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Between Literature and Journalism: The Circulation of Foreign Literary News on the Italian Gazettes of the Early 19th Century

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Despite a long-lasting interest of the academic community towards the origins of Italian journalism, confirmed by many targeted studies conducted over the years, to this day many aspects of the early networks of information existing in the Italian pre-unitarian states of the long 18th century have not received adequate critical attention.¹ This is particularly true for what concerns the introduction and the diffusion of foreign culture through the press, especially with regard to those countries which were not immediately connected to the peninsula, geographically or politically. For example, the Italian reception of the English culture in the long 18th century through the periodical press is still a largely unexplored field.² A blatant example of this trend is represented by the gazettes: these (almost) quotidian publications are probably the widest source of information about the daily life of the time. Not only did they cover a wide array of topics (from politics, to economy, arts and culture), with news coming from many different countries, but they were also made available in cafes and public gathering places, where they were read out loud for the attending people that wanted to be updated with the latest news.³ Since the beginning of their capillary diffusion in the Italian peninsula, which started in the late 18th century, gazettes contained also a multitude of articles about the life and works of prominent writers of the time, and were one of the most effective tools for the

¹ See, among the others, Magnani, DeStefanis-Cicccone and Martinoli.

² As shown for example by Parmegiani and Mangione.

³ See at this regard Habermas, who has shown how the rise of the periodical press was instrumental in shaping the public sphere in Europe.

spreading of knowledge and information. To this day, nevertheless, the role played by the gazettes in the reception of foreign culture has not been sufficiently investigated.

This study intends to be the first step of a wider enquiry on the Italian press of the early 19th century aimed at analyzing the intersections occurring between literature and journalism in the Italian gazettes of the time. Methodologically, the goal of this first incursion is primarily to analyze the patterns that regulated the European circulation of news through the gazettes, by mapping the ‘genealogy’ of articles coming from England to Italy, and identifying how they were modified and adapted to the different readerships. Studying the extent of the intertwined relationship that tied together the foreign and the Italian press of the time will allow to understand not only which attitude the journalists had towards the foreign press, but also how the Italian gazettes interacted with each other. In addition, the study will demonstrate how this cross-cultural and polycentric approach favoured the wide, capillary spread of information about the English literary milieu across Italy. What happened most frequently is that an article firstly arrived in northern Italy through Turin, Genoa or Milan, then was copied in the gazettes published in the central part of Italy (Parma, Florence, Rome), and eventually made its way to the southern gazettes (Naples). The various gazettes were therefore intimately linked to each other, even if they were printed and published in different cities: in fact, their material structure was quite similar for every publication of the Italian peninsula. The news about foreign countries were extracted, copied and translated from foreign journals (especially French) or compendia redacted by censors, and usually they occupied the first pages of each issue.

As I mentioned above, the amount of information circulating through the gazettes was enormous, making it very difficult to efficiently trace the network behind its diffusion. For this reason, the study will focus on a particular, exemplar case study, namely the news regarding the reception of Walter Scott and his work in the most popular *gazzette* of the time published in Milan, Turin, Florence and Naples. The selection of the gazettes printed in these cities is due to the political importance of their publishing hubs, the extent of the print run and the wider circulation in

the peninsula. The spread will allow great latitude in terms of the geographical area chosen for examination, while contextually assuring the consistency and feasibility of the research. In fact, among all the other cities and newspapers examined, the gazettes of these four cities represent a quite unique example of journalistic network, since as I will show they were systematically referencing and quoting each other in the transmission of news.⁴

The choice of Walter Scott as a case study is not arbitrary: a preliminary reading of the corpus of gazettes shows that no other foreign author is mentioned as many times as the Scottish novelist. The immediate and consistent attention he received from the press since the very first appearance of his novels in translation (initially in French, and then in Italian) makes him a very exceptional and relevant case study. Furthermore, not all the news circulating in the gazettes regard his literary works *strictu sensu*: as I will show, news were circulating about his financial situation, or his private life, proving that the success he gained from his literary activity made him so famous that he was becoming a sort of status symbol in the European intellectual milieu of the time.⁵

This investigation builds firstly on studies about the circulation of news in Italy during the 19th century and on surveys that analyzed European journalistic networks of the time (Smith, St. Clair, Raymond, Shattock). Secondly, studies on the Italian reception of Walter Scott (such as those by Fassò, Ruggieri Punzo, Mancini, Irace and Pedullà, Robey), served as a point of reference to locate my case study from a historical and sociological point of view. In addition, for this preliminary study, a few ‘numbers’ will give an idea of the initial context of this pilot research. A quick exploration of the *18thpress.ca* database, created to map the reception of the English novel in Italy between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shows that the reviews and news on Walter Scott alone constitute over 1/3 of all the more than 600 entries in the database, which covers an

⁴ For this research I also consulted gazettes that were printed in cities such as Mantua, Bologna, Brescia, Palermo. Being from minor publishing hubs, they were generally printed in smaller numbers and less regularly, which makes them not only more difficult to access consistently, but also less significant for the purpose of this enquiry, as their reach and audience was more limited than the four I selected as a reference. For a general contextualization of the gazettes see Gaeta, Murialdi, Chiancone.

⁵ The rise of Walter Scott to the status of superstar novelist is in fact the object of a parallel enquiry I am conducting on the periodical press of the 19th century, and to which I will dedicate a targeted work which will show the role played by the gazettes in building its aura and success with the European public.

extended period of time from 1715 to 1830. Among these, well over 90% of all the news, reviews and announcements about the English novel published in the Italian gazettes between 1810 and 1830 concern the life and work of Scott.⁶ Moreover, whereas towards the end of the first decade the name of Scott often appears in cohabitation with those of Sterne, Lewis, Walpole, Mackenzie, Morgan, in a very short time (starting from the 1820s) the Scottish author becomes almost omnipresent. Worthy of note, as I will show, is above all the fact that news about Scott almost always appears not just in the literary section, but in the main news section, together with information about economy and politics. In any case, the examples I will analyse in this article are all taken from gazettes published in 1826. The choice to focus my attention on a single year is dictated by two criteria. In the first place, the need to circumscribe, within an extremely large and varied corpus, a series that was as consistent and exemplary as possible of all the trends concerning the European circulation of news: in other words, 1826 well represents all the nuances of the phenomenon that I will describe. Secondly, 1826 is a crucial year for Scott's fortune in the Italian gazettes: it represents the apex of the almost exclusive attention that they reserved to the Scottish writer as regards to the genre of the novel, since from the following year this attention will begin to be shared with Alessandro Manzoni, who quickly rose to the honours of the literary news with the publication of the *Promessi Sposi*.

The European Circulation of the News: An Intricate Genealogy

The first example of the European circulation of news I will analyze is to be found in the *Gazzetta Piemontese*, which reported the following article about Scott:

I celebri ed all'Europa notissimi librai Hurst, Robinson e comp. hanno sospeso i loro pagamenti. I loro impegni ascendono alla somma di 400000 lire sterline (10 milioni di franchi). Essi erano i librai di sir Walter Scott ; e siccome il loro negozio avea la più gran

⁶ The database, created by Andrea Penso, Sandra Parmegiani and Maria Moschioni, can be consulted at <http://www.18thpress.ca>.

parte delle sue relazioni colla Scozia, si teme che questo fallimento ne produca non pochi altri in Edimburgo. (*Gazzetta Piemontese*, 26 January 1826)⁷

[The famous booksellers Hurst, Robinson and comp, well known in Europe, have suspended their payments. Their commitments rise to the sum of 400,000 pounds sterling (10 million francs). They were the booksellers of Sir Walter Scott; and as their shop had most of its relations with Scotland, it is feared that this failure produces not a few others in Edinburgh]

The very same article appeared in *Gazzetta di Milano* five days later (31 January) without any indication of the source, and in *Gazzetta di Parma* six days later (1 February), with the clear note that the news source was *Gazzetta Piemontese*. Since the text is identical in the Milanese article, we can also infer here that the source was the gazette from Turin. The relationship between the three articles and gazettes would also be confirmed by the rest of the context of the pages in which they were published: all three are included in a section opened by short articles about ‘letters from London’ and the ‘Marquis Wellesley’, in the same order and with the same text. In addition, there is a strange particularity worth noticing: the news about Scott’s booksellers always appeared under the French news sections and not the news from the United Kingdom, which clearly denotes that the source was a French *journal*, even if it was not stated. It is a well-known fact that France was extremely receptive towards novelties coming from across the Channel, which used to enhance its role as the main medium between the UK and Italy for the introduction of news coming from the British cultural and political milieu in the peninsula.

In this respect, it is possible to find the potential original article in the French journal *L’Etoile*, in the issue published a week before the *Gazzetta Piemontese*:

La grande maison de librairie de Londres, si connue dans toute l’Europe sous la raison Hurst Robinson et comp., vient de suspendre ses paiemens : ses engagements se montent à 400,000 liv. sterl. (10 millions de francs). Cet établissement était celui où se vendaient à Londres les romans attribués à Sir Walter-Scott. Comme une très grande partie de ses relations étaient avec l’Ecosse, on craint que cette faillite n’ait un contrecoup funeste à Edimbourg. (*L’Etoile*, 20 January 1826)

⁷ In many occasions, quoting the articles from the gazettes is very difficult, because the pages are not numerated consistently, or their state of conservation does not allow to read the small numbers. In order to be consistent throughout the essay, I decided to refer to each news only with the name of the journal and the day of publication, which allows the best and most precise identification despite the lack of some canonical details.

It appears clear that the Italian journalist who found this news imported it simply by translating the text in its entirety. The only significant difference is that the French article was precise in indicating that the novels were ‘attributed’ to Walter Scott, as the Scottish author tried to remain anonymous at the beginning. On the contrary, the Italian journalist did not report any trace of doubt, and wrote the news in a more assertive way.

Examples of articles being almost ‘copied and pasted’ between national or even international newspapers are countless in the long 18th century, as this was a well-established journalistic practice.⁸ The chronological succession of the publication of the news in the four gazettes considered above allows us to trace the itinerary of the information across the countries. A certain fact happened in the United Kingdom and a British gazette first published the news which gave rise to all the others. In this case, the information about Hurst and Robinson’s bankruptcy was widely circulated by many gazettes, the first probably being *The Times*:

The extensive firm of Messrs. Hurst, Robinson, and Co., booksellers, Pall-mall, stopped payment on Saturday last. The engagements of this house are said to amount to not less than 400,000l. They possessed the agency for the novels by the “Author of Waverley,” and a large proportion of the drafts upon them originate in Edinburgh, where, it is feared, much inconvenience will be felt in consequence of this failure. (*The Times*, 16 January 1826)⁹

Following the first appearance of the news, a constellation of other English newspapers published the same information in various articles. Some days after the original publication, a selection of British gazettes arrived – physically – in France, where, after going through the censors and the controls, the news was taken and included by a French newspaper in the section concerning the UK. After a week or two, the news that passed the censorship and was deemed of some interest entered Italy. Usually, and predictably, the first cities that were in touch with the transalpine press were Turin and Milan, followed by the other most important publishing hubs, from north to south.

⁸ See for example Penso.

⁹ It is to notice that the English article called Scott with a periphrasis “the Author of Waverley”. The French adopted the same cautious attitude, declaring that the editors were responsible of the books “attributed” to Scott. The Italian, as I showed, did not respect this form of prudence, therefore assigning a stronger form of prestige to the author: it is a minor detail of how the fame and aura of Scott was being built in the peninsula.

Naturally, the process of diffusion was not entirely linear. With regard to the case I have shown above, for instance, things are complicated by the fact that the same news, written in the same way, also appeared in the *Gazzetta di Firenze* (2 February) and in *Giornale delle due Sicilie* in Naples (9 February). In these two gazettes, identical news to the previous versions I have mentioned (apart from a typo: ‘Gurst’ for ‘Hurst’ in Naples) are included under a section about England and not about France, in a similar context (both have news about the Duke of Winchester, absent in the other three gazettes). This could be due to a different editorial choice if it were not for the source stated by *Giornale delle due Sicilie*: an enigmatic ‘F. Ingl. D. di R.’ that I was unable to identify beyond a generic ‘Fogli Inglesi’, which might have been a very simple compendium of news elaborated and put together by an intermediary or a censor.¹⁰ The practice of filtering and controlling the newspapers coming from abroad established by the governments was in fact still very active well into the 19th century. Although the identification of the source remains uncertain, it is sufficient to prove that the news published in Naples and in Florence is somehow related, and that it might stem not from the French section of the newspaper, which was the source of the first three (maybe *L’Etoile*, as shown above), but from the section dedicated to British news of a different newspaper. This would prove that there were potentially multiple channels of dissemination across the peninsula: the information was the result of a polycentric process, fruit of multiple crossing and overlapping between the sources.¹¹

The Relationship with the French Sources

On some other occasions it is possible to identify the French source with more certainty because the Italian journalist mentioned it at the bottom of the article. This is the case for the following news about Scott’s potential forthcoming wedding, published in *Gazzetta di Milano*:

¹⁰ It is not easy to identify the source when it is not mentioned, as multiple British newspapers were used across Europe as a source of information about the UK: *The Morning Chronicle*, *Times*, *The Morning Post*, *Observer* are only a few of the most popular outlets that were very well known and extremely influential abroad.

¹¹ On the European network of news see also Raymond and Altick.

Si dice che sir Walter Scott si sposerà in breve colla sorella del sig. Bruce, già professore a Edimburgo il quale la lasciò erede di 7.500.000 franchi. Si assicura, che la futura sposa voglia assolutamente che sir Walter-Scott accetti la somma di 2.500.000 franchi per dar sesto con essa a tutti i suoi affari. – (Etoile). (*Gazzetta di Milano*, 10 October 1826)

[It is said that sir Walter Scott will soon marry Mr. Bruce's sister, professor in Edinburgh, who left her the heiress of 7500000 francs. It is assured that the bride wants sir Walter Scott to absolutely accept the sum of 2500000 francs, so that hw will be able to clear all his affairs]

As mentioned at the end of the article, the source of the news is once again the French *journal*, *L'Etoile*, which previously published this article:

On dit que sir Walter-Scott va prochainement épouser une personne d'une grande fortune, la sœur de M. Bruce, qui avait été professeur à Edimbourg, et qui en mourant laissa à miss Bruce environ 300.000 liv. sterl. (7,500,000 fr.). On assure que la future épouse insiste pour que sir Walter-Scott accepte *avant* le mariage une somme de 100.000 liv. sterl. (2,500,000), afin qu'il puisse arranger ainsi toutes ses affaires. (*L'Etoile*, 30 September 1826)

Evidently, the Italian journalist copied the content of the French article quite faithfully. While there is absolutely no doubt that *Gazzetta di Milano* copied the news from *L'Etoile*, in France the same news also appeared in *Gazette Universelle de Lyon*. The text was quite different:

On assure que sir Walter Scott est sur le point d'épouser une femme énormément riche, et dont la fortune est estimée à plus de 300.000 livres sterl. (*Morning Chronicle*). (*Gazette Universelle de Lyon*, 2 October 1826)

This article is relevant because it allows us to recognize the original English newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*, as the source of all the subsequent propagation in continental Europe. In fact, in the section 'The Mirror of Fashion' (a significant difference with regard to the French and Italian gazettes, where the news about Scott was juxtaposed with information about politics or social issues) it is possible to find the following article:

Sir WALTER SCOTT, it is reported, is shortly to be married to a Lady of immense wealth. Mr. BRUCE, who, under the patronage of the late Lord MELVILLE, became Professor of Logic in the University of Edinburgh, and afterwards Historiographer to the East India Company, and lastly, in conjunction with Sir – HUNTER BLAIR, Printer to the King for Scotland, lately died, leaving behind him, to a maiden sister, an immense fortune, some say of three hundred thousand pounds. The Worthy Baronet, it is reported, has successfully made love to this accomplished Lady, who, on her part, insists on his receiving from her, *before*

marriage, one hundred thousand pounds to clear his incumbrances. Who, after this, will say that the climate of Scotland is cold? (*Morning Chronicle*, 26 September 1826)

This news was then also reported by other British gazettes, which unanimously quoted the *Morning Chronicle* as their source: the very same text appears in *The Examiner* (1 October), *The Kaleidoscope* (3 October), *The London Magazine* (13 October). This case confirms what I have observed above about the mechanisms that regulated the news propagation across the three countries in my analysis. In addition, it also proves that the attitudes of the French and Italian journalists were different in relation to their sources. While the journalist who reported the news in *L'Etoile* edited out some significant parts in relation to the British source (excluding for example the joke at the end, or the part dedicated to the many roles Mr Bruce covered in his life, which allowed him to amass the fortune Walter Scott is now supposed to take advantage of) the Italian journalist was extremely conservative and did not exclude any sentence from the French source. The only difference is due to a minor change: the *Gazzetta* did not ‘respect’ the italics concerning the delivery time of the inherited sum to Scott (‘before’, ‘*avant*’), because the concept is phrased in a different way. What looks like a very venial detail will be helpful to clarify another aspect of the Italian dissemination of the news, as I will explain later on.

It is not easy to explain the reasons behind the prudent attitude adopted by the Italian press. Usually in the process of adaptation from the sources there are no attempts at paraphrasing, no expunctions and no diversions from a literal translation, which, therefore, leads me to think that probably the Italian journalists did not feel comfortable enough with the subject, as they did not have extensive knowledge about it. After all, the original British sources were not that easy to access, even in the first decades of the 19th century: a more prudent attitude was perhaps the best strategy to import and disseminate information about facts that happened abroad, which could not be checked directly.

This osmotic attitude adopted by the Italian journalists is visible also with regard to the ‘internal circulation’ of the news. In fact, the article I have been discussing so far did not appear

only in Milan: the very same text was published by *Gazzetta di Firenze* a week later (17 October 1826), without any modification. On a side note, this was the very first news that the issue reported for that day, giving Walter Scott a position of absolute prominence in the journal. Nevertheless, a different version of the news was circulating in the peninsula. *Gazzetta di Genova* published the following article:

Parlasi del prossimo matrimonio di Sir Walter Scott colla sorella del sig. Bruce, già professore a Edimburgo, e che morendo lasciò alla stessa circa 300.000 lire sterl. (7.500.000 fr). Vuolsi ancora che miss Bruce insista perchè sir Walter Scott accetti *avanti* il matrimonio una somma di 100.000 lire sterl. (2500000 fr), con che dar sesto a' suoi affari. (*Gazzetta di Genova*, 7 October 1826)

[It is spoken about the upcoming marriage of Sir Walter Scott with Mr. Bruce's sister. He was a professor in Edinburgh, and he left his sister 300.000 (7.500.000 fr.) pounds after his death. It is also claimed that miss Bruce is insisting for sir Walter Scott to accept before the marriage a sum of 100.000 pounds (2500000 fr.), so that he could fix his affairs]

Obviously, the source was not mentioned by the Genovese journalist.¹² However, it can be identified once again with *L'Etoile*: on the same page, we can find a news item about Lord Cochrane, mentioning *Et.* at the end, indicating that the editors had access to that French *journal* and could have read the news about Scott. It deals with the same content as the news published in Milan and Florence. Nevertheless, the form is different: the text begins once again with the typically French impersonal '*l'on dit*', which is translated here as '*Parlasi*' and not '*Si dice*'. Both are equally acceptable in Italian, but this difference shows that the translators were different. In addition, the Genovese article is even more conservative than the Milanese one, as it reports the italics '*Avanti* il matrimonio', which is a clear debt to the French '*avant* le mariage'.

These observations lead to the conclusion that once again there were different channels for the introduction of the information into Italy coming from abroad: in this case, the news did not appear in Turin, the city that usually acted as a forerunner for the peninsula, but in Genoa and Milan. From there, the information spread all over the peninsula. In fact, with regard to what I have

¹² In the context of my discussion on the relationships between the different newspapers with their foreign sources, I chose to discuss this article after the Milanese one, even if it appeared three days before, precisely because of this omission.

identified as the multiple channels of dissemination, one last observation must be added. On 16 October 1826, the *Giornale delle due Sicilie* published the same text that appeared in Genova, with a clear mention of the sources at the bottom: ‘et. [Etoile] e G. di Gen. [Gazzetta di Genova]’. It is, therefore, possible to observe that this news was spread in a capillary way throughout the main publishing hubs in Italy, following two parallel axes: Milan-Florence and Genoa-Naples. Examples of ‘multi-centric’ dissemination of news, like the one I have just described, are countless in the Italian gazettes of the early 19th century, and they are not always developed along the same axes (for example, Naples did also ‘copy’ its news directly from Milan on other occasions). This intricate network of information is at times extremely difficult to trace, the only constant fact was that the news spread regularly from north to south. The network covers very different aspects of social, political, and cultural life. As for literature, there are no other authors, who benefitted from such attention and widespread coverage as much as Walter Scott. As I mentioned above, these news items concerning his economic and marital situation were inserted in the ‘general’ section and, therefore, proved that the Scottish writer was deemed worthy of the same level of attention as powerful politicians or international events.

On the sidelines of all the previous observations, one more particularity must be added. The news published by *Gazzetta di Milano* was retracted a few weeks later:

La nuova del matrimonio di sir Walter Scott data dai giornali è per lo meno immatura, scrive il giornale di Glasgovia. Questa notizia ebbe origine da uno scherzo del sig. Jeffrey, il quale, essendo il mediatore di matrimonj, avea detto che sir Walter Scott avrebbe dovuto sposare mistriss Cutt, o miss Bruce; questa notizia prese poi consistenza essendo stata riferita dai giornali come si sa. (*Gazzetta di Milano*, 29 October 1826)

The ‘Giornale di Glasgovia’ is the *Glasgow Chronicle*, which published an article with the same content two weeks earlier:

The statement in the Morning Chronicle respecting Sir Walter Scott’s marriage is altogether premature. The story is said to have originated in a joke of Mr Jeffrey, who, as a match-maker, is said to have expressed an opinion that Sir Walter should marry either Mrs. Coutts or Miss Bruce. This proposal, in being repeated, was metamorphosed into the complete rounded-off fiction, against which neither the London nor the provincial papers can always guard.

Should a marriage follow the rumour, it will not by any means be the first that had such an origin. (*Glasgow Chronicle*, 14-15 October 1826)

This time, though, there was no trace of a similar article in *L'Etoile*, which was the source of the first one. Since the article was published in the French section by the Milanese gazette, the French mediation must have occurred through another *journal*, which I was unable to trace, proving that the 'supply channels' were not always the same. Nevertheless, what matters the most is to notice that none of the other Italian gazettes that reported the first news item about the possible marriage followed up with the news denying it was true: the readers of the gazettes in Florence, Genoa and Naples did not have the chance to read the second article, they were, therefore, building their knowledge on false or at least partial information.

The Relationship with the British Sources

From the examples I showed so far it appears rather clear that the French mediation played a major role in the dissemination in Italy of news coming from England. Even if this was the most characteristic pattern of the Italian reception of British culture in the long 18th century, starting from the second decade of 1800 it is possible to find examples of news coming straight from the United Kingdom. The last example I will discuss of how the European circulation of news was working proves once again that the supply channels of information coming from abroad utilized by the gazettes were multiple and were treated without a consistent 'plan'. On 22 July 1826, *Gazzetta Piemontese* published two articles mentioning Walter Scott, separated by other news, under the section dedicated to England:

Il signor Cooper, chiamato dagli Americani il Walter-Scott degli Stati-Uniti [“dell’America” in *Gazzetta di Milano*], è arrivato colla sua famiglia in Inghilterra: egli si reca a Lione colla qualità di consolo degli Stati-Uniti.

[...]

Il celebre romanziere, sir Walter Scott, ha ottenuto il lucroso impiego di stampatore del Re, nella Scozia. (*Gazzetta Piemontese*, 22 July 1826)

[Mr. Cooper, called ‘the Walter-Scott of the United States’ by the Americans, arrived in England with his family: he is headed to Lyon as the consul of the United States]

[...]

[The celebre novelist, sir Walter Scott, obtained the lucrative job as printer of the King, in Scotland]

Five days later, the same news appeared in *Gazzetta di Milano*, written in the same order and ‘interrupted’ by the same sequence of different news items, again under the ‘Inghilterra’ section. The exploration of the other articles belonging to these ‘English sections’ will provide incontrovertible proof of what I am sustaining about the extreme variety of sources and the ease with which they were used in the importation of news. Except for some small additions in the Milanese issue, which was published later and had time to gather more news, the two parts in the two newspapers are identical, and they are the result of a mash-up between multiple sources, coming from both England and France. The two news items about Scott I reported above are preceded by the same three articles, in the same order: the tale of Lady Erskine, an English woman; a report of some turbulence in the neighbourhood of Bury which starts with ‘The *Sun* says’ (‘Il *Sun* dice’) as if the news came directly from the Londoner gazette; (i) an account on the heavy rains forecast for the city of Norwich (ii) an account on the heavy rains experienced by the city of Norwich. These three news items, though, do not come straight from England: the source is once again the French newspaper *L’Etoile*, which published them in the very same order at the end of the section on ‘Angleterre’, and with the very same text (it was translated in Italian with nearly no changes) on 16 July 1826. This hypothesis is confirmed for example by the article about the woman in which both Italian newspapers used the expression ‘Lord Maire’, based on the French, and not ‘Lord Mayor’, which appeared in the original English article published in the *Morning Post* on 12 July 1826 (quoted in the French newspaper); secondly, the Italian articles about the district of Bury both report the expression ‘potrebb’essere’ in italics, which corresponds to the italics of ‘peut-être’

in *L'Etoile*: the article in the *Sun* did not have any word in italics (see below about the genealogy of the page).

The first news item involving Walter Scott we mentioned above is surprisingly missing from all the usual French sources. I do not exclude the possibility that I have not found the French newspaper that might have published it: these genealogies are extremely difficult to track and all speculations are likely to be re-thought. Nevertheless, an article on the same subject and formulated in a very similar way did appear in a British newspaper. The *Sun*, the same newspaper that was passively quoted in the previous article, published the following news:

Mr. Cooper, the American Novelist, alias “Walter Scott,” the author of the “Pilot,” &c. is arrived in England, together with his wife and family of five children. He is on his way to Lyons, being appointed a Consul for America. (*Sun*, 10 July 1826)

It is clear that the contents are extremely similar, and that the sentences follow the same order. The Italian translation, though, seems a little ‘simplified’, but usually when a French mediation occurs, the translations and the consequent importation are rather faithful and fluent. English, in fact, was still not very well known in Italy, and the scarce awareness of the language might be showing in this translation attempt. The fact that the news does not appear in any of the usual French sources, and that the Italian translation is imperfect, leads us to believe that this article was an attempt to draw the information directly from the primary source, confirming that the Italian readership was being introduced to foreign culture through an extremely polycentric process of importation. This is confirmed by the second Milanese article of the sequence involving Scott. The significant difference from the *Gazzetta Piemontese* is in fact that a source is mentioned: the London-based newspaper ‘[The] *Courier*’. There is no reason to think that the Milanese journalist was lying about the origin of the news, and in the *Courier* issue of 12 July, it is possible to find the following article:

We learn that the profitable office of King’s Printer for Scotland has been conferred on Sir Walter Scott – *Morning Paper* (*Courier*, 12 July 1826)

The same news item did appear in *L'Etoile*, in the same issue that provided the first three articles about England, even if it was in a different section (oddly, about France):

Un journal anglais annonce que sir Walter-Scott est nommé imprimeur du Roi d'Angleterre en Ecosse (*L'Etoile*, 16 July 1826)

The Italian journalists could have easily read the short article, and used it as a source, like the articles they read and copied from the page before. But it appears rather clear that the Italian article is modelled on the English one instead: in my opinion, the key is the adjective profitable (*'lucroso'*) that did not appear in the French newspaper, which might have served just as a 'service translation' to verify there were no mistakes (for example: 'nella Scozia' resembles 'en Ecosse' more than 'for Scotland', but it is a very small detail).¹³ It is hard to tell the reasons behind this attitude in the face of the many different sources, as it is evident that a clear, consistent editorial strategy was not yet in place. What matters the most, in this respect, is to show what the Italian public was actually reading, and to try to interpret their possible reactions. This large volume of information flowing into the Italian erudite circles, *cafés*, *salotti* was starting to build a widespread awareness of major political and social events and the most popular intellectual trends, but the inconsistency at the root of this process was potentially obscure and confusing on many occasions.

With regard to the four brief news items I have been discussing so far published in between the two articles mentioning Walter Scott, it must be noticed that it is likely they all have different origins: they all appear in the usual French and British sources, but it seems that the Italian journalist picked from both without a precise method. In the following image it is possible to have a visual representation of the heterogeneous origins of the news that composed the three columns dedicated to England in the *Gazzetta Piemontese*, which *Gazzetta di Milano* copied almost entirely. The outcome is a real collage (figure 1):

¹³ We can also infer that in the presence of both French and English sources, the Italian journalists would naturally pick the latter as a point of reference for news about the United Kingdom, but always paying attention to how the same news was reported in the French press.

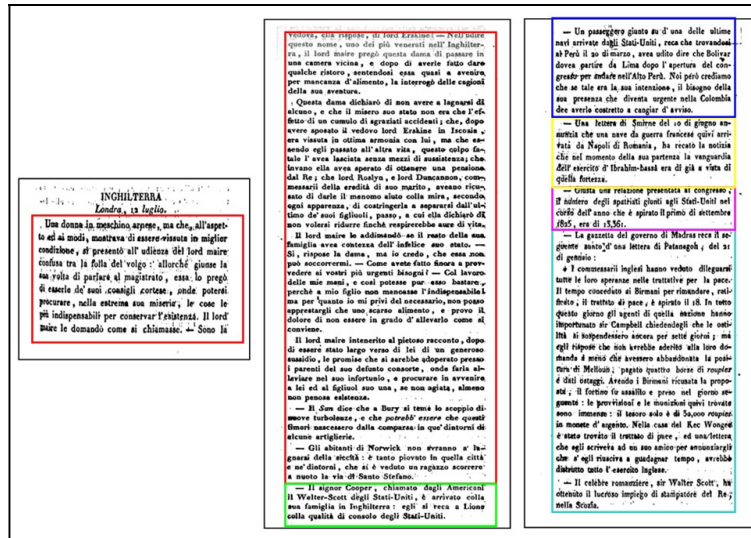


Figure 1: extract from *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 22 July 1826

The genealogical dimension of the page is as follows:

- As I have already said, the first three news items (in the red box) were taken from *L'Etoile* of 16 July 1826. Naturally, they were all previously published in British gazettes, and from there they were imported into France. The first article about Lady Erskine was circulating widely in England: the *Morning Post*, the *London Courier*, the *Star*, the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Sun* all published the item on 12 July. As I have already mentioned above, the second article – about the turbulence in Bury – was taken from the *Sun* of 12 July. The third piece – about the rain in Norwich – first appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* on 8 July, and was then reported by the *Morning Post* and *Star*.
- The article about Mr Cooper, included in the green box, was taken from the *Sun* of 10 July, and was not reported by the usual French sources.
- The top news item in the third column, about Simon Bolivar, was probably taken from the *Globe* of 12 July: the phrasing of the Italian article is very similar to this one (e.g. ‘un passeggero’, modelled on ‘a gentleman who became a passenger’). An article did also appear in *L'Etoile* on 16 July, but the length, form and content are slightly different.
- The second news item about a letter from Smyrna seems to have been copied once again from the *Sun*, where it appeared with a very similar formulation. In addition, I was not able to detect the news in the usual French sources.

- The provenience of the third news item of the column, about the report of the United States Congress, is difficult to understand. The article is very brief and based on numbers, so stylistic choices do not help with the identification. Nevertheless, the information is not present in any of the usual French sources, but was circulating widely in the United Kingdom and Ireland: on 1 July this news was published in *Southern Reporter* and *Cork Commercial Courier* and *Roscommon & Leitrim Gazette*, and one week later it appeared on *The Suffolk Chronicle*.

- Lastly, I have already explained how the news about Walter Scott being appointed as the King's printer derived from the *Courier* of 12 July. From the same gazette came also the second last article about the situation in Burma: both the Italian and the English newspapers published the same extract of the letter, on which the article reported by the *Gazette of Madras* was based (issue of 9 February). The French newspapers did not report that text: *L'Etoile* for example chose to translate and publish another account of the war (from the *Gazette of Madras* of 21 February).

After having reconstructed the—extremely complex—international genealogy of the section focusing on England that first appeared in the *Gazzetta Piemontese*, I will now conclude the description of the example with some remarks about the modalities of news circulation, trying to briefly trace what happened to the two articles dedicated to Walter Scott after their arrival in Northern Italy.

On 1 August 1826, the *Gazzetta di Firenze* published the two news items with no differences (only the order has been changed) on the first page under the 'Inghilterra' section. At the end of the news about England, the 'Fog. [li] Fr. [ancesi]' and 'G.[azzetta] Piem.[ontese]' are credited as the sources for the entire section: clearly, the Florentine newspapers had the chance to draw the information from a compendium coming from, or about France (similar to the 'Fogli Inglesi' I mentioned before) and the *Gazzetta Piemontese*. In the itinerary, though, some of the news published in Turin got lost, and was replaced by other more recent news. It is significant that the two mentioning Walter Scott resisted the expunction, got put together without any news in

between and actually gained a more prominent position in the issue: it is a sign of the high level of attention the media were paying to the writer.

After Florence, the items about Scott can be spotted in Naples, as they were published in *Giornale delle due Sicilie* on 7 August, again on the first page under the section about England and again with no other news items separating them. The Neapolitan newspaper mentioned even more sources for this column: ‘Et.[oile] Gaz.[zetta] di Gen.[ova] e di Fir.[enze]’. Once again, many of the news items that were published in *Gazzetta di Firenze* got lost in the journey to Naples, but the two about Scott survived, denoting once more the importance the Scottish author had for many of the Italian newspapers and journalists of the time. This is even more significant if we think that Neapolitan newspaper collated three sources to select its news, which was later published, having, therefore, the possibility to choose from a wide array of articles. On the other hand, it must be observed that the news about Scott did not appear in *Gazzetta di Genova*: apparently, this gazette must have served as inspiration for news other than the two items about Scott, because no issue in July reported them. This absence would contradict what I have just stated about Scott’s popularity, but it must be noted that none of the articles that comprise the English sections for the newspapers in Turin and Milan appear in Genoa, where the sections dedicated to England were considerably shorter for the month of July.¹⁴ The absence of Scott’s news would therefore be re-dimensioned: it was not for lack of interest, but rather for a probable impossibility to draw the information from the ‘right’ sources.

At the beginning of the journey (in England and France) the news items about Scott were surrounded by a considerable amount of other information about very different subjects, and that in

¹⁴ The only case of articles appearing in Genoa after Milan or Turin can be found in two articles bringing the same information and published in Milan on 21 July and in Genoa on 29 July. The first reads like this: «Il sig. Brougham fu eletto membro del parlamento dalla città di Winchelbena». The second is «M. Brougham è stato nominato membro del parlamento per la città di Winchelsea». It is hard to tell which is the exact source at the root of these very short articles (the news was circulating all over England, often in the form of a small note). Nevertheless, it can be inferred that the news was taken from two different sources. First of all, the meaning is slightly different: the Milanese article suggests that Brougham was elected *by* the city, while the Genovese states that he was elected *for* the city. In this respect, there is a significant typographical mistake concerning the geographic indication in the *Gazzetta di Milano*, which instead is spelled correctly in the Genoa’s one: countless examples show that it was hard for the Italian journalists to correct this sort of mistake about foreign toponyms independently. Therefore, the two articles are almost certainly not related.

the end they ‘survived’ a process of migration from one newspaper to the other, with the constant risk of being cut in favour of other news. This proof of the incredible relevance Walter Scott gained thanks to his literary works, and especially in Italy, the last stop in the journey, where the media considered him as important as, if not even more important than, many of the events that were happening around the world.

Conclusion

The survey allowed me to explain the patterns and trends of *how* the information about Walter Scott was circulating from England to Italy through the newspapers. The news that appeared in the Italian newspapers were the results of multiple crossings and overlaps. An article was conceived and written in a British journal, which acted as the archetype for other journals of the United Kingdom, that copied it generally quoting the source. After one or two weeks, the French press got in possession of a large volume of newspapers coming from the other side of the Channel, and started a process of cataloguing and individuation of the most significant articles, which were then filtered, translated, sectioned and adjusted for the French audience. Once the news were published in France, it was the turn of the Italian censors and journalists to start a very similar process of selection. It is a well known fact that France played a key role in the dissemination of British culture in Italy, for example through the many translations of the books coming from the United Kingdom made available for the Italian readership, not yet well acquainted with the English language. The examples I discussed prove that the extent of this influence reaches also the gazettes: it was in fact the French journalistic tradition that ‘dictated’ in most occasions what was read in Italy about England, and since the news were mostly ‘copied and pasted’, it is through a French lens that the Italian public started accessing news from England regularly. Nevertheless, the study showed also that in some other occasions the news came straight from England. In this case, the attitude of the Italian journals was once again prudent and conservative, also for an additional reason, namely a not yet secure and widespread knowledge of the English language.

This polycentric flux of information coming into Italy from abroad is mirrored by the variety of supply channels that were active within the peninsula. Once in Italy, in fact, the news were regularly transmitted from north to south, from one gazette to the other, once again copying and pasting the articles. As I discussed, in fact, the French journalists were more ‘interactive’ in relations to their first-hand British sources, and it is not rare to find not only better critical insights and contextualization that helped the readers understand and process the information, but also examples where the original articles coming from the other side of the Channel are deemed as imprecise, false or badly informed. On the contrary, the attitude of the Italian journalists towards the sources was almost exclusively conservative and prudent: the contents were not known well enough to take any kind of initiative with regard to the original articles, and in most cases there was no possibility to contradict them with information coming from reliable alternative sources.

What can be concluded about the Italian gazettes is that the custom of importing and copying news from the foreign press that was established in the 18th century, was still active into the 19th century as well. With regards to Great Britain, this resulted in a large amount of information that was being introduced in the peninsula with the only filter of the censorship. Being the quantity of the news seemingly more important of their accuracy, the public was not provided with the necessary hermeneutical tools for a deep comprehension of the facts that were happening in the British islands. It was sufficient to omit, or ‘forget’, the importation of an article that was originally part of a series to leave the Italian readers devoid of necessary information to follow the succession of the facts.

Ultimately, the intricate network of relations occurring between the European journals had one extremely significant consequence for the Italian cultural milieu. The fact that the gazettes were copying each other means that the same news were circulating all over the peninsula, therefore reaching all the different centres of culture diffusion (such as cafés, literary cenacles) in the many pre-unitarian states. Decades before a political unification was actually achieved (1861), the *gazzette* were somehow leading a less evident, but as much important, unification of the Italian

people, which were reading the same contents and the same actualities even if they belonged to different political realities. The process of cultural amalgamation and the shaping of a collective cultural identity passed unequivocally through the gazettes.

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