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## INTRODUCTION

*Trapianti* is Luigi Meneghello's collection of translations of poems and writings by different poets whose works are in English (such as G.M. Hopkins, e. e. cummings, W. Empson, W. B. Yeats, R. Campbell and W. Shakespeare). He translated them into his dialect: Alto-Vicentino, one of the dialects of the Veneto.

These poems and writings are what Meneghello calls his lyric "forage" with which he fed himself during the years he spent at Reading University, England, where from 1947 to 1980 he taught Italian language and literature and where he founded the Department of *Italian Studies* in 1960.

Meneghello spent the first years of his life in completely oral-only dialectophone surroundings. When he started primary school he realized that the national language was Italian, a language that he had heard spoken by certain adults of his village, but the novelty for him was that Italian has a written form.

Through the voice of his childhood and with his irony, Meneghello explores his little personal "museum" (Meneghello, *Su/Per* 20). There is a sensitive and emotional accentuation of the sphere of affection in which Meneghello's dialect is placed: it is something very close to the soul and the spirit of the author and to his fantasy. Like a secret idiom, it is connected with the memory of his experience of the world as a child. Moreover, from a literary point of view, this dialectal material has the function of representing a community of speakers and it has become the subject Meneghello wanted to study and analyse scientifically.

Being exclusively an oral language, the dialect of Malo could be said to reveal the *reality* of a child's way of thinking and seeing, conceiving and feeling the world around him. The reverse side of reality is *fantasy or folly*, part also of the human mind. This last point is associated with the world of the child who conceives the "things" not as objects or tools, but as something pre-logical: images that have a primary

importance for a child's learning<sup>1</sup>. This means that the loss of his dialect compromises the immediate contact with the reality around him.

“Morendo una lingua non muoiono certe alternative di chiamare le cose, ma muoiono certe cose.” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 43)<sup>2</sup>

“Si può facilmente arguire che a rigore di termini non ci sono cose in dialetto, solo parole in dialetto ” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 15) <sup>3</sup>

“La lingua aveva strati sovrapposti: era tutto un intarsio.” (Meneghello, *Libera* 118)<sup>4</sup>

After these statements, Meneghello wonders where this creativity could end up when school teaches you to think in another language.

The meanings of the words in Meneghello were deeply influenced because of the great discrepancy between the two forms: oral and written. Writing gives another criterion for interpreting reality. He was entering a sphere in which the things meant by words were assuming new peculiarities with reference to those that were spoken.

All Meneghello's works are interconnected by a continuum: the main protagonist is his mother tongue, which he sees from many different points of view by operating a “key shift”. In other words, he uses a personal scale in which his inner world is made up the following elements.

Life in his village corresponds to reality. The language of his childhood represents his idea of the “true language”. Meneghello conceives his dialect as the language of Nature, while the language of art and artifice is standard Italian.

The war and the industrialization interrupts this rhythm and the artisans' work stopped being considered as indispensable.

At the age of 25, after World War II, he moved to England. Far from Italy and from Italian surroundings, and therefore from his village and dialectal surroundings, he could not see the continuation of Italian life in its entirety, nor the development of

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<sup>1</sup> On this subject see Cesare Segre “Morendo una lingua non muoiono certe alternative per dire le cose, ma muoiono certe cose” in *Il Tremaio*, pp.43-54.

<sup>2</sup> «When an idiom dies, it is not certain alternatives for calling things that die, but certain things.»

<sup>3</sup> «We can easily deduce that in the strict sense of the term, there are no things in dialect, only words in dialect.»

<sup>4</sup> «The language had superimposed strata: everything was intertwined.»

the languages spoken in Italy or in the different villages. He was out of all this. That is why the dialect spoken in his village during the '20s-'30s found a deep place in his mind.

Moreover, under the influence of these new geographical and social scales his approach to poetry, already stimulated in Italy by his encounters with Antonio Giuriolo, became more intimate dimension.

The need for a national standardization of the language (Tuscan) brought about another way of thinking and tried to eliminate, with compulsory education, a variety of regional dialects considered as "low languages".

This kind of development of equality forgot important differences: local customs, dialects traditions, those things that, even in their diversity, united men and women all over the peninsula into one people, Italians of the same Italy.

Meneghello wants to underline his isolation from trends, fashion, currents, programs, groups, movements and ideas of contemporary Italian literature. His first book *Libera nos a malo* was written in England, without seeing the Italian world of the post-war years. In this experimental creation Meneghello employs three different languages: literary Italian, regional Italian and Alto-Vicentino (a language that had probably never been written before), adding, at times, English words and expressions.

What is unusual in his latest work, *Trapianti*, is Meneghello's experiment: he translates English poems writing exclusively in his dialect. He wants to represent the pole of his interests with reference to the dialectal matter: on the one hand there is his experience in the village, on the other hand there is his passion for poetry.

It is necessary to try to point out similarities and differences by analysing losses and gains between languages spoken in the Italian reality of the '20s-'30s: in this case, for a child like Meneghello, we have a written-only language like Italian and a spoken-only language like Alto-Vicentino. There is a question to solve which is related to the meaning of the "thing" expressed by a word (symbol of a concept), into its particular cultural context, a person uses instead of using a different one, first in the oral form and then in the written form (symbol of another symbol).

Here the cultures involved are two: two civilizations with their sub-systems. It is from the elegy of a child, through his experience and education that, a little at a time, the passage evolves from purely-spoken language into a written one with a literary sense.

“[...] Vorrei far splendere quella sgrammatica grammatica”<sup>5</sup> (Meneghello, *Su/Per* 13)

The poet Meneghello translated in *Trapianti*, and who best embodies the idea of a nearly ungrammatical experimental way of expression is e. e. cummings. The poems we find in *Trapianti* are six in number and they come from different works of cummings:

1. “Buffalo Bill’s” from *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923);
2. “my sweet old etcetera” from *is 5* (1926);
3. “who knows if the moon’s” from *&* (1925)
4. “in Just-” from *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923);
5. “hist whist” from *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923);
6. “the little horse is newLY” from *Xaipe* (1950).

e.e.cummings’ poems represent a challenge to the sense or the meaning of a “thing” expressed by a word because the poet liked playing with logic-visual-phonetic associations and with slang. His creativity and art of communication can be compared to those of a spontaneous child, free from interferences and influences produced by the rest of society: which cummings defines as a snob mass unable to grow. The society cummings sees is unable to accept life: life as the present time which must be lived remaining faithful to ourselves, and life as a mystery. Both parts are fundamental for cummings’ concept of eternity, of which we are all part as individuals.

The uses of free capitalization, free punctuation, free lower-case, free disposition of verses on the page, etc. reveal that cummings takes nothing for granted: little things are also worthy of our attention and they can be great things if we pay attention to them.

The Italian translation of cummings’ poetry made by Mary de Rachewiltz is a point of reference for the analysis of losses and gains between the two languages here compared.

Her translations of cummings’ poems are very important: not only because they are written in standard Italian, but also because she is the daughter of Ezra Pound, one of the most influential poets of the twentieth century, with whom cummings had a

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<sup>5</sup> «I wish I could make that disgrammatical grammar shine.»

strong mainly epistolary friendship, and who inspired him in his spontaneous and innovative way of writing poetry. Mary de Rachewiltz made numerous translations of different authors and e. e. cummings was one of them.

Mary de Rachewiltz's life is very interesting especially for the experiences she had with various languages. Her first language was Tyrolese, a dialect of German, learned from the peasant couple with whom she lived her early years. Her linguistic skills were sharpened by the Italian and French she was taught at school and by the English spoken by her natural parents: Ezra Pound and Olga Rudge, the violinist.

In the cosmopolitan historical period that Italy is experiencing at present with influences or shocks of immigrants' languages, it is obvious to wonder what the meaning of translating into a dialect could be nowadays.

This essay aims to examine the interpretation of poems of e. e. cummings in order to understand the reasons why the writer from Malo used his dialect instead of his national language. I will also compare Meneghello's translations with Mary de Rachewiltz's translations into standard Italian. But the most important point here is to analyse what a translation is able to transmit to the reader, regardless of the language used.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE “KEY SHIFT” FOR THE THREE WRITERS

### 1.1 Portrait of Luigi Meneghello

Luigi Meneghello was born in 1922 in Malo, a little village north of Vicenza (Italy). His mother was from Udine and worked as a teacher in a primary school: she was urbane, of good family and educated, and with a good knowledge of French. She was the most educated person in Meneghello’s family. In 1917 she moved to the Veneto and, after Caporetto, Meneghello’s father suggested that she move to Malo with him. Luigi Meneghello talks of her as a “linguistic miracle” (Paolini, “Ritratti”) because she spoke three languages: Friulano, the dialect of Udine, and Italian. It was easy to realize that she was not “Vicentina” because she used expressions from her own village. Despite this, Meneghello did not consider his mother a foreigner: she adapted completely to the Vicentino dialect, even if she did not understand the full meaning of some expressions or words. She died at the age of 50. His father was an artisan, he worked as a turner on a lathe, in a sort of repair shop. His father spent seven years in the War at the end of which he started working in a machine shop where there were mainly reclaimed wartime vehicles, a couple of cars and some motor-coaches.

Meneghello’s idea of family was broad in meaning: it included uncles, aunts, cousins, etc., because they all had a very close relationship. They were all very genuine and, to him, they represented nature. His only figure of culture was his mother.

Meneghello grew up speaking the dialect of his village: Alto-Vicentino, a variety of the Vicentino dialect. Assuming that a dialect is a language, possessing its own grammar, it is possible to say that it belongs to the people who speak it. For example, the people who lived there spoke the dialect of Malo, and referred to the world using dialectal words. This language, as well as all the dialects of Italy, was originated as oral-only: no written form of it existed. In that reality, where everything was measured and calibrated because of poverty, there was not a strict definition of social categories. In Meneghello’s opinion if we want to classify the people on the basis of

their standard of living, we can say that there were: peasants, who represented “la gente” (the great majority of common people) of Malo; half-peasants, bound to life in the fields and whom Meneghello defines “non-signori” (not rich people); and artisans: people who worked with their hands to create useful things and tools and that could be associated to “signori” (rich people). His was a family of artisans.

Meneghello thought of his village as a metropolis because of the considerable variety of artisan-creators with their different activities. Indeed in Malo people had daily contacts with different artisans present in the territory: each profession was a distinct world, and consequently it possessed a specific language well known by all the people who were living there.

Language also changed according to elderly: for example there was a wide diversity between the dialect spoken by the aged, and that of the children which was modified by the influence of the national language. Adults spoke another dialect that was much more similar to that of the young generation because they could also speak Italian. Over time, the influence of Italian modified dialects throughout the whole peninsula.

In that society everyone had a role and everything had its place: mind references were still strictly connected with the dialectal world of peasants or artisans. Before industrial development started after World War II, artisans created everything necessary for daily life with their hands. The entire range of expressions was related to the kind of work the artisans did: tools, or work-phases, movements, positions, gestures, etc., were all linked to hard-working people, and this contributed to enriching the dialect.

Men never sat down at home, not even to have lunch. Luigi Meneghello was the oldest son, so he was the first man in his family to sit down in order to write and read when he started attending school: just one step from an important social change. Meneghello received the first principles of Italian from his primary school teacher.

“È da lì che partono le difficoltà per un dialettologo, per un bambino che parla dialetto, e che crede che la lingua umana, e che crede ancora quando diventa adulto, che la lingua degli uomini è quella. [...] Allora quando senti che invece c'è quest'altra lingua, che pareva quasi il dialetto degli adulti, [...] no dialetto...di variante linguistica degli adulti. [...] E quella si scriveva, mentre la nostra non si scriveva. La lingua vera non si scriveva, e quindi ti trovi su tutta una serie di

problemi su cui mi sono trovato a scrivere con grandissimo gusto, devo dire.”  
(Paolini, “Ritratti”)<sup>6</sup>

During Fascism Italian children were “balilla”<sup>7</sup> and Meneghello was one of them, but in his village he felt neither the heavy impact of the War nor of Fascism. In 1939 he was studying at Padua University. An important meeting, outside the university, was that with Antonio Giuriolo, a teacher who did not have a licence to teach. For Meneghello and his colleagues, Giuriolo was extraordinary: they did not have lessons with him, but they used to talk about literature and, most importantly, about poetry. Little by little Meneghello started to discover Europe, thanks to the conversations on different cultures with Giuriolo and thanks to the books he was reading. Things emerged that could make him grow and change his point of view. At the same time he was an alpino, serving as a soldier in the Alps: a very difficult life for an 18/19-year-old boy who was studying. “Un semestre era come sei anni”<sup>8</sup>, he claims in the video-interview documented in “Ritratti”.

He became an alpino-partigiano at the beginning of the Resistenza (Civil War). Every time he could find a little time he read a poem and he felt it was like “coming back to life” (Paolini, “Ritratti”).

After World War II, at the age of 25, Meneghello left for England. He started university there as a student, but ended up becoming a professor of Italian language and literature from 1947 to 1980 at Reading University, where he founded the Department of *Italian Studies* in 1960.

At the beginning he did not know English very well, so every single word or expression he was learning day by day, was translated in his mind into a dialectal word. For example the English word “rubbish” in Meneghello’s mind had its correspondence with the Vicentino “scoasse” (Meneghello, *Il Dispatrio* 48), not with the Italian “spazzatura”. Meneghello believes that his immediate association with dialectal words was related to the fact he had left Italy still quite young and had found himself so far from Italian surroundings, and especially out of the dialectal

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<sup>6</sup> «It’s from there that all sorts of problems start for a dialectophone, for a boy who speaks dialect, and who believes that to be human language, and, when he becomes an adult still believes that the language of mankind is that! [...] Then, when you hear that there is this other language, which seemed like a dialect of adults , [...] not dialect...a linguistic variant of adults. [...] And that language is written, while ours has no written form. True language was not written, so you found yourself dealing with a series of problems about which I have written with great enjoyment, I must say»

<sup>7</sup> Young boys between eight and fourteen years old who were organized in a paramilitary formation.

<sup>8</sup> «A semester was like six years»

surroundings of his village. England was so radically different and this was the reason why something of his past in the village and his mother tongue strongly remained in his mind.

While he was teaching, he found himself faced with certain questions on Italian “pronunciation”, for example “béne” or “bène”, “signóra” or “signòra”, etc. He admits he felt a little ashamed, but later, in adulthood he tried to learn the pronunciation of Tuscan.

“Un adulto può ragionevolmente imparare a parlarne, ma non a metterlo in pratica, non con disinvoltura nativa. Oggi mi rendo conto che è stupido se sei veneto voler duplicare, quasi contraffare e falsificare un toscano. Al tempo stesso [...] vivevo in Inghilterra, e per un breve periodo mi ero detto: è bene che io mi metta a parlare come gli inglesi [...]. Oggi mi pare, oltre che impossibile, una tale stupidaggine che non so come posso averla creduta desiderabile. [...] Che senso ha fabbricare artificialmente un altro anglofono?.” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 18)<sup>9</sup>

It was outside Italy that his first work, *Libera nos a malo*, originated and from there on Meneghello started to build a series of works united by a continuum.

For example *Libera nos a malo* and *Trapianti*, his latest work, are related. *Libera nos a malo* is written in three different languages: a) literary Italian; b) regional Italian; c) the dialect of his village in the ‘20s-‘30s. What distinguishes the passages from one language to the other is the use of “trasporti” (“transports” or “interplays”) which show, through the story of Meneghello’s childhood, the complication produced by learning the Italian language, considered as a new language especially when he was attending primary school. Meneghello’s aim is to describe his personal experience in this field.

In *Trapianti* Meneghello translates poems and writings of various English-speaking poets using exclusively Alto-Vicentino. His previous works permit us to interpret the language used by him in *Trapianti* as if it were the true language of Meneghello. That is to say, now the reader is ready to understand *why* Meneghello’s translations are made in his dialect instead of Italian. The introspective course is completed now and the writer is allowed to express himself totally, without the need of

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<sup>9</sup>«An adult can learn to talk about it reasonably, but not put it into practice, or rather, not as self-confidently as a native. Nowadays I realize that it is silly, if you are Veneto, to want to duplicate, almost counterfeit and forge Tuscan. At the same time [...] I was living in England, and for a short period I told myself: you should start to speak like English people do [...]. Today I think that besides being impossible, it is also very stupid, and I do not know how I could have thought it desirable [...] What is the sense of producing another Anglophone artificially?»

any other explanation. There is another reason that can justify this choice and it is in *Libera nos a malo* that we find it:

“Se avessi scritto soltanto per i miei compaesani (come per un momento avevo pensato di fare), il libro sarebbe forse venuto un po' meno brutto, ma solo noi a Malo l'avremo potuto leggere. Sarebbe stato piacevole poter lavorare in piena libertà, seguendo fino in fondo l'ispirazione della sola lingua che conosco bene. E dal punto di vista storico mi avrebbe dato molta soddisfazione comporre il primo documento letterario del volgare di Malo. C'era però la difficoltà pratica di una edizione estremamente ristretta; e l'altra difficoltà più grossa che il libro sarebbe sembrato un po' inutile ai suoi lettori, dato che qui in paese queste cose ce le diciamo già a voce.” (Meneghello, *Libera* 283)<sup>10</sup>

In Meneghello's scale of values *Trapianti* represents the apex of his pleasure in writing in that language he knows so well. In the end his own language reaches the same level as the national language, because with this latest work he has been able to follow his inspiration without any limitation. Moreover it is not a work dedicated only to the people of Malo, but it is the evolution of a single thought and an entire experience that comes to light. As a result we do not have just a mere description of Meneghello's profound aspect, but the uniqueness of his experimental work can be considered as a historical documentation.

The main difference with *Libera nos a malo* is the absence of what Meneghello calls “trasporti” (interplays), which work as a clarification, or as a caricature sometimes, of his dialectal expressions.

In *Il Tremaio* he gives a definition of what a “trasporto” is:

“Il trasporto è dunque la creazione di una parola che deve parere italiano (non nel senso di essere creduta italiana, ma nel senso di armonizzare con l'italiano) e

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<sup>10</sup> «If I had written for my fellow-villagers only (as I thought I would at the beginning), the book would probably have come out a little less ugly, but only we from Malo could have read it. It would have been a pleasure to work in total freedom, following the inspiration of the only language I know well right to the end; and from the historical point of view, to write the first literary document about the *vulgar* language of Malo would have given me great gratification. But there was the practical problem of an extremely limited edition; and the other bigger problem was that the book would have been a bit useless to its readers, because we already *talk* to each other about such things in my village»

insieme rispecchiare il dialetto, e che può funzionare solo se sta in un contesto che permetta di percepire almeno l'aroma [...].” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 29)<sup>11</sup>

Here it is clear how he wishes to be able to render the vitality that he perceives in this transfer of meaning.

“Questa è la fase dei liberi scambi reciproci tra le due lingue, tra il dialetto e la lingua letteraria: il rapporto che in inglese si chiamerebbe “interplay”, in italiano mi piacerebbe dire “interazione” arieggiando un po’ il linguaggio della fisica moderna. Come le interazioni della fisica sono in fondo misteriose, così qui c’è in gioco una serie di forze e di processi che dal punto di vista teorico non potrei certo dire di conoscere appieno. Io ho cercato di lavorare su queste interazioni con determinati esperimenti. In *Libera nos a malo* li ho chiamati, un po’ semplicemente “trasporti”. [...] non mi sono proposto di riprodurre il dialetto, [...] né mi sono proposto di tradurre il dialetto in italiano, cosa intrinsecamente insulsa; ho invece voluto trasferire, *trasportare*, la mia esperienza dialettale in italiano, farla valere anche per chi non conosce il dialetto, nel miglior modo che potevo .” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 26)<sup>12</sup>

Meneghello wonders in what an interplay consists and also how and why it is derived.

“Una risposta veramente soddisfacente io non la so dare, ma posso dire un paio di cose che mi sembrano pertinenti. Primo, che la tastiera in cui si opera è amplissima, i contrasti (e le armonie) riguardano non soltanto il lessico delle due lingue, ma anche la fonologia, le convenzioni grafiche, la grammatica, la sintassi. [...] Il grado estremo di interazione ha luogo soltanto quando i nuclei [...] delle parole si accostano a distanze ridottissime. Qui si sprigionano reazioni che per

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<sup>11</sup> «The creation of a word that must look like Italian (not in the sense of being believed as Italian, but in the sense of harmonizing with Italian) and at the same time reflect the dialect, which can work only if it is in a context which allows us to perceive at least its aroma [...].»

<sup>12</sup> «This is the phase of mutual free exchanges between the two languages, between dialect and literary Italian: the relationship that in English would be called “interplay”, in Italian I would like to call it “interazione” recalling a little the language of modern physics. The aim of physics is after all mysterious, here as well a series of forces and processes are implicated, which I cannot say I totally know from a theoretical point of view. I have tried to work on these interplays with a variety of experimentations. In *Libera nos a malo* I simply call them “trasporti”. [...] It was not my intention to reproduce the dialect, [...] nor did I try to translate dialect into Italian, something intrinsically nonsensical; instead I wanted to transfer, to *transport*, my dialectal experience into Italian, to show its worth as best I could even to those who do not know dialect»

me sono veramente forti, anche se mi rendo conto che non sempre si comunicano al lettore nello stesso modo. [...]” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 26-27)<sup>13</sup>

At this point Meneghello gives an example referred to the dialectal word “fragnòccola” and affirms that it has a correspondence with the Tuscan expression “nocchino”.

“[...] È chiaro che in ogni parte d’Italia qualcosa di analogo esiste e avrà perciò il suo nome, quello dei toscani possiamo anche considerarlo “italiano” benché non sia poi detto che sia la parola più usata nelle varie forme di italiano regionale che, tutto sommato, sono l’italiano.” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 26-27)<sup>14</sup>

The moment of Italian history in which the tale of *Libera nos a malo* is set is the period when regional dialects were the only languages common people spoke. For this reason, to learn *to speak* Italian, and most of all to learn *to write* it was totally new for a little boy like Meneghello, whose dialect was his mother-tongue and was an oral-only language.

“Mi rendo conto che in ogni altra lingua ci sono delle difficoltà quando si impara a scrivere. Figuratevi gli inglesi, con l’enorme disparità tra fonemi e grafemi nella loro lingua: per loro imparare a scrivere dev’essere veramente una tale esperienza dell’irrazionalità umana da segnarli per tutta la vita. [...] Ma da noi c’erano problemi molto più seri. Non si trattava di imparare certi grafemi per i propri fonemi, ma di imparare simultaneamente sia i grafemi, sia un impasto di fonemi nostri e altrui, nel contesto di un lessico in parte forestiero, in parte nostrano e in parte bastardo!” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 20)<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> «I am not able to give a really satisfying answer, but I can say a couple of things that I think are pertinent. First of all the keyboard on which we are operating is very wide, contrasts (and harmonies) refer not only to the lexicon of the two languages but also to phonology, graphic conventions, grammar and syntax. [...] The extreme degree of interplay takes place only when the nuclei [...] of words come closer. Here, for me, very strong reactions are released, even if I realize that it is not always possible to communicate them to the reader in the same way [...].»

<sup>14</sup> «It is clear that in every part of Italy something similar exists and consequently it will have its name, that of Tuscany we can even consider “Italian” even if it is not certain that it is the word most used in the various forms of regional Italian which, after all, are Italian»

<sup>15</sup> «I am aware that in every other language there are difficulties when one learns how to write. Just imagine the English, with the enormous disparity between phonemes and graphemes in their language: for them, learning to write must be an experience of human irrationality which will mark them for the rest of their lives. [...] But there were many more serious problems for us. We did not have to learn certain graphemes and their own phonemes, but to learn simultaneously both graphemes and a

Meneghello explains the substantial separation between the object of the graphic form and the essence of the thing itself as he perceived it. He gives an example in which the subject is a bird.

“C'erano 12 modi per scrivere “uccellino”, trascurando gli infortuni atipici e la forma ipercorretta “uccellino” postulabile in scritture di veneti consequenziari, ma che non trovo attestata:

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. ucelino   | 7. ucellino    |
| 2. ucielino  | 8. uciellino   |
| 3. ucilino   | 9. ucillino    |
| 4. uccelino  | 10. uccellino  |
| 5. uccielino | 11. ucciellino |
| 6. uccilino  | 12. uccillino  |

Undici di queste forme erano illegali. [...] Venendo alla sostanza, e tralasciando come troppo oscura la questione se un uccellino o un uccielino si può considerare un uccellino, resta l'altra, cruciale, se un uccellino è un oseleto. [...] Qui non stiamo analizzando due lingue organizzate in modo analogo, con lo stesso rapporto interno tra parlato e scritto. “Oseleto” era la sola parola da *dire* in paese: e “uccellino” la sola da scrivere. (Meneghello, *Jura* 27)<sup>16</sup>

E probabilmente la nostra concezione profonda dei significati delle parole si è formata o modificata allora, e ci ha poi condizionati forse per sempre.” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 20)<sup>17</sup>

Scrivendo, ci si andava ad inserire in una sfera in cui vigeva un diverso criterio di realtà, e le cose significate dalle parole avevano caratteristiche nuove rispetto al

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mixture of some belonging to our language, and others belonging to another language, in a context where the lexicon is partially foreign, partially local and partially hybrid»

<sup>16</sup> «There were twelve ways of writing “uccellino”, overlooking atypical accidents and the overcorrect form “uccellino” recognizable in successive writings of other people from the Veneto, but that I have not found attested. [...] Eleven of these forms were illegal [...] substantially, omitting the too obscure question of saying if an “ucillino” or an “ucielino” can be considered as an “uccellino”, the other, the crucial one remains: if an “uccellino” is an “oseleto”. Here we are not analysing two languages with the same inner relation between spoken and written form. “Oseleto” was the only way to say it in my village, “uccellino” the only way to write it»

<sup>17</sup> «And probably our deepest conception of the meanings of words was formed or modified at that time, and maybe has conditioned us for ever»

parlato. Un uccellino infatti non fa le cose che fa un oseleto, il quale non fa quasi niente. L'uccellino è energico, fattivo: svolazza, loda Dio; si fa ritrarre nei libri di lettura, o in cartolina, e si può copiare a mano; [...] quando viene la Primavera, lui l'annuncia; è utile alla società [...]. Al confronto l'oseleto è uno scalzacane. Non sa niente, non sa le poesie a memoria, non entra nei dettati, nei libri, nei pensierini... Non pare che abbia alcuna funzione, non interessa alle persone istruite. Eppure tutti sanno che ha una qualità che all'altro manca: è vivo, ed è proprio lui che presta all'altro una sembianza di vita. Perché l'uccellino con tutto il suo lustro ha l'occhietto un po' vitreo. È un aggeggio di smalto e d'oro: sta su un ramo di gemme d'oro, e di lì si dà da fare per stupire le dame e i signori di Bisanzio, o addirittura (dicono) per tenere svegli i soldati ubriachi.<sup>18</sup> (Meneghello, *Jura* 29-30)<sup>19</sup>

Meneghello wonders where the creativity of his mother tongue will end up as school teaches to think in another language, standard Italian. This has a “contaminating” factor, enriching on the one hand but causing change on the other, so that certain dialectal expression or words may become lost. The only thing he can do is say how things were in a not too distant past.

“[...] come stiano ora non sono sicuro. Mi rendo conto per esempio che l'intera funzione dello “scrivere” è cambiata in tutte le società moderne, ha perso importanza e che probabilmente l'idea di avvicinarsi al “vero” delle cose scrivendolo non ha più molto mordente. Però forse non è inutile cercare ugualmente di definirla per quello che è (o era).” (Meneghello, *Tremaio* 13)<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> These last words are taken from two poems of W. B. Yeats “Sailing to Byzantium” from *The Tower* (1928), and “Byzantium”, from *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933).

<sup>19</sup> «When I was writing I was entering a sphere in which there was a different criterion to interpreting reality and things meant by words, and things had new aspects with regard to those of speech. An “uccellino”, in fact does not do those things that an “oseleto” does, that is, almost nothing. The “uccellino” is vigorous, active, flutters, glorifies God, he is portrayed in books, or postcards and you can make a drawing of it. [...] When spring comes, he announces it. He is useful to society. [...] On the contrary the “oseleto” is a botcher. He knows nothing, he does not know poems by heart, he does not appear in dictations, in books or in pupils’ short compositions. He seems to have no function. Educated people are not interested in him. Nevertheless everybody knows that he has a quality that the other lacks: he is alive, and it is he that lends the other a living look. Because the uccellino, for all his lustre, has a little vitreous eye. It is a gadget made of enamel and gold, it sits on a branch of golden buds, and from there it works hard to amaze the ladies and gentlemen of Byzantium or moreover (some say) to keep drunk soldiers awake»

<sup>20</sup> « [...] How things are now, I am not sure. I know for example that the whole function of “writing” has changed in all modern societies, it has lost its importance, and the idea of coming near to the “truth” of things by writing them has not much bite. But maybe it is not useless if we try just the same to define what it is (or was)»

Meneghello does not consider dialect as a *low* language, but as a *deep* language, not because of its special peculiarity as a linguistic system, but because it was the language of the first and vivid stages of his life. A sort of “metaphysic language” (Meneghello, *Su/Per* 25) with the power to evoke an imaginary world, or with the function of representing a community of speakers, or also a topic to study and analyse with a scientific eye.

There is something very rich and complex in his will to write in Alto-Vicentino, something associable to a historical record. Behind a language there is always the story of a group of people who share their lives, so what Meneghello does is to write the biography of a collectivity. There is no better way to explain such concepts than using Meneghello’s words.

“La lingua aveva strati sovrapposti: era tutto un intarsio. C’era la gran divisione della lingua rustica e di quella paesana, e c’era inoltre tutta una gradazione di sfumature per contrade e per generazioni. Strambe linee di divisione tagliavano i quartieri, e fino i cortili, i porticati, la stessa tavola a cui ci si sedeva a mangiare.” (Meneghello, *Libera* 118-119)<sup>21</sup>

In his latest work *Trapianti*, he remains faithful to the peculiar choice of his personal literary way. Following his instinct and his experience, he represents the poles of his interests: on the one hand there is his inner world expressed by the language of his childhood in Malo, on the other hand there is his passion for poetry, another solitary and interior planet in which the highest form of art finds its place.

The writer’s personality was formed in strata like “geological eras” (Meneghello, *Su/Per* 15-16): his childhood in Malo; his scholastic experience, the meeting with Antonio Giuriolo; his experience at the University of Reading; his return to his mother country. A different point of view is related to each strata: it perceives and prints reality with singular peculiarities because in those various sections there is no evolution, no passage, but interferences, contrasts and disturbing elements.

Publishing *Trapianti* Meneghello shares with the reader a private side of himself, but, it being connected with his biographical experience, it is not isolated: it is like

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<sup>21</sup> «The language had superimposed strata: everything was intertwined. There was the great division between rustic language and that of the village, and there was also an entire gradation of shades depending on hamlets and generations. Strange lines of division cut the zones of the village, and even the farmyards, the porticoes of the houses, the very table itself where the family sat down to eat»

another step of the continuum that brings coherence through the whole literary creation of the writer. It becomes the biography of a collectivity.

The roots of dialect are very deep in someone like Meneghello, who lived as a dialectophone during the first years of his life: this has an extraordinary power for his interior life, even if he then spoke another language or, as in his case, lived in a foreign country for many years.

“la lingua si muove come una corrente: normalmente il suo flusso non si avverte, perché ci siamo dentro, ma quando torna qualche emigrato si può misurare la distanza dove è uscito a riva. Tornano dopo dieci anni, dopo venti anni dalle Australie, dalle Americhe: in famiglia hanno continuato a parlare la lo stesso dialetto che parlavano qui con noi, che parlavamo tutti; tornano e sembrano gente di un altro paese o di un'altra età. Eppure non è la loro lingua che si è alterata, è la nostra.” (Meneghello, *Libera* 119)<sup>22</sup>

As every single artisan's product was unique in Meneghello's village, similar but never exactly the same, so his dialect cannot be equated to that spoken today in the same territory where he was born because of the natural evolution of any language. This is a key shift: Meneghello collocates his “true” language in the centre distinguishing it from standard Italian, which is linked to the scholastic experience of learning another way of thinking, which did not give him the feeling of reality. While his sensation for standard Italian was described as a miseducation (against life), the beauty of literature and aspects of different cultures are what he felt as the exploration of a re-education (for life) and it was his discussions with Antonio Giuriolo that transmitted these sensations to him.

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<sup>22</sup> «Languages keep on moving like a stream: normally we cannot feel its dull flowing, because we are inside it, but when some emigrants come back we can measure the distance from the moment they left. They come back home after ten years, after twenty years, from Australia, America: in the family they kept on speaking the same dialect they used to speak here, that we all spoke in the past. They return and it seems as if they are from another place or another time. Nevertheless, it is not their language that has changed, but ours»

## 1.2 Portrait of e. e. cummings

Edward Estlin Cummings (e.e.c.) was born on October 14, 1894, at 104 Irving Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts and as an adult, he was very proud of the fact that he had been born at home, rather than in hospital. To him the increasing dependence on hospitals and other institutions for the basic processes of birth and death signalled an unfortunate depersonalisation in American life. Anyway he was fortunate in the family in which he grew up.

His father, Edward Cummings, taught at Harvard as an instructor of English, political economy and sociology. Later he was a Unitarian Minister in Boston and was active in the field of social ethics.

e.e.cummings' mother was Rebecca Haswell Clarke, of Roxbury, Massachusetts. cummings defined her as a joyous, healthy and generous human being and also a very courageous one.

It was a large household which included, at various times, his grandmother, his aunt, his maternal uncle, and his younger sister Elizabeth. The atmosphere in the household was generally progressive for the interest of cummings' family in the ever-increasing scientific knowledge of the day.

The first telephone in Cambridge was installed in the Cummings' house. Ironically, these were things to which E. E. C. became hostile in his adult life. [...] From his college days many of his attitudes and values were different from those of his family and the community of his childhood: he was on principle opposed to the use of machines as substitutes for experience and barriers against privacy. (Dumas, *A Remembrance* 17)

e.e.cummings' formal schooling began at a private school in Cambridge. After that came several public schools. When he was a child he used to spend vacations in Maine and at a family summer home, Joy Farm, in Silver Lake, New Hampshire, where he died of a cerebral hemorrhage on September 3, 1962. Finally there was the Cambridge High and Latin School where he learned Greek and other languages. In 1911 he entered Harvard College. His first published poems appeared in periodicals such as *The Harvard Advocate* and *Harvard Monthly*. He graduated *magna cum laude* four years later.

Through his association with the two student magazines, Cummings met fellow writers: one of them was John Dos Passos. Other associations were important and interesting: he met T. S. Eliot as a member of the Cambridge Dramatic Club.

e.e.cummings stayed on at Harvard for one more year, during which he earned an M. A. degree from the Graduate School of Arts and Science and helped to organize The Harvard Poetry Society.

From 1917 Cummings started to travel: his first destination was New York, some years later he went to Europe, where he visited Portugal, Spain, France and Italy. He even spent some time in Russia.

During World War I he was a volunteer ambulance driver for the American Red Cross. He was imprisoned with a friend in a French concentration camp for several months under suspicion of disloyalty. Released from prison after the intervention of his father, who wrote a letter to President Woodrow Wilson to get them out, Cummings returned to New York and he enrolled in the United States Army remaining until Armistice. The experience in the camp was described in *The Enormous Room*, a novel/memoir published in 1922. It represents his first literary attack on authoritarianism.

The appearance one year later of his first collection of poetry *Tulips and Chimneys* was very important for the range of *kinds* of poems it contained and it announced the beginning of his long production of experimental poetry.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Cummings travelled widely in Europe to study art, alternately living in Paris and New York. He developed parallel careers as a poet and as a painter: he was particularly impressed by Cubist techniques and Picasso.

Cummings later said that he never made a conscious decision to be a poet. He remembered that he always wrote poetry, and he also said that as far back as he could remember he was writing and painting. (Dumas, *A Remembrance* 20)

Since his publication of poems in *Eight Harvard Poets* in 1917, Cummings' genius created a characteristic: a kind of perception and a kind of valorous honesty exalted by his style. The lower-case personal pronoun "i" became his trademark. e.e.cummings explains his reason for writing his own name totally in lower-case in the following question reported by Dumas in *E.E.Cummings: A Remembrance of Miracles*:

“Concerning the “small “I” ”: did it ever strike you as significant that, of all God’s children, only English & American apotheosize their egos by capitalizing a pronoun whose equivalent is in French “je” in German “ich”, & in Italian “io”?” (Dumas, *A Remembrance* 55-56)<sup>23</sup>

Norman Friedman, one of the critics of Cummings’ art commented that:

Cummings has less frequently had the sort of concentrated critical attention that his noted contemporaries have had. [...] because they have difficulty in taking it [his poetry] seriously. [...] It is the right of any poet to be evaluated in terms of what he does rather than of what he should do. [...] If Cummings does not have a tragic vision, he does have another type of vision, which is sufficiently serious to serve as the basis of a significant lyric poetry – if not of tragic drama or fiction – and it should be judged accordingly. (Friedman, *The Art* 3-4)

The language Cummings used, and his experiments, legitimate artistic ends and if we read his poetry from the beginning to the end we can observe a steady development toward maturity.

In order to define the nature of Cummings’ poetry and to suggest how it may be evaluated, it is necessary to understand how Cummings viewed life. Interestingly Norman Friedman tried to focus his entire study in terms of Cummings’ own values, tracing the *why* of Cummings’ work, then the *what*, and finally the *how*.

[Cummings is] a man with certain qualities of imagination and sensitivity to write not only poems (rather than something else) but poems of certain kinds. What he does and how he does it, that is, are given shape by the force of his inner necessities; what he can conceive of determines what and how he will write, or not write. By this I do not mean that we shall be concerned with the poet’s biography or psychology, but simply with such qualities of his artistic imagination and sensibility as may be inferred from the character of the person he has invented to speak his poems, the attitudes and ideas he has attributed to him, and the kinds of subjects he has chosen to elicit a response in that speaker. (Friedman, *The Art* 5)

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<sup>23</sup> This is a comment e.e.cummings made in a letter to an unidentified English correspondent which is reported by Dumas in his work.

The response of the speaker is a certain sort of vision expressed by the various languages used by Cummings confirming his nature and temperament, and vivifying and intensifying his devices in various constructive powers.

e.e.cummings believes and acts exactly as his speaker believes and acts. This is a man who knows death but chooses life, who knows grief but chooses joy, who knows fear but chooses love. He redeems chaos by remaining true.

The poet, for Cummings, is merely the type of the true man, and all true men are poets: men who can see with clear eyes, feel with unconditional emotions, and love without fear; men who are whole, entire and alive. (Friedman, *The Art* 10)

This is a man in harmony with nature. He is not afraid of the coming of winter and death because of his confidence in the return of spring and life. This subject is present in many poems: in "in Just-", for example, one of Cummings' most analysed poems, also one which Meneghello translates in *Trapianti*.

His speaker sees this world as cleanly divided between good and evil, right and wrong. He "simply rises above the whole struggle into a transcendent world which is one, and full of love" (Friedman, *The Art* 13). In his universe there is evil but not sin, as if in a sort of "Eden in which no command has yet been given". His is "a vision of life without the happy fault, a philosophy of extreme self-determinism and free will. It is perhaps how a sensitive child looks at life." (Friedman, *The Art* 14). e.e.cummings maintains that man is devoid of the capacity to make mistakes and, he only acknowledges a movement toward joy.

He who is truly alive is truly self-reliant and self-created; he is beyond the reach of external causation; his life is entirely within; and he has reached the state of beatitude described by John Donne as a characteristic of the soul after Resurrection. (Friedman, *The Art* 15)

According to Cummings such a status may be achieved on earth without heavenly intervention, and he explains this in part with his satire, which is mostly dedicated to two categories of people: those who refuse to listen and those who do listen. The first cannot feel that the world is transformed, while the true man and woman transcend the "real" world as we know it, where we turn away from fear toward joy, to live in one that is even more real. A clear example of this theme is a very early

poem “who knows if the moon”, which is collected in & (1925). The key terms of cummings’ ideas occupy four areas of human thought and experience: love, death and time; the natural and the artificial; society and the individual; dream and reality. Transcendence means freedom from limitations and has its source in a sinless universe; the result is that love transcends death and time; the individual transcends the group; the natural transcends the artificial; and the dream is the true reality. As Friedman states:

A true individual, a man as opposed to mankind, is a natural and miraculous phenomenon; he is on a par, in the world of Cummings’ speaker, with trees and mountains and flowers. (Friedman, *The Art* 18)

In this way, each individual is a mystery: cummings says that, when mind is separated from heart and soul, what in man prevents him from keeping in harmony with natural processes and this causes him to be afraid of what he sees. Hence, man produces lies, machines and bureaucracy in order to protect himself from reality.

Poems are natural products because they come from a whole man in tune with the music of nature, and they are in competition with other natural elements such as flowers, sunsets, leaves, and so on.

The artificial world created by the mind brings with it also automatism, mass anxiety and universal restlessness. In short, we have what cummings calls the “unworld”. All forms of tyranny of the majority are the chief target of cummings’ satire.

The cure to achieve salvation is to be found in love. Love is the courage to hope and the determination to be oneself. The desire for life. The world that love creates is a world of dream dominated by spiritual strength, where time is timeless and all questions are answered.

The dream is the world of transcendence. The key terms of it are: mystery, miracle, secret and magic. Inside this world *forever* and *when* are *now*, whereas in the unworld they are *never* and *until*. The verb is *am* while in the unworld it is *was*; it is the world of *end*, *begin* and *return* vs. *must*, *shall* and *can’t*; of *new* and *young* vs. *same*; of *yes* vs. *if*, *un*, *non*, *but*, *less*, *almost* and *since*. In short, the dichotomy between immeasurable vs. measurable, and so on appears in it.

e.e.cummings’ style reflects the uniqueness of an arrangement that sees the systematic and complete transformation of verbs into nouns, nouns into adjectives with the addition of an appropriate suffix; adjectives into verbs, and so on, to create

vehicles for a conception of a world which is rare in modern poetry. Language is a grammatical code that achieves significance only in context; thus idea is inseparable from its expression and cummings is able to make us see old values in a fresh, perceptive way. He has developed a conceptual vehicle of delicate precision that can express his values in a vivid, compressed and exciting fashion. e.e.cummings used grammatical shifts such as the change of the grammatical form of words, without changing their root significance to maintain a correspondence with his moral and psychological views. His use of these forms is less present in his first three volumes *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923), & *[And]* (1925), and *is 5* (1926) – but they appear with a certain frequency in his middle three volumes: *VV [ViVa]* (1931), *No Thanks* (1935), and *New Poems* (1938); - and they are dominant in his last three volumes: *50 Poems* (1940), *1 x 1 [One Times One]* (1944), and *Xaipe: Seventy-One Poems* (1950)

e.e.cummings' maturity comes from a development and a growth of the quality of his poetic thought. Love and lovers still remain at the centre of cummings' interests and they are associated with natural processes. While urban interests were higher in *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923), & (1925), less in the volumes from *is 5* (1926) to *50 Poems* (1940), they almost disappear in *1 x 1 [One Times One]* (1944) and in *Xaipe* (1950).

e.e.cummings found a way to capture the chaos of modern society in a form of poetry that is not chaotic. He is against everything and everybody except himself and his personal society which includes his friends, his family and his woman. What most people call the "real" world simply does not exist for cummings. The artist's country is himself: he is not of this world. The world of "mostpeople" is abstract: it is the unworld. People who live in this unworld change when the world changes, succeed when the world succeeds, and collapse when the world collapses. From these affirmations cummings considers them as dead, because they are not true to themselves.

His is a poetry of resolution rather than of conflict, and the distinctive trait of Cummings' persona is his certainty, his freedom from doubt and anxiety, his transcendence of ambivalence and paradox. (Friedman, *The Art* 37)

Poems of description, praise and eulogy, satire, reflection and persuasion, account for almost 90 per cent of his total work.

The largest proportion of cummings' poems are descriptive: his early works *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923) and & (1925) are more descriptive than the others which

gradually lose this peculiarity. This most common form of Cummings' emphasized the importance placed upon the experience of sensation and of his moral values. All these poems describe immediacy, freshness, directness, spontaneity, simultaneity and precision: "a parable effect upon why and how he writes descriptive poems". (Friedman, *The Art* 41).

He praises his father, Buffalo Bill, Picasso, his mother, Negroes, and many other known and unknown people. He also praises beauty, spring, innocence, nature and its creatures, objects and processes.

e.e.cummings is obsessed by the problem of the individual's place in society and, in his satire, with its very simple sense of the funny and ridiculous, he makes big what is small and viceversa. He also satirized on all those people and things that possess power such as politics and politicians, celebrities, war, bureaucracy, commerce, etc. "Mostpeople", for example, is conceived as a collective pseudo beast and the individual finds himself against the tyranny of the majority.

Cummings has been accused of being egocentric and undemocratic, but it is only because he has such an absolute conviction in the dignity of man and the freedom of the human will that he can have such a hate for conformity. (Friedman, *The Art* 51)

In conclusion one can say that the poetry of Cummings is structured in five principal forms:

1. Description: placing its speaker in the presence of some sensory stimulus and representing him as perceiving.
2. Praise and eulogy: placing him in relation to some person, type or idea, and representing him as admiring.
3. Satire: placing him in relation to society and presenting him as its critic;
4. Reflection: placing him before scenes and people and representing him as interpreting and commenting.
5. Persuasion: placing him in the presence of someone else and presenting him as speaking to him or her.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> On this subject see *e. e. Cummings: the art of his poetry* by Norman Friedman, chapter "Action".

A certain kind of vocabulary in a certain set of circumstances produces what may be called a tone of voice. (Friedman, *The Art* 62)

e.e.cummings makes fun of what he praises, and mocks what he reveres. He is seriously funny, comically serious and classically romantic. He can mix concrete adjectives with abstract nouns and see colours in terms of sounds. The components of his mixture are the combination of various voices such as formal, archaic, neutral, or burlesque. Each of these voices is translated into a particular style, so we have the neutral, the burlesque, the archaic and so on. As Friedman says, this can be a “modified romantic style” (Friedman, *The Art* 63): romantic because of the quality and the quantity of those “sweet”, “warm” and “soft” words such as *delicious* and *exquisite*; and modified because of the introduction of “cool”, “dry” and “hard” words such as *exact* and *stern*. This juxtaposition allows him to be flexible and to modify the traditional association of certain words to produce a paradoxical combination of opposites. Vulgarisms also appear, such as the use of New Yorkese for its phonetical spelling which produces the effect of something ridiculous and comic.

e.e.cummings’ subjects, ideas and situations are frequently ultra-traditional, while his techniques and devices are frequently ultra-modern. He has taken a completely individualistic attitude toward rhyme, meter, stanza, grammar, syntax and typography.

The general function of the devices and techniques of poetic art is to render what is being shown as intelligible and yet as vivid as possible (Friedman, *The Art* 86)

In addition, cummings includes word-coinage, the shifting of grammar forms, syntactical and typographical dislocation. His poetry presents a figurative language with metrical and stanzaic practices of dense and vivid effect.

Synaesthesia, metaphor, personification of a season, and simile, all act as symbols in his world of imagination and possibility, of dream and miracles, of love and triumph. In other words, this is a dynamic world opposed to the world of fixities.

Rhythmic units are generally two, the regular and the irregular, but cummings uses a third possibility, the free verse stanza, with no rhyme or meter. Here the poet makes arbitrary decisions. The rhyme scheme can be that of a sonnet but with an

extremely irregular meter; a ballad, a quatrain or one traditionally Shakespearian. The alteration of rhyming sound reflects a shift, a change of interest in subject matter.

His next most radical device is the distortion of grammatical and syntactical units.

[...] *verbs* become nouns, as in [...] “A world of made/ is not a world of born” (XIV:397) [...]; *pronouns* become nouns, as in “when is now and which is Who” (32:447) [...]; *adverbs* become nouns, as in [...] “are flowers neither why nor how” (32:447) [...]; *adjectives* become nouns, as in “the cult of Same” (54:314); and *conjunctions* become noun, as in “and finding only why/smashed it into because” (XXVI:404). [...] *adjectives* can become verbs, as in “to swifts” or “darks”; [...] and *nouns* can become verbs as in “truthed”. Although many additional coinage are formed by adding prefixes, especially “un-” or “non-”, by far the largest proportion is formed by adding suffixes, as “-ness”, “-ly”, and others. (Friedman, *The Art* 106)

His calculated dislocation is accurate and precise and this confers to the poem an aesthetic effect of simultaneity, especially for the rhythm.

The spatial distortion of typographical units is cummings' most radically experimental device and it is represented by an unconventional use of parentheses, capital and lower-case letters, punctuation, and the telescoping of a word or the interlacing of several words. For example cummings is fond of using graduated series of punctuation marks, as in “, ; : : ; ,” in order to give a sense of lightness, rapidity, heaviness or slowness to the reading, or even to give a visual effect of progression. The pattern is balanced and it indicates an aesthetic harmony in the apparently chaotic scene described by the poem. His use of capital and lower-case letters is very important in order to emphasize concepts and forms: see for example “the little horse is newY/ Born) [...] is amazing)/a worD.and in [...]”. A telescopic build-up can be seen in “s???” , “st???” , “sta?” , “star” (70:326). (Friedman, *The Art* 120)

Spacing is another device that distributes words on the page with visual function. In some poems it functions as visual copies of objects or actions: see for example “Buffalo Bill”. Spaces also play the role of word-joining, if a space is missed, and of word-splitting, if a space divides a word into two or more parts.

Cummings is, then, a poetic maker (Friedman, *The Art* 126)

The poet develops a conception of the whole. His artistic problem is to actualise that conception, among the alternative possibilities, as vividly and as clearly as possible. The finished poem must be a completed whole. This unifying conception may vary from poem to poem. As a consequence cummings' poems are pervaded with an obsessive perfectionism.

Vividness of expression is the poet's next problem. This involves rhyme, grammatical forms, syntactical patterns and diction. There is the need for a proper process able to join and rejoin, combine and recombine, compose and recompose the poem.

To sum up, we can point out that cummings' poetry gives a picture of the range of his interests, vision and talents. His poetry is also rich in several types of ambiguities so that "every single poem "means" differently for each individual." (Dumas, *A Remembrance* 102)<sup>25</sup> The truth is that it is impossible to classify cummings' poems on the basis of any classification scheme because, to use cummings' words, standardisation is dehumanisation.

Comparing cummings' values regarding life and poetry with Meneghello's point of view on the language and its power, one can state that both writers have many things in common. In fact, they both possess a strong sense of Nature and the natural, home and family, personal and profound feelings, as opposite to artifice, the rest of the outside world, and what is superficial and standard. For e.e.cummings and Meneghello there is no more intimate vehicle for containing man's inner feelings than poetry. Key shifts are the proposal of language used by the two writers. The proof that they have remained true to themselves and their sensibility is shown in the coherence demonstrated in their works, despite the fact that cummings wrote in a period when experimentalisms were not easily accepted or understood.

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<sup>25</sup> These are cummings' words reported in Dumas's work.

## Portrait of Mary de Rachewiltz

Mary de Rachewiltz was born in Bressanone (Italy), in 1925, to Ezra Pound and Olga Rudge. She was raised by a peasant couple in South Tyrol, where she learned to speak the Tyrolese dialect as her first language. The special surroundings in which she grew up allowed her also to learn Italian and French at school and English from her natural parents who were both American. Her father, Ezra Pound, was a great innovator in modern poetry: he experiment new ways of writing poetry and was a promoter of the "Imagist" style. He also invented various techniques, for example he mixed Chinese and Japanese with English, Latin, Italian and French into his poems and writings. The use of slang, abbreviation of words and many other aspects of his style inspired poets and writers all over the world. Mary de Rachewiltz's mother was an interesting figure in the world of music, a violinist involved in promoting the music of Antonio Vivaldi.

Mary de Rachewiltz spent the greatest part of her life surrounded by her father's works. She made translations of Pound's *Cantos* and she was the author of numerous poems and a memoir (*Discretions*, 1971) about her father. She was the Curator of the Ezra Pound Archive at the Beinecke Library of Yale University for more than twenty years. One of her recent and most beloved works is *Pound/Confucio Analecta* which cannot be considered a mere translation: she herself defined it as "an ethic and linguistic research"<sup>26</sup>.

In this essay she has the role of translator of some of Cummings' poems from English into standard Italian. They are very useful for the comparison with those translated by Luigi Meneghello into Alto-Vicentino.

Mary de Rachewiltz's work has an extraordinary importance for the circumstances in which she lived because of Pound's and her mother's activities. Around her there were a great deal of important figures of the twentieth century.

Thanks to these experiences and her testimony she became a point of reference for a better knowledge and understanding of what some of these writers wanted to express with their works. She had many occasions to meet the major writers of that period, such as Cummings, T. S. Eliot, Joyce, Hemingway, W. B. Yeats, and others.

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<sup>26</sup> «Questa degli Analecta non si può chiamare una traduzione: è, più propriamente, una ricerca etica e linguistica». Quoted in the website: [www.fondazioneilfiore.it/ospiti\\_3html#rachewiltz](http://www.fondazioneilfiore.it/ospiti_3html#rachewiltz)

Her translations are an important source for interpreting cummings' poetry. cummings and Pound were good friends and cummings was strongly inspired by the style of Pound.

Translating cummings into standard Italian she was able to transfer not only his words but also his concept of thinking poetry, in an almost pure way.

The analysis of de Rachewiltz's translations is necessary to see if standard Italian is able to satisfy cummings' intentions completely.

Mary de Rachewiltz translated cummings' poems into standard Italian, the language she used to speak when living in Italy, even if it is not her mother tongue.

The key shift in her work depends on translating cummings' poems directly into Italian, without filtering them through the mental references of her mother tongue, Tyrolese, a language that she uses in *Discretions* every time she wants to say something particular that cannot be expressed in any other language she knows. This is the proof that something linked to the first form of communication she learned to use for thinking and speaking cannot be cancelled or forgotten: it is a part of her. In this experience of the world Mary de Rachewiltz and Luigi Meneghello are similar.

## CHAPTER 2

### ANALYSIS OF SIX POEMS BY e. e. cummings: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

#### 2.1 “the little horse is newly”

<u>e.e.cummings' version</u>		<u>Luigi Meneghello's version</u>	
the little horse is newly	1	el pulierin zé penA	1
Born)he knows nothing,and feels	2	Nato)no'l sa gniente, e'l sente	2
everything;all around whom is	3	tutocuant;intorno a elo ghe	3
perfectly a strange	4	zé parfetamente na stramba	4
ness Of sun	5	ria (De raggi de sole	5
light and of fragrance and of	6	e de roba che sa da bon e de	6
Singing)is ev	7	Sanbei che canta)ghin'è da	7
erywhere(a welcom	8	partuto(un insogno	8
ing dream:is amazing)	9	che'l te fa festa:te resti inbaucà)	9
a world.and in	10	un mondO.e in	10
this world lies: smoothbeautyfuL	11	sto mondo ghe zé: butà-zo lissobelO	11
ly folded;a(brea	12	ben fato-su;un (afarin che'l re	12
thing and a gro	13	spira e'l cres	13
Wing)silence, who;	14	Se)in silenzio, che'l;	14
is: somE	15	zé: cualchE	15
oNe.	16	dUn.	16
		<u>Mary deRachewiltz's version</u>	
		il cavallino è appenA	1
			2
		Nato)nulla sa,e sente	3
		tutto;intorno a lui è	4
		perfetta una stra	5
		nezza Di luce di	6
		sole e fragranza di	7
		Canti)è ov	8
		unque(un accoglien	9
		te sogno:è straordinario	10
		un mondO.e in questo	11
		mondo giace:lisciostupendameN	12
		te ripiegato;un(re	13
		spirare e un cre	14
		Scere)silenzio,che;	15
		è:qualC	16
		uNo.	16

In “the little horse is newLY” cummings’ innovative artistic expression focuses on the idea of birth and growth by the use of particular forms and strategies: visual, typographic, logical and phonic.

The eyes of the reader are the main instrument for observing cummings’ poetry. They capture the vision of the “growing” stanzas organized in one-two-three-four-three-two-one lines. Because of this disposition of the stanzas, a stylisation of progressing and decreasing life stages appears on the paper. Two stanzas in particular turn the poem structure upside-down: the lines of the sixth stanza contain a line of three words and another line of two words, while the seventh counts a line with only the word: “oNe”. These two final stanzas are the proof that for cummings, life knows no end: leaving that “oNe” trace, cummings expresses his belief in eternity.

A trade mark of cummings’ creativity are typography experiments: an unusual punctuation and a free use of spaces, capitalization and lower-case (like in his own name) and a spontaneous attitude for word-coining, express rebellion towards the mass conformity, snobbery and hypocrisy of modern society giving freedom to the celebration of the individual.

With the help of a new and unconventional style cummings is able to enter the sphere of imagination and introduce an innovative form of language constructing fresh metaphors by producing syntactical devices, and shaping letters as pictorial signs.

Even the mind has to work to understand that the words hide more than one meaning, so cummings’ immortal creative imagination can survive both on the paper and in the receiver.

e.e.cummings’ poems are dedicated to the eyes of the reader as much as to his or her ears, but there are also internal rhymes and repetition of sounds that can be mentioned. Listening to the sound produced by the voice of the reader we are able to hear many more words or less words than those written. All of this depends on the English pronunciation. If we also add the collage and word separations that cummings carries out on the page, the musicality of the poem is easily discovered.

In “hist whist”, for example, the pronunciation demonstrates the great power of repetition of words which contain the same sounds.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand the majority of cummings’ poems cannot follow this process: the voice, in fact, cannot always give a sense to the poem.

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<sup>27</sup> See chapter 2.2.

We find examples in “the little horse is newLY”, every time cummings opens or closes a bracket or when he introduces other forms of pause in the poem.

### 2.1.1 The logical form

The multiplicity of meanings hidden in cummings’ poetry is not easy to reveal in each of its parts. But there are aspects that can be disclosed by operating strategical choices.

What Meneghello does is to remain as close as possible to cummings’ setting. He intends to elaborate more than a simple translation of cummings’ poems: he wants to “remake” them, somehow.

In “the little horse is newLY”, whenever cummings repeats the word “every”, Meneghello repeats the word that means “every” in his dialect: “tuto”. And in the same way as cummings combines that word with “thing” or “where”, Meneghello chooses expressions that can contain “tuto”, so we have “tutoquanto” for “everything” and “daparttuto” for “everywhere”. A clear example is in the two stanzas below.<sup>28</sup>

First example:

...Born)he knows nothing,and feels	2	... Nato)no’l sa gniente, e’l sente	2
<u>everything</u> ;all around whom is...	3	<u>tuto</u> quanto;intorno a elo ghe ... (M.)	3
		... Nato)nulla sa,e sente	2
		<u>tutto</u> * <sup>29</sup> ;intorno a lui è ... (R.)	3

Second example:

... Singing)is <u>ev</u>	7	... Sanbei che canta)ghin’è da	7
<u>erywhere</u> (a welcom	8	<u>partuto</u> (un bisogno	8
ing dream:is amazing)	9	che’l te fa festa:te resti inbaucà)	9
a world.and in ...	10	un mondO.e in ... (M.)	10
		... Canti)è <u>ov</u>	7
		<u>unque</u> *(un accoglien	8
		te sogno:è straordinario	9
		un mondO.e in questo ... (R.)	10

<sup>28</sup> In order to distinguish the version of Meneghello from that of de Rachewiltz, the first letter of their surnames is written within brackets at the end of every sequence.

<sup>29</sup> The sign “\*” after “tutto” and “ovunque” indicates the impossibility of repetition of the word “every”.

An equivalent of the dialect form “dapartuto” exists in standard Italian, “dappertutto”, but de Rachewiltz prefers to use the synonymous “ovunque”, which has the same meaning and is much more refined, but which does not respect the repetition of “every”.

On the other hand, “everything” can also be translated with “ogni cosa”, but even this choice would not allow the repetition in the fifth stanza, where cummings divides “breathing” into two.

... <b>this world lies: smooth</b>	<b>11</b>	... sto mondo ghe zé: butà-zo lissobelO	11
<b>ly folded;a(brea</b>	<b>12</b>	ben fato-su;un ( <i>afarín</i> che'l re	12
<b>thing</b> and a gro ...	<b>13</b>	<i>spira</i> e'l cres...(M.)	13
		... mondo giace:liscio stupendameN	11
		te ripiegato;un( <i>re</i>	12
		<i>spirare</i> e un cre...(R.)	13

Again Meneghello is able to solve a problem of interpretation by finding an equivalent word in his mother tongue.

The word analyzed here is “breathing”. By dividing it into “brea” and “thing” cummings introduces two elements: “breathing” and “thing”.

Meneghello is able to express both meanings of this pun by using “thing” with “afarín” and the action of “breathing” with “che ‘l respira”. This is not present in the standard Italian translation, where the verb “respirare” is also rendered as a noun.

In the next stanza the way in which cummings breaks the noun “strangeness” into its adjectival root “strange” and the suffix “ness” again represents an obstacle for the standard Italian translation: in fact, de Rachewiltz can translate only the noun with “stranezza”.

Meneghello clarifies both meanings, because his language allows him to maintain the original arrangement: he chooses “stramba” for the adjective, and then adds the suffix “ria”, turning the word into a noun.

The third stanza below shows how the two translators tried to render cummings’ syntactical construction.

... <i>perfectly a <u>strange</u></i>	4	... zé <i>parfetamente na <u>stramba</u></i>	4
<i>ness Of sun</i>	5	<i>ria (De raggi de sole</i>	5
<i>light and of fragrance and of...</i>	6	<i>e de roba che sa da bon e de... (M.)</i>	6
		... perfetta una <i>stra</i>	4
		<i>nezza Di luce di</i>	5
		<i>sole e fragranza di... (R.)</i>	6

The importance of going beyond things and words is an aspect that Cummings wants to affirm in his poetry. Playing with them, the Anglo-American writer is able to create associations of sounds and produce a plurality of sensations, impressions and meanings.

The central scene of the fourth stanza focuses on the celebration of birth and on the first things the little creature could feel, smell and hear in the world around him. The impression is that of a warm welcome made up of sunlight, fragrance, singing: a world similar to a dream, but at the same time “amazing”. The reaction in front of all this is well-expressed in Meneghello’s version. He too depicts the scene as a dream which gives the creature a warm welcome “un insogno che’l te fa festa”. In order to underline and intensify the celebration of the new birth he writes “te resti imbaucà”. This phrase can be interpreted as the first and a little shocking impression of the animal in front of the world. Because of the verb “resti” which means “remain” (a substitution for the idea of continuity expressed by the “-ing form”) it is also a sensation that lasts, something that holds in the little horse’s feelings.

The adjective “imbaucà”<sup>30</sup> is once again close to the meaning of “amazing”, being something visibly seen on the face or even in the whole body of a person, or as in this case, the body of the animal.

With the personal pronoun “te”, introduced by Meneghello, he creates an ambivalence in the poem: it gives a soul to the animal and Meneghello seems to be talking to him, but it also establishes a direct contact with the reader, as if Meneghello wished “you” to take part in, or to be involved in, this celebration.

For Cummings “you and me are human beings” while “the others”, the mass, “are snob” (Cummings, *Poesie* 159-160). With his device “te”, Meneghello can easily meet

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<sup>30</sup> “imbaucà” is an adjective referred to someone who is looking at or staring at something with an expression of amazement or surprise on his face, similar to that of a stupid person, often with his mouth open. It comes from the root “baùco”: an adjective (often used also as a noun) that is precisely synonymous of a “silly” or “foolish” person.

cummings' sense of the "you and me" relationship, relevant in his poetry and very often adopted.

For example, in the poem "who knows if the moon" the element "we" formed by "you and i" is distinguished from "they" formed by the "pretty people".<sup>31</sup>

In "my sweet old etcetera" again cummings uses the "you and me" relationship. He begins the poem with the pronoun "my" and concludes it with "your".<sup>32</sup>

Mary de Rachewiltz's translation cannot reveal any ambivalence, nor can it fully explain the sense of "amazing". There is the sense of something extraordinary in the word "straordinario" but it does not give the impression also of astonishment or surprise. Moreover, the dream in which the creature thinks he is living, is a "welcoming dream", so the Italian adjective "accogliente" is received only as "welcome", or rather "welcom", not really "welcoming" meant as a celebration or a festivity. The meaning is complete in standard Italian but there is a little loss of the full meaning of "welcoming", that Meneghello is able to express.

... <b>Singing</b> )is ev	<b>7</b>	... Sanbei che canta)ghin'è da	7
<b>erywhere(a welcom</b>	<b>8</b>	partuto(un insogno	8
<b>ing dream:is amazing)</b>	<b>9</b>	<i>che'l te fa festa:te resti inbaucà)</i>	9
<b>a world.and in...</b>	<b>10</b>	un mondO.e in... (M.)	10
		... Canti)è ov	7
		unque(un <i>accoglien</i>	8
		<i>te sogno:è straordinario</i>	9
		un mondO.e in questo... (R.)	10

Another semantic separation that cummings operates is in the word "growing", between the fifth and the seventh stanzas, where the pronunciation and the graphic forms produce two or three interpretations. Pronouncing "growing" our ears hear both "growing" and to "grow in". At the same time our eyes read "gro" separately from "Wing".

In analyzing how Meneghello and de Rachewiltz faced this obstacle, we notice that the key word, "Wing", is not expressed in either translation.

Meneghello tries to capture both meanings created by the sound. In this case he chooses to divide the verb "cresse" in order to reflect the two possible interpretations:

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<sup>31</sup> See chapter 2.2.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter 2.2.

the first one is represented by the entire dialectal verb "cresse" ("he grows"), the second is obtained by beginning the next stanza with "Se", which becomes a conjunction like "if" associable to the sense produced by the sound of "ev" at the end of the seventh verse. From a logical point of view the syntactical structure of Meneghello is correct and complete, although not identical to that of Cummings.

Mary de Rachewiltz prefers the infinitive form. The Italian translation of "growing" is "crescere", but the breaking up of this verb into two ("cre" and "scere") does not result in any meaning for either of its parts. In this way the Italian translation is not in accordance with the sounds of Cummings' "growing", although it does reflect its meaning.

Meneghello also tries to render the expressiveness of "grow in silence" by adding "in" before "silenzio", while de Rachewiltz lets punctuation inform the reader of the presence of "a(...)silence" reproducing what is stated before and after the brackets, namely, "un(...)silenzio".

... <b>this world lies: smooth</b>	<b>11</b>	... sto mondo ghe zé: butà-zo lissobelO	11
<b>ly folded;a(brea</b>	<b>12</b>	ben <i>fato-su</i> ;un (afarin che'l re	12
<b>thing and a gro...</b>	<b>13</b>	spira e'l <i>cres...</i> (M.)	13
		... mondo giace:liscio stupendameN	11
		te <i>ripiegato</i> ;un(re	12
		spirare e un <i>cres...</i> (R.)	13
... <b>Wing)silence, who;</b>	<b>14</b>	... <i>Se</i> )in <i>silenzio</i> , che'l;	14
<b>is: somE</b>	<b>15</b>	zé: cualchE	15
<b>oNe.</b>	<b>16</b>	dUn. (M.)	16
		... <i>Scere</i> ) <i>silenzio</i> ,che;	14
		è:qualC	15
		uNo. (R.)	16

"Folded" is "ripiegato" in standard Italian, while the dialect expression "fato-su" can be used even to refer to something bent, or pressed back, or wrapped up, or rolled up and it does not matter if it is something small or huge, long or short;

moreover, it can give the idea of many pieces of something put together, or assembled, or gathered, in a certain order.

What is more the presence of “f” in “fato-su” sounds nearer to “folded” than “ripiegato”. But these aspects will be dwelled on in the next paragraph dedicated to “sound, rhythm and musicality”.

Summing up, we can affirm that the two translators had to face situations that were not easy in order to reveal each of the poem’s parts. Some aspects are better rendered by Meneghello because he tried to respect and reflect every intention of Cummings. Being helped by the structure of his dialect he can adjust many more of the words and meanings found in Cummings’ poem. Mary de Rachewiltz was able to translate the poem into an elegant standard Italian that gave her the possibility of communicating the global meaning of it, even if sometimes it did not enable her to reproduce the same repetitions or double meanings present in the original version.

We cannot say that one translation is “better” than the other, because we are analyzing two languages, Alto-Vicentino and standard Italian, which have different structures and distinct mind references.

Moreover we must say that no language can be categorized as the best or the worst. The two translators confront various obstacles by operating strategical choices: what is relevant here is to see how these interpretive choices are or are not linear with the original version or to the writer’s intentions.

Ferdinand de Saussure opens a great question about the *sense* of the words in modern linguistics, and states that:

“[...] le difficoltà poste dalla traduzione non erano legate a un preteso misterioso “génie des langues” né a pretese “ricchezze” o “povertà” di certi idiomi forti o deboli, nobili o volgari per natura; ma che dipendono dalla descrizione di tutta una civiltà, di cui una lingua ne è l’espressione (fatto che i traduttori sentivano ma che non sapevano esprimere)” (Mounin, 79-80)<sup>33</sup>

He demonstrates that the *rapporto di significazione* (“relationship of meaning”), which links the non-linguistic thing or concept to the word, is not so easy and puts into

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<sup>33</sup> «[...] difficulties of translation were linked neither to an expected mysterious “genie des langues” nor to expected “richness” or “poorness” of certain strong or weak, noble or vulgar idioms; but they depended on the description of an entire civilization, of which a language is its expression (a fact that translators felt but did not know how to express)»

evidence the fact that the denomination of things and concepts do not obey universal laws. In this way each word is a part of a well-structured system.

Having said this, we can add what Edward Sapir points out:

“Gli esseri umani [...] sono per gran parte alla mercé di quella particolare lingua che è diventata il mezzo di espressione della loro società. [...] Il fatto è che *gran parte* del “mondo reale” è modellata inconsciamente secondo le abitudini linguistiche del gruppo. [...] noi vediamo infatti e sentiamo o vediamo l’esperienza del mondo in questo o in quel modo guidati quasi esclusivamente dalle abitudini linguistiche della nostra comunità, che ci predispongono a certe scelte nella nostra interpretazione..” (Mounin, *Teoria* 89)<sup>34</sup>

From these words it is possible to understand that “meaning is a plural and contingent relation, although not an unchanging unified essence, and therefore a translation cannot be judged according to mathematically-based concepts of semantic equivalence or one-to-one correspondence.” (Venuti, 18) A translation aims to replace linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text intelligible to the target-language reader. Both the original and the translated texts contain diverse linguistic and cultural materials where semantic differences are inevitable, because they are based on different cultural assumptions, interpretative choices, specific social situations and different historical periods. In this case we have a dialect spoken in a village in the Veneto in the ‘20s-‘30s (for Meneghello), and standard Italian that is Tuscan (for de Rachewiltz): these are two different ways of interpreting the same foreign poetical text of Cummings.

### 2.1.2 Sound, rhythm and music

e.e.cummings experimented with idiomatic spoken language, compressed words, dislocated syntax, word-coining. All of these, collocated in a strategical position, confer musicality and a rhythmic sequence to his poetry. Rhetorical devices,

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<sup>34</sup> «Human beings [...] are mostly at the discretion of that particular language which has become the way of expression of their society. [...] The fact is that the great majority of the real world is unconsciously modelled on the linguistic habits of the group. [...] In fact, we see and feel or consider our experience of the world guided almost exclusively by the linguistic habits of our community, which prepare us to operate certain choices of interpretation»

such as the repetition of words become innovative when he uses words with the same suffix, for example “thing”, or the same prefix, “every” (which both have meaning even on their own). This implicates the repetition of the same accents in order to obtain the rhythm of the poem.

Words become notes, and spaces and punctuation become pauses: so, in a sort of score, we have a musical composition. Capitalization assumes an important role in completing cummings’ intention of elaborating such artistic matter.

Gathering repeated letters, like in a mathematical addition, it becomes clear which sound interests cummings most.

Throughout the whole poem, cummings seems to insist on the phonemes [s] and [z]. As a result, the impression is that of someone whispering or inviting the reader to keep silent in order not to disturb the little one. The abundance of words with “s” is shown in the following lists.

Meneghello’s dialect does reproduce the pronunciation of “z”, (represented by the phoneme [z]), and also emphasizes the sibilant and sonorous “s”, which is totally reproducible. Moreover the quantity of words containing the sounds agrees with the global original intention.

On the other hand, standard Italian has sounds that are not present in the English version - [ts] for “z” (in “silenzio”) and “zz” (in “stranezza”) - and it cannot offer enough repetition of “s” either with [s] (because these are no more than half of those of cummings), or with [z] (because they are all sibilant).

**[s], [z]: (C.= 20)**<sup>35</sup> horse, is, knows, feels, is, strangeness, sun, fragrance, singing, is, is, amazing, this, lies, smooth..., silence, is, someone.

**[s], [z]: (M.= 21)** zé, sa , sente, zé, stramba, sole, sa, sanbei, insogno, festa, resti, sto, zé, -zo, lisso..., -su, respira, cresse, silenzio, zé.

**[s]: (R.= 10)** sa, sente, stranezza, sole, sogno, questo, ...stupendamente, respirare, silenzio, straordinario.

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<sup>35</sup> The surnames of the writers and the number of times the sound, or sounds indicated are repeated, are shown within the round brackets.

At the same time it is possible to hear in the background of the poem a few other repetitions of the phonemes [i], [n] and [ŋ], and [l].

The [i] is particularly emphasized: this sound is heard thirty-three times. As we can see in the list below both Alto-Vicentino and Italian translations do not reflect it enough.

**[i]: (C.= 33)** little, is, newly, he, nothing, feels, everything, is, perfectly, strange, light, singing, is, everywhere, welcoming, dream, is, amazing, in, this, lies, beautifully, folded, breathing, growing, silence, is.

**[i]: (M.= 18)** pulierín, gniente, intorno, strambaria, raji, sanbei, ghin', insogno, resti, inbaucà, in, lisso, afarìn, respira, in, silenzio.

**[i]: (R.= 19)** il, cavallino, intorno, lui, di, di, canti, accogliente, straordinario, in, giace, liscio, ripiegato, respirare, silenzio.

The necessity for Meneghello to stress this sound is confronted by paying attention to the accent of the words he arranges. Despite the number of cases in Italian where the [i]-sound is included, the accent of the single word does not allow the ear to hear it in its fullness. Let us take, for example, two verbs: “respira” and “respirare”. Both mean “to breathe”, but while the accent of the first word is on “i”, in the second it is on “a”.

The “n” effect grows with close attention to word-chains cummings frequently creates with the different combinations of the conjunction “and”, the preposition “in” and the brilliant disposition of words ending with “-ing ”

The ability of both translators is challenged by the abundant presence of this sound. The words they use are listed below.

**[n], [ŋ]: (C.= 23)** newly, born, knows, nothing, and, around, strangeness, sun, and, fragrance, and, singing, welcoming, amazing, and, in, breathing, and, growing, silence, someone.

**[n], [ŋ]: (M.= 26)** pulierín, pena, nato, gniente, sente, tutocuantò, intorno, perfetemente, na, bon, sanbei, canta, ghin', un, insogno, inbaucà, un, mondo, in, mondo, ben, un, afarin, in, silenzio, qualchedun.

**[n], [ŋ]: (R.= 25)** cavallino, appena, nato, nulla, sente, intorno, una, stranezza, fragranza, canti, ovunque, un, accogliente, straordinario, un, mondo, in, mondo, stupendamente, un, un, silenzio, qualcuno.

The personal pronouns need to be precisely put in evidence in Alto-Vicentino as in the English language. For this reason, the male pronoun referring to the little horse is always “elo”, contracted as “’l”. This syntactical structure of Meneghello’s dialect benefits his intention to respect the presence of the [l]-sound.

**[l]: (C.= 15)** little, newly, feels, all, perfectly, light, welcoming, world, world, lies, beautifully, folded, silence.

**[l]: (M.= 14)** el, pulierin, no ‘l, e ‘l, elo, sole, che ‘l, lissobelo, che’l, e ‘l, silensio, che’l, qualche.

**[l]: (R.= 6)** il, luce, sole, liscio, silenzio, qualcuno.

The absence in Alto-Vicentino of sounds such as:

- the [ts] or [dz] corresponding to: “zz” and “z” (see for example “stranezza” and “fragranza”);
- the [λ] (in “accogliente”);
- the double “ll” (in “cavalllino”);
- the [ʃ] in the Italian “liscio”, existing in English but not in the poem analyzed here; allows Meneghello to be faithful to the entire musicality of Cummings’ poem.

These sounds in the English version do not exist or do not appear, even if in the graphic form it is possible to note the presence of one “z” in “amazing”, but this - as explained above - is pronounced [z].

In spite of some problems, the musicality of Meneghello’s translation is very close to Cummings’. Meneghello declares that:

“La mia idea è che ogni testo letterario ha parti chiare e parti oscure per la costruzione stessa delle nostre lingue e in sostanza della nostra mente. In una

traduzione, mutando il registro linguistico può accadere che ci si trovi ad esplorare le parti oscure” (Meneghello, *Trapianti* book cover)<sup>36</sup>

A few other examples of repetition, where consonants and vowels have a balanced intensification in the two translations are listed below. However they do not observe Cummings’ repetitions exactly.

- [f], [v]: (C.= 10)** feels, everything, perfectly, of, of, fragrance, of, everywhere, beautifully, folded.
- [f]: (M.= 5)** perfetamente, fa, festa, fato-su, afarin.
- [f]: (R.= 2)** perfetta, fragranza.
- [u]: (C.= 7)** newly, knows, around, beautiful, growing, who, one.
- [u]: (M.= 12)** pulierin, tutocquanto, dapartuto, un, imbaucà, un, butà-zo, fato-su, un, cualchedun.
- [u]: (R.= 12)** nulla, tutto, lui, una, luce, ovunque, un, un, stupendamente, un, un, qualcuno.
- [k], [t]: (C.= 5)** perfectly, fragrance, singing, welcoming, growing.
- [k], [t]: (M.= 9)** tutocquanto, ghe, che canta, imbaucà, cresse, che’l, qualche.
- [k], [t]: (R.= 11)** cavallino, fragranza, canti, ovunque, canti, accogliente, questo, ripiegato, crescere, che, qualcuno.

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<sup>36</sup> «My idea is that every literary text has clear and dark parts, not because of the poet’s intention but because of the very structure of our languages, and substantially our minds. In a translation, by changing the language register it is possible to explore the dark parts»

The pronunciation of the “R” changes throughout the world: it becomes a distinctive peculiarity of a language, so it is extremely difficult to render this sound in translation. If we consider the various phonetic symbols for the letter “R” [r̂] in English each symbol representing a different sound, we can see the difficulty of both translators with regard to this letter:

- [ɜ:] (vowel lengthened) as in “world” [wɜ:ld];
- [r] (pronounced) as in “around” [ə'raʊnd];
- [ʀ] (not pronounced) as in “everywhere” ['evriwɛə\*].

What Luigi Meneghello and Mary de Rachewiltz have chosen to do is respect the number of times the letter “R” in Cummings’ original version fully aware that this is not the reproduction of the same sound.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>“R”:</b> (C.= 15) | horse, born, everything, around, perfectly, strange, fragrance, everywhere, dream, world, world, breathing, growing. |
| <b>“R”:</b> (M.= 13) | pulierin, intorno, perfetamente strambaria, raji, roba, dapartuto, resti, afarin, respira, cresse.                   |
| <b>“R”:</b> (R.= 19) | intorno, perfetta, stranezza, fragranza, straordinario, ripiegato respirare, crescere.                               |

To conclude we can say that there are points that benefit Meneghello’s version and others that benefit de Rachewiltz’s version.

Meneghello’s global interpretation is articulate but the true difficulty is caused by the choice he made in using an archaic language that was spoken during the first decades of the twentieth century only in the village where he was born. His dialectal versions can be read by many Italians, but it is obvious that its meaning can be understood better in the region of the Veneto and, particularly, the nearer we approach Vicenza and the village of Malo.

Mary de Rachewiltz’s standard Italian version is readable for any Italian, it does not matter if he or she is from the north or the south, the east or the west, because its meaning can be understood by all of them.

These two translations are two interpretations by two individuals who have a great knowledge of poetry and literature, and specifically, in this case, know Cummings’ style very well. However, while Meneghello translates into his mother-

tongue (Alto-Vicentino), de Rachewiltz translates into standard Italian, even if her mother-tongue is the Tyrol dialect. Meneghello too knows and speaks standard Italian perfectly but he has preferred to be coherent with his linguistic roots and with himself. Indeed, as we can see from all his writings, he maintains this coherence that can be called “continuum”.

### 2.1.3 The shape: visual, graphic and typographical forms

The visual form cummings chose gives the reader the possibility of paying particular attention to the unusual stanzaic organization of the poem.

He wrote seven stanzas, and each one contains a number of lines based on the place they occupy: for example the first stanza has one line, the second has two lines, and so on until the fourth. From the fifth to the seventh stanzas the number of lines decreases in the opposite way (from three lines to one). The last line is of only one word: “oNe”.

Nothing in this construction is casual. As the coloured line below shows, the two translations have two different shapes, but Meneghello’s (the red line) is a little closer to the shape of cummings’ poem than that of Mary de Rachewiltz (the blue line)

<p>el pulierin zé penA</p> <p>Nato)no'l sa gniente, e'l sente tutocuantò;intorno a elo ghe</p> <p>zé parfetamente na strambaria (De raggi de sole e de roba che sa da bon e de</p> <p>Sanbei che canta)ghin'è da partuto(un insogno che'l te fa festa:te resti inbaucà) un mondO.e in</p> <p>sto mondo ghe zé: butà-zo lissobelO ben fato-su;un (afarin che'l re spira e'l cres</p> <p>Sejin silensio, che'l; zé: cualchE</p> <p>dUn.</p>	<p>the little horse is newlY</p> <p>Born)he knows nothing,and feels everything;all around whom is</p> <p>perfectly a strange ness Of sun light and of fragrance and of</p> <p>Singing)is ev erywhere(a welcom ing dream:is amazing) a world.and in</p> <p>this world lies: smoothbeautyfuLly folded;a(brea thing and a gro</p> <p>Wing)silence, who; is: somE</p> <p>oNe.</p>	<p>il cavallino è appenA</p> <p>Nato&gt;nulla sa,e sente tutto;intorno a lui è</p> <p>perfetta una stranezza Di luce di sole e fragranza di</p> <p>Canti)è ov unque(un accogliente sogno:è straordinario un mondO.e in questo</p> <p>mondo giace:lisciosstupendameNte ripiegato;un(re spirare e un cre</p> <p>Scere)silenzio,che; è:qualC</p> <p>uNo.</p>
<b>Luigi Meneghello</b>	<b>e. e. cummings</b>	<b>Mary de Rachewiltz</b>

Something similar regarding the shape can be seen in the poem “Buffalo Bill”.<sup>37</sup>

In this poem too the image designed by the lines shows that the beginning and the end have things in common with almost each stanza of “the little horse is newLY”. The entire poem “Buffalo Bill” has the aspect of an arrow, a triangle, or perhaps, as I see it, a rifle. It can easily be associated with a sort of graphic describing the stages of a human being’s life.

In “the little horse is newLY” the triangular shape of “Buffalo Bill” appears five times in the whole poem giving it the form of a wave:

- from the first line to the fourth;
- from the fourth to the seventh;
- from the seventh to the tenth;
- from the tenth to the thirteenth;
- from the thirteenth to the sixteenth.

e.e.cummings transfers his experience with cubist techniques and visual art to his poetry giving uniqueness and originality to the global shape of his works.

Comparing capitalization, the lower-case letters and the punctuation, it is possible to see that both Meneghello and de Rachewiltz respect cummings’ choices except for two brackets. One bracket in Meneghello’s version is added and corresponds to “(Of” while in that of de Rachewiltz one bracket is missing in “amazing)”.<sup>38</sup>

Both Meneghello and de Rachewiltz have difficulties in reproducing capitalization. Their translations can only maintain the capitalization when it appears in the original version, but their languages are not able to respect the same original letters as well. Meneghello’s dialect gave him the possibility of maintaining two unvaried capitalizations: the “S” of “Singing” in “SambeI” and the “E” of “someE” in “cualchE”. In de Rachewiltz’s version only the “N” of “oNe” remains in “uNo”.<sup>39</sup>

Lower-case is also maintained in the tenth line, but the letter is again different because of the languages.<sup>40</sup>

The two translations, with the characteristics listed above, follow.

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<sup>37</sup> See chapter 2.2.

<sup>38</sup> These two differences are evidenced in pink.

<sup>39</sup> Capitalization is written with red letters.

<sup>40</sup> These lower-case letters are evidenced in yellow.

Original version	Luigi Meneghello's version
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the little horse is new <sup>Y</sup>	1	el pulierin zé penA	1
<b>B</b> orn he knows nothing and feels everything all around whom is	2 3	Nato no'l sa gniente e'l sente tutocuantò intorno a elo ghe	2 3
perfectly a strange ness <b>O</b> f sun	4 5	zé parfetamente na stramba ria De raga de sole	4 5
light and of fragrance and of	6	e de roba che sa da bon e de	6
<b>S</b> inging is ev erywhere a welcom ing dream is amazing a world and in	7 8 9 10	Sanbei che canta ghin'è da partuto un insogno che'l te fa festa te resti inbaucà un mondO e in	7 8 9 10
this world lies smooth beautyfu <sup>L</sup> ly folded a brea thing and a gro	11 12 13	sto mondo ghe zé butà-zo lissobelO ben fato-sù un afarin che'l re spira e'l cres	11 12 13
<b>W</b> ing silence who is some <sup>E</sup>	14 15	Se in silensio che'l zé cualchE	14 15
oNe	16	dUn	16

Mary de Rachewiltz's version
------------------------------

il cavallino è appenA	1
Nato nulla sa e sente tutto intorno a lui è	2 3
perfetta una stra nezza Di luce di sole e fragranza di	4 5 6
Canti è ov unque un accoglien te sogno è straordinario un mondO e in questo	7 8 9 10
mondo giace liscio stupendame <sup>N</sup> te ripiegato un re spirare e un cre	11 12 13
Scere silensio che è qualC	14 15
uNo	16

Visual, graphical, typographical and logical forms are strongly linked by Cummings with rhythm and sound, so that one is the consequence of the other.

This analysis reveals the great intellectual commitment that Meneghello had to face in order to maintain Cummings' arrangements. Certainly, it was not so difficult for Meneghello to think in his own mother tongue, but his work is particularly refined: he demonstrates his ability to unknot, as far as possible, the network of those hidden, or rather "dark", parts present in Cummings' poem.

Mary de Rachewiltz's knowledge and use of standard Italian, even if it is not her mother tongue, is very refined: she is able to transfer elegance to the poem she translates.

Regarding typography, punctuation, capitalization or lower-case, both Meneghello and de Rachewiltz maintain Cummings' devices as if his poem were in front of a mirror.

What differs from one version to the other is the shape: much more difficult to respect. Meneghello's shape results extremely similar to Cummings' from the first to the last stanzas, both because the writer from Malo analyzed this point carefully, and because the structure of his dialect gave him the possibility to choose words having a length similar to those of the English version. In standard Italian this is not always possible to do so and we see a different shape. However, de Rachewiltz's version is closer to the English shape from the fourth stanza to the last one.

## **2.2 Some other details about 5 poems by e. e. Cummings**

Except for "the little horse is newLY", which comes from Cummings' later collection of poems, *Xaipe* (1950), the other five of his poems translated by Meneghello in *Trapianti*, are all related to his early works.

Three of them: "Buffalo Bill's", "in Just-" and "hist whist" are collected in *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923); "who knows if the moon's" comes from *&* (1925); and "my sweet old etcetera" is contained in *is 5* (1926).

The main peculiarity of these early works of Cummings' is their descriptive poetry, however, they also include praise and satire.

“in Just-” from *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923)

e. e. cummings	Luigi Meneghello	Mary de Rachewiltz
in Just-	1 in Pena-pena	1 in Giusto-
spring when the world is mud-	2 primavera co' che 'l mondo zé na po-	2 primavera quando nel fango il mondo
luscious the little	3 cia de rico paltàn l'omeneto	3 sguazza il piccolo
lame balloonman	4 sòto d'i baluni	4 pallonaro zoppo
whistles far and wee	5 el fa un finfolo de fis'cio là oltra in cao	5 fischia lontano e sottile
and eddieandbill come	6 e dinoememi i vien	6 e eddiebill arrivano
running from marbles and	7 de corsa da la zona de le balete	7 di corsa da biglie e
piracies and it's	8 de marmo e le piraterie e zé	8 guardia e ladri ed è
spring	9 primavera	9 primavera
when the world is puddle-wonderful	10 che 'l mondo zé na maraveia de poce	10 quando il mondo è una meravigliosa pozzanghera
the queer	11 e cuel balengo	11 lo strano
old balloonman whistles	12 de 'l vecio dei baluni el fis'cia	12 vecchio pallonaro fischia
far and wee	13 un fintolo de fis'cio là oltra in cao	13 lontano e sottile
and bettyandisbel come dancing	14 e larinaelaiseta le vien vanti balando	14 e bettyeisabel arrivano danzando
from hop-scotch and jump-rope and	15 da scalón e salta-la-corda e	15 dal salto alla campana e alla corda ed
it's	16 zè	16 è
spring	17 primavera	17 primavera
and	18 e	18 e
the	19 'l	19 il
goat-footed	20 sòto d'i baluni	20 capripede
balloonMan whistles	21 co 'l pie de cavra el fis'cia	21 pallonaro fischia
far	22 là oltra in cao	22 da lon
and	23 un finfolo	23 tanis
wee	24 de	24 simo
	25 fis'cio	

"Buffalo Bill's" from *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923)

e. e. cummings	Luigi Meneghello
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<p><b>Buffalo Bill's</b> defunct     who used to ride a watersmooth-silver     stallion and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat     Jesus  he was a handsome man     and what i want to know is how do you like your blueeyed boy <b>Mister Death</b></p>	<p>1      Bufalo Bil l'è 2      morto defunto 3      che'l nava in gropa 4      a un bel cavalo d'argento lisso 5      confà l'oiò 6      e 'l spacava unadotrequattrocincochetedegessocomenentefusse 7      Jesu  8 9 10 11</p>
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Mary de Rachewiltz
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<p>Buffalo Bill è defunto     e soleva cavalcare     un destriero d'argento liscio come     acqua e rompere unduetrequattrocinque piccioni d'un colpo  Che bell'uomo     E ora mi dica le piace Il suo ragazzo dagli occhi cerulei Signora Morte</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7  8 9 10 11</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Gesù Gesù</p>
--	---

"hist whist" from *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923)

e. e. cummings	Luigi Meneghello	Mary de Rachewiltz
hist whist	1 uò cucò	1 pss sst
little ghostthings	2 putei spiritei	2 spiritelli
tip-toe	3 in punta de pinini	3 in punta
twinkle-toe	4 diiti scøndarei	4 d'alluce
little twitchy	5 striete in boresso	5 piccole streghe
witches and tingling	6 naniti	6 pepate e folletti
goblins	7 co le sgrisole	7 sonaglianti
hob-a-nob hob-a-nob	8 i se la conta i se la conta	8 piglia-dài piglia-dài
little hoppy happy	9 crote saltarelo	9 ranocchietti felici
toad in tweeds	10 vestio de fustagno	10 saltellanti
tweeds	11 fustagno	11 in velluto
little itchy mousies	12 moreiete che le ga spissa	12 topine pizzicate
with scuttling	13 co i oci che scapa via	13 con occhi
eyes rustle and run and	14 le core le se russa	14 furtivi corrono e frusciano e
hidehidehide	15 le va scóndarse scóndarse	15 nasconditinasconditi
whisk	16 cucò	16 psst
whisk look out for the old woman	17 uò cucò tenti la vecia	17 psst scopa-scopetta bada alla vecchia
with the wart on her nose	18 co 'l poro su 'l naso	18 col porro sul naso
what she'll do to yer	19 cossa che la ve fa	19 quel che ti fa
nobody knows	20 nissuni lo sa	20 nessuno lo sa
for she knows the devil	21 la ciama 'l diavolo au	21 lei conosce il diavolo uhh
the devil ouch	22 el diavolo ou	22 diavolo ahu
the devil	23 el diavolo	23 diavolo
ach the great	24 eu el diavo	24 ahi il grande
green	25 lasso verde	25 verde
dancing	26 bala	26 diavolo che
devil	27 rin	27 zompa
devil	28 rin	28 zompa
devil	29 rin	29 zompa
devil	30 rin	30 diavolo
devil	31 inNNN	31 diavolo
wheeEEE	32 inNNN	32 villa

e. e. cummings	Luigi Meneghello
Who knows if the moon's	1 Star vedare se la luna no la zé
a balloon, coming out of a keen city	2 un balón che 'l vien fora da na bela
in the sky – filled with pretty people?	3 sità parària – piena de bela gente
(and if you and i should	4 (e se mi-e-ti dovissino
get into it, if they	5 rivare te sta sità, se luri là
should take me and take you into their balloon,	6 ne facesse montare mi-e-ti su 'l so balon,
why then	7 eh ciò lora
we'd go up higher with all the pretty people	8 'ndarissino in su co tuta la bela gente
than houses and steeples and clouds:	9 pì alti de le case de i campanili de i nuvoli:
go sailing	10 'ndarissino veleggiando
away and away sailing into a keen	11 in volta veleggiando fina na bela
city which nobody's ever visited, where	12 sità che nissuni ghe zé mai nà, do' che
always	13 zé
it's	14 senpre
Spring) and everyone's	15 Primavera) e tuti cuanti
in love and flowers pick themselves	16 Se inamora e i fiuri se tole su da so posta

“My sweet old etcetera” from *is 5* (1926)

e. e. cummings	Luigi Meneghello	Mary de Rachewiltz
1 my sweet old etcetera	1 La me cara ecetera	1 la mia cara vecchia etcetera
2 aunt lucy during the recent	2 zia lùssia ai tempi dela grande	2 zia lucia durante il grande
3 war could and what	3 guera la savea dirte	3 conflitto sapeva dirti e per di
4 is more did tell you just	4 e te poi star sicuro che la te disea	4 più lo faceva esattamente
5 what everybody was fighting	5 i scopi precisi de tuti i beige	5 perché si stava a
6 for	6 ranti,	6 combattere,
7 my sister	7 me sorela	7 mia sorella
8 isabel created hundreds	8 isabela la fasea sentenari	8 isabella creò centinaia
9 (and	9 (e sentenari) de calsetti par no	9 (e
10 hundreds) of socks not to	10 parlare de le camise i pararece inperforabili dai polze	10 centinaia) di calzini senza
11 mention shirts fleaproof earwarmers	11 ecetera i salvapolsi ecetera, me	11 contare camicie orecchiere antipulci
12 etcetera wristers etcetera, my	12 mama la gavarìa sperà ca	12 etcetera polsini etcetera, mia
13 mother hoped that	13 morisse ecetera	13 madre sperava
14 i would die etcetera	14 da eroe se capisse me popà perdea	14 che morissi etcetera
15 bravely of course my father used	15 la vose spiegando che 'l gera	15 da eroe s'intense mio padre
16 to become hoarse talking about how it was	16 un onore speciale e se lu	16 s'arrochiva a spiegare come fosse
17 a privilege and if only he	17 gavesse possudo e intanto mi	17 un onore e se soltanto lui
18 could meanwhile my	18 personalmente ecetera gera butà zo sito sito	18 potesse mentre io
19 self etcetera lay quietly	19 in meso metro de paltàn e	19 me ne etcetera stavo quieto
20 in the deep mud et	20 cetera	20 accovacciato nel fango et
21 cetera	21 (sognando,	21 cetera
22 (dreaming,	22 e	22 (sognando
23 et	23 cetera, el	23 et
24 cetera, of	24 To sorriso	24 cetera, il
25 Your smile	25 I oci i zenoci e la to Ecetera)	25 Tuo sorriso
26 eyes knees and your Etcetera)	26	26 occhi ginocchi e la tua Etcetera)

One of the most important aspects we must consider when we analyse Meneghello's interpretations is that his dialect is an oral language and, as a consequence, the sound produced by the words plays the leading role. Moreover, as Meneghello's mother tongue is the imprinting of his childhood, Cummings' use of children's running together of words breathlessly emphasized by word-joining, are perfectly in tune with Meneghello's view of language. The poems "in Just-", "Buffalo Bill" and "hist whist" can confirm it.

If we compare Meneghello's version of "in Just-" with that of de Rachewiltz, we observe that Meneghello preferred to change even the names of the children rendering them much closer to those names commonly used in his village; while de Rachewiltz maintained the original English names: in the first case she united "eddiebill" with the final "e" of "eddie", which works also as a conjunction.

The repetition of and – and – and in the lines six, seven and eight, shows a child's excited syntax. Moreover, "wee" is a pun on "whee", the same last word present at the end of "hist whist" and which represents a child's cry of excitement and joy.

The seasonal recurrence of children's games is one of the songs of spring and it appears in the words "balloon" and "Spring" both in "in Just-" and in "who knows if the moon".

The "balloonman" is another example of word-joining, which has no correspondence either in Meneghello's version or in that of de Rachewiltz because in the two languages this union is not possible.

<p><b>...and <u>eddieandbill</u> come running from marbles and piracies and it's spring...</b></p>	<p><b>6 7 8 9</b></p>	<p>...e <u>dinoememi</u> i vien de corsa da la zona de le baletè de marmo e le piraterie e zé primavera... (M.)</p>	<p>6 7 8 9</p>
		<p>...e <u>eddiebill</u> arrivano di corsa da biglie e guardia e ladri ed è primavera... (R.)</p>	<p>6 7 8 9</p>

...the queer	11	...e cuel balengo	11
old <u>balloonman</u> whistles	12	de 'l <u>vecio dei baluni</u> el fis'cia	12
far and wee	13	un fintolo de fis'cio là oltra in cao	13
and <u>bettyandisbel</u> come dancing...	14	e <u>larinaelaiseta</u> le vien vanti balando ... (M.)	14
		...lo strano	11
		<u>vecchio pallonaro</u> fischia	12
		lontano e sottile	13
		e <u>bettyeisabel</u> arrivano danzando... (R.)	14

“in Just-” contains also two capitalizations: one in “Just-” and the other in “balloonMan”. The first capitalized word is translated in two different ways by the writers. The position of “Just” after “in” can be interpreted either as Meneghello’s “Pena pena” (appena appena) or as de Rachewiltz’s “Giusto”.

The hyphen after “Just-” joins the word to “spring”, so the image Meneghello evokes by writing “in Pena pena/ primavera” is probably the same meaning of the great beginning of “spring”, intended by cummings as the very beginning of life. The description of the world as “mud-/luscious” is surely connected with that of the Earth at the very beginning of life, when God created Man (Adam and Eve). This interpretation is closely bound with the second capital letter in “balloonMan” in the twenty-first line. Capitalization in this case is meant as cummings’ view of “mostpeople” who refer to themselves with “I” instead of “i”, distinguishing them from the other sons of Nature. The “little lame/balloonman” becomes “goat-footed/ balloonMan”. The goat-foot is the symbol of evil and sin, and this demonstrates the transformation from sinless “man” into sinner “mostpeople”. This passage comes from the adjectives cummings uses to depict the man: “little lame”, “queer old”, and “goat-footed”. The first stanza, the central one and the last one appear as a disturbance to the games of children, who are symbol of purity and innocence. The balloon man’s whistle at eleventh and twenty-fourth lines goes farther and farther away and monosyllables die away in the final “wee”.

Meneghello represents the three stages of the transformation by changing the name and relative adjectives of the “balloonman” every time, so that he obtains: “l’omeneto” (little man), “l’vecio” (the old man), and “sòto [...] co ’l piè de cavra” (goat-footed lame man).

Mary de Rachewiltz prefers to call the “balloonman” with the Italian name “pallonaro” but this does not give her the opportunity to distinguish the transformation of the man.

<b>in Just- spring when the world is mud- luscious the <u>little</u> <u>lame balloonman</u>...</b>	<b>1</b>	in Pena-pena	1
	<b>2</b>	primavera co' che 'l mondo zé na po-	2
	<b>3</b>	cia de rico paltàn <u>l'omeneto</u>	3
	<b>4</b>	<u>sòto d'i baluni</u> ... (M.)	4
		in Giusto-	1
		primavera quando nel fango il mondo	2
		sguazza il piccolo	3
		<u>pallonaro</u> zoppo... (R.)	4
<b>...<u>the queer</u> <u>old balloonman</u> whistles far and wee and bettyandisbel come dancing</b>	<b>11</b>	...e <u>cuel balengo</u>	11
	<b>12</b>	<u>de 'l vecio dei baluni</u> el fis'cia	12
	<b>13</b>	un fintolo de fis'cio là oltra in cao	13
	<b>14</b>	e larinaelaiseta le vien vanti balando...(M.)	14
		... <u>lo strano</u>	11
		<u>vecchio pallonaro</u> fischia	12
		lontano e sottile	13
		e bettyeisabel arrivano danzando... (R.)	14
<b>... <u>goat-footed</u></b>	<b>20</b>	... <u>sòto d'i baluni</u>	20
<b><u>balloonMan</u> whistles far and wee</b>	<b>21</b>	<u>co 'l piè de cavra</u> el fis'cia	21
	<b>22</b>	là oltra in cao	22
	<b>23</b>	un finfolo	23
	<b>24</b>	de	24
		fis'cio (M.)	25
		... <u>capripede</u>	20
		<u>palloNaro</u> fischia	21
		da lon	22
		tanis	23
		simo (R.)	24

In “Buffalo Bill”, one of cummings’ poems of praise, there is a growth from the first line to the sixth and then a decrease from the sixth line to the eleventh. This triangular shape suggests the natural stages of life. In the case of “Buffalo Bill”,







...with scuttling	13	...co i oci che scapa via	13
eyes rustle and run and	14	le core le se russa	14
<u>hidehidehide</u>	15	le va scóndarse scóndarse	15
whisk...	16	cucò... (M.)	16
		...con occhi	13
		furtivi corrono e frusciano e	14
		<u>nasconditinasconditi</u>	15
		psst... (R.)	16

His position in the world and the treatment of the rest of society are also strongly defended by cummings. In the poem “who knows if the moon” this is present even if “they”, in this case, has not a totally negative connotation: “we” is formed by “you and i” and it is clearly distinguished from “they” formed by the “pretty people”. This poem is the only work that has no translation by de Rachewiltz, so we can just state that Meneghello reflects the “you and me” peculiarity of the original version, but adapts the translation to the oral structure of his dialect. In fact, in the second verse Meneghello translates “we” conjugating the verb “ndar” (“to go”) in the first person plural.

Who knows if the moon’s	1	Star vedare se la luna no la zé	1
a balloon, coming out of a keen city	2	Un balón che ’l vien fora da na bela	2
in the sky – filled with <u>pretty people</u> <sup>42</sup> ?	3	sità parària – piena de <u>bela gente</u>	3
(and if <u>you and i</u> should	4	(e se <u>mi-e-ti</u> dovissino	4
get into it, if <u>they</u>	5	rivare te sta sità, se <u>luri</u> là	5
should take <u>me and take you</u> into <u>their</u> balloon,	6	ne facesse montare <u>mi-e-ti</u> su ’l so balon,	6
why then	7	eh ciò lora	7
<u>we’d go up higher with all the pretty people</u> ...	8	’ndarissino in su co tuta <u>la bela gente</u> ...	8

In “my sweet old etcetera” again cummings uses the “you and me” relationship. He begins the poem with the pronoun “my” and concludes it with “your”.

<u>my</u> sweet old etcetera	1	La <u>me</u> cara ecetera	1
aunt lucy during the recent...	2	zia lùssia ai tempi dela grande... (M.)	2
		la <u>mia</u> cara vecchia etcetera	1
		zia lucia durante il grande... (R.)	2

<sup>42</sup> In this poem and in “my sweet old etcetera”, the words underlined once represent the “you and me” relationship, while in “who knows if the moon”, the words underlined twice represent “they” (the pretty people).

... cetera, of	24	... cetera, el	23
<u>Your</u> smile	25	<u>To</u> sorriso	24
eyes knees and <u>your</u> Etcetera)	26	I oci i zenoci e la <u>to</u> Etcetera) (M.)	25
		... cetera, il	24
		<u>Tuo</u> sorriso	25
		occhi ginocchi e la <u>tua</u> Etcetera) (R.)	26

The two word-joinings are “fleaproof” and “earwarmers” and they are both translated as single words because they have single names both in dialect and in Italian. Meneghello does not translate the first “fleaproof” as an united word, because his dialect does not allow him to do so. Meneghello also prefers not to divide the ninth line from the tenth, perhaps to emphasize the oral expressivity of his language.

...isabel created hundreds	8
(and	9
hundreds) of socks not to	10
mention shirts <u>fleaproof</u> <u>earwarmers</u> ...	11
...isabela la fasea sentenari	8
(e sentenari) de calsetti par no	9
parlare de le camise i <u>pararece</u> inperforaili dai polze... (M.)	10
...isabella creò centinaia	8
(e	9
centinaia) di calzini senza	10
contare camicie <u>orecchiere</u> <u>antipulci</u> ... (R.)	11

With reference to the theme of the poem, which belongs to those connected with wartime, the reality of a soldier’s life at the front and the imaginings of his family at home are contrasted. e.e.cummings’ profound sense of home and family appears in the expressions uses, and he presents war as a product of mankind, where the humanity of man is the principal victim of the inhumanity of other men.

The poem is attentively translated by both Meneghello and de Rachewiltz, who transfer all the strategies and sentiments cummings uses in the original.

## CONCLUSIONS

This essay has investigated in the process of translating from a standard language into a dialect and the difficulties deriving from such translations, focusing on Luigi Meneghello's translations of six poems by e. e. cummings. What inspired me to write about Meneghello's dialectal translations is the real meaning such a work might have today. I felt myself involved in the way Meneghello conceives his inner world and the world of language. Analyzing his clever choice of a language that has no written form, as his dialect is, meant being consciously part of a collective biography intrinsically connected with our history. The Italian used by Mary de Rachewiltz to translate the same poems of cummings represents another challenge, and when compared with Meneghello's dialect, it contributes to depict the great diversity between the cultures hidden within these two languages.

The dichotomy between natural and artificial, true and false, are concepts that strongly link the three writers, with regard to their view of life and these have played an important role in my analysis.

What is natural for Meneghello, his original mother tongue, a dialect of the Alto-Vicentino area, represents for cummings everything that goes against conformity and standardization. On the other hand, de Rachewiltz, who translates the same works into standard Italian, has a past as a dialectophone like Meneghello, and states that it is natural for her to say certain things, especially about her childhood, in her Tyrol dialect.

To try to explain why a dialect is a direct language is not an easy task, and personal experience would be required to have some comprehension of it.

My intention, however, was not to establish whether dialect is, or is not, better than standard language, I hope I have been able to transmit enough to the reader to experience the reality that is ours as Italians.

Another aspect was related to the importance of dialect in the present time, and mostly what being Italian means, including attention to the immigrant phenomenon. Approximately over the last thirty years, there has been an increasing number of

immigrants involving all the Italian territory with the consequential difficulties of communication. Inevitably, the encounter of different cultures in Italy will gradually modify expressions and standard language forms, so, the Italian language will keep on evolving toward an ever-increasing standardization, conformity to meet its communication needs.

Nevertheless, we find that the first communicative approach foreigners have in Italy is with the dialect spoken in the area they arrive in (I could quote as an example interviews on the news on television).

The easiness with which foreigners learn dialect in the Veneto can be explained by the adoption of elements of the languages spoken by people who, in previous centuries, invaded and/or occupied the territory leaving “traces” which, at times, are recognizable.

To treasure the dialect is to treasure a part of ourselves which is solely and deeply ours, and it also means not losing our roots which keep reminding us who we are. The dialect in the Veneto encloses something that can be considered a concentration of history.

What this essay aims to transmit is that human beings are very dependent on the particular “original” language, which has become the vehicle of expression of their society. We see, feel and experience the world, guided almost exclusively by the habits of our community<sup>43</sup>. What the writers analyzed did was to model the “real world” on the basis of the linguistic habits and conventions of their group.

With regard to Cummings, we can state that his poetry comes from a “complex but comprehensible sensationalist-transcendentalist philosophy of life”. (Friedman, *The Art* 84). The idiosyncratic devices he uses in his poetry are his method of trying to make us break free from habit and cliché in order to think more freely. He depicts the most normal situation through complicated graphical deviation which challenges the expectations of the readers but which reveals in the end the universality and practically obvious meaning of his poem. These same devices were transferred to the translations of Meneghello and de Rachewiltz, and my comparison has intended to show how the translation from one language into another retains the original intentions.

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<sup>43</sup> On this subject see *Teoria e Storia della Traduzione* by Georges Mounin, chapter 11 “Semantica e visioni del mondo”, Edward Sapir, pg 88-89.

It was Cummings' love for painting that brought him to perfect the "visual" layout of most of his poems. This relationship between painting and writing poetry led him to experiment with punctuation, idiomatic speech, compressed words, dislocated syntax, line division, capitalization and unusual typography. Consequently such deviations give a particular rhythm and image to his poems, whose meanings are intensified for the reader because of them.

e.e.cummings greatly enlarged the boundaries of the possible where the lyric was concerned. His accomplishments in the lyric ranged from the highly melodic to the literally unpronounceable. His poems are not "something for everyone (Dumas, *A Remembrance* 106) However, he was a man with a genuine love for mankind and the art of poetry, and hated those things which make men less men and poetry mere words. That is sufficient to recommend him to all the ages to come.

From the analysis of Meneghello's interpretations of Cummings' poems, the reader can easily deduce that Meneghello's intention was to go beyond translation. Meneghello's version "compete"<sup>44</sup> equally with Cummings' poems permitting the reader to perceive the same beauty as that of the original. This sensation has been transmitted and Meneghello has reached his aim.

Everyone wins in this "competition", the writers and also the languages used for communicating the message, which comes through to the reader, according to his or her sensibility, in a highly personal way.

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<sup>44</sup> Although Luigi Meneghello uses the Italian word "gareggiare" to refer to his interpretation in dialect, he also explains that one language is on a par with the other.

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