

The Tempest in Italian Dialects

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Abstract

This essay aims at analysing a number of translations and adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* which make use of one or multiple Italian dialects. Examples include Eduardo De Filippo's 1984 Neapolitan translation, Davide Iodice's 1999 adaptation *La Tempesta. Dormiti, gallina, dormiti*, and Gianfranco Cabiddu's 2016 film *La stoffa dei sogni*. This is an attempt at considering these translations and adaptations within a complex and still understudied category which I would like to call 'dialect Shakespeare'. I will expose some of the sociocultural and ideological questions that are posed by this phenomenon which can consolidate, as well as complicate, one's sense of belonging to regional and national communities and interrogate cultural hegemony and authority, with dialect sometimes working as a cultural reagent, and other times serving the agenda of various political and cultural movements. *The Tempest* is a play that focuses on the power of language to control and define ownership and identity, and it makes sense that it has been chosen by many authors and directors as a testing ground to explore the dynamics between dialect(s) and the standard, dominant language.

KEYWORDS: *The Tempest*; dialect Shakespeare; Italian dialects; translation; adaptation; Eduardo De Filippo

1. Introduction

The multitude of stagings, translations, and adaptations of Shakespeare's works that make use of one or more Italian dialects which every year are produced across the Peninsula is a phenomenon that still remains understudied. No one knows when it actually started. I could not find any trace of it before the early twentieth century but it is possible to suggest that the flourishing development of local *filodrammatiche* (amateur dramatics) which characterised

the *fin de siècle* must have been a contributing factor, hand-in-hand with a certain reaction against the imposition of Italian (previously a literary idiom based on the Florentine of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio) as the standard language when the country became a unified political entity in 1871 (see Puppa 2007). Two of the earliest examples are Vittorio Betteloni's and Berto Barbarani's poetic rewritings of *Romeo and Juliet* in Veronese (*Zulieta e Romeo* and *Giulietta e Romeo*, both published in 1905), although their nature is much more that of an attempt at re-appropriation and prioritisation of the local tradition than an adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy,¹ unlike Goffredo Galliani's 1903 Bolognese play based on *The Taming of the Shrew*, entitled *La Taraghè(g)gna (The Stubborn One)*, staged multiple times at the Politeama Ariosto theatre in Reggio Emilia and the Teatro Principe Amedeo in Bologna.² On the other hand, the staging of dialect Shakespeare can be a messy as well as a more enduring process than one may expect: for example, Giulio Svetoni's 1933 parodic adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Il Castigamatti* (meaning both 'The Cudgel' and 'The Martinet'), written in Florentine vernacular, has been regularly staged since its composition and was translated into standard Italian in 1936 and into Bergamasco dialect in 1983. Guido Perale and Adriano Lami's adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* in Venetian starring Cesco Baseggio as Shylock premiered in Rome, at the Teatro Odescalchi, in 1927, but was then performed into the 1950s. A more recent instance is represented by Alessandro Serra's adaptation of *Macbeth* in Barbaricino dialect (that is, the variety spoken in the Barbagia area of central Sardinia), *Macbettu* (Compagnia TeatroPersona), which has proved an astounding success winning multiple awards, including the Premio Ubu in 2017 (Italy's most renowned prize for performing arts), the Grand Prix 'Golden Laurel Wreath Award' at the 58th MESS International Theatre Festival (Sarajevo, 2018), and

1 Barbarani's Veronese is also quoted in a section of Arturo Rossato's libretto of Riccardo Zandonai's opera *Giulietta e Romeo* (1921), a programmatically anti-Shakespearean work privileging the Italian sources of the story instead (see Bousquet 2011).

2 This is a contemporary reviewer's evaluation of Galliani's adaptation: "Shakespeare holds out against the translations, too, and even against dialect adaptations" (qtd in Lucchini 2006, 64).

Best Show at the Baltic Theatre Festival in Saint Petersburg (2021). These cultural products elicit many questions: why Shakespeare in dialect? Why Shakespeare in dialect today? Which and whose Shakespeare? Which dialects and for which sociocultural purposes?

In general, one can agree with Anna Maria Cimitile who writes that: “Such dialectal translations of Shakespeare aim to consolidate a sense of belonging to regional communities, raising questions of cultural authority that concern both Shakespeare and the regional dialect and culture appropriating it” (2021, 39). The aim of this essay is to analyse a number of translations and adaptations of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* which make use of one or more Italian dialects and consider the different functions and purposes such dialects can serve and exert.

2. Dialect(s) and Shakespeare: Questions

First of all, it is important to define what is meant here by ‘dialect Shakespeare’, and I feel that, when one considers this potentially elusive and chaotic phenomenon, I have to position myself. I am originally from Trentino, in the North-East of Italy, and my native language is, specifically, the variety of dialect spoken in the Alta Valsugana Valley. Both my parents speak Trentino dialect in their everyday life and I was first exposed to standard Italian mainly through the media and education in school. This means that, when I watch a theatre production or read a text written in Neapolitan or Pugliese, my understanding will be limited. However, this personal challenge can be useful in order to broach questions of intercommunication and accessibility when it comes to dialect Shakespeare.

It should be remembered that Italian dialects are *not* regional varieties of standard Italian: standard Italian is the institutionalised continuation of the Florentine variety of the Tuscan dialect,³ while the other dialects are the ‘siblings’ of that dialect. As experts of

3 It makes sense that the title page of the first published, full-length Italian translation of a Shakespeare play, Domenico Valentini’s *Il Giulio Cesare* (1756), reads: “*Tradotta dall’Inglese in Lingua Toscana*” (translated from English into the Tuscan language).

the field argue: “Italy holds especial treasures for linguists. There is probably no other area of Europe in which such a profusion of linguistic variation is concentrated into so small a geographical area” (Maiden and Parry 1997, 1). Since the Italian Peninsula is an antenna projected into the Mediterranean, it has experienced, from time immemorial, invasions and settlements of several civilisations and centuries of political fragmentation, and these factors have produced the dozens of local dialects spoken in the country. According to a 2017 survey carried out by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), 45,9% of the Italian population over 6 years of age still speaks mainly in Italian with their family; 32,2% both in Italian and in a regional dialect; 14% mainly in dialect. However, these data are changing quickly due to processes of rapid linguistic erosion: many dialects are facing extinction.

Dialect is often regarded as the language of affection and of the family, as well as the vehicle of a rich, although subaltern, literary and theatrical culture in its own right.⁴ It can serve as popular resistance against linguistic hegemony, *sensu* Antonio Gramsci, but is also a social class marker associating its speaker with ignorance and poverty. Dialect is a resource which has often been politicised by regional autonomist movements and/or romanticised as the mouthpiece of a kind of *Volksgeist* (consider, for instance, Luigi Bonaffini’s description of Neapolitan having a “happy tonality . . . expressing love for live” versus “the rather somber, melancholy sounds of Sicilian”, 1997, 285), but, generally speaking:

Dialect is posited . . . as the language of concreteness and difference, in direct opposition to the flat homogeneity of the language of TV and advertising, and therefore offers a greater potential for individual creativity. The strength of dialect, in fact, lies in its essential ‘otherness’, in its position of eccentricity with respect to the national language, in its different history, predominantly oral.
(279)

4 Fascism regarded dialects as detrimental to nationalism and as a potential vehicle of subversive messages, but even in the difficult climate of the 1930s, dialect theatre productions still constituted more than 11% of all productions (Ferrara 2004, 74).

There are dialects which can boast of long-lived theatrical traditions going back to the early modern period (see, for instance, Pietro Antonio Caracciolo's farces from Neapolitan in the 1510s through the 1530s; Ruzante's *mariazos* and pastorals written in Pavano, the rural dialect spoken around Padua; Carlo Maria Maggi's Milanese comedies in the second half of the seventeenth century, etc.). And, of course, *commedia dell'arte* made special use of dialects, associating masks with specific vernaculars (Arlecchino comes from Bergamo, Balanzone from Bologna, the Capitano from the South of Italy, etc.), creating a polyglot system made up of different argots, dialects, and foreign languages. Shakespeare may have known something about the array of dialects spoken in Renaissance Italy: we know that he probably read *A World of Words* by John Florio (see Elam 2008, 66-7), who wondered, in the dedicatory epistle: "How shall we, naie how may we ayme at the Venetian, at the Romane, at the Lombard, at the Neapolitane, at so manie, and so much differing Dialects, and Idiomies, as be used and spoken in Italie, besides the Florentine?", (1598, A4r; see Wyatt 2005, 227ff.). And in the following quotation from *Othello*, Shakespeare seems to know that Neapolitans speak in a different way from how other Italians speak (besides making a snide reference to syphilis which was also known as the Neapolitan disease): "Why, masters, have your instruments been in Naples, that they speak i' the nose, thus?" (3.1.3-4).⁵ Shakespeare must have been interested in such matters: in a number of plays, he used British regional varieties to portray and problematise power relations (see Blank 1996 and Massai 2020).

Staging a play in dialect always expresses an ideological positioning. As Pier Mario Vescovo puts it when discussing his translation into several dialects of the Veneto region of *The Taming of the Shrew* which premiered at the Roman Theatre of Verona in July 2009: "The translation of a play into a certain dialect . . . is a sort of 'cultural reagent'" (2014, 120)⁶ and enables the author to use the resources of a prosody and set of registers which are

5 All quotations from Shakespeare's works other than *The Tempest* refer to Shakespeare 2005. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Tempest* refer to Vaughan and Vaughan 2011.

6 All translations, unless otherwise stated, are mine.

different from those of the standard language. But when it comes to translating Shakespeare, unlike minor or extra-canonical authors, the ideological uses of dialect can become even more marked. Very often, productions of Shakespeare plays set in specific Italian cities will employ the local dialect: for instance, there have been various productions of *Much Ado About Nothing*, which is set in Messina, in Sicilian (the most famous one is Andrea Camilleri and Giuseppe Dipasquale's 2009 *Troppu trafficu ppi nenti*, staged in multiple locations in Sicily and at the Gigi Proietti Globe Theatre in Rome). But while comedies seem to be the genre most often resorted to for dialect productions, examples of tragedies are not few, as already seen.⁷ On the other hand, reviews of such productions seem to insistently repeat the same evaluations: most of them use phrases expressing surprise ("even a Shakespeare play" in dialect, Schiavina 2015) at this perceived mixture of "earthy culture" with "high motifs" (Surianello 2000), which would entail an engagement with the Bard denoting "a rebel spirit" (ibid.) by way of expressing a "primordial sound" (Francabandera and Scolari 2017) capable of harnessing the "realistic and empathic power" (Ciofini 2023) of dialect in order to enhance a sense of verisimilitude. More specifically, the use of multiple dialects in Shakespeare productions has attracted critical attention. For instance, in the case of the Taviani brothers' 2012 *Cesare deve morire* (*Caesar must die*), a mock documentary of a 'prison Shakespeare' staging of *Julius Caesar* shot in the Rebibbia prison of Rome, the interns who act the Shakespearean roles were allowed to use their native dialects. As Maurizio Calbi argues, such a mix of languages can elicit different responses. Most Italians have watched *Cesare deve morire* with subtitles and the dialects

continually shift from more formal to less formal registers; they refract and 'rewrite' each other in a kind of Bakhtinian heteroglossia. In fact, they displace not only the English 'original' but also 'standard' Italian translations of the play. In short, the

⁷ As for the romances, I have been unable to find examples of dialect productions of any except for *The Tempest*, although in the 2010-11 production of *The Winter's Tale* of Teatro dell'Elfo (Milan), which toured all across the country, the Gentlemen of 5.2 were replaced by gossipy servants, chefs, and lackeys who spoke in several different dialects.

‘Shakespeare’ they embody may be said to be a ‘Shakespeare-in-translation’, a ‘Shakespeare’ that remains in translation. (2014, 240-1)

Dialect Shakespeare can thus foreground processes of inter- and intralingual comprehension, communication, and inclusivity. Let us now turn to productions and adaptations of *The Tempest* making use of dialect.

3. Neapolitan *Tempests* and Occasional Uses of Other Dialects

When taking into consideration the history of dialect Shakespeare, it seems natural to imagine that there have been several productions and adaptations of *The Tempest* making use of the dialects which would be spoken by the characters in real life: Neapolitan (the ship’s crew, King Alonso, Sebastian, Ferdinand, Gonzalo, Adrian, Francisco, Trinculo, and Stephano) and Milanese (Antonio, Prospero and Miranda, and perhaps Caliban, since his master and mistress “took pains to make [him] speak”, 1.2.355). This has indeed often been the case, although, of course, such a decision erases the Anglocentric perspective of the play and, even disregarding the fictional nature of the text, is incorrect from a historical point of view: the ruling class of Milan in the Renaissance would speak French, Castilian and even German, besides Italian (the city was a French dominion from 1499 to 1529, with some intermissions, and since 1535 had come under the control of the Habsburg Empire), while the rulers of Naples in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would speak a mixture of Neapolitan, Castilian, and Catalan (besides French – the Capetan House of Anjou ruled Naples from 1266 to 1442). However, many Neapolitans have felt a profound connection with *The Tempest* and the most interesting productions and adaptations in dialect of the play are indeed Neapolitan.⁸ Benedetto Croce (who was originally

⁸ Naples was one of the first cities in Italy which welcomed Shakespeare’s reception (see Piazza and Spera 2020), and proof of such enduring popularity is Ruggero Cappuccio’s play *Shakespea Re di Napoli* (1994), regularly produced in recent years (for instance, at the Teatro Franco Parenti, Milan, in 2020, starring Claudio Di Palma and Ciro Damiano) which imagines that Shakespeare himself visited Naples, fell in love with Desiderio, a local young man, taking him back to England and making him the secret dedicatee of his Sonnets.

from Abruzzo but spent most of his life in Naples) even tried to prove that the name Trinculo, usually thought to derive from the verb *trincare*, to swill down, actually comes from a Neapolitan street cry:

It is likely that Trinculo's name and country were suggested [to him] either by the performances of wandering players or by reading comedies featuring the character of the funny Neapolitan. *Tringole e mingale, chi accatta lazze e spingale* [approx. 'trinkets and knick-knacks, who wants to get some strings and brooches?'] is the cry of those who sell gewgaws and women's jewels. (1911, 303n2)

On the other hand, there have also been *Tempests* in other dialects: for instance, one in Palermitan (a translation by Franco Scaldati, staged at the Cantieri Culturali della Ziza and at the Teatro Biondo in Palermo, 1998, directed by Cherif), an adaptation mixing Milanese and Neapolitan (*Viaggio, naufragio e nozze di Ferdinando principe di Napoli* by Carlo Presotto, Real Albergo dei Poveri, Naples, 2008), and one partly in Sicilian and Neapolitan (Roberto Andò, Teatro Biondo, Palermo, 2019).

A typical situation is to have the characters representing the lower classes to speak in dialect. For example, in Ferdinando Bruni and Francesco Frongia's production of *The Tempest* at the Teatro dell'Elfo (Milan, in 2005 and 2019), Stephano and Trinculo speak in Salentino (a Pugliese dialect), a deliberate choice on the part of Bruni, who, as Prospero, gave voice to all the characters which were literal puppets in his hands. Already in Giorgio Strehler's landmark productions (Giardini di Boboli, Florence, 1948; Piccolo Teatro, Milan, 1977-1978), Trinculo was a Pulcinella figure (the Neapolitan *commedia dell'arte* mask *par excellence*) while Stephano channelled Arlecchino and Brighella (the two masks of servants from Bergamo). Such a choice was not praised by Salvatore Quasimodo (who would be awarded the Nobel prize in Literature eleven years later), whose Italian translation had otherwise been used by Strehler for the 1948 production.⁹ Quasimodo commented: such linguistic choices

⁹ Strehler used Agostino Lombardo's translation for the 1978 production instead. Trinculo and Stephano spoke in Neapolitan also in Giacomo Colli's 1960 production of *The Tempest* at the Giardini di Palazzo Reale in Turin,

have diminished Caliban's humanity . . . Sometimes, Caliban, placed between those two drunken devils speaking in argot, could barely pierce through the clownish air hovering over his wretched figure; he became a melancholy fool. Some of his words seemed 'literary' compared to the others' dialectal violence. (1948, 14)

Similarly, in Alessandro Serra's 2022 production,¹⁰ Caliban, played by the only Black actor of the company, spoke in standard Italian (the language used by Prospero and Miranda), although clearly not a native speaker, as well as, quite surprisingly, English, at the end of the play, when he was forced to perform, wearing a tuxedo, in a sort of freak show managed by Trinculo and Stephano and regretted "tak[ing] this drunkard for a god, / And worship this dull fool" (5.1.297-8), while the Trinculo actor mixed Pugliese dialect with standard Italian and Stefano mainly spoke in heavy Neapolitan. In similar cases, dialect is more than a residual trace of *commedia dell'arte* aimed at inviting spectators to relate to the characters, besides being a social marker of ignorance and poverty. Caliban speaking English was not an extraneous bravura speech: there was only one other character speaking in English in that production: Ariel, who sang *Full Fathom Five*. Caliban's RP English speech aligned him with Prospero's other servant, besides exploding questions of colonialism and imperialism: when and under which circumstances has Caliban learned to speak that language? In the next section, we will see what happens instead when Caliban himself is made to speak in dialect.

The prime example of a Neapolitan adaptation of *The Tempest* (and the most studied one)¹¹ is Eduardo De Filippo's, which he wrote at the very end of his career, and never saw staged, because he died before it premiered at the Teatro Goldoni of Venice on 4 October 1985. De Filippo had been commissioned by one of Italy's leading publishers, Giulio Einaudi, to produce a Neapolitan translation for the series *Scrittori tradotti da scrittori* (*Authors translated by authors*), but

which otherwise used Quasimodo's translation.

10 I warmly thank Alessandro Serra for sending me the script of his production, which I saw performed at the Teatro Sociale of Trento on 22 January 2023.

11 See for example Lombardo 2004; Tomaiuolo 2007; and Nigri 2013.

the dramatist had been interested in writing it for decades, because Shakespeare's play reminded him of the seventeenth-century *féeries* which had been revived in Naples in the 1920s and in which he had performed as a young actor (De Filippo 1984a, 185). From the start, De Filippo had envisaged his *Tempest* as a puppet show, in which all characters were voiced by himself (his recordings are extant), except for Miranda. The play was first translated *verbatim* into standard Italian by his wife, the author and critic Isabella Quarantotti, then he put it in verse and made the very interesting choice of translating it not into contemporary Neapolitan, but into the Neapolitan of the seventeenth century (that of Giambattista Basile, for instance) "as a person living today can write it" (187):

How beautiful this ancient Neapolitan is! It is so 'Latin', with its paroxytone words, not oxytone, with all its musicality, its sweetness, its exceptional ductility, and with the ability to animate magical and mysterious facts and creatures, which no modern language has retained! (Ibid.)

Not surprisingly, De Filippo identified himself with Prospero and believed that language has the power to reanimate the past and change the world like magic. When he presented his translation at Sapienza University of Rome on 29 May 1984 (De Filippo 1984b), he stated that he wanted to "serve the world's greatest poet" who "had chosen his words well", and that what he needed to do was simply to apply "la tavolozza napoletana" ("the Neapolitan palette"). In his afterword, he clarifies the process:

I have tried to be as faithful to the text as possible . . . I haven't always succeeded. Sometimes, especially in the comical scenes, the actor in me rebelled against puns which time has made meaningless: then I have changed them; other times, I felt the need to add some lines to better explain to myself and to the audience some concept. (1984a, 186)

It is not just a question of a different lexical level,¹² but of cultural discourse. De Filippo's Ariel is a *scugnizzo* (an underprivileged,

¹² Einaudi's anxiety that the published translation would not sell may have motivated the insertion of several footnotes.

Neapolitan street urchin trying to scrape a living): “Ariel maintains his impish and poetical character, but it felt natural to me to make him occasionally behave like a sly and waggish *scugnizzo*” (187). And, as Saverio Tomaiuolo notes, “[a]mong the culture-bound references De Filippo includes in his peculiar translation, the most important one is the typically Neapolitan concept of the “family” as the moral and ideological centre of society” (2007, 122).

There are numerous examples of domestication which become evident already from the start. When translating the Boatswain’s cry “Heigh, my hearts; cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! Yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the master’s whistle! Blow till thou burst thy wind, if room enough” (1.1.5-8), De Filippo adds a reference to the Madonna della Catena (lit., of the Chain, i.e. the liberator): “Facivete curaggio: a’ Maronna a’ Catena nce aiuta” (5, “Take courage, the Madonna della Catena is going to help us”). Moreover, the Boatswain is made to shout a cry of encouragement that leaves no doubt where these characters come from: “Guagliú, facímmece annòre: simmo Napulitane!” (ibid., “Guys, let’s defend our honour: we’re Neapolitans!”), to which all the sailors answer in chorus, “Símmo Napulitane!” (“We’re Neapolitans!”). An allusion to San Gennaro, Naples’ revered patron saint, could not possibly be missing. In Shakespeare’s text, Gonzalo tries to comfort the king with these words:

Beseech you, sir, be merry. You have cause
 (So have we all) of joy, for our escape
 Is much beyond our loss. Our hint of woe
 Is common . . .
 (2.1.1-4)

And this is how Eduardo De Filippo renders them:

Majestà, si ve lu ddico,
 è pe’ lu bene vuosto:
 ccà nuje, cumpreso voi,
 dobbiamo rummanere addenucciate
 nu pare d’anne,
 e forse forse cchiúne,
 nnanz’a a lu protettore

San Gennaro,
ca 'nce ha fatto la grazia.
(1984a, 64)

[Your majesty, if I say this to you / It's for your own sake: / Here, we all, you included, / Should kneel and stay so / For a couple of years, / And perhaps even longer, / Before our protector, / San Gennaro, / Who has bestowed his grace upon us.]

Similarly, Prospero portrays Sycorax as a *janara*, one of the witches traditionally said to haunt the city of Benevento, taking shelter from the storm “sott’a n’albero ‘e noce ‘e Beneviento” (38, “under a walnut tree in Benevento”), while the air which Adrian describes as “breath[ing] upon us here most sweetly” (2.1.49) becomes “doce cumm’a na caramella” (67, “as sweet as candy”), which prompts Antonio to protest: “Meglio na sfogliatella o nu babà!” (“I’d much rather have a *sfogliatella* or a *babà*”, typical Neapolitan sweets). Even the geography of the island changes. While Shakespeare’s Ariel says that he has left Ferdinand “in an odd angle of the isle” “cooling of the air with sighs” (1.2.223, 222), De Filippo’s evokes Capri’s Blue Grotto, explaining that “Don Ferdinandino” is lying in

. . . lu posto cchiù bello ‘e tutta l’isola:
sott’a la grutticella blu zaffiro
addò ce trase ‘o sole e lu sospiro
d’ostriche, fasulare e lattarule. S’è sdraiato
‘ncopp’a a nu matarazzo d’erb’ ‘e mare.
(33-4)

[. . . the fairest place of all the island, / Under the little sapphire-blue cave / Where the sun and the outbreaths enter / Of oysters, big clams and mussels. He’s lying / On a mattress of seagrass.]

De Filippo probably decided to accept Einaudi’s proposal not just because he had a life-long interest in the play, but because he was fully aware of the phenomenon of linguistic erosion. He saw dialect theatre as a testament to cultural vulnerability, as he wrote as early as 1939:

We know very well that the dialect will disappear . . . my [siblings] and I will play for only a few years, because dialectal elements are

disappearing day by day. And it is thinking about this epilogue that I am more and more convinced that we need to print dialect plays. Not everything in them deserves to sink into oblivion. There are types, characters, moods and feelings ... [that] represent a living document in the history of custom. Posterity will be very interested in learning and studying them, especially to understand on what generous and fertile soil the new climate that reshapes the Italian life could plant its roots. (Qtd in Segnini 2017, 6)

What can the effect be on the spectators of watching a production of De Filippo's *Tempest*? Lucia Nigri argues that this translation is

a 'domesticated Shakespeare', but in a way that 'foreignises' the text to audiences who do not speak the dialect as well as to those who speak only the contemporary dialect and are bound to perceive different rhythms or lexical choices with a defamiliarizing effect making for 'otherness'. (2013, 106-7)

Indeed, defamiliarisation does not equal obscurity: it can make the spectator more interested in the action on stage. And yet, it is interesting to consider why productions in Milan, Venice, and Rome have been successful. There are many factors to be taken into account (besides bardolatrous ideas of Shakespeare's universality). It certainly helps that some spectators are already familiar with *The Tempest* before going to see De Filippo's play and the fact that De Filippo is a most prestigious dramatist in his own right has contributed to ensuring a good reception. Moreover, the non-verbal, visual dimension of puppetry surely helps to communicate information to people who neither speak Neapolitan nor understand seventeenth-century archaisms.

The road taken by Eduardo De Filippo with his translation lies behind later stage adaptations of *The Tempest* in Neapolitan:¹³ for example, Davide Iodice's 1999 *La Tempesta. Dormiti, gallina, dormiti* (*The Tempest. Sleep, chicken, sleep!*), which was awarded

13 And not just in Naples: Glauco Mauri's 1995 production which premiered at the Roman Theatre in Verona used Dario del Corno's Italian translation but employed De Filippo's for the exchanges between Stephano and Trinculo.

the Premio Ubu as well as the Premio Teatro a Napoli (2000).¹⁴ Iodice was inspired by Vicenzo o' Pazzo, a figure who haunted his childhood: a poor, Neapolitan *sceneggiata*¹⁵ comedian whose main trick was that of hypnotising chickens (something that Ariel tries to accomplish in this play). This adaptation is meant to be a “tradimento votivo” (“votive betrayal”, qtd in Sorge 2019-2020, 159) of De Filippo’s translation: a homage to the earlier translation but one that constitutes a rewriting in “napoletano basso”, the sociolect of the Neapolitan underclasses. It is an adaptation played by old and tawdry *sceneggiata* actors in which the fourth wall is repeatedly broken. The aim is to further domesticate Shakespeare’s play, turning it into prose and infusing it with Neapolitan popular songs and music, and touches of everyday life, making it much closer to the intended addressees than, Iodice argues, De Filippo’s archaic language. In fact, from my personal point of view as someone coming from Trentino, I have found De Filippo’s text much more accessible than the script of Iodice’s play, and not just in terms of vocabulary, but of the cultural references which are immediately clear to Neapolitans only.

In *Dormiti, gallina, dormiti*, Miranda and Ferdinand speak in standard Italian (perhaps because they represent the new, ‘modern’ generation), while the other characters speak most of the time in Neapolitan, with interesting alternations. For instance, dialect can be employed for comic effect. When Gonzalo, rather sanctimoniously, says to Antonio and Sebastian in Italian, “Ridete, e abbracciatevi pure al vostro fasullo potere” (“Go on, laugh, cling to your fake power”), the other two reply in chorus, in dialect, punning on “fasullo” (fake) which sounds a bit like “fasule” (beans): “E’ [sic] fasule! Comme ’e vuò, a zuppa o che pacchere?” (2.1, “Beans! How

¹⁴ Director: Davide Iodice; text: Silvestro Sentiero; music: Nino D’Angelo. I thank Davide Iodice for providing me with the script of the play and additional materials (pictures of his notebook and sketches). The pages of the script are not numbered. Besides in Naples, *Dormiti, gallina, dormiti* was performed all over the Peninsula, including in Rome, Volterra, Trento, Matera, Potenza, and Cagliari.

¹⁵ *Sceneggiate* are the Neapolitan popular spectacle *par excellence*, in which music accompanies short theatre performances that take their cue exactly from a song which constitutes the emotional core of the show.

would you like them, in your soup or with your *paccheri*?” – a type of pasta). The adaptation is domesticated also when it comes to non-verbal components. For instance, in 3.2, one finds the stage direction “*Calibano porta sulle spalle Stefano come un dio pagano (o un S. Gennaro)*” (“Caliban carries Stephano on his shoulders like a heathen god or a San Gennaro”). But by virtue of the deliberate lowering of the register chosen by the director, Prospero’s plea in the Epilogue (“Now my charms are all o’erthrown”, 1ff.) acquires an ever louder note of desperation:

Ogni tarantella è fernuta . . . Me specchio d’into o munne e me sento scunsulato e sulo, nu pover’ommo. Pe tant’anni abbandonate n’coppa a stu piezze e terra sperduto aggia fatte o calle a nustalgia. Pe piacere, mo ca e prete a dint’e e scarpe me l’aggia luvate a una a una, purtateme a Napule! Me fa male o’ stomaco . . . Me crevevo e essere filosofo, me pensavo e sapè campà, invece n’ cocchio ancora cu a capa e tengo a nziria e nu creaturo . . .

[Now my tarantellas are all over . . . I look at my reflection in the world and I feel disconsolate and alone, a poor man. Stranded for many years on this remote piece of land, I’ve got callously used to homesickness. Please, now that I’ve removed the pebbles from my shoe, one by one, bring me to Naples! My stomach hurts . . . I believed I was a philosopher, I thought I knew how to live, and instead I still stubbornly fixate on the same things and have a child’s exasperating disposition to whims . . .]

4. *The Tempest*, Dialect, and the Primordial

The last adaptation of *The Tempest* making use of dialect I would like to discuss in this essay is *La stoffa dei sogni (The Stuff of Dreams)*, a 2016 film directed by Gianfranco Cabiddu produced in Italy and France. It is loosely based on De Filippo’s 1964 play *L’arte della commedia*, features excerpts from his translation of *The Tempest* and plays with it on multiple levels. In *L’arte della commedia*, a company of actors remains blocked in a small town in Abruzzo after the designated place for their performance catches fire. The theatre company lead has an argument with the freshly arrived, new prefect

who issues an expulsion order. The actor steals the list of the people who have scheduled a hearing with the prefect who will now have to understand whether the people who appear in front of him are real citizens or the actors pretending to be them: the lead calls his colleagues not Pirandellian “personaggi in cerca di autore ma attori in cerca di autorità” (De Filippo 1995, 267, “characters in search of an author, but actors in search of authority”). Cabiddu’s film takes this basic plot and grafts Shakespeare’s and De Filippo’s *Tempests* onto it.

The film is set after World War One and opens with the wreck of a ship carrying four dangerous *camorristi* to the prison of the Asinara, a small island off the western coast of Sardinia, as well as a few members of a modest theatre company, also from Campania, who were the captain’s guests. During the storm, the captain is shot by one of the criminals but everyone ends up in the sea and reaches the shore. The boss of the *camorristi*, Don Vincenzo, is desperate because he thinks he has lost his son, who, instead, is found by Miranda, the daughter of the prison warden (and the two youngsters inevitably fall in love). The *camorristi* threaten the actors: they must not reveal their identity. The warden needs to tell apart the actors from the *camorristi* and asks them to put on a production of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*. The actors try to teach the convicts the lines in Italian, but soon the boss understands that this will not be feasible: his fellows find the Italian translation of the play difficult to follow and also try to improvise, which is something that infuriates Campese, the leader of the company, who says that Shakespeare “è una specie di Vangelo” (“is like a kind of Gospel”). That night, Don Vincenzo goes to Campese and says:

DON VINCENZO Alzatevi. Abbiamo a riscrivere il copione.

CAMPESE O’ copione? E che c’azzecca o’ copione?

DON VINCENZO Noi recitiamo ’na schifezza perché non sono parole nostre. Dobbiamo parlare più naturale.

CAMPESE Ma che volete fare, il mestiere che facc’io? Questo è Shakespeare. Ch’ammo a fa’, ’a sceneggiata?

DON VINCENZO . . . Io non voglio fare il buffone per nessuno . . .
 . Questo Shakespeare, se capisce ch’è persona intelligente. E quindi non s’offenderà se gli cambiamo la scorza delle cose.¹⁶

16 The script was authored by Gianfranco Cabiddu, Ugo Chiti, and

[DON VINCENZO Get up. We need to rewrite the script. / CAMPESE The script? What do you mean ‘the script’? / DON VINCENZO We are acting lousily because these are not our words. We need to speak more naturally. / CAMPESE Do you want to do my job? This is Shakespeare. What do you want us to do, put on a *sceneggiata*? / DON VINCENZO I don’t want to be anyone’s fool . . . This Shakespeare – it is clear he’s a smart person. So he won’t get offended if we change the rind of his things.]

The effect of this exchange is slightly paradoxical. The actor playing Don Vincenzo (Renato Carpentieri) speaks in Italian, although with a few shifts into light dialect, and his speech is marked by a cadence and pronunciation typical of Campania. It is Campese (played by Sergio Rubini) who uses many more dialectal forms, at the same time that he resists tampering with what he perceives as the sacredness of the standard Italian translation of *The Tempest* he would like to use. The result of their discussion is that Campese translates the play in dialect (which turns out to be actually De Filippo’s Neapolitan translation), and the spectators must suspend their disbelief in believing that the *camorristi* really find De Filippo’s archaic translation closer to their world than the text in standard Italian with which they initially had to deal with.

The film plays with *The Tempest* on multiple levels: the warden is the Prospero figure, of course, Don Vincenzo’s son is Ferdinand, etc., but I would like to concentrate on the Caliban figure. Two of the *cammorristi* end up attacking Antioco, an illiterate shepherd who lives on his own with his goats, Polyphemus-like. He manages to defend himself and imprisons them in his shed (to later free them and offer them the alcohol he receives from one of the guards in exchange of cheese). It is clear that the shepherd feels lonely and seeks contact and companionship with all these people who have come to live on, and change, the island the nature of which he knows in every detail. Antioco has been described as “an archaic Caliban . . . Cabiddu expresses in this character . . . all the pain felt over the violation of his land” (Casella 2016); “the prototype of a Sardinian shepherd who perhaps no longer exists, but who still lives on in the thousand-year-old memory of the islanders”

(Giraldi 2016). Reviewers have written that “he expresses himself in a language he alone understands” (Casella 2016). But his is not a made-up idiom (one could say “’tis new, or obscure, to thee”): as Sardinians point out, Antioco rigorously speaks *limba*, i.e. the local language. Cabiddu himself has stated in an interview:

The actor who plays Antioco the shepherd speaks in heavy Sardinian. He understands his condition by recognising his own reflection in the theatre. It is exactly by realising this, and consequently, learning the culture [*imparando la cultura*], that one understands one’s own situation . . . When he whistles and makes those natural noises,¹⁷ one feels exactly as if nature were calling you and that beauty can be something that can be felt by the simplest people. We can say it’s a message of hope. I needed poetry: there’s a pain in his difficulty in communication, and when he understands the instruments of theatre it’s as if he wanted to fit in. (Donato 2016)

These pronouncements reveal the contradictions in the film. By watching the play and empathising with Caliban, Antioco “impar[a] la cultura”: but whose culture does he learn? The one imposed by those who have invaded the world he has known his whole life? Was Antioco’s own culture not enough? Is he, as a Sardinian, really able to understand De Filippo’s Neapolitan or would he have preferred a text in Italian? No one has asked him that, he remains an outsider on the island where he has spent his whole life. If the director were not from Sardinia, the portrayal of Antioco could be seen as very problematic, as it risks rehashing the stereotype of the wild Sardinian in a portrayal that merges brutishness with the *noble savage* myth. One of the big issues when dialect is romanticised is that, at best, one embraces dialect as the mouthpiece of a ‘primordial’ counter-culture which has been censured as non-culture, while, at worst, dialect becomes the language of a group of yahoos. Cabiddu’s nostalgia of a world that has been destroyed by capitalism and the tourism industry appears genuine, but this is a

¹⁷ This refers to a moment in the film when the actors, immediately after the “The isle is full of noises” speech, try to recreate the sounds of various animals, but they are bested by Antioco who stands up and manages to perfectly imitate the sound of birds.

tricky territory to navigate. In Serra's *Macbettu*, for example, the misery and brutality of the ancestral world in which the characters live are addressed and explored and folklore is not introduced as an end in itself, despite the intention of seeing the themes of *Macbeth* from a universalising perspective.

In conclusion, the translations and adaptations of *The Tempest*, given their sheer number, provide a fruitful case study to explore the inherent sociocultural implications and ideological issues of the extremely varied phenomenon that is dialect Shakespeare. These cultural products have been interpreted from the point of view of the dynamics between hegemonic and subaltern cultures and show how Shakespeare's play has proved an ideal vehicle for such interrogations.

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