The Voice(s) of *The Tempest(s)*—Listening to the Translator’s Voice on Stage

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“Hast thou, spirit,
Perform’d to point the tempest that I bade thee?”

1 This article investigates the role of voice in translated theatre through an analysis of two rewritings / translations of William Shakespeare’s The Tempest (1611): the postcolonial rewriting by Aimé Césaire, Une Tempête (1969), and Eduardo De Filippo’s translation into seventeenth-century Neapolitan dialect, La Tempesta (1984).

2 The opening section will serve as an introduction to an understanding of translation as performance, and of the translator as a performer. An exploration of the role of voice in these two practices links them closely, and illuminates the possibility they share of voicing the text anew. The two texts analyzed demonstrate that the border between rewriting and translation is a very fluid one; not only can translation be seen as rewriting, but rewriting has also been widely influenced by translation. In the central part of the article, after analyzing the role of voice and language in Shakespeare’s original Tempest, I will address the transformation of the characters’ voices in Césaire’s and De Filippo’s works.

3 These considerations will bring us to a better understanding of the movement of these characters, voices and works between languages and performances. This movement offers the reader a richer text, informed by the very complex patterns of meaning constructed by its “refractions” of the original text, a term used by Lefevere to define both translations and rewritings.
Voice, Translation and Performance

Translation as performance

Scholars and practitioners of theatre have long agreed that performance and drama can be considered as a form of translation. However, translation itself can and should also be considered as a performance, since it functions, like any performance, as an interpretation of a text.

Performance is also an ambiguous term, which Schechner defines as “the domain of the audience” (2003 [1988]: 70), clearly stating the fundamental relationship between the process of performance and the audience, whose role is far from passive. As Anne Ubersfeld writes in Reading Theatre: “any message received by one spectator is refracted (upon fellow spectators), echoed, taken up, and sent off again in a very complex exchange. [...] it is the spectators, much more than the director, who create the spectacle” (1999: 23). These echoes and refractions are what draws translation very close to performance, as the role of a translation is also to enable the original text to move further and engender more refractions, to engage in a fruitful exchange, constructing the original while being constructed by it at the same time.

Another reason why translation can and should be considered as a performance is that the actor uses his own voice to perform the text and bring it onto the stage, just as the translator uses his own voice to perform the original text in a new language. Of course these voices are different in status, as one is the physical instrument of the actor, and the other operates mostly as a metaphor to define a translator’s (or an author’s) style, but if we follow Cecilia Alvstad’s notion that “the idea of voice(s) in translation is intimately linked to translation being reported speech” (2013: 207), we will see that these two different conceptions of voice can actually merge in the translation of drama. Here, the translator’s voice is also, and above all, a physical voice: the one the translator gives the actor to perform the text on stage. We also know that “the theatrical text is present within performance in its form as voice, as phonè. It has a two fold existence: first it precedes performance, then it accompanies it” (Ubersfeld, 1999: 8). The text is therefore a voice, and one which can not only be read, but also heard.

This idea of accompanying performance is crucial for the role of translation as well, since this process can accompany both the work and the audience on a long journey of re-discovery of the text. Ubersfeld, commenting upon the “particular practice or treatment of the text” (ibid.: 10) that performance must effect, writes:

If there is loss of information in the shift from text to performance (sometimes an entire part of the textual poetics is difficult to perform), there is on the other hand an increase in information to the extent that many of the performance signs can form autonomous systems [...] that have no equivalent in the totality of the textual signs. (ibid.: 17)

This is once again valid both for performance and translation, which share the same possibility of producing both a loss of information and an increase in information. The inevitable changes, the shifts or sways that happen in translation, are not much different from what happens in any performance in the original language: the new voice, that of the actor or that of the translator, can give the original text new and unpredictable meanings, and just as no translation is ever identical to the original, nor to any other
translation (even if by the same translator), no performance is ever the same (even if by
the same actor). Day after day, night after night, the actor delivers the same words on
stage, but the performance can change drastically depending on countless factors,
including “the physical surroundings of performance”, which are fundamental for the
choice of a translation strategy, and “never act as a totally neutral filter or frame. [For]
they are themselves always culturally encoded and have always [...] contributed to the
perception of performance” (Carlson, 1993 [1989]: 206).

What translation does, just like acting, is to unlock all the possibilities of the text.
Translation is “potentially a prism that releases, that fires off in different directions a
series of intercultural and intertemporal moments that challenge and enrich spectator
reception and experience”, as Johnston reminds us (2009: 64). A prism is perhaps the best
image to represent translation, and it allows us to further elaborate on the concept of
refraction. Lefevere defines refraction as “the adaptation of a work of literature to a
different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience
reads the work”, and he has also stated that these refractions “have always been with us
in literature” (2000 [1982]: 235). We can then easily speak of translation as a prism,
favouring the refraction of the original texts and their scattering, which engenders new
readings for these works. We, as translators, “bring into the auditorium a swirling
constellation of possibilities. And of course writing or directing (and therefore
translating) a play is about attempting to conjoin and coordinate this vast range of
possibilities” (Johnston, 2009: 66).

A last characteristic these two processes have in common is their secondary position in
respect to the original text. Translation has been historically submitted to the authority
of the original text, given the constant—and far from being forgotten—obsession with
faithfulness to the original. On the other hand, Marco De Marinis writes in his Semiotics of
Theatre that the theatre performance is also generally perceived as “secondary and
derived (literally) from the literary text” (1982: 27). Sirkku Aaltonen also highlights that
“both the translation and the performance are seen to need the authorisation of their
source texts which always enjoy a superior status to its manifestations” (2010: 109).
Although this is not always the case, it is undeniable that the phantom of the original
haunts any performance which dares to detach itself from the tradition or, even worse,
from the written word of the author. Aaltonen further specifies that “the written source
text has been regarded as a self-contained entity whose meanings have been put there by
the author, whereas the work of a translator or a director has been turned into a hopeless
quest to try to uncover these meanings” (ibid.: 109).

These considerations would therefore shift both translation and performance to the
margins of the original, to a liminal position, which allows both of these practices to give
the play a new form, rather than transform it. Translation and performance, in fact, give
the original text a new voice, allowing the work to be seen and heard again on stage.

The Voice of the Translator

If translation is a performance, then the translator is a performer. The Italian writer
Cesare Garboli points out that “to translate is to act. Same attitude, same frame of mind
that leads one, institutionally, to play a part, to do theatre, to carnally breathe the life of
another. [...] And there is, finally, the genius translator: the great actor” (1990: 102). What
allows Garboli to build this parallel is the role of mediator that both actor and translator
share: the translator is the mediator between the original written text and the spectator, the one who voices the author’s text anew, just as the actor does to perform the text on stage. Alvstad clearly shows this while discussing the role of translation as reported speech:

Just as in other kinds of reported speech acts, the original text is filtered through an enunciating instance with power to alter and change everything in the original utterance. Though often unaware of this, readers of a translation do not have direct access to the voice of the author of the original. The voice that reaches the reader is the translator’s. (2013: 207)

For the spectator of a translated play, the voice is an even more complex entity, because it is the result of three voices combined: the actor’s voice, interpreting the translator’s voice, which is already an interpretation of the author’s voice. When we read Cecile Berry’s definition of voice—referring to the voice of the actor—, and think about the parallelism between the actor’s voice and the translator’s voice, we can easily forget that it is not a translator that Berry is writing about:

They want it to be accurate to their intention and to sound unforced. They want to know that they are carrying the listener with them [...]. The audience want to be let into the character, and [...] this will happen to a large extent through voice and speech. Above all, the voice needs to be interesting. [...] You know when you like someone’s voice, when it gives you pleasure and sounds right, but few people understand the complexity of what this “rightness” means. (2002: 810)

As difficult as it is to understand the complications involved in translating a text for performance, the same is true for the actor’s voice, which also needs to be interesting, give pleasure and sound right. This is something the audience or the reader will surely recognize, as Berry writes, although not all of them may fully understand why. Even more inspiring is her description of how the actor can find such a voice, thus fulfilling all the needs and the expectations of the spectators. This beautiful passage merits quotation in full:

The actor has to find his or her own entry into the truth of the character, while at the same time honouring the form of the writing, i.e. the imagery, the rhythm and the cadence in the language. This is a complex mix in that it involves both a subjective and an objective response to one’s own voice. Language therefore has to be practised in order that the actor feels the confidence and freedom to explore the possibilities of the text so that it can make the fullest impact on the hearer—for words are always active and can both inspire and provoke the listener. The actor and voice teacher must never underestimate the primitive delight people have when listening to language which is being fulfilled by the speaker; that pleasure must be preserved, and through that the intention and meaning of the text will be made inescapable. (ibid.: 812)

These words, dedicated to the actor’s voice, are probably the best possible description of the task of a translator, and of a translator for theatre in particular. They outline all the difficulties, and the risks, of this challenge, as well as the many possible positive outcomes of this process. And they remind both translators and actors that all they need to do is find a voice which gives delight and pleasure to the spectator, while respecting and honouring the form of the writing at the same time.
Rewriting as performance

If we consider translation as a performance, it is easy to see why the task of translating drama is particularly challenging, since the performance of the translated text becomes a performance of a performance. A double mediation occurs in the passage from the author to the spectator, which risks increasing the distance between the playwright and the audience. The corpus I will analyze further complicates the matter, as it adds another dimension, namely rewriting.

I consider rewriting a form of translation, following Lefevere’s suggestion that “translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting, and [...] potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or a (series of) work(s) in another culture, lifting that author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin” (1992: 9). This is also true for several other reasons: on the one hand, because it often implies an actual translation from the language of the original to the language of the rewriting, and because the rewriter functions as a mediator between the original text and its new reader; on the other hand, because the process of rewriting shares with translation and performance the same mechanisms I have described above; it functions as a refraction, as another ray of light emitted by the prism, broadening the possibilities of the original text. According to Schechner, “the drama is, by definition, that which can be passed on through successive sociocultural transformations. The original vision is tied to the original matrix, and decays with it” (2003 [1988]: 78). Rewriting, just like performance and translation, and perhaps to an even greater degree, is therefore what allows drama to live on, to avoid its own decay.

The works I will analyze in the following section can be considered as two different forms of theatrical rewriting: Aimé Césaire’s Une Tempête (1969) is a postcolonial rewriting, reinterpreting Shakespeare’s The Tempest with the intention of reconfiguring the power relationships on the island of Caliban and Prospero, “with a view to restructuring European ‘realities’ in post-colonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2002 [1989]: 32). Though this text is clearly more of a rewriting than a translation, translation does play a role here as well. Césaire, in fact, did not work on the original text by Shakespeare; a close reading of his Une Tempête shows that he often used long passages in French that he derived directly from François-Victor Hugo’s 1859 translation, rather than from Shakespeare’s original text, even though he was sufficiently proficient in English to read and work on the original version of the play.¹

Eduardo De Filippo’s La Tempesta (1984) is—at least apparently—an actual translation of Shakespeare’s play into Neapolitan, with no intention of modifying the text. Nevertheless, the process of translation resulted in what could be considered a form of rewriting. De Filippo does not translate directly from the original; in fact, as he explains in his Translator’s note: “my wife Isabella transposed literally into Italian the whole play, act by act, scene by scene, looking then in some of her English books the double and at times triple meaning of certain archaic words which did not persuade me” (1983: 187). Therefore he also worked on what is already a translation, which he then rewrote. As he admits in the same note, he did not always remain as close to the original as he had wished:
I tried to be as faithful as possible to the text, as I think one should be in translating, but I was not always able to do it. At times, especially in the comic scenes, the actor in me rebelled to wordplays by now deprived of meaning, so I changed them; other times I felt the need to add some lines to explain a concept better, to myself and to the audience [...]. Even the songs are different, more in the form than in substance. (ibid.: 186-187)

The border between rewriting and translation is therefore quite vague. Even though these two texts differ in their original intentions, they both offer new versions of the original work, which—as Julie Sanders suggests—give us “new cultural and aesthetic possibilities that stand alongside the texts which have inspired them, enriching rather than ‘robbing’ them” (2006: 41). I will now look at the way characters' voices are rendered or translated in these two works and the way the translation or rewriting of these voices has affected the characters; how it has changed them, and especially how it has changed our perception of them.

“The Isle is Full of Noises”

The Voice(s) of The Tempest(s)

To begin my analysis of the role of voice and language in these versions of The Tempest, the first voice I will focus on is Caliban’s in Shakespeare’s original work. Not only does Caliban speak, but as Kermode writes: “the idiolect that Shakespeare devised for Caliban has such depth and novelty that his representation of the peremptoriness, arrogance, and ill temper of Prospero seems shallow by comparison” (2000: 291). Significantly, Caliban first appears on stage only when Prospero invites him to speak: “Thou earth, thou! Speak.” (Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 29, I. ii. 316) His speech, however, and especially his own native language, is considered deprived of meaning, as Miranda’s enraged lines to Caliban show:

I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow’d thy purposes
With words that made them known.
(ibid.: 32-33, I. ii. 355-360).

Although what Miranda means with “thou didst not [...] / know thine own meaning” (ibid.: 32, I. ii. 357-358) is obviously that Caliban could not express himself, we cannot help but see behind her words the image of a Caliban deprived not only of language, but also of an identity, because of his ignorance of her language. To possess a language is to possess an identity, and power over one’s language is therefore the key to the possibility of being, of having an identity. One of the first rewritings of The Tempest, Ernest Renan’s Caliban, intended as a continuation of Shakespeare’s work, shows this very clearly in the first words Ariel addresses to Caliban:

Tu oublies que c’est par Prospero que tu es un homme, que tu existes.
[...] Tu ne savais le nom de rien ; tu ignorais ce que c’était que la raison. Ton langage inarticulé semblait le beuglement d’un chameau en mauvaise humeur. Les sons, s’étranglant dans ton gosier, étaient comme un effort infructueux pour vomir. Prospero t’apprit la langue des Aryas. Avec cette langue divine, la quantité de raison qui en est inséparable entra en toi.
Peu à peu, grâce au langage et à la raison, tes traits difformes ont pris quelque harmonie;

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tes doigts palmés se sont détachés les uns des autres; de poisson fétide, tu es devenu homme,
et maintenant tu parles presque comme un fils des Aryas. (1923 [1878]: 12-14)

Armando Gnisci describes Miranda, whose schoolmaster was her father Prospero, as a “maestrina” (2015: 158), a schoolmistress, who teaches Caliban English. She is a “scholar of colonial didactics, with a master’s degree and a Ph.D in linguistics in the Dukedom of Milan. Her didactics are sumptuous and miranda, admirable, but unlucky, because the student is a brute-monster”; “the linguistic disaster was predictable” (ibid.: 159-160). Miranda’s mistake is not recognizing that English is not Caliban’s mother tongue, but rather his master tongue, the one Prospero will use at first to “teach […] how / To name the bigger light, and how the less, / That burn by day and night” (Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 31, I. ii. 336-338), but later only to give him orders. In Gnisci’s words:

Miranda’s colonial didactics of languages […] instill in the savage the idea and the praxis of the superiority of the civilized European language, the only one which allows to translate the world and purposes in words and knowledge that can be shared, also through subjugation. […] “I endow’d thy purposes / With words that made them known”, in the logical sequence: purposes – words – self-knowledge – knowledge: excellent theory-praxis of the white European didactics of languages, when it civilizes the barbarians, the savages. Its aim is not freedom or the actual sharing of knowledge, but a servitude to the purposes, the words and the knowledge of the master. (2015: 158-159)

Ngũgĩ’s lines in Decolonising the Mind resound in Gnisci’s passage: “The domination of a people’s language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised.” (2004 [1986]: 16) Shakespeare’s Caliban appears to have understood this quite well, as his answer to both Miranda and Prospero shows: “you taught me language; and my profit on’t / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!” (1988 [1611]: 33, I. ii. 365-367) Caliban has in fact realized that “if language humanizes [him] to audiences in Shakespeare’s Tempest […] it is paradoxically language that simultaneously works to enslave him within the colonial system of the play” (McNary, 2010: 8-9). This paradox reveals that Caliban’s struggle for power in The Tempest is also, specifically, a struggle for language and the power over language.

“O Brave New World”

Césaire’s rewriting of The Tempest highlights and emphasises even further the importance of language and control over language. Caliban’s first and last word in Césaire’s Une Tempête, and the last word of the whole play, is freedom, echoing Prospero’s final line in Shakespeare: “Let your indulgence set me free” (1988 [1611]: 133, V. epilogue. 20). The new voice Césaire has found for Caliban is evident in the choice of the language for this word: while the latter occurrence is in French, Prospero’s language in Césaire’s work, the first occurrence is in fact in Swahili, “Uhuru!” (1969: 24). It is also a very politically charged term, since “Uhuru is the Kiswahili word for freedom which gained international currency during the struggles for decolonisation in the late 1950s and 1960s, not least the Mau Mau Rebellion” (Crispin, 2010: 146). Even though Césaire does not have his Caliban explain the meaning of the word on stage, as Crispin writes:

Even if audience members are ignorant of the meaning of this Kiswahili word, they will understand that it has a key galvanizing importance, that it is Caliban’s rallying cry and that its very foreignness underlines his sense of an autonomous cultural
“otherness”, dignity and agency so brazenly denied him by Prospero. It is a call to revolution. (ibid.: 150)

Césaire’s Caliban speaks a language free from any oppression or domination, and “Uhuru is essential to Césaire’s revisionary project because it gives Caliban a voice, specifically an African voice” (Almquist, 2006: 588), which Prospero considers as “une remontée de ton langage barbare” (Césaire, 1969: 24). Far from being barbaric, this language is the same one Ngũgĩ indicated instead of English as “an excellent candidate for the world language”, since Swahili has “created space for itself in Africa and the world without displaying any national aggrandisement” and “has no history of oppression or domination of other cultures” (1993: 41). Prospero’s reaction is easy to understand, if we see that the very utterance of this word “suggests that Caliban possesses knowledge beyond Prospero’s” (McNary, 2010: 13), and that it “has the function of subverting Prospero’s claim to a master’s absolute knowledge and presents a challenge to his control” (ibid.). Moreover, it shows Caliban’s “ability to conceptualize a world foreign to Prospero, a world not defined through Prospero’s authoritative lexicon” (Almquist, 2006: 604).

Césaire, therefore, is able to trace Caliban’s voice and let us hear it on stage. His reversal of linguistic and power relationships in the play, however, is not only apparent in this new language assigned to Caliban, but also in the impoverishment of Prospero’s own language, the most powerful tool of his magical empire. In the very last scene, just before Caliban’s concluding words in French, “LA LIBERTÉ OHÉ, LA LIBERTÉ” (1969: 92), Césaire writes that Prospero’s language is “appauvri et stéréotypé” [impoverished and stereotypical] (ibid.). The Duke’s choice to remain on the island, and his failed attempts to show Caliban that they share a common faith, render his last speech meaningless. Furthermore, the fact that this time Caliban pronounces the word freedom in French, rather than in Swahili, proves that he can now master his master’s tongue, that he has acquired the right to claim his freedom in that language, and that he has acquired power over that language, while his former master Prospero has lost it.

As I remarked in an article analyzing the English translation of Césaire’s rewriting by Richard Miller, these new voices for Caliban and Prospero are not always respected in Miller’s English translations (first published in 1986, then revised in 1992). I argued that: Césaire’s Caliban and Prospero in English seem to be closer to Shakespeare’s characters than what their new author had wanted them to be. Prospero appears less despotic, more comprehensive, and Caliban suffers an even deeper transformation. His speech loses power, and with his words, the voice of the colonized people given us by Césaire is also weakened. (Sofo, 2014: 27)

Miller chose a less authoritarian language for Prospero, and the translation of the passage I have just discussed, in which Prospero reacts to Caliban’s Uhuru, offers us a good example of this process. Césaire’s “Encore une remontée de ton langage barbare” (1969: 24) is initially translated by Miller as “Back to your native language again” (Césaire, 1986: 13) and then revised as “Mumbling your native language again!” (Césaire, 1992: 11). Though the revision shows that the translator has perceived the arrogance implied in Prospero’s reaction, “ton langage barbare” is rendered in both cases as “your native language”, a far less insulting formulation. Crispin’s translation of the same passage reads: “yet another return to your savage tongue” (Césaire, 2000: 19). In this case, as in many others, the English translation of Césaire’s rewriting gives us a more benevolent Prospero than the French original. In the French version, “we do not meet a benign and bookish old man; rather, we meet an old man who has been accumulating knowledge for profit” (Almquist,
2006: 596). As we will now see, however, Eduardo De Filippo also gives us a benevolent Prospero.

“Bound Home for Naples”

If Césaire gives back to Caliban his original language, De Filippo, in his translation, enables us to rediscover the language spoken in the Kingdom of Naples. In fact, the Italian playwright translates The Tempest into Neapolitan, but does not use the same language as in his own plays:

I have used the Neapolitan of the Seventeenth Century as an inspiration, but written as by a man of our days: [...] how beautiful is this ancient Neapolitan, so Latin, with its paroxytones, rather than oxytones, with its musicality, its sweetness, its exceptional ductility and with the possibility of bringing to life magical creatures and events, a possibility no modern language has anymore. (1983: 187)

This language incorporates “archaic terms” and “the formal procedures of the Neapolitan baroque [...] together with a theatre dialect” (Marotti, 2005: 144). Although De Filippo does not specify this in his Translator’s note, he has certainly not forgotten the main reason leading him to choose this language: Naples is not only part of The Tempest, its kingdom is at the centre of the whole play. The search for new lands to conquer brings Alonso, King of Naples, to Prospero’s island, to which the former Duke of Milan only arrives thanks to Gonzalo, “a noble Neapolitan” (Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 19, I. ii. 161). Prospero’s descendants will also be Neapolitan, since his only daughter Miranda will marry Ferdinand, prince of Naples and future king, and become “the Queen of Naples” (ibid.: 39, I. ii. 452). If Césaire has given us a new voice for Caliban, De Filippo uses the “Neapolitan palette” (De Filippo, 2014 [1984]) to let us hear on stage the language spoken in the kingdom of Alonso and Ferdinand, historically very close to the language spoken in Naples at the times of Shakespeare.

By bringing The Tempest back to Naples, De Filippo does nothing less than what Ariel had already suggested in Shakespeare’s original work, allowing the characters, and us readers, to set sail towards Naples: “They all have met again, / And are upon the Mediterranean flote, / Bound sadly home for Naples” (1988 [1611]: 25, I. ii. 233-235). Or, as De Filippo puts it in Neapolitan: “L’aggio mettute nzieme n’ata vota / e stanno velianno / pe’ lu Mediterraneo / verso Napule” (1984: 35).

Two more characters of Neapolitan descent are present in the original Tempest, the “two Neapolitans scap’d” (Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 66, II. ii. 114) Stephano’ and Trinculo. Benedetto Croce insists on the Neapolitan origin of the name Trinculo, from trincole, quoting the cry “trincole e mingole!” (Del Tufo, 1588, quoted in Croce, 1919: 260) used by a contemporary of Shakespeare, who assigns these words to “street sellers of knick-knacks and trinkets” (Croce, 1911 [1898]: 303). Mingole is defined in Andreoli’s dictionary of Neapolitan as “tiny and superfluous ornaments, Gimmicks, Knick-knacks, Gewgaws, Trinkets” (1887: 42). This is certainly not the only possibility, and the derivation from the verb trincare, “drink deeply” (Orgel in Shakespeare, 1987 [1611]: 145) seems much more likely, but Croce is more convincing when he discusses Stephano’s name. He explains that it stood in Neapolitan for “stomach, belly” (1919: 261), as in the expression “egerse (riempiresi) lo stefano [to fill one’s belly]” (ibid.), which would also justify the wordplay with “cramp” in the line “I am not Stephano, but a cramp” (Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 130, V. i. 286).
Croce goes even further, saying that Shakespeare “remembered in composing *The Tempest* [...] a *commedia* or a scenario realized by Neapolitan comedians” (1919: 260), in particular one indicated by Ferdinando Neri in his *Scenari delle Maschere in Arcadia*, in which it is quite easy to read a brief summary of several scenes in *The Tempest* played out by Pulcinella (or Pollicinella) and Coviello, two type characters of Neapolitan *commedia dell’arte*:

First scene. [...] Magician: the arrival of the foreigners; says they won’t leave against his will; [...] Stormy sea, with shipwrecked ship. *Pollicinella*, from the sea: above the passed tempest, the loss and shipwreck of masters and servants [...] *Coviello*, on the other side: the same as *Pollicinella*. They see each other, gags of fear [...] they realize they’re safe; they talk about the loss of the comrade and the master. (Neri, 1913: 87)

That Trinculo and Stephano can indeed be seen as *commedia dell’arte* type characters is quite evident, and the Italian director Giorgio Strehler (who worked with De Filippo) saw this clearly, and chose to represent Trinculo with Pulcinella, the same one we encountered in the *canovaccio*, and had him speak Neapolitan dialect on stage.

While De Filippo’s characters all speak Neapolitan, there is, moreover, a passage at the very beginning, on the first page of his play, in which both the boatswain and the mariners proclaim they are Neapolitans, to fill themselves with courage. Where Shakespeare simply had: “Heigh, my hearts! Cheerly, cheerly, my hearts! Yare, yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to th’ master’s whistle. Blow till thou burst thy wind, if room enough!” (1988 [1611]: 3-4, I. i. 5-8), De Filippo translates this passage, or rather rewrites it:

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NOSTROMO
Ammainate ‘a vela maestra e mantenite lèse. Appistrate li rrecchie pe’ lu sisco de lu Capitanio. Guagliú, facímece annòre: simmo Napulitane!
MARINAI (in coro) Símmo Napulitane!
NOSTROMO (al vento che soffia forte) Sciosciació! Puozza jettare lu sango, tu e la tempesta de chi t’è muorto?
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These new voices acquired by the characters have transformed their behaviour, just as we have seen in Césaire’s rewriting, and then once again in its translation into English.

If we read De Filippo’s *Translator’s note* we can see that he considers Shakespeare’s play to be filled with “tolerance, the benevolence which pervades the whole story” (1983: 186), and this is certainly apparent in his translation. De Filippo himself recognized that, in his text, Ariel sometimes behaves like a “*scugnizzo*” (ibid.: 187), a streetwise child from Naples, and Vanda Monaco strongly criticized De Filippo’s version precisely because of the changes in the relationships between the characters due to the translation: “It seems that Eduardo was unable to rise beyond the familiar sounds of the dialect and therefore lost the perception of the text to translate. Eduardo seems to only have in mind the language he is translating into and not the original text.” (1988: 39) The sounds of the target language have therefore become more important than the original written text and its explicit meanings. She adds that Shakespeare’s world was transformed into a “benevolent world in which laughter has the function of erasing and masking contradictions” (ibid.: 46).

Simonetta De Fillipis also signals a change in the relationship between the characters in De Filippo’s version, and she notes that Miranda “replies to the paternal reprimands with a very southern vivacity and with far more passioned and almost challenging accents, compared to Shakespeare’s heroine, who expressed herself with a more mitigated and submissive tone of voice” (2002: 201). She also notes that Eduardo’s Prospero is “more
clearly ‘benevolent’ and that the Neapolitan translation can tone down some of the harshness of the language of the Prospero-master [...] with a language which becomes ironical or even comical, softening some of his excessively dictatorial or ‘masterly’ manners” (ibid.: 197). The voice of the translator and/or rewriter has once again changed the characters on stage and the way we perceive them.

After looking at all of these Tempests, we can see that the changes in the characters’ languages and voices made in these translations and/or rewritings “strongly modify the nature of the characters and their interrelationships” (ibid.: 204). What we have is not only a simple switching of the linguistic code but, through these new voices, we see completely new characters, new selves, and new people on stage. Though only one of these works was intended to modify the roles of the characters and their relationships, they all produce a similar change: the voice of the translator / rewriter has affected not only the characters’ voices, but their identities as well.

As Aaltonen writes, “once a play is translated / performed, new interpretations become inevitable. In translation, the meanings in the source texts are expressed with the means of a new language. In this, they already move into a different reality” (2010: 105). This is the same movement Johnston describes, when he says that “translation, and especially translation for the theatre, is a process that [...] engineers movement” (2009: 65), and when he asks “why should the translated play not reflect the huge swirling movement of that reading and writing experience?” (ibid.: 69). Indeed, it would be difficult for a translation of the play not to reflect this movement, and both Césaire’s and De Filippo’s new Tempests prove that they have embodied this movement of translation, and engendered, through their interpretations, an even wider and more complex life for the play. Translators and rewriters have acted out some of the inner possibilities of the play and by listening to their voices on stage, we can, in the end, discern new and unpredictable meanings for the words that we had already read and heard before.

Garboli’s words on the parallel between the actor and the translator come to mind once again, in another passage in which he further elaborates on his metaphor: “He has chosen, who knows why, to create, to invent, to make live something that is already there, that already exists, that has already been written. To make it live like it has been written, and like nobody thought it was, before he performed it.” (1990: 103) This paradox of difference in equivalence is a common experience for the actor and the translator. They both give new life to that which already exists, by lending their voice to a text, and they both transform something while representing it truthfully at the same time. The isle is indeed “full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not” as Caliban taught us (Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 84, III. ii. 133-134), and translators and actors both offer us the opportunity to witness the disclosure of this immense intertwining of meanings and realities, by performing those noises for us, through their voices.
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NOTES

1. Several passages in Césaire’s play show that his rewriting of Shakespeare is based on the first version of Hugo’s translation, published in 1859 and the basis of several modern editions, including the Théâtre Complet published by Garnier (1961-1964). Césaire at times transcribes Hugo’s translation word for word, and at times he modifies it only slightly. This happens especially in the scenes of the marriage between Miranda and Ferdinand, where Césaire has the goddesses celebrate “une union d’amour pur” (1969: 67), and wish “honneur et richesse! Longue vie et longue lignée!” (ibid.) and “Que disette et besoin s’écartent de vous!” (ibid.) to the couple. Ferdinand’s reaction to their vision: “Quelle majestueuse vision! Oserais-je croire que ce sont là des esprits!” (ibid.: 68), as well as his cry in the first part: “L’enfer est vide, et tous les diables sont ici!” (ibid.: 17) and Prospero’s words to Ariel: “Qui fit bâiller le pin où tu étais enfermé et te délivras?” (ibid.: 23) are also much closer to Hugo’s translation than to Shakespeare or to other translations. It is difficult to imagine any other possible derivation for Césaire’s text. For further details, and a comparison between Césaire’s text and the other translations of The Tempest available to him, see Sofo, “Le Shakespeare de Césaire : entre traduction, réécriture et citation” (forthcoming).

2. The attribution of these lines to Miranda has often been disputed, and several editors (among them John Dryden and Lewis Theobald) and several directors attribute them to Prospero, for diverse reasons: “it is Prospero who is berating Caliban, and Miranda would not interfere; the language is at once too indecent and too philosophical for Miranda. Miranda […] could not have had much to do with Caliban’s education; she was too young on arrival in the island” (Kermode in Shakespeare, 1988: 32), and George Lamming in his The Pleasures of Exile notes: “We are brought to the heart of the matter by the cantankerous assertion, spoken by Miranda, but obviously the thought and vocabulary of her father” (1992 [1960]: 109). Most modern editors, though, have chosen to accept the First Folio’s attribution to Miranda. De Filippo assigns these lines to Prospero, most likely because the original he was working on had these lines attributed to him, as was the case for Césaire.

3. Interestingly enough, Ernest Renan wrote his Caliban in Ischia, the largest island of the Neapolitan archipelago, very close to De Filippo’s native land.

4. The fact that Caliban uses “you” instead of the “thou” he uses to refer to Prospero signals that the line is intended to be a response to “both father and daughter” (Kermode in Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 32).

5. To this passage, De Filippo adds a powerful extra line: “Ognuno ‘a lengua soja: / io tenevo la mia / e tu la toja” [To each his own language / I had mine / and you, yours] (1984: 48).

6. Almquist also notes that the word and the concept of Uhuru are far from being monolithically translatable and quotes at length the American writer Robert Ruark who wrote a novel entitled Uhuru in 1962 and explained the complex meaning(s) of this word: “It means, roughly, ‘freedom’, and is used and abused according to personal inclination. In some instances this can be tragic. […] Each native African has his own conception of Uhuru. […] Uhuru to the white man takes on a slightly different complexion. Uhuru is regarded as a threat—a threat to his white property […]. Uhuru is a threat to his concept of himself as a white master of a suppressed black race” (Ruark, 1963 [1962]: V-VI, quoted in Almquist, 2006: 600-601).

7. Stephano even speaks Italian, though incorrectly, at the end of the play, when he tells Caliban: “Coragio, bully-monster, coragio!” (Shakespeare, 1988 [1611]: 128, V. i. 257-258)
8. Croce quotes Andreoli’s definition for mingole, rather than tringole (though he does not say that explicitly), because Andreoli’s dictionary does not have an entry for tringole; the two words are most probably closely related, but this does not imply that Andreoli would have used the same definition for tringole as well.

9. BOATSWAIN Lads, run. Be brave: Our Lady of the Chain will help us. Haul down the mainsail and lay off. Open your ears wide and listen to the Captain’s whistle. Lads, be honourable: we’re Neapolitans!

SAILORS (as a choir) We’re Neapolitans!

BOATSWAIN (towards the hard-blowing wind) Blow, Blow! May you and your damn tempest bleed to death! (my translation)

ABSTRACTS

This article investigates the role of voice in translated theatre, through an analysis of two rewritings / translations of William Shakespeare’s The Tempest, the postcolonial rewriting by Aimé Césaire, Une Tempête, and Eduardo De Filippo’s translation in Seventeenth century Neapolitan dialect, La Tempesta. The first part of the article is dedicated to the possibility of perceiving translation as performance and the translator as a performer, and to a discussion of the ambiguous concept of voice in the theatre context and of the proximity and mutual influence between rewriting and translation. The second part focuses more directly on the corpus, to analyze the role of voice and language in Shakespeare’s original Tempest and then to follow the transformations of these voices, and of the characters using them, in Césaire’s and De Filippo’s works. This will shed some light on the patterns of sense construction engendered by the translation and the performance of voice in drama.

Cet article étudie le rôle de la voix dans le théâtre traduit, à travers une analyse de deux réécritures / traductions de La Tempête de William Shakespeare – la réécriture postcoloniale d’Aimé Césaire, Une tempête, et la traduction par Eduardo De Filippo en dialecte napolitain du XVIIe siècle, La Tempesta. La première partie de l’article est consacrée à la possibilité de percevoir la traduction comme performance et le traducteur comme acteur, ainsi qu’à une discussion du concept ambigu de voix dans le contexte théâtral et de la proximité entre réécriture et traduction. La deuxième partie se concentre plus directement sur le corpus afin d’analyser le rôle de la voix et du langage dans le texte original de Shakespeare, et de suivre les transformations de ces voix et des personnages qui les portent, dans les œuvres de Césaire et De Filippo. Cela nous permet de décrire les parcours de construction du sens engendrés par la traduction et la performance de la voix au théâtre.

INDEX

Keywords: voice, translation, rewriting, performance, Shakespeare, Tempest

Mots-clés: voix, traduction, réécriture, performance, Shakespeare, Tempête
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