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James Joyce's life-long love for "la lingua del si" has been the object of several critical studies both in Italy and the United States. A quick search through the MLA bibliographical listings reveals that only in these past fifteen years over fifty articles have been published which explore a surprising variety of "connections" between Joyce's opus and the language and literature of Italy. These essays investigate Joyce's relation to a number of Italian writers and philosophers such as Dante, Aquinas, Bruno, Vico, D'Annunzio, Svevo, Pirandello, Fogazzaro, Marinetti, Ungaretti, seeking to demonstrate their influence on the evolution of Joyce's aesthetics and style.

The importance of Italian for the greatest prose stylist of our century can be traced from his days at Belvedere College and his writings as a student at University College, Dublin, through Dubliners, Portrait, Exiles, Ulysses, and Finnegans Wake, a work which would be unconceivable without Joyce's perfect knowledge of Italian and the Triestine dialect, among other languages. As has been repeatedly pointed out, Joyce's attraction for Italian and his delight in its daily use did not wane with the end of the long stay in Trieste, where his family resided, except for the Roman and Zürich parenteses, from 1904 to 1920. It is amply attested in the letters that Italian always remained the language of communication with his children Giorgio and Lucia, both born in Trieste. The history of Joyce's acquisition of and relation with Italian has been extensively documented and aptly described by Corinna Del Greco Lobner both in her article James Joyce and the Italian Language and in her illuminating volume James Joyce's Italian Connection, where she

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1 The vast majority of Joyce's letters to Giorgio are in Italian, as are all those to Lucia. As Francini Bruni recalls, "He [Joyce] used to say that the language of family affection could only be Italian" POTTS, W. (1979) 45.
affirms (27-28),

Recapitulating, then, Joyce’s use of Italian from his schooldays in Dublin to the time he left Trieste, the following pattern seems to emerge. While in Dublin, Joyce showed a marked preference for the italiano trecentesco [14th-century Italian] of Dante and Cavalcanti, as it became apparent at his arrival in Pola and during his early acquaintance with Francini Bruni. His aggiornamento [updating] of contemporary Italian was hastened by his daily contacts with Francini, who taught him Tuscan and a wealth of colloquial and proverbial expressions that would remain a substantial and cherished part of his Italian vocabulary. Trieste welcomed Joyce with a mistilingue [mixed-language] dialect filled with humorous possibilities. Joyce loved it and used it well but he never let it interfere with regnicolo, the peninsula’s formal Italian language. The Triestine essays are a telling reminder of his expert use of the language, but they also offer premonitions of innovations which will become an essential part of his style. It is in Joyce’s correspondence with family and friends, however, that Joyce’s Italian fulfills an important role and becomes a creative force in the hands of the homogenius.

Though in the past attempts have been made to study the relevance of Joyce’s Italian writings within the totality of his artistic production, Lobner’s book represents the only study to date that manages to trace a clear connection between Joyce’s public and private use of this language and his works, especially, of course, Finnegans Wake. Her analysis of some “altered words” ["parole alterate"] like antebecedariana in the Italian translation of Anna Livia Plurabelle and others in Joyce’s letters shows how productive her line of research is for obtaining a proper appreciation of Joyce’s idiosyncratic stylistic techniques. Lobner’s felicitous insights stem from the fact that in considering Joyce’s Italian writings, she does not simply fix her attention on the essays and articles written during the

\[2\] Cf. the letter to Alessandro Francini Bruni dated 78 September 1920 (LIII 19) which Joyce concludes with a long paragraph in Triestine dialect and signs "Jacomo del Oio sudito botanico" a pun on his own name, Jacomo being a phonetic transcription in Triestine of his own Italian name and Joyce becoming Oio from the Slovene-Triestine phonetic pronunciation of "Joyce" as "oiitze" ('c' in Slovene is pronounced 'tz') which, as Joyce himself noticed, is very similar to the Slovene words for eggs "jaje" or "jajec." Hence "Joyce" as "Oio," or rather, with an aristocratic flourish, "del Oio." "Sudito botanico" is a political pun on the Italian words "suddito britannico," i.e., British subject, and means "botanic subject." Joyce was obviously aware that this apparently innocent pun would become an instantaneous allusion to anyone well acquainted with the Triestine dialect to another, not so "clean" pun, namely "sudito" [subject] and "sudicio" [filthy].
Triestine period, as the volume *Scritti Italiani* does, but she wisely taps the resources of Joyce's wonderful Italian letters. It is in these texts indeed that she finds the most interesting examples of *parole alterate*, idiomatic expressions, and proverbs which are at the very heart of the creative principle governing *Ulysses* and, even more, *Finnegans Wake*.

While *Scritti Italiani* and *James Joyce's Italian Connection* have obviously different objectives - the former aiming to present, in organic fashion, the bulk of Joyce's production in Italian, the latter analyzing Joyce's knowledge and use of Italian and his relation with D'Annunzio and the avant-garde movement of Futurism - it is surprising that neither considers Joyce's translations into Italian as works worthy of note in a general discussion on the influence of Italian on Joyce. (Though both volumes give space to *Anna Livia Plurabella*, this, as Jacqueline Risset remarks [197], should be considered more a *riscrittura* [rewriting] done by the author than a translation.) To be sure, Lobner lists Joyce's Italian translations in a note, but fails to mention the chapters from Moore's *Celibates* and the debated *The Countess Cathleen*. Though this gap is in part filled by *Joyce Studies in Italy II*, which published an article on the translation of Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, much more needs to be said regarding Joyce's translations. B. J. Tysdahl argues (240),

> An interesting pendant to Joyce translations can be found in Joyce's own translations; and a study of these in their entirety might add appreciably to our knowledge of some of the stylistic considerations that guided Joyce also in the writing of his novels. However, no such study has yet appeared . . . .

While annotated editions of Joyce's translation of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* [Before Sunrise] and even of Joyce's Paduan essays (Berrone) already exist, nothing of the sort has been done for *Riders to the Sea* [*Cavalcata al Mare*], which Joyce translated in collaboration with Nicolò Vidacovich in 1909. Nevertheless, this remains the only Italian translation to have attracted significant critical attention, as the essays by FitzGerald, Bigazzi, Calimani, and Menascé testify. The mystery of this negligence is quickly solved. The translation of the two chapters of *Mildred Lawson* from George Moore's *Celibates*[^1] which Joyce undertook in

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Pola under the supervision of his friend Francini Bruni and which, Joyce bragged to Stanislaus, was meant for a "big publisher in Florence" (*LII* 74), is, as Gabler points out, "clearly an exercise to improve his command of Italian" (xxxii) and, as such, has not been considered interesting from an artistic viewpoint. It should, however, be granted close examination in any study of Joyce's "Italian influence" such as *Scritti Italiani* or Lobner's volume. The Italian version of James Stephens's *Stephen's Green* which Joyce entitled "I Verdi di Giacomo" with a pun on "verde" [green] and "versi" [verses], has not elicited more than a few interesting comments on the typically Joycean playful use of language and his ability to reproduce rhyme and rhythm while still retaining most of the original meaning. There remains what I have termed "the debated Countess Cathleen," the manuscript of which, just as that of Hauptmann's *Michael Kramer* (Gabler xxxi), has been lost.

Before giving my reasons for believing that the translation of the first act of Yeats's *Countess Cathleen* was the fruit of a close collaboration between Vidacovich and Joyce, a discussion of the most recent study of the Synge translation, Joan FitzGerald's "James Joyce's translation of *Riders to the Sea*," seems in order. While FitzGerald builds an effective argument for the close link between Joyce's formulation of his aesthetic theories and his reading and translating Synge's play, she is less than fully accurate when describing the possible terms of the Joyce-Vidacovich collaboration. "Reading the play in manuscript," she writes (152),

> it becomes clear that the translation was a collaborative effort, both Joyce and Vidacovich translating separate parts, and Joyce revising the whole. The overall responsibility for the text is definitely Joyce's, as the manuscript shows him intervening continually... and revising the entire text twice, once by pen... and again in pencil, at a later date, possibly in preparation for its publication in Solaria.

It is quite obvious that not even a close examination of the actual manuscript⁴ could yield information about the later origin of the pencil corrections. It is true that by looking at the facsimile it is possible to formulate the calculated guess that many of the revisions

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were in pencil and the validity of this assumption is quickly confirmed by Gabler's prefatory remarks. However, it seems strange that FitzGerald should not have even mentioned the "third hand," which Gabler identifies as being that of Stanislaus Joyce, thus making him responsible for the "light pencil corrections and revisions" which "appear on every page" (xxxi)\(^5\). If this is the case, then the examples given by FitzGerald of Joyce's corrections, such as *streghe* and *chiunque* (JJA 605, 617) would actually be the work of Stanislaus. The riddle is further complicated by the following remark by Stanislaus in *My Brother's Keeper*, which clearly assigns the role of final editor to Vidacovich: "His [Joyce's] translation, revised by a pupil of his, the lawyer Nicolò Vidacovich, was published after the war in *Solaria*" (215). Strangely enough, Stanislaus, who on other occasions does not fail to mention his own creative efforts\(^6\), in this case does not refer to any active role he might have played in the translation project.

It seems reasonable to argue, as Gabler and FitzGerald do, that the phonetic corrections of the Irish names of the *dramatis personae* were done by Joyce, who, however, might have opted for this course of action after seeing Vidacovich's phonetic rendition of "Maurya" as "Mòria" (JJA 594) and comparing it to his own. As can be observed in the facsimile manuscript, Joyce had originally thought that the substitution of "i" for "y" represented a sufficient italianization of the name. To provide consistent Italian phonetic equivalents to the original names, he also changes Bartley into Bartli and Cathleen into Cathlin (which, in the translation of *Countess Cathleen* was to become Caterina). In any case, there is enough evidence of Joyce's own tendency to italianize proper names in translation even at an earlier stage in his career, as is attested by various sources: his 1904 translation of "Alfred" in Moore's *Celibates* as "Alfreddo," a mispelling which, as the recto of the manuscript shows (JJA 543), was corrected to "Alfredo" by Francini Bruni; his 1907 article "Il Fenianismo", where Robert Eminet and James Stephens become respectively Roberto Eminet and Giacomo Stephens (later he was to italianize his own name as *Giacomo Joyce* and triestinizze it as

\(^5\) Interestingly, it is Gabler who suggests that the pencil revisions belong to "a late stage" (Gabler xxxiii).

\(^6\) In *My Brother's Keeper*, Stanislaus mentions his translation of *Everyman* for the Italian publishing company Bompiani (179).
"Jacomo del Oio"\(^7\); his article "L'Irlanda alla sbarra," where Milesius Joyce becomes Milesio Joyce; his article "Oscar Wilde: il poeta di Salomè" where Oscar is "over-italianized" into an improbable "Oscarre;" and the lecture "Giacomo Clarenzio Mangan." This tendency remains a fixed trait of Joyce's translations, as is noted by Lobner (144): "He shows, for instance, a remarkable persistence in translating first names..." It is possible that Joyce acquired this practice, then common among Italian translators, from Francini Bruni, who helped him standardize his "strano italiano" (Lobner 141), and from Silvio Benco, who had been appointed by Roberto Prezioso to edit his articles for *Il Piccolo della Sera* (*JJ* 255).

One fact at least seems undeniable, namely that the translation of Synge's play was indeed the result of a close cooperation in which both writers played an essential complementary role. To what extent the translation choices can be attributed to Joyce or to Vidacovich can only be a matter of speculation. If nothing else, the examination of hands in the facsimile of the manuscript would indicate that the task of actual translation fell more on Vidacovich's shoulders, since he is responsible for 16 pages altogether (counting also the last quarter of page 10 and the last three quarters of page 21), while Joyce only for 11 (counting also the first quarter of page 21 and three quarters of page 10)\(^8\). However, I believe that considerations about Joyce's knowledge of Italian at the time in question and about the nature of his relationship to Vidacovich can be effectively used to supplement the claim for his leading role in the project. As Francini Bruni recalls, "Cinque anni dopo, è vero, la lingua italiana, la lingua vera, gli era più familiare che a me; i nostri giornali lo ebbero come collaboratore prezioso e potente"\(^9\) (quoted in Lobner 141). Benco, too, attests to Joyce's surprising mastery of Italian (*JJ* 255). Given his ease with the language, his deep knowledge of Italian literature, and the safe assumption that Vidacovich most probably looked up to his "English"

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\(^7\) See above note 2.

\(^8\) FitzGerald is essentially correct in assigning parts of the manuscript to Vidacovich and Joyce, with only one obvious mistake: Joyce's hand runs from p4 (*JJA* 595) to three quarters of p10 (*JJA* 601), not 9. Also, "col piangere" is on p.593, not 595.

\(^9\) "Five years later [1909], it is true, he was more familiar than me with the Italian language, the true language; he became a precious and powerful contributor to our newspapers" (my translation).
professor and would have approved and welcomed his revisions, we can presume that Joyce played a leading role in the project.

The fact that this translation occupies a place in Joyce's canon seems to be due not only to the existence of a manuscript but also to the events and circumstances surrounding its publication. In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver dated 14 September 1916, Joyce wrote: "I do not know where he [Vidacovich] is now (in Rome, I think) or what became of the translation we made together of Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. I read it one night to Mrs Sainati, a very original actress, and her husband took away the *copione* to read it again" (LI 95). As so often happens in literary history, the manuscript disappeared for some time, Joyce evidently not interested or careful enough, in his notorious peregrinations, to preserve a copy of it. When it resurfaced, apparently in 1929, Joyce was no longer the obscure Irishman with literary aspirations teaching at the Trieste Berlitz School, but the renowned and respected author of *Ulysses*. It was for this reason that *Solaria* published *Cavalcata al Mare*, "as the early work of a now famous author" (FitzGerald 152), giving currency to the idea that Joyce was the sole author of the translation. That Vidacovich's part would be neglected becomes clear in the following letter by Vidacovich to Nino Frank dated 23 June 1924 and translated by Eumman (LIII 195):

> Dear Sir, Your very kind letter of this month afforded me great pleasure, recalling to me that happy time when James Joyce, not famous as yet, gave me lessons in English and initiated me in the Irish revival, making me acquainted with Yeats, Synge, and others. By coincidence, just a few days before I received your letter, I came upon the copy of Synge's *Cavalcata al Mare* (*Riders to the Sea*) which was offered to Sainati. I thought I remembered accurately that Joyce and I had made the translation together. So please ask him if that is so, and if it is, my name ought to be properly included too. As for Yeats, I translated the whole first act of *The Countess Cathleen* into verse with the assistance of Joyce, who explained the most difficult passages to me. This first act was sent, as draft, to the author who showed it to Antonio Cippico. Cippico, as far as I can remember, did not dislike the translation, but remarked that he would prefer the verses to be less literary, as it were, and better suited to be spoken in the theatre. Meanwhile Linati published his prose translation, and my work stopped there. If it is of any interest to you, I enclose a draft of my translation.

I have quoted the letter almost in full because of its obvious importance for a better understanding of the terms of the Joyce-
Vidacovich collaboration not only in the *Riders* project but also in the hitherto ignored translation of *Countess Cathleen*. In 1988, *Joyce Studies in Italy II* published, for the first time, the translation of Act I of an early version of this play "from a late transcript of which the original seems to have been lost" (198). The translation is printed in the section "Documenti" of the volume and is preceded by a brief introduction by Carla Marengo Vaglio which tries to shed some light on the part Joyce played in the project. While Carla De Petris suggests that Joyce may have contributed to the translation (10), Marengo Vaglio limits herself to a short history of Joyce's interest in Yeats's play\(^{10}\) and of his relation to the "Triestine lawyer and humanist Nicolò Vidacovich" (198). Although the title of the article is "Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen*: Vidacovich and Joyce's Translation," Marengo Vaglio stresses Joyce's recognition of Vidacovich's paternity.

Though the manuscript has been lost\(^{11}\), it still seems possible to argue that the collaboration between Joyce and Vidacovich was a very close one. As the above discussion on *Riders* demonstrates, the existence of a manuscript does not always necessarily make it easier to establish the precise terms of a creative cooperation. I believe that there exists sufficient external and internal evidence to justify the claim for Joyce's effective contribution to the translation effort. This view is shared by Richard Ellmann who repeatedly attributes to the Joyce-Vidacovich team the paternity of *Riders* and *Countess Cathleen* (cf. *JJ* 276 and *LII* 241). Though Joyce refers to the translation as "his" [Vidacovich's] more than once, he seems to have actively contributed to it, as is clear from both Vidacovich's letter to Nino Frank and Joyce's remark to Yeats that he could "vouch for its fidelity" (*LI* 71). In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver dated 8 November 1916 (*LI* 99), Joyce places his collaboration with Vidacovich at the same level for both projects:

\(^{10}\) All Joyceans are familiar with the episode in Joyce's life which he thus summarizes: "I refused to sign the letter of protest against Countess Cathleen when I was an undergraduate. I was the only student who refused the signature" (*LI* 98).

\(^{11}\) In listing Joyce's works, Gorman writes: "A number of translations in manuscript exist or did exist. Those known are (1): John M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, done into Italian; (2) the first version of William Butler Yeats's *Countess Cathleen*, done into Italian; and (3) Gerhart Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* (Before Sunrise) done into English (238).
He [Synge] gave me *Riders to the Sea* to read and after his death I translated it into Italian (for Mr Sainati) with Mr Vidacovich in Trieste. With him I also translated Mr Yeats’s *Countess Cathleen* but the project failed as we had translated the first version and Mr Yeats did not wish that version to be offered to the Italian public.\(^{12}\)

The translation must have been done some time between 1909 and 1912, probably in early 1912, judging from the tone of Joyce’s letter to Yeats (*LI71*). The same letter and an examination of the translated text reveal that the Italian version follows the 1908 edition of Poems published by Fisher Unwin. The translation was obviously finished before July 1912 for, in a letter to his brother, Joyce mentions Yeats sending the revised version of *Countess Cathleen* to Vidacovich. Vidacovich and Joyce remained committed to the 1908 version (cf. *LI* 321-22) for the very reasons for which Yeats and Cippico (Yeats’s theatre agent in Italy) disliked it: it was too lyrical and not dramatic enough. Reading what remains of the translation, it becomes evident that the text was not intended for the stage but for the reading public. The idea was to introduce Yeats in Italy through the pages of a literary journal and, later, to translate an acting version of the play for possible production “should the play when so published attract the attention of an Italian Manager...” (*LI71*).

Comparing this translation with the other one made by Joyce and Vidacovich, some of the traits typical of their team work can be noted, such as the phonetic rendering of first names for which Joyce must have furnished Vidacovich with the proper Irish pronunciation: Teig becomes Taig, Oona Una, Aleel Alil, Maiv Mèv, and Maire, like the Maurya of *Riders to the Sea*, Mòria. Other names are simply translated: Shemus Rua becomes Giacomo il Rosso, and Cathleen is turned into Caterina, an interesting option when considering that in *Cavalcata al Mare*, as noted above, the same name is mimetically rendered as Cathlin. The strategy, therefore, seems to have been to translate proper names when possible, and to naturalize or italicize them when no translation existed. There is a name, however, which at first sight does not seem to fall into any of these categories: Bita Nolan (Margaret Nolan in the original). While the surname is simply transferred in the Italian version, the first name is translated as Bita

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\(^{12}\) This letter also hints at another common translation project, the translation of *Ivy Day in the Committee Room*, but does explain why "the attempt was a dismal failure" (*LI95*).
instead of Margherita. It seems plausible to argue that Bita must originally have been Rita, the nickname for Margherita, and that it was preferred for rhythmical and metrical reasons. Assuming that the translation published by *Joyce Studies in Italy II* is an accurate reproduction of the late transcript mentioned above, we can formulate the hypothesis that the R of Rita was erroneously transcribed as B from the lost manuscript.

The concern for maintaining the lyrical nature of the text, another characteristic of the Joyce-Vidacovich team, is clearly visible in the effort to reproduce rhythm and pauses (cf. FitzGerald 153) while respecting semantic equivalence. The following examples are a good illustration of this point:

**TEIG**  
*By Carrick-orus churchyard*  
*A herdsman met a man who had no mouth,*  
*Nor ears, nor eyes: his face a wall of flesh;*  
*He saw him plainly by the moon* (Yeats 10)

which in Italian becomes:

**TAIG**  
*Un mandriano*  
*di Carrick-orus presso al cimitero,*  
*incontrò un uom che non aveva bocca*  
*non orecchi, non occhi: il viso un muro*  
*di carne. Il vide, al lume della luna,*  
*distinto*" (Marengo Vaglio 200);

*Impetuous heart, be still, be still;*  
*Your sorrowful love may never be told;*  
*Cover it up with a lonely tune.*  
*He who could bend all things to His will*  
*Has covered the door of the infinite fold*  
*With the pale stars and the wandering moon.* (17)

which in Italian becomes

*Silenzio, impetuoso core;*  
*narrar non dessi la tua ria fort‘na;*  
*coprila d’una solinga canzone.*  
*Chi tutte cose piega alla sua voglia*  
*celò dell’infinito ovil la soglia*  
*con le pallide stelle e con la luna* (204)
The Italian version of the song, which Joyce deemed "excellent" (*LI* 95), is a fine example of how it is possible to strike a balance between the different demands posed by the semantic and the phonetic levels of the original. Rhythm and rhyme are recreated (the ABCABC pattern becoming ABCDDB in Italian) without sacrificing meaning. Only in the second and the last lines of the song do formal considerations momentarily prevail over semantic ones: *fortuna* is not "love", but rather "fate," and the moon is no longer "wandering." Just as in the Synge translation, the language used is much more lyrical than the English original, displaying all of Joyce's passion for the refined, archaic, almost *trecentesco* lexical item.

Though an exhaustive analysis of Joyce's translations into Italian was clearly not within the scope of this paper, I hope to have shown that such a study could effectively contribute to a deeper assessment of Joyce's acquisition of and relation to Italian and the influence this language had on the development of his style. After all, both the translation of Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* and that of Moore's *Celibates* were carried out to acquire a better knowledge of German and Italian, but whereas the former has been the object of an extensive comparative critical study, the latter has been completely neglected. Furthermore, I am convinced that a more attentive textual and biographical study of the Synge, Moore, and Yeats translations could yield interesting results within the framework of a more general investigation of Joyce's links with the Irish Literary Renaissance and its Theatre.

**NOTE**

The following abbreviations have been used:


*JJA* = *James Joyce Archive*. Ed. Michael Groden.

*LI,II,III* = *Letters of James Joyce* Ed. Richard Ellmann (II-III) and Stuart Gilbert (I) (for complete bibliographical references see WORKS CITED).

**WORKS CITED**