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RIVERRUN

Collana di letteratura e cultura inglese

La collana intende promuovere lo studio della letteratura e della cultura inglese, rivolgendo un'attenzione particolare alle letterature e alle culture anglofone nella loro dimensione innovativa, intese cioè come produzione di testi che parlano di altri mondi, di altre sensibilità artistiche, di altre modalità espressive e conoscitive. Da questo punto di vista, rimane la centralità della lingua e della letteratura inglese *tout court* che si pongono quali termini imprescindibili di un confronto con la tradizione. Mentre la lingua inglese allarga sempre più lo spazio della sua funzionalità nella comunicazione e impone la sua egemonia linguistico-culturale, nel panorama globalizzato del terzo millennio nulla è immobile in un processo in cui non è sempre facile distinguere chi influenza da chi è influenzato – anche in termini culturologici. Di qui il ruolo assunto dal concetto di attraversamento che implica anche fluidità e permeabilità degli spazi culturali. Un *riverrun* che si sostituisce alla dialettica centro/periferia o, se si vuole, alla coppia oppositiva continuità/discontinuità, configurando in tal modo un territorio nuovo per gli studi di anglistica, anche sul piano della ricerca comparativa e interculturale.

Criteri di valutazione e metodo di referaggio. I criteri di valutazione delle proposte adottati dalla collana si basano sulla revisione anonima di pari (*blind peer review*) secondo una linea editoriale che s'impegna ad affidare il lavoro di referaggio, di volta in volta, a due studiosi indipendenti – italiani e non – che, per il ruolo svolto nella comunità scientifica ed accademica internazionale, sono in grado di garantire la qualità delle pubblicazioni.

Alessandra Rizzo

**Arnold Bennett,
David Herbert Lawrence,
Giovanni Verga**

Transitional realism, translation and dialect



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for my beloved grandparents Anna and Tonio

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Premise

This survey attempts to find a link between the concepts of *translation*, *transition* and *realism*, which are also correlated with the terms *dialect*, *city* and *travel*: nineteenth-century realist literature is produced in a transitional phase, where the city embodies the idea itself of transition, travel involves permanent and unstable shifts, and dialect is linguistically the manifestation of generational changes but also of cultural movement. This point of linkage resides in the fact that both translation and transition are characterised by the act of moving across from one place into another or from one circumstance or situation into another. The process of moving across implies a mechanism of transformation and change which results in innovation, renewal and a break with something already established and canonised. Translation is a system which transfers concepts and meanings from one set of language signs into another set of language signs. The target text, which necessarily has to work within the target culture, is, therefore, not just the replacement of textual material in one language (source language: SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (target language: TL), but the expression of a new culture, new ideas and significances for the target readership. The passage from one culture into another incorporates and characterises the translation process. As the term culture refers to the historical, economic, political, social, and literary aspects of each society,

the mechanism of translation implies an alteration in the socio-cultural, ideological and literary constraints which lie behind the SL text. Likewise, transition is a process which provokes changes from one condition or situation to another, consequently, transition imposes the need for the replacement of something new upon something old.

Based on this premise, this research examines literary works-in-transition produced during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century and, more specifically, this investigation concentrates on the analysis of Arnold Bennett's and Giovanni Verga's narrative texts and on David Herbert Lawrence as a translator of Verga's literary production. The focus also extends to the understanding of the process of translation as adaptation applied to Bennett's and Verga's selected literary pieces. In particular, the Italian/Sicilian translation of Bennett's short story "From One Generation to Another" is adapted to a contemporary socio-cultural and linguistic Sicilian reality and represents a form of translation as rewriting: the older generation of the lower middle class compared with the newer generation of the upper middle class. Lawrence's translations of Verga's verist prose and, most specifically, of the short story "Cavalleria Rusticana", aim at highlighting the strong affinity between Lawrence and Verga, a similarity that derives from the writers' desire to explore the warm creative stir and the instincts which are seen as the basis of life and the realization of the spirit. The two novelists, Bennett and Verga, are also closely related to one another through their shared artistic ideal, which is the expression of spontaneity — the representation of the original, uncontaminated selfhood retraced to the vital sources of universal beings and, as already stated above, they are representative exponents of

a literary production which belongs to a historically and socio-culturally phase of transition. Their works embody the development of mid-nineteenth-century European realism, which originated in the realist and naturalist tradition of France.

Introduction

Contextualization

This study is a comparative survey which develops a critical path capable of creating a correlation between the concepts of *translation*, *transition* and *realism*, which also involve those of *city*, *travel* and *dialect*. The literary works which are taken into account belong to Bennett and Verga, whose narrative production significantly contributed to the representation of French realism and naturalism in English and Italian literature respectively in a striking epoch of transition, which also characterises mid–nineteenth–century European realism.

The focus on texts–in–transition and the translations of these text types is essential to the appreciation of the relationship between writers and translators and, especially, between realist writers and translators, with particular regard to the position they occupy in their acts of writing and translating an original. Bennett’s and Verga’s transitional works are analysed through their translated versions into Italian and English respectively. The analysis of Verga’s short stories is provided through Lawrence’s English renderings, whereas Bennett’s short stories are proposed in their Italian/Sicilian versions by the author of this book. Lawrence’s role as a translator also implies his position as a writer and the reasons that moved him to translate the Sicilian novelist. The practice of translation

becomes a central activity to the study of Bennett's and Verga's novels and to the knowledge of the relationship between Bennett and Verga as well as between Lawrence and Verga in terms of affinity and divergence. Translation represents an instrument to formulate critical considerations about those translators who translate works produced by authors-in-transition who testify to a society in a phase of change and inner generational contrasts.

In chapter 1 the survey is on Bennett's life, since his professional and private experiences present significant aspects that confirm how powerfully he was preoccupied with the ideas of change and progress and, consequently, how important the acceptance of transition was for him as a matter of fact, from which any form of escape would be meaningless and anachronistic. The attention is also given to the social and economic background as a part of the cultural context in a period of literary transition and also to the role of culture and dialect as two linking forces, dependent upon one another and absorbing the concept of region.

In chapter 2 the primary interest is that of tracing the change in literary style and technique stemming from a process of socio-cultural, economic and historical transition. Here the development of realism in literary, social and philosophical terms is taken into account in order to clarify the significance of the term *realism* and originate critical thoughts concerning the theoretical and practical devices that allowed French, English and Italian novelists to produce their narratives. In particular, the survey on realism is focused upon the historical development of French realism and naturalism and upon the way in which these literary trends influenced late-nineteenth-century English realism and Italian *verismo*.

The last section of chapter 2 can be also found in the first section of chapter 3, where the introduction to the growth of Italian realism demonstrates how Verga's position as a realist and naturalist writer emerges in such a way that it is possible to establish connections between English realism and *verismo* and between Bennett and Verga. The literary affinity this chapter deals with does not just refer to Verga and Bennett, but is also fundamental to the connection between Lawrence and Verga, whose links mostly concern their common views in the modalities of looking at human beings and everyday life. The comparative study is strengthened in two sections, where similarities and dissimilarities between Bennett and Verga are examined, and where the relationship between Lawrence and Verga is explored through Lawrence's interest in Verga's short stories and, in particular, through Lawrence's translation of "Cavalleria rusticana". The role of translation in the study of literary works—in-transition is reinforced in the final part of chapter 3, where translating issues are strongly emphasised, such as the case of Verga's rendering into English of some specific Sicilian phrases or the letters the Sicilian writer used to send to his translators. Verga's constant contacts with his French translator Edouard Rod are indeed demonstrated by the rich epistolary communication between writer and translator because of the difficulties Rod must have found in the process of translation of Verga's Sicilian dialect and Italian. The last section of the third chapter, which concentrates on the translating problems referring to the mechanism of rendering Sicilian culture and lexis into French, also introduces the importance of culture at the level of translation and in terms of translating procedures. This discussion pioneers the debate concerning culture and translation, which appears to be assimilated

in the cultural turn in translation studies, a concept which becomes central in the last chapter of this work.

The last chapter of this investigation, which precedes the conclusion and the bibliographical section, is composed of four Italian/Sicilian translations of Bennett's travel stories, which are represented as acts of critique, where the practice of translation is applied to texts which are adapted and assimilated to the target reader language and culture. These Italian and Sicilian translations acquire a significant role within the framework of a comparative analysis that is centred on mid-nineteenth century European realism, as they contribute to investigate the relationship between Bennett, Lawrence and Verga as emblematic exponents of the phenomena of *transition*, *translation* and *realism*. Indeed, the attention to Verga's translations gives a comparative dimension to the study of Bennett as an author-in-transition, enlarges perspectives in translation and also helps to look critically at the concept of translation as adaptation and rewriting.

The final chapter of this work is essentially practical and is supported by preliminary theoretical considerations that stress the significance of translation and the reasons why the Italian/Sicilian versions of Bennett's short stories can be considered types of translation as adaptation. Bennett's short story and literary pieces, which are here translated in Italian for the first time, are: "From One Generation to Another", which is taken from *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns* (1907), "The Return", which is an extract from *King Albert's Book* and is also a travelogue included in *From the Log of the Velsa* (1914) and the *Arnold Bennett Society Newsletter* (2000-01), "England Again — 1907 — The Gate of the Empire", which is an extract from *Paris Nights and Other Impressions of Places and People*

(1913), and “Taormina”, which belongs to the collection entitled *Mediterranean Scenes* (1928). The first section of this chapter highlights the importance of dialect as the expression of local colour as well as of the generational contrast, while the second section introduces the image of the city as a place of transition, change, and progress. Bennett’s stories and literary pieces are cultural products that confirm and reinforce the Staffordshire novelist’s attitude towards the city as the location of movement, transformation, and evolution. This chapter, which basically focuses on the translation of Bennett’s pieces of writing from English into Italian, offers good sources for establishing two critical comparisons. One regards the position of Bennett’s translator as the insider translator and of Bennett as the metaphorical or outsider translator, whereas the other concerns the connection between Bennett and Verga in relation to their different attitudes towards the importance of the city and the function of dialect at a literary and social level. The translator of the Staffordshire novelist’s works and Bennett’s role as both writer and translator create the interesting correlation between the *metaphorical insider–translator* and the *metaphorical outsider–translator*. The literary piece “Taormina” (where the author plays the role as *metaphorical outsider–translator*) — and all the cultural, social and historical implications concerning the Sicilian village and its inhabitants — is familiar to the Italian/Sicilian translator, who is also the author of this book, whereas Bennett as a travel writer becomes the outsider of his own text. Bennett practises a form of metaphorical translation, through which he formulates what he saw and struck him most forcefully, thus originating a kind of transposition of a location that is alien or unfamiliar to him. The Italian translation of Bennett’s “England Again

— 1907 — “The Gate of the Empire” (where Bennett’s position is that of the *metaphorical insider–translator*) produces a mechanism that reverses the previous process of translation because, in this case, the Italian translator becomes the translator of a text which is written by an author who carefully and critically describes an inner cultural landscape. Taormina’s cultural context is as familiar to the Italian translator as the British context depicted in “England Again — 1907 — The Gate of the Empire” is alien to her. Therefore, the Italian translator can approach her renderings through the eyes of the *cultural outsider–translator*. The relationship between Bennett and his translator in terms of *outsider translator* and *insider translator* echoes Lawrence’s position as a translator of Verga’s short stories. Whereas Bennett is the metaphorical translator of his text “Taormina”, Lawrence becomes the cultural translator of an original text which he can only see from the outside, which is the same external perspective which entails the Italian translator’s view of Bennett’s “England Again – 1907 – The Gate of the Empire”. In contrast, the Italian translator can evaluate Lawrence’s translation, as her position is that of the *insider critic*, for the Sicilian context is the one that Lawrence as a translator has to render into English.

In Bennett and Verga, the authors’ use of dialect has the effect of representing the older generations, old traditional values and essential principles of their native cultures. Bennett’s characters who speak or have a dialectal accent are those who refuse to accept the changes that stem from the new generation’s exigencies and future expectations. In contrast, Verga’s characters may all speak dialect or have a dialectal rhythm in their speeches, for there is no distinction between the young and the old. His characters are socially low; they are very poor people who form

part of the Sicilian hinterland and consider the metropolitan environment distant and unreachable. The city, which in Bennett's writing represents the place of change and towards which young people gravitate, is not present in Verga's geographical settings which, on the contrary, are usually Sicilian villages and sometimes small provincial towns.

This study terminates with a conclusion and a selected bibliography that is not just limited to the works cited but extends to the literary productions by Bennett, Lawrence and Verga and to the critical books written on them.

Key-concepts

The comparative analysis of this work investigates Bennett and Verga's narrative production through the exploration of realism as a philosophical matter and a literary tendency. It also aims at showing the interchanging connections between the conceptions of *translation* and *dialect*, *transition* and *realism*. The terms *translation* and *dialect*, *transition* and *realism*, the key-concepts of this survey, are considered in relation to the cultural dimension of the writers' social contexts, which, through the act of translation, are compared with the cultural realities of the translators — the Sicilian contemporary environment as far as Bennett's Italian translations are concerned, and late-nineteenth-century Nottinghamshire with regard to Verga's English versions.

Culture is the totality of the historical, social, literary and economic factors that take place in a particular age and historical moment, and in a definite society. Transition, which arises from a need for cultural change, is a