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Abstract

Angelo Maria Ripellino and “his own” Mayakovsky’s *Lènin*

The article analyses the way Angelo Maria Ripellino translated in 1967 – fifty years after the October Revolution! – Vladimir Mayakovsky’s long poem *Lenin* for the Turin publishing house Giulio Einaudi.

Judging by the words spent by Ripellino in his *Preface* to the book and in a letter about *Lènin* he sent to one of the editors of Einaudi, Guido Davico Bonino, the translation appears to be an intriguing example of work carried out not as the personal choice of the translator, but as a gentlemen agreement between him and the publisher (a sort of *social’nyj zakaz*, a “social commitment” fulfilled by Ripellino, who at that time was known as the best interpreter of Russian poetry of the first part of the 20th century).

Despite this unfavourable circumstances and, consequently, a presumable low degree of congeniality between the translator and the translated one, Ripellino’s work is extremely interesting as it reveals an approach to poetic translating that is strikingly different from the masterful versions he made of Boris Pasternak’s (1957), Aleksandr Blok’s (1960) and, later, Velimir Khlebnikov’s (1968) poems, whose literary specificity was conveyed to the Italian reader mainly using a very flexible vers libre.

Translating *Lenin*, instead, Ripellino provided the text with a considerable number of rhymes, assonances, consonances and so forth (although the lexical units chosen for the translation not always match the register of the original). Ripellino took so much care of the formal features of Mayakovsky’s long poem that his translation can actually be considered a verbal product that has more to do with rhetoric than with politics (in a sense, the ideological content partly recedes into the background). In all likelihood, Ripellino thus wanted to draw the attention of the reader to Mayakovsky as a ‘revolutionary poet’ rather than to Mayakovsky as the ‘poet of the Revolution’.

Keywords: Angelo Maria Ripellino, Vladimir Majakovskij, Poetry translation, Reception of Russian literature in Italy.