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*Translating longing and distance: an
analysis of four Shakespearian sonnets
translated into Italian*

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FOREWORD

Shakespeare is well-known for his plays. However, this is not the only medium in which he worked. He wrote poetry as well. In this genre, he wrote a series of sonnets, all contained within his collection.

By saying collection of Shakespearian sonnets, what people refer to is Thorpe's edition, the first published version of these sonnets. However, there are some things that need to be said about this topic: critics cannot be sure that these are sonnets written by Shakespeare, as there are no comments by him or even a dedication, which his other published poems do have. The dedication contained in this edition is the one written by Thorpe. This collection of sonnets is also different from the typical collection of poetry, such as *Il Canzoniere* by Petrarca. Petrarca's text is a complete story, Shakespeare's sonnets are not. They do have characters which appear more than once, but they do not tell a story from beginning to end. Some sonnets are connected, sharing themes, images, and constructions, but not all of them are. Basically, there is no proof that there is a complete story underneath the collection. In Thorpe's version there are 154 sonnets. The sonnets are divided into two great groups: that of the fair youth and that of the dark lady. The first 126 sonnets put emphasis on the first object of the desires of the poet: the fair youth. From sonnet 127 to 154, the main object becomes the dark lady.

Shakespeare, as a popular writer, has his works translated into many languages, including his sonnets. The original and the translations of these sonnets make for an incredibly interesting analysis of how different translations of the same text can be. To analyse these texts, I first have to choose the language of the translations I am interested in analysing. My choice is the Italian language. I chose it because, as it is my mother tongue, it is the one language in which I find myself knowledgeable enough to present an informed critique. I also have to choose the actual translations I am going to use in my analysis. To present the greatest variation between texts, I chose Giuseppe Ungaretti and Alessandro Serpieri as translators. The first, Giuseppe Ungaretti, is known as a poet of the 20th century, but he was also a very prolific translator of various languages. His main purpose

in translation is to find inspiration for his own poetry, in order to innovate. Serpieri, instead, was a scholar of English language and literature. His translation existed to give the Italian readership easy access to Shakespeare's poetry even if they did not know English. My choice has been motivated precisely by their different motivations to complete the translation. Different purposes mean different ways of thinking, which I believe leads to different translations. This allows me to analyse if two translations of the same text can be different. One last thing that needs to be decided is which sonnets I will take into consideration. To form a consistent analysis, these sonnets must belong to the same group and they must also share their themes. The first decision is between the groups of the fair youth and of the dark lady. I decided to focus on the first, as it contains a greater number of sonnets, giving me more choice. I then decided the theme that would connect all sonnets: pain and longing. Knowing this, I decided upon the 4 sonnets my analysis would focus on: sonnet 27, 28, 29 and 30. I believe these are connected by themes and language. Sonnets 27 and 28 form a sequence, as they not only share themes and language, but also images and linguistic constructions. Sonnets 29 and 30 do not form a sequence, as they do not strictly share images or linguistic constructions, but they still share themes. The main theme is that of longing, of the painful feeling of desiring something or someone. In all sonnets, this longing is one desire that can never be achieved due to the situation the poet finds himself in. However, what the poet longs for and why he cannot achieve it changes depending on the sonnet.

1. BIOGRAPHIES OF THE TRANSLATORS

1.1 GIUSEPPE UNGARETTI'S BIOGRAPHY

Giuseppe Ungaretti was born on 8 February 1888, in Alexandria of Egypt.¹ His education first started in 1897 at the Istituto Don Bosco, where he first experienced Italian poetry by reading Leopardi. It continued at the École Suisse, where he would be introduced to *Mercur de France*, a French newspaper through which he discovered a series of key figures of literature and philosophy, from Baudelaire and Poe to Nietzsche. It was in the École Suisse that Ungaretti would meet Moammed Sceab, an important figure in his life. Having moved to Cairo in 1909, he began writing for the *Messaggero Egiziano* and the following year, his first creative writings were published, what Ungaretti called *bizzarrie*. In the same year he would also begin his work as a translator by publishing the translation of *Silence* by Edgar Allan Poe. In 1912 he moved from Alexandria of Egypt to Paris. He stopped by Brindisi, meeting many important literary figures and artists as he did in Paris. Here Ungaretti also met his old school friend: Moammed Sceab.

On 9 September 1913, Moammed Sceab killed himself. This affected the poet to such an extent that in his first collection of poems, *Porto Sepolto*, the first, called *In Memoria*, was dedicated to the friend. Soon after this, he graduated. While he was pursuing a career in teaching and exploring new ideas for his literary career, the First World War broke out and Ungaretti wanted to participate as an active soldier. His desire became true on 22 May 1915. During the war he wrote in various letters some of his new poems, including the first transcription of *Il Porto Sepolto*. The collection that included it was later published through the help of a lieutenant Ungaretti met in Versa. On March 1918 Ungaretti was transferred at Bligny, France, where he would fight his last battle. Following this battle, Ungaretti was brought to safety in Paris. There he would work for *Sempre Avanti*, a magazine for the Italian troupes stationed in France. It was during this period that

¹ Colangelo Stefano, "Ungaretti, Giuseppe", https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giuseppe-ungaretti_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ (accessed 17 April 2023). The whole biography of Ungaretti is based on this source.

Ungaretti would work on new texts as well as work with *Littérature*, a French magazine. It was in those same months that Benito Mussolini would employ him for *Popolo d'Italia*, before Ungaretti decided to work at the Italian embassy in France in 1920. Despite financial difficulties, Ungaretti remained there for some time, finding the environment incredibly stimulating for his literary career. It was there that he met Jeanne Dupoix and married her. They would have three children, two of whom did not reach adulthood. The family decided then to move to Rome in 1921, where Ungaretti began working for the minister of foreign affairs. He also worked with other important literary figures and for various magazines, both Italian and French, all the while he kept working on his collection, *Il Porto Sepolto*, published in 1923. In 1927, the family had to move again due to economic difficulties, this time to Marino.

Throughout 1928 and 1929 Ungaretti would work for and with many different newspapers and magazines, as well as translating the works of other notable literary figures, such as Saint-John Perse or William Blake or even Luis de Góngora. Together with these translations, Ungaretti was working on another collection of poems, called *Sentimento del Tempo*. In 1933, Ungaretti began to work for *Quaderni di Novissima* and started teaching. Three years later, he received an invitation by the Argentinian government to participate in a series of meetings between Europe and Latin America in Buenos Aires. Ungaretti's career as a teacher developed in Latin America, at the university of São Paulo in Brazil where his entire family would soon reach him.

When he went back to Italy, he was arrested for openly criticizing fascist laws, but was soon released on Mussolini's order. This, together with the unexpected death of his son, prompted months of silence. Brazil then in 1942 entered the war as an ally of the United States, following retaliation from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, prompting Ungaretti to move back to Rome. Soon after he arrived back in Italy, Mondadori published Ungaretti's complete works, with the title *Vita d'un Uomo*. Not long after, Ungaretti was invited to be a university teacher in Rome. This is the period in which some of his most important translation works were published, including the Shakespearian sonnets.

While other works were being published throughout the 1950s, he was still travelling in different European countries to participate in various meetings. After that, in 1959 he travelled all around the world, reaching Japan and Hong Kong. A notable work of that period is *Il Taccuino del Vecchio*, a recounting of this experience. This wasn't his last trip, as in 1963 Ungaretti visited the USSR, as the president of the European Society of Culture, and in 1964 he went to New York, having received an invitation from Columbia University to talk about Leopardi. These travels were transformed into travel narratives which, together with *Il Taccuino del Vecchio*, became very popular.

Ungaretti's earlier works of translation did not go unnoticed and RAI asked him to translate some passage from the *Odyssey*. He would not only translate them, but also read them on television. Then he went to Perú in order to accept two degrees ad honorem. After this, he kept travelling, going to the United States, as he was asked by Harvard University to read and comment his own poetry. After this stop, he also visited New York where he met Dunja Glamuzina Belli, the person that he would dedicate his last poem to, *L'Impietrito e il Velluto*. He was here struck by illness and, having returned to Italy, he died on 2 June 1970.

1.2 ALESSANDRO SERPIERI'S BIOGRAPHY

Born on 21 January 1935, Serpieri is one of the most important scholars and translators of English literature in Italy.² He showed interest in the English language throughout all his years of academic formation. His career focused on studying English language and literature, his first job being that of ordinary assistant of English literature at the university of Bologna. In 1971 he would change city, becoming a professor at the university of Florence.³ It was there that he, together with Marcello Pagnini – a professor of English language and literature – founded the Florence school of

² <https://www.anglisti.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Newsletter-AIA-primavera-2017.pdf>.

³ *Addio ad Alessandro Serpieri: fu la voce di Shakespeare.*

https://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/arte_e_cultura/17_febbraio_07/addio-ad-alessandro-serpieri-fu-voce-shakespeare-4677e734-ed41-11e6-98b8-4bd2be417fad.shtml

English studies, focusing on the semiotic analysis of texts. Serpieri's skills in semiotic analysis were amongst the greatest in Italy, so much so that he became president of the Associazione Italiana di studi semiotici (from 1979 to 1983). In 1991, he also became president of the Associazione Italiana di Anglistica. His skills in analysis encompassed all literary genres, ranging from poetry (as seen by his analysis of Eliot, Donne, Hopkins and Shakespeare, to name a few), to narrative (focusing on Conrad's works) and even including drama (first with Webster and then with Shakespeare).

His first major critical work was a study of deep structures, completed in 1973, regarding Eliot's poetry. Two years later his first monograph on Shakespeare was published, focusing on the immortality sonnets. Even today, his analysis is still considered one of the most insightful. After this, in 1976, his first volume on Shakespearian drama called *Otello: L'eros negato* was published. It was this unique way of reading Shakespeare that earned him an international reputation: he was among the contributors of the celebrated *Alternative Shakespeares* collection edited by John Drakakis in 1985.

Serpieri was also known as one of the most original theorists of drama of the twentieth century. His essay on the segmentation of the dramatic text (1978) brought forth a new way of understanding the performativity of the dramatic text. From this essay an important research project started and resulted in the volume *Come comunica il teatro* with contributions by many important authors, such as Paola Pugliatti, Tomaso Kemeny and Romana Rutelli.

His major works as a critic and theorist on Shakespeare were accompanied by various translations of both Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. Serpieri's translation of *Hamlet* for the production by Gabriele Lavia in 1978 is considered by many the most effective and actable version of the play in Italian. Among these translations we see the one of Shakespeare's sonnets for Rizzoli, which won him his first award in 1992 (Premio Mondello) as well as *Il primo Amleto* (1997), the translation of a version of the *Hamlet* that was discovered in 1823 and that was dated 1603. Serpieri would also translate many others of Shakespeare's plays.

He also wrote two novels: *Mostri agli Alisei* (1977) and *Mare Scritto* (2007). His career as a literary author did not stop at novels, as he also wrote a gothic dramatic adaptation of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker in 1988. He died on 6 February 2017.

2.SONNET 27: ANALYSIS

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see;
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new:
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.⁴

This sonnet shows how hard both day and night are for the poet by describing what he goes through. He is physically tired due to his travel and his body asks to rest, but his thoughts cannot stop. They keep him awake, even as his body is falling asleep on its own. His thoughts are trying to reach the fair youth and, in the complete darkness that blind people see, they think they have found him. As they see him, they realize how beautiful he is, so much so that the night itself is made beautiful, even if it remains a dark night still. The final rhyming couplet then tells us how this has been the poet's life for some time. As Giorgio Melchiori and Alessandro Serpieri note in their commentary to this sonnet, this and the next sonnet form a sequence, sharing many of their key features, but this will be better explored in the commentary to the next sonnet.⁵ John Dover Wilson focused on a possible explanation why the poet had to travel. This was due to the historical context, arguing that the poet might have had to leave his city due to either the plague, the hostility of a puritan mayor and corporation or due to disapproval from the government, linking the poet's trouble to what Shakespeare saw happen around him in that moment in history.⁶

To analyse the translations of the text, we need to understand what are the elements that make this sonnet work. A good guide in understanding this can be Helen Vendler's *The Art of*

⁴ Shakespeare, William, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones. London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997. This is the edition I use throughout.

⁵ Shakespeare, William, *Shakespeare's sonnets*, ed. by Giorgio Melchiori, Bari: Adriatica editrice, 1971. P. 90. Shakespeare, William, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Alessandro Serpieri, Milano: Rizzoli, 2004. P. 442.

⁶ Shakespeare, William, *The Sonnets*, ed. by John Dover Wilson, Cambridge: University Press, 1969. P. 128.

Shakespeare's Sonnet.⁷ She notes how the sonnet is built around “The speaker’s night of habitual unreprieve [...] bracketed by brief references to days of equal unreprieve”, marking how important the concept of unreprieve is in this sonnet.⁸ The poet mentions the fair youth as the cause of his suffering, divided between the day (during which he suffers in the body) and the night (during which he suffers in the mind). This is something that is emphasised by the word *travel*. Melchiori noted how, at the time, there was no difference in the spelling of *travail* and *travel*, and thus the same word could be interpreted as either.⁹ It works both ways. If read as *travel*, it can be linked to *toil*, emphasizing the reason why the poet is tired. If read as *travail* it means extreme tiredness.¹⁰ This would put more attention on the poet’s condition, rather than on the reason for his suffering. It is also possible it carried both meanings equally.

The three parallelisms noted by Vendler (*day-night*, *limbs-mind* and *thee-myself*) may suggest equal attention given to both day and night, but this is not the case. The distribution is weighted heavily towards the night, even if the first two lines have a balance between the two. This balance is created through specific key words: *weary-bed-reprieve-tired*. These words are important not only for their meanings, but for their positions as well. They are put at the beginning and end of each verse, in order to emphasize them. After the first two lines, the sonnet only focuses on the mind’s work during the night. Stephen Booth describes how the first quatrain works: its first half focuses on *weary with toil*. The main focus at the beginning is the poet’s condition, more than the poet. This changes in line 3, in which we see the *mental journey* beginning and, thus, becoming the subject. Then, in line 4, the subject becomes *journey*, as, in fact, the main focus from that moment onwards is the journey that evolves in the way Vendler describes it.¹¹

⁷ Vendler, Helen Hennessy, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 151.

⁸ Vendler, p. 152.

⁹ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 90.

¹⁰ OED, sub voce “travail”.

¹¹ Shakespeare, William, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Stephen Booth, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, p. 178.

Vendler describes the *mental journey* as beginning in the *head*, line 3, becoming alive in the *mind*, line 4. It is then rendered as *thoughts*, line 5, and, now free from the poet's head, the thoughts begin their *zealous pilgrimage*, line 6.¹² Serpieri and Wilson also note that this line is guided by the verb *intend*.¹³ These *thoughts* now set out upon a *zealous pilgrimage* which allows them to see through the *soul's imaginary sight*, line 9, and to finally perceive the *shadow*, line 10, of the fair youth. The *shadow* is noted by Melchiori as something without substance, almost a vision created by the poet's own mind and also as a word that always appears when the poet is speaking about love's absence.¹⁴ This entire progress is the fundamental construction of the sonnet.

Vendler, while explaining this journey, notes how important the S sound is, specifically in the last verse of the second quatrain and in the entirety of the third quatrain.¹⁵ She focuses on the words *see*, *soul*, *sight*, *shadow* and *sightless view*. These words create a sort of musicality, which brings attention to the ability of being able to see, something fundamental in the sonnet. In the sonnet then there are other specific words that we should pay attention to. Once again, Vendler's commentary can help us understand these better.¹⁶ These words are three: *zealous*, *ghastly* and *jewel*. These were chosen for their phonetic components as well as for their tendency to call for other words. *Zealous* hides *jealous*, *ghastly* calls for *ghostly* and *jewel* fits the cluster of *view* and *beauteous*. There is a reason why Shakespeare chose not to include the words Vendler says are implicitly evoked and that is that they would have ruined the phonetic aspect of the sonnet, even if they were thematically appropriate. This ambiguity is an important part of the sonnet, allowing one word to carry more than one meaning.

Like all Shakespearian sonnets, this one concludes with the final rhyming couplet, in which the most important thing to note is the repetition of *limbs* and *mind*, which are ties to earlier

¹² Vendler, p. 153.

¹³ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 442.

¹⁴ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, 1971, p 90.

¹⁵ Vendler, p. 154.

¹⁶ Vendler, p. 154.

moments in the sonnet. There is a reason for this: to emphasize the conflict that happened and its resolution: first the two sides were one against the other, but now they together torture the poet who can never find in the *day* the rest for the body, nor in the *night* the respite for his mind. This will also be the main point of conflict in the following sonnet.

2.1 UNGARETTI'S IDEA OF TRANSLATION AND HIS VERSION OF SONNET 27

Stremato da stanchezza, verso il letto in fretta m'avvio
Al riposo caro alle membra da tanto viaggio spossate;
Ma allora riprendo il percorso e mi decorre la mente
E lo spirito s'agita, dimesso il lavoro del corpo,
Poiché senza indugio si muovono dalla stanza lontana
In devoto pellegrinaggio incontro a te i pensieri
Tenendo spalancate palpebre che il sonno va prostrandolo
E nelle pupille avrei tenebra come la vede il cieco
Se dell'anima mia la fantastica mira
Non svelasse allo sguardo privo di vista, la tua ombra,
La quale nella notte fosca come un gioiello sospesa
Fa seducente il buio e la sua faccia vecchia, nuova.
Ecco, le mie membra il giorno, la notte la mia mente
Per causa tua e mia non trovano mai quiete.¹⁷

Before we talk about the differences between the original text and Ungaretti's translation, we need to understand an important point: since the Italian language and the English language are different, there are implications we need to be aware of: English is a language that tends to have words that are mono or by-syllabic, while in Italian content words tend to have more than two syllables, even if there are words with two or less. This would not be a problem if these translations were in prose, but in poetry, which is a form of art that in Italian is governed by the number of syllables, this is something that makes the task more complex. Ungaretti was aware of this problem and, in the introduction to his translation of the sonnets, presented his solution:

la difficoltà si risolveva dunque da sé, tenendo conto che in un medesimo gruppo di vocaboli, la quantità di sillabe italiane è superiori alle inglesi di, circa, sedici su dieci o undici.¹⁸

¹⁷ Shakespeare, William, *40 Sonetti di Shakespeare*, ed by Rossella Terreni, trans. by Giuseppe Ungaretti, Bologna: Archetipolibri, 2009. This is the edition I use throughout unless otherwise noted.

¹⁸ Shakespeare, William, *Vita d'un uomo IV: traduzioni I: 40 sonetti di Shakespeare*, ed. and trans. By Giuseppe Ungaretti, Milano: Mondadori 1946. P. 11. "The difficulty is thus easily solvable, considering that, in the same number of words, the number of syllables in the Italian language is superior by sixteen to ten or eleven of English." All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.

However, this notion is not enough to justify the freedom he displayed in his translations. This freedom was something that went beyond simple metric reasons. Rossella Terreni quotes Ungaretti in her book as he claimed that poetry is untranslatable: the rhythm and number of syllables is impossible to translate because of how deeply linked to the language they both are. The content is also untranslatable, as it is mysteriously intertwined with the writer – and thus a translation would be an interpretation and would not maintain this secret relation between the writer and the written – and the style and form are untranslatable as well because they both are the combination of everything that was listed before.¹⁹

Given this thorough explanation of why a translation is impossible, one may wonder why Ungaretti still decided to translate: “Semplicemente per fare opera originale di poesia”.²⁰ What Ungaretti was doing was a translation that is “poesia [...] avendo di mira nel tempo medesimo il rispetto, alla lettera, parola per parola, del significato originale”.²¹ Terreni manages to convey what Ungaretti wanted to do: “Per Ungaretti si tratta dunque di tradurre letteralmente, parola per parola, ricreando in lingua italiana una nuova armonia che riecheggi quella del testo Shakespeariano”²² while also noting that his objective and the actual results differ, in that the translator would often distance himself from the original text in ways that went beyond the linguistic differences between the two languages.

Historical context is also needed to explain the reason for Ungaretti’s interest in translation.

He explained it in the introduction to his collection of Shakespearian translations:

è un lavoro alla quale pensavo sino dal '31, da quando, in un estenuante impegno di rinnovamento, problemi di ordine tecnico o di semplice ispirazione mi portavano [...] a analizzare sul vivo, come si può fare solo traducendo, particolari aspetti di scrittori di diversa indole e origine.²³

¹⁹ Terreni, p. 25.

²⁰ Terreni, p. 25. “Just to write original poetry”.

²¹ Terreni, p. 26. “Poetry and, at the same time, complete respect of the original meaning”.

²² Terreni, p. 26. “Ungaretti wants to translate literally, word for word, creating a new harmony in Italian which echoes that of the Shakespearian text”.

²³ Shakespeare, *Vita d'un uomo IV: traduzioni I*: ed. and trans. by Ungaretti, p. 9. “It was something I have been thinking about ever since 1931, when, constantly seeking renewal, overwhelmed by problems of technique or of simple inspiration I began to analyse, as one can do only by translating, different aspects of writers with different attitudes and origins”.

When he started to translate, it was just an exercise to him, a way to see different approaches to poetry to, possibly, inspire him or help him find a solution to problems he might encounter. In doing this, however, he discovered he enjoyed the process and started to publish his translations, which became an important part of his career (not only translations from English, but from Spanish as well).

Given all this, how does Ungaretti translate Shakespeare? As De Robertis notes in his article, Ungaretti's translation emphasizes the single word as a way of constructing the meaning of the poem.²⁴ For this reason, Ungaretti believed that his translation work was not actually translation, but rather was new poetry.²⁵ This means that Ungaretti allowed himself a degree of freedom when translating the sonnets, especially in verse, as he says that "nel suono [è] assurdo non lasciare seguire a ciascuna il proprio verso, a lingue tanto dissimili".²⁶ He chose not to use the same verse as Shakespeare, as it would not work in Italian. What he chose is a "verso lungo", a combination of two Italian verses. In general, these long verses have 16 syllables, as Ungaretti believed that 16 to 11 was the ratio of Italian to English syllables.²⁷ It is also worth noting that Ungaretti did not respect this rule regarding the number of syllables, as he had to change the ratio between the two languages often. Having made clear the freedom with which Ungaretti approached translation, now we need to compare the actual elements we took into consideration.

The first important element, which was noted by Helen Vendler, was the balance formed by *weary-bed-repose-tired*. Ungaretti maintained the idea this balance wanted to convey in the translation (the poet is physically tired and he still remains so even if he tries to rest), but he did so by changing the order of the words. *Stremato* is a correct equivalent for *weary*, both in meaning and position, but *letto (bed)* is moved to the middle of the verse. While *repose* in the following line is translated with the Italian equivalent (*riposo*), *travel tired* is translated as *da tanto viaggio spossate*.

²⁴ De Robertis, Domenico, "Ungaretti Traduttore Di Shakespeare", *Leonardo* (1947), pp. 194-202.

²⁵ Shakespeare, *40 Sonetti di Shakespeare*, ed. by Terreni, trans. by Ungaretti, p. 25.

²⁶ Shakespeare, *Vita d'un uomo IV*: ed. and trans. by Ungaretti, p. 11. "It would be absurd to not allow such different languages to follow their own rhythm and sounds."

²⁷ Shakespeare, William, *Vita d'un uomo IV*: ed. and trans. by Ungaretti, p. 11.

This is equivalent regarding the meaning, to describe the fact that the limbs need rest, but it loses the English repetition of the sounds /t/ and /r/. This is still a minor difference in the overall sonnet. However, when we consider the entirety of these two lines, we can see for the first time the freedom Terreni talked about as Ungaretti changed the syntax of the second line and, as a consequence, its meaning as well. In the original text, the poet arrives at his bed after a tiring day, the second verse only being a comment on *the dear repose*, on what the poet would like to have. It is not the object of the action, just a thought of the poet. Ungaretti decided to change it into the object of *haste to*, translated as *m'avvio*. Ungaretti's translation of *travel tired* as *da tanto viaggio spossate* ignores the double meaning in the original text noted by Melchiori and Serpieri that I already analysed, as *travel* and *travail* co-exist in the English version. This lack of ambiguity has nothing to do with Ungaretti's own skill as a translator, as even Serpieri, who prioritized a faithful translation above anything else, admits that the double meaning of *travel* and *travail* “non è recuperabile nella traduzione italiana”.²⁸

Following the description of the poet's condition, we can see what stops him from resting: the mind's work during the night and its journey towards the fair youth. The journey's direction is made clear by different keywords: *head-mind-thoughts-pilgrimage-sight-shadow*. Ungaretti, while maintaining the general notion, introduced some changes among these key words: *mind* becomes *spirito* instead of *mente* – as the former was used before for *head* — and the position of *thoughts* and *pilgrimage* is changed as well. *Intend* still introduces *zealous pilgrimage*, however, it does so through an enjambement that connects line 5 and 6. Also, the verb loses its original meaning. It no longer holds the meaning of *intendono*, which Serpieri mentioned in his comment.²⁹ He also does not follow Melchiori, who translated it as *intraprendono*.³⁰ The meaning becomes *si muovono*. This still works to describe what the thoughts do, but the ambiguity present in the English text is lost in

²⁸ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 442. “[It] cannot be maintained in the Italian translation”.

²⁹ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 442.

³⁰ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 90.

Italian. Now the verb describes nothing more than an action of movement, rather than carrying both the meaning of understanding and moving. *Sight (mira)* is moved from line 8 to line 9. *Shadow (ombra)* is in line 10 — the same as the English text —, but it is moved at the end of the line, preceded by *sightless view* (translated as *sguardo privo di vista*, a very literal translation). It is also worth noting that Ungaretti added in line 5 *senza indugio* as well as *dalla stanza lontana*.³¹ Both are elements that Ungaretti chose to include independently of sources, most probably to complete the line without having to move other elements from other lines. It is worth noting that this breaks Ungaretti's rules regarding the number of syllables, as he does in many instances throughout the sonnets.

In line 11, built around *jewel* and *night*, Ungaretti decided to change the order of the words. *Ghastly night* is translated as *notte fosca*, as the adjective *fosca* describes something in which it is hard to see.³² This is put before *like a jewel hung*, translated as *come un gioiello sospesa*. Line 12 also presents a specific variation: *black night* is not translated as *notte nera*, but as *buio*, darkness, and *beauteous* is also changed into *seducente*, seductive, suggesting a more sexually charged meaning to the image conjured up in the original.

Something else that develops throughout this journey is the repetition of the S sound that Vendler describes. Ungaretti tries to translate this alliteration, but he develops it throughout the entire sonnet. In the line in which Vendler brings attention to this alliteration, Ungaretti focuses more on the /m/ and /a/ sounds. The English alliteration, in line 9, starts from *sight*. Ungaretti translates this with *mira*, in which both /m/ and /a/ sounds are present. For this reason, Ungaretti maintains these sounds as alliteration. However, the alliteration loses its strength as these sounds are present only in a single line and, in the following, the S sound becomes the focus again (*svelasse, sguardo, vista*), as here *view* is translated with *vista*, in which the S sound is the most prominent.

³¹ Terreni, p. 226. "Without doubt" and "from the distant room".

³² Treccani, sub voce "fosco".

Then, the final rhyming couplet remains. The structure gives each word its importance, but Ungaretti introduces three changes, one minor and two major. The first change is the combination of both *Lo!* and *thus* in the same emphatic: *ecco*. This has little to no impact to the understanding or the construction of the sonnet, but it is still worth mentioning. The most interesting change is in the translation of *by day my limbs, by night my mind*. Ungaretti decides to change the structure. Rather than use the ABAB construction, he prefers a chiasmic structure and thus creates *le mie membra il giorno, la notte la mia mente*. This was changed possibly to put the emphasis on *il giorno, la notte* so as to make the torture endless even for the reader. Putting both together suggests a continuation without hope for an actual moment of rest. The last thing to note in Ungaretti's version is the fact that the last two lines create an assonance – *mente, quiete* – but not a rhyme. This, specifically, was true throughout the entire sonnet. Ungaretti never showed interest in rhyming in the translation, possibly because he considered it impossible to translate poetry while maintaining or creating rhymes. For this reason, he decided to use the *verso libero*, a kind of verse in Italian in which the rhyme scheme does not follow a specific rhythm or does not rhyme at all.

2.2 SERPIERI'S IDEA OF TRANSLATION AND HIS VERSION OF SONNET 27

Sfinito dalla fatica, mi affretto al mio letto,
 il caro riposo per le membra stanche del viaggio;
 ma allora un altro viaggio mi comincia nella testa,
 e lavora la mia mente, quando è finito il lavoro del corpo.
 allora i miei pensieri, di là lontano dove mi trovo,
 verso di te fanno un devoto pellegrinaggio,
 e tengono spalancate le mie palpebre pesanti,
 a guardare la tenebra che vedono i ciechi.
 Senonché la vista immaginaria della mia anima
 presenta al mio sguardo cieco la tua ombra,
 che, come un gioiello appeso alla notte spettrale,
 fa la nera notte bella e il suo vecchio volto nuovo.

Così di giorno le mie membra, di notte la mia mente,
 Per causa tua, e mia, non trovano quiete.³³

As I did with Ungaretti, I shall preface the analysis of the translation with some information on the translator, Alessandro Serpieri. He was not a writer or poet, but instead had a career in

³³ Shakespeare, William, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Alessandro Serpieri, Milano: Rizzoli, 2004. This is the edition I use throughout unless otherwise noted.

English studies. This means a specific thing for the understanding of his translations: Serpieri was not interested in them as something to inspire him to write something new, as Ungaretti was. He was interested in translation as an accurate equivalent to provide information, musicality and images, or, more generally, as an accurate method of moving something from one language to another. He wanted a translation that would prioritize fidelity over everything else and, specifically, fidelity in the rhythm and in the music created by the sonnet:

Dove si apprezza maggiormente la [...] fedeltà, è nella resa ritmica e timbrica della versificazione: anche quando la traduzione oltrepassa i limiti quantitativi del verso singolo si può tuttavia cogliere [...] una sorprendente corrispondenza fonologica che riesce a convogliare la musicalità del testo originale; Serpieri è tendenzialmente più interessato a rendere il ritmo del verso e l'andamento della strofa.³⁴

What Serpieri wanted to do was create an accessible translation of the sonnets for the Italian readership that may – with the help of his introduction and commentary – allow anyone, even those without prior knowledge, to read and understand them. This purpose changed the way he approached translation and its limitations, allowing him not to forcibly translate something and, instead, admit when something lost its effect because of translation or when something was impossible to translate.

The difference between the two versions is immediately noticeable, as even the first words are different: This translation uses *sfinito dalla fatica* where Ungaretti translates *stremato da stanchezza*. Regarding the balance described by Vendler, the first keywords (*weary-bed-repose-tired*) have been translated literally, even including their position, except for the last one. The last word switches place with its adjective: *sfinito* (first word of the first line)-*letto* (last word of the first line)- *caro riposo* (first words of the second line)-*stanche del viaggio* which translates to tired of the travel, literally, instead of *travel tired*. This last change was made as in Italian the construction *with travel tired* would not make sense. It is worth noting that Serpieri respected the English text's intent: the second line does not become the object of *haste* as it is in Ungaretti's version. Serpieri also

³⁴ Corti, Claudia, "Shakespeare, Sonetti, a cura di A. Serpieri (book review)", *Rivista di Letterature Moderne e Comparate*, 45 (1992), p. 433.

admits the limitations of his translation: he noted that in the source text *travel* appeared as *travail*, which worked effectively as it carries the meanings of both words.³⁵ He recognizes the double meaning but admits that it is untranslatable in Italian and thus his translation uses the meaning of *travel*, *viaggio*, to follow the more literal meaning of the word.

The second important group of key words – those that describe the *mental journey* – formed by *head-mind-thoughts-pilgrimage-sight-shadow*, needs more attention: *head*, translated as *testa*, *mind*, translated as *mente*, and *thoughts*, translated as *pensieri*, are all translated with equivalents in meaning and maintain their corresponding positions. *Zealous pilgrimage* is still introduced by *intend*, only the word has been changed. *Intend* in the English text has a double meaning as both a mental and a physical act, one of understanding and one of movement at the same time. The Italian text translates it with *fanno*. This translation is one that prioritizes the physical action, losing one of the two meanings, as the physical meaning is the one that makes the most sense with the literal reading of the sonnet. *Pilgrimage* is translated as *pellegrinaggio*, but its position is different, as it is at the end of the verse while *to thee* (translated as *verso di te*) is put at the beginning of the verse, switching their positions. *Sight*, translated with *vista*, also changes position: from the end of the verse to the middle and, specifically, the construction *imaginary sight* (translated with *vista immaginaria*) is switched with *my soul*. This switch is motivated by how the possessive noun works in both languages. This form is often used in English, but the Italian language does not have anything that shares the same agility and simplicity to indicate possession. Thus, the construction of the sentence is one that cannot work in Italian and needs to be changed. Serpieri chose to do this by switching the possessed and the possessor. A similar problem is present when considering *shadow*. This is translated with *ombra*, but it is moved once again to the end of the verse, creating a structure that could be easily understood by an Italian reader. Putting the object of the action at the end of the verse emphasizes its importance, making it clear that it is a crucial word in the sonnet. *Ombra* is

³⁵ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 442.

also a perfect translation to achieve what Melchiori described in the original: a creature without substance, something so fickle that it may seem to be a creation of the poet's own mind.³⁶

Serpieri must also contend with the problem of the alliteration of the /s/ sound. This is, as in the case of Ungaretti, lost in the specific lines Vendler notices it, but it is, instead, spread throughout the sonnet. However, even so, it loses its strength, as the sound is less prevalent, even when compared to Ungaretti's translation. The choice to, at least partially, ignore the alliteration is also one motivated by Serpieri's first objective: that of maintaining the rhythm and not necessarily the sounds.

Vendler also talks about the importance of specific words: *zealous*, *ghastly* and *jewel*. The first reason for their importance is the fact that they carry "shadow" words which reinforce the sonnet's themes better, but that would not work because of their sounds. This is something that Serpieri's translation partially loses. In the case of *zealous* the translation is *devoto*, which has nothing to do with jealousy, the word connected to *zealous* by Vendler. *Ghastly*, which hid *ghostly*, is translated as *spettrale*, which is an adjective that describes something as being similar to a *spettro*, a form of ghost. This means that Serpieri's translation works perfectly, as *spettro* evokes the idea of a ghost, while also being used often as an adjective, *spettrale*, to describe something in the same way *ghastly* does. In a way, the translation in this works better than the original because there is no need for a "hidden" word to grasp the full meaning. *Jewel* is also faithfully maintained, as its uniqueness had more to do with its connection to *view* and *beauteous*. It is translated as *gioiello*, which is similar even in sound. We can also say that, while thematic links are still present, the sounds of these words have been changed.

At the end, we have the final rhyming couplet. Here we see that Serpieri distances himself from Ungaretti: *Lo! Thus* is translated as *così*. The rest of the couplet is translated as literally as possible, with Serpieri choosing to maintain the scheme *day-limbs-night-mind*, different from the

³⁶ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 90.

one used by Ungaretti. The last verse is identical to Ungaretti's translation, with the final rhyme being between *mente* and *quiete*, mind and peace. The choice to rhyme here is in contrast with the rest of the sonnet, as no other verse, except for those two, rhymes. This means that in Serpieri's translation *mente* and *quiete* carry an important meaning, as they are the two things that are the most distant in this sonnet, while being the two things the poet wishes for constantly.

3.SONNET 28, THE ORDER OF THE COLLECTION AND OF THE SEQUENCE

How can I then return in happy plight
that am debarred the benefit of rest?
when day's oppression is not eased by night,
but day by night and night by day oppressed,
and each, though enemies to either's reign,
do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, the other to complain
how far I toil, still farther off from thee.
I tell the day to please him, thou art bright
and dost him grace, when clouds do blot the heaven;
so flatter I the swart-complexioned night,
when sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st the even;
 But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
 and night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger.

Before I comment on the sonnet itself, there is something that must be said regarding the order of the sonnets. Serpieri notes in the introduction to his translation that there is no definitive proof of the actual order the Shakespearian sonnets were supposed to be read in.³⁷ This was because the sonnets were printed – from what we can gather – without Shakespeare's approval, as the dedication printed in Thomas Thorpe's edition (the first printed version of this text) was not written by Shakespeare; The playwright did write the dedication for his other published poems. For this reason, no scholar can currently present an order of the sonnets that is certain. Of course, a generally accepted order of the sonnets exists today. Some of the sonnets also share thematic and stylistic connections that lead scholars to consider them as more related to one another in ways that go beyond the links which run throughout the entire collection and that are generally shared by all sonnets. These are sonnets that form what is called a sequence. A sequence is a collection of two or more sonnets linked by strong connections and by an evolution that occurs throughout the sequence. It is a series of sonnets that build upon each other in form and ideas. This is different from what is called a group of sonnets. A group of sonnets is one formed by thematic connections that are not as deeply intertwined. The sonnets that form a group do not share a connection in their form in the same way the sonnets of a sequence do. A group of sonnets also does not show the same evolution a sequence does. While an example of a sequence is the one formed by sonnet 27 and 28, in which

³⁷ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 10.

the same forms and characters evolve and interact, a group is the one of the fair youth, which takes into consideration sonnets from number 1 to number 126, or the group of the dark lady, which includes all sonnets from number 127 to number 154. Not all sonnets in the group share a certain form or build upon each other, but all have the same central characters: the fair youth for the first group or the dark lady for the second. To better understand this, I will explain how the sequence created by sonnet 27 and 28 works. Serpieri recognizes that these two sonnets form a diptych, but it still works in the same way a sequence would which is also noted by Melchiori. Serpieri explains how the entire sequence is built around the idea of the poet's travels, which is a cause of suffering for him.³⁸ This is due to the distance that separates the poet and the fair youth. Sonnet 27 describes this suffering in detail. Sonnet 28, which starts from the idea of the poet's suffering, builds on it and explains what is causing his suffering and how he is trying to avoid it. In sonnet 27, the poet suffers during the day and during the night. In sonnet 28, day and night are no longer passive beings, but become the torturers of the poet. They are not different characters, but they evolve in between sonnet 27 and 28 as they too feel the distance from the fair youth. Both share key ideas, such as that of *toil* and *grief*, but also form, as Melchiori notes that both follow a symmetrical scheme in which sections are repeated and information reinforced.³⁹

However, any one sonnet that is part of a sequence still works by itself and so does sonnet 28. The sonnet describes the poet asking himself how or even if he will be able to return to his love, considering the pain he has to endure every day. He also tells us – and the fair youth – of his attempts at easing the torture he is in. The first line already hides something interesting: *return in happy plight*. Helen Vendler described what this means. *How can I then return in happy plight* can be an answer to the ending of a letter, possibly from the fair youth, repeated with irony. The sender of this letter hoped the poet would *return in happy plight* and the poet, looking at his situation, cannot help but answer with irony, asking how he could return *in happy plight*, considering the

³⁸ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 442. Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 90.

³⁹ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 90.

torture he has to endure each day. The rest of the sonnet is the answer to the letter supposedly sent. An answer that shows frustration more than anything else, in which the poet states what he has lived through and in which he vents all his anger.⁴⁰ Vendler also notes how this irony implicitly states that the day and night are not the true torturers of the poet, but that they are just innocent agents to which the guilt is deflected; The true culprit is the sender of the letter.⁴¹ Serpieri notes how *return* carries a double meaning: its primary meaning is that of “returning to a place”, which he believes to be the place where the lover is, but also the one of recovery, as in, “recovering a lost condition, one that was happier than the poet’s present”.⁴² John Dover Wilson believes this introduction to have a double meaning: it is a tribute to the friend’s beauty, but also a plea for sympathy, almost as if the poet was begging to be helped by someone.⁴³

Day and *night* are both proxies for the true torturer, but still play a role and evolve in the sonnet and in the sequence. They go from *enemies* to *consenting* allies, *shake[ing] hands* in order to *torture* the poet. The *day* tortures the poet through *toil*, physicality, while the *night* makes him complain of the distance from the fair youth, turning the physical torture into a mental one, not allowing the poet to rest. Both are expressed through the repetition of *toil* in two consecutive lines, so as to emphasize how the pain the poet is feeling is both physical and mental. Serpieri notes how the meaning of *debarred the benefit of rest* is to negate, while the actual meaning is “to bar, to block the passage”.⁴⁴ It carries both meanings because the travel the poet completes in the sequence is one that is both mental and physical. This way *debar* emphasizes both. Serpieri also brings attention to how both day and night are oppressors that are enemies and fight each other, with the poet caught in between, almost by chance.⁴⁵ However, both do agree to torture the poet, an agreement signed by shaking hands. This is merely a truce between the two, but enough to destroy the poet. What the *day*

⁴⁰ Vendler, p. 157.

⁴¹ Vendler, p. 158.

⁴² Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443.

⁴³ Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. by Wilson, p. 129.

⁴⁴ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443.

⁴⁵ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443.

does to torture the poet all commenters agree that is clear, making him tired, destroying him physically. What the *night* does is not completely agreed on: Serpieri believes that the night forces the poet to complain.⁴⁶ It stops him from resting and, instead, tortures him with thoughts and anxiety for the future. Melchiori, instead, describes what the *night* does as forcing the poet to *dolere*.⁴⁷ This is an Italian word which is used to express physical pain but also regrets.⁴⁸ Melchiori thus suggests that the poet, during the night, does not only feel mental pain, given by worries and lack of rest, but also physical pain, one that goes beyond the *toil* the day makes him suffer, almost suggesting that the night is worse than the day.

In an attempt to stop the torture of both day and night, the poet bargains with both: to the *day* he says that the fair youth is still present: *thou* (referring to the friend in the second person) *art bright*. The fair youth is described like the sun, *bright*, almost as if he was a powerful force of nature, comparable to the *day*. This power that the fair youth has over everything is represented by the poet believing that just the thought of him is enough to bless the *day*, both the character in the sonnet as well as the day in general. However, Serpieri adds that the way line 9 is written makes the actual meaning unclear: *to please him* may refer to *I tell*, in which case it would mean “to tell the day to please him”, but it can also refer to *thou art bright*, which would mean that the friend shines to please the day.⁴⁹ Serpieri believes that the correct interpretation is the first one, as it creates a parallel with line 11; Wilson agrees with this idea.⁵⁰ Melchiori notes in line 10 that *grace* means “to embellish” and it implicitly positions the lover as the sun of the poet’s life, embellishing the true sun.⁵¹ Serpieri adds that the sentence *dost him grace* suggests that the lover is considered a king, while line 9 compares the lover to the sun.⁵² To the *swart-complexioned night*, the poet says that the fair youth *glid’st the even* when the *stars twine not*. The lover can radiate with so much light that he

⁴⁶ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443.

⁴⁷ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 91.

⁴⁸ Treccani, sub voce “dolere”.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443.

⁵⁰ Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. by Wilson, p. 130.

⁵¹ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 91.

⁵² Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444.

can be compared to a star when the actual stars are nowhere to be seen, as *twire* is another word for peek.⁵³ Serpieri focuses in his commentary on the word *gild'st*. He does so because the first printed version does not have this word, but has *guil'st*, which has a meaning closer to “to lie, to trick”.⁵⁴ Despite admitting that the verb with the positive connotation is the one that makes the most sense, it still can be interesting how one possibility is that the lover can trick the night, making it appear as if the stars are there. This would make sense, considering what we know of the fair youth from the rest of the sonnets, or at least of the consideration the poet has of him. The fair youth is also described, in this sonnet, directly only through these two sentences. Both describe the fair youth as something eternal and superior to mortal man. This suggests that the poet is worshipping the fair youth, is only capable of thinking about him as something superior, comparable to a force of nature more than a man.

The final rhyming couplet presents, in line 13, an alliteration with the /d/ sound which, as Serpieri explains, is one that emphasizes the physical toil the poet has to deal with, as the /d/ sound is the one linked to the *day*.⁵⁵ Something similar is done in the following line, in which the alliteration is created by the /n/ sound, which emphasizes the restlessness of the poet, as the /n/ sound calls for *night*, even if this alliteration is much weaker than before, as it is repeated only two times. For comparison, the alliteration formed by the /d/ sound is repeated four times. The last element worthy of note is the rhyme created through *longer* and *stronger*, which are both descriptors of the torture the poet suffers.

3.1 UNGARETTI'S TRANSLATION OF SONNET 28

Come potrei dunque tornare a uno stato felice,
Quando sono rescisso dal beneficio della quiete,
Quando l'oppressione del giorno, la notte non allevia,
Quando il giorno, da notte, e la notte sono oppresso dal giorno,

⁵³ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444.

⁵⁴ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444.

⁵⁵ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444.

Quando entrambi, nemici l'uno al regno dell'altra,
 Di darsi la mano consentono per impormi tortura,
 Il primo, con gli affanni, lei col pianto che io apra gli affanni
 Un varco da lontano, più ancora lontano da te.
 Al giorno, per farmelo amico, dico che sei splendente,
 Che grazia gli presti se passano nubi a incupire il cielo:
 Della notte il moro carnato lusingo rivelandogli
 Che quando gli astri non rifulgono, da te è dorata la sera.
 Ma il giorno deve tutti I giorni prolungarmi gli affanni,
 E notte farmene apparire più aspro ogni notte il male.

Immediately, we see an important difference: *return in happy plight* has been translated literally as *tornare a uno stato felice*. This choice means that the line loses the hidden meaning found by Vendler: no longer is the poet responding to a supposed letter from the fair youth. This also means that the implication created by the repeated *oppression* of the fair youth being the true torturer is lost as well. The fair youth now appears as more innocent than in the original.

The poet – when lamenting the impossibility to return to the *happy plight* in line 2– says he is *debarred the benefit of rest*, which means that he is prevented from having access to it. Ungaretti translates it by saying that the poet is *resciso dal beneficio della quiete*, which has two major differences from the original: *resciso* means “to be torn” or “to be cut”, but it also has a juridical meaning which is used when referring to a contract that is annulled.⁵⁶ This translation works on multiple levels: the first is the literal one, as the poet is violently denied what was his, which is reinforced by the strong meaning of *resciso*. The second is the juridical meaning, which belongs to a language that Shakespeare often used in other sonnets, as if the poet’s life is being discussed in a court of law. In this case, it evokes the idea that the poet feels day and night not to only be torturers, but also to be breaking the law by torturing him, as if reality was ordered through contracts which they are not respecting. The second difference is in *rest*, which is translated as *quiete*. This is not a literal translation: *quiete* refers to peace or silence rather than *rest*. A better translation of *rest* would be *riposo*. It is difficult to imagine this was done because Ungaretti’s interpretation differed as the difference between the poet begging for a calm moment (a moment of *quiete*) or a moment of *rest* (*riposo*) is one that changes nothing in the context of the sonnet.

⁵⁶ Treccani, sub voce “rescindere”.

Something which requires my attention is also the question mark. In the 1946 version of Ungaretti's translation, there are three different question marks, one in line 2, one in line 3 and one in line 4.⁵⁷ This partially respects the original text, as line 2 in the English text does show a question mark.⁵⁸ The ones in line 3 and 4 are additions by Ungaretti which are not necessarily dissonant with the meaning of the source text. They just put emphasis on the doubts of the poet. However, in the commentary by Rossella Terreni published in 2009 the text does not include any of them.⁵⁹ While removing the question marks in line 3 and 4 is understandable, as they do not enhance or change the meaning, removing the one in line 2 does. Specifically, the question mark acts as a full stop, allowing the next sentence to easily start again. Ungaretti, instead, connects the entire section, from line 2 to line 5, by repeating *quando*, which evokes a stronger connection between each line.

The end of the line 3 – *is not eas'd by night* – has been translated as *la notte non allevia*. This translation is one that needs an explanation, as it differs in some important elements. The first is the order of words: in the Italian translation *night* comes before the verb, which has been changed from the source text. In the original, *is not eas'd by night* is a passive verb. Instead, in Ungaretti's version, the verb is in its active form. This way, the meaning changes: in the original, the line could mean two things: The poet hoped that, during the night, the pain of the day would stop. However, the night would be nothing more than an observer, a moment in which the torture was supposed to stop. It was hope for the non-presence of the day, a moment in which the day would no longer exist and, therefore, no longer able to torture the poet. The second meaning is this: the poet hoped the night would actively protect him and not just stand there doing nothing. He hoped it would not only be a moment of rest, but a being that would grant the moment of rest, almost as if obligated by natural law to do so. Ungaretti's version loses the ambiguity, suggesting only the idea that the poet hoped for the night to protect him and allow him to rest. In the original, the night's supposed role

⁵⁷ Shakespeare, *Vita d'un uomo IV: traduzioni I: 40 sonetti di Shakespeare*, ed. and trans. by Ungaretti, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁸ Shakespeare, William, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones. London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997.

⁵⁹ Shakespeare, *40 Sonetti di Shakespeare*, ed. by Terreni, trans. by Ungaretti, p. 226.

was ambiguous. In Ungaretti's version, the night is an active being which the poet hoped would be benevolent.

Line 4 also deserves a more critical look. This is mainly due to the English construction and how it has been changed in the translation. In this line, we see Shakespeare creating ambiguity with which word is the subject and which is the object. Specifically, the first *day* and the second *night* in the line are the subjects and the first *night* and second *day* are the objects of the sentence. A more understandable construction of the sentence would be: "*but day oppressed by night and night oppressed by day*". In the Italian version the verb is translated as *sono oppresso*, which is the passive form of *opprimere*, to oppress. It is also the first-person singular as Ungaretti believed the subject to be the poet.

In line 5 Ungaretti translates *though* as *quantunque*. This translation is technically correct, but *quantunque* is a word that does not flow as much as *though*. I bring this up because it is a good example of Ungaretti's desire of elevating the language he uses. He does not want to use *seppure* or *anche se*, which would have worked just as well, because the language in his works must be that of poetry. For this reason, he even uses a word that does not work well in the sonnet, but that focuses on this idea.

Line 6 contains a difference in the verb used: while Shakespeare used *to torture me*, Ungaretti's version uses *per impormi tortura*. In English, the two parties are agreeing on a truce between each other to torture the poet. In Italian, the two parties agree to *imporr[e] tortura* over the poet. The poet is saying this in the first-person, so they are imposing the torture on him, changing the sentence just slightly to include the new element, as *impormi* is not present in the original. Day and night do not just *torture* the poet, they force torture on him, making them seem crueller and the torture that much more painful.

Line 7 and 8 also deserve attention, as they have been modified: *il primo, con gli affanni, lei col pianto che io apra gli affanni / un varco da lontano, più ancora lontano da te*. The translation is rough, as it does not make much sense, even if one considers it to be based on meaning rather than a

translation of the exact words of the original. The beginning is similar as *il primo, con gli affanni*, carries a similar meaning to *the one by toil*, even if it differs in the translation of *the one* with an ordinal number, *il primo*, which translates to “the first”. The rest changes: Ungaretti did not maintain what he himself started by using *il primo*, the first. This implies a second one, *un secondo*, but this is not present. The only thing present is *lei*, which is the translation to *the other* and is used where *secondo* should be. It still works as a translation, but it does not make sense to only use *il primo* without *il secondo*. Ungaretti also changes the main verb. He does not translate *to complain*, but rather adds an *apra* as the main verb. The original verb’s meaning has been relegated to *con gli affanni* and *col pianto*. They are both linked to torture, as the *day, il primo*, tortures the poet *con gli affanni*, by making him toil and the *night, lei*, tortures him *col pianto*, by making him cry. However, it is also true that both are connected by a *che* with *apra gli affanni*. This is connected to line 8 and, specifically, to the word *varco*, which is nowhere to be found in the original, as it has been added by Ungaretti. This added word changes the sentence. Ungaretti must have understood these two lines as follow: *day* and *night* are torturing the poet and he, in response to the torture, opens a portal to the fair youth who is far away. What Ungaretti wanted the poet to do with this portal is not clear, as it probably came from a misunderstanding of the original text. I also have to specify that the Italian version is worded strangely and that this is my personal understanding of the two lines in the translation, as it is quite difficult to understand. The English version, instead, wanted to say that the *day* tortures the poet by making him *toil*, by making him tired, and the *night* makes the poet suffer through overthinking and anxiety over his own condition and his loneliness, which is only exacerbated by his distance from the fair youth.

In line 9, Ungaretti changes *to please him* into *per farmelo amico*. This, despite not being a literal translation, is a choice that maintains the correct meaning. The idea is that the poet, as a way of escaping his torture, appeased the *day*. Whether the poet does so just by praising the fair youth or by befriending him, as Ungaretti translated, does not really change the result. The poet expresses this by saying that the *day*, even when the fair youth cannot be seen, is still illuminated by the fair

youth's light. For this reason, the meaning of the line does not change significantly, even if the finer details do. Instead of just praising the friend to make the day less tortured, in the Italian version the poet intends to get closer to the day, to make an actual friend out of him, making him an ally and not an enemy.

Line 10 shows again Ungaretti's tendency to elevate the language in his poetry. The line *when clouds do blot the heaven* has been translated into *se passano nubi a incupire il cielo*. The major change between the two languages has to do with *blot*. While in English *blot* is a simple term, Ungaretti chose to translate it with *incupire*, a word that belongs to a higher level of language. The two verbs do share their meaning, as they both mean "to darken", but the connotations are different: one is more common, the other belongs to a higher level of language. Ungaretti also adds the verb *passano* to indicate that the clouds move under the sky and darken it, describing movement that was never present in the original text.

The translation of line 11 is *della notte il moro carnato lusingo rivelandogli*. The first difference is who the object of the action is. In the original text it is the *night*, which is described as *swart-complexioned*, as it is a dark night. In Ungaretti's version, the object is *il moro carnato*, which is the translation to *swart-complexioned*. *Moro* referred to people of colour but, in time, it started to refer generically to a colour.⁶⁰ *Carnato* comes from *carne*, meat or flesh.⁶¹ Ungaretti's translation, thus, personified the dark skin of the night, presenting a similar image to that of the dark lady of subsequent sonnets. *Night* becomes *della notte*, no longer the subject of the sentence, but the possessor of *moro carnato*. The *night* is the one who has the *moro carnato* or the dark skin, but the poet, in Ungaretti's version, is praising the *moro carnato*, not the *night*. The verb is also different, as the translation contains two verbs. The first, *lusingo*, carries the meaning of "to flatter, to please" – the same one that *to please him* carries – while the second one, *rivelandogli*, translates literally as revealing to her. The poet is saying that he is flattering the night by telling her a secret. Both share

⁶⁰Treccani, sub voce "moro".

⁶¹ Treccani, sub voce "carnato".

the subject in the poet. However, in the original version, Shakespeare does not explicitly state that the poet is telling the night something to flatter her in order to alleviate his torture, but it is implied. In Ungaretti's version, it is clearly stated. This was probably done because Ungaretti did not include the semi colon at the end of the line like the original and, instead, continued the sentence by using an enjambement. For this reason, Ungaretti had to extend the sentence through *rivelandogli*. By including this verb, the sentence had to continue, to explain what was being revealed, as the readers do not know it.

The verb has also been modified in line 12. While the English verb is *twire not*, Ungaretti translates *non rifulgono*. *Twire not* means that the *stars* do not peer through the dark sky, probably the same sky mentioned in line 10, blotted by clouds. As they *twire not* the fair youth can be seen radiating golden light, taking the stars' place. Ungaretti's translation is slightly different in its verb, as instead of being *affacciarsi*, the verb used is *non rifulgono*. *Rifulgere* mean "to sparkle, to emit an intense light". This way, it is not that the stars do not appear, it is just that they lose their energy, their light. When they do, it is the fair youth that takes their place for a while. Another difference between the original and Ungaretti's version is the fact that *sparkling* does not appear in the translation, as its meaning has been condensed into the verb. This difference is also one that highlights how the stars are treated in the two versions: in the original, the stars never lose their sparkle, as it is an adjective to them, it is that which makes them *stars*. In the translation, they lose this characteristic, but remain *stars*.

In the final rhyming couplet neither of the two alliterations is translated, as *day doth daily draw* has been translated with *il giorno deve tutti i giorni* and *night doth nightly* as *notte farmene [...] ogni notte*. In the last line *stronger* has been translated into *più aspro*. This is not a literal translation, as strong is usually translated as *forte*, which would make *stronger* be the Italian *più forte*. However, *forte* is related to physical strength. The poet in the original uses *stronger* to talk about his pain, something that is more mental than physical, and thus *aspro* is a better translation (even if literally it would translate as sour). *Aspro* is the word that describes the intent of *strength* in

an Italian text. Also, in this final rhyming couplet, the rhymes are *longer* and *stronger*, both being adjectives that refer to the pain the poet feels. Ungaretti chose two words which do not rhyme: *affanni* and *male*. While it can be argued that they describe a painful sensation, only *affanni* may refer to something that is contained within the text, while *male* is never used in the text.

3.2 SERPIERI'S TRANSLATION'S OF SONNET 28

Come posso allora ritornare ad uno stato felice
se mi è sbarrato il beneficio del riposo,
e l'oppressione del giorno non è alleviata dalla notte,
ma il giorno dalla notte e la notte dal giorno sono oppressi,
e l'uno e l'altra, sebbene nemici di regno,
in pieno accordo si danno mano a torturarmi,
l'uno con fatica, l'altra lamentando
quanto lontano io m'affanni, sempre da te più lontano?
Io dico al giorno, per compiacerlo, che tu risplendi
e gli dai grazia quando le nuvole sporcano il cielo;
e così lusingo la notte dalla scura pelle,
che, quando scintillanti non s'affacciano le stelle, tu rischiari la sera.
Ma ogni giorno il giorno allunga il mio dolore,
e ogni notte la notte fa sembrare più forte la lunga pena.

Serpieri chose in his translation of line 1 to follow Ungaretti's example. *Return in happy* plight has been translated as *ritornare ad uno stato felice*. The only difference between this and Ungaretti's translation is that Serpieri's translation uses *ritornare* while Ungaretti's uses *tornare*, a simple *ri* sound added by Serpieri. In Italian, this sound, when positioned before a verb, indicates that the action has been repeated. To better understand why Serpieri decided to add it, he left a note: *return* means "to recover, to find once again a happy place or happy condition". It also means, much more literally, "to return to a physical place", in this case the place of the lover. For Serpieri, this *ri*-carried an important meaning, powerful enough to distinguish it from *tornare*.⁶² It marked the double meaning Serpieri described. What is less up to speculation is the fact that both translations lost the double meaning presented by Vendler, as it was probably impossible to translate without

⁶² Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443.

completely changing the line, as in the Italian language there are no salutations that might be able to carry this ambiguity.

In line 2 Serpieri chose a more literal translation than Ungaretti: *that am debarred* is translated with *mi è sbarrato*. *Sbarrato* evokes the physical meaning of *debarred* much better than Ungaretti's *resciso*, while losing its legal meaning. Serpieri motivated his choice:

il senso proprio è “interdire il passaggio”, “sbarrare”. Pare opportuno conservare questo senso forte nella traduzione perché [...] si danno frequenti scambi tra l'[...]esperienza reale e l'astrazione del suo corrispettivo immaginativo.⁶³

Rest has been translated as *riposo*, closer to the original meaning when compared to Ungaretti's *quiete*. One last thing that deserves a note is the question mark. While this was made more complex by the discrepancies of Ungaretti's two versions, it is made more and less complicated in Serpieri's text because the version of the sonnets he referenced does not include the question mark at all. Due to this, whether to include or not the question mark was never a problem to Serpieri. For this reason, he decided to introduce line 3 with a simple *e*, not creating the sequence that Ungaretti formed through the four following *quando*. The question is more complex than that, as the question mark still appears in the sonnet referenced by Serpieri, only in line 8 instead of line 2. Line 3 also shows Serpieri's commitment to a translation closely related to the original, preferring to translate *is not eas'd by night* literally, with *non è alleviata dalla notte*. However, despite the attempt by Serpieri, this translation is one that loses the ambiguity that the original had, the same thing that Ungaretti did. In this version, the *night* is an agent, meaning that the poet is saying that he hoped the night would genuinely protect him from the torture of the day, allowing him to rest.

Line 4 deserves attention for its verb. In English *oppressed* refers to both *day* and *night* as subjects and describes the fact that the natural phenomena that torture the poet are still enemies, torturing each other. Serpieri chose to reinforce this idea (even if line 5 would state it) and translated *oppressed* as *sono oppressi*, a literal translation. This is especially important when we compare it to

⁶³ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443. “the proper meaning is “to stop the passage”, or “put a stop”. It seems correct to maintain this strong meaning in the translation, because there are frequent exchanges between the real experience and the abstraction in the imaginative.”

Ungaretti's translation, which put the subject as the narrator, the poet, as *sono oppresso* is first person singular.

While line 5 does not present differences in the translation, line 6 does. *Do in consent* is translated as *in pieno accordo*. This is a translation that can be considered mostly literal, but the Italian version adds a strong legal meaning, as *accordo* refers to a fundamental element of any contract.⁶⁴ It is almost as if the two beings (*day* and *night*) are signing a contract in which they legally agree to torture the poet. Then we see *shake hands to torture me*, which is translated with *si danno mano a torturarmi*. In this translation we see the same idiom translated, but with its meaning changed. *Shake hands* in English is an idiom used to signal agreement between two parties. In this case, the agreement is between the *day* and the *night* to torture the poet, even if they are enemies, calling a truce. In Italian *darsi [una] mano* is an idiom that is used to mean "to help each other". *Ti do una mano* means "I help you". As Serpieri chose *si danno mano*, the translation suggests that the two beings are agreeing on helping each other torture the poet, something that the original text in English does not seem to imply; It simply states that the two forces agree to torture the poet, but by themselves.

In line 7 and 8 the poet describes the torture. While *the one by toil* is translated literally as *l'uno con fatica*, *to complain* has been changed. Instead of using *to complain*, Serpieri uses *lamentando*. This form of the verb *lamentare*, "to complain" or "to lament", is a peculiar choice: it seems that the subject is *the other*, *l'altra* in Italian.⁶⁵ This would be the *night*. The sentence, as it is translated, would indicate that the *night* is the subject, not the poet as the original seems to imply. The *night* complains of the distance from the fair youth, as the poet does. Specifically, the problem is in the distance from their beloved. Line 8 is also peculiar as it contains the question mark I mentioned Serpieri did not include in line two. Putting it here also makes sense, as this is the first time (outside line 2) in which the sentence can be stopped and still make sense. This makes the

⁶⁴ Treccani, sub voce "accordo".

⁶⁵ Treccani, sub voce "lamentare".

question much longer and with a different meaning. Instead of just asking *how can I then return in happy plight*, the poet asks that with the description of his torture, making the question that much heavier.

In line 9, Serpieri chose the literal approach: *to please him* has been translated with *per compiacerlo*, which is a literal translation of both words and meaning. Serpieri also chose to translate this line as if *to please him* was referred to *I tell*. He explained this choice by saying that it parallels what happens two lines below. By this, he means that *I tell the day to please him* is the preferable alternative to *thou art bright to please him* because in line 11 the poet says *so flatter I the swart-complexioned night*.⁶⁶ Line 11 is not ambiguous and thus can be used as a guide to understand the lines which are ambiguous, such as line 9. The translation loses the ambiguity Serpieri and other commentators noted, making things clearer. Notable is also the translation of *blot the heaven*, in line 10. While Ungaretti chose to translate this as *incupire il cielo*, using a different verb from Shakespeare's *blot*, Serpieri chose to respect Shakespeare's decision and translated it as *sporcano il cielo*. He also commented on the choice, saying that *blot*, with the meaning of "to make something dirty", works in opposition to *grace* and thus needed exactly that meaning, not the more generic one, which is "to darken".⁶⁷

The description of the *swart-complexioned night* in line 11 also deserves a comment. *Swart-complexioned* means "of a dark complexion", a description of the dark night. Serpieri chose to turn the sentence around to make it simpler for the Italian readers, inverting *night* and *swart-complexioned*. His translation thus reads *la notte dalla scura pelle*. There are no other characteristics which make this translation of the line that much different from the original. Ungaretti chose to translate it as *il moro carnato*. As I have already explained when commenting Ungaretti's translation, his translation is one that evokes a higher kind of language, meanwhile

⁶⁶ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 443.

⁶⁷ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444.

Serpieri's version works with a simpler language, one more approachable by anyone. *Moro carnato* has the same meaning as *scura pelle*, but it carries different connotations.

In line 12, Serpieri translated *stars twire not thou gild'st the even* as *non s'affacciano le stelle, tu rischiari la sera*. While there is a minor change that occurs in *stars twire not*, as the order of the subject and of the negation has been swapped, the most important change happens in the translation of *gild'st*. Serpieri's comment notes that *gild'st*, in the original quarto, was written as *guil'st*, which means "to trick, to lie". The original meaning would be that the fair youth tricked the *night* (and, through the same logic, the *sun*) when it was darkened by the clouds. Despite this, Serpieri noted that the correct transcription is still *gild'st*, as it makes more sense in the context to have a verb that works as a positive, but also because *gild'st* is linked to the word *light*, which would complete the paradigm that *bright* began.⁶⁸ While in English it can either mean to cover with a golden colour (like the stars do) or it can mean to embellish something, Serpieri translated it with *rischiari*, which means "to make something clearer" or "to make something more luminous".⁶⁹ The translation and the original do have similar meanings, as what the verse wants to tell is that the fair youth is so beautiful that he could take the place of the stars and light the sky, whenever they are absent. However, the original is specific regarding the fair youth's beauty, as he is compared to gold in how he shines, while in the Italian version the fair youth is compared to a kind of star which provides light, never mentioning gold. Due to this, in the original text the loved one seems to be even more precious, shining as brightly as gold.

In the final rhyming couplet, the /d/ sound alliteration has not been maintained, neither the sound nor the alliteration. The only element one could technically connect to this alliteration is the repetition of the /g/ sound. *Day doth daily draw* becomes *ogni giorno il giorno allunga*. This is only a repetition however, as it uses only one word: *giorno*. The other /g/ sounds in the line are actually pronounced differently and, thus, do not work for the alliteration. This repetition still works in

⁶⁸ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444

⁶⁹ Treccani, sub voce "rischiare".

emphasizing how the day stretches on to torture the poet, but it is weaker than the /d/ sound alliteration in the original.⁷⁰ In line 14, Serpieri changed the /g/ sound into the /n/ sound for the same reason, going from *night* to *notte*. This was an attempt on Serpieri's part to evoke the feeling of loss and tiredness the poet must have felt during the restless nights. The /n/ sound repetition is also present, but very weakly, as only two close instances of the sound are present. Serpieri followed the original in this case and translated both. This, however, was bound to happen: the sound /n/ is produced by the word *night*, which is translated into Italian as *notte*. As was for Ungaretti, there is a notable lack of rhyme in the final rhyming couplet. However, Serpieri used in these lines the words *dolore*, "pain", and *pena*, "suffering". This was done so as to bring focus on what the original wanted to emphasize most in the final rhyming couplet: the pain the poet feels by being tortured by the two halves of his entire existence, *day* and *night*.

⁷⁰ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444.

4.SONNET 29: AN ANALYSIS

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

This sonnet describes a moment of anxiety in the poet's life, from which he recuperates only thanks to the fair youth. The poet believes himself to be not only an outcast from society, but even from heaven, as it refuses to listen to him. As such, he longs for and is jealous of what other men have: friends, skills, a clear scope in life. Despite this depression and oppressive thoughts, there is still something that makes the poet feel unique and welcome in life: the fair youth. The fair youth is so special to the poet that, when he thinks of him, his spirit jumps from the earth like a bird, flying until it reaches the gates of heaven. From there, nothing outside his love matters anymore. No longer is the poet worried about what he lacks or what he could have if he was someone else. Now, he has something not even the greatest among kings has.

Vendler describes two models through which the sonnet is built. The first is a hierarchical model of the social world, which follows this order: at the top, unreachable, is heaven. Underneath it in the hierarchy, there is destiny, which governs the fate of all men. Under destiny, there are the kings, the luckiest men to whom destiny smiles. Underneath the kings there are the men in favour, those lucky enough to have something in life, even if they do not have everything. At the bottom of it all, we see the poet, a disgraced outcast who has nothing.⁷¹ Something worth noting is that the poet describes the men in favour as *rich in hope*. The poet considers other men, those who are not

⁷¹ Vendler, p. 161.

outcasts, as hopeful. Since they have already been blessed by fortune, they can hope for something else, they can hope to be blessed more or in different ways. They know they've been chosen and, thus, can hope to be chosen again. The poet, instead, has never lived with such luxury: he has never been helped by fortune or destiny, he is a reject of both society and life and, because of this, he cannot hope for something. Serpieri's commentary also adds an interesting perspective on this section of the sonnet: the first quatrain describes a sense of isolation, reinforced by the fact that the sonnet is constructed in what he calls an *oratio perpetua*, a Latin model of writing speeches that purposefully did not stop until the very end, literally meaning constant speech.⁷² This creates the sensation that the poet's problems are endless and that there is no solution to any of them. This sense of isolation is then followed by the three lines in which the poet hopes to change into someone else, into someone happier than him. These moments are all built around the word *state*, which is also important for the rest of the sonnet. This word describes two elements within the sonnet: the condition of the poet and his status. *State*, as explained by the Oxford English Dictionary, "can express the combination of circumstances or attributes belonging to a particular time to a person or thing". However, it was also used to express "a person's standing or position in life; a person's social, professional or legal status or condition".⁷³ The first quatrain focuses on the *outcast state* of the poet, on both his circumstances that make him feel like an outsider and his position in life, feeling as if he is completely useless. The *state* of others, even if only implied, is what governs line 5 through 8. In these lines both meanings are correct, existing at the same time. These lines also see the importance of *to change*. The verb is not directly present, but it is heavily implied in the poet's desire to be someone else.

The second model that Vendler describes is one that shows the hierarchy of nature in the sonnet. It is revealed in the second part of the sonnet and is used to describe the poet's ascension once he remembers the fair youth. The natural world starts at the level of the *sullen earth*, which is

⁷² Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 444.

⁷³ OED, sub *voce* "state".

just below the poet. The poet then remembers the *fair youth*, who is above him. This prompts him to leap into the air, similar to a *lark*, but flying much higher and reaching the gates of *heaven*, which stand above everything else.⁷⁴ Serpieri describes this section of the sonnet as the “recovery of merit through thoughts of the loved one”.⁷⁵ It is an upward movement, which contrasts the downward spiral of the two previous sections. The positive connotations of this movement are emphasised by the day rising against the darkness of the night. As it was before, the word *state* still has an important meaning here. In this final ascension it symbolizes the change of movement, from downwards to upwards, and signals the now achieved superior position of the poet, which is better than that of anyone else. *To change* is also modified: before it was a desire for the poet, a wish to be someone better. Now, it is something the poet strongly refuses. There is no one better to change into, anyone else ignores the love of the fair youth.

These two models do exist by themselves, but they also work together by opposing and interacting with each other. *Heaven* was, at first, *deaf* to the *bootless cries* of the poet, an outcast so isolated and lonely that he believed no one would listen to or welcome him. By the end, its *gates* have been reached by the poet’s soul, where he sings *hymns* for everyone to hear. The evolution of the poet is also shown through his sounds: from *bootless cries* which *heaven* did not care for to songs in front of its *gates*. Vendler then sees a third model which combines the previous ones, now showing a happier poet. The model eliminates the outcast, showing only other men, those favoured by fortune, as the lowest. The kings are higher, as they are still luckier, but now their position is inferior compared to that of the poet, who finds himself just below heaven’s gate, which still reigns supreme over the world.⁷⁶

This construction of models proposed by Vendler can also be seen in Stephen Booth’s commentary. Where Vendler identifies the two models of society and nature, Stephen Booth sees

⁷⁴ Vendler, p. 161.

⁷⁵ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 445.

⁷⁶ Vendler, p. 161.

the Christian distinction between material and spiritual well-being. He believes that Christian theology is present throughout the entire sonnet: for example, line 3 suggests the sin of despair, or lines 9 through 12 describe the beloved's love in the same way the love of the deity is described in Christian theology.⁷⁷ The final rhyming couplet is described by Serpieri as the moment in which the octave's negativity is completely reversed by the overwhelming positivity now found by the poet.⁷⁸ The switch from the first model, which Serpieri describes as the downward spiral, to the second and third model of the world – the one Serpieri describes as the upward jump— happens after *Haply I think on thee*. This is the turning point from which the poet can leap from the *sullen earth* to *heaven's gate*. However, this moment does not exist by itself. It is preceded by a moment of reflection on the poet's part, as Vendler herself says, but a moment which is flawed.⁷⁹ This reflection happens in the following line: *with what I most enjoy contented least*. This is the last part of a list formed by three elements: what the poet enjoys, what he enjoys more and what he enjoys most. The one thing he would most like to have is the one he has least of. However, he realizes something: at first, he believed that what he wanted most was what he listed before, *hope, friends, talent*, only to realize that he already has what he wants most: *thee*. The fair youth. This “most” supersedes all other items in the list of desires. However, as I already said, this is a moment of flawed reflection. The way the thoughts are framed implies that the poet has not come to a logical conclusion after days of deep self-reflection of his own position in the social and natural world. It is an illogical moment filled with anxiety in which everything feels wrong to the poet, in which he believes to be unredeemable and lost. The beloved works as a ray of light in the darkness of the poet's thoughts, becoming a grounding element for his spiralling mind. However, the mind is still active when the poet thinks of the lover, still needing an outlet. It is forced not to spiral downwards

⁷⁷ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Booth, p. 180.

⁷⁸ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 445.

⁷⁹ Vendler, p. 162.

onto itself by the lover and it instead shoots up into the sky, towards *heaven*, above *men* or *kings*. So powerful is the poet's love that no earthly blessing can rival it and only *heaven* itself can compare.

Something else worth mentioning are the rhymes, in particular those in the first 8 lines. The rhymes are *eyes—cries*, *state—fate*, *scope—hope* and *possessed—least*. The first of these indicates a physical reaction: the poet, overwhelmed in the moment, can do nothing but weep at his unsolvable situation. Then, we see the consideration of the first hierarchical model, in which the *state* of each human being is determined by their *fate*. *State* is a fundamental part of the sonnet and, as such, when linked through rhyme to something, that something becomes important as well. The third rhyme indicates what the poet lacks: a *scope*, something to work towards, as he feels lost, but also *hope*, as there is no hope for him who has never received anything. The *scope* for life can only be motivated by *hope* for something. It also indicates how *hope* can be a sufficient *scope* for those who have it. The last rhyme is one that puts emphasis on the fact that the poet possesses the least of what he desires most.

One last note deserving of mention comes from John Dover Wilson: “These are the night-thoughts referred to in the last line of [sonnet] 28; hence the special appropriateness in the image of the lark rising at break of day”.⁸⁰ This is not the first time that the lark is evoked to signal the arrival of the day, as Shakespeare uses the same exact animal in act III, scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the tragedy, the lark and the day that follows are two negative symbols for Romeo and Juliet. The animal is not something they want to hear: they are both aware that, when day arrives, they will have to separate. As the lark starts to sing early in the morning, it represents the arrival of the day. In this sonnet, the lark can acquire new meaning with this knowledge: the poet is not aware of the pain the day will bring to him, but the reader is. The reader is aware of the bad omen the lark is. The

⁸⁰Shakespeare, *The Sonnets*, ed. by Wilson, p. 130.

poet is too focused on the fact that the torture of the night has stopped. That moment is one of respite for him, and, in it, he finds the greatest joy of this tortured period of his life.

4.1 UNGARETTI'S VERSION OF SONNET 29

Quando in disgrazia alla fortuna e agli occhi degli uomini,
Tutto solo sono nel pianto sul mio reietto stato,
E accuso il cielo sordo con i miei vani gridi,
E mi ripiego in me e maledico il fato:
Anelandomi simile a chi più di me spera
Ne ambisco le fattezze e il numero d'amici,
O invidia al tale l'arte ed al talaltro le ampie mire,
Io, il meno appagato da ciò che più mi dà lietezza,
Ma in simil pensieri quasi di sprezzo di me stesso
Ho d'improvviso idea di te, ed allora il mio stato,
come l'allodola se spunta il giorno, spiccato il volo
Dalla terra terra anima inni alle porte del cielo.
 Il rammentarsi del tuo dolce amore tale opulenza reca
 Che non baratterei il mio stato in quel momento neanche con un re.

The first thing to notice is the difference between *disgrace with* and its translation *disgrazia alla* in line 1. While they both mean the same thing, “to be disgraced”, the Italian construction works with the proposition *alla*, literally “at the”, to indicate who considers the poet disgraced.⁸¹ While this construction would not make sense in English, using *with* would not work in Italian. The construction is changed between the two languages to assure a working form in both.

Another change happens in line 2 regarding *I all alone beweep*. This is translated as *tutto solo sono nel pianto*. While the English language is full of verbs that are specific to certain situations, this is not the case in Italian. As we see here, *beweep* is a very specific verb, the verb *weep* and the prefix *be-*. This form of the verb is one that specifies that the subject is weeping over something. The Italian instead uses three words to indicate something similar: *essere nel pianto* translates to “to be in the [act of] crying”, as *pianto* is the noun for *crying*.⁸² Such an image is not commonly used in Italian, but it is an evocative use of the language to say that the poet is not only crying his heart out, but he is also within the act of crying, as if it grew out of control, engulfing the

⁸¹ Treccani, sub voce “disgrazia”.

⁸² Treccani, sub voce “pianto”.

poet. It is a translation that reinforces the idea of the original. However, to create an image that could work as well in Italian, Ungaretti had to use five words where Shakespeare used one, showcasing a restriction of the Italian dictionary.

Line 3 presents important changes in *trouble* and in *heaven*. *Trouble* is translated as *accuso*. The verb in the original carries a meaning of disturbing someone, of annoyance. The poet is saying that through his *bootless cries* of pain or anxiety, he feels as if he is disturbing heaven about something it does not care about. As such, it does not answer to him, as it does not concern itself with the problems of the *outcast*. In Italian, *accuso* or *accusare* means “to blame someone for something”.⁸³ In Ungaretti’s translation, the poet is spiteful and ready to blame heaven, accusing it of being the cause of his pain. *Heaven* is translated with *cielo*. While literally referring to the sky, the Italian word *cielo* is often used as a synonym to heaven. For this reason, the translation is one that gives the same image, despite not sharing the literality of *heaven* being translated into *paradiso*.

Line 4 has an interesting change: *look upon myself* becomes *mi ripiego in me*. While the English text shows a moment in which the poet can only see his flaws and other’s people perfection, Ungaretti’s translation presents the image as the poet retreating into himself. In fact, this image is one that works well: he is refusing contact with the outside, unable to see how it truly is and instead he is living in his imagined world, where he is the worst of all in both luck and destiny. The syntactical construction is also different: instead of inserting the comma in between the two sentences of the line, Ungaretti added an *e*, a connector between them. Despite this minor change, the verb and the construction of the lines remain mostly the same.

Ungaretti modified line 5 in *chi più di me spero* which is a translation of *one more rich in hope*. The person the poet wants to become in the Italian version is no longer one rich in hope, one that knows that hope brought them something and still hopes. Rather, he wants to become someone that can hope more than he does, that knows how to hope. In Ungaretti’s version, the verb is also

⁸³ Treccani, sub voce “accusare”.

changed. *Ne ambisco le fattezze* translates *featured like him*. This *ambisco* translates to “to desire something with ambition”, which can be used to describe the poet’s desire to climb up in the social hierarchy.⁸⁴ The *like him* is translated with *ne*, referring to the other’s features or friends. The construction *like him with friend possess’d* is also changed, as its verb has been changed. It becomes *ne ambisco [...] il numero di amici*. *I desire his number of friends* literally. The meaning changes: the poet in the original English says that he desires to become someone with friends, while in Italian the poet says that he wants the same number of friends someone has: the poet of the Italian version has no interest in changing himself, only in wanting what others have.

Line 7 also has its major difference in the verb, as *desiring* has been translated into *invidio*. This is a significant difference: to desire is “to want something”, but it does not carry the negative connotations *invidio* carries, which means “to envy”.⁸⁵ This verb makes the poet a worse person, as he envies something, rather than just desiring it. Something else worthy of note in this line is the fact that Ungaretti added *ampie*, meaning “big, large”.⁸⁶ It is an adjective of the Italian *mire* which emphasizes how vast other people’s objectives are when compared to the poet’s. It reinforces the idea of his own insignificance.

Line 8 in Italian specifies the subject of all verbs from line two to six: *io*. It is the first line in which the subject is explicitly stated in the sonnet. This line also shows a difference in the way it is constructed. *Contented least* and *what I most enjoy* are switched in Ungaretti’s version and, due to this, the subject has to be *io*, instead of *what I most enjoy*. In Italian, the poet is the one who cannot satiate what he desires (becoming the *meno appagato*), while in English the subject of the line is the thing. It is the thing that is *contented least*, not the poet. Of note is the difference created by the translation of *most enjoy* with *più mi da lietezza*. *Lieteza* translates *enjoy*, but it has slightly different meaning. *Lieteza* describes a sensation of blissful peace, of calm happiness.⁸⁷ Despite

⁸⁴ Treccani, sub voce “ambire”.

⁸⁵ Treccani, sub voce “invidiare”.

⁸⁶ Treccani, sub voce “ampio”.

⁸⁷ Treccani, sub voce “lietezza”.

this difference, the image presented by the text is still similar to the original. What both the original text and the translation want to tell the reader is that the poet cannot enjoy anything at all.

Line 9 shows a peculiar change in *myself almost despising*, translated as *quasi di sprezzo di me stesso*. Specifically, I want to focus on the translation of *despising* as *di sprezzo*. While it may seem, the word used is not *disprezzo*. It is two words: *di* and *sprezzo*. *Di* is a preposition that is used to specify something, in this case it describes what the *pensieri* of the poet are (of *sprezzo*). *Sprezzo* carries a similar meaning to despising, but it is a rarer version of *disprezzo*.⁸⁸ The choice to use this word can be attributed to two things: Ungaretti's desire to elevate the language used and the necessity to avoid repetition of the sound *di*. Had Ungaretti chosen *disprezzo*, the line would have been *quasi di disprezzo di me stesso*. *Sprezzo* also describes someone as uncaring, adding a new reading of the line in Italian: the poet is not saying that he despises himself, but he is saying that he is such an outcast that he cannot care for himself. Believing someone to be inferior still is an acknowledgment, while being someone people do not see is worse. As he cannot see himself, he cannot even desire a better self. The line is also composed differently in the two versions: the English language uses only three words to express the idea, while Ungaretti's version doubles that, using six.

In line 10 the verb sees a significant change in the translation, as it goes from *think on thee* to *ho idea di te*. The general idea is maintained: both explain how the thoughts of the fair youth appeared in the poet's mind, but they do it in two different ways. *Haply I think on thee* presents the idea that the poet, in his spiralling mind, thinks of the fair youth. Ungaretti's translation is, literally, *I have the idea of you*. This translation is not literal to the original text, as the literal translation would have been *penso a te*, but, despite the difference in the choice of words, the image presented is similar. At one point, the idea of the fair youth appears in the poet's mind.

⁸⁸ Treccani, sub voce "sprezzo".

In line 11, Ungaretti changed something important in *at break of day*. It is translated as *se spunta il giorno*. The most important difference is in that *se*. In the original, the line describes certainty: every morning at dawn, the lark wakes up and starts to fly. The text compares the sun and the lark to the fair youth and the poet. Just as the lark will know to fly so long as dawn arrives, so will the poet be able to fly back from his sullen mind so long as the fair youth is with him. As the sun and the fair youth exist and will always exist, the lark and the poet will always fly back up. The word chosen by Ungaretti is one that makes the meaning ambiguous. That *se* might carry the meaning of “if”. In this case, the flight of the lark is not a given, it might not happen, and the spirit of the poet might not be lifted, as it says *come l’allodola se spunta il giorno, like the lark if day appears* literally. However, that same *se* can also carry a causal meaning, one that means “since, due to”. In this case it would have a similar meaning to the original, as it would strictly link the *lark* and the *day* without casting the doubt of the first version. Yet another possibility is the meaning of time, specifically meaning “when”, which would be the most literal translation.⁸⁹

In line 12 *sings* must be discussed. In Shakespeare’s version, the spirit of the poet is, symbolically, in front of heaven singing hymns. In Ungaretti’s version, the poet *anima inni*. The word *anima* is much stronger than *sings*: it literally means “to give life to”. It is also the translation of *soul* into Italian. The poet, in the translated version, is not only singing, but giving a soul, a presence to his *hymns*. The energy given to him by the thought of the fair youth is so much that it makes his singing tangible. It can also be connected to the idea of creating art: thanks to the fair youth, the poet is now inspired to write his sonnets, which are mostly about his love, be it for the fair youth or for the dark lady. Something else I must comment on is the translation of *heaven’s gate*. This is translated with *porte del cielo*. As was the case for *heaven* being translated with *cielo*, it is the same for *gate* being translated with *porte*. *Gate* has a literal translation, which is *cancello*,

⁸⁹ Grande dizionario della lingua italiana, sub voce “se”.

but, regarding heaven, in Italian the word *porta* is normally used. It is a cultural element which makes the translation accurate in what it wants to represent.

Line 13 shows a difference in *sweet love remember'd*. This has been translated as *il rammentarsi del tuo dolce amore*. The difference is in the fact that the English text focuses on the love the thought evokes. It is the love of the fair youth that brings *wealth* to the poet, even if it is just a memory. In the translation, Ungaretti focuses more on the memory, it is *il rammentarsi*, the act of remembering, which brings wealth, not love itself. *Wealth* is also not translated as *ricchezza*, but as *opulenza*. This word is one that is in line with Ungaretti's tendency to elevate the language of the sonnet, as it is a synonym of *ricchezza* that belongs to a higher semantic register.

Ungaretti significantly changes the meaning of line 14. Instead of letting the poet fully express himself by translating *scorn* literally, Ungaretti removes it. He decided to translate only *change* into *barattere*. However, the removal of *scorn* creates a problem: the text no longer has a verb with a negative connotation. To solve this, Ungaretti added a *non* to *barattere*. The poet, thus, does not say in Ungaretti's version that he would *scorn to change* his state, only that he would not, giving the impression of being weaker than his counterpart in the English text. In the original, the poet also specifies *kings*, plural, including even the most powerful or important. In Ungaretti's version, the text says *neanche con un re*, "not even with one king" literally, making the expression feel less powerful as it references a random king rather than the concept of one as was in the original. Ungaretti also added a *in quel momento*, in that moment, which is not contained in the original. Every single change only makes the poet appear weaker: he is less vocal about defending his now found happiness and says that the happiness he has finally found will only last for a moment.

4.2 SERPIERI'S VERSION OF SONNET 29

Quando in disgrazia con la Fortuna e con gli occhi degli uomini,
io tutto solo mi lamento della mia condizione di reietto,
e disturbo il cielo sordo con i miei vani gridi,
e guardo a me stesso come uno più ricco di speranza,

come quello d'aspetto, come quello circondato di amici,
 desiderando il talento di quell'uomo, di quell'altro i vasti orizzonti,
 di ciò di cui più godo meno contento,
 eppure in questi pensieri quasi disprezzando me stesso,
 per avventura io penso a te, e allora il mio stato,
 come l'allodola al rompere del giorno in volo
 dalla cupa terra canta inni alle porte del paradiso;
 poiché il tuo dolce amore ricordato reca tale ricchezza
 che allora disdegno di cambiare il mio stato con i re.

Line 1 presents a translation that is almost literal. The only difference is in the single comma that follows *when* in the original, but that is absent in Serpieri's translation. This literal approach does have its merits, as it allows to maintain images and comparisons, but it also has problems, as certain constructions do not work as well when translated literally. Specifically, I am talking about the construction *in disgrace with*, translated with *in disgrazia con*. This is a construction that is not used in the Italian language, as usually *disgrazia* is constructed as *disgrazia di/ verso qualcuno/qualcosa* and not with *with* or *con*, in Italian.⁹⁰ Despite the difference, a reader can still read this line and understand its meaning. The comma, instead, does change something: *when* or *quando* is no longer connected in the translation to *I all alone beweep*, but to *in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes*. Instead of the poet saying that he *haply thinks on* the fair youth while he is crying, in this translation the poet says that he is crying ever since he realized he was disgraced *with fortune and in men's eyes*.

Line 2 shows a particular change in the verb. From *beweep* to *mi lamento di*. These two verbs, while showing a similar idea, do not have the same meaning. *Beweep* describes a lament of one person, making it a stronger verb than *cry*.⁹¹ The poet is weeping for state or his *condizione*. In Italian the becomes *lamentarsi*. While sounding very similar to lament, the meaning is not the same. The non-reflexive version of this verb (*lamentare*) carries the meaning of "to cry, to weep". However, in the reflexive version (determined by the *mi*), which is what Serpieri used, the verb has

⁹⁰ Treccani, sub voce "disgrazia".

⁹¹ Merriam-Webster, sub voce "beweep".

the meaning of “to complain” (while still carrying the meaning of “to cry, to weep”).⁹² The Italian text adds ambiguity: the poet can either be described as desperately crying and wailing at his position in society, or he could be described as complaining about it.

Line 3 is one that has a translation which is literal, but that does not lose anything. This can be seen when compared to Ungaretti’s translation. The only difference between the two is the verb: *trouble*, translated as *accuso* by Ungaretti and *disturbo* by Serpieri. The first is not a translation of *trouble*, but rather a verb that means “to accuse”.⁹³ Instead *disturbo* has a meaning that is closer to the original, less of an accusation from the poet towards the heaven and more of a consideration in the poet’s mind of being annoying and thus undeserving of an answer.⁹⁴ The rest of the line is identical between the two translators.

Line 4 has something to note regarding *look upon myself*, translated as *guardo a me stesso*. The English version suggests that the poet is looking inwards to analyse his position in society, reinforced by Ungaretti’s image of the poet retreating within himself. Serpieri’s version instead evokes the image of the poet leaving his own body and position to look at it objectively. This image works thanks to the presence of the article *a*. Without it, it would seem that the poet is not looking at himself from the outside, but just looking in a mirror, showing a distorted version of who he is. The only way to truly see his position is to be outside it. The rest of the sonnet does prove that this analysis by the poet is unreliable, as it is one driven by anxiety and doubt, but he cannot realize this, as he is dominated by both. For this reason, he is unable to truly be objective about his position.

Line 5 shows a minor change in its construction, as *like to one more rich in hope* is translated with *come uno più ricco di speranza*. This is a translation that does not significantly impact the idea of the sonnet. The poet still wishes to be different from what he is now. However, there is something else that must be noted. In the English text, the poet longs to be like those with

⁹² Treccani, sub voce “lamentare”

⁹³ Treccani, sub voce “accusare”.

⁹⁴ Treccani, sub voce “disturbare”.

more hope. However, he does not want to become them, but *like* them. He wishes he could change his own status and become a better person, not just become them, hinting that perhaps he has something he cannot give up. Serpieri's translation maintains this idea, by using that *come*, an word that carries a similar meaning to *like* in the original.

In line 6 Serpieri modified *featured*. This word meant "well-formed".⁹⁵ A word that carries the same meaning does not exist in Italian and thus Serpieri had to choose: either translate its meaning or adapt it. He chose the second option: Serpieri translated it with *come quello d'aspetto*, with its verb being *desiderandomi*. While the construction in English is *wishing me like to one featured like him*, it becomes in Italian *desiderandomi come quello d'aspetto*. This is not a literal translation, such as *desiderando essere come quello nell'aspetto* or *desiderando l'aspetto di quello*, but these examples lack the necessary agility to form a poetic line, as *desiderandomi* belongs to line 5 and it is just implied in line 6. Serpieri had not only to translate the meaning of the line, but his translation also had to make sense in another language. It is these two reasons combined that made him use a poetic license for the line. Another change worthy of note is *with friends possessed* translated as *circondato di amici*. In the English text, it references the fact that the poet feels overwhelmingly lonely, unable to connect or talk with anyone, so he wants to be like someone that already has friends, but he is not asking for a specific number. In Serpieri's version, he wants to be someone that is *circondato di amici*. Literally this means "to be surrounded by friends" and it is an expression used to mean that someone has a large group of friends. The poet says he wants to be someone with many and many friends in this translation.

In line 7 *art* has been translated with *talento*. The word *art* is one that carries many meanings, but in the original text it can refer to skills possessed by someone else.⁹⁶ Serpieri decided to try and maintain this meaning by translating it as *talento*, as the natural talent some can actually use in everyday situations. Serpieri motivates the choice by saying that *art* is a word that has

⁹⁵ OED, sub voce "featured".

⁹⁶ OED, sub voce "art".

various meanings, amongst which *talent* is one and, having to choose amongst them, he believed *talent* to be the most appropriate in the context.⁹⁷ Another thing worth mentioning about this line is the translation of *scope* in *vasti orizzonti*. *Scope* refers to the objective of a person, what they want to be or do and, by saying it, the poet reinforces his desire to hope, as having a great scope is to hope to reach it, which the poet is unable to do. The translation *vasti orizzonti* references not only hopes for the future, but actual possibilities.⁹⁸ It can also reference someone's lifelong dream and thus it is a translation that does not lose meaning, but only adds to it. Serpieri notes how full of meaning this word is as well.⁹⁹

Line 8 shows changes throughout the entire line. First of all, instead of maintaining the construction that uses *with*, Serpieri chose to introduce the line with a *di*, a proposition. This choice is one that allows him to construct a functioning sentence in Italian, as using the *with* construction would require a complete restructuring of the line to make it work in Italian. Something that must be discussed is also *contented least*. This has been translated as *meno contento*. *Contento*, while being most often used as an adjective and as a translation for happy, does have a similar meaning to *content*: “a feeling of satisfaction”.¹⁰⁰ This feeling is one that is lacking in the poet about the one thing he enjoys the most. He is saying that he does not find any satisfaction in what he believed to be best at, thus depriving himself of a reason to move away from his darkened mind. This showcases again the anxiety the poet feels for his own life. Even the one thing that could actually give him satisfaction, now does not, reinforcing the idea that he is an *outcast* who is worse than anyone else.

In line 9 Serpieri translated *despising* as *disprezzando*. He chose what Ungaretti purposefully avoided, but he found a clever solution to Ungaretti's problem: Serpieri chose not to include the word *di*. The sentence is translated with *quasi disprezzando me stesso* instead of *quasi di sprezzo di*

⁹⁷ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 447.

⁹⁸ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 447.

⁹⁹ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 447.

¹⁰⁰ Treccani, sub voce “contento”.

me stesso. This was possible because the two translations used two different constructions. While in Ungaretti it is the thoughts that *sprezz[ano]* the poet, in Serpieri's translation it is the poet himself that *disprezza* himself. This simple change in subject led to two different translations, one which is more poetic (Ungaretti's) and one which is more literal (Serpieri's).

Line 10 has had its major change in the translation of *haply*. This is translated as *per avventura*. While still evoking the same idea of *haply*, it is not a common expression in Italian. It translates to *by adventure* literally, almost as if saying that the poet's mind went off on its own to another place, leaving the body behind. Serpieri's translation emphasizes the movement of the action away from the poet, away from his logical mind due to his moment of anxiety, which is what the English text did by including *haply*.

In line 11, Serpieri maintains the relation between the lark and the day, unlike Ungaretti. Serpieri translated *like to the lark at break of day as come l'allodola al rompere del giorno*. The only element missing in the translation is *to* which is not required in Italian. However, Serpieri changed one thing: *arising* has been translated as *in volo*. This *in volo* translates to *flying* which is connected more to line 12 than line 11. This *in volo* is used to describe the poet's spirit that is floating just before *heaven's gate* or the *porte del paradiso*. This also has a slight change in the meaning of line 11: the poet's spirit does not jump from the earth at day's break, but it is already in the air floating. Instead of describing the ascension from the earth to the sky, Serpieri chose to represent the spirit as already in the air, having reached his destination before the lark even started its flight. As we see no movement, the *state* before is mainly focused on the *sullen earth* and on the afterwards, when the poet is singing hymns in the sky. *Sullen* means "gloomy, dark" and is translated as *cupa*. *Cupa* carries many meanings: "a color, a low noise, the aspect of someone full of painful thoughts" or, more generally, it means "unsettling".¹⁰¹ the poet jumps from a horrible place

¹⁰¹ Treccani, sub voce "cupo".

in the original text, but in Serpieri's version this place is described as not only horrible, but dangerous as well.

Line 13 is a literal translation, which contrasts with Ungaretti's translation. While Serpieri translated *remembered* as *ricordato*, Ungaretti translated it as *rammentarsi*. Ungaretti's translation had precise consequences on the meaning of the sentence, whereas Serpieri's translation maintains the meaning of the original.¹⁰² Serpieri's translation of this line is also one that uses a level of language closer to Shakespeare's. Ungaretti's translation uses words that are more poetic, such as *rammentarsi* or *opulenza*, while Serpieri chose words that are more used in more common situations, such as *ricordato* or *ricchezza*.

Line 14 shows something similar to line 13. Ungaretti chose not to translate *I scorn* and add *non baratterei*, choosing to change the verb and add a negation. Serpieri, instead, decided to simply translate it as *disdegno*, a reasonable translation of *I scorn* that does not change the meaning of the line.¹⁰³ This translation is one that maintains the idea of the poet: he is now almost disgusted just thinking about giving up his newfound *state*. Serpieri also maintained the plural of *kings* by translating it as *i re*. This translation indicates that the poet would never exchange his state with any king, any of them, be it past, present or future kings. He has found such *wealth* that no king could ever emulate. This translation makes the poet much stronger when compared to the poet of Ungaretti's version, closer to what Shakespeare wanted to represent: a now reformed *ex-outcast* who has finally found something to live for. It also shows the drastic change between the two states of the poet: from the downward spiral to the *sullen earth* to the upward and erupt jump towards *heaven*.

¹⁰² Treccani, sub voce "ricordare".

¹⁰³ Treccani, sub voce "disdegnare".

5.SONNET 30: AN ANALYSIS

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste;
Then can I drown an eye (unused to flow)
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan th'expense of many a vanished sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay, as if not paid before;
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

This is a sonnet about the power of two things: pain and time. Both have power over humans and can change us. The poet can be seen as representing humanity when confronted with these two great powers. Pain can make us desire not to feel, as the poet has been for a long time someone who does not allow himself to feel his emotions (his *eye is unused to flow*), because the pain was too great for him. In time, this pain can be forgotten and experienced again and again, some time for a reason, another time for a different one. The poet, in this sonnet, discovers the pain he thought forgotten. The poet, wishing to feel something in his present, allows himself to call back his past pain and fully feel it. The pain he experiences is grief, pain caused by the death of someone special. The poet, in moments of peace (*sessions of sweet silent thought*), cries for a lost love or friend (one that preceded the fair youth) and for everything their death stole from the poet. However, this desire to feel again can lead to dark places. Sometimes the poet's pain is too big for him and it threatens to consume and destroy him, making his efforts null. In this uncontrolled state in which the poet loses control of his own thoughts, he has one that grounds him: the fair youth. This thought of his new friend or lover calms the poet's mind.

Vendler focuses on time within the sonnet: the timeline starts from the remote past, when the poet was happy. This moment is interrupted when the poet loses someone close to him. This loss changes the poet, making him grow numb to avoid pain. Now, in the present, the poet has found a reason to confront his feelings: the fair youth. Now that he loves again, the poet accepts his

feelings, even if they are painful.¹⁰⁴ While he has not found closure yet, he grows closer to a state of happiness similar to the one before the tragedy. The poet has started to accept his loss. However, it is not easy for him, as this exploration of his feelings risks overwhelming him. If he is not careful, it will hurt him as if the pain was new (*I new pay as if not paid before*). To avoid succumbing to this pain, the poet uses something familiar, something that he associates with happiness and calm: the fair youth.

Serpieri finds this sonnet to be similar to sonnet 29 in the painful descent that is stopped through the presence of the fair youth. The fair youth is, in both, someone that balances the pain of the poet through his presence (even if only in the poet's thoughts): in sonnet 29, we see the poet unable to live in his present, feeling alienated by his torture. In sonnet 30 the poet has found some peace in the present, but he starts to focus on his painful past. This past is cause for alienation due to the loss it has caused the poet. This loss is of two things: the special person and the poet's feelings. In losing someone he loved the poet also lost something of his own: his feelings. In the same way, by finding someone he loves, he is compelled to regain that which is still lost: a part of his self. This sonnet describes him as trying to regain his feelings.

Serpieri and Melchiori highlight in this sonnet a vast use of juridical and economical images. The mind is represented as a court of law, where *sessions* are held. In this court of law, memories are *summon[ed] up*. In here the poet. speaks of debates and of annulments, words which are usually reserved for a specific aspect of life: that of justice and law.

5.1 UNGARETTI'S TRANSLATION OF SONNET 30

Quando nelle sessioni del dolce silente pensiero
Convoco rimembranza di cose avvolte nel passato,
Piango assenza di tante cose nell'anelito vive,
Gemito aggiunto a vecchio pianto del perso caro tempo:
I miei occhi allora, inusi a spargerle, s'annegano in lacrime
Per amici che immemore la morte e incolore, nasconde
E a lamento amorosa pena da lungo estinta torna

¹⁰⁴ Vendler, p. 165.

E rimpiango il disperdersi di tante mie mire svanite:
 Dunque posso ancora patire sofferenze esaurite
 E da gemito a gemito angosciosamente rifare
 L'elenco mesto delle gravi mie afflizioni riaperte
 Che di nuovo come se non patite prima, sconto.
 Ma, amato amico, in quel momento avvenga che a te pensi,
 ogni perdita si recupera, finisce ogni dolore.

Ungaretti's translation shows some differences in line 1 that need to be addressed. First is the fact that the emphasised sounds are different: the English text uses the /t/ and /s/ sound, but Ungaretti focuses only on the /s/ sound. Another difference is the translation of *silent*. This is translated with *silente*. This translation is one that presents the same idea as the original: in a moment of complete silence, one in which the poet can concentrate on his own thoughts, he summons up memories. *Silente* is even stronger than *silent* as its literal translation from Latin is "immersed in silence".¹⁰⁵ Not only are the sessions *silent* in this translation, but silence is something that surrounds them, just like the air. It reaches everywhere within the sonnet, allowing the poet that much more room to concentrate. The choice to use this word is one that can find its explanation in how similar the Italian and English languages are: *silent* and *silente*. The only actual difference in how they are written is the final /e/ sound. However, knowing how Ungaretti translated other sonnets makes me believe that there was also another reason for this translation: the desire to elevate the register of the sonnet. *Silente* is not a common word in Italian and is associated with a higher semantic register, one that belongs more to poetry than to everyday communication. *Silent*, on the other hand, is a common word, one that can be used in all kinds of context.

The verb is the first thing I have to talk about in line 2. This is *I summon up* in English and *convoco* in Italian. *Convoco* is a verb that is used to call for a reunion in juridical contexts, which is one of the meanings *summon up* carries.¹⁰⁶ Another difference is in *cose avvolte nel passato*, which translates *of things past*. The literal translation of the Italian is *things enveloped in the past*. The English text describes memories as *things past*, things that are behind the poet, things that already

¹⁰⁵ Treccani, sub voce "silente".

¹⁰⁶ Treccani, sub voce "convocare".

happened and are in the past. In the Italian text this is different: things not only happened in the past, but they are enveloped by it, they are trapped by it. The past is not a concept that no longer exists, but a true presence which makes memories heavy. Both past and the memories are, in this translation, tangled in a mass that is impossible to unravel and represents how heavy the past actually is for the poet.

Line 3 sees a series of changes which must be explored one at a time. The first thing to change is the first verb of the line. In the English text, it is *I sigh* while in the Italian text it is *piango*. There is a clear difference between the two verbs: while *I sigh* means “I take a deep audible breath (as in weariness or relief)”, the Italian *piango* translates to *I cry*.¹⁰⁷ This difference makes the expression stronger in the Italian text, as the poet is immediately reduced to tears when he thinks about his past. Despite it being stronger, using the verb *piango* goes against the idea of the sonnet. As we will learn in a couple of lines, the poet’s eye is *unused to [the] flow* of tears. As it has been a while since he last allowed himself to grieve and cry, in the English text he needs time to start crying, whereas in Ungaretti’s text he immediately does. Another important difference is at the end of the line: the English text says *many a thing I sought*. This expresses what the poet is grieving over: things he wanted, but never got due to an untimely tragedy. The Italian text translates this with *tante cose nell’anelito vive*. This translates literally to “many things alive within the desire”. In the Italian text, the poet is not grieving over things he wished he had but he could not have, but rather he is grieving over things that he still desires, things that are alive within him. This desire is not allowing the poet to let go of what he wanted. The difference in meaning between the translation and the original is considerable, as they say two different things, but, at least, both are internally correct: in Shakespeare’s version, the poet is in a later moment of his grief, one in which he has begun to accept or has already accepted that what he wanted is gone. To reach this moment of acceptance, the poet had to go through a moment in which he would shut off all emotions not to feel

¹⁰⁷ Merriam-Webster, sub voce “sigh”.

pain. This is why he needs time to give vent to his tears, now that he is ready to feel his pain: he does not remember how to cry anymore and needs to learn again. The poet in Ungaretti's version is one that still has not accepted what happened and still desires what he can no longer have. As the memory of his desire is still fresh, the poet easily cries.

Line 4 sees some significant changes specifically linked to its verb. In the English text the verb in this line is *wail*, "to express sorrow audibly" or "to make a sound suggestive of a mournful cry".¹⁰⁸ The poet is wailing because of two things: the waste of *dear time* and *old woes new* (which means both old and new woes). Ungaretti does not include this verb in his translation. Instead, his version is more complex: *woes new* does not appear and *old* is connected to *gemito*, literally meaning "moan". This changes the meaning of the line. Instead of the line describing the poet crying over his lost time and the pain of his memories, the line says that the poet adds his pain for the *things [he] sought* to a pain he knows well: that of lost time. The translation connects *assenza di tante cose nell'anelito vive* to *old woe* through *aggiunto*, which means *added*. It means that the poet is crying for things he still longs for in addition to what usually causes him pain: time. This is described as *dear*, translated with *caro*. *Dear*, as Melchiori points out, carries a meaning of both affection and as economics. *Time* is *dear* to the poet because it is important to him, because it allows him to live, but it is also *dear* in the sense that it is precious, it is rare and, for this reason, it has a lot of value.¹⁰⁹

In line 5, most of the verbs have been maintained. Instead, the major change is about the order of words and about which is the object and which is the subject. Where Shakespeare wrote *then can I drown an eye*, Ungaretti translated *I miei occhi allora s'annegano in lacrime*. This translation does not modify the verb, as *drown* and *annegano* carry the same meaning.¹¹⁰ What changes is the subject. In Shakespeare's text, it is the poet that allows his tears to flow and drown

¹⁰⁸ Merrem-Webster sub voce "to wail".

¹⁰⁹ Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Melchiori, p. 94.

¹¹⁰ Treccani, sub voce "annegare".

his eye. Instead, in Ungaretti's text it is the eyes (plural) that drown in tears. Another difference is in the translation of *unused to flow*. Ungaretti translated it with *inusi a spargerle*. In the English text, *flow* refers to the flow of tears, which the poet's eyes have not felt for a long time, but this image is not spelled out, only implied through the image of the eye drowning. Ungaretti's text, instead, clarifies it: *lacrime* or tears is the last word of the line, following this *inusi a spargerle*. The final *-le* in *spargerle* clarifies that the verb refers to *lacrime*. The difference is also in how these tears are said to flow from the eye. While Shakespeare references their *flow*, evoking the image of a river gushing out of the poet's eye, Ungaretti prefers *spargerle*, which shows the poet as crying in a more controlled way.¹¹¹

Line 6 continues line 5, adding to what the poet was crying for: his dead friends. They died and are still *hid in death's dateless night*, in the timeless embrace of death. Ungaretti's version modifies the line in various ways. First, it changes the subject: instead of the friends being *hid in [the] night*, it is the *night* that has hidden the friends. *La morte [...] nasconde* means this. Then, *precious* is removed. This does not significantly change the meaning of the line, but it removes the ambiguity that this word creates, removing the economical and emotional aspects of friendship. Ungaretti also added some elements which are not present in the original. This refers specifically to *incolore*, and *immemore*, two adjectives describing death. *Immemore* has to do with memories, as in something that cannot be remembered even if important.¹¹² In this case, *immemore la morte* refers to death making people *immemori* or erasing people from the memories of those who are still alive. The second adjective, *incolore*, literally means "colourless". This is a description that does not exist in the original, as *death* is not described directly, only saying that it is in its *night* that friends are hidden. It can be argued that the night is dark and obscure, probably without light, but the poet of the original text does not describe it. This is a completely new detail that is added in Ungaretti's text. It was probably written to emphasise even more the distance between the living and death.

¹¹¹ Treccani, sub voce "spargere".

¹¹² Treccani, sub voce "immemore".

Nothing in the world of the living exists without colour. The only thing that is said to have lost its colour is a corpse, an approximation of death. Thus death, as an utterly different being which exists as separate from living people, is as distant as possible. Ungaretti regarded *immemore* as not sufficient to explain death and thus added *colourless*.

Line 7 contains two changes by Ungaretti: the verb and the order of words. The verb in the original is *weep* while in Ungaretti's translation it is *torna*. The first represents another way of crying, of feeling pain, whereas the second is a verb of movement meaning "return".¹¹³ Ungaretti constructed the sentence in a more complex way than Shakespeare. Instead of just saying that the poet is crying for yet another painful memory, the Italian version is saying that the *amorosa pena*, the suffering caused by love, returns to the lament of the poet. The suffering is the subject of the sentence, what comes back from extinction (this is the word Ungaretti uses: *da lungo estinta*). This is different from Shakespeare's original expression of the poet crying about an impossible pain he thought forgotten. The order is changed, as Ungaretti positions the verb at the end of the sentence.

Line 8 shows a difference in its verb. In the English text the verb used is *moan* as, in line with the rest of the sonnet, no verb of pain is repeated in order to show how deep and complex pain can be. This has been translated into *rimpiango*, which means "to regret" in Italian. Despite not being as descriptive a verb as *to moan*, which expresses the specific action of "softly groaning", it still can be used to express pain.¹¹⁴ It also gains the idea of regret, adding a meaning that is consistent with the rest of the translation: the pain still feels fresh for the poet and he has yet to accept that what he had hoped for can no longer be achieved. This meaning is not present in Shakespeare's text. In it, the pain described is the pain of someone that has accepted that their hopes will never be fulfilled, but that still feels this pain.

In line 9, *grieve at grievances* has been translated into *patire sofferenze*. This translation is one that changes the idea presented. The original text meant that now, after all expressions of pain

¹¹³ Treccani, *sub voce* "ritornare".

¹¹⁴ Treccani, *sub voce* "rimpiangere".

for the memories of the poet, he is finally able to grieve, finally the poet is able to feel the pain for a purpose. What the poet felt before did not allow him to move on. Grieving, instead, does. The poet is now experiencing pain that will, in time, allow him to move on, to focus on his new life completely. The Italian *patire* does not carry this meaning. The meaning it carries is that of “feeling something that brings with it pain”.¹¹⁵ There is no real way to translate the verb to grieve with an Italian word. The only translation that truly encapsulates its meaning is a locution: *elaborare il lutto* or *essere in lutto*. *Lutto* is the translation to the word *loss* in regard to someone’s death. *Elaborare* means “to work on”. The only correct translation for the verb *to grieve* is to explain what it means. Of course, such a translation is not usable in poetry and thus Ungaretti chose *patire*. *Grievances* has been translated with *sofferenze*. *Grievance[s]* can refer to feelings of distress or pain.¹¹⁶ In this, *sofferenze* is a translation that describes a similar image, as it refers to the suffering of pain, be it physical or else.¹¹⁷ Another word that needs my attention is *foregone*. This has been translated with *esaurite*. *Foregone* refers to things of the past, things that have already concluded.¹¹⁸ *Esaurite* comes from *esaurire*, which means “to consume completely”.¹¹⁹ While the English text only refers to time, by saying that what the poet is now experiencing is something he thought was behind him, the Italian text talks about things that the poet thought were completely consumed, that would no longer exist. This translation is one that adds meaning to the suffering of the poet: he is wondering why he must feel the pain once more. This contrasts the idea I discussed when commenting line 3 and 4, but it is consistent with *inusi a spargerle* in line 5, which presented the poet as someone who has not cried in a while. The poet thought he experienced enough pain to put his painful memories behind him, but they are now resurfacing.

Lines 10 and 11 need to be analysed together, as otherwise the verb used would not make sense. However, first I must focus on *from woe to woe* in line 10. This has been translated into *da*

¹¹⁵ Treccani, sub *voce* “patire”.

¹¹⁶ OED, sub *voce* “grievance”.

¹¹⁷ Treccani, sub *voce* “sofferenza”.

¹¹⁸ OED, sub *voce* “foregone”.

¹¹⁹ Treccani, sub *voce* “esaurire”.

gemito a gemito. The choice of translating *woe* as *gemito* is one that needs a proper explanation. *Woe* carries the meaning of “grief, regret”.¹²⁰ *Gemito* carries a meaning that is closer to moan as a noun.¹²¹ Despite this difference, it still works as a translation. *Gemito* is a sound that is caused by pain, so it can still be understood as describing the pain of the poet. I also need to explain the difference in the verbs in both versions. Shakespeare used *tell over*, while Ungaretti used *rifare*. Both are connected to their object in line 11 through an enjambement. This object is, in the English text, *the sad account* and, in the Italian text, *l’elenco mesto*. While both are *accounts* of the memories of the poet, one of them is *sad*, the other is *mesto*. This Italian word is one that evokes the feeling of bitterness that follows sadness, not sadness by itself.¹²² In the Italian text, the *account* is one that has accepted the memories, but is still bitter over them. The verb in line 10 can now be understood as the poet remembering each regret he thought forgotten. In the Italian text what happens is slightly different: the poet is not only remembering his long list of painful regrets, but he is also writing it from scratch, as that is what *rifare* means, literally “to make anew”. It almost seems as if he tore the account in an attempt to forget his pain and is now writing it back. The last part of line 11, *fore bemoaned moan*, is translated as *gravi mie afflizioni riaperte*. Ungaretti chose a translation for *moan* which is different from the one he used before: he translated *moan* as *afflizioni*. This word refers to emotional sadness or pain.¹²³ *Moan* refers to a specific sound one makes when in pain. Both words refer to pain, but do so in different ways. *Fore bemoaned* is also not translated literally, as it is translated as *riaperte*. This *riaperte*, which means “opened up once more”, is used to talk about wounds, even if they are more emotional than physical.¹²⁴ *Fore bemoaned* tells the readers that these painful memories have caused the poet moans of pain in the past, making him think that they would not do so again. Even if the translation is not literal, *riaperte* gives an image that is similar to the original’s intent, explaining how the poet did not expect these painful

¹²⁰ OED, sub voce “woe”.

¹²¹ Treccani, sub voce “gemito”.

¹²² Treccani, sub voce “mestizia”.

¹²³ Treccani, sub voce “afflizione”.

¹²⁴ Treccani, sub voce “riaprire”.

memories to resurface, just as one does not expect a wound or scar to open up and be painful once more.

Line 12 is translated literally, except for the verb. In the English text the verb is *paid*, a payment of pain for the memories and promises. In the Italian text, this is translated with *sconto*, which is most often used with the meaning of “to serve a sentence”. While in the English text the verb carries a financial meaning, in the Italian text the verb carries a juridical meaning. Both juridical and financial meanings are used by Shakespeare in this sonnet and thus the translation makes sense. However, there is a difference: in the English text *to pay* is used twice, *I new pay as if not paid before*, emphasizing the feeling of useless repetition felt by the poet. He already felt this pain and thus feels he does not deserve to be punished again. In Ungaretti’s text this repetition is lost, as he wrote *come se non patite prima, sconto*. *Patite* still carries a similar meaning, “to feel the effect of something”, but it is not the same word as *sconto*.

Ungaretti’s translation modifies the meaning of lines 13 and 14. In the original these form a conditional clause, saying that if the poet, lost in this whirlpool of pain, thinks on the fair youth, the pain stops. The fair youth is a thought that grounds the poet, but he has to think actively about him. It is not a random thought that occurs to him, showing an evolution from sonnet 29. Ungaretti decided to remove the *if* and added *avvenga che*. This verb is one that is used to express randomness, chance. The fact that the poet thought of the fair youth and managed to stop his pain is not a choice he took on his own. This shows him as a victim to his thoughts. The order of the words is also changed, as Ungaretti put *dear friend* at the beginning of the line, rather than at the end. This makes the friend less important. It also removes the final rhyming couplet, which was *friend—end*. This rhyme reinforces the idea that the friend puts an end to pain in all its forms. Line 14 changes *sorrows* for *dolore*. This is a change that has more to do with Italian than with Ungaretti’s translation. The English vocabulary, as the sonnet shows, is full of different words that can be used to emphasize all kinds of different pain. *Sorrow* is one amongst many used in the sonnet. The same thing cannot be said for the Italian dictionary, which does not have as many words to express pain.

For this reason, the lack of repetition in the sonnet of the word *pain* is one that is untranslatable into the Italian language. That is why *dolore* is used here: there were no other synonyms which would have made sense.

5.2 SERPIERI'S VERSION OF SONNET 30

Quando alle assise del dolce silenzioso pensiero
Convoco la memoria delle cose passate,
io sospiro alla mancanza di più d'una cosa che cercai,
e con vecchie pene lamento nuovamente lo spreco del mio caro tempo.
Allora annego l'occhio, non uso a lacrimare,
per preziosi amici nascosti nella notte sterminata della morte,
e di nuovo piango pene d'amore da tempo cancellate
Allora m'affliggo di passate afflizioni
E desolato di dolore in dolore ridico
Il triste conto di lamenti già lamentati,
che nuovamente pago, come se già non li avessi pagati.
Ma se, allora, io penso a te, caro amico
Tutte le perdite mi vengono rese, e finiscono gli affanni.

Of interest in line 1 is in the translation of *sessions*. Serpieri translated it as *assise*. *Assise* describes a criminal court in which the worst kind of crimes are discussed.¹²⁵ This translation carries the same meaning, emphasising the same juridical aspect. Another literal translation is *silent* as *silenzioso*. This is its most literal translation, which also considers the semantic register, especially when compared to Ungaretti's *silente*.

Line 2 shows, again, a literal translation. The legal meaning that *I summon up* carries is maintained by translating it with *convoco*, a verb used specifically in juridical contexts.¹²⁶ *Remembrance* is translated as *la memoria*, which describes a similar image. *Of things past* is translated literally as *delle cose passate*.

Line 3 shows interest in maintaining what the original did. *I sigh* has been translated into *sospiro*, which gives the same idea of exhaling air to express pain or discomfort.¹²⁷ In the rest of the sonnet, Serpieri showed great consideration to maintain the complexity of the expressions of pain in English. This consideration starts from this *sospiro*. Ungaretti did not care for the difference in the

¹²⁵ Treccani, sub voce "assise".

¹²⁶ Treccani, sub voce "convocare".

¹²⁷ Treccani, sub voce "sospiro".

expression of pain, as he translated *sigh* with *piango*, which means “to cry”. Serpieri, besides caring about the difference between each verb of pain, also had to make some changes to the text to use a correct Italian. He translated *the lack of* with *alla mancanza di*. In Italian, this construction is the one that makes the most sense in the context, as that *alla* indicates what causes the poet to *sigh*. *Many a thing I sought* is translated with *più d’una cosa che cercai*. The text is telling the reader that the poet is starting to remember things that he sought in his past but could never find. These things are many and this is emphasised by the construction. The Italian construction emphasises the same thing. *Più d’una cosa* makes the reader understand that many things have been looked for, emphasising the number, just as the English text used *many a thing*.

Line 4 in Serpieri’s translation sees its major change in *new*. This *new* is connected in the original text to *old woes*, to show how the old pain the poet thought gone is now back. Serpieri translated it as *nuovamente*. This is an adverb that means “once again”.¹²⁸ This *nuovamente* refers to *lamento*, the translation of *wail*. What this version of the sonnet tells the readers is not that the old pains have now returned to the poet’s mind as if they were new, but that the poet wails because of them once again. The focus is not the pain that has returned to his mind, but to its effect on the poet: it causes him to wail once more. I also want to focus on the translation of *dear*. This has been translated with *caro*. *Dear* is a word that is used with both an emotional meaning as well as an economical one. The time is *dear* to the poet because it is important, but also because it is costly, it has a lot of value. *Caro* works exactly in the same way. It emphasises both the emotional value time has for the poet, but also its financial value.¹²⁹

In line 5, Serpieri eliminates the verb *can*. In the translation, the poet no longer admits that he can allow himself to cry, he just does. The Italian text suggests that he is unable to control it. The image used to represent the poet crying is still the same: the poet *drown[ing]* his own eye. Something else that is worth commenting on is *non uso a lacrimare*. This is the translation to

¹²⁸ Treccani, sub voce “nuovamente”.

¹²⁹ Treccani, sub voce “caro”.

unused to flow. *Non uso* refers to a lack of habit in the poet, he was not able to cry for a long time and thus was no longer used to it. It carries an identical meaning and it represents the action of the original. Serpieri also changed *flow* in *lacrimare*. Instead of describing the act of crying through a metaphor of a flowing river, Serpieri spells out what the action is, by specifying that the eye is no longer used to crying.

In line 6 I want to comment on the adjectives used. First, *precious*. This adjective has the meaning of “beloved, held in high esteem”, but also of “expensive, costly”.¹³⁰ The poet is telling us that his lost friends are both beloved and expensive. His friends are so precious to him that they would cost him a fortune to have. Both meanings are well represented in *preziosi*. This is a word that describes something as having great value, which can be both financial and emotional.¹³¹ The second adjective I need to focus on is *dateless*. This has been translated into *sterminata*. *Dateless* refers to time. The *dateless night* is a moment which exists outside of time. This *night* is achieved only through *death*. Only through death can one exist outside of time, eternal as death itself. Serpieri translated this in *notte sterminata della morte*. If something is *sterminato* it literally means that it is something that goes beyond limits.¹³² This means that this *night* described by Serpieri has no limits or, rather, it goes beyond all. The *night* thus exists outside of time and space, as *death* brings anything away from reality. Serpieri also talks about *hid*. He emphasises the fact that *hid* does not mean eliminated or destroyed, but that they are hidden and are, thus, ready to appear again. They can appear in the poet’s mind, as they are already doing in a way, but also in paradise, in the eternal moment after death.¹³³

In line 7, we see *weep afresh love’s [...] woe* which emphasizes how the poet’s pain and his expressions of it are growing in strength. It also tells us readers that the poet has already gone through this pain for the promises he made and does not understand why it is happening again.

¹³⁰ OED, sub voce “precious”.

¹³¹ Treccani, sub voce “prezioso”.

¹³² Treccani, sub voce “sterminato”.

¹³³ Shakespeare, *Sonetti*, ed. and trans. by Serpieri, p. 448.

Serpieri presented this image by translating it as *di nuovo piango pene d'amore*. However, there are some differences in this translation. *Afresh* means specifically “from the beginning”: the poet is weeping for his pain as if new, which we know is not, but it shows the complexity of the process of grief.¹³⁴ *Di nuovo* emphasizes the repetition. Everything is repeated, the poet has already experienced this. Another key difference is in the translation of *woe*. This refers to pain and Serpieri translated it with *pene*. There are two main differences between these two words. *Pene* is the plural of *pena*, while *woe* is singular. The second difference is in meaning: while *woe* refers only to the pain of the poet, *pena* is more ambiguous: the meaning can refer to punishment, but it can also refer to great suffering, in particular moral suffering.¹³⁵ In both texts, this pain or suffering is still linked to *love*. The last thing to note is the position of *long since cancelled*. While in the English text it precedes *woe*, in the Italian text it follows *pene*, being the last three words of the line.

In line 8, *th'expense* is translated as *la perdita*. The original text signals only a financial meaning, in the sense that *expense* indicates the expenditure of money or possessions.¹³⁶ In a way, the poet is saying that his *vanished sight* had great monetary value for him and, in losing it, he lost a great value. *Perdita*, on the other hand, indicates a loss which can be emotional, when one loses a friend, but also economical, when one loses something worth a lot.¹³⁷ Here we also see the verb *lamento* used as a translation to *moan*. This *lamento* has already been used before, to translate *wail* in line 4. The repetition is, in this specific sonnet, one that deserves to be noted. In the original, there is only one verb of pain that is repeated and that is *moan*. Except for this one, every other verb of pain is used only once to represent how deep and complex grief and the pain it carries can be. In the translation, this *lamento* is not the only verb of pain that is repeated. I already mentioned when commenting Ungaretti's version how this is more of an issue regarding the Italian vocabulary and how it is limited in this regard.

¹³⁴ Merriam-Webster, sub voce “afresh”.

¹³⁵ Treccani, sub voce “pena”.

¹³⁶ OED, sub voce “expense”.

¹³⁷ Treccani, sub voce “perdita”.

In line 9, Serpieri had to translate *grieve*. As we have seen in the case of Ungaretti this verb is difficult to translate. Serpieri chose *m'affliggo* as a translation. *Affliggersi* has two meanings: “to torment oneself and to feel pain or to feel saddened”.¹³⁸ It is a translation that, while not completely encapsulating the process of grief, does still work and explains what it feels to grieve for someone or something. In this process, one must contend with both a deep pain within himself that exists together with sadness, but also with the thoughts of the mind, which are most often than not torture. They remind the person of wasted opportunities, of what they did not want to say, of what they regretted. In the process of grief, the mind, a part of the person, is out of control and, usually, ends up in dark places which torture the person. This verb is also used in its reflexive form, meaning that the speaker (the poet) is the object of his action and thus he is torturing himself in the process. There is something else that deserves to be noted: the translation of *grievances foregone* as *passate afflizioni*. This is a translation that is identical to the original text. As *grievances* contains the verb used (*grieve*), the translation does the same: *afflizioni* contains *affliggo*. *Foregone* describes something as “previous, past”.¹³⁹ something that has already been lost. In the same way, *passate* has the same meaning: something that happened in the past; The word is literally past with only one letter changed, *passato* and *passate*.

In line 10, the adjective changes. *Heavily* becomes *desolato*. This word describes a pain that cannot be comforted.¹⁴⁰ Its meaning is stronger than *heavily*, which just describes a strong pain. Another important change introduced by Serpieri is in *from woe to woe*. In English, this means that the poet goes through the pain of his past. In Serpieri’s version, the word *woes* is translated with *dolore*. In both versions, the poet expresses the fact that he is living once more the pain he thought forgotten. The last change is in *ridico*. This translates *tell o’er*. *Tell o’er* means “to count up, to enumerate”.¹⁴¹ It is a verb that focuses on the list the poet is making, on the length of it. *Ridico*

¹³⁸ Treccani, sub voce “affliggersi”.

¹³⁹ Merriam-Webster sub voce “sospiro”.

¹⁴⁰ Treccani, sub voce “desolato”.

¹⁴¹ OED, sub voce “tell over”.

means “I repeat, I say once more”.¹⁴² This translation is one that is more focused on the fact that the poet felt these painful moments already and that, in enumerating them in the list in line 11, the poet is doing nothing except for feeling them once again.

Line 11 is a literal translation. This must be noted especially regarding *fore-bemoaned moan* which has been translated as *lamenti già lamentati*. It deserves to be noted because, in the original text, it is the only case in which a verb of pain is repeated. The verb repeated is *moan*. The peculiarity of the translation is that Serpieri followed the repetition, translating this *fore-bemoaned moan* as *lamenti già lamentati*. The *moan* of line 8 was in fact translated as *lamento*. As in the original sonnet, in the translation the verb becomes both a noun and an adjective. *The sad account* is translated literally, with *il triste conto*. *Account* can refer to a written description of an event or to a calculation or enumeration.¹⁴³ In this case, it talks about the poet’s moaning of pain. *Conto* comes from *contare*, but this verb can have more than one meaning. If *contare* is used as if it originates from *raccontare*, it means “to tell a story”, meaning that the poet is telling of his pains once more as if they were part of a story.¹⁴⁴ If, instead, it is *contare*, it means “to enumerate”, which would mean that the poet is enumerating his pains, counting how many there are.¹⁴⁵ Even the ambiguity of the original text is maintained in the translation.

While line 12 is pretty much a literal translation which does not require my notes, line 13 does. In particular with the translation of *while*. This has been translated with *allora*, which carries a different meaning: in the original that *while* describes the poet as saying that, during one of his crisis, he thinks of the fair youth and that calms him down. Instead, in the translation, that *allora* is an expression, not necessarily referring to the interrupted moment of crisis, but rather a general expression to emphasise the role of the fair youth in the poet’s mind.

¹⁴² Treccani, sub voce “ridire”.

¹⁴³ OED, sub voce “account”.

¹⁴⁴ Treccani, sub voce “raccontare”.

¹⁴⁵ Treccani, sub voce “contare”.

In line 14, the translation of the verb *restored* translated with *mi vengono rese* is peculiar. This would mean that the losses of the poet are being returned to him, as if the money he lost was given back to him, now that he is gaining back his feelings. It is a financial meaning, maintaining what Shakespeare originally wrote, which is linked to a more emotional meaning. Just as the poet is finding himself once more, so is he recuperating his monetary losses.

CONCLUSION

When I started to write this thesis, I was curious to see how different the translations of the same text could be, even if in the same target language. I have shown how a different approach to the same text can lead to a different interpretation, which can lead to differences in the translation. Ungaretti prioritised the beauty of his work. To him, this was more about creating something new, rather than translating something old and well-known. Ungaretti wanted to use this well-established collection of sonnets to find new inspiration for his own poetry. This is why he added elements that were not in the original: he modified the sonnets to turn them into something more appealing to his readership and that would inspire him. Serpieri, on the other hand, was interested in spreading knowledge and understanding of the sonnets. For this reason, his translation cared less about catering to the Italian taste and focused more on maintaining the effects of the original. A result of the different purpose of Serpieri's text is the commentary that is included with the translation, useful to add information that could not be contained in the translation or to express the limits of his translation. Despite the differences in the purpose of translation, no one translation is better than the other. Each translation that exists (even outside of those I analysed) is different and all can be equally valid.

SUMMARY IN ITALIAN

Ho iniziato la tesi con la biografia dei due traduttori, Giuseppe Ungaretti e Alessandro Serpieri. Questo è stato fatto per fornire una visione completa del loro sviluppo come persone e come autori e anche per contestualizzare la traduzione da me usata.

Ungaretti nella sua vita ha potuto vedere molto del mondo, spostandosi prima all'interno dell'Italia, poi all'interno dell'Europa avendo partecipato alla Prima guerra mondiale, e poi arrivando in America e in Asia. Questa visione del mondo nelle sue moltissime culture ha sicuramente lasciato un segno in Ungaretti, tanto quanto il suo partecipare alla guerra. Serpieri, invece, ha sviluppato la propria carriera sempre all'interno dell'Italia, trovando il proprio posto a Firenze una volta iniziata la propria carriera di ricerca. È stato uno studioso molto influente a livello non solo italiano, ma anche mondiale per quanto riguarda l'inglese, sia nello studio della lingua che nello studio della letteratura. La sua è stata una ricerca che non si è concentrata solo su un solo periodo storico o su un singolo autore, ma che ha spaziato oltre il singolo genere, toccando molti autori rilevanti della letteratura inglese.

Una volta contestualizzati i traduttori, ho continuato con il capitolo sul sonetto 27. Questo capitolo contiene un'analisi del sonetto. Questa, come quelle degli altri sonetti, si è sviluppata sulla base dei commenti di Alessandro Serpieri, Giorgio Melchiori, Helen Hennessy Vendler, John Dover Wilson e Stephen Booth. Questo primo sonetto mostra il narratore della collezione, nominato *poet* all'interno della tesi, in una situazione orribile: mentre il giorno lo affatica fisicamente, la notte lo affatica mentalmente. Durante la notte, il poeta rende chiaro cosa lo affligge: la mancanza del *fair youth*, la figura amata. Questa è tale che inizia addirittura a sognarlo, personificando i propri pensieri che gli sfuggono e cercano di raggiungere l'amato. Il poeta spende molto del sonetto a descrivere come questo avvenga. L'analisi del sonetto è poi terminata ponendo enfasi sulla ripetizione di *limbs* e *mind* per evidenziare come queste due sue parti prima in conflitto, ora siano alleate contro il poeta stesso, rendendo ogni parte della sua esistenza opposta al suo stare bene.

All'analisi del sonetto 27, segue l'analisi della traduzione di Ungaretti. In questo sottocapitolo ho anche voluto fare una introduzione storica e contestuale di Ungaretti, per rendere chiaro cosa muova la sua traduzione. Questa contiene i suoi ragionamenti su come tradurre da testi inglesi (in quanto fino ad allora aveva solo tradotto testi spagnoli). Questi suoi ragionamenti si concludono con l'idea che sia impossibile ottenere una traduzione accurata, soprattutto in poesia. Lui però ha una sua ragione di tradurre: fare opera originale. Ungaretti, nel tradurre, cerca ispirazione per le proprie opere poetiche e quindi l'accuratezza rispetto al testo originale non era tra le sue priorità. Discuto anche del verso da lui scelto, secondo un suo ragionamento che il rapporto tra il numero di sillabe inglesi rispetto a quelle italiane è di 11 a 16, un fatto che nemmeno lui rispetta. Già dai primi versi vediamo come la libertà di voler fare poesia nuova impatti la traduzione: vediamo una serie di cambiamenti che, seppur appaiano di minor importanza, portano in realtà a modifiche del senso stesso del verso. Si può anche vedere come Ungaretti dia meno priorità alla traduzione letterale, introducendo più di una volta elementi non presenti nell'originale o spostando, da un verso ad un altro, differenti elementi per mantenere un certo ritmo presente nella sua traduzione, ma assente nella versione inglese. Ho terminato questa analisi parlando di come Ungaretti non fosse interessato a mantenere le rime dell'originale, mantenendo, dove poteva, alcune assonanze almeno per dimostrare il legame tra due elementi.

Il secondo sottocapitolo tratta della traduzione di Serpieri del sonetto 27. Come ho fatto per Ungaretti, ho prima contestualizzato la traduzione di Serpieri. Quest'ultimo si diede come priorità assoluta non quella di creare poesia nuova, ma di creare una versione dei sonetti che fosse comprensibile da un pubblico italiano anche se privo di conoscenza di Shakespeare o dell'inglese in generale. Questo differente obiettivo ha avuto un doppio effetto: primo, ha reso la traduzione differente da quella di Ungaretti, in quanto ha un obiettivo differente. Secondo, nel suo commento Serpieri è pronto a riconoscere quando la sua traduzione manca di qualcosa rispetto all'originale, o anche quando qualcosa è semplicemente intraducibile. Nonostante questa sua più grande attenzione

data all'originale, Serpieri ha comunque modificato il testo nel passare da una lingua all'altra per far sì che potesse comunque avere un italiano corretto. La traduzione di Serpieri si sviluppa come Ungaretti nell'ordine e in come le parole sono usate, ma Serpieri, proprio per il suo obiettivo differente, dà priorità a mantenere i significati inalterati. Quando questo non lo è, nei casi di ambiguità o di significati nascosti, la priorità viene data ai significati più letterali. Anche nel caso di Serpieri ho terminato il sotto capitolo parlando delle rime finali che sono *mente* e *quiete*. Seppur siano presenti delle rime, hanno un significato diverso da quelle shakespeariane, evidenziando la distanza che esiste tra la mente del poeta e la sua quiete.

Viene poi il secondo capitolo, che descrive il sonetto 28. Questo capitolo inizia con una analisi dell'ordine dei sonetti e di come questi si connettono. Definisce poi la differenza tra *collection*, *group* e *sequence*. Viene speso del tempo sulla spiegazione della *sequence* formata dai sonetti 27 e 28, così da assicurare che la definizione di *sequence* sia chiara al lettore. Una volta completata questa spiegazione, viene preso in considerazione il sonetto 28, compilandone un commento. Il commento si concentra su tre elementi: il primo verso, la posizione del giorno e della notte e la situazione del poeta. Il primo verso nasconde un doppio significato: un possibile saluto da un'altra persona, ma anche un gesto ironico del poeta in risposta a questo saluto. La posizione del giorno e della notte si riferisce alla loro posizione come torturatori, ma anche di come potrebbero non essere la causa di questa tortura. Infine, la situazione del poeta descrive come costui tenti di sopravvivere in questo momento in cui la vita non è altro che tortura. In questa sua posizione, il poeta cerca di ridurla, convincendo il giorno e notte che il loro amato, il *fair youth*, è ancora presente, anche se così non sembra.

Dopo di questo, abbiamo il sottocapitolo della traduzione di Ungaretti del sonetto 28. Nel mio commento ho indicato come Ungaretti tenda a cambiare più di quanto serva per far funzionare la traduzione, togliendo precisi significati e anche ponendone di nuovi. Mi sono concentrato sulle differenze di punteggiatura tra il testo originale e la traduzione, in particolare sul punto di domanda

mancante nella traduzione al verso 2, ma anche su altre modifiche di punti e virgole così come sulle modifiche fatte all'ordine delle parole. Oltretutto, ho annotato come la traduzione di Ungaretti tenda a perdere molte delle ambiguità presenti nel testo originale, eliminando varie interpretazioni presenti in questo. Quando necessario, ho preso in considerazione come Ungaretti eccedesse nelle modifiche, portando addirittura a versi poco comprensibili in italiano e che non avevano gli stessi significati dell'inglese. Ho infine posto attenzione alla fine degli ultimi due versi. Ungaretti pone *affanni e male* come fine in modo da evidenziare i due elementi fondamentali del testo.

Il secondo sottocapitolo del secondo capitolo è dedicato alla traduzione fatta da Serpieri. In questo commento, ho notato come Serpieri prioritizzi in assoluto l'originale, cercando di tradurre letteralmente. Nonostante ciò, alcuni significati ambigui vengono persi anche nella sua traduzione in quanto intraducibili. Invece altri significati non presenti nella versione originale vengono aggiunti. Inoltre, nemmeno Serpieri riesce ad evitare le conseguenze che le costruzioni inglesi avrebbero nella lingua italiana e pertanto, quando necessario, modifica l'ordine delle parole. Le varie spiegazioni dei cambiamenti includono note di Serpieri che spiega il perché di questi, dove lo ritiene necessario. Ho finito questo sottocapitolo ponendo enfasi sulle parole che concludono gli ultimi due versi: *dolore e pena*, due parole che descrivono il dolore del poeta.

A seguito è presente il terzo capitolo che tratta del sonetto 29. In questo vediamo una descrizione della notte del poeta, colma di ansia e di pensieri soffocanti. Tra tutti questi, il più forte è il desiderio di essere un altro, qualcuno diverso da sé. In tutto ciò appare però una figura che riesce a riportare il poeta in un punto sano della propria mente, a calmarlo: il *fair youth*. Nel commento al sonetto, ho descritto come Vendler e Booth lo dividono in vari modelli e di come questi si connettano e interagiscano, evidenziando le differenze e somiglianze.

Leggiamo poi il sottocapitolo sulla traduzione di Ungaretti. Anche in questo, il punto principale del capitolo è di mostrare i cambiamenti che esistono tra la traduzione di Ungaretti e il testo originale. Ho anche portato attenzione a come precise espressioni vengono modificate, per

essere rese più comprensibili o apprezzabili da un pubblico che parla e che ha un gusto italiano. La mia analisi si è mossa di verso in verso, in modo da poter presentare un commento che prendesse in considerazione ogni fattore di questa traduzione.

Il sottocapitolo seguente analizza poi la traduzione completata da Serpieri, mostrando cosa è riuscito a mantenere, come abbia fatto a mantenere questi elementi, ma anche cosa ha cambiato, perché e che conseguenze hanno portato questi cambiamenti nel testo rispetto all'originale. Ho descritto poi come i modi di dire sono stati tradotti, se in maniera letterale o meno, e come la decisione di mantenere o cambiare uno di questi ha modificato la traduzione.

L'ultimo capitolo tratta del sonetto 30 e dei suoi temi principali: dolore e tempo. Mentre il dolore può portare chiunque ad un rifiuto totale delle proprie emozioni, il tempo può cancellare questo stesso dolore e portare con sé nuovi desideri di sentire le proprie emozioni, persino il dolore dimenticato. È anche un sonetto che parla dell'effetto che la morte di persone a noi care può avere e del processo di accettazione di questa perdita. Il sonetto mostra una costruzione particolare dal punto di vista del tempo e della sua percezione: un insieme intricato di passato e presente rappresentato non linearmente, ma che parte dal presente, si muove verso il momento più remoto in un modo illogico e torna poi al presente. È anche una evoluzione dal sonetto 29, dove vediamo un poeta che, dopo essersi riappacificato col proprio presente, deve affrontare il proprio passato. Parlo anche del linguaggio usato all'interno del sonetto, linguaggio tipico della legge e dell'economia.

Nel primo sottocapitolo, analizzo la traduzione fatta da Ungaretti, mostrando come presenti una tendenza ad elevare il linguaggio usato, ma anche a modificare l'ordine delle parole, così come a modificare interi versi, portando ad importanti differenze di significato. Ungaretti decide anche di aggiungere parole o aggettivi che non sono presenti nell'originale con lo scopo di accrescere la forza dei propri versi, anche se ciò può portare a differenze considerevoli tra l'originale e la sua traduzione.

Il secondo sottocapitolo prende in considerazione la traduzione di Serpieri del sonetto 30. Questa è una traduzione, come per gli altri sonetti, che tende a mantenere i significati più letterali dei sonetti, anche se deve a volte sacrificare il significante, in quanto Shakespeare usa delle costruzioni che non sono traducibili in italiano e che, per questo, vanno adattate alla lingua meta. Nonostante l'obiettivo di Serpieri di voler mantenere il significato, anch'egli deve modificare alcune parti dei versi, causando in alcuni delle differenze di significato che possono essere più o meno importanti.

Infine, ho posto le conclusioni di questa mia analisi: ho dimostrato come obiettivi diversi possano portare a risultati diversi, anche se il testo originale è identico. In più, ho notato come differenti obiettivi possano portare all'aggiunta di elementi extra testuali, come può essere il commento di Serpieri. Come ultimo elemento ho dimostrato come due traduzioni molto diverse possano comunque essere entrambe valide.

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