Irene Ranzato

Sapienza Università di Roma

Introduction:
Reading Dialect Varieties in the Literary Macrotext

> All poetry (even Cockney Keats?) you see
> 's been dubbed by [Λs] into RP
> Received Pronunciation, please believe [Λs]
> your speech is in the hands of the Receivers.
>
> from Tony Harrison's *Them and [uz]*

The ways in which a literary text changes when translated into different languages, different genres and different media, and the way the "original" text, expanded and complicated by a string of declinations over time and places, becomes an ever-changing, multi-layered, dynamic macrotext, opens up avenues of analysis also for the diachronic and diatopic study of more or less micro linguistic features. Or for features, such as dialects and accents in fictional narratives, where micro and macro issues are often intertwined.

That dialects in real or fictional contexts allow for readings which are often not only "purely" linguistic is a well established fact. Looking more closely at the dialects of England, we know that the "modern" dialect areas (sixteen for Trudgill 2000) and a broad distinction between a linguistic North and South are based on a set of pronunciation variables including initial *h/h*-dropping, silent or present *g* in *-ing* forms, final or absent *r*, and the *but/put* distinction (ibid: 52-84). So much for the linguistic fact. But we also know that the latter distinction, along with the vowel in *bath*, is loaded with added meaningfulness, being one of the most salient and most symbolic markers of Northern English pronunciation, both occurring in popular representations of Northern speech versus Southern speech. Lessons in Northern grammar schools aiming at the inculcation of Received Pronunciation and the eradication

of a Northern accent concentrated, for example, on the *a* and *u* (Wales 2002: 50). Over time these vowels have become «the focus of condescension and derision on the one hand, and pride and solidarity on the other: depending, of course, on whether one is a Northerner or a Southerner» (ibid.: 49). Outside the discipline of linguistics, in fact, the value-neutral view of language varieties has little influence: «There is apparently a yawning gap between what linguists profess to think about language and what ordinary people assume in their daily use and observation of language» (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 11). And, as the same scholars state: «Although discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender or social class is not now publicly acceptable, it appears that discrimination on linguistic grounds is publicly acceptable» (Milroy and Milroy 1999: 2-3).

Definitions of geographical/political versus psychological boundaries are significant for all dialect areas (psychogeography and perceptual dialectology are explored for example by Preston 1989 and, more recently, by Cramer and Montgomery 2016), but the semiotic opposition between the "savage" North and the urbanised South is deeply rooted in British popular imagination, making the "North-South divide" more vivid, perceptionally speaking, than any other linguistic opposition within the British Isles. In addition, metrocentrism, discrimination in favour of the capital, has always intensified the polarity in favour of the South:

For Londoners, the North begins in popular parlance "North of Potters Bar" or "North of Watford". Beyond the northern limits of the former Greater London Council and the last stop on the underground Metropolitan Line is the cultural wilderness (Wales 2002: 46-47).

Polarisation often equals to simplification, and this cannot be more true as in the case of what we may term the conceptual North of England, where opposing perceptions of land, people and language converge. On one hand, under the influence of Romanticism, people from the North of England came to be conceived as manifestations of the "pure" and "noble savages" surrounded in their solitude by a "sublime" landscape of mountains and lakes (Wales 2002: 46); on the other, with the impact

of the Industrial Revolution, the North came to be associated to polluted industrial cities, inhabited by poverty-stricken working-class masses (ibid.). Industrialisation, however, did not convey only negative images: the loaded polarity of the North as negative versus a South as positive was partly corrected, «since for the first time in history the North was more successful economically than the South, and there flourished a wealthy "millocracy"» (Wales 2002: 61 quoting Crowley 1989: 153). This elaborate view of the North, engrained till recent times in popular imagination, inspiring books, films, television serialisations and comedy sketches, is only an instance of how perceptive realities have nourished literary and audiovisual renditions of accents and dialects, complicating the notion of realistic portrayal.

The culture clash ensuing the encounter between people coming from different social and linguistic realities within the same country, and the way this clash has been read in fictional narratives, is best encapsulated in Elizabeth Gaskell's social novel *North and South* (1855) and in its BBC adaptations (*North & South*, Bennett 1975; Percival 2004). Based on her experience of life in Manchester, where Gaskell lived, this is the story of a girl and her family, accustomed to a tranquil life in the rural South, who move to the North and settle among the *nouveaux riches* and the hard-toiling labourers of a manufacturing town. The complex emotions experienced by the characters in the encounter – contempt, sympathy, eventually liking and love – are convincingly described by Gaskell, but speech is used for characterisation by the author only in the case of the working class Bessy and Nicholas Higgins. The following is one of the dialogue exchanges between Margaret and her new friend Bessy, contained in the chapter by the telling (and Austenian) title of «First Impressions»:

«Why, Bessy, what kind of a life has yours been?»
«Nought worse than many others', I reckon. Only I fretted again' it, and they didn't.»
«But what was it? You know, I'm a stranger here, so perhaps I'm not so quick at understanding what you mean as if I'd lived all my life at Milton.»

«If yo'd ha' come to our house when yo' said yo' would, I could maybe ha' told you. But father says you're just like th' rest on 'em; it's out o' sight out o' mind wi' you.» (Gaskell 1855/1994: 103).

Dialect in working class characters, as emerges from *North and South* and other social novels of the same period, is also a marker of (working class) solidarity, of an "us" versus "them" ideology (Wales 2002: 61). The antagonism expressed by Betty's words in her encounter with the genteel Southerner finds a linguistic, and visual[1], counterpart in the transcription of her Northern accent.

No such device is used in the case of the leading characters, Margaret Hale and John Thornton, who speak in the novel in standard English, with no indication that their pronunciation diverts from the received one. This follows a well-established convention of the Victorian novels, whose authors customarily assigned standard speech to characters who would realistically speak a non-standard variety. Virtuous characters who play a major part in the story were usually handled in this way, «the purity of their speech reflecting the purity of their natures and their superiority to their environment» (Chapman 1994: 221). It was a convention which reveals the status accorded to standard speech within society:

The improbable diction which Dickens gives to some of his characters has often been noticed. Oliver Twist is brought up in a workhouse and then thrown among London criminals, but his pronunciation continues to be as pure as his sentiments (ibid.).

If, in some cases such as Gaskell, strong dialect is given to those with whom the reader should sympathise, such as the Higgins in *North and South*, other authors like Eliot and Hardy were more cautious and, again in the case of Dickens, characters like Oliver Twist, Little Nell and

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[1] Bessy's speech as reported by Gaskell presents features of "eye dialect" which consists in the use of spelling that has nothing to do with the phonological differences of real dialects to suggest a dialect difference, for example in the spelling of «the» as «th'». It appeals to the eye of the reader rather than the ear (Wolfram and Schilling 2016: 399).

Lizzie Hexam are the most striking examples of linguistic «bond of fellowship between the middle-class reader and the virtuous poor» (Chapman 1994: 246).

The 1975 TV version of *North and South* partly follows the novel's lead of having only minor characters speak non-standard forms of English. Mr Thornton, interpreted by Yorkshire-born Patrick Stewart, speaks with an almost imperceptible twang of educated Northerner. Southerner Margaret, on the other hand, comes from the area where the very concept of RP found its origins[2] and speaks accordingly. Quite differently, the 2004 adaptation of Gaskell's novel, *North & South*, portrays the clash also in vivid linguistic terms: quite distinctly from the Hale family's RP, all of the Thorntons, including John's mother and sister, speak with a marked "oop North" accent.

The handling of accents and dialects in the novel and in the novel's afterlives is paradigmatic of the way dialect was handled in literature in the Victorian period and of how British television authors have, in the course of time, constructed more in-depth characterisations also by integrating realistic linguistic features such as regional and social dialects. The partial, "cautious" or altogether inexistent depiction of dialects in characters one would imagine as speaking a variety other than standard English is by all means not a feature limited to the Victorian novel. In Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908), George Emerson, the young man that the heroine, Lucy Honeychurch, will eventually marry, has no characteristic linguistic features in the novel and critics have often noted that George is unrealised as a character (Scherer Herz 2007). Forster's unease with George, who evidently comes, according to the author's description, from a lower class than the one the genteel Lucy could hope to aim at, is comparable to Forster's Leonard Bast, the working class character in *Howards End* (1910/2012). The film adaptation of *A Room with a View* (Ivory 1985) does not rely, generally speaking, on non-standard accent for

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[2] As the *Oxford Dictionary of English* online concisely defines it, received pronunciation is «the standard form of British English pronunciation, based on educated speech in southern England, widely accepted as a standard elsewhere».

characterisation (Mr Emerson, George's father, presents a proletarian but after all not heavily marked accent), although the actors' use of facial expressions and gestures are carefully calculated to convey their sense of social status and their personal idiosyncrasies. For example, in contrast to actor Julian Sands's George Emerson, whose movements are loose and who speaks in wild, erratic phrases, Daniel Day Lewis's characterisation of the aesthete Cecil is highly choreographed: his gestures are mechanical, and his words delivered less as a casual conversation and more as if he were reading a novel (Landy 2007: 245). In addition, in the Italian dubbing, Cecil is made to exploit the resources of codeswitching by using various French and Italian expressions to convey his snobbish culture. George Emerson does not speak much, but when he does, he uses standard English as in the novel, with no traces of an "unreceived" accent. It is through the images of the film that his and his father's social class are made evident to the audience, as the following description in the original screenplay by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala exemplifies:

These are opposite Mr Emerson and George – who are markedly different from the other guests. Their reception of the newcomers is also different: Mr Emerson, an elderly, plump gentleman with childlike eyes, has his mouth full and so can only wave his fork cheerily in their direction (Prawer Jhabvala n.d.: 4).

In the ITV television version (Renton 2007), on the other hand, George Emerson and his father speak with a marked London accent which precisely characterises their social background, more than often alluded to in Forster's novel, and in this version overtly emphasised by the use of this strong accent and by various explicit references to class.

In the wake of what I would term the 1990s big turn in television adaptations of the classics, which has seen the introduction of a greater number of realistic features in an attempt to bring these stories closer to our contemporary sensibilities, George has acquired the Cockney linguistic features of actor Rafe Spall who rivals in "plebeian" accent with his father, Timothy Spall, who plays Mr Emerson in the film (for more insights on this novel's macrotext, see Ranzato 2016).

It is a fact that television adaptations of the classics frequently portray the regional and social dialects that supposedly belong to their characters even when in the original novels these same characters speak in standard dialogue or are characterised by way of a few impressionistic – linguistically speaking – brushstrokes. Thus, in more recent times, in adaptations of the classic works of literature on British television, and, less often, cinema, it is not infrequent to hear even the "hero" or "heroine" speak with a marked accent: see, for example, or rather hear, besides John Thornton and his mother and sister in *North & South*, and George Emerson and his father in *A Room with a View*, the characters of Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (Renton 1998), Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Percival 2007) (although this is certainly an evil hero, an example of grotesque and low character, he is notable for not speaking in dialect in Dickens's novel), Heatchcliff and Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* (Giedroyc, 2009), and Jane Eyre in *Jane Eyre* (Fukunaga, 2011), to name but a few adaptations in which regional accents are used as means to create a character's idiolect. Some of these are also typical examples of the diatopic dimension meeting the diastratic one, for instance in the case of the uncultivated London accent of the Emersons in the TV adaptation. This is in line with established evidence from sociolinguistic studies (since Labov 1966/2006) which have shown regular correlations between sociolinguistic status and usage levels of vernacular versus standard features.

In novel adaptations, television programmes have proven to be even more realistic than cinema: compare for example the cited *A Room with a View* with James Ivory's 1985 film version, or Renton's *Far from the Madding Crowd* with Thomas Vinterberg's 2015 film adaptation (the latter notable, as far as accents are concerned, for Oak's very un-British Flemish accent). Apart from a few grotesque or rustic minor characters, cinematographic films consistently tend to present main characters as speaking standard English. One recent and remarkable exception is (Australian-born) Mia Wasikowska's sensitive rendition of a Yorkshire accent in Fukunaga's *Jane Eyre* film.

If the reasons for this undeniable gap between cinema directors' preference for what we could define as decontextualised literary adaptations and the taste for realistic portrayals of television productions should be, in my opinion, investigated further, the naturalistic potential of the television image has been, on the other hand, amply discussed in its connection with realism (Ellis 1992; Cardwell 2002) and its «persistent reference» to an eternal «presentness» (Doane 1990: 222): the television frame is perceived as a «reflection of the living, constantly changing present» (Zettl 1978: 7). It can be argued that television's potential for realistic liveness has encouraged authors and directors to depict characters in their realistic traits which include the portrayal of non-standard forms of English. In short, it is as if these "national heritage" stories were treated as universal myths by cinema film-makers and more as local, domestic and geographically situated tales by television authors.

British television, however, has long been known for its penchant for dialects and for the audience's appreciation of the «foregrounded banality» (Richardson 2010: 48) of series of every genre showcasing a range of leading characters with marked regional accents. This has arguably been more and more true since the social turn which substantially changed the attitude towards people speaking with an accent in Britain. The perception of regional varieties of English in the UK is at the centre of a sociological change that, according to some linguists (Trudgill 1986; Fennell 2001), took place in the middle of the twentieth century in England, giving dialects an overt prestige which they only enjoyed covertly in earlier times. Attitudes towards received pronunciation and non-standard dialects began to change in the 1960s, when people started to feel more positive about their regional dialects, conceding, as Fennell states (2001: 186), less prestige to the dialect of London and the Home Counties. A variety of reasons have been suggested for this change. In a well-known study on pop songs, Peter Trudgill (cited in Fennell ibid.) has suggested that the Beatles, with their Liverpool accent, had a very strong influence on British linguistic attitudes, although, as Fennell also notes (ibid.), other factors such as improved local conditions may have been more influential.

However important it is that the (socio)linguistic data relative to natural speech play a major role even in the study of fictional dialects, I am convinced that the focus on the intertextual relations created within the literary macrotext is in itself a fruitful area of investigation of these features as reproduced by authors and perceived by readers and viewers.

Once upon a time a writer like Thomas Hardy, famous for the use of dialects in his novels, was attacked by critics for his inconsistencies and defended himself by writing that «If a writer attempts to exhibit on paper the precise accents of a rustic speaker, he disturbs the proper balance of a true representation by unduly insisting upon the grotesque element» (quoted in Blake 1981: 166). Some of the screen adaptations of his novels show how «true representation» was achieved also through the precise depiction of these very «rustic» speakers.

In contemporary film and literature, on the other hand, we can count illustrious examples of how the scale of realism has tipped decidedly towards the portrayal of dialects in literature, rather than in their audiovisual counterparts: novels can be more extreme in their depiction of non-standard varieties than their relative adaptations for the screen. Dialect in James Kelman's or Irvin Welsh's works, for example, is a literary device which reminds one of the operation of learning the artificial *nadsat* language in Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. Such is the impact, for instance, of the virtually alien language - the transcription of the Edinburgh dialect - right from the *incipit* of Welsh's *Trainspotting*. Welsh's characters do not only speak dialect, they narrate in it, too:

The sweat wis lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling. Ah wis jist sitting thair, focusing oan the telly, tryin no tae notice the cunt. He wis bringing me doon. Ah tried tae keep ma attention oan the Jean–Claude Van Damme video.
As happens in such movies, they started oaf wi an obligatory dramatic opening. Then the next phase ay the picture involved building up the tension through introducing the dastardly villain and sticking the weak plot thegither. Any minute now though,

auld Jean–Claude's ready tae git doon tae some serious swedgin. – Rents. Ah've goat tae see Mother Superior, Sick Boy gasped, shaking his heid. (Welsh 2013: 3).[3]

A quite different operation was carried out by using the marked Scottish but perfectly comprehensible accent which can be heard on the film, right from the «Choose life» opening monologue. Or is the book's initial impenetrability just apparent, the fruit of Welsh's brilliant use of eye dialect? The migration of dialect from text to screen poses this and many other interesting questions, that can only be complicated by the various translated texts (for subtitling, dubbing and the other forms of audiovisual translation) that come to enrich the macrotext.

The interplay between literature and its adaptations for cinema and TV screens can shed light on the multifarious function of dialects in fictional dialogues and mirror the changing attitude of readers and viewers towards this socially loaded feature.

Not only North or South: this collection

Engaging in linguistic, translational and broadly narrative issues relative to literary and audiovisual texts, the present collection of essays encompasses a diverse range of perspectives on British dialects as represented in fictional works of various periods.

Jorge Braga Riera discusses Thomas Hardy's use of the Wessex county (the novelist's fictional reinvention of Dorset) dialect in *Thomas Hardy's dialect in Spanish translation: the reception of* Tess of the D'Urbervilles. The author analyses the two existing Spanish translations of this novel with the purpose of illustrating how the grammatical

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[3] A comment from a linguist quoted in «The Guardian» compares this use of dialect with that of *Wuthering Heights*: «Such dialect may be thoroughly non-standard in its spelling, but it is transparent compared with, say, the speech of the servant Joseph in the first edition of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. '"Tmaister's dahn i' fowld. Goa rahnd by th'end u' laith, if you went tuh spake tull him." This is his first sentence in the book, and makes Welsh's Edinburgh smack addicts seem lucid in comparison. (After Emily Brontë's death, her sister Charlotte rewrote the dialect to make it easier for those she called "Southerns".)» (Mullan 2008).

structures, vocabulary, and phonological characteristics of this dialect are rendered by the Spanish translators and the extent to which the latter have managed to portray both Tess's rural quality and social evolution as reflected in her idiom.

The neighbouring county of Somerset provides the context for the analysis of another south-western dialect as portrayed by the Caroline playwright Richard Brome. In *«Youle zee zuch an altrication in him as never was zeen in a brother»: Somerset Dialect in Richard Brome's* The Sparagus Garden, Cristina Paravano explores the social, political and identity issues, as well as the comedic purposes, related to the use of a stage dialect which had a long tradition on the early modern stage, from Shakespeare and Jonson to Brome.

An array of different accents are used as a trigger for humour in a popular animated film, the subject of two contributions of this collection. In *British dialects in animated films: the case of* Gnomeo & Juliet *and its creative Italian dubbing*, Vincenza Minutella examines how dialects are exploited to define characters in the original version of this 2011 film by Kelly Asbury. The author analyses the creative domestication process whereby the story is turned into an Italian tale by using Italian regional dialects, in a creative process of adaptation that has the main purpose of increasing the humorous load.

Interestingly, the same film is read from a different perspective in the contribution by Silvia Bruti and Gianmarco Vignozzi, *Voices from the Anglo-Saxon world: accents and dialects across film genres*, which focuses on the representation of sociolinguistic variation across social classes by contrasting this comedic, computer-animated film, loosely based on Shakespeare's tragedy, to one of a radically different genre, Robert Altman's *Gosford Park* (2001), an ensemble murder mystery which takes place during a hunting party of aristocratic people and their friends. The analysis of the two authors aims in this case to demonstrate the way in which language variation triggers social stereotypes associated with the marked regional and social varieties portrayed in the films.

Inspired by *Gosford Park* and created by its scriptwriter, Julian Fellowes, the series *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015) is one of the most successful television shows of recent times. Much in the same way as in

the earlier film, regional and social dialects from upper and lower classes of people are here intertwined in a narrative which offers rich substance for the translational analysis which Annalisa Sandrelli carries out in her corpus-based study by the telling title of: Downton Abbey *in Italian: not quite the same.* Her paper investigates to what extent regional and social linguistic features have been reproduced in the Italian dubbed dialogues. As the title anticipates, the scholar's analysis shows that although the Italian adaptation of *Downton Abbey* is overall accurate, the characteristics which make it such a special and original period drama are, to an extent, lacking from the dubbed dialogues, which perhaps explains why the show enjoyed a more limited popularity in Italy.

That metrocentrism is a reality is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that the dialect of London is featured in some of the articles already mentioned and is also the main topic of investigation of three of this issue's contributions. In *Translating British dialects: the interplay between Cockney and Cockney Rhyming Slang in* Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels *and* Snatch *and their Italian dubbed version*, Silvia Monti investigates the translation strategies relevant to Cockney and Cockney Rhyming Slang in the Italian dubbed version of two films by British director Guy Ritchie, with the aim to verify whether such non-standard varieties are either maintained or standardized. The importance of Cockney and Cockney Rhyming Slang appears to have been generally recognised by the Italian dubbing adapters as revealing indexes of the characters' socio-cultural identity, as constructed in the original version of these films. And, as the author points out, the translation of regionalisms and sociolects often succeeds in recreating the appeal of diversity, creating a sort of invented language that, in some way, makes the target audience aware of the "otherness" portrayed on the screen.

The spirit of recreation is also at the heart of some of the dubbing strategies of the British TV series *Misfits*, as Margherita Dore concludes in her essay on *The Italian Dubbing of Dialects, Accents and Slang in the British Dark Comedy Drama* Misfits. Dialects, accents and slang (including but not limited to the London accent) are used in this series to characterise its five young main characters. Dore's study investigates the strategies and procedures used to transfer *Misfits* into Italian, which

range from standardisation to an intensification of the use of youth language (including swearing and slang).

More than the London accent in general, it is the peculiar slang spoken by the thieves of Dickens's London which Josep Marco and Isabel Tello Fons explore in their *Thieves' cant in Spanish translations of Dickens's* Oliver Twist. The thieves' dialect is analysed by the two scholars who detect a close connection between the extent to which the symbolical value of cant in the source text is conveyed and the use of certain translation techniques, evaluating whether some kind of norm transgression and/or a highly colloquial tenor (which may even include slang) is more apt to convey the symbolical associations of cant, than a translation which mainly relies on neutralisation.

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Irene Ranzato is a tenured researcher and lecturer in English language and translation at Sapienza University of Rome, where she teaches translation (audiovisual and intersemiotic) and English language for BA and MA courses. She holds a PhD in Translation Studies (Imperial College London). Her research focuses on the translation of cultural references, on censorship and manipulation in dubbing, on the function and translation of regional and social varieties of English, on the linguistic analysis of film and television dialogue. She is also interested, and has tried to incorporate more and more into her research in audiovisual translation, topics related to adaptation studies and to film and television studies. She has especially worked – both in research and teaching – with cinema and television adaptations of the classics of

English literature, involving students in linguistic, translational and intersemiotic analyses. She has translated films, books, articles and essays and she has written extensively on the themes of her research. Most recently, she published the book *Translating Culture Specific References - The Case of Dubbing* (Routledge 2016) and co-edited with J. Díaz Cintas and I. Parini a special issue of the journal *Altre Modernità* on *Ideological Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation*. She is co-editor of the the Sapienza University journal *Status Quaestionis* (Dipartimento di Studi Europei Americani e Interculturali).