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Translating postcolonial English: The Italian Translation of D. Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*

Summary

In postcolonial writing the English language is often intentionally appropriated: it ceases to represent the vehicle of expression of 'Englishness' only and becomes the means of communication of a wider part of the world. Therefore, many strategies are used in postcolonial works as a means of cultural assertion on the part of the writers. Such strategies, however, are extremely difficult to convey in languages which are not directly concerned with issues such as postcolonial resistance to colonial control in literature, as in the case of Italian. Using as a case study the only Italian translation of Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*, I will analyse in this paper a number of strategies employed in the Source Text (ST), concurrently analysing the difficulties related to their translation into Italian. Besides the tools provided by stylistics, structural grammar, translation studies and postcolonial studies**,** the frameworks of ethnostylistics and translational stylistics are particularly useful in the scrutiny of this text.

Key words: Postcolonial English, ethnostylistics, translational stylistics, English/Italian translation, Derek Walcott's The Odyssey: A Stage Version

Prevajanje postkolonialne angleščine: italijanski prevod dela *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* Dereka Walcotta

Povzetek

V postkolonialnem pisanju je angleški jezik pogosto podvržen prikrojevanju: ni več zgolj medij za prenašanje "angleškosti", temveč postane sredstvo komunikacije za širši del sveta. Pri kulturnem opredeljevanju tako postkolonialni avtorji uporabljajo množtvo strategij. Takšne strategije pa je izjemno težko vzdrževati v jezikih, ki nimajo neposredne izkušnje z vprašanji, kot je postkolonialni odpor do kolonialnega nadzora v književnosti, in med te jezike spada tudi italijanščina. Na primeru edinega italijanskega prevoda Walcottovega dela *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* avtorica prispevka razčleni številne strategije izhodiščnega besedila ter njihove poustvaritve v italijanskem besedilu. Pri tem se opira tako na izsledke stilistike, strukturalne slovnice, prevodoslovja in postkolonialnih študij kot na dognanja etnostilistike in prevodne stilistike.

Ključne besede: postkolonialna angleščina, etnostilistika, prevodna stilistika, angleški/italijanski prevod, The Odyssey: A Stage Version Dereka Walcotta

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1. Introduction

English is often employed as a *Lingua Franca* and turned into an array of 'Englishes' by non-native speakers, whose native languages influence English in a variety of ways. Postcolonial English represents an antecedent to this phenomenon, for in the colonized world the process began centuries ago, when colonization started.

Furthermore, in the case of the English employed by the ex-colonized, not only has the language been influenced by native tongues through spontaneous linguistic processes, such as language transfer, but it has also been intentionally appropriated as a strategy of resistance and means of asserting identity. Indeed, postcolonial English has ceased to represent the vehicle of expression of Englishness only to become the means of communication of a wider part of the world – as Salman Rushdie stated more than twenty years ago in his famous article "The empire writes back with a vengeance" (1982; my emphasis):

> English, no longer an English language, now grows from many roots; and those whom it once colonized *are carving out large territories within the language for themselves*. The Empire is striking back.

As Rushdie himself underscores in this article, the site where the effects of this trend were (and are) most particularly visible is postcolonial literature, where a series of strategies, such as the deployment of intentionally 'ungrammatical' English, is used as a means of cultural assertion on the part of the writer.

Such strategies, however, are extremely difficult to convey in languages, such as Italian, which are not directly concerned with the use of literature as an instrument of postcolonial resistance to colonial control and/or assertion of cultural/national identity.

The aim of this paper will thus be to analyse through stylistics (Short 1996; Pratt 1993), structural grammar (Aarts and Aarts 1982), ethnostylistics (Thompson 2004), translational stylistics (Malmkjær 2004), translation studies (Taylor 1990; Taylor 1998) and postcolonial studies (Hamner 2001; Thieme 1999) the difficulties connected with the rendering of some postcolonial linguistic strategies, and the way these strategies have been dealt with in translation, using as a case study the Italian translation of Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* by Matteo Campagnoli, which is the only Italian translation of this text.

2. Overview of Walcott's The Odyssey: A Stage Version

Derek Walcott has re-wrote Homer's epic *The Odyssey* for the Royal Shakespeare Company,

turning it into a play divided into two acts with a structure that Short (1996, 171–2) would define as a variation on the three-level structure:

1. playwright (Walcott)/audience and/or readers (us);
2. narrator (Billy Blue)/narratees (us);
3. characters (included Billy Blue)/characters.

The position of this work, together with many other works by Walcott, within the universe of postcolonial literature is controversial. Indeed, besides their involvement with the sphere of postcolonialism and the linguistic struggle briefly described above, with which Walcott's works share a good deal of concern and a series of common strategies, they also express a whole array of personal and national issues.

Hamner and Thieme, who have written about Walcott extensively, both conclude that Walcott's use of myths, and of Homer's *Odyssey* in particular, present "a process of reverse colonization" (Thieme 1999, 189) and a "creolization process" (Hamner 2001, 376); but they also underline that it also shows the intent on the part of the author of creating a Caribbean product which becomes an expression of cultural and national self-awareness, within and concurrently beyond the postcolonial struggle for resistance to colonial domination in literature. In other words, Walcott refuses to create a sheer imitation of Homer's epic, which would limit "the possibility of creating a new imaginative space by locking its exponent into the agendas created by a discourse of resistance" (Thieme 1999, 192), and opts for the creation of a "creole drama" which is constituted by "an assemblage of fragments, a collage that calls into question the ostensible purity of linguistic and racial roots" (Hamner 2001, 388–9).

In this context, it is useful to recall the concept of "transculturation", originally proposed by the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz, and adopted by Pratt in her study of the "resymbolazation" of the figure of La Malinche in the Chicano movement (Pratt 1993). Starting from the problematization of the interaction between dominant and subordinate groups, this concept denies that the latter simply assimilate to the former without questioning this act, and refers instead to the fact that "subordinate groups are *selective* about what they acquire from a dominant culture, and *inventive* about what they do with it" (ibid., 185). In a similar way, the Homeric epic has been *transculturated* into a Caribbean product, namely subjected to appropriation and introduced into a different ideological and national scaffolding – postcolonial *and* Caribbean.

Although the main features of the Greek epic are retained, such as the most important moments of the original plot, a variety of different "creolization" elements meant to "question the ostensible purity of linguistic and racial roots" are employed in the play: the use of different languages (English, non-standard English, transliterated Greek, Latin); the reference to different religious traditions (Greek, African, Catholic); the insertion of new characters (the Philosopher, Stratis, Costa, etc.) and the appearance of characters from the *Iliad* (Thersites); the reinterpretation in a Caribbean or postcolonial framework of two basic episodes (the Circe episode and the Cyclops episode, respectively). However, the level on which this reconstruction is more evident is the linguistic level.

For reasons of space, the next section will be devoted to the analysis of the linguistic behaviour of two of the many characters of the play and of the Italian translation of some of their turns. I have chosen two of the most important characters in relation to the plot and whose parts are constructed first and foremost on a linguistic level, so that they epitomise the postcolonial and cultural issues Walcott concentrates on in the play.

3. Billy Blue and Eurycleia

3.1 Billy Blue: a narrator who sings blues

The very first character that the audience/readers meet while watching or reading the play is Billy Blue, the narrator that Walcott creates as of the heirs of Homer's singing skills. Indeed, this character, together with Omeros and Seven Seas in *Omeros* (1990), and Phemius and Demodocus (whose parts are played by Billy Blue in actual fact) in *The Odyssey*, belongs to the group of blind narrators which Walcott creates to populate his works, their blindness being a necessary feature of their poetry. Billy Blue is a singer who sings blues,[1] whose rhythm and idiom are the first Caribbean reference in the work, who mixes epic language with expressions of African-American origin and who, against Greek poetic tradition, sings rhymed couplets with Caribbean accentuation (Hamner 2001, 376). Obviously, the very fact that Billy Blue is the narrator, appearing at regular intervals in the play, renders this character highly important.

The *incipit* of the play is particularly interesting in this respect, hence the first two couplets will be subjected to translational stylistic and ethnostylistic analysis.

> BILLY BLUE *(Sings)*
> Gone sing 'bout that man because his stories please us,
> Who saw trails and tempests for ten years after Troy.
>
> I'm Blind Billy Blue, my main man's sea-smart Odysseus,
> Who the God of the Sea drove crazy and tried to destroy. (Walcott 2006, 12; I, 1)
>
> BILLY BLUE *(Canta)(Sings)*
> Canterò di quest'uomo perché la sua storia mi piace,
> [I will sing of this man because his story pleases me][2]
> Che prove e tempeste ha passato per dieci anni da Troia.
> [Who faced trials and tempests for ten years since Troy]

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[1] "In tribal, elemental poetry, the epic experience of the race is compressed in metaphor. In an oral tradition the mode is simple [...]. There is no dying fall, no egoistical signature of effect; in short, no pathos. The blues is not pathos, not the individual voice, it is a tribal mode, and each new oral poet can contribute his couplet, and this is based on the concept that the tribe, inured to despair, will also survive: there is no beginning, but no end" (Walcott 1998, 47; my emphasis). The choice of turning The Odyssey's narrator into a blues singer is thus closely connected with the tribal experience of the Caribbean area, just as the choice of making Billy Blue sing in couplets.

[2] The Italian translation is translated back into standard English for ease of comprehension.

Sono Blind Billy Blue e il mio uomo è Odisseo, astuto e audace,
[I'm Blind Billy Blue and my man is Odysseus, clever and bold]
Che il Dio del Mare ha fatto impazzire e quasi lo ingoia. (Walcott 2006, 13; I, 1)
[Whom the God of the Sea drove crazy and almost swallows him]

The very first line of the play immediately fails to come up to the expectations connected with the epic genre. Just as, while reading a fairy tale, readers expect the first words to be "Once upon a time", while reading an epic poem or play, the readers expect, at least, its first words to be written or uttered in a standard language. In contrast to these expectations, Billy Blue immediately performs a series of dialectic elisions (Hamner 2001, 376): "Gone" in place of "I'm going to" and "'bout" instead of "about".

The way the hero of the story is introduced is also unusual. The noun phrase "that man", and the deictic form "that" in particular, seems to 'follow the rules' at first, in the sense that the audience/reader still expect a post-modification such as "who has many skills and has travelled for ten years". But in Walcott's play the reason for singing Odysseus' story does not lie in his renown multifaceted ability to survive in every situation; it lies, instead, in the enjoyment roused in the audience and in the narrator by the telling of his stories.

This 'anti-heroic' construction of the character is further reinforced in the first line of the third couplet, which follows the first two couplets presented above. This represents the transliteration, using the Latin alphabet, of the first line of the Greek *Odyssey*:

Andra moi ennepe mousa polutropon hos mala polla…

The fact that Odysseus is "polutropon", (πολύτροπον – "with many skills"), appears in this way to be 'hidden' – his talent of being πολύτροπον representing the defining feature of Odysseus' character *par excellence*. Indeed, the insertion of this adjective in a line where the Greek words are written using the Latin alphabet makes this premodification clear only to those people who have a grasp of Greek and/or who are cognizant with the very beginning of the original Greek text. The average English-speaking reader of the play will find it more difficult to understand the reference immediately, and, in particular, to acknowledge Odysseus' renowned skills. In other words, the mechanisms employed in the first line of Walcott's *The Odyssey* and in the first line of the third couplet, (namely, the first line of Homer's *The Odyssey*), contribute to diminishing the hero's status greatly.

In the beginning of the second and the fourth line an anaphora is constructed through the repetition of the word "Who". It should be pointed out, however, that the second pronoun is used 'mistakenly'; the inflected form "whom" should be used instead, "Who" constituting, in standard terms, a noun phrase performing the function Subject (SU) rather than the function Direct Object (DO).

Line three makes extensive use of alliteration: the letter "b" is exploited in the first alliterative set,

the name of the narrator "*B*illy *B*lue" being premodified by the epithet "*B*lind"; the letter "m" is employed to create the second instantiation of alliteration, which is used in the noun phrase, of African American origin (Hamner 2001, 376), introducing the hero "*m*y *m*ain *m*an"; and the letter "s" constitute the final example of alliteration and it is deployed in the premodifier of the hero's name "*s*ea-*s*mart". Finally, the rhyme scheme, which varies a great deal in the course of the play, is, in these first two couplets, AB AB.

Translational stylistics (Malmkjær 2004, 16) takes into account the relationship between the Source Text, (ST), and the Target Text, (TT), in order to shed light on the reasons for which some translation decisions have been made instead of others, which, in the absence of a direct comparison between the two texts, could not be satisfactorily explained.

Ethnostylistics (Thompson 2004, 55–6), on the other hand, starts by considering the fact that, in the case of some non-standard language varieties, used as the expression of a national and/or sub-national identity, translation is already implied in the ST, in a struggle for supremacy between the non-standard variety and the standard language. Ethnostylistics, then, is focused on considering ethnicity-as-style and style-as-ethnicity.

Indeed, the consideration of both the ST and the Italian translation of the above couplets (together with the close reading of the conversation which will be analysed in section 3.2) provides us with some interesting insights into the difficulties connected with the translation of a variety of English which already implies a process of translation in the ST. To put it another way, we could borrow Jakobson's terminology (1959) to claim that some parts of Walcott's play present features of an *intra*linguistic translation (English to non-standard English), which makes the *inter*linguistic translation into Italian even more difficult than it would be in 'standard' circumstances.

The first observation than can be made about the TT is that it has been completely normalised – no trace of non-standard language forms is to be found in it. The first line is particularly interesting. The very first words "Gone 'bout" are translated with an Italian standard future tense "Canterò" [I will sing]. Such wording in Italian constitutes a quasi formulaic expression which reminds Italian readers of other famous *incipits* of epic texts, such as Virgil's *Aeneid*: "arma virumque cano" [I sing of arms and of that man]. The rendering of this "ill-formed" *incipit* into a standard one, (both grammatically and in accordance to the 'conventions' related to the *incipit* of epic texts), is noteworthy for a second reason.

The device of beginning his works with a non-standard sentence is not a novelty for Walcott. It was used, for example, to begin *Omeros*;[3] following this publication Walcott won the Nobel prize for literature in 1992. Indeed, it is a device he uses in order to strike the audience at the very beginning of the work and make them understand immediately that they are going to read/watch something 'non-standard'. Therefore, that the first line of the ST is turned in the TT

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3   "This is how, one sunrise, we cut down them canoes" (Walcott 2003, 12; my emphasis). Fumagalli (2000, 17) reminds the readers of Walcott's claim about the striking effect of the opening line in Omeros "Well, I want to see how they will read this at the BBC", which reflects perfectly his awareness about the "non-standard effect" brought about by his intentional linguistic choice.

into a standard sentence brings about a twofold effect: it erases the cultural/postcolonial strategy connected with the use of non-standard features in *The Odyssey*, AND the intertextual citation between Walcott's two works. The deictic form "that" is rendered as "questo" [this], thereby diminishing the expectations of the reader/audience connected with the deictic form "that" in the ST, which, as already suggested, implies a more 'epic' postmodification.

The reason Billy Blue provides for singing Odysseus' story – "because his stories please us" – is translated as "perchè la sua storia mi piace" [because his story pleases me], again reducing the power of the ST greatly. Indeed, in the ST the reason asserted for undertaking the enterprise of telling Odysseus' story lies in the enjoyment aroused in the narrator and in the audience (nay, in everybody) by his misfortunes. In the TT the power of this assertion is greatly circumscribed, as to represent Billy Blue's reaction to Odysseus' story only.

The beginnings of lines 2 and 4 maintain the anaphoric structure of the ST, due to the repetition of the pronoun "Che" [Who/Whom]. Nonetheless, since in Italian there is no difference between the subject and the object pronoun, in the TT it is used in the first case to perform the function SU, and in the second the function DO, namely it is used in standard terms, normalising the effect (and the strategy lying behind it) created by the non-standard usage of "Who" in the ST in line four. The alliterative effect in line three is clearly very difficult to maintain. The first alliterating letter "b" is not translated in fact, in the sense that the three words in the ST are reproduced with no variation whatsoever in the TT. This choice creates a problematic situation, since a reader of the TT who is not acquainted with the English language would think the proper name of the narrator to be "Blind Billy Blue", whereas "Blind" is in actual fact an epithet instead. Furthermore, in this way, the Italian TT fails to underline Billy Blue's blindness, which, as suggested above, is an important feature of Walcott's singers, since it allows them to have an extremely developed 'mind-sight.'[4] The second alliterating letter "m" is also lost in the TT. The translation of the expression "my main man" as "il mio uomo" also implies the loss of the African-American origin of the expression in the ST, since "il mio uomo" has no particular connotations in Italian – let alone that of African American origin. Hence, the mingling of cultures operated by Walcott in the ST, as symbolic of the cultural mixture existing in the Caribbean, is lost too. The third alliterating letter "s" is substituted (Malone in Taylor 1998, 52) by the alliterating letter "a" in the TT, just as the translation of the epic epithet "sea-smart" is rendered efficaciously by an equivalent pair of epic adjectives in Italian ("*a*stuto e *a*udace"), thereby maintaining both device and effect of the ST. Finally, the rhyme scheme in these first two couplets is maintained, even though this has made the choice of the Italian present simple tense "ingoia" ("swallows") necessary in *lieu* of the English past simple tense ("tried to destroy").

On the one hand, some of the translating choices analysed (e.g., "Blind Billy Blue" as "Blind Billy Blue" or "tried to destroy" as "ingoia") must be considered in relation to 'typical' translating processes, such as the preference on the part of the translator to respect certain 'special' features of the text, e. g. alliteration or the rhyme scheme. Other choices, on the other hand, are closely

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4   Billy Blue, playing the part of Demodocus, after having been asked whether he can see Odysseus, answers: "Not see. I see through" (Walcott 2006, 274).

connected with the impossibility of translating into Italian any non-standard linguistic variety, since Italian does not deploy non-standard features for a precise strategy of assertion of identity through the linguistic violations of the standard code. This brings about the loss of a whole level of meaning and, if we agree on considering the language as the main means of conveying or asserting one's identity, it then implies the loss of a very important, if not the most important, level of the text.

This loss becomes even more blatant if we briefly take into consideration the last song by Billy Blue, which ends the play (just as his first song opened it). This song is sung in standard English, which seems to be meant to signal the universality of the (Homeric) play: Walcott's *Odyssey* has a Caribbean protagonist, it has been sung in part in non-standard English, but it is, in the end, an expression of Homer's legacy to the world, not only to Walcott and his people. This last song, just like the first one, is still translated into standard Italian, so that the change in meaning connected with Billy Blue's shift to standard English is totally lost.

3.2 Eurycleia: an Egyptian nanny

Another character whose identity is constructed on a linguistic level first of all is Eurycleia, who, as in Homer's *Odyssey*, is in this play both Odysseus' and Telemachus' nurse – though she is an Egyptian nurse. As already suggested, John Thieme regards the Caribbean elements of this play to be part of Walcott's "process of reverse colonization" (1999, 189). He also suggests (ibid.) that one of the aims of Walcott's enterprise is that of undermining the Western conception of Greece as the cradle of civilization. It is for this reason, he further argues, that a number of aspects of Homer's epic are described as having an Egyptian, hence African, genealogy. Robert Hamner (2001, 377) also underlines the importance the nurse has in the play, since "as an intimate of Ithaca's royal family for two generations, Eurycleia has used her nursery to shape the developing minds of Odysseus and his son Telemachus" – implying that Egypt (Africa) has deeply influenced Greece just as it has influenced the Caribbean.[5] In other words, Eurycleia has opened Telamachus' and Odysseus "gates of imagination" (Walcott 2006, 86). To such an important character Walcott has assigned a language which is profoundly affected by West Indian patois (ibid.). This is clearly meant to further creolize the play and to contribute to inserting as many Caribbean's elements as possible into the text, concurrently stressing the paramount importance they have.

The excerpt which will be scrutinized is a part of the first conversation involving both Telemachus and Eurycleia. Telemachus has just seen a swallow, whom he has heard speaking:

> TELEMACHUS
> You said Athena, the sea-eyed, is Egyptian.
> EURYCLEIA
> But never in life me call any bird captain.
> TELEMACHUS

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[5] In the first conversation with Telemachus, a part of which is going to be analysed in this section, Eurycleia claims that Egypt must cradle Greece until Greece will be mature enough (cf. Walcott 2006, 28).

She said she'd argued with God to save my father.
EURYCLEIA
Nancy stories me tell you and Hodysseus.
TELEMACHUS
I believe them now. My faith has caught a fever.
EURYCLEIA
Launching your lickle cradles into dreaming seas.
TELEMACHUS
What are those stories? An old slave's superstition?
EURYCLEYA
People don't credit them now. Them too civilized. (Walcott 2006, 26–28; I, 2)

TELEMACO
Tu mi hai detto che Atena dall'occhio marino è egiziana.
[You have told me that Athena with a sea eye is Egyptian]
EURICLEA
Si, ma in vita mia mai ho chiamato un uccello capitano.
[Yes, but in my life I have never called a bird captain]
TELEMACO
Ha detto che per salvare mio padre ha litigato con Dio.
[She said that to save my father she had argued with God]
EURICLEA
Favole che Euriclea ha raccontato a te e Odisseo.
[Fairy tales that Eurycleia has told you and Odysseus]
TELEMACO
Adesso ci credo. Alla mia fede è venuta la febbre.
[I believe them now. My faith has caught a fever]
EURICLEA
E lancia su mari sognanti la tua piccola culla.
[And launches into dreaming seas you little cradle]
TELEMACO
Che storie erano? Superstizioni di una vecchia ancella?
[What were those stories? An old maidservant's superstition?]
EURICLEA
La gente non le ascolta adesso. Troppo civilizzati. (Walcott 2006, 27-29; I, 2)
[People don't listen to them now. Too civilized]

In the first line of this extract, the importance that the Egyptian Eurycleia has had in "shaping the developing mind" of Telemachus is instantly recalled: he reminds his nurse of what she has told him, namely that the goddess who will side with Odysseus in order to help him go back home, Athena, is also Egyptian. Eurycleia's reply immediately shows her deeply non-standard idiolect. The subject pronoun "I" is substituted by the object pronoun "me" and the verb tense is totally unclear. "[c]all" seems to be a bare infinitive, so that it is not easy to claim whether

it represents a present tense ("I call", which would not be grammatically logic though) or a present perfect tense "I have called", or even a future "I will call". The same linguistic features can be traced in Eurycleia's second answer. Together with the substitution of "I" by "me" and the uncertain verb form "tell", she mispronounces Odysseus' name ("Hodisseus") and talks about "Nancy stories". Here, Eurycleia truncates "Anansy" into "Nancy", which is common in the West Indian vernacular (Hamner 2001, 377). Anansy is a sort of "Spiderman hero" of African origin who has special significance for slaves, since he represents the underdog who manages to emerge triumphantly (Barret in Hamner 2001, 378). He is a central figure in the tales told by *nanas* and *dadas* to their children born in exile in the West Indies (*ibid.*). His figure therefore represents a culture bound concept, which must be added to the creolizing patterns populating the play gaining more and more importance as the play develops: these "Nancy stories" are, in actual fact, the only cure for the fever which has caught Telemachus's faith.

Nevertheless, Eurycleia continues to show her disbelief in her subsequent answer, where she depicts the image of Telemachus' cradle floating on a "dreaming sea". Here, another feature typical of the West Indian vernacular is manifest, namely the sounding *k* in lieu of *tt* in "little" (Hamner 2001, 377). Furthermore, she talks about "cradles", as if Telemachus (who, by this point in the play, is a grown-up man), had more than one cradle when he was a baby (which is possible, especially for a prince, but still improbable) – we might therefore hypothesize that the use of the plural in *lieu* of the (more logical) singular is also to be ascribed to the nanny's idiolect.

It is interesting to note that, to this claim on the part of Eurycleia about Telemachus' excessively imaginative thought, Telemachus appears to react angrily and to perform a Face Threatening Act (FTA; Brown and Levinson 1987) by calling her "old slave" and doubting the truth of her past words. It could be objected that the noun "slave" also means "submissive or devoted servant", and that this might be the meaning intended by Telemachus. It is logical to conclude, however, that the first meaning is the intended one, given a) the premodification ("old"), which is a value laden and negatively connoted adjective when it is used in the face of the person one is talking to, and, more importantly, b) the fact that a servant has contradicted a prince, probably arousing his indignation.

The last turn taken by Eurycleia is a sort of mixture. The first sentence is perfectly correct in standard English terms. This shift to standard English appears to be an attempt on the part of Eurycleia to avoid arousing Telemachus' anger again, which drives her to construct a standard sentence which is concurrently an explanation and a silent apology. Apparently believing that this first sentence is sufficient as an apology, she goes back to her "normal" linguistic behaviour. The second sentence exhibits again the substitution of the subject pronoun "they" with the object pronoun "them", the elision of the auxiliary verb "are" and the absence of the marker of the past participle "-[e]d" in "civilise[d]".

All of these connotations on grammatical, phonetic and cultural levels related to Eurycleia's vernacular completely disappear in the TT. As a telling start, the nurse's first turn is totally normalised. The grammatically incorrect subject and verb in the ST "me call" are translated as "ho chiamato" in the

TT, which is the standard Italian verb tense corresponding to "I have called". Furthermore, in the TT the subject pronoun "Io" – "I" – is not expressed, which is a possibility offered by the grammar of Italian but not by English grammar. In other words, this particular difference between the grammars of the two languages necessarily implies the 'correction' in the TT of the 'mistake' in the ST. The time adverb "mai" ("never") preceding the verb phrase "ho chiamato" contributes to creating a slightly marked syntagmatic form, the unmarked one being "non ho mai chiamato" rather than "mai ho chiamato"; this form, indeed, tends to be connoted as a more formal or poetic structure in Italian, which is the exact opposite of Eurycleia's idiolect.

The same translating operation is performed in Eurycleia's following turn. Verb and subject are turned into standard forms, and the name of the protagonist is also normalised. On the other hand, the reference to "Anansi", as stated above, is one of those culturally bound concepts which are highly difficult to translate into a TT whose Target Language (TL) does not provide a similar idea. Therefore, the choice of the translator has been that of substituting this narrow, specific concept with a broader, non culture bound one, namely "Favole" ("Fairy tales").

The third of Eurycleia's turns exhibits a similar translating process. The phonetic feature "lickle" is transformed back into the standard form through the use of the Italian adjective "piccola" ("little") and the plural noun "cradles" in the ST is turned into the singular, more logical noun "culla" ("cradle") in the TT.

Eurycleia's last turn is particularly interesting. The first grammatically correct sentence in the ST is translated with a similarly grammatically correct Italian sentence, which implies again the loss of the layers of meaning connected with the nurse's choice to switch from the non-standard idiolect to the standard language. Furthermore, the reason for Eurycleia's linguistic switch is also rendered less straightforward in the TT because of the translation of the noun phrase "old slave" with the Italian noun "ancella" ("maidservant"), which, in Italian, has positive, poetic rather than negative connotations.

The second sentence reveals an attempt to reproduce the strategy employed in the ST in the TT too. The ST subject "them" is left out (we have already observed that the subject must not necessarily be expressed in Italian). The missing auxiliary verb in the ST is also missing in the TT, while the past participle, which is not grammatically correct in the ST, is turned into a standard past participle in the TT. This gives birth to an Italian sentence with neither subject nor main verb – a sentence which tries to reproduce the ST sentence structure as closely as possible. Nevertheless, this sentence is not an ungrammatical one in the TL, since the elision of the subject is common practise and that of the main verb is also allowed, when there are no doubts about which auxiliary or lexical verb should be used. In this case "Troppo civilizzati" ("Too civilized") leaves no doubt about the fact that the standard sentence should be "Loro sono troppo civilizzati" ("They are too civilized").

4. Conclusion

A necessarily brief analysis of a number of the features of Derek Walcott's *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* has been carried out. Many other interesting features have not been scrutinized due to space limitations. This brief analysis has shown that the translation of a non-standard variety, whose deployment is related to postcolonial and personal issues of revision of the colonial order and assertion of identity, becomes a highly difficult enterprise when the TL is a language such as Italian.

It could be thought that the linguistic strategy of deploying a non-standard English variety could be reproduced in the case of an Italian TT by the use of one of the many local dialects available in the country. In fact, it might happen that, in order to connote the provenance of a character or a whole work, one of the Italian dialects would be chosen. However, dialects in Italy tend to be thought of as a vehicle of amusement, the majority of jokes been based on local languages and on the funny stereotypes connected to those languages: a person coming from Milan only thinks about work and money, a person coming from Florence necessarily has a good sense of humour, and so on. In the case of a postcolonial ST employing a non-standard linguistic variety, therefore, not only would the selection of an Italian dialect impede the same effect related to the ST strategy, but it would also result in a 'funny' text for the target culture readers.

As far as Italian is concerned, the language is not, or it is no longer, part of a broader project of national/cultural self-awareness through language. Stated differently, the use of a non-grammatical variety of Italian meant to reproduce the non-standard variety of English would not 'make sense' to the Italian readers, because they are not acquainted with the violation of the code as a means of challenging the *status quo*. Obviously, this adds a further complication to that highly challenging process that is literary translation.

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