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Poetry translators and regional vernacular voice

Belli’s Romanesco sonnets in English and Scots

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This study investigates how poetry translators tackle source regional voice within their wider approach to poetic text. It analyses eleven translators' 'corpora' of Scots and English translations from Giuseppe Belli's 19th-century regional-language sonnets, which are set in working-class Rome. Each corpus was coded for voice (space, community, tenor marking), text-world space, and poetic form (rhyme, rhythm), then analysed quantitatively and qualitatively; translator interviews and translators' written commentaries provided extra data. Translators ranged along a spectrum (apparently genre-specific) between two extremes: (1) 'relocalising' voice into target regional language/dialect with similar working-class and informal features to Belli's originals, whilst relocating place and person names to target-country analogies, and recreating rhyme and rhythm; (2) translating into standard (supra-regional, literary/educated, neutral-to-formal) English, whilst preserving Belli's Roman setting, but replacing rhyme and rhythm by free verse. This reflects a spectrum between two priorities: (1) creatively conveying poetic texture; (2) replicating surface semantics.

Keywords: regional dialect, poetry, Italian, Scots, English, voice, rhyme, rhythm

1. Introduction

1.1 Translating regional voices in poetry

Poems are “symbolic, multiplex, polysemantic” texts, which exploit the possibilities of language to communicate rich or subtle messages (Jakobson [1960] 1988, 49; Matterson and Jones 2000, 13). Hence translating poems is complex, especially since a double aim drives most poetry translators: to write a viable target-language poem that also “match[es] the original” enough for it to “be considered a translation” (Holmes 1988, 50; cf. Jones 2011, 100-101). The challenges this implies for translating rhymed, regular-metre poems have often been debated. Less often discussed, however, is how poetry translators tackle voice – an “authorial, narratorial or translatorial presence” (Munday 2006, 21-22) typically manifested via style, or the “choices” a writer makes from “alternative ways of rendering the same subject matter” (Leech and Short 2007, 31). How poetry translators engage with regional voice is even less explored.

In literature, regional voice ties its speakers – the ‘implied author’ (the writer’s in-text persona, cf. Stockwell 2002, 42-43), narrator or characters – to a geographic space by means of place-specific accent, vocabulary and/or grammar. In Tony Harrison’s “So right, yer buggers then! We’ll occupy / your lousy leasehold Poetry” ([1984] 1987, 123), for example, phonology (“yer” ['you']) and lexis (“buggers” as a term of ironic defiance rather than insult) mark the implied author as from Yorkshire. These links are language-specific. Only
Italian has a Rome-based voice, for instance. So how should this voice be translated into English, say? Roman English does not exist; Cockney conventionally ties its speakers to London, not Rome; and standard English conventionally ties them to no geographic space. Hence translating regional literary voices is notoriously problematic, as prose- and drama-based research (outlined below) indicates. Moreover, poetry translators cannot be assumed to follow similar orientations towards source-target relations as prose and drama translators, because genre-specific features may affect regional-voice decisions.

Therefore this article analyses how poetry translators tackle source regional voice, and why. Analysis involves considering how regional voice can indicate not only speakers’ geographic allegiance, but also their social status and the formality of the interaction (Määttä 2004, 320; Ramos Pinto 2009, 290-291). It also investigates how regional voice might interact with two communicative features of poetry which preliminary investigations identified as potentially relevant:

1. How a poem typically creates, in relatively few words, a richly-detailed, self-contained ‘text world’ of places, events and characters (Stockwell 2002, 137ff) with strong emotive or intellectual force.

2. Poetic form: here, rhyme and rhythm.

More widely, this should shed more light on how translators tackle poems as multiplex communication acts, and enrich existing models of translating literary regional voice.

1.2 Belli’s Romanesco sonnets

To draw generalisable conclusions about translators’ approaches, multiple data sources are needed. Ideally, these would be case studies (to research real-life complexities in context – Yin 1993, 34) of several source writers (to incorporate varying source-text purposes – cf. Susam-Sarajevo 2001), each of which ‘embeds’ several translators’ outputs (to reveal how translation practices vary – cf. Ellinger et al. 2009, 337, 339). This article takes the first step, by presenting an embedded case study of multiple translators working on one set of regionally-voiced poems: Giuseppe Gioachino Belli’s Sonetti romaneschi.

These (collected in Belli 2007b) are 2279 sonnets, written between 1828 and 1849. Now regarded as a “summit” of Italian Romantic literature (Gibellini 1978, IX, LXV-XCIV), they are written not in the literary Italian usual for poetry, but in Romanesco. ‘Romanesco’ normally denotes the Rome-based geographic variant of Italian (Briguglia 2011, 111); in this article, it refers to the literary voice that Belli gave to the poor of Rome’s Trastevere quarter who narrate and people his poems. Most poems are set in and around Rome, though some retell Bible stories. Satirical, bawdy or sentimental in mood, many show sympathy to the poor and socially powerless – like the young narrator of La Bbona Famijja (‘The Good Family’, alluding to ‘the Holy Family’: Figure 1). Formally, they are Petrarchan sonnets: fully-rhymed, 14-line poems in the 11-syllable endecasillabo metre.

1 Mi nonna a un’ or de notte che vviè Ttata
   [‘My grandmother an hour after dark when Dad comes’]
2 se leva da filà, ppovera vecchia,
   [‘gets up from spinning, poor old (woman)’],
3 attizza un carboncello, sciappareccchia,
   [‘pokes up a little charcoal, sets the table.’]
4 e mmaggnamo du’ fronne d’in zalata,
and we eat two leaves of salad,’

5 Quarche vvorta se fâmo una frittata,
   ['Sometimes we make ourselves an omelette,’]
6 che ssi la metti ar lume, sce se specchia
   ['which if you put it to the light, it shines through’]
7 come fussi a traverzzo d’un’orecchia:
   ['as if it were through an ear:’]
8 quattro nosce, e la scena è terminata.
   ['four walnuts, and dinner is finished.’]
9 Poi ner mentre ch’io, Tata e Cremențina
   ['Then while I, Dad and Clementina’]
10 seguitamo un par d’ora de sgocchetto,
   ['go on with a couple of hours’ tippling,’]
11 lei sparecchia e arissetta la cucina.
   ['she clears the table and tidies the kitchen.’]
12 E appena visto er fonno ar bucaletto,
   ['And as soon as the bottom of the little jug (is) seen,’]
13 ‘na pisciatina, ‘na sarvereggin,
   ['a pee, a Salve Regina (=prayer’),
14 e in zanta pasce sce n’annamo a letto.
   ['and in holy peace (=contented) we go off to bed.’]

Figure 1.  La bbona famijja (Belli 2007b, no. 288) and English literal

Bibliography and web searches identified twelve published translators of Belli’s sonnets into English or Scots, eleven of them since 1960, giving rich material for researching the translation of regionally-voiced poetry. Before detailing data-gathering and analytic methods (Section 2), I present key underlying concepts and research findings in three areas: poetry translation as communication, language varieties, and translating region-specific voice.

1.3 Reading and translating poetry

The ‘cognitive-pragmatic’ model of literary communication that informs this study (after Hickey 1998; Gutt 2000; Stockwell 2002) views poets as ‘signalling’ complex, often indeterminate meanings – explicitly via lexis and grammar, and implicitly via sound, non-standard voice, extratextual allusions, etc. Signals may be referential, emotional or metalinguistic – or all at once. Thus ppovera vecchia (Figure 1, Line 2) referentially establishes the grandmother as poor and old; emotionally, as a term of endearment, it signals the narrator’s sympathy with the Roman poor; and metalinguistically, the Romanesco ppovera, with its • • • stress echoed in vecchia, signals the text as a poem with a Roman narrator.

Readers interpret these signals to build schemata (mental maps – Stockwell 2002, 75ff.) of text-world meaning. These are often reader-specific, both because of poetry’s “openness to different interpretations’” (Furniss and Bath, quoted in Boase-Beier 2009, 195),
and because readers participate in at least two other ‘worlds’ (interactions of text and context – Stockwell, 136):

1. ‘Author world’: here, each reader’s knowledge about Belli and perception of his in-poem presence.
2. ‘Reader world’: each reader’s knowledge about Rome and Italy, plus his/her life history, attitudes, ideologies (normative belief systems about social reality that a community feels “to be commonsensical” – Verschueren 2012, 10), etc.

Readers of translated poems experience an interplay between the source poet’s and the translator’s signals. Most recent poetry translators aim to relay a justifiable interpretation of the source by using similar or analogous signals (Boase-Beier 2009, 195; Jones 2011, 140-141; Holmes 1988, 54). In practice, poetry’s “multiplex, polysemantic” nature (as with pprovera vecchia above) often makes this difficult, forcing translators to choose between two alternatives (Jones 2011, 140-141):

1. Reducing multiplex to simple signals: reproducing semantics but abandoning rhyme, say.
2. Creatively shifting signals: making ‘novel’ yet ‘appropriate’ signals (Sternberg and Lubart 1999) which alter the source poem’s semantics while reflecting its text world or perceived intent. Stocks, for example, retains Belli’s interaction of text-world and rhyme by shifting ‘two leaves of salad’ (La bbona famija, Line 4) into not much on the plate, which rhymes with Line 2’s daddy gets back late (Belli 2007a, 13).

Here, translators have personal ‘hierarchies of correspondences’ – whether they see conveying semantic detail or rhyme, say, as more crucial (Holmes 1998, 86). Moreover, if source signals cannot be reproduced, ‘translator-world’ factors (the translator’s knowledge, life history, attitudes, ideologies, etc.) also influence which new signals translators choose (Tymoczko 2000, 24).

With poetry translation, Holmes’s twin aims (writing a target-language poem that adequately “matches” a source-language poem – 1988, 50) are notoriously hard to combine, so readers typically know they are reading translations (Boase-Beier 2004, 25). Hence, though readers may agree to read “as if [the translations] were the original” (anonymous reviewer’s comment), they may be aware of the interplay between source poet’s and translator’s signals. Moreover, certain “play[s] of signifiers” – a source-country character with a target-language name, say – may highlight the translator’s mediation to readers (Venuti 1995, 24).

1.4 Language varieties

A language is regarded here as a cluster of ‘varieties’, or related communicative systems, which vary according to “external factors” like geographic place, formality, etc., but also in terms of social prestige (Wardhaugh 2006, 27-33). A canonical ‘standard’ variety carries high prestige, typically because it is supra-regional (largely uniform across a nation-state’s territories), but is also used by the educated and the socially powerful, and/or in high-status communication events (ibid., 33-35). A dialect, by contrast, is defined here as a regional variety with lower prestige than standard varieties (cf. Armstrong and Federici 2006, 11-12; Wardhaugh, 30). Users, however, may covertly value their dialect (to signal group solidarity, say) and even use it to subvert the standard’s dominance – as, arguably, with Belli’s
Romanesco (DuVal 1990, 28). Hence how readers interpret literary dialect voices depends on reader world – specifically, on their personal associations with those voices.

A closely-related concept is ‘regional language’: a language used in part of a nation-state only, without necessarily being subordinate to a supra-regional standard (Tabouret-Keller 1999, 337). Scots, for example, is a UK regional language cognate to English, with a long written tradition (Scottish Executive Education Department 2007, 17). In practice, regional and standard languages may differ in status. Thus English remains Scotland’s only official language. Conversely, Scots writing can convey “cultural and political overtones from which an official national language is free”, such as subversiveness (McClure 2006, 310) or “hameliness” (‘intimacy’ – Holton 2004, 15).

English dialects, such as Yorkshire or Strine (Australian dialect), and Scots occur in the Belli translations analysed here. Because dialects and regional language share many features, I henceforth use ‘regional voice/variety/speech’ to cover both, except when highlighting differences between the two.

People’s relative command of standard vs. regional varieties may vary. In modern-day UK, for example, all understand Standard English, and many people rarely or never speak a regional variety, though regional accent variation is common. In early-19th-century Italy, however, standard Italian was largely restricted to certain written domains, like literature, whereas about 90% of the population spoke only a regional variety (De Mauro, Castellani, Bruni, quoted in Trifone 2011; Federico Federici, personal communication).

Regional speech may signal not only space, but also community, and/or tenor (relationship between interlocutors – Halliday 1978, 110). With Belli’s Romanesco, the community is the urban poor, and the tenor is informal; hence, in Berman’s terms, it is a ‘vernacular’ (a localised, popular speech variety – [1985] 2000, 294). Of course, Belli’s Romanesco is a literary vernacular – a type of “literary sociolect” (Lane-Mercier 1997, 45). Literary sociolects give a ‘narrative point of view’ that highlights the speaker’s social status (Määttä 2004, 319) – a poor Roman child in La b bona famija, for example. Rather than recreating authentic language-use, these typically follow conventional forms, often in order to highlight traits conventionally associated with their speakers. Hence they can contribute to characterisation and plot, but also generate structures of “aesthetic, ideological and political meaning” (Lane-Mercier, 46) – stressing interpersonal warmth in poor families, for example.

1.5 Translating regional voices and text worlds

Recent research has highlighted how literary-prose and drama translators tackle regional voices. Most often, translators ‘delocalise’ such voices into a supra-regional variety (Leppihalme 2000; Ramos Pinto 2009; Ghassempur 2011; Briguglia 2011). This may carry similar tenor signals (e.g., colloquial) to the source, though it is often a ‘normalised’ variety (Allén 1999, 31-79; Ramos Pinto, 292) stripped of all specific marking. Though target readers may appreciate delocalised voices, “the more important a [regional] feature, the more loss […] if the translator downplays it” (Leppihalme, 250, 264-267; cf. Torop, quoted in Fochi 2006, 74). For Määttä, normalisation removes the Other’s point-of-view signalled by the source sociolect (2004, 319, 322).

Occasionally, translators ‘relocalise’ (Armstrong and Federici 2006, 14) source regional voices into a target regional variety – to add local colour, or highlight solidarity with regional target audiences (e.g., Bowman and Findlay 2004). Relocalising, however, appears especially rare in prose. This probably reflects the view that localising “is foredoomed to failure” (Landers 2001, 117), because it risks changing the source variety’s community and tenor signals, imposing a crudely stereotyped variety, and/or arousing reader resistance (ibid.; Määttä 2004, 321, 331; Leppihalme, 265-267). Relocalising is sometimes advocated,
however, if the target variety carries similar conventional signals (e.g., poor, big-city, resourceful) to the source, or has its own literary tradition, as with Scots (Määttä, 321). An occasionally-used alternative is to relocalise into an amalgam of target-region varieties.

Whatever the approach, the translator’s “twofold violence” in mediating source-text content, ideology, etc. via her/his own translator-world and target-culture “reader positions” means that “translated literary sociolects are saturated” with the visible “presence of the translating subject” (Lane-Mercier 1997, 48). Therefore Woodham suggests a “disjunctive approach” whereby target audiences “collude” in letting a translation exist in both the target place (signalled by target regional voicing) and the source place (signalled by author-world knowledge, place-names, etc.) – via the wider “suspension of belief” that allows them to experience any target-language input as if it were source-language input (2006, 406). Alternatively, she advocates a “toned-down” approach that only keeps the sociolect’s textually relevant signals (402-403), such as informality.

Text-world semantics, such as La bbona famijja’s Roman female name Cremen
tina (‘Clementina’ in standard Italian) or salad as cheap Italian food, may also give space signals. ‘Normalising’ translation would delete such items, and ‘relocalising’ would replace them with target-region items. Another option is ‘preserving’ their source-space reference by transcribing or literally translating (e.g., Cremen
tina→Cremen
tina or inzalata→salad).

2 Methods
2.1 Data sources
In exploring how and why translators tackle source-poem regional voice, the unit of analysis is each translator’s ‘output’, or body of Belli translations, backed up by the translator’s ‘comments’ (where available) about this output. Figure 2 lists the Belli translators identified in bibliography and web searches by first year of publication, plus details of outputs and comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translator</th>
<th>First publication year</th>
<th>Output analysed</th>
<th>No of poems in output</th>
<th>Source of translator comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Frances Trollope)</td>
<td>(1881)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Burgess</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Burgess (1977)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desmond O’Grady</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>O’Grady (1977)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>O’Grady (1977, 94-95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix to Duranti (2006, 293-305)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Stocks</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Belli (2007a)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Translators, outputs and comments

Trollope was excluded from the study, for two reasons. Firstly, she published much earlier (1881) than the others (1960–2007) – well before the early-20th-century modernist revolution in poetic norms. For the eleven remaining translators, none of the ‘element’
variables listed below (Figure 3) correlated significantly with publication year; hence publication-era effects can be disregarded. Secondly, she was the only female, which would have risked introducing a gender variable whose effect could not be assessed without more female subjects.

None of the remaining eleven, to my knowledge, are professional translators. Burgess, Garioch, Neill, Norse, O’Grady, Stocks and Williams are published poets, Howard and Sullivan are not (Andrews’s and Dale’s status is unknown); as this distinction did not correlate significantly with any element variables, it is also disregarded in analyses.

Each output comprises all web- and paper-published Belli translations I could find by that translator. All outputs are selections from Belli’s 2279 sonnets, ranging from Garioch’s 120 to Howard’s four poems. Differences in output size do not materially affect findings, however, because each translator’s approach is highly consistent: patterns emerged after analysing typically 4–5 poems, with further analyses usually just confirming these patterns.

Translator’s comments derive firstly from available translator’s prefaces (referenced in Figure 2). Secondly, I tried to contact all living translators to arrange interviews. This only succeeded with Howard and Stocks. Interviews lasted about 1½ hours, and were audio-recorded. The following questions provided data for this study:

Do you have any principles/beliefs which you feel guide your translation strategies?
What are they?
How would you describe the target-language style you chose for Belli? Why and how did you choose it / did it choose you? What was the relationship between your chosen style and:
- the fact that Belli wrote in dialect rather than ‘standard’ literary Italian?
- any other aspects of Belli’s style?
- any aspects of Belli’s content?

2.2 Analysis

Analysis involves fleshing out initial quantitative findings with qualitative explorations. Quantitatively, outputs are analysed in terms of three ‘dimensions’, each with one or more ‘elements’. The Voice dimension (three elements: Space, Community, Tenor) logs translators’ responses to the signals given by Belli’s Romanesco; Text-world (one element: Space) logs their responses to space signals from his Roman text-world; Form (two elements: Rhyme, Rhythm) logs their responses to his rhymed endecasillabi. Each output was coded (1), (2) or (3) on each element to show the overall relationship between Belli’s original signals and those transmitted by the translator (cf. Section 1.3’s cognitive-pragmatic model of poetry translation). These codes constitute each element as a three-point ranked (ordinal) scale, where target-poem signals have three degrees of divergence from source-poem signals:
(1) ‘paralleling’ best-fit recreations of source-poem signals;
(2) a ‘mid-way’ or ‘mixed’ approach;
(3) target signals ‘diverging’ sharply from source-poem signals (whether deleting or creatively shifting).

This enables two types of quantitative analysis: comparing output counts across an element’s three codes shows translators’ preferences, and rank correlation tests between elements reveal linkages between elements. Figure 3 shows criteria plus example linguistic indicators for the Paralleling and Diverging extremes of each element.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(1) Paralleling</th>
<th>(2) Mid-way / Mixed</th>
<th>(3) Diverging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice/Space</strong></td>
<td>relocasing: regional language/dialect throughout&lt;br&gt;• “Then me, wi’ towd man an’ mi sister Grace” (Howard 2005, 49)</td>
<td>mixture of relocasing + delocalising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice/Community</strong></td>
<td>wholly or mainly working-class&lt;br&gt;• “all I’m sayin’ is that when the drink flows / it can blind a feller and ‘e loses ‘is wick” (Sullivan – Duranti 2006, 293)</td>
<td>literary/ educated, with some working-class marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice/Tenor</strong></td>
<td>wholly or mainly informal&lt;br&gt;• “so put a sock in it and shut your gob” (Stocks – Belli 2007a, 41)</td>
<td>informal dialogue, but neutral-to-formal narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text-world/Space</strong></td>
<td>preserving: Roman/Italian text-world features only&lt;br&gt;• “Mastro Checco, you call the Roman / conclave Pilate’s Praetorium” (O’Grady 1977, 97)</td>
<td>Roman/Italian plus target-country text-world features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form/Rhythm</strong></td>
<td>regular metric lines only&lt;br&gt;• “The people of this world are much the same / as coffee beans inside the grinder’s mill” (Stocks – Belli 2007a, 47)</td>
<td>mixed or loose rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Form/Rhyme</strong></td>
<td>wholly or mainly full rhymes&lt;br&gt;• “We’ve got to touch the stars. But how? An able-/ Brained bastard told them: ‘Build the tower of Babel.” (Burgess 1977, 102)</td>
<td>wholly or mainly imperfect rhymes, e.g., grope-cup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.** Elements, code definitions and output examples (emphases added)

Two more elements – **Voice/Time** and **Text-world/Time**, coded as ‘archaising’ vs. ‘modernising’ (keeping old-fashioned vs. updating: Jones and Turner 2004) – were used to check whether translators’ approaches to Belli’s non-modern voicing and text worlds interacted with their approaches to regional voice. These did not correlate significantly with any of Figure 3’s elements, however, and are therefore also disregarded.

Figure 4 lists each output’s codes plus explanatory notes. This shows, for example, that Andrews’ three Voice elements and Form/Rhyme, coded as (3), diverge from Belli’s rhymed local vernacular into unrhymed standard English; whereas his Text-World/Space and Form/Rhythm, coded as (1), parallel Belli’s Roman text world and fixed rhythm.
Translator approaches – e.g., preference for working-class vs. literary/educated Voice – do not always fall naturally into discrete categories. Hence some borderline coding decisions were inevitably based on researcher intuition. However, reliability was increased by re-coding all outputs two years after initial coding; the few discrepancies were resolved by extra scrutiny (where the first coding usually prevailed). Moreover, the power of ranked-category methods to reveal patterns hidden to qualitative analyses arguably more than compensates for such slight ‘fuzzinesses’.

In any case, quantitative and qualitative methods enrich each other. Correlations suggest trends, and output counts across each element’s three categories map patterns of translator preferences onto each trend; both aspects are then analysed qualitatively with reference to target-poem examples and translator comments. In cognitive-pragmatic terms, the combined analyses reveal what translators seem to regard as a ‘justifiable interpretation’ of the source poem and why, in terms of how they mediate source-poem signals. They also speculate how readers might interpret target-poem signals in light of their likely schemata about Rome and Belli, about the target-poem text world and translator, and about the role of poetic form.

### 3 Findings

#### 3.1 Correlations

Rank correlations between elements are summarised in Figure 5 (underlying output-counts are presented later, when discussing specific correlation patterns). Rank correlation tests the polarity and strength of linkage (expressed by coefficient ρ) between two variables with ranked categories. Thus a ‘positive’ correlation of ρ .75 between Form/Rhythm and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice/Space</th>
<th>Voice/Community</th>
<th>Voice/Tenor</th>
<th>Text-world/Space</th>
<th>Form/Rhythm</th>
<th>Form/Rhyme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrews</td>
<td>(3) non-region-specific</td>
<td>(3) standard literary</td>
<td>(3) largely neutral</td>
<td>(1) Rome</td>
<td>(1) iambic pentameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burgess</td>
<td>(2) non-region-specific + some Lancashire</td>
<td>(2) some working-class words</td>
<td>(1) informal</td>
<td>(2) mainly Italy + some UK</td>
<td>(1) iambic pentameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale</td>
<td>(1) Strine</td>
<td>(1) working class</td>
<td>(1) informal</td>
<td>(2) Rome + Australia</td>
<td>(2) pentameter + hexameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garioch</td>
<td>(1) Edinburgh Scots</td>
<td>(1) working class</td>
<td>(1) informal</td>
<td>(2) Rome + Scotland</td>
<td>(1) iambic pentameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>(1) Yorkshire English</td>
<td>(1) working class</td>
<td>(1) informal</td>
<td>(3) Northern England only</td>
<td>(1) 10-syllable pentameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neill</td>
<td>(1) Scots</td>
<td>(2) literary + working-class</td>
<td>(1) informal</td>
<td>(3) Scotland only</td>
<td>(1) iambic pentameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norse</td>
<td>(2) non-region-specific + New York</td>
<td>(2) literary + working-class</td>
<td>(2) neutral + informal</td>
<td>(1) Rome</td>
<td>(3) free verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Grady</td>
<td>(3) non-region-specific</td>
<td>(3) standard literary</td>
<td>(3) mainly neutral</td>
<td>(1) Rome</td>
<td>(3) free verse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stocks</td>
<td>(3) non-region-specific</td>
<td>(2) some working-class words</td>
<td>(1) informal</td>
<td>(2) Roman places, but often UK person-names</td>
<td>(1) iambic pentameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sullivan</td>
<td>(1) amalgam of UK dialects</td>
<td>(1) working-class</td>
<td>(1) informal</td>
<td>(2) mainly UK + some Italy</td>
<td>(2) tetrameter + pentameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>(3) non-region-specific</td>
<td>(3) standard literary</td>
<td>(3) largely neutral</td>
<td>(1) Rome</td>
<td>(2) tetrameter + pentameter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Outputs plus codes allocated
Form/Rhythm shows a fairly strong tendency for translators to use similar approaches with both elements, whether paralleling (reflecting Belli’s poetic form), mid/mixed, or diverging (rejecting it). A ‘negative’ correlation of $\rho = .89$ between Voice/Tenor and Text-world/Space, however, shows a very strong tendency for translators to use opposite approaches with these elements (e.g., paralleling Belli’s informal voice while diverging from Belli’s Rome into target-country text-worlds). Figure 5 also indicates the probability (2-tailed $p$) of correlations reflecting real linkages:

** and * mark ‘highly significant’ ($p \leq .01$) and ‘significant’ ($p .02 – p .05$) correlations respectively. These elements are regarded as linked.

*ns* marks ‘non-significant’ correlations ($p > .05$). These elements are regarded as unlinked. For clarity, $\rho$ values are omitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Voice/Community</th>
<th>Voice/Tenor</th>
<th>Text-world/Space</th>
<th>Form/Rhyme</th>
<th>Form/Rhythm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice/Space</td>
<td>.88**</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td>- .75**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice/Community</td>
<td>.84**</td>
<td>- .69*</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice/Tenor</td>
<td>- .89**</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-world/Space</td>
<td>- .84**</td>
<td>- .61*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.** Inter-element rank correlations and significance

Analyses focus first on voice (3.2), then on how it interacts with two other factors: text-world space (3.3), and poetic form (3.4).

3.2 Tackling Belli’s vernacular voice

3.2.1 Preferences and inter-connections

Figure 5 shows strong positive correlations between the three Voice elements: Space~Community $\rho = .88$, Space~Tenor $\rho = .75$, Community~Tenor $\rho = .84$. Thus Voice/Space, Voice/Community and Voice/Tenor may be seen as forming a single spectrum between two archetypal extremes:

1. Paralleling: translators who echo Belli’s vernacular voice with a relocalised-Space, informal-Tenor and working-class-Community vernacular – as in Howard’s Yorkshire *a couple o’ hours o’ suppin’ pass* [‘a couple of hours of boozing pass’] for Line 9 of *La bbona famijja* (2005, 49).
Figure 6. Voice: output counts

Figure 6 shows that outputs are distributed across all points (parallelizing, mixed and diverging) on this spectrum. However, parallelizing approaches are slightly preferred: 5/11 relocalise Belli’s local Voice/Space (vs. 4/11 diverging into delocalised voice); 4/11 recreate his working-class Voice/Community (vs. 3/11 diverging into literary/educated); and 7/11 recreate his informal Voice/Tenor (vs. 3/11 diverging into neutral/formal). The following sections explore three key approaches within this spectrum: archetypal ‘parallelising’ relocalisation; delocalising Voice/Space whilst keeping other vernacular features; and archetypal ‘diverging’ shifts to standard English.

3.2.2 Relocalised vernaculars
Almost half the translators relocalise Belli’s local voices – suggesting that the problems of relocalisation cited for prose and drama are not insurmountable in poetry. One such problem is that relocalisation can give readers cognitively conflicting signals (e.g., Määttä 2004, 321): author-world knowledge (supplied via translator prefaces) places the poems in Rome, but in-poem voices place them in Yorkshire, say. A solution to cognitive conflict is analogy: highlighting how two superficially dissimilar things share key common features. This enables relocalising translators to ask target readers to “collude” (Woodham 2006, 406) in accepting target-region voices as an analogy for Romanesco, based on the assumption that a translated poem is a best-fit analogy of its source counterpart.

Readers are presumably likelier to accept such analogies if target voices transmit other relevant signals beside the source voice’s regionalism. Whereas Landers claims that relocalising risks losing non-spatial connotations of source dialect (2001, 117), Belli’s relocalising translators retain Romanesco’s informality, plus all (4/5 translators) or some (1/5) of its urban-working-class connotations – unsurprisingly, since English and Scots have plenty of local, informal, urban-working-class varieties. When interviewed for this study, Howard explained further why he used his Yorkshire dialect as an analogy for Belli’s Romanesco:
Yorkshire is [...] rural and yet interspersed with large urban centres. [...] Around the large urban area of Rome [...] at that time it would have all just been rural [...]. So in the Yorkshire [dialect] it’s adaptable enough to fit both scenarios.

Also, Howard continued, only regional vernacular voicing can reflect Romanesco’s polyglossic opposition to the standard Italian of Rome’s rulers (cf. Määttä 2004, passim),

[Belli] talks about nnoantri\(^5\): [...] ‘us’, so like ‘us and them’. So, the first thing you see [with] a Belli sonnet is this otherness, that you’ve got to convey. So by putting it into any kind of standard, for me, you just miss the point.

For Howard, Yorkshire dialect, with its associations of working-class solidarity, carries precisely these “us and them” undertones. Similarly, Dale argues that the “old [...] underclass” associations of his Strine voicing (e.g., *An we siddown t’ eat a coupla leaves a salad* ‘and we sit down to eat a couple of leaves of salad’: *La bbona famijja*, Line 4) signal Romanesco’s subversiveness (2006).

This concern with analogy is arguably also ethical, with loyalty to source writers entailing loyalty to their style and socio-political ideology. As discussed below, this is important even for translators who recreate only the informal element of Belli’s vernacular.

Loyalty does not imply invisibility, however. Since relocated voices signal both the analogised source-poem space and the heard target-poem space, the latter can only belong to the ‘implied translator’, who therefore becomes potentially visible to readers (cf. Woodham, 406; Lane-Mercier 1997, 48). In Lines 1–2 of *La bbona famijja*, for instance, Garioch’s Scots (1983, 231) highlights his status as a Scottish poet speaking for Belli without effacing his own identity:

*Faither wins hame, my granny leaves her wheel,*
*puir sowl, gies owre her spinning for the nicht;*
*[‘Father gets home, my granny leaves her wheel,*
*poor soul, stops her spinning for the night’]*

Of course, each of these translators’ regional voices is, like Belli’s, a literary voice, which reflects just one of their potential voices. Nevertheless, relocating enables translators to signal their own regional identity – and therefore, like Belli, their own ideologies of identity. In the extract quoted earlier, for instance, Howard spoke the phrase “us and them” in an extra-strong Yorkshire accent, emphasising his regional voice’s socially subversive potential.

With Garioch and Neill’s Scots translations, ideologies of regional identity serve a wider literary-political agenda. The viability of Scots “as a national literary medium against the [...] cultural dominance of English” is not universally accepted, even in Scotland (McClure 2006, 310). Hence Scots, like English-dialect voicing, can explore and subvert relationships of linguistic dominance: thus Garioch uses Scots alongside standard English to echo Belli’s satirical contrast between vernacular and “hegemonic language” (standard Italian or Latin – Duranti 1989, 41), and Neill describes his poetry’s interplay between English, Scots and Gaelic as “standing up for the small tongues against the big mouths”.

Scots, however, unlike Yorkshire or Strine, is also a re-emergent national language. Thus Garioch’s translations helped to “[recreate] a new Scots tongue” by extending its scope (Fletcher 2000, 34) – an enterprise that Neill continued. Garioch and Neill, however, represent differing views about this literary tongue: whether it should emerge from writers reworking their own local and literary heritages, as in Garioch’s amalgam of Edinburgh
vernacular with English, or combine modern demotic with Renaissance literary usage, as in Neill’s translations (W. N. Herbert, personal communication; McClure, ibid.; Findlay 2004, 4).

Identities and ideologies within texts engage ultimately with those of readers. Like regionally-voiced conversation (cf. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006, 41), translator-to-reader communication in a shared regional voice can reinforce shared ‘us’ identity, and activate shared regional associations, both real-world (e.g., identification with Northern-English industrial-rural landscapes) and ideological (e.g., resistance to London centralism). If this reflects the source poet’s communication with intended source readers, it arguably enhances the literary experience. However, regionally-voiced conversation can also exclude (ibid.), readers who do not share the translator’s regional voice may feel excluded from its us-group, and even feel identified with the ruling them-group. This risk may be reduced if non-us readers accept the target voice as the translator’s only means of conveying the source’s regionalism, since few can write more than one regional voice convincingly. Thus, after reading Dale’s justification for translating into his native Strine (2006), non-Australian readers might regard Strine as Dale’s best-fit way of signalling what Belli intended with Romanesco. Some might even regard Dale’s Strine as analogous to their own local speech, thus feeling vicariously included in the Strine users’ us-group. Regional target voice, however, also risks excluding non-us readers who simply cannot understand it, or who find using glossaries (as supplied by Garioch and Neill) effortsome: hence the view that Scots voicing “narrows down [a translation’s] audience” (Duranti 1989, 40-41) because “few [non-Scottish readers] read Scots with ease” (Dale 2006, 86).

Relocalising into a ‘regional amalgam’ can potentially lessen these risks. Thus, in Cain, Sullivan (quoted in Duranti 2006, 293) uses vocabulary from Scots (neeps: ‘turnips’) and Cockney (china: ‘mate’), plus phonology and grammar (e.g., ‘is: ‘his’; like they was: ‘as if they were’) from various UK-English dialects: “But he saw the Almighty treat his neeps / and ‘is ‘oney like they was a joke, / not so with Abel’s milk and sheeps. / […] / so then, my old china, you go for broke”.

As stereotypical regionalisms, these are comprehensible to most UK readers; and because they are not linked to one space, there is no us-group where (UK) readers might feel excluded from. Such amalgams, however, rarely occur in real life or literature: hence readers might perceive them as a less credible analogy for Belli’s Romanesco.

3.2.3 Delocalised vernaculars
Delocalising regional voices avoids the risks of relocalising. Here, two approaches emerged. The first keeps the informal and/or urban-working-class signals of Belli’s Romanesco. When interviewed for this study, Stocks advocated this for accessibility reasons: “Scots and dialect are going to reach such a small number of readers […] whereas [with] mainstream language […] I really hope that this book will gradually be read by a wider and wider set of potential readers”.

He also explained that he does not command a regional variety which would convincingly reflect Belli’s Romanesco. For relocalising translators, the space signals of Belli’s Romanesco are crucial. For Stocks, however, these are less important than its subversiveness. To convey this, Stocks (echoing several scholars, summarised in Weston 2006, 240) advocated recreating Belli’s informal tenor and poetic energy:

[Romanesco] totally freed [Belli] up from the constraints of Italian formal language […] So somehow as a translator, you’ve got to achieve an equivalent. […] So what I’ve
tried to do is [...] find a style of language which [...] echoes Belli but is comprehensible immediately to anyone [...] who’s a native English speaker. And you achieve that with idiom, with clever syntax, with slang, with just muscular vigour.

(interview by present author)

This is borne out by Stocks’s translations, like Mad Again (Belli 2007a, 3)⁷: “You know who’s flipped again? Loverboy Jack. / His boss – who’s seen it all, and knows the score – / has sent him to the Naples nuthouse for / some treatment, so he’ll get his marbles back”.

3.2.4 Diverging to standard language
The second delocalising approach normalises all elements of Belli’s vernacular into standard literary English. In written communication, this variety is conventionally transparent, with no specific space, community or tenor signals. This reduces the translator’s visibility, both as source-poem interpreter and as target-culture actor (Tymoczko 2000, 23; Venuti 1995). Moreover, it deletes the source vernacular’s socially-subversive signals. The poems’ text worlds, of course, still convey this subversiveness. Belli’s poems, however, are voiced as if spoken – and spoken standard English is associated with socially-dominant speakers or formal speech events. The voice’s point-of-view, therefore, changes from subversive/informal to dominant/formal, giving signals that conflict with the subversive/informal text world.

In The Model Family (La b bona famijja, Lines 13-14: Belli 1984), for example, Andrews’ narrator says: “A little piss, a short Salve Regina, / And, in the peace of Heaven, we go to bed”. The formal ecclesiastical tone of a short Salve Regina and in the peace of Heaven signals the family as following official Church doctrine. This contrasts with the vernacular clichés of Belli’s ‘na sarveregina and in zanta pasce. These signal the family as simply doing what needs doing before bed (Federico Federici, personal communication) rather than being subservient – as in Howard’s “a quick piss and an ‘ail mary / an’ straight up to bed in peace an’ plenty” (2005, 49).

3.3 Space-marked text worlds
3.3.1 Voice and text-world space
Text worlds (places, people, items, etc.) can also carry space signals. In Figure 5, Text-world/Space correlates negatively with Voice: $\rho = .69$ with Voice/Community, $\rho = .75$ with Voice/Space, and $\rho = .89$ with Voice/Tenor. This adds a text-world aspect to Section 3.2.1’s voice-based spectrum:

At one extreme, translators relocalise Belli’s vernacular Voice to an informal, urban-working-class, target-region voice (paralleling) – which also means relocalising Belli’s Roman Text-World/Space to target-country analogies (diverging: hence the negative correlations).

At the other extreme, translators diverge from Belli’s vernacular into a standard-English Voice – but they parallel Belli’s Text-World/Space by keeping it in Rome.

The former extreme is relatively unpopular: of the 5/11 translators consistently relocalising vernacular Voice/Space (Paralleling: Figure 6), only two also consistently relocalise Roman/Italian Text-world/Space (Diverging: Figure 7). More popular in Figure 7 are: preserving some Text-world/Space features whilst relocalising others (Mixed), or consistently preserving Roman/Italian Text-world/Space (Paralleling).

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Sections 3.3.2–3.3.4 discuss key points on this modified spectrum.

3.3.2 Relocalised text worlds
Howard and Neill are the two translators who consistently relocalise text-world and voice. Howard, for example, changes La Bhona Famija’s Cresentina to Grace – a UK name with a similar meaning. And in Neill’s Ugson Sicht (‘Dreadful Sight’) a murdered girl is found on the road to Balmapaddie (Belli 1998, 19), an invented Scottish-sounding place that replaces Belli’s La Storta near Rome (2007b, no. 2158; Brian Holton, personal communication). This avoids cognitive conflict between voices signalling Yorkshire/Scotland and text worlds signalling Italy. As Howard explained, “I could only make [Belli] speak authentically by just domesticating the whole lot” (interview with present author). This also entailed not translating poems whose text worlds could not be relocalised: “I mean you wouldn’t have a sonnet on Pope Leo XII or something in the Yorkshire dialect […] because it would just be totally incongruous” (ibid.). Thus, because voice helps locate speakers within text worlds, these ‘double-relocalising’ translators see voice and text world as inseparable aspects of one coherent “discourse world” – “the imaginary world […] conjured up by a reading of a text” (Stockwell 2002, 92-93). Hence, in their view, only a radically creative shift of space (from Italy to Scotland, say) can keep the discourse world intact, thus retaining its analogical power.

Double relocalisation has disadvantages, of course. For some poetry translators, creatively changing text-world details loses a poem’s essential core (Jones 2011, 140). Moreover, even relocalised target-discourse worlds remain spatially inconsistent, since readers still know that Neill’s Scotland, say, is an analogy for Belli’s Rome.

3.3.3 Preserving the source-poem text world
Consistently preserving Roman text-world space avoids these disadvantages – as in O’Grady’s “Mastro Checco, you call the Roman / conclave Pilate’s Praetorium” quoted earlier. Three translators who do so consistently delocalise Belli’s Romanesco to supra-regional English. By literary convention, supra-regional varieties give no space signals, thus enabling them to represent foreign speech in a foreign space. Moreover, the resulting discourse-world coherence between Roman text worlds and reader-world knowledge (that
Belli wrote about Rome) offsets the loss of local voicing from the discourse world. These three translators, however, also normalise the informal and urban-working class elements of Belli’s vernacular – though, as Stocks shows, these can be preserved whilst delocalising the vernacular’s regionalism. Conversely, no translators consistently preserve Roman text worlds whilst consistently using informal Voice/Tenor and working-class Voice/Community, though this would have caused no cognitive conflict and breached no literary convention.

A disadvantage of preserving source-poem text-worlds is that translation readers may not know the associations of local items such as “Mastro Checco”, or the local associations of shared items (salad as cheap rather than healthy food, say). Two translators (Williams and Stocks) add footnotes/endnotes explaining such associations – though this increases the cognitive effort required of the reader.

### 3.3.4 Mixed text worlds
Interestingly, the most popular approach to text-world space is ‘mixed’ (5/11: Figure 7). Stocks, for instance, preserves place-names (e.g., Palazzo Doria – Belli 2007b, 18-19) whilst relocalising most personal names (e.g., Antonio Ulivo → Anthony Green, 38-39); whereas Garioch preserves many proper nouns whilst relocalising many other items (e.g., salad → kail ['greens'] – 1983, 231). This risks giving conflicting space signals (e.g., Rome vs. Scotland). Alternatively, it may be seen as building a hybrid text-world, where preserved Roman items plus extra-textual knowledge signal that target-space items are analogies for Roman items. This also makes associative meanings accessible to target readers. Thus, for Scottish readers, cooked greens are more believable than salad as a poor people’s dish, but source-space items alongside it (e.g., drappie wine ['drink of wine'], Line 11) signal that kail is ‘reporting on’ something different but equally frugal in Belli’s original.

All five mixed Text-world/Space translators also preserve the informal Voice/Tenor and at least some working-class Voice/Community signals of Belli’s Romanesco – as do the two double-relocalisers. For most translators (7/11), therefore, reflecting the informal, working-class source voicing is so important that they are prepared to relocalise at least some text-world features – presumably so that narrators and characters “speak authentically” in text worlds that make sense to readers. This implies that some translators prioritise recreating literary effects (here, voice and associative meaning) – and others, text-world semantics. For the former, making translations work as target-language poems seems paramount, even if this involves adapting source-poem text worlds.

### 3.4 Poetic form, voices and text worlds
A translated poem’s literary effects also depend on its poetic form. Interestingly, decisions regarding form, voice and space are interlinked.

#### 3.4.1 Poetic form
Translators’ approaches to Rhyme and Rhythm correlate positively ($\rho .75$, Figure 5).
Paralleling Belli’s poetic form is popular (Figure 8). Six translators use regular Rhythm, of whom five also use full Rhyme – as with Stocks’s rhymed iambic pentameters (Belli 2007a, 13): “My poor old granny leaves her spinning wheel / and pokes the fire when daddy gets back late, / and sets the table for the little meal / we’ll sit down to. There’s not much on the plate”. Only two translators diverge both Rhythm and Rhyme into free verse – as with O’Grady’s The Sacred College of Cardinals:\(^9\): “The cardinals make the Pope and the Pope, / after his election, makes the cardinals; / they’re like radish and horse-radish, / like boots and leather”.

In Figure 5, Text-world/Space correlates negatively with Rhyme (\(\rho -.84\)) and Rhythm (\(\rho -.61\)), whereas Voice/Tenor correlates positively with Rhyme (\(\rho .80\)). This gives a third spectrum, loosely linked to Section 3.3.1’s Voice+Space spectrum:

1. At one extreme, translators recreate Belli’s Rhyme, Rhythm and informal Tenor (paralleling) in wholly or partially relocalised Text-world/Space (diverging).

2. At the other, translators convert Belli’s Rhyme, Rhythm and informal Tenor into neutrally-to-formally-voiced English free verse (diverging), whilst preserving his Roman Text-world/Space (paralleling).

This might be titled a Poetic Texture spectrum, as discussed below.

3.4.2 Reflecting voice and sound

It is argued above that translators who preserve informal voice in relocalised text-worlds prioritise “authenticity” of voice. They also, however, prioritise poetic form – perhaps because they actually prioritise conveying Belli’s poetic texture, with voice and form as two key dimensions. As Stocks says:

Belli writes sonnets. Sonnets have metre, sonnets have rhyme, sonnets have a volta. And then of course […] there’s the tone and the diction of his poems […] So I wanted to try and write translations which [are] going to be English sonnets, so they’re going to have English metre. They’re going to be rhymed.

(interview with present author)
This concern with texture need not imply relocating Belli’s vernacular (Rhyme and Rhythm do not correlate with Voice/Space: Figure 5). Keeping its informal Tenor as crucial for these translators, however; moreover, this preserves Belli’s contrast between socially-subversive voicing and traditional form.

3.4.3 Free verse and standard voicing

Free-verse translations of rhyme-and-rhythm poems can be viewed in two ways. Negatively, they abandon the original form. Some see this as avoiding the risk of “betraying” or “falsifying” source semantics when finding rhymes (Lefevere 1975, 58-59; cf. Bly 1983, 44-45). This implies regarding form as secondary to content and wider texture, as when O’Grady writes that his translations “are not in strict sonnet form but try to give the feel as well as render the sense” of Belli’s sonnets (1977, 95). This belief fits with the free-verse translators’ preservation of source text-worlds. These translators, however, also abandon the source’s informal tenor: thus O’Grady converts Belli’s vernacular to standard English. The “feel” aspect of texture, therefore, is not prioritised in practice.

Positively, free verse, as the dominant modern-day Anglo-Scots poetic form, arguably has analogous cultural status to the 19th-century Italian sonnet. Free-verse translation, therefore, may be seen as cultural relocation. Combining it with the neutral-to-formal voicing dominant in target-culture poetics, however, risks positioning the translations in the late-20th-century modernist mainstream. This replaces Belli’s subversive contrast between vernacular voicing and mainstream form with a less subversive harmony between mainstream, socially-dominant voicing and form.

4 Conclusion

The more ‘replications’ a case study contains, the better its power to model reality (Yin 1993, 39). Hence this study, with its eleven translator-output replications, reveals a preliminary outline of poetry translators’ approaches to regional voice – as described below.

4.1 Regional voice and genre

This study cautiously supports Section 1.1’s proposal that translators’ approaches to regional voicing might vary with genre. These poetry translators adopt a wider spectrum of approaches than reported for other genres – especially prose. In particular, relocating (rare in prose) appears mainstream, whereas normalising into a supra-regional standard (dominant in prose) is just one of several options. Poetry’s conciseness, as also proposed in Section 1.1, may indeed be important here. Since these translators feel that relocated voices should speak within partially or wholly relocated text worlds, relocating a 14-line sonnet’s text world is less far-reaching than relocating a 300-page novel’s text world, say. Also, ‘relation norms’ defining expected source-target relationships (Chesterman 1997, 69) can vary between genres. Thus poetry translators are arguably allowed greater freedom than literary-prose translators in creatively adapting text worlds, probably because replicating source-poem semantics within the constraints of poetic form is notoriously difficult.

Drama can also allow a wide spectrum of responses to regional voice. Poetry translators, however, may relocate for more reasons than drama translators, leading one to speculate whether relocation might be more mainstream in poetry. The Belli translators relocated to reflect the source’s textuality, and/or to promote shared identity with target
audiences. Reports of drama translation, however, tend to highlight the latter, as with the relocalising of Tremblay’s Québécois plays into Scots (Bowman and Findlay 2004).

4.2 Poetic approaches

4.2.1 Problem spaces and poetic texture

Another reason for these contrasts, again as proposed, is that source-poem regional voice is tackled not in isolation, but within a wider problem-space. Within this space, translators seek convincing solutions that reflect the source poem’s ‘essential core’. Different views regarding what this core might be, however, generate different clusters of decisions. Some Belli translators, echoing several published accounts (e.g., Folkart 2007; Jones 2011), see texture – provisionally, poetic form and voice – as essential, which implies being prepared to compromise on text-world content. Others, echoing other accounts (e.g., Lefevere 1975; Bly 1983; Jones ibid.), see source text-worlds as essential – though this implies abandoning poetic texture, not just compromising on it. This reflects the age-old form-versus-content debate in poetry translation, while suggesting that form is part of a wider concern with poetic texture. Following Jones finding (ibid.) that source-poem language-play, rhyme and rhythm stimulate similar translation approaches, ‘texture’ might be expanded to contain language-play alongside sound-structure and voice – plus perhaps other, yet-to-be-researched ‘parasemantic’ aspects of poetic communication.

Texture is a key means of delivering Jakobson’s “poetic function” of language: a “focus on the message for its own sake” by “promoting the palpability of signs” ([1960] 1988, 37ff). Interestingly, these texture-oriented translators disagreed whether one such palpability – the ‘oldness’ of Belli’s language and text-worlds – was essential, since these did not correlate with the study’s main variables.

In any case, this study suggests that texture-prioritising translators may see a regional voice’s space signals as part of the must-recreate core, or may not; but content-prioritising translators tend to abandon all the regional voice’s signals. These three approaches are discussed below.

4.2.2 Poetic texture and regional vernacular

Literary regional voice carries multiple signals. Besides space, it may signal social status or discourse-type, say, and therefore serve multiple purposes: to construct character, build humour, give social critique, etc. (Lane-Mercier 1997, 46; Määttä 2004, 322; Ramos Pinto 2009, 290-292). It may also serve wider political, literary or social purposes: e.g., to promote the regional variety’s literary status, or emphasise how writer and reader share identities. Belli’s texture-prioritising translators recognised this, but followed two alternative ways of translating the untranslatable – i.e. of finding target-language counterparts for source-language-specific voices.

Some translators saw all source-voice signals as crucial, and therefore used a target-language voice with analogous signals: local, urban-working-class, informal. Since local voicing (e.g., Yorkshire dialect) conventionally signals its own local space, this also meant relocalising source-text worlds to signal the same space. These translators, therefore, blatantly breached the default relation norm, which applies even to poetry (Jones 2011, 179), that source- and target-text worlds should roughly match. This further supports the view that pressures to convey texture lead to relation norms being more relaxable in poetry than in most other genres (ibid.).

Other texture-prioritising translators used the loss-management strategy of deconstructing the source voice into its sub-elements, abandoning its untranslatable local element while retaining its translatable working-class and informal elements. Delocalising
the voice’s local signals removes the need to relocalise text-world space: hence text world and author world can, in principle, stay in the same, cognitively-consistent source-country space. Moreover, relation norms are largely maintained, since just one of several signals (localness of voice) is lost. Nevertheless, concern for target-poem ‘authenticity’ – a sense that Jack is likelier than Caccemmetti to speak informal English, say – tempted such translators to breach these norms more overtly by building a hybrid text-world space.

4.2.3 Normalisation and literary norms
For the third, content-prioritising group of translators, exactly recreating source text-worlds is the ideal. Hence, besides localness of voice, they also abandon rhyme – which threatens surface semantic equivalence whilst allowing rough-and-ready text-world correspondence (Jones 2011, 169). This retreat to the translatable is justifiable in relation-norms terms, with gains in content balancing loss of texture. However, they also abandon translatable aspects of texture (rhythm plus the source voice’s community and tenor signals), which need not block semantic equivalence.

Partially at least, since this group contains only a minority of Belli translators, this supports the claim that literary translators often normalise source texture (e.g., Berman [1985] 2000; Allén 1999; Venuti 2000). This is typically seen as problematic. Allén describes normalisation as “a constant threat” (29), implying a wider phenomenon than a ‘retreat to the translatable’: thus translators may also normalise regional voice unwittingly, or as a safer tactic than risking exposure and criticism for marked stylistic decisions. Lack of confidence in writing non-standard voices may also be a factor.

In late-20th-century English-language poetry, rhymed dialect verse was largely restricted to lowbrow ‘local-interest’ pamphlets and regional newspapers, and standard-language free verse was the dominant idiom. Hence, in literary-norm terms, converting Belli’s poems from the former to the latter shifts them from the periphery to the centre. This, however, also implies the “ethnocentric violence” of domestication (Venuti 1995, 310). Here, preventing target readers from experiencing the source’s intracultural and intercultural otherness respectively reinforces the hegemony of dominant discourses, and strengthens the illusion that target-culture literary norms are universally valid rather than culture-specific.

Literary norms, however, are not monolithic or static. In one sense, the vernacular fixed-form Belli translations are more open to the source’s otherness. But they also fit with recent shifts in Anglo-Scots poetry towards embracing fixed alongside free poetic forms, high- alongside popular-culture references, and regional alongside standard voicing – as in Tony Harrison’s V ([1984] 1987, 235-249) or W. N. Herbert’s Cabaret McGonagall (1996).

4.3 Creativity and regional voice
Creative shifts in poetry translation usually happen at “recreation-impossible points” (Jones 2011, 180). Here, lack of target-language equivalents for source-poem rhymes or language-play forces translators into either creatively changing source-poem semantics, or abandoning semantic or textural complexity. This study adds another recreation-impossible stimulus: regional voice. It also shows that creative changes are not only semantic: those stimulated by regional voice are primarily textural (e.g., Romansesco to Scots, with semantic changes (e.g., La Storta to Balnmapaddie) as their secondary consequence. Such textural changes are no less creative, i.e. novel and appropriate (Sternberg and Lubart 1999): Scots signals a novel space relative to Romansesco, whilst appropriately meeting the translator’s original-matching norm (Holmes 1988, 50) by preserving Romansesco’s local-space signals.

Moreover, this study confirms that creative changes prompted not by recreation-impossible stimuli, but by desire for target-poem effectiveness and coherence (e.g.,
Caccemmetti → Loverboy Jack in an otherwise non-relocalised translation), happen occasionally rather than often (Jones 2011, 169). It also confirms that some translators are unwilling to make creative changes, and regard abandoning poetic complexity as the lesser evil (Jones, 180; Federici 2011, 11). The creator-abandoner division is not absolute, however. The multiplex signals given by source regional voice allow a range of options, between the double relocalisers’ radical creativity and the free-verse normalisers’ radical abandonment of texture. Between them lies a middle ground occupied by translators who prioritise informality and/or poetic form, or who combine dialect with standard, or coarse with neutral style.

4.4 Ideologies and identities

A translated poem’s voicing, together with text-world content and statements in paratexts (e.g., translator’s or editor’s introductions), can also signal issues of ideology and identity. Here, the translators’ own ideologies and identities can affect how s/he understands and mediates source-poem signals – inevitably, in some scholars’ view (e.g., Lane-Mercier 1997, 48). Whether translation readers realise which signals are the source poet’s, and which are the translator’s, presumably depends on how overt and marked the mediation is. With highly marked approaches like Howard’s Rome-to-Yorkshire relocalisation, readers’ knowledge that Belli was not a Yorkshireman makes Howard’s Yorkshire identity visible – and therefore, arguably, his ideological motivation for proposing the Yorkshire poor as an analogy for the Roman poor. When Andrews, however, normalises towards the unmarked standard (e.g., a short Salve Regina), his identity and ideology are less visible. Nevertheless, they arguably still operate. If readers know from paratexts that source-poem vernacular has become target-poem standard English, this risks signalling that regional, working-class identities have less universal worth than supra-regional, non-working-class identities.

Furthermore, how poetry readers interpret ideological signals depends partially on their own ideologies – for example, on how their ideologies of spatial identity interact with those expressed in the poems. The more overtly regional these poems are, the bigger their potential both to include and exclude readers. Thus many Scottish readers of Garioch’s translations may gain both a ‘hamely’ analogy for Belli’s world and a validation of their own Scottishness. Many non-Scottish readers, however, may feel excluded from both – especially if they cannot easily read Scots. But how far should local voice be expected to appeal to non-local readers? If Scots is a fully-fledged language, this implies a self-sufficient native readership, with no need to write for non-native readers. Such a response is less satisfactory with dialects such as Strine or Yorkshire, which do not claim literary-language status and the readership this implies. Hence Dale’s and Howard’s translations seem aimed also at non-local readers – as implied by their publication on an Italian website and in a London-based journal respectively (Belli 2002-2008; Howard 2005), and because they seem broadly comprehensible to non-local readers.

4.5 Voices and signals

Poetry’s compact, multiplex nature means that even a few words can give a complex set of signals. Style and voice, however, communicate not “anything explicit, [but] a set of (sometimes fairly weak) implicatures” (Boase-Beier 2004, 29). Hence different readers – translators reading source poems, or target readers reading translations – can interpret the same voice differently (Pilkington 2000, 103-104). Moreover, translators have differing skills and preferences – regarding how far they can or want to write local vernacular, say. Hence they may offer a wide range of analogies for the same source voice.
Arguably, however, skilled poetry translators – like original poets – assume that readers will have Shelley’s ‘poetic faith’, the “willing suspension of disbelief” that allows a poem’s unreal world to be experienced as reality. This also allows translation readers to experience target-poem voices as if they are source-poem voices (Woodham, 2006, 406), where Scots or standard English becomes 19th-century Roman dialect, say. Yet, as Federici points out (2011, 15), offering a creative, non-normalised analogy for a regional source voice gives the translator “the same status as the author”. That is, both voices are heard by the reader, enabling both to have literary effects in the target culture.

4.6 Further research

Inevitably, this study raises further questions worth exploring in future research. Case studies of other ‘regional’ source poets would enrich our knowledge of how non-standard poetic voices are translated, and how these translations are read – especially if they gather target readers’ views, or explore the effects of poet-translators’ own poetic agendas, translator status, and power/familiarity relationships between source and target cultures.
Notes

1. Many thanks to Bill Herbert, Brian Holton, Federico Federici, Hanneke Jones, Laura Leonardo, two anonymous reviewers and the journal editor for their invaluable input into this article.
2. After doing the analysis, I found another translator, whose output fits a profile identified in this study.
3. ‘Wholly or mainly’ allows for a feature dominating an output without completely excluding its opposite – e.g., giving largely working-class signals, but with occasional formal words.
5. ‘We others’, i.e. ‘our-selves’: a key term in Trastevere Romans’ discourses of identity (Laura Leonardo, personal communication).
6. After Belli’s *Caino* (2007b, no. 184): “Ma cquer vede ch’Iddio sempre ar zu’ mèle / e a le su’ rape je sputava addosso, / e nnò ar latte e a le pecore d’Abbele, // […] e allora, amico mio, taija ch’è roso”.
8. *Cavoli* (‘cabbages’) figure in other sonnets by Belli, further justifying this analogy (anonymous reviewer’s comment).

References

Translating Dialects and Languages of Minorities, ed. by Federico M. Federici, 49-64. Berne: Peter Lang.


