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ANALYSIS OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE ITALIAN TRANSLATIONS OF THE WORKS OF P.G. WODEHOUSE (1881-1975) IN THE LIGHT OF THE EPISTEMIC APPROACH

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Abstract

Research on Humour and Translation studies requires instruments capable to appreciate their complex nature. We present here the epistemic approach, a tool especially devised to analyse the translation of humour instances in written fictional text. This approach focuses on the role knowledge plays in creative production and in the process of translating, allowing both translators and researchers to recognize the functions of the stylistic devices employed to convey humour, and to guide and evaluate their rendering in translation. The stylistic device investigated in this study is intertextuality in the works of humourist writer P.G. Wodehouse (1881-1975). By means of a case study, its treatment in translation is analysed, comparing five translations of the same novel into Italian, published between 1931 and 1994.

Keywords: P.G. Wodehouse. Epistemic approach. Intertextuality. Retranslation. Comic style.

The way humour is produced and perceived, which is both universal and subjective, is one of the reasons why the rendering in translation is complex and laborious, but it is also why the work of the translator as much as that of the researcher can be a stimulating experience, filled with gratifications.

Precisely because of its complexity, humour can be investigated from multiple perspectives and, most certainly, its study requires tools that allow for an understanding of the underlying mechanisms in the most comprehensive way.

This paper suggests the employment of an inter-disciplinary tool to the analysis of the translation process of written texts: the epistemic approach.

The inter-disciplinary dimension of this approach presupposes taking into account both the premises and the methodology of application.

The text is contextualized within the author's career and literary production, the typology is taken into consideration and the characteristics of the phenomenon on which the study focuses are analysed.

The parts played by all parties involved in this relationship are examined: the author and the reader in the first place, but also the editor and the figures who support the author in the creative process, such as the literary agents and those he is close to in real life. The intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the creative writing process are considered. Particular attention is paid to the knowledge of the author's world, how it reverberates within his literary works and how much this can interact with the world of the readers.

The characteristics of the text are identified with respect to their function and they are analysed accordingly. In the case of humoristic texts, it is necessary to recognize which mechanisms the text employs, using the contributions and resources made available by disciplines which contribute to its study, such as, for example, psychology, philosophy and linguistics.

The methodology described is applied to the study of the translation process, in which other figures are inserted resulting in an even more complex framework. A particular focus resides on the figure of the author, a part played from time to time by the editor and, obviously, by the translator. The skills of the latter and their knowledge affect the translation process and, therefore, also the characteristics of the text, including the translation quality.

Within the current study, the epistemic approach was applied to the analysis of the works of a great English humorist, an author translated and known all over the world. His popularity offers researchers an invaluable resource consisting of the large number of works produced, translated and retranslated in many languages. Specifically, the study deals with his literary production translated into Italian, from 1928 to the present day, and it focuses on the use of intertextual references and their function within his works.

1. P.G. Wodehouse: Literary Career

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (1881-1975), a well-known humoristic writer, who was born in England and who became an American national in 1955, had a long and extremely prolific literary career. He published his first story as a boy, at age nineteen, while he was still at school (the beloved Dulwich, near London) and he was working on his latest novel when he was found dead, in hospital, a few months after his ninety third birthday.

He is the creator of hilarious and improbable entanglements, mostly set in an age suspended in time (Prasad 2004), in places now famous, such as the castle of Blandings or the *Drones Club*, shaped after the London circles of the Edwardian age, and of well-known characters, such as the amiable and absent-minded Lord Emsworth and his authoritarian sisters, as well as the couple consisting of Bertie Wooster and his valet Jeeves. His stories are told with the lightness of a great humorist who deals with language in a masterly way.

His first humoristic story was published in the *Public School Magazine* in 1900, while his first paid job was the publication of an article in the November issue of the *Tit-Bits* magazine in the same year (McCrum 2005: 49).

The collaborations with various London magazines allowed him to leave his job at the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in London, which did not suit him very well, but where his father had directed him, because he could not afford to keep him at university. After a period of occasional collaboration, he was hired by *The London Globe* for which he edited the *By the Way* column: his job was to produce a humoristic composition in verse that had to be ready by twelve every morning. It was a prestigious assignment (the column was published on the front page and it had been previously edited by renowned writers), which he kept for seven years and which, as Wodehouse himself recalls in the autobiographical *Over Seventy*, taught him to work under constant pressure.

Wodehouse wrote to engage and entertain. In an age that saw the blooming of modernist literature (Mooneyham 1994), he produced light and amusing works while stating that there were only two ways to write novels: one was to

jump into life and to go all the way, while the other (namely his) was to ignore it completely and to write musical comedies without the music.

He published a lot: it is not possible to know the exact extent of his work, since he signed many texts with numerous pseudonyms, such as, for example, J. Plum, P. Brooke-Haven, Pelham Grenville, Melrose Grainger, CP West, J. Walker Williams (McCrum 2005: 114), and / or J. William Walker (Phelps 1992: 116). The numerous bibliographies compiled over time, referring only to the volumes signed with the name of P.G. Wodehouse, do not agree on the total number of works, for mainly editorial reasons, because the stories were collected differently in the various editions in Great Britain and in the United States. His biographers, however, agree that his first novel, *The Puthunters*, was published in volume in 1902 and that the number of books published during his lifetime were about a hundred, out of which ninety are novels and collections of stories. To these, one must add the already mentioned collaborations with magazines, nineteen theatrical works, some original and others originating in his novels, signed by him alone or in collaboration with others (for example, with his friend Guy Bolton), and the many contributions, between 1917 and 1935, to numerous musical comedies staged in London as a librettist and lyricist (Usborne 1981). During his first "American period", he wrote screenplays for successful Broadway musicals, starting with the years of the First World War.

His relationship with the United States was intense and Wodehouse came to consider it his second homeland (Ratcliffe 2012). He visited the continent twice briefly, in 1904 and 1909, and then he came to live in New York and California, writing comedies for Broadway and screenplays for Hollywood. After a brief stay in England, Wodehouse moved to France and, after the Second World War, moved for good to the West Coast of the United States. In 1955 he gained his citizenship (Donaldson 2014; McCrum 2005; Usborne 1978).

1.1 Wodehouse's Success in the World

Wodehouse is popular all over the world, not just the English speaking part of it, and his works have been translated into at least 28 languages, starting with the first edition of the novel *Piccadilly Jim*, translated into Swedish in 1920. The curious initiative of an admirer and collector of his works, the editor James H. Heimann, is worth mentioning, since it resulted into the translation of a short story, *The Great Sermon Handicap*, into 57 languages. The literary work was originally published in 1922, in *Strand Magazine,* and the following year in *The Inimitable Jeeves* collection.

The translations in ancient and modern languages, from Afrikaans to Sanskrit, were collected in 6 volumes in 1989.

For his foreign readers, including the Americans who were actually reading the original versions, his world represented Edwardian England. Its places are manors, castles surrounded by vast parks, sleepy rural surroundings, golf courses and pubs with imaginative names. The characters are idle young people, aristocrats, and butlers, American plutocrats, whose flaws are kindly teased by Wodehouse in a rich, precise and extremely creative language. Which of these aspects has it been possible to keep in translation and how is a question that is certainly worth asking oneself.

2. P.G. Wodehouse's Literary Works Translated in Italian

The current paper on intertextuality in Wodehouse's writings is part of a broader research that aims to analyze the Italian translations of his works. Wodehouse is a writer well known to the Italian public at large and my current research aims at understanding the reasons behind such a success and at comparing the translations that have occurred over the years.

In Italy, Wodehouse's books have been translated since 1928 and often publishers have competed against each other in order to publish his titles. The survey conducted in the current paper made it possible to establish that, to date, 88 titles have been translated, in a total of 592 editions and 175 translations. This includes the largest number in the so-called "decade of translations", the thirties, which coincides with an extremely prolific period of Wodehouse's career, although his titles are still to be found in the catalog of more than one publisher, with new translations being commissioned.

The average is two translations per title, but some have been re-proposed in new translations even four times. For one of these, *A Damsel in Distress*, from 1929, five translations were commissioned over a period of 45 years, starting in 1931. This constitutes itself as a very interesting material in the context of re-translation studies, which allows not only to compare how the original text was rendered, but also to note some characteristics of the Italian publishing legacy. The title was in fact published in two different translations in 1931, by the publisher Monanni (who first introduced Wodehouse in Italy) and by Bietti, respectively under the titles *Una donzella in imbarazzo* (translation by Francesco Palumbo) and *Una signorina in imbarazzo* (translation by Ariberto Mozzati).

Furthermore, in 1935, the publisher S.A.C.S.E. published the same translation, by Alfredo Bianchini, with two different titles: *Un capriccio e poi…* and *Un matrimonio complicato*. The Lucchi edition, in 1939, in a new translation by

Gian Dàuli, resumes the title of a successful film based on a Wodehouse novel, *Una magnifica avventura*. Since 1994, a new translation has been published, by Rosetta Palazzi, with the same title, *Una donzella in imbarazzo*, first used by Mursia and then by Guanda, in 2004, and by TEA, in 2006.

3. P.G. Wodehouse's Style

Despite the fact that Wodehouse's comic style is acknowledged as extraordinary and inimitable even by its few detractors, it has been the subject of few systematic studies (Hall 1974). The comments on his style are signed by famous colleagues, such as Hilaire Belloc and Evelyn Waugh, literary critics, such as Eric Gillette, and Oxford professors, such as Lord David Cecil (Keir 1973), and they are to be found mainly in the prefaces and presentations of his books. In these, Wodehouse is praised as a "superb craftsman of the word", "a master creator of plots" and "unforgettable comic figures". There is also a lot of high praise for his wit and his ability to employ prestigious stylistic devices and quotes from the most unexpected sources. Even the paratextual material present in the Italian editions of his works praises extensively the style, defined as being unique and characterized by a great linguistic and expressive skill.

Wodehouse's humor resides in the plot, in the characters, but above all in the language. Of his plots, it has been said that they seem "miracles of ingenuity" (McCrum 2005) and Prasad (2004: 156) states that "the inventiveness of Wodehouse weaves an intricate verbal web around the reader". In the preface to the Italian edition of *Heavy Weather* (*Aria di tempesta* of 1994, for Ugo Guanda), Giorgio Manganelli writes that Wodehouse is a master of parts, as much as classical Greek and Latin playwrights, and he compares him to Menander and Terence.

Wodehouse's vocabulary is very rich and it is employed in an extremely creative way (Prasad 2004). The *Oxford English Dictionary* contains 1,800 citations from his writings (McCrum 2005), accrediting him as the first user in the English language of 180 words or expressions (www.oed.com; June 20, 2016). This aspect certainly constitutes a challenge for the translator who has to render his texts in a language other than English.

However, as noted by Charles Ryskam in the preface to *P.G. Wodehouse. At Centenary Celebration* (1981: xi), the success of the numerous translations of his works into German, Dutch, Swedish, Japanese, Italian, Turkish and Portuguese proves that the literary virtues of Wodehouse go beyond his ability to use language. In the same celebratory volume, editor Heineman declares that, although he cannot disavow that he has always been fascinated by the intricate storylines of Wodehouse's stories and his idiosyncratic use of English,

what has most attached him to his work is "the pristine quality, the pure music of dialogues and narrative" (in Thompson 1992: xiii, my translation).

The image of music is often associated with Wodehouse's prose. For example, Hall (1974) notes how comparable is the perceptible variation in his writing to the structure of a musical composition. There is no doubt that Wodehouse's style was influenced by his experiences in the London theater world and in the American musical. Between 1904 and 1928, Wodehouse contributed to the lyrics of 29 musical comedies, 20 librettos and he published over 300 songs (Heineman & Bensen 1981).

Despite his many sided and prolific activity, Wodehouse has managed to maintain a stylistic coherence that makes his style recognizable and unmistakable. While reading him, his prose seems to flow effortlessly, and yet we know from examining the manuscripts, which are richly annotated, that his style was the result of continuous revisions (Thompson 1992).

4. The Stylistic Analysis in the Age of *Digital Humanities*

The literary style is an ineffable notion and, therefore, multiple definitions have been offered. An interesting proposal, in the era of Digital Humanities, was put forward by Herrmann, van Dalen-Oskam and Schöch. The aim of the authors is to "introduce an operational definition of style that incorporates a minimal common ground for interdisciplinary empirical research and the application of new, digital methods" (2015: 28).

Their definition, which will be applied in the following considerations, reads as follows: "Style is a property of texts constituted by an ensemble of formal features which can be observed quantitatively or qualitatively" (2015: 44).

By text, the authors intend both a complete text and a fragment, but also single or collected texts (for example, by the same author). Formal features concern the lexical, semantic, syntactic level just as those that transcend the phrase (such as, for example, the narrative perspective) and that are comparable to what Hall (1974), drawing from Riffaterre (1959), has dubbed Stylistic Devices (SD). In the translation process, the theoretical study of the SD is relevant because it assists the translator, actively supporting him in the search for the characteristics of the TT, helping him to cope with the difficulties in rendering it in the TL and to implement any compensation mechanisms in order to obtain the result of the original text.

In his text, Hall (1974) identifies the SD used by Wodehouse at word level (phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic) and at discourse level (incongruity, figurative language, quotations and what he calls "stylistic rhythm").

The analysis of the corpus derived as such from my research has allowed me to identify others, among which the treatment of clichés and idioms, sudden transitions (bathos) and intertextuality, which is the object of a specific focus in this paper that promises to highlight just how this stylistic feature specific to Wodehouse has been rendered by Italian translators.

The notion of intertextuality has been used in many research fields, from literary criticism to semiotics and to linguistics, and it has therefore been defined in many ways. Genette (1979: 81, my translation) called it a "relationship of coexistence between texts". In the current study, we understand by intertextuality, as the SD used by Wodehouse, the appeal, both explicit and implicit, to texts unequivocally belonging to other sources: literature, religion, folk, theater and music.

5. The Epistemic Approach: An Introduction

In the current study, the method employed to analyze the treatment of intertextuality in the translation of P.G. Wodehouse is the epistemic approach.

This approach acknowledges the socially constructed nature of knowledge (Latour & Woolgar 1979) and it is based on the assumption that perceptions are transformed into coherent experiences that are subsequently transformed into abstract forms of knowledge (Dowst 1980: 69). The aim of an epistemic approach is to identify the way in which this process takes place and its effects within a specific field of research, in this case the translation of a written narrative text. The essential traits in the translation field will be presented here, as this is not the place for an extensive analysis on this topic, an aspect that will be the object of a more extensive discussion, which is still in progress, by the author of this article.

Since a text does not exist by itself (Suleiman & Crosman 2014), always in the need to be updated, it is necessary to trigger a process of interaction with the reader who must relate the textual elements with his or her own knowledge (Colina 2015). This process is relevant to translation studies because the translator is primarily a reader. The knowledge necessary for this interaction consists of two distinct classes (Valentino 2010): the linguistic codes (LC) used and the knowledge of the world (KnoW).

The KnoW, which can be defined as knowledge derived from experience (Valentino 2010: 9), is the result of the interventions that each individual works in and on the world and his or her active relations with the signs. It maintains a continuous dialogue with external stimuli, it is dynamic, open, and therefore conjectural, uncertain and critical (Popper 1972). It is the recurrent generator of predictions necessary to textual interpretation and it allows the activation

of the schemes, understood as "organizational structures known to the reader and related to a particular situation" (Colina 2015: 159, my translation GV), which contribute to the acknowledgement of coherence within the text.

In writing, coherence can be achieved by means of syntactic and meaningful connections that must be collected and elaborated by the reader. It is possible, as Baker (2011: 222) observes, that these may be "common to a certain number of languages" (my translation GV), but each language uses them in a specific way. Coherence is a psychological necessity: we tend to organize the stimuli to which we are exposed in a coherent way and, because of our innate inclination, to seek regularity (Popper 1972) and to try to resolve any inconsistencies.

Even if, as a rule, incongruity is perceived as an impediment in communication that must be removed as soon as possible, it is one of the mechanisms credited with triggering humor as well. The first of the linguistic theories elaborated in the field of humor studies, the Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH), by Raskin (1979 and 1985), has underlined its role: a text is humorous when it is compatible with two scripts placed in local antinomy. By script, Raskin understands each of the cognitive structures of basic meaning internalized by the speakers, which represent the individual knowledge of standardized procedures and recurring situations (Raskin 1979), prototypical of the described entities (Attardo 2001), that are linked to the lexical voices present in the text and evoked by them. Since this is not the place or the time to explore the formal aspects of this theory and its limits in detail, which are partially overcome by its development in the broader General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH, Attardo & Raskin 1991), it will be sufficient to underline the relevance of the clash between opposing scripts in generating and perceiving humor within a text.

Applied to translation, the epistemic approach takes a look at the way in which the contribution of KnoW influences, first, the reading of the text to be translated (ST) and, consequently, the result of the translation process (TT). When applied to the examination of the mechanisms that render a text humorous, the epistemic approach analyzes how the KnoW allows for the recognition of the two scripts, which are simultaneously present in the text, the grasping of the conflict and its solution. By extension, the epistemic approach is the tool that helps highlight the cognitive processes (inferences and implicatures) that the translator implements when he is engaged in the task of decoding the text, grasping its coherence and incongruity and consequently highlighting each one in its turn in the TT.

6. Intertextuality in P.G. Wodehouse

The function of intertextuality in humoristic texts and the role that the KnoW plays in its identification are also recognized within the GTVH. Attardo (2001: 71) notes the vagueness of the boundaries of intertextuality as a concept and he puts forth a definition, writing that one can state that a text (Ti) has an intertextual relation with another text (Tj) when the elaboration of Ti would be incomplete without a reference to Tj. He adds that the reference can be to any constituent element of the text (the meaning, the formal organization and the circumstances in which the text is produced).

Wodehouse makes frequent use of remarks hinting to canonical texts, such as those of Shakespeare and the Bible, and his more or less explicit references to proverbs, idioms, texts and folk songs are a characteristic trait of his comic style (Usborne 1981, Olney 1962, French 1966, Voorhees 1966). This is not pure parody, to which Wodehouse recurs very infrequently, but a real SD, used with generous mastery. The relationship between his texts and those to which he refers is such that it can be defined as intense, in the light of Broich and Pfister's intermediatory model (Säckel, Göbel & Hamdy 2009): Wodehouse uses intertextuality repetitively and consciously.

The references to Shakespeare are particularly frequent in the Jeeves and Bertie Wooster cycle and they increase the comic effect of the dialogues, underlining the discrepancy between the learned and wise servant and his master, described as a silly fop who received a classical education, traces of which can be barely seen (Morris & Macintyre 1981). Shakespeare is a mine for Jeeves' wise and sagacious observations, and he is also often referred to by Bertie, although in a vague and woolly way, as if his memory was hard pressed to bring forth the quotes. For example, in *The Code of the Woosters*, Wodehouse alludes to Shakespeare eleven times. We find "the native hue of resolution" (*Hamlet*), "full many a glorious morning" (*Sonnet XXXIII*), "taken his pound of flesh" (with reference to *The Merchant of Venice*). But one also sees it with the easygoing superficiality of Bertie, "sleep which does something", in an attempt to retrieve the exact quote from *Macbeth*,[1] even referring to the same Macbeth as "the cat chap" alluding to the words of Lady Macbeth: "Letting 'I give not' wait upon 'I would', Like the poor cat in 'the adage?"[2] (*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 7).

1. "Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care" (*Act II Scene 2*): "il sonno che ravvia, sbroglia, dipana l'arruffata matassa degli affanni" (Translation by Goffredo Raponi).
2. "Lasciando che il 'Non oso' accompagni Il 'Vorrei', come il povero gatto nel proverbio"(Translation by Agostino Lombardo).

Sometimes Bertie assigns quotations from Shakespeare to the wisdom of his valet Jeeves instead. The following example is actually from Sonnet 33, although revisited in a manner typical of Bertie:

> I remember Jeeves saying to me once, apropos of how you can never tell what the weather's going to do, that full many a glorious morning had he seen flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye and then turn into a rather nasty afternoon (*The Code of the Woosters* 1938: 245).

In addition, Bertie, who boasts that he has won an award at school for mastering the Scripture, often refers to the Bible. Father Rob Bovendeaard, compiler of "Biblia Wodehousiana" and Terry Mordue, unrivaled researcher and commentator of Wodehouse's work (http://terry-mordue.co.uk/biblia-wodehousiana/) identified 2,275 quotations from the Old and New Testament in the 90 books belonging to the Wodehousian canon. For example, again in *The Code of the Woosters* (Wodehouse 1938: 195), one finds the following: "I had been dreaming that I was driving through my head—not just ordinary spikes, as used by Jael the wife of Heber, but red-hot ones ".

The stylistic artifice of the search for the biblical reference by a character with a woolly memory, in this case the unpredictable Lord Ickenham, is found in *Uncle Dynamite* (Wodehouse 1948: 9):

> Pongo is in terrific form. He bestrides the world like a Colossus. It would not be too much to say that Moab is his washpot and over what's-his-name has he cast his shoe.

Here the reference is to Psalm 60.8 of the King James Version (KJV). The quotation, although vague and deliberately imprecise, is strengthened by the imitation of the style of the Scriptures familiar to Wodehouse's readers and it guides them towards the identification of the hypothesis.

Wodehouse also draws heavily on English and Latin literature: allusions to works by Tennyson, Longfellow, Blake, Gray, Keats, Byron, Scott, but also by Latin poets such as Lucretius, Juvenal, Horace, and the philosopher Marcus Aurelius, probably the favorite and most cited by Wodehouse, whose thinking is often reported by Jeeves as an example of impartial and detached judgment on human affairs, abound everywhere.

Popular, light fiction such as mystery stories or thrillers, folklore and musical comedies are other sources Wodehouse drew upon. One can identify references to novels contemporary to his, to proverbs, nursery rhymes and songs.

Hints to the very popular works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle are already found in Wodehouse's first contribution to *Public School Magazine*, in December 1900. Wodehouse was an admirer of Conan Doyle and he declares himself as

such in his introduction to The Ballantine 1977 edition of *The Sign of the Four*, written when he was already ninety years old. The two writers went to England and, despite being twenty years apart in age, often played cricket together. Wodehouse was honored by the bond of friendship shared with his "hero" and they stopped frequenting each other only when Wodehouse moved to the United States. However, they remained very close (McCrum 2005) and Wodehouse alluded to the character of Sherlock Holmes many times in his work. Nor did he limit himself to this: the very famous expression "Elementary, my dear Watson" is not to be found in any of Conan Doyle's stories: it is an invention of Wodehouse, who made his Psmith character utter it loud and clear with reference to Sherlock Holmes, in *Psmith Journalist*, published for the first time in *The Captain* magazine in 1909 and later in volume, with the same title, in 1915.

Wodehouse's relation with the sources of his intertextual references, therefore, appears to be profound and advantageous. His ability to skillfully mix popular literature with scholarly material (highbrow) has placed him under the scrutiny of scholars in the recent literature debate on the so-called "middlebrow literature". In fact, he is acknowledged to have understood the formula: in *Middlebrow Wodehouse* (Rea 2015), Einhaus notes how much he draws from scholarly works as well as from the most popular ones, stating that his nonchalant and smooth use of highbrow references is a fundamental aspect of what could be called his specific middlebrow aesthetics. According to Einhaus (in Rea 2015), his professional aesthetic is based on the very principles of the formula: an intermediate position between highbrow intellectualism and the most derisive forms of consumer literature, an emphasis on the readability of a work and on the refusal to take himself seriously. This may very well be the key to his popularity.

7. Intertextuality in Translation

The translation of intertextuality applied to humoristic texts, which, as Chiaro (2010) notes, show an extreme linguistic and cultural specificity, is a daunting task. The translator must be able, thanks to his KnoW, to recognize, track and render these references belonging to the culture of the ST. Not only that, he must also be able to understand them and, consequently, render their function.

In the case of Wodehouse, the function of intertextual references is to generate a contrast between scripts, to adhere to forms of middlebrow culture and to assign features to characters.

The following example, a sample from *The Girl on the Boat* (1922), allows one to better illustrate the conflict between scripts. Horatio and his *Ars Poetica*

are mentioned without actually naming them. The excerpt is part of an intermezzo in the narration: the hero, wounded by the girl he loves, came down to Southampton from the ocean liner on which he had met her. Instead of going immediately to London to meet his father, he takes refuge in a desolate seaside resort on the Channel. This, says the narrator, is one of the ways in which a man disappointed in love can react. Yet there are others:

> *Archilocum*, for instance, according to the Roman writer, *proprio rabies armavit iambo*. It is no good pretending out of politeness that you know what it means, so I will translate. *Rabies* – his grouch – *armavit* – armed – *Archilochum* – Archilocus – *iambo* – with the iambic – *proprio* – his own invention. In other words, when the poet Archilocus was handed his hat by the lady of his affections, he consoled himself by going off and writing satirical verse about her in a new metre which he had thought up immediately after leaving the house. That was the way the thing affected him.

The contrast of registers between the Latin verses and the paraphrase offered by Wodehouse is an example of *bathos*, a passage, more sudden than that of an anticlimax, from a sublime to a trivial tone. Bringing forth an example of Latin classical poetry to illustrate in these terms the state of mind of a modern hero is an instance of incongruity: the two opposing scripts are simultaneously activated and interpolated by the narrator's comments, who, with paternalistic conceit, turns and directly addresses the narratee: a narrative technique to which Wodehouse resorts very rarely and that here, given the ambiguity of the pronoun "you", will force the Italian translator to choose between various solutions. This is how Alfredo Pitta translates the excerpt (*La ragazza del transatlantico*, Wodehouse, 1932: 126):

> *Archilocum*, per esempio, secondo lo scrittore latino, *proprio rabies armavit iambo*. Non è una mancanza di cortesia il supporre che i lettori ignorino che cosa ciò voglia dire: e perciò traduco. *Rabies*, il cruccio; *armavit,* armò; *Archilochum*, Archiloco; *iambo*, del giambo; *proprio*, di sua invenzione. In altre parole, quando il poeta Archiloco fu congedato dalla signora dei suoi pensieri, si consolò scrivendo dei versi satirici su di lei in un nuovo metro che egli immaginò subito dopo essere stato messo alla porta. Ecco in che modo manifestò il proprio dispiacere.

Pitta's prose is elegant, but the choice of the register is unfortunately inadequate: it does not allow the reader to grasp the opposing scripts. Translating thus "grouch", "was handed his hat" and "thought up", he does not prove to have understood the comic expertise that Wodehouse displays by mixing the registers. Moreover, the translator decides to translate "you" with a generic and bland "readers" so the narrator's reproachful tone loses much of its humorous effect, already compromised by the fact that the meaning of "out of politeness"

has been misunderstood. One notes, however, the implementation of a compensation process in the use of "messo alla porta" that corrects the inadequate register of "congedato".

8. Applying the Epistemic Approach to the Analysis of Intertextuality

The Wodehouse translator must be aware that recourse to intertextuality is a feature that strongly characterizes the author's style, creating inconsistencies in the speech with a humorous effect. The translator must therefore be able to recognize and translate these occurrences so as to allow the reader to enjoy them. In fact, Chiaro notes (2010: 7) that readers of a translated humoristic text expect to have fun, to the same extent as those of the original text.

The translator is therefore required to 1) recognize the intertextual reference, 2) to identify the hypotext, and 3) to efficiently render the translation. Because of the way in which Wodehouse skillfully disseminates the clues, recognizing the presence of an intertextual reference is not a difficult task: even when Wodehouse limits himself to alluding to a hypotext, he imitates its style and register (see, for example, the already quoted above "over what's-his-name is he cast his shoe", in which the subject / verb inversion recalls the style of the Bible in the version known to its English readers).

The identification of the particular source is less easy, considering that Wodehouse's extensive readings allowed him to wander considerably, drawing mainly on literary and popular English sources. The role of the translator's KnoW is at this stage of the process more than obvious: having grasped the idea, the professional translator will search for the hypotext. If the translator succeeds in his intent, he or she will have the source available for use.

The translator will therefore be faced with a choice: to use a possibly pre-existing translation or to offer a translation of his or her own.

9. Case Study: Comparing the Italian Translations of a *Damsel in Distress*

This study has analyzed and compared the Italian translations of a Wodehouse novel by applying the principles of the epistemic approach.

The intertextuality, as defined above, has been recognized as one of the SD characterizing Wodehouse's humoristic style. Its function is recognized in: 1) creating script conflict, 2) conveying features to characters, and 3) expressing the middlebrow aesthetic.

Each intertextual occurrence of the original was assessed in light of its predominant function and it was then evaluated whether this function had been maintained in the renderings of the 5 translators. This offers the possibility to evaluate either how the translators' KnoW influenced the translation process,

or the result of the translator's effort, but also it allows for a prediction of the effect it had on the perception of the humoristic intent by the reader of the translated text.

9.1 Method

For this study, the five existing Italian translations of the 1919 Wodehouse novel *A Damsel in Distress* were analyzed. The data are shown in Table 1.

Nr.	Page	CATEGORY	TRANS 1	TRANS 2	TRANS 3	TRANS 4	TRANS 5
1	2	Literature	RENDERED	RENDERED	NR	RENDERED	RENDERED
2	15	Literature	NR	NR	IGNORED	NR	RENDERED
3	9	Folklore	NR	NR	IGNORED	NR	NR
4	25	Literature	NU	NR	NU	NR	NU
5	27	Literature	NR	NR	NR	NR	RENDERED
6	15	Music	NU	NR	NU	*LC	RENDERED
7	31	Literature	NR	NR	RENDERED	NR	RENDERED
8	37	Scripture	NR	NU	IGNORED	IGNORED	NU
9	38	Literature	RENDERED	NU	IGNORED	NU	RENDERED
10	41	Literature	NU	NR	IGNORED	NR	NR
11	53	Myth	*LC	NU	*LC	NU	RENDERED
12	54	Literature	NR	NR	NR	RENDERED	RENDERED
13	67	Literature	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED
14	69	Literature	NU	NU	NU	NR	RENDERED
15	71	Literature	PARAPHRASED	NU	PARAPHRASED	NU	NU
16	75	Literature	NU	NU	NU	NU	NU
17	78	Literature	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED
18	79	Folklore	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED
19	82	Scripture	NU	NU	IGNORED	NU	RENDEREDn
20	83	Music	IGNORED	NR	IGNORED	RENDERED	RENDERED
21	83	Music	IGNORED	IGNORED	IGNORED	RENDERED	NU
22	84	Scripture	RENDERED	IGNORED	RENDERED	IGNORED	RENDEREDn
23	89	Literature	RENDERED	IGNORED	RENDERED	RENDERED	NR
24	93	Folklore	RENDERED	NR	IGNORED	NR	RENDERED
25	100	Folklore	RENDERED	NR	NU	RENDERED	NR
26	102	Literature	PARAPHRASED	NR	PARAPHRASED	NR	IGNORED
27	112	Literature	PARAPHRASED	NR	PARAPHRASED	RENDERED	NR
28	119	Literature	IGNORED	NR	IGNORED	RENDERED	RENDERED
29	119	Scripture	*LC	*LC	*LC	*LC	RENDERED
30	126	Literature	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED
31	130	Literature	NU	NR	NU	NR	RENDERED
32	135	Scripture	*LC	NU	*LC	RENDERED	RENDERED
33	142	Literature	IGNORED	NR	IGNORED	IGNORED	NR
34	165	Scripture	RENDERED	NR	RENDERED	NR	NR

35	166	Literature	RENDERED	NU	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED
36	183	Myth	NR	NU	IGNORED	NU	RENDERED
37	187	Literature	NU	NU	NU	NU	RENDERED
38	199	Literature	NU	RENDERED	NU	RENDERED	RENDERED
39	207	Literature	RENDERED	IGNORED	IGNORED	RENDERED	RENDERED
40	207	Literature	IGNORED	NU	IGNORED	NU	NR
41	211	Literature	IGNORED	NU	IGNORED	RENDERED	RENDERED
42	215	Folklore	IGNORED	NU	IGNORED	NU	RENDERED
43	217	Literature	NU	RENDERED	IGNORED	NU	RENDERED
44	231	Folklore	NR	IGNORED	NR	NR	RENDERED
45	243	Literature	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED	RENDERED
46	262	Scripture	NR	RENDERED	IGNORED	NR	RENDERED
47	278	Scripture	IGNORED	RENDERED	IGNORED	RENDERED	RENDERED
48	228	Scripture	NR	NU	NR	RENDERED	RENDERED
49	244	Scripture	RENDERED	RENDERED	IGNORED	RENDERED	RENDERED
50	250	Scripture	IGNORED	NR	IGNORED	NU	RENDERED

Classification of Treatment	TRANS 1	TRANS 2	TRANS 3	TRANS 4	TRANS 5
Paraphrased	3	-	3	-	-
Ignored	9	5	21	3	1
*LC	3	1	3	2	-
NU	10	15	8	11	4
NR	10	18	5	13	7
RENDERED	15	11	11	21	34
RENDEREDn	-	-	-	-	2

Table 1 – Classification of the 50 occurrences of intertextual references identified by Hudson and Mordue in the novel *A Damsel in Distress* (1919) by P.G. Wodehouse, with references to the page numbers in the 2008 Arrow Books edition, for each translation. At the bottom, the results of the analysis of each rendering, by category and translator.

Thanks to the precious notes compiled by Mark Hudson and Terry Mordue, which can be found at http://www.madameulalie.org/tmordue/pgwbooks/pgwadid1.html, 50 occurrences of intertextuality have been selected: these are references to literary texts, mainly English, belonging to Latin classics, the Scriptures, proverbs, nursery rhymes and popular songs, categorized as following: Literature, Scriptures, Myth, Folklore and Music.

The translators can be found under: TRANS 1 (Francesco Palumbo 1931), TRANS 2 (Aribert Mozaki 1931), TRANS 3 (Alfredo Balanchine 1935), TRANS 4 (Gain Dali 1939) and TRANS 5 (Rosetta Palazzi 1994).

For each occurrence, the 5 Italian translations were compared and it was assessed whether the translator had understood the intertextual reference and

if he had made it as such. Afterwards each occurrence was labelled as: NOT UNDERSTOOD (NU) = the translator did not understand the meaning of the hypertextual reference (when translation errors were present because of linguistic shortcomings, *LC = Linguistic Code was added); RENDERED = translated in such a way as to preserve the function as SD; NOT RENDERED (NR) = translated without preserving the function as SD. When the translator used para-textual references to explain the meaning or provide the origin of a reference, the symbol n was used. It has been observed that often the hypertextual references have been ignored in translation (IGNORED) and there are also cases in which translators have resorted to paraphrasing (PARAPHRASED).

9.2 Discussion

First of all, the table shows that very often the sentences containing intertextual references have not been translated with the loss of the incongruity arising from the conflicting script present in the original text. The translator no. 1 ignored them 9 times, no. 2 ignored them 5 times, no. 3, 21 times, no. 4 did it 3 times, while no. 5 has almost always recognized and rendered them, while sometimes even offering explanations in a footnote.

The linguistic difficulties, indicated in the table under the symbol *LC, are mainly found in the versions of translators 1 and 3. The latter, as will be seen below, is reasonably suspect of plagiarism.

The meaning of the intertextual reference has not been understood many times and it has therefore been rendered inadequately.

Observing the disaggregated data, one notes that the category in which the references were most ignored is that of music, followed closely in terms of percentage by Folklore and Scriptures.

The best rendered category is that of Literature, although the references to Shakespeare have not been given due attention. The least rendered is, rather curiously, that of Myths.

The analytical reading highlights some serious translation errors due to insufficient knowledge of the LC. For example, translator 4 renders the expression “Mendelssohn’s March Daughters” with “daughters of March by Mendelssohn”, completely missing the meaning of the original text. Another translation error, due to a misinterpretation of the word “Grail”, in four translations, prevents one from enjoying the skillfully weaved script conflict in the original text, which compares the voice of a sturdy policeman (who breaks into the scene while the two antagonists are arguing) to the Holy Grail “sliding athward a sunbeam” (a literal quote from *Le Morte d’Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, in the 1470 Caxton edition). In the various translations, “Holy Grail”

becomes “holy water”, “angel”, “blessed rain” and “a ray of sunshine”. Only translator 5 manages a correct rendition: “the Holy Grail penetrates through a ray of sunshine”.

A good example of rendering opposing scripts is instead the reference to Lovelace (“Stone walls do not a prison make or iron bars a cage”): all translators manage to preserve the tone and rhythm, thus keeping in context the inconsistency present in the original.

Not even the most famous characters of the Scriptures escape interpretative errors: “the late king Herod” has been translated “the last king Herod” by the translator 1 and even, “the last king Ercole” both by the translator 2 and 4, despite the mention, in the original text, of his policy (policy, translated by translators 1 and 3 with “police”!) concerning infants.

Regarding the musical references, it should be noted how the literal reference “Poor Butterfly” (title of a 1916 song) is not rendered by translator number 5, who, not understanding the context, inadequately translates with “the unfortunate Madame Butterfly”, since the scenario is that of a young man singing a serenade. The others do not seem to cope any better: translator 4 translates with “Poor Butterfly [sic]”, while the others solve the crux ignoring this part of the episode altogether.

By not taking in the reference to Tennyson’s poetry and by distorting the meaning of the original text, translators 2 and 4 translate “Vere de Vere” with “artist”, inferring from the context that the narrator wanted to compare the character not to an arrogant person, but to a consummate actor.

It is indeed interesting to analyze how a particularly difficult case was treated. The heroine, Lady Maud, asks the very young servant Albert—gross, ignorant, superficial—whom she wishes to educate, to read some lines from Tennyson (whose name is not mentioned in the text). Albert reads them in a voice that was previously hoarse with the habit of smoking and with popular pronunciation. In Wodehouse’s text, the stanza, the first of the *Mariana* poem, is transcribed as Albert pronounces it:

> Wiv’ blekest morss the flower-ports
> Was-I mean were-crusted one and orl;
> Ther rusted niles fell from the knorts
> That ‘eld the pear to the garden-worll.
> Ther broken sheds looked sed and stringe;
> Unlifted was the clinking latch;
> Weeded and worn their ancient thatch
> Er-pon ther lownely moated gringe,
> She only said ‘Me life is dreary,
> ‘E cometh not,’ she said.

Being able to get the same effect in Italian is certainly very difficult and none of the five translators attempted it: two of them (1 and 3) limit themselves to describing the scene and to implementing compensating mechanisms, respectively, on page 129, "read, making various errors of pronunciation, the beautiful verses" and, on page 98, "Then he read, with wrong pronunciation, the beautiful verses". The others translate poetry, without resorting to any of the Italian versions of the poetry already published in Italy (that of Paolo Bellezza from 1892 and from 1933, therefore already available for translators 4 and 5, by Raffaella Pagani Masseroni). Almost certainly the author of the verses was not recognized by any of the translators, despite the fact that the characterization of the heroine and her own name could have put them on the right track.

Some cultural aspects, present in Wodehouse's hypotexts, are not known by translators. An example is the translation given to the expression "dried over a barrel", which refers to the custom of letting a drowning victim lie down on a barrel, then rolling the person forward and backward in an attempt to make them cough the swallowed water. In fact, none of the versions shows that this expression, present in some stories of the early 1900s, was known to the translators.

In some translations references to characters very well disseminated narrative works are completely missed out, such as the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland* or Little Eva from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The Italian translators of *A Damsel in Distress* do not seem to cope much better than Bertie Wooster when it comes to recognizing passages and characters from the Scriptures. Almost no one gets the name of Mount Pisgah (in Italian Mount Nebo), nor those of Sharach, Meschach and Abednego (with the exception of diligent translator 4, who describes their fate in a succinct note). The same is true (including the paratextual reference) for the script contrast between the degraded town of Belpher and the biblical Ichabod (without honor, without glory). Moreover, "Noah [...] the Flood" becomes, for translators 1 and 3 "Noah and the Ark", while translator 4 renders the two terms "grandfather" and "past time", completely missing the biblical reference. The prophet Daniel gets a better treatment (he is recognized by everyone) in the lions' den.

Neither the "Egyptian" darkness, in which Lord Belpher plunges, locked in a cellar by the parish priest, nor the exact meaning of Millennium (the thousand-year peace period promised in the Book of Revelations) in the phrase referring to the annoying Plummer, "It is the presence on the globe of these Plummers that delays the coming of the Millennium", are rendered adequately. These are two examples of opposing scripts based on anachronism that would have been interesting to examine in the light of GTVH. While making a case study on Ecco's *Il nome della rosa,* Attardo (2001: 148 et seq.) emphasizes how

Eco obtains a humoristic effect through the use of anachronistic references and he analyzes those he had been able to identify. The same regret arises from the impossibility of comparing, by applying the Attardo method, the renderings in translation of the phrase "Centuries before we were born or thought of there was a widely press-agented boy in Sparta who…", since only one translator (translator 5) tried it.

An example of Shakespearian reference cannot be left out of this analysis: in the episode in which Lord Marshmorenton, the heroine's father, had to scold his son Percy for having been involved in a fight and having hit a policeman, he thinks of him that "nothing in Percy's life became this assault on the Force". The reference is to the text of *Macbeth*, Scene 4, Act I: "Nothing in his life became him...". Unfortunately, the quote was not recognized and the text was then rendered as follows, from translator 2 with "the act of life of the young man he liked best", to number 5 with "nothing in the life of Percy suited him". Translators 1 and 3 resort instead to one (identical, such as to reinforce the suspicion of plagiarism) paraphrase: "never in the life of Percy had anything more serious happened", which fails to evoke the conflict of script in the original text.

10. Conclusions

Comparing the solutions found by the translators, it was possible to observe how the KnoW of each of them influenced the translation process and, consequently, their performance. Translators from the 1930s certainly had fewer resources than the last among them, and their versions sometimes also suffer from linguistic deficiencies.

The comparison also made it possible to note that translator 3 has certainly worked always comparing with the first translation, from which he has drawn profusely. The two versions are very often completely identical, even if, in the presence of a particular crux, translator 3, probably in too much of a doubt, has completely omitted the problematic step. These cuts in the text could also have been made out of editorial reasons, since an entire chapter is missing from that edition. However, the absence of many passages from the translation, some of which are crucial and could have been posing real difficulties in translating, would lead us to think that an opportunistic choice was made.

The historically and linguistically contextualized critical analysis of Wodehouse's works pointed to how the use of intertextuality was one of the SD used by the author to achieve an incongruity with consequent humoristic effect: analyzing the rendering of each occurrence of intertextual reference allowed one to assess whether the original function was retained or not.

Likewise, having recognized the function of intertextuality in Wodehouse as an instance of middlebrow culture, by comparing the different translations, it is possible to hypothesize the impact of each translation on the Italian reader of the era in which it was published.

Applying the epistemic approach to the comparison of translations of the same work also makes it possible to contribute to the debate on the phenomenon of retranslation, which underlines its complexity and the need to include it within a discussion on the historical, ideological and normative context (Baker & Saldanha 2009: 233). In our case, the comparison between the 5 translations published within a 45 year time span (from 1931 to 1994), which has seen radical changes in the Italian society of a political, cultural and economic nature, makes it possible to contribute to the establishing of an opinion regarding the cultural phenomena of that time, in particular with regard to the publishing field.

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