

Anotacijos, apžvalgos, vertimai

TRANSLATING FROM LITHUANIAN INTO ITALIAN: FIVE YEARS AFTER TURIN 2007

ADRIANO CERRI

Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics

University of Pisa

Italy

adriano.cerri@for.unipi.it

This review deals with the most recent translations from Lithuanian into Italian. It is intended as a sequel to previous works (e.g. Dini 2007b; Dini, Klioštoraitytė 2009). The focus is the years 2008–2012. All the translations which appeared in this period are reviewed with two objectives in mind: a) to update the data; b) to analyse the situation after the 2007 Turin Book Fair, where Lithuania was the guest of honour. The analysis suggests both negative and positive conclusions. Compared to the period 2005–2008, there was a drop in the number of translations. This may have been a natural effect after the rapid growth due to the Fair; however, the drop in translations can be largely attributed to the economic crisis. In fact, the 2011 Bologna Children’s Book Fair did not cause the same surge in the market of translation. Regrettably, some translators who worked in the pre-Turin years have not continued; thus, the small number of translators is currently a problem. On the other hand, there are also positive signs. Several important and high-quality translations have appeared recently. The efforts of the few main translators have even increased over the years and, finally, some new translators and new publishing companies are slowly emerging.

PREAMBLE

The relationship between Italy and Lithuania has increasingly grown since the late eighties. The political independence of Lithuania (1991) strongly contributed to the rediscovery of cultural ties which had been apparent in the period between the two World Wars (Dini 2007a; Dini, Klioštoraitytė 2009). Thanks to the efforts of a few scholars and translators, a number of publications concerning Lithuania have appeared in Italy in the last 25 years. A noticeable part of these works is made up of translations. Though Lithuanian literature is still to be considered “minor” in Italy, today an Italian reader has access to a significant number of translations of both prose and poetry. In

order to keep up with the translations to date, a number of reports have been published in the past (see Dini 1999, 2007b; Bugiani 2007; Dini, Klioštoraitytė 2009). Other information can be found on the website Books from Lithuania¹ and also on the Italian Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania²; unfortunately, such information is often lacking and not up-to-date.

In this article I will deal with this topic, limiting myself to the last five years (2008–2012). I chose this period in order to achieve two goals: the first one, of course, is to update the data and the second, to analyse the situation after the 2007 Turin Book Fair, where Lithuania was the guest of honour. The Turin Book Fair represented a great chance for Lithuania to advertise its literary world and make its talents known in Italy. Hopefully, I am not mistaken when I say that many Italians became acquainted with Lithuanian *belle lettres* for the first time in Turin. The importance of this event is clearly mirrored by the rapid growth of translations in the few years preceding the event. According to the data provided by Jonikaitė (2008, 58), in the period 2005–2008, the number of translations from Lithuanian into Italian was one of the highest, Italian being fourth after English, German and Swedish. If we consider the small number of translators, this is a major achievement.

REVIEW (2008–2012)

Prose

I will try to provide a report about the translations published in the last five years starting with prose. In 2009, Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's book "Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros" was translated into Italian by Ieva Musteikytė³. This work is distinctive, firstly, because of its historical and autobiographical theme; secondly, because its translator is one of the most productive of the "young generation" (so far, Ieva Musteikytė has translated two books from Lithuanian into Italian and one from Italian into Lithuanian⁴).

In the same year, a team of three young Italian translators – Alessandra Calì, Adriano Cerri and Fabrizio Mazzella – participated in the international workshop *Vilniaus įkvėpti* (Inspired by Vilnius) and, under the guidance of Guido Michelini, translated a short story *Kontūrinis Vilnius* by Agnė Žagrakalytė⁵.

In 2010, four short stories – "Koncertas Nr. 1" (Concert No 1), "Namas užmiestyje" (A House in the Suburbs) by Jurga Ivanauskaitė, "Raudoni miškai" (Red forests) and "Beržų

¹ www.booksfromlithuania.lt

² <https://it.mfa.lt/index.php?1426099436>

³ Dalia Grinkevičiūtė. *I lituani al mar di Laptev. L'inferno di ghiaccio nei lager comunisti*, edited by Francobaldo Chiocci, translated by Ieva Musteikytė, Roma: Pagine, 2009.

⁴ Laima Laučkaitė. *Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis e l'arte lituana all'inizio del XX secolo*, translated by Ieva Musteikytė, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2007; *ROMA nuo įkūrimo iki mūsų dienu*, translated by Ieva Musteikytė, Vatikanas: Lozzi editore, 2008;

⁵ Agnė Žagrakalytė, "Profilo di Vilnius", in "*Vilniaus įkvėpti*" (Inspired by Vilnius), Vilnius: Europos kultūros sostinė, 2009.

kalnas” (A Birch Hill) by Romualdas Granauskas – were translated by Adriano Cerri for the journal *Hebenon*⁶. The same issue also included the first Italian translation of Kristijonas Donelaitis’s fables. Among these three authors, Granauskas was probably the best known because of Michelini’s translation of *Gyvenimas po klevu*⁷ (Life under a Maple) in 2007.

A wider collection of short stories was published in 2010 with the title *Sotto il cielo del nord* (Under the northern sky). This is a printed almanac of the yearly festival “Europos literatūros dienos” (Days of European Culture), organised by Markus Roduner (winner of the St. Jerome Award in 2008). The translations are by Pietro U. Dini and the authors represented are Undinė Radzevičiūtė, Pauls Bankovskis, Aleksandra Fomina, Danielius Mušinskas, Danutė Kalinauskaitė, and Laurynas Katkus. Moreover, a digital and extended version of the same book is supposed to appear in the near future, which should also contain three short stories from Kęstutis Navakas’ collection “Du lagaminai sniego” (Two cases of snow) and an excerpt from Jaroslavas Melnikas’s book “Labai keistas namas” (A very strange/quaint house), translated by Adriano Cerri.

In 2011 the translation of the novel “Kvėpavimas į marmurą” (Breathing to the marble) by Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė appeared thanks to Guido Michelini and Birutė Žindžiūtė-Michelini⁸, who had previously translated other contemporary best sellers such as Sigitas Parulskis’ “Trys sekundės dangaus” (Three seconds of the sky)⁹.

To continue on the subject of best sellers, Pietro U. Dini has recently completed the translation of Jurga Ivanauskaitė’s “Ragana ir lietus” (A witch and the rain). The book was supposed to be published by Nikita Editore (Florence) with the financial support of Books from Lithuania, but the publishing company went bankrupt. Thus, the book’s destiny remained uncertain for a while. Fortunately, Joker Edizioni from Novi Ligure (AL) has decided to publish it; therefore it will likely appear in 2013.

Another forthcoming book (2014) is a collection of short stories by Tomas Saulius Kondrotas, “Il collezionista di tramonti e altre storie“, edited and translated by Pietro U. Dini for Books & Company (Livorno).

As far as children’s literature is concerned, only two books have appeared in Italian: Kęstutis Kasparavičius’s *Sodininkas Florencijus*¹⁰ and *Dingęs paveikslas*¹¹, both translated by Aistė Kasiulytė and Roberta Fabbri and published by Comma 22 (Bologna) in 2010.

⁶ Hebenon. *Rivista internazionale di letteratura*, Anno XV, Quarta serie, No. 5–6, 2010.

⁷ Romualdas Granauskas, *La vita sotto l’acero*, translated by Guido Michelini, Nardò (LE): Besa Editrice, 2007.

⁸ Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė, *Il respiro sul marmo*, translated by Guido Michelini and Birutė Žindžiūtė-Michelini, Roma: Atmosphere libri, 2011.

⁹ Sigitas Parulskis, *Tre secondi di cielo – Sappiamo come uccidere non come vivere*, translated by Guido Michelini and Birutė Žindžiūtė-Michelini, Milano: Isbn Edizioni, 2005.

¹⁰ Kęstutis Kasparavičius, *Il giardiniera Florenzio*, translated by Aistė Kasiulytė and Roberta Fabbri, Bologna: Comma 22, 2010.

¹¹ Kęstutis Kasparavičius, *Il quadro scomparso*, translated by Aistė Kasiulytė and Roberta Fabbri, Bologna: Comma 22, 2010.

Dealing with prose, we must mention the recent translations of Leonidas Donskis's *Mažasis patirties žemėlapis. Mintys ir aforizmai* and *99 Baltijos istorijos*. These collections of aphorisms and/or short stories have been translated by Pietro U. Dini for the publisher Joker. The first book appeared at the end of 2012¹², while the second is still under preparation.

Poetry

Turning now to poetry, probably the biggest contribution in this field is the collection "Mappa della poesia lituana del terzo Novecento. Poeti degli anni sessanta" edited and translated by Pietro U. Dini¹³ in 2010. The collection contains poetry of the most influential contemporary Lithuanian poets such as Eugenijus Ališanka, Dovilė Zelčiūtė, Kęstutis Navakas, Sigitas Parulskis and many others. This work is intended as a sequel to the previous collections which appeared in the same journal "In forma di parole" (Bologna). In fact, in 2006 two volumes were dedicated to the poets of the second half of the 19th century (among them were Antanas A. Jonynas, Justinas Marcinkevičius, Kornelijus Platelis, Marcelijus Martinaitis and others). Before 2008, the journal "In forma di parole" was surely the leader in the circulation of Lithuanian poetry in Italy. Besides the mentioned anthologies, other issues were specifically dedicated to Vytautas Mačernis (1986), Tomas Venclova (2003) and Sigitas Geda (2007).

Today the situation has changed, as there is a new company that seems to be intent on becoming the new leader in this sector. This company is Joker Edizioni, which was mentioned above with regard to the publication of Ivanauskaitė's *Ragana ir lietus*. In 2008 the company decided to start a series named *Parole del mondo* (Words of the world), which deserves special attention. As you can read on the presentation page¹⁴, its purpose is to release Italian translations of both fiction and poetry from various international cultures. So, it doesn't favour any specific cultural, linguistic or geographical domain. In spite of this, a quick overview immediately reveals the strong "Balticity" of the series. So far, five authors have been published: two Lithuanians Vytautas Mačernis and Gintaras Grajauskas, the New Zealander Bill Manhire, the Latvian Knuts Skujenieks and the Estonian Jüri Talvet¹⁵. In addition, preparations are underway for anthologies of Vladas Braziūnas's (2013) and and Jonas Mekas's (2014) work.

¹² Leonidas Donskis, *Piccola mappa esperienziale. Aforismi, intuizioni, piccole storie*, translated and edited by Pietro U. Dini, Novi Ligure (AL): Joker, 2012

¹³ *Mappa della poesia lituana del terzo Novecento. Poeti degli anni sessanta*, translated and edited by Pietro U. Dini, Bologna: In forma di parole, 2010.

¹⁴ <http://www.edizionijoker.com/collane.html>

¹⁵ Gintaras Grajauskas, *Barricate quotidiane*, translated and edited by Pietro U. Dini, Novi Ligure (AL): Joker, 2008; Knuts Skujenieks, *Tornato da un altro mondo*, translated and edited by Pietro U. Dini, Novi Ligure (AL): Joker, 2010; Vytautas Mačernis, *Corte consonanze*, translated and edited by Pietro U. Dini, Novi Ligure (AL): Joker, 2010; Jüri Talvet, *Primavera e polvere*, translated and edited by Albert Lázaro-Tinaut and Pietro U. Dini, Novi Ligure (AL): Joker, 2012

Bearing in mind the state of the editorial crisis and the small amount of circulation of Baltic literature in Italy, we may regard the series *Parole del mondo* as a daring challenge. Moreover, not many companies are inclined to invest in poetry, viewing it as not very profitable. Dealing with the economic side of the matter, we have to remember that the costs of the translations from Lithuanian were covered by grants from Books from Lithuania (as well as the above-mentioned anthology of contemporary poets). The *spiritus movens* of the collection once again is professor Pietro U. Dini, who has translated and edited the books. All the issues share common features, such as the original parallel text, a biographical presentation of the authors, a critical note by the editor, bibliographical information and pictures. The selection of the poems was based on the editor's choices as well as suggestions from the poets.

A recent accomplishment (December 2012) is the translation of Donelaitis's *Pavasario linksmybės*¹⁶. It was part of the project *Donelaičio tekstų vertimas ir hiperteksto kūrimas italų kalba*, which was carried out by the Institute of Lithuanian language and the University of Pisa with funds from the Lithuanian Ministry of Science and Education. The result of the project was the creation of the first Italian website wholly dedicated to Kristijonas Donelaitis: www.donelaitis.it. Here a lot of information can be found about the author's life and work, while in the section "traduzioni in italiano" the reader can find the above-mentioned translation as well as a reviewed version of the six fables previously published in the journal *Hebenon* (see above §2.1). It is worth considering that only an excerpt of "Metai" had previously been translated into Italian¹⁷; hopefully, this could be the first step towards the complete translation of Lithuania's national poem.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, we can point out some general tendencies in the most recent years. First of all, from a quantitative point of view, there was a drop in the number of translations after 2008. Therefore, we can take it that the 2007 Turin Book Fair did not produce the expected results. On the other hand, this fact should be regarded as a natural effect after the rapid growth of translations due to the Fair. In comparison with previous periods such as 1996–2000, the number of translations in the last five years has been higher. The efforts of the three main translators (Pietro U. Dini, Guido Michelini and Birutė Žindžiūtė-Michelini) have been constant or have even increased over the years; conversely, other translators who worked in the past should probably be considered occasional rather than stable (see Anna Karpič-Tornaghi, Danius Būrė, Aušra Povilavičiūtė, Rasa Klioštoraitytė,

¹⁶ Kristijonas Donelaitis, *Le gioie della primavera*, translated by Adriano Cerri, 2012: <http://donelaitis.it/index.php/traduzioni-in-italiano/le-gioie-della-primavera/>.

¹⁷ Vincas Mincevičius, "Le prime composizioni poetiche lituane in esametri / Le gioie della primavera", ELTA-Press, n. 3, Roma, 1964, pp. 23–26.

Aistė Kasiulytė, Roberta Fabbri, etc.). So, though some new and young translators are slowly emerging, their small number is a current problem.

Poetry is still the most translated genre – just as it always has been. However, some important novels are being translated too. In this case the main criterion of choice seems to be, unsurprisingly, the popularity of the book and the number of translations in other languages. The path to publication usually starts with the translator's idea followed by the proposal to a publishing company. The reverse – that is, the request is put forward by a company – happens rarely, but that is the case, for instance, regarding *Ragana ir lietūs*¹⁸.

So far, theatre as a genre has been largely disregarded: only a very small number of translations have appeared¹⁹. As far as I know, there have been no translations whatsoever in the last five years. In order to account for this, we should bear in mind the fact that despite the great tradition of Italian drama (from Niccolò Machiavelli to Luigi Pirandello and Eduardo De Filippo), today it is a rather peripheral genre. Besides the classics, only a few contemporary writers have been successful in this genre: Dario Fo, Erri De Luca, Alessandro Baricco, Stefano Benni, Marco Paolini, and Ascanio Celestini (by the way, the latter two, also being actors, owe their editorial success, in part, to their theatrical fame).

Another evident deficiency can be seen in children's literature. There was a peak in 2007, when four books were published²⁰. Since that time, only two translations have appeared. This is surprising if we consider that Lithuania was the guest of honour at the 2011 Children's Book Fair in Bologna. An exception to this negative trend was the 5th edition of the Premio Estroverso²¹, a prize for translations from Eastern European languages into Italian and Friulian. In 2011, Lithuanian was chosen as one of the source languages. The winners were Laura Vilkaitė and Serena Cantoni, who translated Lina Žutautė's "Kakė Makė ir netvarkos nykštukas" (*Kake Make and a dwarf of mess*). The book is scheduled to be published no later than the beginning of 2014. If we compare the 2011 Bologna Children's Book Fair with Turin 2007, we can clearly see that the Children's Book Fair did not cause the same surge in the market of translation. This is probably not due to the genre. Instead, we have to admit that the economic crisis hit this sector hard.

¹⁸ See Pietro U. Dini's interview in Mitaitė (2011, 137).

¹⁹ Justinas Marcinkevičius, *Mažnydas*, translated and edited by Pietro U. Dini, Potenza: Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università della Basilicata, 1992–93; Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė, *Lucia sul ghiaccio*; Marius Ivaškevičius, *Malish*, translated by Birutė Žindžiūtė-Michelini, in: Roberta Carlotto (ed.), *A est: scritture dall'Europa orientale*, Napoli: L'ancora nel Mediterraneo, 2005.

²⁰ *Fiabe popolari lituane*, translated by Anna Karpič-Tornaghi, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2007; Sigutė Ach, Ambrogio, Fufi e l'Angelo, translated by Birutė Žindžiūtė-Michelini, Vilnius: Nieko rimto, 2007; Aurelija Čeredaitė, *La strega pigrona*, translated by Rasa Klioštoraitytė, Livorno: Books & Company, 2007; Kęstutis Kasparavičius, *La giornata delle fragole: storie misteriose*, translated by Birutė Žindžiūtė-Michelini, Vilnius: Nieko rimto, 2007.

²¹ http://www.comune.tavagnacco.ud.it/progetti/copy_of_estroverso-5-edizione.

In conclusion, I would like to recall what Dini wrote in 1999:

“Big” publishing companies hardly ever show an interest in Baltic literature. In fact, the vast majority of translations were published in periodicals or thanks to the courage of “little” companies, which are decidedly more interested in the quality of the product rather than the immediate profit (Dini 1999, 29).

Fourteen years later, these words still hold true; nonetheless, let us think positively. There are companies that despite being small show courage in this area and there are translators who, despite being few in number, are dedicated and passionate.

REFERENCES

- Bugiani P. 2007. From Innocent III to today – Italian interest in the Baltic. *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38 (2), 255–262.
- Dini P.U. 1999. Letterature baltiche in traduzione italiana. *Il traduttore nuovo* 50, 21–29.
- Dini P.U. 2007a. *L'anello lituano. La Lituania vista dagli altri: viaggi, studi, parole*. Livorno/Vilnius. Books & Company/Lietuvių kalbos institutas.
- Dini P.U. 2007b. *Letteratura lituana in traduzione italiana*. Vilnius. Books from Lithuania.
- Dini P.U. & Klioštoraitytė R. 2009. Italų literatūra Lietuvoje ir lietuvių literatūra Italijoje: vertimų bibliografija. *Vertimo studijos* 2, 185–194.
- Jonikaitė A. 2008. Translations of Lithuanian Literature between 2005 and 2008. *The Vilnius Review* 25, [http://test.svs.lt/?Vilnius;Number\(276\);Article\(6733\)](http://test.svs.lt/?Vilnius;Number(276);Article(6733)).
- Mitaitė D. 2011. Su žymioju baltistu apie jo paralelinę aistrą. *Colloquia* 27, 132–140, <http://www.liti.lt/failai/Pokalbiai.pdf>.

VERTIMAI IŠ LIETUVIŲ KALBOS Į ITALŲ: PENKERI METAI PO TURINO MUGĖS (2007)

ADRIANO CERRI

Santrauka

Pristatyti vertimus iš lietuvių kalbos į italų jau tapo tradicija (žr. Dini 2007b; Dini, Klioštoraitytė 2009). Čia pateikiamoje apžvalgoje aptariami naujausi, t. y. 2008–2012 m. lietuvių autorių vertimai į italų kalbą. Per visą šį laikotarpį išleisti vertimai apžvelgiami siekiant dviejų tikslų: atnaujinti duomenis ir aptarti padėtį po 2007-ųjų Turino knygų mugės, kurioje Lietuva dalyvavo garbės svečio teisėmis. Atlikta analizė parodė, kad darytinios ir teigiamos, ir neigiamos išvados. Palyginti su 2005–2008 m. laikotarpiu, vertimų gerokai sumažėjo. Tai gali būti natūralus kritimas po itin spartaus vertimų skaičiaus didėjimo prieš mugę, tačiau didesnė tikimybė, kad vertimų sumažėjo dėl ekonomikos krizės. Iš tiesų – 2011-ųjų Bolonijos vaikų knygų mugė prieš Turino mugę buvusio šuolio vertimo rinkoje nesulaukė. Tenka apgailestauti, kad kai kurie vertėjai po Turino mugės naujų knygų neverčia, todėl šiuo metu problema – nedidelis vertėjų skaičius. Tačiau yra ir teigiamų ženklų. Neseniai pasirodė keletas svarbių aukštos kokybės vertimų, nes labiausiai patyrę vertėjai dėjo dar daugiau pastangų, kad vertimų srautas nenutrūktų. Išleista keletas reikšmingų knygų, be to, pamažu randasi naujų leidyklų, kurios imasi leisti mažiau žinomų autorių kūrinis.