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Make it new: When Luigi Meneghello transplanted “silly” Yeats

Arianna Antonielli

Università degli Studi di Firenze (<arianna.antonielli@unifi.it>)

Abstract:

The essay explores how Luigi Meneghello translated some of W.B. Yeats’s poems into the dialect of Vicenza. Yeats’s compositions became a source of sustenance for the poet from Malo, offering profound insights into various aspects of life and art. Meneghello’s fascination with Yeats led him to undertake the translations of his works into the Vicentine dialect, resulting in the collection *Trapianti*, consisting of seventeen compositions by Yeats, and showcasing Meneghello’s skill in capturing the essence and rhythmic tension of the originals while infusing them with new life and meaning.

Keywords: Dialect, Luigi Meneghello, Translating, “Transplanting”, W.B. Yeats

Eppure la poesia è splendida.
(Meneghello, *Il turbo e il chiaro*, 1995)

1. From Translating to Transplanting

If one has something to say, better say it with simplicity and clarity¹. With these words, Meneghello recounts his apprenticeship in England, during which he learned to write simply and clearly, as his English friends recommended. He discovered a society where writing prose meant writing it plainly, serving the sole purpose of conveying one’s thoughts directly. Thus, the poet from Malo identified his profound debt to England, where he discovered what he calls “the taste for a certain type or kind of relationship with the written page”².

¹ Meneghello 1986, 22: “Se si ha qualcosa da dire, più chiaramente e semplicemente lo si dice, meglio è”.

² Meneghello 2006a, 1074: “il gusto di un certo tipo di relazione con la pagina scritta”.

From the English language, Meneghello absorbed various elements, both stylistic and rhythmic, and qualities such as grace, irony, and wit, that may have had some indirect influence on his way of seeing things and attempting to write them, as he stated in *Il turbo e il chiaro*³. Likewise, Meneghello grasped the importance of “dialect”, which he defined as an extraordinary reservoir of linguistic resources, in particular regarding translations of texts from English to the dialect of Vicenza. He realized that by translating a few fragments of some notable works of English literature into his dialect, the resulting text turned out to be livelier and at times imbued with a force comparable to that of the original. Conversely, when he opted for a more literary style, albeit not too formal, he came up with a writing that seemed flat and rigid. According to Carola Gandelli, translating into the Vicentine dialect was for Meneghello “a life-giving force that restores vigor to the original. The perfect transplant is subject to mastery of the language into which it is translated, but above all to the evocative power of the mother tongue”⁴.

During an international conference held in Florence on the 100th anniversary of Meneghello’s birth (19 May 1922), organized by Ernestina Pellegrini and Diego Salvadori, Franco Marengo discusses how, in his writings, Meneghello constantly blended ingredients derived from two worlds he calls the “land of toys” and the “land of angels”, clearly referring to Italy and England. In *Trapianti*, this duality is manifested as a convergence we could call “ironic”. Originally published in 2002 by Rizzoli, then republished in 2021, *Trapianti* is a collection of forty-one translations of works by seven English poets into the Vicentine dialect. As Meneghello explains in a note, his purpose was not to translate them “but almost to ‘remake’ them [...] in Vicentino”⁵. They are not actual translations, even though they appear as such in form, alongside their original text, thereby deceiving the reader into line by line readings; rather, they are autonomous, original poems, “a comparison of linguistic fantasies [the Vicentino and the original]”, so as not to betray by translating *verbatim*, but to “transplant” into another ground, as Meneghello himself admitted in an interview with Ernestina Pellegrini in 2002. This requires “[hitting] the neuralgic points of the text” and bringing out “aspects that were not prominent”⁶.

Meneghello’s *Trapianti* are a valuable linguistic exercise between source language and target language, and as an interpretive and cultural practice where attention is shifted towards the target text. Although *Trapianti* from English to Vicentino feature the originals in English indeed, readers are bound to think of and to read them more as autonomous poetic texts. This peculiar method allows Meneghello to maintain the rhythmic and phonological tension of the original composition and its expressive energy. This strategy also opens new scenarios, making the composition almost a new autonomous entity, since the latter must win over faithfulness to the original. As pointed out by Diego Zancani, “Meneghello’s ability to sculpt, to focus on an essential element of the English discourse, and transport it into a familiar, recognizable, perhaps domestic expression, yet no less expressive than the original, is unparalleled, stemming

³ Meneghello 2006b, 1543: “Garbo, ironia, Wit, le qualità ‘inglesi’ che poi forse hanno avuto un qualche influsso indiretto sul mio stesso modo di vedere le cose e di provare a scriverle”.

⁴ Gandelli 2020, 92: “la traduzione verso il dialetto vicentino è una forza vivificatrice che ridona vigore all’originale. Il trapianto perfetto è sottoposto alla padronanza della lingua in cui si traduce, ma soprattutto alla forza evocativa della lingua materna”. Unless otherwise stated, all translations into English are mine.

⁵ Meneghello 2002, 135: “L’idea immodesta, era quella di rinnovare l’accesione lirica degli originali: non veramente tradurli, dunque, ma quasi rifarli, in devota emulazione, in vicentino”.

⁶ Meneghello 2006, 1539-1540: “Si va, traducendo, a colpire punti neuralgici del testo; si fanno emergere aspetti che non erano in rilievo”.

from extensive study and, obviously, great love”⁷. Ernestina Pellegrini observes a stronger affinity between dialect and English than between dialect and Italian. Both languages exhibit a practical and pragmatic approach towards literary language, characterized by its elements of indeterminacy and abstraction (1992, 102).

2. *W.B. Yeats transplanted by Meneghello*

Meneghello drew inspiration from a multitude of authors originating from the “land of angels”; some of them were mentioned and “transplanted” in *Trapianti*, such as Shakespeare, Coleridge, Wordsworth, G.M. Hopkins, and William Empson. Among these authors, one in particular is a recurring name within the volume: he is undoubtedly the most beloved and widely translated (Pellegrini 2022, 7). Irish nationalist poet, central figure of the Irish Literary Revival, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923, symbolist, and seeker of esoteric knowledge, W.B. Yeats deeply influenced Meneghello. He was “silly”, states the poet from Malo in *Il turbo e il chiaro*, adding that “his poetry is splendid”⁸. It is a “gift” able to survive everything around it. Meneghello is well aware that poetry, especially Yeats’s, is “food for thought”, sustenance, fodder he loves to consume. Beyond any possible reservations about the ideological and cultural contents of Yeats’s work, and surely Meneghello had some, he also perceives in the Irish poet “a profusion of extraordinary insights into the most varied aspects of the world, youth and old age, the nature of poetry and beauty, the stark power of fanaticism... These are lightning illuminations, flashes of light that go to the heart of things... And there are also some splendid examples of a light touch”⁹.

In 1997, Meneghello decided to “renew his Yeats” and to remake it “in devout emulation”, first in *Le biave* (1997)¹⁰ then in *Trapianti*, although some translations date back to an earlier time. In *Trapianti*, Meneghello transplanted seventeen compositions by Yeats, or eighteen (if we want to count as different the two versions of “The Coming of Wisdom with Time”), into Vicentino. His choice was accurate, carefully elaborated, in that he did not focus only on a particular phase of Yeats’s poetic vision, but rather he embraced it almost entirely (except for some collections¹¹).

Meneghello was fascinated and influenced by the places that marked Yeats’s biographical story, so he decided to open and to close his poetic itinerary in the small town of Sligo, Yeats’s

⁷ Zancani 2015, 123: “La capacità di Meneghello di scolpire, di concentrarsi su un elemento essenziale del discorso inglese e trasportarlo in una espressione familiare, riconoscibile, magari domestica, ma non meno espressiva dell’originale è senza pari, perché dovuta a un lungo studio e ovviamente un grande amore”.

⁸ “[E]ppure la poesia è splendida”.

⁹ Meneghello 2006b, 151: “una profusione di intuizioni straordinarie, intorno ai più vari aspetti del mondo, la gioventù e la vecchiaia, la natura della poesia e della bellezza, la potenza ossuta del fanatismo... Sono illuminazioni fulminee, luce di lampo che va al cuore delle cose... E c’è anche qualche splendido esempio di leggerezza di tocco”.

¹⁰ The individual translations in the transition from the 1997 edition to the 2002 edition undergo no significant changes. Except for changes in punctuation, diacritical marks (grave and acute accents, apostrophes, interverbal dashes), some new spellings (reintroduction of double letters, different word divisions), and a few revisions of stanza division, only six corrections remain, some of which respond to a search for more archaic forms, while others aim for a closer approximation to spoken language. In *Le biave* Meneghello had already published the following *trapianti*: “Innisfri”, “La me passion de cuel che zé diffissile”, “El giudissio vien co’l tempo”, “A cuela che ’l so lavoro l’è nda a ramengo”, “Podin”, “Su cuei che no ghe zé piasso el “Playboy de l’Occidente”, “Un tabaro”, “El balón de la mente”, “Na biuti teribile”, “Sédase morti”, “I cavai de Colono”, “Oio e sangue”, “Epitafio”, “Go sigà”, “Le aparission”, “Do’ che nasse l’ispirassion”, “Sota la gropa nuda”.

¹¹ The most important works of Yeats’s early phase that Meneghello does not translate in *Trapianti* are poems from the collections *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889), *Crossways* (1889), *The Rose* (1893), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) and *In the Seven Woods* (1903).

Land of Heart's Desire. Furthermore, he did this on both an imaginative and a poetic level, notably starting his *trapianti* with "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" of 1888 and closing them with the mountains of "Under Ben Bulbin", which was the last composition Yeats wrote before his death, and which was published posthumously. In the collection, we find poems highlighting what is most dear to Yeats, namely, the complementary nature of the unity of being and the unity of culture, which also surfaces in the work of Meneghello in the form of a moral, intimate, familiar relationship between life and writing.

Published first in *The National Observer* in 1889 and then included in *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* in 1892, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is not only an example of the Celtic Revival, but also a spiritual journey to the center of the Irish experience. As we will delve deeper in the following section by analyzing Meneghello's "trapianto", we can perceive how the poem captures the essence of Yeats's deep connection to the Irish landscape and his longing for a simpler, more spiritual existence. The peaceful setting of Innisfree, with its evocative imagery of nature and solitude, reflects Yeats's desire for a retreat from the hustle and bustle of modern life and a return to the primal rhythms of the natural world. Beyond its lyrical beauty, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" symbolizes a spiritual quest, a journey inward to rediscover the essence of Irish identity and experience. Similarly, for Meneghello, transplanting it into his dialect is a reinforcement of his own identity and origins.

The following Yeatsian poems which Meneghello translates in *Trapianti*, in the order they appear in the collection, are "The Fascination of What's Difficult" (13 lines; "La me pasión par cuel che zé difisile", first four lines) and "The Coming of Wisdom with Time" ("El giudissio vien co'l tempo"). "The Fascination of What's Difficult" is condensed in only four lines in Meneghello's translation, highlighting the challenging yet alluring nature of life's complexities. This poem underscores Yeats's fascination with the enigmatic and elusive themes that are central to his poetic vision. "The Coming of Wisdom with Time", already translated by Meneghello in a previous version within the *Carte*, reflects Yeats's evolving perspective on life and the passage of time. In Meneghello's text the four lines of the original are expanded to five in the *Trapianti* version (they were three lines in *Le Carte*). Originally published in Yeats's collection *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* in 1910, these poems mark a transition in Yeats's poetic style and thematic concerns, as he moves away from his earlier, more introspective works and embraces a more public-facing role.

In *Trapianti*, Meneghello reworks four poems from Yeats's collection *Responsibilities* (1914): "To a Friend whose Work has come to Nothing" (16 lines; "A cuela che 'l so lavoro 'l è 'nda a ramengo", 18 lines), "Paudeen" (8 lines; "Podìn", 12 lines), "On those that hated 'The Playboy of the Western World'" (6 lines; "Su cuei che no ghe zé piasso el 'Playboy de l'Occidente", 7 lines), and "A Coat" (10 lines; "Un tabaro", 9 lines). This last collection echoes Yeats's experience in secret societies and his public commitment, although both themes emerge as bitter, disillusioned political rhetoric¹². Through his translations of these poems, Meneghello captures the essence of Yeats's introspection and disillusionment with the political landscape of his era.

The following poem selected by Meneghello from *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917) is "The Balloon of the Mind" (4 lines; "El balón de la mente", 4 lines), where the leading themes are the effort of artistic creation and disillusionment with the world of school. It is worth remembering that this collection dates to the time of Yeats's marriage to Georgie Hyde Lees, therefore it coincided with the exercise of automatic writing he practiced with her, and the first experiments of *A Vision*, whose specific "system" first appeared in this poem. The poem was also the

¹² Yeats lived in a delicate phase between the 19th to the 20th century, during which he engaged in verism, and he cultivated his interest in symbolism of esoteric derivation.

combination of the poet's different readings of Blake, Swedenborg, and Boehme as well as the well-known theosophical, magical and occult experiences that accompanied him as his knowledge of history and philosophy were also growing. A case in point are the two compositions, "Ego dominus tuus" and "The Double Vision of Michael Robartes".

The selection continues with two poetical texts from *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), specifically seven lines from "Easter, 1916" ("Na biuti teribile") and two sestets from "Sixteen Dead Men" ("Sédase morti"), the latter published in *The Dial* in November 1920. The inclusion of excerpts from this collection offers insight into Yeats's exploration of Irish nationalism and the aftermath of the Easter Rising. From the period following the watershed represented by Yeats's being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1923, Meneghello chooses "Colonus' Praise" (5 lines; "I cava de Colono", 5 lines) from the collection *The Tower* (1928); and three poems from *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), namely: "Oil and Blood" (6 lines; "Oio e sangue", 6 lines), "Swift's Epitaph" (6 lines; "Epitafio", 6 lines), "Remorse for Intemperate Speech" (11 lines; "Go sigà", 10 lines). They offer glimpses into Yeats's exploration of personal and societal themes, showcasing his ability to blend lyrical beauty with profound philosophical insights.

Finally, there are three poems from the *Last Poems* (1939): "The Apparitions" (24 lines; "Le aparissión", 25 lines), five lines from "The Circus Animals Desertion, III" (5 lines; "Do' che nasse l'ispirassión", 4 lines) and finally eleven lines from "Under Ben Bulbin, VI" (11 lines, 1938, published posthumously in the collection *Last Poems and Two Plays*; "Soto la gropa nuda", 12 lines).

The selection made by Meneghello in *Trapianti* does not seem to stem from an apparent chronological rigor. He identified those lines in which he probably managed to feel more capable of eliciting unexpected and novel acoustic harmonies. The storyline within Meneghello's poetical "transplants" unfolds through linguistic revelations that serve as the starting point for the episodes being recounted. Pellegrini uses a metaphorical image, likening these revelations to "word-hooks", which act as baits that Meneghello uses to narrate experiences, stories, and situations. In Pellegrini's interview published in *Luigi Meneghello* (2002), in response to the question:

E.P. [...] Can we say that everything stems from a set of seed-words, or from the phonetic suggestion of certain terms? And sticking to language, if I told you that sometimes you give the impression of coagulating events and people around a center of words you have inside, how would you comment on that?

Meneghello answered:

L.M. I would say that it is very close to what seems to me to happen when I write something that truly interests me: it's a set of seed-words... In the first book, I realized it with surprise, because I didn't know that the deposit of meaningful words we have inside worked in this way. Later, I understood that it is like this. Sometimes, I have happened to search for the seed-word and, as soon as I found it, to build around it three lines or thirty lines, depending on the case [...]. (Pellegrini 2002, 145-146)¹³

¹³ "E.P. [...] Si può dire che tutto nasca da un insieme di parole-semi, o dalla suggestione fonetica di certi termini? E sempre sul linguaggio, se ti dicessi che alle volte dai l'impressione di coagulare eventi e persone intorno a un centro di parole che hai dentro, come commenteresti? L.M. Direi che è molto vicino a ciò che a me pare che succeda quando scrivo qualche cosa che veramente mi interessa: è un insieme di parole-semi... Nel primo libro me ne sono accorto con sorpresa, perché non sapevo che funzionasse in questo modo il deposito di parole significative che abbiamo dentro. In seguito, ho capito che è così. Mi è capitato a volte di andare in cerca della parola-seme e, appena trovata, di farci attorno le tre righe o le trenta righe, secondo il caso [...]" (Pellegrini 2002, 145-146).

3. Case Studies

3.1 “Innisfri”

As previously hinted, Meneghello’s decision to translate “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” should come as no surprise, as this is one of Yeats’s poems where the richness of visual elements is almost overshadowed by the variety of sounds, stronger than the noise of the city in which the poetic ‘I’ finds itself.

“The Lake Isle of Innisfree”

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
cricket sings;
There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet’s wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart’s core.

“Innisfri”

E desso ciapo e vago, e vago a Innisfri

(e vui farme na capaneta co le cane e la crea, nove file de
Bisi, un gnaro de ave e vivere li da me posta te ‘l praeselo
Do’ che le sbùsina. E podarò catare un po’ de pace,
perché li la pace la sgiossa pian-pianelo, la vien zo da i
velari de la matina fin do’ che canta i grii; a mesanote tuto
quanto slùsega, el mesodì zé na propora che rde, de sera
sfrecia i zoli d’i feganèi)

Si, ciapo e vago, perché de note e de dì
Senpre sento acua de lago che discore
Su la riva; co’ so’ in strada, drio i marciapie,
la sento te ‘l buso profondo del core.

“Innisfree”, the heather island, turns into “Innisfri”: such is the title of Meneghello’s transplant, whose “minimalist” rendering focused solely on the toponym, hinting at his real intentions from the outset. Indeed, Meneghello does not seem to be interested in echoing the smooth, almost fairy-tale-like sounds of the original, as shown by the alliteration of the “l” in “lake” and “isle”, and the “i” in “Innisfree”, in Yeats’s poem.

Yeats’s division into three four-line stanzas – three hexameters and one tetrameter – with alternate rhyme, gives way, in Meneghello, to an irregular scanning: the Italian author isolates the first line, respecting its internal partition given by the comma and the anaphora of “go”, here rendered as “vago”, then he moves away again from the musicality of the original. This music, which Yeats reproduces using a metric form typical of the ballad (see Yeats 2005, 999), is further enhanced both by the recurring caesuras in the hexameters – which arguably slows down the rhythm thanks to the commas – and by the juxtaposition of some diphthongs, for example, in the play of the vowels of the first line (“ui”, “ai”, “ou”, “au”: “I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree”). This play on words ultimately seems to project the scene described by the poem into a distant future, despite the time-reference “now”. An interesting semantic choice operated by Meneghello involves restoring “the conventional archaism” (these are Yeats’s words in his *Autobiography*) and the indeterminacy that accompanies the action of “going”, exemplified by Yeats’s use of the future tense, with the verb “vagare”, conjugated in the Italian present indicative. The action of “going” becomes immediate and almost imperative in Meneghello,

and it is even stronger due to the syntactic break between the first line, the subsequent part in parentheses, and the concluding quatrain.

Unlike other translations, where Meneghello maintains the stanza division of the original, “Inisfri” presents a different structure compared to that of the original text: indeed, instead of the three quatrains of “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”, there is a single isolated first line, a central parenthetical in rhythmic prose, and a final quatrain. Meneghello combines lines 2 and 4 of the first quatrain and 5 and 8 of the second in the original composition into a long period of “poetry in prose or rhythmic prose”, distinct from the first and the last four lines from both a structural and a semantic perspective. It is worth noticing Meneghello’s restitution of what can be ascribed to the certainty of the present and, on the other hand, to what is attributable to the dreamlike sphere of the Yeatsian original. The latter is related to what the lyrical self will do once gone, and which is rendered in the form of poetry-in-prose. Meneghello recreates the certainty of going or wandering in the first line, through using the present indicative instead of the future. This certainty is thus reproduced in the last quatrain, while the parentheses in the *trapianto* serve to circumscribe that dreamy future of the physical journey, once it is completed – a consequence of the very act of going which pertains to the present time. The final quatrain is taken up in the concluding 4 lines, where Meneghello focuses on the rhythm of the assonance (“ciapo” and “vago”) and the internal rhyme (“vago” and “lago”), while also concentrating on the play between the English “core” and the Vicentino “core”, as two words that are homographic but not homophonic.

The poem opens and ends with the seed-word “ciapo”, serving as the focal point around which Meneghello weaves the narrative of the event, relating it to the isle of “Inisfri”, the latter being the main and unique element that allows us to understand its intimate connection with the original Yeatsian version.

3.2 “*Un tabaro*”¹⁴

“A Coat” is a brief composition where trimeters and dimeters are used by Yeats with remarkable freedom. The poem opened a new phase in the poetic and personal life of the Irish poet, following his political disappointments and the romantic ideals of his youth; it was in this period that he also went on to embrace Blake’s admonition: “art can never exist without the *naked beauty displayed*” (*Laocon* 1820, 776; my emphasis).

¹⁴ In 1956, Meneghello also attempted the translation of “A Coat” into Italian: “Col mio canto mi sono fatto / un pastrano con gli arredi / di mitologie vecchiotte, / lungo dalle spalle ai piedi. / Gli imbecilli me lo presero / per far colpo sulla gente / se ne vollero adornare, / come fosse roba loro. / Se lo tengano, o mio canto! / C’è più merito a girare/ per strade nudo infante (Gallia 2015, 141). However, it is noticeable that, compared to the translation into dialect, the Italian text seems to lack expressive force.

“A Coat”

I MADE my song a coat
 Covered with embroideries
 Out of old mythologies
 From heel to throat;
 But the fools caught it,
 Wore it in the world's eyes
 As though they'd wrought it.
 Song, let them take it,
 For there's more enterprise
 In walking naked.

“Un tabaro”

Par le me poesie
 ghea fato un tabaro de strasse
 coverto da capo a piè
 de bei ricami, mitologie;
 ma 'l ne zé sta ciavà da sti monasse
 ch'i se lo mete dosso e arie i s'in dà tante.
 Lassémoghelo luri, scrittura mia,
 che ghe vol pì fantasia
 a nare in volta nudo infante

The coat is a metaphor for Yeats's poetry, seen as both the process, or act of writing, and as the result. In particular, the coat exemplifies the influence of Celtic mythology on Yeats's poetry, albeit revisited in a personal way. The poet's desire to wear no coat expresses his commitment to abandon the mythological apparatus he has nurtured for a long time, and which fueled the compositions in his early collections (Yeats 2006, 1135). As communicated in the concluding lines, walking naked is a choice that explicitly articulates the oppositional dualism between the false lyrical self who wears the coat (i.e., the mask), and the 'true' lyrical self, reborn naked and clothed in such nudity.

In his *trapianto*, Meneghello immediately uses a seed-word – “tabaro” – transforming Yeats's cloak into a “tabaro de strasse”, that is, a cloak made of rags, where the ambiguity of the Yeatsian original (“embroideries”), is strongly connoted, referring phonetically to rhinestones and semantically to the term “stracci” (*rags*). If Yeats's cloak is woven with embroideries, Meneghello's is threaded with rags, or rhinestones, which are false stones, and therefore imitations of the pure ones. Yeats's metaphorical use of “song” instead of “poems” or “poetry” is not taken up by Meneghello, who decides to move beyond the metaphor and to explicit Yeats's focus, by using the word “poesie” (“par le me poesie”, l. 1). In other words, Meneghello attempts to disambiguate the original, explicating that Yeats's attention is of a poetic nature.

The Yeatsian legacy of the last three lines is rendered by Meneghello with two evocative words, charged with great expressive power. The expression “enterprise” (l. 9) from the original, which could also be read as “courage”, is translated by Meneghello as “fantasia”, while the final line “walking naked” is rendered in the transplant as “nudo infante”: “a nare n volta nudo infante”, where the alliterations amplify Yeats's original. By doing so, Meneghello's text “becomes a specific system in which the level of expression is an independent, self-referential and culturally connoted paradigm”¹⁵. In such a system, “the native language allows one to perceive the contents in a more intimate and profound way” as if in a sort of “darkroom” (Chinellato 2012, 143). Yeats's painful confession and testament (“Song, let them take it”) given through the rhymes of this poetic narrative, is interiorized by Meneghello through an intimate and colloquial storytelling, where he once again shows his subtle skill in *taming his* Yeats.

¹⁵ Chinellato 2012, 149: “la lingua materna permette di percepire i contenuti in modo più intimo e profondo” come se si fosse in una sorta di ‘camera oscura’”.

3.3 “Podìn”

The aforementioned paradigm is also visible in Meneghello’s own version of Yeats’s “Paudeen”:

“Paudeen”

Indignant at the fumbling wits, the obscure spite
of our old Paudeen in his shop, I stumbled blind
among the stones and thorn trees, under morning light
until a curlew cried and in the luminous wind
a curlew answered; and suddenly thereupon I thought
that on the lonely height where all are in God’s eye,
there cannot be, confusion of our sound forgot,
a single soul that lacks a sweet crystalline cry.

“Podìn”

Me son rabià co ’l nostro Piareto de la Bia,
te la so botegheta,
suca un po’ da bronbólo, e radegheta.
Vo fora, fo cualche passo da meso-orbo
soto la luce de la matina, fra piere e russe,
e a un serto punto na perùssola la tira un sigo
e in meso al vento che slusega na perùssola ghe risponde;
e tuto un trato me vien namente sto pensiero, che se
su ’l cucùssolo
do che tuti se inpunara ai oci del Signore,
no pol èssarghe, se se dismèntega ’l casin
d’i nostri sóni, un’ànema, una sola
che no la mola el so dolse segnale de cristalo.

During Yeats’s era, “Paudeen” and “Biddy” were disparaging nicknames for Irish Catholic men and women, respectively. The poem opens with a sharp satirical edge, where the lyrical I is “indignant” at the shopkeeper, Paudeen, casting the latter name as a symbol of mental limitations. He is unintelligent and rude, where rudeness is probably given by the influence of commercialism. The scenario abruptly changes and the poet envisages a rural landscape characterized by “stones”, “thorn-trees”, and “morning light”. Within this environment, the poet experiences a sudden transformation of consciousness, metonymically represented by the crying of a curlew. On the World Curlew Day, Seamus Heaney (2019) remembered Yeats’s curlew figure in “Paudeen”: “the curlew’s ‘crystalline cry’ represents the moment of epiphany for Yeats, the realisation that he and Paudeen are both human after all”¹⁶. At the end of the poem, the poet realizes that both “Paudeen’s” soul and his own are equally beautiful and worthy.

Meneghello puts into practice his cultural interpretive practices by naming the parallel character of “Podìn” (title) “Piareto de la Bia” (l. 1) and turning the “curlew” into a “coal tit” (perùssola). The lyrical “I” that in Yeats makes his explicit entrance only at the end of the second line, in order to introduce the epiphanic section which makes clear the change of his perspective and vision, in Meneghello’s text immediately captures the scene by showing his “anger” (stronger than Yeats’s indignation) towards “Piareto de la Bia”. While the poet’s indignation remains to some extents an interior feeling in Yeats’s poem, in Meneghello’s *trapianto* it appears to have been unleashed. Thus, Paudeen’s “fumbling wits” turns into “Piareto de la Bia”’s “zoca de bronbólo” and “radegheta”, whereas the authorial form “I thought” is replaced by an impersonal one, “me vien namente sto pensiero”. As accurately pointed out by Mozzato:

From the very beginning, the speaker’s voice is emphasised. A whole spectrum of emotions ranging from affectionate reproach to elation is thus made more explicit than in Yeats’s poem. Meneghello’s use of tenses at the end is also highly telling: while the poem’s progress toward its climax is rhythmically reproduced, the unfolding of the absolute participle in lines 11-12 commands the readers’ emotional

¹⁶ <<https://seamussweeney.net/2019/04/23/a-curlew-cried-and-in-the-luminous-wind-a-curlew-answered-paudeen-wb-yeats/>> (05/2024).

response. The impersonal pronoun, ‘se se dismèntega’, actually constructs the reader as addressee, thus suggesting the speaker’s trust on a choral, communal audience. (2012, 132)

What is also worth noticing is the atmosphere of the *trapianto* first lines, which is immediately concretized by action. Just like “Inisfri”, in “Podìn” Meneghello suddenly shifts to the present tense in “vo fora, fo cualche passo da meso-orbo” and his peculiar use of the *passato prossimo* (“Me son rabià”) lends the poetry a colloquial flair. Meneghello’s endeavor to make lines “sound like speech” (Vendler 2007, 1) and to confer on the poem a quite discursive flow is also reinforced by an additional lowering of the register. In the *trapianto*, he uses a strong colloquial and idiomatic tone as, for example, in the rendering of the expression “I stumbled blind” (l. 2) as “Vo fora, fo cualche passo da meso-orbo”, facilitating an oral reproduction.

As in other *trapianti*, Yeats’s rhymed hexameters are evoked by Meneghello’s interplay of assonances, consonances, and paronomasia and the blending of low vowels with sibilants hints at a mystical and euphoric unity. Meneghello’s handling of linguistic shifts strikes a balance between adhering to the original and enriching Yeats’s poem with subtle nuances. Thus, Mozzato suggests “by replacing “chiasso” (“noise”, “racket”) with “sóni”, the translator adheres to the original but also crucially departs from it. This word actually retains the detached, already non-human quality of “sound”, yet Meneghello’s use of the plural form blunts Yeats’s more markedly disembodied “sound”: “sóni” almost becomes a synonym for lives” (2012, 132).

Meneghello’s “Podìn” does not adhere to the regularity of the versification of the original text. The new *trapianto* turns into a “sound-box” (130), to adopt Mozzato’s definition, where phonetics seems to unlock additional layers of resonance between the original and Meneghello’s rendition. By the way, the *trapianto* does not only concern linguistic, phonological, and structural aspects, but also more properly semantic and cultural ones. By bringing the Irish context closer to his own, that of Malo, Meneghello incorporates Yeatsian themes into the fabric of his own land and cultural background, restoring them in all their strength and expressive power. This demonstrates an intimate and profound understanding of Yeats’s symbolic and thematic issues.

3. Conclusions

Popular culture, marginal perspectives, and bodily and material reasons are never considered by Meneghello as ontological and privileged perspectives to express truth. The irony that arises from the estranged contact between the two languages is profound, and it leads back to the dialect, to the mother tongue, which, as Cesare Segre asserts, is imbued with sensations, memories, and is linked to nature, life, and feelings. It is in these “creative interactions”, “clash of different things or planes” (2005, 24), confrontation between languages that the sense of that “creative shock” can manifest and generate irony. This return to the maternal language allows readers to find the meaning and importance of Meneghello’s experience with the English language.

Throughout his journey, Yeats did not invent new forms distant from the previous tradition, but rather, he revisited them without losing his roots. In *Trapianti*, Meneghello appropriates the compositions of the Irish master and transports them into his own garden; he transforms them to let them take root in a new soil. Quoting *en passant* the skilled gardener poet of Shakespeare’s *Sonnet XV*¹⁷, this grafting is made possible and it is somehow authorized by Meneghello’s profound understanding of Yeats’s complex symbolic and metric system, which the Italian poet

¹⁷ See the couplet of Shakespeare’s *Sonnet XV* (“I engraft you”).

challenged in these Vicentino linguistic-cultural fantasies - as he himself liked to call them. As evident in “Innisfri”, “Un tabaro” and “Podìn”, as well as in the other transplants, Meneghello’s endeavor to achieve linguistic harmony with Yeats is notably demonstrated through his employment of intricate webs of rhymes, assonances, and consonances. These elements effectively transpose on the new texts the effects elicited by the original poems.

Meneghello’s poems are a tribute to Yeats, a way of expressing his gratitude for having “fed” him during his 57 years spent in the land of Albion, and also for helping him understand that the original “attempt to recreate Yeatsian rhythms” produced mere “fairground ditties”, which were far from the actual power of Yeats’s poetry. *Trapianti* are the mature fruit of Meneghello’s research, initiated many years earlier, the garden where he succeeded in “shining new light” on Yeatsian poetry, in being in “consonance” with him in a “singular, intense, and inebriating” way, as Meneghello himself explains in his short autobiographical essay, *Il turbo e il chiaro*¹⁸. They are exercises in understanding, decoding, and prose-poetic rendering that Meneghello can achieve through exploring his own language; through that “Kernel of primordial matter where associations are free and fundamentally crazy. The dialect is therefore in some ways reality and in other ways madness”¹⁹ (my emphasis).

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¹⁸ Meneghello 2006, 1554: “La mia consonanza con Yeats è singolare, intensa e inebriante”.

¹⁹ Meneghello 1975, 43: “nòcciolo di materia primordiale dove le associazioni sono libere e fondamentalmente folli. Il dialetto è dunque per certi versi realtà e per altri versi follia”.

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