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Papers from the 24th AIA Conference

Challenges for the 21st Century: Dilemmas, Ambiguities, Directions

VOLUME I

Literary Studies

Edited by

ROSY COLOMBO, LILLA MARIA CRISAFULLI, FRANCA RUGGIERI

Cultural Studies

Edited by

RICHARD AMBROSINI, ALESSANDRA CONTENTI, DANIELA CORONA

Challenges for the 21st Century: Dilemmas, Ambiguities, Directions.

Papers from the 24th AIA conference.

Volume I. Literary Studies (edited by R. Colombo, L.M. Crisafulli, F. Ruggieri);

Cultural Studies (edited by R. Ambrosini, A. Contenti, D. Corona).

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By which it appears, that except at the curve, marked A, where I took a trip to Navarre, – and the indented curve B, which is the short airing when I was there with the Lady Baussiere and her page, - I have not taken the least frisk of a digression, till John de la Casse's devils led me the round you see marked D – for as for C C C C C they are nothing but parentheses, and the common ins and outs incident to the lives of the greatest ministers of state; and when compared with what men have done, – or with my own transgressions at the letters A B D – they vanish into nothing.

To Giorgio Melchiori

*In memory of a lifelong contribution
to English studies*



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Foreword

The 24th Conference of the *Associazione Italiana di Anglistica* (AIA) was held on October 1-3, 2009, hosted by the Faculty of *Lettere e Filosofia* of Roma Tre University. The Conference title, “Challenges for the 21st Century: Dilemmas, Ambiguities, Directions”, was decided upon by the Board of the Association at that time and by the Anglicists from Roma Tre, working in different Departments. The Conference attracted more than 300 participants, among whom the vast majority were young researchers, to whom AIA Conferences are traditionally addressed. More than 200 AIA members presented their contributions in the 39 parallel sessions or in the Poster sessions, and all AIA areas – Literary Studies, Cultural Studies and Language Studies – also attracted contributions from senior scholars.

Due to editorial constraints and the large number of papers accepted for publication, the Editors decided to divide contributions into two volumes: volume one includes contributions in the areas of Literary Studies (Part 1) and Cultural Studies (Part 2); volume two is made up of contributions in the area of Language Studies. Each volume has been jointly edited by the Convenors of the Conference sessions, who summarize contributions and explain the logic behind their sequencing in greater detail in their Introductions to Part 1 and Part 2 of volume one and to volume two.

The two volumes do not constitute the complete Proceedings of the Conference: some contributors at the Conference did not submit their papers for publication. The Editors have followed the thematic sequencing of the original sessions as far as possible, on occasion re-grouping contributions to offer a more cohesive presentation of the various research topics investigated from a number of different perspectives, and to highlight convergences and divergences. They hope that readers will find the sequencing helpful and that individual authors will feel rewarded for their efforts.

The Editors

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Acknowledgements

As coordinator of the Scientific Committee and of the Organising Committee of the 24th AIA (*Associazione Italiana di Anglistica*) Conference “Challenges for the 21st Century: Dilemmas, Ambiguities, Directions”, I wish to express my gratitude to all those who have helped turn the original proposal put forward by the AIA Board at the time into a major event and who have made the publication of these two volumes possible.

My first thanks go to AIA President, Giuseppina Cortese, and to the other members of the Board – Carlo Bajetta, John Douthwaite, Oriana Palusci, Rita Salvi, Maristella Trulli, Marina Vitale – for inviting me and Roma Tre Anglicists to take on the daunting task of organizing the national Conference. The Conference organization appeared at first to be a real challenge and perhaps not by chance the word “challenge” played a major role when the Board and the organisers discussed the Conference title and eventually became a key word in its theme.

I also wish to extend warm thanks to all the members of the Scientific Committee (Richard Ambrosini, Rosy Colombo, Alessandra Contenti, Daniela Corona, Lilla Maria Crisafulli, Gabriella Di Martino, Linda Lombardo, Marinella Rocca Longo, Franca Ruggieri) and of the local organising committee (Patrick Boylan, Adriano Elia, Paola Faini, Liz Glass, Enrico Grazzi, David Hart, Lucilla Lopriore, Patrizia Pierini, Tania Zulli) for their invaluable help and suggestions at all stages of this initiative.

The Conference was made possible thanks to the financial, administrative and logistic support of Roma Tre Rectorate, of the Faculty of *Lettere e Filosofia*, and of the Departments of *Letterature Compare*, *Linguistica* and *Studi Internazionali*, that actively contributed to its organization before, during and after the Conference itself. Special thanks go to the Rector, Prof Guido Fabiani, and the Administrative Director Dr Pasquale Basilicata; the Dean of the Faculty, Prof Francesca Cantù, and her administrative staff; the Department Heads, Professors Otello Lottini, Franca Orletti and Annunziata Nobile, and their administrative staffs.

I also wish to thank the British Council, in particular the former Director Paul Docherty, the current Director Christine Melia, and the Deputy Director Kevin Mackenzie: they gave their enthusiastic support to the Conference from the very beginning and made it possible for the organisers to invite John Simpson, OED Chief Editor, as plenary speaker. Christine Melia also attended the inaugural session, and her illustration of British Council activities was well received by the audience.

The plenary session devoted to institutional matters, a novelty in AIA Conferences, was most stimulating and special thanks go to the Head of CUN, Prof Andrea Lenzi and to CUN Member Prof Simona Costa, for readily agreeing to take part in this very important moment of the conference and for their insights into the global and local trends in the reorganization of the macro-areas representing AIA members' academic, scientific and didactic activities.

On behalf of the Organisers I express special gratitude to Prof Fernando Galvan, ESSE President, for accepting the invitation to attend the Conference and for his insightful comments on various topics.

Specific appreciation must be expressed to the Convenors of the three main AIA Conference areas – to Franca Ruggieri, Rosy Colombo and Lilla Maria Crisafulli for Literary Studies; to Richard Ambrosini, Alessandra Contenti and Daniela Corona for Cultural Studies; and to Linda Lombardo and Gabriella Di Martino who worked with me for Language Studies – for their commitment and involvement both before the Conference as members of the Scientific Committee and afterward as editors of these volumes. I am personally indebted to the local Convenors of Literary and Cultural Studies, Franca Ruggieri and Richard Ambrosini, for the numerous meetings I have asked them to attend and the innumerable email messages we have exchanged from the conference planning stage to the final editorial summing up. I am also personally indebted to my co-convenors, Linda Lombardo and Gabriella Di Martino, for their active participation in all stages of the editorial process, always in a friendly and collaborative way, which was especially gratifying. Thank you Linda, thank you Gabriella.

Special thanks go also to the Chairs of the Plenary sessions, Prof Barbara Arnett and Prof Giuseppina Cortese, and to the Chairs of the parallel sessions, too many to name them all here.

All my Faculty Colleagues were very patient during the days of the Conference, and the entire University staff, in particular the technicians, were especially cooperative and helpful. My personal thanks go to them all.

A special mention must go to the agency Prestige Italy and to all their staff for attending to both the organisational and administrative aspects of the Conference, from the social dinner to welcoming participants and catering for their needs, from coffee breaks to printing and distributing programmes.

A final word concerns the gratitude that AIA in its entirety owes to its co-founder and first President, Giorgio Melchiori, for his internationally renowned achievements and for his academic, scientific and didactic commitment. It is to him that the volumes containing the papers from the 24th Conference, the first since he sadly passed away, are dedicated in fond memory.

Stefania Nuccorini

Part 2
CULTURAL STUDIES

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Introduction

Underlying the many interests which have shaped the discussion in the 24th AIA conference culture sessions is a theorizing drive which is clearly visible in the 29 essays included in this second half of the volume. Each text, each cultural phenomenon – and in one case, an entire literary tradition in English – is brought to our attention in a way that illustrates a facet of the collective research being carried out in Italy on the complex world of English-speaking cultures.

We have chosen to open with the section on “Cultural Translation: New Theories and Practices”, which includes four essays that ideally conflate the analytical tools of linguistic and cultural studies by positing translation as an act of transformation and transmission of a culture travelling across languages, genres and boundaries. The papers examine the various techniques and strategies enacted by translators who aim at fulfilling educational and political purposes by construing different types of readers, as in the case of DIANA BIANCHI’S discussion of the ‘Scottification’ of classic English children’s literature (“Taking on Little Miss Muffet: the ‘Scottification’ of Classic English Children’s Literature”). ALESSANDRA RIZZO (“Cultural Translation and Migration: the Literary Cases of Jhumpa Lahiri and Leila Aboulela”) explores instead translated identities and identities-in-translation within a multicultural Anglo-American context to explain the relation between migrancy, translation and culture; to this end, she sets forth a comparative analysis of the similar role played by cultural translation both in the novel *The Translator* (1999) by the Sudanese writer Leila Aboulela and in the collection of short stories, *The Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), by Jhumpa Lahiri, an author of Bengali Indian descent. Translation is also perceived as a complex act of metaphorical and intercultural migrancy across places, histories and languages, where self and other interact and constantly redefine themselves, as for example in IVONNE DEFANT’S analysis of the Scottish writer Anne Donovan’s novel *Being Emily* which is a ‘translation’ or re-writing of Emily Brontë’s life and *Wuthering Heights* (“Translating Selfhood: *Being Emily* by Anne Donovan”). Finally, the idea that translation is heavily affected by different child cultures is examined by ROWENA

COLES (“How Does a Child Become a *Bambino*? Creating Child Constructions in Translation”) through a comparative analysis of Sylvia Plath’s *The It-doesn’t-matter Suit* and its Italian translation *Il vestito color zafferano* by Bianca Pizzorno.

If we have decided to apply the title “Community and Nation: Hybrid Identities, Reinvented Traditions” to two different sections it is because we thought it was important to provide a common frame to the variety of responses generated by the challenging intercrossing of key notions in the field apparent in that overall title. CARLA LOCATELLI (“English in Filipino Hands: Language, Literature, Culture”) discusses the crucial issue of canon formation by rethinking the notions of nation, literature and national literature from a non-Eurocentric perspective. Drawing on the works of two major contemporary critics (G.H. Abad and C. Antoja Hidalgo) Locatelli demonstrates that Philippine Literature in English is firmly tied to the colonial enterprise, and might be viewed as a literature in translation. Furthermore, she highlights the strength of a definition of the *canon* as a social and cultural construct. ELISABETTA ZURRU (“The Morichjhāpi Massacre: Re-constructing Silenced Knowledge”) takes into account in her paper the importance of giving alternative views of History in postcolonial fiction, in order to give voice to the people and the events which have been silenced or removed from official accounts furnished by (post)colonial regimes. Zurru focuses on Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* (2004), a novel about the massacre of the refugees in Morichjhāpi island in 1978 by the Bengali government. She shows the fictional and narrative strategies through which Ghosh discloses the hidden truth behind the official narrations of this important historical event. In the first of two essays on contemporary Australian culture, FRANCESCA DI BLASIO (“We meet/Between the furnace and the flying/In the mouth of cohabitation: Australian Indigenous Culture in the 21st Century”) shows how, in novels by female authors such as Liza Bellea and Patricia Sykes, among others, the theme of “a devastated millennial tradition” is emerging, where “aboriginal myths are related to the substance of the earth” and “the land is conceptualized as the result of the bodies of ancestral beings leaving their marks upon it in their continuous wanderings”. In her highly theoretical essay, KATHERINE E. RUSSO (“When Was Modernism?: Towards an Interstitial Cartography of Australia’s Modernity”) explores instead the way in which two contemporary Australian poets, Lionel Fogarty and Kim Scott, in, respectively, *Miniung Woolah Binnung* and *Benang*, in dealing with exclusively Australian themes such as child removal and linguistic genocide, both explore an image of the past and re-assess its meaning while also re-appropriating modernist forms.

By bringing to bear on Pasolini’s *Petrolio* a transnational/multinational perspective, MARINA DE CHIARA (“Postcolonial Journeys for Tristram: Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Petrolio*”) uncovers a complex journey through the Italian culture and society of the 1970s. She focuses on Pasolini’s depiction of the character of the novel (named Tristram after L. Sterne’s hero) as evoking Edward Said’s

postcolonial discomfort and argues that the old colonial practices have taken up new shapes which still repeat cultural and economic subalternization. In her paper, NICOLETTA BRAZZELLI (“Departures and Desertions in Abdulrazak Gurnah”) raises a number of interesting issues by using the works of Abdulrazak Gurnah, a contemporary writer whose novels focus on the experience of those migrants who after the diaspora are fated to face cultural and racial prejudices in Great Britain. In particular, Brazzelli discusses Gurnah’s latest novel, *Desertion* (2005), in which cultural and identity boundaries are overcome in order to redefine contemporary identity as a hybrid and multicultural entity. SABINA D’ALESSANDRO (“The Battle of Images in Ahdaf Soueif’s *Mezzaterra*”) examines Ahdaf Soueif’s collection of essays *Mezzaterra*, where the strategies used by Western media to represent the Middle Eastern conflict are subtly analysed and subverted. In particular, Soueif shows that these representations are constantly defined by a number of colonial decontextualised stereotypes, which assert the difference between the Western Subject *vs.* the Oriental ‘Other’. In this way, she unveils the political implications of such representations, which strengthen cultural and racial stereotypes. TANIA ZULLI (“Resurrecting Ayesha’s Ghost: the New Challenges of Rider Haggard’s Fiction”) analyses the relationship between literary and cultural studies which emerge in R.L. Stevenson’s and H. Rider Haggard’s novels once we conceive them as ‘contextualized’ entities in their connection with the new epistemic modes of the time and their ideologically oriented approach. She suggests, in a postcolonial perspective, that the colonial and imperial past still influences the life of contemporary Britain.

The two essays included in the section titled “Travelling Concepts, Transforming Bodies” set the human body within a temporal frame that spans from the Renaissance to the challenges of the cyborg age. FRANCESCA GUIDOTTI’S “A.C. Clarke’s *A Meeting with Medusa: the Cyborg Challenge to This World and the Next*” traces in contemporary culture the evolution of the hybrid, enigmatic figure of the cyborg (cybernetic organism), a living creature whose organic body is modified by the incorporation of inorganic parts. In this story, she assigns a seminal role to Arthur C. Clarke’s novel, *A Meeting with Medusa* (1971), in which the author created a more complex and ideologically contradictory cyborg, which in turn paved the way to a more euphoric post-modern version of the theme. In her paper “Body Language: Early Modern Medicine and the Female Body” IOLANDA PLESCIA addresses the debate surrounding the Caesarean section as a new *techne*, thus shedding light on rhetorical constructions and narrations of the female body in early modern scientific and literary texts, with particular reference to Posthumus Leonatus’ “extraordinary birth” in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*.

“Postcolonial London” opens with ADRIANO ELIA (“Catching up with the New Millennium: Hanif Kureishi’s *Something to Tell You*”), who takes his cue from Hanif Kureishi’s latest novel to review some of the most topical socio-political issues raised in post-7/7 fiction, related to the growth of radical Islam in the UK. ENZA

MARIA ESTER GENDUSA (“Deconstruction and Re-writing of Englishness and the European Cultural Identity in Bernardine Evaristo’s Narrative”) focuses instead on Bernardine Evaristo’s narrative production in terms of genre (hystorigraphic fiction), stylistic experimentation (verse-novel) and inspiring motifs. Finally, SIMONA CORSO (“The World Suddenly Feels Bipolar: Martin Amis after 9/11”) uses Martin Amis’ collection of essays and stories, *The Second Plane* (2008), to address a number of uncomfortable questions about our existence in a supposedly “bipolar world” – and about literature’s right to prey upon collective tragedy.

SILVIA ANTOSA, in the first essay included in the “Representations of Antinormative Sexual Identities” section, “Queer Sexualities, Queer Spaces: Gender and Performance in Sarah Waters’ *Tipping the Velvet*”, presents a very interesting and sophisticated paper which discusses – from a performative perspective – the way in which sexual heteronormativity (and the heteronormative spaces it produces) is challenged by queer identities. NADIA SANTORO’S contribution, “Herland and/or Queerland: Some Suggestions for Reading Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*”, offers a reading of *Orlando* which intersects queer theory (especially following Judith Butler’s suggestions) and sexual difference theory, by developing ideas elaborated by Italian feminism. FRANCESCA MAIOLI’S paper, “Nomadic Subjects on Canvas: from Essentialism to Hybridity in Jenny Saville’s Paintings”, analyses Saville’s production showing that, starting from a traditional essentialist feminism, her work develops into a challenging notion of the body as the site for an identity project based on hybridity, transition and transformation.

Addressed in the section “New Challenges for Drama Studies and Cultural Theory” one finds questions relating to the ‘spectrality’ of Shakespeare and late Renaissance drama, cross-cultural topics, and intermediality. MAURIZIO CALBI (“Performing in the Desert: Spectrality in Kristian Levring’s *The King Is Alive*”) focuses on two experimental movies, K. Levring’s *The King is Alive* and M. Figgis’s *Hotel*, and shows how in these movies the ‘re-mediation’ of seventeenth-century literary materials works towards an alternative aesthetic, but in radically opposed ways: the ‘desertification’ of the experience in one case; the baroque cannibalization in the other. MARIACONCETTA COSTANTINI (“From Scottish Thane to Metal Revenant: Cross-Media Transpositions of *Macbeth*”) discusses the effects of Shakespearean ‘hauntology’ in recent heavy metal adaptations of *Macbeth*. Albums like *Thane to the Throne* or *A Tragedy in Steel*, she argues, invite us to reflect on the cultural implications of Shakespeare’s uncanny metamorphoses within an intersemiotic globalized culture. Drawing on the analysis of the various ways in which hyper-environments construe the presence of an interactive participant in multimodal communication, ARIANNA MAIORANI (“The Stage as a Multimodal Text: a Proposal for a New Perspective”) investigates the stage as a multimodal interactive text. ARIANNA MARMO (“A Room of One’s Own: Ophelia’s Darkroom in Almereyda’s *Hamlet 2000*”) examines instead Almereyda’s *Hamlet 2000*, a post-

modern remake of the tragedy located in the 'rotten' city of New York, where Hamlet is an aspiring filmmaker and Ophelia is a photographer. She suggests that in this film Ophelia is portrayed like her photos: divided between 'what is not here' and 'what has actually been'.

The field included in "Visual and Media Studies" attracted a plurality of interests and approaches. SERENA GUARRACINO ("William Kentridge's Opera Stagings: Trans-coding the Western Musical Canon") offers a reading of opera stagings by visual artist William Kentridge, in order to show how the South African video-maker has trans-coded the Western musical language into contemporary visual arts – thus trans-coding the ambivalent place of music at the core of Western Orientalist imagery in a postcolonial narrative of hegemony and subalternity. MARIA CRISTINA CONSIGLIO ("Wiseguys Don't Work on Mother's Day: Italian-Americans on the Screen") explores instead the relationship between the stereotype of Italian-Americans and the language used in some movies, starting from the hypothesis that the Italian-American language, as it has been represented on the screen, can be seen as a sort of anti-language connected with crime and not merely as a neutral sociolect. IRENE RANZATO ("Manipulating the Classics: Film Dubbing as an Extreme Form of Rewriting"), drawing examples from three well-known films – Joseph Mankiewicz's *Suddenly Last Summer*, Ang Lee's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, and Baz Luhrmann's (and Tonino Accolla's) adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* – demonstrates how rewriting through dubbing in Italy has never stood in awe of the classics, and has always privileged the target audience's presumed 'horizon of expectations'. EMANUELE MONEGATO ("Photographing 7/7 Dilemmas: *The Day After* by Johannes Hepp and *People's Cinema*") analyses German photographer Johannes Hepp's "London July 07. 2005 England", starting from the consideration that a division could be drawn between visual representations produced while the terrorist attack takes place and in its immediate aftermath, and/or representations produced when the initial emotional reaction has been revised and elaborated. Finally, C. BRUNA MANCINI ("Internet in a Cup, or a Cup of Internet: the Coffee-house Goes Online") suggests a continuity between the role coffee shops had in London in the early eighteenth-century and today's Internet cafés. Particular attention is devoted, in the essay, to the experience of Starbucks and its aim to turn "Ordinary into Extraordinary".

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Manipulating the Classics: Film Dubbing as an Extreme Form of Rewriting

The choices of a translator shed light on the interplay between the translator's responses to expectations, constraints and pressures in a social context. Although forms of manipulation and censorship are more easily detectable under totalitarian governments, even in the most liberal and democratic contexts texts are rewritten until they are deemed acceptable to the poetics and ideology of the target culture. If the translated work that tries to take its place in the new context does not conform to the target audience's "horizon of expectations", its reception is likely to be rendered more difficult (Lefevere 1992).

Censorship can be defined as the review by an official authority of any material before dissemination. The concept of "horizon of expectations", a term employed by Jauss (1982, 24) to refer to the readers' general expectations on style, form, content etc. relative to the text in the translated new version, helps us to give shape to the more elusive, although more comprehensive, term of manipulation, as it defines the dialectical way a text is elaborated by the translator in a way that may respond to the expectations of the public, while it also defines the way the latter will interpret and judge it according to their own beliefs, biases and preconceptions. If these constraints bind the translator and the public from 'within', so to speak, at the same time prevailing target norms of a linguistic, translational, socio-cultural nature act as constraints from 'without'. Norms, rather than technical constraints, encourage translators and adapters to manipulate the text. Ideology but also, as Fawcett aptly writes, "human randomness and simple cussedness" (Fawcett 2003, 145).

The birth and growth of a successful dubbing industry were promoted in Italy by the fascist government (1922-1943) and understanding the complexities of the relationship of fascism to censorship is fundamental to understand the birth of the audiovisual industry in Italy and the evolution of practices and modes of the translation for dubbing.¹

¹ For an exhaustive account of the relationship between cinema and fascism, see for example Brunetta (1975); Gili (1981); Talbot (2007); Ricci (2008).

When dubbing became technically viable in 1931, films were dubbed into Italian either in their original country or in Italy. But in 1933, the government prohibited the importation of films which had been dubbed elsewhere than in Italy. It was now possible for the censor to view the film in the original version and to 'suggest' the alterations in the dialogue that needed to be introduced in the dubbing so as to modify the 'unpleasant' sequences. With this policy the government achieved a greater control over the 'purity of the language', which added to the other, more overtly political, advantages: manipulation of content, deletion of unwanted references, freedom of adaptation and, in some cases, addition of more 'pleasant' references. The government could, from then on, exert without difficulty a linguistic control which aimed first of all at the disappearance of Italian dialects, regionalisms and accents in the final dubbed version. American films – the majority of the films imported – were to be dubbed in an 'abstract' Italian, thus contributing to the effort of cultural homogenization and regional uprooting which was one of the aims of fascism. From this point of view, as pointed out by Gili (1981, 35-37), the foreign film to be dubbed was a more flexible and controllable product than an original Italian film. The dubbed versions of foreign films gradually elaborated that 'middle language', suitable for "primary communicative functions" (Brunetta 1975, 427). All English language films were to be translated into 'pure' – that is, non-accented, non-dialect – Italian. If from the 1970s film dialogues lost much of their stiffness², still, the language of dubbing, as we can all hear, cannot and often is not concerned to convey all the linguistic subtleties of the original.

Italian adapters – an 'umbrella' term which can include up to three professionals: translator, adapter and even distributor – have used over the years various strategies of rewriting, creating texts that are sometimes quite distant from the original. Their treatment of the classics is generally not an exception.

It is, I believe, symptomatic of the attitude of our dubbing industry towards culture and literature, that literary and generally 'intellectual' references and quotations are often eliminated or manipulated – that is altered or expanded. From the plethora of instances from any period, an excerpt from one of Woody Allen's films best exemplifies this attitude. In *Manhattan* (1979), Mary is a 38-year-old woman speaking to the 17-year-old girlfriend of the much older male protagonist:

² It is not possible to trace here even an outline of the history of dubbing in Italy. It will be sufficient to say that in the 1970s we can register a remarkable, if not crucial, turning point in dubbing, when dialects started to appear in the productions of the big American companies. The first important film where characters speak Sicilian is *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972). From then on, film dialogues have become less stiff and have been marked at times by expressions in dialect. So, since 1970, the linguistic gap between national production and foreign imported production has not been as wide as in the previous decades.

Manhattan, Woody Allen, 1979

ORIGINAL FILM DIALOGUE

MARY: What do you do Tracy?

TRACY: I go to high school.

MARY: Oh, really. Really. Somewhere Nabokov is smiling, if you know what I mean.

ITALIAN ADAPTATION

MARY: Tu che fai, Tracy?

TRACY: Io faccio il liceo.

MARY: Ma senti, senti, il liceo. Sembra talmente lontano il liceo.

And if 1979 seems far away, we can cite a more recent example: the film *Notes on a Scandal* (Richard Eyre, 2006), based on a screenplay by Patrick Marber, contains several literary references, including a direct reference to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. When describing the violent behaviour of teenagers in a classroom, one of the teachers says that "it's bloody *Lord of the Flies* in there". In Italian, the title of the book was translated with "È un pandemonio". A subtle reference to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was also ignored. Two classics of English literature were virtually suppressed in a film supposedly aimed at a cultured audience. The deletion or banalisation of 'intellectual' references is unfortunately a common practice in audiovisual translation into Italian. Translators act in this case on the basis of what I would define the 'presumed ignorance' of the target audience: the audience will presumably not understand the reference and will be confused by it. Highbrow has to become lowbrow by any means: by manipulating and suppressing contents in the source text and also by changing the balance among the various components of the original audiovisual text.

In the 1959 film version of Tennessee Williams's play *Suddenly, Last Summer*, directed by Joseph Mankiewicz, all references to homosexuality were diluted or deleted, and the same treatment was reserved to any sex-food metaphors and to the references to God. The heavy manipulation, for example, of the crucial lines of the film, when the protagonist, Catherine, explains that her homosexual cousin Sebastian chose the "blonds" and the "dark ones" as if they were dishes of an ideal menu, has altered the text in such a way that the blond and dark boys became with the Italian dubbing the more abstract North and South.³ Many other examples show the need to 'sanitise' the sexually charged images of a ravenous and devouring nature. This kind of sex/food metaphors are constant

³ A more thorough analysis, including various examples, of the dubbing of *Improvvisamente l'estate scorsa* can be found in Ranzato (2009).

through the film and the play and their omission dilutes the morbid sensuality of the story.

More interesting still for the present analysis are the less macroscopic ways of unsettling the balance of the original film. One of them is the manipulation of what we can call the prosody of the work through the translation of the phrase which is also the title of the play (and of the film): the words “suddenly, last summer”, repeated continuously both by Mrs Venable and Catherine, are translated into Italian in a variety of ways (“l’altr’anno”, “da un giorno all’altro”, and similar expressions) and sometimes are completely omitted. In the original, the frequent repetition of these words has the effect of pathetically evoking the poem, the “summer song”, that Sebastian, a deluded poet, delivered every summer after a nine-month gestation, until suddenly, last summer, he had left the page blank. By omitting this important repetition, the Italian version loses a text within the text: Sebastian’s poem.

This particular form of rewriting which is dubbing, the last layer of an already multilayered text such as an adaptation usually is, does not simply suppress and alter contents, it also operates meaningfully on the rhythm and even musicality of a film. The narrative structure of this story, characterised by a crescendo of tension released by a few cathartic moments, is sensibly altered in the Italian version.

Another form of rewriting in audiovisual translation takes the form of an alteration of the idiolects. Williams’ play could provide examples in this field too – from the rather vulgar Southern American accents of Catherine’s mother and brother to the more refined monologues delivered by Elizabeth Taylor in the main role to the unmistakable upper class accent of Katherine Hepburn playing Sebastian’s mother, Mrs Venable – but I would like to move on to another classic and to the characters of Brutus and Cassius in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* as adapted in the 1953 film directed by Joseph Mankiewicz. As David Daniell wrote in his introduction to the play, “linguistically, the thin, unsmiling, nervously-articulate Caius Cassius, a modern intellectual and anarchist, is also individually marked, particularly in a way that has not been noticed, for he shows a characteristic of using the most modern vocabulary. This is not absolute throughout the play, but it is notable. Again and again Cassius’s words turn out to be first recorded in the mid-1590s or later” (Daniell 2003, 60). Daniell made a list of recent and very recent words (or recent in the special sense intended) used by Cassius, such as “gusty”, “temper”, “scandal”, “banqueting”, “buffet”, “stemming”, “creature”, “lustre”, “get the start”, “majestic”, “applauses”, “bestride”, “famed with”, “jealous”, “aim”, “chew”, “villager”, “chidden”, “humour”, “trash”, “indifferent”. By contrast, Brutus’s words are often ancient: “gamesome”, “lack”, “part”, “quick”, “spirit”, “hinder” and so on, are all “solidly old” (Daniell 2003, 60-61). Daniell’s interesting analysis parallels Cassius’s ‘speaking modern’ to Iago’s, thus characterising

the ‘speaking modern’ as the idiolect of the villains in Shakespeare. Fascinating as this hypothesis is, what I would like to emphasize here is the fatal loss of such subtle, ingenious nuances in the Italian version, a difference of idiom in Shakespeare’s play which was brought out quite effectively by James Mason as Brutus and John Gielgud as Cassius in Mankiewicz’s film. The Italian faithful translation fails to respect this characterisation, failing to choose particularly ‘contemporary’ words for Cassius and putting on Brutus’s lips expressions which are in fact quite modern:

Julius Caesar, Joseph Mankiewicz, 1953

ORIGINAL FILM DIALOGUE

CASSIUS: Will you go see the order of the course?

BRUTUS: Not I.

CASSIUS: I pray you do.

BRUTUS: I am not gamesome. I do lack some part

Of that quick spirit that is in Antony.

Let me not hinder, Cassius, your desires.

I’ll leave you.

ITALIAN ADAPTATION

CASSIO: Tu non vai a vedere le corse?

BRUTO: Io no.

CASSIO: Ti prego, va’.

BRUTO: Non fa per me. Mi manca un poco del vivace spirito che ha Antonio.

Non impedirò a te Cassio di andarci, ti lascio.

ORIGINAL FILM DIALOGUE

BRUTUS: [...] Conceptions only proper to myself, Which give some soil, perhaps, to my behaviour.

ITALIAN ADAPTATION

BRUTO: [...] Conflitti tutti personali miei che possono talvolta adombrarmi la faccia.

Note, in the second example, the translation of “conceptions” with “conflitti tutti personali miei”, where the XIV century word “conflitti”, from the Latin *conflictus*, is used here in the ‘new’ sense of psychology and thus certainly post-Caesar.

What becomes of these finely chiselled idiolects in the Italian translation? Obviously not much. Even if our adapters always and evidently rely on established published translations of these great texts, it is certain that the loss of colour in characterisation is immense and irreparable.

But if we think that Brutus spoke modern when he said “conflitti”, what could we say of an adaptation totally conceived as to be aimed at a teenage audience, as in Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet*?

This 1996 film was originally, clearly, aimed at the so-called MTV generation (young people born and bred on a diet of video-clip aesthetics), but it did so by way of a use of exclusively visual motifs. In the Italian version, the manipulation of the dialogues has the evident purpose to aim the product at an even younger, certainly less cultured target audience. I argue that this is actually one of the particular goals of adapters into Italian: to widen the target audience. Tonino Accolla, dubbing director and adapter of many Shakespearian films, tailored this product for teenage audiences. If the film in original puts Shakespeare’s words in the mouth of the teenage idol Leonardo Di Caprio, the words are still unmistakably Shakespeare’s. The minor cuts and deletions cannot change the fact that what we hear are Shakespeare’s middle English words. Thus the audience of the film in the original version cannot be too uncultured, too lowbrow, or, hopefully, will be less so after viewing the film. English-speaking teenagers can hear Shakespeare’s words practically unaltered in watching *Romeo + Juliet*, while Italian teenagers (and adults) hear a simplified Shakespeare: speeches that contain no asperities, with few outdated expressions.

Yet another important mode of rewriting in dubbing takes the form of unsettling the balance among the various elements of the audiovisual text (notably images, words and sounds). In the original *Romeo + Juliet* film, it is the images which help the audience understand, for example, Shakespeare’s salacious remarks and jokes. The original film does not alter or simplify Shakespeare’s words, it makes use of the images to give emphasis to the words. Images are used as a bridge to the exotism of Shakespeare’s words but no attempt is made to translate Shakespeare into modern English. Images are there to make it modern. Dubbing intrudes and changes the balance between images and sounds:

***Romeo + Juliet*, Baz Luhrmann, 1996**

ORIGINAL FILM DIALOGUE

BENVOLIO: Tell me in sadness, who is it that you love.

ROMEO: In sadness, cousin, I do love... a woman.

BENVOLIO: I aimed so near when I supposed you loved.

ROMEO: A right good marksman; and she’s fair I love.

BENVOLIO: Rosaline! A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.

ROMEO: She’ll not be hit with Cupid’s arrow. She hath Diana’s wit,
And in strong proof of chastity lives well armed.

BENVOLIO: Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?

ROMEO: She hath; and in that sparing makes huge waste.

ITALIAN ADAPTATION

BENVOLIO: Dimmi seriamente, di chi sei innamorato?

ROMEO: Seriamente, cugino, di una donna.

BENVOLIO: Ah, ho colpito nel segno quando ho detto che sei innamorato.

ROMEO: Hai fatto centro, ed è anche bella.

BENVOLIO: Quando il bersaglio è bello, cugino, si fa centro.

ROMEO: Ma io l'ho mancato. Non si fa vincere dalla freccia di Cupido, né dall'assalto di occhi adoranti, né apre il grembo all'oro che seduce le sante.

BENVOLIO: Allora ha giurato di vivere in castità?

ROMEO: Sì, e questa economia è un grave spreco.

Benvolio's and Romeo's words on hitting the mark in this scene are underlined by the movements of their game of billiards. The sense of the words is exemplified by the thrusting movements of the players' sticks hitting the balls, so even if the words may sound 'exotic' to a contemporary audience, images are there to explain the meaning. The simplified Italian translation makes the visual explanation superfluous, even redundant (maybe even a little vulgar): the balance between images – the movements and expressions of the actors – and the words they utter is dangerously jeopardised:

Romeo + Juliet, Baz Luhrmann, 1996

ORIGINAL FILM DIALOGUE

FATHER LAURENCE: Our Romeo hath not been in bed tonight.

ROMEO: The last is true. The sweeter rest was mine.

FATHER LAURENCE: God pardon sin! Wast thou with Rosaline?

ROMEO: With Rosaline, my ghostly father? No.

I have forgot that name and that name's woe. [...]

FATHER LAURENCE: What a ch'ange is here! Is Rosaline,
that thou didst love so dear,

So soon foresaken? Young men's love then lies

Not truly in their hearts, but in their eyes.

ROMEO: Thou chid'st me oft for loving Rosaline.

FATHER LAURENCE: For doting, not for loving, pupil mine.

ROMEO: I pray thee chide me not. Her I love now

Doth grace for grace and love for love allow. The other did not so.

FATHER LAURENCE: O, she knew well Thy love did read by rote,
that could not spell.

ITALIAN ADAPTATION

FRATE LORENZO: Il nostro Romeo il letto non l'ha nemmeno visto.

ROMEO: È vero, ho fatto di meglio.

FRATE LORENZO: Dio ci perdoni, sei stato con Rosalina?
 ROMEO: Con Rosalina? Mio caro padre, no.
 Ho scordato quel nome e quei tormenti. [...]
 FRATE LORENZO: Che novità è questa? E Rosalina, che amavi alla follia,
 l'hai già dimenticata? Tu mi vuoi fare pensare che non hai l'amore
 nel cuore ma dentro gli occhi.
 ROMEO: Tu non volevi che amassi Rosalina.
 FRATE LORENZO: La idolatravi, non era un amore sano, quello.
 ROMEO: Ti prego, non sgridarmi, colei che amo adesso consente
 e restituisce un amore sereno, l'altra non era così.
 FRATE LORENZO: Mah, quella sapeva che era un amore
 imparato a memoria, senza slanci.

Note here, as well as the translation of middle English into standard modern Italian, the addition of that little word, “(non) sano”, to define Romeo’s immoderate love. Again, a contemporary expression, an expansion to explain better, to make the audience understand better.

This simplifying, but also banalising, operation perfectly justifies the scream of sorrow and dismay of a teen-ager in the packed cinema where I saw *Romeo + Juliet* for the first time. At the end of the film, when both the protagonists are dead, the girl in the audience screamed: “Why did they make it end this way?! Is the director crazy?”. This reaction demonstrates that Accolla’s rewriting has hit its right fair mark, as Benvolio would say.

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