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## British Dialects in Animated Films: The Case of *Gnomeo & Juliet* and its Creative Italian Dubbing

### Abstract

*Gnomeo & Juliet* (Kelly Asbury, 2011) is a humorous animated adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy in which the feuding families are portrayed as garden gnomes who, after racing and fighting on lawnmowers, stealing orchids and chatting with the Bard's statue, live happily ever after, accompanied by Elton John's songs. The film is set in the UK and most of the characters speak British English. This paper examines how dialects are exploited in the original English version to define characters and analyses the creative domestication process whereby the story is turned into an Italian tale by using Italian regional dialects.

### 1. Introduction

This article sets up to explore how characters are linguistically connoted through the use of British (and other) dialects in the original English version of the animated film *Gnomeo & Juliet* (Asbury, 2011) and to analyse the strategies adopted by Italian dubbing professionals to transfer the story to Italy. The paper will describe how various dialects are employed for characterisation in the original version and how in the Italian dubbed version creative transfer, domestication and localisation take place, since added connotations and humour are conveyed through the use of Italian regional dialects.

*Gnomeo & Juliet* was chosen for various reasons. Firstly, because it is an extremely interesting and funny adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* which exploits intertextual allusions and visual as well as verbal humour to a great extent. Its humour is multilayered: while its primary audience are children, several allusions or jokes are directed at adults and

may thus not be grasped by children. This makes it a very challenging audiovisual text for translators to deal with. Secondly, because the story is set in Britain, the voice actors are mostly British and the film is a collaborative effort of British, American and Canadian filmmakers. Thirdly, because its Italian dubbed version emphasises Italian accents and dialects as a source of humour. This is an exception to the Italian tendency towards standardisation of linguistic variation.

As far as methodology is concerned, the investigation provided in this article is based on repeated viewing of the film, analysis of the English dialogue list, the transcription of the English and Italian dialogues and a close examination of their phonetic, lexical and syntactic features, comments by English and Italian native speakers about the accents and the vocabulary used in the original and dubbed versions, and interviews with one of the English screenwriters and the dubbing professionals who created the Italian version, i.e., the dubbing director, two dubbing actors and the supervisor of the Italian edition.<sup>1</sup>

## *2. Accents and dialects in films and in audiovisual translation*

As pointed out by several scholars, film dialogue tends to imitate natural conversation but it is nevertheless written to be spoken as if not written, it is a «planned, unplanned discourse» (Taylor 1999: 262) which constitutes a «prefabricated orality» (Chaume 2001). Even when film dialogue may seem realistic, the audience must always bear in mind that it is a carefully planned, artificial and crafted language that serves specific purposes. As observed by Kozloff:

In narrative films, dialogue may strive mightily to imitate natural conversation, but it is always an imitation. It has been scripted, written and rewritten, censored, polished,

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rehearsed, and performed. Even when lines are improvised on the set, they have been spoken by impersonators, judged, approved, and allowed to remain. Then all dialogue is recorded, edited, mixed, underscored, and played through stereophonic speakers with Dolby sound. The actual hesitations, repetitions, digressions, grunts, interruptions, and mutterings of everyday speech have either been pruned away, or, if not, deliberately included (Kozloff 2000: 18).

One of the functions of film dialogue is to provide characterisation and «reveal character» (Kozloff 2000: 44). In particular, filmmakers and actors exploit language varieties or dialects in order to identify characters and to create the fictional world of the film. The audience that «overhears» (Kozloff 2000) the characters' speeches will usually be able to situate the speakers in terms of their geographical, social or ethnic origin. As argued by Hodson, «the way in which a character speaks will correlate directly with their social and geographical background, and as audiences or readers we are accustomed to using these clues to help us understand the film or novel» (Hodson 2014: 5-6). Kozloff also points out that

Recognizable, clichéd dialects are used onscreen to sketch in a character's past and cultural heritage, to locate each person in terms of his or her financial standing, education level, geographical background, or ethnic group. Thus, screen dialects lead directly into the problems of stereotyping (2000: 31).

The above observations can also apply to the genre of animated films, even if dialogue in cartoons does not purport to be real, does not claim to be an authentic portrayal of spontaneous speech. In her detailed analysis of Disney films, Lippi-Green argues that «in animated film [...] language is used as a quick way to build character and reaffirm stereotype» (1997: 85). Dialects and accents are often used in this genre to provide characterisation, to construct identities, to establish a specific setting, to create/reinforce stereotypes as well as to trigger humour (Lippi-Green 1997; Barra 2007; Chiaro 2008; Puddu and Virdis 2014 on *The Simpsons*; Bruti 2009 on *The Aristocats* and 2014 on *Rio*; Minutella 2014 on *Shrek*, among others). Moreover, specific language varieties tend to convey certain connotations. For instance, British English is often employed in Disney films to connote evil characters (Lippi-Green, 1997: 122; Chiaro

2008: 16; Corrius and Zabalbeascoa, 2011: 121; Minutella 2014: 70), while a French accent is adopted to set the story in France (as in *Ratatouille*) or for characters who are stereotypically associated with «food preparation or presentation» or are seductive (Lippi Green 1997: 100; Minutella 2014: 70).

Dialects, however, do not have equivalents in another culture. As observed by Chiaro (2010: 9):

possibly the most difficult feature affecting the quality of screen translation is language variation. Variety is frequently used for humorous purposes – suffice it to think of how comedians all over the world use regional accents in their repertoire. But what to do about regional variation in translation is indeed a thorny issue. Is the source variety to be replaced with a target variety? Is it to be flattened by simply replacing it with a standard target form?

Dialects are difficult – and “dangerous” – to transfer into another language. Replacing a source language variety with a target language variety would run the risk of adding unintended effects, rendering the characters comic or grotesque (Galassi 1994: 66-67) and creating or reaffirming stereotypes belonging to the target culture. In Chiaro’s words, «stereotypical connotations attached to Italian dialects would run a serious risk of complicating matters further» (Chiaro 2008: 11). As a result, a widespread practice in audiovisual translation is that of levelling out or reducing the linguistic variation of the source text: «a common strategy to deal with variation is simply not to deal with it and homogenize it into the standard, mainstream variety of the target language» (Chiaro 2008: 23). For instance, in her analysis of the Italian dubbing of *Rio*, Bruti has observed that «what is diastratically and diaphasically marked in the original is turned into a sort of neutralised neo-standard (“italiano dell’uso medio”) with very little variation and mainly applying to vocabulary» (Bruti 2014: 96). Both accent and morphosyntactic variation are obliterated, and an attempt at conveying a colloquial register is made through some colloquial lexical choices (ibid: 96-97).

In Italy the norm seems to be that of homogenising English dialects using standard Italian and there is a tendency to refrain from using Italian regional dialects and accents in order to avoid unintended effects and stereotyping. The language of dubbing is supposed to have a neutral accent, and great care is taken in the dubbing studio to ensure that the dubbing actors' pronunciation complies with the norms of proper diction and that it is clear and regionally unmarked. Personal interviews with dubbing practitioners and observation of dubbing sessions also corroborate this point (Morville 2015, 2016; Alto 2016; Di Carlo 2016; Guadagno 2016; Mete 2016; Paccagnella 2016).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, a common dubbing stereotype is that of dubbing Italo-Americans, especially if they are thugs or mobsters, with a Sicilian accent (Pavesi 2005; Rossi 2006; Chiaro 2008; Parini 2009 among others). However, although standardisation and homogenisation are the norm, a few exceptions, especially in comedies and animated films, can be observed (Chiaro 2008; Bruti 2009; Parini 2009; Ranzato 2010; Minutella 2014, 2015 among others). Pavesi argues that «nel doppiaggio il dialetto o l'italiano regionale rimangono riservati, ancora per lo più, a personaggi fantastici o comici» (1994: 132). In some cases Italian dubbing professionals creatively resort to target language regional varieties of Italian, dialects and ethnolects, thus adding a further layer of meaning to the audiovisual product, which is domesticated and localised. A case in point is *My Fair Lady* (1964), in which Eliza Doolittle's contrived, «quite forced, “laboratory” Cockney» is turned into «a mixture of Neapolitan and Barese [...], a non-existent Italian language» (Ranzato 2010: 114). Animated feature films also provide interesting case studies. For instance, the successful Italian version of *The Aristocats* (1970) turned Thomas O' Malley into “Romeo, er mejo der Colosseo” and resorted to English-accented Italian for the Gabble sisters and stereotyped foreign-accented Italian for the cats in Scat Cat's jazz band (Bruti 2009). As regards ethnolects, or «ethnic varieties of the

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<sup>2</sup> Personal communications with Roberto Morville, 17 June 2015, 28 January 2016; Massimiliano Alto, 25 January 2016; Elena Di Carlo, 21 January 2016; Marco Guadagno, 7 January 2016; Marco Mete, 7 February 2016; Serena Paccagnella, 8 February 2016.

majority language» (Salmon 2000), analysis of several animated films seems to suggest that foreign-accented English in the original versions is often rendered with foreign-accented Italian in dubbing. For example, Italo-American was turned into Sicilian in *Lady and the Tramp* in 1955 and then into Neapolitan in the 1997 redubbing (Rossi 2006; Pavesi 1994), and with Sicilian and Neapolitan in *Shark Tale*. Ethnolect or foreign-accented Italian is used for Puss in Boots (Spanish accent), the three little pigs (German accent), Monsieur Hood and the Muffin Man (French accent) in *Shrek* (Minutella 2014, 2015). Moreover, stereotyped Italian regional dialects are exploited in the Italian dubbing of *The Simpsons* (Fusari 2007; Puddu and Viridis 2014; Barra 2007; Ferrari 2010).

One of the reasons why animation is more prone to adopt localised regional dialects is its lack of verisimilitude and its comic function. According to Ferrari, «marked (localized) accents, therefore, simply offer an additional humorous element in the already abundant range of extravagant sound effects common in animation. *The Simpsons*, in fact, represents but one case that exemplifies the tendency of using regionalized accents in Italy to increase the comical effect of animated characters» (2010: 45).

The Italian version of *Gnomeo & Juliet* is another recent case of added connotation and humour in dubbing since the garden gnomes – which in the original have mainly British accents – speak with Southern versus Northern Italian regional dialects. The following section will describe the original English version of *Gnomeo & Juliet* and its exploitation of various British and some American dialects to portray characters, while section 4 will analyse the Italian dubbed version of the film.

### *3. Language variation in Gnomeo & Juliet: the original version*

*Gnomeo & Juliet* was directed by American Kelly Asbury and produced by Touchstone Pictures, Elton John's Rocket Pictures, Miramax Films and Starz Animation and distributed in Europe by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures. It is worth pointing out that the screenplay was originally written

by British writers Rob Sprackling and John R. Smith in 1999 but it took the story twelve years to be developed into a film. As pointed out by Sprackling and Smith,<sup>3</sup> it was initially difficult for them to sell their story since garden gnomes were unknown in the USA. Moreover, perhaps the idea of using Shakespeare (too high-brow? too British?) and garden gnomes (too British? too kitsch?) was not considered a winning one. After Elton John's Rocket Pictures bought the screenplay and Disney's Touchstone Pictures decided to develop the film, Kelly Asbury, other screenwriters and producers joined in and modified the original script, writing and rewriting it, adding and pruning elements. Sprackling explains «the journey of the script from [his] perspective» in the following way:

I thought it would be funny and interesting to cross silly, kitsch, pointless garden ornaments with a heroic/dramatic love story. Once I made the connection between Romeo and Gnomeo the idea was formed. John and I then developed the idea and wrote the original screenplay, which established the broad tone and humour of the movie and laid out the critical story beats [...]. Disney [...] bought the film. After that, we went through a process of evolving the script further with the producers at Rocket. We did several treatments - developing the story and pushing it closer in terms of structure and characters, towards Shakespeare's original. After this [...] the producers brought in some new writers to develop it on the next leg of its journey. It then went on a very circuitous route over a ten year period [...] until eventually a new executive came on board - and took the story back to our original premise. After that, a lot of new jokes and ideas flooded in from the final set of writers who came on board - as well as from the director and producer, which we believe improved the script a lot.<sup>4</sup>

The genesis of the film and of the screenplay is of particular importance for our analysis, since it shows how the film dialogues as we hear them are the result of a collective effort, a long rewriting process in which several authors were involved. Various screenwriters (9 according to the IMDB),

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Rob Sprackling "What's the most ridiculous way you could tell that story?": <http://www.filmclub.org/behind-the-scenes/details/385/rob-sprackling>; Interview with John R. Smith: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-12486093>

<sup>4</sup> Rob Sprackling, personal communication, 14 June 2016.

the director, producer as well as the actors contributed to create the final version of the film.

In terms of plot and characters, *Gnomeo & Juliet* is a humorous, happy ending adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy in which the feuding families are portrayed as ceramic garden gnomes (the Reds and the Blues) living in the gardens of neighbouring Ms Montague and Mr Capulet, who hate one another. After lawnmower races and fights, stealing orchids and chatting with the Bard's statue, the star-crossed lovers live happily ever after, accompanied by Elton John's songs.

The film's "Britishness" is conveyed through various visual, verbal and music elements. Firstly, it is a rewriting of Shakespeare's tragedy which also contains several humorous (mis-)quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* («Red! I hate the word!»; «What's in a gnome?»; «Parting is such sweet sorrow»; «A weed, by any other name, is still a weed»; etc.) and from other famous Shakespeare's plays («Out! Damn, Spot!» from *Macbeth*; «Unleash the dogs of war!» from *Julius Caesar*; «Good night, sweet prince; and flights of angels» from *Hamlet* are only some examples). Moreover, the on-screen text often contains humorous puns and allusions to Shakespeare's works («Hamlet», «Taming of the Glue», «As You like it», «Tempest Teapots», etc.). The British setting is also constructed through several visual references: the typical British semi-detached houses with their gardens, the Verona Drive sign, the double decker bus with Stratford-upon-Avon written on it, and Shakespeare's bronze statue among others. Moreover, Elton John's soundtrack (containing some of his famous songs and three new ones composed for the film) contributes to convey a British atmosphere. The famous musician is also visually present since in one scene Paris looks like him and sings *Your song* in Nanette's imagination.

### 3.1. *The characters' voices*

Voice actors were also chosen accordingly, so as to give the film a British identity. Most of the cast are British, but with some relevant American exceptions: Jim Cummings, who voices Featherstone (a pink plastic

flamingo that helps the lovers and corresponds to Friar Laurence), Dolly Parton, who lends her voice and appearance to a Dolly Gnome that starts the lawnmower race, Hulk Hogan, who voices Terrafirminator (the terrible lawnmower which almost kills Gnomeo and Juliet and destroys the two gardens) and Kelly Asbury, voice of the red Good Gnomes. The film opens with one of these gnomes on a theatre stage. With an American accent, the gnome introduces the story saying that it «has been told before», «a lot», and reads part of Shakespeare's Prologue which, in his own words, is «rather long» and «boring». The above characters do not belong to the two feuding families and their being different is conveyed also through their distinguishable American accents. Anyone would recognise the famous wrestler as the voice of Terrafirminator («a weapon of grass destruction»). The blonde and sexy Dolly Gnome, voiced by country singer Dolly Parton, has a strong, Southern American accent, and her speech presents prosodic and pronunciation features typical of rural Southern English such as «exaggerated pitch peaks», «simplification of final consonant clusters» and realisation of [ɪn] for unstressed final *-ing* (Thomas 2004: 305, 321), combined with colloquial, non-standard verb forms (*wanna*, *gonna*), as illustrated in the following lines:

DOLLY GNOME: Okay, boys, y'all know the rules and I don't need to repeat 'em. But I'm gonna, 'cause I wanna. And here they are: No bitin', no scratchin', no kickin', no burpin', no slurpin', no cussin', no squallin', no rasslin', no heein', no hawin', and more than anything, no cheatin'!

On the other hand, the lovers' friend and helper Featherstone is given a contrived Spanish accent, his dialogue is peppered with Spanish words and phrases such as «Hola», «Como está usted?», «Bueno» and he also uses non-standard grammar («I go to sit down now»; «No one for to talk at»; «I getting into this now»; «I couldn't do nothing about it», etc.). His dialect and frequent mistakes portray him as not being a native speaker of English, and more specifically as being Latin American. Visual elements (his pink colour, the plastic material) combine with ethnolect to provide characterisation and distance him from the two British feuding families.

However, it is worth pointing out that the audience can tell that the actor voicing Featherstone is not really a native speaker of Spanish and that his accent is contrived.

Apart from these recognisably non-British characters, the British setting and identity of the protagonists is conveyed through the casting of several English and Scottish actors who speak with various types of regional and social British dialects. According to a survey carried out among British native speakers of English, none of the characters is perceived as having evident, marked phonetic traits typical of specific regional dialects and most of the differences seem to be in terms of social dialects and formal or informal registers. Most of the characters were recognised as coming from a generic South, except for Juliet's nurse - the frog Nanette - who has a Scottish accent but does not use any lexical items typical of Scottish English. Gnomeo is perceived as having a more working-class, East end of London accent, Juliet as speaking a middle-class Standard English, Lady Bluebury has quite a posh Received Pronunciation, while Lord Redbrick's accent is recognised as being more working-class. Benny's and Tybalt's accents also seem to be working-class, East-end-of-London, whereas Paris has a more Southwestern, Bristolian accent and Shakespeare's statue speaks with a not too marked Received Pronunciation. However, accents and dialects do not seem to be particularly strong or marked, they are more stylised. as they give a hint of the characters' British identity. This is confirmed by Scottish actor James McAvoy (who has quite a broad Scottish accent when he speaks naturally). In an interview he explained that for the role of Gnomeo he was asked to change his accent and to do «this kind of South-Easty kind of sound» but «they didn't want anything that was a massive characterization.»<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Exclusive Interview: Gnomeo And Juliet's James McAvoy By Eric Eisenberg (2011-02-09): <http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Exclusive-Interview-Gnomeo-And-Juliet-s-James-McAvoy-23092.html>.

A linguistic analysis of the film dialogues and the British native speakers' comments may suggest that the function of British accents and dialects in *Gnomeo & Juliet* is to establish the setting of the story (Southern England), to give a British flavour, to provide some kind of regional and/or social characterisation, but without being too realistic and without emphasising phonetic and syntactic features which may create caricatures or may hinder comprehension for a wide audience.

### *3.2. Dialects and accents: a linguistic analysis*

The main dialects represented in the film dialogues will be described below in more detail, so as to show the linguistic characterisation of some of the protagonists. As far as pronunciation is concerned, Gnomeo's utterances in the film sometimes contain instances of H-dropping, T-glottalling and realisations of [ɪn] for unstressed final *-ing*, as well as a few occurrences of TH-fronting, in particular the realization of /θ/ as the corresponding labiodental fricative [f]. These are features typical of a South-East, London accent and an informal speech style, in particular of young generations of speakers (Docherty 2010: 65).<sup>6</sup> For instance, as pointed out by Altendorf and Watt, «despite its wide geographical dissemination, T-glottalling has a tradition of being regarded as a stereotype of London English» (2004: 192-193). Moreover, glottalisation is also linked to social class: it tends to be more frequently used by working-class people whereas «middle-class speakers differ from working-class speakers by avoiding the glottal variant in socially sensitive positions when speaking in more formal styles». As a result, glottalisation in «word-internal intervocalic position (as in *butter*)» is highly stigmatised (Altendorf and Watt 2004: 293). Gnomeo's

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<sup>6</sup> T- glottalling “is an age-specific feature, rather than characteristic of a particular accent and it can be heard among younger speakers across the UK.” [http://www.bl.uk/search/learning/search?q=cache:Vri0OlrpRfAJ:www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/regional-voices/social-variation/+dialects&output=xml\\_no\\_dtd&proxystylesheet=public\\_learning&client=public\\_learning&site=public\\_learning&ie=UTF-8&access=p&oe=UTF-8](http://www.bl.uk/search/learning/search?q=cache:Vri0OlrpRfAJ:www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/regional-voices/social-variation/+dialects&output=xml_no_dtd&proxystylesheet=public_learning&client=public_learning&site=public_learning&ie=UTF-8&access=p&oe=UTF-8)

exchange with the statue of Shakespeare (voiced by Patrick Stewart) illustrates the contrast between Gnomeo's colloquial, South-East, youth speech style (in bold) and Shakespeare's refined RP accent and formal lexical choices (underlined):

SHAKESPEARE: Extraordinary. Your story, it-it does put me in mind of another.

GNOMEO: It does?

SHAKESPEARE: Oh, indeed! Yes, there are remarkable similarities.

GNOMEO: Whoa! What happens? Do they get back together, then?

SHAKESPEARE: Get back together? Um, no, not exactly.

GNOMEO: What exactly do you mean?

SHAKESPEARE: Well, now, it really is quite good. She feigns her death. He finds her, thinks her dead, takes his own life. She wakes, finds him dead, takes her life, both dead, exeunt omnes, the end, curtain! Standing ovation! Bravo! Bravo! Author! Author! Hmm.

GNOMEO: Whoa, whoa. Whoa! Ah! What did you say? They both die! What kind of an ending is that?

SHAKESPEARE: My dear boy, this is a tragedy.

GNOMEO: **Yeah**, you're telling me, **mate**. It's **rubbish!**

SHAKESPEARE: Rubbish?

GNOMEO: There's **gotta** be a better ending than that!

SHAKESPEARE: Well. I suppose that he could have made it back in time to avert disaster, but I like the whole death part better. ... Oh, dear.

As regards lexical and syntactic choices, Gnomeo uses colloquial words such as *yeah*, *mate*, *rubbish* and *gotta*, and more direct questions and statements. *Mate* is a typical British English colloquial word used as a vocative, which Gnomeo pronounces with a glottal stop, as /meɪ/ rather than /meɪt/. When Gnomeo says «What did you say? They both die! What kind of an ending is that?», and «there's gotta be a better ending than that» we can hear T-glottalling in *what*, *that*, *better* and TH-fronting in the realization of *both* (/f/ rather than /θ/). Shakespeare's statue, on the other hand, uses a formal vocabulary, with Latinate words and Received Pronunciation. However, it should be pointed out that there is not always consistency in pronunciation patterns in Gnomeo's dialogues, but only some hints at a specific dialect and register, probably due to the fact that, as pointed above, McAvoy had to contrive the accent and that the director did not want an exaggerated characterisation.

The fiery and aggressive Tybalt – voiced by Jason Statham – also presents some phonetic features typical of South-Eastern, London, working-class dialect, uses a colloquial register and some non-standard grammar. For instance, when he finds Juliet outside their garden at night he says: «Juliet! You're not allowed off your pedestal. What you doing out in the alley?», where we can notice several instances of T-glottalling (in *not*, *what* and *out*). Moreover, «what you» is pronounced as [wju:], the pronunciation of «out» shows T-glottalling as well as the process of *smoothing* ('out' > [ɑ:]) since the second part of the diphthong is lost, while the prepositional phrase «in the alley» is realised as [nɪ'æli]. The above phonetic features, together with the use of non-standard grammar, i.e., the omission of the auxiliary “are” in «what you doing», contribute to connote the character in terms of geographical origin, social class and age. However, we should point out that Tybalt does not have a marked, Cockney accent since TH-fronting and H-dropping are not very frequent in his speech.

Juliet (voiced by Emily Blunt) is perceived as having a Southern accent, closer to RP. However, she also uses colloquial words and expressions such as «*Hiya*, Dad!» and sometimes resorts to T-glottalling in pre-vocalic position, as in «I, um, *certainly* haven't seen him.»

Juliet's father, Lord Redbrick, is voiced by Michael Caine, who is well known for his portrayal of British working class. Caine is famous for having refused to “talk posh”, adopting Received Pronunciation in order to become an actor, and for having retained his Cockney accent.<sup>7</sup> In *Gnomeo & Juliet* Caine's distinctive voice and accent are recognisable and, together with some specific lexical choices, they contribute to create Lord Redbrick's identity as a working-class, uneducated Southern character. Juliet's father in fact tries to use a formal vocabulary, especially when he addresses his enemy, the posh Lady Bluebury (voiced by Maggie Smith), or when he speaks to his daughter and wants to sound more authoritative.

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<sup>7</sup> “Michael Caine: tales of a jobbing Cockney”: <http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/movies/michael-caine-theses-of-a-jobbing-cockney-34385708.html>, published 24/01/2016.

However, Lady Bluebury mocks him and despises him as his attempts at style-shifting usually fail. He makes frequent mistakes since he mispronounces words or does not understand their meaning, as in the following exchange at the beginning of the film:

LADY BLUEBURY: Top of the morning, Lord Redbrick!

LORD REDBRICK: Lady Bluebury.

LADY BLUEBURY: Your tulips are looking a little limp this year, aren't they?

LORD REDBRICK: Oh! I don't like what you're incinerating!

LADY BLUEBURY: The proper word is "insinuating." Illiterate.

LORD REDBRICK: I am not illiterate! My parents were married!

While the head of the Reds has a clear working-class identity, the head of the Blues has a distinctive upper-class accent and uses a formal, at times also old-fashioned, vocabulary. For instance, in the above exchange Lady Bluebury's greeting, «Top of the morning», is quite unusual and perhaps humorous, since it is an old-fashioned, stereotypically Irish greeting which is not commonly used in Ireland and definitely not in England. The on-line *Collins English Dictionary* defines it as «a morning greeting regarded as characteristic of Irishmen». Maggie Smith gives an aristocratic identity to Lady Bluebury through her Received Pronunciation and her elocution. The different dialects used by Lord Redbrick and Lady Bluebury provide characterisation and contribute to highlight the contrast between the feuding families, which are not only visually, but also linguistically and socially distant.

When asked whether they had originally thought of social and geographical differentiation for the members of the two families, screenplay writer Rob Sprackling commented as follows:

Regarding class/geographic location - there was no clear divide intended - as in a working class family versus an upper class family, or North vs South. Like the Shakespeare original we wanted to keep it as «two households both alike in dignity» [...]. Though you are right to say Lady Blueberry was upper class, and Lord Redbrick was

more of a nouveau riche arriviste. [...] Some [accents] were written into the script. [...] Lord Redbrick had to be a self-made cockney (with all his malapropisms).<sup>8</sup>

Paris, voiced by Bristol-born comedian Stephen Merchant, has a Southern accent. Among the native speakers of British English who were interviewed for this study,<sup>9</sup> some recognised Paris's accent as South-Western, probably due to his intonation, while one Erasmus student clearly identified it as a Bristolian accent. However, the stereotypical "Bristol L" and other pronunciation features typical of the Bristol variety (Melchers and Shaw 2011: 52; Altendorf and Watt 2004: 198) do not emerge in Paris's speech. Nevertheless, his idiolect is quite peculiar and makes him sound a bit dull. When he addresses Juliet he speaks very fast, almost as if in a monologue, and with a mainly informal register (for instance, he uses "innit" - a non-standard tag typical of British English slang). However, he mixes colloquial words with technical terms that describe plants, as he seems obsessed with these. The fact that Paris is recognised as having a Bristol accent adds some stereotypical features to the character: a common perception in Britain is that Bristolians are farmers, simpletons, rustic (Altendorf and Watt 2004: 197) and somewhat thick (Kasprzak 2012). This links well with Paris's look and behaviour: he wears big glasses and grows strange plants, like the hybrid of foxglove and buttercup, which he calls "foxbutt" and gives to Juliet as «a small token of my affection».

PARIS Uh, **got** something for you. Here it is. Gypsophila. Lovely. Um, what does it mean? It means "lover of chalk." Although, ironically, it grows better in a clay soil. It's weird, **innit?** You think you got it down, and then **bam**, you do some reading, it turns out it likes clay soil. Even though you thought it was a lover of chalk. **Weird.**

JULIET Right. Well, it's been terribly nice speaking with you-

PARIS Where are you going? Stop! No! Uh, I don't- Obviously, do whatever you want. But my-my point was surely it's a bit rude to leave me on a first date.

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<sup>8</sup> Personal communication, 15 June 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Three British lecturers and some British Erasmus students attending a translation module at the University of Torino were asked to comment on the accents of the characters in the film.

While Juliet is not struck by Paris's gift, rhetorical skills and serenades, the frog Nanette (Juliet's Nurse), voiced by Scottish actress Ashley Jensen, falls in love with him. Nanette speaks with a Scottish accent. She can be said to speak a variety called Scottish Standard English, which is defined as «Standard English spoken with a Scottish accent» (Stuart-Smith 2004: 47), sometimes interspersed with a few lexical and syntactic Scotticisms (Melchers and Shaw 2011: 12). However, Nanette never uses any Scotticisms in vocabulary or grammar. Moreover, she sometimes utters words or expressions which are not British but rather American, such as «Nice junk in the trunk» (a slang American expression meaning “nice bottom” which she uses to comment on Juliet's outfit). According to the Scottish Erasmus students interviewed, Scottish people would not use this expression and her accent is not a realistic portrayal of how a real Scottish woman would speak. Jensen thus retained a Scottish accent, but playing down her own natural one, perhaps for the sake of intelligibility.<sup>10</sup> Having Jensen speak with her own natural Scottish accent might have hindered comprehension for a wide non-British audience and for children. Nanette's lines, which consist of predominantly British vocabulary but with some American expressions mixed in, could also be interpreted as an attempt by the voice actress and the screenwriters to create a character whose speech is highly humorous, contains some features typical of Scottish Standard English (SSE) and is nevertheless accessible to a wider, more international audience. An analysis of Nanette's utterances confirms that she adopts some phonetic features typical of SSE, but not to a great extent and that she is not always consistent throughout her speech. The following are some salient features of SSE that can be found in Nanette's lines:

- rhoticity – a characteristic usually associated with the varieties of Scotland (Stuart-Smith 2004: 56; Docherty 2010: 66; Melchers and

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<sup>10</sup> It should be borne in mind that the film *Trainspotting*, in which a broad Scottish accent was spoken, was partly dubbed in the United States so that the US public could understand the dialogues.

Shaw 2011: 65-70). She pronounces a rhotic r, sometimes with a trill, in words such as “gorgeous” > [ˈgɔrdʒɜs] («Is he totally gorgeous?»); “rotund belly” > [ˈrɔtʌnd ˈbe:lɪ] («Does he have a nice, rotund belly?»); “sparrows” > [ˈspɑ:roʒ]; “sorrow” > [ˈsɔɹɔ];

- dark /l/, which in some cases results in L vocalisation (Melchers and Shaw 2011: 66). It can be heard when Nanette says “little jokes”, pronounced as [lio ˈdʒɔʊks];
- Vowel length: due to the phenomenon of the “Scottish Vowel Length Rule (SVLR)” (Stuart-Smith 2004: 56-57), «“short” vowels sound quite long and “long” vowels rather shorter» if compared to RP (Melchers and Shaw 2011: 66). This can be noticed in Nanette’s pronunciation of “rotund belly” > [ˈrɔtʌnd ˈbe:lɪ] and “sparrows” > [ˈspɑ:roʒ].

Moreover, she also sometimes uses long vowels rather than RP’s diphthongs, or short vowels rather than long ones. Some humorous expressions uttered by Nanette are «Nice junk in the trunk» (American English slang), «Flipping, flaming Nora!» (“flipping” and “flaming” are British slang, quite old-fashioned intensifiers used euphemistically - *OED*, *CED* – “flaming Nora” is a euphemistic expression), and various colloquial words and expressions. Nanette, with her plump green body, huge red mouth, funny facial expressions and movements is the most comic character in the film, and Jensen’s voice quality, her loudness, her Scottish accent and several humorous lines contribute to create this image. Moreover, Nanette’s Scottish accent and behaviour can be associated with some British stereotypes of Northerners, who are considered «hard-working and humorous in the face of adversity, blunt speaking and straight-forward, friendly to strangers» (Wales 2006: 28). Another stereotype which can be seen in Nanette is the “strong collocation” «“Northern” and “working-class”» (Wales 2006: 167). Her role as Juliet’s nurse places her in a lower social condition which fits in with the stereotype.

Other stereotypes which seem to be triggered through dialects in the film are those which associate the London, East End accent with the uneducated working class (Lord Redbrick), RP with snob, more educated upper class, as well as the stereotype of Bristolians as rustic and simple. Last but not least, the distinctive Brummie accent and voice quality of Ozzy Osbourne, with his flat vowels and a slow pace, gives Tybalt's friend Fawn a specific characterisation which reinforces a negative stereotype: a recent study has pointed out that people with a Birmingham accent are perceived as having a low level of intelligence.<sup>11</sup> Fawn is arguably not the brightest guy in the garden, as confirmed by his surprise on how good the Chorus gnomes are when they immediately guess that a one-word movie that starts with "Spider" is "Spiderman". Sprackling explains that the character of «Fawn (who was originally written as a very large gnome) always had a slow Birmingham drawl in the script - which led to the casting of Ozzy Osbourne».<sup>12</sup>

As previously pointed out, the British setting of the film and the characters' identity are conveyed partly through lexical choices. The film dialogues contain a predominantly British vocabulary. "Oi; wizened old hag"; "Ya crumbly old codger"; "mate"; "rubbish"; "innit?"; "flipping, flaming Nora"; "oh my giddy aunt"; "no mucking about"; "fancy"; "smashing" are only some examples of words and expressions which are labelled as "British" in the *CED*. This mainly British English lexis is interspersed with some colloquial American lexical elements and various references to and quotations from American popular culture (i.e., films and TV series). As discussed above, British regional and social accents are also purposefully used and they sometimes reinforce specific stereotypes.

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<sup>11</sup> "How outdated stereotypes about British accents reinforce the glass ceiling", *The Conversation*, available at: <http://theconversation.com/how-outdated-stereotypes-about-british-accents-reinforce-the-class-ceiling-43683>; see also Furness, Hannah (2015), "Brummie accent 'worse than staying silent', study shows" *The Telegraph*, 16 July 2015, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/11745186/Brummie-accents-worse-than-staying-silent-study-shows.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication, 15 June 2016.

These linguistic cues show that the film dialogues are the result of a process of rewriting by various authors, from various backgrounds. However, analysis and the survey among native speakers has also revealed that dialectal features and accents are not emphasised, but are often stylised or downplayed. Moreover, as mentioned above, both highly stigmatised features of specific dialects (for instance, Cockney) and non-standard dialects tend to be avoided and some regional pronunciations are not always consistently reproduced, perhaps for the sake of intelligibility, i.e., in order to make the film accessible to children as well as to a wider American and international audience. It might thus be argued that «the filmmakers have chosen to strike a balance between allowing the characters to speak with enough of a dialect to sound convincing, while still being comprehensible to a national (and indeed international) audience» (Hodson 2014: 62). The above analysis has described how dialects, and in particular accents and lexical choices, are exploited in *Gnomeo & Juliet* to provide characterisation. The following section will analyse the Italian version of *Gnomeo & Juliet* and the linguistic resources employed by Italian dubbing professionals to transpose this film to Italy.

#### *4. Gnomeo and Juliet: the Italian dubbed version*

The Italian dubbed version of *Gnomeo & Juliet* immediately strikes the audience as being very different from the homogeneous, standard, neutral language of dubbing they are used to hearing and also quite distant from the mild characterisation of the original. Italian regional accents and dialects can be heard right from the start, in the words and accent of the Chorus gnome who introduces the story and reads the Prologue in a marked Pugliese accent (*raccondada; tande volte; due innamoraiti, sfortuneiti, separeiti; collochiemo*), as well as in the Veneto expression «*Ocio, piovel!*» [Watch out, it's raining!], uttered by the female sprinkler (who in the original version says a sarcastic “Oh, great!”). It is at once clear that, despite the British visual references, the story is transposed to Italy, to its place of origin, and it is adapted to the new cultural context. In the Italian

dubbed version the feuding families are opposed not only visually but also, and especially, linguistically, in terms of accent and to some extent vocabulary, according to an Italian North/South divide. The Blues speak with some kind of Lombardo or Veneto accent and dialect, while the Reds speak with accents and dialects from the South, like Sicilian, Calabrese, Neapolitan or Pugliese. Moreover, Gnomeo's and Juliet's helper and friend Featherstone, who lives in an in-between, neutral territory and acts as a mediator and a bridge between the families, speaks with a strong Roman accent, the sexy dolly gnome has a Romagnolo accent, while Shakespeare speaks Italian with an English accent signalling his British identity.

Before moving on to a description of the dubbed version, it is worth clarifying a terminological issue regarding language varieties in Italy. As pointed out by Cerruti:

The sociolinguistic situation of Italy is characterized by the presence of regional varieties of Italian, which is spoken alongside more than fifteen Italo-Romance dialects [...] The regional varieties of Italian are varieties of the national language that are spoken in different geographical areas. They differ both from each other and from standard Italian (henceforth SI) at all levels of the language system, especially with regard to phonetics, phonology and prosody, and represent the Italian actually spoken in contemporary Italy. Common Italian speakers regularly speak a regional variety of Italian, which is termed *regional Italian* (henceforth RI) (2011: 9).

While the language of dubbing usually adopts standard Italian with a neutral pronunciation, devoid of regional accents, intonation and vocabulary, in *Gnomeo and Juliet* several regional varieties of Italian with some lexical choices derived from Italo-Romance dialects are exploited to trigger humour while Standard Italian is not spoken.

In order to understand the reasons behind these extremely localising choices, the dubbing professionals who had worked on *Gnomeo & Juliet* were interviewed. Dubbing director Oreste Baldini<sup>13</sup>, dubbing actors

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<sup>13</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

Stefano Brusa<sup>14</sup> and Chiara Gioncardi<sup>15</sup> and Disney Character Voices International's creative director Roberto Morville<sup>16</sup> all pointed out that the dubbed version is the result of a series of creative rewritings aimed at rendering the text more humorous. Firstly, the English dialogues were translated and adapted into standard Italian by Cinzia De Carolis. These Italian dialogues were further rewritten and considerably modified, turned into regional varieties of Italian interspersed with local dialect words by Baldini, together with Morville and the dubbing actors who improvised in the dubbing studio, playing with Italian regional dialects. During the dubbing of the film the actors had fun improvising, inventing new lines, trying to find the right words to make the audience laugh. Each dubbing actor thus added some personal, dialectal elements that would contribute to enhance the humorous load of the Italian version.

The decision to localise the film using regional Italian and dialects was taken by Morville himself, who was responsible for the Italian version which he supervised through all its different stages. As explained by Morville, he found the original film humorous, but felt that the Italian adaptation, in standard Italian, was not equally funny: «Il film era molto divertente ma lasciava un po' perplesso il tutto, non riuscivamo a renderlo divertente.»<sup>17</sup> [the film was very funny but as a whole the Italian version did not convince us, we did not manage to make it funny.] This was perhaps due to the fact that some of the film's verbal and visual allusions, frequent intertextuality and self-referentiality (quotations from Shakespeare's plays and references to American pop culture) might be difficult to grasp for an Italian audience and perhaps also because some jokes were deemed difficult to understand or were considered vulgar. In order to make the product more humorous, the supervisor decided to resort to Italian regional dialects. He was aware that Italianising the story in such a way, using regional varieties and marked regional accents and

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<sup>14</sup> Personal communication, 6 June 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication, 17 June 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

lexical choices, would be a risky and debatable choice and that he could be criticised for it, but he decided to run this risk since his aim was to create an Italian version which would be as humorous as the English version. As explained by Morville, «l'idea era di localizzare questo film in maniera un po' ardita, "tradendo", anzi non tradendo, ma estrapolando, ciò che si ha nell'originale».<sup>18</sup> [the idea was to localise this film in quite a bold way, "betraying", well, actually not betraying, but rather extrapolating something which is already in the original.] He thus chose the dubbing director accordingly: Oreste Baldini is known and appreciated among his colleagues as being an extremely creative and humorous dubbing director who often makes reckless choices when adapting the original scripts, taking liberties with the source text. Morville believed that he would be bold enough to accept his idea of localising the text and he would exploit his creativity and inventiveness. Morville and Baldini thus decided to make an Italian version which departed from the original by being more Italian, by representing Italian contrasts rather than British ones, and by using Italian regional accents and some dialect words. They determined to make the Blues speak with Northern accents, specifically from Lombardia and Veneto, and the Reds with accents and dialects from the South. Casting was done with this aim in mind, looking for dubbing actors who came from specific areas and were thus native speakers of regional Italian or dialects. As pointed out by Morville, «la criticità però era trovare attori doppiatori che per origine e caratteristiche fossero in grado di fare certi accenti».<sup>19</sup> [however, the difficulty was to find dubbing actors who were able to speak with specific regional accents]. Moreover, the dubbing actors also had to have similar voice qualities to the dubbing actors in the original version, since Morville and Disney pay particular attention to voice quality. No star talents were employed, but dubbing and theatre actors who could speak and play with Italian regional vernaculars. The voice tests were aimed at finding the right voices for each character and actors who

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<sup>18</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

could naturally speak regional Italian without having to contrive specific accents. Authenticity and matching the voice quality of the original actors were important criteria in Morville's selection of the dubbing actors. Dubbing director Baldini also points out that they chose dubbing actors who were funny and were able to speak local dialects, and that his aim in adapting the text was to recreate the humorous intentions of the original lines, to make the audience laugh, sometimes even departing from the original text, inventing new lines.<sup>20</sup>

As a result, theatre and dubbing actor Saverio Indrio, from Puglia, spoke the Prologue with a marked Pugliese accent and pronunciation, adding humour through invented lines such as «*nu* prologone lungo come *nu* provolone» [a prologue as long as provolone cheese] for “a rather long, boring prologue”. Nanette was voiced by Neapolitan theatre actress Paola Fulciniti, who spoke with a marked Neapolitan accent and added Neapolitan expressions (“*tarantella*”, “*babbà*”, etc.). Lord Redbrick was dubbed by Sicilian-born Elio Zamuto, Juliet by Rome-born Chiara Gioncardi, who however has Sicilian origins, Tybalt by Pasquale Anselmo, from Calabria, who usually dubs Statham, Lady Bluebury was voiced by Lorenza Biella, from Veneto. Gnomeo was dubbed by Stefano Brusa, born in Piemonte, who was asked to contrive a Veneto/Lombardo accent and could not speak with his own Piedmontese regional Italian, because the choice had been made that his family was from that Northern region, i.e., the area in which the story of Romeo and Juliet was actually set by Shakespeare and by his Italian sources, and also because of coherence – mother and son had to have the same accent.<sup>21</sup> The fact that he is not a native speaker is evident in his lines, since he uses fewer regional words or expressions compared to other protagonists, he puts up a Lombardo/Veneto accent and uses very open vowels (especially –e-), thus his characterisation ends up being more stylised. Featherstone was dubbed with a marked Roman accent by Francesco Pannofino (who has lived in

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<sup>20</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication, 6 June 2016.

Rome since the 1970s), Dolly gnome was voiced by Claudia Balboni (from Rome, but she contrives a Romagnolo accent), and Shakespeare was voiced by Patrick Stuart, with his own English accent.

As reported by Brusa and Gioncardi,<sup>22</sup> each dubbing actor would try to use their regional variety of Italian, either only reproducing the rhythm of a specific regional Italian, or also adding some Italo-Romance dialect words. Some of the dialogues were invented in the dubbing studio through improvisation. However, although their aim was to provide characterisation and humour through regional Italian accents and intonation and the use of local dialect words, Morville and Gioncardi point out that it was important to avoid excessive use of dialects. The dubbing actors were allowed to use a limited amount of words and expressions, not too many, because otherwise the dialogues would have become incomprehensible. The rewriting and dubbing process was performed bearing in mind that the intended target audience of the film were children, and using dialects extensively would hinder comprehension. For instance, Gioncardi admits that she wanted to insert more Sicilian words in her utterances but that the dubbing director did not want her to overdo it and asked her to adopt prosodic features typical of Sicilian.<sup>23</sup> It is worth pointing out that at times some dialect words or expressions may be difficult to decode by children, but they are still humorous because of the dubbing actors' voice quality and intonation.

Some examples of utterances by the main characters will be provided below in order to illustrate how language variation is exploited to a great extent in dubbing and how regional varieties of Italian interspersed with local dialect words and expressions contribute to build characterisation and to trigger humour. Dialect words or pronunciation will be marked by the use of italics.

As regards the Reds, Juliet and her father are Sicilian, while Tybalt is Calabrese, the good gnomes from Puglia and Nanette from Naples. Lord

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<sup>22</sup> Personal communications, 6 June 2015, 12 June 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

Redbrick has Sicilian pronunciation and intonation features and uses some local dialect expressions. Typical Sicilian words uttered by him are «*Mizzica*, qui c'è lo zampino dei blu», where “mizzica” is a mild Sicilian interjection, a euphemism, a milder alternative to the well-known “minchia”, corresponding to the alternative between “shit” and “sugar”; «*Figghia mia!*» rather than “figlia” [my daughter]; «*cumannu io*» [I rule]; «non ti *pigghiari* pensier» [don't worry about it]; «*accussè*» [like this]; «*Mi dispiace pe' vvostru figghiu*» [I'm sorry about your son]. Juliet also utters Sicilian expressions and has a Sicilian pronunciation, as in «*Amuninne*» [let's go] and «*Baciamo le manis*», a form of greeting indicating respect, originally used among *mafiosi*, who literally used to kiss the boss' hands, «*Che bbeddol!*» [how nice!], «*Pigghia!*» [take this]. Juliet also uses marked syntactic features typical of Sicilian regional Italian, like «*nessuno vidi, sicurissima sono*» [Nobody I saw, sure I am] (Object-Subject inversion, Complement-Verb inversion). Both father and daughter have the typical Sicilian pronunciation of a long fricative –r-, as in “*rriguardare*”, “*rrossa*”. Tybalt is also highly connoted through the use of linguistic variation. He has a very strong Calabrese accent and intonation and uses local dialect vocabulary, as can be noted from the following examples: «*I mannaia!*», a Calabrese interjection for “mannaggia” [darn it!], «*Vieni ccà!*» [come here], «*Che ci fai 'cca?*» [what are you doing here?], «*Nu cappello accussè granne per uno gnomo accussè ppiccolo*» [such a big hat for such a small gnome], «*Mo' so' ccocci!*» [now I'm in trouble, I'm shattered], «*T'ho soppressato!*» [I've smashed you]. This final expression, addressed to Gnomeo during the lawnmower race, also contains a pun based on the cultural reference “*soppressata*”, a type of sausage from Calabria. The following extract is an exchange between Tybalt and Juliet which illustrates some of the defining phonetic, lexical and syntactic features of the characters (in italics):

ENGLISH VERSION	ITALIAN DUBBING
TYBALT: Juliet! You're not allowed off your pedestal. What you doing out in the alley?	TYBALT: Giuletta! Non <i>te</i> puoi allontanare dal piedistallo. Che ci fai ' <i>cca</i> ?
JULIET I'm- I'm... Well I could ask you	JULIET: Io ... <i>potrei</i> farti la stessa

<p>the same question Tybalt.          TYBALT We're looking for a blue gnome.          Yeah, he's an ugly little fella. Got a scratch, right here.          FAWN: And his name's Gnomeo.          TYBALT: You haven't seen him, have you?          JULIET Er, oh, um, er he sounds awful. No, no why I, um, certainly haven't seen him. I haven't seen him at all.          TYBALT Well, lucky you! Come on, let's get inside.</p>	<p>domanda, Tebbaldo.          TYBALT: Stavo <i>ceccando</i> uno gnomo <i>bblu</i>. È uno <i>picciriddo, racchio</i>: Ha una cicatrice <i>'nta a faccia</i>.          FAWN: E <i>lu</i> nome è Gnomeo.          TYBALT: Non l'hai visto, spero <i>pittia</i>.          JULIET: Ah, uuh, Ahm. Ah, <i>chetto</i>, deve essere <i>brutto assai</i>. No, io, no, <i>nessuno vidi</i>. <i>Sicurissima sono</i>.          TYBALT: <i>Rrètieniti</i> fortunata. Andiamo, torniamo <i>aa' casa</i>.</p>
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The Blues are from the North, more specifically from Veneto and Lombardia. This is conveyed through some phonetic traits such as open vowels, especially open *-e* (*è*) at the end of a word or in internal position (Telmon 1993: 106), as well as the use of *te* rather than *tu* as Subject pronoun, dialect words or expressions such as the interjection «*ostrega*» [gosh], «*ocio*» [watch out], «*ciamame*» [call me], «*santa polenta con gli osei*» [holy polenta with roasted birds]. This final expression contains the cultural reference “polenta con gli osei” which is a typical Veneto dish. A Veneto regional variety of Italian is also testified by Benny’s «*Ostrega, xé la tua mama*» [gosh, it’s your Mum], uttered with a typical Veneto intonation and using the interjection “*ostrega*”, Lady Bluebury’s «*Ueilà!*» [hello], «*Cume la va?*» [how’s it going?], «*Cusa l’è suces?* [...] *Cume l’è success*, come? *Ma te te, dov’eri?*» [what happened? [...] how did that happen? How? But you, you, where were you?] or «*Poereta mè!*» [poor me!], «*Me dispias per la so piscinina*» [I’m sorry about your little daughter]. The first exchange between Lady Bluebury and Lord Redbrick illustrates the importance of the fictional use of regional varieties to establish the contrast between the feuding families (regional phonetic and lexical features of both characters in italics):

ENGLISH ORIGINAL	ITALIAN DUBBING
LORD REDBRICK: Oh, those Blues are	LORD REDBRICK: <i>Mizzica</i> , qui c’è lo

<p>at it again.  LADY BLUEBURY: Top of the morning, Lord Redbrick!  LORD REDBRICK: Lady Bluebury.  LADY BLUEBURY: Your tulips are looking a little limp this year, aren't they?  LORD REDBRICK: Oh! I don't like what you're incinerating!  LADY BLUEBURY: The proper word is "insinuating." Illiterate.  LORD REDBRICK: I am not illiterate! My parents were married!</p>	<p>zampino dei Blu.  LADY BLUEBURY: <i>Ueilà</i>, lord Mattone rosso, <i>cume la va?</i>  LORD REDBRICK: <i>Donna</i> Mirtillo.  LADY BLUEBURY: Quest'anno i suoi tulipani sono un po' mosci, <i>ne' vero?</i>  LORD REDBRICK: Non mi piace quello che volete inserire.  LADY BLUEBURY: <i>Uei</i>, tontolo, si dice insinuare! Illetterato!  LORD REDBRICK: Io non <i>suggnu</i> illetterato. Ogni <i>s sera</i> vado a <i>lletto</i>.</p>
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The frog Nanette is the funniest character in the film. In the dubbed version she becomes even more humorous thanks to Fulciniti's performance. Nanette's exchanges with Juliet (below) abound in creative Neapolitan expressions and regional phonetic and intonation features, while Juliet's dialogue is more controlled and less regionally marked (marked regional features in italics):

ENGLISH VERSION	ITALIAN DUBBING
<p>NANETTE: All this for some daffy flower!  [...]  NANETTE: Ooh! A new outfit! I'm on it. ... Here. That is cute. Give us a turn. Uh-huh, uh-huh. Nice junk in the trunk. Now, go get your flower.  [...]  NANETTE: Trust me. Nobody is going to pay you any attention in that.  JULIET: Then it's perfect.  [...]  NANETTE: Hmm. Shut up! You met a boy!  JULIET: What? No. Well, maybe, sort of, um... Yes. Yes, I did.  NANETTE: I need details! And go</p>	<p>NANETTE: Tutta <i>'sta tarantella pe' nu</i> fiorellino!  [...]  NANETTE: Uh. Vuoi cambiare look? <i>Mo' ci pensi io!</i> ... <i>Tie'</i>. Questa è <i>'na sciccheria!</i> Girati <i>nu poco!</i> Aha aha. <i>Sì cchiù bbona du' bbabbà.</i> Va', <i>vatt'a piglià stu fiore.</i>  [...]  NANETTE: <i>Piccerè</i>, con questo addosso <i>manco</i> tu ti riconosci. Garantito assoluto.  JULIET: <i>Perfetto è.</i>  [...]  NANETTE: <i>Uè, uè. Agge capito!</i> Tu hai conosciuto un ragazzo!  JULIET: Come?! No! Be'... forse, in un certo senso... Sì. Sì, l'ho conosciuto.  NANETTE: <i>Vojjo sapè tutt' cose!</i> Dimme</p>

slowly! Is he totally gorgeous?	tutto, <i>pe' ffilo e ppe' ssegno. È bbello bbellissimo?</i>
JULIET: Totally.	JULIET: Bellissimo.
NANETTE: Does he have a nice, rotund belly?	NANETTE: E la <i>tiene</i> una <i>bbella panza</i> tonda tonda?
JULIET: Well, let's call it sturdy.	JULIET: Beh, diciamo che è robusto.

Paris is also given a Neapolitan accent and uses dialect words, as in the song lyrics «*Si stu scarrafone nun schiatta, cu' ddidditti...*» [if this cockroach does not die with this DDT] which replace the lyrics of Elton John's *Your song*.

Featherstone is another comical character who is hypercharacterised through a Roman regional Italian, as can be seen from the speech below, where he addresses Gnomeo and Juliet (regional pronunciation and expressions in italics):

ENGLISH ORIGINAL	ITALIAN DUBBING
FEATHERSTONE: Oh definitely. I know I'm scared. Look at that baby, huh? Watch me now! [...] Oh by the way, thanks for finding my leg. And setting me free. I love you! Do you know what it's like to be trapped for twenty years? All alone by yourself! No one for to talk at? "Hola, Featherstone. ¿Cómo está usted?" "Oh! <i>Bueno</i> , Featherstone! How's the other leg?" "I don't know, Featherstone, 'member? I don't have it." You see? I'm not exactly terrific company, am I?	FEATHERSTONE: Eh <i>'nte digo!</i> M'hai fatto <i>pijà 'n corpo!</i> Guardate <i>bbamboli</i> , eh? <i>Guardateme 'mpo!</i> [...] Grazie per <i>ave'</i> ritrovato <i>'a zampa</i> mia e <i>pe' avemme libberato</i> . Vi amooo! Ma riuscite a <i>immagginavve</i> che <i>vvor di' resta'</i> intrappolato <i>pervent'anni?</i> Solo come un povero allocco, <i>nisuno</i> con cui <i>fa' 'na</i> parola. Oh Piumarosa, come <i>te bbutta?</i> 'Na favola, Rosapiuma! Come sta l' <i>artra zampa?</i> A <i>ssapello</i> Piumarosa, ma <i>'nte</i> ricordi? L'ho <i>ppersa</i> . Visto? <i>Robba</i> da matti, <i>me spiego?</i>

Featherstone's lines above contain several features typical of pronunciation in Central-Southern regions and in Rome in particular. We can notice instances of self-geminant consonants (as in "robba": [rɔb:a]), and of interlexical consonant gemination or co-gemination, also known as phonosyntactic doubling (Canepari 2007: 138; Telmon 1993: 111), as in

«*te bbutta*» [how's it going?], «*A ssapello*» [I wish I knew], «*che vor di*'» [what does it mean?], «*pervent'anni*» [for twenty years]. On the other hand, «*l'artra*», «*corpo*», «*vor*» are phenomena of «rotacizzazione della laterale alveolare davanti a consonante» “[al'ki:lɔ] > [ar'ki:lɔ]” which are typically found in Roman varieties of Italian (Telmon 1993: 111). Featherstone's “*pjã*” contains the phenomenon of lateral loss of the palatal sound. Another diastatically marked typical trait of regional Italian from Rome which can be found in Featherstone's utterances is the reduction of the diphthong /wɔ/ (Telmon 1993: 108), so that “buono” is pronounced as [b:ɔ:no]. Pannofino's performance exploits phonetic, intonation and lexical features of the Roman regional variety, thus contributing to render Featherstone an extremely funny character without having to mimic the “fake”, contrived Spanish accent of the original version.

The Italian dubbed version further localises the text by using songs from the Italian regional tradition. For instance, in the original version Ms Montague (the owner of the Blue garden) sings «Don't cha wish your girlfriend was hot like me» (a song by the Pussycat Dolls). This humorous and ironic music reference (Ms Montague is not exactly ‘hot’) is transformed in the dubbed version into «Piva, piva, l'oli d'uliva, piva, piva, l'oli d'ulà» (a Christmas song typical of Lombardia). In another scene, a red mankini gnome who looks like Borat and exposes his sunburnt bottom sings in Spanish «Tengo un bonito par de coconuts», which is turned into the popular Neapolitan song *Funiculì funiculà* in the Italian version.

It is worth pointing out that the dubbed version avoids some vulgar allusions and *double entendres* contained in the English dialogues, adding instead references to Italian culture and new puns in order to maintain the humorous load of the text. For instance, when the Reds are looking for Gnomeo and Benny, who have attacked their garden and are now hiding “in the begonias”, Tybalt asks a red Gnome «Do I look like a begonia?». The gnome replies «No, more like a pansy» in which “pansy” means both a type of violet and «(slang, offensive) an effeminate or homosexual man or boy» (CED). This *double entendre* is eliminated in the dubbed version, which renders the exchange as «*Peccaso* io ti sembro un fiore? – Beh, sì. Una *pansè*

con la *panzè*» [do I look like a flower to you, by any chance? – Well, yes. A violet with a flowery belly], where humour is maintained since “pansè” is a violet but also a reference to a famous Neapolitan song by Renato Carosone, while regional “panzè” alludes to Tybalt’s prominent belly and the red flower painted on his T-shirt. Humour is thus not only retained, but heightened by adding references to Italian popular culture, regional Italian accents and extra puns, even if the vulgar allusion is omitted. These cultural references, together with some regional words and lines, may not be easy to decode by children and may be grasped only by adults, but they are still humorous because of the actor’s voice quality and intonation.

The analysis provided in this section and the interviews with the dubbing practitioners have highlighted the deliberate, complex process of adaptation and rewriting that the English dialogues underwent for the dubbed version before the film’s release in Italy. We have shown how the story was transposed to Italy and reinterpreted through an Italian lens through the exploitation of Italian regional dialects, with the main aim of being funny.

### 5. Conclusion

The animated film *Gnomeo & Juliet* is a comic, happy-ending adaptation of the English tragedy that plays with Shakespeare and popular culture and uses British and American dialects and accents to a certain extent to construct identity. The above analysis has described how language variation is exploited in the original version of *Gnomeo & Juliet* to provide characterisation, to convey a British atmosphere and to trigger humour. However, language varieties in the original film were not emphasised but only hinted at, since they were not aimed at creating a geographical or class contrast. As explained by screenwriter Sprackling, «the accents of the characters mainly derived from the casting - though some were written into the script».<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the article has described how the screenplay

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<sup>24</sup> Personal communication, 15 June 2016.

was rewritten by several British and American writers. The film dialogues, combined with references to Shakespeare but also with visual elements and allusions to popular American culture, are indeed «a compromise between authenticity and comprehension» (Hodson 2014: 62), between Britain and the USA, in an attempt to play with audiences from both sides of the ocean.

Moreover, the paper has explored the translation, adaptation and dubbing process, unveiling the reasons behind the extremely localising choice of using regional Italian and dialects in dubbing. The article has analysed the linguistic resources employed by Italian dubbing professionals to transpose the film into Italian and the representation/recreation of language varieties. As shown in our analysis, the dialogues of the Italian version are extremely creative. Interviews with dubbing professionals have revealed that they are the result of an adaptation process by many rewriters, and also of improvisation while dubbing. This operation was aimed at increasing the humorous load of the lines, at making the film more entertaining. *Gnomeo & Giulietta* is thus a creative attempt at conveying humour through language variation, and of a collaborative effort by all the dubbing professionals involved in the final Italian version, who playfully engaged with the linguistic resources of regional Italian and local dialects.

The article has also pointed out that the portrayal of accents and dialects is more realistic in the dubbed version compared to the original one and is functional to a reading of the story in terms of North/South divide. Moreover, some phonetic features or lexical choices are emphasised, since the function of accents and dialects in the dubbed version is to trigger humour. Some Italian stereotypes or *clichés* can also be detected, as that of hot-blooded Southerners (Tybalt), the over-protective, jealous Sicilian father (Lord Redbrick), the rustic and less educated Southerner (Lord Redbrick) and the comical, loud, humorous Neapolitan

(Nanette).<sup>25</sup> Baldini explained that he wanted the Reds to be from the South because «il difendere una femmina è più del sud, il rosso è calore, passione, gelosia.» [to defend a female is more typical of men from the South, red is the colour of heat, passion, jealousy].<sup>26</sup>

Our analysis also confirms that the genre of animation allows for greater freedom and more leeway for creativity in the representation/manipulation of language variation. The Italian dubbing of *Gnomeo and Juliet* is the result of «a creative process of cross-cultural textual indigenization» (Ferrari 2010: 5) performed by dubbing professionals. The translation, adaptation, dubbing of animated films is part of an industry, of an international market, and it is not only a linguistic issue, a simple transfer of a single meaning from source to target language. Various linguistic, cultural and commercial issues come at play, and several rewriters contribute to create the final version.

*Gnomeo & Giulietta* is thus an example of extreme domestication and localisation, which might be justified by the fact that *Romeo and Juliet* is a story set in Verona and originally an Italian tale that reached Shakespeare through translations and various rewritings (Minutella 2013). The manipulation of the film dialogues and the process of rewriting might be interpreted by some as a betrayal of the original film. However, this is not really a betrayal but could be seen as an interpretation of the story which takes it back to its original setting and reads the tale of the lovers as a conflict between families belonging to different regions, according to the Italian North-versus-South divide. The final outcome is indeed a humorous, great Babel of regional varieties of Italian and dialects. Each age, each culture, each rewriter makes the story of the star-crossed lovers wear different clothes, thus contributing to constitute its afterlife. The Italian dubbed version of *Gnomeo & Juliet* is yet another costume that the story is made to wear in the *ad infinitum* process of translation, rewriting, adaptation, imitation that Shakespeare's play has undergone through time.

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<sup>25</sup> Several Italian students highlighted the presence of the above stereotypical associations.

<sup>26</sup> Personal communication, 12 June 2015.

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