



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI  
DI PADOVA

## Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari

Corso di Laurea Triennale Interclasse in  
Lingue, Letterature e Mediazione Culturale (LTLLM)  
Classe LT-11

Tesi di Laurea

# *The translations of Petrarch's sonnets in early modern England*

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Anno Accademico 2021 / 2022

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## Foreword

The focus of this thesis is the analysis of the translations of Petrarch's sonnets in early modern England. More precisely, the two authors that were taken in consideration are Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, earl of Surrey. Naturally, for the purpose of this thesis I selected certain poems based on some criteria that will be explained further on. The idea of looking into this topic came from a consideration of different approaches to translation. For this reason, the first chapter focuses on trying to give a definition of translation. In particular, it should be remembered that, especially when it comes to poetry, most of the times the texts produced by translators are adaptations, since their language and culture differ from the original one. As concerns language and culture, I have explored how the English language was influenced by other idioms, especially Latin and French in the Middle Ages, and how it gained importance starting from the reign of Henry VI. With the beginning of the development of Renaissance, Italian texts started to circulate in England, as a consequence of commerce and of the presence of Italians in the country. From this moment, Italian texts such as the *Canzoniere* enjoyed popularity and began to be widely translated.

Petrarch's works' influence, first in the Italian peninsula and then in England, is the focus of the second chapter. In particular, I have explained how the first texts that were studied were the Latin ones, while the vernacular production became popular only later. With respect to the spread of Petrarch's Italian texts in England, the poems contained in the *Canzoniere* became fashionable during the reign of Henry VIII. The first to introduce these poems in England was probably Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder, whose translations were collected in Richard Tottel's miscellany *Songes and Sonnetes*. This text was published in 1557 and it also contained poems by Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, who, together with others like Wyatt, contributed to the creation and consolidation of the English sonnet. This poetic form appeared for the first time in Sicily in the thirteenth century, and survived the test of time, being used and modified by poets such as Dante Alighieri and, above all, Petrarch. The latter, in particular, contributed to the consolidation of the sonnet form, in fact the Italian sonnet is also known as "Petrarchan". This lyric form was later adopted by English poets

such as Wyatt and Surrey, but the consolidation of its definitive structure in England is attributed to William Shakespeare.

In order to understand different approaches to translation, the third chapter focuses on the analyses of Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's Rima 134 ("Pace non trovo, et non ò da far guerra") and Surrey's version of Rima 310 ("Zephiro torna, e 'l bel tempo rimena"). More precisely, through a comparison of both sonnets with Petrarch's original, it is proven that Wyatt is more faithful to the original than Surrey is. In fact, by comparing the structure, the language, and the style of the poems, I have explained how Surrey's "The Soote Season" should be considered an adaptation and not a translation. Finally, the fourth chapter of this thesis consists of an analysis of Wyatt's and Surrey's translations of the same sonnet. Specifically, the Petrarchan poem taken in consideration is Rima 140 ("Amor, che nel pensier mio vive et regna"). This sonnet was chosen since it is the only one translated by both Wyatt and Surrey. Therefore, the main differences between the two poets' way of translating are clearly shown in this section. When comparing Wyatt's "The long love, that in my thought doth harbour" and Surrey's "Love that doth reign and live within my thought" it is clear how the former is closer to Petrarch's original than the latter. However, both poems respect the Italian sonnet even though they present some changes which show the poetic abilities of their authors. In particular, both Wyatt and Surrey worked on Petrarch's sonnets trying to convey the original meaning but at the same time they made it accessible to their readers. In fact, through their poetic work they showed how English is suitable for poetry, even though it had been believed it was not. Furthermore, their poetic production contributed to the creation of the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet form.

## 1. Humanism and translation

### 1.1. A definition of translation

The lexicographer John Florio (1552-1625) when giving a definition of translation refers to it as “to traduce, to transpose, to bring or leade over, to bring, to convay, to remove or transport from one place to another. Also to translate from out of one tongue into another.”<sup>1</sup> This statement gives a clear idea of what it means to translate and also of how precise and complex this process was and still is. The verb “transpose” gives the idea of a process which does not only include the mere translation from one language to another, but also the possibility of producing a completely new text. If we consider translation in this sense, we can understand many of the works produced in the sixteenth century, as for instance those that will be analysed in the following chapters. So, it would be wrong to consider all the translations produced in that time as simple reproductions of a text in another idiom. We should think of many of them as adaptations and focus also on the social and literary context in which they appeared. The aftermath of these processes is that, when comparing a text and its translations, we could be facing two compositions that have very little in common. This may happen especially if the original text belongs to a different period. For instance, if we analyse a translation of an Italian text written in the fourteenth century made by an English author one hundred years later, we can see many differences first in the language but also in the contents. So, the first thing to do when comparing a translation and its source is to consider where, when and to whom they belong.

In this perspective, it is proper to consider translation as “a process that re-situates the cultural phenomena of a period variously demarcated in a dynamic relation with the future”<sup>2</sup>, as noted by Michael Wyatt. It is right to situate translations in the time they were produced, but they should also be seen in relation with what comes after and what had come before.

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<sup>1</sup> Florio, John, *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionarie of the Italian and English Tongues of Italians and Englishmen*, London: Edward Blount and William Barret, 1611, p. 570.

<sup>2</sup> Wyatt, Michael, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.3.

The debate on translation and its meaning and use opens a wide range of possible answers. An interesting observation is made by Matthew Reynolds, who focuses his study on metaphors. This aspect fits this thesis because translation cannot be given a unique definition, it implies many different approaches. One of the metaphors explored by Reynolds in *The Poetry of Translation* suits perfectly the matter of this thesis: translation as interpretation. This word “interpretation” is defined as “radically ambiguous”<sup>3</sup> if associated to translation. But it is also the most exact comparison that can be made if considering the works produced in the sixteenth century, especially if they are poems. To give an equal transposition of a poetic text in another language is a very hard task because every single translator gives their own interpretation. Even a single word could change drastically the meaning of a poem, so it can be said that “interpretation” is certainly an ambiguous metaphor but at the same time the most appropriate one if associated to the poetic translations of the early modern age. As pointed out by Reynolds, “no translation is the same as its source: not a ‘substitute’ (...) but a ‘parallel text’, or a ‘re-embodiment’ – or maybe an ‘interpretation’.”<sup>4</sup> So, when we read any translation, we should keep in mind that it is an adaptation of an original text with the aim of making it accessible to a wide range of readers.

## **1.2. Languages and Humanism in England**

Before reaching the role of the main language spoken in England, English had to share its space with other idioms. In fact, late medieval England was characterised by linguistic instability. English at that time did not have the popularity it obtained later and suffered the influence of other languages. This phenomenon can be described as a sort of tri-lingualism: Latin was still the main idiom of the Church and was studied at school, French was the language of the court and English of the people. At that time English was poor in comparison with the other languages that were spoken in the kingdom. It transformed into what it is now also because of this mixture, in fact many terms derive from French or Latin.

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<sup>3</sup> Reynolds, Matthew, *The Poetry of Translation: from Chaucer and Petrarch to Homer and Logue*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p.60.

<sup>4</sup> Reynolds, p.61.

The French influence started just after the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century. With the passing of time, it obtained more and more importance, also because many court members were francophone. This idiom was recognised as the language of the nobles, so we could also see its spreading as the consequence of fashion. French kept the role of language of the court for just a few centuries, until the reign of Henry VI<sup>5</sup>, when English established its priority.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to notice that Henry VI reigned also in France (as the son of Henry V and Catherine of Valois), so he spoke both English and French, but the language that could ‘win the fight’ of prominence in England was the former. Despite his kingdom being inefficient from a political point of view, King Henry VI put a lot of effort into education and founded schools and universities, proving that culture is as important as politics, and maybe his dedication was one of the reasons English gained importance. The interest in culture continued under the reign of Henry VII (from 1485 to 1509) and, as a consequence of the political stability he gave to the country, education could spread. During that time the Renaissance could begin its development in England, but it started to flower after the accession of Henry VIII in 1509.<sup>7</sup>

Starting from the end of the fifteenth century with the age of discoveries, many travellers explored the new world, but voyages to the ‘old’ one certainly did not stop. Even before new discoveries it was common for young rich men to travel abroad for several months and to get in touch with other cultures. With them also writers and literates visited European countries and got involved in their culture. Writers met, exchanged works and ideas, and contributed to the spreading of texts all over Europe. Another reason for the exchanges between countries was commerce: merchants travelled by sea and by land and kept continuous contacts. These encounters were crucial in the developing of languages and their varieties, such as dialects. Cultural circulation in that period also meant the spread of Humanism. It first appeared in the fourteenth century in Italy and influenced cultural life until approximately 1600. Humanism developed together with the

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<sup>5</sup> Henry VI first was king from 1422 to 1461 and then from 1470 to 1471. He was also king of France from 1422 to 1453.

<sup>6</sup> Wyatt, p.158.

Renaissance and during this period the centre of philosophic, literate, historic and scientific studies was the human being.<sup>8</sup>

Humanism made its first appearance in England in the mid fifteenth century. Many humanists visited (or also lived in) Britain, sharing works both in English and Italian and approaching translation. But it would be wrong to consider these as the first contacts England had with Italy. Almost a century before, when Humanism was at its beginning in Italy, Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) went there for business reasons and could possibly have met writers like Boccaccio and Petrarch.<sup>9</sup> This assumption can be made on the basis of the fact that in Chaucer's poetry can be found several translations of Italian texts, especially right after his travels. So, he was the one who introduced some Italian works to England even before the spreading of Humanism in his country.

It was over a hundred years later that Italian works started to become fashionable, with the consolidation of the Renaissance in England during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. The former, in particular, created a court in which foreign influences were welcome. An example is the presence of Italians such as Pietro Carmeliano (1451-1527), who was Latin secretary to Henry VII and for a few years to Henry VIII. In fact, during the latter's reign his status declined.<sup>10</sup> During the reign of Henry VIII, because of the divorce from the Roman Church and the creation of the Anglican Church (1534), Italian relationships with England experienced a period of decline. But this did not mean that Italian texts stopped circulating. With the passing of time and the ending of the persecutions against Catholics under Mary I's reign, the presence of Italians in England kept growing. When Elizabeth I ruled, in particular, there was a high number of Italians living in the kingdom, especially in London. The situation for them was apparently simple because even though Queen Elizabeth did not persecute actively Catholics, they were marginalized. The Italian language was also part of the studies of the Queen. In fact, she learned to speak and write many languages as

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<sup>8</sup> Greenblatt, Stephen *The Norton Anthology of English Literature. The Sixteenth Century / The Early Seventeenth Century*, New York: Norton, 2018, p.7.

<sup>9</sup> Wyatt, p.18.

<sup>10</sup> Trapp, J.B., "Pietro Carmeliano", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/> (accessed on 15/04/22).

a child and by the age of ten she was learning both Italian and French. The former language was taught to her by the Italian tutor Giovanni Battista Castiglione (1516-1598), one of the many Italians living and writing at court.<sup>11</sup>

The influence of humanism brought particular attention to many Italian writers and their works, with the consequence of them affecting English writers and their thought. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries people became very interested in Italian works and started to translate them into English. Translations were not the only means of showing this love for Italy: many authors set their works there, among them William Shakespeare (1564-1616) with plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare probably never visited Italy and he learned about it thanks to literary and historic works.

People involved in this trend, however, did not always use properly the Italian language because sometimes words were inserted in the English vernacular without knowing their real meaning. This could happen because those who studied Italian (and other languages) did it on their own, so instead of correctly learning it they would simply interpret and elaborate the language wrongly. Also, not all intellectuals living in Tudor England were fascinated by the Italian myth. Roger Ascham (1515-1568), for instance, in *The Scholemaster*<sup>12</sup> denounces the English Italianate fashion and associates modern Italy with “seduction, corruption and decay”.<sup>13</sup>

The consequence of these phenomena was that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the interest in studying new languages brought to an explosion of translations in England. Among the foreign texts that circulated at the time, those that deserve particular attention are with any doubts the Italian ones. Many authors discovered the works of the great Italian writers and tried to translate them or, in many cases, to interpret them. Also, English translators wanted to make available in their country many famous literary works produced abroad. Among the Italian texts that were translated we must remember Baldassarre Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano* and Ludovico Ariosto’s

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<sup>11</sup> Collinson, Patrick, “Elizabeth I”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/> (accessed on 15/04/22)

<sup>12</sup> *The Scholemaster* was published in 1570, after Roger Ascham’s death. It is a book on education in which the author proposes principles to educate and raise English young boys.

<sup>13</sup> Wyatt, p.159.

*Orlando Furioso*, translated respectively by Sir Thomas Hoby<sup>14</sup> and Sir John Harington.<sup>15</sup> Poetry was also the focus of many translations and interpretation and one of the poets that were most translated was Petrarch, whose sonnets will be the centre of this study.

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<sup>14</sup> Sir Thomas Hoby (1530-1566) was an English courtier and translator.

<sup>15</sup> John Harington (1561-1612) was an English courtier and author.

## 2. Petrarch, the *Canzoniere*, and the sonnet

### 2.1. The influence of Petrarch's works in Italy

Petrarch (1304-1374), alongside using different stylistic devices and genres, wrote both in Latin and in the Italian vernacular. This is perfectly framed within the cultural situation in the peninsula at the time, since Latin was the language of culture, while Italian was seen as the popular language. Therefore, Petrarch's literary production and its influence in Italy and Europe must be considered according to his double identity.<sup>1</sup> For what concerns his Latin work, it was the most valued by his contemporaries in the fourteenth century: there are works written in prose, such as *Secretum meum* (1342-43), and in verse, as *Africa* (1338-41). It was only in the later decades of the fifteenth century that Petrarch's vernacular production gained popularity.<sup>2</sup> He became the main model for lyric poetry in Italy and in Europe, and from that moment on Petrarch became the one who inspired other poets.<sup>3</sup> The Italian production consists of the poem *Triumpho*, the poetic collection now called the *Canzoniere*, and other poems that were not included in the collection.

The *Canzoniere*, which will be the main focus of my dissertation, was originally titled by the author *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* ('Fragments in the vernacular'). In fact, this collection has been known through the centuries with three different names: the original title just mentioned refers to the language in which the poems are written; the second title *Rime sparse* ('Scattered rhymes') comes from the first verse of the first sonnet and appeared when the collection started circulating in printed versions; the third and most popular title is *Canzoniere*, which refers to the fact that the collection is a song book.<sup>4</sup>

The circulation of Petrarch's work in vernacular began in Italy with the first Italian printing presses in the late 1460s. More precisely, what at the time was called *Rime Sparse* appeared for the

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<sup>1</sup> Petrina, Alessandra, *Petrarch's Triumpho in the British Isles*, Cambridge: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 2020, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Petrina, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Hutchins, Christine E., "English Anti-Petrarchism: Imbalance and Excess in 'the Englishe Strain' of the Sonnet", *Studies in Philology*, 109 (2012), p.556.

<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, William J., "European Beginnings and Transmissions: Dante, Petrarch and the Sonnet Sequence", in A.D. Cousins, Peter Howarth, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p.94.

first time in a printed version in Venice in 1470 and it would dominate the sixteenth century Italian book market as regards poetry.<sup>5</sup> This edition was followed by many others, published with an additional commentary by the author. For instance, in 1501 the Italian printer Aldo Manuzio il Vecchio (1449-1515) published an edition of Petrarch's Italian poetry in Venice with the help of the humanist scholar Pietro Bembo (1470-1547). The latter contributed with a detailed analysis of the poems, investigating their syntax and semantics. But the volume of Petrarch's poems that circulated the most in the sixteenth century was the one by Alessandro Vellutello (1473-c. 1544). In this edition, which appeared in 1525 in Venice and was titled *Le volgari opere del Petrarca con la espositione di Alessandro Vellutello da Lucca*, the editor adjusts the order of the poems to create a coherent narrative in relation to Petrarch's life.<sup>6</sup>

The year 1525 is also the one in which Pietro Bembo published *Prose della volgar lingua* ('Discussion of the vernacular language'). This is one of the first historical Italian grammars and it was crucial for the establishment of a standard Italian language. Bembo suggested that fourteenth century Tuscan should be used as the model for Italian literary language. Precisely, he considered Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) as the model for prose and Petrarch as the model for poetry. In fact, both authors had written using the Italian vernacular and were influenced by 'fiorentino', the variety spoken in and around Florence. Bembo himself was one of the first imitators of the Petrarchan style, since he wrote poems in vernacular, which were collected in an edition titled *Rime* and it appeared in 1530.

## **2.2. The influence of Petrarch's works in England**

As previously said, the first of Petrarch's works that circulated in the Italian peninsula were the Latin ones. This situation eventually occurred also in Europe and, case in point, in England. Fifteenth-century English humanists were interested in the poet's Latin production, and many of Petrarch's Latin texts can be found in medieval manuscripts. In fact, in a few cases we have English translations. This may have happened because many humanists were unaware of the existence of

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<sup>5</sup> Kennedy, p.94.

<sup>6</sup> Kennedy, p.95.

the Italian works, which became a growing topic of interest for poets and translators in the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the first and most influential English poet who adapted and imitated Petrarch was Geoffrey Chaucer.<sup>8</sup> For instance, in his *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1383-1385) the author includes a translation of one of Petrarch's Italian sonnets. But trying to analyse the influence of Petrarch's Italian work in England through Chaucer could potentially be misleading, since he is an isolated case among his contemporaries.<sup>9</sup>

It was many years later, precisely during the reign of Henry VIII, that Petrarch's vernacular works began to circulate and be widely translated in England. The first to introduce the *Canzoniere* and the *Triumphs* in England was probably Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder (1503-1542) after one of his missions to the papal court in 1527.<sup>10</sup> The poet translated and adapted many poems from the *Canzoniere*. It is interesting to notice that Wyatt, like many other translators, did not adapt all 366 poems, but only some of them, since it was easier to work on a single one (or a few of them) rather than on the whole sequence. Consequently, the sonnets that were most translated gained increasing popularity in England.<sup>11</sup>

Wyatt's translations of Petrarch's poems appeared in 1557, after his death, in *Songes and Sonnetes*, a miscellany composed by the English publisher Richard Tottel (1528-1593), which contained also other poems by poets such as Henry Howard, earl of Surrey. This book's importance is to be found in the fact that it demonstrated that the English language could do in poetry what had been done in Italian, Greek and Latin<sup>12</sup>, despite the popular belief that English was inadequate to poetic matters. Additionally, the publication of *Songes and Sonnetes* determined the beginning of a new phase in the English poetic tradition inspired by Petrarch's vernacular production.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Petrina, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> Hutchins, p.554.

<sup>9</sup> Petrina, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Colin Burrow, "Wyatt, Sir Thomas", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/> (accessed on 25/06/22).

<sup>11</sup> Petrina, p.9.

<sup>12</sup> Greenblatt, Stephen, ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature. The Sixteenth Century / The Early Seventeenth Century*, New York: Norton, 2018, p.502.

<sup>13</sup> Wyatt, Michael, "Other Petrarchs in Early Modern England", in Peter Hainsworth, Martin MacLaughlin, Letizia Panizza, eds., *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 Years: Proceedings of the British Academy*, London: The British Academy, 2007, p.212.

Petrarchism must not be seen as a mere reproduction of the original poems. In fact, many poets who worked on Petrarchan sonnets changed their meaning and structure, and others also revolutionized the criteria of the love sonnets and developed their own. This tendency can be described with the term “Anti-Petrarchan Petrarchism”, which, according to Christine E. Hutchins, refers to the “departure from the Italian and French reception of Petrarchan poetics”<sup>14</sup>. This phenomenon can be found in poets such as Sir Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, as well as William Shakespeare. More precisely, Hutchins points out that these “poet-lovers violate the chief criteria of Petrarch’s art as it has been described and canonized by his celebrated commentator Pietro Bembo”.<sup>15</sup>

### **2.3 The sonnet: from the Italian to the English form**

The sonnet finds its origins in the Sicilian court of Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250), and it owes its creation, almost certainly, to the administrative notary Giacomo da Lentini (c. 1210-c. 1260). His lyrics are composed of an octave (a unit of eight lines) and a sextet (a unit of six lines) and the second unit represents a change in the tone of the whole sonnet, after a turning-point. The type of line which at the time had become the standard unit of Italian verse is the *endecasillabo*, an eleven-syllable line and it would become the main type used by future Italian poets. Another aspect that influenced poetry in the following centuries was the relation among the poems: in fact, “many of Giacomo’s sonnets are loosely related to one another in thematic terms”.<sup>16</sup> This phenomenon is a distinctive trait of poetic collections such as Dante Alighieri’s *Vita Nova*.

The Sicilian mode started to travel throughout the peninsula and reached its middle regions; this happened in consequence to the death of the literary patron Frederick II, which led literates to move to other prosperous cultural environments.<sup>17</sup> Specifically, it arrived in Tuscany through the poet Bonagiunta Orbicciani (c. 1220-c. 1290), whose sonnets and *canzoni* were imitations of

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<sup>14</sup> Hutchins, p.558.

<sup>15</sup> Hutchins, pp.558-59.

<sup>16</sup> Kennedy, p.86.

<sup>17</sup> Campana, Andrea, “Italiani, francesi, provenzali”, in Nicola Bonazzi, Andrea Campana, Fabio Giunta, Nicolò Maldina, eds, *Itinerari nella letteratura italiana. Da Dante al web*, Roma: Carocci, 2018, p.52.

Giacomo da Lentini and other Sicilian poets.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, many of his Tuscan contemporaries started writing love sonnets in the Italian vernacular, also adapting Sicilian words to their variety of language. Among those poets who mostly contributed to the shaping and consolidation of the sonnet there are, for instance, Guittone d'Arezzo, Guido Guinizzelli, Dante Alighieri, and Guido Cavalcanti, but the name which is most connected to this poetic form is Petrarch. The standard form they used consists of fourteen lines divided into an octave and a sestet (as introduced by Giacomo da Lentini). The rhyme scheme defined by the Sicilian School and later known as the Petrarchan sonnet is: *abba abba cde cde*, according to which the octave is divided into two quatrains in closed rhyme, and the sestet into two tercets in interlaced rhyme.<sup>19</sup> Since the second part is briefer than the first, there cannot be a continuation of the rhyme scheme, so there is

a number of legitimate varieties of sestet, that is to say those which acknowledge the unity of the rhyme scheme, support the organization in tercets and do not too closely resemble the octave in structure.<sup>20</sup>

More precisely, Fuller identifies five of the varieties of the sestet: type one (interlaced rhyme: *cde cde*), type two (open rhyme: *cdc dcd*), type three (*cde dce*), type four (*cde ced*), and type five (the French type, which has three different varieties). For instance, the first three types can be found among Petrarch's sonnets.<sup>21</sup>

Alongside the structure, another element that defines Petrarchan sonnets is the matter they deal with. The main topic presented in the *Canzoniere* is the poet's love for Laura, a woman he met in Avignon in 1327. This detail also recalls the spirituality that distinguishes the poems, especially in the second part of the collection (starting from canzone 264), which belongs to the period after Laura's death.<sup>22</sup> But this love differs from the one lived by the *dolce stil novo* poets. For instance, Dante Alighieri's poems focus on the feelings of the poet-lover, while Petrarch describes the internal conflict caused by his unrequited love.<sup>23</sup> Also, Petrarch's sonnets do not deal only with the

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<sup>18</sup> Kennedy, p.86.

<sup>19</sup> Fuller, John, *The Sonnet*, London: Methuen, 1972, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> Fuller, p.3.

<sup>21</sup> Fuller, pp.3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Severi, Andrea, "Petarca da Avignone a Praga", in Nicola Bonazzi, Andrea Campana, Fabio Giunta, Nicolò Maldina, eds, *Itinerari nella letteratura italiana. Da Dante al web*, Roma: Carocci, 2018, p.92.

<sup>23</sup> Kennedy, p.94.

concept of love, but also with the passing of time, the theme of glory, and political matters. For instance, sonnets 136, 137 and 138, commonly known as ‘sonetti babilonesi’ (‘Babylonian sonnets’), present a critic towards the curia in Avignon.<sup>24</sup>

Petrarch’s sonnets influenced a large part of the following poetic production in early modern Europe, giving the basis to the English poets to imitate, adapt and create a new form from it. What is defined as the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet differs from the Petrarchan one first in structure: instead of an octave and a sestet, it is composed of three quatrains and a final couplet, and the rhyme scheme is: *abab cdcd efef gg*, where the turning point is right before the last two lines. Thus, there is a different organization, where the problem is presented in a douzaine and then solved in a couplet.<sup>25</sup> These features appeared for the first time in Sir Thomas Wyatt’s sonnets, which held the Petrarchan ones as a model whilst diverging from them for other attributes. This form became very popular among English poets, also because a sonnet in seven rhymes was more suitable for their language than a sonnet in four or five rhymes, giving it a greater flexibility in rhyming.<sup>26</sup>

The two elements that have been examined up until this point, the structure, and the matters of the sonnets, travel though time reaching the Shakespearean sonnets too. Despite being known as an innovator himself, Shakespeare was undoubtedly influenced by the literary patrimony of Petrarchan derivation. For what concerns some of the elements of the structure of what has been consecrated as the Shakespearean sonnet, many derived from the innovation installed by Sir Thomas Wyatt. Regarding the content, it is less close to Petrarchan ones, with rather a reformulation of the idea of the poet-lover.<sup>27</sup>

#### **2.4. The translations of Petrarch’s poetry**

As previously mentioned, the publication of Tottel’s miscellany *Songes and Sonnetes* in 1557 determined the beginning of a poetic phase inspired by Petrarch’s production. The two leading authors of the poems collected in the miscellany are Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, earl of

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<sup>24</sup> Severi, p.93.

<sup>25</sup> Fuller, p.19.

<sup>26</sup> Fuller, p.15.

<sup>27</sup> Hutchins, p.552.

Surrey. Respectively, ninety-six poems belong to the former and forty to the latter, and they were all written in the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Among Wyatt's poems, twenty-seven can be traced to a source in the *Canzoniere*; half are relatively faithful translations and half are imitations where "the original serves as a starting-point or framework for a version that reflects Wyatt's own experience".<sup>29</sup> His translations focus not only on sonnets, since he also worked on three canzoni: 37, 206 and 360.<sup>30</sup> If the Petrarchan experience is central in Wyatt, it is peripheral in Surrey, since only five of his poems contained in *Songes and Sonnetes* have a recognizable source in the *Canzoniere*.<sup>31</sup>

Poems by Wyatt and Surrey are contained also in the Hill Manuscript. Another fourteen translations from the *Canzoniere* can be found here: two are attributed to John Harington the Elder, and the author of the others is anonymous.<sup>32</sup> These twelve poems constitute the largest single body of sonnets belonging to the period between 1547 and 1582, years in which Petrarchism stopped being the main fashion in poetry.<sup>33</sup> Since seven of these translations have as source texts sonnets that had already appeared in English versions, Anthony Mortimer claims that the Hill Manuscript "adds quantity rather than quality to the history of English Petrarchan translation".<sup>34</sup> However, even though this manuscript does not contain a lot of new translations, it can be considered an important document of English Petrarchism. In particular, some of the poems it contains belong to a period in which translating Petrarch's poetry was not as fashionable as before. Moreover, among the twelve anonymous sonnets many have as source texts poems that had already been translated in English, but they were not interpreted by the same authors; as a consequence, these sonnets give another reading of the original Petrarchan ones. Therefore, the Hill Manuscript adds quality to the history of

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<sup>28</sup> Warner, J. Christopher, *The Making and Marketing of Tottel's Miscellany, 1557: Songs and Sonnets in the Summer of the Martyrs' Fires*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, p.36.

<sup>29</sup> Mortimer, Anthony, *Petrarch's Canzoniere in the English Renaissance*, Rome: Minerva Italica, 1975, p.12.

<sup>30</sup> Hainsworth, Peter, "Translating Petrarch", in Peter Hainsworth, Martin MacLaughlin, Letizia Panizza, eds., *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 Years: Proceedings of the British Academy*, London: The British Academy, 2007, p.341.

<sup>31</sup> Mortimer, p.16.

<sup>32</sup> Mortimer, p.18.

<sup>33</sup> Mortimer, p.18.

<sup>34</sup> Mortimer, p.19.

English Petrarchan translation, especially if we consider the years in which its sonnets were composed.

Not all the poems of the *Canzoniere* were translated during the sixteenth century. Between the two sections in which the collection is divided, one including poems written while Laura was alive and one composed of those written after her death, the former gathered more popularity than the latter. In fact, almost none of the poems belonging to the section *In Morte* is translated, except very few cases.<sup>35</sup> Among the 366 poems collected in the *Canzoniere* the same ten or twelve sonnets kept being used for translation and imitation. They are mostly sonnets celebrating Laura's beauty and they are often built up around paradoxes; in particular, those who appear most are sonnets 132, 134 and 310.<sup>36</sup> However, love is not the only topic that is encountered in the translations. For instance, the two translations attributed to John Harington present denunciations of the Papacy, and they have as source texts the Babylonian sonnets.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Hainsworth, p.342.

<sup>36</sup> Hainsworth, p.342.

<sup>37</sup> Mortimer, p.18.

### 3. Understanding translation

#### 3.1 Sir Thomas Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's sonnet 134

This chapter will focus on the comparison between two of Petrarch's sonnets and their translations, one by Sir Thomas Wyatt and one by Henry Howard, earl of Surrey. In this first section I will analyse Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's sonnet 134, comparing it to the original. Before starting the analysis, I will present the two sonnets in their entirety, in order to have a clear idea of their structure. The original Petrarchan Rima 134 recites:

Pace non trovo, et non ò da far guerra;  
E temo, et spero; et ardo, et son un ghiaccio;  
Et volo sopra 'l cielo, et giaccio in terra;  
Et nulla stringo, et tutto 'l mondo abbraccio.

Tal m'è in pregon, che non m'apre né serra,  
Né per suo mi riten né scioglie il laccio;  
Et non m'ancide Amore, et non mi sferra,  
Né mi vuol vivo, né mi trae d'impaccio.

Veggio senza occhi, et non ò lingua et grido;  
Et bramo di perir, et cheggio aita;  
Et ò in odio me stesso, et amo altrui.

Pascomi di dolor, piangendo rido;  
Eguamente mi spiace morte et vita:  
In questo stato son, donna, per voi.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the following is Sir Thomas Wyatt's translation:

I find no peace and all my war is done;  
I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice;  
I fly above the wind yet can I not arise;  
And nought I have and all the world I seize on.

That looseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison  
And holdeth me not, yet can I scape nowise;  
Nor letteth me live nor die at my devise,  
And yet of death it giveth me occasion.

Without eyen I see; and without tongue I plain;  
I desire to perish and yet I ask health;  
I love another and thus I hate myself;

I feed me in sorrow and laugh in all my pain;  
Likewise displeaseth me both death and life;  
And my delight is causer of this strife.<sup>2</sup>

The first element of interest is comparing the two sonnets' structure: both consist of two quatrains and two tercets written in iambic pentameter, but the rhyme scheme is different. Petrarch's

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<sup>1</sup> Petrarca, Francesco, *Canzoniere*, edited by Ugo Dotti, Milan: Feltrinelli, 2013, p.170.

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer, Anthony, *Petrarch's Canzoniere in the English Renaissance*, Rome: Minerva Italica, 1975, p.60.

quatrains present an alternate rhyme (*abab cdcd*) and the tercets an interlaced rhyme (*efg efg*), while in Wyatt's translation the quatrains are in enclosed rhyme (*abba abba*) and the tercets keep the interlaced rhyme (*cde cde*). Both schemes are typical of the Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet, and this could be seen as an attempt on the part of Wyatt to remain as faithful as possible to the original, even though he introduces some changes. This choice could be related to the poet's intention to maintain the sense of the whole poem and also to adapt his language to the rhythm of the original. In fact, one of the problems Wyatt encountered while translating Petrarchan sonnets regards rhythm. However, the contrasts presented through the use of antithesis in Rima 134 are congenial to Wyatt's poetic temperament and this structure "goes a long way towards solving Wyatt's rhythmical problem by dictating a very definite cesura in most of the lines".<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to notice that this sonnet belongs to Wyatt's earliest production, a phase in which he remained more faithful to the source texts, while in his mature work he repudiated Petrarch's values and he began to handle the originals in a "cynical and rebellious fashion".<sup>4</sup>

Petrarch's sonnet belongs to the first part of the *Canzoniere*, the one written while Laura was alive, in fact the main theme is love, which is represented in an antithetical structure. The contrasts presented in the sonnet, for instance the one between ice and fire, would become common in Renaissance poetry. However, it would be wrong to consider Wyatt's use of these conventions only an instance of fashionable imitation, since the paradoxes could represent a means to express his personal and political insecurities.<sup>5</sup>

The speaker in the original poem is desperate, he cannot find peace while he is in love, as suggested by the antithesis in the first line, whose meaning remains unchanged in Wyatt's translation. The feelings of the lover are expressed by a series of oxymorons and paradoxes in both sonnets, even though Wyatt slightly changes them in some cases. For instance, in the third line of the Petrarchan sonnet the poet says he is 'flying above the sky', but at the same time falling on the

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<sup>3</sup> Mortimer, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> Dasenbrock, Reed Way, "Wyatt's Transformation of Petrarch", *Comparative Literature*, 40 (1988), p.124.

<sup>5</sup> Mortimer, p.14.

ground; Wyatt repeats this pattern, but in the second part of the line he underlines the inability to arise. The antitheses represent the lack of equilibrium and the constant conflicts the poet is facing because of his unrequited love, and they are used for the same purpose in Wyatt's translations. However, in the English version the antitheses are not presented with a connective conjunction as in Petrarch, but they are stressed by the use of 'yet'.<sup>6</sup>

Another difference that can be noticed is that Wyatt focuses on the speaker's emotions by starting the first three lines with the first-person pronoun 'I', while in Petrarch's original the sentences begin with the conjunction 'et' ('and'). Therefore, the anaphora is still present, but the new choice of words creates a different effect in which the suffering of the lover is stressed by repeating the subject. This choice can be related to linguistic reasons: in the Italian language the subject of the sentence can be omitted, while in English it is necessary. The same phenomenon can be found in the tenth and eleventh lines, where the speaker first expresses his desire both to die and to be healthy, and then he displays hate for himself in contrast with love for someone else. Wyatt, alongside adding the pronoun 'I', inverts the structure of Petrarch's line eleven: the Italian poet talks first about hate and then about love, while the translator does the opposite, probably for metric and rhythmic reasons.

Besides the antitheses that appear throughout the poem, Wyatt adapts other stylistic devices used by Petrarch. When reading both sonnets the use of anaphora can be clearly seen. For instance, as already mentioned, this kind of repetition appears in the first quatrain of both poems, but with some differences. The word used by Petrarch is the conjunction 'et' (or 'e' in the second line), and it can be found at the beginning of lines two, three and four, while in Wyatt the anaphora is in the first three lines, and it involves the word 'I'. This figure of speech appears also in lines ten and eleven in both sonnets, with the same change of word in Wyatt's version. Petrarch also makes use of polysyndeton: the conjunction 'et' is repeated not only at the beginning but also in the middle of many lines, probably to represent the simultaneous presence of the opposing feelings caused by

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<sup>6</sup> Mortimer, p.14.

love. Wyatt is able to convey the same meaning with the frequent use of 'and' and 'yet'. The latter in particular suggests the constant struggle experienced by the poet-lover, who feels positive and negative emotions at the same time.

This interior conflict is expressed by Petrarch through figures of speech such as metaphors. For instance, in the second line the poet describes himself as if he was made of ice. The same image appears also in Wyatt's translation, but with a difference. If in the original sonnet the idea of the lover being frozen is expressed by a metaphor, the English version presents the addition of the preposition 'like', which makes it a simile. Therefore, while Petrarch uses the direct image of ice, Wyatt describes the feeling of freezing like ice without identifying himself with the object. In line six of the original sonnet there is another metaphor: Petrarch describes his condition of imprisonment saying that Love neither keeps him nor lets him free. He associates the act of being released to the image of being untied, as if he was trapped by a rope. Wyatt, instead of using a metaphor, talks directly about his inability to escape.

Another figure of speech employed by Petrarch to express opposition and contrast is the oxymoron, an example of which can be found in line twelve. Here the Tuscan poet affirms that he laughs while crying, so he juxtaposes two verbs with an opposite meaning. The oxymoron is changed in the English translation. Wyatt says that he is laughing in his pain, so the crying is replaced with the emotion by which it is caused. This sense of contradiction is stressed by Petrarch also with the use of chiasmus. This figure of speech appears in the first line of the sonnet, in which the poet inverts the structure of the two phrases. The first one begins with the object followed by the verb, while in the second phrase this order is inverted. In his first line Wyatt changes the structure. The first part of the antithesis begins with the pronoun 'I' followed by the verb 'find' and then the object of the phrase, which is 'no peace', while in the following phrase the subject is not the narrator but the noun 'war'. Therefore, since the general structure is changed, there is not the chiasmus that distinguishes Petrarch's original first line.

As previously said, the main theme of both sonnets is love, which is the cause of the poets' suffering. In the second quatrain Petrarch talks about love as if it was a human being and he does so by using personifications. In line seven he calls the feeling 'Amore' ('Love'), with a capital letter, as is normally done when referring to people. So, it is clear that 'Amore' is the one who is keeping the poet imprisoned, without killing him or letting him free. He does not refer directly to the agent responsible for his pain, instead he reports the damages it is causing him by switching from the pronoun 'I' to 'he'. It is interesting to notice that these personifications in Wyatt are totally absent. In the second quatrain of the English version love is never mentioned, therefore verbs like 'looseth', 'locketh', 'holdeth', 'letteth', and 'displeaseth' could be referring to the feeling but also to the woman with whom the poet is in love.

At the end of the sonnet, in the very last line, Petrarch talks directly to the woman he loves, who has been identified with Laura. In fact, the poet claims to be in that condition of confusion for her. One of the main differences between the original and Wyatt's translation could be found in this line. If the Italian version ends with a clear reference to the woman, the English one has a completely different conclusion. Instead of talking to his loved one, Wyatt continues the scheme of antitheses of the whole sonnet, and he adds a final paradox.<sup>7</sup> In fact, in his last line the English poet considers his 'delight' the cause of this 'strife', ending with a last contrast. Therefore, the translation of the first line is faithful to the original, despite some structural changes, but the ending is completely different, even though it presents the same pattern as the other lines.

In conclusion, the general tone and meaning of the original sonnet are reproduced by the translator. Wyatt was able to adapt his language to the form of the Italian sonnet, and in particular to the paradoxes presented by Petrarch, even though he made some changes. The modifications could be related to linguistic reasons since it is impossible to translate every single word. At the same time, another difficulty that Wyatt must have encountered is in the choice of adapting a different rhyme scheme and maintaining the same sense of the original. Therefore, Wyatt's sonnet could be

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<sup>7</sup> Mortimer, p.14.

considered a faithful transposition of the source text since the variations do not dramatically change the general meaning.

### 3.2. Henry Howard, earl of Surrey's translation of Petrarch's sonnet 310

This section will focus on the analysis of Surrey's transposition of Petrarch's sonnet 310, proposing a comparison with the analysis of the original poem. First, I will present both sonnets in their entirety, in order to have a clear idea of their structure. The following is Petrarch's sonnet 310:

Zephiro torna, e 'l bel tempo rimena,  
E i fiori et le erbe, sua dolce famiglia,  
Et garrir Progne et pianger Philomena,  
Et primavera candida et vermiglia.  
  
Ridono i prati, e 'l ciel si rasserena;  
Giove s'allegra di mirar sua figlia;  
L'aria et l'acqua et la terra è d'amor piena;  
Ogni animal d'amar si riconsiglia.  
  
Ma per me, lasso, tornano i più gravi  
Sospiri, che del cor profondo tragge  
Quella ch'al ciel se ne portò le chiavi;  
  
Et cantar augelletti, et fiorir piagge,  
E 'n belle donne honeste atti soavi  
Sono un deserto, et fere aspre et selvagge.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst Surrey's version recites:

The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,  
With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale;  
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;  
The turtle to her make hath told her tale.  
  
Summer is come, for every spray now springs;  
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;  
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings;  
The fishes float with new-repaired scale;  
The adder all her slough away she slings;  
The swift swallow pursueth the flies small;  
The busy bee her honey now she mings;  
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.  
  
And thus I see, among these pleasant things,  
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs.<sup>9</sup>

Unlike Wyatt's translation of sonnet 134, Surrey's transposition of sonnet 310 cannot formally be recognized as a translation, but rather it is a variation on the theme of Petrarch's original.<sup>10</sup> In fact, when considering Surrey's translations of Petrarch's poetry, it should be noticed that he

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<sup>8</sup> Petrarca, Francesco, *Canzoniere*, edited by Ugo Dotti, Milan: Feltrinelli, 2013, p.278.

<sup>9</sup> Edited in Mortimer, Anthony, *Petrarch's Canzoniere in the English Renaissance*, Rome: Minerva Italica, 1975, p.91.

is not primarily interested in the Petrarchan psychology of love or in the manipulation of metaphor or conceit. Instead, we find smooth versification, verbal elegance, and descriptive natural imagery employed almost as ends in themselves.<sup>11</sup>

All these characteristics can be found in “The Soote Season”, which differs from its source text first in the structure. The Italian version is composed of two quatrains in alternate rhyme (*abab abab*) and two tercets in open rhyme (*cdc dcd*), while Surrey introduces a completely different division of the stanzas. His sonnet presents a quatrain and an octave in alternate rhyme (*abab abababab*), and a rhyming couplet (*aa*). Therefore, while four different rhymes can be distinguished in Petrarch’s poem, Surrey reduces them to just two.

Rima 310 belongs to the section *In Morte* of the *Canzoniere*, which is the one written after Laura’s death. The main theme of the poem is the arrival of spring, which is in contrast with the recent death of Laura. Therefore, the poet-lover is in mourning during the period of rebirth of nature. The English version is about the coming of spring and the simultaneous suffering of the poet. However, even though the general themes of both poems are similar, the internal structures are completely different. This can be seen immediately at the beginning of the two sonnets. In his first line Petrarch introduces the figure of ‘Zephiro’ (‘Zephyrus’), who was the west wind in Greek mythology, in order to describe the coming of spring; the season is not directly mentioned in the first line, but the noun ‘primavera’ (‘spring’) appears in line four. In the English version the noun ‘spring’ does not appear; instead, Surrey talks about summer in line five. Furthermore, the English poet does not mention Zephyrus: instead, his first line begins by referring to spring as ‘the soote season’, where the adjective ‘soote’ means ‘sweet’. This word used by Surrey could be seen as a reference to the first lines of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. In fact, it has been pointed out that this sonnet “has a Chaucerian freshness and precision”<sup>12</sup> and critics have frequently remarked allusions to Chaucer and also to some medieval songs.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>11</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>12</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>13</sup> Haldane, Michael, ““The Soote Season”: Surrey and the Amatory Elegy”, *English Studies*, 87 (2006), p.403.

The quatrains of “Zephiro torna” celebrate nature and new life with idyllic tones. Petrarch does so by describing the typical atmosphere of the beginning of spring. In the first quatrain the west wind brings back the nice weather and with it also flowers and plants, to whom the poet refers as Zephyrus’s family; this metaphor could represent the fact that the wind generates and raises all natural elements. Alongside this first mythological figure, sonnet 310 contains other classical references. In the third line two Ovidian mythological characters appear, ‘Progne’ and ‘Philomena’, who respectively represent a swallow chirping and a nightingale crying.<sup>14</sup> In the second quatrain, more precisely in line six, Petrarch mentions the mythological figure of ‘Giove’ (‘Jupiter’). He looks at his daughter, Venus, the goddess of spring, which is also the season of love. Furthermore, the act of Jupiter watching Venus could represent the fact that the planets called after them stand one in front of the other during springtime.<sup>15</sup> What is interesting to notice in Surrey’s version is that all these classical references are totally absent. Instead, the English poet uses a more common and domestic language by mentioning a series of animals and describing the impact spring has on them and on nature in general. Alongside mentioning animals with their English names, Surrey describes accurately what they do in spring. Therefore, it could be said that this sonnet is not simply about spring, but rather about how this season appears in England. The list of animals begins in line three and continues for almost the whole sonnet. For instance, in line three Surrey directly mentions the nightingale, which in Petrarch was represented by ‘Philomena’. The actions are described with a simple vocabulary, a choice that is in contrast with the more complicated series of words we find in the Italian poem. Surrey refers to animals’ characteristic behaviour, like the floating of fish or the turtledove’s faithfulness to one mate. In Petrarch the atmosphere is more idyllic and there is no actual reference to what specific animals do. In line eight the Italian poet says that every creature starts loving again, while Surrey describes their action accurately. The rebirth brought by spring can also be seen in relation to the female ‘adder’ (a small snake) mentioned in line nine of the English version: it sheds its skin, as if it was starting its new life. However, in Surrey the impact spring has

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<sup>14</sup> *Canzoniere*, p.278.

<sup>15</sup> *Canzoniere*, p.278.

on nature is not always positive. In fact, it has been noted that “beneath the images of rebirth and renewal there flows a sinister undercurrent”.<sup>16</sup> More precisely, the hart’s head, the buck’s winter coat and the adder’s slough represent the old being cast off, and what is left are death remains.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Surrey describes spring in a realistic way: it is the season of renewal, but this rebirth implies a previous death. So, the effect obtained by the English poet is not the idyllic one that characterises Petrarch’s description of spring. Instead, Surrey’s octave presents natural phenomena through a description of their most cruel and unpleasant aspects.

Another aspect that distinguishes the atmosphere in Surrey’s sonnet from the one of the Italian text regards colours. In line four Petrarch describes spring as ‘candida’ and ‘vermiglia’, adjectives that respectively mean ‘white’ and ‘red’. These two colours commonly represent youth and love, so the spring described by the Italian poet does not refer to what he sees. Instead, this use of colours could be seen as representative of a spring of the mind. The impact this season has on nature is clearer in the English version since Surrey describes accurately what he sees. In particular, the word ‘green’ in line two gives the idea of what spring actually looks like to the poet’s eyes. Therefore, he gives an accurate description of what he sees during that time of the year in England, in order to allow the reader to see through the narrator’s eyes.<sup>18</sup>

It has been mentioned that Surrey talks about ‘summer’ in line five; he uses this word interchangeably with ‘spring’ also in another of his poems, “When sommer toke in hand”.<sup>19</sup> The term ‘summer’, together with other details regarding the animals’ behaviour, could be seen as a complex association with spring. For instance, the poet includes a swallow, a nightingale and a turtledove in his list: these birds here are presented as typical of spring but, actually, they arrive in England in summer. Therefore, the nightingale and the turtledove, which represent love and constancy, are vagrants; so, it could be assumed that the permanence of the qualities they signify are

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<sup>16</sup> Haldane, p.404.

<sup>17</sup> Haldane, p.404.

<sup>18</sup> Haldane, p. 411.

<sup>19</sup> Haldane, p.404.

questioned.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, these associations could be seen in relation with the problem of time, like other elements. For instance, the image of the bee being ‘busy’ making honey suggests that the time is limited; also, the line division of the sonnet suggests a cyclic development, which mirrors the cycle of nature and of time: most of the lines are single, except the first two and final two that constitute “sense-unit couplets”.<sup>21</sup>

Surrey builds the list of animals and their behaviours through the use of anaphora; in fact, most of the lines begin with the article ‘the’. This stylistic choice contributes to the creation of an effect of stasis in the cyclical process, suggested also by the presence of only two rhymes.<sup>22</sup> In Petrarch there are repetitions, but they have a different function. The Italian poet makes use of polysyndeton through the repetition of the conjunctions ‘e’ or ‘et’ (‘and’) both at the beginning and in the middle of lines. In the quatrains this figure of speech conveys the idea of nature’s cycle by describing typical aspects of spring which recur every year. However, in the second tercet the polysyndeton produces a different effect due to the poet’s change of tone. Here Petrarch presents the contrast between the joyful things surrounding him and the simultaneous pain he is feeling because of his loss. Therefore, the conjunctions in the last three lines constitute first an enumeration of pleasant things, which are replaced by others representing the sorrow experienced by the narrator.

The description of animals in Surrey’s quatrain also involves the sounds they make; in the octave all noises disappear, and the poet describes only what he sees. However, the silence of the atmosphere described is in contrast with the phonetic effects used by the poet.<sup>23</sup> More precisely, Surrey uses at length the figures of alliteration and assonance. For instance, the repetition of the sound ‘s’ in the first line is soft, and can be related to harmony and tranquillity, two of the qualities usually attributed to spring. In contrast with the use of sounds like ‘s’, the sonnet contains repetitions of harsher sounds, such as ‘t’ in line four or ‘b’ in line seven. The juxtaposition of these

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<sup>20</sup> Haldane, p.408.

<sup>21</sup> Haldane, p.407.

<sup>22</sup> Haldane, p.410.

<sup>23</sup> Haldane, p.403.

different sounds could be seen in relation to the description of some unpleasant aspects of nature, which are in contrast with the typical atmosphere of peace which commonly characterises spring. Moreover, the contrasts between these different sounds and those characterising the description of nature could be seen in relation to the sorrow of the poet, since it appears during the season of love and rebirth.

What the sonnets have in common is the change of attitude at the end, even though they present many differences. More precisely, Petrarch introduces his condition of suffering in the first tercet. The second quatrain ends with the animals experiencing love again, but the following line presents a contrast. With the conjunction ‘ma’ (‘but’) at the beginning of line nine the Tuscan poet moves the attention to his feelings, which are the opposite of what spring is making all creatures experience. This pain is caused by the recent death of the woman with whom he was in love, Laura. She is not directly mentioned in the sonnet, instead Petrarch refers to her using a periphrasis in the eleventh line. He describes the woman as the one who took the keys of his heart to heaven; in fact, when she died the poet was still in love with her, so she kept being the owner of his heart even though she had passed away. In the last tercet Petrarch compares the birds singing, the ladies sweetly moving, and the grass flowering to savage beasts and desert. Therefore, even the joy brought by spring cannot heal the poet. Instead, for him everything is hostile, and he is not able to enjoy the happiness surrounding him.

If the reason of Petrarch’s discomfort is clear, Surrey’s is not. No woman is mentioned in the sonnet, and the English poet never explains why he is in that condition, so the cause could be anything. Also, after the first quatrain love is not mentioned: there is a description of the animals’ actions, but “there is nothing to correspond to Petrarch’s line 8”,<sup>24</sup> in which the animals return to love each other. Therefore, the theme of love that characterises “Zephiro torna” is absent in “The soote season”, and so is the reference to Petrarch’s beloved in heaven.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the change of tone in Surrey’s poem appears at the very end, more precisely in the final couplet after the turn that

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<sup>24</sup> Haldane, p.407.

<sup>25</sup> Thomson, Patricia, “The First English Petrarchans”, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 22 (1959), p.100.

characterises the form of the English sonnets. Here Surrey gives a description of his feelings through a strong conclusion: despite being surrounded by such pleasant things, his sorrow grows. The very last word of the sonnet is the verb 'springs', which here refers to the poet's suffering. Worth noting is that the same rhyme-word is used by the poet to announce the arrival of the sweet season in line five. Therefore, the contrast between the beginning of new life and the simultaneous sorrow experienced by the poet is stressed by this linguistic choice, which suggests "dissimilarity of action in the verb".<sup>26</sup> The lines that constitute the final couplet end with the same rhyme, which also appears alternately in the whole sonnet. When analysing this choice, it has been claimed that "the rejection of a new rhyme scheme in the concluding couplet emphasises the fact that the speaker belongs to nature, and so adds an ironic force to his separation".<sup>27</sup> In fact, even though he is part of the nature, he is not enjoying the atmosphere of renewal that is surrounding him. When reading Surrey's conclusion, it could be assumed that "when his situation is finally revealed, he seems more irrelevant than moving".<sup>28</sup> However, even though his ending is less explanatory than Petrarch's, the English poet was able to express in his final couplet what he was feeling, and also to put it in contrast with the general happiness caused by spring.

As previously said, Surrey's "The soote season" cannot be considered a translation of Petrarch's Rima 310. It can be noticed that the English poet used the Italian sonnet as a basis to write his own poem, but there are more differences than similarities between the two versions. The general topic is preserved, but what changes completely is the internal structure of the sonnet. Petrarch's language is complex and sophisticated, also due to the presence of classical references, while Surrey's vocabulary is more domestic, and it made the whole sonnet easier to understand for his contemporaries. However, this poem has been considered not worthy of being called a sonnet since it lacks the "rapid development of thought and feeling"<sup>29</sup> which is expected. Even though it does not present emotions in a sophisticated and more explanatory way like Petrarch, Surrey's

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<sup>26</sup> Haldane, p.410.

<sup>27</sup> Haldane, p.410.

<sup>28</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>29</sup> Thomson, p.103.

poem should be appreciated for its clear descriptions of nature and its domestic language. Also, through the final couplet the English poet was able to convey his sorrow, even though its causes are not explained.

#### 4. Wyatt's and Surrey's versions of Petrarch's Rima 140

In order to understand better the differences between Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, this chapter will focus on the translations they made of Petrarch's Rima 140, the only one which was translated by both poets. Before starting the analysis, I will present the three sonnets in their entirety, beginning with Petrarch's original:

Amor, che nel pensier mio vive et regna  
E 'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,  
Talor armato ne la fronte vène,  
Ivi si loca, et ivi pon sua insegna.

Quella ch'amare et sofferir ne 'nsegna  
E vòl che 'l gran desio, l'accesa spene,  
Ragion, vergogna et reverenza affrene,  
Di nostro ardir fra se stessa si sdegna.

Onde Amor paventoso fugge al core,  
Lasciando ogni sua impresa, et piange, et trema;  
Ivi s'asconde, et non appar piú fore.

Che poss'io far, temendo il mio signore,  
Se non star seco infin a l'ora extrema?  
Ché bel fin fa chi ben amando more.<sup>1</sup>

Wyatt's sonnet recites:

The long love, that in my thought doth harbour  
And in mine heart doth keep his residence,  
Into my face presseth with bold pretence,  
And therein campeth, spreading his banner.

She that me learneth to love and suffer  
And will that my trust and lustè's negligence  
Be reined by reason, shame, and reverence,  
With his hardiness taketh displeasure.

Wherewithal. Unto the heart's forest he fleeth,  
Leaving his enterprise with pain and cry,  
And there him hideth and not appeareth.

What may I do when my master feareth,  
But, in the field, with him to live and die?  
For good is the life, ending faithfully.<sup>2</sup>

And, lastly, this is Surrey's version:

Love that doth reign and live within my thought,  
And built his seat within my captive breast,  
Clad in the arms wherein with me fought,  
Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.

But she that taught me love and suffer pain,  
My doubtful hope and eke my hot desire  
With shamefast look to shadow and refrain,

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<sup>1</sup> Petrarca, Francesco, *Canzoniere*, edited by Ugo Dotti, Milan: Feltrinelli, 2013, p.176.

<sup>2</sup> Edited in Mortimer, Anthony, *Petrarch's Canzoniere in the English Renaissance*, Rome: Minerva Italica, 1975, pp.64-65.

Her smiling grace converteth straight to ire.

And coward love then to the heart apace  
Taket h his flight, where he doth lurk and plain,  
His purpose lost, and dare not show his face.  
For my lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pain;

Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove.  
Sweet is the death that taketh end by love.<sup>3</sup>

The first aspect that will be analysed is the structure of the sonnets. Petrarch's original consists of two quatrains in enclosed rhyme (*abba abba*) and two tercets rhyming *cdc cdc*. Wyatt's version presents a very similar structure, except for the last two lines which rhyme *dd*. Also, as regards the distribution of sentences, Wyatt's sonnet is structured exactly like Petrarch's. Many differences can be found in Surrey's translation, since it is composed of three quatrains in alternate rhyme (*abab cdcd efef*) and a final couplet (*gg*). Surrey too respects the syntactic structure of the original, except for the lack of the question in lines twelve and thirteen.

Petrarch's "Amor, che nel pensier mio vive et regna" belongs to the first part of the *Canzoniere*, the one in which Laura is still alive. This sonnet describes a personification of Love, who shows himself on the poet's face by making him blush. This action has as a consequence the indignation of the poet's beloved, who is described as a teacher. In the first quatrain of the Italian version the poet explains, though the use of personification, how Love lives and reigns in the poet's mind and keeps his residence in the heart; also, sometimes he goes 'armed' to the poet's face. The figure of Love is presented by Petrarch as "courtly lord, in his attributes of prince and ruler, and as courtly knight, in his attributes of warrior and challenger".<sup>4</sup> In fact, the use of words such as 'regna' (reigns') and 'seggio' ('seat') refers to the vocabulary of princes and kings; similarly, the adjective 'armato' in line three refers to chivalry. The other figure is the poet-lover, who has only a passive role, since he represents the territory in which Love itself is ruling and fighting. Love is the protagonist of the first quatrain both in Wyatt's and Surrey's versions, but there are differences regarding how this figure is introduced. In his first line Wyatt adds the adjective 'long' to the

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<sup>3</sup> Edited in Mortimer, p.65.

<sup>4</sup> Camaïora, Luisa Conti, "The Treachery of Translation: Wyatt and Surrey's Versions of Petrarch's Sonnet CXL", in Sergio Rossi, Dianella Savoia, eds., *Italy and the English Renaissance*, Milan: Unicopli, 1989, p.72.

description of Love and this choice could suggest “a state of being rather than a personification”<sup>5</sup>; the word ‘long’ could have both a positive and a negative connotation: it could refer to the kind of love that lasts forever or to the unbearable pain that feeling causes. Surrey’s first line, instead, has “a stronger emphasis, truer to the tone and meaning of Petrarch’s opening”.<sup>6</sup> In this version, in fact, the structure of the first line is very similar to the original and, while Wyatt simply uses the verb ‘harbour’, Surrey repeats the verbs ‘reign’ and ‘live’, which appear also in Petrarch’s sonnet. The rest of the first quatrain is quite faithful in both translations, except for some differences. For instance, Petrarch refers to Love as ‘armato’ (‘armed’) when he appears on the poet’s face. Surrey conveys a similar meaning by using the past tense of the verb ‘fight’, while Wyatt simply mentions Love’s ‘bold pretence’. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that

Surrey keeps all the connotations of the conceit of the rule of princes, and maintains the figure of love as an autonomous and mythic personality, collocated in the initial position in the line and sonnet. (...) while Wyatt, instead, from the start deliberately defines Love as ‘longe’, immediately using the feudal conceit, and the language and terminology associated with it, as vehicle for his vision of the lover/power game.<sup>7</sup>

Petrarch, in his second quatrain, introduces the figure of the woman with whom he is in love, Laura. Her name is not mentioned, instead he refers to her using the demonstrative pronoun ‘Quella’ (‘the one’). More precisely, she is considered the one who teaches both the poet and Love how to love and suffer. Therefore, in this stanza the woman is the principal actor, while the poet-lover and Love are relegated to a marginal and passive role. Furthermore, in the two quatrains the two main subjects of the sonnet, Love and Laura, are presented “in their relationship to the lover, to each other, and to their symbolic functions”.<sup>8</sup> The female figure appears in both Wyatt’s and Surrey’s versions, with some differences. The former remains very close to the original, even though he introduces slight changes. If in Petrarch the woman teaches both the poet and Love, in Wyatt she educates only the lover, since he uses the pronoun ‘me’ in line five. Also, while Petrarch mentions ‘desio’ (‘desire’) and ‘speme’ (‘hope’) in line six, these words are replaced by ‘trust’ in Wyatt. Furthermore, the English poet introduces the phrase ‘lustes negligence’, a concept which is

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<sup>5</sup> Camaiora, p.72.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson, Patricia, “The First English Petrarchans”, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 22 (1959), p.90.

<sup>7</sup> Camaiora, p.72.

<sup>8</sup> Camaiora, p.76.

absent in Petrarch's original sonnet. Surrey's lines five and six are close to the Italian ones, except for the fact that the woman is only the teacher of the poet as in Wyatt, and for the oxymoron 'doubtful hope': in Petrarch hope is described as 'ardente' ('ardent'), while Surrey gives it a different connotation. In line seven Petrarch mentions 'ragion' ('reason'), 'vergogna' ('shame'), and 'reverenza' ('reverence'), which can be considered the woman's doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Wyatt "recognises the moral weight"<sup>10</sup> of these three words and translates them literally, while these concepts are lost in Surrey, since he reduces them to 'shamefast look'. Also, it could be said that Surrey "prefers a literal fact, a face blushing with shame, to the metaphor of lust 'rayned' by shame used by Petrarch and Wyatt".<sup>11</sup> Another difference between Surrey and the original regards the woman who is being represented. In Surrey the poet-lover should learn from his beloved how to control and conceal the ardour of his passion. Therefore, it has been noted that the woman in Surrey is "another dominant personality, quick to anger, similar, in her desire of obedience, to love himself"<sup>12</sup>, a description that is in contrast with the idealised teacher in Petrarch.

The consequences of the situation presented in Petrarch's quatrains are explained in the two tercets. From line nine to line eleven the action focuses on Love; the poet describes how, after the indignation of the beloved, Love flees to the heart, where he hides after leaving his enterprise. The cowardly and fearful behaviour of Love is emphasized by the poet through the use of the verbs 'piange' ('cries') and 'trema' ('trembles'). Wyatt's translation is quite close to the original. The English poet renders Love's desperation with the phrase 'pain and cry'; therefore, the action of trembling is missing. Worth noting is that in Wyatt Love flees to the heart's forest, adding a word that refers to the natural external world and at the same time emphasises the psychological internal one.<sup>13</sup> The protagonist of Petrarch's second tercet is the poet-lover, who is experiencing doubt and indecision, rendered with a question in lines twelve and thirteen. Here the lover shows acceptance,

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<sup>9</sup> Thomson, p.91.

<sup>10</sup> Mortimer, p.16.

<sup>11</sup> Thomson, p.91.

<sup>12</sup> Camaiora, p.78.

<sup>13</sup> Camaiora, p.83.

and does not mention the cruelty of his fate.<sup>14</sup> He admits that the only thing he can do, fearing his Lord (Love), is staying with him until he dies; thus, what he means is that he must keep loving. Wyatt's final tercet has the same structure as Petrarch's, with the question in the twelfth and thirteenth lines. However, the second part of the question is different: Petrarch's only choice is to stay beside Love till his final hour, while Wyatt "takes up the military conceit so that his remaining with Love is qualified as 'being in the field', that is, implicitly, in a continual state of alert and war".<sup>15</sup> In Surrey the topic of Petrarch and Wyatt's tercets is explained in a quatrain and a final couplet, and the structure lacks the question characterising Italian lines twelve and thirteen. One of the differences that can be noticed is that Petrarch describes Love as 'paventoso' ('scared') in line nine, while Surrey refers to it as 'coward'. This semantic choice could be read as a sign of Surrey's different interpretation of Love's reaction to the woman's disdain. In fact, Petrarch's interpretation hints at the idea that Love's fear is due to the moment, whilst Surrey's word choice suggests that cowardice is an innate characteristic of Love. Furthermore, instead of maintaining the original verbs 'cries' and 'trembles', the English poet uses the verbs 'lurk' and 'plain', which emphasise Love's pusillanimity. Therefore, what Surrey does is putting into evidence Love's more despicable features; also, there is a clear judgement of the poet-lover on Love's fearful behaviour.<sup>16</sup> The result is an inversion of the idea of Love as the brave invader of the first quatrain. The main difference that can be noticed is that, instead of a question, Surrey's lines twelve and thirteen contain a statement. Therefore, the poet-lover does not interrogate himself on what his possibilities are; instead, he gives immediately his only choice: with the metaphor 'from my love shall not my foot remove' in line thirteen Surrey admits that the only thing he can do is staying beside Love, his lord. Also, while in their twelfth lines Petrarch and Wyatt pose their questions, Surrey's poet-lover admits he is in pain because of his lord's (Love's) guilt.

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<sup>14</sup> Camaiora, p.79.

<sup>15</sup> Camaiora, p.83.

<sup>16</sup> Camaiora, p.84.

As regards the very last line, Petrarch claims that he who dies loving well comes to a good end. It is interesting to notice that in the last two lines there are three different presentations of death: the phrase 'ora extrema' ('final hour') in line thirteen and the words 'fin' ('end') and 'more' ('dies'). Neither Wyatt nor Surrey replicate the three representations. In Wyatt death can be associated to the verbs 'die' in line thirteen and 'ending' in line fourteen; in Surrey, instead, 'death' is clearly mentioned in the last line, followed by the noun 'end'. Considering only the last line of the three sonnets, many other differences can be seen. If in Petrarch the adjective 'bel' ('nice') refers to the noun 'fin' ('end'), making it the matter of interest, in Wyatt the emphasis is on 'life'. Therefore, in Petrarch death is good only if the individual dies loving, while for Wyatt life can be considered good if it ends faithfully; it could be said that, according to Wyatt, more value is given to life only if it ends in fidelity. Moreover, it has been noted that "Wyatt translates freely, but maintains and strengthens the ideal of feudal loyalty".<sup>17</sup> Another difference that can be noticed in Wyatt's version is that it ends with a rhyming couplet, which constitutes the only divergence from the original's rhyme scheme. However, even though there is a slight change in the structure, Wyatt "retains Petrarch's continuity and his rhetorical question".<sup>18</sup> In his last line Surrey emphasises death like Petrarch; however, the English poet does not translate literally. For instance, he does not translate 'fin' with 'end', but with the more direct 'death'; also, the adjective he uses to describe death is 'sweet', which is more sentimental than 'bel' in Petrarch. Furthermore, love is the first and last word of Surrey's sonnet. This choice could symbolise a life that both begins and ends with love, and also faithfulness to it.

When analysing these sonnets, it has been assumed that "Wyatt not only meets better the challenge of Petrarch's central conceit and rhythmic structure, but that he also pays more serious heed to the framework of Petrarchan ideas".<sup>19</sup> Wyatt's version is more similar to the original,

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<sup>17</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>18</sup> Thomson, p.90.

<sup>19</sup> Thomson, p.91.

however it should be considered that this is one of his first attempts to translate Petrarch:<sup>20</sup> in the earliest phase of his poetic production he remained more faithful to his source texts.<sup>21</sup> Another important aspect is that Surrey's concerns are different from Wyatt's; in fact, the former is not as interested as the latter in "the Petrarchan psychology of love or in the manipulation of metaphor or conceit".<sup>22</sup> In fact, as regards Surrey's "Love that doth reign and live within my thought", it has been observed that he "sacrifices too much, for his pictures and descriptions rarely suggest more than themselves".<sup>23</sup> However, even though his images do not always convey the same meaning as Petrarch's, they are a great example of "smooth versification, verbal elegance, and descriptive natural imagery".<sup>24</sup> Another difference between the two English translators is that Surrey makes use of iambic pentameter, while Wyatt attempts to imitate the Italian 'endecasillabi'<sup>25</sup>, a choice that makes Wyatt's translation even more similar to the original than Surrey's. The comparison of these two poets shows that Surrey's developments, like the English sonnet form or pictorial solidity, are "his legacy to his Elizabethan successors"<sup>26</sup>; but Wyatt "ushers much of both the meaning and quality of Petrarch's sonnets".<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it could be said that both Wyatt and Surrey, when translating Petrarch's poems, "created a world that was typically his own".<sup>28</sup> So, it would not be appropriate to consider Wyatt's translation of "Amor, che nel pensier mio vive et regna" better than Surrey's only because it is more similar to the original. Both poets were able to convey the original meaning to their sonnets, and they also contributed by making some changes according to their poetic abilities. Also, with their translations and their whole poetic production, both Wyatt and Surrey contributed to the creation and consolidation of what would be known as the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet.

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<sup>20</sup> Thomson, p.92.

<sup>21</sup> Dasenbrock, Reed Way, "Wyatt's Transformation of Petrarch", *Comparative Literature*, 40 (1988), p.124.

<sup>22</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>23</sup> Thomson, p.91.

<sup>24</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>25</sup> Mortimer, p.17.

<sup>26</sup> Thomson, p.92.

<sup>27</sup> Thomson, p.92.

<sup>28</sup> Camaiora, p.87.

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## **Riassunto**

In primo luogo, sarebbe erroneo considerare ogni testo prodotto nell'ambito della traduzione come pura trasposizione da una lingua all'altra, in quanto, essendo due idiomi differenti, la traduzione prodotta non avrebbe lo stesso significato dell'originale. A questo proposito, in molti casi sarebbe più appropriato parlare di adattamenti e interpretazioni, in quanto, alle volte, le traduzioni presentano molto poco in comune con il testo di partenza. Infatti, è necessario tenere in considerazione diversi aspetti che influiscono sul lavoro del traduttore: la sua lingua madre, il luogo in cui vive e, di conseguenza, la sua cultura e la società in cui è inserito. I testi analizzati in questa tesi, in particolare, appartengono al periodo della prima modernità inglese, ma i sonetti petrarcheschi dai quali essi derivano furono scritti due secoli prima, in un periodo e in un luogo molto diversi.

La lingua inglese non ebbe sempre il ruolo che possiede oggi. Difatti, l'inglese nel Basso Medioevo sentì l'influenza del latino e del francese, in un clima linguistico che può essere definito di tri-lingualismo. La priorità della lingua inglese sulle altre si affermò a partire dal regno di Enrico VI (1422-1461 e 1470-1471), periodo in cui ci fu uno sviluppo dell'educazione e un maggiore interesse per la cultura, che proseguì sotto i regni di Enrico VII (1485-1509) ed Enrico VIII (1509-1547). Grazie agli scambi commerciali con il resto d'Europa e i continui viaggi dei giovani nobili e dei letterati l'Umanesimo cominciò a diffondersi anche in Inghilterra intorno alla metà del quindicesimo secolo, circa un secolo dopo i suoi inizi in Italia. In questo modo, le opere letterarie italiane cominciarono ad essere conosciute, studiate e anche tradotte in Inghilterra, soprattutto dopo il consolidamento del Rinascimento. Questo avvenne anche grazie alla presenza di Italiani nelle corti, la quale raggiunse il suo massimo durante il regno di Elisabetta I (1558-1603). La cultura della penisola divenne una moda e, oltre alla traduzione di testi italiani, ispirò le opere di molti autori, come ad esempio alcune di William Shakespeare.

Tra gli autori italiani che vennero maggiormente tradotti in Inghilterra nel sedicesimo secolo troviamo Francesco Petrarca. La produzione del poeta fiorentino si divide in opere scritte in latino e altre scritte in volgare. Le seconde divennero popolari più tardi rispetto alle prime; infatti, i contemporanei di Petrarca diedero maggiore attenzione alla sua produzione latina. Le opere in volgare, il *Canzoniere* e i *Trionfi*, raggiunsero una maggiore notorietà in Italia a partire dagli ultimi decenni del quindicesimo secolo. Il *Canzoniere* in particolare si diffuse grazie alle stampe e apparve per la prima volta a Venezia nel 1470 con il titolo di *Rime Sparse*; negli anni successivi vennero stampate altre edizioni.

Le opere di Petrarca che inizialmente ebbero una maggiore notorietà in Inghilterra furono quelle in latino, mentre le opere in volgare divennero materia di interesse successivamente alla loro diffusione in Italia. In particolare, fu durante il regno di Enrico VIII, che il *Canzoniere* venne introdotto in Inghilterra, probabilmente grazie a Sir Thomas Wyatt. Egli tradusse svariate poesie petrarchesche e le sue versioni vennero raccolte nella miscellanea di Richard Tottel intitolata *Songes and Sonnetes* e pubblicata nel 1557. In quest'opera vennero inseriti altri componimenti, tra cui quelli di Henry Howard, conte di Surrey, il quale si dedicò anch'egli alle traduzioni di alcune poesie di Petrarca.

La composizione poetica maggiormente associata a Francesco Petrarca è il sonetto. Esso apparve per la prima volta in Sicilia, nella corte di Federico II, nella prima metà del tredicesimo secolo. Il sonetto si caratterizza per essere composto da un'ottava e una sestina, la quale presenta un cambio di tono rispetto ai versi precedenti. Il verso caratterizzante questa lirica è l'endecasillabo, che influenzerà la maggior parte della produzione poetica italiana. Il sonetto siciliano raggiunse poi le regioni centrali, tra cui la Toscana, continuò ad essere utilizzato nel tempo e venne adottato dai maggiori poeti italiani successivi, tra cui Francesco Petrarca. Infatti, a quest'ultimo si deve la denominazione di sonetto petrarchesco, il quale è costituito da due quartine e due terzine; lo schema metrico che lo contraddistingue è *abba abba cde cde*. Per quanto riguarda i sonetti di Petrarca, essi si caratterizzano anche per i temi trattati. In particolare, al centro del *Canzoniere* vi è l'amore per

Laura; infatti, la raccolta è suddivisa in due parti segnate dalla morte dell'amata. Oltre al tema centrale dell'amore, Petrarca tratta argomenti quali il passare del tempo, la gloria e anche la materia politica. Dei 366 componimenti presenti nel Canzoniere, solo alcuni vennero tradotti nell'Inghilterra del sedicesimo secolo e, di conseguenza, solo questi divennero popolari. In particolare, si tratta di poesie riguardanti il tema dell'amore e appartenenti, per la maggior parte, alla prima parte del canzoniere.

Per comprendere meglio le differenze dei vari approcci alla traduzione di Petrarca, vengono presi in considerazione tre sonetti. Il primo affrontato è "Pace non trovo, et non ò da far guerra", tradotto da Sir Thomas Wyatt. Si può notare come la struttura dell'originale sia stata mantenuta dal poeta inglese, con una variazione nello schema metrico. Per quanto riguarda il significato generale del sonetto, la versione inglese rimane fedele, ma con alcune modifiche. Il tono disperato del narratore viene mantenuto tramite le continue antitesi che stanno a significare un conflitto interno del poeta, il quale prova emozioni positive e negative allo stesso tempo a causa dell'amore. Oltre alle antitesi, come quella tra pace e guerra del primo verso, Wyatt adatta altre figure retoriche utilizzate da Petrarca, quali anafore, metafore e ossimori. Una differenza importante tra le due versioni riguarda la mancanza, da parte di Wyatt, della menzione di 'Amore', che in Petrarca viene personificato come la causa del suo dolore. Infine, nell'ultimo verso della sua traduzione, Wyatt non si riferisce alla donna amata come Petrarca, ma presenta un ulteriore paradosso tra gioia e dolore.

Un approccio diverso alla traduzione di Petrarca lo si trova nella versione del sonetto 310 per mano di Henry Howard, conte di Surrey. Infatti, "The Soote Season" è un adattamento di "Zephiro torna", dal momento che presenta molte differenze con l'originale. Ciò si nota innanzitutto nella struttura: la versione inglese presenta una quartina, un'ottava e un distico, mentre il sonetto originale è suddiviso in due quartine e due terzine. Surrey tratta il tema dell'arrivo della primavera, in contrasto con il lutto per la morte della donna amata, in maniera diversa rispetto a Petrarca. Se nella versione originale la bella stagione è descritta attraverso rimandi ai classici e toni idillici,

nell'adattamento inglese il linguaggio è domestico. Infatti, Surrey elenca una serie di animali, descrivendone i comportamenti tipici nella stagione primaverile inglese, menzionando anche i lati più crudi della natura. Un aspetto comune tra i due sonetti è il cambio di tono alla fine; Petrarca introduce la sua condizione di sofferenza nella prima terzina, in cui il suo dolore è contrapposto agli animali che ricominciano ad amare, mentre Surrey non menziona una donna o l'amore e il cambio di tono nella sua versione avviene nel distico finale. Qui, infatti, il poeta inglese afferma che, nonostante sia circondato da elementi naturali piacevoli, il suo dolore cresce, ma non menziona la causa della sua sofferenza, a differenza di Petrarca.

Per comprendere meglio le differenze tra Wyatt e Surrey, vengono prese in considerazione le loro versioni del sonetto 140, "Amor, che nel pensier mio vive et regna", l'unico ad essere stato tradotto da entrambi i poeti. Per quanto riguarda la struttura dei componimenti, Wyatt rimane fedele all'originale nonostante una differenza nella rima degli ultimi due versi, mentre Surrey cambia la divisione in strofe sostituendo le due quartine e le due terzine con tre quartine ed un distico finale. Petrarca descrive l'azione di arrossire a causa dell'amore e l'indignazione da parte dell'amata. Il sentimento viene personificato usando vocaboli appartenenti al linguaggio cortese e cavalleresco, mentre la donna viene vista come l'insegnante sia di Amore che del poeta. La traduzione di Wyatt, "The long love, that in my thought doth harbour", risulta più simile all'originale rispetto a "Love that doth reign and live within my thought" di Surrey. Entrambe le versioni mantengono il tema dell'originale con alcune distinzioni. Una differenza sostanziale tra le due traduzioni si trova nel fatto che, mentre Wyatt riprende la domanda presente nell'ultima terzina, Surrey cambia la struttura sostituendo il quesito con un'affermazione. Inoltre, in Surrey vi è una diversa rappresentazione dell'amore, descritto anche nei suoi lati peggiori, quali la codardia. Nell'analizzare questi due sonetti va ricordato che, nel caso di Wyatt, si tratta di uno dei primi approcci alla traduzione di Petrarca, in una fase in cui resta più fedele all'originale; in Surrey invece l'esperienza petrarchesca risulta marginale e i suoi sonetti sono un eccellente esempio di eleganza verbale e immagini naturali descrittive. Sarebbe erroneo, dunque, considerare la versione di Wyatt migliore di quella di Surrey

solamente perché si avvicina di più all'originale. Inoltre, entrambi i poeti, non solo in queste traduzioni ma in tutta la loro produzione poetica, dimostrarono le proprie capacità non limitandosi ad una semplice trasposizione delle poesie petrarchesche; difatti, Wyatt e Surrey contribuirono alla creazione e alla consolidazione di quello che sarà poi conosciuto come il sonetto inglese o shakespeariano.