



Who the Devil Taught Thee So Much Italian?'

Jason Lawrence

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This book offers a comprehensive account of the methods and practice of learning modern languages, particularly Italian, in late sixteenth - and early seventeenth - century England. It is the first study to suggest that there is a fundamental connection between these language-learning habits and the techniques for both reading and imitating Italian materials employed by a range of poets and dramatists, such as Daniel, Drummond, Marston and Shakespeare, in the same period.

The widespread use of bilingual parallel-text instruction manuals from the 1570s onwards, most notably those of the Italian teacher John Florio, highlights the importance of translation in the language-learning process. More advanced students attempt translation exercises from Italian poetry to increase their linguistic fluency, but even beginners are encouraged to use the translations in these manuals as a means of careful parallel reading. This study emphasises the impact of both aspects of language-learning translation on contemporary habits of literary imitation, in its detailed analyses of Daniel's sonnet sequence *Delia* and his pastoral tragicomedies, and Shakespeare's use of Italian materials in *Measure for Measure* and *Othello*.

By focusing on Shakespeare as a typical language learner of the period (one who is certainly familiar with Florio's two manuals), the book argues that the playwright develops a competent reading knowledge of Italian in the 1590s and early 1600s.

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