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Why should anyone care about literary translations into Italian in the early nineteenth century? Italians might pay attention, since it is part of how their nation came into existence: a mostly unified Kingdom of Italy would not be declared until 1861. But should anyone else care? This book gives a series of very good reasons: we find that translation can play an active and not always visible role in deep historical change processes; we discover that the otherwise reductive and formulaic opposition between domestication and foreignization can take on active political content in a specific historical context. And we are thus generally shown how a long public debate on the nature and role of translations can concern far, far more than translations. It is a tale worth recounting.

Agorni's story begins in 1816 because that year saw the publication of Madame de Staël's essay "Sulla maniera e l'utilità delle traduzioni" (On the manner and utility of translations), written at the request of the new Italian journal *Biblioteca italiana*. De Staël's generally Romantic argument was that some European literatures, notably in English and German, aspired to universalism, and that translation was the one of the ways this progress could and should be transferred to the literatures that did not, notably in Italian. I note in passing that the French title of the essay is "De l'esprit des traductions" (On the spirit of translations), a wink to Montesquieu's "De l'esprit des lois" (On the spirit laws) of 1748, clearly universalist in both name and aspiration. In Italian, the title's appeal to "manner and utility" reads more like a call to action: in a still-new logic of modernity, Italians were belated and had to catch up.

Sparked by that essay, two opposed camps started to debate with each other in Italian lands. On one side, Romantics broadly accepted this new role for translation and generally favoured a translation method that could import new concepts and turns of phrase from what were perceived to be the more advanced literatures. On the other, Classicists pointed to the glory of the Roman past and the Italian Renaissance, refusing to accept the inferiority of the present and basically arguing that, if translations were needed, they should fit in with the existing literary system. Something like that opposition might be found in most cultures, of course, but it gains particular significance in the case of Italian because of the extreme weight of past glory (one might say similar things about the special weight of the Chinese past). On the surface, the positions would neatly oppose Romantic *foreignization* to Classicist *domestication*, giving those terms an interesting political and historical role as something more than the two abstract poles of what translators can do. The binary opposition also makes sense in terms of one of the proposed laws that comes to us from Descriptive Translation Studies: if the receiving culture feels inferior, translators foreignize; if not, they domesticate – to simplify an observation made by Even-Zohar (1978) and Toury (1995/2012: 314). In historical practice, though, things were not so simple. And that is why we need translation history.

Agorni's historical method, described here as "localism", effectively traces how the big ideas become nuanced and complicated in historical practice. Driving that practice, says Agorni, we have technological advances in printing, which partly industrialized the circulation of printed literature and configured Milan as the literary centre. This means that "translators were not the only agents in this process, printers and reviewers were also very much involved" (36). So localism means looking at much more than a printed translation and a translator's individual claims: we have to consider the whole micro-network of relations between various actors. Agorni thus successively zooms in from the apparently universal binarism to the local complexity, working from the wider debates sparked by De Staël's essay, then to various personal positions of influential reviewers and critics, and finally to an extensive case study where she analyses in detail the work and background of one particular translator. She notes that this approach might also be called "genealogical" (BELLE 2014) and I would add that it has affinities with the applied concepts of "translation culture" (PRUNČ 1997), "microhistory" (MUNDAY 2014) and, for that matter, "intercultures" (PYM 2014). Yet at the end of the day, any historical method has to be judged on what it reveals, not on its name.

Agorni makes it abundantly clear that the opposition set up by De Staël was complicated by the very nature of what was being translated. Walter Scott's historical novels were all the rage across Europe at the time, being translated almost immediately into French and from there into other languages. The form of the historical novel was primarily what the Romantics sensed was lacking in Italian literature. And so it is entirely fitting that Agorni focuses on Scott's main Italian translator, Gaetano Barbieri, in the major case study that closes the book – indeed for which all other chapters set the stage.

So why should Scott's historical novels complicate any facile opposition of foreignization to domestication? The reasons are not really gone into by Agorni, who briefly cites Lukács on the middle-class status of Scott's heroes but somehow overlooks Lukács's study specifically on the historical novel, particularly his linking of the novel form to the rising sense of mass involvement in European history following the Napoleonic wars (1983: 23). Agorni does associate a sense of mass involvement with the *Risorgimento* protests and she clearly links this with the Romantic cause (31). Yet the Lukács's way of linking politics with the historical novel is also a matter of narrative structure. Too often in translation history, texts are counted and dated as if they were inert objects whose form were somehow independent of the translation process. In this case, though, the very nature of the historical novel marks it off from simple logics of belatedness, importing the foreign or filling a gap. While the structure of modernity commonly works on ideologies of progress, where a centre is advanced and a periphery perceives itself as being less advanced (as might be the case, for example, of translations into Chinese from the late nineteenth century), the historical novel is different to the extent that it itself looks *backward*, placing the middle-class Romantic subject in the social fabric of a distant and ostensibly foundational past: it is from our shared social history there, says the novel, that our shared social present has not only come but has become historical. Further, whereas the centres of the greater modernity coincided with technological and industrial development (again, such was the perception from China), Walter Scott was looking back on the disintegration of the pre-industrial Scottish clan systems. In effect, this meant locating a past for which functionally equivalent locations could be found in virtually all European cultures: each nation was implicitly invited to discover its own foundational past, its own historical novel. And this is precisely what happened in Italy, where the historical novel was developed under the pen of Alessandro Manzoni, just as it took shape through Balzac

in France, Tolstoy in Russia or Pérez Galdós in Spain, among many others. Given this structure, any simple opposition of Romantic foreignization to Classicist domestication was not really going to work: the foreign itself was an invitation to look back to the receiving culture's own foundational past. Hence the extreme interest of Agorni's case study.

So what did Gaetano Barbieri do when translating Walter Scott? On Agorni's general analysis, since he was a Liberal, one we might expect his sympathies to be more on the foreignizing side of business, seeking reform through imports from abroad. Something like a foreignizing position can indeed be read into the translator's expressed need to move beyond the intermediary French translations by Defauconpret, actually learning English from 1829 so as to translate directly from Scott, which he then did at an industrial rate. His direct translations from English soon gained a distinctive market value and hence visibility, as indeed did his status as a teacher of mathematics – duly noted on his translations. Yet status as an English-learning schoolteacher does not in itself solve the problem of how to translate.

Barbieri's answer to the question of whether to go literal or to adapt was firstly to take a bit of both: character's names are kept in English, for example, while historical figures are Italianized, as was the practice of the day. In an isolated reflection on his translation method, Barbieri explicitly allowed interventions that were based on the translator's subjective interpretation of the text, as long as they were made "with wisdom and moderation". Agorni glosses this reference to subjective interpretation as enabling Barbieri "to deconstruct the opposition between domesticating and foreignizing translations" (108), which is what happens. Yet Barbieri's more substantial solution then clearly becomes his use of copious *translator notes* in order not just to present explanations, glosses and interpretations, but also to comment on the action in the first person, as an observer and expert guide, "an authoritative literary critic" (109), says Agorni. For example, the translator tells us when a passage almost moves him to tears; he criticizes Scott for a casual reference to "treacherous Italians"; he links episodes to other novels by Scott (which helped to market more translations); and he compares the Scottish cultural references to similar moments in Italian history, for instance by relating Mary Stuart's court to that of Cosmo de' Medici (116). This use of translator notes effectively domesticates the foreign even while allowing a timid foreignness in the text itself. The mixing of translation methods thus gains a very specific historical content.

Agorni shows how this translation practice not only introduced the form of the historical novel but also connected with its rise within Italian letters. A long translator note by Barbieri compares Scott's *The Fair Maid of Perth* with Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed), noting the similarity in plot and style but then actually giving the advantage to Manzoni, who was apparently better at portraying characters. Within the Italian translation of Scott, we thus effectively find publicity for the homegrown Italian counterpart. The transfer might thus be considered complete.

Agorni's selection and presentation of this elaborate case study is astute and narratively engaging. She does not hesitate to take issue with previous research when necessary, and she is at the same time modest in recognizing that further studies of this kind are needed in order to build up a more complete historical account. For me, further accounts are indeed necessary. In particular, one might have hoped for more information on the kinds of Italian that were being used in the translations. When Agorni notes that the *Risorgimento* protests linked a broad social class with the Romantic cause (31), she does not wholly explain how such a movement would connect with novels translated into an Italian that less than ten percent of the population used in everyday communication – one assumes people read many more words than were

in the Italian they spoke. And when she comments on the 1842 second edition of Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*, she notes that it imitated the variety of educated Florentines and served a pedagogical function in spreading literary Italian (121), but this raises new questions for an outsider. For example, if Milan had become the centre of publishing (as is clearly documented here), why would Florence provide the literary language? And if a common educated Italian was being forged, where exactly did a translator like Barbieri draw his Italian from? One supposes that the Florentine tradition of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio was working somewhere in the background to answer both questions, but once again non-Italian readers will need more information. And then, even when the charitable assumptions are made, what actual evidence do we have of the Scott translations reaching anything like a mass readership? It is clear that such questions cannot be tackled without due attention to the role of publishers, to the technologies of printing and distribution, the prices, paper quality and paratexts that signal of intended readerships, and the role of literary critics and press reviews. All these elements of "localism" are indeed present in the chapters that set the scene for the final case study of Barbieri's Walter Scott. Yet they are strangely absent from the narrative of the case study itself.

I look forward to more.

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