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Italian Soundscape in Performance: Voices, Accents and Local Sonorities of Shakespeare's History Plays in Italy (2000-2020)*

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While scholarship on the utilization of dialects and accents in stagings of Shakespeare's plays on the British stage has recently emerged (Massai 2020; Lee 2020), systematic discussions on the "theatre phonetics" (Calamai 2006, xvi, my translation) of Italian Shakespearean productions struggle to be initiated. In particular, scholarly output seems to limit itself to various references to or a mild consideration of single productions, or even to gloss over the treatment of histories. As a result, this paper engages with performances of history plays in the first two decades of the new millennium, from 2000 to 2020, with the aim of determining their phonetic garment. Through a qualitative analysis of reviews, websites, videos and information provided by theatre practitioners, I investigate whether standard Italian, accents or dialects are used in performances put on in Italian theatres in the selected time frame, showing the limited embracement of phonetic alterity. In addition, only partially drawing inspiration from the publications of the English-speaking world, I focus on critical attitudes and expectations towards the Shakespearean (translated) language and go beyond the phonetic dimension, which reveals the existence of prefabricated ideas. From a broader perspective, my research ultimately aims to contribute to informing international aural and reception studies centred on Shakespeare as an author performed worldwide.

Keywords: Italian, Dialects, Accents, Sonorities, Histories, Performances, Italian scholarship

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Introduction

As Paula Blank puts it, Shakespeare's texts only "offer a smattering of regional dialect words or pronunciations, including some from the playwright's native Warwickshire" (Blank 2016, 219)[1]. Yet, in more recent years, unrecorded local sonorities have been utilized in the staging of the Shakespeare's works, at least on the British stage. In fact, regional accents, 'unwritten' in the plays, have been employed in productions ascribable to, among the others, the Complete Works Festival (2006-2007) and the World Shakespeare Festival (2012)[2]. Albeit not always appreciated by critics, some of the performances have stimulated reflection and discussion regarding aural diversity, and have recently resulted in scientific publications such as *Shakespeare's Accents* by Sonia Massai (2020) and *Shakespeare and Accentism* edited by Adele Lee (2020), prone to analyzing critical attitudes towards the stagings[3].

In light of this sonic 'enrichment' marking the British stage and subsequent scholarly investigation, we might ask whether the Italian theatre, immersed in a linguistically rich country, has also indulged in Shakespearean acoustic experimentation. Such a hypothesis, far from being solely based on Italy's sociolinguistic situation, could also be suggested by the following primarily theatrical factors: the country's long tradition of dialectal theatre (Stefanelli 2006, 133; Lucia 2018, 649) and the greater dramatic experimentation with accents in the second half of the twentieth

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1 The expression "a smattering of" conveys the idea of a small amount, which is echoed by Gelderen's reference to the author's 'non-abundant' use of dialect: "Shakespeare uses dialect for special purposes as well, but not abundantly" (Gelderen 2006, 188). Going back in time, already in the first half of the twentieth century, Willcock had acknowledged the presence of "[a] number of dialect words (some of them traceable to Warwickshire)" (Willcock 1934, 121), which, according to him, were not to be interpreted as indications of Shakespeare's "local patriotism" (120).

2 The productions in 'Original Pronunciation' (OP) were *Romeo and Juliet* (2004), *Troilus and Cressida* (2005), *Macbeth* (2014) and *Henry V* (2015), the last two of which corresponded to staged readings. According to David Crystal, in Shakespeare's day actors kept their native accents, which were superimposed on a common phonological system (Crystal 2005).

3 *Shakespeare and Accentism* encompasses but does not restrict itself to the British theatre.

century (Stefanelli 2011); the increasing contemporary use of such a dialect as Romanesco in genres other than comedies of manners (Giovanardi 2006; see also Giovanardi 2007, 62-90); the growing contemporary practice of retaining accent in performances (Stefanelli 2006, 127); the absence of "conflittualità" (conflict [Binazzi 2006, x]) between standard Italian and dialect (see also Stefanelli 2006, 136) and even between the national language and accents; and, last but surely not least, the translations/rewritings of Shakespearean works in dialects such as *The Tempest* by Eduardo De Filippo in the past century (Segnini 2017).

In fact, several phonetic experiments with the Shakespearean plays have been carried out in the last two decades. The Italian critical literature does not include large-scale works matching *Shakespeare's Accents* and *Shakespeare and Accentism*; rather, it limits itself to references to or discussions of single productions, with no systematic overview of the Shakespearean performances in dialects or accents. To start with, Cavecchi claims that many stagings such as *Ambleto* and *Macbetto* have been "flavoured" with regional languages (Cavecchi 2005, 15), and, according to Stefanelli, these productions, as well as Testori's *Edipus*, conflate "dialectal elements, Lombardisms, archaisms, Latinisms, low vocabulary of popular origin" (Stefanelli 2006, 135)[4]. Additionally, Montorfano briefly discusses regional accents and foreign languages in *Una acerba felicità*, inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*, and other productions of Gionfrida's (Montorfano 2018, 144-45). Interestingly, she maintains that the use of different languages or "multilingualism" has the purpose of "enrich[ing] performances with innovative and authentic elements of truth" (145)[5]. On the other hand, on analyzing

[4] Unless otherwise specified, all translation from Italian into English are mine. Recently, Margherita Dore discussed Alessandro Serra's *Macbettu* from a linguistic and translational point of view in her paper "Adaptation and Sur/Subtitling for the Theatre: *Macbettu* as a Case in Point", presented at Sapienza University's conference "Shakespeare, Austen and Audiovisual Translation: The Classics Translated on Screen" (1 July 2022).

[5] Another analysis by Valentini (2016) is halfway between theatre and cinema, which is more inclined to phonetic experimentation (Stefanelli 2006, 126-27; see also Ferrone 2006, 5). The scholar deals with the tragedy *Julius Caesar* as staged by Fabio Cavalli and presented by the Taviani brothers; such a production

Ruggero Cappuccio's *Sogno di una notte di mezz'estate* (2016), Lucia makes linguistic considerations and defines the production as "*de facto* reshaped and deformed also by the adoption of a strongly spurious language contaminated with the sound scores of the Neapolitan dialect of learned tradition" (Lucia 2018, 658). Therefore, individual stagings of Shakespearean tragedies and comedies[6] have, to some extent, attracted scholarly attention in terms of phonetics, whereas so far theatrical productions of histories[7] seem to have escaped such a scientific exploration.

Within this framework, this paper aims to take as a model recent scholarship surfacing in and concerning the British world, and to expand and enrich that strand of research that might go by the name of "theatre phonetics" (Calamai 2006, xvi) in relation to the productions of Shakespeare's plays in Italy. Given the dearth of studies specifically overviewing the phonetic dimension in the staging of histories, I have engaged with the latter in the first two decades of the new millennium, from 2000 to 2020, with the aim of determining their phonetic aspect[8]. Particularly, I have investigated

resorts to various regional languages such as Neapolitan and has the merit of facilitating the acting of the performers-prisoners, and of making the language "natural, spontaneous" (Valentini 2016, 188). It is interesting to notice that dialects seem to be particularly exploited in stagings in prison. In this regard, Tempera claims that "[t]ranslated into modern Italian or, more frequently, into a variety of dialects, the plays become linguistically accessible to the composite prison population and offer roles that can be successfully adapted to suit the personalities of the inmate players" (Tempera 2017, 265).

6 I have recently been made aware of Cimitile's (phonetic) analysis of Luigi Lo Cascio's *Otello* in Sicilian (2015) and Giuseppe Miale di Mauro's *Otello* in Neapolitan (2017) (Cimitile 2021).

7 As Ferrone and Stefanelli claim, in the previous century cinema has shown a greater predilection for phonetic experimentation than theatre (Ferrone 2006, 5; Stefanelli 2006, 126-27). Focusing on dubbed films, in the case of Olivier's *Henry V*, Nell Quickly's Cockney, a social accent, morphs into "a distinct Venetian cadence" (Soncini 2002, 171), which is reminiscent of *commedia dell'arte* and eliminates the more political shades of the original text (171-72). In addition, in the very same film "the Italian translator re-creates linguistic difference through non-standard lexico-syntactic and phonetic variants" for the three captains (172).

8 As inferable from Aebischer, the year 2020, marked by the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic, is a watershed for theatrical productions, which started experiencing a greater digital life (Aebischer 2021), so I chose to stop at its threshold.

whether standard Italian pronunciation, accents or dialects[9] are used in performances put on in Italian theatres in the selected time frame by prioritizing critical portrayals of the stagings. In addition, only partially drawing inspiration from the publications of the English-speaking world, I have taken into account critical perspectives, attitudes and expectations towards the Shakespearean (translated) language going beyond the phonetic dimension. In a broader perspective, such research would ultimately contribute to informing international aural and reception studies centred on Shakespeare as an author performed worldwide.

1. Investigating the Productions

Before delving into the actual findings of my investigation, it is worth specifying what plays were staged in the time period selected[10]. The sources consulted do not record any performances of *Henry VI*, *King John*, *Edward III* and *Henry VIII*, which were then condemned to utter oblivion. On the other hand, when it comes to the histories receiving theatrical attention in Italy, they correspond to the remaining plays – *Richard III*, *Sir Thomas More*, *Henry V*, *Henry IV* and *Richard II*[11] – and the total number of their performances amounts to twenty-six.

It must be pointed out that for the present study, after identifying the productions, I consulted various articles and reviews in the theatre magazines *Sipario* and *Hystrio* and in online repositories, the last of which also included scanned newspaper

[9] For the sake of clarity, dialects are varieties with "a particular set of words and grammatical structures" and "a distinctive pronunciation, or accent" (Crystal 2008, 142), whereas accents only concern pronunciation, revealing "where a person is from, regionally or socially" (3). In this paper, dialects will only be considered in relation to their phonetic aspects. From now on dialects will also be referred to as non-standard languages, non-standard language varieties and regional languages.

[10] I did not consider productions in foreign languages such as *El año de Ricardo* (2013) by Angélica Liddell, those put on by academies, and performances mounted or given by non-professionals.

[11] Here the short versions of the original titles have been used.

articles[12]. Due to the limited scope of my research and to the fact that it deals with quite recent, technology-based times – the first two decades of the twenty-first century – I accorded priority to online resources and tools[13]. The language varieties and accents employed in these retrieved productions will now be established, and a discussion of critical attitudes towards the Shakespearean language deployed in the retrieved productions will follow.

1.1. Standard Italian Pronunciation, Dialects or Accented Italians?

To start with, the majority of the twenty-six stagings under investigation seem to resort to the standard pronunciation of Italian, although a clear indication is not always provided. In fact, if in the case of Daniele Pecci's *Enrico V* (2017) the standard phonetic nature of the staging is implied by a reviewer[14], oftentimes the use

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[12] My study consisted of three phases: (1) identification of the theatrical stagings of Shakespearean history plays in the time frame 2000-2020, (2) creation of my corpus and (3) analysis with a focus on phonetic and linguistic elements. Firstly, to identify performances of histories, I had recourse to Gebbia's listings of Shakespearean productions in *Memoria di Shakespeare* (Gebbia 2002, 2003 and 2004), consulted Marenco's *Drammi storici* (Shakespeare 2017) and used the website Teatrionline and the search engine Google News, where the titles of the plays translated into Italian were typed in. In the latter two cases, articles and reviews were consulted, but, when it comes to Google News, only the results of the first twenty pages for each play were considered. Secondly, after identifying the productions in the two decades, I resolved to engage with the ones put on by professional actors or companies in Italian theatres. Having determined my object of analysis, including twenty-six stagings, I proceeded to build my corpus by retrieving reviews, articles, director's notes, videos and information from theatres and companies, which I contacted. Thirdly, once gathered and scanned all the relevant material, I analyzed it concentrating on the reconstruction of phonetic and linguistic elements for every production as emerging from my corpus. For a list of articles, reviews and video recordings consulted but not referenced in this paper, see Appendix.

[13] I have excluded the drama yearbook *Il Patalogo* from my research, in that it does not cover the entire time period under investigation in this paper – it was published only until the year 2009. In a future continuation of this study, I would broaden the scope of my investigation to include further print sources.

[14] "[…] *Enrico V* at the Silvano Toti Globe Theatre in Rome restores all the power and suggestion of the Bard's words, managing to retain the force, height and poeticity of Shakespeare's language and the work's evocative power *even in Italian*" (Boni 2017, emphasis mine).

of standard Italian pronunciation is not signalled whatsoever. For instance, whilst commenting on the linguistic dimension of d'Elia's *Riccardo III* (2008; 2018), three reviewers do not make the slightest reference to standard pronunciation, supposedly taking for granted its adoption (Caleffi 2009; Costa 2018; D'Amico 2018), and neither does the description of the production (Compagnia Corrado d'Elia, n.d.).

A further, not isolated example of the lack of (Italian) pronunciation specification in both reviews and the descriptions of stagings is given by Andrea De Rosa's production, *Falstaff* (2014). According to the director, the production is marked by "cheeky love of life, which manifests itself above all in the form of a love of language, of words, of wit, of the incessant creation of metaphors and wordplays" (Redazione 2014). Here De Rosa points to the value of language in his production but does not mention the kind of Italian adopted, which is, however, suggested by a video of a performance (Teatro Stabile Torino TST 2014) and by the involvement of the translator Nadia Fusini. Not dissimilar in terms of phonetic determination is Roma's and Benvenuti's emphasis on the staging's swearwords and insults, which does not shed light on the diction employed (Roma 2014; Benvenuti 2014).

Then, as standard Italian pronunciation is still of the utmost importance in theatre, its use can be assumed, and appears to be confirmed by the fact that there are no references to accents in the texts. As a matter of fact, reviews do not record, nor hint at, the use of any accent in productions, and, whilst this might be due to their actual absence, one cannot help but wonder how a play such as *Henry V* manages to do without any acoustic device for the characterization of the three phonetically differentiated captains in the three Italian performances retrieved. It cannot be excluded that grammatical errors might replace the anomalous sounds of the three characters; yet, such a solution would irreparably alter the phonetic value of the Shakespearean text, and assign a grammatical incompetence to the characters which they originally do not possess.

Unlike accents, non-standard language varieties or dialects are distinctly signalled or recoverable in the case of four productions: three revolving around *Richard III* and one centred on *Henry V*.

Northern or, more precisely, Lombard dialects are embedded in two stagings of the triad regarding "this sun of York", namely Mauro Maggioni's *Riccardo III. Non siamo sicuri, Clarence, non siamo sicuri* (2000) and Roberto Abbiati's *Riccardo l'infermo. Il mio regno per un pappagallo* (2007-2018), whereas Giuseppe Massa's *Riccardo III (overu la nascita dû novu putiri)* (2012) and Davide Migliorisi's *Enric V* (2019) rely on the Sicilian language. In Maggioni's *Riccardo III*, the title character and the ghosts or figments of Richard's conscience, who are of great significance in the staging, utter what sounds like translated Shakespearean lines, whose order often differs from the one in Shakespeare's play[15]. They appear to shape a rather homogenous linguistic universe, where the figures express themselves in a modern, solemn Italian; however, in this quite uniform microcosm, one exception is audible. Unfortunately, no review is available, but the recording of the production shows that from the beginning of the play, and on several occasions, Margaret adopts the Lombard language[16], which, if one considers the very nature of the former queen, can be read as an explicit sign of her opposition to the title character.

In Abbiati's *Riccardo l'infermo* as well, Northern sonorities are utilized, although it is not clear to what extent. The production, in which Richard becomes an actor impersonating the English king in a hospital, is depicted by one source as substituting English with the "dialect of the Lombard countryside" (Di Biase 2018), and Abbiati's notes themselves hint at such a replacement (Cronache Maceratesi 2014). Yet, as can be inferred from a video (Arti Vive 2011), colloquial Italian must also be available in this staging, which only retains fragments of Shakespeare's language and content (the production "blends Shakespearian shreds into the daily life of an actor/clown with his fears and encounters, the real ones, with people, with illness, with those who were there and this morning when he woke up are no more" [Di Biase 2018]). It can then be said that the Lombard variety is resorted to, seemingly in a limited manner.

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15 Internet Shakespeare Editions' *Richard III*, based on the First Folio (1623), has been taken into account (https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/Texts/R3).

16 I am unable to determine the exact type of language (e.g. Milanese) employed.

Not a Lombard variety but a Sicilian one[17] instead is adopted in Massa's *Riccardo III*. In a female-dominated staging, chiefly inhabited by Queen Elizabeth, Margaret and the Duchess of York, Trenti classifies the language used by the only performer on stage, Simona Malato, as archaic Sicilian (Trenti 2013). This visceral and ancestral dialect, as another source remarks, is apt to express the on-stage characters' lamentations and, thanks to them, the echoes of other lamentations supposedly originating from the bowels of the Sicilian land itself (Redazione 2012). Thus, the staging is rooted in the Sicilian language and Sicilianity, whose "anthropologically deeper characteristics" are explored by means of the Shakespearean play, and can be assumed to be linguistically other than *Richard III*, constituting a "free and original reworking of the text" (Redazione 2012).

Lastly, also entrenched in Sicilianity is *Enric V*, directed by Davide Migliorisi, featuring two, maximum three performers (Sturiale 2019)[18], and narrating the play's events such as the Hundred Years' War (Di Mauro 2019). The production configures itself as a comic "cunto siculo" (Sicilian tale [Sturiale 2019]), revolutionizes the Shakespearean language and remodels the original text according to the "idiomatic and declaiming" storytelling of the nineteenth-century Sicilian tradition (Redazione CT 2019). Thus, like in the case of Massa's *Riccardo III*, the Sicilian language does not appear as having an ornamental function in this staging but rather remolds the Shakespearean play adjusting it to – and nourishing it with – the Sicilian culture.

In summary, Italian is predominant in stagings of history plays, and, in terms of non-standard language varieties, only Sicilian and Lombard are used, or have been adequately indicated. Given the accessed descriptions, Lombard varieties are mixed with Italian, while Sicilian seems to be used from start to finish.

[17] I am using the definition as offered by the reviews.

[18] It is not clear what the function of the third actor is.

1.2. Attitudes and Expectations about Shakespeare's Language

Unlike the productions in regional languages, limited in number and reliant on a small amount of information, those in standard Italian, thanks to their relative abundance and the copiousness of the reviews retrieved, make it possible to reconstruct some of the critics' general attitudes and expectations about the (translated) Shakespearean language.

Starting on a rather positive note, the elegance and charm of the Italian texts are deeply appreciated in the stagings, and directly traced back to the Shakespearean language. Referring to Pecci's *Enrico V*, Boni maintains that the staging "restores all the power and fascination of the Bard's words, managing to retain the force, height and poeticity of Shakespeare's language and the work's evocative power even in Italian" (Boni 2017). A not dissimilar interest in elegance, previously labelled as "height", might hold true with reference to Peter Stein's *Richard II*, starring Maddalena Crippa: reviewers limit themselves to claim the staging's adherence to the Shakespearean language[19], but a video of the production seems to point to a lofty, high-sounding translation (Teatro Metastasio 2017). Albeit indirectly, the hypothesis of an elegant Shakespearean language appears as corroborated by Guarino arguing with regard to Bernardi's *Enrico IV* (2005-2007) that, at times, the translation is lexically and syntactically inappropriate to the depicted situations (Guarino 2007). Lastly, *Kings. Il Gioco del Potere* (2014) does not immediately appear linked to the idea of elegance – according to Facchinelli, it reproduces "the charm and density of the Shakespearean word" (Facchinelli 2014). However, charm could be seen as related to elegance if one bears in mind the link between "fascination" and "height" established by Boni[20].

[19] Montanino describes the dialogues as "extraordinarily close to those of the Bard" (Montanino 2017), while Bonci states that "Shakespeare's words resonate in space" (Bonci and Lucarelli 2017).

[20] Discussing Carniti's production (2019), Villatico defines the director's translation as "smooth, clear, with a relentless theatrical rhythm", and claims that, thanks to the performers, it reflects, at least partially, the extraordinary rhythmical richness of the original play (Villatico 2019). Consequently, to a lesser extent, rhythm could be another quality attributed to Shakespeare's language.

On the other hand, what seems to bother critics, even if only marginally, is foul language, which some attribute to modernization. It must be acknowledged that modern or contemporary language[21] in itself does not necessarily attract negative criticism. As an example, Vetrano and Randisi's *Riccardo III. L'avversario* (2018-2020), which, according to Vetrano himself, is set in the present time and makes use of contemporary language (Colasanto 2018), is greatly exalted, being described as "powerful" (Viesti 2019), "beautiful" and "sincere and poetic" (Bandettini 2019). Yet the use of obscene language, associated with modernity in at least one case, is perceived as inappropriate**.** An instance of this is given by Alessandro Gassman's *Riccardo III*, which, as the director himself reveals, is based on his desire to update the language "through a direct and unfiltered lexical structure" (Gassman 2013). Concretely speaking, the production, marked by considerable cuts affecting both characters and scenes (Raponi 2014), relies on contemporary language (Bruscella 2014), but, rather than colloquial Italian, a lexically and syntactically refined variety is in use, as the verb "contemplare" (to contemplate) and expressions like "di rozzo stampo" (of coarse moulding) suggest (Taskvideo Italia 2014). In this context, Raponi and Raciti lament Hastings's unjustified linguistic impudence: Raponi maintains that "at times the language appears far too modern with some lapses in style, see Hastings" (Raponi 2014), whereas Raciti tends to regard Hastings' foul language as a "pointless provocation", detached from the rest, and as only triggering "convulsive laughter" (Raciti 2014). Raponi's words, linking modernity to "some lapses in style", are not explicit about the presence of foul language, but, in the light of Raciti's clear description, they can easily be interpreted as referring to the use of obscene expressions.

Less openly critical, and more subtle, are the comments regarding the adoption of foul language in Andrea De Rosa's *Falstaff*, which mostly investigates the relation between father and

[21] Different videos point to the use of a modern language; yet, as I have not watched the entire productions, it is not possible for me to overgeneralize and claim with some degree of certainty that modern-sounding language was used in said performances.

son (Roma 2014), and stars Giuseppe Battiston. As has already been mentioned (see 1.1.), several critics point to the use of swearwords and insults. Specifically, Roma suggests their greater use on the part of Hal ("his language is more vulgar than the master's/father's" [Roma 2014]) and their general abundance ("Vulgarity and swearing, of which the show was overflowing, did not affect the Turin audience, who often applauded and laughed heartily at the right moments" [Roma 2014]), whilst Benvenuti signals their moderate adoption but recognizes the fact that these "scurrilous interjections" "may or may not offend the sensibilities of spectators" (Benvenuti 2014). As can be seen, the reviewers' words are not openly censorious, but Roma's lexical choice ("vulgar") and the very act of noticing the use of foul language on the part of both critics might suggest their surprise and a meagre attribution of insults to Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. For accuracy's sake, the productions might have exaggerated the use of obscene language, but it must also be borne in mind that the play is by no means exempt from it. On the contrary, it is characterized by conceptual and linguistic transgressiveness, ranging from Falstaff's life outside societal rules to the very presence of rude language and Hal's mastery of lower-class language, a form of subversiveness according to Blank (Blank 1996, 34-36)[22].

[22] If the use of foul language in productions is tendentially regarded as a form of 'abuse', the deletion of Shakespeare's words in the stagings is not. As two productions dramatizing *Richard III* show, a reconceptualization of Shakespearean plays – if well realized – is not unavoidably seen in a negative light. In the case of Andrea Gambuzza's *Riccardo alla terza. Disappunti di un dittatore* (2011), which highlights the resemblance between Shakespeare's politics and the contemporary one (Solinas 2015), only few passages of the Shakespearean script are retained (Solinas 2015), and, on the basis of a video of the show, the language in use can generally be assumed to be modern, even informal Italian (L'Orto degli Ananassi 2010). However, the linguistic, non-Shakespearean sphere does not draw any negative criticism; instead, Solinas appreciates Gambuzza's idea whereby the content of a text goes beyond its written component exploring the historical, social, and cultural circumstances originating it (Solinas 2015). Similarly positive is the portrayal of Mallus's *Riccardo III* (2018), set at the Globe in a post-apocalyptic future and focusing on the role of society in shaping Richard's monstrosity, and on his diversity (Teatro Carcano Milano, n.d.). As Camaldo claims, the production makes use of the

To sum up, as far as the productions under investigation are concerned, in quite a few cases critics seem to expect high-sounding, charming and non-vulgar Shakespearean words. While it is apparent that the semantic plane is involved, it cannot be excluded that, whenever the elegance and charm are invoked by some of the reviewers, the phonetic level is affected as well. The descriptions taken into account do not allow for a reading in terms of phonaesthetics, but the very existence of the discipline, the importance given to the sonic dimension in Shakespeare's day (Blake 1983; Barber 1997; Hope 2015) and the use of poetry in the original texts suggest that sensible and gifted translators might have shaped sounds in their translations, not just words.

Conclusion

The present study, which has looked into Shakespeare's histories performed in the period 2000-2020 in Italy, delineates a picture of the stagings as molded by the predominance of the standard Italian pronunciation, by the critics' positive attitude towards refined Italian, and their rejection of obscene words.

To begin with, as can be deduced, the adoption of the standard Italian pronunciation is prevalent, with only four productions turning to the Lombard and Sicilian dialects, and employing either some lines in regional languages (Maggioni's *Riccardo III*) or (presumably) entire scripts in non-standard varieties (Migliorisi's *Enric V*). As Massa's *Riccardo III* and Migliorisi's *Enric V* suggest, the use of dialect is linked to the recreation of local culture; yet, at least in two cases out of four, non-standard language varieties also seem to be rooted in, or at least carriers of, subalternity. In

play's most famous lines (Camaldo 2019), which suggests a general non-adherence to the original language, a hypothesis corroborated by linguistic modernity as displayed in a video of the production (Teatro Carcano 2019). Yet, irrespective of any presumable and 'objective' linguistic distance from the original play, Acquaviva argues that the retention of Shakespeare's "dramatic and lyrical power" is not affected in this staging (Acquaviva 2018), tinted by Palla's (vocal?) capacity to rapidly give life to characters (Camaldo 2019). That said, it is worthwhile to notice that the acceptance of major, almost total cuts should not be overgeneralized, but, in need of further evidence, it might be solely ascribed to rewritings rather than adaptations of the Shakespearean plays.

Maggioni's *Riccardo III* defiant Margaret is the only character using a different, non-standard variety, and in Massa's *Riccardo III* the female protagonists, who oppose, to a greater or lesser extent, Richard, are all implied to adopt Sicilian. Thus, as based on a superficial, external knowledge of the productions, it could be hypothesized that dialects, spoken by disruptive female figures, confirm Enzo Moscato's description, which equates them to languages "of the edge, of the limit" (Moscato 2006, 93). In other words, in the above-mentioned productions these non-standard languages appear to constitute (political) tools voicing and highlighting the subaltern nature of characters, as both opponents of Richard and as females. The production *Riccardo l'infermo* as well might lend itself to being read through the lenses of subalternity. The staging, revolving around an actor in a hospital, possibly conveys the idea of 'otherness' through disease, the opposite of the (allegedly) socially predominant healthiness. Such an idea might be emphasized on a phonetic level by means of Lombard sonorities, but such a reading mostly stems from conjectures and should be substantiated by textual or theatrical evidence.

About the non-standard languages of the productions, it has been noticed that of Italy's vast dialectal cauldron only Lombard and Sicilian have been adopted. One cannot help but wonder why only Sicilian, and no other dialect, is used as a tool for translating or rewriting Shakespeare's histories. More specifically, considering Eduardo De Filippo's twentieth-century translation into Neapolitan of *The Tempest* and the aliveness of such a dialect, pointed out by Segnini (Segnini 2017, 241), or even the strong presence of Romanesco in contemporary theatre (Giovanardi 2007), it is astonishing (and disappointing) to see that neither the language of Naples nor that of Rome features in any production (e.g. in Laura Angiulli's *Riccardo III. Invito a corte* staged in Naples, and in *Riccardo III* directed by Alessandro Gassman, a Roman actor and director).

Focusing on standard Italian diction, it is oftentimes not signalled and seems to be taken for granted, whereas regional languages are singled out, which points to the unsurprising association between the Shakespearean histories and the Italian standard pronunciation in the Peninsula. However, one doubt hovers over the phonetic dimension of the stagings: do the

mounted works only hinge on standard Italian diction, and resort to no accents at all? Given the critics' general specification of regional varieties, it could be plausible to discard the employment of accents in any of the investigated stagings, which, combined with the scant use of non-standard languages, appears as a missed opportunity for embracing the phonetic potential of Shakespeare's histories such as *Henry V*. Nonetheless, based on the increasing use of accents (see Introduction), it cannot be definitively ruled out that critics are or have grown insensitive to accented Italians and no longer record them, which would however result in the reviewers' inability to capture and identify possibly riveting nuances of performances.

Lastly, it has been shown that several comments generate the idea of the Shakespearean language as (sounding) elegant and charming. Such a conceptualization could be coupled with a more or less explicit refusal of foul language, which bucks current linguistically liberal trends and begs the following questions: Do Italian critics expect a softened version of Shakespeare's language? Are they familiar with the texts in English or only with their translations? The latter query opens up a broader issue regarding the legacy of the more prestigious translations of the Shakespearean works published in the twentieth century and probably still in use. For aesthetic or ideological reasons, the latter might have privileged and spread a 'polite' language, thereby creating the expectation that the plays are fundamentally genteel and do not feature or indulge in vulgar expressions. For the sake of precision, it must be highlighted that Shakespeare's works are not devoid of 'unrefined' expressions, an aspect stressed by several texts (Partridge 2001; Kiernan 2007), and nullifying their presence would risk watering down and misinterpreting the original works. That said, to answer the question concerning the use and pragmatic characteristics of Italian translations of Shakespeare's history plays, it would be necessary to conduct some large-scale research, which goes beyond the scope of the present study.

In closing, the phonetics of the stagings of the Shakespearean histories in the period 2000-2020 mostly assumes the guise of uniformity: the reviews depict a rather homogenous universe in which standard Italian diction is presumable, dialects appear in the

minority, accented Italians are not contemplated, and Shakespeare's language is not rarely expected to be elegant and non-scurrilous. The result is that the phonetic nuances of the playwright's works, but, even more, those of the Italian Peninsula, are not done justice to or adequately exploited. But, more importantly, when we think of how subalternity is conveyed by the use of dialect in some of the stagings, the scant adoption of non-standard language varieties makes Shakespeare's history plays lacking in this regard, and irremediably links the productions to a predominantly acoustic non-transgressiveness.

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