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THE ITALIAN LINGUISTIC CONTINUUM ON THE STAGE: THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSLATING *CARTA CANTA* BY RAFFAELLO BALDINI

STEFANO BOSELLI

ò da ès cmè cós, mè, cmè Dino Manfroni? che parla sempre in italiano, sè, ò capéi, lui è laureato, non può parlare in dialetto, non sta bene, che pu a zcòrr ènca mè in italièn, quant l'è e' mumént, che bisogna parlare in italiano (Baldini, *Carta canta* 56)

devo essere come coso, io, come Dino Manfroni? che parla sempre in italiano, sí, ho capito, lui è laureato, non può parlare in dialetto, non sta bene, che poi parlo anch'io in italiano, quando è il momento, che bisogna parlare in italiano (Baldini, *Carta canta* 57)

do I have to be like what's-his-name, me, like Dino Manfroni? who's always speaking in Italian, yes, I understand, he's got a degree, he can't talk in dialect, it doesn't suit him, and then I can speak in Italian too, when the time comes you need to speak Italian[1]

The contradictions of art imitating nature

The relationship between the language found in real life and the one presented on the stage provides a constant challenge for both playwrights and actors. While in many instances theatre is meant to imitate reality, it still needs to transmit a meaning through a degree of coherence, organization, and synthesis not conceivable for everyday events. On the one hand, the ever-changing chaotic world is held as a model; on the other hand, theatre necessarily becomes an ordering filter. In addition, performers are frequently required to speak louder in order to reach a much larger audience than in normal conversation. Thus, within any degree of realism, the development of a language for the stage differs from that of any spoken or written language devoid of artistic purposes. Art and Nature must remain two distinct poles.

Despite this fundamental distance, many authors try to capture the essence of their characters through the closest approximation to an actual spoken variety of language. Their attempt is justified by a desire to create the most credible effect of reality, as a way to make the play a more successful vehicle for the playwright's ideas or to facilitate emotional communication between the actors and the audience. This effort to activate a dynamic reception is common to all stage performances, but Italian dramaturgy offers a peculiar situation, specific problems, and calls for imaginative solutions.

The fact that the origins of theatrical Italian are rooted in literature rather than orality has regularly been at odds with any demands for realism. At the same time, the unique and broad assortment of regional dialects that actively interact with Italian offers a great opportunity for dramatists who wish to endow their plays with a closer connection to everyday life. Unfortunately, these dialects are often mutually unintelligible and represent a risky choice for authors aiming at a general circulation of their plays in regions other than the one a particular dialect belongs to.

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[1] This and all subsequent versions in standard English are my own, based on the available translation by Adria Bernardi, which I discuss later in this article.

While the traditional choice in implementing dialect has been to simplify it and make it more understandable, thus unavoidably losing some of its visceral power, in his monologue *Carta canta* Raffaello Baldini adopted a more effective and functional solution. But before engaging in an analysis of the play to appreciate its originality, it will be helpful to take a closer look at the development of Italian for the stage, starting with some basic definitions of the essence of theatrical language.

Theatrical language: a hybrid variety

One of the fundamental differences in defining the varieties of a language is dependent on the physical medium used: in general terms, a communicative act is either spoken or written. Spoken language entails the presence of interlocutors in a dialogic setting and an ample use of deictics, i.e., elements in discourse that indicate objects or situations belonging to the immediate context of the dialogue, such as "that" or "here." This integration with often unpredictable circumstances leaves room for improvisation, and usually results in interruptions, abrupt changes, even incomplete utterances that remain fragments. Spoken communication has a tendency to be incomplete, and can afford to do so, because the physical world itself provides the missing bits of information or stimulates the production of new plans or meanings.

Conversely, written language is more monologic, it only envisages an ideal reader in an imaginary context, and needs to render its descriptions or explanations as detailed as possible. This enhanced precision, in turn, produces a better flow and a sense of completeness. However, the actual readers might be far away in space or time and the risk of misunderstandings must be dealt with in advance. This separation between addresser and addressee requires conscious planning and a higher degree of consistency as compared to spoken discourse. In fact, no changes will normally be possible after a written message has been sent and the author is no longer present.

Speech used for theatrical purposes embraces both the written and the spoken realms, at least when the production of a written text is involved, either before or after a performance. But even in the case of totally improvised speech, the structure of performance itself induces the resulting spoken text to adhere to rules otherwise absent from normal conversation.

In his pioneering study "Parlato-parlato, parlato-scritto, parlato-recitato," Giovanni Nencioni distinguished the possible varieties of spoken expression. Despite having in common many ingredients of everyday oral communication ("parlato-parlato"), such as the physical presence of the speakers and the context itself, the words pronounced on the stage ("parlato-recitato") possess some characteristics of written discourse, as they tend to be extremely polished and efficient while avoiding any kind of redundancy (175); hence the author's definition of "speech written for performance" ("parlato scritto per la recitazione" 127). Since every word should ideally be essential to the script and the development of the action, theatrical speech often resembles spoken dialogue on the surface, while more or less successfully concealing, or in certain cases deliberately showing, its deeper organization.

In an effort to more accurately categorize the special qualities of this hybrid variety, some further definitions have been proposed. One of them describes the language of playwriting as "written to be spoken as if it were not written" ("scritto per essere detto

come se non fosse scritto" Lavinio 33). Pietro Trifone argued that, while this definition effectively captures the threefold nature of a text that is "written," "written to be spoken," and "written to be spoken as if it were not written," it fails to be accurate enough. In his view, it is both too generic, because it could be applied to non-theatrical texts, and too specific, since it basically addresses only naturalistic texts (17). Trifone's more comprehensive proposal explicitly emphasizes the primary role of writing: "written for oral performance in the fiction of the stage" ("scritto per l'esecuzione orale nella finzione scenica"). Still, his definition completely overshadows the specific role of the performers.

In a sense, the same problem faced years ago by theatre semiotics applies to the language for the stage. If the object of study is the dramatic text only, Trifone's definition could be exhaustive. However, if we consider the performance as a whole, then theatrical speech derives from the combined efforts of the playwright *and* the actors at different moments, including that of delivery. It was again Nencioni who highlighted the fact that since actors eventually use the playwright's text as a suggestion, the written play is only a point of departure towards the final "parlato-recitato" (176). Therefore, a definition of speech for the stage that comprises the point of view of the performers could be articulated as follows: "spoken by the actors according to their perception of an author's suggestions, as derived both from the written play and from rehearsals."

This inclusion of the performance aspect promises to be the next step in understanding how language on the stage really works. Yet, before the appearance of sound or video recording devices, the only type of information available has indeed been limited to the texts alone. Thus, if we want to investigate the history of the Italian language for the theatre and identify some threads that will lead us to Baldini's work, we still need to start with the written plays.

A brief history of Italian for the stage

For a long time, the main problem with Italian has been that a common language did not exist except in literature. If an author used it on the stage, he could be sure to be understood everywhere, but his effort to produce even minimally realistic language was doomed; if he relied on his native dialect, no one would appreciate his work outside his region. As a matter of fact, every playwright has had to invent a personal approach in order to tackle this problem peculiar to the Italian tradition. Following Trifone's seminal study on Italian for the theatre, *L'italiano a teatro*, let us briefly review the most relevant of those solutions.[2] Overall, we will mainly be concerned with comedy rather than with more idealized kinds of dramatic expression, such as the pastoral or tragic genres, because only in the lowest comedic style do we expect to see a significant relation to real life, and therefore to actual spoken language.

The premiere of Ludovico Ariosto's *Cassaria* (*The Chest*) in Ferrara in 1508 is commonly referred to as the beginning of modern theatre (Trifone 24). In contrast with the preceding *volgarizzamenti*, i.e., the translations of Latin comedies, the play offered the illusion of a continuity between the action on the stage and the audience by showing a city scene in full perspective. On the linguistic side, however, it still employed endecasyllable verse. Although Ariosto actually tried to achieve a synthesis of literature

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[2] For a shorter study in English see the chapter "Language at Play: The Italian Dialect Theatre" in Haller 39-53.

and theatre, in 1532 the Duke of Mantua refused four of his plays on account of their being written in verse. In the Duke's opinion they would not work on the stage (26).

In fact, the choice of prose over verse occurred early in the Italian tradition. In 1513 in Urbino, *La Calandria* (*The Comedy of Calandro*) by Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena began with a prologue in which the author prided himself on the use of prose as a better rendition of everyday conversation (30). The play's title was explicitly inspired by a character of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the fourteenth-century prose model for the lower style.

A few years later, with his *Mandragola* (*The Mandrake*) Niccolò Machiavelli made a significant step forward by choosing an idiolect, a peculiar version of his Florentine, for each of the characters ("plurilinguismo funzionale" 'functional plurilingualism' 33). While *commedia dell'arte* actors wore masks on their faces to emphasize differences, Machiavelli perceived how language itself could become the distinguishing feature for each role. Moreover, in his *Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua* (*Discourse Concerning Our Language*), he unequivocally supported the use of an author's native dialect, instead of mimicking someone else's, to improve a comedy's effect. He attributed Ariosto's failure to the fact that "he did not like Ferrara's witticisms, and did not know those of Florence" ("i motti ferraresi non li piacevano, et i fiorentini non sapeva" Machiavelli 63).

Several other sixteenth-century authors tried to vary the language used in their comedies in reaction to the regularizations buttressed by Pietro Bembo (1470-1547) and later by the Accademia della Crusca, founded in 1583. Pietro Aretino's *La Cortigiana* (*The Courtesan*, 1525), set in a Rome viewed as a modern Babel, employed extremely diverse and experimental linguistic materials. However, these varieties were not geographic alternatives to the dominant Tuscan model, but rather hybrids of the available literary styles (Trifone 44). Annibal Caro's *Comedia de gli straccioni* (*The Ragamuffins' Comedy* composed in 1543, published in 1582) showed a remarkable tendency to imitate the spoken language (46). Finally, Vergilio Verucci's *Diversi linguaggi* (*Different Languages*, 1609) for the first time utilized different regional varieties – as many as ten – spoken by ten characters respectively. Some of them belonged to the same family: the Venetian Pantalone had a Roman son, a Florentine daughter, a servant from Bergamo and another from Bologna (50). The paradox was again justified by setting the action in Rome, where the mixture of dialects had a tangible reality, but it also showed a completely literary alternative to the performance use of dialects.[3]

At the end of the seventeenth century, the variety of dialects was commended by theorist Andrea Perrucci, who declared that the different languages offered a source of much entertainment in comedies. Nevertheless, Perrucci's attitude, like Verucci's, was one of cautious adjustment of dialects non only to the character, but also to the different regional audiences: a simplified version of each dialect was required in order to be fully understood. This attention to reception was obviously required for a professional touring company, but it also shows how early the decision to privilege communication through adaptation was made.

Although the use of regional alternatives already offered a multifaceted linguistic panorama, the varieties were still used horizontally, one beside the other, each language corresponding to a particular type. Even foreign accents were included, such as the

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[3] In *commedia dell'arte*, every mask had a specific regional origin and therefore conventionally used a particular dialect.

Spanish one. It was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that a vertical plurilingualism was achieved in the works of Carlo Maria Maggi. His masterpiece, *I consigli di Meneghino* (*Meneghino's Advice*, 1697), differentiated at least three social categories through language choice. The aristocracy spoke the literary version of Italian, the most conservative sectors of the same class used an italianized Milanese, while the native Milanese was reserved for the lower classes (61). Yet, this achievement did not answer possibly the most important problem of comic dramaturgy, the lack of a "middle" language that could be used for conversation instead of, or even along with, dialect.

Only around the mid-eighteenth century was a solution found by Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793), usually referred to as the reformer of an exhausted and unruly *commedia dell'arte* tradition. By introducing written texts in place of the improvised scenarios, he reinforced the importance of authorship and control of the final results, even when the author himself could not be present. He effectively combined the two poles of dramatic creation: the World, intended as close attention to the outside reality, and the Theatre, the knowledge of the laws governing artistic performance on a professional stage. The result was a language partly discovered, partly invented (73), a mixture of literary and colloquial, of Tuscan and Venetian, and many other regional or even foreign influences. In this both ideal and real language, targeted at a large, not exclusively local audience, the Venetian dialect and Italian were not opposed but tended to blend, while still portraying a society composed of several linguistically distinct classes and individuals. The separation was abolished and each character could make use of every nuance of a "linguistic continuum." The secret Goldoni seems to have intuitively mastered was the use of syntax: by introducing syntactic constructions derived from the spoken language, he could furnish his written dialogues with a colloquial quality, without limiting them to a regional or lower-class tone based on weak phono-morphological features (77). Italian was being influenced by dialect and vice versa.

When Goldoni began producing a credible and therefore realistic language for the stage, the opposite choice also became available. Carlo Gozzi, Goldoni's toughest rival, decided to enhance the artificiality of his theatrical fables by increasing the use of verse and even verse variety, besides maintaining a strict separation of Italian from dialect. This division between a more realistic and a literary approach continued to exist throughout the less than innovative dramatic production of the nineteenth century, generally dependent on French models based on the classic bourgeois triangle.

In the 1880s, the *veristi* Giovanni Verga (1840-1922) and Luigi Capuana (1839-1915), in response to Zola's plea for a naturalistic theatre in *Le Naturalisme au Théâtre* (1874), tried to create a new Italian dramaturgy that would realistically show the lives of the lower classes, who could obviously not speak the words of literature. For that purpose, Capuana wrote plays in Sicilian dialect that remained confined to a regional audience, but Verga felt dialect as too strict a limitation and tried to produce a play to be performed by a mainstream theatre company. His *Cavalleria rusticana* (*Rustic Chivalry*, 1884), in Italian, developed Goldoni's syntactic techniques mainly by augmenting the number of colloquialisms based on word position. Essentially, he left to proper names and a few other linguistic elements the task of giving the impression of a Sicilian setting. With the great actress Eleonora Duse in the main role, the play was extremely successful and, for the first time, it showed onstage tragic events set in a rural world of primordial passions. Even so, while trying to appeal to the same middle-class audience that formed

the bulk of theatre-goers, the endeavor to provide the lower classes with a means of artistic expression was lost on the linguistic level.

Some decades later, Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936), another Sicilian author, was asked by Nino Martoglio, actor-manager of a Sicilian troupe, to write a play in dialect. Later he either translated his Italian plays into dialect – such as *Pensaci, Giacomino!* (*Think it over, Giacomino!*) and *La giara* (*The Jar*) – or vice versa (*Liolà*), but the division remained. Pirandello, increasingly interested in philosophical ideas rather than realism, was never too eager to imitate the "parlato-parlato" as much as in effectively exploiting the resources of "parlato-recitato." In fact, he actively deconstructed the very mechanisms of performance through his metatheatrical works in order to shatter any illusion of art imitating nature. For him, dialect as a reflection of real life became essentially uninteresting, but he used it if there was a concrete opportunity for a production.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Pirandello agreed to a translation of his *Liolà* into Neapolitan by an emerging troupe, the "Compagnia del Teatro umoristico I De Filippo," established by Eduardo De Filippo, his brother Peppino, and his sister Titina. Eduardo (1900-1984) was *figlio d'arte*, illegitimate son of the famous Neapolitan actor Eduardo Scarpetta. He lived in a city where dialect influenced all social classes as an integral part of culture and he wanted to communicate with a broader national audience. He therefore employed all layers available in the continuum, from dialect, to regional Italian,[4] to standard Italian itself and, in this sense, his plays are the closest antecedents to those by Baldini. For instance, the protagonist of *Napoli milionaria!* (*Millionaire Naples!*, 1945) is perfectly bilingual. He code-switches according to the subject of conversation and prefers dialect where the emotional impetus is prevalent (101-02). On the whole, however, Eduardo always kept the degree of dialect under control. Although some normalizations were due to the pressures of the nationalist Fascist government, he also needed to dilute dialect use by increasing the presence of regional Italian, so that his plays could be understood outside Naples.

Subsequent dramatists using dialect chose the path of re-creation, based more on theatrical tradition than everyday life. Giovanni Testori (1923-1993) opted for a harsh and expressionist *Lombardo*, whereas Dario Fo has reconstructed a Padan *koinè* common to a larger area, which he first used in his *Mistero buffo*. All in all, the full range of "real" dialect in active combination with the "higher" versions of Italian has remained elusive.

Raffaello Baldini's Carta canta

Raffaello Baldini (1924-2005) was born in Santarcangelo, a small town in Romagna, near Rimini. He received a degree in Philosophy from the University of Bologna and later moved to Milan, where he worked for twenty years for *Panorama*, a popular national weekly magazine. If Baldini used Italian for his job, as a creative writer he began composing poems, not drama, in his native dialect and became "one of the most important Italian poets of the twentieth century" (Benati "Interview" 1). Since his poems were often long monologues themselves, "going into the theater was a natural progression" (7).

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[4] Regional Italian is a variety of Italian influenced by the underlying dialect. For an in-depth look at this topic, see the essays contained in Cortellazzo and Mioni.

Some of the reasons for the use of dialect had to do with its status with respect to Italian. Baldini was perfectly aware that dialect is a "small language," spoken and understood by a few people, and that it has undoubtedly lost its battle with Italian. Yet, this did not mean that dialect was already dead. While more and more things are now "happening" in Italian, some stories can only be told in dialect, "if one wants to tell these things as they really happened" (2). Thus, he claimed to have chosen dialect not as a refusal of the dominant language, as if longing to return to an improbable idyllic past, but rather as the only choice left in certain circumstances (Brevini 19). While in Italian one can say everything – which is no longer true for dialect – in dialect one can say a number of things better (Ricci 15).

While Italian is the language learnt in school, with rules, syntax, and a feeling that one speaks well when one sounds like a printed book, dialect is spoken well by everyone precisely because it has no rules. Thus, there is a different degree of "tension": "Italian is standing at attention, the dialect is being at ease; in Italian you're on duty, while in dialect you're off duty" (Baldini, Bernardi, and Benati 41). Therefore, while those writing in Italian need to carefully search for terms appropriate to their task, those who utilize dialect can be more relaxed because they find a whole language already available. It is like "swimming with fins" (Ricci 17).

Furthermore, dialect seems closer to people and reality. For instance, since "[t]he dialect's phrase is spread by word of mouth, from mouth to ear, [. . .] it already carries along with it the experience of an emotional relationship with others" (Baldini, Bernardi, and Benati 41). Also, while in Italian one frequently has the impression that words come first and things follow, in dialect the opposite happens because dialect is a much more practical language. Or, using another of Baldini's metaphors, dialect is the thing, whereas Italian is just the paint (Ricci 16).

The danger is that dialect itself could soon become that paint, an empty shell. It seems as if the task of keeping it alive is shifting more and more into the hands of the writers. While the speakers are gradually and inexorably being conquered by the national language, dialect is losing its tempo and lagging behind. But employing it in art fulfills the purpose of reinvigorating it from within by rebuilding the precious connections between deep meaning and surface expression (Baldini, "A lezione" 14).

As a result of his intent to preserve and revitalize dialect, Baldini's production shows a remarkable mimicry of oral traits: "It is not a simple imitation of the spoken word, but a rendering of the effects of spoken phrases that get interrupted, digress, get repeated, as if caught up in a fervored propulsion that disrupts the syntax" (Baldini, Bernardi, and Benati 43). As an utterly realistic writer, Baldini portrays dialect in its actually spoken form, which is, by definition, impure: "if one wants to render the dialect's orality, one cannot avoid recording its mingling with Italian" (Ricci 16). *Carta canta* is a perfect example of this simultaneous coexistence.

In regard to his writing for the theatre, Baldini commented: "Friends, and not just friends, have always said that my poems are like theater. For me [. . .] the dialect is orality, it's an oral animal. So much so that it's difficult to read when it's written, even for those who speak it. Now, orality, the spoken word, is still a litte theatrical. It came naturally" (Baldini, Bernardi, and Benati 7). In the foreword to the Italian edition of his monologues, the author adds an account of how the idea for *Carta canta* was born. One day the actor Ivano Marescotti asked him if he could translate for him a monologue

written in a German dialect into his own. The play was *Ella* by Herbert Achternbusch. Baldini tried, but felt that those stories could not be translated effectively, precisely because of cultural reasons: they just could not happen in a different language. After the actor's counter-proposal to write something of his own, he therefore decided to write directly in his native dialect (*Carta canta* v).

A single problem existed for Marescotti: he comes from a little town, Villanova di Bagnacavallo, only forty kilometers from Santarcangelo di Romagna. The paradox, according to Baldini, is that Marescotti could have played in Neapolitan, Veneto, French, or English, but he needed to translate Baldini's monologue into his own dialect, or he would not have been able to adequately use it on the stage (Tesio 270). We earlier emphasized the importance of taking actors into account when analyzing the language for the stage, and this is a very good example. Here we have a playtext, written in a particular dialect, which has only been performed in another – although not entirely different – dialect by the actor involved in the original stage production directed by Giorgio Gallione.

The story is quite simple. The protagonist, Aurelio Brandi speaks to himself and imaginary interlocutors for the full duration of the performance. He is an ordinary shopkeeper who, through the services of a specialized agency, has recently found out that his family stems from noble ancestors. This unexpected social repositioning offers him the opportunity to talk from an unusual standpoint about all those who demeaned him in the past. Some of the various personal issues that surface are also linguistic and the citation at the beginning of this article is only one of several signs of the importance of language choice in establishing hierarchies within the context of the ongoing struggle between Italian and dialect.

One element that carefully conceals the author's craft is the incessant repetition of words permitted by dialect: "whoever speaks in dialect doesn't feel bothered by a word that is repeated several times and then loops back again later. Italian, on the other hand, is hypersensitive about repetition; it will not tolerate it" (Baldini, Bernardi, and Benati 4). But several other features of spoken discourse are carefully mimicked: anacoluthon ("la mia famiglia erano marchigiani" 'my family they came from Marche' 26); the so-called *'che' polivalente* or "multi-purpose that" ("però è un nome e un cognome che c'è dietro qualcosa" 'but it's a name and a family name that there's something behind' 34); or the use of fillers such as "mo" (it. "ma," literally "but") as in "mo qui dove si va a finire" 'like, here how is it going to end up' (8). However, the most striking feature of this monologue is the depiction of the constant interplay of dialect and Italian through code-switching.

In order to see how the linguistic continuum really functions, it is important at this point to look more closely at the textual details. The translations in Italian that follow belong to Baldini himself, who habitually publishes his texts in dialect with this supplemental help for his readers. It will be understood that the page of the Italian translation is the one immediately following the original, and the order for each example is always dialect, Italian, and English.

The continuum

Starting with the "lowest" phonological levels, it should be noted that many Italian words are pronounced differently in the context of dialect:

a. Different vowel opening. Baldini's text indicates the accent in the dialect original, while standard accents in Italian are here added to underscore the difference: "insòmma" (6, "insómma," 'in sum'); "paróla" (24, "paròla," 'word'); "divérsa" (24, "divèrsa"; 'different').

b. Double consonants in Italian are pronounced as single consonants in dialect. The following examples can all be found on page 10: "non se l'aspetavano" ("non se l'aspettavano," 'they didn't expect it'); "sucede," "erore," "parochiali" ("succede," "errore," "parrocchiali"; 'it happens,' 'mistake,' 'parochial'). The rule applies even to proper names, such as that of an official publication: "Gazetta Uficiale" ("Gazzetta Ufficiale")

c. Some Italian morpho-phonological rules do not apply: "un scrivano" e "i scrivani" are also repeated as such in the Italian translation, instead of "*uno* scrivano," "*gli* scrivani" ("a clerk," "the clerks").

At the lexical level, the entire world is generally present in dialect form: numbers "mellanovzentequàtar" (14, "1904"); currency: "baócch" (14, "soldi," 'money'); proper nouns: "mè a faz Brandi Avreglio" (10, "io faccio Brandi Aurelio," 'I go by Brandi Aurelio'); public places and institutions: "tl'uféizi tecnich de Cuméun" (16, "nell'ufficio tecnico del Comune," 'in the planning office of the Town Hall') and "Crèdit [. . .] Bènca Popolèra" (50, "Credito [. . .] Banca Popolare," 'Bank [. . .] Credit Union").

With toponyms, however, we begin to see an alternation. Some of the names of places are immediately translated, but others are retained because they belong to a different region and therefore lack a *Romagnolo* form. Thus, we find on one side "Sinigaia" (16, "Sinigaglia"), or "a Rémin, a Savgnèn" (18, "a Rimini, a Savignano," 'in Rimini, in Savignano'),[5] but on the other side, there are the untranslated "Macerata Marche" (10) and "Città di Castello" (36).

Sometimes code-switching from dialect to Italian is required because a piece of lexicon is missing, here emphasized in italics: "ch'u n'è gnénca *geometra*" (18, "che non è neanche geometra," 'he ain't even a surveyor'); "ta i vu tachè ènca l'*influenza*?" (22, "gli vuoi attaccare anche l'influenza?' 'do you want to give him the flu too?'). In the following example, the peculiar name of one architectural building, the "sferisterio," is opposed to the traditional term for "theatre" that is present in dialect: "e d'instèda fanno una *stagione lirica*, mo a la granda, in questo *sferisterio* che hanno loro [. . .] l'è una specie ad teètar" (28, "e d'estate fanno una stagione lirica, ma alla grande in questo sferisterio che hanno loro [. . .] è una specie di teatro," 'in the summer they have an opera season, but on a big scale, in this arena they have [. . .] it's a kind of theatre').

Titles of works of art cannot be translated but might afford a different pronunciation. In the following example, dialect might have the final /e/ pronounced in *Bohème*, whereas lines from the opera are necessarily in Italian: mo la *Bohème*, a déggh, a la ò zà vésta, a la cnòss, che gelida manina, che dòp i s lasa" (30 "ma la *Bohème*, dico, l'ho già vista, la conosco, che gelida manina, che dopo si lasciano, 'but the *Bohème*, I say, I already saw it, I know it, *che gelida manina*, and afterwards they split').

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5 See also "i è vnù a Santarcanzal, i méi, no, a Santarcangelo sono arrivati dopo" (14, "sono venuti a Santarcangelo, i miei, no, a Santarcangelo sono arrivati dopo," 'they came to Santarcangelo, my ancestors, no, in Santarcangelo they arrived later').

Sometimes a translation is included directly in the text, either from or to Italian. Italian to dialect: "sono andati indietro, mo i è 'ndè indrì ad che póch" (12; "sono andati indietro, ma sono andati indietro di quel po'," 'they went back, they went back just that little bit'). Dialect to Italian: "l'éva una mèna, perché ci vuole anche la mano" (20 "aveva una mano, perché ci vuole anche la mano," 'he had a gift for it [literally: 'a hand'], because you need to be gifted too') or "però l'è bèl sté leòun, questa testa di leone" (24 "però è bello questo leone, questa testa di leone," 'after all it's a beautiful lion, this lion's head').

It can be noted that the in-text translations are not exact calques, rather variations that both help the process of understanding and add some new information. But we do find cases of double translations in a row: "e io invece mi sentivo più, insòmma, a m sintéva piò féin, nell'animo mi sentivo più signore" (38; "e io invece mi sentivo più, insomma, mi sentivo più fine, nell'animo mi sentivo più signore," 'and I, on the other hand, felt myself to be more, well, I felt I was more refined, in my soul, I felt more like a gentleman'). The first translation into dialect translates the Italian "mi sentivo" and then adds new information ("piò féin"), which is then immediately translated into Italian. Here, the continuum is already quite manifest.

The various shifts between languages also include regional Italian, where the basis is dialect, but in an italianized form. In "loro *sono dietro che cercano* per una *sua* strada" (italics added, 6; same in the Italian translation, 'they are exploring one of their threads') the standard Italian form would be "stanno cercando" and "loro."

Finally, we have an example of code-switching between different dialects (the change of dialect is here italicized). The protagonist narrates how, while serving in the military, he came into contact with a different dialect of a bordering region: "a m'arcórd ti suldè, *si marchigèn, dove andàt? cosa fat? come dit* u s capéss tótt" (30; "mi ricordo a militare coi marchigiani, dove andat? cosa fat? come dit? si capisce tutto," 'I remember being in the military, with guys from Marche, where are you going? what are you doing? how do you say? you get it all').

In order to gain a better understanding of the kind of continuous code-switching reproduced by Baldini, let us analyze a longer excerpt taken from the beginning of the monologue. Italian is italicized for emphasis, and regional Italian is underlined:

Original:

> u m'è rivàt sta cartuléina, che te préim a n'éva gnénch' capéi, una cartuléina celèsta, *dice: abbiamo trovato delle notizie sulla sua famiglia, se lei vuole, possiamo fare delle ricerche*, mo che ricerche? Cs'èll ch'émm fat, *la mia famiglia? Cos'abbiamo fatto?* Cs'èll ch'i vó quést che què? dòp ò lèt sòtta, e ò capéi, *che loro, insomma, queste ricerche erano per fare la storia della mia famiglia,* che però te préim a so 'rvènz un pó acsè, parchè ènca *queste ricerche*, csa i saràl mai da zarchè, *la mia famiglia,* 's'ut, *però, dice, abbiamo trovato delle notizie,* e se lei è d'acordo, parchè bsògna che mè a séa d'acórd, quèll' l'è robi, éun e' pò déi: no, lasciate stare lì, io non permetto, e lòu i n pò mégga andè a scartablè, se te non sei d'acordo, *devono chiedere prima*, amo cumè, *sono cose delicate, e infatti loro hanno chiesto*, i m'à mand sta cartuléina, dice (4-6)[6]

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[6] Italian: m'è arrivata 'sta cartolina, che in un primo momento non avevo neanche capito, una cartolina azzurra, dice: abbiamo trovato delle notizie sulla sua famiglia, se lei vuole, possiamo fare delle ricerche, ma che ricerche? cos'abbiamo fatto, la mia famiglia? cosa vogliono questi qui? dopo ho letto sotto, e ho capito,

Standard English:

> I received this postcard, which at first I hadn't understood, a light-blue postcard, it says: we have found information about your family, if you wish, we can do research, what kind of research? what is it we've done, my family? what have we done? what do these people want? then I read below and I understood, that they, well, this research was to find the history of my family, even though at first I was a little… you know, because even this research, what is there to look for anyway, my family, you know, but, it says, we have found information, and if you agree, because I necessarily must agree, those are things, one can say: no, stop it, I don't give permission, and they can't go ahead and sift through the documents if you don't agree, they need to ask first, and well, these are delicate matters, and in fact they asked, they sent me this postcard, it says

The reasons for the code-switching vary: for example, the "dice" ('says' repeated later twice) introduces a formal, written discourse and a transition to a higher register (Italian); dialect immediately resurfaces through the repetition of a word in Italian ("ricerche"), this time introduced by a dialect filler ("mo"). Again, the following "la mia famiglia" is a repetition of the words contained in the postcard and a change of voice. Regional Italian, where the standard "lasciate stare" is followed by "lì," is a sign of the active power of dialect under the surface of Italian. The process continues in an endless flow.

In sum, a contemporary author, Raffaello Baldini, seems to have achieved the closest representation of the language spoken by some people in Italy through the frequent code-switching between Italian and an underlying dialect. This process makes his monologues both extremely realistic and understandable outside the small area of Santarcangelo. It provides the Italian theatrical tradition with a definitive blueprint for tapping into the powerful resources of dialects and it gives them an opportunity to survive. Baldini's style is such that in his hands dialect does not risk becoming a simple literary artifact; rather, it will continue to attract new speakers – although professional – that will make its sounds audible for a long time. In all this, one could say that Italian for the stage has achieved a definitive maturity. But how did this mastery translate into a different language?

Translating Carta canta*: the road ahead*

Contained in Baldini's collection published by Einaudi, *Carta canta* is available in English as *Page Proof* in the translation by Adria Bernardi, an award-winning writer and translator who has become Baldini's voice in English. The volume, edited by Daniele Benati for Bordighera Press, also includes some interesting paratextual materials: a previously unpublished interview with Baldini, a brief critical account by Benati, and

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che loro, insomma queste ricerche erano per fare la storia della mia famiglia, che però in un primo momento sono rimasto un po' così, perché anche queste ricerche, cosa ci sarà mai da cercare? la mia famiglia, cosa vuoi, però, dice, abbiamo trovato delle notizie, e se lei è d'accordo, perché bisogna che io sia d'accordo, quelle sono robe, uno può dire: no, lasciate stare lì, io non permetto, e loro non possono mica andare a scartabellare, se te non sei d'accordo, devono chiedere prima, e beh, sono cose delicate, e infatti loro hanno chiesto, m'hanno mandato questa cartolina, dice (5-7)

some pictures of Italian performances that are a welcome addition to the otherwise very austere Italian edition.

The following analysis of the translation(s) of this monologue proceeds from certain basic assumptions. The first is that the destination of *Carta canta* is eminently theatrical and thus, although we may read it on the page with the aid of a parallel text, ultimately we must envision a performance of a single, spoken version. Hence, the importance of code-switching in this particular work implies that form is at least as significant as content. If we remove the portrayal of the linguistic continuum, we sacrifice what makes this monologue unique beyond the outpouring of a lonely man lost in his obsessions. Thus, we waste a precious source of dramatic potential in favor of a more uneventful, and literary, stream of consciousness.

As we have seen, the first translator of *Carta canta* was Baldini himself who, aware of the difficulties for both speakers and non-speakers of *Romagnolo*, added his own version all in Italian. But Baldini's position remained unambiguous: his translations "are 'servile,' or, to use an expression that's a little less disparaging, 'serviceable.' In substance, they are the calque, a loan translation, of the text in dialect" (Benati, "Interview" 4). In other words, Baldini sets a clear hierarchy in which the artistic text is the original that includes dialect, whereas the translation functions as a useful, but secondary, aid to comprehension. It is the dialect version that is meant for performance.

What is interesting is that the Italian version does not exactly match the original. Limiting ourselves to the parts in Italian in both texts – which we could assume to be identical – there are indeed a few discrepancies. In the initial stage direction we find "richiude"/"chiude" ("closes again"/"closes" 4-5), a lack of prefix that resurfaces elsewhere ("torna"/"ritorna" 16-17). But we also notice differences in the spoken lines: "due giorni fa"/"tre giorni fa" ("two days ago"/"three days ago" 10-11), "ho preso"/"ho preferito" ("I had"/"I preferred" 30-31), or inversions such as "c'è dietro"/"dietro c'è" ("there's behind"/"behind there is" 34-35).

Thanks to these subtle indicators, it appears that Bernardi has translated the Italian version, and not the original, and produced a translation of a translation. For instance, in one of the above examples, she accepts the information directly from the stage direction in the Italian version ("three days ago" 13). Or, on the same page, where the dialect version employs a single spatial deictic ("lè" 'there'), the Italian specifies "lì in quel momento" and the translation punctually becomes "at that moment," with an emphasis on a temporal deictic instead. The list could go on.[7] Given the difficulty of reading dialect even for native speakers, the translator's choice is understandable and perfectly acceptable, but completely unstated. Rather, Bernardi's account of her experience as translator in a related article seems to imply that her source text was the one in dialect ("*La è 'ndeda acsè*" 62-63).

Of course the differences are minimal and the overall content only suffers when the Italian itself is not truly grasped. As happens to most translators, Bernardi's understanding is at times vague. To quote from the first pages, "non è che abbia speso una cifra" (11) means "it's not that I spent a large sum of money," but the translation

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[7] "il nome"/"il mio nome" (10-11) becomes "my name" in the translation (13); "zò"/"dài" appears twice in dialect but once in Italian (18) and is translated only when it appears in Italian as "come on now" (17); "i géva ch'l'éva fat"/"dicevano, così, che aveva fatto" (20-21) shows "così" only in Italian, which of course is then translated into English: "they said, they said this, that he had done" (18), etc.

becomes "it's not that I spent a specific amount" (13) as if the protagonist were unaware of the bill he paid. Later, when he explains his difficulties with having his family name changed, which requires a lawyer or "uno se lo tiene" ("one has to keep it" 11), the object pronoun "lo" obviously refers to the name, but the translation suggests that "you have to retain him" (14) as if, on top of paying the lawyer, one were supposed to support him for life...

On the whole, the degree of actual collaboration with Benati remains open to conjecture. In theory, the Italian scholar states that he supervised the translation and helped Bernardi omit certain troublesome features of dialect she did not understand, such as the "che" at the beginning of sentences (Libriadaltavoce). In practice, the awkward "which" of the translation is still there throughout, as in Bernardi's version of the passage quoted at the beginning of this article:

> do I have to be like what's-his-name, me, like Dino Manfroni? who's always speaking in correct Italian, yes, I understand, he's got a degree, he can't talk in dialect, *which* doesn't suit him, *which* I speak in correct Italian too, when it's the right time, when talking in Italian is necessary (37, italics added).

What is more critical, however, is that Bernardi – as a result of translating from the Italian version – in turn produced a serviceable translation without any particular attempt to mimic the constant flow and shifts between some standard and non-standard language. In the end, of the five strategies indicated by Manuela Perteghella for translating dialect for the theatre, Bernardi chose standardization, or "[t]o substitute dialect, slang, and jargon with standard language [. . .] sometimes dotted with occasional colloquialisms" (51).[8] Obviously, the readers, performers, or spectators of *Page Proof* have no original to glance at and no way of reconstructing the continuum. As a result, "if this type of text is used for a stage production, the characterization will lose its strength and the dialogues some of the musicality and colorfulness of the source dialogue."[9]

In theory, Bernardi was perfectly equipped for this task because she grew up in a family that actively employed dialect and its variants, both alone and in combination with what she calls Highwoodese, "a kind of broken Midwest-, Chicago-English" (Browning).[10] In practice, this exceptional expertise was left untapped and the translation of *Carta canta* into English has the taste of a missed opportunity.

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[8] Perteghella also lists 1. dialect compilation ("a mixture of target dialects or idioms"), 2. pseudo-dialect translation ("a fictitious, indistinct dialect"), 3. parallel dialect translation, i.e., the use of a dialect "of another specific target language [. . .] that has similar connotations and occupies an analogous position in the target linguistic system," and 4. the localization of dialect "into another specific to the target-language frame" (50).

[9] The wave of standardization initiated in the American context has come full circle in some recent, and surprising, statements by Benati. In a video of his performance of *Carta canta* in Reggio Emilia for the event *Libri ad alta voce* (20 January 2011) he states that Baldini, by translating his own pieces, "obtained an effect of specularity so that the Italian has the same effect than the poetry in dialect." As a result, Benati reads a part of the monologue in Italian as if his voice were a disembodied instrument among the others that accompany his performance. Thus, we have two of Baldini's strongest supporters on both sides of the Atlantic who have chosen, at least in this case, to privilege content at the expense of dialect, quite a reversal – it would seem – of Baldini's artistic philosophy.

[10] Here is Bernardi's account of the variety of her unique linguistic upbringing: "My grandparents all spoke 'the dialect,' as it was called by my parents. Three of them spoke it exclusively and did not speak Italian. My maternal grandmother spoke both standard Italian, as well as the dialect. My mother's first language

Clearly, the challenge of transferring this monologue to another culture is not for the faint of heart. As Baldini found it difficult to translate Achternbusch's German dialect for Marescotti, a translator of Baldini's work is in a similar situation. In addition, Baldini's accomplishments are the final product of centuries of experimentation in the Italian dramatic tradition and the search for an equivalent solution may be difficult for someone living in the United States, where differences in terms of regional dialects are not so marked. Yet, because the differential between dialect and Italian in *Carta canta* also entails a connotation of social revenge, a possible solution could have been the use of a social dialect as opposed to standard English, i.e., the English of an uneducated shopkeeper as opposed to a more refined, bureaucratic variant.

What is truly indispensable is to acknowledge the importance of the formal mechanism of constant transition between linguistic layers. Not only is it one of the themes of the monologue, but it also engenders much of its tension and dramatic potential.

In sum, the fact that the work has indeed pierced the linguistic barrier is a point of merit for both translator and editor and we can only sympathize with their endeavors. However, without clearer intentions, tighter collaboration, and higher stakes it becomes almost pointless to translate for the theatre. The playtext does not enter the canon of actually performed plays in the new culture and remains, at best, opaque literature. Last, but not least, the team of translators should really plan on including professional performers in the process. Their advice would be invaluable in taking more risks and finally producing a version that is the real "thing" rather than just "the paint."

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was Italian; my father's first language was dialect. My mother does not speak a dialect. She and her mother spoke to each other in Italian; my mother's parents spoke to each other in dialect. My father spoke to his parents in dialect; his parents spoke to each other in dialect. The dialects of my grandparents were technically the same; yet they were from different towns, and these towns had very different words and different gestures. They sounded different. My parents did not speak Italian to me. My grandparents spoke in Italian or dialect to me" (Browning).

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