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*Translating for the Common Reader. An Ongoing Research
on Science and Education in the Italian Book Trade,
1865-1903**

1. *A resource for Italian publishers*

The aim of this article is to present a selection of works, series, periodicals translated and adapted for the recently broadened Italian audience of the late 19th century, in order to reflect on the influence of publishing strategies on cultural dynamics at different levels of the society, in particular during a controversial age dominated by the cultural debate on Positivism. The research is still in progress, especially the part concerning non-Italian material, nonetheless it is already possible to retrace important features of the Italian publishing market in a transnational perspective. Cultural historians have insisted on the importance of a transnational approach as a key for the understanding of such processes that trespass national and geographical borders but still play an important role in the everyday lives of the

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people living within such borders.¹ Namely, this article is dealing with the century of birth of cultural industry, a phenomenon that can be retraced at a global level although following different timings.

The focus is going to be set on translations as an important element of the book trade in an era of increasing demand. As a matter of fact, the effects of the so-called 'reading revolution' were visible also in Italy in the late 19th century: the number of readers was increasing, despite the slow effects of school policies. The extension of the Piedmontese law on compulsory education to the whole country in 1861, i.e. after the unification, had only weak effects on literacy.² Nonetheless, the period we are dealing with saw the emergence of new readers, although with a certain delay if compared to the German so-called *Leserevolution* or to the emergence of new publics in France and in Britain.³ However, different kinds of audiences emerged in Italy: families of the bourgeoisie, interested in novels and illustrated press, as well as cultivated professionals and specialised workers were part of the new middlebrow audience. As far as the lower part of the social ladder is concerned, other emerging readers were workers interested in self education and reached by publishers thanks to self-help narratives and popular fiction, sometimes even in new forms of *ephemera*.⁴

In a few words, publishers had to face an unprecedented demand for printed products. Illustrated press and popular series further stimulated the interest of readers, leading to an ever-increasing demand for publications. How to face such a demand? From the industrial point of view, publishers were trying to re-organise, but as far as the texts to be published were concerned, they often looked abroad to

¹ Cf. the book history panel presented at the *20th International Congress of Historical Science* (Sidney, 2005) and *Pour une histoire transnationale du livre* 2012.

² On Italian post-unification school policies cf., among others, Genovesi 1998, De Fort 1996 and now Ricuperati 2015.

³ Cf. Wittmann 1995, Lyons 2001 and Rose 2001.

⁴ Cf. the popular editions analysed in Bacci 2009.

find inspiration. Exploiting the already existing intellectual exchanges, publishers often looked eagerly at the book trade in the neighbour countries, first of all at the French market.⁵ As a matter of fact, the two biggest publishers of the 19th century, Emilio Treves and Edoardo Sonzogno, had both spent an informal apprenticeship period beyond the Alps, in order to learn from the French publishing system. Sonzogno even published one of its most successful periodicals, the satirical «Spirito folletto», in both Italian and French editions. Moreover, he anticipated the debate on international copyright becoming the Italian agent for the *Société des gens de lettres*, the French authors' association. This engagement made it possible for him to have the exclusive on the publication of the most successful *roman-feuilletons*, that were to gain popularity in the Italian publishing market as well.⁶

Besides representing a sort of preliminary market research, since the works published were already tested in another country, which allowed publishers to reduce business risk, translation could represent a profitable strategy because of the legislative haziness. Although literary property national laws were already in force at this point, the right of translation had to be regulated through international conferences and conventions. The first one took place in Brussels in 1852 and deliberated that the author had the right to choose to have her or his work translated in another language; such right was to be exercised within three years after the publication; after the expiration of this time span, the work was in the public domain and was likely to be translated by any translator/publisher. Since this law was difficult to put into practice and rather stimulated uncontrolled translations, ten years later, in 1862, France and Italy signed a bilateral convention

⁵ On cultural exchange in the previous century cf. *Cultural translation* 2007, *Cultural transfers* 2010, *Intellectual journeys* 2013. *La cultura francese* 2010 and Muller 2013 have already retraced the history of cultural relations between France and Italy in late modern, with particular attention to literature and publishing.

⁶ Cf. Cagninelli 2008.

stating that the time period for the author to manage her or his right of translation was one year; after that period, the work was in the public domain and likely to be translated and adapted. This period was extended to three years in 1885.

At any rate, it is easy to understand why publishers freely drew from France a lot of texts with the aim of enriching their offer. Not by chance, the works of the *Congrès littéraire international*, held in Paris in 1878 with the aim of further studying international copyright issues, aroused concerns in Italy, since the Italian market widely benefitted from translations from French.⁷ The situation was to partially change in 1886, with the Bern convention, when the right of translation was safeguarded for ten years after the publication. Only the additional act of the Bern convention signed in 1896 was finally able to even out copyright and the right of translation.

It is easy to understand why the period before this last disposition was extremely fruitful for the proliferation on translations. It can be argued that the Italian book market lived on this kind of publications: it often happened that, although written by non-French authors, some texts were vehiculated to Italy through translations from French editions. But were such texts translated or adapted? Or even rewritten? Can we identify translators and their role in this process? Only seldom can Italian editions be defined as proper translations. It is not my aim here to deal with translations studies issues, nonetheless, it is important to reflect on such questions having manifold implication in the transcultural circulation of knowledge.

2. *Translating and popularising*

⁷ On the national debate on copyright and on the incidence of French translations cf. Palazzolo 2013, p. 87-91.

Which were the most translated work? Not only novels, but also children's literature, self-help, biographies, travels and explorations, science popularisation. Such texts represented a big portion of the book-trade in the late 19th century, has already argued by manifold scholars.⁸ The motto attributed to Massimo D'Azeglio 'fare gli italiani' (making the Italians) has often been used to show how politicians and leading classes felt their commitment to unify a nation that was still scattered in what counted most: its citizens. Popular education and science popularisation campaigns, also involving people beyond school-age, were often undertaken by private, charity, or mutual-cooperation associations, rather than by public institutions. Among them, publishing enterprises have to be mentioned: in particular, the launch of a significant number of collections aiming at disseminating secular values such as science and work among the popular classes.⁹

Concurrently with such private effort in popular education, a new literary genre was literally taking over the publishing market: after Samuel Smiles' *Self-help*'s transnational success, a new wave of educational publications for the adults of the lower classes was overwhelming publisher's catalogues and, consequently, popular- and circulating libraries.¹⁰ Adriana Chemello has already investigated the reasons of Smiles' and his imitators' success and its relationship with the traditional Italian popular novel; a major argument of her analysis is the process of cultural adaptation that self-help narratives underwent. To start with Strafforello's version of Smiles' work, the cultural translation is already evident in the title *Chi si aiuta Dio*

⁸ Cf. Govoni 2002 on science popularisation, Chemello 2009 on popular novels and self-help, Chiosso 2013 on educational publishing and Colin 2005 on children's literature.

⁹ Cf. Lanaro 1979, Verucci 1981.

¹⁰ Cfr. Chemello 1997. On the origins of Italian public libraries cf. Montecchi 1995. On 19th century audience, reading practices and institutions see also De Franceschi 2013.

l'aiuta, and would influence the reception of the whole genre by the Italian audience through the work of translators and imitators, often coordinated by the major publishing houses.¹¹ The Milanese Treves and Sonzogno were, again, the more influent promoters of such multifaceted wave of publications: from novels to handbooks, from biographies to scientific and hygienic popularisation.¹² A concurrent source of new texts and topics was the French activity of professional popularisers such as Jean Macé, Luois Figuier, Gaston Tissandier and, to a lesser extent, Pierre Larousse and Camille Flammarion.¹³ These authors were also translated and culturally adapted to the Italian market: the more emblematic example of such dynamics is represented by the translation, identified by Bruno Ambrella, of the word *ouvriers*, French for 'workers', into *artigiani*, Italian for 'artisans', throughout the Treves 1887 edition of Tissandier's *Gli eroi del lavoro* [*Les Héros du travail*, Paris: M. Dreyfous, 1882].¹⁴ Awareness of the international historical and cultural context is essential to investigate such choices: in this case, the presumed backwardness of the Italian industrial system only partially concealed worries towards social equality claims, especially after the events of the Paris Commune. Therefore, a transnational approach seems relevant to understand choices and dynamics of the new-born cultural industry. Besides the abovementioned case studies, an almost unexplored galaxy of publishing initiatives was issued for the same reasons; I would like here to provide two case studies that will lead to further reflections on the role of publishers as (trans)cultural actors.

3. *The geographic turn*

¹¹ Cf. Chemello 2009, p. 97-158.

¹² Cf. Govoni 2002, p. 105-163.

¹³ Cf. *La science pour tous* 1990, Raichvarg and Jacques 2003, Fox 2012, p. 184-226.

¹⁴ Cf. Ambrella 2011, p. 74-75.

Exploration accounts represent a pan-European phenomenon in the 19th century: expeditions within colonial enterprises stimulated a range of publications extending from official reports to semi-fictional narratives. The colonial campaigns undertaken by European states represented an important incentive for geographical interests; Geographical Societies were important institutions for the modern European countries, and they often played a relevant role in fostering the interest towards geography through a multifaceted range of publications. The Italian situation was partially different, since the country would not own any colony before 1882, however, the establishment of the Geographical Society in 1868 represents an important part of a programme aimed at preparing the ground for colonialism.¹⁵ In parallel to this, the illustrated press and the entire publishing system raised involvement in the colonial imagery. As a matter of fact, travels had always encountered the interest of readers, and travel literature had already experimented a season of success in Italy in the previous decades; in this phase of progress and colonial quests a different kind of narration takes over the publishing market: exploration accounts often in instalments.¹⁶

As far as a transnational perspective is concerned, the circulation of themes and texts from abroad in the Italian illustrated press clearly emerges. A blatant example is the Italian journal «Il Giro del mondo», published weekly by Treves from 1863 to 1887, that was a sort of translation/imitation of «Le Tour du Monde», the French periodical directed by Edouard Charton, published weekly from 1860 to 1914. Charton was mentioned in the title page of the Italian version as a collaborator of the Italian publisher. Actually, the Italian edition was a sort of re-working of Charton's journal: French materials were translated into Italian with the addition of some new texts of different

¹⁵ Ricci 2005, p. 79.

¹⁶ On the Italian authors of travel literature from the 18th century cf. *Scrittori italiani di viaggio* 2008 and Ricorda 2012.

kinds: reportages by journalists, expeditions accounts by Italian explorers, other texts on the development of geography by the journal's editors. Charton's material was borrowed from different issues of the original publication and re-assembled in an edition adapted to the Italian audience, with the effect that the Italian issues were not the mere translation of the French ones. Nonetheless, the original material represented a very low percentage: in the Italian edition only the 15% of the texts was represented by original articles.¹⁷ Who translated Charton's articles remains obscure, but we can imagine that non-professional translators worked on it: anyone among Italian cultivated people would be able to do that in a decent way. We have already mentioned the fact that Treves was part of the process of transcultural adaptation of 19th century publication: his strategy was applied to the geographical periodical publications as well. Moreover, it can be argued that this publication, preceding the foundation of the Italian Geographical Society, played an important role in arousing public interest towards geography.¹⁸

Travels and explorations were one of the core interests of average readers and also Sonzogno published the «Giornale illustrato dei viaggi e delle avventure di terra e di mare» from 1878 to 1924, in the wake of another French publication that contained both exploration reports and fictional travels: a less scientific and more popular orientation that fitted Sonzogno's audience. This specialisation of the two major publishers of post-unification 19th century Italy was in perfect accordance with their competition strategies, since they addressed two different targets: the urban bourgeoisie was Treves's main target, whereas Sonzogno addressed a more popular audience, especially as far as his book editions were concerned.¹⁹ Besides these major initiatives in the periodical press, the Italian book-trade was

¹⁷ Caravello 2014, p. 96.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 110-112.

¹⁹ On Treves and Sonzogno editions in the Milanese book market see Braidà 2001.

literally overwhelmed by a wave of exploration narratives in volumes, often regrouped in thematic book series. It can be argued that the second half of the 19th century represented a golden age for the book series in the Italian book trade; incidentally, also in this case transcultural circulation can be seen as a relevant agent of innovation: not by chance the so-called ‘invention of the book series’ had taken place in France some years before.²⁰

Treves’ *Biblioteca di viaggi* (Library of travels) is the first proper book series of travel and exploration accounts published in Italy, issued from 1869 to 1878 (and then reprinted until 1901). The foreword to the first volume, signed by the publisher himself – a very usual practice by Treves, that provides useful information despite the destruction of his archives under WWII bombings – declared that the texts were chosen among the ones published in «Il Giro del mondo», the already-mentioned periodical ‘inspired’ by Charton’s weekly journal: «da questo stesso giornale contiamo di trascinare taluni viaggi e pubblicarli pure in volume» (from this very same journal we will select some travels and publish them in volume).²¹ A very cheap solution for a publisher having to face the described increasing demand: articles were mainly adapted from the French periodical and then offered to the Italian readers through journal instalments. In a second phase, they were assembled in books following the *feuilleton* strategy adopted by French and Italian publishers as far as literary texts were concerned: the same texts were sold twice and with a scarce money investment.²²

As already mentioned, paratextual elements represent an essential

²⁰ Cf. Olivero 2009. On Italian series see also Verucci 1981, p. 116-138, Marazzi 2014, p. 175-213.

²¹ Raynal 1869, *Foreword* (translation mine).

²² On the first experiences of series drawn from instalments cf. Bianchini 1969, p. 10-16.

source for the historical investigation of Treves's strategy: the forewords, signed with Emilio Treves' initials, were somehow communicating what we would now call the brand image, namely, what the publisher wanted his readers to know about his publications. In the very same foreword mentioned before, after informing the audience that he was mainly going to publish texts by foreign authors in the series, Treves wished himself «accadrà col tempo di poter arricchire questa raccolta, con lavori nuovi ed originali; [...] stimolando gli autori nell'emulazione e il pubblico nell'amor proprio e nazionale» (to enrich the series with new and original works in the future [...], stimulating authors and audience to self-respect and national feeling). The idea vehiculated is that the use of foreign texts was almost necessary, since there was a lack of Italian narrations of travel and explorations, even though «lo studio della geografia è diventato uno dei prediletti del nostro secolo» (the study of geography ha[d] become one of the most favourite in our century).²³ As it happened in almost all fields of science, technology, and industry, Italian people had to be informed on the international progress in order to learn from foreign models and put them into practice on a national basis.

Treves engaged in such task publishing fifty volumes in the series, of which only a small part indeed seems to be original works by Italian authors. Besides Edmondo De Amicis, who was bound to Treves by a contract, and whose reportage from London was paired with a text on the same city by the French explorer Louis Simonin, only nine other issues contained texts by Italian authors.²⁴ Pietro Savio (two works), Arturo Issel, Antonio Gallenga, Antonio Bottoni, Giuseppe Garzolini, Nicola Lazzaro, together with an anonymous author giving account of the Vienna universal exhibition in 1873, were the Italian scientists and explorers published by Treves. Some of their works were not original,

²³ Raynal 1869, *Foreword* (translations mine).

²⁴ Some interesting pages on the correspondence Treves-De Amicis are included in Ragone 2009, p. 197-226.

since they had been published before in «Il Giro del Mondo» and also elsewhere. A blatant example is *Viaggio nel Mar Rosso e tra i Bogos* [Travel to the Red Sea and among the Bogos], by the Italian geologist and palaeontologist Arturo Issel (1842-1922), published in 1871 on «La Nuova Antologia» in Florence and then republished by Treves in «Il Giro del mondo» the following year. The success of such report is tightly bound with the increasing Italian interest towards north-eastern Africa, that would later result in the Italian colonial policy.²⁵ As a volume, Issel's work was advertised as «talmente migliorato ed aumentato che, sebbene conservi lo stesso titolo, può dirsi una cosa nuova» [enhanced and enriched so much that it can be defined a new thing].²⁶ As a matter of fact, it was enriched with cartography; the publishers also declared that the new version had undergone a revision process by the author.

If texts originally written in Italian were re-worked from the publication in instalment to become volumes, what happened to texts in foreign languages, that needed to undergo a translation process first? In some case it is already difficult to identify the source text, as in the case of the volume *Viaggio nei regni di Siam, di Cambodge, di Laos ed in altre parti centrali dell'Indo China*, by Henri Mouhot (Treves, 1871). An article entitled *Viaggio nei regni di Siam, Cambogia e Laos* was published in «Il Giro del Mondo» in the first year, 1863-64, and was drawn by «Le Tour du Monde» 1863 issue. Additionally, a French edition of the same work was published by Hachette in 1868, and seems to be the main source of the 1871 Italian translation. Actually, the French edition was, in turn, the volume publication of the instalments previously issued by «Le Tour du monde» and was introduced with a preface by Ferdinand de Lanoye, the real compiler of the French version after Mouhot's documents; this preface was

²⁵ Cf. Carazzi 1972 and Surdich 1979.

²⁶ Livingstone 1873, publisher's announce at the end of the volume.

only partly reproduced by Treves, without ascribing it to Lanoye. Nevertheless, the introduction to the Italian edition leads to think that the French text is the main source for it, even if a London 1864 edition existed. The latter had nothing to do with Lanoye, though. However, describing the volume in his foreword, Treves clearly referred to the London edition by Murray, as the main source for the plates, engraved and printed after Mouhot's sketches; to tell the truth, all three editions, Italian, English and French included the same engravings.

In another case, the French edition by Hachette seems to be the main source, but after having undergone a process of reduction: a blatant example is *La Russia libera* by William H. Dixon, a selection of 38 chapters among the 66 of the French edition *La Russie libre*: the more detailed descriptions and in-depth analysis were simply cut out by the Italian translator/adaptor, reducing the original text of 500 pages to 330). Such choices were probably made to give readers a series of books of similar length: 150 pages was the average, sometimes obtained by combining two texts, as in *Viaggio in Danimarca e all'interno dell'Islanda*, that contained two reports by Jean-Marie Dargaud and Natale Nogaret. The second text by Pietro Savio published in the series (*Il Giappone al giorno d'oggi nella sua vita pubblica e privata, politica e commerciale* [...], Treves: 1875) was even combined with *O-kiku-San romanzo giapponese* [japanese novel]. Another aim was probably not to discourage readers with long volumes: as far as *Viaggio in Messico* by Ernest Vigneaux is concerned, the French Hachette edition *Souvenirs d'un prisonnier de guerre au Mexique* of 560 pages was reduced to 150, in particular, by cutting out the author's introduction and summing it up in Treves's foreword.

4. *Adapting geographical narrations*

The selection of examples presented leads us to briefly reflect on the implications on authorship of such policies.²⁷ As already argued by Maria Iolanda Palazzolo, as far as children's literature was concerned, Italian publishers often acted as the authors of a new work, coordinating translation- and editing activities and offering a re-worked book that they believed more likely to meet their own audience's expectations.²⁸ This despite the energies spent in trying to rule copyright at an international level (Treves took personally part to the Paris convention of 1878, the aforementioned *Congrès Littéraire International*). A blatant example in this direction is the *Biblioteca di viaggi* first issue, entitled *Il nuovo Robinson Crusoe, ossia i naufraghi delle isole Auckland, pel signor Edoardo Raynal* (1869) [The new Robinson Crosue, or the shipwreck on Auckland islands, by Mr Edoardo Raynal], which represented, as already said, the publication in volume of the instalments previously issued by «Il Giro del mondo» (on the very same year) and, before, on «Le Tour du monde» (1863). The interesting aspect is the reference to one of the most transnational long-sellers of the history of literature: Robinson Crusoe. Such a title had not been used either in the French or in the Italian instalments, but for his first travel narration, Treves decided to rely upon the success on the fictional shipwreck imagined by Defoe. As already shown by Andrew O'Malley, the manifold adaptations of Defoe's work had not only distorted the author's intentions, but had also become a sort of vehicle for a wide range of purposes, especially educational.²⁹ In this travel edition, the choice operated by Treves is quite controversial; on the one hand, it has an undeniable advertising aim: Crusoe's shipwreck was undoubtedly the most renowned by

²⁷ On translation and authorship in the early modern period cf. Johns 1998, Chartier 2015.

²⁸ Palazzolo 2004.

²⁹ O'Malley 2012. See also Marazzi 2014, p. 162-164 on the French *Robinsonnades*.

every kind of potential reader. On the other hand, such a title referred to a fictional event, whereas the new work published was a report, albeit in a narrative style, of a real ‘adventure’. In the foreword, the Italian publisher insists on such difference as an argument to stress the truthfulness of the account published in the volume: in his opinion, a real account of a lived experience is more useful. This argument seems quite weak to the contemporary reader; however, the choice of the title seems pitch-perfect for business purposes.

In the following years, the presence of exploration accounts increased throughout publishers’ catalogues; although Treves’ *Biblioteca di viaggi* was closed in 1878, a relevant number of exploration accounts was still issued by Milanese publishers with similar strategies. Emin Pasha relief expedition, led by Henry Morton Stanley, represented one of the most read – and published – adventures of the time. Treves was one of the hundreds European and American publishers that dedicated books to this fascinating narration in diverse forms (novels, reports, publication of letters and diaries of the participants to the expedition). In 1890 he published *La liberazione di Emin Pascià narrata da H.M. Stanley nelle sue lettere* [The relief of Emin Pasha narrated by H.M. Stanley in his letters]. Stanley was one of the most renowned explorers in Italy, thanks to the international success of the previous narrations of Livingstone’s search expedition: the choice of publishing his letters in a volume about another venture of his does not need to be explained. Originally, such letters had been collected by J. Scott Keltie and published on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society in London: not surprisingly, both the French edition by Hachette and the Italian by Treves reproduced the foreword of the English edition and did not mention the name of the translator. Treves did something more: besides declaring that the Italian edition also contained some supplementary letters, together with the narration of Stanley’s travel back to England, he added, as stated in the sub-title, an annex regarding the Italian explorer Gaetano Casati, who was also part of the rescue expedition.

Containing Casati’s biography together with some excerpts of his

letters from the expedition, such supplementary section confirms two main features of the coeval publishing market: the use of biographies and the constant attempt to adapt the text to its readers, including experiences and people that they would recognise as more familiar. On biographies, I will just refer to Casalena 2012, who has already given account of their role within the civil education aims of the Italian nation-building process. The role of publishers was essential, starting from the Florentine Barbèra, who launched a specialised series already before the unification; also, collections of biographies – compiled in the wake of Plutarch, often mentioned in titles and subtitles as the archetype of the genre – were to become a proper sub-genre of self-help and educational literature.³⁰ As far as biographies are concerned, it is important to remember that Treves also published, in the same years, two of the most renowned French works of the time: Gaston Tissandier's *Les Martyrs de la science* (Treves, 1884) and *Les Héros du travail* (Treves, 1887). Moreover, he had already shown his interest towards explorers' biographies in «Il Giro del mondo»: as a matter of fact, one of the innovation introduced in the Italian version of the «Tour du monde» was represented by some articles on three Italian coeval explorers (Filippo De Filippi, published in 1867, Giovanni Miani in 1874 and Giovanni Chiarini, 1880) together with the lives of Italian travellers of the past centuries (1872), and a profile of the most famous explorer of every time, David Livingstone, translated from an article in a German journal and published in 1874. Not by chance, the three Italian coeval explorers, all perished during expeditions, were also included in the Italian version of *Les Martyrs de la science* and such choice leads us back to the publication about Emin Pasha's relief: the idea of adding a biography of an Italian explorer who had taken part to the narrated expedition is only one of the similar operations made by Treves in his translated books. The aim of the

³⁰ See also Lanaro 1981.

Milanese publisher, that emerges in different publications, was then to ‘make things nearer’ to his audience, in order to pursue both his popularising/educational and business plans.

Treves was not the only publisher that benefitted from the new audience’s interest towards explorations – and from the possibility of assembling new versions of texts issued abroad: examining the Italian offer in the years 1870-1880,³¹ hundreds of books give account of, or are inspired by, the vicissitudes of Livingstone and Stanley, the shipwreck in the Auckland Islands, Emin Pasha’s relief expedition, whereas other less adventurous works remain confined to more specialised collections and journals. Besides the already mentioned best-sellers, Thomas Mayne Reid, Verney Lovett Cameron, Georg August Schweinfurth, James Augustus Grant and John Hanning Speke were the ‘explorers’ whose adventures were offered in manifold ways to a wide range of readers. Both Francesco and Antonio Vallardi’s publishing houses, relying on a solid family tradition in lithography and cartography, also proposed travel accounts with diverse levels of technicality, as well as other Milanese publishers such as Muggiani and Carrara and the aforementioned Sonzogno.

In central Italy, another publishing house with a strong interest in the new readers was Perino, that also started a dedicated series called *Biblioteca di viaggi* in 1884.³² It did not last more than a year, but it is particularly interesting for the ability to conjugate entertainment and educational purposes. Not by chance, most of the texts concerned northern Africa, in view of Italian colonial interests that were starting to emerge. The key of the success of these narrations, that by that time had become a proper publishing genre, was the ability to offer attractive books, dominated by strong exoticism and adventure, that

³¹ Information was drawn from the Italian national Opac and enriched by the exam of publishers’ catalogues, in particular, the collective catalogues editions issued in the occasion of industrial exhibitions (1878, 1881, 1891).

³² On Perino cf. Palazzolo - Mori - Bacci 2012.

at the same time were extremely current, since travels and explorations were usually quite recent. In this way, they managed to widespread geographical notions and to progressively involve common readers in the colonial adventure. The interests intertwined in such publications were diverse, but a great role was played by the possibility of popularising geography. Not by chance, Treves, in his forewords, openly addressed his ‘young readers’: an utmost curious audience, fascinated by adventures in exotic settings, but at the same time felt by the society as the main object of educational efforts. The materiality of such publications, especially the ones by Treves, would not deceive young readers: accurate black and white plates, resistant bindings and useful maps were at the time the main features of accurate edition for the families of the bourgeoisie.

5. *Translating illustrations?*

Young readers were the object of a great portion of 19th century publications, as already anticipated. A second case study will help us reflect on cultural transfer in educational publications, dealing with the pedagogic use of illustrations in a transnational perspective. Such approach needs a short premise on the theoretical context. Differently from manifold fields of knowledge, the reception of Positivism in the Italian pedagogy was quite strong, especially in the 1880’s: in 1888 Minister Gabelli compiled new syllabi for elementary school, that were to be valid until 1894.³³ Even though most teachers rather identified themselves with the catholic-liberal side, as emerges from a variety of teachers’ journals published in the liberal age, one key method supported by Positivism was widely appreciated by them, including the more conservative: the so-called object lessons.³⁴ Such

³³ For the syllabi’s texts see Catarsi 1990.

³⁴ On school periodicals and the evolution of teachers’ professionalism cf. *I periodici scolastici* 1993 and Chiosso 2011.

method, based on observation, already put into practice throughout Europe since the first decades of the 19th century, knew a revamp at the end of the same century in Italy. The interest towards object lesson and practical teaching in Italy was derived from Heinrich Pestalozzi and his disciple Adolph Diesterweg, whose reception, albeit late (the two were both born at the end of the previous century), was strong in the Italian liberal age and shared among teachers with different views. No matter what the pedagogic origin of this interest in ‘objects’ was, publishers were ready to exploit it with a new range of illustrated publications.

The portion of the world that can be observed from a classroom is indeed rather small: illustrated books represented a way to overcome such problem, by offering a representation of reality that was used to conduct object lessons. The idea was to start from a picture and, by its description, to let the pupil get to know all possible contents related to that image. Namely, when showing a picture of the sea, the adult would not only mention the names of boats and fishes, but also explain fishing activity and market and so forth. In Italy, this kind of method had additional success due to another need: teaching the Italian ‘name of things’ to dialect-speaking pupils in the recently unified state. It has been argued that school publishers represented important actors in the process of nation building and at the same time they were eager to exploit the newly established school-system.³⁵ As a result, a new wave of didactic posters was printed to satisfy teachers’ need, together with related teacher-handbooks, conceived to provide a glossary and to suggest application of such material.³⁶

Nevertheless, the quality of the Italian average school- and children’s book was quite poor from a material point of view, especially as far as illustrations were concerned. Books were usually printed in black and

³⁵ Cf. Chiosso 2013 and Marazzi 2014.

³⁶ Didactic posters have been recently analysed by Targhetta 2015.

white with few images, in order to keep prices low. This was also due to the Italian graphic compartment being quite underdeveloped at that time. In 1874, the Milanese publisher Antonio Vallardi, who was going to specialize in school-edition in the following years, declared: «I prodotti della litografia e calcografia sono di gran lunga inferiori agli esteri; ne è causa la mancanza di buone scuole per istruire bravi disegnatori [...]. Di più le minime tariffe doganali fanno sì che gli stranieri possano liberamente, e lo fanno, infestare il paese delle loro produzioni [...]» [Lithographic and chalcographic prints are far less accurate than abroad, due to the lack of good drawing schools [...]. Moreover, the low import duties let foreigner invade the country with their production].³⁷

Like others, Vallardi was skilled in lithography and cartography and was trying to renew his offer, in order to meet the requests of the new established educational system, but recognized a weakness in the Italian graphic industry, if compared to other countries. As a matter of fact, Giovanni DeAgostini, who was to become leader in cartography editions, had his apprenticeship in German schools (Berlin and Gotha). It is not by chance that in the same years a significant number of publishers from abroad settled in Italy during the 19th century, especially in Turin. One of them was Ulrich Hoepli, from Thurgau, in Switzerland, who took over an antiquarian bookseller in Milan and started a publishing activity on the side, that soon became his main – and successful – business. Even though he is renowned for his collection *Manuali Hoepli* (Hoepli handbooks), inspired by a primers series by the British publisher MacMillan (another case of transcultural circulation that deserves attention), his concern for beautiful books led him to publish a small number of children's books, particularly accurate in their material details and quite innovative: some decades

³⁷ *Atti del comitato dell'inchiesta industriale 1874* (translation mine).

later, he would be one of the few Italian publishers concerned in experiments in paper crafting with the collection of animated scenic design *Libriteatro* (Theatre books) (1940s).

Among Hoepli's first editions for children, one of the most renowned (and rare) is *Il mondo dipinto*, sometimes defined the *Orbis pictus* of the 19th century, with reference to Comenius' work. *Il mondo dipinto* was an in-4° volume, made up of 96 plates in colours combined with texts by Pasquale Fornari, a Milanese educator. The book was declared to be designed by Staub and Fischer, a teacher and an illustrator quite active in Germany in such kind of books, according to the bibliographic records in international Opac's. Staub and Fischer's illustrations were realised in chromolithography by the Swiss Hindemman and Siebermann and unequivocally show their Germanic provenience (Ill. 1 and 2), even though it has not been possible, up to now, to identify the German original work that was proposed to the Italian children through the mediation of Hoepli and Fornari.³⁸ What is sure is that we are dealing with a tool for object lessons more than with a children's book. In fact, the illustrations are clearly conceived as a subject to describe, when they don't look like didactic posters (Ill. 3 and 4). Also, the text, exactly as the abovementioned teachers' handbooks for object lessons, seems conceived to stimulate the reflection of children and to help educators discuss the illustrations. If the content can lead us to identify *Il mondo dipinto* as a textbook for object lessons, as it was also stated in the title page («quadri cromolitografici al naturale per l'insegnamento oggettivo ai bambini» [self-standing chromolithographic plates for teaching object lessons to children – translation mine], its materiality leads us in the opposite direction: we cannot imagine such a big-format publication, with a relatively high price, being conceived

³⁸ *Ulrico Hoepli* 2001, p. 43-44 has first given account of this publication by Hoepli.

for ordinary use in the classrooms of the newly established public educational system. Instead, it might have been used as a didactic tool by private teachers, and more frequently by parents, confirming once more the idea that the didactic purpose was essential in publications for young readers, as already emerged throughout the manifold works on children's literature of the 19th century.³⁹

Unfortunately, Hoepli's archives of the 19th century are not preserved, yet it is possible to put forward some hypothesis on the reasons and the dynamics that were behind this publication and its transcultural implications. *Il mondo dipinto* and many other similar books were not the translation of a German equivalent: they just reproduced the same illustrations and plates, but with a text conceived by a new author. This helped bypassing intellectual property and at the same time provided quality pictures to the Italian publishers. Not to mention that a literal translation of the text would be useless for didactic purposes, since an Italian teacher or parent would use the same pictures in a totally different way from a German speaking educator, both for linguistic and cultural reasons.

Hoepli was not the only one to put into practice the same strategy of importation and adaptation of didactic plates: another similar work printed by Vallardi, entitled *Il mondo illustrato* (with a manifest allusion to Hoepli's successful publication) contains the new version of a plate from *Il mondo dipinto* where the subject is unequivocally of Swiss origin (Ill. 5). Another example is a book on the nomenclature of arts and crafts, probably part of a multiple volume course: *Istruzione e diletto: metodo per iniziare i fanciulli alla osservazione accurata delle cose ed alla appropriata espressione del nome loro*, published in Padua in 1878, by Drücker & Tedeschi. The volume, entitled *Arti e mestieri*, consists of 24 plates, where the name of each object is printed both in German (gothic type) and in Italian, the latter being

³⁹ Boero - De Luca 2007 represents an exhaustive reference.

probably added on already-existing German stereotypes. (Ill. 6) The argument of a contemporary observer confirms the hypothesis that only stereotypes were imported and then associated to new texts: «quello che è censurabile da noi è l'abuso dei *clichés* forastieri [*sic*] nelle pubblicazioni di carattere italiano. La contraddizione è così flagrante, quei tipi, specialmente di bambini, hanno un aspetto così d'oltre Alpi che è impossibile l'illusione» [what is censurable in our country is the use of stereotypes from abroad in Italian publications. The contradiction is striking: those types, especially representing children, look so transalpine that it is impossible to cheat].⁴⁰ Gavazzi Spech's observation wants to be a wake-up call for the Italian publishing sector, but, observing the situation more than a century later, it is possible to argue that the importation of plates from abroad has represented a stimulus for the Italian publishers. After producing hybrid volumes because of an eagerness to offer new books to satisfy a growing demand, the necessity to make children's book more attractive by the means of illustration became increasingly clearer to publishers and led to an evolution in the materiality of Italian editions for children.

6. *Further directions*

The case studies presented are aimed at demonstrating the importance of publishing strategies in 19th century transnational cultural exchange, when the increasing demand represented a real challenge for publishers. Anonymous, often low-quality translations, rewritings, reuse of iconographic material were every-day practices, in parallel with more accurate editions targeting more expert readers and audiences from the upper class.⁴¹ All these editions, including

⁴⁰ Gavazzi Spech 1883, p. 97 (translation mine).

⁴¹ An example to be mentioned is the *Biblioteca scientifica internazionale*, published by Dumolard as the Italian version of what can be defined a proper

the cheap ones, not only increased the national publishing market, but also played an important role in the innovation of the country. The success of travel publications from abroad stimulated the study of geography; imported high quality lithographic plates contributed to the development of illustrated children's literature. A further hypothesis that I would like to propose as an open conclusion to this account of some less investigated publications, also involves other already mentioned publishing genres of the 19th century and aims at investigating the Italian society through its publishing industry.

Previous researches on culture and society in the Italian liberal age have enlightened the surprising diffusion of scientism at every stage of the society. What I would like to argue is that the role played in this process by publishers seems not indifferent at all: such suggestions often reached common readers thanks to a galaxy of journals and popular publications that literally overwhelmed the Italian book-trade.⁴² Positivism represented a cultural background pervading the manifold aspects of the international book market, not limited to scientific editions: the Italian reception of foreign publishing initiatives through translations and adaptations ended up in vehiculating new values throughout the society.

The idea is to retrace the role played by publishers' choices in the reception of texts, authors and forms of thinking relating to the positivistic spirit.⁴³ To better sketch this further perspective, it might be useful to briefly dwell on the controversial reception of Positivism in Italy, which has determined the time span of this

transnational series: the *International Scientific Series* (1873-1911) already studied by Leslie Howsam 2000 especially on the British side, and that my current project aims at analysing in a trans-cultural perspective.

⁴² Lacaita 1973, Baglioni 1974, Lanaro 1979, Verucci 1981, *Innovazione e modernizzazione* 1995.

⁴³ Redondi 1980, *Il positivismo e la cultura moderna* 1985, *L'età del positivismo* 1986 represent a framework for retracing such debate.

article. Although connected with the international movement of ideas, it has been argued that an own Italian matrix can be retraced in Enlightenment-derived themes (such as in Carlo Cattaneo). Furthermore, evolutionism and naturalism had to face a stronger resistance due to the Catholic presence. In the end, the dialogue with disciplines besides social sciences was very limited, due to the lower level of scientific progress in natural sciences compared to other countries. This is of course a very simplified sketch, but the aim is to show how the general fascination with science and technology represented the broadest effect of the positivistic cultural climate in the country. Nevertheless, the abovementioned diffusion of scientism can be better understood in a transnational perspective from below, that takes into account commercial relations in the field of cultural production. Such dynamics, in parallel with the aforementioned educational purposes, managed to influence the taste and the interests of common people, even if their lives were lived far away from the traditional centres of intellectual speculation (universities, scientific societies etc.). As a matter of fact, Positivism represented a cultural background for diverse aspects of the international book market, not limited to the scientific editions.⁴⁴ Biographies, social novels, self-help, geographical and didactic publications were involved.⁴⁵ To what extent did publishing strategies contribute to the circulation of positivistic suggestions among common people? The case studies presented in this article represent a first step of an analyses of the publishing market in the liberal age aiming at giving a broader answer to this question.

ILLUSTRATIONS

⁴⁴ On publishing initiatives deeply rooted in Positivism and evolutionary naturalism cf. *Darwin 2010*; *Global Spencerism 2016*.

⁴⁵ On the social novel cf. Chevalier 1976 and Chemello 1997, p. 165-176.

ILLUSTRATIONS

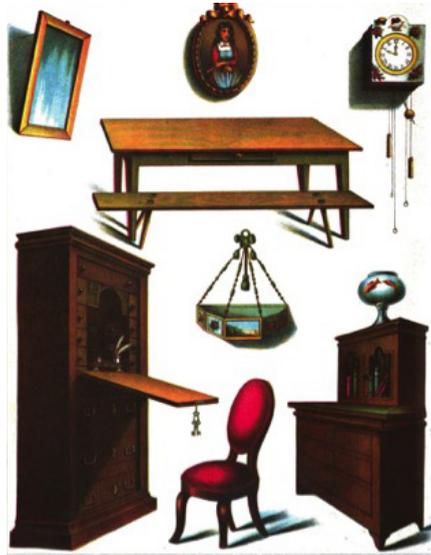


Ill. 1 and 2

Examples of plates of undoubted German area origin.

P. Fornari, *Il mondo dipinto*, Milano, Hoepli
(available on line, last accessed July 2017

<<https://books.google.it/books?id=veFi0LcQYcMC&printsec=frontcover&hl=it#v=onepage&q&f=false>>).



III. 3

Example of plate with didactic purpose.

P. Fornari, *Il mondo dipinto*, Milano, Hoepli

(available on line, last accessed July 2017 <<https://books.google.it/books?id=veFi0Lc-QYcMC&printsec=frontcover&hl=it#v=onepage&q&f=false>>).



III. 4

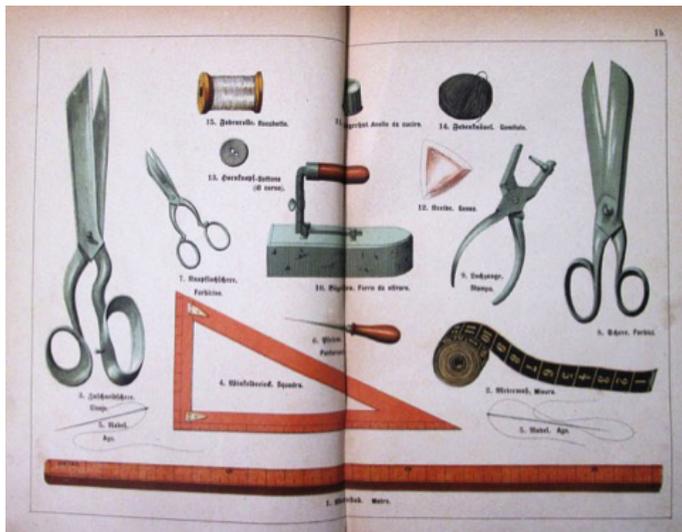
Example of didactic poster.

Illustrazione delle tavole murali a colori di nomenclatura domestica, arti e mestieri e storia naturale, Torino, Paravia, 1883 [Biblioteca della Fondazione Centro culturale valdese, Torre Pellice (TO)].



III. 5

Plate from *Il mondo illustrato*, Milano, Vallardi, s.d.
[Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo, Torino].



III. 6

Plate from
Istruzione e diletto. Metodo per iniziare i fanciulli alla osservazione accurata delle cose ed alla appropriata espressione del nome loro [...], Padova-Verona, Drucker e Tedeschi, 1878 [Biblioteca comunale di Milano, biblioteca Casa del pane].

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ABSTRACT

The article aims at presenting the first results of a current research on works, series, periodicals translated and adapted for the Italian recently broadened audience of the late 19th century, especially during the age of Positivism. It presents two case studies: 1. translation and adaptation of geographical publications by Emilio Treves; 2. reuse of images in educational publications for object lessons, mainly published by Hoepli, Vallardi, Paravia. The two case studies are meant to give account of publishers' strategies, influenced by the emergence of new readers, and favoured by a still-undefined international copyright legislation. Publishers often translated and adapted texts from abroad in order to save money and satisfy their audience; by doing so, they acted as relevant transcultural mediators in an age of mass education. In the conclusions, the debate on the controversial reception of Positivism in Italy, which determines the time span of the article, is mentioned as likely to benefit from the study of the coeval book trade. Namely, it can be argued that the surprising diffusion of scientism at every rank of society during the so-called liberal age drew upon on the described strategies of transcultural adaptation.

Italian 19th century book trade; transnational approach; cultural history

L'articolo presenta i primi risultati di una ricerca in corso su opere, collane e periodici tradotti e adattati al pubblico dei nuovi lettori italiani del XIX secolo, in particolare nell'arco cronologico a cui si fa convenzionalmente riferimento come età del Positivismo. Sono presentati due studi di caso: 1. traduzione e adattamento di opere di argomento geografico da parte dell'editore Emilio Treves; 2. riutilizzo di immagini nei manuali didattici fondati sul metodo oggettivo pubblicati da

Hoepli, Antonio Vallardi e Paravia. L'intento è quello di far luce sulle strategie editoriali poste in atto per rispondere alla domanda di nuove pubblicazioni, sorta in conseguenza dell'emergere di nuovi pubblici; tali strategie erano favorite dall'incertezza che ancora caratterizzava la legislazione internazionale in materia di diritto d'autore. Spesso tradurre un testo significava pubblicare a costi limitati materiali ancora inediti in Italia, ma un'iniziativa 'al risparmio' si rivelava in realtà un'operazione, talora inconsapevole, di mediazione transculturale. Nella conclusione si avanza un'ipotesi volta ad arricchire il dibattito sulla ricezione del Positivismo in Italia proprio mediante l'esame del mercato editoriale coevo: si intende ipotizzare che, nell'età liberale, la diffusione di un clima di entusiasmo nei confronti della scienza anche ai livelli più bassi della scala sociale sia stata parzialmente influenzata dalle strategie editoriali descritte nell'articolo.

Mercato del libro nell'Italia dell'Ottocento; approccio transnazionale; storia culturale