E.M. FORSTER’S A ROOM WITH A VIEW; CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE NOVEL’S AFTERLIVES

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1. Introduction

The novels by British author E.M. Forster are particularly suitable for cinematographic adaptation: thanks to the refined use of melodrama against the backdrop of lush, exotic scenarios and thanks to the nuanced allusions to visual and aural stimuli, Forster’s style lends itself to cinematic treatment. The fact that his novels were not adapted for the screen during his lifetime had to do with the author’s resistance to their being filmed, though he did grant the rights for a television production of A Passage to India (1924/2005) in 1965 (Landy 2007: 236-237).

This contribution is an attempt to combine, in what can be considered the ideal site of E.M. Forster’s novel A Room with a View (1908/2000), two different research approaches, one focused on interlinguistic translation and another one which takes into account the translation into images and paralinguistic elements of the words of the source text.

The objective, and in this sense the interlinguistic and intersemiotic dimensions are both at play, is to follow some linguistic and cultural aspects of the respective novels, namely regional and social varieties of English and culture specific elements, in their translation from the page of the novelist to the words and images of the screen and in the successive translation of the verbal component into Italian, both of the novels and of the film versions. The choice has fallen on these two features because they are widely recognised by scholars as some of the most challenging translational hurdles (for a discussion on culture specific references, see Leppihalme 1997 and, for audiovisual translation in particular, Pedersen 2005, 2007, 2011, Ramière 2007, Ranzato 2013, Santamaria Guinot 2001; for dialects and accents in audiovisual translation, see more circumscribed researches on single case studies by Ferrari 2006, Ranzato 2010, Taylor 2006).

The corpus, illustrated in the following section, consists of several rewritings of the same source text.
Although the analysis has been carried out following a Descriptive Translations Studies\textsuperscript{1} paradigm, which generally relies on mostly quantitative data, the translation of words into images, as the following pages will clarify, defies a purely quantitative approach and makes a qualitative interpretation of the information equally necessary.

2. The texts

A Room with a View, first published in 1908, is the third novel by the English author E.M. Forster, notable for its rich landscape of culture specific elements and notations on social and even regional speech traits. The story, a Bildungsroman of sorts, follows the gradual awakening to life of young Lucy Honeychurch and of a series of other characters, all of whom touched in their lives, in one way or another, by the experience of Italy.

As mentioned above, the aim is to analyse the incidence of culture specific references and of references to social and geographical varieties of English in the source text in order to investigate the strategies enacted to translate these features and elements in the novels’ afterlives, following them through several rewritings of the book: its Italian translation(s), the film(s) (including, when available, the screenplays), the Italian dubbed and/or subtitled dialogues.

A Room with a View was translated several times into Italian and all of the following versions have been taken into consideration in the analysis:

- 1958 Camera con vista, translated by Giuliana Aldi Pompili, Rizzoli, Milano.
- 1979 Camera con vista, translated by Marcella Bonsanti, Garzanti, Torino.
- 1986 Camera con vista, translated by Marisa Caramella, Oscar Mondadori, Milano.

\textsuperscript{1} At a time in which Translation Studies was decidedly marked by source-orientedness, the work of Gideon Toury in the 1980s and of Itamar Even-Zohar before him contributed to deviate the course of this newly-founded discipline towards an attention and emphasis on the target text. In order for the discipline of Translation Studies to stand on more solid scientific grounds and to be able to study more thoroughly this reciprocal interplay of influences between source text (and culture) and target text (and culture), Toury advocates the need for a methodology and research techniques which go beyond sets of isolated and randomly selected ‘examples’ and study regularities of translational behaviour by analysing a substantial corpus of purposefully selected material. Toury’s advocacy of the descriptive approach generally associated to his name and in particular his notion of norms have had a huge influence on Translation Studies, supporting the most active research programme in this field to date (Toury 1980 and 1995).

The audiovisual transpositions of the novel are:

1986 *A Room with a View*, directed by James Ivory, UK. Screenplay by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala.

2007 *A Room with a View*, directed by Nicholas Renton, UK. Screenplay by Andrew Davies.

The screenplay by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala (available on www.dailyscript.com/scripts/A_Room_With_A_View.pdf) was added to the corpus as an important intermediate text in order to integrate the vision of Ivory’s film.

The dubbing adaptation of Ivory’s film, available in the Italian edition of the DVD, was created by Sergio Jacquier. The subtitles available on the DVD are in this case only a transcription of the dubbed dialogue.

Renton’s film, on the other hand, produced and broadcast by ITV, is not available on DVD in an Italian version, so only the original film was considered.

3. Culture specific references from page to screen

For what concerns the methodology, the analysis of culture specific elements is based on the work of the scholars who have dealt with this topic in literary and in audiovisual translation, especially the ones who devised detailed but at the same time user-friendly classifications and lists of translation strategies on which I based my own classifications (as well as the cited Leppihalme and Pedersen, see also Antonini and Chiaro 2005, Ballester Casado 2001, Diaz Cintas and Remael 2007, Gottlieb 2009, Ivir 1987, Katan 2004, Mailhac 1996, Nedergaard Larsen 1993, Newmark 1981, 1988). In order to classify culture specific elements and rather than relying on the taxonomies devised by some of the scholars cited above, which divide cultural references into thematic groups, I devised the following classification based on the relative nature of these elements, whose translation and comprehension depends completely on the point of view of author, reader, audience, translators in both geographical and temporal terms:

TABLE 1
Classification of cultural references
a) Realistic references

Source culture references (elements not ‘exported’ outside the source culture)
Intercultural references (source culture elements absorbed by the target culture)
Third culture references (references to cultures other than the source or the target cultures)
Target culture references (references to the target culture contained in the source text)

b) Intertextual references

Overt intertextual allusions (explicit references to other texts)
Covert intertextual allusions (implicit references to other texts)
Intertextual macroallusions (the whole text is a reference or contains various references to another text)

All of the above can be either:
- Verbal or nonverbal cultural references
- Synchronous or asynchronous cultural references

This classification, conceived for methodological purposes, cannot be expounded in depth in the present study and is discussed elsewhere (Ranzato 2013 and 2014). For the purpose of the present study, the category of culture specific elements referred to the target culture is the one which best clarifies what is meant by relative status of these elements: the point of view of an Italian readership or audience will determine the understanding and successive translation of these elements. Most of Forster’s novels and short stories are set in Italy, thus culture-bound elements referred to the target culture are of particular interest and are thus the ones which are taken into consideration in this contribution.

The novel *A Room with a View* contains 788 culture specific references, of which 346 (43.91%) are elements referred to the target culture: Florence, Leonardo, Fiesole, Alessio Baldovinetti, Arno, and so on. This is a remarkable percentage which shows how Forster relied on these particular elements to give substance to his work and how, as a consequence, their translation into the language of the target culture, Italian, is a potentially sensitive topic.

How were these elements translated? As could be expected, all of the target culture references contained in *A Room with a View* have been transferred as loans (i.e. Leonardo) or with official translations (Florence = *Firenze*) to the Italian versions of the book. Only the 1979/2012 Garzanti
edition includes detailed footnotes which offer explanations for some of the cultural references.

A number of 50 target culture references out of the 346 present in the novel (14.4%) are included as loans, official translations or additions in Ivory’s film dialogues. A lesser figure of 38 (10.9%) is present in the dialogues of Renton’s film. Both films, then, drastically reduce the number of verbal references to the target culture (and cultural references in general). Both audiovisual texts rely heavily on images to convey a great part of the references Forster had expressed in words, thus confirming the impression of proper intersemiotic translations: Lucy’s eventful stroll in Piazza della Signoria (Chapter Four), for example, is especially the occasion, in both films, to linger on innumerable Florentine details. The 31 references to the target culture present in this chapter do not find their way at all into the words of the dialogue – with the exception of Lucy’s mention of “Italians” in her conversation with George – but are lavishly displayed through the luxurious images of Florence and evoked through famous Italian arias.

In Ivory’s film, Cecil’s description of his first meeting with the Emersons at the National Gallery (“In the Umbrian Room. Absolute strangers. They were admiring Luca Signorelli – of course, quite stupidly”, Chapter Ten) is rendered visually with a beautiful shot of the actors in front of a large Italian painting at the National Gallery, where Signorelli was translated into the more scenographic Paolo Uccello.

One of the dialogues in Ivory’s film is worth mentioning for its intertextual quality. When Miss Bartlett and Miss Lavish talk secretively during the party’s excursion to the countryside, they use words which cannot be found in Forster’s book:

BARTLETT: And she never went back to Weybridge?
LAVISH: Her friend had to return without her. She remained at Monteriano.
[...]
BARTLETT: Did she really marry this Italian?
LAVISH: In the church at Monteriano. A youth. Ten years younger than herself.

This dialogue is a covert allusion to Forster’s novel Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905/2012) and to details of its plot, skillfully interwoven in the folds of this later story.

For what concerns the Italian dialogues of Ivory’s film, it is evident by some of the translation solutions that the adapter thought carefully of the possible effect that references to Italy and Italians could have on the target audience. In the book and in both films, for example, Cecil announces his engagement to Lucy quoting the title of the book I promessi sposi to the somewhat bewildered Honeychurches who are not
as cultured as him. The reference to Manzoni’s novel is rendered in the Italian dubbing with the following words spoken by Cecil: *habemus sponsum atque sponsam*. The use of the Latin phrase certainly succeeds in justifying the confused reactions of Lucy’s mother and brother.

Even more than other types of references, the ones referred to the target culture emphasise the relative status of culture specific references which acquire their full meaning only in the interaction between the two cultures involved in the translating process.

4. Dialects from page to screen

Regional dialects could be defined, following Chiaro (2009: 155), (who, however, applies this definition to other features like songs, rhymes and so on), areas of overlap between language and culture. Their portrayal in the respective media is sensibly influenced by the social and historical contexts in which the respective works were created. In other words, it is extremely interesting to see what happens of an early twentieth century story which contains nonstandard forms of English when it is translated for the contemporary screen, and especially after the social change which, according to some linguists (Trudgill 1986, Fennell 2001) gave dialects in England in the 1960s an overt prestige which they certainly did not enjoy, if not covertly, in earlier times. It is a social change that, with some delay, has spread also to the TV screens: it is a fact that television adaptations of the classics, since at least the mid-1990s, have portrayed more frequently the regional and social dialects which are supposedly spoken by characters even when the original novels failed to portray them. In this sense television programmes have proven to be even more realistic than cinema, perhaps because of the nature of the television image which has been amply discussed in its connection with realism (Ellis 1992; Cardwell 2002), in its “persistent reference” to an eternal “present-ness” (Doane 1990: 222) and of the television frame perceived as a “reflection of the living, constantly changing present” (Zettl 1978: 7). In a word, my contention is that television’s potential for realistic liveness has encouraged authors and directors to depict characters in their realistic traits which include the portrayal nonstandard forms of English.

Literary dialects are one of written records at the disposal of the investigation of the linguist, although fictional dialogue is hypothetical, imagined speech, usually thought to be uttered by others than the writer but by speakers with whose real-life models he is familiar; there is no association with a real-life speech event, but the fictitious utterance is intended to be characteristic of its - frequently also fictitious - speaker (Zettl 1978: 5).
Even literary critics, however, have noted the limits of some classic authors’ portrayal of dialects. Hardy, for example, was attacked by some critics for his inconsistencies. Such inconsistency is characteristic of all nonstandard language representation in nineteenth century literature, for writers wished to point out certain features of a character rather than to create a photographic reality in linguistic usage (Blake 1981: 166). Hardy himself in a letter to *The Athenaeum* of 30 November 1878 on “Dialect in Novels” (quoted in Blake 1981: 166) recognised that true representation of dialect was not suitable in a novel:

> An author may be said to fairly convey the spirit of intelligent peasant talk if he retains the idiom, compass, and characteristic expressions, although he may not encumber the page with obsolete pronunciations of the purely English words [...]. If a writer attempts to exhibit on paper the precise accents of a rustic speaker, he disturbs the proper balance of a true representation by unduly insisting upon the grotesque element.

However, the incorrect, stereotypical use of dialects by the authors and indeed by filmmakers after them is not particularly relevant for the type of analysis proposed here, because what is of interest is the acknowledgement, on the part of the translators, of the existence of a given variety.

Forster’s attitude towards dialect is complex and influenced by his genteel upbringing. It results in a mixture of repulsion and attraction for ‘rustic speakers’ which is typical of his portrayal of the ‘lower classes’. His description of social classes, which seldom results in the use of sociolects, is also complex and nuanced. His travellers to Southern Europe, for example, do not fit the eighteenth-century model of the Grand Tourist, they are not typically young upper-class gentlemen.

They are the Miss Abbotts and Miss Bartletts of small-town southern England who are surprised that the drawing room of their Italian pension is decorated ‘to rival the solid comfort of a Bloomsbury boarding house’ and that their Signora speaks with a Cockney accent. They are inclined to note with distaste that the company at meals includes such men as Mr Emerson and his son George, who typify the ‘ill bred people whom one does meet abroad’ yet from whom their lives are safely insulated back at home (Ardis 2007: 63).

For what concerns regional dialects, in *A Room with a View* the only variety of English which is mentioned is Cockney. This regional variety, the London accent in its most traditional features, has also, traditionally as well, and especially in Forster, precise social connotations. In this novel the references to Cockney are usually, but not always, connected to
the description of the Signora, the owner of the pension Bartolini, as in the following example followed by the respective translations into Italian:

Beyond them stood the unreliable Signora, bowing good-evening to her guests, and supported by ‘Enery, her little boy, and Victorier, her daughter. It made a curious little scene, this attempt of the Cockney to convey the grace and geniality of the South.

Italian translations

1954: Dall'altra parte era ad attenderle la Signora che aveva mancato la promessa, e che adesso si inchinava augurando la buona sera ai suoi ospiti, affiancata dal figliolo Enery e dalla sua bambina Victorier. Era una scenetta curiosa quel tentativo della cockney di esprimersi con la grazia e la genialità del sud.

1958: Dietro di esse stava l'infida Signora che s'inchinava agli ospiti dando la buona sera ed era sostenuta da Henery, il figliuolo e Victorier, la figlia. Era una scenetta curiosa, quel tentativo della Cockney di creare l'atmosfera gentile e cordiale del sud...

1979: Dietro quelle tende stava la malfida Signora, che augurava la buona sera ai propri ospiti con una riverenza, affiancata dai figli, il piccolo Henry e Victoria (‘Enerey e Victorier nella pronuncia plebea della madre). Costituiva una scenetta curiosa, quel tentativo d'una tipica cockney di render l'idea della grazia e dell'affabilità del sud.

1986: Dietro di esse c'era l'inattendibile signora, che si inchinava per dar la buonanotte agli ospiti, fiancheggiata da ‘Enery, il suo bambino, e Victorier, sua figlia. Era un quadretto curioso, quello che offrivano quei cockney nel tentativo di comunicare la grazia e l'estrosa cordialità del Sud.

1994: Dietro di esse c'era l'inattendibile Signora, che si inchinava a dar la buonanotte agli ospiti, assistita da Enery, il suo piccino, e Victorier, sua figlia. Era una scenetta curiosa, quella di quei cockney che cercavano di trasmettere la grazia e l'estrosa cordialità del Sud.

We will note here that the only acknowledgement of the existence of a departure from standard English, is in Bonsanti's 1979 translation, which states in brackets: 'Enerey and Victorier in the mother's plebeian pronunciation. The other translations all transcribe the Cockney pronunciation of the two names, a detail which would be lost to most Italian readers, especially since there are no explanations of the meaning of the word Cockney. The next example shows another transcription, by Forster, of the signora's dialect:
How right is signora Bertolini, who exclaimed to me the other day: "Ho, Mr Beebe, if you knew what I suffer over the children's edjauishon! Hi won't 'ave my little Victorier taught by a hignorant Italian what can't explain nothink!"

Italian translations
1954: Come ha ragione la signora Bertolini, che l'altro giorno mi diceva: "Oh, signor Beebe, se voi sapete come soffro per quello che è l'educazione dei bambini! Ma non voglio che il mio piccolo Victorier sia imparato da un ignorante italiano che lui non ci sa spiegare nulla".

1958: Come aveva ragione la signora Bertolini di dirmi l'altro giorno: "Oh, reverendo Beebe, se sapeste come sono preoccupata per l'educazione dei miei ragazzi! Non è possibile che la mia piccola Victoria impari da un italiano ignorante che non sa neppure spiegare!" (nota: Nel testo inglese tale frase è in dialetto e non priva di errori).

1979: Ha proprio ragione la signora Bertolini, che l'altro giorno mi ha detto: "Oh, Mr Beebe, sapesse come mi preoccupo per l'educazione dei miei figli! Non sopporto che la mia piccola Victorier abbia per maestro un ignorante d'un italiano che non sa spiegare un bel niente!"

1986: Ha proprio ragione la signora Bertolini, che l'altro giorno mi ha detto: "Oh, Mr. Beebe, sapesse come mi preoccupo per l'educazione dei miei figli! Non sopporto che la mia piccola Victorier abbia per maestro un ignorante d'un italiano che non sa spiegare un bel niente!"

1994: Ha proprio ragione la Signora Bertolini, che l'altro giorno mi ha detto: "Oh, Mr. Beebe, sapesse quanti pensieri mi dà l'educazione dei miei figli! Non voglio che la mia piccola Victorier abbia per insegnante un ignorante d'un italiano che non è in grado di spiegarle un accidente!". (nota: nell'originale inglese la grafia della frase riportata da Mr. Beebe riproduce la forte inflessione dialettale e le sgrammaticature tipicamente cockney della Signora)

In this case, Pompili (1958) and Meneghelli (1994) translate the phrase marked by typical Cockney traits into standard Italian, but add an explicative footnote. And while Arjo (1954), apart from mistaking Victorier for a boy, acknowledges the presence of a regional accent and translates it into an Italian full of grammatical mistakes, the other translators simply opt for standard Italian speech.

In terms of social dialects, A Room with a View is even more remarkable for what is not there. George, the young man that the heroine, Lucy, will eventually marry, has no characteristic linguistic features in the novel and critics have often noted that George is unrealised as a character (Scherer Herz 2007). Forster’s unease with
George, who evidently comes, according to the author’s description, from a lower class than the one Lucy could hope to aim at, is comparable to Forster’s Leonard Bast, the working class character in *Howards End* (1910/2012).

In the 1985 James Ivory version of *A Room with a View*, the actors’ use of facial expressions and gestures are carefully calculated to convey their sense of social status and their personal idiosyncrasies. For example, in contrast to actor Julian Sands’s George Emerson, whose movements are loose and who speaks in wild, erratic phrases, Daniel Day Lewis’s characterisation of the aesthete Cecil is highly choreographed: his gestures are mechanical, and his words delivered less as a casual conversation and more as if he were reading a novel (Landy 2007: 245). In addition, in the Italian dubbing, Cecil is made to exploit the resources of codeswitching by using various French expressions to convey his extreme snobbishness.

George does not speak much, but when he does, he uses standard English in the novel. Faithful to Forster, Ivory, in his translation for the screen, lets George speak in standard English with a Received Pronunciation. It is through the images that his and his father’s social class are made evident to the audience, as the screenplay by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala exemplifies:

> These are opposite Mr Emerson and George – who are markedly different from the other guests. Their reception of the newcomers is also different: Mr Emerson, an elderly, plump gentleman with childlike eyes, has his mouth full and so can only wave his fork cheerily in their direction (Prawer Jhabvala n.d.: 4).

In the 2007 ITV version, on the other hand, George Emerson and his father speak with a marked London accent which really characterises their social background, more than often alluded to in Forster’s novel, and in this version overtly emphasised by the use of this strong accent and by various explicit references to class.

> In the wake of what I would term the 1990s big turn in television adaptations of the classics, which has seen the introduction of a greater number of realistic features in an attempt to bring these stories closer to our contemporary sensibilities, George has acquired the Cockney linguistic features of actor Rafe Spall who rivals in ’plebeian’ accent with his father, Timothy Spall, who plays Mr Emerson in the film.

**5. Conclusions**
This contribution focused on two of the most challenging translational hurdles – culture specific references and dialects – and showed the importance of multiplying the tools for analysis, availing oneself of different texts, trying to interpret images and paralinguistic features in order to make use of all resources drawn from the fields of translation, adaptation and film studies. In the case of A Room with a View and its afterlives, the many texts which result from all the authorial contributions – the writer, the translator, the filmmakers, the adapters - amount to a complex but fascinating multilayered text which is a challenge to try to analyse in all its linguistic and cultural implications.

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