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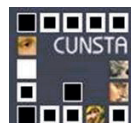
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The Reception of British Culture in the Italian Gazettes of the Restoration: a Case Study

Andrea Penso*

Abstract

The article aims to investigate the role played by the Italian gazettes in the reception of English culture during the years that followed the French revolution (1816-1830). This aspect of Anglo-Italian relations in the Restoration has not been investigated enough by academics, and will be addressed in this article through the analysis of an exemplary case study. In fact, the article will focus on the exploration of Walter Scott's reception in the gazettes of Turin, Milan, Parma, Florence and Naples, guaranteeing a wide geographical and cultural latitude in the context of pre-unification Italy. The study will show the fundamental role of mediation played by the French press in receiving news from Great Britain. Firstly, it will describe in detail how the Italian newspapers drew on French ones by copying their articles; secondly, it will reconstruct the genealogical dimension of some exemplary cases. Ultimately, the analysis will show how this flow of information that arrived in Italy from England via France is mirrored by a polycentric 'internal' flow, since the gazettes of the various pre-unification states copied each other and transmitted the same news. Many years before national political unity was achieved, the gazettes were acting as unifying agents in creating a unified public that could read the same information across the peninsula.

* Andrea Penso, Assistant Professor-Senior Postdoctoral Fellow, Vrije Universiteit Brussel-VUB, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgio, e-mail: andrea.penso@vub.be.

L'articolo mira ad approfondire il ruolo giocato dalle gazzette italiane nella ricezione della cultura inglese durante il periodo successivo alla rivoluzione francese (1816-1830). Si tratta di un aspetto ancora poco noto nel quadro degli studi sulle relazioni interculturali della Restaurazione, che verrà investigato attraverso l'analisi di un caso studio esemplare. Il saggio infatti si concentrerà sull'esplorazione della ricezione di Walter Scott nelle gazzette di Torino, Milano, Parma, Firenze e Napoli, garantendo un'ampia latitudine dal punto di vista geografico e culturale nel contesto dell'Italia pre-unitaria. Lo studio mostrerà il ruolo fondamentale della mediazione della stampa francese nella ricezione delle notizie provenienti dalla Gran Bretagna, descrivendo dettagliatamente come i giornali italiani attingessero a quelli francesi copiandone gli articoli, e ricostruendo la dimensione genealogica di alcuni casi esemplari. In ultima analisi, l'articolo mostrerà come a questo flusso di informazioni che arrivavano in Italia dall'Inghilterra attraverso la Francia, corrispondesse anche un flusso policentrico 'interno', dal momento che le gazzette dei vari stati preunitari si copiavano tra di loro trasmettendo le stesse notizie. Molti anni prima che fosse raggiunta un'unità nazionale dal punto di vista politico, le gazzette stavano fungendo da agenti unificanti nella creazione di un pubblico unitario che poteva leggere le medesime informazioni in tutta la penisola.

The Italian reception of foreign literature in the long 18th century through the periodical press is still a largely unexplored field, as pointed out by Daniela Mangione in her *Prima di Manzoni* (2012)¹. This is particularly true with regard to the gazettes. Since the beginning of their capillary diffusion in the Italian peninsula, which started in the late 18th century, gazettes contained a multitude of articles about the life and works of prominent writers of the time, and were one of the most effective tools for spreading knowledge and information. Nevertheless, the role played by the Italian gazettes in the reception of British culture has not been sufficiently investigated until now.

This paper will focus on a particular case study, namely the reception of Walter Scott and his work in the *gazzette* published in Milan, Turin, Parma, Florence and Naples, providing a great deal of latitude in terms of geographical variety. 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.

Building on previous studies on the European circulation of news in the Restoration, and on the Italian reception of Walter Scott², the aim of this article is primarily to show in detail how the Italian gazettes recurrently selected and republished articles about the writer taken from many sources belonging to the British and French press, and explain the attitude the Italian journalists had towards them; secondarily, the study will demonstrate how this cross-cultural and polycentric approach favoured the wide spread of information about

¹ See Mangione 2012.

² Especially Fassò 1975; Ambrose 1981; Bautz 2007; Pittock 2007; Irace, Pedullà 2012; Robey 2017; Marini 2018; Penso 2020, 2021, of which this article is an expansion.

Scott across the peninsula, which contributed to designing a portrait of the writer even without being in close contact with him or his cultural context³.

As I mentioned above, the reception of Scott's works in the periodical press is a topic that needs to be further analysed, especially with regard to the gazettes. These (almost) quotidian publications are probably the widest source of information about the daily life of the time, as they covered a wide array of topics from politics, to economy, art and culture, with news coming from many different countries. The structure of the gazettes was quite similar for every publication in the Italian peninsula:

- the first pages were dedicated to news about foreign countries that were extracted, copied and translated from gazettes coming from abroad,
- the central parts were focused on news regarding the Italian states,
- the final part concerned items on art and culture, including editorial initiatives and new upcoming publications.

Most of the time, the various gazettes were intimately linked to each other, even if they were printed and published in different cities: not only are there traces of ongoing contacts and collaborations, but in many circumstances the news (most of all if it was about foreign facts) was literally copied and pasted from one gazette to another. As we will detail in the next paragraphs through the analysis of cases that are exemplary of the most common tendencies in news circulation and diffusion all over the continent, the privileged source of information for the Italian gazettes was the French press. What happened most frequently is that an article arrived first in northern Italy through Turin, Genoa or Milan, was then copied in the gazettes published in the central part of Italy (Parma, Florence, Rome), and eventually made its way to the southern gazettes (Naples).

This flux of information from north to south shows at least two things: the journalism of the time was working in quite an osmotic and 'passive' way, copying and introducing the same news that had already been published elsewhere through multiple crossing and overlapping; and this homogeneity in the contents implied a certain degree of consistency. Even if an *Italian* readership was still to be created and the unity of the Nation was to come many years later, people in the many different states could build similar ideas on many topics, since the same news was being read all over the peninsula. As I will show with the analysis of relevant cases, the Italian gazettes were therefore contributing to the creation of a united intellectual and cultural identity in Italy, many years before political unification was achieved⁴.

³ This was a common practice for the periodical press in general: see for example Berengo 1962.

⁴ In this study I will focus my attention on exemplary articles published in the year 1826: not only will this approach grant consistency in the analysis, but 1826 is the most characteristic of

A very clear example of this trend, which will also be of help with the contextualization of my observations regarding Scott's reception, is to be found in the «Gazzetta Piemontese» of 26 January 1826, which reported the following article:

I celebri ed all'Europa notissimi librai Hurst, Robinson e comp. hanno sospeso i loro pagamenti. I loro impegni ascendono alla somma di 400.000 lire sterline (10 milioni di franchi). Essi erano i librai di sir Walter Scott ; e siccome il loro negozio avea la più gran parte delle sue relazioni colla Scozia, si teme che questo fallimento ne produca non pochi altri in Edimburgo⁵.

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 a clear note stating 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 it 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 peninsula⁶.

In this respect, it is possible to find the potential original article in the French journal «L'Etoile», in the issue published on 20 January, 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 engagemens se montent

the trends that supported the reception of Scott in the Italian gazettes. In fact, this was the year in which Scott's popularity reached its apex, as in 1827 the attention of the Italian newspapers started to address Alessandro Manzoni and his masterpiece *I promessi sposi*, considered by many the first important novel written in Italy.

⁵ In many occasions, quoting the articles from the gazettes is very difficult, because pages are not numbered 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 piece of 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.

⁶ See for example Penso 2020.

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.

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. 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 other. In this case, the item about Hurst and Robinson's bankruptcy was widely circulated by many gazettes, the first probably being «The Times», on 16 January:

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 failure⁷.

A confirmation of the fact that the news was first circulated by «The Times» comes from a note that appeared in «The British Press» of 17 January (and reported in a shorter version also by the «Morning Post» on the same day):

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BRITISH PRESS.

SIR – It is my duty, as the attorney of Messrs. Hurst, Robinson, and Co., to inform you that the paragraph which appeared in the *Times* of this morning [the day before] respecting them is not only unauthorised but false. The amount of their engagements is most grossly exaggerated, and it is untrue that they have made a general stoppage of payments. It is, however, not to be denied that bills have been dishonoured from the impossibility of raising cash in the present unexampled state of the money market, though they have an abundance of funds to meet all engagements, and a handsome surplus of property. As false and exaggerated statements are calculated to produce much unneces-

⁷ It is to be noticed 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 for the books "attributed" to Scott. The Italians, as I showed, did not respect this form of prudence. Therefore the author was depicted in a more prestigious way: it is a minor detail of how the fame and aura of Scott was being built in the peninsula.

sary alarm, and deeply to injure, not only Messrs. Hurst, Robinson, and Co., but all those establishments which are known to be connected with them, you will greatly oblige them by not admitting into your respectable columns any statement on the subject. An action will commenced against the publishers of the Times this day. I am, for Tottie, self, and Gaunt,

Sir, your very obedient Servant.
JAS. RICHARDSON.

33, Poultry, 16th Jan., 1826.

It is interesting to notice how the immediate correction applied by the English newspapers permitted an amendment to a piece of information that was deemed imprecise by the lawyer, thus allowing the readership to be properly informed about the true sequence of facts⁸. This was clearly impossible for the other countries that were importing the news. The public either remained uninformed about the correction of this fake news *ante litteram* (for multiple reasons: the news was not always imported regularly and consistently), or discovered the truth after a considerable amount of time. In the example I am discussing, the rectification did not appear in any of the Italian gazettes, and no other items of news about Hurst and Robinson were published in 1826: not only was the readership missing out on some important steps in the whole *querelle*, and, therefore, building their knowledge on partial information, but more importantly, the news about the commercial situation of the foreign country was deemed of interest only because Walter Scott was, by some means, involved. It is a clear signal of how the social position of the writer was increasing his prestige all over Europe. Scott was important not only because of his role as a literary man: the curiosity surrounding this figure obliterated the borders of the intellectual domain, reaching for example the socio-economical one. Countless variegated information conveyed by the gazettes was, therefore, playing a big part in the making of Scott's 'superstar novelist' status, a new and unique concept on the horizon of the cultural *milieu* of the long 18th century.

After this necessary digression, I will now go back to discussing the genealogical dimension of the articles. 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 Nevertheless, even in England the wrong news was circulating days after the 'correction', especially in minor newspapers (for example «Westmorland Gazette», January 21).

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) is 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 censor⁹. 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.

With regard to the polycentric flux of information, another example will clarify how the different channels of supply for the news were interacting with the sources and with each other. On 3 February 1826 the «Gazzetta Piemontese» published the following article:

In Edimburgo s'intese con dolore il fallimento del celebre libraio Constable. Egli è generalmente compianto, perchè niuno più di lui incoraggiava i giovani autori, e dava lavoro ad un maggior numero d'operai. Questo avvenimento è dannoso per tutta la Scozia. Si dice che sir Walter Scott perde, per questo fallimento, la maggior parte delle sue sostanze.

The following day, the same news appeared in «Gazzetta di Genova». The text, though, was quite different:

Uno de' fallimenti che sono stati sentiti con maggior dispiacere in Inghilterra, è quello del celebre librajò Constable di Edimburgo. Egli è generalmente compianto, perché niuno più di lui dava degl'incoraggiamenti ai giovani autori, e lavoro agli operaj. Quest'avvenimento è una calamità per tutta la Scozia: Sir Walter Scott vi perde una parte della sua fortuna.

⁹ 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.

It appears rather clear that the two articles are related: not only do they talk about the same subjects, they also convey the same information in the same order. We saw with the previous example that it was common practice for the Italian gazettes to just copy and paste news that were deemed relevant from other journals of the peninsula. In this case, however, the clear differences in the phrasing of the same news, and the fact that only one day divides the two publications, suggest that the «Gazzetta di Genova» did not use the «Piemontese» as its source. In fact, the similarities would hint once again to the fact that the two journals had a common ancestor: they both had access to the same source, but that original article was then translated in two different ways. It is no wonder that this ancestor is to be found in the French press. «L'Etoile» published the following article on January 28:

Parmi les faillites qui viennent d'affliger l'Angleterre, l'une des plus généralement senties est celle du célèbre libraire Constable d'Edinbourg. On le plaint généralement, parce que [sic] nul plus que lui ne donna d'encouragement aux jeunes auteurs et de travail aux ouvriers. Cet événement est une calamité pour toute l'Ecosse : Sir Walter Scott y perd dit-on une partie de sa fortune.

Obviously, the journalist, or the compiler, from Genoa opted for a more adherent rendition of the original article, as shown for example by the literal translation of *calamité* – *calamità* and *fortune* – *fortuna*. On the contrary, the Piedmontese decided to paraphrase some of the concepts: *calamité* is for example reduced to a less poignant *dannoso*. Nevertheless, it is evident that the French article is at the very base of both the Italian versions¹⁰. The differences we have described so far prove that knowledge about foreign facts and events was arriving in Italy through a multi-centric flux of information, characterised by many different supply channels that were not always working consistently and homogeneously, as I will show below.

«L'Etoile», in turn, took the news from an English source. The information about Constable's financial troubles was circulating widely in the United Kingdom. Amongst the many articles, the one published by the «Morning Post»

¹⁰ The relationship between the three journals would also be confirmed by the presence of an article about the commercial situation in Liverpool in all journals, right before the article about Constable and Scott. Once again, this article appears in two different versions in the Italian gazettes, with the Piedmontese one being the less adherent to the original. In «L'Etoile» we can read: «Une énorme faillite dans le commerce des cotons vient encore de se déclarer à Liverpool: c'est celle de la maison Garret: la situation du commerce des soieries est de plus en plus critique». In «Gazzetta Piemontese» the news is reported as follows: «A Liverpool è stato annunziato un nuovo enorme fallimento nel commercio de' cotoni, quello della casa Garret: il traffico della seta vi è in pessimo stato». «Gazzetta di Genova» opted for a more conservative version: «A Liverpool si è dichiarato un gran fallimento nel commercio de' cotoni, quello cioè della casa Garret. La situazione del commercio delle seterie è delle più critiche».

– one of the most used British sources by the French journals – on 24 January seems the most likely to have acted as a source:

Yesterday, Mr. Wallace, the Master of the Mint, transacted business at the Treasury. Messrs. Constable and Co. — We extract the following from the last number of the Scotsman, which reached town yesterday: — “The temporary stoppage of a great publishing house at the east end of Princes street, has been felt as a calamity to Scotland; and so it will, if it should be permanent; but we are most anxious to think that the partners may be allowed to continue the management of a business, which has given encouragement to authors, and employment to tradesmen, to such an unexampled extent. The projects of Constable and Co. were magnificent; and it will be found, we believe, that, on the whole, they were also successful. Sir Walter Scott, it is said, is here very deeply involved; but the author of Marmion, of the Lady of the Lake, and of the Scotch Novels, is not thus to be borne down — Scotland, Britain, cannot permit such a misfortune to befall them. To all concerned, we trust, there will be a favourable rebound.”

Clearly, the French journalists cut many of the details that were described in the British journal, such as for example the hope for a “favourable rebound”. Obviously, none of these details could ever arrive in Italy through the French mediation, as they were omitted in the ‘archetype’. On the contrary, it is worth mentioning how the Italians were receptive to a French addition: nowhere in the English source the authors helped by Constable are described as “young”. The fact that the editor was giving encouragement to “jeunes auteurs” is a French interpretation, which was included in both the Italian versions. These are just simple examples of how the news circulating in the peninsula and coming from abroad were unequivocally filtered by a French lens, unless the Italian journalists were able to access some first-hand sources. At this regard, the «Gazzetta Piemontese» did not even include the news about Edinburgh under the “Inghilterra” section of the journal, but in the “Francia”, clearly showing what the origin of the article was.

After being introduced in the northwest of the peninsula, the news circulated in other publishing hubs: the same text published in Genoa later appeared in «Gazzetta di Firenze» (9 February) and in «Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie» (13 February). What is relevant about these publications in Genoa, Florence and Naples is that in all these journals the news about the editor Constable and Scott’s financial situation appeared in the very first page of the issue, surrounded by news about politics and international finance. It is but one of the many examples of news related to Scott that gained prominence in the Italian newspapers. The Italian readership was led to give the Scottish author the same importance that was given to news about international politics and economy: Scott’s aura and fame in Italy was being built also, if not *especially*, through the gazettes.

Nevertheless, this polycentric flux of information did not always worked consistently. Normally, after appearing in Turin, a news would be published in Milan as well, after just a couple of days. In many cases, Milan was publishing

news coming from France even before Turin, proving that foreign information had multiple access in the peninsula. In this case, there is no trace in Milan of the news I described so far, suggesting an introduction limited to the western part of the peninsula. In fact, in some occasions the network of news circulation was not efficient in receiving and distributing the news in all the usual publishing hubs. What can be described as a normal malfunctioning of the 'supply chain' could have relevant repercussions for the readers of the journals. In this case, a news about Constable did appear in «Gazzetta Milanese», on February 21:

Scrivono da Londra che Sir Walter-Scott, quantunque abbia negato fin'ora d'esser l'autore del *Waverley*, essendo compreso nel fallimento del librajo Constable, di modo che si trova egli quasi interamente rovinato, ha risoluto di presentarsi come creditore nella liquidazione di questo librajo, il cui animo fu sì colpito dalla sua disgrazia, che si teme seriamente ch'abbia perduto la ragione. (*F. F.*)

The source article was once again published in «L'Etoile» on February 10:

On dit à Londres que Sir Walter Scott a écrit qu'il allait enfin se présenter dans la liquidation de la faillite du libraire Constable, comme auteur de *Waverley*. Comment, dit un journal, pourrait-on expliquer ce fait quand on se rappelle les dénégations nombreuses de cet écrivain surtout lorsqu'on lui montra une traduction française des romans de *L'Inconnu* : quand on sait qu'il a renouvelé cette dénégation devant le roi lui-même, et enfin que le siège voté l'auteur de *Waverley* dans le club de Roxburg, n'a jamais été rempli. Nous regrettons beaucoup d'apprendre que sir Walter Scott est presque ruiné par la faillite de Constable : on dit que l'esprit de ce dernier est sérieusement affecté depuis sa catastrophe

The information was circulating widely in England. The news was published for example by the «Kentish Weekly Post: or, Canterbury Journal» on February 7:

We hear that a letter is in town, stating that Sir Scott has announced himself to be the author of the *Waverley* novels, to enable him to prove against the estate of Messrs. Constable and Co. if a commission of bankruptcy should be taken out against them. How can this be reconciled with a fact have heard slated, that on the presentation of a set of the French translation being presented to Sir Walter, he wrote a letter denying himself be the author, with that of similar denial to his Majesty, and with the circumstance that the seat voted to the author of *Waverley* in the Roxburgh Club has never yet been taken? We are to hear that Sir W. Scott is likely to be nearly ruined by Mr. Constable's embarrassments; and it is said that the mind of the latter is seriously affected by the recent distresses. — Sunday Times.

In particular, the last short paragraph about the consequences of the bankruptcy on Constable's mental health, which recurs in all three versions, proves the genealogical link between the articles.

In England, «The Globe» gave another account of the news with a shorter article the day before (6 February):

We hear that a letter is in town, stating that sir Walter Scott has announced himself to be the author of the Waverley novels, to enable him to prove against the estate of Messrs. Constable and Co., if a commission of bankruptcy should be taken out against them.—
Sunday times

As it is evident, both journals quote the «Sunday Times» as their own source, so it is reasonable to assume that the ‘archetype’ for these articles was actually this journal, which most likely first published the news on February 5 at the latest.

After the publication in Milan, this article only appeared in «Gazzetta di Genova» on February 21: there is no trace of the news in any of the other usual news outlets that would receive and transmit the information across the peninsula. The reasons behind this exclusion could be manifold, from a lack of interest or simple negligence. What matters is to understand what the readership would be introduced to. The fact that the Milanese gazette omitted the first part of the story implies that its readers were not accessing the story of Constable’s bankruptcy in its entirety, and were missing some information for its reconstruction. Reversing the perspective, the fact that only two journals published the second news means that the gazette of Turin, Florence and Naples did not follow up on the evolution of Constable’s story after the publication of the first news at the beginning of February. Their readers were therefore also introduced to some partial information, and they were not informed about the updates. In comparison, the source for all these news is always the French journal «L’Etoile». This means that in France the newspaper was being more consistent in the introduction of foreign news to its readers: the French public could access the story line in a more complete and informed way, was provided with more detailed information and could benefit of a deeper, more aware critical contextualization. In Italy, the fact that many publishing hubs were scattered all over the peninsula, in representation of the different pre-unitarian states, have two opposed consequences. On the one hand, when the network was working efficiently and consistently, the public could access the very same content across the peninsula, as the journals were transmitting and copying the news between each other. This homogeneity gives an idea of a ‘proto-united’ readership many years before the official political unification of the nation. On the other hand, however, when the circuits were activated only partially and the information circulating across the states was not complete, the readers were able to access only partial information, and it was not always possible to follow the complete sequence of events. The gazettes contained in embryo the potential to constitute a uniform and homogeneous readership, but the process to achieve such goal was obviously not simple or linear.

Another example of how Italian gazettes were dealing with French sources is offered by the following case, which is intimately connected to the previous

example. On 15 March 1826, «Gazzetta di Genova» and «Gazzetta di Milano» published a very similar article about Scott's financial situation. This is the text that appeared in the Genovese newspaper:

Farà piacere il sentire, che a malgrado della perdita enorme cui soggiacque pel fallimento del libraio Constable, sir Walter Scott conservi ancora una sufficiente fortuna. Lady Scott ha ereditato molti beni da un suo fratello, i quali dopo di essa passeranno a suoi figli; e sir Walter Scott, dopo che saranno state accomodate tutte le sue difficoltà pecuniarie, conserverà il suo impiego, che è ad un tempo importante e lucroso. (*Et.*)

And this was the news included in the Milanese one:

A malgrado della perdita enorme che soffersse sir Walter Scott nel fallimento del libraio Constable, gli rimane non pertanto una sostanza che lo rende felice e indipendente. Lady Scott possiede beni considerabili per la fatta eredità da un suo fratello, e questi passeranno ai suoi figli. La possessione, d'Abbotsford distante 40 miglia da Edimburgo fu donata dall'autore al di lui figlio che condusse in moglie una ricchissima persona; finalmente sir Walter Scott dopo che saranno accomodate le attuali sue ristrettezze pecuniarie, conserverà il suo posto che è importante e lucroso.

Only the first gazette mentioned its source, which was once again «L'Etoile». The French newspaper in fact published the following article on 24 February:

On apprendra avec plaisir que malgré la perte énorme que lui fait supporter la faillite du libraire Constable, sir Walter Scott conserve encore une heureuse indépendance de fortune. Lady Scott a des biens considérables qui lui proviennent de l'héritage d'un frère, et qui arriveront après elle à ses enfans. Le domaine d'Abbotsford à 40 milles d'Edimbourg, a été donné par l'écrivain à son fils qui s'est marié à une personne fort riche. Enfin sir Walter Scott, après que toutes ses difficultés pécuniaires auront été arrangées, conservera la place qu'il possède et qui est à la fois importante et lucrative.

The news was circulating widely in the UK, as many newspapers were following the vicissitudes of the Scottish printing industry. The «Morning Chronicle» was often reported as the source even by the English newspapers and it was probably once again among the first to spread the information, publishing it in the last week of February. The English news read as follows:

We rejoice to hear that Sir Walter Scott, notwithstanding the unfortunate issue of the commercial speculations with which he has been most unfortunately mingled, will not be in a destitute condition. Lady Scott had a large fortune left to her at the decease of a brother, which hereafter will descend to the children. The estate of Abbotsford, about 40 miles from Edinburgh, on which a large fortune has been expended, was, some years back, settled upon his son, who married a lady of considerable wealth. The important and lucrative office held by Sir Walter himself will remain after all pecuniary difficulties have been arranged¹¹.

¹¹ This is taken from «The Examiner» of 26 February that quotes the «Morning Chronicle» as a source.

A comparison between the French and English articles shows that the journalist working for «L'Etoile» was extremely conservative in reporting the news, as the content was translated very faithfully. Nevertheless, one intervention appears to be significant. Nowhere in the British article was it mentioned that the subject matter was the bankruptcy of the publisher Constable, a specific detail which, on the contrary, figured prominently in the French article. This means that the French journalist, who was probably following the whole vicissitude involving Scott, knew exactly what the 'unfortunate issue of the commercial speculations' was and felt, therefore, confident enough to add information diverging from the source. Constable was one of the publishing companies that collapsed right after the aforementioned bankruptcy of Hurst and Robinson. Most British newspapers were following the evolution of these events quite closely, and the French were following it immediately in a proactive way, drawing the information from the original sources. The stories had a limited echo in Italy and once again only the articles involving mentions of Scott were published: this is another sign of the prominence the author was gaining over other facts and actualities. In this respect, both Italian newspapers followed the source very carefully, when mentioning the names of the 'personalities' involved in the event, copying the passage in its entirety: we cannot determine with certainty the extent of the journalists' knowledge of the topics they were discussing, but as I have explained above the Italian attitude towards the source was rather 'osmotic' on multiple occasions. This phenomenon would prove to be the key to differentiating the approach of the French and Italian press towards news coming from England: the French readership could benefit from a more mature journalistic tradition, which questioned its first-hand sources and provided the readers with more critically aware information; the Italian readers had access most of the time to 'second-hand' news already mediated by the French, which was introduced to them in quite a passive way, as if the quantity of the news imported was more important than its quality. The lack of contextualization, together with inconsistency for what concerns the channels through which the information was arriving in Italy, made some of the news quite obscure and difficult to interpret: the diffusion of knowledge about England was irremediably taking place not only through the French *physical* mediation (the material circulation of the newspapers), but also through a French interpretative lens. With regard to the inconsistency I have just mentioned, it must be added that there was no internal 'stability' either, as the gazettes did not have regular 'news suppliers' or 'streams of dissemination'. In this case, for example, the only other gazette that published this news was «Giornale delle due Sicilie», quoting both «L'Etoile» and «Gazzetta di Genova» as sources: the newspapers of Turin, Parma, or Florence did not report this step of Scott's financial *querelle* on this occasion, making it difficult for the readers to interpret the rest of the story, which was nonetheless published in those newspapers as well, but with missing pieces.

Some additional considerations about the example I am analysing will deepen the understanding of how the knowledge about Scott was being built by the Italian gazettes. Even if the Milanese journalists did not mention their source, we can infer that it was probably the same as the «Gazzetta di Genova»'s, since the content is exactly the same. In fact, the case would confirm the idea of polycentricism for the news supply channels and that it was common practice to import foreign newspapers and news through different channels. First of all, the two Italian gazettes published the news the very same day: being the first in Northern Italy it is practically impossible for them to have been inspired by each other. In addition, the form of the articles is a bit different: the Genovese one is conservative in reporting the 'empathetic' note that opened the French article ('On apprendra avec plaisir' versus 'Farà piacere il sentire'), but omits the details about the property in Abbotsford, probably deemed irrelevant. The article written for «Gazzetta di Milano», on the contrary, reports all the details about the economic aspects, but does not include the opening remark on how the news could have made the readers happy. In fact, both articles manipulated the meaning of the first sentences. The Genovese journalist wrote that Scott's fortune was 'sufficiente', 'sufficient', diverging from the French source. The Milanese writer pushed the interpretation even further: the object of the phrase, the 'happy independence of fortune' becomes the active part of speech that makes Scott happy and independent. Even if it is a minor detail, it is nonetheless meaningful to see how the focus switched to involving Scott's feelings more directly: this attention to the writer's sentiments and actions is a constant pattern of the news circulating in Italy, and it plays an important role in building his fame too.

The essay explained the patterns of how English culture was circulating from England to Italy through the newspapers. A news was conceived and written in a British gazette, which acted as the archetype for other British newspapers that copied the article. After a few days, the French press imported a number of British newspapers and started selecting the most significant articles, which were then translated and adjusted for the French public. After the publication in France, the Italian journals started a very similar process of selection with the transalpine newspapers¹². It was therefore through a French lens that the Italian public started accessing news from England regularly, via the gazettes. The polycentric flux of information was also based on a variety of supply channels that were active within the peninsula. Once in Italy, in fact, the news was regularly introduced from one gazette to the other, from north

¹² It is a renowned fact that France played a key role in the dissemination of British culture in Italy, for example through the many translations of books coming from the United Kingdom made available to the Italian readership, not yet well acquainted with the English language: see Penso 2020.

to south, mostly copying the articles *in toto*. As I have discussed, in fact, the French journalists were more 'interactive' in relation to their first-hand British sources, and it is common to find better critical insights and contextualization that helped the readers understand and process the information. The approach of the Italian journalists towards the sources was almost exclusively conservative: the contents were not known well enough to take any kind of initiative with regard to the archetypes, so there were very little margin for contradicting them in a reliable manner. Nevertheless, the intricate network of relations occurring between the European gazettes had one extremely significant consequence for the Italian cultural milieu. The fact that they were copying each other means that the same news was 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 *gazette* were somehow leading a less evident, but equally important, unification of the Italian people, who were reading the same contents and the same news even if they belonged to different political realities.

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