Università di Firenze Dipartimento di Formazione, Lingue, Intercultura, Letterature e Psicologia

L-11 Corso di Studio in Lingue, Letterature e Studi Interculturali III anno Lingua Inglese 2 (12 cfu)

Corso di Traduzione in Lingua inglese John Gilbert

Supplementary translation work (Anne Rice)

 The text to be translated is an extract from the novel ***Intervista col vampiro*** (title in italics because it is a novel, a book) by **Anne Rice**. This is the extract:

(…)

      «‘Louis’ disse infine con voce sommessa. ‘Tu hai paura. Tu non stai in guardia contro la

paura. Non capisci il pericolo che rappresenta la paura. Avremo la risposta quando troveremo

quelli che ce la possono dare, che posseggono da secoli la conoscenza, dal tempo in cui

creature come noi apparvero sulla terra. Quella conoscenza era un nostro innato diritto, e

Lestat ce ne ha privato. Ha meritato la sua morte’.

      «‘Ma non è morto…’ ribattei.

      «‘È morto’ insistette lei. ‘Nessuno sarebbe riuscito a fuggire da quella casa a meno di

correre via con noi, al nostro fianco. No, è morto, e così pure quell’esteta tremante, il suo

amico. La coscienza, che importanza ha?’

      «Raccolse le carte e le mise da parte, accennandomi di passarle i libri sul tavolo accanto

alla cuccetta, i libri che aveva tolto dalle valigie appena giunta a bordo: le poche testimonianze

scelte delle tradizioni sui vampiri che s’era portata perché le facessero da guida. Non

includevano nessuna delle leggende assurde dell’Inghilterra, nessun racconto di Edgar Allan

Poe, nessuna storia fantastica. Solo quei pochi resoconti sui vampiri dell’Europa orientale, che

erano diventati per lei una specie di Bibbia. In quei paesi, in effetti, quando trovavano un

vampiro ne bruciavano i resti, gli trafiggevano il cuore con un paletto e gli tagliavano la testa.

Li leggeva per ore e ore, questi antichi libri che erano stati letti e riletti prima ancora di trovare

la strada al di là dell’Atlantico; erano racconti di viaggiatori, preti e studiosi. E progettava il

nostro viaggio, senza bisogno di penna o carta, tutto a mente. Un viaggio che ci avrebbe subito

portato lontano dalle scintillanti capitali d’Europa verso il Mar Nero, dove saremmo attraccati

a Varna, per cominciare la nostra ricerca nella campagna dei Carpazi.

(…)

 The original text was written in English (pub. 1976) and the Italian translation (pub. 1977) is by Margherita Bignardi,, so our translation into English is what is referred to as a **back** **translation**, that is a translation of a translated work back into its original language. As an exercise, back translations are interesting because they also allow us to reflect on the choices made by the translator in rendering the original source language (SL) text in the translated target language (TL) text.

 The  **genre** of the text is narrative, a literary text (a neo-Gothic vampire novel). The **narrative structure** is that of a “boxed narrative” (as, for example, in Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* or Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness),* with a 1st person narrative voice (Louis, the vampire character) speaking in direct discourse within a 3rd person narration (the interviewer’s). This is why each paragraph begins with double quotation marks but has no quotation marks at the end of each paragraph because Louis’ narrative has not been interrupted by the interviewer.

The **style** is that of **direct discourse dialogue** (1st, 2nd and 3rd paragraphs; about half of the extract) between Louis and a female character (Claudia), and **descriptive narrative** as recounted in Louis’ **first person monologue** in the 4th paragraph. This type of narrative structure requires a “suspension of disbelief” on the part of the reader, as it is not quite realistic that an individual being interviewed (Louis) would speak using direct discourse dialogue instead of indirect reported speech.

 The **function** of the extract is not clear from the context given, but it does not appear to be part of the introduction or the beginning of the novel, and seems certainly to be set before the climax. The characters are at the beginning of a ship voyage and are still search-ing for *“la risposta.”* The **register** both of the descriptive narrative and the dialogue between Louis and Claudia appears to be **quite formal, literary** (“**Gothic**”)**.** The **tone** of Claudia’s speech seems serious, determined and confident, reassuring towards Louis *(“con voce sommessa”)* but also admonishing and in disagreement with him, and angry and bitter towards the male character Lestat. The **tone** of Louis’ narrative is serious, reflective, thoughtful, while the dialogue in the extract has only one short sentence by Louis *(“‘Ma non è morto…’ ribattei.)* and the tone is that of disaccord with Claudia. The **atmosphere** is mysterious, tense, anxious, even frightening.

 In terms of the **paragraph structure**, the 1st is perhaps less than medium length and is direct discourse by Claudia. The 2nd paragraph is only one line with a very short sentence of dialogue on the part of Louis. The 3rd is Claudia’s short response to Louis in direct discourse. The descriptive narrative in the 4th paragraph is, on the other hand, quite long, more than the 1st three paragraphs put together.

 As for the **sentence structure**, with the exception of a few short sentences in the 1st three paragraphs of dialogue, most of the sentences are rather long and syntactically complex. In the 4th paragraph, the 3rd sentence and the last sentence are subordinate clauses and not complete sentences. The finite **verb constructions** include the *passato remoto, presente indicativo, futuro, imperfetto, condizionale passato, trapassato prossimo* and *congiuntivo imperfetto.*

 In terms of **culturally-restricted terms**, there is the proper noun *i Carpazi***. Idiomatic expressions** include “*avere paura,” “stare in guardia,” “accennare a qualcuno di fare qualcosa,” “fare da guida,” “una specie di,” “tagliare la testa,” “trovare la strada,” “al di là di,”* and *“a mente.”* **Particular problems** are posed by the punctuation (e.g. the quotation marks (BE-NAE) / inverted commas BE), the expressions *“a meno di correre via con noi,” “e così pure quell’esteta tremante,” “perché le facessero da guida,” “prima ancora di trovare la strada al di là dell’Atlantico,”* and the words *“coscienza,” “le carte”* and *“attraccare.”*

Now that the style and various features of the SL text have been analysed thoroughly, it is possible to start the TL translation.

 The original English **title** of the novel was ***Interview with the Vampire****,* which is also the natural choice for the back translation of the Italian title ***Intervista col vampiro****.* Then before the 1st paragraph, there are parentheses indicating missing text: **(…)** **Indent** the 1st paragraph. For the **quotation marks**, in NAE double quotation marks are generally used, and then for a quotation within a quotation, single quotation marks are used. In BE it is generally the opposite.

 **“‘Louis’ disse infine con voce sommessa.** In English the comma is necessary before the phrase with the reporting verb. **“‘Louis,’ she finally said/said in the end with/in a soft/low/quiet voice.**

**‘Tu hai paura. ‘You are/afraid/frightened.** “Scared” is less literary, more informal.

**Tu non stai in guardia contro la paura. You are not on (your) guard** (preferable to “**on watch**”) **against fear.**

Original English: “‘Louis,’ she said, her voice soft. ‘You’re afraid. You don’t stand *en garde* against fear.

**Non capisci il pericolo che rappresenta la paura.**

**You don’t understand the danger (that/which) fear represents.** Original English: You don’t understand the danger of fear itself. (“il pericolo della paura in se”?).

**Avremo la riposta quando troveremo quelli che ce la possono dare,**

**We will** (more assertive than “We’ll”) **have/get the answer when we find those who/that can give it to us,** (simple present in the “when clause”)

**che posseggono da secoli la conoscenza,**

**the ones/those who/that have possessed the/that knowledge for centuries**

**dal tempo in cui creature come noi apparvero sulla terra.**

**since/from the time that/when/in which creatures like us appeared on (the) earth.**

**Quella conoscenza era un nostro innato diritto**

**That knowledge was our inherent/natural right//birthright//an innate right of ours,**

**e Lestat ce ne ha privato. and Lestat deprived us of it.**

**Ha meritato la sua morte’. He deserved** (preferable to “**merited**”) **his death/to die.**

Original English: We’ll know these answers when we find those who can tell us, those who’ve possessed knowledge (without the definite article?!) for centuries, for however long creatures such as ourselves have walked the earth. (How would you translate that in Italian?) That knowledge was our birthright, and he deprived us (of it?). He earned his death.’

 Indent new paragraph. **“‘Ma non è morto…’ ribattei.**

 **“‘But he’s not dead/he didn’t die…’ I countered/retorted/answered back.**

Original English: “‘But he didn’t die…” I said. (“**ribattei**” is stronger than simply “**said**”)

 Indent new paragraph. **«‘È morto’ insistette lei.**

 **“‘He’s dead/He died,” she insisted.** (Is “morto” an adjective or a past participle? In English, a comma is necessary before the reporting verb).

**‘Nessuno sarebbe riuscito a fuggire da quella casa a meno di correre via con noi, al nostro fianco.** (The past conditional here is an unreal hypothesis in the past, not a future in the past, so the 3rd conditional in English). **No one could have escaped (from) that house**

 **Nobody would have been able to get out of that house**

**unless they had run out/except by running out/without having run out with us,**

**by/at our (very) side.**

**No, è morto, e così pure quell’esteta tremante, il suo amico.**

**No, he’s dead, and so is that trembling aesthete** (BE) **friend of his.**

**No, he died, and so did that trembling esthete friend of his**

 **and that trembling esthete friend of his, too/also.**

 **likewise/the same for his trembling esthete friend.**

**La coscienza, che importanza ha?’ - “coscienza”** is “consapevolezza” (“consciousness” or “awareness”) or “coscienza” (as in “mi morde la coscienza” - “conscience”)?

**Conscience, what importance has it got?’ // What importance does conscience have?’**

Original English:‘No one could have escaped that house unless they’d run with us, at our very side. No. He’s dead, and so it that trembling aesthete, his friend. Consciousness, what does it matter?’

 Indent new paragraph. «**Raccolse le carte e le mise da parte**, What is the meaning of “**le carte**” here? Cards (playing cards?)? maps? papers? Since Claudia was planning their trip (“**progettava il nostro viaggio**”), the meaning is probably “maps” or simply “papers.”

**“She gathered up/picked up the papers/maps and put them aside/to one side,**

**accennandomi di passarle i libri sul tavolo accanto alla cuccetta,**

**gesturing/motioning/beckoning to/for me to pass/hand/give her the books on the table next to/beside/by her bunk/berth/couchette,**

**i libri che aveva tolto dalle valigie appena giunta a bordo:**

**the books (that/which) she had taken/pulled out of** (preferable to “**from**”) the **suit-cases/luggage/bags/baggage as soon as she was/got on board:/.**

**le poche testimonianze scelte delle tradizioni sui vampiri**

**(They were) the few select** (preferable to “**selected**”) **accounts/testimonies on/about/concerning/regarding**

 **the few records chosen from**

**the traditions/legends on/about/concerning/regarding vampires**

**vampire lore**

**che s’era portata perché le facessero da guida to guide her.**

**(that/which) she had brought/taken (with her/along) to serve as her guides.**

 **as guides (for her).**

 **so that they could guide her/be her guide.**

Original English: “She gathered up the cards and put them aside, gesturing for me to hand her the books from the table beside the bunk, those books which she’d unpacked immedi-ately on board, the few select records of vampire lore which she’d taken to be her guides.

**Non includevano nessuna delle leggende assurde dell’Inghilterra,**

**They included none/They did not include any of the absurd legends of/from**

 **England,**

 **English legends,**

**nessun racconto di Edgar Allan Poe, nessuna storia fantastica.**

**no/any story/tale by Edgar Allan Poe, no/any fantastic/fantasy story.**

 **of Edgar Allan Poe(’s),**

Original English: They included no wild romances from England, no stories of Edgar Allan Poe, no fancy.

**Solo quei pochi resoconti sui vampiri dell’Europa orientale, che erano diventati per lei una specie di Bibbia.**

**(There were) o/Only those few accounts of the vampires of e/(E)astern Europe** (at the time in which the novel was set, the east of Europe was perhaps not really an administrative/political region acknowledged as such, and so “**eastern**” is descriptive and not capitalized), **which/that had become for her a sort of Bible/something like a Bible for/to her.**

Original English: Only those few accounts of the vampires of eastern Europe, which had become for her a sort of Bible.

**In quei paesi, in effetti, quando trovavano un vampiro ne bruciavano i resti,**

**In those countries, indeed, when they found a vampire/when a vampire was found(,) they would burn/burned (NAE)/burnt (BE) the/his/their remains,**

**gli trafiggevano il cuore con un paletto e gli tagliavano la testa.**

**they would drive/drove/put/ran a stake through his/their heart and cut** (preferable to “**transfix/pierce his heart with a stake**”) **his/their head off.**

Not “cut their head” (“fare un taglio alla testa”), but decapitate, cut off (“mozzare,” “troncare”).

Original English: In those countries indeed they did (emphatic use of the auxiliary verb “do”) burn the remains of the vampire when they found him, and the heart was staked (unusual expression) and the head severed (unusual expression}.

**Li leggeva per ore e ore, questi antichi libri che erano stati letti e riletti prima ancora di trovare la strada al di là dell’Atlantico;**

**She would read/read them for hours and hours, those antique/very old books that/which had been** (preferable to “**were**”) **read and re-read/read again still before they had (ever) made/found their way across/to the other side of the Atlantic.**

Original English: She would read these now for hours, these ancient books which had been read and reread before they ever found their way across the Atlantic;

**erano racconti di viaggiatori, preti e studiosi.**

**They were (the) tales/stories/accounts by/of travel(l)ers, priests and scholars.**

Original English: they were travellers’ tales, the accounts of priests and scholars.

**E progettava il nostro viaggio, senza bisogno di penna o carta, tutto a mente.**

**And she planned/would plan our trip/journey without (the/any) need of paper or**

 **resorting to (a) pen or paper,**

**pen, all in her head/mind/everything by heart.**

Original English: And she would plan our trip, not with the need of any pen or paper, only in her mind.

**Un viaggio che ci avrebbe subito portato lontano dalle scintillanti capitali d’Europa verso il Mar Nero,** (*condizionale passato* expresses a future in the past here, not an unreal past hypothesis)

**(It would be/was) a/A trip that would immediately take us**

 **which was going to carry us at once far (away) from the glittering/sparkling capitals of Europe toward(s) the Black Sea,**

**dove saremmo attraccati a Varna, per cominciare la nostra ricerca nella campagna dei Carpazi.**

**where we would dock** (not “**moor**”) **at Varna,** (*condizionale passato* expresses a future in the past here, not an unreal past hypothesis) **to begin/start our search in the countryside of the Carpathians.**

Original English: A trip that would take us at once away from the glittering capitals of Europe towards the Black Sea, where we would dock at Varna and begin that search in the rural countryside of the Carpathians.

**(…)**

 If you have any questions about your own translation solutions which were not dealt with in my translation exposition above, please send them to me at john.gilbert@unifi.it

 Please put your corrected translation in my mailbox in Via Santa Reparata (when possible!).

\*N.B. BE = British English; NAE = North American English.