron of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*.

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1 'Italy' and 'Germany' are anachronistic terms, as neither Italy nor Germany existed as national entities until the 19th century. I will sometimes speak of 'Italy' and 'Germany' for shortness; the terms are to be understood as the 'Italian-speaking area' and the 'German-speaking area'.

## 2 TRANSLATION AS *SPRACHARBEIT* IN THE *FRUCHTBRINGENDE GESELLSCHAFT* (1617–1680)

The *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* (FG) was founded in Weimar in 1617 with the intention of creating a space in which to promote the theoretical discussion on the German vernacular as well as practical activities aimed at improving its stylistic qualities (Ball 2008, Conermann 2008). The FG was the first and most influential German ‘language academy’ and served as a model for the establishment of several other ‘language societies’ that came into being in the German-speaking area after the end of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1638).

In contrast to later academies such as the *Deutschgesinnte Genossenschaft* (‘German-minded Cooperative’) (Hamburg, 1642/43–1708) or the *Pegnesischer Blumenorden* (‘Pegnitz Flower Society’) (Nuremberg, 1644), which were founded by non-noble poets and intellectuals (von Polenz 2013: 122), the FG was established by a group of protestant noblemen from Anhalt and Weimar and was led until 1650 by one of its co-founders, Prince Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen (1579–1650).

The influence of the Italian linguistic reflection on Prince Ludwig and, consequently, on the FG is well known in the research literature (Bircher 1985, Ball 2008: 403, Conermann 2008: 21–22). As was customary for young noblemen in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in his youth Prince Ludwig travelled across Europe to further his education. His travels brought him to the Netherlands, England, Switzerland, France and Italy, where he remained from 1598 to 1602. Prince Ludwig spent most of this time in Florence, where he perfected his knowledge of the Florentine vernacular under the tutoring of Bastiano de’ Rossi (Ball 2008: 401). At the time, de’ Rossi was the secretary of the *Accademia della Crusca*, the oldest language academy still in existence today. Thanks to de’ Rossi’s support, in 1600 Prince Ludwig became the first German member of the *Crusca* (Lange 2002: 92).

Prince Ludwig was interested in linguistic questions even before his journey to Italy (Conermann 1985: 145), probably after coming into contact with Stefano Guazzo’s *Civil Conversazione* (‘Civil Conversation’) (Brescia, 1674), a very influential treatise that postulated the central role of courtly conversation in teaching virtues and moral costumes (Quondam 1993: XXX).<sup>2</sup> Ludwig’s stay in Florence and his participation in the activities of the *Crusca*<sup>3</sup> later gave him the idea of founding a similar academy in Germany. It is a well-known fact that the *Crusca* served as a model for the FG, in which, just like in the *Crusca*, members had society names and emblems consistent with the overall symbology of the society (Bircher 1985: 124, Conermann 1992: \*8, Ball 2008: 400–401). It is, however, through the contact with texts of Florentine authors of the previous century that Prince Ludwig developed the strategies for legitimising and improving the German vernacular that became common practice in the FG, especially in the first years after its inception (Conermann 2008: 21).

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2 The interconnections between correct language use, courtly conversation and moral virtues later became one of the focal points of Prince Ludwig’s thought and one of the highest aims of the FG (Ball 2008: 401; Herz 2009: 165–169).

3 For example, Ludwig contributed to the *Crusca* vocabulary, the first ever dictionary of the Italian vernacular, published in 1612 (Conermann 2008: 20).

Not until after 1638 did members of the FG begin producing theoretical works, grammars, and orthography books. In the early years of the society, members of the FG dedicated themselves to tangible *Spracharbeit* ('language work') (Hundt 2000: 108), which mostly took the form of translations from Italian and French (Dünnhaupt 1978: 521ff.). Prince Ludwig was himself a fairly active translator. In 1619 he translated two of Giovan Battista Gelli's works, *I Capricci del Bottai* and *La Circe*; after the Thirty Years' War followed more translations from French and Italian, of both prose and poetry works. Moreover, he actively encouraged and supported family members and members of the FG in the translation of Italian and French literature. Under his guidance, a group of eight of his younger relatives translated the Italian *Novellino*, probably around 1624 (Assenzi 2020c). In the earliest years of the FG, Tobias Hübner, Wilhelm von Kalcheim and Diederich von dem Werder were prolific translators from French and Italian.<sup>4</sup>

Not only did Prince Ludwig encourage translation; all member of the FG had to send him their works before publication (Dünnhaupt 1988: 181). He then proceeded to revise them himself and send them to other members of the FG for discussing and reviewing (Hundt 2000: 111–113), as attested in the close epistolary exchange between members of the FG (Conermann 1992–2019). On the practical side, translating was seen as a tool for improving the stylistic qualities of the German vernacular, for which viable linguistic models were still lacking. Prince Ludwig and some of his closest collaborators in the FG, for example the grammarian Christian Gueintz, repeatedly quoted the language of Luther and of the Saxon Chancery as linguistic authorities (Conermann 2008: 25, Moulin 2008: XVII). Both models were mentioned primarily for programmatic reasons, however, that is in order to legitimise Prince Ludwig's belief that the East Central German variety should become the basis for the German literary and scientific language (Conermann 2013a: 30). In fact, neither Luther nor the language of the Saxon Chancery were feasible models for the literary language.

In many ways, and particularly in its spelling, Luther's language was already outdated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Christian Gueintz, who in his *Deutsche Rechtschreibung* (1645) ('German Orthography') mentions Luther as a linguistic authority, often uses quotes from Luther's Bible to exemplify German orthography. These however all come from 17<sup>th</sup> century editions of Luther's Bible and have a significantly updated spelling (Moulin 2008: XXII). Chancery language was no less problematic, particularly because of its highly formulaic, syntactically overcomplex style, which was difficult to read and was not flexible enough for use in literary texts (Ball 2008: 406).

Prince Ludwig was convinced that translating works of literature from other vernaculars such as Italian and French – in which a more conversational style had already been achieved (see note 9) – could help modernise the literary quality of the German vernacular style, while also expanding the boundaries of German culture by importing and disseminating new literary genres and scientific contents in the German-speaking area (Ball 2008: 398–399). At the same time, it was a common view amongst FG translators such as Prince Ludwig, Diederich von dem Werder or Philipp Harsdörffer, that a

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4 For a list of all translations by members of the FG, see Lange (2002: 98).

good translation which matched the stylistic level of the original text could legitimise the arguments of those who wanted to affirm German as a literary language (Dünnhaupt 1978: 521, Hess 1992).

Moreover, the translation of texts containing arguments that sustained the legitimacy of the vernacular as a cultural language contributed to advance the theoretical discussion on the state of the German vernacular. Gelli's *Capricci del Bottai* were such a text.

### **3 A CASE STUDY: PRINCE LUDWIG'S TRANSLATION OF GELLI'S *CAPRICCI DEL BOTTAIO***

#### **3.1 Gelli and the *Capricci del bottaio* (1546)**

Giovan Battista Gelli (1498–1563) was a self-educated man of the Florentine middle-class who pursued his interest in philology whilst never abandoning his profession as a shoemaker (De Gaetano 1967: 132). He was an influential member of the *Accademia degli Umidi*, established in Florence in 1540 by a group of twelve men of letters. One year later, the academy was renamed *Accademia Fiorentina*, as Cosimo I de' Medici took it under its wing and made it an official institution of the Republic of Florence (Marazzini 2002: 278).

Gelli's *Capricci del Bottai*, first published in Florence in 1546, comprises ten dialogues between the Florentine cooper Giusto and his Soul. In the dialogues, the Soul tries to educate Giusto on different philosophical and philological matters. Coming himself from the middle-class, Gelli was animated by a "spirit of defiance of both Humanistic authority and of the over-subtleties of scholasticism" (De Gaetano 1967: 132). In his works, he didn't address the learned Humanists of his time. Instead, he wrote primarily for a middle-class audience. For this reason, even when dealing with the finest philosophical arguments, Gelli's writing – in the *Capricci* and elsewhere – remains "smooth and [...] conversational" (De Gaetano 1967: 141), often humorous, and comprehensible to the broader public (Cassiani 2006: 25).

Thanks to their lively style, the *Capricci* were an immediate success and were reprinted five times between 1546 and 1551 in both Florence and Venice. The *Capricci* even enjoyed a certain European success. Already before Prince Ludwig's translation into German in 1619, a French translation (*Les discours fantastiques de Justin tonnelier* by Claude de Kerquifen) appeared in 1566; an English version by William Bake, *The fearfull fancies of the Florentine cooper*, followed in 1568.

In the fourth and fifth dialogues, Gelli uses Giusto's Soul to voice his own arguments in favour of the vernacular (De Gaetano 1967: 141, Puliafito 2011). Gelli, and the *Accademia Fiorentina* in general, maintained that the Italian literary language should be based on the contemporary cultivated Florentine vernacular, that is the language spoken at the Medici Court (Marazzini 2002: 278). Gelli thus rejected the Classicist position of Pietro Bembo, who wanted to restrict the canon of exemplary authors to Petrarca and Boccaccio (Marazzini 2002: 264), as well as the 'courtly language' proposal of Baldassarre Castiglione, who claimed that the koine of different cultivated dialects that had evolved spontaneously at the court of Rome should be considered as the Italian

language (Marazzini 2002: 266). Gelli not only sustained the primacy of contemporary Florentine as a candidate to become the basis for the Italian literary and scientific language, but he also contradicted many of the criticisms promoted by Humanists who considered the Italian vernacular a degradation of Latin – an imperfect language not suitable for literature and science (De Gaetano 1967: 141, Puliafito 2011).

Other than the defence of the Florentine vernacular, Gelli's arguments legitimising the use of the vernacular as a cultural language were not specifically tailored for the Italian debate. They were in fact universal and could easily be applied to other vernaculars as well. Through an analysis of such arguments, and of Prince Ludwig's commentaries to them, it is possible to precisely reconstruct how ideas about the vernacular entered the German discussion through direct contact with Italian works and ideas.

### 3.2 Prince Ludwig's commentaries

In 1619, Prince Ludwig published Gelli's *Capricci del Bottai* in the original language alongside the German translation *Anmütige Gespräch* in his own printing house in Köthen.<sup>5</sup> Ludwig did not just translate Gelli's text; he also commented on it extensively in the appendix to the translation. In his commentaries, Prince Ludwig expands on some of the points Gelli makes in favour of the vernacular, applying Gelli's reasonings to the German context (Conermann 1992: \*28). Many of the arguments Prince Ludwig takes up again in the appendix became central points in the theoretical reflection and in the *Spracharbeit* of the FG.

In more than one passage from the *Capricci del Bottai*, Giusto's Soul states that all languages are equally adequate for expressing any kind of content. Latin is thus not superior to the vernacular:

A: O perche no: non è la lingua vulgare cosi ben atta a manifestare i concetti suoi come la latina, e l'altre che son tenute belle e buone? (*Capricci* 1619: 52)

[S: Why not, then? Isn't the vernacular just as capable of expressing its concepts as Latin and the other languages that are considered to be good and beautiful?]

The Soul proceeds to demonstrate this with concrete examples. It mentions the philosopher Francesco de' Vieri, who held public lectures on Aristotelian philosophy and switched from Latin to the vernacular as soon as he noticed a man in the audience who did not understand Latin. Because de' Vieri could express even the most complex philosophical concepts in the vernacular, it follows that the vernacular is just as good as Latin for philosophy (*Capricci* 1619: 52). In the appendix, Ludwig emphasises that no language is per se unfit for *die Künste* ('the Arts'):

Ob zwar eine Sprach für der andern mehr zu den Künsten geschickt/jedoch ist keine für sich selbst untüchtig/das man darinnen die Künste nicht sollte lehren können. (*Gespräch* 1619: 226)

5 For this reason, in this paper I will not quote from the first Florentine version of the *Capricci*. Instead, I will use the Köthen version, as this is most likely the source text Prince Ludwig used for his translation.

[Even though a language may be more suitable for the Arts than others, no language is per se so inadequate that one should not be able to teach the Arts in it.]

He then applies de' Vieri's example to the German context, affirming that if it is possible to talk about philosophy in one vernacular, it should be possible to do so in any vernacular – that is, explicitly, also in German:

Weil *Francisco Verin*. in welscher Sprach das 12. Buch *Arist.* der Wesenkündigung außgeleget: Jst hierauß abzunehmen/daß es auch nicht unmöglich/solches in teutscher Sprach ins werck zusetzen [...] (*Gespräch* 1619: 226)

[Since *Francesco de' Vieri* has expounded the 12<sup>th</sup> book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the Italian vernacular, it follows that it is not impossible to do this in German as well [...]]

Similar considerations resonate in later writings of the FG – for example, in the *Kurtzer Bericht* (1622), the first programmatic writing of the FG.<sup>6</sup> Whereas Prince Ludwig confines himself in his commentaries to comparing the status of the vernacular in Italy and Germany without any claim to a presumed superiority of the German language (Conermann 1992: \*28), in the *Kurtzer Bericht* we do find expressions of linguistic patriotism: not only can German express any kind of content; it is even better at it than any other language:

[...] weil unsere weitgeehrte hochdeutsche Muttersprache/so wol an alter/schönen und zierlichen Reden/als auch an überfluß eigentlicher und wolbedeutlicher Wort so jede sachen besser als die frembden recht zu verstehen geben können/einen nicht geringen vorzug hat [...] (*Kurtzer Bericht* 1628: Aii')

[For our widely honoured High German mother-tongue has no small advantage because of its ancientness, its beautiful and graceful expressions and its abundance of appropriate and poignant words which can express anything better and more fittingly than any foreign language can [...]]

The legitimation of the German vernacular as a cultural language was evidently a long process. In 1641, Christian Gueintz wrote – under Prince Ludwig's strict supervision – the *Deutscher Sprachlehre Entwurf*, the first official grammar of the FG. More than 20 years after the *Anmutige Gespräch*, Gueintz still feels the need to repeat Gelli's old argument: there is nothing that cannot be adequately expressed in German:

Die Völligkeit der Deutschen sprache ist so gros/daß auch fast nichts kan gefunden werden/welches man in dieser sprache nicht nenne könnte (*Sprachlehre* 1641: 11)

[The fullness of the German language is so big that it's almost impossible to find anything which cannot be named in this language]

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6 The *Kurtzer Bericht* is quoted here from a later, but essentially identical, 1628 edition.

Giusto later repeats the preconception that the vernacular cannot become a scientific language because its scientific terminology is less rich than Latin's. The Soul replies that this is actually a nonissue, as it is always possible to create new terms – especially technical terms – in any living language (*Capricci* 1619: 66). The argument must have resonated with Prince Ludwig, who wrote a commentary on this passage just to further emphasise the concept. Moreover, as will be shown in Section 3.3, he himself created new words in his translation to render some of the technical terms he found in the *Capricci del Bottai*o:

Das vergönnet sey/newe Wörter und zwar Kunstwörter (*technica*) zuerfinden/  
bejahet die Seele recht [...] (*Gespräch* 1619: 231)  
[The Soul rightly affirms that it is legitimate to create new words, and in particular technical terms [...]]

In order to convince Giusto that Latin is not inherently superior to the vernacular, the Soul explains that Latin vocabulary is only rich because it was expanded by its authors. The Soul further affirms that no language is perfect in its beginnings, but it can become so through the dedication and work of its authors. Once again, the Soul demonstrates this with an example: even Cicero and Boethius created a new term whenever they lacked a Latin expression for a Greek philosophical concept (*Capricci* 1619: 68). Although Ludwig does not comment on this passage, these ideas became part of the FG's arsenal of pro-vernacular arguments and resurfaced years later in Gueintz's *Sprachlehre*. There, Gueintz makes the same argument as Gelli: just as Latin was initially *heslich und ungerueumet* ('ugly and disorderly') and was then made better, German can also be improved:

Und gleich wie erstlich [...] die Lateinische heslich und ungerueumet gewesen  
[...] Also verhelt sich es auch mit der Deutschen/weil ihre hoheit und richtigkeit  
ist langer verborgen gelegen [...] (*Sprachlehre* 1641: V<sup>v</sup>– VI<sup>r</sup>)  
[And just as Latin was ugly and disorderly in its beginnings, this also applies to  
German because its greatness and rightness has long remained hidden [...]]

Just like Gelli, Gueintz mentions that even Cicero introduced new terminology in Latin, as a legitimising argument for doing the same in German:

Der Entwurf der Kunstwörter/wie von andern angefangen/ist ferner daß sie  
Deutsch sein können versucht. Ein versuch aber in sothanen dingen ist nicht zu  
tadeln [...] Und hat Cicero in seiner sprache die Kunstwörter verlateinert (das  
ich so reden mag/oder in das Lateinische übersetzt) was ist dan strafwürdiger/  
dergleichen fleis in gleicher sache anwenden? (*Sprachlehre* 1641: IV<sup>v</sup>)  
[An attempt was made to create technical terms – as others did before – so that  
we can have them in German. But an attempt in such things is not to be blamed.  
Didn't Cicero also latinise (so to speak, or translate into Latin) technical terms?  
What is reproachable in applying the same zeal in the same matter?]

In the fifth dialogue, Giusto objects that, as all scientific books are written in Latin, knowledge of Latin is still indispensable in order to learn the sciences. In this passage, the Soul once again points out that this has nothing to do with some presumed superior qualities of Latin, and seizes the opportunity to criticise the Tuscan people for not having translated enough scientific works into their mother tongue:

G. E però non si può egli essere dotto senza intender la lingua Latina, dove elle son tutte, che vuoi tu imparare nella nostra?

A. Mercé de' Romani che ve le tradussono, se la lingua Latina ne è ricca; e colpa de Toscani, che non hanno mai fatto conto della loro, se ella ne è povera. (*Capricci* 1619: 66)

[G. But still it is impossible to become a person of learning without understanding Latin, in which all [sciences] are written. What do you want to learn in our own [language]?

S. If Latin has plenty [of scientific texts], it's only thanks to the Romans who translated them into Latin. And it's the fault of the people of Tuscany if there are none in their language, because they never took care of their vernacular.]

The Soul's remark can also be understood as indirect praise of the activities of the *Accademia Fiorentina*, whose members translated Latin and Greek classics to make them accessible to “intellectually ambitious Florentines” (Sherberg 2003: 28).<sup>7</sup>

In the appendix to his translation, Ludwig expresses a similar complaint: German people have long been ‘unthankful’ towards their own native language, as hardly anyone has ever tried to write or translate philosophical and scientific texts in German. It is for precisely this reason that many people think German is unsuitable for science and literature:

Auß diesen ist auch abzunehmen/woher man gemeinlich dafür helt/als sey die teutsche Sprache nicht zu den wissenschaftten und andern gemüthsfertigkeiten tüchtig/denn biß anhero fast niemands gewesen/welcher einig stuck der *Philosophi* recht teutsch zu geben sich unterstanden hette/welches wol eine verachtung/ ja ein undanck gegen unsere Muttersprache mag genennet werden. Denn solte man am rechten orth es angreifen/würde sichs befinden/daß sie es vielen andern gleich/wo nicht zuvor thun würde. (*Gespräch* 1619: 230)

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7 At the same time, the words of Giusto's Soul and the overall spirit of Gelli's work, for whom a more democratic access to the sciences was crucial, fit perfectly as arguments in favour of the reform of the Köthen and Weimar school system Ludwig was working on between 1618 and 1624 (Herz 2009: 161). The reform, which was conceived by the educational reformer Wolfgang Ratke, involved teaching the pupils in their own native language instead of in Latin (Ising 1959: 10–18; Dünnhaupt 1988). For this purpose, Ludwig founded his own printing house in the Köthen castle, in which parallel editions of scientific, philosophical, theological and literary texts in the Latin or Greek original and in German translation were published. Following Ratke's ideas, the pupils had to read the texts firstly in their own native language in order to understand their content properly, and only afterwards in the classical languages (Dünnhaupt 1988: 177–178). Although the educational reform was not a project of the FG but rather a private enterprise of the regents of Köthen and Weimar, the contact points with the ideas behind the *Spracharbeit* of the FG cannot be denied (Herz 2009: 161).



[From this passage it can be gathered why it is commonly thought that the German language is not well suited for scientific and intellectual purposes, for until now hardly anyone has tried to write pieces of philosophy in proper German, which may well be called contempt, or even ingratitude towards our own mother-tongue. For if one were only to attempt this the right way, it would become clear that German can do that just as good as other languages, if not even better.]

The solution for Ludwig is clear. German people should begin to practice the arts in their own mother tongue (*cf. Capricci* 1619: 227). This became the aim of the *Spracharbeit* of the FG: to cultivate the German language, also through translations, in order to legitimise its use for science, philosophy, and literature.

Giusto's Soul then clarifies that the first aim of a translation is to faithfully express the content of the source text. However, in order to be an effective form of language cultivation, translations should also result in a text that is pleasant to read in the target language. The fact that many in the past neglected this aspect has given translations a bad reputation (*Capricci* 1619: 73–74). Ludwig underlines this point in his commentaries:

In verdolmetschung der wissenschaftten ist vor allen dingen (*primario*) auff den verstandt zusehen [...] Hernach aber auch auff der Rede zierde und wolstand.  
(*Gespräch* 1619: 235)

[When translating the sciences, attention must be paid first and foremost to the meaning, but then also to the ornament and quality of the language.]

It does not then seem a coincidence that in the translations of the FG, the faithful transposition of the meaning of the source text was always paired with the striving for a translation that respected the spirit of the *puritas sermonis*. This concept, which was adopted by the German metalinguistic reflection of the 17<sup>th</sup> century from classical Latin rhetoric (Conermann 2013b), postulated that the criteria for good language use went above and beyond its grammatical and orthographical correctness. A good, 'pure' writing style was one which also obeyed the pragmatic and idiomatic rules of the German language and which avoided unnecessary foreign words as well as obsolete and regional expressions (Conermann 2013a: 17, Assenzi 2020a: 117–120, Assenzi 2020b: 231–234).

Through his translation of the *Capricci*, Ludwig introduced new arguments in favour of the vernacular to German intellectuals and gave practical indications about how to improve the German language. At the same time, with his *Anmutige Gespräch*, he provided a concrete example of what a language-cultivating translation had to look like.

### 3.3 Linguistic features of Prince Ludwig's translation

As stated in Section 2, improving the stylistic qualities of the German vernacular implied finding an alternative model to the syntactically overcomplicated chancery style. In the FG, this was pursued by choosing texts for translation that were written in a lively and conversational style rather than by forcibly simplifying the syntax of the source texts. Since no other translation by members of the FG has been studied in detail yet, this assumption must remain provisional. Still, this was certainly the case with the collective translation of the *Novellino* (s. Assenzi 2020c: 35–37) and with Ludwig's translation of Gelli's *Capricci*.

Prince Ludwig makes almost no changes to the syntactic structure of his source text. When he does, he aims at improving readability through simplification. For example, he sometimes replaces subordinate clauses with nominal phrases – as in (1), where the adverbial dependent clause (iv) in (1).a is rendered as a nominal phrase in (1).b:

- (1)
- a. [che [chi è invidioso]<sub>ii</sub> non merita altro,]<sub>i</sub> [che essere scacciato, e fuggito da ogni uno,]<sub>iii</sub> [come si farebbe una fiera]<sub>iv</sub> (*Capricci* 1619: 60–61)<sup>8</sup>  
 [that [he who is envious]<sub>ii</sub> doesn't deserve anything else]<sub>i</sub> [but being driven out and avoided by everybody]<sub>iii</sub> [like one would do with a wild beast]<sub>iv</sub>
- b. [daß [wer mißgünstig ist]/<sub>ii</sub> der verdienet anders nichts/]<sub>i</sub> [als daß er von jederman möge außgejaget/und [als ein wildes Thier]<sub>iv</sub> geflohen werden.]<sub>iii</sub> (*Gespräch* 1619: 79)  
 [that [he who is envious]<sub>ii</sub> doesn't deserve anything else]<sub>i</sub> [but that he is driven out and avoided [like a wild beast]<sub>iv</sub> by everybody]<sub>iii</sub>

Another way Ludwig reduces hypotaxis can be seen in (2); (2).a is a complex sentence containing a single main clause (i), four subordinate finite clauses (ii–v), and two subordinate gerund clauses ( $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ). Ludwig decreases the hypotactic complexity of the sentence by translating the gerund ( $\alpha$ ) as well as the relative clause (iii) as main clauses:

- (2)
- a. [non vedemmo noi pur ieri quel santissimo e dottissimo vecchio messer Francesco Verino Filosofo di maniera eccellentissimo]<sub>i</sub>, [che nessuno altro gli pose i piedi innanzi nell'età sua;]<sub>ii</sub> [che [leggendo filosofia,] <sub>$\alpha$</sub>  e [veggendo tal volta venire à udirlo il Capitano Pepe, [il quale non intendeva la lingua latina,]<sub>iv</sub>] <sub>$\beta$</sub>  subito cominciava à leggere in volgare,]<sub>iii</sub> [perche e' potesse intender anch'egli;]<sub>v</sub> (*Capricci* 1619: 52)  
 [Didn't we see just yesterday that most saintly and learned Sir Francesco Verino, such an excellent philosopher]<sub>i</sub> [that nobody in his time surpassed him]<sub>ii</sub> [who [lecturing about philosophy] <sub>$\alpha$</sub>  and [seeing at times Captain Pepe [who didn't understand Latin]<sub>iv</sub> come to hear him,] <sub>$\beta$</sub>  immediately began reading in the vernacular,]<sub>iii</sub> [so that he could also understand him]<sub>v</sub>

8 In Gelli's text, finite clauses are enclosed in square brackets and numerated progressively with Roman numerals. Infinite clauses containing a gerund are numerated using Greek letters. The same references are used in the translation to visualise how the single clauses were translated.

- b. [sahen wir nicht gestern den uberauß alten gelehrten/und in der Weißheit wol erfahren Mann/Francischo Verino,]<sub>i</sub> [deme es auch niemand bey seiner zeit zuvor gethan /]<sub>ii</sub> [dieser lase die *Philosophi* oder Vernunftlehr]<sub>α</sub>/und [wann zu zeiten der Hauptman Pepe, [welcher doch kein latein verstund/]<sub>iv</sub> ihn zu hören herkam/]<sub>β</sub> [hub er bald in der Muttersprach an zu lesen/]<sub>iii</sub> [damit jener/als ein Zuhörer/es auch verstehen möchte.]<sub>v</sub> (*Gespräch* 1619: 68)  
 [Didn't we see just yesterday the most old, learned and well experienced in his wisdom Sir Francesco Verino]<sub>i</sub> [whom nobody surpassed in his time]<sub>ii</sub> [He was lecturing about philosophy]<sub>α</sub> and [when Captain Pepe [who didn't understand Latin]<sub>iv</sub>, came to hear him from time to time]<sub>β</sub> he immediately began reading in the vernacular,]<sub>iii</sub> [so that even Pepe could understand him as a listener]<sub>v</sub>

In (2) we can see other recurring characteristics of Ludwig's translation. Ludwig never tries to reproduce syntactic elements which are common in Italian but not in German. Italian gerunds could potentially be translated into German as phrases with a non-inflected present participle as their head. However, since German non-finite participial clauses are not as widespread as gerunds in Italian (*cf.* Assenzi 2021: 141), Ludwig usually translates gerunds as main clauses ( $\alpha$ ) or subordinate adverbial clauses ( $\beta$ ).

For similar reasons, Ludwig avoids reproducing the numerous accusative infinitive (AcI) constructions of the Italian text. The gerund ( $\beta$ ) in (2).a contains an AcI. By omitting the verb *vegghendo* ('seeing'), Ludwig avoids the AcI in his translation. Another means Ludwig resorts to for bypassing an AcI can be seen in (3), where the infinitive is rendered as a finite object clause:

(3)

- a. Consciossiacosa che egli si è veduto infinite volte per ogni huomo della corruzione d'una cosa, nascerne una piu bella, ed una miglior di quella (Capricci 1619: 57)  
 ['Because everybody has seen countless times a finer and better thing grow from the corruption of an old thing']
- b. dann man hat unzehlich vielmal von jederman gesehen/daß auß verderbung eines dinges/ein schöneres und bessers/als das vorige/erwachsen (Gespräch 1619: 75)  
 ['Because everybody has seen countless times that from the corruption of an old thing a finer and better one has grown']

In contrast to chancery writers and to some 17<sup>th</sup> century authors, for example Martin Opitz, Ludwig thus avoids elements such as AcI and participial phrases that were untypical in German and were also commonly associated with a heavily Latin-influenced style (Gardt 1994: 407).

Ludwig further ensures his text bears no trace of foreign syntactic influences by paraphrasing many nominalised verbs that would result in an unnatural German construction if rendered as the corresponding German nominalised verb: *il dire* in (4).a

could be translated as *das Sagen*. However, this choice would lead to an atypical sentence structure in German. In similar cases, Ludwig translates the nominalised verb as a full subordinate clause, as in (4).b:

- (4)
- a. A. Vo' dire, ch'e' comincia oggi a non servire piu il dire, egli è stato a studio, o e' da opera alle lettere; (Capricci 1619: 55)  
 ['S. I mean that today saying that someone went to a prestigious school or that he has dedicated himself to literature is starting to become useless']
  - b. S. Ich wil dieses sagen/daß es heutiges Tages nicht viel hilft/wenn man schon fürigibet/er ist auff einer hohen Schulen gewesen/oder er studieret fleissig (Gespräch 1619: 72)  
 ['S. I mean that today it doesn't help much if someone says he went to a famous school or has been studying diligently']

As Giusto's Soul states in the *Capricci*, the first task of every good translator is that of conveying the meaning of the source text faithfully. This was a common opinion among German authors and translators starting from the end of the 16th century and throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Gardt 1994: 412–414). It was, however, typical of the translation debate of the FG to underline the importance of creating a text that is stylistically acceptable in the target language. As seen in Section 3.3 writing idiomatically in the target language was just as important to Prince Ludwig and other members of the FG as respecting grammatical correctness. We can see the practical implications of this idea by observing how Ludwig deals with idiomatic expressions in the Italian text.

When he finds an idiomatic expression, Ludwig looks for a corresponding German expression that faithfully conveys the meaning of the original text and that is as idiomatic as possible. In (5).a Giusto uses the idiom *volere la baja* ('to make fun of somebody'). Ludwig translates this as *vexieren*, a word which is obsolete in contemporary German but was very common in this sense in the 17th century (DWB, s.v. *vexieren*).

- (5)
- a. G. Ah si? tu vuoi la baja (Capricci 1619: 53)
  - b. I: Ja eben so/du wilt mich vexieren (Gespräch 1619: 69)  
 ['A. Right, you are making fun of me']

Sometimes Ludwig even uses a German idiomatic expression when there is none in the source text: in (6).b Ludwig adds the idiom *jemandem nicht das Wasser reichen können* ('not hold a candle to someone'), since it fits the context perfectly:

- (6)
- a. ma accorgendosi dipoi [...] di non poter appressarsi à Dante, in modo alcuno [...] (Capricci 1619: 60)  
 ['but then, realising that he couldn't come anywhere near Dante...']
  - b. aber nach deme er [...] inne worden/daß er dem Dante ganz nicht das Wasser/wie man saget/reichen können [...] (Gespräch 1619: 78)  
 ['but after he realised that he couldn't quite hold a candle to Dante, as one says...']

Lastly, Ludwig follows Gelli’s hint about the legitimacy of creating new technical terms and translates philosophical and scientific vocabulary in order to enrich the German language of new words. However, as the corresponding Latin loanwords were predominant in German, Ludwig must pair the newly translated word to its Latin counterpart in order for the readers to understand him (*cf.* Conermann 1992: \*23). One example for this process can be found in (2).b, in which Ludwig translates *filosofia* as “*Philosophi* oder Vernunftlehr”, as well as in (7):

- (7)
- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| matematica ( <i>Capricci</i> 1619: 51)<br>[‘mathematics’]             | → | Maßkündigung ( <i>Gespräch</i> 1619:67)<br>verstehe hiedurch <i>Mathematicam</i> (ivi: 226)<br>[‘measurement-science<br>understand hereby <i>Mathematicam</i> ’] |
| divina filosofia ( <i>Capricci</i> 1619: 52)<br>[‘divine philosophy’] | → | göttliche <i>Philosophi</i> oder<br>Wesenkündigung ( <i>Gespräch</i> 1619: 68)<br>[‘divine philosophy or being-science’]   |
| disciplina ( <i>Capricci</i> 1619: 54)<br>[‘discipline’]              | → | Disciplin/oder wolgefaste<br>Geschickligkeit ( <i>Gespräch</i> 1619:70)<br>[discipline, or well-conceived skill’]  |

None of the technical terms Ludwig coined were adopted by others in the long term – with the exception of *Vernunftlehre*, which was still used as a (rare) synonym for *Philosophie* in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is most likely that the brief popularity of *Vernunftlehre* was due to its use by the philosopher Christian Thomasius rather than to its appearance in Ludwig’s translation of the *Capricci*, as Thomasius’ works were more broadly received than Ludwig’s.<sup>9</sup>

Although avoiding the use of foreign words was a component of the concept of *puritas* and also a programmatic point of the FG (Conermann 2013a: 17), Prince Ludwig himself and the members of the FG near him never expressed strictly purist positions (Conermann 2013b). On the contrary, they allowed for the possibility of using technical terms in the original language and were more in general in favour of continuing to use well established loanwords (Assenzi 2020b: 231–234). After 1640, Prince Ludwig openly criticised Philip von Zesen for what he thought were extreme attempts at translating common loanwords into German (Hundt 2000: 111, Conermann 2013b). It seems therefore that Ludwig did experiment with the Germanisation of technical

<sup>9</sup> Thomasius used the term in his *Einleitung zu der Vernunft-Lehre* (Halle, 1691) and *Ausübung der Vernunft-Lehre* (Halle, 1691). Thomasius played a key role in the process that led to the affirmation of German as a teaching language in German universities (von Polenz 2013: 59–60) and was a central figure in German early Enlightenment philosophy, whose works “would continue to exercise an important influence on German philosophy throughout the first half of the eighteenth century” (Dyck & Sassen 2021). On the other hand, the extent to which Ludwig’s translations were received is still unclear but must have been modest in comparison to that of Thomasius’ writings. For example, the *Einleitung zu der Vernunft-Lehre* (Halle, 1691) received two new editions by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1694, 1699), whereas Ludwig’s translation of the *Capricci* was printed just the one time in Köthen in 1619.

terms in his translation of the *Capricci*, but it is improbable that he carried on with this experimentation in his later translation. Of course, only an analysis of his other works could confirm this assumption.

### 3.4 The significance of Prince Ludwig's translation of the *Capricci*

The reception of the 'language work' of the FG suffered long from the disqualification of the culture of the Baroque era that was common in the Enlightenment. Well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 17<sup>th</sup> century German language academies were commonly trivialised as unsuccessful attempts at imposing foreign language purism. While linguistic purism was surely a component of the language work of the FG, it was neither its focal point nor the sole interest pursued by members of the society (s. Note 2; Ball 2008; Herz 2009). Moreover, the purism of the FG is not to be equated with foreign language purism but is in fact identical with that much broader concept of *puritas* described in Section 3.2 (Conermann 2013b).

Because of this long-standing prejudice, the complexity of the linguistic discussion in the FG has long remained unrecognised. This has changed only in recent years with the edition of the letters and documents of the FG curated by Conermann (1992–2019) and by the research done on the FG by Conermann, Ball and Herz. Yet, much work is still to be done on the translations made by members of the FG, on their significance for the history of the cultural contact between Germany and Italy (or France), on their reception and the impact they had on the development of new literary genres and of a new literary writing style in the German-speaking area.

As was shown in Section 3.2, the *Capricci* had a clearly identifiable long-term influence on Prince Ludwig's thought and on programmatic writings of the FG. Moreover, a relatively large number of copies of both Ludwig's edition and translation of the *Capricci* is preserved or attested in several libraries and private archives, while only a few copies were found in Prince Ludwig's library at his death (Conermann 1992: \*13). This seems to point to the fact that Gelli's work and its translation did indeed achieve wide circulation and could have well influenced intellectuals inside and outside the circle of the FG.

What is certain is that the new, less complex and convoluted writing style Ludwig experimented with in his translation of the *Capricci* and which he also consistently used in his letters (Ball 2008: 406; Ball 2020) ended up establishing itself and replacing the earlier obscure 'baroque' writing style. What role Ludwig, his translations and the FG more in general played in this process still has to be investigated in detail. Only a more precise and more extensive analysis of the works of FG members and their reception will show in what measure the FG impacted the German translating and writing style and what role it played as a precursor of a change that was then ultimately brought about by the influence of French galant style in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

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10 Although the ideal of the *civil conversazione* ('civil conversation') and of the necessity of using a clear, pleasant, conversational style for courtly communication originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Italy with Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1513–1524) ('The Courtier'), Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo* (1558) and Stefano Guazzo's *Civil Conversazione* (1574), it was through the French adoption of this ideal that the galant, civil

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Prince Ludwig's translation of Gelli's *Capricci del Bottaio* perfectly exemplifies the cultural contact between the Italian and German vernacular debates. On the one hand, Prince Ludwig's translation introduced into the German discussion new arguments in favour of the vernacular which originated in the *Accademia Fiorentina*, and which became an integral part of the FG's ideas. Gelli's conception of the equal dignity of Latin and the vernacular(s), as well as his suggestions for language cultivation, resonated not only in the *Kurtzer Bericht*, the first programmatic writing of the FG from 1622, but also later in the first official grammar of the FG, Christian Gueintz's *Sprachlehre* (1641).

On the other hand, Ludwig's *Anmutige Gespräch* provides a tangible example of how a translation can effectively improve the stylistic qualities of the target language and help legitimise the vernacular as a cultural language. In his translation, Ludwig manages to reproduce Gelli's lively and conversational style while always respecting German syntax and idiomaticity. He thus provides an alternative model for literary language that distances itself from the syntactically complex, formulaic and pompous chancery style that was still exemplary at the time. On the long run, this newer, less complex style, for which Ludwig was a precursor, ended up establishing itself. Only a more extensive analysis of the translations of the FG, of their reception and impact will clarify what influence the FG had on the long-term evolution of German writing style.

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conversation style spread throughout Europe (Quondam 1993: X–XI).

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#### Abstract

#### TRANSLATION, THE VERNACULAR DEBATE, AND THE EVOLUTION OF LITERARY WRITING STYLE BETWEEN ITALY AND GERMANY: PRINCE LUDWIG VON ANHALT-KÖTHEN AND HIS TRANSLATION OF GIOVAN BATTISTA GELLI’S *CAPRICCI DEL BOTTAIO*

The aim of the present paper is to shed light on the cultural contact between the Italian and German vernacular debates in the 17th century, and to show how this cultural contact introduced new legitimising arguments in favour of the vernacular in the German-speaking context while also providing a renovating impulse to German literary style. The paper investigates one exemplary case of such cultural contact: Prince Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen’s *Anmutige Gespräch* (1619), the translation of Giovan Battista Gelli’s dialogue *Capricci del Bottai* (1546). Gelli was an influential member of the *Accademia Fiorentina*, a 16th century Florentine language academy. In his *Capricci*, Gelli debates the legitimacy of the Florentine vernacular as a scientific and literary language. Through an analysis of Prince Ludwig’s commentaries to his translation of the *Capricci*, the paper shows how Prince Ludwig applied Gelli’s arguments in favour of the vernacular to the German context, and how these arguments resonated even years later in the writings of the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, a German language academy led by Prince Ludwig from 1617 to 1650. As translation was seen as a form of ‘language work’ both by the *Accademia Fiorentina* and by the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, the most salient linguistic features of Ludwig’s translation is analysed in the paper in order to show how the theoretical discussion on translation was implemented in the translation process. This investigation shows how translating from Italian promoted a more conversational literary style that distanced itself from the pompous, formulaic chancery language that was still seen as exemplary of good language use in 17th century Germany.

**Keywords:** translation, vernacular debate, Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft, Accademia Fiorentina

## Povzetek

### PREVAJANJE, RAZPRAVLJANJE O VERNAKULARNIH JEZIKIH IN SLOGOVNI RAZVOJ LITERARNEGA JEZIKA MED ITALIJO IN NEMČIJO: PRINC LUDVIK ANHALT-KÖTHENSKI IN NJEGOV PREVOD BESEDILA *CAPRICCI DEL BOTTAIO* GIOVAN BATTISTA GELLIJA

Članek skuša osvetliti kulturne stike med italijanskim in nemškim svetom v zvezi z razpravami o vernakularnih jezikih v 17. stoletju in obenem pokazati, kako so ti stiki prispevali nove argumente v prid vernakularnemu jeziku v nemško govorečem kontekstu ter dali nemškemu literarnemu slogu prenovitveni vzgib. Kot nazoren primer tovrstnega kulturnega stika je obravnavano delo *Anmutige Gespräch* (1619) princa Ludvika Anhalt-Köthenskega, ki je prevod dialoga *Capricci del Bottai* (1546) Giovan Battista Gellija (1546). Gelli je bil vpliven član *Accademie Fiorentine*, ustanove, ki se je v 16. stoletju posvečala vprašanju jezika. V omenjenem dialogu Gelli razpravlja o upravičenosti rabe florentinskega vernakularnega jezika kot jezika znanosti in književnosti. Na osnovi analize komentarjev princa Ludvika k njegovemu lastnemu prevodu Gellijevega dela pokažemo, kako je princ Ludvik Gellijeve argumente v nemški situaciji uporabil v prid vernakularnemu jeziku in kako je bilo te argumente čutiti še leta pozneje v spisih ustanove *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, nemške jezikovne akademije, ki jo je od 1617 do 1650 vodil princ Ludvik. Upošteva, da sta tako *Accademia Fiorentina* kot *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* prevajanje imeli za "jezikovno dejavnost", prispevek proučuje najvažnejše jezikovne značilnosti Ludvikovega prevoda, da bi videli, kako je bilo teoretsko razpravljanje o prevajanju upoštevano pri samem prevodnem procesu. Iz raziskave izhaja, da je prevajanje iz italijanščine spodbujalo bolj pogovorni literarni slog, ki je bil drugačen od bombastičnega, formulaičnega pisarniškega jezika, kakršen je v Nemčiji 17. stoletja še vedno veljal za zgled dobre jezikovne rabe.

**Ključne besede:** prevajanje, razpravljanje o vernakularnem jeziku, *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft*, *Accademia Fiorentina*