An Experiment in Multilingualism:
Translating Timberlake Wertenbaker’s
The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira into
Italian

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Abstract

This study analyses the potentialities of multilingualism as a translation strategy. It does so with the explicitly political aim of resisting and changing the way of thinking about, and doing, translation in Italy, where, for cultural and historical reasons also examined, engagement with the discipline is of a primarily practical and prescriptive nature. The multilingual translation strategy presented is also seen as a way of promoting a kind of literature which is more representative of the multilingual nature of contemporary society, as well as a critical tool for the understanding of the source texts. The relevance of this kind of strategy in the context of increasing multilingual pedagogical practices, such as CLIL, in Italian schools, is also considered.

The approach is practical, providing a multilingual translation of two full texts, Timberlake Wertenbaker’s *The Love of the Nightingale* (1988) and *Dianeira* (1999) – translated as *Aedón* and *La moglie dell’eroe* (The hero’s wife) respectively – and in-depth commentary of extracts drawn from these translations. I examine reasons why multilingualism is a useful strategy in general and for the translation into Italian of these texts specifically, and I consider the consequences that the adoption of such a strategy might have on the source text and on the target culture, on translation studies in Italy and on the relationship between the reader and the translator.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Points of contact

Timberlake Wertenbaker is a contemporary Anglo-American playwright whose oeuvre includes the 1988 award-winning play *Our Country’s Good* as well as the two works this study is primarily concerned with, the 1988 play *The Love of the Nightingale*, here translated as *Aedón*, and the 1999 radio drama *Dianeira*, here translated as *La moglie dell’eroe* (The hero’s wife). Throughout the thesis, I shall refer to my translations of Wertenbaker’s work with the Italian titles I have given them – with the exception of Chapter 6 where, due to the high frequency of references, I will introduce abbreviations.

Details about Wertenbaker’s life are present in the playwright’s introductions to her works and have also been provided in talks and interviews, some of which I was fortunate to take part in thanks to Wertenbaker’s presence at UEA since 2012.¹ Bush’s 2013 monography on Wertenbaker offers a more in-depth biographical account than most other sources. Born in New York, Wertenbaker spent her early childhood in the French Basque country. In addition to French and English, the young Wertenbaker therefore also spoke Basque (Bush 2013: 7). Her father died when she was a teenager and after that loss her family moved back to the USA, where she attended St. John’s College in Annapolis, a school with a strong focus on philosophy – an interest which is traceable in most of Wertenbaker’s works. After leaving university she had a successful job as a caption writer but, in her late 20s, she left the job and left the US. She travelled to England and then to Greece, where she worked as a French teacher while at the same time beginning to write her first plays. Her multicultural upbringing, her witnessing of the systematic silencing of the Basque language and culture (Wertenbaker 1996: ix), her many experiences of living in different parts of the world, have created in this author strong awareness of, and engagement with, issues of

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¹ For instance, her exchange with Steve Waters in November 2012 and her theatre writing workshops in the following year.
cultural and linguistic dislocation and silencing. She has defined a key aspect of being a
writer as that of having a ‘floating identity’ (de Vries quoted in Bush 2013: 1) and Bush
points out how the phrase is not just an accurate description of her work, which defies
all labels, but also of her life, which is marked by the absence of a single identifying
culture, country or language (Bush 2013: 1). This condition is a central theme in most
of her works, it is embodied by many of her characters and it is one of the elements
which most drew me towards Wertenbaker’s work. With an Italian father and an
English mother, I was raised bilingually in Piedmont, in the North of Italy, where my
paternal grandparents, who originated from Naples, provided a constant cultural and
linguistic reminder of the family’s southern origins. Such a reminder was only
exacerbated by the daily clash with the local Piedmontese culture and dialect of the
area I was growing up in. These conditions provide a strong point of contact between
my own experience and Wertenbaker’s personal history and have meant that I could
immediately identify with this playwright’s multicultural perspective, with her
portrayal of cultural dislocation and identity loss, with her inability to truly ‘fit in’ with
one culture, one language. Therefore, despite initially coming into contact with
Wertenbaker’s writing by chance, I rapidly became very interested in it. However, the
themes of countrylessness and dislocation were not the only
thing to recommend this
author’s work. Many of her plays (including the two translated in this study) are based
on – or have strong links with – Greek mythology and philosophy, two of the subjects
which were at the heart of my high school curriculum and for which I have always had
an interest. When I read Wertenbaker’s myth-based plays for the first time, it occurred
to me that, although I had studied ancient Greek language and literature in high school
and was familiar with many of the motifs of Greek myth, I had never really understood,
or wondered, why we still study them, what they mean for people living today, in such
different conditions and in such a different world. The reason I thoroughly enjoyed The
Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira despite the tragic and violent themes they deal
with (a summary of the plot of the myths is provided in Chapter 4) is, very simply, that
these plays made me think – and they still make me think every time I read them. I
recognise this as the effect Jean Boase-Beier speaks about when remarking on the
reader’s enjoyment of Holocaust poetry. In the context of the Holocaust, Boase-Beier
defines the term ‘enjoyment’ as an unlikely one, but one that she can nevertheless
accept if we consider that the enjoyment comes not from the themes of the reading but from the cognitive effects it has: new insights and understanding, the questioning of one’s own cognitive models, the gaining of new perspectives (Boase-Beier 2015: 124). It was a similar enjoyment that I derived from reading *The Love of the Nightingale*, a play which I found myself appreciating to my own surprise, in the light of the violent and generally unpleasant and disturbing events it portrays. This unexpected reaction made me aware of the pedagogical aspects of this play and even though I did not engage with them explicitly at this stage, I decided to extend and develop a comparative literature assignment on *The Love of the Nightingale* into my undergraduate thesis which focused on Wertenbaker’s recasting of Greek myth.

During my MA in Literary Translation I began to look at Wertenbaker’s plays from the perspective of translation, to consider the possibility of translating them into Italian and to think about what they had to say about language and translation. To this date, only four of Wertenbaker’s plays have appeared in Italian translation. *After Darwin, Credible Witness* and *Galileo’s Daughter* appear in a single publication by Editoria & Spettacolo, in a translation by Maria Vittoria Tessitore and Paola Bono (2011), while Maggie Rose and Sara Soncini have produced a translation of *The Love of the Nightingale* (1997) for the drama magazine *Sipario* (copies of which are not readily accessible to the general public, see section 4.1). Critical commentary of and engagement with Wertenbaker’s works have had even smaller fortune. Both facts are surprising if we consider the way in which many of Wertenbaker’s works showcase key features of Greek and Latin literature and the strong link that there is between Italian culture and classical literature. Indeed, the relevance of many of the central themes of Wertenbaker’s work for traditional subjects in the Italian high-school curriculum (Greek and Latin literature and philosophy) and for more recent subjects of debate (migration, identity, interculturality), further convinced me of the validity of a project which would explore, among other things, the pedagogical potential of translations of Wertenbaker’s work (see section 6.6 and chapter 7 for details on how my translation may be used in a pedagogical context).

22 My MA dissertation was a comparative study of three translations of Eduardo De Filippo’s *Filumena Marturano*, one of which was by Wertenbaker (1998).
A particularly precious source in thinking about Wertenbaker’s work from a translation perspective was Roth and Freeman’s 2008 book *Translation and Transformation in the Theatre of Timberlake Wertenbaker*, the first full-length work on the entirety of Wertenbaker’s œuvre. This publication, in fact, explicitly links, from its very title, the works of Wertenbaker with issues of translation and it provided me with the confidence to explore further the links between this writer’s production and the new academic subject I was starting to engage with. According to Roth and Freeman, issues of translation constantly feature in all of Wertenbaker’s work in a variety of different forms to the point that all her works can be considered translations (2008: 13). This claim is partly justified by the fact that most of her plays, particularly the earlier ones, draw explicitly on other literary sources. For example, *The Upper World* is a reversal of the Orpheus and Eurydice story, *Agamennon’s Daughter* revisits the events of the well-known myth focusing on the point of view of the female characters of Clytemnestra and Electra, *Inside Out* centres on the figure of the legendary Japanese courtesan Ono Komachi, *New Anatomies* is based on the diaries of the 19th century traveler Isabelle Eberhart, *The Grace of Mary Traverse* recasts the myth of Faust from a female perspective and in *Don Juan’s Women*, the legendary libertine is put on trial on by the victims of his seduction. But Roth and Freeman point out that all of Wertenbaker’s plays, not just the ones mentioned above, draw at least partially on other sources, and, what’s more, also engage in different kinds of transformation across media and forms (Roth and Freeman 2008: 13), or highlight and ‘make visible the interaction and interpretation, of cultures’ (Roth and Freeman 2008: 13).

As is clear even from the few words spent on each of the plays mentioned above, in the earlier stages of Wertenbaker’s career interaction with different sources was used to reveal, dissect and subvert pre-established gender roles. Later, however, the scope of Wertenbaker’s work became broader, encompassing issues of identity, language and dislocation (Bush 2013: 98). Bush points out that none of these issues are ever completely absent from Wertenbaker’s work and, if we consider her own personal history described at the beginning of this section, the fact is not surprising. Issues of this kind are central in her most successful and well-known play, *Our Country’s Good* (1988), which portrays the first penal colony in Australia. The convicts in the colony put on a production of George Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Offer*, and
drama is portrayed as a means for these wretched and displaced individuals to resist oppression and regain a voice. *Credible Witness*, a 2001 play which deals with the difficulties refugees face in reconciling their culture of origin with the culture of their host country (Bush 2013: 209 – 220) also focuses on issues of language, identity, and dislocation, and such topics are thematic pillars in *The Love of the Nightingale*. In this play (a detailed summary of which can be found in section 4.1.2) Procone, an Athenian princess, is forced to marry and move abroad to the land of her husband where she is faced with different customs and traditions, as well as a different way of using language. Her sister Philomele discovers the link between speech and identity when, mutilated and deprived of her tongue, she becomes ‘nothing’, ‘no-one’ (Wertenbaker 1996a: 342). In a similar way to the convicts in *Our Country’s Good*, drama will provide her with the means to resist oppression. In this play issues of identity acquire a strong linguistic value – Wertenbaker makes explicit the link between speaking and being, or rather between speaking and being heard, and being. In this context, translation becomes a particularly important process because it provides alternative ways of speaking, of making oneself heard and thus, alternative ways of being and of knowing oneself. It acquires highly political, psychological and pedagogical value.

The link between translation processes, identity and pedagogical development further strengthened my interest in these plays resulting in the decision to undertake this research project. The translations of the two texts themselves have been the core around which the rest of the project has developed. The strategy adopted to translate *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* relies heavily on multilingualism, and although such a strategy is analysed in detail in Chapter 5, in the sections that follow I will explain what is meant here by multilingualism (1.2) and provide an overview of the reasons behind the choice of adopting it as a translation strategy (1.3).

Finally, it must be specified that although *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* are dramatic texts, my interest in them is not linked to their nature as plays to be performed but as texts. Consequently, my translations are intended for the written page and when referring to the recipients of my translations I will use the word ‘readers’. The issue of page and stage in the translation of drama is examined more in detail in section 4.1.4.
1.2 Multilingualism in literature and translation

Multilingualism is here taken to mean ‘the use of two or more languages within the same text’ in proportions which can be variable, as defined by Grutman in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2011: 183). As Grutman explains, in some instances a multilingual text will give ‘equal prominence’ to the languages involved, in others it might just present ‘a liberal sprinkling of foreign tongues’ alongside ‘a dominant language clearly identified as a central axis’ (Grutman 2011: 183). Examples of multilingual literary works of both types are not scarce. We may think, for example, of Latin in Brian Friel’s *Translations* or Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*, of French in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* or German in Primo Levi’s *If This is a Man*. As Grutman points out, the second form of multilingualism, the one involving one main language and a ‘sprinkling’ of one or more others, is the most common form.

The presence of multilingualism in a translation, however, is generally linked to its prior presence in the source text, and the main concern of anyone discussing multilingualism in relation to translation generally revolves around the various solutions that can be adopted to convey the multilingualism of the source text in the target text. A translator may decide to translate the main language of the source text and leave the others as they appear in the source text, or to translate everything into the target language, thus erasing the multilingualism of the source text (Grutman 2011: 184-185). Other solutions might include the introduction of footnotes (Grutman 2011:185) or the use of markers to highlight parts of the text which, in the source text, appeared in a different language.

That multilingualism may be a feature that the translator adds to a source text is a less common idea, although it is not a completely novel one. In her translation of Sophocles’ *Theban Plays*, for example, Wertenbaker herself left many of the lines of the chorus in the original Greek, albeit in Roman script; Wright (2016: 50-52) reports on Lorena Terando’s use of Colombian words in her English translation of María Eugenia Vásquez Perdomo’s *Escrito papa no morir: Bitácora de una militancia*, and Boase-Beier (2015: 58) comments on Felstiner’s use of German words in his translation of Celan’s poem *Todesfuge*. The translations presented in this thesis go further in their multilingualism by retaining whole extracts of the source text with no change, creating
a text which resembles the first form of multilingualism described by Grutman, the one in which two languages have equal prominence. English and Italian are indeed present in similar quantities in my texts and they are also accompanied, in *Aedón*, by a ‘sprinkling’ of Ancient Greek words.

The choice of when to use any of the languages involved is motivated by the themes of the source texts themselves. The switching between languages, in fact, is not random but carefully structured to highlight the themes central to Wertenbaker’s work or specific conversational dynamics between characters. The reasons behind the choice of each language for specific lines, characters or scenes are fully discussed in Chapter 6.

### 1.3 Multilingualism as a translation strategy

As mentioned above, multilingualism features in my translations not as a characteristic of the source texts but as a strategy for translation. Through non-translation of specific sections of the source texts, my translations are texts in which source language and target language coexist on an almost equal basis (with the addition of less frequent elements of ancient Greek in *Aedón*). Reasons for using multilingualism as a translation strategy relate to the three main subject areas listed below, each one of which is presented in more detail in the sub-sections that follow:

- The target language context in which the translation takes place (specifically in relation to the status of translation as an academic discipline and the visibility of the translator)
- The nature of the source texts themselves
- My own linguistic and cultural background and translator’s subjectivity

#### 1.3.1 The target language context

My translations address a target audience immersed in a cultural context in which translation as a professional and creative activity, and the translator as a professional, have a particularly low status. Bruno Osimo, translator and teacher of
translation at the Altiero Spinelli School for translation and interpreting in Milan, goes as far as to state that translation as a cultural category does not exist in Italy (Informalingua 2016). The general view of what a translator is and does is undoubtedly still the ‘commonsensical view’ of the translator as ‘assembler of linguistic equivalences’ (Loffredo and Perteghella 2007: 7). This is not very surprising if we consider the particular series of cultural, political and historical circumstances which mark the Italian intellectual context, such as the late development of translation studies as an academic discipline (Informalingua 2016, Bocci 2016: 174, Mazzarelli 2012), the conservative nature of academia (Mellino 2007: 467), the lack of engagement with postcolonial studies (Mellino, 2007), the negative view of translation expressed by highly influential figures such as Croce or Dante (Duranti 2011: 465) and the covert manipulation and censorship of translation carried out during the fascist regime (Rundle 1999). Consequently, literary translation in Italy is an extremely practice-driven and prescriptive discipline, in which theory has little space. This situation becomes obvious in examining the programmes of events, workshops and seminars on literary translation, as well as the reading lists of university and professional courses in the subject, and it is reflected in the kind of sources I cite in Chapter 2 in reference to the Italian translation panorama. There are very few truly academic sources, and much of the debate around translation happens via interviews with, or the blog posts of, professional, well-established translators, which are published and shared on the web by educational institutions and translator’s associations. Among the few theorists whose names are mentioned with some frequency in translation seminars and events and on reading lists is Lawrence Venuti. Not surprisingly, considering the situation outlined above, engagement with Venuti’s work relates primarily to the strictly practical issue of the social and professional invisibility of the translator. Indeed, Duranti remarks on Italian translators’ unanimous complaints on this front but he also highlights a general improvement in this situation since the late 20th century (Duranti 2011: 466). Such improvements owe much to the various campaigns initiated by the Italian translators’ union (Strade), the association of translators and interpreters (AITI) and the European CEATL. However, the other aspect of the translator’s invisibility to which Venuti refers, i.e. the invisibility of the translator within the text and the ethical consequences this has (2008: 15), has not sparked the
same debate and reaction as it has in the Anglo-Saxon world. Indeed, one may even go so far as to say it has almost gone unnoticed. The idea that translation should be invisible and fluent is constantly repeated from interview to interview, seminar to seminar, article to article (see Mioni in RAI 2015 and Testa 2008), generally without mention of a different possible course of action. What seems to have escaped Italian translators so far is the fact that professional invisibility and textual invisibility are inextricably linked (Chesterman 2000: 169) and thus one cannot be effectively fought if the other is endorsed. If translators themselves believe their own work should be hidden, how can others, such as publishers and readers, truly value it?

It is my opinion that the textual visibility of the translator should be encouraged because it is inextricably linked to the professional and social visibility of the translator that translation associations and organizations in Italy are already fighting for. In addition, it makes the readers aware of the process of translation which has taken place in order to provide them with a target text. Greater awareness among the wider public of what translation is and does would promote the identifying of the many ways in which translation can give a valid contribution to other disciplines. Some of the ways in which translation may prove useful in the development of other disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, literary criticism, pedagogy or politics, are examined in this thesis in Chapter 3. Finally, a translation strategy that goes against the current tendency towards fluency and transparency would undoubtedly foster the kind of theoretical reflection about translation that is currently lacking in the Italian translation panorama.

In this context, multilingualism is used somewhat provocatively to create an extreme form of Venuti’s foreignization effect which, in turn, might achieve the greater visibility of translation and the translator and foster the awareness and discussion of aspects of translation which are generally ignored in the practice-oriented world of literary translation in Italy (such as its ethical, political or creative dimension). The intent then, is the same as Venuti’s in *The Translator’s Invisibility*: to change a situation in which translation is undervalued and neglected (Venuti 2008: viii). The object of the desired change is no longer the Anglo-American context (Venuti 2008: viii), where some signs of change are emerging, but the Italian one which is the
target context of my translations. Additionally, it may serve to remind the Anglophone academic world that there exist, as close as continental Europe, literary and cultural contexts which are different from the Anglo-American one and that, for people translating or commenting on translation out of English, such diversity of context must be taken into consideration. The discussion in this thesis is not exclusively theoretical, since, as well as presenting a translation strategy influenced by the theories discussed, I will also present and analyse two full lengths translations in which the strategy has been applied.

Due to the different context in which my translations occur there are other issues to take into consideration. Mine are not translations into English from a minority language and therefore issues of cultural dominance and assimilation are not as relevant. What multilingualism tries to achieve in my translations is not so much the preservation of the identity of a foreign other from assimilation into a dominant target culture, as this is not the type of dynamic that exists in a translation from English to Italian. The aim of my multilingual strategy is rather the preservation of the identity of a foreign other in order to remind the readers that what they have in front of them is the result of a process of translation, and that consequently, depending on specific situations, issues of power, ethics politics and many others, may arise. This is a dimension which may be found in any interlingual translation, regardless of the languages involved.

Reader proficiency in English, and to some extent in Greek for *Aedón*, must also be taken into consideration. Educational programmes focusing strongly on the English language, as well as the increasingly globalised nature of society, mean that even those who are not proficient, or have not actively learnt the language, deal with a constantly increasing amount of loan words or anglicisms (Pulci 2006: 313). As detailed in section 6.6, I believe readers of an Intermediate level would be able to engage with the text without too much difficulty, but it is important to point out that some element of difficulty has been consciously sought out in the creation of these translation, as the aim is to make the reader think actively and critically about issues presented in the texts (be they relevant to translation processes, multilingualism, politics or other), rather than sit back passively and a-critically.
1.3.2 The translator’s subjectivity

Both plays translated here are, to a different extent, about identity, a particularly sensitive subject for Timberlake Wertenbaker, an Anglo-American raised in the French Basque country. Although I cannot claim to have as multicultural a background as her, I was brought up in a British-Italian bilingual and bicultural family. I therefore perceive my identity to be neither fully – or perhaps neither exclusively – British or Italian. Even within the Italian side of my background there is further fragmentation between the southern roots of my father’s family and the north-Italian context that I was born and grew up in. This last condition is not one that is specific to myself, but rather quite typical in the Italian linguistic landscape, marked by a very young, standard variety of Italian (Alderman 2005: 325, De Mauro 2016: 25-35), and a large number of dialects which are still widely spoken (De Mauro 2016: 113).

Cultural and linguistic plurality are therefore an important element of my existence, and they have resulted in a constant struggle to identify a mother tongue, the same kind of struggle experienced by a number of bilingual writers, such as, for example, Ariel Dorfman (1999). This is such a fundamental aspect of my existence that it cannot be excluded from any of my writing, particularly a form of writing which, like translation, is especially concerned with multicultural issues. The multilingualism of English and Italian is used not only to represent the fragmented identities of Wertenbaker’s characters, but also to express the impossibility for me to choose one of my languages over the other and the constant tension that exists between the two languages and their respective cultures which mark my life. This aspect of the strategy adopted is analysed more in detail in section 6.2.1.

1.3.3 The source texts

Throughout this study, I treat The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira as translations, following the suggestion of Roth and Freeman, 2008 (see Chapter 4). Consequently, although they are written entirely in English, an aspect of multilingualism is present in their very nature as translations. Indeed, in The Love of
the Nightingale there is a clear cultural opposition between Athenian characters and Thracian characters. Such opposition is not just one of customs and traditions (theatre and philosophy for the Athenians, hunting for the Thracians) but also one of language. As the Athenian princess Procne finds out when she moves to Thrace with her new husband, Thracians use a more figurative and evocative language, which is in direct opposition to the clarity and literalness of the Athenians. In Dianeira, the cultural opposition is between the mythical events of the story and the characters in the modern framework, as well as the audience. Such opposition is highlighted by the constant need, on the part of character of Irene, to provide tagged-on explanations of concepts linked to the mythical world, as for example the idea of a ‘house herald’ (Wertenbaker 2002: 337). Additionally, both plays see an opposition between the main female characters (Philomel and Procne, Dianeira) and the male ones (Tereus, Heracles). The oppositions and multiplicity of points of view present in these texts seem to invite the use of multilingualism as a strategy to enhance them (see section 6.1).

1.4 Transforming readers and translators

Multilingualism in a translation (when it was not pre-existing in the source text) might seem an extreme strategy, indeed even one that contradicts the very idea of translation. It probably does if our idea of translation is limited to the idea of transferring a clearly identifiable content from one language to the other. But it is this idea of translation, particularly deep rooted in the Italian context, which this work seeks to overcome, replacing it with the idea of translation as a process which enhances the source text (Boase-Beier 2015: 57). Wertenbaker describes her idea of theatre as that of a remarkably Brechtian place (see section 6.5) which should be ‘difficult’ and is meant to ‘disturb’ its audience (Kirkpatrick 1988: 554), challenging its understanding and thought processes. My translations aim at enhancing the difficult and alienating aspect for their readers through constant switching between languages,

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3 See section 6.4.1 for more on Irene’s role as mediator between the present and the mythical world
challenging readers to keep up linguistically as well as conceptually and developing the experience of ‘enjoyment’ described in section 1.1.

In discussing the translation of Holocaust poetry, Boase-Beier also comments on the need to overcome the idea that translation should simply try to provide a text in the target language which can be read as though no translation process even happened (2015: 130). She goes on to add that it might be possible to try to transform the monoglot reader into a multilingual reader or ‘at least a reader of multilingual sensibility’ (2015: 131). Although her remarks refer specifically to poetry, I see no reason why they cannot be applied to literary texts in general, including the ones examined here.

Multilingualism is actually a much more common condition that monolingualism, and this is just as true in Italy, where dialects are regularly spoken alongside Italian by almost 50% of the population (De Mauro 2016: 113), as anywhere else. This condition is reflected in the degree to which Italian literature has engaged with linguistic experimentalism (such as in the works of De Filippo and Fo as well as others – an issue discussed in greater detail in section 6.6.2). Therefore, there should be little reason for readers not to be able to deal with it just as easily in the literary world as they do in real life, except for the fact that they are not used to doing so. My translations aim at encouraging the kind of reader transformation that Boase-Beier describes, as a way to highlight the translation process and offer an ‘enhanced’ reading experience (Boase-Beier 2015: 57-58). The transformation of the reader in the context of changing the status of literary translation has also been mentioned by Petruccioli (2014: 112-113), who, however, considers exclusively reader awareness of editorial practices (becoming aware of how to recognize a book that is a translation, starting from where to find the name of the translator and the original title, being aware that other figures, such as editors, can influence the final product, being aware of the priorities that publisher and editors may have when publishing a new book etc.). Although he does not focus on the process of translation itself or on the transformation of the reader’s sensibility, Petruccioli’s suggestion is encouraging in that the reader is at least in some form considered a key figure in the development of the status of translation and of translation practices. Although the transformation
Petruccioli suggests is partial, if combined with the type of reader sensibility suggested by Boase-Beier and, as far as the Italian context is concerned, by a transformation of translators’ own understanding of their own work (see section 2.6), it could lead to significant changes in how literary translation is perceived, practiced and experienced.

Transforming the reader, the translator and translation practice as described above would be a big leap for the context of translation in Italy and it is reasonable to expect that translation projects of this kind would find little support among publishers who are driven by commercial concerns and are used to the practice of concealing translation (Petruccioli 2014: 29). However, using a multilingual strategy may appeal to educational contexts as interdisciplinarity is a great concern in the current Italian high school curriculum (Dal Passo 2003: 37), one that recently has taken on a linguistic aspect thanks to the increasing popularity of CLIL programmes.

1.5 Chapter outline

Besides this Introduction there are six more chapters to this thesis. Chapter 2 addresses the situation of literary translation in Italy and argues that the lower status of the discipline in Italy, as well as its greater focus on practice and low level of academic engagement, result in the widespread perception, both in professional and academic contexts, of translation as a mechanical operation of linguistic transfer, and little more. This situation was instrumental in convincing me of the need for a strong statement in favour of translation seen as something with deep inherent value, with the potential to contribute to, and improve our understanding of, a variety of other disciplines. The translation context in Italy is, therefore, one of the reasons for choosing a multilingual translation strategy.

Providing a clear picture of the status of translation in Italy has not been easy. Precisely because of its low status as an academic discipline, few academic sources exist, and even fewer that comment on the current state of things, rather than providing histories of translation. Ilide Carmignani’s 2008 book Gli autori invisibili, a collection of interviews with some of the most well-known translators into Italian
(many of whom are also editors or teachers of translation), proved a useful source. It provides a good overview of what the people who are directly involved in the field of literary translation perceive the crucial discussion points about translation to be, and of what they think about the state of the discipline, both from the professional and academic perspective. Sadly, the title itself (‘The Invisible Authors’) can be considered emblematic of the situation in Italy: translators proudly claim for themselves the label of invisibility.

Over the last few years, through the work of associations such as CEATL and the Italian Union of translators Strade, translation has gained some visibility, though usually it is limited to the social and professional side of things rather than being reflected in textual strategies. However, a number of books written by translators on their work as translators, or on translation more generally, have been published over the last few decade (Carmignani 2008, Basso 2010, Cavagnoli 2012, Petruccioli 2014, Bocci 2016). These are non-academic texts, suitable for readers interested in translation but also for the general reader. In particular, Petruccioli’s book which, unlike the other three, deals with the translation industry as a whole, rather than being an account of his own work as a translator, was very helpful in pinpointing specific attitudes and assumptions about translation in Italy. Translator blogs and interviews, as well as the programmes of translation seminars and events, and training courses reading lists, provided further material for delineating the situation in Italy.

Due to the lack of strictly academic writing about translation in Italy, another important element of my research was the emerging, but distinctly academic, field of Italian postcolonial theory, which provided, at least as far as possible causes are concerned, an important academic backing to my argument that literary translation is a much less theoretical and academic discipline in Italy than it is in the U.K. Particularly valuable from this point of view was the work of Mellino (2007) who deliberately sets out to identify the reasons for the late development of postcolonial studies in Italy.

Chapter 3 focuses more specifically on certain aspects of literary translation that are not often taken into consideration, even by translators themselves, and

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4 Any extracts from this or other Italian sources throughout the thesis are in my translation, unless otherwise specified.
particularly not in Italy. These aspects relate to the interaction between translation and other disciplines, not just those linked to literature and linguistics, but other less obvious ones too. I believe that an approach to the study of translation which takes into consideration these interactions would offer a more comprehensive and enriching perspective on this discipline. This section is particularly interested in the way translation can contribute to disciplines such as pedagogy, philosophy, literary criticism, psychology and politics. Particularly useful for this section was the work of Boase-Beier, Fawcett and Wilson (2014), who deal specifically with how literary translation can speak to and learn from other disciplines, the work of Cook-Sather (2006) on the link between education and translation, and Rundle’s work on the fascist regime’s manipulation of translations.

Chapter 4 looks specifically at the playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker, at her work in general and in particular at the two plays this thesis is concerned with. Drawing on the analysis of Roth and Freeman (2008), I explain why I consider these two plays a form of translation and what I believe their content says about translation. Particularly useful for this section have been Roth and Freeman (2008) and Bush (2013), the only full-length publications so far to deal exclusively with Wertenbaker’s work. Bush’s work proved particularly insightful thanks to its engagement with unpublished and archival resources.

Chapter 5 presents my translations of Wertenbaker’s *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira*, entitled *Aedón* and *La moglie dell’eroe* respectively.

Chapter 6 gives a detailed account of the translation strategy adopted, presenting the reasons for the choice of a multilingual translation strategy, the ways in which it has been achieved and the effects of its use on the target text, on the general reader and on the reader with a specific interest in translation. It also suggests a number of ways in which these texts are particularly apt for use in the Italian education system for purposes ranging from foreign language acquisition to the study of Greek language and literature, philosophy and ethics, history, politics and gender studies.

In the concluding section I consider the contribution this work makes to translation studies, to the study of Wertenbaker’s work, and to pedagogical practices
in Italy. I also take into consideration further applications of this translation strategy on other texts and literary genres and possible collaborations with EFL and CLIL classrooms to pinpoint more precisely the pedagogical applications of this strategy in the Italian educational system.
Chapter 2
Specificities of the Italian Literary Translation Context

2.1 Introduction

As detailed in the introductory chapter, this study proposes a translation into Italian of two plays written in English by Timberlake Wertenbaker. To put into perspective and understand the translation strategies adopted, it is necessary to take a close look at the situation of literary translation in Italy. When studying translation in any context, it is often the subject matter itself that reminds us of the differences that exist between languages and cultures, of the traps we may fall into when confronted with one or another foreign text, with a specific genre or a specific language and culture. What is not necessarily as obvious when discussing and studying translation more generally in any English-speaking institution, using textbooks mostly written in English by people working in the Anglophone academic context, is that what is true for literary translation as an academic subject and profession in the English-speaking world is not necessarily true everywhere, not even in the rest of the Western world. I want to argue that even within Europe there are major differences in the status, development, teaching and practice of literary translation and that these differences have to be taken into account when discussing translation into or from any language. My aim in this chapter is, therefore, to highlight the situation in Italy in order to provide the context for my specific translation choices (discussed in detail in Chapter 6).

Literary translation in Italy has a particularly low status: it has hardly any academic standing and very little professional standing – so much so, in fact, that Bruno Osimo has declared that Italy ‘lacks the cultural category of translation’ (Informalingua 2016) and, even among those who work in this sector, many think about translation as little more than a hobby, a ‘non-job’ (Petruccioli 2014: 51). Such attitudes to translation have a significant influence on the professional and social condition of the translator, on the way consumers of translations and translators themselves speak and think about translation, on the content of translation events and
seminars, on the lack of debate around theoretical issues, on the paucity of academic journals on translation, on effective translator training and on conceptual exchange with the translation realities of other countries. All these issues will be examined in detail in the different sections of this chapter.

Many of the social factors relating to the translator’s job are under the spotlight in the wake of the resonance and success of Lawrence Venuti’s 1995 book *The Translator’s Invisibility*. Some of the considerations in this chapter stem from the influence and reception of Venuti’s work in Italy, and consequent engagement in favour of the translator’s visibility. In his book, Venuti put forward the idea that translators are invisible. He suggested that they are invisible in two ways. Firstly, they are invisible as far as their social and professional status is concerned, and here Venuti highlights the lack of recognition for their work and unfavourable contractual conditions. Secondly, they are also textually invisible, i.e. in the final product, the translated book, the work of the translator is not evident but ‘hidden’, invisible to the consumer. This factor is ascribed to the widespread practice of ‘fluent’ translations (Venuti 2008: 1) which create a target text which reads as a source text, thus hiding to the reader the presence of a translator and of the process of translation. Although not everyone has agreed with every aspect of Venuti’s work (for example, Pym 1996), many scholars recognise that he did indeed point the finger at the crucial issue of the marginalization of the translator (Boase-Beier 2015: 52), and the extent to which academics and translators have identified with the idea of the invisibility of the translator’s role is evident in the sheer number of works which, from their very title, engage with issues of translator visibility or invisibility. In the Italian context, however, commentary and discussion of Venuti’s work has been particularly focused on the social aspect of invisibility, while textual invisibility is often seen as a desirable thing (Carmignani 2008: 15, Testa 2008: 163). The situation, therefore, is one in which translators themselves are unaware of the value and potentialities of the activity they are involved in, to such an extent that they themselves are the main cause of their own lack of professional status (Venuti 2013: 248).

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This study adopts the view that today, over twenty years after the publication of Venuti’s book, translation in Italy lies in a state of greater invisibility than in the Anglophone world. This is not to say that all the problems pointed out by Venuti have been overcome in the Anglophone context but that, as the rest of the chapter aims to prove, such issues are present to a much greater extent in Italy. This is ascribed to the fact that the Italian translation context is a particularly practice-driven one, in which what Lawrence Venuti calls the instrumental model of translation (2011: 234), is the predominant one. As Venuti intends it, the instrumental model of translation is the one according to which a translation is merely considered as the reproduction of ‘an invariant that is contained or caused by the source text’ (Venuti 2011: 234). This is the same model which is often associated with transfer (Martín de León 2010: 82-90) or substitution metaphors (Scott 2012: 14).

The idea that practice dominates over theory is in direct opposition to what was suggested by Bassnett and Bush in their 2006 book *The Translator as Writer*. In fact, in that publication they lamented that all contributors to the volume worked in a context that prioritized theory over practice (Bassnett and Bush 2006: 2). The vast majority of those contributors, however, worked for British, American or Australian institutions at the time the book was published, and their experience thus offers an incomplete and Anglo-centric picture, something which the editors of the volume fail to remark upon.

In the Italian context, the lack of academic courses in literary translation (Mioni in *RAI* 2015), perhaps a direct consequence of the perceived lack of value of translation theory (Bernascone 2008: 127, Mazzarelli 2012c), and the direction taken by the initiatives of non-academic institutions, such as AITI (the Italian association of translators and interpreters), CEATL (the European Council of Literary Translators’ Associations) and Strade (the Italian translators’ union), tend towards the exclusion of theoretical debate in favour of issues related to the social and professional status of the translator. In fact, while the influence and reception of Venuti’s work has sparked engagement in favour of the translator’s visibility, such engagement has, as sections

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6 The term ‘instrumental’ is also used in relation to translation by Nord (1997: 47-50), and later by Boase-Beier (2011: 26), in opposition to ‘documentary’ translation to identify a difference of function.
2.2 and 2.6 will show, been only partial and deeply flawed. Indeed, the associations mentioned above have been highly active in fighting the social and professional invisibility of the translator, but they have so far neglected the equally controversial issue of the invisibility of the translator within the translated text, perhaps precisely because to do so would be to challenge the ‘instrumental model’ of translation that is dominant in Italy and would require engaging with issues that are seen as unrelated to current practice and, consequently, irrelevant.

The suggestion here is not that initiatives in favour of social visibility are pointless but that social and textual invisibility are connected (Morini 2007: 29; Chesterman 2000: 169) and thus need to be fought together. Theoretical debate does have an effect on translators’ perception of their own worth and of the value of what they do and translators themselves – through the education of the future generation of translators and readers, through the translation strategies they choose to adopt, through what they write in translation preface, through what they say to publishers or to journalists and readers via interviews – do have the power to influence audiences and the wider community. Translators must realise that by being invisible within the target text they are contributing to perpetuating their own cultural invisibility (Venuti 2008: 7). In fact, if we consider translators as no more than copyists performing menial transcription work, why should we accept their demands for higher fees than those that are normally paid for purely mechanical tasks? (Morini 2007:29)

Of the many organizations and individual translators who regularly advocate greater social visibility for the translator, few are ready to carry out an in-depth analysis of current translation practices and of their own work to identify aspects of their own choices and overall attitude towards translation which might be having an effect on the social and cultural status of translators. The failure to recognise the fact that social and professional invisibility and textual invisibility are inextricably linked, and that the one cannot be overcome as long as the other is encouraged, is one of the main causes of the perpetuation of the translator’s invisibility in Italy. For translators to become socially visible, they must become textually visible too – or at least be ready to accept that there might be instances in which textual visibility can be taken into consideration, and even applied, without necessarily creating a worthless translation.
The prevailing attitude however, is to advocate textual invisibility as desirable and to link the translatorly activity to ideas of servility, imitation and falsehood. Martina Testa, well-known editor and translator from the English for Minimum Fax (Carmignani 2008: 179), explicitly says that her aim as translator is to disappear entirely (Testa 2008: 163), translator Paolo Nori compares translators to swindlers (2008: 64) and, from the very title of his book, *Falsi d’autore*, writer and translator Daniele Petruccioli links the idea of the translator’s work to falsehood (2014). If textual visibility is still unacceptable in editorial practice because of publishers’ fear of alienating the reader, and therefore un-applicable for translators, this should not mean that it cannot be discussed with other translators or students, or carried out in ‘safe’ and experimental contexts such as training assignments. But none of this can happen if translators do not see themselves as a professional category which does more than simply copy and transfer content from one language to another.

Further issues which have an impact not only on the lack of social and professional status of translators and translation, but also on the slow development of translation studies in general, setting the Italian context of translation further apart from the British one, include a stale and conservative academic system which is not flexible enough to allow for the development of a new discipline (Mellino 2007: 467, Duranti 2008: 90), a lack of interest in the literary translation contexts of other countries and the late development of postcolonial studies. All these issues will be examined in the paragraphs that follow in order to present the context in which my translation has been produced.

2.2 A non-job: the question of obscurity

Since the publication of Lawrence Venuti’s *The Translator’s Invisibility* in the mid 90s, invisibility has become a great concern not only for individual practitioners and scholars of translation but also for translation associations and cultural bodies. The issue has sparked action and controversy in Italy as in the rest of the world, as the reaction of translators and of translation associations – some of whose initiatives are described more in detail later in this section – confirm. However, a close look at the Italian situation reveals that the influence of Venuti’s work has been confined, in that
country, almost exclusively to non-textual invisibility, i.e. to the financial, contractual and social aspects of the translator’s invisibility. The low professional status of the translator is felt and noted by Petruccioli (a translator himself) who ironically defines the job of the translator as a non-job and plays on images of frailty and obscurity (even conjuring up the image of a panda) to give an accurate idea of the real status of the translator’s profession (2014: 51). He adds further details to this miserable picture by suggesting that the idea that any young language enthusiast can perform the translator’s job effectively is widespread even among specialists of the publishing sector (Petruccioli 2014: 10). Further proof of the extremely low professional status of the translator’s work is the fact that, contrary to what happens in other countries, standard translation contracts in Italy include a lump sum (among the lowest fees in Europe) for the work carried out but no royalties (Mazzarelli 2012).

A review of the action taken so far by a number of European and Italian translators’ associations and cultural bodies confirms the tendency to focus on the promotion of the social and contractual visibility of the translator, ignoring aspects related to textual visibility. The European Council for Literary Translators’ Associations (CEATL), which actively participates in book fairs and translation events across Italy, has collected and published data about the financial situation of translators in Europe, organized a competition for the creation of videos promoting the visibility of translators and held a survey on the cultural visibility of translators in Europe. In 2013 translation associations, websites and blogs celebrated the release of the Italian version of the Petra Recommendations, a publication which follows on from the 2009 conference Literary Translation and Culture and the subsequent 2011 Petra Congress. The publication and the conferences it sprang from aim to develop a plan of action to change the situation of literary translators in Europe. Each chapter of the Recommendations addresses an issue identified as crucial in the current European translation panorama. One of these chapters is dedicated to the translator’s cultural situation and degree of visibility. The Petra Project has subsequently led to Petra-E, a network for translation training which has already put together a Framework of Reference for the Education and Training of Literary Translators (Petra-E Network)

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7 See CEATL’s website, in particular the page on visibility: http://www.ceatl.eu/current-situation/visibility.
The online translation forum Biblit was the first to undertake a structured survey of average translation fees in Italy, attempting to portray at once the lower average rate for translation work in Italy compared to the rest of Europe, the lack of a minimum standard of pay for translation work and the degree of negotiation power perceived by translators according to their age and experience, gender and language combination. In 2012 an Italian Union of Literary Translators, Strade, was founded with the goal of achieving ‘il pieno riconoscimento del valore del traduttore editoriale [sic] sotto il profilo professionale, artistico e retributivo’ (‘The full recognition of the value of literary translators from the professional, artistic and financial point of view’).

Translators themselves have often spoken up against their unacceptable social and professional status (Mazzarelli 2012b, Petruccioli 2014, RAI 2015). In an attempt to empower the professional category of translators, Daniele Petruccioli has written a short volume intended to help readers understand the world of translation and the mechanisms which lead to the publication of a translated book (2014). His text is based on the premise that readers need to be informed because all details relating to the fact that a volume may be a translation and to the work of the translator and editing team are deliberately hidden in the final product. In fact, despite the law stating that the name of the translator should be included on the cover or title page (Petruccioli 2014: 23), it is usually relegated to the small print of the colophon, effectively hiding the information from the unaware reader. This is true in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of a couple of minor publishing houses who include the name of the translator on the book cover (Petruccioli 2014: 16).

In the second chapter of his book, entitled ‘Perché ce lo nascondono’ (Why they hide it from us), Petruccioli tries to uncover the reasons behind this deliberate concealment. He is unable to find one single, clear-cut reason and concludes that this practice is the result of complex cultural, ideological and economic dynamics (Petruccioli 2014: 30). On the one hand, publishers have to reconcile artistic and cultural interests with their financial concerns and, on the other, translators have to keep their boss happy. From the ideological point of view, a romantic conception of authorship, based on the ideas of genius, uniqueness and originality, (Bennet 2004: 59)

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8 See [http://www.traduttoristrade.it/obiettivi/](http://www.traduttoristrade.it/obiettivi/)
works against the public recognition of figures like translators, editors and proofreaders. In fact, if a work of literature is a masterpiece, a work of genius, can readers really accept that it exists in more than one form, in more than one language, as the result of the work of a variety of people besides the author-genius? Venuti also makes a very similar point about the concept of authorship and the translators’ invisibility (2008: 6). Readers and critics, Petruccioli suggests, rest easier if they have a single, clearly identifiable individual to praise or blame, to love or hate (2014: 34-35).

Publishers want to make sure that their audience is comfortable, hence a vicious circle ensues. Petruccioli suggests that only readers can change this situation, by becoming more aware. This involves, first of all, becoming aware of which figures work towards the publication of a translation and who is responsible for what, and secondly learning to judge the work of a translator. In order to do so, he presents a list of revealing factors which a reader can look for in an Italian translation – such as culture specific references, forms of translationese such as ‘traduttese’ e ‘tradiano’,9 the use of morphemes,10 or lack thereof (Petruccioli 2014: 93-113). Once aware of these factors readers can start to develop a personal taste for a specific translation approach or the work of a specific translator and look out for the name and work of some translators over others. And perhaps, eventually, this will lead to the overcoming of the genius-masterpiece idea and the multiplicity that translation offers will be seen as added value rather than a necessary evil.

Although he presents many interesting insights into the world of publishing and the role of translators, and although he attempts to explain and uncover the obscurity in which the work of the translator lies, Petruccioli fails to consider the fact that textual

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9 While with ‘tradiano’ Petruccioli denotes the awkwardness of a target language that follows source language syntactical structures, with ‘traduttese’ he means a language in which any stylistic or lexical peculiarities are flattened to match an idea of elegant ‘Italian’ creating a very predictable and ‘scholastic’ language (2014: 99 – 103).

10 Petruccioli is referring to suffixes which are used in Italian to add some nuance to words. The typical example is so called ‘accrescitivi’ and ‘diminuitivi’ (2014: 106). The first, such as the suffix - one/ona, have a similar function to adjectives like ‘big’ or ‘large’. Thus, ‘a big house’, could be translated literally with adjective and noun (una casa grande) or with the morpheme ‘ona’: una casona. ‘Diminutivi’ such as -ino/ina or -etto/etta, on the other hand, decrease the size of the object in question. Therefore a ‘casina’ or ‘casetta’ is ‘a small house’. Petruccioli argues that morphemes are a natural feature of the Italian language (used freely and creatively by Italian writers) which, however, is often remarkably absent in translations from languages (such as English) which do not have the same feature. This absence is therefore one of the elements which he states can help the reader to understand if a text has been transalted from another language (2014: 105).
and social invisibility are linked and that translators themselves have some degree of responsibility for the current state of things. Indeed, Mioni and Mazzarelli, mentioned above as having spoken against the social invisibility of translators, are, however, strong advocates of textual invisibility. Most crucially, they are also teachers of translation and therefore have a strong influence on how the new ranks of translators understand their role. We can only assume that Petruccioli’s desire to create a conscientious reader is based on the assumption that translators are already conscientious, but as I will explain more in detail section 2.6, the way translators, particularly those who are in a position to influence other translators – at times Petruccioli included – constantly refer to their own work reveals a passive, subservient and often a-critical attitude which contributes to maintaining the low status of translation in Italy.

2.3 Theory and Practice: the question of training

The lack of engagement with the full spectrum of issues relating to literary translation in Italy may be due to several reasons. The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies reports on a delay in the development of translation studies in Italy and suggests that the negative attitude of influential thinkers such as Croce and Gentile towards translation may be at the root of it (Baker and Saldanha 2011: 465), but it also suggests that effective translator training is another issue to take into consideration. The two sections below examine and present obstacles to translation training in Italy within academic and professional institutions.
2.3.1 Academic training and conservativism

Despite the famously low number of translations published in the U.K.—against significantly higher figures in the Italian publishing market—Translation Studies is an older discipline in Britain and the English-speaking world than it is in the Italian one. As a number of Italian practitioners report (Bocci 2016: 174, Mazzarelli 2012a), the generation of older, more experienced translators is one of ‘naive’ or ‘natural’ translators, who went through higher education during the early 70s, a time in which there were no formal courses (academic or otherwise) in literary translation, and who therefore learnt to translate through unguided (by formal education or theory) confrontation with the text (Bocci 2016; 174). This, of course, is also true of the British context (Wright 2016: 2) but, in Italy, it is combined with the extraordinarily conservative tendency of the Italian academic system, defined by Mellino (2007: 467) as being ‘closed, eternally immobile, traditional (…) with a strongly nepotistic system of recruiting’. In light of this description it is not surprising that, according to an article published in the Corriere della Sera in January 2015, just over 0.1% of full professors in Italian universities are under the age of 40 (Stella 2015). The statistic refers to ‘professori ordinari’, full professors, but even if we consider the figures for professors of any degree (associate professors and researchers), those under 40 are still only 8.8% of the total. If we combine this data with the knowledge that formal courses in translation are only a recent addition to the education system, we can conclude that those who teach translation in academic contexts today are most likely too old to have benefitted from formal education in the subject they now teach. The generation that Mazzarelli and Bocci described as that of self-taught, ‘naive’ translators is the only generation that is currently allowed to hold high-standing roles in academia. Those who might have benefited from specific training in literary translation and from greater exchange with the international intellectual community thanks to greater

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11 Translations are usually considered to account for 3% of English language publications (see, for example, CEATL’s page on statistics from http://www.ceatl.eu/current-situation/translation-statistics), however research carried out by Literature Across Frontiers reveals that, in 2008, 2.43 % of the total number of U.K. publications were translations, whereas translation accounted for 4.59 % of publications in the areas of poetry, drama and fiction (Donahaye 28: 2012).

12 22% according to CEATL’s survey ‘Comparative Income of Literary Translators in Europe’ (Fock et al 2008: 4).

13 ‘traduttori “ingenui” o “naturali”’ (Bocci: 2016: 174)
freedom of movement among institutions in the wake of the Erasmus programme are, in the majority of cases, too young and unconnected to consistently reach stable positions in a highly conservative academic system.

Although the number of academic courses in translation, including literary translation, is increasing, the academic system does not seem flexible enough to offer a well-rounded preparation for translators (Duranti 2008: 90). The inadequacy of translator training in higher education institutions has also been remarked upon by Bernascone (2008: 127), and it is worth noting that although there are a number of academic courses in translation, few of them focus specifically on translation as opposed to interpreting, and even fewer address literary translation specifically. Indeed, of the 12 courses in translation offered by Italian universities listed in the 2014 CEATL Rapport sur la formation à la traduction littéraire, a comparative survey on literary translation education practices in Europe (Groupe de Travail ‘Formation à la traduction littéraire’ 2014), only one is specifically and exclusively devoted to literary translation (the Laurea Magistrale in Traduzione Letteraria e Saggistica from the University of Pisa). Among the other institutions which offer more generic translation courses (occasionally literary translation is explicitly mentioned in the title of the qualification, but always alongside technical or specialist translation), only a few have core modules in literary translation (the Magistrale in Traduzione Specialistica at IULM and the Magistrale in Traduzione from the Civica Scuola Altiero Spinelli). Paola Brusasco, Maria Cristina Caimotto and Aurelia Martelli, teachers in the Foreign Languages and Literature Faculty at the University of Turin, have also commented on the less than ideal conditions for teaching translation in Italian Universities (2011). They point out that, except for institutions that have a School of Translation Studies and Interpreting, translation is normally taught within language modules as part of degrees in Modern Languages and Literature and not separately as a translation module. This highlights the fact that translation is often considered a discipline which has no autonomous status, as is also confirmed by teacher and translator Bruno Osimo (Informalingua 2016). In addition, there are logistic issues which hinder the effective teaching of translation. The Italian system rarely has a strict selection process for student admission (particularly in Humanities faculties) and often students are not obliged to attend classes (as is the case in the institution Brusasco, Caimotto and
Martelli speak about). The first aspect means that class numbers are extremely high (the teachers mention figures of 200 students per class), the second factor means that there is no guarantee of continuity within the course and that the difference in level among students, who already have very different levels of competence due to the lack of a selection process, often increases rather than diminishing throughout the teaching process.

The difficult situation of translator training in Italy is not necessarily an isolated case. The CEATL Rapport shows that many European countries have their own issues as far as this discipline is concerned. The section ‘Informations et réflexions complémentaires’ in the CEATL Rapport sur la formation à la traduction littéraire is a precious tool for gaining a general picture of how the different European countries fare. It has to be noted that this section did not ask for specific information. Contributors included whatever information they felt was most relevant to their country. It is therefore impossible to use these remarks for a systematic comparison of European countries. However, it is possible to extract one significant piece of information. While each writer felt the need to highlight a deficient aspect or, at the very least, to suggest some kind of improvement for their own country, the UK section is the only one that paints a picture of complete success and harmony, with a strong academic model and a single organization, the BCLT, which functions as the main point of reference for everything to do with literary translation (Whiteside 2014). Italy might not be the only country that is lagging as far as the teaching of literary translation is concerned, however it joins some of its neighbours in being a significant number of steps behind the United Kingdom. Since this is a study which takes place within the British academic system but refers to the Italian literary translation context, the difference in the development of the discipline in these two countries is an important factor to bear in mind.

On the whole, as far as current debate about translation and translator training is concerned, the Italian environment still has a lot of catching up to do and, consequently, issues that are old and stale in some countries are barely starting to emerge or have yet to appear at all in Italy. As section 2.4 will explain, a strong national literary tradition and linguistic pride may also contribute to isolate the Italian
literary world from its neighbours. Therefore, taking into considerations all the factors described in the last two sections, we can say that translation is currently less visible in Italy than it is in the UK (despite there being more of it on paper). This is not just because Venuti’s ‘call to action’ (2008: 265) has yet to have its full impact but, more simply, because there is less said, written, done and taught about translation altogether. Translation itself may indeed be a crucial contributor in this unbalanced situation, as academics of any nationality are more likely – and simply able – to write in English than they are in Italian, paradoxically raising the issue of the lack of translations of works on translation in Italy today. In fact, if, Venuti’s *The Translator’s Invisibility*, has been translated into Italian and appears frequently on translation courses’ reading lists,14 many other well-known names which normally form the core of literary translation reading lists in the British academic system are not available in Italian translation (from Gutt to Toury, from Tymoczko to Boase-Beier just to mention a few). In addition, Italian translation journals which might offer translation of extracts of foreign works or indirect access to some of the ideas contained in such works are very few. Dealing specifically with literary translation are the well-established *Testo a fronte*, created in 1989 and published by Marcos y Marcos, and the more recent addition *Tradurre: pratiche, teorie, strumenti*, an online journal set-up in 2011 by some of the translation staff at the Agenzia Formativa Tuttoeuropa in Turin. *Intralinea*, run by the Department of Interpreting and Translation of the University of Bologna deals with translation in general, not specifically literary. In 2011, *Between*, which deals with comparative literature rather than translation specifically, was set up at the University of Cagliari and in 2014 staff at the University of Trento created *Ticontre* with the three Ts in the title referring to theory, text and translation.

2.3.2 Private training and prescriptiveness

The disproportion in the percentage of translated texts in Britain and Italy which has already been mentioned (between 2.5 % and 4.5 % in Britain vs 22% in Italy) is perhaps another reason why the world of translation in Italy seems to show a

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14 For more details on this see section 2.6.
greater focus on the professional aspects of translation, rather neglecting theoretical issues. The few universities which offer courses in various branches of translation (literary as well as technical translation, subtitling or interpreting) are less active in organizing conferences, events and open lectures on the subject than British institutions and the inadequacy of the academic system in providing an effective and up-to-date preparation in translation has already been mentioned above as has the general tendency to conservatism of the Italian academic world. Together, all these elements create a situation which hinders the full development of this still relatively young discipline within Italian academia.

The situation is not necessarily better outside of the academic world. In fact, despite a vast number of long-term courses, seminars and workshops in literary translation being offered by private bodies (typically private educational institutions, literary agencies and publishing houses),¹⁵ which are free from the constraints that plague the academic context, these non-academic bodies have their own issues to take into consideration. Private educational institutions that organize courses in literary translation, in fact, must necessarily take a practical angle to differentiate themselves from generally much cheaper academic courses (with the exception of the Tuttoeuropa specialization course, which benefits from European funding and is available at no cost to the 15 students per language per year who pass the selection process). As active businesses in the publishing industry, literary agencies and publishing houses also naturally tend to favour practical aspects over theoretical ones. This is due partly to the reason described above, but also because of their own interest in creating a network of professionals who are familiar with the business’ way of working, as well as a potential pool of talented collaborators. Consequently, the only alternative to the less than adequate academic courses are practical ones which are limited to offering translation do’s and don’ts, legal and financial advice and accounts by well-established translators of their own professional journey. Although a great part of this content may be of significant value, it does not encourage translators and

¹⁵ Private educational institutions offering courses in literary translation include the Agenzia Formativa Tuttoeuropa in Turin or IULM in Milan, literary agencies which have the same kind of offering are Herzog and Oblique and examples of publishers are Leconte and Voland.
students of translation to think about, and be aware of, the full implications of the activity they have chosen and its significance.

All these elements combined suggest that the academic system is inadequate to adapt to as new a discipline as literary translation and provide its students with high-quality and up-to-date all-round preparation, and that private bodies, which might have the flexibility and funds to create a more varied and self-rejuvenating debate, do not necessarily have a strong enough interest in doing so and tend to favour practice and prescriptiveness, with critical debate suffering as a consequence. A case in point is Franca Cavagnoli’s 2012 book *La voce del testo – l’arte e il mestiere del tradurre*. Cavagnoli is a writer and translator as well as a professor of translation at the University of Milan, and since its publication, *La Voce del testo* has become an extremely popular text which, as well as being very accessible to the general public, has been adopted by many Universities and private institutions as suggested reading for aspiring translators. Translation modules at the University of Pisa, of Rome 3, at the Agenzia Formativa Tuttoeuropa of Turin, and *Books in Italy* (Marchi and Carmignani 2014), the website dedicated to the promotion of the Italian publishing industry, language and culture, all recommend Cavagnoli’s book. Although Cavagnoli sets out, from the very start, to be critical rather than prescriptive, informing us that it is not her intention to dispense norms to be followed, such an objective is very rapidly contradicted by consistent use of extremely prescriptive vocabulary including expressions like ‘bisogna’ (one must), ‘è necessario’ (it is necessary), ‘è opportuno’ (it is desirable). The prescriptive nature of the text has already been remarked upon, to some extent, by Bibbò (2012: 2). As a result, Cavagnoli’s popular text, is a collection of do’s and don’ts, which, although supported by a variety of examples, create an ‘instruction manual’ for a specific kind of translation rather than promoting a critical approach to translation as a whole.

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17 See [http://host.uniroma3.it/docenti/antonucci/regole_tesi.html](http://host.uniroma3.it/docenti/antonucci/regole_tesi.html)

18 Personal correspondence with Professor Giulia Baselica dated 16th January 2014

19 She says ‘i criteri non vogliono essere affatto normativi o prescrittivi’, (these criteria are not intended to be normative or prescriptive’, Cavagnoli 2012:10).

20 For example, when discussing Maggie Shayne’s novel *Twilight Illusion* she writes that it is appropriate, it is desirable (‘è opportuno’), to translate it in a specific way (2012: 20-33), namely in a way that focuses on action and erases any elements that slow it down, such as long sentences, refined vocabulary and
Even the more text-based public workshops, seminars and other educational events about translation that take place in Italy each year fail to look at translation as little more than one of the possible career outcomes for humanities graduates today. Reflection on what translation actually is, on its value as a tool for cultural exchange or as a creative activity is supplanted by prescriptive lectures on how to do translation in today’s market. A brief look at the programme of translation events across the country (a good selection of which is collected on the website of AITI\textsuperscript{21} - the Italian Association of Translators and Interpreters) confirms this. Of all the training events dealing with translation rather than interpreting sponsored by AITI in 2016, the vast majority focuses on practical strategies for translating a specific genre (advertising, fantasy literature, medical texts etc.) or a specific author, or occasionally on presenting a published translation, on teaching how to use a specific tool (for example CAT tools or social media) or on presenting connected activities such as editing and proofreading. In 2016 only one event programme mentions translation theory as having any space within one half of the seminar (Professor Nasi’s seminar on ‘extreme translations’)\textsuperscript{22} and one other specifically addresses the idea of creativity in translation (the conference Creativity in Translation/Interpretation and Interpreter/Translator Training organized by the Università Suor Orsola Benincasa in Naples).\textsuperscript{23} Looking further back in the events archive, a similar situation can be observed for previous years. In 2015, there is no mention of creativity in relation to literary translation and Nasi’s seminar, still on ‘extreme translations’, this time does not mention theory at all.\textsuperscript{24} For 2014 no event explicitly mentions translation theory or creativity as linked to translation in a context that is not related to children’s literature or copywriting.

Examining past programmes of the AutoreInvisibile Literary Translation seminars at the Turin Book Fair a very similar picture emerges. Even the title given to the series of events on translation, AutoreInvisibile (‘InvisibleAuthor’) seems a repetition (‘bisogna lavorare sull’azione e eliminare sistematicamente tutto ciò che la rallenta: frasi troppo lunghe, parole troppo ricercate, fenomeni di ridondanza’ my emphasis).

\textsuperscript{21} For a list of the events see http://www.aiti.org/news-formazione-eventi
\textsuperscript{22} The event programme is available at http://pvda.aiti.org/news-formazione-eventi/corsi-eventi/torino-28-maggio2016-vincoli-svincoli-e-liberta-vigilate-sulla
\textsuperscript{23} The event programme is available at http://www.aiti.org/news-formazione-eventi/corsi-eventi/evento-patrocinato-da-aiti-napoli-5-e-6-maggio-2016-creativity
\textsuperscript{24} The event programme is available at http://friulivg.aiti.org/news-formazione-eventi/corsi-eventi/udine-18-aprile-2015-traduzioni-estreme-e-traduzioni-per
testament to the reductive perception of the activity it is meant to celebrate. Whereas some years ago such a title might have been provocative, forcing people to engage with a controversial issue and acknowledge a presence they were normally free to ignore while at the same time acknowledging the status of the translator as ‘author’, now that the translator’s invisibility is a familiar concept, it simply seems to reinforce a widespread conception and seal the doom of translators as invisible and unacknowledged professionals. In addition, over the last three years, this sector of the Fair has failed to promote a broader debate around the act of translation, although opportunities were not lacking. The account Stefano Bordiglioni provided at the 2013 Fair of his experience translating Rodari’s rhymes into song and introducing them into the primary and secondary school classroom is a case in point. Some children were present during Bordiglioni’s presentation, creating the perfect scenario for Bordiglioni to show his audience how children reacted to his activities and their willingness (indeed eagerness) to become rhyme or song writers and create new words for the music or new versions of Rodari’s stories. The event was not part of the AutoreInvisibile series, presumably because it did not deal explicitly with interlingual translation, however it would have provided a perfect opportunity for translators to reflect on alternative functions of translation and on how it may be used as an educational tool to foster literacy and creativity. The organisers of the AutoreInvisibile seminars have shown a lack of willingness to create a modern and eclectic event, presenting the same speakers and similar topics again and again. Popular seminar formats are: a discussion between source text writer and translator (this format is called ‘Lo scrittore e il suo doppio’, the writer and his double), discussion between translator and editor or discussion of the difficulties of translating specific genres (see Salone Internazionale del Libro 2016 and 2017). The theoretical, creative and critical aspects of translation find little space within this event. These are problems that are not absent from the Anglophone context. Venuti, in fact, has commented extensively on the negative effect of the lack of theoretical engagement and excess of prescriptiveness on translator’s understanding of their own and their colleagues’ work (2013: 242-243). However, if we look at the programme of Anglophone events comparable to the Italian one previously mentioned, it appears that the issue is present to a different degree in the two countries.
If we compare the events offered by the Translation Centre at the London Book Fair to the ones on offer at the Turin Book Fair a significant difference does emerge.

Though many events are similar, the London event shows a greater willingness to include a wider range of topics, including those linked to academic and theoretical issues. The 2016 edition, for example, featured a seminar on Translation as Research, in which translation is discussed as a form of creative writing, critical reading and valuable academic contribution and one on Translator as Activism [sic], in which the wider social and political impact of translation is discussed (Literary Translation Centre 2016 and 2016a).

Whereas practical tips on how to be a successful translator are, of course, useful, it seems very surprising and worrying that aspiring translators should be sent into the publishing world with all the practical tools to carry out the profession in the generally accepted way and none of that ‘theoretical self-consciousness that might allow translators to criticise and improve their own work’ (Venuti 2013: 235). What is more surprising is that articles and other texts of various kinds highlighting the value of translation are written and enthusiastically shared on websites and social media by many translation associations and forums, but the ideas they put forward are rarely seen as worthy of discussion at organised events.25 In short, the value that an awareness of different theories has – regardless of whether one agrees with the view expressed in such theories or not – for the constant development of new and different ways of thinking about translation (see Boase-Beier 2007: 48) is even less appreciated in Italy than it is in the Anglophone world. This is not to say that experimentation and creativity cannot occur without engagement with translation theory but simply that, at the moment, they are rarely conceptualised in the Italian context. Such conceptualisation would be desirable since as Wright puts it, when informed by

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25 A case in point is the article by Luciano Canfora which appeared in the Corriere della Sera in October 2013 and immediately bounced off the Facebook and Twitter feed of translation forums and associations. The article’s title compared the act of translating with the act of [critical] thinking and defined translations as the motor of civil progress (Canfora 2013). A similar case is that of Simone Giusti’s 2015 article Le potenzialità della traduzione a scuola which states and documents the need for a greater visibility of translation in order to promote multiculturalism in schools, but which failed to create a response within the translation community (Giusti 2015).
theory, practice ‘can become less intuitive and more considered, less in thrall to
cassion and more open to innovation’ (2016: 2).

Despite openly fighting for the visibility of translation, translation practitioners
(who in most cases run translation events of the type mentioned above) seem unable
to take in the full dimension of the translation world today, shining the spotlight on
prescriptive aspects of current translation practice and confining the deeper
evolution of the nature of translation itself to the shadows. By refusing to look
towards less conventional aspects of the translation world, by refusing to engage with
work carried out either in a more academic environment or within the framework of a
completely different discipline, those in charge of organising the sort of event which
should promote the visibility and development of translation are, paradoxically,
hindering it.

2.4 Pride and Prejudice: the question of insularity

A further aspect to take into consideration when forming a general picture of
literary translation in Italy is the extent to which the Italian world of literary translation
engages in dialogue with other realities, comparing not only professional and
contractual conditions, but also ideas of what translation is and how it is carried out.
Unfortunately, the condition of translation in Italy is quite insular. Foreign speakers on
translation rarely take part in the most popular seminars and events about translation.
In recent programmes of the AutoreInvisibile, the series of literary translation seminars
and events at the Turin Book Fair, and of the Giornate della Traduzione Letteraria in
Urbino, foreign participants are almost completely absent, and the few who are
present usually participate either as authors of foreign texts who, alongside their
translator into Italian, comment on the source text or on their relationship with their
translator, or as collaborators of international organisations (such as CEATL) presenting
specific projects and initiatives (competitions, training programmes, translation
residences). Translators into other languages, or translation theorists who would be

Both the translation section of the Turin Book Fair (l’AutoreInvisibile) and the Giornate della
Traduzione Letteraria of Urbino, for instance, are organized by Spanish >Italian translator Ilide
Carmignani.
able to offer alternative points of view on the theory and practice of translation in general, rarely figure in the programmes of the most popular translation events. The main reasons behind this failure to engage with what might be going on beyond the national boundaries are two-fold:

1) Translation theory, which can influence areas of study that are not specific to a single language, is vastly undervalued and underdeveloped in Italy. Often, it is translators themselves who are unable to see how even a practitioner has a professional duty to be aware of all aspects of their chosen field. Paola Mazzarelli, who is a translator and teacher of translation within a non-academic context, has given proof of this inability by suggesting that translating as a job has no connection to theory (‘The job [of translating] is something else altogether and it has nothing to do with theory’, Mazzarelli 2012c). This is a view shared by many of her teacher and translator colleagues, including Rossella Bernascone, who considers theory either too abstract or too prescriptive to be of any use to practitioners (2008: 127). In a context in which practice is considered the most useful tool for translators, it is only natural that translators into the national language will be seen as individuals who are able to offer the most valuable contribution for aspiring Italian translators at translation events. Consequently, those most likely to gain an invitation to speak at seminars and talks on translation in Italy are translators into Italian, most of whom are found within the national boundaries and might have little awareness of discussion topics on translation beyond those boundaries. This is not to say that there are no brilliant Italian researchers in translation, however it is significant that a vast number of them work and publish in English for an Anglophone audience. Eugenia Loffredo, Manuela Perteghella and Stefania Taviano are just a few examples.

2) There exists a very strong form of national pride when it comes to the Italian language and literature. This is not necessarily a feature which is exclusive to the Italian context, but it can definitely be considered one that marks a difference from Anglophone contexts. The Italian language is protected by an Academy, the ‘Accademia della Crusca’ and the idea that the language and
literature of Italy are a national treasure has deep roots. Many types of publications, from newspapers to magazine and books, address the beauty, uniqueness and value of the Italian language and one of the main national newspapers, *Repubblica*, is now offering in collaboration with the ‘Accademia della crusca’ a series of publications on the ‘formidable’ Italian language.27

The lack of development and appreciation of a theoretical framework for the work of the translator has already been analysed in section 2.3, consequently in this section I will focus on point 2) above. As far as literary and linguistic pride goes, while the idea of safeguarding a language and its literary production is commendable, it can be taken too far and turn into a refusal to engage with foreign neighbours or to acknowledge the fact that other linguistic and literary realities might have something to contribute to the Italian one. Indeed, in some cases Italian translators, intellectuals and critics, do appear to become blinded by pride in their language and, in some instances, voice the dangerous idea that Italy has nothing to learn from anyone as far as writing, translating and critiquing literature goes. Emblematic are the following lines by Petruccioi (2014: 60-61):

> Well, if there is one thing that in this wretched and miserable peninsula we are not just good at, but the very best at, it is the effective use our own language. It is something we invented, something others have been copying from us for nearly a thousand years. And about 500 years ago, we were so universally emulated that half the vocabulary of Europe was contaminated by italianisms. Microchips and computers didn’t do it, and neither did wine bottles. It happened through metre and use of adjectives; through the rhythm of syntax and lexical euphony. In other words, through the harmonics of spoken language, the music of telling stories.

> Our translators are the best, if not in the whole world, at least in the West. If the British – in the few titles that they translate – cut and adapt everything they can’t quite understand (...); and the French embellish freely and then swear that their translations are the most beautiful (...); if the

27 See [http://temi.repubblica.it/iniziative-biblioteca/2016/10/20/litaliano/?refresh_ce](http://temi.repubblica.it/iniziative-biblioteca/2016/10/20/litaliano/?refresh_ce)
Germans re-write everything from scratch because they believe they are the only ones who fully understand; if, basically, others try to find themselves, we Italians – with the mimetic spirit that sets us apart, with the light-hearted histrionics that we put into every sentence, with our ability to love our own language, not for how it is but for how it promises to be, and for its ability to change and adapt – we Italians are better than anyone else at conveying the scent of difference through the warm and ancient material at our disposal. Nobody better than Italian translators can handle their linguistic tools to cradle, scare, fascinate and invent, as well as to disown, desecrate, deconstruct, and then soothe with a pinch of the good old operatic arias.

Petruccioli, who in the rest of his book appears able to consider different factors within each issue he examines, here provides no alternative point of view, no proof for what he claims, no comparison with the other languages and literatures – and this is no small oversight, considering he is claiming outright that Italians are the best at something which is very difficult to judge. However, he is in not the only one among translators or intellectuals to be subject to this blind form of pride. Similar sentiments for the language and literary tradition of Italy can be traced in the words of many translators who see themselves as defenders of a true and pure Italian (Vigliani 2016, Mazzarelli 2012d) ostensibly against forms of lexical impoverishment and translationese, but in practice against any form of unconventional or experimental language. Mazzarelli, for instance, is against changes that take away, rather than add value (2012d). But who decides, and on the basis of what criteria, what kind of changes add value, or indeed what value is? These are questions that neither Petruccioli nor Mazzarelli ask. And although ‘fluent’ translation practices do not automatically exclude aspects of creativity – as is the case of Maurizia Balmelli’s translation of Cormac McCarthy’s Suttre (see Mazzarelli 2011)28 – this does not automatically mean that translators are aware of the creative aspect of the work they carry out and that they

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28 See the discussion between the two translators initiated by the word ‘updrafts’ in McCarthy’s text. It is worth noting that despite admiration being expressed for Balmelli’s work, ‘creativity’ is never mentioned in relation to it, the focus being on the dogged, meticulous, exhausting and time-consuming nature of the work.
have the ‘conceptual resources’ that are necessarily to critically discuss translations and ideas about translation (Venuti 2013: 243).

If translating means defending an idea of ‘pure’ Italian, then it makes sense that translators would not think of turning their gaze abroad to learn about their chosen activity. This blind pride may well have given rise to the prejudicial idea that, when it comes to languages and literature, Italy has little to learn from its neighbours but rather should be taken as a model of excellence. This pride, as well as the disturbing idea expressed by Petruccioli regarding the superiority of Italian translators, and the consequent refusal to engage critically with the translation debate beyond national boundaries, must be at least in part accountable for the slow development of this discipline in Italy.

2.5 Culture and politics: historical embargo and censorship

Another reason for the lack of engagement with specific aspects of translation, in particular its ethical and political dimension, which is at the root of Venuti’s discussion of textual invisibility, may well be found in the still emerging nature of postcolonial studies in Italy (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012). Although the postcolonial debate in this country is not completely absent (see, among others, Mellino 2005 and Pompeo 2009, who have written, in Italian, about different aspects of postcolonial culture), it has not yet been systematically developed (Mellino 2007: 462, Ponzanesi 2014). Mellino (2007) identifies multiple causes of this situation, first and foremost the myth of Italian colonialism as atypical and less brutal, an idea willingly encouraged by the post-war government in an attempt to identify colonial expansion with the fascist regime, thus preserving the image of an essentially peaceful and meek country whose focus was to help and improve the life of people in the colonies (Macchi 2011: 9; 10).

Macchi highlights further details of the complex political dynamics that characterized post-war Italy, including the need to avoid weakening the Italian government in order to present a united front against Communism during the Cold War and the fact that the loss of its colonies was, for Italy, the result of the defeat in
the Second World War and not the consequence of wars of liberation and a process of decolonisation. These factors resulted in active censorship, throughout the whole of the 20th century, of the atrocities committed by Italian troops in the colonies. As a consequence, Italy’s colonial past has been almost removed from collective memory and engagement with, and public debate about, the misdeeds of Italian colonialism is lacking. Mellino speaks about ‘colonial amnesia’ (2012: 91) and quotes Labanca who suggests that ‘There is an embargo in public opinion and, more generally, in the press and the media, against free and critical historical research on Italian colonialism. This critical historical research has been accused of denigrating the activities of “italiani brava gente.”’ (quoted in Mellino 2012: 92). Labanca provides the examples of the 1989 BBC documentary Fascist Legacy and the 1979 American film The Lion of the Desert as cases in point (quoted in Mellino 2012: 92). In fact, despite broadcasting rights for the former having been initially acquired by RAI, the national broadcasting company, fragments of the documentary were only shown in 2003, and in an abridged version, by a small private channel as part of a history show (Macchi 2011: 12). As Macchi comments, the presenter and co-creator of the programme, historian Sergio Luzzatto, was then removed from the position after the episode in which parts of the film were broadcast (Macchi 2011: 12). The 1979 film The Lion of the Desert has faced the constant censorship of the Italian government and was broadcast by the private broadcasting company Sky only in 2009 on the occasion of Colonel Gaddafi’s visit to Italy (Castelnuovo 2009).

Macchi also reports that, as late as 2004, Gianfranco Fini, at the time deputy Prime Minister, minimised the disastrous effects of Italian expansion in Libya and highlighted the beneficial effects of having improved the social, cultural and economic conditions for the people of Libya. In reality, as Macchi is quick to point out, at the end of Italian occupation all statistics relating to mortality rates, education and employment in Libya were catastrophic (Macchi 2011: 8). But Fini’s minimising attitude is far from being an isolated case. In her analysis of postcolonial studies in Italy Ponzanesi (2012) echoes Macchi in speaking about outright ‘denial’ of Italy’s colonial past and of ‘historical oblivion’ (Ponzanesi 2012: 52, Macchi 2011: 9; 12). Mellino’s

\[29\] English translation by Mellino (2012: 92).
work on the reasons for this delay in engaging in postcolonial studies goes further and identifies other significant factors such as the limited influence of post-structuralism and post-modernism on Italian intellectuals (2007: 467), the modest impact, and late translation into Italian, of Said’s work (2007: 468) and the particularly conservative and nepotistic nature of the recruiting system in Italian universities (2007: 467). Whatever the causes of this situation may be, if we consider the extent to which postcolonial studies have contributed to research in translation in the Anglophone world (see for example the collected works in Bassnett and Trivedi 2002), we can presume that the late development of this field of study in Italy has resulted in a more limited engagement with the ethical and political aspects of translation and in a less developed appreciation of the implications of adopting foreignizing or domesticating strategies. In this light, presenting a foreignizing translation also serves to highlight an area of debate around translation which so far as deserved limited consideration in the Italian context, as well as to offer an interesting option for the translation of postcolonial literature into and out of Italian.

Another reason for the late development of translations studies in Italy may be found in the fascist regime heritage. As section 3.6 explains in more detail, the regime kept the publishing industry in check, exercising a form of covert manipulation first, and outright censorship later, of translated literature in Italy. Initially elements which contrasted with the regime’s ideals were removed or toned down (suicides, abortions, negative depictions of Italians), but soon it became clear that translation into Italian contradicted the nationalistic ideology of the regime and was equated with a form of cultural invasion (Rundle and Sturge 2010: 8). The regime, therefore, tried to stifle the receptiveness of the publishing industry, by manipulating, censoring and limiting translation practices. As a result of such policies publishers were limited in what they could print but, as was in their economic interest, continued to publish making sure translated texts were altered in a way that made them acceptable to the regime. It is possible that such pervasive negative propaganda around translation still has a hold on the current publishing industry and readership. The high level of government manipulation of translated literature may have created a distrust of translation practices and of translators the effects of which might still linger today. It is possible that the choices translators were forced to make may have had a negative impact on
the readers’ evaluation of their ability, and of the value of their activity, particularly if we bear in mind that, due to the covert and pre-emptive form of censorship carried out, awareness of the constraints imposed on the translators’ work may not have been widespread among those not directly involved in the publishing industry.

2.6 Textual visibility: the question of responsibility

Unlike social invisibility, the other side of the issue described by Venuti, textual invisibility (i.e. the invisibility of translators who deliberately hide their presence in the text by creating a fluent translation) is far from being considered an issue of great significance. Indeed, Petruccioli, whose already mentioned *Falsi d’autore* (2014) addresses the issue of social invisibility by providing a rather insightful picture of the ‘submerged’ publishing world, does not waste even a paragraph on textual invisibility.

Talks and seminars at translation events throughout the country, as well as articles and interviews with Italian practitioners, in fact, show that the invisibility of the translator within the text is a condition which is generally advocated as a desirable feature in a translation. Anna Mioni, translator of over 60 titles into Italian and teacher of translation for several literary translation courses and seminars (RAI 2015), gives voice most clearly to this contradictory way of seeing the role of the literary translator. In a 2015 video interview for the literature web portal of the national television and radio broadcasting company (RAI 2015), she says that translators should remain invisible within the translation, because a translation is good when you cannot tell that it comes from a text written in a different language. She also says, however, that translators’ work should be recognised, because without it the foreign writer would not have an Italian voice. The possibility that such recognition might be impossible to achieve so long as we perceive the act of translation as one that has to be concealed, does not appear to occur to her.

Ideas of invisibility, servility and self-annihilation, as well as less than flattering depictions of the translator’s artistic and creative abilities, are recurrent in the public words of Italian translators. Renata Colorni affirms that translators should annul themselves and their own ability of expression in order to serve the source text and author (2008: 22) and even suggests that translators are failed writers unable to create
their own imaginary worlds (2008: 23). Petruccioli himself, despite his attempt to spread awareness among readers about the translator’s work, consistently refers to translation as something which is complex work but nevertheless still linked to ideas of obscurity, falsehood, transfer and illusion, rather than an authorial and creative activity. Indeed, the idea of falsehood is prominent from the very title of his 2014 book, *Falsi d’autore* (Autorial fakes).

These views on translation are by no means exclusive to the Italian context. Perhaps one of the most famous advocates of textual invisibility in the Anglophone world is Anthea Bell (2004). However, the pervasiveness of ideas of invisibility, servility and obscurity sustained by the majority of Italian translators and rarely counterbalanced by a clear awareness of the critical and creative value of the translatorly activity and by a lively debate, is a fundamental factor in the slow development of translation as a respected profession and academic discipline in its own right. Indeed, even the collaboration between the prestigious writing school Scuola Holden, two well-known translators into Italian and the publisher Bompiani, failed, in the description of its costly literary translation training event, to come up with anything more innovative, interesting or inspiring than the title ‘Bella e Fedele’ (Beautiful and Faithful). Because most of the teaching staff on literary translation courses are made up of professional translators (Petruccioli, and Mioni among them), not only is this a-critical point of view the only one to which aspiring translators are regularly exposed, but ideas of servility, passivity and self-annihilation take on the connotations of a prescriptive requirement for getting a translation contract and producing ‘good’ translations.

As already mentioned, the influence of Venuti’s work has hardly gone beyond the financial and contractual side of things. Venuti’s name is perhaps one of the most well-known among students, professionals, amateur and aspiring translators, and *The Translator’s Invisibility*, in particular, has figured on the reading list of many academic or vocational courses in foreign languages and translation, including the University of

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30 The programme of the training event can be viewed at: http://scuolaholden.it/bella-e-fedele/
Milan, the University della Tuscia, the University of Rome Lumsa and the Agenzia Formativa Tuttoeuropa of Turin. Indeed, despite the focus of Venuti’s work being primarily on textual visibility as an ethical choice, it is the last chapter of his book, the ‘Call to action’ focusing on cultural visibility (i.e non-text-related) which has had the greatest resonance in the world of translation, highlighting the unappreciated status of a whole professional category (as opposed as the unappreciated status of the translation process itself). The ethical domestication/foreignization binary, which Venuti describes in the rest of his book, is often considered only as a modern reinvention of the old free/literal opposition. In fact, even the prestigious intellectual figure of Umberto Eco, in his analysis of the foreignization/domestication binary, failed to take into consideration the ethical dimension Venuti ascribes to the opposition and instead related it exclusively to issues of readability and fluency (Eco 2007: 172-181).

The significance of suggesting, as Venuti does drawing on Schleiermacher’s (1992) and Berman’s (2012) earlier considerations, that the translator may carry out ‘an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values’ or put ‘an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text’ (Venuti 2008: 15) and the consequence such considerations might have on translators’ understanding and performing of their own work, seems so far not to have been fully appreciated. The ethical dimension ascribed by Venuti to textual invisibility is easy to see as abstract and idealistic and difficult to reconcile with the practical demands of the publishing market and has thus had less influence on the general translation scene. Even if the issue were to gain consideration, the particularly wide gap between theory and practice, the causes of which (inadequacy of the academic system, insularity of the Italian translation world, the late development of translation studies) have been described above, would

31 Suggested reading for this course available at: http://www.studumanistici.unimi.it/CorsiDi Laurea/2013/C74/pianoStudi/curriculum/C-393/C-393.13.1/index_ITA.HTML.html
34 Personal correspondence with Giulia Baselica, professor of Translation Theory at the Agenzia formativa Tuttoeuropa, dated 16th January 2014.
probably result in their rapid dismissal as another theoretical dilemma with no definitive solution and little effect on practice.

My contention is that it is in fact impossible to consider textual and non-textual invisibility separately as each is linked to the other in a vicious circle of cause and effect. A textual strategy which involves translators purposefully hiding their work – and consequently themselves both as individuals and professional entities – must have a consequence for the translators’ own perception of their work (and, of course, for other people’s perception of the translators’ work). In this light, the translator’s unappreciated social status, i.e. non text-related invisibility, may be seen as partly self-imposed by the adoption of a fluent and domesticating strategy (i.e. text-related invisibility). By adopting such a strategy translators make themselves invisible within the text, performing an act of ‘weird self-annihilation’ (Venuti 2008: 7). The target text that is thus created reads as though it had been written in the target language, leaving the reader no reason to assume they are not reading the ‘original’. Chesterman has effectively summed up this situation by pointing out that ‘Invisible translators, who seek to efface themselves textually, also tend to get effaced socially’ (2000: 169).

I do not wish to suggest that there is no value in domesticating translation strategies and that foreignization is always the better choice. Indeed, critics of Venuti have pointed out many situations in which foreignization may be detrimental. As far as translation from minority languages into dominant ones is concerned, for instance, domestication may actually represent the only way in which the foreign culture can survive and a foreignizing strategy may have an exoticising effect, i.e. it might reinforce target culture prejudices and moral complacency against the source culture (Shamma 2014: 78). As for translation into minority languages from dominant ones, foreignization may allow elements of the dominant language to seep more and more into the receiving language thus causing minority languages to ‘succumb at lexical and syntactical levels so that over time they become mirror-images of the dominant language’ (Cronin 1998: 147). I do, however, wish to suggest that the translator’s choice of strategy should be a conscious one, not one determined exclusively by a superficial understanding of translation itself, by prescriptive norms or by the demands of the publishing industry. Most of the translators who regularly speak and write about
translations and who are extensively quoted in this thesis, translate from one dominant language into another and therefore concerns such as those raised by Cronin and Shamma are not necessarily relevant. Most of these translators do not question widespread ‘fluent’ practices and speak of themselves and of their work in term of subordination and servility, thus reinforcing the translator’s status of invisibility.

If we consider their failure to question the nature of their professional role and the activity they perform, invisibility is indeed self-imposed. In order to be appreciated and valued by others, translators should learn to appreciate and value themselves and their work, and this cannot happen if they keep talking and thinking about themselves and their work in negative terms rather than engaging in the full spectrum of the debate (both practical and theoretical, local and foreign) regarding the multiple qualities, uses and peculiarities of their particularly rich and complex discipline.

In this context, translation associations, which have already done much to reinforce the translator’s legal and social condition, still have a lot to do. Little, in fact, is being done to reinforce translators’ appreciation of their role and self-confidence in their ability as writers or their awareness of their cultural contribution or their thorough understanding of the potentialities of the translatorly activity. As pointed out by Venuti ‘if translators want to change the cultural marginality of translation, they need to change the ways in which they themselves think about and represent their work’ (2013: 248).

So, as well as the need for readers to become conscientious (Petruccioli 2014: 93), it appears that translators themselves still need to become fully conscious of the importance and potentialities of their own job, and of their own responsibility for the way they practise it, speak and think about it. Whereas readers, critics, publishers and associations may play a part in raising the status of translation, the first individuals to hold responsible are translators themselves. Translators, first and foremost the ones that have some amount of visibility derived from being regular speakers or interviewees at translation seminars and literary events, and teachers of translation courses all have a double responsibility. First of all, to be fully aware of the different aspects of their area of expertise, including issues discussed and researched in other countries even if they do not appear to have any immediate influence on Italian
practice, and secondly to try to spread a similarly aware and conscious attitude among people within and without the world of translation. As things stand at the moment, it seems paradoxical that a work as influential as Venuti’s, which is present and well-known in the Italian context, should not be fully exploited by educational institutions and seminars and events on translation. Despite the criticism his book has undergone it cannot be denied that 1) its controversial nature has sparked debate, response and action all over the world\textsuperscript{35} and would consequently draw any readers into a wider discussion about translation and encourage them to provide their own criticism, 2) it affirms the political and ethical responsibility of the translator, thus conferring greater cultural agency on this professional figure, 3) it is one of the few works of this kind available in Italian translation.

2.7 Way forward

Despite the delay in the development of translation in Italy, particularly as far as certain aspects of the discipline are concerned, the overall picture is not exclusively of gloom. Although creativity and experimentation in translation may rarely be conceptualised, they are not entirely absent from the Italian literary context, as the works of Malerba and Baricco (discussed more in detail in section 6.1), or Maurizia Balmelli’s previously mentioned translation of McCarthy’s *Suttre* (see section 2.4), show.

Training courses are increasing in numbers as are translation associations, translation journals, and books written by translators on translation. Degree courses in literature now offer modules in postcolonial studies. Voices offering more critical perspectives on the discipline are occasionally emerging: Bruno Osimo has challenged the instrumental model of translation, pointing out the wide range of processes that the word ‘translation’ spans (2010: 10); Giusti (2015), Benvenuti (2012) and Morini (2007) have engaged with the ethical aspects of the translator’s invisibility; Rebonato (2001) has demonstrated how translation can contribute to literary criticism and

\textsuperscript{35} Vocabulario related to invisibility has been rapidly taken up in the titles of events and publications (the literary translation section of the Turin Book Fair is called AutoreInvisibile, and the Arc Publications translated poetry series established in 2000 has been named ‘Visible Poets’)

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Ferme (2002) has analysed the cultural and ideological power of translation\(^{36}\) (these two latter contributions are analysed more in detail in the Chapter 3). These are still minority voices in the Italian context, but greater contact with the work of foreign scholars and translators (perhaps through translation into Italian) could contribute to making these voices less lonely, to enlivening the debate around translation or even just to creating greater awareness of how others think about translation in other parts of the world. Some points of view might be particularly helpful in challenging dominant ideas about translation in Italy. Clive Scott, for example, believes that the insistence on the substitutive aspect of interlingual translation – similar to what Venuti calls the ‘instrumental model’ of translation which, as we have seen, is typical of the Italian scenario – distracts us from one of the key values of translation, i.e. its potential to promote awareness of the multiplicity of languages and cultures among the readers of translation (2012: 14). In addition, Scott identifies a highly personal dimension in the translatorly activity, a dimension which he names ‘psycho-existential’ (Scott 2010: 13). This dimension sees a translation as ‘part of the spiritual autobiography of a relation with the ST’ (Scott 2010: 181), an account of the translator’s reading of the source text. In this way, the translator becomes an active agent who claims possession of his/her work even if this means ‘textual intrusion’ (Scott 2010: 2) and who ‘does not draw meaning out of the ST and embody it in another language but instead confers meaning on the ST by using another language’ (Scott 2010: 177). The picture of translation that emerges from Scott’s words is clearly very different from the standard view of translators and translation in Italy. Scott proposes a translator whose agency is deliberately made visible in the target text, whose agency is in fact one of the main points of translation. Boase-Beier and Holman (1999) have reflected on the creative aspect of translation, a point of view which, if we consider the constant reference on the part of Italian translators and teachers of translation to ideas of inferiority,

\(^{36}\) Despite the book itself pointing out that translation is much more than a means of transferring a specific content from one language to another, its title (presumably assigned by the publisher), by using another familiar cliché, ‘Tradurre è tradire’, offers a very immediate picture of translation as something negative. Only the reader who goes beyond those first three words to the smaller print of the subtitle and then to the actual content of the book realises that the clichéd opening leads to something more interesting.
modesty, falsehood and mechanical imitation, might prove useful for challenging commonly accepted views of the translator’s role.

Unfortunately, neither Scott’s nor Boase-Beier’s works, alongside those of many other academics, have been translated into Italian. Their translation would indeed present many difficulties, foremost of which, from the financial point of view of the publisher, is the fact that they are not generally included on any education institution reading lists, and are therefore not very likely to sell. However, one would expect that translation and cultural associations who are truly interested in the development of the discipline would see it as their duty to take an interest in, encourage and fund, the translation of key academic texts.

What the work of translators and academics like Scott, Boase-Beier and, indeed, Venuti shows is that there are ways of thinking about the translator as an active agent and creator of a text as opposed to a mere copyist; in short, ways of thinking of the translator not just as a visible professional entity but also as a visible literary, cultural and creative one. Whether the translator’s agency is of a political or personal kind, whether we can expect Italian translation students and practitioners to share the views of Venuti or Scott is irrelevant. To engage with works of this kind and encourage reflection on the non-linguistic aspects of translation is essential to overcome the unbalanced and unilateral picture of translation which emerges in Italy today. In addition, scholars like Scott and Venuti propose a textual form of visibility which is completely alien to translation practice or even, in most cases, to theoretical discussion in Italy. An emphasis on textual visibility, which should originate from translators themselves, is here seen as an essential step to achieving the greater visibility of translation in general (as detailed above). In fact, until translators themselves appreciate the key role translation plays in human existence and the importance of their role as translators, it will be impossible for readers, critics and publishing houses to do so either.

37 Jean Boase-Beier does make a brief appearance on the suggested reading list for a German language module at the University of Rome LUMSA for the academic year 2016/2017, though both her name and the title of the publication are inaccurately reported. The full list of University module programmes is available at: [http://www.lumsa.it/sites/default/files/didattica/scieclinpol/16-17/programmi_L11_1aa16-17.pdf](http://www.lumsa.it/sites/default/files/didattica/scieclinpol/16-17/programmi_L11_1aa16-17.pdf)
A further area of study, which appears particularly suited for development in the Italian context, is the field which examines the interactions between translation and other areas of study (Boase-Beier et al. 2014). In a context in which practice is the dominant force and in which there does not exist a ‘cultural category of translation’ (Osimo in Informalingua 2016), studying how translation can offer practical contributions to other, more authoritative fields of study, may not only help translators to become more aware of the many benefits and applications of their own discipline, but may also encourage non-specialists to come into contact with, and learn to appreciate, this discipline and see how it actually impacts a number of different aspects of human existence. For this reason, the interactions between translation and a select number of other disciplines will be analysed in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Embracing Hybridity

3.1 Introduction

The Italian context of translation described in Chapter 2 denotes a widespread monolithic view of what translation is and does, a view which, despite the gradual emerging of more diversified voices such as those mentioned in section 2.7, is unlikely to undergo any rapid change. This is due primarily to the long-standing social and historical factors identified in the previous chapter, including cultural heritage, insularity, conservatism of the academic system and economic interests which create a tangle of opposing forces in which translation finds itself trapped. Petruccioli’s 2014 work *Falsi d’autore*, discussed in the previous chapter, paints a clear picture of a situation in which a number of translators demonstrate a true will to empower translation and a belief that it is a valuable and worthwhile activity but, at the same time, an inability to fully distance themselves from the pre-conceived and superseded ideas which placed it in the shadows to start with. For the type of experimental translation that I will propose in Chapter 5 to be understood and appreciated, translation itself must be understood as more than an instrumental activity but as a process with inherent value and potential. From this point of view, I believe it is highly important not only, as pointed out in the previous chapter, to consider the textual side of the invisibility of the translator and its causes and consequences, but also to recognise and discuss the multiplicity, complexity and value of literary translation from all perspectives. To think about translation as a mechanical operation of ‘transfer’ is both an outdated point of view and one which actually hinders the development not only of translation but also of other, more high-profile disciplines. This chapter proposes a conceptual shift in how translation is thought about, practiced, taught and consumed in Italy, from the idea of a mechanical, ‘service’ transfer operation, to the idea of a hybrid discipline which is valuable *per se*. The contribution that translation can make to traditionally more prestigious and visible disciplines, such as philosophy or literary theory, is a key element for translation to achieve a higher status.
Worldwide, many translators have looked at translation from a broader perspective, describing it as much more than the interlingual transfer of a clearly identifiable content. Paz (1992) and Hermans (2003) and more recently Apter (2006) and Grossman (2010) have all highlighted the relevance of translation processes in fostering an awareness of the ‘other’ and facilitating processes of critical enquiry and meaning construction. Grossman has attempted to define the contribution of translation to the modern world by stating that:

Translation always helps us to know, to see from a different angle, to attribute new value to what once may have been unfamiliar. As nations and individuals we have a critical need for that kind of understanding and insight. The alternative is unthinkable. (2010: x-xi)

Emily Apter elaborates similar ideas, although her words seem charged with a greater political and social force if we consider that her study is informed by her own experience of 9/11. For her, translation acquires a more disturbing dimension, forcing individuals to abandon their natural complacency, the comfort of their own unquestioned beliefs, and to engage with the difficult reality that surrounds them. Not surprisingly she speaks of translation as a means of ‘denaturalizing citizens’ (Apter 2006: 6).

The practitioners and academics mentioned above consider translation as more than a simple interlingual transfer of content and reach the conclusion that translation is a key process in the development of intercultural understanding, self-awareness and self-knowledge. Other scholars or practitioners, not necessarily in the field of translation, have taken a step further, explicitly considering how translation interacts with other disciplines and what it can lend to or borrow from them. As we shall see, in most cases this involves both translators and experts of other disciplines challenging the boundaries of their own area of knowledge and expertise. Although a high cultural value is often attributed to translation also in the Italian context, it is usually in very vague terms rather than as a specific topic of academic investigation. As detailed in Chapter 2, debate around translation rarely goes beyond linguistic issues, and the value attributed to the discipline normally lies in its function as a tool for the diffusion of literary works (Petruccioli 2014:9), and thus of culture. More detailed analysis of
how translation interacts with specific areas of human activity would, I believe, help in shifting the way of thinking about translation in countries such as Italy, where reductive ideas are still dominant. However, for this change to occur, these perspectives must gain visibility in the Italian context. The responsibility for this lies with translators themselves. In fact, despite Petruccioli’s call for reader awareness and greater institutional interest in translation via the financing of cultural projects (2014: 82), I believe that any change in the current situation must originate first and foremost from those who practice, think and speak about translation.

The Petra-E framework of reference for the education and training of literary translators identifies 8 key competences and 5 levels of proficiency – LT1 to LT5 – for literary translators (PETRA-E Network 2016). As the framework specifies, a translator ‘does not need all the competences’, however ‘ideally, an expert literary translator will combine all the competences’.

This must be all the truer if we are talking about translators who not only teach translation but who are also in charge of planning and organising training events or even translation courses. If, that is, they are actively shaping the understanding of future translators and the discipline itself (as is the case, for example, of Ilide Carmignagni, in charge of the AutoreInvisibile events at the Turin Book Festival or Paola Mazzarelli, academic coordinator of the Tutteuropa post-graduate course in literary translation). As shown in Chapter 2, many other figures of this kind in Italy fail to satisfy some of the descriptors in the framework which, considering the Italian condition of ongoing development of the discipline, are particularly crucial ones. This is the case of some of the descriptors for ‘Professional competence’ and ‘Research competence’ at levels LT3, 4 and 5 (specifically, keeping up with the translation debate and making original, complex and innovative contributions to it) and, in some cases, even of the LT1 descriptor for ‘Professional competence’, specifically the awareness of literary criticism in the target culture (PETRA-E Network 2016). With reference to the framework then, the Italian context can be seen as extremely unbalanced, with the first three competences listed in the document (the more strictly linguistic ones) being more developed than the bottom three.
The presence of a network like PETRA-E (to which the Italian Fondazione Universitaria San Pellegrino participates) and the existence of a collaborative document like the framework, which makes it easier to identify this type of unbalance and tries to guide translators in their ongoing development, leaves little room for excuse for Italian translators, particularly those who are involved in educating the new generations. The tools for constructive exchange with other European translators on the development of the discipline, on necessary competences and skills, training, ideas and strategies are there and this type of exchange is precisely the goal of the PETRA-E Network. Despite specific cultural, historical and social issue which may have affected the development of translation so far, translators in Italy have no excuse for not comparing their own situation with their neighbours’, for not seeking to learn from, and discuss with, each other. Translators, particularly those who shape the future of the discipline through their own visibility, have a duty to recognise the full scope of their chosen activity and to develop their skills accordingly, and now they even have a document to remind them of that. For if translators themselves are not able to recognise the true value, potentialities and complexity of what they do, why should others?

Although there are many areas of research concerning translation which are currently marginal in Italy and which could help to broaden and rejuvenate the debate in that country, I will focus on the area of study which concerns itself with the interaction between translation and other disciplines, and consider what each may gain from or contribute to the other. Developing this specific area of study might be particularly helpful in the Italian context. It has, in fact, very self-evident practical implications, not just for translation but also for disciplines with a higher status than translation. This could make stepping away from standard linguistic approaches to translation more acceptable in a context as practice-driven as the Italian one. Additionally, the reputation of translation may well benefit from being associated with more mainstream and high-status disciplines. As shown by Boase-Beier et al. (2014) and Bowker et al. (1998), translation overlaps with a wide range of other disciplines and, when experts from those disciplines are alert enough to notice translation and engage with it, they are often rewarded with valuable insights into their own field. The link to some of these disciplines, for example literary theory and pedagogy, is more
evident and has already been at the centre of research to varying degrees, whereas for other disciplines the connection has only more recently been established.

In the paragraphs that follow, a number of disciplines are taken into consideration as fields to which translation may contribute in different ways, as well as fields which might inform translation practice. Although the interaction between translation and some of these disciplines has, to some extent, already been the subject of research in the English-speaking world, it is still almost completely ignored in Italy, due to the situation detailed in Chapter 2. The question of what the Italian cultural context specifically has to contribute to and gain from the study of the interaction of translation with other disciplines has yet to be addressed.

To offer an example of how translation issues may be relevant in a number of different situations, I have selected five disciplines to analyse in their relation to translation and these are: literary criticism, philosophy, pedagogy, psychology and politics. This does not mean, however, that there are no other disciplines which could be the object of similar analysis. With the aim of encouraging a radical change in how translation is practiced, perceived, consumed and taught in Italy, I have selected disciplines which, for specific cultural or historical reasons, are particularly relevant in the Italian context, or which touch on key themes of the texts I will translate, thus shaping my own translation approach.

Literary criticism and philosophy have been selected because they are subjects with a strong academic tradition, standing and authority in Italy. The pride Italy takes in its own literature and in the classical texts that have shaped it has already been described in Chapter 2. A similar status is held by philosophy, also strongly associated with classical literature. Like classical literature (and language), philosophy still forms the core of traditional education curricula and has just as strong an academic standing. The idea, put forward in sections 3.2 and 3.3 below, that translation may make a significant contribution to the development of these prestigious disciplines is a point worth considering if one wishes to improve the status of translation itself. References to classical literature and philosophy are, moreover, abundant in Wertenbaker’s two texts and the presence of such familiar and canonical themes might also serve to
soften the controversial aspects of the experimental translation presented in Chapter 5 more acceptable in the Italian literary context.

As far as pedagogy is concerned, its connection to translation has always been exploited in the Italian education system, albeit somewhat implicitly. ‘Versioni’ are the translations from Latin or Greek that students produce in classics classes and, for students of ‘Liceo Classico’ – the humanities-oriented high school – a ‘versione’ is the subject of the second written test (set by the Ministry of Education at national level) in the final examination process. Although the exercise being performed is essentially an interlingual translation, the word ‘translation’ is never actually used to refer to it, thus allowing Italian students to get used to engaging in translation activities without actually realising it. Even without resorting to the area of foreign language learning, translation is therefore a key but somewhat concealed element in well-established educational practices. The interaction between pedagogy and translation might, therefore, be one which Italian academics could recognise more easily as they would realise that it has always, albeit implicitly, been part of accepted teaching practices for one of the most traditional academic subjects.

The interaction between translation and politics also has particular relevance in the Italian context. Given Italy’s colonial past, its experience of political manipulation of art and the media during the fascist regime, its historic role as threshold to Europe and, more importantly, its current role as preferred destination for mass migration movements (see section 3.6), it is difficult to imagine how debates about translation in that country could not strongly gravitate around political issues. Because of the specific situation it finds itself in, Italy could provide useful insights into, and strategies for responding to, the social, cultural and linguistic changes arising from the recent increase in migration flow.

The links between pedagogy and psychology and different forms of translation described below in sections 3.4 and 3.5, as well as that with politics just mentioned, embody key ideas which are recurrent in Wertenbaker’s works (the two I am concerned with here, but also in general) where they appear sometimes explicitly and sometimes more indirectly. The very source material of these texts, Greek myth, suggests a keen interest in finding out how human beings work. Indeed, in her 2007
paper *The Voices We Hear*, Wertenbaker she suggests that it is precisely because of the Greeks’ interest in human psychology that Greek drama remains so popular today.

In *The Love of the Nightingale*, there are some rather explicit examples of the relationship between translation and, in particular, psychology and politics. Procne finds herself having to translate intralingually to communicate with the chorus of Thracian women. Although the language is the same, Procne uses it very literally whereas the Thracian women use it metaphorically (see also section 4.4). Procne’s inability to understand what the chorus means, i.e. to translate, is directly linked to the concept of empathy in Hero’s line ‘images require sympathy’ (Wertenbaker 1996a: 317). Physically silenced through the cutting out of her tongue (see section 4.1.2), Philomele carries out a form of intersemiotic translation by communicating with her sister through the staging of a human puppet show. Philomele’s translation is at once a deeply identity-affirming and political act. Reduced to ‘No one. No name. Nothing’ when she loses the ability to speak (1996a: 342), she restablishes her own identity and becomes Philomele again by gaining her sister’s recognition through the puppet show (1996a: 343), which, at the same time, is also an act of political dissent, exposing the tyrant Tereus for the criminal he really is. Ideas of translation as an essential tool in an individual’s formal and psychological education, as a tool for developing empathy and understanding, as an identity-shaping tool and as one for overcoming violence, and also as a highly political activity are constant elements of Wertenbaker’s works and the connection between these dimensions and translation is therefore essential and has informed my reading and my own translation of Wertenbaker’s texts. It has been my intention to translate them in a way that highlights these issues and that offers an example of a translation which is not a merely linguistic act, but an affirmation of personal identity as well as a deeply political act.

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38 Although Hero talks about ‘sympathy’ rather than ‘empathy’, the two concepts are similar. According to Keen, sympathy is the ability to react to someone’s feeling (2007: 5), a definition which has much to share with definitions of empathy (see section 3.5 for more details on notions of empathy and sympathy).
3.2 Literary Criticism

Literary translation, and in particular the close, attentive form of reading of the target text that literary translators perform, is a good example of how translation can—and should—be seen as something that has other uses beyond the transfer of texts from one language to the other.

It would appear to be an obvious fact that, during the process of reading, translators engage with the text in a deeper and more intense manner than the average reader. Grossman has called the translator ‘the most penetrating reader and critic a work can have’ (2010: 73), Cavagnoli (2012) dedicates the whole of the first chapter of La Voce del Testo to the reading process.

In Translating Style, his study of translations into Italian of English Modernist writers, Tim Parks has effectively shown how a close reading of the source text and its translation can give deeper insights into literary works (Parks 2007: 14), an idea already explored by Gaddis Rose (1997: 55). Jean Boase-Beier has also worked along similar lines, albeit with a focus on poetry. In her 2014 article ‘Using Translation to Read Literature’, she states that:

Particularly with literary translation, we want to know how texts can lead to different interpretations, how they achieve their effects, what different readerly contexts will mean for possible readings. And the fact that it is the linguistic detail of the text which gives rise to such interpretations, effects or ways of reading is thrown into sharp relief by the confrontation of two different languages and the exploration of how original and translated text work in these different languages. (Boase-Beier 2014: 242)

In the same article, she delivers a very detailed analysis of some poems by Welsh poet R.S. Thomas and Kevin Perryman’s translation into German of them. The commentary on stylistic features of the source text and their rendering in the target text gives rise to a discussion about the poet’s life and thoughts, and for a moment we might be inclined to think that Boase-Beier finds in the stylistic features of the poems the confirmation of details about the poet’s life and thoughts of which she was already aware. This is not, however, what happens. The stylistic analysis precedes the knowledge of aspects of Thomas’ life and thoughts. Boase-Beier does not notice the
effectiveness of stylistic features because she knows everything about the poet, rather 
she assures us that the stylistic features tell her, just as they tell the attentive reader, 
‘where to explore and search further’ (2014: 249). A detailed reading of the text, 
combined with an analysis of its stylistic elements, points the reader towards specific 
lines of enquiry which, if followed, will help him/her understand the work in question 
more fully.

The kind of research carried out by Boase-Beier and Parks has a series of direct 
implications for translation. In the above-mentioned article, Boase-Beier highlights a 
number of ambiguities present in the source text. Such ambiguities are present to start 
with but become more obvious to a bilingual reader when faced with source text and 
translation side by side. Following the paths along which such ambiguities lead, Boase- 
Beier is able to delve deeper into the poet’s work and unveil new elements about it. An 
example Boase-Beier gives is that of the expression ‘life’s conscientious objector’ 
(2014: 245). When we compare the English expression used to describe somebody 
who objects to taking part in a war, ‘conscientious objector’, with the German one 
used by Perryman, ‘Kriegsdienstverweigerer’, which Boase-Beier glosses as ‘war-
service refusers’, it becomes obvious that the English expression is much less explicit 
(2014: 245). It contains no direct reference to war – and yet it is normally understood 
as referring to war. The German translation, therefore, reveals an ambiguity in 
Thomas’ poem. Thomas speaks of objecting to life, however he uses an expression 
which usually refers to war, effectively conjuring up both ideas simultaneously. Not 
surprisingly, as Boase-Beier points out, for Thomas ‘being a pacifist and being one who 
withdraws from life were connected’ (2014: 245). Without the difference in the 
German expression, which underlines the vagueness in the English one, the reader 
might not have stopped to consider that a conscientious objector normally objects to 
war and would have thus missed the ambiguity in Thomas’ line. It is the parallel 
reading of source text and translations which can provide a greater insight into 
Thomas’ work.

Along similar lines to Boase-Beier, Parks demonstrates how specific stylistic 
choices by the source text authors lead the reader towards themes that are central to 
the authors’ work and how certain translations invariably shut down the path to 
finding those themes (Parks 2007: 12-13). The comparison between translation and
source text, however, is particularly useful because the points where the two diverge most greatly are usually points of crucial importance within the texts (Parks 2007: 14), an idea also put forward by Boase-Beier (2009) in relation to ‘the eye of the poem’.

Arguably, readers of the source text might not necessarily see and follow the paths of enquiry laid out by the writer; however, both Parks and Boase-Beier prove that those paths are there, the exploration is possible. Translation can help make those paths visible for both source and target text readers, opening up the paths for the process of exploration and discovery that Boase-Beier describes and which constitutes one of the reasons why reading is enjoyable regardless of the kind of work we are reading. As Boase-Beier points out (2015: 124) even poetry dealing with a topic as tragic as the Holocaust can create a sense of enjoyment, of a cognitive kind, originating in new discoveries and insights and the very reshaping of our own cognitive models. Translation therefore has the power to enhance this type of enjoyment of literary froms (not exclusively poetry).

Far from suggesting that something is always lost in translation, the stylistic analyses of Parks and Boase-Beier suggest that, if we refrain from thinking of translation exclusively in terms of product and think of it as a process which includes source text, target text and everything that occurs in between, then a translation is much more than the source text. In fact, it is thanks to the process of translation, i.e. by comparing source and target text, that both Boase-Beier and Parks obtain significant new insights for their literary, stylistic and cognitive analyses.

A slightly different way in which translation may contribute to the field of literary criticism is described by Alessandro Rebonato in relation to the works of Italian poet Eugenio Montale (Rebonato 2001). In this case, it is the translations by one specific translator which are seen to contribute greatly to literary criticism and to the study of the Nobel-prize winning poet’s work. Rebonato analyses the translations produced by American scholar Irma Brandeis and suggests that, because of the close relationship between the American woman and the Italian poet (the two were lovers) and because of their shared literary and philosophical interests, specific choices in Brandeis’ translations shed new light on Montale’s work and reveal facts, allusions and references which another reader or translator would not have had access to. Indeed, he describes Brandeis’ translations as an interpretative act which reveals and
intensifies aspects of Montale’s hermetic works (Rebonato 2001: 119). According to Rebonato, thanks to Brandeis’ translations – Brandeis’ specifically – we know more about Montale’s work than we could have possibly known by studying the source texts and the translations by other translators less closely acquainted with the poet. Rebonato’s analysis is, of course, much narrower than Boase-Beier’s and Parks’ as it can only be true for a limited number of very specific translations. However, it does suggest another way in which translation can contribute to literary criticism. It is also encouraging that it is an Italian offering this point of view on Brandeis’ translations, although we must consider that the article and the volume it is published in sprang from a series of seminars organised by the University of Chicago rather than an Italian institution and that the subject of the seminar, as well as Rebonato’s area of expertise, is not specifically translation but Romance Languages and Literature (Nasi 2001: 171).

3.3 Philosophy

Philosophy is referred to by Venuti as one of the ‘traditionally defined areas of thinking about language and culture’ (2012: 4) and particularly since the 15th century (Pym 2007: 26) philosophers have focused their attention in that direction. From Schopenhauer to Heidegger, from Gadamer to Ricoeur, just to mention a few, there have not been many philosophers who have failed to find an interest in translation, to the extent that a number of their writings, for example Schleiermacher’s ‘On the Different Methods of Translating’ (1992), have become landmark texts in translation studies. Whether their interest lies in the enquiry into the nature of language and meaning, or into the nature of art or power, the relationship between translation and philosophy is not a novel one. Pym (2007: 24) identifies three different ways in which the two disciplines are linked:

(1) Philosophers of various kinds have used translation as a case study or metaphor for issues of more general application.

(2) Translation theorists and practitioners have referred to philosophical discourses for support and authority for their ideas.

(3) Philosophers, scholars and translators have commented on the translation of philosophical discourses.
Benedetto Croce’s ideas about art and its untranslatability (Jervolino 2002: 432-435) and Nietzsche’s reflection on translation as a tool for conquest (Nietzsche 1974: 137) may be seen to belong to the first category. The second category may include Tymoczko’s application of Wittgenstein’s ‘open concepts’ or ‘cluster concepts’ to the field of translation in order to achieve a deeper understanding of it (2007: 83-90), or indeed Schleiermacher’s application of the principles of hermeneutics to translation, as described by Hermans (2015).

As far as Pym’s third category is concerned, Batchelor reports on David Charlston’s analysis of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind*, with particular focus on the translation of ‘Geist’, discussing how ‘the various solutions adopted are deeply influenced not only by the translator’s private preferences, but also (...) by the prevailing philosophical views of the time’ (Charlston in Batchelor 2013: 123). Similarly, Hermans (2003: 380) reports on John Jones’ ground-breaking 1962 work on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which argues that Aristotle thought of tragedy in situational terms and not in individualised ones. Such a conclusion sprang from considerations about the translation of Aristotle’s works, and Hermans gives the example of the Greek term ‘philia’, commonly translated as ‘love’ but actually meaning “the objective state of being *φιλοι*, ‘dear ones’, by virtue of blood ties.” (Else quoted in Hermans 2003: 381). Venuti and critics of the time (Pippin Burnett 1963), however, see Jones’ considerations on Aristotle’s *Poetics* as a reflection of the existentialist ideals popular at the time.

In the context of this study the examples of cases 1) and 3) described by Pym are of the greatest interest as they highlight what translation can ‘lend’ to philosophy, i.e. how translation may provide a valuable contribution to a high-profile discipline and attract the attention of a number of philosophy academics, students and enthusiasts who would not necessarily actively engage with issues of translation otherwise. In the examples described above, new insights into philosophical questions (be it Aristotle’s poetics or the issue of how current prevailing philosophical trends influence the perception and understanding of past philosophical works) have been provided by examining issues relating to translation. These insights would have been impossible to reach had Charlston or Jones not been aware of the translation issues involved.
3.4 Pedagogy

In the field of education, translation has been used in schools to promote the development of literacy skills and creativity as well as of self-knowledge and self-confidence among students. Sarah Ardizzone (2012) and Rohini Chowdury (2013) have written about their involvement with, respectively, the Translation Nation and Pop Up fusion projects set up in British primary schools, and in 2013 the Translators in Schools project was also set up. These initiatives highlight the benefits of translation processes for the children’s familiarity with literature and storytelling, as well as for their confidence in their own creativity and awareness of their own, often multicultural and multilingual, backgrounds. Others have used non-interlingual translation forms to achieve similar goals. Evelyn Arizpe and Julie McAdam used the wordless picture book Flotsam to explore issues relating to storytelling, family history, culture and photography (2011). Zipes has carried out a similar operation through storytelling and drama (Zipes 1995), and, as mentioned in section 2.3.2, Bordiglioni has used music and song to promote literacy and creativity by encouraging children to create new versions of well-known rhymes, fairy tales or proverbs (see Bordiglioni 1998 and 2005, and the song ‘Raccontala giusta’).

While all the British and American examples above (with the exception of Zipes, whose work in schools is somewhat older) have taken place within the framework of a sponsored educational or multicultural project for the development of specific skills in schoolchildren, the Italian example springs from the individual creativity, passion and a certain amount of bravery of a solitary schoolteacher with a guitar. The reluctance to adopt the unorthodox teaching method these projects involve is evident in the lack of institutionally-sponsored examples in the Italian context and, as far as the British and American examples are concerned, in the fact that the initiative was taken by a body external to the school in which the activities were to take place. Although such a situation is understandable as it limits the risk for the school if the project should

39 For details about the project, see http://translatorsinschools.org/
40 The song lyrics are available from: http://www.bordiglioni.com/raccontala_giusta.htm
41 The case of Gianni Rodari, who in 1972 was invited by the local council of Reggio Emilia to hold a series of seminars aimed at providing primary school teachers with basic strategies for fostering creativity and storytelling skills in their pupils (Rodari 2010: 9), represents an exception, but we must bear in mind that Rodari was, at the time, a well-established and famous writer (one of his most successful stories, La Freccia Azzura, for instance, had been published in 1968).
prove to be a failure, it is also testimony to the fact that there is a fear of this unorthodox kind of activity. The success of such workshops, however, may pave the way for a more active role for translation in the educational curriculum.

In the context of higher education, Alison Cook-Sather, Professor of Education at Bryn Mawr College, has carried out an operation similar to those described above, although in her case the intervention comes from within the educational institution and occurs in the context of a prestigious private college. Along with some colleagues, Cook-Sather put together a course entitled ‘Finding the Bias: Tracing the Self Across Contexts’, which aimed at promoting the students’ understanding of their own cultural bias and background, to help them in their understanding of self and other. In her book *Education is Translation*, Cook-Sather takes Lakoff and Johnson’s contention that our conceptual system is metaphorical in nature (2003: 6) and that metaphors highlight certain aspects of a concept and hide others (2003: 10), as a starting point to develop a new and more helpful metaphor for education. After analysing the detrimental aspects of common metaphors for education (2006: 33), and basing herself also on her own experience of learning German, she suggests reconceptualising education through translation. In the same book she provides an account of how the course ‘Finding the Bias’ course at Bryn Mawr College was put together and of the activities it involved, as well as of the students’ reaction and development over the period of the course. Cook-Sather’s main concern is to illustrate how ‘all meaning-making – both the deepening or complicating of previous understanding and the generating of new insights – is a process of discerning differences and trying to make connections’ (Cook-Sather 2006: viii). The most obvious example of this is metaphor itself, a tool we often use to gain a better understanding of complex concepts and ideas (Guldin 2010: 162). As suggested by Stockwell, metaphor changes our understanding of the source as well as the target element (2002: 111); Cook-Sather draws on this idea suggesting that by juxtaposing seemingly unrelated terms, metaphor ‘prompts us to rethink both terms, to re-conceptualize both spaces’ and construct meaning through the relationship between them (2006: 31). This is a process which has been extensively used in translation studies to try to define and describe this hybrid and complex field (see St. André 2010, Hermans and Stecconi 2002).
Indeed, some have gone so far as to suggest metaphor itself as a metaphor for translation (Guldin 2010), which does not seem far from Cook-Sather’s ideas.

Cook-Sather is careful to point out that the connecting process she envisions is not fixed but on-going and constantly developing. Instead of sharing what she sees as the underlying belief of educational practices, i.e. that connections can be ‘established and then permanently fixed’, she challenges this idea, maintaining that education should be seen as an ongoing process of change in which the individual constantly adapts to new stimuli (2006: vii). The role of the teacher is to ‘create a context in which she can facilitate, support and encourage the students’ translation of themselves’ (Cook-Sather 2006: 37). Therefore, although metaphorical images relating to the bridge and the process of ‘carrying across’ are often present in Cook-Sather’s discourse about translation (2006: viii, 36), her understanding of the process is far removed from what Martín de León treats as transfer metaphors (2010: 82-90) and may actually be compared to the more elaborate projection metaphor (2010: 101-103). For this latter category, Martín de León draws on the work of Holz-Mänttäri, where the idea of transfer is still present but not linked to the transfer of information (as implied in what Martín de León calls transfer metaphor). In what Martin de Léon calls the projection metaphor translators transfer *themselves* into worlds they have mentally constructed, a process which is not spontaneous but needs to be learnt (Martín de León 2010: 103), exactly like the process described by Cook-Sather. Essentially, the projection metaphor sees translators, like the students in the educational process described by Cook-Sather, translate *themselves*.

In the context of academia, Anna Magyar and Anna Robinson-Pant have commented on the relevance of issues related to intercultural communication and translation for the carrying out and sharing of intercultural academic research and for policy development in British Higher Education institutions (2011), while Robinson Pant and Wolf and the contributors to their 2014 volume have explored the importance of the ethics of translation and the role of the translator in intercultural and multilingual research practice more in detail.

The work of the translators and teachers presented above demonstrates that translation has a huge potential for use in an educational context, a potential which is gradually starting to be realised, at least in the Anglo-American world. It is significant
that, while processes of translation are to varying extents central to all these examples, at least two of them, the Translation Nation project and Cook-Sather’s account of her own experience in *Education is Translation*, make a direct reference to translation, placing this discipline in full view of the pedagogical world. In section 6.6 and in Chapter 7 I provide a detailed analysis of the ways in which my translations of Wertenbaker’s works could be used for pedagogical purposes in Italian schools.

### 3.5 Psychology

Cook-Sather’s description of education through translation seems particularly effective and bears a remarkable resemblance to some of the concepts expressed by David Foster Wallace in his 2005 commencement speech delivered to the Graduates of Kenyon College. In this speech, Foster Wallace tried to provide a definition of the ‘liberal arts education’ the students were now supposedly equipped with. He started by giving a rather unforgiving example of man’s supposed ‘hardwired’ self-centredness:

> Everything in my own immediate experience supports my deep belief that I am the absolute center of the universe, the realest, most vivid and important person in existence.

(...)  

> We rarely think about this sort of natural, basic self-centeredness, because it’s so socially repulsive, but it’s pretty much the same for all of us, deep down. (2009: 37)

According to Foster Wallace, this aspect of human perception is difficult to identify and even more difficult to overcome, precisely because it is so natural and ‘hardwired’. For this reason, it is all the more important that the graduates should attempt to become aware of it and challenge it, hopefully at least occasionally overcoming it, thus engaging with the otherness that surrounds them.

Out of context Foster Wallace’s claim that man is absolutely self-centred may seem rather extreme and debatable. In fact, a number of studies have proved that, contrary to what Foster Wallace seems to be affirming, empathy, altruism and
cooperation are essential components in human life (see Baron-Cohen 2012, De Waal 2009 and Sussman and Cloninger 2011). A more detailed analysis of research in this field, however, suggests that Foster Wallace’s words may be more than a personal opinion. Studies on altruism and empathy highlight the fact that man has become a cooperative, social creature despite ‘primitive tendencies’ to aggression and self-preservation (Sussman and Cloninger 2011: viii). Altruism and cooperation have been identified as ‘essential ingredients in evolution, ecology, and development’ (Sussman and Cloninger 2011: viii) and empathy as a tendency that is almost as natural as the instinct to survive. In Zero Degrees of Empathy Baron-Cohen gives a double definition of empathy, which he sees as something that ‘occurs when we suspend our single-minded focus of attention, and instead adopt a double-minded focus of attention’ (2012:11), as well as the ability to ‘identify what someone else is thinking or feeling, and to respond to their thoughts with an appropriate emotion’ (2012:12). However, Baron-Cohen also puts forward the idea that empathy can become ‘eroded’ in some people, leading even to its total absence, a condition that we normally define in terms of cruelty and evil (2012: 5). This can be a temporary status, which subsides once the situation that caused it no longer persists, or a long-term condition (the causes of which can be varied, see Baron-Cohen 2012). Whether it is a temporary or a long-term status, lack of empathy results in the individual seeing, and consequently treating, other people as mere objects. The examples given by Baron-Cohen of situations in which people have displayed a total lack of empathy and a perception of other human beings as objects include the treatment of the inmates of concentration camps by Nazi scientists performing experiments (2012: 2) and the case of a woman in a Nairobi supermarket whose finger was cut off by a thief in order to steal her ring (2012: 7). These are of course very extreme examples, by which anyone with some degree of empathy would be horrified. But, as Baron-Cohen points out, ‘when a person is solely focused on the pursuit of their own interest they have all the potential to be unempathic’ and this is something that could happen to anyone (2012: 6). To most people this occurs in much less extreme and more day to day situations than those described above. Empathy may be switched off when, for example, ‘you are rummaging through your belongings’ and your attention is focused exclusively ‘on your current goal of urgently finding something’ (2012: 13). In such a situation, single-
mindedness takes over and the ability to perceive and react in response to others around us is limited. As Baron-Cohen goes on to point out, ‘if someone interrupted you to ask you what you were doing, your narrative would be one-sided: a report of your own current preoccupation. The language you would use to describe this state would be totally self-focused.’ (2012: 13). In his speech, Foster Wallace is talking to the graduates about their future, rather normal, presumably dull and, at times, frustrating working life (2009: 63-73). Indeed, the repetitiveness of the ‘day in, day out’ routine is something he is careful to stress (2009: 73-74). Situations of obvious or extraordinary chaos and distress (accidents, terrorist attacks, natural disasters) are not part of the picture he is painting. The situations to which he refers are, in fact, very similar to the ‘rummaging through your belongings’ example and involve trivial, everyday actions like queuing at a crowded supermarket checkout at the end of a long working day or sitting in traffic on the way home from work. In these situations, Foster Wallace argues, we tend to think that the crowd in the supermarket is in our way, that we are more in a hurry than everyone else and we do not see the other shoppers as people who are as tired, stressed and hungry as ourselves but, in the selfish conviction that our need is greater than theirs, as simple obstacles to our own goal (2009: 77). In other words, we see other people as objects, finding ourselves in the temporary state of ‘empathy erosion’ described by Baron-Cohen.

Foster Wallace’s harsh statements are not, therefore, as far-fetched as they may initially seem. As we have seen, Baron-Cohen allows for the possibility (indeed, probability) that people may temporarily display complete selfishness (lack of empathy), causing them to overlook other people in their concern for their own problems. In such a state, it is not difficult to envision the self-centredness Foster Wallace describes, and his exhortation to make a ‘conscious effort’ to think differently about the world that surrounds us is endowed with even greater value. However naïve or clichéd his speech may appear, what he was trying to convey was the need to overcome arrogance and single-mindedness (as individuals and as a people), to develop the critical awareness and thinking that is the aim of a liberal arts education by choosing to think differently about the world around us. He was, in a way, asking the graduates to be more empathic, to learn to translate.
Indeed, translation and empathy have often been seen as linked in some way. The word empathy has appeared often in discourses on translation, however it has rarely been used to refer to anything more than the simple idea of some sort of affinity between the translator and the text or author s/he is translating. Boella has commented on the impossibility of describing the relationship between translator and author, source text and target text without resorting to the vocabulary of empathy (2007: 115) and Newmark went as far as to say that ‘a successful translation is probably more dependent on the translator’s empathy with the writer’s thought than on affinity of language and culture’ (1981: 54). Venuti mentions the advice of an unnamed but renowned translator who recommends translating authors and texts which the translator finds ‘simpatico’ (2008: 237). Although Venuti does not use the word ‘empathy’, we cannot ignore the fact that the word ‘simpatico’ is etymologically linked to ‘empathy’ (simpatia – empatia, n.; simpatico – empatico, adj.). Suzanne Keen states that in psychology and philosophy to show sympathy means offering emotional support or feeling pity for someone else’s (presumably painful) feelings (2007: 5). According to such definition, what Keen calls sympathy is nothing other than the ‘response’ component in Baron Cohen’s idea of empathy (‘recognition’ being the first one). So, Venuti’s notion of ‘simpatico’ on the whole does not appear to differ very much from the concept expressed by Newmark.

According to such definitions, however, empathy (or sympathy) is simply a condition of affinity which either exists, or does not exist between two elements (the translator and the text/author). However, if we think of empathy in Baron-Cohen’s terms, as the ability to ‘suspend our single-minded focus of attention’ and adopt a double-minded one instead (2012: 11), indeed the ability to create the kind of condition that Venuti and Newmark describe, then we open up a whole new way of thinking about translation. If we think of double-mindedness as a central feature, then the translation process mirrors the empathizing one. Constantly juggling two languages and cultures in one’s head, the mind of the translator inhabits two different worlds all

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42 Venuti does not decline the Italian adjective in its plural or feminine form and always uses the masculine singular adjective ‘simpatico’ regardless of context. Here, the word has been modified according to the requirements of its context.
the time. Translation (performing it, reading it or merely thinking about it) therefore, may provide a valuable tool for exercising the ‘double’ focus of attention so important in empathic processes.

Far from contradicting each other, Foster Wallace and Baron-Cohen seem to agree on a real need for the fostering of empathy. To this end, translation can be seen not only as a tool to help achieve the goals of a liberal arts education (or, presumably, any kind of education) but also, very simply, a means to becoming better, more empathic, human beings. Indeed, Baron-Cohen believes empathy to be the ‘most valuable resource in our world’ and laments its lack of prominence in the ‘school and parenting curriculum’ (2012: 107). Empathy not only defines how we interact with others in our everyday routines as well as in more extreme situations, but it can have global consequences as well, as when the people involved in the empathizing process are political leaders who hold the fates of whole countries in their hands (Baron-Cohen 2012: 107). In this light, anything that can help us to exercise our ability to empathize represents a valuable resource, something which is just as important as empathy itself. My suggestion is that to perform acts of translation, or merely to be aware of and to think about translation, is particularly apt for such a task in virtue of the fact that it mirrors the empathizing process. Any kind of translation, even intralingual, involves, by its very nature, the adoption of the ‘double focus of attention’ that Baron-Cohen sees as central to the empathising process, just as the mind of the empathizer inhabits two different experiences at the same time. Translation, therefore, may provide a valuable tool for learning to exercise the double focus of attention so important in empathic processes. Perhaps if psychologists turned their attention to translation, they would be able to use it in their study of empathy and consider its use in relation to the treatment of forms of zero degrees of empathy in a similar way to the role games Baron-Cohen mentions (2012: 105). However, until translators themselves start to uncover the potentialities of translation and to challenge the boundaries of what translation is commonly seen to be and do, we cannot expect experts from other fields to turn to translation for solutions.
3.6 Politics

In the early 1990s Bassnett and Lefevere had already lamented the narrow and linguistically centred perspectives on translation that dominated discussion around it. Translation, they argue in *Translation, History, Culture*, occupies a central position in cultural history because of, among other things, its high political and ideological relevance. Most interestingly, they backed up their claims with a range of historical texts, from Cicero to Voltaire and Martin Luther, demonstrating that translation has always been a ‘shaping force’ whether we treat it as such or not (2003: xi-xii). The connection between translation and power and politics has been at the centre of the work of many academics, particularly in a postcolonial context (Spivak 2012, Tymoczko 2002), where it is seen as a way to impose the coloniser’s institutions and beliefs or as a way for the colonised to express dissidence and safeguard their own identity. The late and slow development of postcolonial studies in Italy, already mentioned in Chapter 2, must be once again called upon to explain why this connection has so far been largely overlooked in the Italian context.

The idea that language is an instrument of political power has indeed been remarked upon and debated in Italy, but its relevance to translation has so far not caused the same engagement. In 1965, Italo Calvino wrote an article called *L’antilingua* (‘anti-language’) in which he denounced the use of an incomprehensible form of Italian as a long-standing and undemocratic feature of the nation’s bureaucratic system and public institutions (Calvino 1995). Similar considerations have been made, more recently, by the novelist and former judge and lawyer Gianrico Carofiglio, who comments at length on the power and democratic relevance of the language of institutions (Carofiglio 2015). The online petition and social media trend #dilloinitaliano (say it in Italian), which was set up by journalist Annamaria Testa in 2013, protests against the extensive use of English terms in business, the media, and particularly in politics and public institutions (a case in point is the Jobsact passed by the Renzi government) declaring that extensive use of such practices when perfectly adequate Italian terms exist, defies clarity, transparency and democracy (Testa 2013). But even the huge success of this petition, which explicitly engages with issues linked to the Italian language in relation to a foreign one, to political institutions, to
institutional transparency and citizens’ rights, has failed to kick-start a critical debate on translation as an instrument of political dominance or dissidence. Indeed Valerio Ferme, author of one of the few Italian-language works that look at translation as a political and ideological force, laments the lack of consideration which this aspect of translation has so far obtained (2002: 14; 20).

If the present does not appear to offer enough stimuli for the Italian intellectual world to extensively and systematically tackle the political relevance of translation, Italian history does have at least one blatant example of how translation and politics are closely linked, and it is this example upon which Valerio Ferme (2002) builds his study of translation as a political force. Cultural censorship in the fascist era is a well-documented fact (see archival research in Cembali 2006 and Rundle 1999) and the different degrees of control that the government exercised over the publishing industry in relation to works translated into Italian – mild or even symbolic up to the mid-1930s, more extreme later and very strict after 1938 (Rundle 1999: 434-435) – are a clear example of how translation can be a tool of dissidence against dominant power structures or a tool of perpetuation of those structures.

Although there are a number of studies on fascism and censorship, few of them engage satisfactorily with both the translatorly and political element. Spurio (2011), who offers many textual examples from Agatha Christie’s work and its translations into Italian published during the fascist regime, simply comments on small variations from the source text which, he admits, are probably due to ‘lack of tools for the comprehension of everyday English’ (Spurio 2001: 6). He fails to engage with translation during fascism from a political perspective and to offer an analysis of the type of manipulations which were carried out by the regime and of the translators’ reaction to it. He also fails to consider that the examples he takes are from Mondadori’s series Libri Gialli, a periodical publication in magazine format, which Mondadori himself defined as ‘ephemeral’ (Rundle 1999: 435) and decided, at his own risk, not to include in the list of translated publications he was required to submit to the fascist government (Rundle 2004: 72; 1999: 435). Mondadori may have played a smart trick in order to present a better image of himself to the fascist authorities, however those authorities accepted, at one stage at least, such justification, revealing
that they too perceived a difference between a traditional book and periodicals like the *Libri Gialli* series. In my opinion, most of the textual examples Spurio quotes can be simply ascribed to less than thorough translation work, probably due to the less prestigious nature of a magazine-type publication which was designed to be a cheap, mass-market product (Rundle 2004: 65), as well as to the lack of tools Spurio himself mentioned, rather than to the interference of the regime’s political agenda. This does not mean that such a political agenda did not exist; indeed, Rundle and Barale’s citations of government documentation, of correspondence between publishers and the Ministry, or publishers and the readers they employed to comment on the ‘suitability’ of possible publication projects (Rundle 2000, Barale 2011) confirm that it was quite the contrary. It is Spurio who decides to focus on less significant extracts, missing the chance to offer a critical commentary on the type of intervention the regime required, or the publishers felt was needed, and its possible effects on the reader, on the regime’s authority or on popular consent. Instead, he offers little more than an attack on a single translator’s specific choices and alleged incompetence. Both Barale (2011) and Cembali (2006) provide a more satisfying picture of how translations were manipulated and, although neither of them quotes extracts of the texts directly, they do cite private correspondence between publishers and their staff which makes it clear what elements were deemed unsuitable and what kind of interventions were carried out. Barale’s work, however, focuses on the fortunes of a specific literary genre in Italy, women’s popular fiction, and on the idea of woman in 1930s Germany and Italy, rather than on translation itself, and Cembali focuses primarily on the very peculiar type of censorship exercised by the regime (rather mild and indirect, at least up until the introduction of anti-semitic laws in 1938).

If we consider the relevance of fascism in Italian and world history in general, and the wealth of archival documentation (archival correspondence cited at length by Rundle 1999 and Barale 2006) on the censorship and other forms of manipulation of published literature and translations, there do seem to be rather few studies on the subject which focus specifically on translators and the translation process in relation to political consent or resistance. Indeed, Ferme has remarked that studies on translation during the fascist era focus on the influence of thematic elements of the source texts, failing to take into close consideration the interaction between translator, text, and
the surrounding cultural environment (2002: 20). Most works focus on censorship in general (in all forms of media), the publishing industry in general (original works also had to be monitored and approved by the regime) or leading publishers of the time. The only works which focus specifically on issues of translation, politics, ideology and subversion are that of Ferme himself (2002) and the works of Rundle. Rundle explicitly suggests that, during the fascist period, translations of literature into Italian was perceived as a form of cultural pollution and invasion (2010: 8). Particularly with the war in Ethiopia, designed to place Mussolini’s Italy alongside the other colonial superpowers, translation became ‘a sensitive political issue’. What caused problems was not so much the content of what was translated (even though this was constantly monitored and manipulated, if not by government bodies, pre-emptively by publishers), but the fact that more titles were translated into Italian than out of it. This situation of ‘translation deficit’ (Rundle 1999: 431) did not match fascist ideals, according to which the expansion of Italy’s geographical boundaries was to be matched by a form of cultural conquest, to be obtained via translation of Italian literature into other languages. In this context, the high number of translations into Italian represented a ‘threat to the integrity of the national culture and language’ and ‘glaring evidence of the failure of fascist culture to expand and of its low status abroad (Rundle and Sturge 2010: 8).

To what extent the heritage of fascist regime policies still influences the Italian cultural environment today is hard to determine. But perhaps, just as with the colonial experience, which is also linked to fascism (see Chapter 2), there is here too an unwillingness to admit or remember how easily Italian citizens were seduced and hoodwinked into consent (Rundle 2000: 68) by Mussolini’s tools of propaganda and cultural manipulation, and thus the full power of those tools of seduction, translation among them, has still been only partially explored and demystified. What is obvious, however, is that more extensive study of translation in relation to politics, particularly at a time when it was overtly used as a political tool, would offer new insights into past and present translation practices as well as political scenarios and historical events.

The fascist regime offers an extremely emblematic example of the relevance of translation in politics, both in general and in Italian history in particular. It is not,
however, the only example of how issues of language and translation have had, and still have, an important role in the country’s political life. Linguistic diversity, an issue which has been identified as particularly relevant both in a postcolonial context (Venuti’s ethnocentric and ethnodeviant practices) and in the light of the contemporary migration flows (Cronin 2006), was a controversial point in Italy even before the 20th century. It is a question which has been historically at the centre of a heated debate among Italian cultural and political institutions. In fact, as Senator Consiglio put it to his colleagues in 2013 when suggesting an amendment to the 1999 law on linguistic minorities, ‘Our country has the highest number of dialects per surface area’ (Consiglio 2013). It is unclear what the terms of Consiglio’s comparison are (in Europe, in the world?), but a millennial history of linguistic diversity (De Mauro 2016: 25-33), combined with the very recent formation of a nation state (1861) and an even later definition of current national boundaries, are undeniable facts which have resulted in a particularly high number of identified native idioms (35 compared to the world average of 31, De Mauro 2016: 36). But the high number of language varieties is not the only thing to consider. It is worth noting the widespread and regular use among Italians, even in contemporary times, of non-standard varieties of the national language. According to Istat, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, whose findings are quoted by linguist Tullio De Mauro (2016: 113), as recently as 2006, 44.1 % of the Italian population alternated between the use of standard Italian and a local dialect, while 5.4 % still spoke exclusively in dialect (2016: 113). The multilingualism of the Italian peninsula is stronger than that of other modern European countries not just because of the variety of idioms but also because of the distance between them (De Mauro 2016: 36-40). This complex linguistic situation has been an ongoing source of controversy, inviting the intervention of political bodies which have defined, at various stages in the country’s history, leading policies on the subject. After the Second World War, the need to safeguard linguistic minorities was clearly expressed in Article 6 of the Republic’s fundamental document, the Constitution, which became effective in the years immediately following the war. And yet, the indications on linguistic diversity contained in it did not have effective practical application (De Mauro 2006: 4). Since the Constitution there have been a number of laws, or law proposals, at European, national and regional level, addressing the same question and its increasing relevance
in the light of constantly more globalising trends and migration movements. Such awareness culminated in the 1999/842 law which explicitly set out a list of 12 minority languages to be safeguarded in Italy, and provided for, among other things, their presence in education and public offices in the interested regions (Parlamento Italiano 1999). The languages identified were either a) historical minorities, present in small communities in many areas of the country due to past migrations or settlements, as is the case of Albanian, Occitan, and Catalan speaking minorities; b) those which are present in border areas due to political boundaries not matching linguistic ones, such as German, Slovenian and patois-speaking minorities along the northern borders, or c) regional varieties which, because of extreme insularity, present particularly significant differences from standard Italian, like Sardinian (Morelli 2006: 6-7). However, as the unheeded amendment proposal put forward by Senator Consiglio points out, the languages included in the law were only a small part of those which exist in the Italian territory. The majority of the country’s local dialects did not feature in the list, giving rise to the very kind of linguistic discrimination phenomenon that the law set out to counteract. Indeed, in the report presented for the 6th year of the 1999 law’s application in the journal of the Ministry of Education, De Mauro himself highlighted the dignity and value of all languages, including the incredible variety of dialects which, since the 500s, have marked the linguistic history of Italy (De Mauro 2006). But the 1999 law had identified only 12 minority languages as being worthy of extra attention, extra funding, extra promotional initiatives and extra legislation. Most local dialects had not been given that privilege. Consiglio’s amendment proposed to put an end to such discrimination by suggesting that individual regional administrations be given the authority to apply the steps contained in the approved law, at their discretion, to any language they deemed historically significant for their region. Although Consiglio’s proposal is understandable and quite logical, it can easily be seen why it was rejected. It is not difficult to see how the changes that the approved law put into place would be impossible (from a financial and organisational point of view) to put into practice on a greater scale and how no region could satisfactorily safeguard one variety of its regional dialect over the others without causing further controversy and discontent. Additionally, far-right parties opposed to the idea of a centrally organised government and promoting autonomist aspirations, such as the Lega Nord (to which Consiglio
belonged), could easily take advantage of such a law not so much to protect a specific minority, but to alienate and discriminate those who did not belong to it.  

Despite the 1999 law, therefore, the problem of linguistic minorities in Italy is far from settled and there still remains the issue of whether the use of dialects, with their historic and cultural value, colour and emotional value, should be protected in the name of diversity or discouraged as an obsolete form of expression, an obstacle to mutual intelligibility and equal education practices remains. Recently some regions have taken, or proposed to take, steps towards greater institutional bilingualism, with the region of Veneto approving in 2016 a regional law which grants its people the same rights as recognised linguistic minorities. The question of local dialects and whether and how they should be safeguarded in the cultural, educational and media system is still a very controversial one, but it does invite reflection on issues of translation, identity and political power. If, on the one hand, it is commendable to defend the cultural and linguistic identity of a people, how it can be done in practice, and with what linguistic and educational tools, is not as clear. What is even less clear is how to prevent unscrupulous political parties from turning a people’s will to see their identity recognised into a sense of entitlement and prejudice against those who do not share that identity.

At present, however, there are also newer reasons why the link between translation and politics is particularly evident in the Italian context. The country has always been a major destination point for migration flow out of the African continent, but this position has become even more evident, and dramatically so, with the latest developments in world politics and the increase of migration flow over the last few years. If Italy is a country that is used to a large presence of migrants, it will have to

43 Indeed, from its very creation in the early 1980s, the Lega Nord (Northern League), by opposing government intervention in the historically less industrialised southern regions of the country (intervention which was seen as ‘stealing’ resources from the North), effectively encouraged the rise of discriminatory and prejudicial attitudes towards Southern Italians (see Umberto Bossi’s first manifesto in the party document CRONISTORIA DELLA LEGA NORD DALLE ORIGINI AD OGGI Prima Parte 1979 – 1987, pp. 33-34, in particular points 3 and 6, downloadable from http://www.leganord.org/il-movimento/la-nostra-storia/la-storia-della-lega).

In more recent times, the current members of the party, including leader Matteo Salvini and Luca Zaia, have repeatedly proven that the same kind of attitudes are now more frequently reserved for European Institutions and foreign migrants (Kirchgaessner 2015 and 2016).
become even more so and this requires very practical steps in the field of translation and interpreting. As Cronin points out, ‘the condition of the migrant is the condition of the translated being’ (2006: 45). As the number of migrants increases dramatically, so will the necessity to be able to understand and respond to ‘the condition of the translated being’. This involves not only the need for interpreters, but also the need for a targeted system which is able to provide interpreting services in a range of sectors, from medical to education and childcare, to the justice system. The importance of such services in the light of the developing political situation is paramount as, in the words of Sonja Pöllabauer, ‘The consequences of misunderstandings here are thus not merely damage to the asylum seeker’s personal image, misleading information or a financial loss, as in many other fields of community interpreting but, in the worst-case scenario, are tantamount to a death sentence.’ (2004: 143-4)

Remarkably, Wertenbaker’s works frequently revolve around the issues mentioned in the section above presenting translation as a highly political activity which truly shapes human interactions. As will be examined more in detail in Chapter 6, many events in The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira comment on the political power of language and translation. In the first play, the discussion of the meaning of the word ‘myth’, which, in the context of the story of a king taking advantage of a young girl, has gone from meaning ‘speech’ to meaning ‘an unlikely story’ (Wertenbaker 1996a: 315), hints at political and historical manipulation. In Dianeira, the narrator Irene’s assumption that the figure of the violent hero Heracles will be familiar to a modern audience, while the quiet Dianeira will have been forgotten by history has similar significance. Procne’s long exchanges with the female chorus (to be examined more in detail in Chapters 4 and 6), as well as the figure of Iole and her silence, are powerful reflections on issues of identity, language and dispossession. Tereus’s mutilation of Philomele is carried out in the attempt to suppress political dissidence; it is a most extreme form of censorship imposed by the dominant power structure. The choice of translating these two texts is, then, a way to bring the interactions between translation and politics to the forefront, first of all by presenting a text which deals with them, and secondly by translating it in a way which attempts to highlight these issues (as explained more in detail in section 6.4).
3.7 Hybridity in practice

As will be explained in the next chapter, despite being generally considered ‘original works’, all of Wertenbaker’s texts are actually translations which exemplify the work of a self-conscious translator who takes apparently distant stories, myths and events and links them to a variety of human activities, inviting the reader to discover how translation is linked to all aspects of human life. Both the plays I will examine here draw on classical myths to comment on a number of aspects of human life, linked to philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, and political, dimensions. Issues of ethics and gender, alienation and identity, language and power, self-knowledge and compassion, anger and violence, consent and rebellion abound in all her works. Indeed, some have even defined her plays as didactic (Bush 2013: 62) and moral (Winston 1995: 518), though it must be pointed out that if they are, they are so indirectly because they focus on raising questions and problems and encouraging audiences to seek answers rather than offering those answers readymade.

Wertenbaker uses translation to create her own idea of theatre as a ‘difficult’ dramatic or literary place (in Kirkpatrick 1988: 553-53), and by making sure that translation is visible enough to catch the readers’ attention she invites them along a path of questioning and self-discovery.

Thinking of, and practising, translation as Wertenbaker does, i.e. as a discipline which interacts with, and contributes to, a range of other disciplines and therefore as something important and interesting per se, not just from the point of view of the content it is able to communicate in another language, is a key step in creating self-aware and self-conscious translators in a context, like the Italian one, where translation is still often thought of in terms of a necessary evil or loss. My translation attempts to embody such an idea in preserving the multiple paths of questioning and discovery created by Wertenbaker and in multiplying them further by highlighting the interdisciplinarity of translation and experimenting with issues of hybridity and multiplicity via the adoption of a multilingual translation strategy. Before my translation is presented, the next chapter will address in greater detail Wertenbaker herself, her work in general, and The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira specifically,
in order to provide a clearer picture of how translation as an interdisciplinary and hybrid activity informs her work as a whole.
Chapter 4

Making Translation Visible: Two Plays by Timberlake Wertenbaker

4.1 Introduction

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the context of translation into Italian is one in which there is a general tendency to think of translation principally as an instrumental activity. A look at the type of seminars and workshops offered by translators’ associations and cultural bodies in recent years demonstrates that there appears to be a reluctance to think about translation in all its aspects. A prescriptive approach, primarily based on the demands of publishers, is widespread in non-academic contexts, as demonstrated by the insistence, on the part of influential translators, editors and teachers of translation, that fluency is the ‘right’ way to translate (Mioni in RAI 2015 and Testa 2008) or indeed that there is a ‘right’ way to translate, as the prescriptive approach adopted by Franca Cavagnoli in her popular book La voce del testo (2012) seems to indicate (see section 2.3.2 on Cavagnoli’s text). In the academic context, an extremely conservative system, the ageing of teaching staff (Stella 2015) and the emerging nature of postcolonial studies (Mellino 2007) mean that the debate around translation is not as rich and varied as it is in the English-speaking world. As explained in Chapter 2, in Italy, the ethical and political significance of translation is particularly neglected in favour of financial and contractual issues. I am referring, for example, to the programme of the AutoreInvisibile sections on translation at Turin Book Fair, to list of seminars at recent editions of the Giornate della traduzione letteraria of Urbino, and to the list of translation events and seminars provided on the AITI website. Consequently, it appears that the vast majority of translation

45 The programmes for each year are available at: http://traduzione-editoria.fusp.it/giornate-traduzione-letteraria/archivio
46 The AITI event list is available at http://www.aiti.org/news-formazione-eventi/corsi-eventi?page=1
professionals and academics, as well as the general public, may have very little sense of how important translation is in its own right.

As far as translation strategies are concerned, fluency – i.e. the search for readability and transparency (Venuti 2008: 1) – is still the main governing principle, as the words of some of the best-known translators into Italian confirm (see Testa 2008, Ferrero 2008, Mioni in RAI 2015). What Venuti identified as the most common governing principle of translation into English in the mid-90s appears to be the governing principle of translation into Italian today. Whereas the unethical dimension of the regime of fluency governing translation into English is linked to the imperialistic dimension of this language, the same cannot necessarily be said of other languages. Indeed, it is definitely not said of Italian, although, perhaps, it could be. As explained in the previous chapter, in fact, Italy does have a colonial past, although it is not necessarily actively present in this country’s collective memory (Macchi 2011, Mellino 2007). Censorship and mystification, as well as a conservative system of academic appointments, are in fact elements which constantly hold back the development of postcolonial debate in Italy (Mellino 2007).

Is fluency, then, unethical in translating into languages other than English? I wish to argue that it is, because fluency implies concealing the fact that translation has occurred, thus perpetrating a form of deception against the reader, the same deception that Petruccioli denounces in his already mentioned text (2014). As I hope the previous chapter, with its analysis of the interaction between translation and a variety of fields of knowledge, has demonstrated, translation is a valuable tool for fostering critical thinking, self-knowledge and tolerance. This chapter will further demonstrate the power of translation to promote all of the above through the presentation of the work of a playwright, Timberlake Wertenbaker, whose texts embody the idea of translation as a complex and hybrid discipline which influences all aspects of human life, from literary production to psychological development. In fact, as detailed below, all of Wertenabaker’s texts can be themselves considered translations. The general aim of empowering translation and revealing some of its potential is further pursued in the two following chapters, the first of which presents my own translation of two of Wertenbaker’s plays, *The Love of the Nightingale* and
Dianeira, while the other analyses the translations in detail. The process of translation and the agency of the translator will, therefore, be deliberately made visible through the adoption of a multilingual translation strategy. To hide the fact that a translation process has occurred, in fact, would be to deprive readers of an opportunity for self-development and perpetuate widespread ideas of translation as a mechanical and ‘service’ operation.

In this chapter I will present the two works I have selected for translation, Timberlake Wertenbaker’s 1988 play The Love of the Nightingale and her 1999 radio drama Dianeira, and I will give some background information on the playwright herself and on the extent to which translation has been a constant theme throughout her life and works. Both works considered here deal with the issue of silencing and ‘the voicing of the silenced’ (Williams 1997: 19), although this element is particularly evident in The Love of the Nightingale which is based on the Philomela myth. In the light of the situation in the Italian context explained in the previous chapter and summarised above, translators themselves can be currently considered a silenced category in Italy, where their voice is rarely more than a whisper as regards fair working conditions and where the lack of engagement with the postcolonial debate (Mellino 2005 and 2007, Lomabrdi-Diop and Romeo 2012) means that the ethical and political relevance of translation are barely considered a worthy topic for debate. The myth of Philomela and of Dianeira, therefore, also seem ideal mediums through which a translator into Italian may find a voice.

As well as offering an overview of Wertenbaker’s work and of the plot of the two plays, I will present the different levels on which the texts engage with issues which are relevant for translation. First and foremost, I will explain why Wertenbaker’s texts can themselves be considered translations (Roth and Freeman 2008: 13), and how Wertenbaker adopts a translation strategy which, despite some elements of domestication, makes extensive use of foreignization to create two texts which force the reader to engage critically with the ethical, psychological and political issues present in the plot. Secondly, the texts are also, self-reflexively, about translation, which figures as a major thematic element particularly in The Love of the Nightingale. Both texts, in fact, engage with issues of translation from multiple perspectives,
presenting it not only as a linguistic issue but, from a more multi-layered perspective, alternatively as a form of dissidence, self-affirmation, oppression or redemption.

Because of their engagement with translation issues which are not normally taken into consideration in the Italian debate in this field, I believe that these texts, if translated, and particularly if translated in a way that highlights the ethical and political dimension of translation as well as its pedagogical and critical potential, will contribute to challenging current translation theory and practice in Italy and to initiating a debate about issues which I see as crucial for the development of translation in general, and in my country in particular. By presenting the translator as a visible and active factor in the target text I believe discussion about issues of textual invisibility may also be fostered. Additionally, both these texts engage with general topics and works of literature which are central in the Italian high school curriculum (Greek and Latin Literature, history, philosophy), thus providing a renewed and translation-centred view of classical texts and standard academic subjects and presenting critical reflexion on translation in a form that may realistically seem appealing to the Italian school system. For these reasons a translation of these texts into Italian (in the case of *The Love of the Nightingale* in a more readily accessible form than the existing translation by Sara Soncini and Maggie Rose)⁴⁷ would represent an operation that would make a significant contribution to translation studies in Italy and in general.

Unlike Soncini and Rose’s translation of *The Love of the Nightingale*, which conforms to the popular view of what translation is and should be in Italy, my translations of the Philomela-based play and of *Dianeira* will take a more unconventional path. Whereas Soncini and Rose present Wertenbaker’s text in Italian, in a text that could be read as though it had originally been written in Italian, with no need for the readers to be aware that they are engaging with a translation, I wish to actively challenge this conception of translation, creating a text in which source and target language coexist, forcing readers to consider the translatorly nature of the text, and of human interactions in general, the nature of the translation process itself, and

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⁴⁷ The translation by Soncini and Rose was published in 1997 in the drama magazine *Sipario* (back issues of which are not readily accessible to the public and must be specifically requested by phone or email - see [http://www.sipario.it/](http://www.sipario.it/)).
encouraging them to engage in constant processes of translation – including, but not limited to, the interlingual kind (Jakobson 2012: 127).

4.1.1 The playwright

Stephenson and Langridge have described Timberlake Wertenbaker as ‘one of our greatest contemporary playwrights’ (1997:136), and of her work they have said:

[it] explores a huge variety of subjects and has asked some of the most important questions of our time, encompassing the value of and meaning of art, the quest for power and the seductive appeal of corruption, the effects of enforced silencing, the definition of crime and civilization (1997: 136)

An early awareness of issues relating to linguistic and cultural differences can be traced in Wertenbaker’s biographical details. As mentioned in the Introduction, she was born of Anglo-American parents and raised in the French Basque Country and thus is most commonly described as ‘Anglo-French American’ (Carlson 1993: 267). As well as speaking English and French she absorbed the Basque language and culture and experienced its enforced silencing by the French government. After moving to the United States, she studied at St. John’s College in Annapolis, a school with a strong focus on philosophy and classical literature. She subsequently lived in Greece for some time, where she became familiar with the modern culture and language of the country and began to write her first plays (Sage 1999: 659, Bush 2013: 7). Due to her varied background, therefore, linguistic and national labels are inapplicable to Wertenbaker and, as we shall see shortly, to her work (Bush 2013: 1). Multiculturalism and multilingualism, constant drawing from multiple and varied sources, are key features of her writing, so much so that to say, as does Bush (2013: 1), that Wertenbaker’s is a floating (cultural, linguistic, creative) identity is perhaps the only label we can safely assign. Perhaps because of the fragmentation of her linguistic and cultural identity, language is a constant concern in all of Wertenbaker’s playwriting, as remarked by Bush (2013: 97) and Carlson (2000: 134), and it is particularly prominent in The Love of the Nightingale.
4.1.2 The Love of the Nightingale

*The Love of the Nightingale* (1988) retells the myth of Philomela, renamed Philomele by Wertenbaker, which was told in the form of a tragedy by Sophocles, although only a few short fragments of the ancient Greek texts have survived (Lloyd-Jones 2003: 291-301). For this reason, it is also possible to consider the text an ‘original’ work. The story has, however, been told many times, most famously, as Wertenbaker mentions, by Ovid and Robert Graves (Wertenbaker 2008: 39). These texts, as well as some fragments from Sophocles which appear as a prologue to the dramatic action, form the basis for *The Love of the Nightingale*. Other sources, such as Euripides’ *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae*, the myth of Echo and Narcissus, and ancient Greek philosophy are woven into the main storyline (the first two appearing in sc. 5, pp. 300-07 and sc. 19, pp. 344-8 respectively and the other two throughout the whole play, particularly in the lines of Philomele and Echo, a member of the female chorus).

The plot of the myth, as told by the ancient sources, can be summarized as follows: Procne, Athenian princess and older sister of Philomela, marries Tereus, the Thracian king who has aided Athens in war. Procne leaves for her new home in Thrace, and Philomela promises she will go and visit her sister if Procne ever asks her to. In due course Procne has a son, Itys. However, she feels lonely and estranged in her new home and asks Tereus to travel to Athens and bring Philomela back to Thrace. Tereus goes, but during the journey back to Thrace he becomes enamoured of Philomela. When the girl rejects him, he rapes her and cuts out her tongue so that she will not tell her story. He then imprisons her in a hut not far from his palace in Thrace, goes back to Procne and tells her that Philomela has died on the journey. As time passes the dumb Philomela weaves her story into a tapestry and sends it to Procne. When she sees this, Procne rushes to the hut to free her sister. Together, they take revenge on Tereus by killing Itys and serving him to his father as a meal. When the truth is revealed, Tereus chases the two sisters, intending to kill them. Before he reaches them, all three characters are transformed into birds. Tereus becomes a hawk (or hoopoe in some versions) and Philomela and Procne respectively a nightingale and a swallow.

Wertenbaker’s play makes a few key alterations to the traditional mythical storyline, as well as to Sophocles’ reconstructed tragedy, the significance of which shall be
examined either in the following sections or in the more detailed discussion of the texts in Chapter 6.

4.1.3 Dianeira

*Dianeira* is a 1999 radio drama which closely follows the plot of Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis* (1978), retelling the story of Dianeira who is married to the great hero Heracles. Heracles returns home from his travels, bringing with him a group of women he has enslaved after conquering the city of Oechalia. Among them is Iole, beautiful daughter of Eurytos, king of Oechalia, with whom Heracles has fallen madly in love. It was his desire for Iole that pushed him to attack her city. When she learns the truth about the sacking of Oechalia and the presence of Iole in her household, Dianeira realizes she now has a rival in love and resorts to using a potion, given to her by the centaur Nessos after he was mortally wounded by Heracles. According to the centaur, the potion would restore Heracles’ love for Dianeira. Dianeira dips a robe into the potion and has it sent to Heracles as a gift from her. When Heracles puts on the robe, however, the potion is revealed to be poison; the fabric starts smoking and cannot be removed from Heracles’s back, causing the hero terrible pain. Learning of the true effects of her gift, Dianeira kills herself in shame. On his deathbed, Heracles makes Hyllos, his son, promise to marry Iole. Whereas in Sophocles’ tragedy the episode of Nessos is narrated by Dianeira, in Wertenbaker’s text it appears in the form of a flashback. A similar technique is used to relate a prophecy made about Heracles’ future, which is also retold by Dianeira in Sophocles’ play. In addition, Wertenbaker sets the myth of Dianeira within a distinctly modern framework. In this framework a character named after herself, Timberlake, who is visiting Greece with a group of friends, asks a blind storyteller by the name of Irene to tell them a story about anger. The myth of Dianeira is what Timberlake and her friends hear.

4.1.4 Page or stage

*The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* are both dramatic texts and, in the context of their translation, the issue of text and performance needs to be addressed,
although ‘performance’ carries a slightly different connotation for each of the two texts, given that Dianeira is a radio drama rather than a stage play.

My translation of both texts is aimed at the written page rather than at a performance. In fact, although text and performance are generally considered two inseparable aspects of drama (Bassnett-McGuire 1985: 97, Zuber-Skerrit 1984: 5), and although performance offers many opportunities for foreignization through non-textual elements, studying performance over texts entails several significant problems (McIntyre 2006, Short 2002)– namely that each production of a play, and each performance of a particular production, is different from the others (Short 2002: 8) – and that indications about how the text should be performed are contained within the text itself and therefore reading alone does allow for ‘sensitive understandings’ of plays (Short 2002: 7). Another of Short’s arguments that is particularly relevant to Wertenbaker’s works relates to the understanding process itself, which, when reading, can be facilitated by the possibility of going back to specific parts of the text as many times as necessary (Short 2002: 9). A similar point is also made by Redmond (1991: 57) and, due to the deliberately complex and challenging nature of Wertenbaker’s plays (see section 4.5), this seems a particularly desirable advantage. In addition, the aim of my translation is to enhance the ‘demanding’ aspects of the text, by introducing elements such as extensive use of the source language and Greek vocabulary, making the possibility of slowing down or re-reading parts of the text essential. Finally, some of the reasons for translating these texts relate to their relevance to the Italian high school curriculum – in this context, the widespread practice of reading dramatic texts (Short 2002: 6-7), rather than performing them or seeing them in performance, also needs to be taken into consideration. Although dramatic performance has often been remarked upon as a useful pedagogical tool (Hertzberg 2001; Arts Council England 2003), translation for performance in an educational context would involve a complicated process of negotiating times, approval, budgets and appointments of drama professionals with schools. Additionally, presenting a text for performance might actually limit the ways in which a class could engage with it. Translation is also an established pedagogical tool (Ardizzone 2012, Chowdury 2013) and to offer a permanent text with which classes are free to engage in a variety of ways (structured performance, translation, rewriting, spontaneous performance) and from the point of
view of different academic subjects (performing arts, literature, English language, history, philosophy) may offer more flexibility for a variety of learning strategies than a text designed exclusively for performance. Teachers and students are thus given the raw material through which to develop the learning strategy that best suits their own pedagogical context.

Short’s numerous arguments in favour of the ‘adequacy (even necessity) of reading play-texts’ (2002: 6) led McIntyre to structure his analysis of viewpoint in drama by basing it on the play-text rather than a specific performance of it (McIntyre 2006: 13). The complex interplay between text and performance becomes even more complicated when we consider the issue of translating drama. In the complex process of taking a play from the page to the stage, through the medium of a new language, the very role of the translator may need redefining in relation to other figures ‘described as that of adaptor, dramatist or by any other creative term’ (Hardwick 2013: 322). This appears impossible to do in the absence of a planned performance and for this reason, to consider issues relating to performance does not seem sensible where there is no specific production in mind. In this case, no specific production has been envisaged because the aim of this thesis is not to address issues specific to the translation of drama, but rather to show how a multilingual translation strategy may prove not only a possible one, but one that is particularly suited to the translation of revisionist texts built on principles of questioning and subversion. The translation strategy adopted in Chapter 5, which relies heavily on the use of the source language in the target text, wants to suggest a possible way of highlighting the subversive elements of the source text while challenging the world of literary translation in Italy to engage with different ways of understanding the process and function of translation. For general readers, it offers the possibility of finding out much more about the source text and language, about translation and about themselves than they would be able to through a more traditional type of translation. Although this strategy may seem particularly apt for texts similar in nature to Wertenbaker’s, there is no reason for it not to be adopted for the translation of any kind of text (examples of how this strategy may be used in the translation of other types of text are given in Chapter 7).
For all of the reasons outlined above, I will use the terms ‘play’ (*The Love of the Nightingale*), ‘drama’ (*Dianeira*) and ‘text’ (both) to indicate Wertenbaker’s works and ‘audience’ to indicate their recipients. When referring to my own translations of Wertenbaker’s works I will use ‘text’ and ‘reader’.

### 4.2 Defining *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira*

A fundamental difficulty emerges in talking about Wertenbaker’s works in relation to translation, namely that different notions of translation are present within her works, often overlapping with each other within the same work. Interlingual translation, intralingual translation and intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 2012: 127) all feature within her works, as does the ‘specialised kind of translation’ that Zuber-Skerrit calls ‘dramatic transposition’ (1984: 8) and as do the much vaguer notions of transformation, rewriting and adaptation (Bastin 2011: 3). Indeed, Wertenbaker has produced plays that have generally been labelled as either translations, adaptations or ‘original’ works, but in point of fact a lot of her plays contain elements of all three in varying proportions (see the description of *Our Country’s Good* which follows in this section), and *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* are no exceptions. Both plays are generally considered original works, as is evident from the fact that they appear in the collected volumes of her original plays and do not bear any formal acknowledgement of their sources on their title page (Wertenbaker 1996a and 2002). Wertenbaker herself, however, comments on the fact that, despite happily signing her name to both plays, the nature of these works is rather ambiguous (Wertenbaker 2008: 39). In this section, I will try to unravel the complexity of overlapping concepts of translation, adaptation, original and rewriting present in Wertenbaker’s works and attempt to give a sense of the kind of texts that I will be translating in Chapter 5.

The playwright has declared that when not writing an ‘original’ her favourite way of working is by basing a work on another and gives *Our Country’s Good* as an example of this process (Wertenbaker 2008: 39). We can conclude, therefore, that she does not regard *Our Country’s Good* as an original, but, most probably, an
adaptation. In fact, in being commissioned to write *Our Country’s Good*, Wertenbaker reports being explicitly asked to ‘write something based on Thomas Keneally’s *The Playmaker*’ (Wertenbaker 1996: viii). *Our Country’s Good* therefore shows great similarities with *The Love of the Nightingale*, as both plays are explicitly based on a number of different sources. The novel *The Playmaker*, in fact, portrays a group of Australian convicts staging Farquhar’s Restoration comedy *The Recruiting Officer* and, drawing on factual elements from accounts of the first British settlements in Australia, such as Robert Hughes’ *The Fatal Shore* (Bush 2013: 118), it intertwines them with literary sources. It is logical to conclude, then, that if *Our Country’s Good* cannot be considered an original play, then neither can *The Love of the Nightingale*. Wertenbaker herself, however, is adamant that the play cannot be considered an adaptation either as there was ‘no “original” work to adapt’ (Wertenbaker 2008: 39). Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that there was no single original work to adapt, but there were many. The crucial point is not so much the absence of one identifiable ‘original’, but whether the myth is in fact adapted. Wertenbaker herself reminds us that to adapt means to change something so that it is more suitable for new conditions (Wertenbaker 2008: 36). In literature, this can mean adapting to suit a different culture and context, a different genre or a different age category (Bastin 2011: 4), or indeed relocating the cultural or temporal setting entirely (Sanders 2006: 20). However, Wertenbaker carries out operations of this kind only to a limited extent. The myth on which *The Love of the Nightingale* is based, in fact, presents many elements pertaining to some of the factors which generally cause the need for adaptation, in particular those which Bastin (2011: 5) calls ‘situational or cultural inadequacy’ (consisting in the absence, in the target culture, of the context referred to in the original text) and the ‘disruption of the communication process’ (consisting in ‘the emergence of a new epoch’ or ‘need to address a different type of readership’). Despite the presence of such elements, Wertenbaker purposefully avoids adapting many of these factors in her play. *The Love of the Nightingale* is distinctly Greek in its dramatic elements (it even includes a male and female chorus) and content and no attempt is made to adapt the myth to contemporary dramatic conventions or the expectation of a modern audience. Wertenbaker’s engagement with the myth is such

48 Sanders (2006: 31), gives this play as an example of adaptation.
that she wishes to preserve its distance and foreignness while presenting it to a modern public. On the other hand, she creates much more rounded and fully-fledged characters than in the ancient sources, particularly when it comes to the two female protagonists. The greatest change occurs in Philomele, who is presumed to have been a mute character in Sophocles’ Tereus (Monella 2005: 98). In fact, the play is believed to have started in medias res, after the rape and mutilation of Philomele, the backstory being widely known by the Greek audience and summarised in a prologue (Monella 2005: 107). Philomele has no lines in Ovid’s text either and, as Bush points out, she ‘is described only by her outward appearance’ (2013: 10). Wertenbaker, however, focuses heavily on the feelings and sensations of Philomele, as well as those of her sister, inserting, at the very beginning of the play, an intimate exchange in which the two sisters discuss their own feelings and sensations while watching two soldiers fight. The result is a scene in which the female point of view and emotions are foregrounded and the male body is objectified (Bush 2013: 101).

Itys is another character that ‘grows’ in Wertenbaker’s play. Also presumed to have been a mute character in Sophocles, in The Love of the Nightingale he is first a replica of Tereus’ violent and selfish personality and later, in the final scene of the play, a beacon of hope for the future as he gradually learns to ask questions.

Dianeira proves just as difficult to define as The Love of the Nightingale. Although the play closely follows a single main source, Sophocles’ The Trachiniae, Wertenbaker herself admits that, despite taking Sophocles as a starting point, she ‘then went somewhere else’ (Wertenbaker 2008: 39). In this case too, she rules out the term ‘adaptation’ arguing that her play ‘does not make The Trachiniae more accessible – more fit’ (Wertenbaker 2008: 39). In fact, just as in The Love of the Nightingale, the Greek elements of Sophocles’ tragedy are preserved in Dianeira, including a chorus.

Thus, hesitant to call The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira original texts and unsure whether they can safely be defined as adaptations, we are still at a loss to find a convincing categorization for them. My suggestion is that we may safely call both works translations. As Boase-Beier points out (2011: 5), there is a lack of clarity as to what translation actually involves, despite Jakobson’s (2012: 127) apparently strict
definition of translation types. Boase-Beier’s solution to Jakobson’s inexhaustive categorization is to think about translation in terms of a process of ‘transferring one section of language into another’, thus suggesting the possibility that ‘any reformulation is a translation’ (2011: 7). Although, in these terms, ‘translation’ may be applied very loosely (as in Boase-Beier’s example ‘A: I don’t quite, well, maybe, you know . . . B: Let me translate: no.’, 2011: 7), in the case of Wertenbaker’s works the playwright is consciously reformulating material from the past in order to present crucial issues to a modern audience, an element which has already led Roth and Freeman to consider Wertenbaker’s work in its entirety in terms of translation (2008: 13). In their monographic study of the playwright’s work, in fact, Roth and Freeman suggest that The Love of the Nightingale, Dianeira and indeed all of Wertenbaker’s plays, may be considered translations. This is not as far-fetched a proposition as it may seem if we consider the lack of defining qualities of translation pointed out by Boase-Beier (2011: 5), which may lead us to safely consider adaptation as a form of translation. A number of theorists, in fact, believe that the types of processes which are normally defined as adaptation can be, and at different stages in literary history have been (Venuti 2011: 230), encompassed in the concept of translation (Bastin 2011: 5). Roth and Freeman seem to share this view and they motivate their claim by pointing out that all of Wertenbaker’s plays either draw on other material, transforming it ‘across media and forms’ (Roth and Freeman 2008: 13) or engage in a critical transposition of the past, through which universal issues of power, self-knowledge, crime and punishment, marriage, silence and identity are addressed (Roth and Freeman 2008: 13-33, Roth 2009). Analyzing archival material, Sophie Bush (2013) was able to show how even Wertenbaker’s very early work already demonstrated a deep interest in the past, particularly Greek myth, as well as a desire to use those well-known stories to say something new. Among the earliest materials Bush discusses is the synopsis for a play entitled The Upper World, which revisited the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in reverse form, with the woman descending into a symbolic Hades to rescue the man (Bush 2013: 32). Similarly, Agamennon’s Daughter (c. 1978) revisits the plots of Sophocles’ Electra and Aeschylus’ Libation Bearers through the eyes of the female characters, Electra and Clytemnestra (Bush 2013: 48), while Monads, although set in a modern context, references the mythical and philosophical concepts of the
Apollonian and Dionysian man (Bush 2013: 57) as well as Euripides’ Bacchae (Bush 2013: 58). As argued by Hall (2004: 2-8), engaging with Greek myth was not an unusual practice in post-60s drama,\(^{49}\) and indeed recastings of Greek myth are abundant in other literary genres too (such as Boland or Duffy’s poetry). Wertenbaker’s work, however, shows a predilection for engaging with past sources of other kinds too. New Anatomies (1981) draws on the journals of the historical figure of Isabelle Eberhardt, who is at the centre of the play (Wertenbaker 1996: vii), Inside Out (1982) draws on the legend of the beautiful Japanese Courtesan Ono Komachi (Bush 2013: 78), and although the title character in The Grace of Mary Traverse (1985) is fictional, her character is inspired by the figure of Faust and she speaks lines from Tom Paine (Wertenbaker in Stephenson and Langridge 1997: 139). All three of these plays use legendary and historical figures to challenge stereotypical views (past and contemporary) of female passivity (Bush 2013: 94). As already mentioned, Our Country’s Good, to date Wertenbaker’s most famous play, shares with The Love of the Nightingale a reliance on a number of earlier sources of different kinds. The same trend continues with more recent plays including the 1998 play After Darwin, in which we witness two actors, a writer and a director working on a play about Darwin and the development of his theories, the 2000 play The Ash Girl, based on the fairytale of Cinderella, or in the more recent Our Ajax and My Father, Odysseus (first performed in 2013 and 2016 respectively) which go back to Sophocles and Homer. The two plays this study is concerned with are among those which engage most deeply and explicitly with mythical sources and, in this case, the interlingual aspect of the transposition (both texts being based on Greek and Latin sources) must also be considered.

Roth and Freeman point out that even those of Wertenbaker’s plays which engage less explicitly with previous texts still ‘orbit around complex cultural translations navigated by immigrants and diverse Brits crossing borders of language, nation and culture in England, having to contend equally with social inequities and adaptive renewal’ (2008: 14). In his contribution to Roth and Freeman’s book, Jay M. Gipson-King focuses on three of Wertenbaker’s plays which draw on historical or mythical sources (The Grace of Mary Traverse, The Love of the Nightingale and After

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\(^{49}\) Hall (2004) also offers an interesting and detailed analysis of this Greek revival and its causes.
Darwin). He remarks on the similarity between recent approaches to translation and history, pointing out the fact that both activities have been described as highly manipulative and shaped by ideology (Gipson-King 2008: 224). In his view, Wertenbaker’s historical or mythical plays are translations of history which reveal history itself to be a deliberate construction, just as translation is (Gipson-King 2008: 224).

Wertenbaker has defined translation as a process which ‘not only changes something but it also moves it, displaces it. It then makes us ask all sorts of questions’ (Wertenbaker 2008: 35). In the light of the new and multiple perspectives they offer on the ancient mythical material and in the light of their highly interrogative nature, *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* both fit their author’s definition of translation perfectly. I will therefore consider these plays as translations, thus agreeing with the view suggested by Roth and Freeman in their lengthy study (2008). This view, however, is not shared simply because of a process of exclusion of other terms such as ‘original’ and ‘adaptation’, but through the desire to take a broader perspective on translation, one which, similarly to what is suggested by Boase-Beier (2011: 7), sees translation as a term which is able to encompass both Jakobson’s ideas of interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation (2012: 127) and processes such as writing and re-writing. Such a view, in fact, seems the most suited to fully engage with the multi-faceted nature of Wertenbaker’s texts. In addition, stretching the boundaries of what we consider a translation beyond the common idea of interlingual translation is a way of initiating controversy and debate in the Italian intellectual environment, where, despite broader notions of translation occasionally being briefly addressed (Osimo 2010, Giusti 2015), translation is still, almost exclusively, ‘translation proper’ (Jakobson 2012: 127). This does not mean that no form of experimental translation takes place in Italy. As analysed more in detail in section 6.1, in fact, experimentation occurs regularly in popular fiction, drama and, as the example of Stefano Bordiglioni in section 2.3.2 has shown, in children’s literature too. As in the case of Bordiglioni, however, the translatorly nature of these works is rarely recognized.
4.3 Wertenbaker as visible translator

These two plays combine some elements of domestication with more extensive use of foreignization strategies, use which will be analysed below. They are deliberate recontextualizations of two ancient myths which present timeless issues of brutality, silence, identity and anger to a modern audience while at the same time preserving their ancient Greek setting. In such a process of recontextualization, Wertenbaker makes an effort to create direct lines of communication between herself and the audience, making them aware, primarily through the means of ‘metatheatre and shifting frames of narrative styles’, of the different layers of translation being negotiated in her work (Roth and Freeman 2008: 23).

In *The Love of the Nightingale* Wertenbaker has the Queen tell us that we must ‘Listen to the chorus. The playwright always speaks through the chorus.’ (1996a: 304) Although the Queen is speaking to Tereus in relation to the chorus in a play-within-the-play representation of *Hippolytus*, her warning resounds throughout, so that the words of the two main male and female choruses in the main play are loaded with extra significance. In fact, it is precisely the two main choruses who make explicit reference to modern times, thus performing a very visible type of recontextualization (a point also remarked upon by Roth and Freeman, 2008: 12). In sc. 20, for example, the female chorus opens a direct window onto the present by asking: ‘Why do white people cut off the words of blacks? Why are little girls raped and murdered in the car parks of dark cities?’ (Wertenbaker 1996a: 349), and in sc. 8 the male chorus reminds us that the word ‘myth’ has been decontextualized and recontextualized through the centuries and that, regardless of the meaning we give to it now, ‘the first, the Greek meaning of myth, is simply what is delivered by word of mouth, a myth is speech, public speech.’ (Wertenbaker 1996a: 315)

In *Dianeira*, Wertenbaker actually appears as a character (‘Timberlake’, played by Wertenbaker herself in the 1999 BBC Radio 3 broadcast) in the modern framework of the drama. The character Timberlake speaks the ‘Introduction’ to the play, in which

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50 Namely the explicit links drawn in both works between myth and the contemporary world, but also the creation of very familiar and ‘domestic’ scenes, such as scene 2 of the Love of the Nightingale, in which two young sisters discuss sex (in direct opposition to the previous scene in which two soldiers engage in a ritualistic exchange of insults.
she explains how she and a group of friends came to meet Irene, the Greek storyteller who narrates Dianeira’s story to them. Wertenbaker becomes, therefore, not just an agency whose presence behind the play can be sensed if not seen, but she also has an active and visible role within the drama itself. Irene, the narrator of the story, could be compared to another chorus (there is a main chorus within the ‘ancient’ part of the story) and, just like the female chorus in *The Love of the Nightingale*, by reflecting on anger, identity and disappointment, she re-contextualizes events from the past for the modern audience as, for example, in the lines:

What is worse than to feel you’ve been lied to? Who doesn’t revile the man who goes on television and appeals for the discovery of the child he has himself killed? We feel such fury when our politicians deny all wrongdoing the day before their crimes are revealed. (p. 340)

The deliberate presentation of contemporary and mythical elements side by side forces the audience to consider the process of translation which puts them in direct contact with the ancient mythical source of the drama, but also the way in which the mythical material relates to current times. Contemporary events can thus be re-examined in the light of mythical ones and vice versa, creating the kind of critical engagement which not only drama but literature in general, including translation, aim to foster (see section 4.5).

*The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* are both full of elements which make them unmistakably and visibly a very personal account of Wertenbaker’s relationship not just with a text but rather with a whole culture. Issues of silencing, brutality and identity, which are most typically embodied in the female figures of Procne, Philomele, Niobe, Dianeira and Iole, are not just central to these plays, but also to Wertenbaker’s personal life. The impossibility of labelling Wertenbaker’s provenance, her belonging to one culture, one country, one language, in short her state of ‘countrylessness’, have already been mentioned in section 4.1.1, and Wertenbaker herself, in introducing the first volume of her collected plays, has said, specifically of *The Love of the Nightingale*:

I was actually thinking about the violence that erupts in societies when they have been silenced for too long. Without language, brutality will
triumph. I grew up in the Basque country, where the language was systematically silenced, and it is something that always haunts me.

(Wertenbaker 1996: viii)

Dianeira, which Wertenbaker describes as being about anger (2007: 367), is more specifically about voiced or unvoiced anger. As remarked by Pedrick (2008: 46-47), one of the boldest alterations made by Wertenbaker to the Sophoclean text is Dianeira’s speech at the moment of her death. Unlike Sophocles’ character, Wertenbaker’s Dianeira gives voice, before the end, to the anger which she has nursed silently for years. It is anger for having always been left in the shadows while Heracles went on his adventures and for having been finally replaced despite her years of faithfully waiting and looking after Heracles’ house and children. And as well as admitting her anger she also admits that deep down she knew what Nessos’ potion would do (‘I felt no surprise. I knew it was poison, would kill him. I knew…’ p. 359).

Greek myth in general has also been central in Wertenbaker’s life and thinking (Wertenbaker 2004), and although both plays draw on Greek sources, The Love of the Nightingale in particular seems to celebrate this centrality through a structure based on several overlapping layers of Greek myth. As remarked by Shmit (1989) and as made evident by the use of formulaic epithets such as ‘rosy-fingered’ in reference to the dawn (sc. 6, p. 308) and ‘wine dark sea’ (sc. 13, p. 326 and 327), the language used by Wertenbaker has Homeric resonances. The Phaedra and Hippolytus myth is used to foreshadow the events of The Love of the Nightingale and is tightly woven into Wertenbaker’s work through direct citation of Euripides’ Hippolytus. The attentive audience will identify, in the well-known tale of Phaedra and Hippolytus, a gender-inverted version of Philomele and Tereus’ story. A connection between Phaedra and Hippolytus and Philomele and Tereus is first suggested by Philomele during the

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51 Pedrick fails to consider a key point here. Her claim is that, after Hyllos’ grave accusations, Wertenbaker’s Dianeira, unlike Sophocles’ one, does not remain silent because a modern audience would not understand the ominous significance of a woman walking off stage (2008: 46). That might be so, however, we must also bear in mind that Dianeira having been written for radio, its audience would not have been able to see a character’s exit. Despite what Pedrick claims, therefore, Wertenbaker’s Dianeira, must speak at this point. What is of course significant, as Pedrick does recognise, are the words she says.
performance of the play-within-the play. ‘But Father, I’m not Hippolytus’, she says to Pandion to convince him to send her to Thrace, followed by ‘and Tereus isn’t Phaedra, look.’ (p.306). Her denial of the connection has nevertheless suggested it, and later, in sc. 13, Tereus confirms that the two stories are indeed similar by referencing the Hippolytus play when he declares his feelings to Philomele. ‘The play. I am Phaedra. (Pause.) I love you. That way.’ (p. 328). The audience’s experience of Greek myth is further amplified when, as well as the direct quotations from Sophocles and Euripides and the main storyline of Philomele and Procne, a scene based on The Bacchae appears in sc. 19 (pp. 344-8). In addition, the members of the female chorus – with the exception perhaps of Helen – seem to have preserved part of the character of their eponymous heroines. When the women sense danger and discuss it among themselves, it is Iris, traditionally messenger of the Gods, who finally communicates the chorus’ concerns to Procne (sc. 9, p. 316). And when Procne wants to know if Tereus is alive (sc. 14, p. 331), it is once again Iris who she addresses to ask for information about her husband. In the same scene, Procne threatens to commit suicide and informs the woman that ‘when I kill myself, it will be for you to bring news of my death, Iris’ (p. 331). In a similar way, the foreboding line ‘the sky was so dark this morning’ in sc. 9 (p. 317) is pronounced by Hero, traditionally the priestess of Aphrodite who, according to Ovid’s account in Heroides, waited for her lover to swim to her under the cover of night, watching the sea and the sky for any signs of the bad weather that would prevent him from coming to her. But perhaps the most significant figure among the women of the chorus is Echo, whose significance in the play has been analyzed in detail by Monrós Gaspar (2006). According to Ovid’s account, Juno had deprived Echo of most of her speaking ability as a punishment for using her words to trick the goddess. Echo is left unable to utter independent speech and only capable of repeating the last part of the words she hears (Ovid 2001: 95-100). She has, therefore, much in common with Philomele, deprived of a voice by Tereus’ brutality. As the extracts below show, the character of Echo in The Love of the Nightingale exhibits similar linguistic limitations to the nymph of the same name:

Procne: Where have all the words gone?
Echo: Gone, Procne, the words?

(...)

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Procne: How we talked. (...) Where is she now? Who shares those games with her? Or is she silent too?
Echo: Silent, Procne, who?

(...)  
Procne: Tereus could bring her, she’ll be safe with him.  
Echo: Tereus.  
Helen: Dangers on the sea, he won’t want you to risk them.  
Procne: He can go alone. I’ll wait here and look after the country.  
Echo: Tereus.  
(1996a: 298-300)

Procne: Enough of your nonsense. Be silent.  
Helen: Silent.  
Echo: Silent.  
(1996a: 318)

June: We show you a myth.  
Echo: Image. Echo.  

(...)  
Iris: Such a transformation.  
Echo: Metamorphosis.  
(1996a: 349; 352)

As Monró Gaspar has pointed out, Echo’s lines either repeat the words pronounced by someone before her or they ‘echo’ their meaning and her communicative limitations are mirrored in the constant use of broken nominal constructions (Monró Gaspar 2006: 6). But just as Philomele finds an alternative means of communication by making three life-size dolls to animate, Echo too is able to find a way out of her linguistic constraints by imbuing ‘with extra meaning the utterances she repeats from others’ (Monró Gaspar 2006: 7). Monró Gaspar has found further proof in the play of the correspondence between the Echo of the female chorus and the mythical figure of the same name in an apparent identification of Tereus with Narcissus.
Wertenbaker’s constant reference to secondary myths throughout the main plot of *The Love of the Nightingale* can be interpreted as the playwright’s way of providing the attentive audience with hints about the extent to which the Greeks had studied human nature. Her interest in what Greek literature has to say about humanity is evident not only in the choice of source materials for her plays and in the themes that her plays address, but also in her interviews and other writings. From this point of view, most significant among them is, perhaps, *The Voices We Hear* (Wertenbaker 2004), in which she discusses the understanding the Greeks had of human nature. Greek antiquity, therefore, is not merely a personal interest and the source of a plot line for Wertenbaker, but a true source of understanding and self-discovery. In *The Love of the Nightingale* the references to Echo provide further confirmation that the ability to express ourselves is one of the things that makes us human and that those deprived of this ability must either find alternative ways of expression or risk descending into a feral condition. The playwright’s references to contemporary elements encourage the audience to consider the extent to which issues of this kind have never stopped resurfacing throughout history and are still relevant today.

A translation that wishes to underline the plurality of sources and factors at work in this play must consider how to deal with Wertenbaker’s close links to ancient Greece, particularly in the context of a target readership which has – through linguistic, cultural and historical ties as well as educational policies – a much closer link to Greek antiquity than the source text audience. As will be explained in detail in Chapter 6, I have attempted to enhance the link to the mythical world by expanding on some of the minor references and introducing words in ancient Greek – a strategy in some ways similar to the one used by Wertenbaker herself for some of the lines of the choruses in her translations of *Oedipus Tyrannus, Oedipus at Kolonos* and *Antigone* (1991).

The issue of silencing portrayed in *The Love of the Nightingale* and highlighted by the figure of Echo and the references she carries with her are also central in *Dianeira*. In this text, silence and voicelessness are to some degree seen as the cause of the anger
that Wertenbaker’s Dianeira is finally able to express before taking her own life. In her interactions with Heracles, Dianeira shows similar communicative limitations to Echo, but in her case these limitations are imposed by Heracles’ arrogance and self-absorption. The relationship between the two main characters is entirely shown through flashbacks, rather than being narrated by one of the characters as in Sophocles’ play, so that the only scenes in which Heracles and Dianeira appear together are set in the past. In both flashback scenes (the first relating to the prophecy about Heracles’ future, the second showing the crossing of the river and the death of Nessos) the only word Dianeira seems able to speak to Heracles is the hero’s name. There are two attempts to cut into his ‘monologue’ in the first flashback scene, ‘Heracles...’ and ‘Heracles – ’ (p. 332 and 333), that go unheeded, and the second flashback scene contains the frightened shout of ‘Heracles!’ and a worried, and once again unheeded, ‘But – Heracles’ (p. 346 and 347). Such limited utterances are in sharp contrast with the rest of the drama, in which Dianeira is often engaged in lengthy monologues or in deeply emotional conversations (such as the one with Hyllos – pp. 331-2 – or the dying Nessos – pp. 348-50).

The multi-layered experience of Greek myth that The Love of the Nightingale offers is augmented by smaller details, such as the constant references to classical philosophy (which will be discussed more thoroughly below) or the repeated line ‘a beating of wings’ (Echo in sc. 4, p. 300 and Philomele in sc. 5, p. 307) to invoke a feeling of foreboding which takes us back to the tradition of omen-reading in bird flight (Padel 2012: 34). Echoes of this are also present in Dianeira, where birds are also associated with a feeling of foreboding (p. 333).

In a way not dissimilar to Scott’s operation in translating Baudelaire, Wertenbaker includes a number of sources, or ‘ancestors’, of the Philomela story (Sophocles’ Tereus and Ovid’s Metamorphoses) which make her individual intervention clearly visible within the play. She then further extends her primary sources by making them interact with other Greek myths (Hippolytus, Bacchae, the tale of Echo and Narcissus) and by adding further imagery related to Greek tradition (such as the Homeric epithets mentioned above). Although Dianeira is more consistently based on a single source, Wertenbaker’s intervention is just as clearly visible in the modern framework in which the play is set, in the words of the character Timberlake and of the
narrator Irene, in the adoption of the flashback to foreground two particular scenes, and in the changes to Dianeira’s deathbed monologue.

In the case of both plays, the result may indeed be defined as ‘a spiritual autobiography of a relation with the ST’ (Scott 2010: 181) and if looking at the plays as translations (as suggested in section 4.2) in relation to a literary context, the Italian one, where translators are still commonly referred to as a ferrymen or faithful servants of the author (Colorni 2008: 22; Bortoli 2008: 56), they are endowed with an even greater element of novelty and controversy and have the potential to originate discussion around the role of the translator as an active and visible agent within the target text. In addition, by openly recontextualizing the myths, Wertenbaker is further challenging the instrumental model of translation described in Chapter 2 and suggesting that, instead of just being a way to transfer content from one language to another, translation may be able to offer a source of critical understanding not only of the source text, but also of the cultural and social context of the source text and target text (Venuti 2009: 165).

4.4 Translation, politics and polyphony

Wertenbaker’s plays are not just translations, but self-reflexive translations. In fact, in The Love of the Nightingale, through the careful selection and transformation of a plurality of source texts, Wertenbaker opens up multiple perspectives on the Philomela myth, creating a play which encourages reflection on translation as an element of political significance. First of all, she presents translation as a means through which oppressed categories can regain a voice to subvert the dominant power structure, as when Philomele manages to act against Tereus, regaining some kind of voice through intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 2012: 127) and communicating with her sister. Secondly, she suggests that translation is a tool that can be used to maintain and reinforce existing power structures by influencing the transmission of knowledge - as exemplified by the discussion in sc. 8 (p. 315), where the male chorus invite reflection on how a story of rape and dispossession may be turned from an ‘unwanted truth’, but a truth nonetheless, into an ‘unlikely story’ (Monró Gaspar 2006: 3).
The multiple and contrasting points of view presented in Wertenbaker’s play create a polyphonic text, in the sense described by Keyssar – and remarked upon by Winston (1995: 518) in relation to *The Love of the Nightingale*. Keyssar takes Bakhtin’s controversial view of polyphony in drama as a starting point (Keyssar 1996: 110) and applies the term to plays which present a ‘refusal to finalise or assert dominant ideologies’ and ‘resistances to patriarchal authority and to a unified field of vision’ (Keyssar 1996: 121). Just like the feminist and black American plays Keyssar is referring to, Wertenbaker’s plays mediate, rather than resolve, differences by allowing diverse discourses to ‘interanimate’ each other (Keyssar 1996: 122). Wertenbaker achieves this polyphonic aspect by carefully selecting, transforming and weaving into her play intertextual elements drawn from different sources, as described in detail in section 4.3 above (the myth of Echo, Phaedra and Pentheus among them). This effect is not dissimilar to the one Burian comments on in relation to Sophocles’ *Ajax*, in which, he argues, intertextual elements (specifically Homeric scenes and lines) add voices from ‘off-stage’ to the text (Burian 2012: 71). This feature of Wertenbaker’s work has been picked up on by Roth and Freeman who, despite not using the term ‘polyphonic’, have commented on Wertenbaker’s commitment to ‘hearing the multivocality of traditions and sources’ as well as ‘the multivocality of language and identity, the plurality of culture and history.’ (2008: 12).

As mentioned in section 4.2, the most striking transformation in comparison with ancient sources occurs in the character of Philomela, who is presumed to have been mute in the only known dramatic source of the myth, Sophocles’ *Tereus* (Monella 2005: 98). By giving this character a strong and insistent physical voice (Philomele is constantly ‘grilling’ the other character with questions during the play, as in sc. 7, pp. 309-10), Wertenbaker not only highlights her enforced silence after the mutilation in sc. 15, she also creates a painful counterpoint to Procne’s metaphorical silence and alienation, providing a parallel perspective on the issue of voicelessness. Procne, in fact, although physically whole, is silenced by her uprooted condition. When she arrives in Thrace she finds that, although the Thracian women (the chorus) speak the same language as she does, they use it very differently. Procne uses language literally and favours clarity. The women of the chorus, on the other hand, speak more metaphorically with ‘meanings half in the shade, unclear’ (Wertenbaker 1996a: 298).
In scene 9 the chorus try to communicate a sense of foreboding, but do so in the allusive language they favour:

   Hero: The sky was so dark this morning

   Procne: It’ll rain. It always rains.

   Iris: Again.

   Hero: I was not talking metereologically. Images require sympathy.

   (1996a: 317)

   Procne is unable to understand the chorus’ allusive language and this contributes to isolating her (‘she is not one of us’ says June, p.298). This feeling of isolation leads her to wish for her sister’s company, setting the wheels of the play in motion. In the extract quoted above, the two distinct ways of communicating are evident. Procne takes the chorus’ words literally and thus their warning (which here is referring to what might be happening to Philomele while she is in Tereus’ care) goes unheeded, with tragic consequences.

   The figure of Niobe adds yet another perspective by bringing whole countries and the postcolonial dimension into the picture (see Roth 2009: 48, Bush 2013: 102-3). The fate of the women in the play who are sold to, or captured by, a foreign power and forced to live in a land that is alien to them, acts as a parallel to the fate of colonized countries, which are obliged to submit to a foreign military and political force and adopt its language and culture. As is often the case in postcolonial texts, translation is a central element which allows authors to re-appropriate and subvert the language and literary canon of the colonizers, enabling them to find a language in which to ‘write back’ (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002:7-8). In the case of The Love of the Nightingale, translation and drama are showcased in sc. 18 (pp. 342-3) as a way for Philomele to break free of her powerless and silent condition and reveal the truth to Procne. The Hippolytus metadrama, as ‘the most famous violent incest narrative in Western drama’ (Roth 2009: 45), offers yet another perspective on the issue of rape and violence by presenting a similar story with gender-inverted roles and raising the
issue of blame and responsibility (Winston 1995: 502 and Roth 2009: 45), both in The Love of the Nightingale and as traditionally attributed in Greek classical drama.

Dianeira can also be considered, though perhaps to a lesser degree, a polyphonic text. As already mentioned, it draws on a more limited number of sources, but the context of a modern framework involving Wertenbaker, a group of friends and the storyteller Irene, contributes to presenting the story from more unusual perspectives. Irene herself comments on the fact that although Timberlake and her friends will definitely have heard of Heracles, they most probably will not know anything about Dianeira, touching yet again on the issue of how histories may be manipulated and mediated by male discourse as they are passed down to present-day audiences. Wertenbaker’s play explicitly presents the heroine’s point of view in a way that the source text did not. This is evident not only in the title chosen by Wertenbaker, but also in Dianeira’s monologue before committing suicide (pp. 359-60), in which, as mentioned in the previous section, the anger we can only imagine her to have felt in Sophocles’ play is finally given full expression. Throughout the drama, Irene’s interventions continue to offer alternative views on specific key themes such as father and son relationships, fear, identity, anger, revenge and deception. The presentation of flashback scenes in which Heracles and Dianeira appear together but are unable to interact with each other also effectively contributes to opening up specific perspectives on the life of the two main characters, whereas the dense interaction between Dianeira and Nessos in the river crossing scene means that three different perspectives (Dianeira’s, Nessos’ and Heracles’) are presented on the centaur’s death. The intensity of communication between the pairs Nessos / Dianeira and Hylllos / Dianeira is also in sharp contrast with the lack of communication, or the one-sidedness of communication, between these same characters and Heracles. Like the figure of Niobe in The Love of the Nightingale, the character of Iole in Dianeira offers a different perspective on a story that is very similar to Dianeira’s. Just like the play’s title character, Iole has been cursed by her own beauty, but the young girl chooses to express her anger by refusing to speak at all so that, in time, anger and hatred become a way of life and she ignores Hylllos’ final plea to put an end to all the ugliness his father has caused (p. 373).
By giving voice to the myths, and their key themes, from a plurality of perspectives, in *The Love of the Nightingale* and in *Dianeira*, Wertenbaker, therefore, succeeds in creating a dramatic environment which fosters ‘critical engagement with the world’ (Freeman 2008: 280), and keeps audiences ‘moving alternately, and simultaneously, in plural directions’ (Roth and Freeman 2008: 23). The numerous perspectives through which translation features in both these texts, which are not only translations but a reflection on translation as a powerful political and psychological element, contribute to rendering any translator wishing to approach them particularly self-conscious about the task ahead of them. Assuming that even the average reader will be made more sensitive to issues of translation by the content of the plays, the translation strategy adopted is certain to be put under closer scrutiny than usual and also to be endowed with a greater significance than usual. An invisible translation that seeks to hide the presence of a source text and that focuses on readability or ‘flow’ – in other words a ‘fluent’ translation (Venuti 2008: 1-4) – would contradict the very themes of the text as well as the perceived need, described in Chapter 2, to expand the boundaries of the Italian translatorly panorama. In an attempt to broaden those boundaries, I have aimed at creating a translation in which source and target language coexist, enhancing the polyphonic element of the source text and highlighting issues of meaning, communication (and miscommunication), rebellion against, and acceptance of, predetermined power structures, while at the same time reinforcing specific dramatic and thematic elements of the play.

4.5 Wertenbaker beyond translation

A central theme in all of Wertenbaker’s work is that of dislocation and questioning as a source of knowledge. The pedagogical function of drama has been widely recognised and documented (Arts Council England 2003, Teoh 2012: 7) and Wertenbaker, therefore, is not alone in her view that the theatre is a ‘difficult place’, the aim of which is to foster the imagination, to challenge assumptions, to ‘disturb’ (Kirkpatrick 1988: 554) rather than simply to entertain. Such qualities, however, are not exclusive to drama. Literature more generically is considered as key to pedagogical practices (Cliff Hodges 2010) because of its ability to foster imagination, discovery,
empathy, self-knowledge and the understanding of otherness, and Cliff Hodges provides a well rounded account of how a number of theorists, from Iser to Heaney, have analysed the critical and creative function of literature and reading (2010: 63-65).

In Wertenbaker’s texts, by being put into contact with different times, peoples and places the audience engage in a critical, ongoing process of enquiry through which they attempt to make sense of the world on stage as well as of their own world. Wertenbaker uses the term ‘emotional intelligence’ to describe the ability to question and to engage with this ‘difficulty’. For her, theatre revolves around emotional intelligence and all her plays show a constant effort to engage with it:

It seems to me that the history of playwriting is probably the struggle of “emotional intelligence” against the “dumbing down” of whoever felt like “dumbing down” society at the time. Emotional intelligence is defined in many ways, but it is essentially the ability to make links, the ability to find the relationships, and I think that is what the theatre is about: it is the ability to make links between people, between past and present, to draw out, to come to a revelation about something. (Wertenbaker in Edgar 1999: 76)

One of the main ways through which Wertenbaker encourages the audience to exercise emotional intelligence is through translation. Indeed, as pointed out by Roth and Freeman (2008: 23-24), translations of different kinds (they include transformation and adaptation in this definition) are the chief means through which Wertenbaker’s plays achieve dislocation, questioning of common assumptions and a general ‘disturbing’ effect. This raises the question of how translation into other languages may be used to re-create and possibly enhance the dislocating factors in Wertenbaker’s plays.

Emotional intelligence, which is fostered by the translatorly and transformative nature of Wertenbaker’s texts, seems, in Wertenbaker’s description reported above, very similar to what Foster Wallace envisioned when asking the graduates of Kenyon College to challenge their ‘default settings’ (2009: 37). Both concepts involve being able to translate, process and accept potentially disturbing realities. The theatre is a ‘difficult place’ precisely because it asks the audience to perform this kind of complex
and disturbing operation. Embodying translation in her plays, Wertenbaker facilitates this process by stimulating thought and critical engagement with crucial issues of human existence while at the same time pre-figuring it, in a sense leaving a trail for her audience to follow, if they wish. Theatre becomes a place of translation: Wertenbaker translates (myth, newspaper material, novels), the actors translate her text into a live performance and the audience is invited to translate their pre-determined understanding of the events they witness.

Wertenbaker’s ‘emotional intelligence’ (Edgar 1999: 76) also shares many aspects of what Baron-Cohen calls empathy (Baron-Cohen 2012: 11 - 12). A single, clear definition of emotional intelligence still eludes the community of psychologists who have tackled the subject (Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts 2004: 4 - 20). Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts define it as ‘the competence to identify and express emotions, understand emotions, assimilate emotions in thought and regulate both positive and negative emotions in the self and in others’ (2004: 3). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Baron-Cohen’s definition of empathy speaks of something that ‘occurs when we suspend our single-minded focus of attention, and instead adopt a double-minded focus of attention’ (2012: 11) as well as of the ability to ‘identify what someone else is thinking or feeling, and to respond to their thoughts with an appropriate emotion’ (2012: 12). The similarities between Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts’ definition of emotional intelligence and Baron-Cohen’s definition of empathy are striking. Many other existing definitions of emotional intelligence feature significant resemblances to Baron-Cohen’s definition of empathy. Daniel Goleman includes the ability ‘to empathize’ among the abilities which he believes to be fundamental aspects of emotional intelligence (2006: 34) and Bar-On also identifies empathy as one of the key components of emotional intelligence (Bar-On 2000: 385). Like empathy, therefore, emotional intelligence involves the identification of, and response to, the emotional condition of others.

Wertenbaker’s thoughts on the value of theatre and her constant use of translation to achieve what she considers the aim of drama suggest that translation and drama may both be seen as pedagogical tools that work in similar ways to each other. Roth and Freeman confirm the link between the workings of drama and those of translation by commenting on how notions of theatre inform discourse on translation.
in the whole of Wertenbaker’s oeuvre (2008: 11). In Wertenbaker’s plays, translation (whether it is translation between languages, between different media, between perspectives) is the main tool for creating the dislocating environment that fosters critical enquiry. Wertenbaker’s works, and particularly those which, like *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira*, draw more explicitly on translation, represent an ideal setting for exploring the value of translation in foregrounding and developing emotional intelligence and empathy, which are seen as essential elements of human existence not just by Wertenbaker and Baron-Cohen, but by institutional bodies such as the Arts Council England (Arts Council England 2003). Indeed, the recent educational projects carried out in schools and focusing on translation, already mentioned in Chapter 2, incorporate significant elements of drama (see *Translation Nation*, Ardizzone 2012, and *Pop up Fusion*, Chowdury 2013, and even the more spontaneous work of Bordiglioni 1998, 2005), confirming how the two things can be successfully used as closely linked pedagogical tools.

In addition, *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* are texts which would fit in particularly well as an educational resource in Italian high schools, in particular those classed as ‘licei’. The texts not only present topics (Greek and Latin language and literature, English language and literature, philosophy) which are central to the Italian high school curriculum but, more importantly, through translation and dislocation, they do something which original Greek or Latin texts, or textbooks purposely written for use in schools, are rarely able to do: they present the relevance of Greek myths in today’s world as well as the myths themselves. These texts represent a novelty and texts which are not part of the literary canon (be it Greek, Latin, Italian or English) are rarely introduced into the curriculum but the strong link of *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* to one of the most traditional elements of the curriculum (Greek and

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52 Traditionally, schools which focused on preparation for further academic study rather than on entering the professional environment. The curriculum in such schools includes more traditional subjects such as philosophy, Greek and Latin (language and literature) or just Latin (language and literature).

53 In addition, it presents such topics in connection to each other, an issue which is of further importance in an academic system which values interdisciplinarity, itself at the centre of the brief for the short dissertation to be presented during the final examination. Despite the lack of specific official instructions on the nature of the dissertation – official documents only state that is should be multidisciplinary – the informal guide to the final exam prepared by Prof. Pernigotti’s states that educational practice requires the work to span at least three subjects, though more are preferable (Pernigotti 2012: 4).
Latin literature) may well be sufficient to make such a proposition a realistically viable possibility. For these reasons, *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* are here considered as plays that have a concrete chance of contributing significantly to the Italian cultural context, both in terms of their educational potential as ‘study texts’ (see section 6.6) and in terms of the discussion they could promote, both inside and outside state institutions, with regard to translation as a visible and ethically and politically driven process.

**4.6 Translating Timberlake Wertenbaker**

The aim of the translation presented in the next chapter is to demonstrate that, regardless of the languages involved, when it is visible, translation can enhance the very qualities that are considered most valuable in literature, i.e. the fostering of imagination, empathy and self-knowledge (Cliff Hodges 2010: 62) – despite the subordinate position that it is often seen to hold generally, and in Italy in particular, in comparison with original writing (Colorni 2008: 22; Bortoli 2008: 56). If the inherent value of drama, and literature in general, is that it does not ‘make things easy’ for its audience, translation should also not try to ‘make things easy’, but rather exploit its own potential for adding new questions and perspectives to the source text. Translation that is visible allows the reader to come into closer contact with the source text, and to experience, at least to some extent, what it means to translate. Bearing in mind the points made in these first four chapters, I would suggest that to translate means many valuable things: not only to discover and make sense of linguistic and cultural differences, but also to learn to understand oneself and to learn to empathise.

For this reason, I have adopted multilingualism as a translation strategy in my translations of *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira*. A similar strategy was adopted, to a lesser extent, by Wertenbaker herself in her 1991 translation of the Theban plays, in which both text and performance include some Greek, with the aim of enhancing the foreignness of the play and challenging ‘anglophone cultural expectations’ (Hardwick 2013: 327). Constant switching between two languages does not just encourage engagement with a foreign language and with the problem of translation itself, but also engagement with different perspectives on the events that
the text portrays. In a target culture which is used to translators deliberately working
towards concealing their own work (see Testa 2008 and Ferrero 2008), my aim is to
make it impossible for readers to ignore the fact that they are reading a translation
and to make it almost as impossible for them not to actively engage in different forms
of translation as part of their reading experience.
Chapter 5

Translations of *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira*
Listen. This is the noise of myth. It makes the same sound as shadow. Can you hear it?

Eavan Boland, ‘The Journey’

νῦν δ’ οὐδὲν εἰμὶ χωρίς· ἀλλὰ πολλάκις ἔβλεψα ταῦτα τὴν γυναικείαν φύσιν,
ὡς οὐδέν ἔσμεν. οἶμαι, ζῴμεν ἄνθρωπων βίον-
tερπνῶς γὰρ ἄει παιδάς ἀνόια τρέφει.
ὅταν δ’ ἐς ἱβήν ἔξικώμεθ’ ἐμφρόνες,
οὐδούμεθ’ ἔξω καὶ διεμπολώμεθα
θεών πατρίων τῶν τε φυσάντων ἀπό,
αἱ μὲν ξένους πρὸς ἄνδρας, αἱ δὲ βαρβάρους,
αἱ δ’ εἰς ἄγηθή δώμαθ’, αἱ δ’ ἐπίρροθα.
καὶ ταῦτ’, ἔπειδ’ ἐν βίῳ ζεύξη μία,
χρεῶν ἔπαινεν καὶ δοκεῖν καλῶς ἔχειν.

Now by myself, I am nothing; yea, full oft
I have regarded woman’s fortunes thus,
That we are nothing; who in our fathers’ house
Live, I suppose, the happiest, while young,
Of all mankind; for ever pleasantly
Does Folly nurture all. Then, when we come
To full discretion and maturity,
We are thrust out and marketed abroad,
Far from our parents and ancestral abroad,
Some to strange husbands, some to barbarous,
One to a rude, one to a wrangling home;
And these, after the yoking of a night,
We are bound to like, and deem it well with us.

πολλά σε ζηλώ βίου,
μάλιστα δ’ εἴ γῆς μὴ πεπείρασαι ξένης

Much
I envy thee thy life: and most of all,
That thou hast never had experience
Of a strange land.

Due frammenti dalla tragedia perduta di Sofocle, Tereo

Traduzione inglese di Sir George Young

5.1 Aedón
Personaggi

Coro di uomini (1)
Primo Soldato
Secondo Soldato
Procne
Filomele
Re Pandione
Regina
Tereus
Hero
Iris
June
Echo
Helen
Afrodite
Fedra
Nutrice
Coro di donne
Ippolito
Teseo
Coro di uomini (2)
Capitano
Niobe
Schiava
Itys
Marinai, baccanti, acrobati (muti)
Scena prima

Atene, Coro di uomini.

Coro di uomini: Guerra.

Entrano due soldati, armati di scudo e spada.

Primo soldato: Razza di bastardo!

Secondo soldato: You cat’s whisker.

Primo soldato: Arto di pulce.

Secondo soldato: You particle.

Pausa

You son of a bitch.

Primo soldato: Figlio di una iena zoppa.

Secondo soldato: You son of a bleeding whore.

Primo soldato: Figlio di buona donna!

Pausa.

Ti recido quei testicoli flosci.

Secondo soldato: I’ll pierce your windy asshole.

Primo soldato: Userò il tuo teschio come calice.

Pausa.

Vigliacco!

Secondo soldato: Braggard.

Primo soldato: Razza di verme.

Secondo soldato: You - man.

Combattono.
Coro di uomini: E ora, la morte.

*Il primo soldato uccide il secondo soldato.*

Secondo soldato: Murderer!

Primo soldato: Cadavere!

Coro di uomini: Cominciamo da qui perché nessuno è immune alla guerra.

Coro di uomini: A tutti piace parlare di guerra.

Coro di uomini: Eppure il suo risultato, la morte, è avvolto dal silenzio.

Coro di uomini: La guerra rende la morte accettabile. Gli dei appaiono meno crudeli se la colpa è dell'uomo.

Coro di uomini: Può darsi, ma la nostra storia è un'altra. La guerra è il contesto inevitabile, le rovine sullo sfondo, un'indicazione di luogo e prospettiva.

Coro di uomini: Atene è in guerra, ma nel palazzo del re ateniese Pandione due sorelle discutono delle gioie della vita e del fascino degli uomini.

**Scena seconda**

*Procne, Filomele.*

Procne: Non dire così, Filomele.

Filomele: Ma è la verità, è così bello che vorrei stringermelo tra le gambe.

Procne: Non è così che si fa.

Filomele: Come faccio a sapere come si fa se nessuno me lo spiega? Guarda quel corpo lucido di sudore, come vorrei stringermelo tra le caviglie, sentire i muscoli della sua schiena sotto i piedi. Come si fa Procne? Per favore, dimmelo. Se non me lo dici tu, dovrò chiedere a Niobe e lei mi spiegherà tutto al contrario.

Procne: Te lo dico se tu dici una cosa a me.

Filomele: Ti dirò tutto quello che so, cara sorella. *(Pausa).* Non so niente.
**Procne**: Però conosci te stessa.

**Filomele**: Oh sì... sento delle cose, Procne, delle cose... Tigri, fiumi, serpi, qui, nello stomaco, un po’ piu in giù. Ti racconto del serpente che striscia dentro di me se mi spieghi come si fa.

**Procne**: Non è quello che intendevo. Filomele, presto mi sposerò.

**Filomele**: Come ti invidio, saprai tutto allora. Come sono, gli uomini?

**Procne**: Guarda: combattono.

**Filomele**: Ma come sono, da nudi?

**Procne**: Spugnosi.

**Filomele**: Eh?

**Procne**: Non ne ho mai visto uno, ma mi hanno detto di preprarami. Hanno una spugna.

**Filomele**: Dove?

**Procne**: Qui. Che s’ingrossa e si rimpicciolisce e va su e giù. Non è che abbia ascoltato molto attentamente, presto lo vedrò con i miei occhi. Filomele, dopo che mi sarò sposata, vorrai venire a trovarmi?

**Filomele**: Ma certo sorella mia, certo. Verrò a trovarmi tutti i giorni e mi permetterai di guardare.

**Procne**: Filomele! Ma non riesci a pensare ad altro?


**Procne**: Credo che nella maggior parte dei casi, lo si possa fare da sole. La spugna, ecco... credo si stacchi.

**Filomele**: Ma non voglio farlo da sola. Voglio accarezzare quella pelle abbronzata. Ah, sento di nuovo la tigre.

**Procne**: Se andassi molto lontano, vorresti venire lo stesso a trovarmi?
Filomele: Attraverserei qualsiasi oceano per venire da te e dal tuo nobile marito, sorella. 
(Pausa). Quando sarò più grande, non smetterò mai di farlo, qualsiasi cosa sia. La vita dev’essere così bella quando si è più vecchi. È bella ora. A volte mi sento così felice.


Filomele: Mi hai insegnato che non bisogna mentire.

Procne: Vorrei non dover partire. Sono preoccupata per te.

Filomele: La vita è dolce, sorella mia, e io ne amo ogni aspetto. Questa sensazione. Atene. Tu. E quel giovane soldato coraggioso che combatte per proteggerci. Oh!

Procne: Che c’è? Ah. È morto.

Filomele: Crollato a terra. Procne, non sarà mica stata colpa mia? Forse avrei dovuto stare zitta.


Procne: Devi cercare di essere più equilibrata. Σωφροούνη, misura in ogni cosa. Ricordalo. È ciò che raccomandano i filosofi.

Filomele: I filosofi riprenderanno a parlare dopo la guerra? Possiamo andare a sentirli?

Procne: Io non ci sarò.

Filomele: Non andartene.

Procne: È il volere dei nostri genitori. Sanno quel che fanno.

Pausa.

Verrai da me se te lo chiedo, vero?

Filomele: Sì.
Procne: Voglio che me lo prometti. Ricordati che le promesse si mantengono.


Procne: Ciò mi rende felice.

Scena terza

Il palazzo di Re Pandione. Re Pandione, la Regina, Tereus, Procne, Filomele, Coro di uomini.

Coro di uomini: Con l’aiuto di un alleato del nord, Atene vinse la guerra.

Coro di uomini: Il comandante delle forze liberatrici si chiamava Tereus.

Re Pandione: No liberated country is ungrateful. That is a rule. You will take what you want from our country. It will be given with gratitude. We are ready.

Tereus: I came here not out of greed but in the cause of justice, King Pandion. But I have come to love this country and its inhabitants.

Regina (a re Pandione): Vuole restare! Lo sapevo.

Pausa

Re Pandione: Of course if you wish to stay in Athens that is your right. We can only remind you that this is a small city. But you must stay if you wish.

Tereus: No. I must go back north. There has been trouble while I’ve conducted this war. What I want is to bring some of your country to mine, its manners, its ease, its civilized discourse.

Regina (a Re Pandione): Lo sapevo: vuole Procne.

Re Pandione: I can send you some of our tutors. The philosophers, I’m afraid, are rather independent.

Tereus: I have always believed that culture was kept by the women.

Re Pandione: Ours are not encouraged to go abroad.
Tereus: But they have a reputation for wisdom. Is that false?

Regina: Attento, è scaltro.

Re Pandione: It is true. Our women are the best.

Tereus: So.

Regina: Lo sapevo.

Pausa.

Re Pandione: She’s yours, Tereus. Procne –

Procne: Ma, Padre –

Re Pandione: Tuo marito.

Procne: Madre –

Regina: Cosa posso dire?

Re Pandione: Mi dispiace solo che andrai a vivere così lontano.

Filomele: Posso andare con lei?

Regina: Zitta, bambina.

Tereus (a Procne): I will love you and respect you.

Coro di uomini: Non fu cosa così rapida. Ci vollero mesi, e tanti discorsi indiretti. Ma questo è il succo. La fine era nota già dall’inizio.


Coro di uomini: Lo erano sempre stati, ma vediamo le cose in modo diverso in tempi di pace. Per questo la pace è dolorosa.

Coro di uomini: Non c’è nulla ad offuscare le acque. Si vede il fondo.

Coro di uomini: E se la giornata èserena, vediamo anche il nostro riflesso.
Coro di uomini: A tempo debito, Procne ebbe un figlio, di nome Itys. Passarono cinque anni.

Scena quarta

Procne e le sue compagne, il Coro di donne: Hero, Echo, Iris, June, Helen.

Procne: Dove sono finite tutte le parole?

Hero: She sits alone, hour after hour, turns her head away and laments.

Iris: We don’t know how to act, we don’t know what to say.

Hero: She turns from us in grief.

June: Boredom.

Echo: Homesick.

Hero: It is difficult to come to a strange land.

Helen: You will always be a guest there, never call it your own, never rest in the kindness of history.

Echo: Your story intermingled with events, no. You will be outside.

Iris: And if it is the land of your husband, can you even say you have chosen it?

June: She is not one of us.

Hero: A shared childhood makes friends between women.

Echo: The places we walked together, our first smells.

Helen: But an unhappy woman can do harm. She has already dampened our play.

June: Mocked the occupation of hours, scorned.

Iris: What shall we do?

Helen: I fear the future.

Procne: Dove sono finite le parole?
Echo: Finite, Procne, le parole?

Procne: Ce n’erano così tante. A ogni cosa corrispondeva una parola e ogni parola indicava una cosa. Nessuno di questi significati per metà in ombra, indefiniti.

Iris: Noi parliamo anche la tua lingua, Procne.

Procne: Le parole sono le stesse, ma indicano cose diverse. Noi ricerchiamo la chiarezza dei suoni, a voi piacciono i silenzi intermedi.

Hero: Ci siamo offerte d’iniziarti.

Procne: Usanze barbare. Sono ateniese: so che la verità si ottiene con la logica e che la felicità risiede in ciò che è vero.

Hero: La verità è ombra.

Procne: No, la verità e bontà e bellezza. Capite ora? (Pausa) Mi serve qualcuno con cui parlare.

June: We’ve tried. See...

Hero: She turns away.

Procne: Come parlavamo. Le nostre parole si rincorrevano, si sfioravano. Le lanciavamo in aria, la sfida era prenderle al volo. Dov’è ora? Con chi li fa quei giochi? O sta anche lei in silenzio?

Echo: In silenzio, Procne? Chi?

Procne: Mia sorella. (Pausa). La mia amica. Voglio parlarle. La voglio qui.


Helen: Il viaggio è lungo e pericoloso per una fanciulla.

Helen: Lascia stare, Procne.

Procne: Voglio mia sorella qui con me.
Helen: Potrebbe accaderle qualcosa.

Procne: Non se va a prenderla Tereus. Sarà al sicuro con lui.

Echo: Tereus.

Helen: I pericoli del mare, non vorrà che tu li corra.

Procne: Che ci vada da solo allora. Io starò qui a badare al regno.

Echo: Tereus.

Hero: Tua sorella vorrà raggiungerti in una terra straniera?

Procne: Vorrà ciò che voglio io.

Helen: Non chiederle di venire qui, Procne.

Procne: Perché no?

Hero: Questo non è paese per una giovane straniera.

Procne: Ma sarà con me.

Hero: She won’t listen.

Helen: I am worried. It is not something I can say. There are no words for forebodings.

Hero: We are only brushed by possibilities.

Echo: A beating of wings.

June: Best to say nothing. Procne? Possiamo andare adesso?

Procne: Ai vostri riti?

June: Sì, è ora.

Procne: Molto bene, andate.

Vanno.

Che silenzio... che silenzio...
Scena quinta


Re Pandione: Procne has always been so sensible. Why, suddenly, does she ask for her sister?

Tereus: She didn’t explain. She insisted I come to you and did what she asked.

Re Pandione: I understand, Tereus, but such a long journey... Procne is not ill?

Tereus: She was well when I left. She has her child, companions.

Re Pandione: Filomele is still very young. And yet, I allowed Procne to go so far away... What do you think Tereus?

Tereus: You’re her father.

Re Pandione: And you.

Tereus: I only meant Procne would accept any decision you made. It is a long journey.

Entra Afrodite.

Afrodite: Sono Afrodite, dea dell’amore, inclita Cipride, lucente, magnifica, venerata in cielo e in terra.

Re Pandione: Do you know this play, Tereus?

Tereus: No.

Re Pandione: I find plays help me think. You catch a phrase, recognize a character. Perhaps this play will help us come to a decision.

Afrodite: Onoro chi s’inchina al mio potere, ma l’animo fiero che osa sfidarmi, quell’animo io lo distruggo.

Tereus: That’s sound.

Re Pandione: Do you have good theatre in Thrace?

Tereus: We prefer sport.
Re Pandion: Then you are like Hippolytus.

Tereus: Who?

Re Pandion: Listen.

Afrodite: Ippolito mi ripudia, preferisce la caccia ai soffici guanciali, fiere selvatiche ai preliminari, Artemide a me. Ma oggi stesso mi vendicherò del casto Ippolito.

Afrodite esce, entrano la Regina e Filomele.

Filomele: Siamo in ritardo! Ci siamoperse Afrodite.

Re Pandion: Ci ha solo detto che andrà a finire male, ma lo sapevamo già. È una tragedia.

Entra Fedra.

Regina: Ecco Fedra. (a Tereo) Fedra è la moglie di Teseo, re di Atene. Ippolito è il figlio di Teseo, avuto dalla sua precedente donna, la regina delle Amazzoni, che ora è morta. Fedra è quindi la matrigna di Ippolito ma ha anche tre figli suoi.

Fedra: Tiratemi su, reggetemi la testa. Ogni arto divien tremando molle.

Filomele: Che bello amare in quel modo! ‘The strength of my limbs is melting away’. Is that what you feel for Procne, Tereus?

Regina: Filomele! (a Tereus) Fedra si è innamorata di Ippolito.

Tereus: Her own stepson! That’s wrong.

Re Pandion: That’s what makes it a tragedy. When you love the right person it’s a comedy.

Fedra: Pietà, povera me! Che ho fatto? Cosa sarà di me? Ho perso la via della ragione.

Tereus: Why should we pity her? These plays condone vice.

Re Pandion: Perhaps they only show us the uncomfortable folds of the human heart.
Fedra: Sono folle, acceccata dalla malizia di una divinità implacabile.

Filomele: You see, Tereus, love is a god and you cannot control him.

Regina: Ecco la nutrice. Dà sempre consigli.

Entra la Nutrice


Tereus: Terrible advice.

Filomele: No, Tereus, you must obey the gods. Are you blasphemous up there in Thrace?

Re Pandione: Filomele, stai parlando a un re.

Tereus: And to a brother, let her speak, Pandion.

Nutrice: Conosco un rimedio. Fidati di me.

Re Pandione: Procne ha chiesto di te. Vuole che tu vada in Tracia con Tereus.


Re Pandione: Vuoi lasciare Atene e i tuoi genitori?

Filomele: Ho promesso a Procne che sarei andata se me l’avesse chiesto.

Re Pandione: Eri solo una bambina.

Tereus: We have no theatre or even philosophers in Thrace, Filomele.

Filomele: I have to keep my word.

Tereus: Why?

Filomele: Because that is honourable, Tereus.

Regina: Ascoltate bene il coro. L’autore parla sempre attraverso il coro.
**Coro di donne:** Eros, che dolcemente ti fai strada nelle anime che vuoi distruggere,
Eros che ci accechi col veleno amaro del desiderio, Eros, lunghi da me. E quando
spazzi le strade coi tuoi turbini selvaggi, quando avanzi col tuo passo indomabile dal
ritmo sregolato, Eros, ti prego, non toccarmi, ti prego, passa oltre.

**Tereus:** Ah!

**Filomele:** I would never say that, would you, brother Tereus? I want to feel
everything there is to feel. Don’t you?

**Tereus:** No!

**Re Pandione:** Tereus, what is the matter?

**Tereus:** Nothing. The heat.

**Fedra:** Sono per sempre perduta.

**Filomele:** Povera Fedra.

**Tereus:** You pity her, Filomele?

**Regina:** Ippolito ha appena scoperto in che modo Fedra lo ama. È furioso.

**Ippolito:** Zeus, perché mai hai creato le donne, queste creature così disonesti?
Sarebbe meglio comprare i figli nei tempi ed evitare l’interazione con esseri così
odiosi. Donne, vi odio, vi odio, vi odio.

**Filomele:** This is horrible. It’s not Fedra’s fault she loves him.

**Tereus:** She could keep silent about it.

**Filomele:** When you love someone you want to imprison the one you love in your
words, in your tenderness.

**Tereus:** How do you know all this, Filomele?

**Filomele:** Sometimes I feel the whole world beating inside me.

**Tereus:** Filomele...

*Fuoriscena, Fedra urla, poi riappare barcollando sul palco.*
Regina: Fedra si è uccisa, ed ecco Teseo appena tornato dai suoi viaggi.

Teseo: Moglie mia! Cosa ho fatto per spingerti ad una morte così tremenda? Mi chiama a sé, riesce ancora a parlare. Quali volontà, quali ordini, quali preghiere lasci al tuo marito stravolto. Povero amor mio, parla! (Ascolta,) Ippolito! Ha osato violentare mia moglie!

Tereus: Fedra has lied! That’s vile.

Filomele: Why destroy what you love? It’s the god.

Teseo: Padre Poseidone, venerando e potente dio del mare, mi hai concesso tre desideri. Esaudiscine uno, ti prego, uccidi mio figlio.

Regina: Quello succede fuoriscena. Un’onda gigante si leva dal mare e schianta il carro d’Ippolito sulle rocce. Ecco il coro di uomini.

Coro di uomini: A volte credo nell’esistenza di un potere saggio e onnisciente ma quando osservo le le sorti e le azioni degli uomini ogni speranza muore. La fortuna mutevole gira e rigira e la vita è solo un vagabondare senza meta. E allora vorrei essere in luoghi inaccessibili, tra montagne impervie, tramutato da un dio in un essere alato.

Re Pandione: La tragedia è quasi finita e non ho ancora preso una decisione. Regina...

Coro di uomini: Ciò che voglio dalla vita è essere normale.

Filomele: Che noia.

Regina: Ippolito è rientrato ad Atene per morire. È ferito alla testa.

Coro di donne: Povero Ippolito, piangerò per la tua triste sorte. Sono in collera con gli dei che ti hanno mandato lontano, via dalla terra di tuo padre e incontro alla devastante onda del dio del mare.

Re Pandione: Ecco le parole che aspettavo. Filomele, non lascerai la terra di tuo padre. Resterai qui.
Filomele: Ma padre, non sono Ippolito. Non mi hai maledetta. E Tereus non è Fedra, guarda.

Ride.

Tereus: I have expert sailors, I don’t think we’ll crash against the rocks.

Re Pandione: It’s such a long journey.

Tereus: We’ll travel swiftly. Procne is so impatient to see her sister. We must go soon, or she’ll fall ill with worry.

Re Pandione: When?

Tereus: Tomorrow.

Ippolito: Piangete per me, distrutto, devastato, travolto da uomo e dio, entrambi ingiusti. Piangete, piangete la mia morte.

Filomele: Ah.

Tereus: You’re crying, Filomele.

Filomele: I felt, I felt – the beating of wings...

Re Pandione: Non devi andare per forza.

Filomele: È stato solo lo spettacolo, mi dispiace così tanto per tutti loro. Ci devo andare. L’ho promesso...

Re Pandione (alla Regina): È solo una breve visita, tornerà presto da noi.

Regina: Dove va?

Re Pandione: In Tracia! Non stavi ascoltando?

Coro di uomini e coro di donne (insieme): Questo dolore si abbatte inaspettato su di noi.

Coro di uomini: Il destino è ineluttabile.

Coro di donne: Non vi è modo di sfuggirvi.

Re Pandione: And now we must applaud the actors.
Scena sesta

Una piccola nave diretta a nord. Il Coro di uomini, Filomele, Tereus, il Capitano.

Coro di uomini: Il viaggio verso nord:


Coro di uomini: Ditirosee, femmine.

Coro di uomini: Man mano che proseguiamo verso nord, ogni nuova alba è un po’ più fredda.

Pausa.

Coro di uomini: Filomele contempla la bellezza del mare.

Coro di uomini: Tereus contempla la bellezza di Filomele.

Coro di uomini: Noi non diciamo nulla. E quando riceviamo l’ordine.

Coro di uomini: E che ordine.

Coro di uomini: A Filomele è stata assegnata una scorta di sei soldati ateniesi. Stanno di guardia sul ponte. In una notte buia, scompaiono.

Pausa.

Coro di uomini: Nel gelo dell’alba, Tereus arde.


Coro di uomini: E così eccoci al porto deserto di Imeros. È buio, non c’è nessuno ad accoglierci.

Coro di uomini: Il nostro arrivo è inaspettato.
Coro di uomini: È una notte senza luna.
Coro di uomini: Infausta.
Coro di uomini: Ma questo lo sapevamo già. Avremmo forse potuto fare qualcosa? E ora?
Coro di uomini: Decidiamo essere accurati e prendiamo nota:

Scena settima

Il Capitano, Filomele, Niobe.

Filomele: Dove siamo ora, Capitano?

Capitano: Molte miglia a nord di Atene, mia Signora.

Filomele: Questo lo so, Capitano. Quanto dista la Tracia?

Capitano: Qualche giorno, forse di più, dipende.

Filomele: Da te?

Capitano: No. Dal mare.

Filomele: È un fuoco quello lassù?

Capitano: Sì.

Filomele: Allora vuol dire che siamo vicini alla costa, vero?

Capitano: Sì, esatto.

Filomele: Guarda quanto è in alto quel fuoco. Dev’essere su una montagna.

Capitano: Sì, è così.


Capitano: È il Monte Athos, mia Signora.

Filomele: Perché non gettiamo l’ancora lì e non scaliamo la montagna?
Capitano: È meglio che non andarci, lassù.

Filomele: Perché no? È un brutto posto?

Capitano: No, ma ci vivono uomini selvaggi. Molto sevaggi. Uccidono tutte le donne, neppure gli animali di sesso femminile possono salire su quella montagna.

Filomele: Perché no?

Capitano: Adorano divinità maschili. Credono che la donna sia l’origine di tutti i mali del mondo.

Filomele: E perché credono ciò? (Pausa) Tu non sei d’accordo, vero Capitano?

Capitano: Non so, mia Signora.

Filomela: Se non sei in disaccordo, allora sei d’accordo con loro. È una semplice questione di logica.

Capitano: Le donne sono belle.

Filomele: E non credi che ciò che è bello sia anche vero e buono?

Capitano: Non so. Dovrei pensarci.

Filomele: Te lo proverò, ho sentito un filosofo che lo faceva, una volta. Comincerò col farti molte domande. Rispondi sì o no. Ma devi fare attenzione. Sei pronto?

Capitano: Credo di sì.

Filomele: E quando te ne avrò dato prova, dovrai rinnegare il credo di quegli uomini selvaggi.

Capitano: Forse.

Filomele: Lo devi promettere.

Entra Tereus.

Tereus: Why are the sails up, Captain?

Capitano: We have a good wind, Tereus.

Tereus: Take them down.
**Capitano:** We could be becalmed further north and then my men will have to row.
They’re tired, Tereus.

**Tereus:** We’re sailing too fast, it’s frightening Filomele.

**Filomele:** I love to feel the wind, Tereus.

**Tereus:** Why aren’t you asleep?

**Filomele:** It’s such a beautiful night. I was watching the fires on Athos.

**Tereus:** Athos? Yes, the hooded men.

**Filomele:** The Captain was telling me about them.

**Tereus:** Lower the sails, Captain.

**Capitano:** But, Tereus –

**Tereus:** This isn’t a battle. We have time.

*Il Capitano esce.*

**Niobe:** Vieni, Filomele, andiamo di sotto.

**Tereus:** Not yet.

*Pausa.*

Come and talk to me Filomele.

**Niobe:** Tieni comapagnia al nostro re, Filomele.

*Silenzio.*

**Tereus:** Well. You were talking easily enough when I came above.

**Filomele:** Tell me about my sister, Tereus.

**Tereus:** I’ve already told you.

**Filomele:** Tell me more. How does she occupy her time?

**Tereus:** I don’t know. She has women with her.

**Filomele:** What do they talk about?
Tereus: What women talk about. I didn’t ask you to grill me Filomele. Talk to me. Talk to me about the night.

Filomele: The night?

Pausa.

Tereus: The night. Something! What were you saying to the Captain?

Filomele: I was asking him questions, Tereus.

Silenzio. I marinai cantano una canzone, dolcemente.

Filomele: Come cantano bene.

Tereus: Do you want to be married, Filomele?

Niobe: Ma certo, mio signore! Tutte le ragazze vogliono sposarsi. Non è vero, Filomele?

Filomele: Niobe, vai a dormire per favore.

Niobe: No, no, non posso, non devo. Devo restare qui.

Filomele: Perché?

Niobe: Non starebbe bene... Una giovane fanciulla. Un uomo.

Filomele: Sono con mio fratello.

Tereus: You can go, Niobe.

Niobe: Va bene, va bene. Vado a parlare coi marinai. Anche se non so cosa avranno da dire a una vecchia... nessuno ha voglia di parlare con una vecchia. Ma così sia. Non sono lontana, per nulla. La regina mi ha detto di non allontanarmi.

Pausa.

Tereus: You’re beautiful.

Filomele: Procne me lo diceva sempre. Ma era lei che tutti ammiravano, per la sua dignità. L’ha preservata negli anni?

Tereus: In the moonlight, your skin seems transparent.
Filomele: Lasciavamo dell’acqua fuori, durante le notti di luna piena e poi la usavamo per lavarci il viso. Eravamo convinte che ci avrebbe dato la pelle di una dea. Lo faccio ancora, in memoria di mia sorella. Fa ancora quel risolino ritmico quando pensa che tu abbia detto una sciocchezza? Sempre la stessa nota, subito interrotta. Ride con le sue compagne?

Tereus: I don’t know...

Filomele: Ride di te?

Tereus: Filomele.

Filomele: Yes, brother.

Tereus: What sort of a man do you want to marry? A king?


Tereus: Not necessarily from Athens?

Filomele: No. As long as he is wise.

Tereus: Wise?

Filomele: But then, all kings are wise, aren’t they? They have to be or they wouldn’t be kings.

Tereus: You are born a king. Nothing can change that.

Filomele: But you still have to deserve it, don’t you?

Tereus: Would you marry a king from the north? Like your sister? Would you do as your sister in all things?

Filomele: What do you mean? Oh, look, they are making fun of Niobe. Niobe, vieni qui!

Niobe: Dicono che sarei bella se fossi giovane e che se fossi giovane sarei bella. Nessuno è gentile con una vecchia, ma non m’interessa, lo so come va il mondo, io. L’hai fatto ridere Filomele, l’ho sentito, brava. Tutto va per il meglio quando i potenti sorridono, lo so bene io.
**Tereus**: Filomele wants to marry a king from the north.

**Niobe**: Certo, un uomo grande e potente come voi.

**Filomele**: Sono felice per mia sorella e questo mi basta.

**Niobe**: Sorelle, sorelle...

**Tereus**: If Procne were...

**Niobe**: Anch’io avevo delle sorelle...

**Filomele**: Procne.

**Tereus**: To become ill...

**Filomele**: What are you saying Tereus? Wasn’t she well when you left? Why didn’t you tell me? Why are we going so slowly? Tell the Captain to go faster.

**Tereus**: I didn’t say that, but if...

**Niobe**: Si, avevo molte sorelle.

**Tereus**: Things happen.

**Niobe**: Fin troppe...

**Filomele**: My love will protect her, and yours too, Tereus.

**Tereus**: Yes... But should...

**Niobe**: Sono morte.

**Filomele**: Niobe!

**Niobe**: Sto solo cercando di essere d’aiuto. So come vanno certe cose. Le vecchie lo sanno. Ma sto zitta ora, zitta zitta.

**Filomele**: Sorella. Saremo così felici.

**Tereus**: Filomele...
Coro di uomini.

Coro di uomini: Cos’è un mito? Il riflesso distorto di una verità scomoda, che riecheggia attraverso i secoli.

Coro di uomini: Eppure, in origine, in greco, μύθος significava semplicemente ciò che si tramanda per via orale. Mito significa discorso, discorso pubblico.

Coro di uomini: Ma il mito è anche la materia stessa, il contenuto del discorso.

Coro di uomini: Allora chiediamoci, il contenuto è forse diventato progressivamente più inaceitabile e pertanto il discorso più indiretto? Come ha fatto μύθος a trasformarsi da un discorso pubblico a una storia improbabile? Voleva anche dire consiglio, comando. Ora è una fiaba remota.

Coro di uomini: Sia quel che sia, non vi è contenuto che non abbia un suo mito. Padri e figli, ribellioni, collaborazioni, lo stato, ogni anfratto e ogni piega dell’animo umano, li abbiamo raccontati tutti. Questo qui, penserete guardando Filomele che guarda Tereus e che guarda Filomele, parla di uomini e donne, sì, penserete, un mito dei nostri tempi, abbiamo capito.

Coro di uomini: Non è quello il mito. Se dovete pensare a qualcosa, pensate a paesi, silenzio, ma non possiamo riformularvelo. Se potessimo spiegarlo perché farlo vedere?

A colpo di remi portiamo Filomele verso nord. Ha già notato le crepe che si stanno aprendo nel fragile edificio della sua felicità? E Procne, invece? La causa, forse, o almeno il motore di un mito da cui è per lo più assente.

Scena nona

Procne e il Coro di donne.

Hero: Sometimes I feel I know things but I cannot prove that I know them or that what I know is true and when I doubt my knowledge it disintegrates into a senseless
jumble of possibilities, a puzzle that will not be reassembled, the spider web in which I lie, immobile, and truth paralysed.

**Helen:** Let me put it another way: I have trouble expressing myself. The world I see and the words I have do not match.

**June:** I am the ugly duckling of fact, so most of the time I try to keep out of the way.

**Echo:** Quiet. I should not be here at all.

**Iris:** But sometimes it’s too much and I must speak. Procne.

**Procne:** Cosa avete da borbottare da mezz’ora? Nulla di buono, di sicuro.

**Iris:** Procne, percepiamo un pericolo.

**Procne:** Percepite sempre qualcosa e quando vi chiedo cosa, dite che non sapete, non è ancora successo, ma succederà, o potrebbe succedere. Beh, di cosa si tratta questa volta? Che pericolo? Siamo al sicuro qui. Non ci sono orde di banditi alle nostre porte, nessun terremoto. Che cosa, allora? Che altro c’è?

**Hero:** I say danger, she thinks of earthquakes. Doesn’t know the first meaning of danger is the power of a lord or master.

**Helen:** That one is always in someone’s danger.

**Echo:** In their power, at their mercy.

**June:** All service is danger, and marriage too.

**Iris:** Procne, ascoltaci.

**Procne:** Cosa c’è adesso?

**Hero:** Il cielo era così scuro questa mattina...

**Procne:** Pioverà, piove sempre...

**Iris:** Again.

**Hero:** Non dicevo in senso meteorologico. Συμπάθεια: le immagini necessitano di un orecchio simpatetico.
Echo: Un altro modo di ascoltare.

Iris: Procne.

Procne: Sì, sì, che c’è?

Hero: Tua sorella è in mare.

Procne: È in mare da un mese. Ve ne siete accorte solo adesso?

Helen: Ma il mare, il mare...

Hero: E Tereus è un uomo, giovane.

Echo: Tereus.

Procne: E pertanto si sbrigherà più in fretta. Perché non mi dite qualcosa che non so?

Hero: When it’s too late it’s easy to find the words.

Iris: Procne.

Procne: Lasciatemi stare.

Iris: Potresti andare giù al porto. Andare loro incontro...

Echo: Un benvenuto...

Procne: Ho promesso a Tereus che sarei rimasta qui a badare al regno. Lo aspetterò qua.

Iris: Procne.

Procne: Basta con queste stupidaggini. Fate silenzio.

Helen: Silence.

Echo: Silenzio.
Scena decima

Coro di uomini, primo soldato, secondo soldato, Tereus.

Coro di uomini: Siamo accampati su una spiaggia deserta. Passano i giorni.

Primo soldato: Why are we still here?

Secondo soldato: Tereus has his reasons.

Primo soldato: I want to go home.

Secondo soldato: We can’t until we have the order.

Primo soldato: It’s no more than four days’ walk to the palace. Why are we still here?

Secondo soldato: I told you: because we haven’t been ordered to move.

Primo soldato: Why not?

Secondo soldato: You ask too many questions.

Coro di uomini: Le domande. L’istinto del bambino soppresso nell’adulto.

Coro di uomini: In nome della pace, dell’ordine.

Coro di uomini: Ma a quale prezzo?

Coro di uomini: Non mi piacerebbe vivere in un mondo in costante mutamento. Le domande sono come i terremoti. Se sei fortunato senti solo un rombo lontano.

Primo soldato: Why don’t we ask Tereus if we can go home? I want to see my girl.

Secondo soldato: He wants to see his wife.

Primo soldato: How do you know?

Secondo soldato: He would, wouldn’t he?

Primo soldato: Then why are we here?

Secondo soldato: Ask him.

Primo soldato: Why don’t you ask him.
Coro di uomini: Passano altri giorni. Aspettiamo.

Primo soldato: Why don’t we talk to him together?

Secondo soldato: And say what?

Primo soldato: Ask him if he’s had any news from home. Tell him how nice it is. And spring’s coming.

Secondo soldato: I’d leave out the bit about spring.

Primo soldato: Why?

Secondo soldato: Ready?

Pausa.

Not today. He is worried.

Primo soldato: What about me?

Secondo soldato: You’re not a king. His worry is bigger than yours.

Primo soldato: Why?

Secondo Soldato: It’s more interesting.

Coro di uomini: Giorni.

Coro di uomini: Altri giorni.

Secondo soldato: Tereus?

Tereus: Yes.

Secondo soldato: He wants to speak to you.

Tereus: Speak.

Primo soldato: Speak.

Secondo Soldato: Euh.

Pausa. Tereus si volta dall’altra parte.

Primo soldato: Why are we here?
Secondo soldato: What are we waiting for?

Primo soldato: Why aren’t we going home?

Secondo soldato: Why haven’t any messengers been sent to tell everyone we’re safe?

Primo soldato: We want to go home.

Secondo soldato: We’ve had enough.

_Pausa._

Tereus: I have my reasons.

Coro di uomini: Parole logore, ma servono a guadagnare tempo. Altri giorni.

Primo soldato: What reasons?

Secondo soldato: Yes, what reasons?

Tereus: You must trust me.

_Pausa._

Am I not your leader?

Secondo soldato: Yes, Tereus, but –

Tereus: My knowledge is greater than yours, that is my duty, just as yours is to trust me. Think: when you fight wars with me, you see only part of the battle, the few enemies that you kill, or your own wounds. Sometimes this seems terrible to you, I know, but later you see the victory and the glory of my country. That glory, fame, I have seen all along.

Secondo soldato: Yes, Tereus, but –

Primo soldato: Where’s the enemy?

Tereus: I have information.

Coro di uomini: Altri giorni.

Secondo soldato: Why do we have to wait so long?
Primo soldato: For what?

Secondo soldato: It’s the waiting that makes me afraid. I’d rather something happened, anything.

Tereus: I know this is difficult for you. (Pausa.) It’s difficult for me. (Pausa.) You’re experienced soldiers, responsible citizens, I trust you not to risk the safety and honour of your country because you don’t understand yet. Trust me and you’ll understand in time.

Coro di uomini: Col tempo...

Coro di uomini: Cosa non si fa e non si dice in nome del futuro? Un futuro sempre nelle mani di qualcun altro. Aspettammo, senza il peso della responsabilità, quei momenti promessi, i bei momenti. Non facemmo altre domande e di notte dormimmo sonni tranquilli e non vedemmo:

Scena undicesima

Filomele, Niobe, Tereus.

Tereus: Filomele.

Filomele: (a Niobe) Perché mi segue ovunque? Persino Procne mi lasciava da sola ogni tanto.

Niobe: Vedi di non farlo arrabbiare!

Tereus: Filomele.


Tereus: Filomele.

Filomele: E questo è timo selvatico e li c’è della xorta. A Procne piace quel gusto amaro.

Tereus: Filomele.

Tereus: Filomele!

Filomele: Quiet brother, you’re disturbing the butterflies. Procne would not like that.

Tereus: Procne. Procne. Procne is dead.

Silenzio.

There is a mountain not far from the palace. She climbed it with her women to see if she could catch sight of the sea. On a clear day you can look at the sea from there. She climbed to the top, but there was a tall rock and she said she would climb that as well to see us, to welcome the ship. The women begged her not to, no one would follow her. The rock is slippery and on the other side drops straight into the river below. She climbed, climbed higher to welcome her sister and stood there, waving, safe, the women thought. But then she seemed to grow dizzy, she cried out and suddenly fell, down to the rock, down to the cliff, into the river swollen now because of the winter rains. They are still looking for her body, it was carried with the torrent. Perhaps better not to find it.

Niobe: Già, meglio. Un cadavere mal ridotto è peggio della morte che l’ha colpito.

Tereus: Mourn, Filomele, mourn with me. She was my wife.

Filomele: Procne.

Niobe: Procne.

Philomele inizia a urlare e piangere. Tereus la stringe tra le braccia.

Tereus: Sister, beloved sister. My sister.

Filomele: Procne. No! Voglio vedere il corpo!

Coro: Né vedemmo, ancora addormentati:
**Scena dodicesima**

*Filomele, il Capitano, Niobe*

**Filomele:** Capitano, da quando tempo ce ne stiamo in questo posto dimenticato dagli dei?

**Capitano:** Quasi un mese, Filomele.

**Filomele:** Ma perché?

*Pausa.*

Non posso piangere mia sorella in questo luogo. Perché non posso ricordarla dal luogo in cui ha vissuto gli ultimi anni? Perché non facciamo altro che aspettare? Aspettare cosa?

**Capitano:** Potrebbero esserci problemi. Tereus tiene queste cose per sé.

**Filomele:** E tu, Capitano, dove andrai?

**Capitano:** Attendo ordini.

**Filomele:** A sud?

**Capitano:** Può darsi.

**Filomele:** Non me lo vuoi dire. Ti è stato chiesto di non dirmelo. Perché?

**Capitano:** Fai troppe domande, Filomele.

**Filomele:** E perché tu non ne fai alcuna?

*Pausa*

Ami il mare?

**Capitano:** A volte.

**Filomele:** Ero solita guardarti di notte, mentre stavi sul ponte, circondato da un’immensa solitudine. Sembravi un maestro degli elementi, in comando del vento.

**Capitano:** No, quello che farà il vento si può solo indovinare, sono le vele che si comandano. I venti hanno nomi, sono divini, l’uomo obbedisce.
Filomele: Non ho mai capito l’obbedienza, Capitan filosofia.

Capitano: Sei una donna.

Filomele: Ciò mi rende forse senza legge? Hai una moglie?

Capitano: No, no.

Filomele: Perché no?

Niobe (*borbotta*): Svergognata. Fare il filo a un capitano quando potrebbe avere un re.

Filomele: Portami con te.

Capitano: Portarti. Dove?

Filomele: In mare. A sud…ovunque…

Capitano: Ti prendi gioco di me, Filomele. Tereus…


Capitano: Non dovresti parlare in questo modo. Non a me. È mio compito obbedirgli.

Filomele: Ancora! E cosa mi dici dell’obbedienza verso gli elementi? E verso il desiderio, non è un dio anche quello?

Capitano: Filomele…

Filomele: Mi hai toccato la mano sulla nave una volta, per errore, e una volta il movimento di un’onda mi ha spinta contro di te, sei arrossito, l’ho visto, paura, desiderio, sono la stessa cosa, non sono una bambina. Toccami di nuovo la mano, dammi prova che non senti nulla.

_Protende la mano. Il Capitano esita e la tocca._

Ecco – avevo ragione. Portami con te.
Capitano: Chiederemo a Tereus.

Filomele: Chiederemo agli dei dentro di noi. L’Amore...

Capitano: ...il tuo potere...

Filomele: Non mio...tra di noi, al di sopra di noi.

Gli prende la mano e se la poggia sul seno. Entra Tereo.

Tereus: Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!

Uccide il Capitano.

A young girl, defenceless.

I’ll cut off your genitals.

Go to the underworld with your shame around your neck.

Pausa.

Be more careful, Filomele.

Coro di Uomini: (portando via il corpo) Non abbiamo visto nulla.

Scena tredicesima

Chiaro di luna. La spiaggia. Filomele.

Filomele: Luna lucente, raggi da accarezzare. Luna lucente, raggi da calpestare.
Vieni a me fosforescenza, vieni a me luminescenza, svelami i segreti del purpureo mare.

Pausa.

Mi sento così sola.

Pausa.

Procne, vieni a me.

Pausa. Aspetta.
Procne, Procne, sorella mia. Aiutami.


*Entra Tereus. Filomele se ne accorge.*

(piano) Vieni a me fosforescenza, vieni a me luminescenza, svelami i segreti del purpureo mare...

**Tereus (piano):** Filomele, what are you doing?

**Filomele:** Catching the lather of the sea. Chiaro di luna, chiaro di luna.

**Tereus:** I only wish you well...

**Filomele:** Let me bury my sister.

**Tereus:** I told you, we never found the body.

**Filomele:** Take me to the gorge, I will find it.

**Tereus:** Nothing left now, weeks –

**Filomele:** I will find the bones.

**Tereus:** Washed by the river.

**Filomele:** Let me stand in the river.

**Tereus:** It’s dangerous.

**Filomele:** I don’t want to stay here.

**Tereus:** You have everything you want, you loved the spot when we first came.

**Filomele:** Then...

Tereus, I want to see my sister’s home, I want to speak to the women who were with her. I want to know the last words she said, please, please, take me there. Why are we here? What is the point of talking if you won’t answer that question?

*Silenzio. Filomele si gira dall’altra parte.*
Chiaro di luna, chiaro di luna...

Tereus: Filomele, listen to me.

Filomele: Brilla sulle conchiglie, brilla sui coralli, brilla sulle resti di anime perdute: polvere e ossa.

Tereus: Filomele!

Filomele: Cattura la spuma del mare...

Tereus: Do you remember that day in the theatre in Athens? The play?

Filomele: Evanescenza, evanescenza...

Tereus: Filomele, I am telling you.

     Pausa.

I love you.

Filomele: I love you too, brother Tereus, you are my sister’s husband.


Filomele: It is against the law.

Tereus: My wife is dead.

Filomele: It is still against the law.

Tereus: The power of the god is above the law. It began then, in the theatre, the chorus told me. I saw the god and I loved you.

Filomele: Tereus.

     Pausa.

I do not love you.

I do not want you.

I want to go back to Athens.
Tereus: Who can resist the gods? Those are your words. Filomele. They convinced me, your words.

Filomele: Oh, la mia lingua incauta. Procne lo diceva sempre – lingua iperattiva. But, Tereus, it was the theatre, it was hot, come back to Athens with me. My parents – Tereus, please, let me go back to Athens.

Tereus: The god is implacable.

Filomele: You are a king, you are a widower. This is – frivolous.

Tereus: You call this frivolous.

La afferra.

Filomele: Tradimento.

Tereus: Love me.

Filomele: No.

Tereus: Then my love will be for both. I will love you and love myself for you. Filomele, I will have you.

Filomele: Tereus, wait.

Tereus: The god is out.

Filomele: Let me mourn.

Tereus: Your darkness and your sadness make you all the more beautiful.

Filomele: I have to consent.

Tereus: It would be better, but no, you do not have to. Does the god ask for permission?


Tereus: So you are afraid. I know fear well. Fear is consent. You see the god and you accept.

Filomele: Niobe!
**Tereus:** I will have you in your fear. Trembling limbs to my fire.

*La afferra e la trascina via. Entra Niobe.*


**Scena quattordicesima**

*Il palazzo di Tereo. Procne e il Coro di donne.*

**Procne:** Se è vivo lo voglio vedere e se è morto voglio vederne il corpo. È logico. Iris, vieni qua. Più vicino. Così.

*Pausa.*

Pausa.

Iris, abbi pietà per favore. Un sì o un no. Parole così piccole ma che possono rivoltare il mondo intero.

Pausa.

Ho imparato ad essere paziente. È stata la pioggia.

Pausa.

L’inesorabile prigionia di un cielo fosco. Posso aspettare.

Silenzio.

È una sola parola.

Va bene, non dirmelo. Ma quando mi sarò uccisa toccherà a te, Iris, diffondere la notizia della mia morte. Non mi credi? Gli Ateniesi non si uccidono. Ma so anche essere tracia. Ho vissuto qua abbastanza a lungo. Ora va’.

Iris: No.

Procne: Non è morto.

Iris: No.

Procne: Ma allora, perché?

Pausa.

La promessa, certo. (Pausa.) Ti ringrazio.

Mia sorella? No, è un’altra domanda. Se ne ho fatta una, non posso forse farne due? (Si rivolge alle donne.) Mio marito non è morto. Chi vuole dirmi dove si trova? Perché? Ci sono i vostri mariti tra i suoi uomini. Non vi fate domande? Quali
alate sirene li avranno intrappolati coi loro canti melliflui? È questo che è successo? Eppure no, non è morto, per cui non può essere annegato. Trasformato in una bestia feroce dal poter di una strega, è questo che è successo? Avete udito un ululato nella foresta e avete riconosciuto mio marito? Non ditemelo, che vergogna, mio marito è un cane. Tutto pulci, scodinzolii e morsi a casaccio. Beh, è questo che è successo?

Settimane, settimane intere, e nessuno mi parla.

Pausa.

Mi basterebbe una voce infondata, un sentito dire. Dove sono i vostri uomini?

Dov’è il mio?

Dov’è Tereus?

Entrano Tereus e il Coro di uomini.

Tereus: Here.

Pause.

A delay.

Procne (immobile): Un ritardo.

Pausa.

Hai le mani sporche di sangue.


Procne: Mia sorella?

Tereus (dopo una breve pausa): Not here.

Procne: No. (Pausa.) Annegata?

Pausa.

Tereus: But I am here.
Procne: Sì.

Procne allarga le braccia. Il Coro di uomini si fa avanti, nascondendo Tereus e Procne.

Coro di uomini: Finalmente a casa.

Coro di uomini: Non abbiamo detto nulla.

Coro di uomini: Meglio così.

Scena quindicesima

Filomele, Niobe. Niobe sta lavando Filomele che ha una bacinella d’acqua tra le gambe e la testa chinata.


Filomele: Ne sento ancora l’odore. Puliscimi.

Niobe: È il tuo odore. Non c’è più niente.


Niobe: È l’odore della paura.

Filomele: Puliscimi.


Filomele: Voglio morire. Puliscimi.


Filomele: Supplicare? È stata forse colpa mia?

Niobe: Io non faccio domande. Fatti dare delle monete se riesci.
Filomele: Dee, dove eravate?


Filomele: Tu. Tu sei peggio di lui.

_Versa l’acqua sporca addosso a Niobe._


Filomele: No.


Filomele: Mai.

Niobe: Ecco il re. Morditi la lingua, Filomele.

_Entra Tereus._

Tereus: Now I wish you didn’t exist.

_Pausa._

Filomele: When will you explain, Tereus?

Tereus: Explain?

Filomele: Why? The cause? I want to understand.

Tereus: I don’t know what to do with you...

Filomele: Me...

_Pausa._

I was the cause, wasn’t I? Was I? I said something. What did I do?

_Pausa._
Something in my walk? If I had sung a different song? My hair up, my hair down? It was the beach. I ought not to have been there. I ought not to have been anywhere. I ought not to have been... at all... then there would be no cause. Is that it? Answer.

_Tereus_: What?

_Filomele_: My body bleeding, my spirit ripped open and I am the cause? No, this cannot be right, why would I cause my own pain? That isn’t reasonable. What was it then, tell me, Tereus, if I was not the cause?

_Pausa._

You must know, it was your act, you must know, tell me why, say.

_Pausa._

It was your act. It was you. I caused nothing.

_Pausa breve._

And Procne is not dead. I can smell her on you.

_Pausa._

You. You lied. And you.

What did you tell your wife, my sister, Procne, what did you tell her? Did you tell her you violated her sister, the sister she gave into your trust? Did you tell her what a coward you are and that you could not, cannot bear to look at me? Did you tell her that despite my fear, your violence, when I saw you in your nakedness I couldn’t help laughing because you were so shrivelled, so ridiculous and it is not the way it is on the statues? Did you tell her you cut me because you yourself had no strength? Did you tell her I pitied her for having in her bed a man who could screech such quick and ugly pleasure, a man of jelly beneath his hard skin, did you tell her that?

_Pausa._
And once I envied her happiness with the northern hero. The leader of men. Take the sword out of your hand, you fold into a cloth. Have they ever looked at you, your soldiers, your subjects?

**Tereus**: That’s enough.

**Filomele**: There’s nothing inside you. You are only full when you’re filled with violence. And they obey you? Look up to you? Have the men and women of Thrace ever seen you naked? Shall I tell them? Yes, I will talk.

**Tereus**: Quiet, woman.

**Filomele**: You call this man your king, men and women of Thrace, this scarecrow dribbling embarrassed lust, that is what I will say to them, you revere him, but have you looked at him? No? You’re too awed, he wears his cloak of might and virility with such ease you won’t look beneath. When he murdered a virtuous captain, that was bravery, you say. And if, women of Thrace, he wants to force himself on you, trying to stretch his puny manhood to your intimacies, you call that high spirits? And you soldiers, you’ll follow into battle a man who lies, a man of tiny spirit and shrivelled courage? Wouldn’t you prefer someone with truth and goodness, self-control and reason? Let my sister rule in his place.

**Tereus**: I said that was enough.

**Filomele**: No, I will say more. They will all know what you are.

**Tereus**: I warn you.

**Filomele**: Men and women of Thrace, come and listen to the truth about this man –

**Tereus**: I will keep you quiet.

**Filomele**: Never, as long as I have the words to expose you. The truth, men and women of Thrace, the truth –

* Tereus taglia la lingua a Filomele. *
Scena sedicesima

*Filomele rannicchiata in una pozza di sangue. Niobe*


*Filomele si aggrappa a lei, cerca di comunicare qualcosa.*

Non so cosa vuole. Non può più darmi ordini. A che serve uno schiavo se non può ricevere ordini? Me ne vado. Non so cosa vuole.

**Entra Tereus. Filomele rimane immobile. Silenzio.**

**Tereus:** You should have kept quiet.

*Pausa.*

I did what I had to do.

*Pausa.*

You threatened the order of my rule.

*Pausa.*

How could I allow rebellion? I had to keep you quiet. I am not sorry. Except for your pain. But it was you or me.

*Pausa lunga.*

You are more beautiful now in your silence. I could love you. You should have allowed the god to have his way. You should have kept quiet. I was the stronger. And my desire. Niobe, you will look after her. This is to ease the pain (*dà dei soldi a Niobe, poi va da Filomele*). Why weren’t you more careful? Let me kiss those bruised lips. You are mine. My sweet, my songless, my caged bird.
La bacia. Lei rimane immobile.

Scena diciassettesima


Procne: Non vorrei essere di nuovo giovane. Il tempo passa più dolcemente quando si è vecchi. Prima sembrava frantumarsi sulle rocce. Cinque anni dalla morte di mia sorella. Domani. Accenderò una candela verso il mare, come faccio tutti gli anni. Ma il dolore si è affievolito ora, quasi spento. Will you come with me this time, Tereus?

Tereus: No.

Procne: I used to be angry that you would not mourn my sister. Why should you mourn her? You hardly knew her. Your aunt, Itys. You would have liked her. She was full of laughter.

Itys: I have uncles. They're strong.

Procne: She could speak with the philosophers. She was bold and quick.

Itys: What is a philosopher?

Procne: A man who loves wisdom.

Itys: What is wisdom?

Procne: It brings peace.

Itys: I don’t like peace. I like war.

Procne: Why?

Itys: So I can be brave. I want to be a great captain. Lead thousands into battle. Like Mars.

Procne: Mars is a god.

Itys: What is a god?

Procne: Like us. But doesn’t die.
Itys: Why can’t I be a god?

Procne: You have to be born one.

Tereus: But you’ll be a king, Itys, that’s almost as good.

Procne: A wise king, like your father.

Itys: (voltandosi con la lancia in mano) I’ll fight this way. I’ll fight that way. I’ll fight this way. I’ll fight this way.

Corre via.

Procne: I am happy, since there was to be only one, that we have a son.

Pausa.

Aren’t you?

Tereus: Yes.

Procne: You’re quiet.

Pausa.

Over the years you have become quiet. I used to be afraid of you, did you know? But we shall grow old in peace. I wish more people came to visit this country. Then we could show our hospitality. No one comes here. Why?

Silenzio.

And if a god came to visit, he would find us sitting here, content, and perhaps turn us into two trees as a reward, oak and linden intertwined, like Baucis and Philemon. Would you like that?

Tereus: Not yet.

Procne: Ha. I love to see you smile.

Pausa.

And tomorrow is the feast of Bacchus. I will go out this time. I will go out with the women of this country. You see how I become Thracian.
Pausa.

You’re going? Of course, you must. The evening is soft, look, stars too. We do not have many evenings together. I was frightened of your evenings when we were first married. That is why I sent you to Athens for my sister. I am a woman now. I can take pleasure in my husband.

_Si avvicina a Tereus, ma lui la allontana e se ne va. Quando se n’è andato,_

_Procne si mette una mano sul ventre._

Il desiderio. Ora, così tardi.

Oh, dei, quanto siete crudeli.

O forse solo ubriachi.

_Inizia a vestirsi da baccante e così fa anche il Coro di donne. Musica._

Scena diciottesima

_Musica. Il palco si riempie di Baccanti. Entra Niobe guidando Filomele che trascina due grossi pupazzi. Dietro di lei la Schiava porta un terzo pupazzo._


_Schiava:_ Faremmo più in fretta senza i fantocci, Niobe.

Schiava: Molto strane, Niobe. Ma stava meglio nella capanna.

Niobe: No. Le serve una gita. In cinque anni ha avuto contatti solo con noi e con il re.

Schiava: Ormai il re non si fa quasi mai vedere.


Schiava: Niobe, ma chi è?


Schiava: Provo pietà per lei. Non so perché.


Niobe: Una pazza, una pazza! Aiutatemi!

Ma la folla applaude, allarga il cerchio e aspetta in silenzio. La scena dello stupro viene rappresentata in modo comico e grottesco, in parte per via della reticenza di Niobe e dei suoi tentativi di afferrare Filomele. È Filomele a fare la maggior parte del lavoro con entrambi i pupazzi. La folla ride. Poi Filomele rappresenta in modo brutale il taglio della lingua del pupazzo femmina. Uno straccio di sangue per terra. La folla rimane in silenzio. Niobe immobile. Poi la Schiava entra nel cerchio, portando con sé il terzo pupazzo, una regina. In quel momento compare anche Procne al limitare del cerchio. Ha assistito alla rappresentazione. Il pupazzo-Procne piange. I due pupazzi femmina si abbracciano.

**Procne:** Come faccio a sapere che è la verità?

**Pausa.**

Sei sempre stata un po’ selvatica. Come faccio a sapere che non te lo sei portato a letto?

Potresti avergli detto delle bugie su di me, esserti tagliata la lingua per la vergogna. Come faccio a saperlo?


Ha dovuto trattenerti dal lanciarti sui suoi soldati. Il desiderio è sempre stato una fiamma potente dentro di te. Hai fatto la scema coi suoi marinai? Ci hai coperti tutti di vergogna? Perché dovrei crederti?

**Scuote Filomele.**

Fa’ qualcosa, fammi capire che mi hai mostrato la verità.

**Pausa.**


**Silenzio.**

Ma se è vero. Mia sorella.

Apri la bocca.

*Filomele apre lentamente la bocca.*
Arrivare a fare una cosa del genere. Ne sarebbe in grado.

Pausa.

Giustizia. Filomele, la giustizia che ci hanno insegnato da bambine, te la ricordi? Dov’è? Vieni, vieni con me.

Le Baccanti danno del vino a Procne e Filomele.

Una cosa del genere.

Filomele beve.


Se ne vanno danzando con le Baccanti.

**Scena diciannovesima**

**Due Soldati.**

**Primo soldato:** È quasi l’alba. Andiamo.

**Secondo soldato:** Ci ha detto di restare vicino al palazzo fino al sorgere del sole.

**Primo soldato:** Di cosa ha paura? Un’invasione di amazzoni? Sono tutte là dentro.

**Secondo soldato:** I nostri nemici sanno che questa è una notte strana.


**Secondo soldato:** Non possiamo.

**Primo soldato:** Non ci sono leggi in notti come queste.

**Secondo soldato:** Vuoi dare una sbirciata?

**Primo soldato:** Ci ucciderebbero.

**Secondo soldato:** Quella finestra lì. Potremmo guardare attraverso le persiane.
**Primo soldato:** È un mistero. Un mistero femminile. Così dice la mia ragazza. Lasciami stare.

**Secondo soldato:** Potresti salire sulle mie spalle. Potresti assicurarti che la tua ragazza si comporti bene.

**Primo soldato:** Ci sono solo donne là dentro.

**Secondo soldato:** Ci sono solo uomini in guerra.

**Primo soldato:** Vuoi dire che lei – loro – no.

**Secondo soldato:** Da’ un’occhiata.

**Primo soldato:** Se sta – la strozzo. E quindi sarebbe quello il mistero? Fammie vedere.

*Il Primo soldato sale sulle spalle del Secondo soldato.*

**Secondo soldato:** Ci vedi?

**Primo soldato:** Sta fermo.

**Secondo soldato:** Ti sto tenendo le gambe. Vedi qualcosa?

**Primo soldato:** Sì.

**Secondo Soldato:** Beh?

**Primo soldato:** Ci sono solo un sacco di donne.

**Secondo soldato:** Quello lo sappiamo, idiota. Cosa stanno facendo?

**Primo soldato:** Bevono.

**Secondo soldato:** E?

**Primo soldato:** Ah.

**Secondo soldato:** Cosa?

**Primo soldato:** Oh, per tutti gli dei!

**Secondo soldato:** Beh, cosa stanno facendo esattamente? Cosa?
**Primo soldato** (*salta giù, ridendo*): Niente.

*Fa un balletto col Secondo soldato.*

Danzano. Tanto vino. Hanno spade e lance.

*Compare Itys.*

Cosa ci fai qui?

**Itys:** I saw you.

**Primo soldato:** No men, no boys in the street. Go home.

**Itys:** I saw you looking.

**Secondo soldato:** È Itys, il figlio di Tereus. Why aren’t you asleep?

**Itys:** I saw you. I’m going to tell my father when he gets back.

**Primo soldato:** Nothing wrong with looking.

**Itys:** Mother said no one’s to see.

I’ll tell her, she’ll tell father, he’ll be angry.

**Secondo soldato:** Don’t you want to see?

**Itys:** It’s not allowed.

**Secondo soldato:** Aren’t you a prince? A king’s son? You let women tell you what is and is not allowed?

**Itys:** You shouldn’t have looked.

**Primo soldato:** It’s just women.

**Secondo soldato:** Why don’t you see for yourself? A king has to be informed.

**Primo soldato:** You can sit on my shoulders.

**Secondo soldato:** Do you know how to sit on somebody’s shoulders? Are you strong enough?

**Itys:** Of course I know.
**Secondo soldato**: You sure? It’s difficult.

**Primo soldato**: We’ll hold you.

**Secondo soldato**: No, we won’t. You have to climb all by yourself. Like a man. Can you do it?

**Itys**: I’ll show you.

*Itys si arrampica sulle spalle del Secondo soldato.*

**Secondo soldato**: Good. You’ll make a soldier yet. You’re too small to reach the window, aren’t you?

**Itys**: No, I’m not.

**Secondo soldato**: I think you are.

*Itys si allunga verso la finestra e guarda. Pausa.*

**Itys**: Oh.

**Primo soldato**: Still dancing, the women?

**Itys**: They drink more than my father.

**Primo soldato**: But only once a year.

**Itys**: There’s Mother.

**Primo soldato**: What is she doing?

**Itys**: Why should I tell you?

**Secondo soldato**: Quite right, boy. What about the other women?

**Itys**: There’s one I’ve never seen before. She looks like a slave. That’s my sword. That slave girl. A slave, a girl slave holding my sword. Let me down.

**Secondo soldato**: Where are you going?

**Itys**: To stop them.

**Primo soldato**: No.
Secondo soldato: Wait.

Itys scappa via.

Primo soldato: Andiamo.


Primo soldato: Cosa è successo?


Scappano via.

Scena ventesima

Coro di donne. Procne. Filomele.

Hero: Without the words to demand.

Echo: Or ask. Plead. Beg for.

June: Without the words to accuse.

Helen: Without even the words to forgive.

Echo: The words that help to forget.

Hero: What else was there?

Iris: There are some questions that have no answers. We might ask you now: why does the Vulture eat Prometheus’ liver? He brought men intelligence.

Echo: Why did God want them stupid?
Iris: We can ask: why did Medea kill her children?

June: Why do countries make war?

Helen: Why are races exterminated?

Hero: Why do white people cut off the words of blacks?

Iris: Why do people disappear? The ultimate silence.

Echo: Not even death recorded.

Helen: Why are little girls raped and murdered in the car parks of dark cities?

Iris: What makes the torturer smile?

Hero: We can ask. Words will grope and probably not find. But if you silence the question.

Iris: Imprison the mind that asks.

Echo: Cut out its tongue.

Hero: You will have this.

June: We show you a myth.

Echo: Image. Echo.

Helen: A child is the future.

Hero: This is what the soldiers did not see.

Itys entra di corsa.

Itys: That’s my sword. Give me my sword.

Procne: Itys.

Itys: Give me my sword, slave, or I’ll kick you. Kill you all. Cut off your heads. Pick out your eyes.

Tereus: It’s daylight at last. The revels are over. Time to go home.

Silenzio. Nessuno si muove.

We’re whitewashing the streets. All that wine. Poured like blood. It’s time for you to go home.

Nessuno si muove.

Stupefied? You should hold your wine better. You’ve had your revels. Go on. Stagger home. Procne, tell your women to go home.

Appare Filomele, ha le mani insanguinate. Cala il silenzio.

Tereus: I had wanted to say.

Procne: Cosa avresti voluto dire, Tereus?

Tereus: If I could explain.

Procne: Tu ce l’hai la lingua.

Tereus: Beyond words.

Procne: Che cosa?

Tereus: When I ride my horse into battle, I see where I am going. But close your eyes for an instant and the world whirls round. That is what happened. The world whirled round.

Pausa.

Procne: Cosa ti ha impedito di parlare? La vergogna?

Tereus: No.

Procne: Allora cosa?

Tereus: I can’t say. There are no rules.


Lunga pausa.
**Tereus:** I have no other words.

**Procne:** Ti aiuto io a trovarle, le parole.

_Viene mostrato il corpo di Itys._

Se cercassi il tuo riflesso nelle acqua del fiume, è questo che troveresti.

**Tereus:** Itys. You.

**Procne:** Io non ho fatto nulla. Come sempre. Ho solo lasciato che la violenza dilagasse attorno a me.

**Tereus:** She –

**Procne:** No. You, Tereus. You bloodied the future. For all of us. We don’t want it.

**Tereus:** Your own child!

**Procne:** Ours. There are no more rules. There is nothing. The world is bleak. The past a mockery, the future dead. And now I want to die.

**Tereus:** I loved her. When I silenced her, it was for love. She didn’t want my love. She could only mock, and soon rebel, she was dangerous.

    I loved my country. I loved my child. You – this.

**Procne:** You wanted something and you took it. That is not love. Look at yourself. That is not love.

**Tereus:** How could I know what love was? Who was there to tell me?

**Procne:** Did you ask?

**Tereus:** Monsters. Fiends. I will kill you both.

    _Tereus impugna la spada di Itys. Il coro di donne si avvicina._

**Hero:** Tereus pursued the two sisters, but he never reached them. The myth has a strange end.

**Echo:** No end.

**Iris:** Filomele becomes a nightingale.
June: Procne a swallow.

Helen: And Tereus a hoopoe.

Hero: You might ask, why does the myth end that way?

Iris: Such a transformation.

Echo: Metamorphosis.

*Entrano gli uccelli.*

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**Scena ventunesima**

*Itys e gli uccelli.*

Filomele (*l’usignolo*): E ora, fammi qualche altra domanda.

Itys: I wish you’d sing again.

Filomele: You have to ask me a question first.

*Pausa.*

Itys: Do you like being a nightingale?

Filomele: I like the nights and my voice in the night. I like the spring. Otherwise no, not much, I never liked birds, but we were all so angry the bloodshed would have gone on for ever. So it was better to become a nightingale. You see the world differently.

Itys: Do you like being a nightingale more than being Filomele?

Filomele: Before or after I was silenced?

Itys: I don’t know. Both.

Filomele: I always felt a shadow hanging over me. I asked too many questions.

Itys: You want me to ask questions.

Filomele: Yes.
Itys: Will you sing some more?

Filomele: Later.

Itys: Why doesn’t Procne sing?

Filomele: Because she was turned into a swallow and swallows don’t sing.

Itys: Why not?

Filomele: Different job.

Itys: Oh.

Pausa.

I like it when you sing.

Filomele: Do you understand why it was wrong of Tereus to cut out my tongue?

Itys: It hurt.

Filomele: Yes, but why was it wrong?

Itys (annoiato): I don’t know. Why was it wrong?

Filomele: It was wrong because –

Itys: what does wrong mean?

Filomele: It is what isn’t right.

Itys: What is right?

L’usignolo comincia a cantare.

Didn’t you want me to ask questions?

Dissolvenza a nero.
5.2 La moglie dell’eroe

Personaggi

Timberlake Wertenbaker

(Introduzione)

Irene
Deianira
Coro
Nutrice
Illo
Eracle
Messaggero
Lica
Nesso
Timberlake: Some years ago, when I was in Athens, I heard there was a village up north where you could still find storytellers in the Kafeneions. I asked my friends to take me there and we drove up mountain roads to the village. We arrived at dusk and went to the market place, but we discovered that most of the storytellers were already well into their tales. It felt like arriving late for a movie and we were about to leave, when a café owner pointed to a woman slumped asleep over a table. We were told her name was Irene and no one had dared to wake her up, but we were strangers and could take that liberty. We shook her awake, put some bills on the plate in front of her and ordered her a coffee. She asked us to add a glass of brandy. She was grey-haired, with a slight moustache, dressed in a floppy black and white dress with a dark jacket. She could have been the widow of the local solicitor but her eyes were watery and veiled. Of course, she was blind, most story tellers are. She asked us what kind of story we wanted. I wanted one about love, but my friends said they'd heard lots of those, they wanted adventure. We settled on anger. This is what we heard.

Irene: I will tell you a story of anger. It took place a long long time ago, any time, in Trachis, which is over there, on the other side of the mountains. But Trachis is more a state of mind than a place. You know this, you come from Athens, the seat of logic. Trachis is a plain of disappointment. Disappointment – and that’s where anger puts down roots and finds its nourishment.

The three heroes of this story are Dianeira, Heracles and Hyllos. Now, even though you’re students you probably won’t have heard of Dianeira and that’s part of her story. Heracles you’ll know. Hercules, Heracles, the great man, always labouring, a model of manhood, but an unloved one. Why? I’m not sure. And their
oldest son Hyllos. A young man who at the beginning of this story is not marked or mapped yet – that is to come.

Where does anger lie? Somewhere in that plain between the hopes of a life and what actually happens to it, a plain clouded over by fear and foreboding. That neutral plain of Trachis, that’s where it found its breeding ground for this story. Listen to Dianeira. It is dark, she stands on a terrace looking at the night. It is time to go inside to sleep and she is surrounded by some of the women of Trachis who keep her company, a chorus, whose job is mostly to listen and occasionally to echo.

Trachis

Deianira: Dicono che si possa determinare se la vita di una persona sia stata felice o dannata solo dopo la sua morte. Così dicono, ma io so che sono nata per essere infelice anche senza rivisitare i miei ricordi dall’oltretomba. Già quando ero una vergine, nella casa di mio padre, cominciò ad andare tutto male. Tutte le altre fanciulle d’Etolia non vedevano l’ora di sposarsi. Ma che tipo di pretendente bussò alla mia, di porta? Ve lo dico io: un fiume. Sì, l’Acheloo, il dio fiume. Ma nemmeno lui aveva il coraggio di presentarsi sotto forma di acqua scrosciante, così a volte appariva in forma di toro sbuffante e minaccioso; a volte come serpente, tutto squame ondeggianti, strisciare di spire e guizzi di lingua biforcuta; altre volte appariva nel corpo di un uomo nudo e, come se non bastasse, con la testa di un bue e getti d’acqua che gli sprizzavano dalla barba. Ma chi è che vuole sposare una fontana? Pregai gli dei di morire pur di non dover condividere il letto con quella cosa, ma è impossibile sapere se gli dei ci ascoltano.

Così, quando alla fine – finalmente – arrivò lui, lui, mi parve un salvatore, un vero eroe. Eracle. Arrivò, alto, tutto muscoli...

Primo coro: Sodi, lucidi...

Deianira: Arrivò –

Coro Secondo: Portava con sé l’arco e la faretra.
Deianira: E sfidò il dio fiume. Non chiedetemi di descrivere il combattimento. Io me ne stavo rannicchiata sulla riva opposta, la testa tra le ginocchia, tremante, maledicendo la bellezza del mio volto, causa solo di sofferenze e ancora sofferenze. Beh, fortunatamente, Zeus, il dio di ogni battaglia, fece sì che il risultato fosse favorevole.

Terzo Coro: Potrebbe essere stata la dea dell’amore, di solito è lei: Afrodite.

Deianira: Eracle vinse e io divenni la moglie dell’eroe.

Dal giorno del nostro matrimonio, la mia vita non è stata altro che un lungo tormento. Ondate di paura s’infrangono attorno a m. È tutto ciò che provo, la paura.

Terrori notturni.

La notte, consumata artista della paura, le dà costantemente forma, ne tinge le sfumature di oscurità e desolazione. Di notte il terrore diventa malleabile. Certo, abbiamo dei figli, ma Eracle è come un padrone assente che visita i suoi poderi solo due volte l’anno, per la semina e per il raccolto. E poi torna al lavoro, sempre per il bene di qualcun altro. Lavoro, fatica, tutta quella forza sempre al servizio di qualcuno che si trovava lontano. Gli è stato predetto che queste sue fatiche finiranno prima o poi, ma ho più paura che mai prima d’ora. Eccomi qui, a Trachis, un’estranea in casa di un estraneo, ad aspettare. Ma nessuno sembra sapere dove si trovi, questo mio eroe, mio marito Eracle. È via da quindici mesi. A dieci sono abituata. Ma quindici è troppo, persino per lui.

Ci sono tanti modi di avere paura. C’è la paura che ti perseguita durante un sonno turbato ma c’è anche una paura mattutina. Acuminata, come il primo raggio di sole sulla brina. E perciò ho paura di andare a dormire e ancora più paura di quando dovrò svegliarmi.

Irene: In that long ago time, people did not have character as we know it today, childhood was no more than the empty plain between birth and marriage and, once married, a woman always had a nurse to advise her. Obvious advice, and often disastrous as obvious advice must be. The nurse – an antique version of the
horoscope: ‘Convince someone influential that your hidden depths could be of benefit. Stop short of flirting with danger, however.’ Here is the nurse, come to wake the mournful Dianeira. She is old, bent down by humility, but the morning is new and she feels it is time to advise.

**Nutrice:** Deianira, mia signora, ti lamenti sempre dell’assenza di tuo marito. Eppure, nonostante abbiaite figli, non ne hai mandato neanche uno a scoprire dove si trovi. Di certo Illo, il tuo primogenito, vorrebbe sapere cosa combina il padre? Mandalo a cercare Eracle – a meno che non tu non sia avversa ai consigli di un’umile schiava.

**Irene:** In the pure air of that long ago time, in the stillness of the early morning and in the golden light of the sun on the rise, comes Hyllos, himself with that first golden beauty of the young male, untouched by trouble or by doubt. He is a son, a promise, hope. He carries this lightly, insouciant, open.

**Deianira:** Illo, figlio mio. Avvicinati.

**Illo:** Madre.

**Deianira:** Più vicino.

**Illo:** Sì, Madre.

**Deianira:** Sei cresciuto.

**Illo:** Da ieri?

**Deianira:** Succede.

**Illo:** Ma lo vedi solo tu.

**Deianira:** Resta un po’ con me. Non ti vedo quasi mai.

**Illo:** Sono sempre qui...

**Deianira:** Quasi un uomo ormai... Anzi già lo sei... così presto... Illo –

**Illo:** Cosa c’è, Madre?

**Deianira:** Figlio mio...

Ecco…

Mi hai insegnato ad amare la mattina.

Deianira: Come?

Illo: Riuscivo sempre a trovarti, di mattina.

Deianira: Illo, vorrei chiederti…

Illo: Non ti dico sempre tutto quello che vuoi sapere?

Deianira: Non ti sei mai chiesto dove possa essere tuo padre?

Illo: Mio padre. Non è forse sempre impegnato in una qualche impresa eroica?

Deianira: Sì, ma non ti chiedi dove sia?

Illo: Che importanza ha? Quando avrà trionfato, tornerà.

Deianira: Ma questa volta è stato via più a lungo del solito.

Illo: Sta sempre via a lungo.

Deianira: È così che vanno le cose nella vita degli eroi.

Illo: Sento sempre storie su di lui.

Deianira: È difficile non sentir parlare di Eracle. Ma dove si trova ora?

Illo: Ho sentito che si trovava al servizio di una donna in Lidia.

Deianira: Al servizio di una donna! Eracle? Chi te l’ha detto?

Illo: Ma adesso ha finito li e ora si sta preparando per una campagna contro l’Eubea, almeno così ho sentito dire.

Deianira: Eubea… ci sono stati dei presagi… Eubea. Mi aveva detto…

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Heracles: Dianeira, I went to consult the sacred oak of my father, the great God Zeus. I felt him come to me in that shady grove and I heard him say to me that in Euboea, my fate would fork. Either I would find rest at last, retire from these great labours or else, it’s in Euboea, Dianeira, that I would meet my end.

Deianira: Eracle...

Heracles: I have triumphed over so many enemies, and I am strong: look at me. The oak leaves through which my father spoke were whispering so softly I could only just make out the words. Rest is what they said, what I heard, rest. I have worked so hard, Dianeira, I would welcome rest at last. I am sure that’s what they said. Wait for me. If I am not back by the fifteenth month, then...

Deianira: Eracle –

Heracles: Wait for me.

***

Deianira: E poi, sparito di nuovo...

Ho paura, Illo.

Illo: Tu hai sempre paura. Sa badare a se stesso.

Deianira: Il lento insinuarsi di un presentimento... come un ramo che si spezza o il richiamo di un uccello migratore che risuona da lontano.

Illo, devi andare a cercarlo. Parti oggi stesso. Riportamel sano e salvo. È tardi, ma forse non troppo tardi.

La paura mi attanaglia.

Presto, va’.

Illo: Lo troverò, madre, non temere.

Irene: Hyllos will go out of the house, out of the village, to find his father in a country not so big you can’t walk it eventually. And now, for the first time, the shadow of destiny falls over him too, the son, as he seeks and comes closer to his
father. His father’s shadow begins to cover him, merges with his own shadow.
Hyllos walks eastward, towards Euboea.

Illo: Prima o poi incontrerò qualcuno che sappia darmi notizie. Un pastore, un soldato. E poi lo troverò. Non è che lo conosca molto bene, questo mio eroico padre. Torna a casa stanco dalle sue fatiche, si tuffa nel letto di mia madre, mi arruffa i capelli, dice poco o niente. Ora non mi arruffa neanche più i capelli, mi guarda con stupore, ormai sono alto quasi quanto lui.

Heracles: You’ve grown, you keep growing.


Irene: Dianeira does not have the relief of movement and search. She has to stay still and wait, all movement in the imagination. Imagination too is a breeding ground for anger, but for the moment she and her woman friends are content to muse about darkness, life and geography and borrow from our poet Sophocles his sketches of the night.

Primo Coro: Ecco la notte, avvolta nel suo mantello tempestato di stelle.

Secondo coro: Luccicante.

Terzo Coro: Anzi, immagina la notte come un grembo, gonfio e ansimante, che, lacerato, divelto, dà luce – tra dolori atroci – al sole.

Primo Coro: E più tardi, lo abbraccia, lo accarezza, l’agonia a venire già dimenticata, come una madre amorevole, la tenera notte.

Terzo Coro: Ancora e ancora, agonie ricorrenti seguite dal perdono quando lo riammette dentro di sé.

Secondo Coro: Ma solo il sole può penetrare ogni anfratto della terra, ogni fossa dell’oceano per dirci dove si trova Eracle.
**Primo Coro:** Dicono che Eracle sia in grado di trattenere i due continenti mentre si muovono l’uno incontro all’altro, pronti a uno scontro devastante.

**Secondo Coro:** L’ultima volta che l’hanno visto stava affrontando le onde ai confini del mondo.

**Terzo Coro:** Io ho sentito che stava dando l’assalto alle mura di una ricca città.

**Secondo Coro:** Invoco il sole affinché illumini i continenti, lo cerchi in ogni angolo e mi dica dove trovare il figlio di Alcmena e del dio del tuono Zeus.

**Primo Coro:** Deianira, tremi come un uccello che non trova il proprio nido e che ha ancora più paura di trovarlo, nel caso dovesse rivelarsi vuoto. Troppe fatiche, dici, peggiori del mare, una dopo l’altra, ondata dopo ondata di travagli, sì, Deianira, troppe avventure. Ma aggrappati alla speranza, quel fiordo del destino umano, e ricorda che nella vita nulla rimane immobile.

**Secondo Coro:** Né le stelle,

nè ricchezza o miseria,

esse vanno e vengono.

Qualcuno gioisce,

sì, ma qualcun altro urla di dolore.

**Terzo Coro:** Perciò non perdere le speranze. Zeus non è senza premura per i propri figli.

**Deianira:** Date voce alla banalità della speranza, ma non capite niente. Non sapete cosa significhi essere me, siete troppo giovani. Vi crogiolate nell’agio della giovinezza e credete che il tempo non scorra, ma aspettate di sposarvi. Solo dolori, uno dopo l’altro, marito, figli, non dormirete mai più in pace, credetemi, mai più, per il resto della vostra vita. Sono già vedova delle sue fatiche, l’ho provata quella solitudine, non voglio dover mandar giù la vedovanza in un sol boccone. E poi, vedete, di solito quando partono, gli uomini ti dicono di non preoccuparti, ma questa volta invece –
* 

**Heracles:** In Euboea, Dianeira, in Euboea... ease, at last, peace, or, well, maybe death. And yet, see. I am like a god in my strength, but I am a man too and my father Zeus wants me to know fear, and to know what it is to triumph over fear – like a man, a godly man. Wait for me. If after fifteen months I haven’t returned, then... but until then, wait patiently, without fear.

* 

**Deianira:** Ho aspettato. Aspetto da quindici mesi. E voi mi dite di non perdere la speranza.

**Irene:** A messenger is a strange being. He has no name, he is the messenger. He comes running, always breathless, and brings news. Sometimes good, sometimes bad, but most often seemingly good but really bad. Pass the parcel and unwrap the worm. In those days, there was always a messenger or two, who came running hot off the press and dropped a bombshell. This one’s no exception. He is running across the plain, through a narrow street, up to the house, onto the terrace, here he is.

**Messaggero:** Volevo essere il primo a darti la buna notizia, mia Signora. Tuo marito è vivo e in salute e presto sarà a casa.

**Irene:** Dianeira knows better than to trust the first appearance of words. She checks.

**Deianira:** Cosa stai dicendo, come sai queste cose, chi te le ha dette?

**Messaggero:** L’araldo di questa casa, Lica, sta venendo qui per dirtelo, ma è circondato da così tante persone che deve continuare a fermarsi per ripetere la buona notizia e rispondere a mille domande. Così ho deciso di anticiparlo.

**Deianira:** Sta tornando a casa... finalmente... è salvo... scacci i brutti presentimenti, Deianira, solleva lo sguardo verso la luce.

   Ecco che arriva proprio Lica a dirmi di più.
Irene: Lychas has a name and so he is more than a messenger. Who is he? A house herald, that is a messenger attached to a particular house, who brings messages back and forth, a kind of postman. Unfortunately, he has ideas of his own, a tragic complication. How he missed Hyllos, we don’t know. One took the lower route, the other the higher one. Lychas is not breathless because he’s made a more leisurely way to the house, talking to everyone as he came. He is covered in dust from the road but dignified, as a house herald must be.

Lica: Ti porto notizie gradite, mia Signora Deianira, tuo marito sta terminando i riti di ringraziamento agli dei a sarà presto di ritorno.

Deianira: Cosa l’ha tenuto via così a lungo?

Lica: Ha dovuto servire la donna che si chiama Onfale, lui stesso vestito da donna.

Deianira: Vestito da donna... che umiliazione.

Lica: Precisamente, ed ecco perché si è preso qualche mese in più per saccheggiare la città di re Eurito.

Deianira: Ma quella città è in una zona completamente diversa. Non capisco.

Lica: Vedi, Eracle riteneva Eurito colpevole della sua sottomissione a una donna. Eracle era ospite in casa di Eurito quando il re cominciò a farsi beffe di lui, burlandosi del suo arco e delle sue frecce, dicendo che non era in grado di mirare dritto, che non era affatto un eroe e alla fine Eurito lo ha cacciato dalla sua casa.

Irene: Now I must tell you this is what you call a likely story. The rules of hospitality were so stringent in those days, even the most debauched and insane tyrant would think twice before throwing any guest out of his house, but listen and listen to a slight tremor in the tale Lychas tells.

scelleratezza e, non appena fu libero dal servizio di Onfale, saccheggiò la città di Eurito, uccise il re, s’impossessò dei tesori della città e ne prese le donne come schiave. Ti manda questo piccolo gruppo, mi hanno seguito, eccole che arrivano, guarda. È un peccato, non è vero? Le loro case sono cenere, i loro mariti scheletri, e cominciano qui una nuova vita fatta di tristezza e miseria, come schiave senza nome. È così che vanno le cose, mia Signora, ma tuo marito è al sicuro, e torna da te trionfante, per cui puoi gioire.

Deianira: Gioire... mio marito torna da me... Eppure, guardate queste donne che salgono lentamente su per la collina e si fermano di fronte a me, umili e silenziose. Chi sono? Alcune di loro appartenevano a famiglie ricche, abitavano in una città forte e sicura e poi, un giorno, guerra, devastazione, stupro e schiavitù. Avevano un nome, ora l’hanno perso, profughe. Guardate questa qui, così giovane, un dolore tremendo sembra scorrerle dentro facendola tremare. Ma sul suo viso, nessuna espressione, neanche un accenno, e come è bello questo suo viso...

(a Iole) Dimmi chi sei, bambina, non posso non pensare che tu avessi un nome che portavi con orgoglio, lo vedo anche adesso, nella tua immobilità. Non avere paura di me. Come ti chiami? Dimmelo.

Lica, perché non mi risponde. Dimmi chi è.

Lica: Non lo so. A volte piange, ma non parla mai, neanche una parola. Forse faremmo bene a rispettare l’orgoglio del lutto e non insistere per avere delle risposte.

Deianira Non infierirò sulla sofferenza di queste misere donne.


Lica, porta queste donne in casa e assicurati che vengano trattate bene.
Lica: Non mi sarei aspettato altro da una donna tanto magnanima.

Irene: You’ve no doubt detected that Lychas is covering something up. And so he rakes the soil and prepares it for the seeds of anger. What is worse than to feel you’ve been lied to? Who doesn’t revile the man who goes on television and appeals for the discovery of the child he has himself killed? We feel such fury when our politicians deny all wrongdoing the day before their crimes are revealed. It never does good to cover up, but at the moment Dianeira is taken in and looks at these women with pity, and also with the fear of contagion, should this evil destiny be catching. And so she acts with compassion, but the messenger, the nameless messenger, has been listening to all this in silence and now he is angry. Why? Perhaps a mixture – the one who has the truth can’t help feeling angry when he listens to blatant lies and also because his own importance as a messenger has been overshadowed by Lychas. He feels unappreciated and in that terrain anger rises quickly.

Messaggero: Mia Signora Deianira, di tutto ciò che ti ha detto Lica, le uniche verità sono che Eracle è vivo e che sta tornando a casa.

Deianira: Cosa vuoi dire?

Messaggero: Eracle non ha saccheggiato la città di Eurito per vendicare la sua dignità ma per lussuria. Si è innamorato di Iole. La voleva. Il padre di lei, Eurito, non era contrario e ora la città è un cumulo di macerie e Iole è stata portata qui, a casa vostra, come nuova moglie di Eracle.

Deianira: Chi te l’ha detto?


Deianira: Fate venire qui Lica.

Messaggero: Se nega ciò che ti ho detto, mente.
**Irene:** In that great story by Sophocles, Oedipus, two messengers argue about the facts of Oedipus’ birth. One wants to reveal all, the other to cover it up. Both men want the best, but their attitude to truth diverges. The one who wants to cover the facts up believes that truth is inevitably tragic and it would be better to live without such pain. He is proved right, although we might say that it is our search for the truth that makes us human. However, this is not the subject of our story except for one thing: hearing the truth late is the worst. When a comfortable deception is brutally cut by the truth, it leaves a wound where rage must breed.

**Deianira:** E ora cosa faccio? Ecco che arriva Lica. Devo affrontarlo. Calma, senza rivelare nulla. Lei non ha rivelato nulla quando è entrata in casa mia avvolta nella lussuria di mio marito.

**Lica:** Le donne sono al sicuro in casa tua, andrò da Eracle e gli racconterò della tua gentilezza, che messaggio vuoi che aggiunga?

**Deianira:** Hai fretta di partire, eppure sei venuto qui in tutta calma. Abbiamo ancora alcune cose da dirci.

**Lica:** Sono a tua disposizione.

**Deianira:** Mi dirai la verità?

**Lica:** Sì, almeno per quanto ne sia a conoscenza.

**Deianira:** Chi è la fanciulla che hai portato qui?

**Lica:** Viene dalla città di Eurito. Ma se mi stai chiedendo di chi sia figlia, non ne ho la minima idea.

**Messaggero:** Lica, la fanciulla di cui dici di non sapere nulla, non hai forse dichiarato che si tratta di Iole, la figlia di re Eurito?

**Lica:** Quando l’avrei detto? Trovami un testimone che ti confermi che l’ho detto.

**Messaggero:** L’hai urlato nella piazza del mercato, tutti a Trachis l’hanno sentito. Io ero lì.

**Lica:** Stavo solo ripetendo per sentito dire. Voci. Non sono la stessa cosa dei fatti.
Messaggero: Ma hai detto che stavi portando Iole alla casa di Deianira, perché diventasse la nuova sposa di Eracle.

Lica: Per Dio, ma chi è quest’uomo?

Messaggero: Eracle ha dovuto vestirsi da donna e servire Onfale ma quella era solo una delle sue fatiche, e non s’è tirato indietro. Non è stata la vergogna a fargli distruggere la città di Eurito, Eracle non ha mai tempo per provare vergogna, è stato il desiderio. Lussuria. Amore. La dea. Afrodite.

Lica: Non ho intenzione di continuare a parlare con questo imbecille. Devo andare.

Deianira: Ma io non sono un’imbicille, Lica, e ti prego – in nome di tutti gli dei, ti imploro – di darmi la verità. So che gli esseri umani sono mutevoli per natura, persino incostanti. So che l’amore controlla persino gli dei con i suoi capricci. Per cui, chi sono io per lamentarmi o oppormi al suo potere? Non posso dare la colpa a mio marito se è vittima del desiderio, né posso adirarmi contro questa fanciulla che, ne sono certa, non mi vuole male. Ma tu – tu –

Se menti perché te l’ha ordinato Eracle, sei uno stolto. Se invece, è una tua idea e lo fai per risparmiarmi un dolore, stai facendo uno sbaglio. Preferisco conoscere la verità. La scoprirò comunque prima o poi, Lica, perché le menzogne vengono sempre a galla. Hai paura? Cosa può esserci di male nella verità?

Non è che Eracle non abbia già avuto altre donne, durante tutti i suoi viaggi. Mi hai mai sentita lamentarmi? E non sarà dura con questa fanciulla, non importa quando si sia lasciata travolgere dalla passione per lui. Provo solo compassione per lei, perché la sua bellezza le ha distrutto la vita e quella è una cosa che posso capire. Ogni vita si piega al soffio del vento, ma la verità è dura da piegare. Menti pure a chi vuoi, ma non a me.

Messaggero: Vedi quanto è ragionevole, quanto è superiore e anche umana, pronta a perdonare la debolezza degli uomini, e tu vuoi sminuirla con le tue bugie.

Deianira: La verità, Lica.
Lica: Il messaggero dice il vero: Eracle si è invaghito della fanciulla. Perciò ha distrutto la città e se l’è presa. Non mi ha chiesto di nasconderti nulla, ero io a volerti risparmiare un dolore. È stato un mio errore, ma ora che sai tutto ti prego per il bene di lui e per il tuo, di essere caritatevole verso la ragazza. Con la sua forza, Eracle ha sempre piegato tutto ciò che gli si parava davanti, ma in questo caso è stato sopraffatto dalla passione per la giovane.

Deianira: Donne di Trachis, rientriamo ora e tu, Lica, non temere. Ci comporteremo in modo ragionevole e saggio – non cercherò di oppormi, sola contro gli dei. Ma non puoi tornare da Eracle a mani vuote quando lui ti ha mandato qui con una tale abbondanza, una tale folla di persone. Aspetta qui.

Primo Coro: Zeus, Poseidone e Ade si dividono il mondo eppure basta un gesto delle sue soffici dita rosate e quei tre magnifici dei lasciano i cieli, l’aria e l’oltretomba e corrono da lei, inciampando goffamente nel loro stesso desiderio. Una megadea, la potente Afrodite.

Deianira: Ecco, è così allora. E le ho pure aperto le porte della mia casa, come un povero marinaio sprovveduto che accetta di trasportare un carico apparentemente leggero ma che alla fine si rivela essere la causa del suo naufragio. Perché lei sarà la mia fine. Cosa ne sarà di noi due? Sotto lo stesso tetto, ah, sotto le stesse lenzuola, aspettando che lui prenda una di noi tra le sue braccia. Non c’è neanche bisogno di chiedersi quale delle due. E sarebbe questa la mia ricompensa per tutti i lunghi anni passati a prendermi cura di lui, della sua casa, delle sue cose, dei suoi figli.

Non è la prima volta, ma in passato è stato discreto, una donna ogni tanto mentre era in viaggio, ma ora si aspetta che condivida il nostro matrimonio, o peggio. Cosa dovrei fare? Starmene tranquilla a guardare la sua giovinezza che sboccia trionfante mentre io appassisco, divento nulla e, rifiutata, svanisco nell’invisibilità. Lei fiorirà, occuperà sempre più spazio e io verrò spinta in un angolo, un’ombra rugosa e raggrinzita. Lo sguardo di Eracle cadrà sempre su di lei, una falena verso la luce, un’ape verso il fiore, il desiderio verso la bellezza, mentre io di mio marito vedrò solo la nuca, di sfuggita mentre si allontana, o il tacco di un
piede che batte in ritirata. E poi dicono che adirarsi in una situazione come questa non si addica a una signora. Dopotutto è molto comune, dovrei comportarmi con dignità perché sto invecchiando e cosa ti aspettavi? Le api sono api.

**Primo Coro:** Lasciatemi alzare il sipario, dare una rispolverata alla storia. Vi ricordate la bellissima e triste vergine, la fanciulla Deianira? Lasciate che salga sul palco deserto della memoria e che si rannicchi in un angolo. Guardare, chi arriva?

**Secondo Coro:** Il fiume Acheloo si trasforma in un toro per il combattimento. E ora, a passo di marcia arriva, da Tebe, Eracle. Porta la clava, l’arco e la faretra. Lo si riconosce dai muscoli, dalla stazza. Entrambi vogliono la fanciulla, uno dei due la porterà a letto. Uno deve morire.

**Terzo Coro:** E ora c’è anche lei, invisibile, intenta, la dea del desiderio, Afrodisita, il martelletto da giudice in mano. Sarà lei a decidere. A malapena si accorge della fanciulla. Non ha alcun interesse per la sua bellezza, è il desiderio degli uomini che la attira. Guarda freddamente mentre combattono.

**Deianira:** Guardate Iole, eccola lì, distante, distaccata, trasuda bellezza, il suo lutto intrecciato all’orgoglio. Lo sedurrà con la sua indifferenza e lui si lascerà inebriare dal senso di colpa. E io dove sarò?

**Secondo Coro:** Il combattimento: polvere e grugniti si levano indistinti dal suolo. Teste che si scontrano, pugni colpiscono ossa o aria, arco e mani intrecciate a corna, gambe che si arrampicano sul dorso animale, zoccoli che si arrampicano sul torso umano.

**Primo Coro:** Io, il coro, che ero lì, che sono sempre lì, non sono in grado di descriverlo molto bene a causa della confusione del cozzare di teste e degli sbuffi di dolore che si levano da quel groviglio di membra indistinte.

**Deianira:** Il desiderio. Ho sempre odiato esserne la causa ma temo ancora di più il non causarlo. Il suo sguardo mi sorvolerà mentre la cerca per la casa. Cosa posso fare? Ucciderla ora, qui. Ma lui capirà tutto e mi odierà, tutti mi ripudieranno come un essere vile. Mi ripudierà comunque. Com’è che a lui è concesso uccidere chiunque gli si opponga? Perché la mia unica fatica dev’essere quella preservare il
suo desiderio? Oh, dei, perché mi avete fatto questo? Vi aspettate che me ne stia tranquilla ad assistere alla mia scomparsa? È quello che si aspetta lui?

**Primo Coro:** E dov’era la bella in quel tornado di sangue e grugniti? Il più lontano possibile. Siede su una collinetta, avvolta nella sua bellezza, uno scintillio d’innocenza.

Tiene gli occhi chiusi, non vuole vedere l’orribile brutalità di cui dicono sia causa. Siede e aspetta di sentire il tocco di un marito sulla spalla.

**Secondo Coro:** Lei non vide nulla, ma io, il coro, lo spettatore della storia, vidi tutto e posso raccontare cosa avvenne, anche se lei, l’oggetto di questo racconto, non può. Lei sa solo aspettare, ansiosa, misera.

**Deianira:** Il desiderio. Inutile pregare Afrodite. Non mi è mai stata amica.

**Terzo Coro:** Aspetta, il viso distorto dalla paura.

**Deianira:** Il desiderio. Chi è che sa tutto sul desiderio? Cosa sto cercando di ricordare? Il dio del fiume, il toro, no, no, qualcun altro, lui, mezzo-uomo, mezzo-bestia, quel mostro di desiderio, Nesso... me n’ero dimenticata, mi sono sforzata di dimenticare... Nesso...

**Secondo Coro:** All’improvviso un lamento, poi il silenzio. Sente il tocco di una mano -

**Heracles:** Come, Dianeira, come with me.

**Terzo Coro:** – e in un attimo –

**Secondo coro:** – brutalmente –

**Terzo coro:** – viene condotta al matrimonio.

**Primo Coro:** Come un vitello al macello.

**Secondo Coro:** Sangue.

**Deianira:** Nesso...

**Terzo Coro:** Sì, ormai è una donna, ed è sola.
**Deianira:** Solo pochi giorni dopo il mio matrimonio. Stavamo attraversando il fiume. La corrente era forte e il fiume profondo. Eracle era carico di tutto l’equipaggiamento del grande eroe.

**In riva al fiume**

**Deianira** (*grida*): Eracle!

**Heracles:** I have to protect my bow and arrows from the water and these clubs are cumbersome. I can’t carry you myself, Dianeira.

**Deianira:** E poi apparve dal fitto del bosco, il manto arruffato, scuro, si avvicinò a noi al trotto. Viso, lunghe braccia e torso di uomo. Non avevo mai visto un centauro prima di allora.

**Heracles:** Climb onto the back of this beast, Dianeira, he will swim you across the river.

**Deianira:** Ma – Eracle…

**Heracles:** Don’t be afraid of him, he’s a centaur, a beast of burden with human pretensions. Kick him if he goes too slowly, I’ll be behind you.

**Deianira:** Come ti chiami?

**Nesso:** Nesso, mia Signora.

**Deianira:** Nesso… Ma in mezzo al fiume… cone le mani, mani umane, cominciò a… prima la gamba, poi più su… più su… mani e acqua… urlai.

Eracle lo colpì con una freccia avvelenata, alla schiena…

Poi lo trascinò sulla sponda del fiume.

**Heracles:** Beast, low mangy hairy foreign beast, not to be trusted, uncontrolled appetite, ignoble in your actions, and now that I’ve killed you, as you deserve, I have to apologise for it and go and make a sacrifice to the gods to purify myself.
Timberlake: Irene stopped talking. She said that’s all we’d paid her for, she was thirsty. We argued that was no place to stop, she hadn’t given us a resolution, but she remained silent, her mouth tightly shut, her eyes increasingly veiled. After a while, we put more money into her plate and ordered brandy for all of us.

Irene: So: Dianeira was angry about getting old. She hadn’t known she was getting old until Heracles made her see herself in Iole’s reflection and, of course, her story isn’t finished yet, although it could be. Many stories of anger finish in a blank. Now I’ll tell you about the centaur Nessos. There were a lot of centaurs in those days, colonies of them, these horses with a human torso and arms, mocking eyes, in essence horses but untameable and anarchic, and all of them with those wonderfully sensual hands. There are still some today in these parts, people say they hear them galloping through the woods at night. There were all kinds of other monsters too, like the chimera and the many-headed giant serpent Hydra but they belong to other stories although a few of them might come into this one. Well now, you know how powerful and also how heavy horses are and how terrible it is to watch them die. Heracles went off immediately to ask for forgiveness of the gods for shooting him like that in a flare of anger, and Dianeira was left alone with the dying, the human monster. And this is the story of the anger of Nessos.

Nesso: Perchè ha dovuto uccidermi così, Deianira? E colpendomi alle spalle per di più.

Dianeira: Mi dispiace... Non volevo urlare, non sono riuscita a impedirmelo.

Nesso: Non ti ha mai toccata nessuno là sotto?

Dianeira: Ti prego...

Nesso: Siamo bravi con le mani noi centauri, pensavo ti sarebbe piaciuto.

Dianeira: All’inizio non capivo, pensavo fosse l’acqua.
Nesso: Eh eh, lui non sarebbe mai in grado di farti sentire così, vero? Troppo impegnato, troppo di fretta, eh eh.

Deianira: Smettila! Sei disgustoso! Ma mi dispiace lo stesso che tu stia morendo.

Nesso: Sento il veleno che fa effetto, guarda che ferita, grondante di fluido nero. Non c’era bisogno di usare il veleno, avrebbe potuto ferirmi e basta ma non è stato in grado di controllare la sua ira. Perché non ti ha portata lui stesso dall’altra parte del fiume? Perché gli importava di più delle sue armi, ecco perché. Non c’era bisogno che usasse il veleno... Comincio a sentire il bruciore. Sarà orribile, soffrirò terribilmente. Lo sai, Deianira, che i mostri percepiscono il dolore in maniera più acuta degli uomini? Non ci siamo abituati.

Deianira: Posso pulirti la ferita?

Nesso: E a che servirebbe? Il veleno è già in circolo. Tuo marito è un uomo avventato, Deianira, si lascia trascinare dal momento, sarà brusco, è un uomo stupido.

Deianira: Smettila!

Nesso: Gli stupidi non sanno resistere alle tentazioni. Ora ti protegge e uccide chiunque ti desideri, ma un giorno si allontanerà da te per inseguire i veli diafani della giovinezza. Conosco gli eroi come lui, hanno capacità di attenzione limitate.

Deianira: Smettila!


Deianira: Nesso...

Lo vedi il centro della ferita, non avere paura, guarda, lì dove la pelle è tutta annerita.

_Deianira_: Sì...

_Nesso_: Il sangue che sgorga, più velocemente ora... Lo sento, mischiato al veleno nerastro.

_Deianira_: Sì, Nesso.

_Nesso_: Attenta a non toccarlo, metti qui il recipiente, proprio qui sotto, si sta riempiendo?

_Deianira_: Sì...

_Nesso_: Sgorga veloce, vero? Guarda quanto sangue abbiamo noi centauri. Allora, tienilo segreto e quando un giorno – e succederà – quando il desiderio di Eracle vagherà lontano da te, allora imbevi l’abito di tuo marito con questo liquido magico a lui ti amerà di nuovo. Te lo prometto, parola di centauro... E, ascolta bene, devi tenere sempre il liquido lontano dalla luce del sole o dal calore, tienilo al buio, al buio... fino a che non ti servirà, ma fino ad allora, sempre al buio, sempre segreto, Deianira, ricorda le mie parole... nascondilo a Eracle. Ahhh... 

_Nesso grida in agonia._

_Heracles_: I’m clean now, I’ve prayed the gods, I’ve poured water over my hands.

   Why did you make me so angry?

_Nesso_: Non potevi controllarti, Eracle? Sei un uomo. Dovresti essere razionale –

_Heracles_: How could I? Why did you provoke me?

_Nesso_: Mi hai colpito alle spalle.

_Heracles_: I ought not to have done that, but I’ve washed my hands and prayed. I had to take revenge.

_Nesso_: Vendetta per cosa Eracle? Ho fatto solo ciò che mi riesce bene. Combinare un po’ di guai. Innocuo.
**Heracles:** You’re a monstrous usurping hybrid who shouldn’t be here at all.

**Nesso:** Non voglio morire. E non tra tali tormenti. Così no.

**Heracles:** I can’t help it. You didn’t deserve to live.

**Nesso:** Non merito questa tortura e sarà una cosa lunga, lo so che sarà una cosa lunga.

*Grida di dolore.*

**Heracles:** Come, Dianeira. Look, my hands are clean. Don’t cry. He made me so angry. I couldn’t let him get away with it. Don’t keep looking at him. He’s no more than a beast. Let’s go.

**Nesso:** Non dimenticarmi, Deianira.

**Heracles:** Come, quickly.

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**Trachis**

**Deianira:** Vedo che ti prepari a partire Lica. Ecco qui il dono che ti ho promesso da portare a mio marito.

Portagli questo scrigno in cui ho messo una tunica che ho tessuto io stessa in questi lunghi mesi di attesa. La dovrà indossare quando compierà i sacrifici in onore degli dei, quando dovrà apparire nel pieno splendore dell’eroe, solo allora. Digli di tenere la tunica al riparo dal sole, cosicché la sua lucentezza non sbiadisca. Affrettati. Quanto a un messaggio... cosa posso dire... parole d’amore potrebbero sfracellarsi contro la sua indifferenza... niente parole allora. Svelto.

**Lica:** Farò presto, mia Signora, e farò tutto ciò che hai chiesto.

**Deianira:** Cosa ho fatto? Sono attanagliata da dubbi terribili.

**Irene:** You can be angry and hit out, scream, kill. But you can also be angry in a manner so hidden even your actions seem unwilled. This invisible unfelt anger multiplies fast, undetected, unpreventable.
Deianira: Cosa ho fatto...

Irene: The anger that can’t be admitted is the worse. It goes under and rots all.

Deianira: La pozione...cosa ho fatto?

Irene: I can’t tell you if Dianeira knew what she was doing. How could I know? Anger could have paralysed her mind but made her hands more active than ever. That’s not unusual in these women.

Deianira urla.

Primo Coro: È Deianira! Perché urla così?

Secondo Coro: Entriamo, presto.


Sussultano.

Primo Coro: Annerito.

Secondo Coro: Un ammasso ribollente.

Terzo Coro: Raggrumato.

Primo coro: Nero, melmoso, guardate, s’indurisce.

Terzo coro: Si sgretola.

Secondo coro: Raggrinzisce.

Primo coro: Rimane solo cenere rovente, quella cosa pulsante, quella non-cosa.

Terzo coro: Polvere, ancora ansimante. Un mucchietto di polvere.

Primo Coro: Ancora in vita...

Secondo Coro: Bollente

Terzo Coro: E l’odore...

Coro: Ahhh.

Primo Coro: Putrefazione.
Deianira: Una volta era un ritaglio di ottimo tessuto.

Terzo Coro: Zolfo.

Primo Coro: Il fetore della malattia.

Secondo Coro: Guardate, si arriccia su se stesso...

Primo Coro: Si autoconsuma...

Terzo Coro: Sparisce...

Deianira: Ho usato quel ritaglio per ungere la tunica che ho mandato a Eracle.

Terzo Coro: Hai unto la tunica?

Deianira: Sì, avevo un unguento magico, datomi anni fa da un amico, anzi, un centauro che... Mi disse di tenere l’unguento lontano dalla luce del sole e dal calore del fuoco. Ho seguito le sue istruzioni e oggi l’ho cosparso sulla tunica col favore del buio a poi ho messo la tunica nello scrigno, ben protetta, come avete visto, accompagnata dalla mie indicazioni a Lica. Poi ho posato il ritaglio di tessuto usato per impregnare la tunica di Eracle sulla pietra del davanzale e non vi ho più prestato attenzione.

Terzo Coro: Quella cosa?

Secondo Coro: Pezzetti che ancora si muovono, fumo, poi nulla.

Deianira: Cosa ho fatto?

Perché avrebbe dovuto farmi un favore quel centauro? Eracle l’ha colpito con una freccia avvelenata. A causa mia. La freccia che Eracle aveva imbevuto col veleno della terribile Idra.

Terzo Coro: Il serpente dalle nove teste? Quell’Idra?

Deianira: Sì, cos’altro? Quanto Eracle uccise l’Idra, non ricordo più in che modo, fu una delle sue fatiche, impregnò alcune frecce col sangue del mostro. Certo che Nesso voleva distruggere l’uomo che gli ha causato tale dolore, a tradimento poi, devo ammetterlo. Eracle lo colpì alle spalle, un gesto per nulla eroico.
Secondo Coro: Ma Deianira, si dice che il sangue putrido dell’Idra fece ammalare anche gli dei quando l’odorarono.

Deianira: Sì... me n’ero dimenticata. Volevo che mi desiderasse di nuovo. Il centauro mi disse di raccogliere il suo sangue mischiato al liquido nero e denso della freccia, mi disse che avrebbe fatto sì che Eracle ardesse d’amore per me. Ardesse... Ma ricordo come mi era apparso scuro, denso, disgustoso quel liquido – beh, a volte anche il desiderio... Non mi feci domande allora, ma ora credo che questa magia... Mi chiedo... magia donata nell’odio e nell’ira, come possa condurre a qualcosa di buono...

Se Eracle muore, morirò anch’io.

Volevo il desiderio di un uomo, non lo sdegno del mondo, no, non potrei sopportarlo.

Primo Coro: Calma, Deianira. Non lasciarti sopraffare dai tuoi timori. Non puoi sapere...

Deinaira: Non posso sapere...

Secondo Coro: Non avevi pianificato di ucciderlo.

Deianira: No, non l’ho fatto. Pianificare.

Terzo Coro: Non ti si può condannare per un errore sventurato.

Deianira: Un errore, sì, se non vi è intenzione. Ma come si fa a dire che intenzioni si formino in un animo confuso e disperato? E la paura, anche la paura confonde l’intento. Cosa ho fatto? Cosa avevo intenzione di fare? Come faccio a saperlo?

Primo Coro: Devi stare zitta ora, Deianira, non dire altro. C’è Illo che corre verso casa. Eccolo che arriva. Ti rassicurerà, o almeno porterà notizie.

Irene: The last time we saw Hyllos, if you remember, he was walking through Greece, looking for news of his father. And he was innocent, casting almost no shadow, a son who loved his mother and searched for his father, normal. Now his story begins, his own terrible story.

Illo: Ho solo tre cose da dirti. Vorrei che non fossi mai nata. Se proprio dovevi nascere, vorrei che non fossi mai stata mia madre, e vorrei che fossi morta.

Primo coro: Illo, che parole orribili – rivolte a tua madre, poi!

Illo: She is not my mother, she is disgusting, she is evil.

Deianira: Illo.

Illo: Murderer!

Deianira: Illo! Come osi parlarmi in questo modo?

Illo: Tu hai osato uccidere mio padre.

Deianira: Ritira quello che hai detto.

Illo: Tanto varrebbe chiedermi di ritirare ciò che è accaduto. È lì, è accaduto, è manifesto, non si può cancellare ora, non si può far sì che non sia mai successo. Assassina! Guarda cosa hai fatto.

Deianira: Non lo so che cosa ho fatto...

Illo: Te lo dico io. Non ti risparmierò alcun dettaglio.

Ascoltami bene.

Non mi ci volle molto a raccogliere notizie su mio padre. Mi dissero che era di ritorno dal saccheggio della città di Eurito, carico del bottino di quella conquista, armi, tesori per te, intere mandrie di bestiame. Si diresse a Punta Cenaeum, un promontorio sul mare e lì preparò gli altari per libare al padre Zeus e ringraziarlo della vittoria. Fu lì che lo trovai, circondato dal suo esercito, mentre stava per sacrificare alcune delle bestie che aveva ottenuto. Fu lì che lo trovò anche Lica. Lica:

Heracles (contentissimo): From Dianeira? Woven by her? For me?

Ah, it’s magnificent.
Illo: La indossò, seguendo le tue istruzioni, mantenendosi all’ombra. E poi, forte, alto e fiero nello splendore della sua nuova tunica, mio padre condusse dodici buoi verso gli altari. Sembrava così felice, glorioso, e incominciò a pregare, i suoi nobili lineamenti pervaso di gioia e orgoglio. Ero in piedi tra la folla, ma ero anch’io fiero, madre, del fatto che quell’uomo magnifico fosse mio padre. I rami presero fuoco scoppiettando e le fiamme presero a danzare. Eracle pregò, il viso illuminato dal fuoco, o forse dal dio.

Heracles: God of the heavens and of all victories, Zeus, my father, I stand here to thank you for my triumph. The city razed to the ground, bounty, slaves, and for you these oxen. From you, Zeus, my strength, my purpose, and my hope. Accept these gifts, god of lightning, and stretch down the flames of you power to your mortal son, Heracles. Grant me a safe return, grant me days of peace, grant me my promised rest, grant me the time to enjoy the fruits of my labour. Let your prophecy be fulfilled, father, and let me rest at last.

Illo: E fu allora, madre, che uno strato di sudore iniziò a formarsi sulla sua pelle e la tunica sembrò stringersi addosso, avvinghiarsi, come incollata al suo corpo. Iniziò a grattarsi, nel bel mezzo dei riti sacrificiali. Era come se la stoffa lo stesse consumando fin nelle ossa, non riusciva a grattarsi abbastanza forte, abbastanza a fondo. Cominciò a rigirarsi su se stesso, grattando, graffiando. E a quel punto riuscivamo a vedere che il veleno si stava lentamente nutrendo della sua stessa pelle, come un serpente che si avvinghia stretto attorno a un arto. Cominciò a urlare e fece chiamare Lica perché gli spiegasse come avesse potuto tramare la sua rovina decidendo di ucciderlo con la stoffa avvelenata. Lica cercò di dirgli che il dono era da parte tua ma mentre stava parlando, un nuovo spasimo d’agonia s’impossesso delle membra di mio padre che afferrò Lica per la caviglia e lo scaraventò contro una roccia. Il suo cranio si frantumò, cervella che colavano sulla roccia. Amavo Lica, è da lui che ho imparato a essere fiero di mio padre. Tu non ne parlavi mai, ma Lica mi raccontava tutte le storie. E ora, di lui rimane solo una poltiglia grigiastriata di sangue che cola lentamente dalla roccia fino al mare.

La gente cominciò a rabbividire dall’orrore, le loro grida smorzate solo dal terrore quando mio padre cominciò a gettarsi a terra per poi saltare di nuovo su,

**Heracles**: Child... come her... Child, don’t run away from my torment. Come to me, my child.

**Illo**: Corsi da lui, madre, ma non potei abbracciarlo per via del dolore.

**Heracles**: Child, don’t let me die here on this desolate promontory. Take me away with you. Take me to the sea.

**Illo**: Abbiamo fatto come ha chiesto, lo abbiamo portato con grandi sforzi e difficoltà su una nave, dove ha urlato il suo dolore alle onde. Siamo attraccati sulla costa e ora si dirige qui. Non so dire se ne vedrai il cadavere o il relitto vivente, ansimante, dell’uomo, ma ti costringerò a vedere ciò che hai fatto. Sì, madre, un piano astuto il tuo, ma sei stata smascherata. All Greece will echo with your evil and I pray that the guilt and torment of all the furies of Hell will pay you back in kind for what you have done.

**Primo Coro**: Illo... Stai parlando a tua madre, mostra il rispetto dovuto e non trasgressire la legge.

**Illo**: She usurps the name of mother, pollutes it with her presence.

I hear my father, the greatest man on earth, the best of fathers, I’ll make you face him, let him do what he will with you.

I’ll take you before him and if he has the strength, he’ll kill you and I won’t care.

**Primo Coro**: Guarda, Illo. Tua madre scivola silenziosamente verso la casa, senza una parola.

**Illo**: Let her slink away, slithering murderer.
Secondo Coro: Pur sempre tua madre.
Illo: Is there anything in her behaviour to show she ever gave birth? That crawling piece of evil flesh is not a mother.
Primo Coro: Un lamento rimbomba tra le mura della casa. Che altro c’è, adesso?
Terzo Coro: Un soffio di miseria, i muri tremano.
Primo coro: Entriamo. Vedo la nutrice di Deianira.
Nutrice: Vaga da una stanza all’altra, si rifiuta di parlare, la seguo. Guardate. Prima si è fermata davanti a ogni altare delle casa...
Deianira: Quello che non posso dire... Si, sapevo.
Nutrice: Scivola silenziosa di stanza in stanza, tocca ogni oggetto, vasi, il telaio, una panca di pietra.
Deianira: Non ho provato stupore. Sapevo che era veleno. Che l’avrebbe ucciso. Lo sapevo...
Nutrice: Poi è andata in camera, si è seduta sul loro letto, nel centro.
Deianira: Quello che non riesco a dire: un elemento di piacere in quelle urla di dolore. Per via del mio di dolore, in tutti questi anni. La prima volta che venne a prendermi, la prima volta che mi lasciò, quando ritornò, quando arrivarono i figli e ora che ha deciso liberarsi di me.
Nutrice: Ha rimosso le spille dalle spalline dell’abito.
Nutrice: E allora ho visto che teneva in mano una spada.
Deianira: Ma Illo no, non lo posso sopportare: di essere orfana di mio figlio, da lui odiata e abbandonata – la casa privata dei figli e dell’amore no, questo no.

Nutrice: Ha lanciato un urlo, piangendo il focolare abbandonato e le ceneri fredde. Ha lanciato un urlo e son corsa fuori a cercare Illo perché mi aiutasse.

Deianira: Quello che non riesco a dire: non m’importa se muoio ora, non mi sarebbe importato neanche prima, a cosa è servita questa vita? Non c’è nulla. Che la notte scenda con il suo manto scintillante di vuotezza, che la notte mi copra pure.

Nutrice: E si è trapassata il fianco con la spada.

Deianira: Quello che non posso a dire: sto cercando uno schema adesso, un diagramma che dia senso alla mia vita, ma non vedo niente. Tutto sa solo di spreco.

Nutrice: Dove l’ha trovata la forza nelle braccia? Quale donna si uccide con la spada?

Che fine terribile, e con la sua fine giunge anche la mia. Che vita è, se non sia nessuno da accudire?

Illo: Perché mi chiamate? Non sentite le urla di mio padre che is fanno strada su per la collina? I must go to him. And then she will face her torment.

Primo Coro: È già morta, Illo.

Terzo Coro: Si è uccisa.

Secondo Coro: Con la spada, gesto eroico e virile.

Terzo Coro: Condannata da te.

Secondo Coro: Senza possibilità di essere udita, di difendersi.

Terzo Coro: Sola.

Secondo Coro: La tua rabbia.

Primo Coro: Non era sua intenzione uccidere tuo padre.

Secondo Coro: La veste era intrisa di una pozione d’amore.
Terzo Coro: E adesso.

Primo Coro: Non hai nessuno contro cui inveire.

Secondo Coro: Dove scaricherai la tua rabbia?

Terzo Coro: Dove?

Primo Coro: Non contro di lei. Non più.

Terzo Coro: Irraggiungibile.

Illo: Madre...

Primo Coro: Inutilegettartisul letto ormai.

Terzo Coro: Piangere.

Illo: Madre...

Primo Coro: Inutile baciarse le mani, abbracciarla, ricoprirla delle tue lacrime. Il suo sange che ti sporca le mani. Troppo tardi.


Terzo Coro: Lei stessa silenziosa, non ti può più sentire.

Secondo Coro: Tanto vale che torni da tuo padre.

Primo Coro: Ti vogliamo lontano da lei.

Secondo Coro: Va’ da tuo padre.

Illo: Mia madre...

Primo Coro: Vai.

Primo Coro: Va’ ora. Da tuo padre.

\*

Irene: I can stop now. Unless you give me more brandy and a few more bills in there, eh?
Dianeria is dead, dead in anger. What kind of a life was that? Of what significance? All shadows and quiet, sometimes it makes you angry just to remember those lives. I can go on. Because now the story takes a right-angle turn. Now we have the great man, once strong and beautiful, the man of great works, ravaged and humiliated by disease and now we have his anger and the scarring of his son. Listen.

The women of Trachis laid out the body of Dianeira ready for burning and then moved slowly out of the house as they heard the heavy tread of a mournful procession winding its way up the hill.

**Secondo Coro:** Non vorrei essere qui.

**Terzo Coro:** Non voglio assistere a nulla di tutto questo.

**Secondo Coro:** Perché dobbiamo sempre essere testimoni di tali orrori?

**Terzo Coro:** Non ho mai voluto nulla di ciò.

**Secondo Coro:** Credo che preferirei morire anch’io.

**Primo Coro:** Ecco che arrivano. Estranei. Lo trasportano con cura e tenerezza, ma potrebbe essere già morto.

**Secondo Coro:** Sarebbe meglio. Ma forse dorme solo.

**Terzo Coro:** Illo cammina davanti a tutti, la testa china.

**Secondo Coro:** Non voglio proprio vedere.

**Terzo Coro:** Vedo il corpo. Un tremito lo scuote.

**Primo Coro:** Mettono giù la lettiga. Gli mostrano una tale premura, questi estranei.

**Secondo Coro:** Solleva la testa.

**Terzo Coro:** Illo è in piedi dietro di lui.

**Heracles:** Child, dear child, where are you? Take my hand. My son...
Now comes the pain, I can feel it clawing at my flesh, digs deep, deeper. 
Hyllos, if only you could take my sword and slice, slice off the pain at my neck, here, head from neck, it’s easy, do it. Oh you furies from Hell, let my life close up now.


Heracles: I worked so hard. All my life. Painful even in the telling. I never stopped. I crossed swords with a thousand men, I braved an army of giants, I mastered the wild beasts of the earth, I purified my country of diseases and the scourge of monsters. Look at my hands. I throttled the ox-eating lion with them, I subdued the hissing invincible many-headed Hydra. I tamed those lawless horses with the heads of men, the anarchic centaurs, and I even dragged the three-headed dog of the underworld to the light. That was before, no after, I killed the dragon who guarded the golden apples on the far edges of the world. How many other labours? And I always won. No one beat me at anything, ever. And now look at me. Mown down by the blind sweep of misfortune. No, not fate. Her. What neither Greek nor stuttering Barbarian could do, she’s done by wrapping this cloak of venom around me, she, without a sword, she’s turned me inside out, revealed me to be no more than a girl, a girl. Crying, begging for help, I have no strength, not even courage, I’m a girl, a girl.

Geme.

I can’t bear this pain, this flaming itch. It flicks and then it grips and then it throttles every limb. Look at you father, Hyllos, look at this gangrenous puppet, limbs jerking in all directions, screeching distress, that’s what she’s done. No respite. Never again.

I always did my duty, followed my calling without complaint. I, son of the noble Alcmene and son also of a god, look at me now, shredded.

Urla.

Illo: Padre...

Heracles: Bring her to me, bring her here, Hyllos. Never mind that she is your mother, that she suckled you, cradled you, bring her out and deliver her into these
hands. Still strong. Quickly, Hyllos, show yourself to be a true son of mine, waste no
time. And let me see whether you feel more for your father or for your mother
when she lies before you mangled by my hands as she’s mangled me. Go...

Illo: Padre...

Heracles: I may be nothing now, but I can still inflict on her the same torment she’s
inflicted on me. Bring her to me and I’ll pull out of her one by one sounds that
declare Heracles always takes revenge on the wrongs done to him.

Irene: Our parents are the great heroes of our mythology, our Olympian gods. To
watch them fall is unbearable. Hyllos sees his great strong father cry like a girl and
he can’t help despising Heracles a little. Hyllos then begins to feel the most painful
anger of all, anger against oneself.

Illo: Padre, ascoltami.

Heracles: The pain roars in my ears, what did you say?

Illo: Listen.

Heracles: Be quick, before my next spasm.

Illo: My mother...

Heracles: Why isn’t she here yet? You promised to bring her, why have you
disobeyed?

Illo: Padre...mia madre...

Heracles: It roars, it roars. I want her in my hands, why are you withholding this last
pleasure from me?

Illo: Devo dirti qualcosa a questo proposito, padre. Ha sbagliato, ma non apposta.

Heracles: How can you speak of her with that tone of voice when you stand in front
of the father she murdered?

Illo: Non diresti così se sapessi –
**Heracles**: Am I not dying? Did she not poison me? Are you in league with her? Are you going to show yourself a murderous villain and not my son?

**Illo**: She is dead. Just now. Pierced by the sword.

**Heracles**: You did this?

**Illo**: She did. Alone.

**Heracles**: She did. Coward. And so she slips from the torture of my hands. Rage.

**Illo**: Your anger will subside when you learn more.

**Heracles**: Relinquish my anger? Never!

**Illo**: She knew of your unbridled lust for Iole, she wanted to apply a love charm that would turn your desires back to her. Voleva proteggere le mura domestiche dall’ombra di Iole, salvare il suo matrimonio, proteggere la nostra famiglia e anche me, padre, il tuo primogenito – nel caso avessi deciso di prendere una ragazza poco più grande di me come moglie e mia nuova madre.

**Heracles**: Who in Trachis is so expert in drugs?

**Illo**: Nessos the centaur gave her the charm many years ago and told her it would rekindle the dying embers of your love.

**Heracles**: Oloololola. I see the shape of my fate now, the man-monster galloping from Hell with his deadly revenge. Your father is no more, Hyllos. Darkness for me now.

Call your brothers and your sisters, call my mother, that proud bride of Zeus. Why? What was it all for? Her marriage, bearing me? Nothing, all in vain.

When you are all gathered I will disclose the final predictions concerning my fate.

**Illo**: When you left for you last works, our family scattered, Father, but I am here. Speak to me, I will assist you as best I can.
Irene: All his life Hyllos longed for the intimacy and the confidence of his great and absent father. He feels a moment of joy at not having to share it, being the only one there, at last recognised and valued. So he believes. He can’t know that when parents die they behave no differently than when they lived.

Heracles: Now listen carefully, Hyllos, and prove to me you are indeed my son and not some bastard of your mother’s. It was my own father Zeus who told me I would never die at the hands of a human being. I thought he was promising me immortality or at least a heroic combat with a god. Now I see all he meant was that the hatred and anger of a mortal being, of an animal, would be stored cold in the jaws of hell, waiting for me.

And Zeus said more when I went to consult his sacred oak. I remember how the branches bent down to me and the leaves murmured in soft tones that all my work, all that endless effort would one day come to an end. And I thought the branches were singing of ease to come, retirement, rest at last, but they were only mouthing words of death. Of course! Only in death do we rest from our labours. Ha ha. That was the prediction! Now it all twists together and glistens in the light! My destiny made manifest.

What was all that work for? Nothing. Vanity. Passing. You, my child, must now help your father. Be my companion and my friend, do not make me repeat any of this twice and do what I ask with joy and due respect for the law that orders sons always to obey their fathers.

Illo: Queste parole, pronunciate con tale solennità, mi spaventano, padre, ma obbedirò.

Heracles: Hold out your right hand, touch mine and swear.

Illo: Here is my hand.

Heracles: Pray also for unending torment as punishment if you fail.

Illo: I can keep my promises, Father, but even so I ask for punishment if I fail.
**Heracles**: See the peak of Mount Oeta over there. You will carry me to that peak in your own arms, my son.

**Illo**: Yes, Father, I will do that.

**Heracles**: When you reach the mountain peak, cut off the branches of some deeply rooted oaks and add the strongest branches of an olive tree. Then make a pyre and use the soft branches of a fir tree to light it. And on that pyre, Hyllos, you will throw my live body.

**Illo**: Il tuo corpo, ancora in vita –

**Heracles**: You will throw my live body on the fire. And you will do this without a tear, not so much as a moan or the least sign of mourning.

**Illo**: Non puoi chiedermelo.

**Heracles**: I have told you what you must do, if not, you are someone else’s son, not mine.

**Illo**: You are asking me to be your killer.

**Heracles**: I am asking for you to end this torment, to be my healer.

**Illo**: How can I cure your body by burning it alive?

**Heracles**: It is mercy.

**Illo**: It is killing.

**Heracles**: Mercy-killing then. Take friends with you if you cannot bear to do this alone. Don’t cross me now, Hyllos, don’t make me angry.

**Illo**: Father, I will carry you there, that I cannot refuse.

**Heracles**: And you will prepare the wood for the pyre.

**Illo**: Yes, I can do that, but I cannot let my hands bring on your death.

**Heracles**: I don’t care who lights the pyre.

**Illo**: No one will agree to be your murderer.
Heracles: I am the one in pain. It’s what I want.

Illo: I cannot kill my own father.

Heracles: You understand nothing.

Illo: My gesture, my guilt.

Heracles: My pain.

Illo: Padre, ti prego, liberami dal giuramento.

Heracles: Too late: you swore and the gods witnessed. Now one other small favour...

Irene: Listen to the gasp from Hyllos. This intractable and totally self-absorbed father, asking for what now? And where can Hyllos turn? To Zeus, his father’s father, who seems to have mocked Heracles all along?

Heracles: Do you know the daughter of Eurytos?

Illo: Iole?

Heracles: Yes, I mean Iole. Hyllos, she shared my bed, I don’t want an unknown stranger to lay his hands on her when I’m gone. I have decided you will marry her. Obey the sacred duty you owe your father and do not confound your good behaviour by disobeying me over this small matter.

Illo: Padre: la presenza di Iole ha causato la morte di mia madre, il dolore atroce che provi ora. Chi mi chiederebbe di sposarla se non qualcuno la cui mente è stata colpita da spiriti corrotti o da infernali segugi vendicatori? Preferirei morire che condividere la casa, il letto, col mio nemico più odiato.

Heracles: I’m the one who is dying.

Illo: Non ci vedi più, Padre, ma sta uscendo ora dalla casa, come se convocata dal suo nome odioso. And I can see from here triumph on her face. Don’t forget you killed her father, burned her city, took her by violence.

Heracles: I loved her.
Illo: Hai uno strano modo di amare, Padre. Ma ora stai morendo, tra spasmi agonizzanti e lei gioisce delle tue sofferenze, della morte di mia madre. What I see is a curl of pleasure on her cold lips. Don’t ask me to marry such malice.

**Heracles:** It’s what I want. It’s the fulfilment of my fate.

**Illo:** Impedirmi di vivere è il compimento del tuo destino?

**Heracles:** I’ve had enough of your disobedience and your doubts. If you disobey me in this, I’ll call down the vengeance of the gods, and believe me they will wait for you and they will destroy you.

**Illo:** La tua mente è malata.

**Heracles:** And you are arousing my pains again, I can feel them unfurling, Ah – you’re doing this to me.

*Heracles inizia a gemere, più forte.*

**Illo:** Mi sento perduto, non so da che parte girarmi.

**Heracles:** Listen to the man who gave you life.

**Illo:** Tu chiedi l’impossibile, va contro ogni sentimento.

**Heracles:** Obey, ask no questions.

**Illo:** Make an end of you with my own hands – marry in hatred.

**Heracles:** Don’t turn over your actions so much when I am the one commanding them.

**Illo:** Dove sono le regole? All my life I loved you and trusted you.

**Heracles:** Then trust me now. Don’t arouse my pains. Take me to the mountain quickly.

**Illo:** Father, how can I love my children if I loathe my wife?

**Heracles:** Love.

**Illo:** Didn’t you love my mother?
Heracles: I hate her now.

Illo: Padre, ti prego, lasciami decidere: ridammi la mia vita.

Heracles: We must look to my death.

Irene: It could go on, this argument, but in the end, fathers do eat their sons if they can, there is no other myth that rings so true. I know you young people like to think differently, but you give yourselves the illusion of too much power. You do what your fathers tell you in the end, one way or the other, even now, you’ll die by their order. You can hear that death from here, right now, taking place up north. That’s another story. A story of obedience.

And now the long arm of Heracles bows down the head of his son and turn this young man full of hope and life and possible love into a man overflowing with resentment, anger. And so it continues.

Illo: Non posso disobbedirti, farò come dici, ma se ciò che faccio è sbagliato è per tuo ordine, Padre, e non di mia spontanea volontà.

Heracles: I did as my own father asked... Laboured, laboured, never questioned, never complained. Do I reproach him now for the grim and itching end he’s kept for me? Do I accuse him of falsehood when I heard promises from him that made me dream of ease? No. I bow my head to him. I accept, as a man does, as a son must. Now lift me up, gently, before a new spasm contorts my body. Carry me, child.

Illo: Yes father.

Illo geme e singhiozza, mormorii di donne.

Heracles: Now my hardened soul must clamp itself shut. No cries, no cries. And let this act you perform with such reluctance fill you with joy because it is my release, my child, long awaited. This is the end of the man I am.

Illo: Portiamolo sulla montagna, amici miei, e che il mondo mi perdoni per ciò che sto per fare.
**Primo coro:** E noi seguiremo la processione visto che siamo state testimoni di queste atroci sofferenze. Dobbiamo ricordarci, tuttavia, che tutto ciò che è successo è per volere del dio.

**Illo:** Il volere del dio, oh sì, perché non riflettiamo, mentre portiamo mio padre Eracle in cima alla montagna, sul menefreghismo e l’indifferenza degli dei. Si fanno chiamare nostri padri, Zeus chiamava quest’uomo il suo seme, il suo figlio mortale, eppure Zeus osserva il suo dolore con totale indifferenza, se davvero lo osserva. Ecco mio padre che sopporta le angosce di questa rovina decretata dagli dei, tale vista suscita in noi pietà, orrore e compassione, ma gli dei che cosa provano? Nemmeno un po’di vergogna.

**Irene:** The procession made its way slowly up the mountain. There were no more cries from Heracles. Iole the and the women of Trachis watched as his wrecked body burnt down to ash. Iole never said a word. She never said a word when she married Hyllos. She never said a word to her children. What was there to say? the bitterest anger is silent. And so anger threads its way through generations. There is only one more curve to the story. One morning, some years after his marriage, Hyllos went to Iole.

**Illo:** Iole...

**Irene:** Naturally, she gave no answer, did not even turn to look at him.

**Illo:** Iole, sono anni che viviamo nell’amarezza dell’odio, nelal rabbia...

**Irene:** She turned then to look at him, bland, confirming those words.

**Illo:** Iole, l’odio che i miei genitori provavano l’uno per l’altro mi ha rovinato la vita. Vuoi rovinare i nostri figli?

**Irene:** She stares at him, still with no expression.

**Illo:** E se ti lasciassi andare? Riusciresti allora a perdonare mio padre e la mia famiglia?

**Irene:** Hyllos watches for a flicker but there is none, maybe a slight widening of the eyes.
Illo: Potresti tornare alla tua città, persino ricostruirla se vuoi. Lasciare qui i bambini finché sono piccoli.

Irene: Iole smiles and Hyllos mistakes the smile.

Illo: Saresti libera, potresti rifarti una vita, ricostruire la città di tuo padre, e una volta fatto ciò i bambini potrebbero raggiungerti e potremmo mettere fine a tutta questa rabbia.

Irene: But Iole’s smile is the smile of refusal. She has suckled her children with anger, she is her anger now, how can she relinquish the anger that she is? Anger is her life, her identity, and even a not too unpleasant habit. She shakes her head and Hyllos feels his own anger rising again, fury at her stubbornness, and he shakes her, shakes her hard.

Iole geme.

Illo: I wanted to stop this.

Irene: He shakes her hard, so hard it hurts. More anger for both, another notch of hatred.

*

Iole’s city was never rebuilt. The ruins are over there, you can’t see much now, but you can visit them. The family had descendants but they became scattered and unimportant. And the gods looked on, indifferent, and then they changed too and were forgotten.

Eventually, people stopped telling the story, this terrible story of anger, and it too was forgotten. It happened so long ago, but I am tired now and I need to rest.

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Timberlake: We left her, nodding over her brandy and put a few more notes in the plate. Outside, in the clear night, we could hear the guns in the country north of the border, where there is always a war. And then we drove silently back to Athens.
Chapter 6
Multilingual translation: visibility, polyphony and provocation

6.1 Introduction

As argued in Chapter 2, translation in Italy is seen primarily as a purely instrumental activity in the commercial context of the publishing industry. This is almost the only view of translation that exists, the academic world being characterised by extremely conservative policies and influenced by an intellectual debate which, for various reasons, excludes many of the topics that would normally lead to discussion about issues also relevant to translation (see Chapter 2). Professional schools and associations, as well as cultural bodies, are thus the main driving forces behind the debate on translation in Italy and their focus is almost exclusively on the practical side of things. Translator Federica Aceto (2015) has lamented translators’ lack of engagement with the artistic, experimental and creative side of their activity, while at the same time betraying her own limited perception of the world of translation today. In fact, although she suggests that a limited form of experimentalism, including small incursions of the source language in the target text should be acceptable, and would indeed be a sign of faith in the reader’s intelligence and receptiveness, rather than a breaking of a spell, she also says that translation, unlike any other art form, has never engaged in meta-narration and experimentalism.

I believe the two works by Wertenbaker examined and translated in this thesis suffice to undermine that claim. The claim itself, however, is proof of the fact that most discourse on translation in Italy is limited to the perception of translation as the transfer of a text from one language into another, aimed at the general publishing market. A broader perspective of what translation is would have forced Aceto to consider a number of works, even in the limited circle of Italian literature, including, among others, Malerba’s *Itaca per sempre* and Mabiala Gangbo’s *Rometta e Giulio*. The first is a 1997 re-writing of the events in the final part of *The
Odyssey with a shift – or rather a split – of perspectives. The voices of Penelope and Ulysses, in fact, alternately narrate events from their own point of view and Penelope’s role is strengthened and made less passive (despite immediately recognising Ulysses, she fools him, the cleverest of heroes, into thinking she does not know him in order to punish him for taking his time on his journey back from Troy and for not trusting her enough to reveal his identity). Mabiala Gangbo’s 2001 novel is a postcolonial work which draws on Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet to tell a story of migrant identity in modern Italy, examining the relationship between language and identity and resorting to formal and linguistic experimentalism (Orton and Parati 2007: 18).

These, as well as many other works in Italian (such as Baricco’s Omero, Iliade and Calvino’s Il castello dei destini Incrociati), offer interesting stimuli from the point of view of the relationship between writing, translation, adaptation and creativity, but Aceto’s comments testify to the general inability to see translation as something more complex than assembling linguistic equivalents (Loffredo and Perteghella 2007: 7). Aceto’s point of view is not an isolated one. Malerba himself, in commenting on Itaca per sempre, treats the very shifts in perspective which make his text particularly interesting in an apologetic manner (2016: 180-181), confirming the general view that any change to a source text is considered, if not by the author himself, at least by the audience he addresses, a kind of violation. A similar attitude is also displayed by Baricco, whose 2004 text presents the events of the Iliad from the point of view of 17 different characters and who also treats his few very minor changes to the source test in an apologetic manner.54

Paradoxically, in describing the Italian translation context as one which is extremely fluency-oriented and non-experimental, Aceto highlights her own restricted view of what experimental and non-fluent translation may be – thus giving further confirmation that translators themselves need to undergo some kind

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54 In the post-scriptum to his work, Malerba talks about the elements which ‘induced him’ to ‘take some liberties with the Homeric text’ and says that he had ‘dared’ to present his personal conjecture on the origin of the epic (2016: 180). In his preface to Omero, Iliade, Baricco similarly speaks about the very minor additions he made to the Homeric text in terms of an inability to resist temptation (Baricco 2004: 9).
of transformation (as has already been seen in the critical remarks of another Italian translator, Daniele Petruccioli, noted in Chapter 2). However, Aceto does pick up on a crucial issue, which is central to my choice of translation strategy, i.e. the idea that the reader is not a child to be babied, someone who must be patronizingly prevented from seeing the translation process behind the target text, but someone who wants to, and should be encouraged and trusted to engage critically with the text s/he is reading.

Bearing in mind this kind of context, my texts Aedón and La moglie dell’eroe, translations of Wertenbaker’s The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira respectively, aim at challenging the conservative way in which translation is carried out, studied, talked and thought about in Italy today. As pointed out in Chapter 4, the source texts themselves already challenge the general view of what translation is and does in Italy, portraying translation as something which is key to issues of identity, power and subversion. I have endeavoured to translate these texts in a way that highlights these elements and foregrounds the idea, expressed in Chapter 3, according to which translation is a process which is in itself valuable and interesting and which can contribute to processes of understanding and knowledge construction. By presenting texts which engage with issues of translation from novel points of view and by translating them in a way that pushes the boundaries of what are currently considered acceptable translation strategies in Italy, I attempt to open the doors for further development of what is still a very young discipline (Bocci 2016: 174). The various strategies adopted in my translations aim at presenting a picture of the translator as a creative and visible entity, whose own subjectivity shapes the target text, and of the translatory activity as something which is valuable per se and not merely as a means to making the source text more accessible, but rather as something which the target text reader can be aware of and thus engage with critically.

The most remarkable feature of the two translations proposed here is that they rely heavily on a multilingual translation strategy. Terms such as ‘multilingual’, ‘bilingual’ and even ‘translingual’ have been commonly used to indicate the act of writing different works in different languages, the act of writing in a language
different from one’s mother tongue (De Courtivron 2009), the act of self-translation (Kellman 2013), the simultaneous appearance within a single volume of a source text and its translation on opposite pages and the act of writing a single work of literature in which two or more languages coexist (Kellman 2013). I will use the terms ‘multilingual’ and ‘multilingualism’ to define my translation strategy, taking as a starting point Grutman’s definition of multilingualism in literature, already quoted in the Introduction, as ‘the use of two or more languages within the same text’ in proportions which can be variable (2011: 183). The languages can be present to a similar extent or one language can form most of the text while just a ‘sprinkling’ of words appear in another language. In both *Aedón* and *La moglie dell’eroe* English and Italian have equal prominence, but in the former text a few words in ancient Greek, as well as Niobe’s regionalized Italian idiolect, are also present. The expression ‘bilingual edition’ will be used in section 6.5 to refer to an entirely different practice, i.e. the publication of a source and target text side by side on opposite pages in a single volume.

I am fully aware that the two translations presented here would not be considered commercially acceptable by most publishers and indeed by most translators in Italy. However, I believe that they showcase an alternative way of translating which reveals the fact that the text being read is the product of a process of transformation of a source text. Once this process is revealed, the reader can become aware of it and engage with it, think about it, consider how s/he would have carried out that same transformation. Additionally, although multilingualism may appear to be a particularly extreme strategy, if we consider the extent to which it occurs in modern society (in different ways and to different extents), I believe it is not as far-fetched an option as might seem at first. Indeed, in Italy like in many other countries throughout the world, the linguistic situation is more inherently multilingual than monolingual. As well as the very specific situation with regional dialects, and in some border regions other minority languages, already discussed in section 3.6, the English language is also increasingly part of the linguistic panorama. In some cases, it is even seen as shaping and moulding Italian lexis and syntax (Ottoni 2009, Testa 2013), an issue that will be addressed more in
detail in section 6.6. Additionally, in writing, multilingualism has occurred often enough in original works and examples from the works of Ariel Dorfman, Susana Chavez-Silverman, Brian Friel and Dario Fo will follow in sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2. The existence of these examples, and many more besides, confirms that readers can be, and have been, able to process a text written in more than one language. Why is this more acceptable if done by an author than by a translator? In fact, who better than a translator can reveal the difficulties, challenges, joys and inner workings of the process of translating a text? Through multilingualism, this is exactly what I have tried to do with these translations. The coexistence of different languages is used as a way of bringing language and translation to the forefront, to foreground the translation process itself and to get the readership to engage with what it means to read an original, to read a translation, and to translate. In short, it is a way of fostering awareness of issues relating to translation and creating the condition for their discussion. As remarked by Kellman in his analysis of Ariel Dorfman’s work, the presence of another language, unexplained and untranslated, works to dispel the invisibility of the translator creating a text which is foreignizing (Kellman 2013:215). The coexistence of English and Italian presented in my translations challenges conventional ideas of fluency, while at the same time representing what in today’s world is a fairly common condition and which might, in a near future, be incorporated in the idea of fluency itself: that of multilingualism (Yildiz 2012: 3).

Essentially, far from being an ‘admission of defeat’ (Aceto 2015), the use of English within my Italian translation serves to make the translator, and the translation process, visible by reminding the readers that they are not reading a text originally written in Italian. As section 6.2.1 will explain, this strategy also represents and gives voice to my own, fragmented linguistic identity – at the same time mirroring the fragmented linguistic and cultural identity of the source text author and of some of the characters in the text. Additionally, the clash of languages mirrors and foregrounds the clash of cultures or perspectives which are portrayed in the two texts. The persistence of the source language – English – in my translation might be controversial due to the global nature of this language.
However, it is important to point out that the choice of English alongside Italian as primary language in my translations is due simply to the fact that these are the two languages which form the core of my linguistic identity. As such, there was, in fact, no choice at all. Few others might experience the same struggle between the same two languages, but many experience a similar struggle between another pair of languages or between a standard variety of language and one of its dialects or among standard language and idiolect. In fact, in its many forms, multilingualism is actually a much more widespread condition than monolingualism (Trudgill and Cheshire 1998: 1) and consequently a high number of people, whether they consciously realise it or not, have to learn to reconcile and translate different cultural and linguistic experiences in their everyday life. The intent of these translations is not, therefore, to suggest a need or wish to impose English per se on speakers of a different language, or to reduce linguistic diversity by imposing a global language. The aim is rather to convey the difficulty of reconciling different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the split identity of the translator which, in this particular case, is torn primarily between English and Italian, and the idea that anybody can engage with the diverse and unfamiliar and gain from the exchange.

Overcoming the instrumental model of translation that is so widespread in Italy does not mean denying the fact that translation does have practical applications. It does mean, however, suggesting that those applications are more varied than the simple act of making a text or utterance available in a language different from the one in which it was originally written or uttered. Some of the ways in which translation can give a wider contribution to a number of disciplines have been described in Chapter 3, and in the last two sections of this chapter I will provide examples of how a multilingual translation strategy may prove particularly useful in different educational contexts. In section 6.6 I will analyse practical uses of my translations within the Italian high school curriculum and in chapter 7 I will suggest further possible uses at higher and lower levels of education.

Throughout this chapter I will use ‘ST’, followed by the page number from Wertenbaker 1996a or Wertenbaker 2002, to refer to extracts from the original plays; ‘TT’, followed by the page number from this thesis, to refer to extracts from
my translation; ‘ST’ and ‘TT’ each followed by respective page numbers when the extract appears identically in both Wertenbaker’s text and my translation.

6.2 Linguistic bigamy

The idea of creating a text in which English and Italian are used together stems, first and foremost, from my own desire to give voice to a linguistic plurality which has marked my whole existence. This plurality however, is only partly due to my personal situation of having an English mother and an Italian father. It is also due to the more general linguistic situation in Italy, already mentioned in section 3.6. It is a situation which sees the coexistence of a vast number of regional dialects which are spoken alongside the standard language by a high percentage of people – 44.1% – and as the only language by a small percentage of people – 5.4% (De Mauro 2016: 113). Additionally, as a result of the growing interaction between elements of dialectal and standard language, regionally marked varieties of Italian, called ‘italiani regionali’, have emerged (De Mauro 2016: 120; 127-132; Berruto 2010), meaning that even what is considered standard language exists in many varieties. The two following sections give an overview of my personal background and the general linguistic background of Italy in relation to the literary works I have translated and the way I have chosen to translate them.

6.2.1 Personal background

Multilingualism has been an essential part of my life and this is something which is also true for Wertenbaker, although to a much greater extent and with issues relating to governmental language policies, as described in section 4.1.1. In my case specifically, the bilingualism of English and Italian has been the central feature of my linguistic identity. My translations are therefore marked by my desire to give voice to a type of hesitation and uncertainty which mark my daily struggle to identify a single mother tongue. This is a kind of struggle which many bilingual writers have commented on. The aforementioned Ariel Dorfman effectively
described this kind of hesitation by proclaiming himself a ‘bigamist of language’ (1999: 270), while writers and translators Ilan Stavan and Edward Said both produced autobiographical texts (On Borrowed Words, Stavan 2002 and Out of Place, Said 2000) which give voice to the sense of ‘split selves’ that being a polyglot produces (Stavan 2016). In both these writers’ words, this sense of split selves seems to be linked to ideas of linguistic relativism. Popularised in the first half of the 20th century by Sapir and Whorf, this theory, based on the earlier works of Humbolt and the German romantics (Hermans 2011: 302), essentially postulates that ‘culture, through language, affects the way we think, especially perhaps our classification of the experienced world.’ (Gumperz and Levinson 1996: 1). Despite much discussion and criticism of ideas of linguistic relativity, it is clear from Stavan and Said’s words that their own experience of language seems to support it. Stavan believes that ‘how one perceives the world in any given moment depends on the language in which that moment is experienced’. Similarly, Said commented on his own experience as author and on the feeling of always having to try to translate experiences he had had in a remote environment and in a different language (Said 2000: XV). Like Stavan, he suggested that life is lived and experiences are had in a given language, and for people who speak more than one language fluently this causes a split when trying to describe events, which were experienced in one language, in a different one (Said 2000: XV - XVI).

For some of these writers, the way to overcome such a split has been to let the languages overlap and interact, producing multilingual texts. As already mentioned, Ariel Dorfman includes Spanish words (without explanation) in his autobiographical work Heading South, Looking North (1999), written primarily in English. Stavan, describes his initial wish to write different sections of his memoir, On Borrowed Words, in different languages – a solution he was forced to give up because of practical editorial (contractual) issues (Stavan 2016). The kind of split these writers describe is not dissimilar to the one that has characterised my life but in present day society it is not necessary to be raised bilingually to experience a similar struggle. It may also be felt by the migrant or expatriate who learns to live,
work and interact in a new language or by individuals using dialect in the personal sphere of their life and the standard language in the public one.

Although Italian/English bilingualism is the most prominent aspect of my linguistic identity, it is not the only one. My father is originally from Naples in the South of Italy, but I grew up in a village in Piedmont, in the North-West of Italy, so different varieties of Italian have always coexisted within my everyday linguistic experience: local Piedmontese regional expressions and dialect (easily heard from and used by people in the small country village in which I grew up), Neapolitan regional expressions and dialect (used by my father’s family) and standard Italian (used at school and by the media). The question of a mixed cultural and linguistic background has always been of particular interest to me, especially the extent to which dialectal expressions, or ‘regionalismi’ (words, expressions or syntactic constructions which are typical of a specific region, Zingarelli 2012), are present in a person’s idiolect, often without their awareness. This is a very elusive aspect of any linguistic identity, but I have tried to embody it in in my translation of The Love of the Nightingale, through the figure of Niobe (see section 6.3).

Considering the increasingly multilingual nature of modern society (see Aronin and Singleton 2012: 31-36, Trudgill and Cheshire 1998:1) and the historical diglossia of Italy (Berruto 2010, De Mauro 2016: 25-44), it seems absurd that the majority of written or spoken texts should be confined to a translation-effacing condition of monolingualism (with subtitling, bilingual editions of poetry, or scholarly bilingual editions of literary classics being exceptions). Nor would one expect multilingual texts like the ones presented here to be perceived as controversial, but perhaps just more realistic. If multilingual texts represent the linguistic condition of the majority of readers more accurately than monolingual ones, then the creation of multilingual texts is not just a way of expressing my own linguistic struggle, but a mode of representation which is more in line with reality, as well as one that has the scope to improve the visibility of translation, as we shall see below.

Furthermore, both the texts chosen for translation contain thematic elements related to displacement, alienation and loss of identity, feelings with
which many bilinguals, myself included, easily identify. As multilingual writer and translator Ilan Stavan has commented in discussing the writing of his ‘memoir of language’, *On Borrowed Words*, people with more than one language find themselves in a ‘complicated’ situation (Stavan 2016). Although they enjoy the benefit of greater ‘freedom’ and of ‘infinite possibility’, they also have to face the drawback of ‘belonging nowhere in particular’ (Stavan 2016). As we have seen in Chapter 4, this condition is central to Wertenbaker’s life experience and in her works. Indeed, both Procne and Dianeira find themselves displaced somehow. Both women have followed their husbands away from their own home. The difference in how Thracians and Athenians use language is a determining factor for Procne’s alienated state of mind, and is even the motor that sets the wheels of the plot in motion (ST pp. 297-300). Dianeira and Heracles, on the other hand, are actually in exile in Trachis, so Dianeira is twice displaced, first for having been forced to leave her childhood home to follow her new husband and then for being exiled with him to Trachis. Niobe and Iole are both slaves whose home has been destroyed by invaders. Issues of linguistic and cultural difference arise quite naturally in this context and the use of different languages in my translations stresses the displaced condition and fragmented identity of these characters (see section 6.4).

### 6.2.2 National context

It is not only my personal linguistic background that is fragmented. The linguistic landscape of Italy is still marked by the coexistence of multiple languages: despite the rapid growth of standard Italian, dialects are still widely spoken (De Mauro 2016: 111-117) – it is worth remembering that Italy was officially ‘unified’ only in 1861, and did not actually acquire its present political borders until after World War II. There also exist varieties of Italian which are marked by regional influences but are nevertheless considered part of a ‘broader’ standard language and not dialectal forms (Berruto 2010). Indeed, in an interview for the web portal of the publisher Mauri Spagnul, linguist Giuseppe Antonelli has remarked on the increasing percentage of words of dialectal origin included in recent editions of Italian dictionaries, due, in his opinion, to the increasingly informal quality of
communication (Ghioni 2016). De Mauro also comments on the same phenomenon, though in his opinion the literary prose of writers such as Gadda and Camilleri accounts for it (De Mauro 2016: 130-131). Multilingualism is, therefore, a natural condition on Italian territory, and one which is not exclusively confined to orality (as shown by the above-mentioned works of Gadda and Camilleri, or those of De Filippo and Pasolini) nor to the boundaries of individual regions or even to Italy itself – as De Mauro points out, some dialectal songs like the Neapolitan O sole mio have gained international fame (De Mauro 2016: 129). Historically stronger in border areas (in the northern regions bordering France, Austria or Switzerland varieties of French and German are also spoken), Italian multilingualism takes on an additional dimension in contemporary society where, regardless of political or physical boundaries, English is seeping more and more into everyday life (see Pulcini 2006: 313-14). Linguistic experimentalism in Italian literature has therefore always been present, indeed it is because of it that a standard Italian arose. The standard language, in fact, emerged artificially based on the language painstakingly researched and achieved by figures like Dante Alighieri, Pietro Bembo and Alessandro Manzoni (Berruto 2010) in their literary works. Forms of experimentalism and reflection on the multilingual nature of Italy have never ceased to occur, finding expression in a number of literary works. For example, the opposition between standard Italian and Neapolitan, at a time when standard Italian was growing most rapidly thanks to TV and radio (Acton 1964: 552), is central to the work of Eduardo De Filippo (Barsotti 1995), and linguistic issues are also a prominent feature of the work of Dario Fo, who targeted both the coexistence of regional varieties of Italian (in his famous 1969 work Mistero Buffo) and the hegemonic spread of the English language (Fo 1977). Many others, from Verga to Pirandello, also took an interest in dialectal language and incorporated it in their works.

Similar reflections on language are not absent from Anglophone works and, as we have seen, are central to most of Wertenbaker’s work. The experimentations and reflections on language included by Dorfman (1999) in his own work have already been mentioned, and more extreme forms of linguistic experimentalism
also exist. In his play *Translations* (1981), a work which, like Wertenbaker’s, is also extremely concerned with issues of language and identity (Pelletier 2006: 68), Brian Friel includes Irish toponyms as well as lines of ancient Greek and Latin, only some of which are followed by an explanation of their meaning in English (Friel 1981: 14, 48); while Susana Chavez-Silverman goes further in her experimentation in *Killer Crónicas: Bilingual Memoirs* (2004), creating constant destabilizing code-switching between English and Spanish, designed to ‘wake readers up’ and ‘make them think’ (Publishers Weekly 2004: 48). As far as translation is concerned, Wertenbaker herself in her translation of Sophocles’ Theban plays (1997), leaves many of the lines of the chorus in Greek, albeit in roman script. My own translation starts off in a similar way, reporting the original Greek fragments of Sophocles’ *Tereus* in the play’s Prologue and including the Greek words for key concepts such as σωφροσύνη (measure), μύθος (myth) and συμπάθεια (sympathy). It therefore goes further than the strategy used by Wertenbaker in her *Theban Plays*, but not as far as the works of Chavez-Silverman or Fo.

Different languages are used in my translation, but they never overlap or mould and shape each other. It has been suggested to me that characters in my translation could have been made to use an altogether different language, created by mixing elements of Italian and English. The reason against this more radical form of multilingualism is that my aim has been to encourage reflection on translation and the relationship between two languages, on how one can be understood an interpreted by speakers of another language. It seemed therefore important that the essential elements of each of the two languages remained clearly identifiable and separate. Furthermore, the presence of English words in everyday Italian conversation is widespread and often used to confer a degree of prestige to the speaker, ‘to sound modern and competent’ (Pulcini 2006: 313). This is an effect I wanted to avoid. Conversely, it could also have created an effect reminiscent of an ‘interlangue’ (Comberiati 2010: 85), a phenomenon which is generally associated with a later form of bilingualism than mine, and therefore one that it is difficult for me to identify with, but also one that would automatically lead to thinking about English as an increasingly dominant language, an issue which, as expressly stated in

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section 6.1, has nothing to do with my linguistic choices. In fact, English (as a global language) is indeed perceived to be violently taking over, or indeed ‘raping’, Italian, as the #dilloinitiale petition (Testa 2013) clearly proves (see section 6.6). In this context it seems important to highlight the fact that both languages can coexist and inspire reflection about one another and about the relationship between them, while at the same time preserving their individual peculiarities. To preserve the unity of a clause in a single language highlights its features and characteristics and the differences from other languages. Thus, for example, Italian can show its relentless precision of gender and number, of formal or informal mode of address, while the remarkable flexibility of English, devoid of such constraints, also shines.

6.3 Visible translation and reader language proficiency

As well as expressing a personal struggle and highlighting language as one of the central themes of the play, retaining English extracts exactly as they appear in the source text challenges common assumptions about translation by making the source text, its language, the translator and the translation process as visible as they could possibly be. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the idea of the translator’s presence being visible within the target text is rather alien to the Italian context, where the debate around translation is generally limited to issues of instrumentality. My translations thus aim at introducing precisely those elements of experimentalism and metanarration that translator Federica Aceto (2015) laments the lack of (see section 6.1 above), forcing the reader to engage with them by presenting them in a way that makes them impossible to ignore. Encountering words and sentences in two or more different languages on the same page (and occasionally in the same line or even sentence) forces the reader to consider more specific issues of translation by, for example, reflecting on a specific choice and considering alternatives to the translator’s solution. In my translation of The Love of the Nightingale, for example, I have created instances in the text in which the same line is repeated in Italian and English by two different characters. Let us look at the following extract from Sc. 5:
Phaedra: Hold me, hold me, hold up my head. The strength of my limbs is melting away.

Philomele: How beautiful to love like that! The strength of my limbs is melting away. Is that what you feel for Procne, Tereus?

Fedra: Tiratemi su, reggetemi la testa. Ogni arto divien, tremando, molle.

Filomele: Che bello amare in quel modo! ‘The strength of my limbs is melting away’. Is that what you feel for Procne, Tereus?

As can be seen looking at the source text lines, the same words are repeated by Phaedra in the play within the play and immediately after by Philomele. In my text, Fedra says her line in Italian and the Athenian princess repeats a part of it in English. It is as if Filomele offers Tereus her own translation of the lines, and readers are thus encouraged to think about her translation, particularly since it does not match the Italian line very closely. Readers might question why Filomele chooses to translate that way and they might think of other ways in which she could have translated. They are encouraged, in short, to think about the process of translation. Something similar happens in sc. 10, where Tereus’ words ‘in time’ are immediately echoed by the male chorus’ translation into Italian ‘col tempo’ (TT. p. 144), or in sc. 14 where Procne translates Tereus’ line ‘a delay’ into ‘un ritardo’ (TT. p. 154). In such instances, it is my opinion that it would be almost impossible for a reader with at least some understanding of both languages not to reflect on the two forms of the same line, on the translation process that has created this duality, on the effect of reading two languages in the same text or on other possible ways in which the line could have been translated.

In my translation of Dianeira the use of English only for the modern framework and Italian (primarily, but not exclusively) for the mythical events

55 In this case, the unusual construction of Fedra’s line was inspired by a line in Dante’s sonnet Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare, contained in Vita Nuova (2004: 200), which is generally studied in detail in high school. Dante’s line, which refers to the effect Beatrice has on the ability to speak of people around her, reads: ‘ogne lingua deven tremando muta’ (every tongue trembling becomes silent). Tongues are substituted by limbs in my translation of Wertenbaker’s line which can be back translated as ‘every limb trembling becomes soft’.

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highlights the fact that the subject story has to undergo a process of transformation and negotiation through the mediation of Irene before it can be taken in by the modern audience of Timberlake and her friends, whose condition as listeners mirrors that of the reader of Wertenbaker’s text. The readers are therefore made explicitly aware that the story undergoes multiple layers of transformation and interpretation before they can engage with it, and this may lead them to reflect on how that process of transformation takes place and what consequences it has. In this way, readers are also reminded of the distance in time that separates them from the events of the myth, as is made evident by Irene’s comments which offer tagged-on explanations for specific elements of Greek culture, such as the idea of character, the role of a house herald, or the rules of hospitality current then (see also section 6.4.1).

In both texts, it has been my intention to make sure that Wertenbaker’s presence is still strongly felt within the target text, but, in my translation of The Love of the Nightingale, I have wanted to make sure that neither Wertenbaker’s visibility, nor my own, overshadow the presence of the many other sources of the text. There are many elements of Greek language and culture present in Wertenbaker’s text and I was concerned that, depending on the reader’s degree of proficiency in English, the parallel use of both English and Italian might distract attention from these elements. I have therefore tried to draw further attention to such elements to make sure they are not drowned out by the use of two different main languages. Where there are references to a key concept or value of Greek culture and society, I have tried to highlight such concepts or values by inserting the Greek term for them, in Greek script. Thus, in sc. 2 of my translation, Procne uses the term σωφροσύνη (sophrosyne) to indicate the key value of moderation (TT p. 119). In sc.8, the discussion around the meaning of ‘myth’ is further deepened by the use of the Greek word μῦθος (mythos, TT p. 138) and in sc. 9 the word συμπάθεια (sympatheia) is introduced instead of ‘sympathy’ (TT p. 139). The presence of the Greek words, however, does not create a degree of difficulty which would be too high for readers who are not familiar with classical Greek culture and language, because they are always followed by an explanation, in Italian. In sc. 2,
Procne’s use of the word σωφροσύνη is followed by her clarification in Italian ‘misura in ogni cosa’ (‘Measure in all things’, ST p. 295). Scene 8 actually revolves around the discussion of the meaning of the word μῦθος, and although the word appears twice in its Greek form, it is accompanied by 7 instances of the Italian word ‘mito’. Hero’s use of the Greek word συμπάθεια is also followed by the explanation ‘le immagini necessitano di un orecchio simpatetico’ (‘images require sympathy’, ST p. 317).

To further highlight the presence of the Greek sources of the texts I have also, on some occasions, expanded on those sources. In sc.5 I have expanded on some of the lines spoken by the male chorus within the framework of the Hippolytus metadrama (TT p. 129, ST p. 306), adding the words ‘E allora vorrei essere in luoghi inaccessibili, tra montagne impervie, tramutato da un dio in un essere alato’ which come earlier in the play (Euripides 2005: 101). This addition is an Italian translation of lines which appear a little earlier on in Euripides’ text, but which are not included in Wertenbaker’s text (ST p. 306). I have seen fit to include these lines because they refer to a transformation into birds – therefore providing an additional foreshadowing element of the events in the main storyline.

In the title chosen for the translation, the Greek word for nightingale, Aedón, I have attempted to set the Greek identity of the text in the reader’s mind, even before s/he reaches the two fragments of Sophocles’ tragedy Tereus included in Wertenbaker’s prologue, which are kept in the target text. Indeed, as well as the English translation by Sir George Young which appears in Wertenbaker’s prologue, I have added the original Greek fragments (TT p. 114). For those familiar with Greek, the title Aedón also raises issues of translation since, as well as ‘nightingale’, it may also mean ‘poet’ or ‘poetry’ (Williams 1997: 20). But even the reader less familiar with Greek will recognise that the word is not Italian, nor English and will thus be encouraged to question its meaning and origin. In-depth knowledge of Greek

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56 The line can be backtranslated thus: ‘and then I would like to be in inaccessible places, among steep mountains, transformed by a god into a winged creature’

57 As mentioned in 4.3, the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus foreshadows, with gender-inverted roles, the fate of Philomele and Tereus.
language and culture is not, therefore, necessary for readers to engage with and appreciate these texts, though certainly an interest in the topics would be helpful.

As mentioned in section 5.1, the English sections of my texts are unchanged from Wertenbaker’s words raising questions about how accessible such sections are for the average Italian reader. Some form of simplification of the English might have been carried out, however the nature of the source texts themselves is to constantly challenge the reader, to provide a difficult experience, but one that is all the more rewarding because of its difficult nature. To simplify the language would have toned down the challenging aspect of the experience and this was not my intention. Additionally, we must bear in mind that foreign language acquisition is a fundamental element of the Italian education system, which has been constantly re-inforced by every educational reform over the last 25 years. The teaching of at least one foreign language (English, French, Spanish or German) from primary school level onwards has been compulsory since 1991\textsuperscript{58} and in 2004 English specifically was made a mandatory teaching subject, again starting at primary school level (Archivio Pubblica Istruzione 2004). The latest educational reform, the Buona Scuola, once again strengthens the importance of English Language competencies prescribing the teaching of some subjects in English (MIUR 2015). Such regulations denote the perceived value and importance of knowing English for Italians and as a result of these policies (combined with the globalising effect of internet and television) most people in Italy have at least some knowledge of English. My experience as an EFL teacher leads me to believe that readers from an intermediate level of proficiency\textsuperscript{59} upwards would be able to engage with my translations, and gain from them, without encountering excessive difficulty. In fact, although some of the vocabulary Wertenbaker uses is complex or unusual, the syntax is in general quite simple, mainly paratactical, and the alternating of English with Italian means that in many cases the meaning of the English lines becomes clearer when reading the Italian ones close to them. The repetitions in two different languages discussed at the beginning of this section also serve this clarifying

\textsuperscript{58} The text of the 1991 law is available at: http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/norme/decreti/dm28691.html

\textsuperscript{59} With intermediate level I refer to levels B1/B2 on the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001: 24).
function. However, in a pedagogical context and according to a teacher’s aims and the student age range, some form of simplification of the English parts of the texts could be envisioned (see Chapter 7).

In both of the texts I have presented here, the sections in Italian have been translated using a strategy which could be defined as ‘faithful’. It was, in fact, my intention to recreate a crispness and clarity of language very similar to Wertenbaker’s own in order to seek an effect of continuity between the English parts and the Italian ones, particularly when they appear within the same conversation or even line. The Italian in the targets text has therefore been stripped down and syntax has been simplified in an attempt to match the brief rhythms and paratactical structure of the English source. In the scenes in which the same words are repeated first in one language and then in the other, this simplicity also serves to facilitate the reader who is less familiar with the English language (see the examples above in this section). If the syntactical structures of the two lines are similar, in fact, it will be easier for the reader to work out the correspondences between the two languages. In addition, it was my belief that achieving such simplicity of language would throw into greater relief the Greek words and regional expressions contained in the texts.

6.4 Polyphony and subversion: using multilingualism to multiply perspectives

Although, as argued in 4.4, in both The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira, Wertenbaker has created polyphonic texts which challenge dominant ideologies and patriarchal authority, these elements are more evident in The Love of the Nightingale than in Dianeira. The Love of the Nightingale, in fact, explicitly addresses issues of silencing (whether physical, psychological, social, domestic, military or political) and ways of reacting to it, as well as drawing on a very heterogeneous array of sources, each one of which is an added voice in the chorus of perspectives that make up this play. Dianeira, on the other hand, despite purposefully focusing on the female, the forgotten figure (ST p. 328) associated with the myth of Heracles, is based on a single main and integral source (Sophocles’
The Trachiniae) and sees a much smaller number of characters interact (a total of 9 characters compared to the 24 speaking and 3 non-speaking ones in The Love of the Nightingale).

The following sections describe and analyse my translation strategy providing many practical examples from the texts. Familiarity with the plot of the myths is helpful in order to fully understand my commentary and a summary of the two myths can be found in sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, while the whole of Chapter 4 provides useful background information on the entirety of Timberlake Wertenbaker’s work.

6.4.1 Multiplying perspectives in Dianeira

As already mentioned, this text is less obviously polyphonic than The Love of the Nightingale, but Wertenbaker’s effort to multiply the different perspectives on the events presented is still evident, first and foremost in the modern framework, where the mythical events are presented through the eyes of a modern storyteller (Irene) and the reaction of modern listeners (Timberlake Wertenbaker, who thus appears as a character within her own work, and her friends), and secondly in the expansion of the subjectivities of Dianeira, Nessos, Hyllos and Iole (even though the young girl’s perspective is represented through silence) as has been already discussed in section 4.4. In my translation, English and Italian are deliberately used to highlight this contrast and plurality of voices and perspectives. The modern framework is exclusively in English, while the greater part of the mythical content is in Italian. This reinforces the idea of the distance that exists between the ancient events being narrated to Timberlake and her friends and the modern context in which they are being narrated, mirroring the distance between the reader and the text. We are thus further reminded that the events being recounted are mediated by time, history, language and the storyteller Irene’s own perspective and voice. Indeed, Irene often reminds us of some of the peculiarities of the mythical world, providing tagged-on explanations for concepts like hospitality (‘The rules of hospitality were so stringent in those days’, ST p. 338, TT p. 185) or the role of a
house herald (‘A house herald, that is a messenger attached to a particular house, who brings messages back and forth, a kind of postman’, ST p.337, TT p. 185). She also offers connections between what she is recounting of the mythical events and a more modern context, as for instance, when she mentions lying politicians (‘We feel such fury when our politicians deny all wrongdoing the day before their crimes are revealed’ ST p. 340, TT p. 187) and fake television appeals (‘Who doesn’t revile the man the man who goes on television and appeals for the discovery of the child he has himself killed?’ ST p. 339-340, TT p. 187).

In the mythical part of the text, the two languages are used to highlight the patterns of opposition already present in Sophocles’ text (Williams and Dickerson 1978: 3) and highlighted by Wertenbaker. The main opposition, the one between Heracles and Dianeira, is physically obvious in the fact that the two characters never appear together in Sophocles’ play (Dianeira is already dead by the time Heracles makes his appearance). In the Greek tragedy, this was not just a choice but also a necessity, the two main characters being played by the same male actor (Hicks 1992: 77).

Wertenbaker’s radio drama, however, is not bound by the same rules. Indeed, Heracles and Dianeira do appear together in Wertenbaker’s text in two flashback scenes added to the Sophoclean source, the prophecy scene (ST p. 332 - 333) and the river crossing scene (ST p. 346 -351). The latter is presented below, with Wertenbaker’s and my own words in parallel. Despite representing direct interaction between husband and wife, these two scenes far from softening the opposition and distance between the two characters, actually foreground it. The contrast between the worlds of Heracles and Dianeira is perfectly showcased by portraying the inability of husband and wife to have a two-way conversation with each other and by presenting a passive and timid Dianeira alongside a selfish, brutal and domineering Heracles.

(ST p. 347) 
Dianeira: (shouts) Heracles! 

(TT p. 193) 
Deianira: (grida) Eracle!
**Heracles**: I have to protect my bow and arrows from the water and these clubs are cumbersome. I can’t carry you myself, Dianeira.

(...)

**Heracles**: Climb onto the back of this beast, Dianeira, he will swim you across the river.

**Dianeira**: But – Heracles...

**Heracles**: Don’t be afraid of him, he’s a centaur, a beast of burden with human pretentions. Kick him if he goes too slowly, I’ll be behind you.

**Dianeira**: What is your name?

**Nessos**: Nessos, my lady.

**Deianira**: Ma – Eracle...

**Heracles**: Don’t be afraid of him, he’s a centaur, a beast of burden with human pretentions. Kick him if he goes too slowly, I’ll be behind you.

**Deianira**: Come ti chiami?

**Nesso**: Nesso, mia Signora.

As can be seen, in the source text on the left of the page, Dianeira is talked at by Heracles, and is cut off every time she tries to speak to him, hardly managing to get out more than his name (similarly, in the prophecy scene, her husband’s name is all she manages to fit in before being interrupted by Heracles’ lengthy descriptions and instructions). Lack of communication is not due to an inability on Dianeira’s part, however, because she is perfectly capable of communicating with Nessos, as is also evident in the continuation of the scene not included in the extract above (ST p. 348 – 349). In my translation, on the right-hand side of the page, I have tried to highlight the patterns of communication and lack thereof by having husband and wife speak different languages. As already mentioned, in fact, Heracles is set apart from other characters of the myth by the fact that he is the only one to speak exclusively in English. Dianeira, on the other hand, attempts to get a word in in Italian and is able to communicate efficiently with Nessos in the same language.
While Heracles and Dianeira stand in direct and unbreachable opposition to each other, Hyllos, their son, is constantly caught between the two parental figures. In my translation, this condition is mirrored in his ability to use both languages depending on the situation. Primarily associated with his mother, he speaks mainly Italian (TT p. 179-82), particularly in the first half of the text, and only switches to English when migrating towards his father’s sphere of influence or adopting a similar attitude of blind anger. In the extract below, for instance, he is blinded by rage against his mother in his belief that she has deliberately set out to murder Heracles.

**Primo coro**: Illo, che parole orribili – rivolte a tua madre, poi!

**Illo**: She is not my mother, she is disgusting, she is evil.

**Deianira**: Illo.

**Illo**: Murderer!

**Deianira**: Illo! Come osi pararmi in questo modo?

(TT p. 201)

Hyllos’ most direct, unforgiving and raging lines are delivered in English, and the same occurs shortly afterwards, with lines such as ‘All Greece will echo with your evil and I pray that the guilt and torment of all the furies of Hell will pay you back in kind for what you have done’ (TT p. 203). Hyllos also switches between Italian and English in the final scenes with his father, whose only language is English. As the three extracts below show, in the exchanges between Hyllos and Heracles, the only words that Heracles actually heeds and reacts or responds to are the ones that Hyllos pronounces in English, whereas anything he says in Italian is effectively a waste of breath.

1) **Illo**: Padre, ascoltami.

**Heracles**: The pain roars in my ears, what did you say?

**Illo**: Listen.

**Heracles**: Be quick, before my next spasm.
Illo: My mother...

Heracles: Why isn’t she here yet? You promised to bring her, why have you disobeyed?

(...)

(TT p. 209)

2) Heracles: How can you speak of her with that tone of voice when you stand in front of the father she murdered?

Illo: Non diresti così se sapessi –

Heracles: Am I not dying? Did she not poison me? Are you in league with her? Are you going to show yourself a murderous villain and not my son?

Illo: She is dead. Just now. Pierced by the sword.

Heracles: You did this?

(...)

(TT p. 209-10)

3) Illo: She knew of your unbridled lust for Iole, she wanted to apply a love charm that would turn your desires back to her. Voleva proteggere le mura domestiche dall’ombra di Iole, salvare il suo matrimonio, proteggere la nostra famiglia e anche me, padre, il tuo primogenito – nel caso avessi deciso di prendere una ragazza poco più grande di me come moglie e mia nuova madre.

Heracles: Who in Trachis is so expert in drugs?

(TT p. 210)
In these three examples from the final scenes, Heracles only really ‘hears’ and responds to the lines Hyllos says in English. The information expressed in Italian is completely ignored by Heracles. This is most evident in extract number 3 where Hyllos’ line is half in English and half in Italian. What he says in English, the fact that Dianeira was looking for a magical potion, is the only thing that registers with Heracles, who focuses on who could have provided his wife with such a powerful potion. What drove Dianeira to resort to magic in the first place, which Hyllos explains in Italian, is of no interest to Heracles. Similar dynamics are also evident in the final scenes of the play, as shown by the following extract (in which lines have been numbered for convenience – TT p. 214-15):

1 **Illo**: Mi sento perduto, non so da che parte girarmi.

2 **Heracles**: Listen to the man who gave you life.

3 **Illo**: Tu chiedi l’impossibile, va contro ogni sentimento.

4 **Heracles**: Obey, ask no questions.

5 **Illo**: Make an end of you with my own hands – marry in hatred.

6 **Heracles**: Don’t turn over your actions so much when I am the one commanding them.

7 **Illo**: Dove sono le regole? All my life I loved you and trusted you.

8 **Heracles**: Then trust me now. Don’t arouse my pains. Take me to the mountain quickly.

9 **Illo**: Father, how can I love my children if I loathe my wife?

10 **Heracles**: Love.

11 **Illo**: Didn’t you love my mother?

12 **Heracles**: I hate her now.

13 **Illo**: Padre, ti prego, lasciami decidere: ridammi la mia vita.
14 **Heracles**: We must look to my death.

As Heracles makes specific requests about his death and Hyllos’ life with Iole, Hyllos uses Italian when he is voicing horror, or the impossibility of even contemplating doing what his father is asking (such as in lines 1, 3 and 13), and English when he is mulling over the requests, still horrified, but accepting the possibility of obeying them, such as in lines 5 and 9, in which he voices the significance of what he is asked to do and the consequences he expects such actions to have on his future life. Conversely, Heracles fails to recognise and address any of the objections Hyllos makes in Italian and his only response to such objections is to blindly restate his own will and insist that his orders be followed without question, as in lines 4 and 14 in the extract above. The contrast between languages becomes a way of highlighting Hyllos’ condition of being torn between the compulsion to obey his father, regardless of the requests, and the knowledge that doing so will ruin his own life. This kind of dynamic is present throughout the whole of the final conversation between father and son (TT p. 208-15).

Apart from Hyllos and Dianeira, Nessos is the only other character to have direct interaction with Heracles. Heracles and Nessos do not share the same language in order to highlight the apparent opposition between the characters which, from Heracles’ point of view, is that of a lowly treacherous beast (ST p. 347 and 350-51, TT p. 193 and 196-97) and an honourable hero. In reality of course, as the story unfolds, we understand that Heracles himself is actually just as dishonourable and prone to lust as Nessos, with the only difference that he is incapable of admitting his own faults. Additionally, creating this opposition between Heracles and Nessos fortifies the connection between Nessos and Dianeira, who is also present during the river crossing scene in which the centaur dies. The centaur and the young woman both speak Italian so they are able to interact fully. Dianeira takes an interest in Nessos’ fate, and the exchange between the two characters is essential for the development of the plot (Nessos’ gift of the potion and Dianeira’s later decision to use it). The interaction between Nessos and Dianeira also shows that the woman is not passive and unable to communicate *per se*, but that it is Heracles attitude that makes her so.
6.4.2 Multiplying Perspectives in The Love of the Nightingale

We cannot say much for certain about Sophocles’ Tereus, the only dramatic source to The Love of the Nightingale which has survived in just a few fragments, two of which are quoted at the beginning of Wertenbaker’s play. The title of Sophocles’ play may lead us to believe that it was a strictly monological one, revolving exclusively around the title figure. However, considerations made about Sophocles’ Ajax, which fortunately has reached us in more than a few fragments, may lead us to reconsider such an assumption. Burian, in fact, suggests that as obvious as it would seem to assume that Ajax is entirely and exclusively about Ajax, with the other characters simply serving to define the figure of the title hero by contrast, as suggested by Reinhardt (in Burian 2012: 69), such an assumption may be superficial. Burian suggests that the other characters in the play actually create a polyphony of voices which force us to consider a number of perspectives (Burian 2012: 69). Although we cannot know if such a polyphonic aspect was already present in Tereus, Wertenbaker’s The Love of the Nightingale displays the kind of polyphony that Burian mentions in relation to Ajax. Every one of Wertenbaker’s choices, be it of embracing one source over another, deviating from sources, building on them or filling them in, suggests the intention of offering different voices and perspectives on the issues examined in the play so that, even though we cannot say for certain whether Tereus was as polyphonic in nature as Burian suggests Ajax is, we can say that The Love of the Nightingale most definitely is, and I have tried to make it even more so through multilingualism.

In this play, the attention is directed towards the female figures of Procne, Niobe and, above all, Philomele, all of whom represent different perspectives on the issues of voicelessness, dispossession and power. In Sophocles’ tragedy the character of Philomele was a weak one, indeed a non-speaking one, because the play presumably started in medias res after the rape and mutilation (Monella 2005: 98). In Wertenbaker’s play, however, the figure of the young girl acquires a strength and importance that make her the driving force of the tragedy. Amid the array of clashing voices in The Love of the Nightingale, Philomele’s is the main disruptive
force through which we measure all the other characters. She is physically silenced by Tereus’ violence, but she is also willing and able to react. She finds an alternative way of communicating with her sister and exposing Tereus’ crimes (via a form of drama). Niobe, who has also suffered rape and the conquest of her homeland by the invading Athenian army, represents a different approach to a similar condition. She is more willing to accept the violence she has suffered as part of the natural order of things, and her commentary to Philomele’s rape in sc. 13 shows this ('She should have consented. Easier that way’, ST p. 330). Indeed, she is also complicit in the girl’s rape, as she admits to seeing where Tereus’ interest would lead but deciding not to warn her because she did not believe it would make a difference ('I’ve seen it coming for weeks. I could have warned her, but what’s the point?' ST p. 330). She also decides not to intervene in the girl’s defence as the rape is unfolding offstage, despite Philomele repeatedly calling her name (ST p. 229).

Procne represents a more nuanced perspective on similar issues. Displaced and surrounded by strangers in Thrace, initially all she can do is mourn what she has lost rather than react and seek anything positive in her new environment. The women of the chorus, who are very friendly to her, offer her advice and they also offer to initiate her into Thracian rites, but Procne despises what she doesn’t know and refuses to attempt to understand (sc. 4). It is only with time that she becomes more accepting, and it is her participation, finally, in the celebrations for the feast of Bacchus which allow Philomele to reveal herself to her.

Just as in my translation of *Dianeira*, the parallel use of English and Italian in my translation of *The Love of the Nightingale* serves to highlight the polyphonic aspect of the text. Equally important in achieving this goal, however, is the choice of when to use each of the two main languages present in the translation. In general, my translation sees the Athenian characters (Philomele, Procne, King Pandion and the Queen) primarily using the Italian language and Thracian characters (Tereus, the female chorus) primarily using English. Overlaps do occur, in fact a character’s ability or willingness to speak in a different language at different moments is used to emphasize specific elements of their personality or condition. Some characters, such as Philomele or King Pandion, appear to be able to switch
easily from Italian to English and vice versa. Others, such as the Queen, Tereus or Procne, are more confined within the borders of a single language. Let us look at the example below, where the source text and target text of the conversation between Pandion and Tereus in sc. 3 are compared (ST p. 296 and TT p. 9).

**ST p. 296**

**Tereus**: I have always believed that culture was kept by the women.

**King Pandion**: Ours are not encouraged to go abroad.

**Tereus**: But they have a reputation for wisdom. Is that false?

**Queen**: Be careful, he’s crafty.

**King Pandion**: It is true. Our women are the best.

**Tereus**: So.

**Queen**: I knew it.

**Pause**.

**King Pandion**: She’s yours, Tereus.

**Procne** –

**Procne**: But, Father –

**King Pandion**: Your husband.

**Procne**: Mother –

**Queen**: What can I say?

**King Pandion**: I am only sad you will live so far away.

**TT p. 120-21**

**Tereus**: I have always believed that culture was kept by the women.

**Re Pandione**: Ours are not encouraged to go abroad.

**Tereus**: But they have a reputation for wisdom. Is that false?

**Regina**: Attento, è scaltro.

**Re Pandione**: It is true. Our women are the best.

**Tereus**: So.

**Regina**: Lo sapevo.

**Pausa**.

**Re Pandione**: She’s yours, Tereus.

**Procne** –

**Procne**: Ma, padre –

**Re Pandione**: Tuo marito.

**Procne**: Madre –

**Regina**: Cosa posso dire?

**Re Pandione**: Mi dispiace solo che andrai a vivere così lontano.

In the translation of this extract we see King Pandion easily speaking English with Tereus and switching to Italian to address his daughter. The Queen, on the other hand, only contributes with brief Italian asides to her husband, while Tereus speaks exclusively in English. The Queen’s ability to speak only Italian is used to highlight
her marginal position in any decision-making process throughout the whole play: she is a mere spectator as regards the fate that befalls both her daughters. In the extract above, when the decision is being made to marry Procne to Tereus, she can only contribute with brief asides to Pandion, and although there is no specific indication in Wertenbaker’s text that her words are meant for Pandion alone, the fact that she refers to Tereus in the third person, as though he were not there (‘Be careful, he’s crafty’), leads us to assume that that is the case. With the Queen’s lines in a different language to the one in which the main dialogue between Tereus and Pandion occurs, it becomes even more evident that the Queen’s words are not meant for the ears of the Thracian king and language becomes a more explicit dramatic tool, as well as a way of highlighting the differences of culture and tradition that exist between Thracians and Athenians (particularly evident in the interaction between female chorus and Procne in scenes 4 and 9 and in the exchanges between the Athenian characters and Tereus in sc. 5). The Queen’s marginal position is also evident in sc. 5, when her husband is debating whether to allow Philomele to make the long journey to Thrace to see Procne. Although present, the Queen appears to be unaware that a decision about her daughter’s future is being made – ‘Where is she going?’ she asks, bewildered, once Pandion has already granted permission (ST p. 307). Her inability to participate in the English exchanges between Pandion, Tereus and Philomele – highlighted by the fact that she makes comments on the play, presumably addressed to the foreigner Tereus, but always in Italian – leaves her out of the loop. Although she may be presumed to understand English to a certain extent (as is evident from the asides to Pandion in sc. 3 discussed above) her inability to use it actively stresses the position of marginality and passivity to which she is confined. Tereus’ monolingualism, on the other hand, is not seen as ascribable to an inability to speak another language but rather to an arrogant unwillingness to engage with otherness. Tereus, the conquering, power-wielding figure, is not so much unable as unwilling to address the Athenian characters in Italian. It is others who must adapt if they want to have a truly significant exchange with him.
Procne initially speaks only Italian, something which, in the English-speaking Thracian environment in which she is forced to live from sc. 4 onwards, can be interpreted as a sign not only of her foreignness, but also of her sense of discomfort and alienation, of her inability and unwillingness to fit in with Thracian life. Her own, initial monolingualism (Italian), coupled with that of Tereus (English) also stresses the distance which exists between the couple, married for reasons of state rather than for love. Indeed, the scenes in which they speak to each other directly are very limited in number. In their very brief exchange in sc. 14 (TT p. 154), for example, we can imagine that mutual comprehension occurs only in virtue of the very specific, emotionally intense nature of the situation. Similarly, Procne’s exclusive use of Italian in the first half of the play stresses the distance that separates her from the female chorus, a distance more directly remarked upon by the women of the chorus themselves (‘June: She is not one of us’, ST p. 298, TT p. 122). Unlike Tereus, however, the female chorus are willing to speak a different language in order to try to interact, at least to some extent, with Procne, with the use of English reserved for conversation among themselves or between the chorus and the reader (TT p. 122-24 and 138-39). Towards the end of the play Procne becomes more resigned, at peace with her situation, conscious that the pain of Philomele’s (alleged) death is fading. In sc. 17 this transformation is marked by her effort to interact with Tereus and her decision to take part in the celebrations in honour of Bacchus, as well as her admission, in English, ‘you see how I become Thracian’ (ST p. 340, TT p. 161). She even attempts to breach the physical and emotional distance that separates her from her husband (‘I am a woman now. I can take pleasure in my husband….’ ST p. 340, TT p. 162). Procne’s ‘becoming Thracian’ is mirrored by the change in her linguistic habits, by her willingness, at this point in the text, to address Tereus in English.

Significantly, Philomele, the most curious, instinctive and adventurous character, is the one who switches with most ease from one language to another, often within the same sentence. See for example:

Filomele: Che bello amare in quel modo! ‘The strength of my limbs is melting away’. Is that what you feel for Procne, Tereus?
Filomele: Catching the lather of the sea. Chiaro di luna, chiaro di luna.  

The ease with which she switches from English to Italian mirrors the numerous sides to her personality that we see throughout the play. Naïve younger sister in sc.2, she shows a depth of wisdom and knowledge that put Tereus to shame in sc.5; innocent maiden, oblivious to Tereus’ lust during the journey to Thrace, she becomes a dangerous political threat in sc. 15. Mutilated and unable to speak, she is once again powerless but regains a voice in sc.18 and exacts her terrible revenge in sc.19. In a similar way to Philomele, Pandion’s ability to switch from Italian to English highlights a flexibility of mind which lets him, the patriarchal figure par excellence, make at least some attempt to keep his eldest daughter from marrying Tereus in sc.3 and consider the value of drama and tragedy when faced with Tereus’ rash and abrupt condemnation in sc. 5 (‘Tereus: (...) These plays condone vice. / King Pandion: Perhaps they only show us the uncomfortable folds of the human heart.’ ST p. 303, TT p. 126).

If most characters can be safely identified as Thracian or Athenian, one is quite explicitly neither. Despite belonging to the entourage of the Athenian monarch, Niobe actually comes from an unspecified island previously conquered by Athens in an equally unspecified past. The experience of conquest and rape she herself has endured is very similar to that endured by Philomele and is narrated through a monologue at the end of sc.13, providing a sort of indirect running commentary to Philomele’s rape, which is taking place offstage at the same time (ST p. 330, TT p. 152). I have tried to give this other experience of silencing yet another linguistic identity and have drawn on a series of Piedmontese regionally marked expressions to create a specific idiolect for Niobe. The slave woman speaks an Italian which is more reminiscent of spoken language and includes some local Piedmontese expressions (‘bon’, ‘solo più’). The frequent repetition of sentences such as ‘well I know’, ‘I know these things’, is translated with redundant forms such as ‘lo so bene, io’, which repeat the subject unnecessarily at the end of the
sentence (‘I know well, me’), marking Niobe’s belief that she knows what is best for Philomele in that situation. Despite the fact that some of these expressions are typically Piedmontese, it is important to specify that Niobe does not speak in dialect and that regionalisms in general, despite being expressions that are typical of a specific area, are not considered incorrect language and convey an exclusively geographical rather than social notion (Berruto 2010). Niobe’s idiolect, therefore, does not attempt to convey any notion of class, but perhaps of register, the slave adopting a form of Italian which is slightly more colloquial, but now accepted as part of a broadened notion of standard Italian (Berruto 2010) and able to suggest the idea of someone who has a different geographical origin to the other characters and has learnt the language simply by hearing it and speaking it, rather than by being born and educated in it. As mentioned in 6.2, the choice of Piedmontese regional aspects for Niobe’s more colloquial language is due to my own background and the wish to embed the different aspects of my linguistic identity in the text. Although I have also been influenced by Neapolitan linguistic variants, such influences have taken the form of pure dialect and therefore would have been more difficult to use to create a character’s linguistic identity without the risk of conveying some form of social marker as well as a geographical one.

The play’s two choruses, a female one and a male one, further add to the polyphonic aspect of the play. By being both characters in the play and a voice of commentary which is external to the action, they stand both within and without the narrative (Gipson-King 2008: 227). In this way they not only add the perspective of two specific categories to the events portrayed in the play (Procne’s female Thracian entourage in the case of the female chorus and Tereus’ men in the case of the male chorus), but they also fulfil the playwright’s ‘moral’ intent (Winston 1995: 518) with their frequent highly anachronistic remarks (sc. 8, sc.10, sc.20), something which is pointed out to us in a very direct fashion by the Queen in sc.5: ‘Listen to the chorus. The playwright always speaks through the chorus’ (ST p. 304, TT p. 127).

In the female chorus, polyphony acquires a physical dimension too: unlike the male chorus, which is an indistinct collective entity, the female chorus is a
multi-voiced entity comprised of five distinct individuals, each with their own name and lines to say, but also with a mythical background which, to different extents, shines through in their role in Wertenbaker’s play, as already discussed in section 4.3. Thus, Echo, the most evident instance, is not only repeating a warning to Procne when she echoes lines such as ‘Tereus’ or ‘Silent’, but she is also voicing the elements of the story of the mythical figure of Echo, elements which have much in common with the fate that will befall Philomele later in the play.

The profound difference in the way the female chorus and Procne think and interpret the world around them (see section 4.4) is highlighted in my translation by the fact that the chorus are more at ease expressing themselves in English, whereas Procne prefers Italian. This does not mean they have an unsympathetic attitude: they understand Procne’s plight and attempt to engage in significant communication with her, switching to Italian when addressing her directly. However, their use of English when they speak to one another, even when they speak about Procne in her presence, constantly reasserts the divide that exists between the female chorus and their Queen.

The male chorus, on the other hand, are associated with the figure of Tereus and, like their female counterpart, they are also conflicted, though for different reasons. Bound to serve and obey Tereus, they recognise the wrongness of what they see unfolding before them, but they feel unable to act against it and choose to retell and comment on the myth rather than intervene (ST p. 308, TT p. 131). The difference in attitude between the two choruses is highlighted by the fact that, despite both being associated with the Thracian side of the story, they speak different languages. The male chorus, in fact, express themselves in Italian. In the context of their constant vicinity to Tereus, the choice of Italian, the language the king is less familiar with, helps bring across the male chorus’ fearful and secretive condition and, by making them express themselves in a language that is not Tereus’ chosen one, the cowardice that marks their passivity is highlighted. Additionally, each chorus acts within opposing engendered spaces: that of politics and military power for the male chorus and the domestic sphere for the female chorus (Gipson-
King 2008:228). The two languages used in the translation, therefore, also serve to highlight the different realms to which the actions of each chorus are confined.

6.5 Cognitive benefits

In this section I will argue that using two (or more) languages within the same text creates specific cognitive benefits which relate to both to Wertenbaker’s view of what drama is and to the wider pedagogical and psychological issues examined in 3.4 and 3.5.

Wertenbaker’s plays undoubtedly embody a didactic element (Sierz quoted in Bush 2013: 198) and indeed have been seen to share a number of aspects of Brechtian theatre. Foster (1997: 429) has remarked on Wertenbaker’s use of history, and Bligh (2008: 187) on the alienation effects she creates, in relation to Brecht. Indeed, it is impossible not to see an echo of Brecht’s ‘epic theatre’, which ‘must report’ (Brecht in Willet 2001: 25) and must not allow the spectator to ‘submit to an experience uncritically’ (Brecht in Willet 2001: 71), in the male chorus of The Love of the Nightingale, who stress their role as observers, recorders, ‘journalists of antique world’ (ST p. 308) or in Wertenbaker’s words about theatre as an art form the role of which is to reveal and disturb (Kirkpatrick 1993: 553-554). As Foster remarks (1997: 428), the character of Wisehammer in Our Country’s Good perfectly summarizes the essence of the theatre of Brecht and Wertenbaker: ‘A play should make you understand something new. If it tells you what you already know, you leave it as ignorant as when you went in.’ (Wertenbaker 1996b: 262).

As mentioned in section 4.5, the same principles are applicable to reading in general, and that includes reading in translation. The use of multiple languages in my translation of Wertenbaker is aimed at preserving and enhancing the alienation effect central to the playwright’s work and tries to force the audience to work and learn – not just about what is represented in the text, but about the process of translation the text has undergone – rather than just sitting back and ‘enjoying’ a story in the more traditional sense of the word. As already pointed out in section 1, multilingualism may enhance the readers’ enjoyment of the text, if we think about
the enjoyment that is gained by questioning our own cognitive models and gaining new perspective (Boase-Beier 2015: 124). If the difficulty of Wertenbaker’s text is enhanced by multilingualism, so is the reward that readers gain from engaging with them and therefore, a ‘difficult’ text may attract readers rather than scaring them away.

The use of multiple languages is not just a way of embodying an idea of literature, of reading and of translation as a critical act. It also carries further benefits in a cognitive and pedagogical context. Throughout the rest of this section I will use the term ‘bilingualism’ because studies on the topic refer primarily to the use of two languages. Bilingualism, however, is by definition a form of multilingualism and so by speaking of bilingualism we are automatically speaking also of multilingualism. Despite bilingualism being originally thought of as negative for a child’s cognitive development, more recent studies have overturned such claims, showing it to be beneficial for pedagogical development (Baker 2011: 140-43, Bialystok et al. 2012: 2). Specifically, it is seen as carrying a number of benefits for the child, described variously as a ‘mental flexibility, a superiority in concept formation, a more diversified set of mental abilities’ (Peal and Lambert 1962: 20) or a greater degree of creative thinking, metalinguistic awareness and communicative sensitivity (Baker 2011: 148-50). These new findings, combined with the increasingly multicultural nature of our contemporary society and the natural condition of multilingualism of the majority of the world population (Bialystok et al. 2012: 1) have led to the growing popularity of multilingual pedagogical programmes, from bilingual schools to translanguaging60 and CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning – (Ball et al. 2015: 3). Although these types of programmes are often identified with the development of foreign language acquisition, the benefits they offer are actually more generic. Of the three points identified by Estyn (2002:2) as the main advantages of using translanguaging, only one is strictly related to foreign language acquisition. The other two points involve elements such as refining an individual’s ability to think and understand, developing

60 Translanguaging is defined by García as ‘the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features of various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential (García 2009: 140).
flexibility of mind and promoting a positive approach to other cultures (Estyn 2002: 2) and can therefore be seen as more generic cognitive and pedagogical benefits. The benefits identified in the use of two languages by studies on bilingualism and on translanguaging alike, are closely related to aspects at the heart of the educational projects or personal initiatives described in 2.3.3 (Translation Nation, Pop Up fusion, Bordiglioni’s musical re-castings of rhymes and proverbs), as well as relating to Baron-Cohen’s empathic principle of developing a double focus of attention, described in 3.5.

My translations aim at creating a multilingual text that may foster the abilities described above. The form of multilingualism I have created is, however, different, and in my opinion more helpful, than that found in bilingual editions of poetry, where the two languages occupy well-defined, separate and parallel spaces on the page. With my translation, I have tried to create a text in which Italian and English and, in Aedón, Greek are not clearly separated, forcing the reader to more active engagement with the text and with a language that is not their mother tongue, presumably fostering similar cognitive processes to those observed in bilingual children or in translanguaging classrooms. Bilingual editions of works of literature, while still highlighting the presence of a source text, a source language and a translation process, offer the target text reader the option not to engage with all these things, simply by ignoring the left-hand page. If the two texts are mixed together, the reader is forced to acknowledge source text and language, translator and translation process, even if only long enough to register discomfort.61

If we consider what bilingualism can do for the cognitive development of children and for the prevention of cognitive decline in old age and if we bear in mind that it is anyway the condition of the majority of people, it makes more sense to read, write and translate multilingually, thus making creative use of a cognitively and physically beneficial condition. As I will explain in the following section, the use

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61 Bilingualism has also been proved to have further benefits on cognition which go beyond childhood age. It has been found, for instance to have physical effects on the brain in old age, hindering the development of age related cognitive decline (Bialystok et al 2012: 11-12).
of a multilingual strategy for the translation of Wertenbaker’s two plays also has more specific practical benefits in the Italian cultural and pedagogical context.

6.6 Provocation and practical benefits

The choice of including large extracts of the source text within the target text is a controversial one. Firstly, it invites the objection that almost half the text has not been translated at all. Secondly, the status of Italian as a high-profile literary language, the existence of an Academy dedicated to its study and safeguarding (the Accademia della Crusca) and the notion of beauty and pride (Petruccioli 2014: 60-61) linked to this language – a notion which, although theoretically untenable, is historically widespread (Patota in Fuduli Sorrentino 2016) – promote a purist and conservative attitude towards the language, and consequently, any form of linguistic experimentation may incur automatic distrust and greater resistance. Indeed, the increasing influence of English vocabulary and syntax on spoken Italian and the use of English words in many sectors, most recently including public institutions, have, over the last decade, sparked different degrees of indignation and mobilisation on the part of cultural associations, intellectuals and regular citizens, in many cases conferring highly negative connotations on the idea of multilingualism. At the 2009 conference ‘Multilinguismo in atto’ organised by the Accademia della Crusca, Filippo Ottoni, president of A.I.D.A.C, the Italian association for dubbing and subtitling, commented on the widespread use, among younger generations, of ‘doppiaggese’, a form of Italian based on TV shows dubbed from the English. Doppiaggese is syntactically and lexically influenced by English, becoming almost unintelligible to those who did not grow up watching dubbed TV shows. Ottoni also presented a video created by A.I.D.A.C, which offered practical examples of ‘doppiaggese’ and provocatively portrayed the extent to which it has become part of everyday speech in younger generations. Moreover, the very successful online petition and social media thread #dilloinitaliano (‘say it in Italian’), set up by journalist and copywriter Annamaria Testa (2013), sparked mass mobilisation by targeting businesses, the media and public institutions. The petition’s manifesto highlights a widespread
feeling of saturation provoked by the use of foreign (more specifically English) expressions which could make the multilingual strategy I have adopted particularly irksome to the Italian readership at this time. The petition invites the Italian government, public administration and media to be more aware of the lexical variety of their own language, avoiding the use of English words when there are perfectly adequate Italian terms. Although this is an understandable phenomenon if we consider the all-pervasiveness that English has reached through the web – examples given by people signing the petition include the verb ‘add’ modified according to Italian morphology into ‘addare’ or kill into ‘killare’ in online gaming and social media contexts – the petition appeals specifically to figures of authority, public institutions and anyone with high visibility to set an example of grammatical correctness and clarity, while stressing each individual’s freedom in a more private context. Examples provided in the petition manifesto, therefore, relate to more bureaucratic and institutional spheres and include words like ‘form’ and ‘jobs act’, used instead of the Italian ‘modulo’ and ‘legge sul lavoro’ respectively (Testa 2013). Interestingly, in the first of its 8 bullet points, the petition manifesto refers to the political relevance of language, declaring that the use of Italian within the institutions is a question of clarity and democracy. It seems impossible to disagree with this, but what is surprising is that the petition has bounced off almost every translation blog and social media page in the country, and yet still the political relevance of language has not emerged as an issue worthy of greater consideration in the context of translation. Additionally, point 1 of the manifesto fails to consider the fact that lack of transparency and clarity within governmental and public institutions exists independently of foreign language interference. As Italo Calvino already pointed out in his famous 1965 article L’antilingua (‘anti-language’), an incomprehensible form of Italian has always been a feature of bureaucracy and public institutions, even when such language remains within the boundaries of perfectly correct and ‘pure’ Italian. Similar considerations have been made, more recently, by the novelist and former judge and lawyer Gianrico Carofiglio, who

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62 The article, originally published in Il Giorno, is now available in Calvino 1995.
comments at length on the power and democratic relevance of the language of institutions (Carofiglio 2015).

Language as a political instrument of power and oppression is therefore a concept which the Italian intellectual world in general has not failed to engage with. It is the world of translation more specifically which has, so far, shied away from directly and extensively tackling such issues in relation to the work of the translator. The #dil löinitaliano petition manifesto is a measured and well thought-out expression of the desire to safeguard the Italian language as well as the English one. Bilingualism and the evolution and interaction of languages are not deprecated but rather seen as desirable (see points 4 and 7 of the petition) as long as the identity of each one of the languages is preserved rather than ‘lacerated’ (Testa 2013).

What occurs in my translation is not of course comparable to the phenomena such as ‘addare’ and ‘killare’. My texts are indeed bilingual, but neither of the two languages is distorted by the other and the tension between the two is used creatively and dramatically to highlight tensions between characters. Nevertheless, and despite the reasonable and informed nature of the #dil löinitaliano petition, its enormous and lightning fast success might also be a reflection of the underlying conservative and purist attitude of many intellectuals in Italy.

In a sense, this present state of affairs may almost be considered an advantage. Although, as I have explained in section 6.2, the refusal to cancel the English language from my translation is linked to the impossibility for me as a bilingual speaker of cancelling it from my own mind, this is, however, only a partial explanation. Despite the strong significance that not choosing Italian over English has for me, it is also true that the impossibility of fully committing to one language may have been communicated more subtly. Bearing in mind the stale condition of the debate around translation in Italy, as well as the fervour about the interaction between Italian and English revealed by the #dil löinitaliano movement, my translation strategy is bound to spark some sort of controversy which, as harsh or negative as it might be, may at least provoke fresh debate. Provocation, however, is not an end in itself. Although the idea of creating a translation in which a variety of languages appear, with source and target language in similar quantities, may seem
extremely unorthodox and experimental, this solution is actually able to offer significant practical benefits, both in the general context of editorial practices and in the more specific one relating to *The Love of the Nightingale, Dianeira* and the Italian audience and educational context. On a commercial level, if we compare the coexistence of source and target language within the same text to the more traditional option of a bilingual edition, two significant advantages can be found. Firstly, costs would be considerably lower than a double length publication, and secondly it is an option that is as easy to put in practice for prose genres as it is for poetry.

If we consider this translation strategy applied to *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* addressed to an Italian audience there are other, more specific, practical benefits that are easily identified. Although it is not my concern to engage with translation as a tool for foreign language acquisition, it appears evident that bilingual texts such as the translation I have created offer many possibilities for use within such a framework. From this point of view, it would appeal to a scholastic audience of teachers and students (both of whom may be daunted by the prospect of reading the whole text in English) as a starting point for discussing contemporary British literature, but also to a more generic readership, usually aware of the need to familiarise themselves with the English language but often scared of doing so.

Not shying away from introducing languages other than the two main ones produces further practical benefits in the Italian educational context. As mentioned in 4.5 there are specific elements in *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Dianeira* which bring to the fore important themes in the Italian high school curriculum. In *Aedón*, by further expanding the multilingualism of my translation and introducing Greek words for specific values and qualities, I have tried to highlight such elements, thus providing a clear starting point for the discussion of essential elements of ancient Greek culture and tradition. The introduction of such words offers not only the opportunity to discuss the concept itself but it also promotes familiarity with its Greek spelling – a useful benefit in a school where students are tested on their
ability to read and write in ancient Greek and to understand and translate from the language.

As far as linguistic competency is concerned, I believe the texts, as they are, can be easily used in the latter years of high school (17-19 years old), particularly in schools with a strong focus on foreign languages. As far as the focus on specific Greek words is concerned, the texts would obviously be of more interest to teachers at ‘Liceo Classico’, the humanities-focused high school. At university level, teachers of English literature, Greek literature and language and comparative literature modules may find an interesting source of material in these texts. This does not mean that through accurate preparation and adequate pre-teaching of vocabulary, the texts could not be used at lower levels too. There follow below some ideas on how these texts could be used in an educational context, though it must be understood that they are just a sketch. Depending on individual teachers’ needs, aims and creative ability, the possibilities are almost infinite.

Scenes 5 and 8 of Aedón, for example, would provide interesting material for the study of Greek theatre and its function and conventions, inviting discussion of Aristotle’s poetics and of the meaning of specific Greek words (as well as myth, which is the centre of the discussion in sc. 8, also tragedy, comedy, catharsis etc.). The presence of words in ancient Greek invites reflection on the origin of the words, on their significance within the cultural and ethical context of ancient Greece, on the current use of the word in modern society. The presence of these words also encourages discussion of the way in which the concept is normally translated into Italian, and students can be encouraged to experiment. Take, for example, the adoption in my translation of less conventional solutions for the two Homeric epithets which appear in Wertenbaker’s text, ‘rosy-fingered’ (for the dawn) and ‘wine-dark’ (for the sea), translated as ‘ditirosea’ and ‘purpureo’ respectively, instead of the more well-known solutions ‘dalle rosee dita’ and ‘color del vino’. A teacher of Italian, classics or English may plan a task revolving around such epithets, selecting those present in the text and asking students to create more, either giving them the original Greek and asking them to experiment with possible English or Italian translations, or giving them an Italian translation and
asking them to provide English versions. As also mentioned in section 6.2, in some instances I have slightly expanded on the source text, providing extra information – or additional extracts, or single words – from Greek texts that figure within the general framework of *The Love of the Nightingale*. Within the *Hippolytus* metadrama in scene 5, for example, I have inserted on different occasions the epithet ‘inclita’, commonly associated with Aphrodite in Greek literature, to create an opportunity to familiarise students with – or remind them of – formulaic elements that are often tested in the context of Greek literature classes. In sc. 17 I expanded on the very brief reference to the myth of Baucis and Philemon, creating a clearer opportunity for teachers and students to recognise, or discover, an additional Greek myth. The very title given to my translation of *The Love of the Nightingale, Aedón*, the Greek for ‘nightingale’, ‘poet’ and ‘poetry’ (Williams 1997: 20), invites reflection on what the text might actually be about, on the Greek word itself, on the concept of poet and poetry in ancient Greece as well as on translation and polysemy. A classics teacher may use it as a point of departure to discuss the concept of poetry for the Greeks or the significance of birds in Greek culture.

Large extracts of both texts invite reflection on issues of colonialism, migration and vagrancy (sc.4 and Niobe’s monologue in sc. 13 in *Aedón*; Dianeira’s pitying of Iole in *La moglie dell’eroe*), topics which, given the high number of migrants who every day land on southern Italian shores, are very relevant. In *Aedón* in particular (sc. 4 and 9), the use of two languages to highlight Procne’s uprooted condition in her interaction with the female chorus, actively recreates, in the non-native English speaker, the condition of helplessness and incomprehension typical of the migrant. Teachers of history, geography or ethics could devise tasks to reflect on the migrant condition taking the text as a starting point, inviting any foreign students in the class to relate their experience of migration or discussing any current events or news stories linked to the issue (elections with high profile anti-migrant parties involved – at the time of writing, for example, the Le Pen-Macron fight for power in France or Trump’s anti-migration policies in the United States; in a more strictly Italian context, the frequent news stories linked to the comments of Matteo Salvini or other far-right political figures).
La moglie dell’eroe, whose title was chosen because of its similarity to the Italian title of Carol Ann Duffy’s poetry collection The World’s Wife (La moglie del Mondo), could offer an interesting starting point for teachers to examine female perspectives in literature. Duffy’s collection in fact, focuses on providing the viewpoint of the wives or partners of famous mythological or literary figures and is thus thematically connected to Dianeira. Dianeira is not one of the characters chosen by Duffy (although Eurydice, Penelope, Delilah and Circe, just to mention a few, are) but she could just as easily have been. The title La Moglie dell’eroe is probably not linguistically distinctive enough for an immediate association with Duffy’s collection (‘La moglie del’ has nothing unusual about it), however the thematic links (voicing female perspectives, classical myth) and reading in an educational context might create the association in the mind of the literarily aware reader. Teachers of literature in the final years of high school or at university level may use the text to examine other famous instances of female voices in literature, be it classical literature, as in Ovid’s Heroids, English literature as in Duffy’s poetry collection, or Italian literature, as in Malerba’s recounting of the Odyssey from Penelope’s perspective in Itaca per sempre (see section 6.1).

According to each school’s linguistic policies, engagement with the texts may take a different form, such as a bilingual lesson or CLIL practices, usually classified as ‘soft CLIL’ if foreign language development is the main aim or ‘hard CLIL’ if subject content is the goal, with English as the conveying language (Ball et al. 2015: 5). A more traditional approach may also be taken, with straightforward analysis of more specific elements (such as the construction of formulaic epithets mentioned above, or the discussion of specific Greek words – myth, sympathy, sophrosyne, as detailed in section 6.3).

For an Italian audience, the multilingual strategy applied to texts like The Love of the Nightingale and Dianeira contributes to the creation of a text which constantly shifts between the challenging of conventional ideas about literature and translation and the comforting familiarity of classical themes and formats that still form the basis of education in Italy. I see both elements as particularly desirable because the former forces engagement with issues of language and translation and
a rethinking of these issues, while the latter presents the former in a light that makes it appear less daunting and more practically acceptable in educational contexts.

The growing popularity of multilingual pedagogical practices such as CLIL has already been mentioned in the previous section. Indeed, Italy is now one of the countries where there is a legal mandate for the introduction of CLIL in secondary schools (Ball, personal correspondence dated 14th March 2017), so it is safe to presume that CLIL’s popularity is set to increase. One of the main struggles that CLIL teachers face, as teachers of a relatively new discipline, is the lack of teaching materials which often have to be created *ex novo* (Ball et al. 2015: 174). I do not wish to suggest that my translations are CLIL texts, they most definitely are not. But they are multilingual texts which deal with a number of topics central to the education curriculum (ethics and politics, history, Greek literature) as well as others which might be of interest in more specific contexts (translation, drama), thus responding to the need for multilingual didactic material in a society which is increasingly valuing multilingual pedagogical practices.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

The translation choices detailed in Chapter 6 may appear rather controversial, particularly since large portions of the source text have been left untouched and thus appear in English in the target text. Some might wonder why I did not rework the material, however lightly, perhaps simplifying the English for the Italian readership. This was an option which I consciously dismissed, as to do so would be little different, in principle, to offering a monolingual translation. It would have made things easier for readers rather than forcing them to stop and consider specific turns of phrase, the process of translation, their own knowledge of the English and Italian languages, and it would have done little to develop in readers that multilingual sensibility mentioned in section 1.4, which might lead them to understand and appreciate the value and complexity of translation processes to a greater extent. In a world in which more people are multilingual than monolingual (García 2009: 140), it does seem bizarre that literature should remain primarily monolingual and translation strategies like the one presented here could work to change this.

The choice of adopting such a controversial translation strategy also stems from my analysis of the Literary Translation context in Italy, presented in Chapter 2, which shows significant differences from the British one. These differences are important to bear in mind while considering my translations, which have been carried out for a degree course in a British University but have the Italian context as their target.

Grasping the academically less developed and more practical nature of the Italian context is also necessary for an understanding of another of my aims in adopting an extreme translation strategy. By presenting a multilingual translation that retains many extracts of the source text without any change, I wish to challenge the prescriptive and conservative way of thinking about translation in
Italy, which is still stuck on ideas of content transfer and leaves little room for creativity, experimentalism and discussion even within more academic environments. It is important to point out that the fact that translation in Italy is some steps behind its British counterpart, at least as far as status and visibility is concerned, does not mean that translation has all the attention it deserves in the U.K. Indeed, translation in the U.K. may have its own, perhaps opposite problems. Tim Parks, for example, believes in the superiority of Italian translation practice over the English one, and has confessed that when reading a German book in translation, he chooses to read the Italian translation, rather than the English one.\(^{63}\)

The specific problematics of the U.K. context were not, however, chosen as the focus of this study, firstly because, as already stated, it is my objective to foster a change in the Italian context, and secondly because overall the situation in the U.K. does appear more balanced, as Whiteside’s contribution to the ‘Informations et réflexions complémentaires’ section of the CEATL *Rapport sur la formation à la traduction littéraire* (2014) seems to imply\(^ {64}\) and as confirmed by Wright’s account of recent improvements (2016: 2-3). The Italian context, on the other hand, appears more complex and fragmented, with few people addressing its nature head-on, but only from single perspectives (the translator’s professional status, translator training) and with little interest in understanding the underlying causes of any of these conditions, some of which I have identified in Chapter 2.

In this context it would be interesting to take research further, for example through direct contact with trainers and institutions, a more thorough collection of reading list data, and discussion of criteria for reading list selection. The overall widespread attitude of people involved in translation, particularly the constantly understated tone with which they refer to their own activity of choice, referred to extensively in Chapter 2, would also be an interesting topic for more in-depth analysis. If it is easy to understand how professional translators with no academic training would be content to stick to their prescriptive how-to’s and insist on notions of servility and derivativeness, those who hold more theoretically complex

\(^{63}\) Personal correspondence dated 27th April 2017.
\(^{64}\) See section 2.3.1
backgrounds might be expected to see things differently. Even Professor Nasi,\(^65\) however, whose position as Professor of Translation Theory at the University of Modena and whose many academic publications mark him out as a more theory-conscious figure, shows no qualms about describing translation as a secondary activity (2015: 23). Is there a precise cultural reason specific to Italy for this self-harming insistence? Is the attitude of translators a form of pre-emptive self-defence mechanism engrained in the country’s translational culture by the lingering effects of fascist policies and ideals? How far did the fascist period slow down or even push back the development of translation? How long did it take for translators, publishers and intellectuals to feel free to speak about and practice translation without limitations? Answering these questions would help to further clarify the present condition of translation studies in Italy.

In discussing the interactions between translation studies and other discipline, Chapter 3 has identified specific areas of translations studies to which Italian scholars of translation and related subjects could make significant contributions, if they were more willing to think outside the boundaries of their own discipline. As far as the relationship between politics and translation is concerned, for example, Italian researchers are in a privileged position to study not only linguistic, but also cultural, social and political issues in relation to high number of immigrants who reach Italian shores from the African continent every day and their uncertain future in Italy and in Europe. The fascist manipulation of literary translation practices offers other interesting points of departure for examining how translators and readers reacted to, accepted and resisted such control, but, as detailed in section 3.6, the issue is rarely tackled from this perspective.

The engagement Wertenbaker’s text show with issues of politics, psychology and pedagogy provide further reason for her work to deserve greater recognition in Italy, where it is very rarely object of study. *The love of the Nightingale* was included in Professor Angeletti’s 2013/14 English Literature module on women’s drama at the University of Parma and at the University of

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\(^65\) Teacher of Translation Theory at the University of Modena (http://traduzione-editoria.fusp.it/persone/franco-nasi)
Modena and Reggio Emilia, Sara Soncini has published an article on the same play (1996) while Sarah Perruccio has focused on *New Anatomies* (2016). As far as I am aware, this is the extent of engagement with Timberlake Wertenbaker’s work in the Italian academic world. The fact that many of her texts provide ideal material around which university modules in comparative literature, classical literature, postcolonial literature, ethics and politics could be structured seems, so far, to have gone unnoticed and the translations this study presents offer some much-needed material for developing the reception of Wertenbaker’s work in Italy.

Following my own translations in Chapter 5, Chapter 6 discussed in detail the multilingual translation strategy adopted and its intended effects on the target text and on the target text reader. It is a strategy which is not only particularly suited to Wertenbaker’s texts because of their content, but which also works towards posing a strong challenge to the widespread way of understanding translation in Italy, and it is my hope that this kind of translation practice, if it were to become more common and attract the attention of those involved in the field, would kickstart a livelier debate and contribute to creating a more self-conscious and innovative translation practice.

As Chapter 6, section 6.4 in particular, has demonstrated, my translations have also worked as a valuable tool for criticism of the source texts. Although some of the formal and thematic patterns highlighted through the use of two languages were evident from the start, others became clearer as the text underwent translation. Different languages could be used to highlight the different voices and perspectives present in the text, but how many exactly are those voices? Monrós Gaspar has identified in one of the members of the female chorus in *The Love of the Nightingale* a direct reference to another story of transformation, that of Echo

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66 The module description for the University of Parma is available at: [http://www.unipr.it/ugov/degreecourse/120176](http://www.unipr.it/ugov/degreecourse/120176); the module description for the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia is available at: [http://www.dslc.unimore.it/site/home/didattica/insegnamento.html?P0_cds_cod=12-260&P0_aa_ord_id=2012&P0_pds_cod=12-260-2&P0_aa_off_id=2013&P0_lang=ita&P0_ad_cod=LCC-00034&P0_aa_corso=2&P0_pagpre=170009917](http://www.dslc.unimore.it/site/home/didattica/insegnamento.html?P0_cds_cod=12-260&P0_aa_ord_id=2012&P0_pds_cod=12-260-2&P0_aa_off_id=2013&P0_lang=ita&P0_ad_cod=LCC-00034&P0_aa_corso=2&P0_pagpre=170009917)
(2006). But careful reading of the lines of the rest of the female chorus revealed that each one of them, too, adds intertextual references to other myths.

While many other figures besides Monró Gaspar have offered critical insights into *The Love of the Nightingale* (Bush 2013: 98-118, Roth 2009, Winston 1995 and Carlson 1993, to mention a few), no such wealth of critical material exists for *Dianeira*. In Roth and Freeman’s study (2008), two chapters address this work directly but only one of them does so exclusively and offers in-depth commentary (Wilson), while the other is more interested in the Sophoclean source (Pedrick). In her lengthy study on Wertenbaker, Bush (2013) devotes only a short paragraph to this play which also makes few other appearances in literary journals and volumes on drama. It is true that the two plays have a lot in common – besides the mythical source, both are ‘about women who are taken to a new country, and in the process, lose agency.’ (Wilson 2008: 212) – and that therefore the extensive material on *The Love of the Nightingale* can hint at useful paths to follow in *Dianeira*. The translation process, however, has uncovered elements which, even with background knowledge of *The Love of the Nightingale* and Wertenbaker’s other works, were not immediately evident, such as the way in which the conversation dynamics between Heracles and Dianeira serve to highlight the hero’s selfish and self-absorbed personality, as we see that Dianeira is indeed able to interact efficiently with others, even in delicate situations (Nessos on his deathbed, Lychas caught lying to her) when she is not prevented from doing so.

The multilingual translation strategy discussed here is particularly suited to Wertenbaker’s works, even the ones which are not based on Greek myth. In fact, as detailed in section 1.1 and throughout Chapter 4, most of Wertenbaker’s works deal with issues of migration, politics, language and identity. With such texts, this strategy can be adopted to highlight dispossessed and uprooted conditions, issues of silencing, repression and dissent as well as to offer a pedagogical tool for schools with a focus on language and interdisciplinarity. Educational institutions of this kind might use these texts to explore subjects such as ethics or history via a foreign language. For example, in *The Ash Girl*, which is based on the fairy tale of *Cinderella*, the prince and his family are refugees who come to a new land and decide to give a
ball as a way of integrating in their new community (Wertenbaker 2002a). Cultural dislocation and racial prejudice are therefore thematic elements of the play (Bush 2013: 221). The prince, Amir, is reminiscent of Procne: he is unwilling to give his new home a chance and is focused on mourning what he has left behind. His friend Paul represents the opposite pole, cultural assimilation, as is evident from his very name (Bush 2012: 226). He is enthusiastic about his new life and is not concerned about forgetting his origins. Zehra, the prince’s mother, stands in between these two opposite positions. She mourns for what she has left behind but is willing to learn to understand and appreciate the new place (Johanson 2008: 114-15). In this text too then, there is an opposition between the newcomers at the palace, and Ashgirl and her stepmother and stepsisters. Multilingualism could therefore be used to highlight this opposition and the three foreigners’ different attitudes to being uprooted. Like Procne, Amir could start off by speaking only his native language and then slowly progress to using both, once he learns to love his new home, despite its being different from what he is used to. The same could be done to highlight Zehra and Paul’s attitudes. Language could also be used to highlight the way in which the eight monsters in the play (seven deadly sins in the form of animals, and Sadness) represent fears and faults which are common to all humans (Johanson 2008: 117): they could, for example, be able to speak any language spoken by the human they are affecting at any one time.

It is not only Wertenbaker’s texts which are suited to this multilingual strategy. Many Greek myths are based on similar oppositions to the ones we see in the Philomele and Dianeira myths. In Euripides’ Hippolytus, for instance, we have the opposition between Phaedra’s world, ruled by Aphrodite’s will to which Phaedra refuses to succumb, and the world of Hippolytus’, who is devoted to Artemis and has no interest in love; between the power of the gods and the power of social rules and conventions (Susanetti 2005: 8). As in The Trachiniae, this opposition is highlighted by the physical distance between the two characters who, just like Heracles and Dianeira, never appear on stage together (Susanetti 2005: 18). But oppositions of this kind do not exist exclusively in Greek drama. In Neapolitan playwright Eduardo De Filippo’s 1946 comedy Filumena Marturano, a
fierce Filumena fights for the laws of sentiment and family against the superficial conventions of society, which are embodied by her young antagonist in love, Diana and, for most of the play, by her life partner Domenico. Filumena’s strong emotional qualities are embodied in her use of Neapolitan dialect, whereas in the society around her standard Italian represents integrity, education and status (De Filippo 1995). Although this text has been successfully translated monolingually (among others, by Wertenbaker herself), it can be easily imagined that a multilingual translation might serve to highlight the oppositions central to De Filippo’s work.

Brian Friel’s *Translations* (1980) would also easily lend itself to this type of strategy, as it is centred around the incomprehension between Irish and English characters and the English mapping and renaming of local Irish places. Although in Friel’s play both Irish and English characters actually speak English (but the audience understands the Irish to be speaking Irish), a translation of the play which uses two separate languages can easily be envisaged. As far as the Italian peninsula is concerned, this type of translation could be a strong political message in areas, such as Valle d’Aosta and parts of Piedmont, where local *patois* which are closer to French than Italian are spoken (Morelli 2006: 9), or regions with a strong independent identity and language, such as Sardinia (Morelli 2006: 12).

Drama is not the only genre to which this strategy could be applied. Many prose works would offer an interesting chance to explore the potentialities of this strategy further. In Italo Calvino’s *Il visconte dimezzato*, written in 1951, Viscount Medardo of the Ligurian village of Terralba is ripped apart by a cannon ball during the Turkish wars of the 17th century (Calvino 1996: 415). Two distinct, exact halves of the man survive, one inherently good and the other inherently evil. Terralba suffers under the influence of two opposite but extreme personalities, the evil Viscount being driven by cruelty, and the good one showing excessive zeal in his benevolent practices as well as an inability to truly oppose the evil of his

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67 Published as *Filumena*, 1998.
68 According to Morelli, there are about 90,000 speakers of *patois* in the small region of Valle d’Aosta and some parts of Piedmont.
counterpart. Calvino’s text expresses unease over the great changes the world had undergone since World War II, over the tension of the Cold War and what he perceived as a torn, incomplete condition (Calvino 1996: 414-15). It does not seem far-fetched to assume that a translator might find a way to convey this kind of unease through multilinguism. Ilan Stavan, Edward Said, Ariel Dorfman, have all expressed the feeling of unease created by their split linguistic identity (see section 6.2.1). In Calvino’s text the viscount’s physical laceration embodies the mental and emotional laceration of Calvino and the post-war era. Perhaps the conflicted condition at the centre of the short novel could also be communicated via the alternate use of more than one language. In a recontextualization of Calvino’s work, multilingualism of this kind could represent, depending on the target context, a form of linguistic and cultural laceration that non-English native speakers who are witnessing English taking over all areas of daily life – from work environments to all forms of media and advertisement and even institutional language – might feel. In Italy, for example, such unease is evident and represented in popular initiatives such as the #diloinitaliano online petition discussed at length in Chapter 6.

In any of these cases, a multilingual translation strategy would cover all the translations aims mentioned above: highlight particular themes or dynamics of the source text, foreground the translation process and encourage the development of a multilingual sensitivity in the reader and, in the Italian contexts, kickstart a more varied debate about translation while offering, from the point of view of educational practice, multilingual material that is relevant to traditional aspects of the curriculum (Greek and Latin literature, history, philosophy) and to newer ones (language acquisition via CLIL).

Other types of texts, however, might offer the chance to use multilinguism to obtain just some or one of these aims. In a pedagogical context, multilingualism might be applied to children’s texts, such as Gianni Rodari’s or Roald Dahl’s rhymes. Dahl’s Revolting Rhymes, for instance, play on children’s familiarity with conventional fairytales, subverting expectations in a fun and creative way (Dahl 2016). How much more fun could Italian children have if, as well as playing with their expectations about the stories, the texts also played with their expectations
about language? Other texts could also be translated multilingually to serve a pedagogical end, though for older readers. In Calvino’s commentary to *Orlando Furioso* entitled *Orlando Furioso di Ludovico Ariosto raccontato da Italo Calvino*, for example, the Italian writer summarises, paraphrases and explains Ariosto’s epic, accompanying his comments with a large number of extracts of the original in 16th century Italian text, supplemented by abundant footnotes (Calvino 2012). A translation might be devised for non-Italian native speakers studying Italian language and literature, in which Calvino’s commentary and footnotes are translated into the students’ native language, but Ariosto’s Italian is left untouched. Students could therefore engage directly, through their teacher's guidance, with at least some parts of Ariosto’s text.

Translation of more popular text genres, however, would work better towards creating discussion and debate, as the practice-driven translation world would not be able to ignore such a strategy applied to a mass-market product. Naomi Novik’s fantasy novel *Uprooted* (2015), so far untranslated into Italian, may offer another chance to apply a multilingual translation strategy to a more popular kind of text. In this novel, a young girl is taken away from her family to face an uncertain fate in the tower of a strict and unapproachable wizard. Initially lonely and scared inside the tower, with the unfriendly man as her only company, she gradually learns what her role is and begins to fear him less. In this case two languages could highlight the different worlds the two characters come from: a simple, peasant life for the girl and a life that is comfortable but full of danger and responsibility for the man. They would also highlight the wizard’s initial lack of interest in being friendly or accommodating to the girl and could then be further used to denote his transformation and gradual warming to her presence, as well as her increasing confidence and familiarity with him. Though these are just some examples, undoubtedly there are many other novels centred around oppositions, conflicts and transformations in which multilingual strategies could be used to a similar end. At this stage, where multilingual literature is still the exception rather than the norm, it is important to point out that, in order for this translation strategy
not to become a pointless exercise in complexity, it is advisable that it is used to
highlight or develop key thematic or structural elements of the source text.

Although, for the reasons detailed in section 4.1.4, performance was not an
object of this study, it can be envisioned for the translations presented, once again
particularly in the pedagogical context. Indeed, drama has become a popular means
for non-native speakers of English in Italy to improve their language skills in a fun
and dynamic way. Many public schools, theatre companies and private language
schools now offer drama workshops in English and there exist a number of English
theatre companies which put on shows in English.\(^{69}\) Though the oral nature of
performance would add further difficulty to the foreign language element for the
audience (there not being the possibility to pause on a single word, re-read it and
even look it up in a dictionary), the visual and mimic side of the performance would
provide an aid to understanding that the written page does not offer. In
pedagogical contexts, particularly of the language learning type, the translations
could be performed, with no alterations, for high school students of humanities and
language-focused schools. Students in the final years (aged 17 to 19) are likely to be
able to understand the whole texts unadapted without excessive struggle. Most of
the linguistic difficulties of Wertenbaker’s text lie in vocabulary, rather than syntax
(the constructions she uses generally favour parataxis). Vocabulary contains more
poetic and uncommon words which could pose greater problems, but some form of
lexical preparation could be planned and carried out before the performance (it
could include extracts of multiple English translations of Homer or Greek plays to
familiarise students with specific elements of vocabulary or it could simply focus on
the words the teacher has previously identified as problematic).

Students could also put on a performance of the play through one of the
language drama workshops which are increasingly popular.\(^{70}\) In this case, the

\(^{69}\) ACLE (http://www.acle.it/app/theatrino/), ETC
(http://www.englishtheatrecompany.com/italiano.php) and Arcadia (https://arcadia.info/chi-
siamo/) are a few examples.

\(^{70}\) NoveTeatro (http://www.noveteatro.it/teatro-in-lingua/), Il Palco delle Valli
(http://www.ilpalcodellevalli.com/corsi/laboratorio-di-teatro-in-inglese.html) and Linguaggicreativi
(http://www.linguaggicreativi.it/teatro-in-inglese/) are just some of the theatres which, throughout
Italy, provide English drama workshops for adults and children.
performance could be seen as a means of and reason for learning the new vocabulary, and a strong focus could be put, via acting, on pronunciation. A performance of a text of this kind would also allow for all students, even those who do not excel in English, to actively take part in the project. These students could play characters who speak mainly Italian but, through participation in general workshops, they would also take part in the discussion of the English language elements of the text, thus benefitting didactically without being pushed too far out of their comfort zone.

Naturally, the translations might also be adapted. The English parts could be simplified in order for younger audiences, or linguistically less advanced ones, to engage with them more easily. As I have said, this was not my desire, as I believe that to simplify the English parts of the texts would be to decrease the demands these texts make on their audience. As stated in the previous chapter, I believe students in schools with a good language focus and a good English teaching programme, particularly if aged 17 and upwards, would be able, with adequate guidance and preparation from their teacher, to engage with the texts as they are. However, for younger students, or for students with a lower level of language competence, teachers might want to consider adapting parts of the text to their students’ linguistic ability.

Further research on the use of multilingual translation strategies would involve testing the material presented here on different readerships in the context of adult EFL classrooms. Of particular concern would be not just the level of language proficiency but also the level of interest in literature in general, and classical literature in particular. Student response is likely to provide interesting feedback on what elements of content and language are more stimulating for the reader, and on which elements, if any, prove excessively difficult or require a greater attention in the pre-teaching and preparation stage.

Collaboration with Italian, Philosophy, History and Classics teachers in high schools would be useful to help understand if there are further points of contact between the themes which are central to the two texts and the curriculum. The degree to which teachers would be interested in exploring the concept of
translation directly with their students is also of interest, as it might provide the chance to introduce reflection on the process of translation much earlier than formal education usually permits. Such collaboration would also be necessary to examine the response of a younger readership, as well as of teachers and school boards, to this type of translation, and to test the true potentialities of these texts in a CLIL classroom. It would provide a clearer idea of what the limits of these texts are as far as content is concerned, of what is most relevant to the national high school curriculum and what is more likely to interest only a limited number of teachers. The degree of collaboration required between English language teachers and subject teachers is also an interesting point of enquiry, as often subject teachers have a much lower level of language competency in English than their students.

Another crucial issue for future consideration is the question of how applicable this strategy is to translation into English. Can a similar knowledge of a foreign language be expected of the English reader as can be expected of English from the Italian reader? To what extent does the English education system focus on foreign language acquisition? From the pedagogical point of view, what age students would be most likely to benefit from this type of translation? What kind of text is likely to have similar overlaps with the British national curriculum as Wertenbaker’s texts have with the Italian one? In this context, it would be interesting to translate an Italian work into English, using the same strategy presented here, but perhaps leaving a lower percentage of the text in Italian.

Though there are many questions still to answer, there are a number of certainties too: the multilingual translation strategy presented here is a useful tool for in-depth examination of the source texts; in the Italian literary translation context it is likely to be controversial enough to spark discussion; it undoubtedly poses high demands on its readers, encouraging them to develop a multilingual sensibility; it combines many topics which are central to the Italian high school curriculum and therefore could provide a valuable pedagogical tool. This thesis therefore, lays the groundwork for further research in, and experimentation with, multilingual translation strategies which could lead in a number of directions.
depending on the nature of the texts translated, on the translator and on the languages involved, but each as interesting, useful and creative as the other.
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Appendix A
THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

For Kate
Listen. This is the noise of myth. It makes the same sound as shadow. Can you hear it?

Eavan Boland, “The Journey”

Now, by myself, I am nothing; yea, full oft
I have regarded woman’s fortunes thus,
That we are nothing; who in our fathers’ house
Live, I suppose, the happiest, while young,
Of all mankind; for ever pleasantly
Does Folly nurture all. Then, when we come
To full discretion and maturity,
We are thrust out and marketed abroad,
Far from our parents and ancestral gods,
Some to strange husbands, some to barbarous,
One to a rude, one to a wrangling home;
And these, after the yoking of a night;
We are bound to like, and deem it well with us.

Much
I envy thee thy life: and most of all,
That thou hast never had experience
Of a strange land.

Two fragments from Sophocles’ lost play, *Tereus*
*Translated by Sir George Young*
Characters

Male Chorus (1)
  First Soldier
  Second Soldier
  Procne
  Philomele
  King Pandion
  Queen
  Tereus
  Hero
  Iris
  June
  Echo
  Helen
  Aphrodite
  Phaedra
  Nurse
Female Chorus
  Hippolytus
  Theseus
Male Chorus (2)
  Captain
  Niobe
  Servant
  Itys
Sailors, Bacchae, Acrobats (non-speaking)
The Love of the Nightingale was first performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon on 28 October 1988. The cast was as follows:

**Male Chorus**  David Acton, Stephen Gordon, Richard Haddon Haines, Patrick Miller, Edward Rawle-Hicks
First Soldier  Patrick Miller
Second Soldier  David Acton
Procne  Marie Mullen
Philomele  Katy Behean
King Pandion  Richard Haddon Haines
Queen  Joan Blackham
Tereus  Peter Lennon

**Female Chorus**
Hero  Cate Hamer
Iris  Claudette Williams
June  Joan Blackham
Echo  Joanna Roth
Helen  Jill Spurrier

**Actors in Hippolytus play**
Aphrodite  Claudette Williams
Phaedra  Cate Hamer
Nurse  Jill Spurrier
Female Chorus  Joanna Roth
Hippolytus  Edward Rawle-Hicks
Theseus  David Acton
Male Chorus  Stephen Gordon
Note on the Chorus
The Chorus never speak together, except the one time it is specifically indicated in the text.

SCENE ONE

Athens, the Male Chorus.

Male Chorus War.

Two Soldiers come on, with swords and shields.

First Soldier You cur!
Second Soldier You car's whisker.
First Soldier You flea's foot.
Second Soldier You particle.

Pause.
You son of a bitch.
First Soldier You son of a lame hyena.
Second Soldier You son of a bleeding whore.
First Soldier You son of a woman!

Pause.
I'll slice your drooping genitalia.
Second Soldier I'll pierce your windy asshole.
First Soldier I'll drink from your skull.

Pause.
Coward!
Second Soldier Braggard.
First Soldier You Worm.
Second Soldier You - man.

They fight.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

Male Chorus And now, death.

*The First Soldier kills the Second Soldier.*

Second Soldier Murderer!

First Soldier Corpse!

Male Chorus We begin here because no life ever has been untouched by war.

Male Chorus Everyone loves to discuss war.

Male Chorus And yet its outcome, death, is shrouded in silence.

Male Chorus Wars make death acceptable. The gods are less cruel if it is man's fault.

Male Chorus Perhaps, but this is not our story. War is the inevitable background, the ruins in the distance establishing place and perspective.

Male Chorus Athens is at war, but at the palace of the Athenian King Pandion, two sisters discuss life's charms and the attractions of men.

SCENE TWO

Procne, Philomele.

Procne Don't say that, Philomele.

Philomele It's the truth: he's so handsome I want to wrap my legs around him.

Procne That's not how it's done.

Philomele How can I know if no one will tell me? Look at the sweat shining down his body. My feet will curl around the muscles of his back. How is it done, Procne, tell me, please? If you don't tell me, I'll ask Niobe and she'll tell me all wrong.

Procne I'll tell you if you tell me something.

Philomele I'll tell you everything I know, sweet sister. (Pause.) I don't know anything.

Procne You know yourself.

Philomele Oh, yes, I feel such things, Procne, such things. Tigers, rivers, serpents, here, in my stomach, a little below. I'll tell you how the serpent uncurls inside me if you tell me how it's done.

Procne That's not what I meant. Philomele, I'm going to marry soon.

Philomele I envy you, sister, you'll know everything then. What are they like? Men?

Procne Look: they fight.

Philomele What are they like: naked?

Procne Spongy.

Philomele What?

Procne I haven't seen one yet, but that's what they told me to prepare me. They have sponges.

Philomele Where?

Procne Here. Getting bigger and smaller and moving up and down. I didn't listen very carefully, I'll know soon enough. Philomele, when I am married, will you want to come and visit me?

Philomele Yes, sister, yes. I'll visit you every day and you'll let me watch.

Procne Philomele! Can't you think of anything else?
Philomele Not today. Tomorrow I’ll think about wisdom. It must be so beautiful. Warm ripples of light.

Procne I think most of it you can do on your own. The sponge, I think it detaches.

Philomele I wouldn’t want to do it on my own. I want to run my hands down bronzed skin. Ah, I can feel the tiger again.

Procne If I went far away, would you still want to come and visit me?

Philomele I will cross any sea to visit you and your handsome husband, sister. (Pause.) When I’m old enough, I won’t stop doing it, whatever it is. Life must be so beautiful when you’re older. It’s beautiful now. Sometimes I’m so happy.

Procne Quiet, Philomele! Never say you’re happy. It wakes up the gods and then they look at you and that is never a good thing. Take it back, now.

Philomele You taught me not to lie, sister.

Procne I wish I didn’t have to leave home. I worry about you.

Philomele Life is sweet, my sister, and I love everything in it. The feeling. Athens. You. And that brave young warrior fighting to protect us. Oh!

Procne Philomele? Ah. He’s dead.

Philomele Crumpled. Procne, was it my fault? Should I have held my tongue?

Procne Athens is at war, men must die.

Philomele I’m frightened. I don’t want to leave this room, ever.

Procne You must try to become more moderate. Measure in all things, remember, it’s what the philosophers recommend.

Philomele Will the philosophers start speaking again after the war? Procne, can we go and listen to them?

Procne I won’t be here.

Philomele Procne, don’t go.

Procne It’s our parents’ will. They know best.

Pause.

You will come to me if I ask for you, you will?

Philomele Yes.

Procne I want you to promise. Remember you must never break a promise.

Philomele I promise. I will want to. I promise again.

Procne That makes me happy. Ah.

Scene Three

The palace of King Pandion. King Pandion, the Queen, Tereus, Procne, Philomele, the Male Chorus.

Male Chorus Athens won the war with the help of an ally from the north.

Male Chorus The leader of the liberators was called Tereus.

King Pandion No liberated country is ungrateful. That is a rule. You will take what you want from our country. It will be given with gratitude. We are ready.

Tereus I came not out of greed but in the cause of justice,
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

King Pandion. But I have come to love this country and its inhabitants.

Queen (to King Pandion) He wants to stay! I knew it!

Pause.

King Pandion Of course if you wish to stay in Athens that is your right. We can only remind you this is a small city. But you must stay if you wish.

Tereus No. I must go back north. There has been trouble while I've conducted this war. What I want is to bring some of your country to mine, its manners, its ease, its civilized discourse.

Queen (to King Pandion) I knew it; he wants Procne.

King Pandion I can send you some of our tutors. The philosophers, I'm afraid, are rather independent.

Tereus I have always believed that culture was kept by the women.

King Pandion Ours are not encouraged to go abroad.

Tereus But they have a reputation for wisdom. Is that false?

Queen Be careful, he's crafty.

King Pandion It is true. Our women are the best.

Tereus So.

Queen I knew it.

Pause.

King Pandion She's yours, Tereus. Procne -

Procne But, Father -

King Pandion Your husband.

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Procne Mother -

Queen What can I say?

King Pandion I am only sad you will live so far away.

Philomele Can I go with her?

Queen Quiet, child.

Tereus (to Procne) I will love and respect you.

Male Chorus It didn't happen that quickly. It took months and much indirect discourse. But that is the gist of it. The end was known from the beginning.

Male Chorus After an elaborate wedding in which King Pandion solemnly gave his daughter to the hero, Tereus, the two left for Thrace. There was relief in Athens. His army had become expensive, rude, rowdy.

Male Chorus Had always been, but we see things differently in peace. That is why peace is so painful.

Male Chorus Nothing to blur the waters. We look down to the bottom.

Male Chorus And on a clear day, we see our own reflections.

Male Chorus In due course, Procne had a child, a boy called Itys. Five years passed.

SCENE FOUR

Procne and her companions, the Female Chorus: Hero, Echo, Iris, June, Helen.

Procne Where have all the words gone?

Hero She sits alone, hour after hour, turns her head away and laments.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

Iris  We don't know how to act, we don't know what to say.

Hero  She turns from us in grief.

June  Boredom.

Echo  Homesick.

Hero  It is difficult to come to a strange land.

Helen  You will always be a guest there, never call it your own, never rest in the kindness of history.

Echo  Your story intermingled with events, no. You will be outside.

Iris  And if it is the land of your husband can you even say you have chosen it?

June  She is not one of us.

Hero  A shared childhood makes friends between women.

Echo  The places we walked together, our first smells.

Helen  But an unhappy woman can do harm. She has already dampened our play.

June  Mocked the occupation of our hours, scorned.

Iris  What shall we do?

Helen  I fear the future.

Procne  Where have the words gone?

Echo  Gone, Procne, the words?

Procne  There were so many. Everything that was had a word and every word was something. None of these meanings half in the shade, unclear.

Iris  We speak the same language, Procne.

Procne  The words are the same, but point to different

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things. We aspire to clarity in sound, you like the silences in between.

Hero  We offered to initiate you.

Procne  Barbarian practices. I am an Athenian: I know the truth is found by logic and happiness lies in the truth.

Hero  Truth is full of darkness.

Procne  No, truth is good and beautiful. See . . . (Pause.) I must have someone to talk to.

June  We've tried. See . . .

Hero  She turns away.

Procne  How we talked. Our words played, caressed each other, our words were tossed lightly, a challenge to catch.
Where is she now? Who shares those games with her? Or is she silent too?

Echo  Silent, Procne, who?

Procne  My sister. (Pause.) My friend. I want to talk to her. I want her here.

Hero  You have a family, Procne, a husband, a child.

Procne  I cannot talk to my husband. I have nothing to say to my son. I want her here. She must come here.

Helen  It's a long way and a dangerous one for a young girl.

Helen  Let her be, Procne.

Procne  I want my sister here.

Helen  She could come to harm.

Procne  Tereus could bring her, she'll be safe with him.

Echo  Tereus.

Helen  Dangers on the sea, he won't want you to risk them.
Procne He can go alone. I'll wait here and look after the country.
Echo Tereus.
Hero Will your sister want to come to a strange land?
Procne She will want what I want.
Helen Don't ask her to come, Procne.
Procne Why not?
Hero This is no country for a strange young girl.
Procne She will be with me.
Hero She won't listen.
Helen I am worried. It is not something I can say. There are no words for forebodings.
Hero We are only brushed by possibilities.
Echo A beating of wings.
June Best to say nothing. Procne? May we go now?
Procne To your rituals?
June Yes, it's time.
Procne Very well, go.
They go.
This silence . . . this silence . . .

SCENE FIVE

The theatre in Athens. King Pandion, Tereus, Hippolytus, Theseus.

King Pandion Procne has always been so sensible. Why,
suddenly, does she ask for her sister?
Tereus She didn't explain. She insisted I come to you and I did what she asked.

King Pandion I understand, Tereus, but such a long journey . . . Procne's not ill?
Tereus She was well when I left. She has her child, companions.

King Pandion Philomel is still very young. And yet, I allowed Procne to go so far away . . . What do you think, Tereus?
Tereus You're her father.
King Pandion And you.

Tereus I only meant Procne would accept any decision you made. It is a long journey.

Aphrodite enters.

Aphrodite I am Aphrodite, goddess of love, resplendent and mighty, revered on earth, courted in heaven, all pay tribute to my fearful power.

King Pandion Do you know this play, Tereus?
Tereus No.

King Pandion I find plays help me think. You catch a phrase, recognize a character. Perhaps this play will help us come to a decision.

Aphrodite I honour those who kneel before me, but that proud heart which dares defy me, that haughty heart I bring low.
Tereus That's sound.

King Pandion Do you have good theatre in Thrace?
Tereus We prefer sport.
King Pandion Then you are like Hippolytus.
Tereus Who?
King Pandion Listen.
Aphrodite Hippolytus turns his head away. Hippolytus prefers the hard chase to the soft bed, wild game to foreplay, but chaste Hippolytus shall be crushed this very day.

_Aphrodite exits, The Queen and Philomele enter._

Philomele We're late! I've missed Aphrodite.
King Pandion She only told us it was going to end badly, but we already know that. It's a tragedy.

Enter Phaedra.

Queen There's Phaedra. (to Tereus) Phaedra is married to Theseus, the King of Athens. Hippolytus is Theseus' son by his previous mistress, the Amazon Queen, who's now dead, and so Phaedra's stepson. Phaedra has three children of her own.

Phaedra Hold me, hold me, hold up my head. The strength of my limbs is melting away.

Philomele How beautiful to love like that! The strength of my limbs is melting away. Is that what you feel for Procne, Tereus?

Queen Philomele! (to Tereus) Phaedra's fallen in love with Hippolytus.

Tereus Her own stepson! That's wrong.
King Pandion That's what makes it a tragedy. When you love the right person it's a comedy.
King Pandion  You were a child.

Tereus  We have no theatre or even philosophers in
      Thrace, Philomele.

Philomele  I have to keep my word.

Tereus  Why?

Philomele  Because that is honourable, Tereus.

Queen  Listen to the chorus. The playwright always speaks
      through the chorus.

Female Chorus  Love, stealing with grace into the heart
      you wish to destroy, love, turning us blind with the bitter
      poison of desire, love, come not my way. And when you
      whirl through the streets, wild steps to unchained rhythms,
      love, I pray you, brush not against me, love, I beg you,
      pass me by.

Tereus  Ah!

Philomele  I would never say that, would you, brother
      Tereus? I want to feel everything there is to feel. Don't
      you?

Tereus  No!

King Pandion  Tereus, what's the matter?

Tereus  Nothing. The heat.

Phaedra  Oh, I am destroyed for ever.

Philomele  Poor Phaedra.

Tereus  You pity her, Philomele?

Queen  Hippolytus has just heard in what way Phaedra
      loves him. He's furious.

Tereus  Hippolytus has just heard in what way Phaedra
      loves him. He's furious.

Phaedra  Woman, counterfeit coin, why did the gods
      put you in the world? If we must have sons, let us buy

Philomele  This is horrible. It's not Phaedra's fault she
      loves him.

Tereus  She could keep silent about it.

Philomele  When you love you want to imprison the one
      you love in your words, in your tenderness.

Tereus  How do you know all this, Philomele?

Philomele  Sometimes I feel the whole world beating inside
      me.

Tereus  Philomele, Philomele . . .

      
      Phaedra screams offstage, then staggers on.

Queen  Phaedra's killed herself and there's Theseus just
      back from his travels.

Theseus  My wife! What have I said or done to drive you
to this horrible death? She calls me to her, she can still
      speak. What prayers, what orders, what entreaties do you
      leave your grieving husband? Oh, my poor love, speak!
      (He listens.) Hippolytus! Has dared to rape my wife!

Tereus  Phaedra has lied! That's vile.

Philomele  Why destroy what you love? It's the god.

Theseus  Father Poseidon, great and ancient sea-god, you
      once allotted me three wishes. With one of these, I pray
      you now, kill my son.

Queen  That happens offstage. A giant wave comes out of
      the sea and crashes Hippolytus' chariot against the rocks.
      Here's the male chorus.

Male Chorus  Sometimes I believe in a kind power, wise
and all-knowing but when I see the acts of men and their destinies, my hopes grow dim. Fortune twists and turns and life is endless wandering.

King Pandion The play’s coming to an end, and I still haven’t reached a decision. Queen . . .

Male Chorus What I want from life is to be ordinary.

Philomele How boring.

Queen Hippolytus has come back to Athens to die. He’s wounded. The head.

Female Chorus Poor Hippolytus, I weep at your pitiful fate. And I rage against the gods who sent you far away, out of your father’s lands to meet with such disaster from the sea-god’s wave.

King Pandion That’s the phrase. Philomele, you must not leave your father’s lands. You’ll stay here.

Philomele But, Father, I’m not Hippolytus. You haven’t cursed me. And Tereus isn’t Phaedra, look.

She laughs.

Tereus I have expert sailors, I don’t think we’ll crash against the rocks.

King Pandion It’s such a long journey.

Tereus We’ll travel swiftly. Procris is so impatient to see her sister. We must go soon, or she’ll fall ill with worry.

King Pandion When?

Tereus Tomorrow.

Hippolytus Weep for me, weep for me, destroyed, mangled, trampled underfoot by man and god both unjust, weep, weep for my death.

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Philomele Ah.

Tereus You’re crying, Philomele.

Philomele I felt, I felt – the beating of wings . . .

King Pandion You do not have to go.

Philomele It’s the play, I am so sorry for them all. I have to go. My promise . . .

King Pandion (to Queen) It’s only a visit, Philomele will come back to us.

Queen Where is she going?

King Pandion To Thrace! Weren’t you listening?

Male and Female Chorus (together) These sorrows have fallen upon us unforeseen.

Male Chorus Fate is irresistible.

Female Chorus And there is no escape.

King Pandion And now we must applaud the actors.

SCENE SIX

A small ship, sailing north. The Male Chorus, Philomele, Tereus, the Captain.

Male Chorus The journey north:

Row gently out of Piraeus on a starlit night, Sail around Cape Sounion with a good wind, over to Kea for water and provisions. Kea to Andros, a quiet sea. Up the coast of Euboea to the Sporades: Skiathos, Paparethos, Gioura, Pathoura. Skirt the three-fingered promontory of the mainland: Kassandra, Sithounia and Athos of the wild men and into the Thracian sea. The dawns, so loved by the poets.
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Scene Seven

The Captain, Philomele, Niobe.

Philomele Where are we now, Captain?
Captain Far north of Athens, Miss.
Philomele I know that, Captain. How far are we from Thrace?
Captain A few days, perhaps more. It depends.
Philomele On you?
Captain No. On the sea.
Philomele Isn’t that a fire over there?
Captain Yes.
Philomele That means we’re not far from the coast, doesn’t it?
Captain Yes, it does.
Philomele Look how high the fire is. It must be a mountain, Captain.
Captain Yes, it is.
Philomele What is it called, Captain, what is it like? I would like to know about all these lands. You must tell me.
Captain That would be Mount Athos, Miss.
Philomele Why don’t we anchor there, Captain, and climb the mountain?
Captain You wouldn’t want to go there, Miss.
Philomele Why not, is it ugly?
Captain  No, but wild men live there, very wild. They kill all women, even female animals are not allowed on that mountain.

Philomele  Why not?

Captain  They worship male gods. They believe all harm in the world comes from women.

Philomele  Why do they believe that? (Pause.) You don’t agree with them, do you, Captain?

Captain  I don’t know, Miss.

Philomele  If you don’t disagree you agree with them, Captain, that’s logic.

Captain  Women are beautiful.

Philomele  But surely you believe that beauty is truth and goodness as well?

Captain  That I don’t know. I would have to think about it.

Philomele  I’ll prove it to you now, I once heard a philosopher do it. I will begin by asking you a lot of questions. You answer yes or no. But you must pay attention. Are you ready?

Captain  I think so.

Philomele  And when I’ve proved all this, Captain, you will have to renounce the beliefs of those wild men.

Captain  I might.

Philomele  You have to promise.

Tereus  You have to promise.

Tereus  Why are the sails up, Captain?

Captain  We have a good wind, Tereus.
Tereus  I don't know. She has women with her.
Philomele  What do they talk about?
Tereus  What women talk about. I didn't ask you to grill me, Philomele. Talk to me. Talk to me about the night.
Philomele  The night?
    Pause.
Tereus  The night. Something! What were you saying to the Captain?
Philomele  I was asking him questions, Tereus.
    Silence. The Sailors sing a song, softly.
Philomele  How well they sing.
    Pause.
Tereus  Do you want to be married, Philomele?
Niobe  Oh, yes, my lord. Every young girl wants to be married. Don't you, Philomele?
Philomele  Niobe, go to bed, please.
Niobe  No, I can't, I mustn't. I will stay here. I must.
Philomele  Why?
Niobe  It wouldn't be right . . . A young girl. A man.
Philomele  I am with my brother, Niobe.
Tereus  You can go, Niobe.
Niobe  Yes, yes. Well . . . I will go and talk to the sailors. Although what they will say to an old woman . . . no one wants to talk to an old woman. But so it is . . . I'm not far, I'm not far. The Queen said I was not to go far.
    Pause.

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Tereus  You're beautiful.
Philomele  Procne always said I was. But the Athenians admired her because of her dignity. Has she kept that in all her years?
Tereus  In the moonlight, your skin seems transparent.
Philomele  We used to put water out in the full moon and wash our faces in it. We thought it would give us the skin of a goddess. I still do it in memory of my sister. Does she still let out that rhythmical laugh when she thinks you're being foolish? Always on one note, then stopped abruptly. Does she laugh with her women?
Tereus  I don't know . . .
Philomele  Does she laugh at you?
Tereus  Philomele.
Philomele  Yes, brother.
Tereus  What sort of man do you want to marry? A king?
Philomele  Why not? A great king. Or a prince. Or a noble captain.
Tereus  Not necessarily from Athens?
Philomele  No. As long as he is wise.
Tereus  Wise?
Philomele  But then, all kings are wise, aren't they? They have to be or they wouldn't be kings.
Tereus  You are born a king. Nothing can change that.
Philomele  But you still have to deserve it, don't you?
Tereus  Would you marry a king from the north? Like your sister? Would you do as your sister in all things?
Philomele  What do you mean? Oh, look, they're making fun of Niobe. Niobe! Here!

Niobe  They say I would be beautiful if I were young and if I were beautiful then I would be young. No one is kind to an old woman, but I don't mind, I've seen the world. You made his lordship laugh, Philomele, I heard it, that's good. All is well when power smiles, that I know.

Tereus  Philomele wants to marry a king from the north.

Niobe  Why yes, a man as great and brave as you.

Philomele  I am happy for my sister and that is enough for me.

Niobe  Sisters, sisters .

Tereus  If Procne were .

Niobe  I had sisters .

Philomele  Procne.

Tereus  To become ill .

Philomele  What are you saying, Tereus? Wasn't she well when you left? Why didn't you tell me? Why are we going so slowly? Tell the Captain to go faster.

Tereus  I didn't say that, but if .

Niobe  Yes, I had many sisters.

Tereus  Things happen.

Niobe  Too many .

Philomele  My love will protect her, and yours too, Tereus.

Tereus  Yes . . . But should . . .

Niobe  They died.

Philomele  Niobe!

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Niobe  I only want to help. I know the world. Old women do. But I'll be quiet now, very quiet.

Philomele  Sister. We will be so happy.

Tereus  Philomele . . .

SCENE EIGHT

The Male Chorus.

Male Chorus  What is a myth? The oblique image of an unwanted truth, reverberating through time.

Male Chorus  And yet, the first, the Greek meaning of myth, is simply what is delivered by word of mouth, a myth is speech, public speech.

Male Chorus  And myth also means the matter itself, the content of the speech.

Male Chorus  We might ask, has the content become increasingly unacceptable and therefore the speech more indirect? How has the meaning of myth been transformed from public speech to an unlikely story? It also meant counsel, command. Now it is a remote tale.

Male Chorus  Let that be, there is no content without its myth. Fathers and sons, rebellion, collaboration, the state, every fold and twist of passion, we have uttered them all. This one, you will say, watching Philomele watching Tereus watching Philomele, must be about men and women, yes, you think, a myth for our times, we understand.

Male Chorus  You will be beside the myth. If you think of anything, think of countries, silence, but we cannot rephrase it for you. If we could, why would we trouble to show you the myth?
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

We row Philomele north. Does she notice the widening cracks in that fragile edifice, happiness? And what about Procnæ, the cause perhaps, in any case the motor of a myth that leaves her mostly absent?

SCENE NINE

Procnæ and the Female Chorus

Hero Sometimes I feel I know things but I cannot prove that I know them or that what I know is true and when I doubt my knowledge it disintegrates into a senseless jumble of possibilities, a puzzle that will not be reassembled, the spider web in which I lie, immobile, and truth paralysed.

Helen Let me put it another way: I have trouble expressing myself. The world I see and the words I have do not match.

June I am the ugly duckling of fact, so most of the time I try to keep out of the way.

Echo Quiet. I shouldn’t be here at all.

Iris But sometimes it’s too much and I must speak. Procnæ.

Procnæ What are you women muttering about this time? Something gloomy, no doubt.

Iris Procnæ, we sense danger.

Procnæ You always sense something, and when I ask you what, you say you don’t know, it hasn’t happened yet, but it will, or it might. Well, what is it now? What danger? This place is safe. No marauding bands outside, no earthquake, what? What?

Hero I say danger, she thinks of earthquakes. Doesn’t know the first meaning of danger is the power of a lord or master.

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

Helen That one is always in someone’s danger.

Echo In their power, at their mercy.

June All service is danger and all marriage too.

Iris Procnæ, listen to me.

Procnæ What now?

Hero The sky was so dark this morning . . .

Procnæ It’ll rain. It always rains . . .

Iris Again.

Hero I was not talking meteorologically. Images require sympathy.

Echo Another way of listening.

Iris Procnæ.

Procnæ Yes, yes, yes.

Hero Your sister is on the sea.

Procnæ She’s been on the sea for a month. Have you just found that out?

Helen But the sea, the sea . . .

Hero And Tereus is a young man.

Echo Tereus.

Procnæ He’ll move that much more quickly. Tell me something I don’t know.

Hero When it’s too late, it’s easy to find the words.

Iris Procnæ.

Procnæ Leave me alone.

Iris If you went down to the seaport. Met them there.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

Echo A welcome . . .

Procne I promised Tereus I would stay here and look after his country. I will wait for him here.

Iris Procne.

Procne Enough of your nonsense. Be silent.

Helen Silent.

Echo Silent.

SCENE TEN

The Male Chorus, First Soldier, Second Soldier, Tereus.

Male Chorus We camp on a desolate beach. Days pass.

First Soldier Why are we still here?

Second Soldier Tereus has his reasons.

First Soldier I want to go home.

Second Soldier We can’t until we have the order.

First Soldier It’s no more than four days’ walk to the palace. Why are we still here?

Second Soldier I told you: because we haven’t been ordered to move.

First Soldier Why not?

Second Soldier You ask too many questions.

Male Chorus Questions. The child’s instinct suppressed in the adult.

Male Chorus For the sake of order, peace.

Male Chorus But at what price?

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

Male Chorus I wouldn’t want to live in a world that’s always shifting. Questions are like earthquakes. If you’re lucky, it’s just a rumble.

First Soldier Why don’t we ask Tereus if we can go home? I want to see my girl.

Second Soldier He wants to see his wife.

First Soldier How do you know?

Second Soldier He would, wouldn’t he?

First Soldier Then why are we here?

Second Soldier Ask him.

First Soldier Why don’t you?

Second Soldier You ask too many questions.

Male Chorus More days pass. We all wait.

First Soldier Why don’t we talk to him together? Respectful, friendly.

Second Soldier And say what?

First Soldier Ask him if he’s had any news of home. Tell him how nice it is. And spring’s coming.

Second Soldier I’d leave out the bit about spring.

First Soldier Why?

Second Soldier Ready?

Pause.

Not today. He’s worried.

First Soldier What about me?

Second Soldier You’re not a king. His worry is bigger than yours.

First Soldier Why?
The Love of the Nightingale

Am I not your leader?

Second Soldier Yes, Tereus, but –

Tereus My knowledge is greater than yours, that is my duty, just as yours is to trust me. Think: when you fight wars with me, you see only part of the battle, the few enemies you kill, or your own wounds. Sometimes this seems terrible to you, I know, but later you see the victory and the glory of your country. That glory, fame, I have seen all along.

Second Soldier Yes, Tereus, but –

First Soldier Where’s the enemy?

Tereus I have information.

Male Chorus More days.

Second Soldier Why do we have to wait so long?

First Soldier For what?

Second Soldier It’s this waiting makes me afraid. I’d rather something happened, anything.

Tereus I know this is difficult for you. (Pause.) It’s difficult for me. (Pause.) You’re experienced soldiers, responsible citizens, I trust you not to risk the safety and honour of your country because you don’t understand yet. Trust me and you’ll understand all in time.

Male Chorus In time . . .

Male Chorus What hasn’t been said and done in the name of the future? A future always in someone else’s hands. We waited, without the pain of responsibility for that promised time, the good times. We asked no more questions and at night, we slept soundly, and did not see:
Philomele, Niobe, Tereus.

Tereus Philomele.

Philomele (to Niobe) Why does he follow me everywhere? Even Procne left me alone sometimes.

Niobe Don't make him angry!

Tereus Philomele.

Philomele It's spring. Look at these flowers, Niobe, we have them in the woods near Athens. I'll bring some to Procne.

Tereus Philomele.

Philomele And here is some wild thyme, and that is xorta. Procne loves its bitter taste.

Tereus Philomele.

Philomele What is this plant, Niobe? Smell it. It's salty, I've never seen it before. Procne will know.

Tereus Philomele!

Philomele Quiet brother, you're disturbing the butterflies. Procne would not like that.

Tereus Procne. Procne. Procne is dead.

Silence.

There is a mountain not far from the palace. She climbed it with her women to see if she could catch sight of the sea. On a clear day you can look at the sea from there. She climbed to the top, but there was a tall rock and she said she would climb that as well to see us, to welcome the ship. The women begged her not to, no one would follow her. The rock is slippery and on the other side drops straight into the river below. She climbed, climbed higher to welcome her sister and stood there, waving, safe, the women thought. But then she seemed to grow dizzy, she cried out and suddenly fell, down the rock, down the cliff, into the river swollen now because of the winter rains. They are still looking for her body, it was carried with the torrent. Perhaps better not to find it.

Niobe Yes, better. Never look at a battered body, it is worse than the death that came to it.

Tereus Mourn, Philomele, mourn with me. She was my wife.

Philomele Procne.

Niobe Procne.

Philomele begins to cry and scream. Tereus takes her in his arms.

Tereus Sister, beloved sister. My sister.

Philomele Procne. No!

I want to see her body!

Chorus Nor did we see, still sleeping:

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

SCENE TWELVE

Philomele, the Captain, Niobe

Philomele How long have we been in this place forsaken by the gods, Captain?

Captain Almost a full month, Philomele.

Philomele Why?

Pause.
I can't mourn my sister here. Let me at least remember her where she lived all those years. Why do we wait and wait, for what?

Captain There may be trouble. Tereus keeps these things to himself.

Philomele And you, Captain, where will you go?

Captain I'm waiting for orders.

Philomele South?

Captain Perhaps.

Philomele You won't say, you've been asked not to say, why?

Captain You ask too many questions, Philomele.

Philomele And you ask none, why?

Pause.

Captain Do you love the sea?

Philomele I used to watch you at night, standing on your deck, an immense solitude around you. You seemed a king of elements, ordering the wind.

Captain No, you guess the wind, you order the sails. The winds have names, they're godlike, man obeys.

Philomele I never understood obedience, Captain philosophical.

Captain You're a woman.

Philomele Does that make me lawless? Do you have a wife?

Captain No, no.

Philomele Why not?

Niobe (muttering) Girl without shame. After a captain when she could have a king.

Philomele Take me with you.

Captain Take you. Where?


Captain You're laughing at me, Philomele. Tereus . . .

Philomele Frightens me. Since Procne's accident. Perhaps before. His eyes wander, have you noticed? In Athens the philosophers used to talk about wandering eyes. I forget exactly what they said, but it was not good. Yes, the eyes are the windows of the soul - Tereus has a nervous soul.

Captain You shouldn't speak like that. Not to me. My job is to obey him.

Philomele Again! What about your obedience to the elements? And desire, isn't that a god too?

Captain Philomele . . .

Philomele You touched my hand on the ship once, by mistake, and once I fell against you, a wave, you blushed, I saw it, fear, desire, they're the same, I'm not a child. Touch my hand again: prove you feel nothing.

She holds out her hand. The Captain hesitates and touches it.

So - I was right. Take me with you.

Captain We will ask Tereus.

Philomele We will ask the gods within us. Love . . .

Captain . . . your power . . .
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

Philomele  Not mine . . . Between us, above us.

She takes his hand and puts it on her breast. Tereus enters.

Tereus  Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!

He kills the Captain.

A young girl, defenceless.
I'll cut off your genitals.
Go to the underworld with your shame around your neck.

Pause.

Be more careful, Philomele.

Male Chorus  (carrying the body off) We saw nothing.

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

Tereus enters. Philomele senses this.
(softly) Phosphorescence, phosphorescence, tell me the secrets of the wine-dark sea . . .

Tereus  (softly) Philomele, what are you doing?

Philomele  Catching the lather of the sea. Moonlight, moonlight.

Tereus  I only wish you well . . .

Philomele  Let me bury my sister.

Tereus  I told you, we never found the body.

Philomele  Take me to the gorge, I will find it.

Tereus  Nothing left now, weeks -

Philomele  I will find the bones.

Tereus  Washed by the river.

Philomele  Let me stand in the river.

Tereus  It's dangerous.

Philomele  I don't want to stay here.

Tereus  You have everything you want, you loved the spot when we first came.

Philomele  Then . . .

Tereus, I want to see my sister's home, I want to speak to the women who were with her. I want to know the last words she said, please, please take me there. Why are we here? What is the point of talking if you won't answer that question?

Silence. Philomele turns away.

Moonlight, moonlight . . .

Tereus  Philomele, listen to me.

SCENE THIRTEEN

Moonlight. The beach. Philomele.

Philomele  Catch the moonlight with your hands. Tread the moonlight with your toes, phosphorescence, phosphorescence, come to me, come to me, tell me the secrets of the wine-dark sea.

Pause.

I'm so lonely.

Pause.

Procne, come to me.

Pause. She waits.

Procne, Procne, sister. Help me.

Catch the lather of the moonlight. Spirits, talk to me.

Oh, you gods, help me.
Philomele Light the shells, light the stones, light the dust of old men's bones . . .

Tereus Philomele!

Philomele Catch the lather of the sea . . .

Tereus Do you remember that day in the theatre in Athens? The play?

Philomele Evanesence, evanescence . . .

Tereus Philomele, I am telling you.

Pause.

I love you.

Philomele I love you too, brother Tereus, you are my sister's husband.

Tereus No, no. The play. I am Phaedra. (Pause.) I love you. That way.

Silence.

Philomele It is against the law.

Tereus My wife is dead.

Philomele It is still against the law.

Tereus The power of the god is above the law. It began then, in the theatre, the chorus told me. I saw the god and I loved you.

Philomele Tereus.

Pause.

I do not love you.
I do not want you.
I want to go back to Athens.

Tereus Who can resist the gods? Those are your words.
Tereus I will have you in your fear. Trembling limbs to my fire.

He grabs her and leads her off. Niobe appears.

Niobe So it's happened. I've seen it coming for weeks. I could have warned her, but what's the point? Nowhere to go. It was already as good as done. I know these things. She should have consented. Easier that way. Now it will be all pain. Well I know. We fought Athens. Foolish of a small island but we were proud. The men – dead. All of them. And us. Well – we wished ourselves dead then, but now I know it's better to live. Life is sweet. You bend your head. It's still sweet. You bend it even more. Power is something you can't resist. That I know. My island bowed its head. I came to Athens. Oh dear, oh dear, she shouldn't scream like that. It only makes it worse. Too tense. More brutal. Well I know. She'll accept it in the end. Have to. We do. And then. When she's like me she'll wish it could happen again. I wouldn't mind a soldier. They don't look at me now. All my life I was afraid of them and then one day they stop looking and it's even more frightening. Because what makes you invisible is death coming quietly. Makes you pale, then unseen. First, no one turns, then you're not there. Nobody goes to my island any more. It's dead too. Countries are like women. It's when they're fresh they're wanted. Why did the Athenians want our island? I don't know. We only had a few lemon trees. Now the trees are withered. Nobody looks at them. There. It's finished now. A cool cloth. On her cheeks first. That's where it hurts most. The shame. Then we'll do the rest. I know all about it. It's the lemon trees I miss, not all those dead men. Funny, isn't it? I think of the lemon trees.

The palace of Tereus. Procne and the Female Chorus

Procne If he is dead then I want to see his body and if he is alive then I want to see him. That is logical. Iris, come here. Closer: There.

Pause.

Iris, I have seen you look at me with some kindness. You could be my friend, possibly? What is a friend? A friend tells the truth. Will you be my friend? No, don't turn away, I won't impose the whole burden of this friendship. One gesture, one gift. One question. Will you be my friend to the tune of one question? Ah, you don't say no. Iris, answer me. Is Tereus dead?

Pause.

Iris, please, pity. One yes, one no. Small words and yet can turn the world inside out.

Pause.

I have learned patience. It is the rain.

Pause.

The inexorable weight of a grey sky. I can wait.

Silence.

It's only one word.

Very well, don't. And when I kill myself, it will be for you to bring news of my death, Iris. You don't believe me? Athenians don't kill themselves. But I can be Thracian too. I have been here long enough. Go now.

Iris No.
Procne He is not dead.
Iris No.
Procne But then, why?

Pause.

Yes, my promise. (Pause.) Thank you.

My sister? No, of course, another question. If there is one, might there not be two? (She addresses the women.) My husband is not dead. Who will tell me where he is? Why? You have husbands among his men. Don’t you ask yourselves questions? What sirens have entangled them in what melodies? Is that it? But no, he is not dead, so he is not drowned. Turned into a wild beast by the power of a witch, is that it? You’ve heard barking in the forest and recognized your husbands? Don’t dare say, the shame of it; my husband is a dog. All fleas, wagging tail and the irrational bite, well, is that it?

Weeks, weeks and no one speaks to me.

Pause.

Even a rumour would do.
Where are your men?
Where is mine?
Where is Tereus?

Tereus and the Male Chorus enter.

Tereus Here.

Pause.

A delay.

Procne (very still) A delay.

Pause.

There’s blood on your hands.

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

Tereus A wild beast. Or a god in disguise. Unnameable.
Procne My sister?
Tereus (after a brief pause) Not here.
Procne No. (Pause.) Drowned?

Pause.

Tereus But I am here.
Procne Yes.

She opens her arms. The Male Chorus comes forward, hiding Tereus and Procne.

Male Chorus Home at last.
Male Chorus We said nothing.
Male Chorus It was better that way.

SCENE FIFTEEN

Philomela, Niobe. Philomela is being washed by Niobe, her legs spread out around a basin. Her head is down.

Niobe There. Nothing left. It’s a weak liquid, it drops out quickly. Not like resin.

Philomela I can still smell it. Wash me.

Niobe It’s your own smell, there’s nothing left.

Philomela It’s the smell of violence. Wash me.

Niobe It’s the smell of fear.

Philomela Wash me.

Niobe Some women get to like the smell. I never did. Too much like fishing boats. I like the smell of pines.
Philomele I want to die. Wash me.

Niobe You will, when it’s time. In the meantime, get him to provide for you. They don’t like us much afterwards, you know. Now he might still feel something. We must eat. Smile. Beg.

Philomele Beg? Was it my fault?

Niobe I don’t ask questions. Get some coins if you can.

Philomele Goddesses, where were you?

Niobe Stop worrying about the gods and think of us. Don’t make him angry. He might still be interested. That would be excellent.

Philomele You. You are worse than him.

She pours the dirty water over Niobe.

Filth. Here. Drink his excretions.

Niobe Don’t be so mighty, Philomele. You’re nothing now. Another victim. Grovel. Like the rest of us.

Philomele No.


Philomele Never.

Niobe Here’s the King. Hold back your tongue, Philomele.

Tereus enters.

Tereus Now I wish you didn’t exist.

Philomele When will you explain, Tereus?

Tereus Explain?

Philomele Why? The cause? I want to understand.
coward you are and that you could not, cannot bear to look at me? Did you tell her that despite my fear, your violence, when I saw you in your nakedness I couldn’t help laughing because you were so shrivelled, so ridiculous and it is not the way it is on the statues? Did you tell her you cut me because you yourself had no strength? Did you tell her I pitied her for having in her bed a man who could screech such quick and ugly pleasure, a man of jelly beneath his hard skin, did you tell her that?

Pause.

And once I envied her happiness with her northern hero. The leader of men. Take the sword out of your hand, you fold into a cloth. Have they ever looked at you, your soldiers, your subjects?

Tereus That’s enough.

Philomele There’s nothing inside you. You’re only full when you’re filled with violence. And they obey you? Look up to you? Have the men and women of Thrace seen you naked? Shall I tell them? Yes, I will talk.

Tereus Quiet, woman.

Philomele You call this man your king, men and women of Thrace, this scarecrow dribbling embarrassed lust, that is what I will say to them, you revere him, but have you looked at him? No? You’re too awed, he wears his cloak of might and virility with such ease you won’t look beneath. When he murdered a virtuous captain because a woman could love that captain, that was bravery, you say. And if, women of Thrace, he wants to force himself on you, trying to stretch his puny manhood to your intimacies, you call that high spirits? And you soldiers, you’ll follow into a battle a man who lies, a man of tiny spirit and shrivelled courage? Wouldn’t you prefer someone with truth and goodness, self-control and reason? Let my sister rule in his place.

The Love of the Nightingale

Tereus I said that was enough.

Philomele No, I will say more. They will all know what you are.

Tereus I warn you.

Philomele Men and women of Thrace, come and listen to the truth about this man –

Tereus I will keep you quiet.

Philomele Never, as long as I have the words to expose you. The truth, men and women of Thrace, the truth –

Tereus cuts out Philomele’s tongue.

Scene Sixteen

Philomele crouched in a pool of blood. Niobe.

Niobe Now truly I pity Philomele. She has lost her words, all of them. Now she is silent. For good. Of course, he could have killed her, that is the usual way of keeping people silent. But that might have made others talk. The silence of the dead can turn into a wild chorus. But the one alive who cannot speak, that one has truly lost all power. There. I don’t know what she wants. I don’t know what she feels. Perhaps she likes being silent. No responsibility.

Philomele seizes her, tries to express something.

I don’t know what she wants. She can no longer command me. What good is a servant without orders? I will go. I don’t know what she wants.


Tereus You should have kept quiet.

Pause.
I did what I had to.

Pause.

You threatened the order of my rule.

Pause.

How could I allow rebellion? I had to keep you quiet. I am not sorry. Except for your pain. But it was you or me.

Long pause.

You are more beautiful now in your silence. I could love you. You should have allowed the god to have his way. You should have kept quiet. I was the stronger. And my desire. Niobe, you will look after her. This is to ease the pain. (He gives Niobe money, then goes to Philomele.)

Why weren’t you more careful? Let me kiss those bruised lips. You are mine. My sweet, my songless, my caged bird.

He kisses her. She is still.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

Tereus’ palace. Procne, Itys, Tereus.

Procne I wouldn’t want to be young again. Time flows so gently as you get older. It used to feel broken by rocks. Five years since my sister died. Tomorrow. I will light a candle towards the sea, as I do every year. But the pain flickers now, almost out. Will you come with me this time, Tereus?

Tereus No.

Procne I used to be angry that you would not mourn my sister. Why should you mourn her? You hardly knew her. Your aunt, Itys. You would have liked her. She was full of laughter.

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

Itys I have uncles. They’re strong.

Procne She could speak with the philosophers. She was bold and quick.

Itys What’s a philosopher?

Procne A man who loves wisdom.

Itys What is wisdom?

Procne It brings peace.

Itys I don’t like peace. I like war.

Procne Why?

Itys So I can be brave. I want to be a great captain. Lead thousands into battle. Like Mars.

Procne Mars is a god.

Itys What is a god?

Procne Like us. But doesn’t die.

Itys Why can’t I be a god?

Procne You have to be born one.

Tereus But you’ll be a king, Itys, that’s almost as good.

Procne A wise king, like your father.

Itys (turning round with his spear in hand) I’ll fight this way. I’ll fight that way. I’ll fight this way. I’ll fight this way.

He runs out.

Procne I am happy, as there was to be only one, that we have a son.

Pause.

Aren’t you?
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

Tereus Yes.

Procne You're quiet.

Pause.

Over the years you have become quiet. I used to be afraid of you, did you know? But we shall grow old in peace. I wish more people came to visit this country. Then we could show our hospitality. No one comes here. Why?

Silence.

And if a god came to visit, he would find us sitting here, content, and perhaps turn us into two trees as a reward, like Baucis and Philemon. Would you like that?

Tereus Not yet.

Procne Ha. I love to see you smile.

Pause.

And tomorrow is the feast of Bacchus. I will go out this time. I will go out with the women of this country. You see how I become Thracian.

Pause.

You're going? Of course, you must. The evening is soft, look, stars too. We do not have many evenings together. I was frightened of your evenings when we were first married. That is why I sent you to Athens for my sister, I am a woman now. I can take pleasure in my husband.

She approaches Tereus, but he puts her away from him and leaves. When he is gone, she holds the bottom of her stomach.

Desire. Now. So late.

Oh, you gods, you are cruel.

Or, perhaps, only drunk.

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

She begins to dress as a Bacchae as does the Female Chorus. Music.

SCENE EIGHTEEN

Music. The stage fills with Bacchae. Niobe enters leading Philomele, who carries two huge dolls. Behind her, the Servant carries a third doll.

Niobe No place safe from the Bacchae. They run the city and the woods, flit along the beach, no crevasse free from the light of their torches. Miles and miles of a drunken chain. These people are savages. Look at their women. You never see them and when you do, breasts hanging out, flutes to their mouths. In my village, they'd be stoned. Out of the way, you, out of the way.

Servant We could move faster without those big dolls, Niobe.

Niobe She wouldn't go without them. Years she's been sewing, making them, painting faces. Look. Childlike pastime for her, what can I say? It's kept her still. And she's quiet anyway. Tereus said, get her out, quickly into the city. She'll be lost there. Another madwoman, no one will notice. Could have cut off her tongue in frenzied singing to the gods. Strange things happen on these nights, I have heard.

Servant Very strange, Niobe. But she was better in the hut.

Niobe No. It gives her a little outing. She's only seen us and the King for five years.

Servant He doesn't come much any more.

Niobe No. They all dream of silence, but then it bores them.
Nick BARTON

Timberlake Wertenbaker

Servant Who is she, Niobe?


Servant I feel pity for her. I don't know why.

Niobe Look, some acrobats. The idiot will like it. Look.

Look. See the acrobats. Now that's like my village. Except I believe they're women. Shame on them. But still, no harm in watching.

She thrusts Philomele to the front of a circle, watching. A crowd gathers around. The Acrobats perform Finish. As they melt back into the crowd, the empty space remains and Philomele throws the dolls into the circle. Niobe grabs one of them and tries to grab Philomele, but she is behind the second doll. Since the dolls are huge, the struggle seems to be between the two dolls. One is male, one is female and the male one has a king's crown.

Niobe A mad girl, a mad girl. Help me.

But the crowd applauds, makes a wider circle and waits in silence. The rape scene is re-enacted in a gross and comic way, partly because of Niobe's resistance and attempt to catch Philomele. Philomele does most of the work with both dolls. The crowd laughs. Philomele then stages a very brutal illustration of the cutting of the female doll's tongue. Blood cloth on the floor. The crowd is very silent. Niobe still. Then the Servant comes inside the circle, holding a third doll, a queen. At that moment, Procne also appears in the front of the crowd's circle. She has been watching. The Procne doll weeps. The two female dolls embrace. Procne approaches Philomele, looks at her and takes her away. The dolls are picked up by the crowd and they move off. A bare stage for a second. Then Procne and Philomele appear.

The Love of the Nightingale

Procne holding on to Philomele, almost dragging her. Then she lets go. Philomele stands still. Procne circles her, touches her. Sound of music very distant. Then a long silence. The sisters look at each other.

Procne How can I know that was the truth?

Pause.

You were always wild. How do I know you didn't take him to your bed?

You could have told him lies about me, cut your own tongue in shame. How can I know?

You won't nod, you won't shake your head. I have never seen him violent. He would not do this.

He had to keep you back from his soldiers. Desire always burnt in you. Did you play with his sailors? Did you shame us all? Why should I believe you?

She shakes Philomele.

Do something, make me know you showed the truth.

Pause.

There's no shame in your eyes. Why should I believe you? And perhaps you're not Philomele. A resemblance. A mockery in this horrible drunken feast. How can I know?

Silence.

But if it is true. My sister.

Open your mouth.

Philomele opens her mouth, slowly.

To do this. He would do this.

Pause.

Justice. Philomele, the justice we learned as children, do you remember? Where is it? Come, come with me.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

The Bacchae give wine to Procne and Philomele.

Do this.

Philomele drinks.

Drink. Oh, we will revel. You, drunken god, help us. Help us.

They dance off with the Bacchae.

SCENE NINETEEN

Two Soldiers.

First Soldier It's almost dawn. Let's go.

Second Soldier He said to stay by the palace until the sun was up.

First Soldier What is he afraid of? An invasion of Amazons? They're all in there.

Second Soldier Our enemies know this is a strange night.

First Soldier I never liked this festival. All these drunken women. My girl's in there. And she'll never tell what happens. I tell her about the war. Well. Most of it. Let's go.

Second Soldier We can't.

First Soldier There's no law on these nights.

Second Soldier Do you want to look in?

First Soldier They'd kill us.

Second Soldier That window, there. We could see through the shutters.

First Soldier It's supposed to be a mystery. A woman's mystery. That's what my girl says. Give me a break.

Second Soldier You could sit on my shoulders. Make sure your girl's behaving.

First Soldier It's all women in there.

Second Soldier It's all men in a war.

First Soldier You mean, she - they - no.

Second Soldier Have a look.

First Soldier If she - I'll strangle her. So that's what mystery is. Let me see.

The First Soldier climbs on to the Second Soldier's shoulder.

Second Soldier Can you see?

First Soldier Steady.

Second Soldier I'm holding your legs. Can you see?

First Soldier Yeah.

Second Soldier Well?

First Soldier It's just a lot of women.

Second Soldier We know that, stupid. What are they doing?

First Soldier Drinking.

Second Soldier And?

First Soldier Oh.

Second Soldier What?

First Soldier Oh, you gods.

Second Soldier Well? What are they doing? Exactly? What?

First Soldier (Jumping down, laughing.) Nothing.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

He does a dance with the Second Soldier.

Dancing. Lots of wine. They've swords and lances.

Itys has appeared.

What are you doing here?

Itys I saw you.

First Soldier No men, no boys on the street. Go home.

Itys I saw you looking.

Second Soldier That's Itys. Tereus' son. Why aren't you asleep?

Itys I saw you. I'm going to tell my father when he gets back.

First Soldier Nothing wrong with looking.

Itys Mother, said no one's to see.

I'll tell her, she'll tell father. He'll be angry.

Second Soldier Don't you want to see?

Itys It's not allowed.

Second Soldier Aren't you a prince? A king's son? You let women tell you what is and is not allowed?

Itys You shouldn't have looked.

First Soldier It's just women.

Second Soldier Why don't you see for yourself? A king has to be informed.

First Soldier You can sit on my shoulders.

Second Soldier Do you know how to sit on somebody's shoulders? Are you strong enough?

Itys Of course I know.

SECOND SOLDIER clings on the shoulders of the Second Soldier.

Second Soldier I think you are.

Itys stretches himself to the window and looks. Pause.

Itys Oh.

First Soldier Still dancing, the women?

Itys They drink more than my father.

First Soldier But only once a year.

Itys There's Mother.

First Soldier What is she doing?

Itys Why should I tell you?

Second Soldier Quite right, boy. What about the other women?

Itys There's one I've never seen before. She looks like a slave. That's my sword. That slave girl. A slave, a girl slave holding my sword. Let me down.

Second Soldier Where are you going?

Itys To stop them.

First Soldier No.
Second Soldier  Wait.

Itys runs off.
First Soldier  Let's go.
Second Soldier  Let me look. (He climbs.) He's there. They've stopped. They're looking at him. It's all right. Procne is holding him. Shows him to the slave girl. He looks up. They've all gone still. He laughs. Oh! (The Second Soldier drops down.)
First Soldier  What happened?
Second Soldier  I'm drunk. I didn't see anything. It didn't happen. The god has touched me with madness. For looking. I'm seeing things. I didn't see anything. Nothing. Nothing. Let's go. I didn't see anything. There's Tereus. I don't know anything. I wasn't here.

They run off.

SCENE TWENTY

The Female Chorus. Procne. Philomele.
Hero  Without the words to demand.
Echo  Or ask. Plead. Beg for.
June  Without the words to accuse.
Helen  Without even the words to forgive.
Echo  The words that help to forget.
Hero  What else was there?
Iris  There are some questions that have no answers. We might ask you now: why does the Vulture eat Prometheus' liver? He brought men intelligence.

THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

Echo  Why did God want them stupid?
Iris  We can ask: why did Medea kill her children?
June  Why do countries make war?
Helen  Why are races exterminated?
Hero  Why do white people cut off the words of blacks?
Iris  Why do people disappear? The ultimate silence.
Echo  Not even death recorded.
Helen  Why are little girls raped and murdered in the car parks of dark cities?
Iris  What makes the torturer smile?
Hero  We can ask. Words will grope and probably not find. But if you silence the question.
Iris  Imprison the mind that asks.
Echo  Cut out its tongue.
Hero  You will have this.
June  We show you a myth.
Echo  Image. Echo.
Helen  A child is the future.
Hero  This is what the soldiers did not see.

Itys comes running in.

Itys  That's my sword. Give me my sword.
Procne  Itys.

Itys  Give me my sword, slave, or I'll kick you. Kill you all. Cut off your heads. Pick out your eyes.

Itys goes for Philomele. Procne holds him. Philomele still
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has the sword. Philomele brings the sword down on his neck. The Female Chorus close in front. Tereus enters.

Tereus It's daylight at last. The revels are over. Time to go home.

Silence. No one moves.

We're whitewashing the streets. All that wine. Poured like blood. It's time for you to go home.

No one moves.

Stupefied? You should hold your wine better. You've had your revels. Go on. Stagger home. Procne, tell your women to go home.

Philomele is revealed. Hands bloodied. There is a silence.

Tereus I had wanted to say.

Procne Say what, Tereus?

Tereus If I could explain.

Procne You have a tongue.

Tereus Beyond words.

Procne What?

Tereus When I ride my horse into battle, I see where I am going. But close your eyes for an instant and the world whirls round. That is what happened. The world whirled round.

Pause.

Procne What kept you silent? Shame?

Tereus No.

Procne What?
Procne Did you ask?

Tereus Monsters. Fiends. I will kill you both.

Tereus takes the sword of Itys. The Female Chorus comes forward.

Hero Tereus pursued the two sisters, but he never reached them. The myth has a strange end.

Echo No end.

Iris Philomele becomes a nightingale.

June Procne a swallow.

Helen And Tereus a hoopoe.

Hero You might ask, why does the myth end that way?

Iris Such a transformation.

Echo Metamorphosis.

The birds come on.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

Itys and the birds.

Philomele (the Nightingale) And now, ask me some more questions.

Itys I wish you'd sing again.

Philomele You have to ask me a question first.

Pause.

Itys Do you like being a nightingale?

Philomele I like the nights and my voice in the night. I like the spring. Otherwise, no, not much, I never liked birds,

but we were all so angry the bloodshed would have gone on for ever. So it was better to become a nightingale. You see the world differently.

Itys Do you like being a nightingale more than being Philomele?

Philomele Before or after I was silenced?

Itys I don't know. Both.

Philomele I always felt a shadow hanging over me. I asked too many questions.

Itys You want me to ask questions.

Philomele Yes.

Itys Will you sing some more?

Philomele Later.

Itys Why doesn't Procne sing?

Philomele Because she was turned into a swallow and swallows don't sing.

Itys Why not?

Philomele Different job.

Itys Oh.

Pause.

I like it when you sing.

Philomele Do you understand why it was wrong of Tereus to cut out my tongue?

Itys It hurt.

Philomele Yes, but why was it wrong?

Itys (bored) I don't know. Why was it wrong?
Philomele It was wrong because –
Itys What does wrong mean?
Philomele It is what isn’t right.
Itys What is right?

_The Nightingale sings._

Didn’t you want me to ask questions?

_Fade._
Appendix B
Dianeira was originally broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on 28 November 1999. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

Irene Olympia Dukakis
Dianeira Harriet Walter
First Chorus Jenny Quayle
Second Chorus Emily Bruni
Third Chorus Joy Richardson
Nurse Sandra Voe
Hyllos Joseph Fiennes
Heracles Alan Howard
Messenger Jonathan Tafler
Lychas David Bradley
Nessos Simon Callow
Characters

Timberlake Wertenbaker
(Introduction)

Irene
Dianeira
Chorus
Nurse
Hyllos
Heracles
Messenger
Lychas
Nessos
INTRODUCTION

Timberlake Some years ago, when I was in Athens, I heard there was a village up north where you could still find storytellers in the Kafeneions. I asked my friends to take me there and we drove up mountain roads to the village. We arrived at dusk and went to the market place, but we discovered that most of the storytellers were already well into their tales. It felt like arriving late for a movie and we were about to leave, when a café owner pointed to a woman slumped asleep over a table. We were told her name was Irene and no one had dared to wake her up, but we were strangers and could take that liberty. We shook her awake, put some bills on the plate in front of her and ordered her a coffee. She asked us to add a glass of brandy. She was grey-haired, with a slight moustache, dressed in a floppy black and white dress with a dark jacket. She could have been the widow of the local solicitor but her eyes were watery and veiled. Of course, she was blind, most storytellers are. She asked us what kind of story we wanted. I wanted one about love, but my friends said they'd heard lots of those, they wanted adventure. We settled on anger. This is what we heard.

KAFENEION

Irene I will tell you a story of anger. It took place a long time ago, any time, in Trachis, which is over there, on the other side of the mountains. But Trachis is more a state of mind than a place. You know this, you come
from Athens, the seat of logic. Trachis is a plain of disappointment. Disappointment – and that’s where anger puts down roots and finds its nourishment.

The three heroes of this story are Dianeira, Heracles and Hyllos. Now, even though you’re students you probably won’t have heard of Dianeira and that’s part of her story. Heracles you’ll know. Hercules, Heracles, the great man, always labouring, a model of manhood, but an unloved one. Why? I’m not sure. And their oldest son Hyllos. A young man who at the beginning of this story is not marked or mapped yet – that is to come.

Where does anger lie? Somewhere in that plain between the hopes of a life and what actually happens to it, a plain clouded over by fear and foreboding. That neutral plain of Trachis, that’s where it found its breeding ground for this story. Listen to Dianeira. It is dark, she stands on a terrace looking at the night. It is time to go inside to sleep and she is surrounded by some of the women of Trachis who keep her company, a chorus, whose job is mostly to listen and occasionally to echo.

TRACHIS

Dianeira There’s this saying that you cannot judge a person’s life as happy or wretched until that person is dead. That’s what they say, but I don’t need a trip to the underworld where they’d hand me a map of my memories to understand that I was born to be unhappy. Already, as a young virgin in my father’s house, it started going badly. All the other girls of Eetolia were looking forward to their marriages. But who had come to my door as a suitor? I’ll tell you: a river. Yes, Akilos, the river god. Even he didn’t have the nerve to come to a house as running water so sometimes he presented himself as a bull, pawing, snorting; sometimes as a snake, all shivering skin, slithering coils, darting tongue; and sometimes he took on the naked body of a man, that’s bad enough, but with the head of an ox, his beard spluttering jets of water. Who wants to marry a spitting fountain? I prayed to the gods to let me die rather than share a bed with that, but you never know if the gods hear you.

So when, at last, at long last, he came, him, he seemed like a saviour, a maiden’s true hero. Heracles. He came, tall, a protrusion of muscles –

First Chorus Rippling, glistening . . .

Dianeira He came –

Second Chorus And he had his bow and arrows.

Dianeira And fought the river god. Don’t ask me to describe the fight. I was crouched down on the other side of the river, with my head bowed over my knees, trembling, and cursing the beauty of my face which was bringing me nothing but suffering, more suffering. Well, as luck would have it, Zeus, the god of battles, made the outcome a good one.

Third Chorus It could have been the goddess of love, it usually is: Aphrodite.

Dianeira Heracles won, and I became the wife of the hero.

Since our marriage, my life has been one long bleak torment. Wave upon wave of fear breaks over me, that’s all I ever feel, fear.

Terrors of the night.

Night, consummate artist of fear, shapes and reshapes it, colours it different shades of grim and dark. Terror turns so malleable in the night. Yes, we have children, but Heracles is like an absent landlord who visits his
holdings twice a year, once to sow and once to reap. And then he goes back to work, always for someone else's benefit. Work, labour, all that strength always at the service of somebody far away. He had it predicted to him that these labours of his would eventually come to an end, but now I am more afraid than ever. Here I am, in Trachis, a stranger in the house of a stranger, waiting. But nobody seems to know where he is, this hero of mine, my husband Heracles. He's been gone for fifteen months. Ten I'm used to. Fifteen is excessive, even for him.

There are so many ways to be afraid. There's the fear that stalks you through troubled sleep, but there's a morning fear, too. Sharp as the first sliver of the sun on morning frost. And so I am afraid to go to bed and even more afraid that I will have to wake up.

Irene In that long ago time, people did not have character as we know it today, childhood was no more than the empty plain between birth and marriage and, once married, a woman always had a nurse to advise her. Obvious advice and often disastrous as obvious advice must be. The nurse – an antique version of the horoscope: ‘Convince someone influential that your hidden depths could be of benefit. Stop short of flirting with danger, however.’ Here is the nurse, come to wake the mournful Dianeira. She is old, bent down by humility, but the morning is new and she feels it is time to advise.

Nurse My lady Dianeira, you are always complaining about your husband's absence. And yet, you have children and you haven't sent one of them to find out where he is. Surely Hyllos, your eldest, wants to know what his father is up to. Send him to find Heracles, that is, if you don't object to the advice of a humble slave.

Irene In the pure air of that long ago time, in the stillness of the early morning and in the golden light of...
Dianeira  Hylllos, have you never asked yourself where you father might be?

Hylllos  My father. Isn’t he always away on some heroic mission?

Dianeira  Yes, but don’t you wonder where he is?

Hylllos  Does it matter? When he’s triumphed, he’ll come back.

Dianeira  He’s been away longer than usual.

Hylllos  It’s always long.

Dianeira  That’s the way with heroes.

Hylllos  I keep hearing about him.

Dianeira  It’s hard not to hear about Heracles, but where is he now?

Hylllos  I heard he was in the service of some woman in Lydia.

Dianeira  In service to a woman! Heracles? Who told you that?

Hylllos  But that’s finished and now he’s about to go on a campaign against Euboea, that’s what I’ve heard anyway.

Dianeira  Euboea . . . there were predictions . . . Euboea. He told me . . .

Heracles  Dianeira, I went to consult the sacred oak of my father, the great God Zeus. I felt him come to me in that shady grove and I heard him say to me that in Euboea, my fate would fork. Either I would find rest at last, retire from these great labours or else, it’s in Euboea, Dianeira, that I would meet my end.

Dianeira  Heracles . . .

Heracles  I have triumphed over so many enemies, and I am strong: look at me. The oak leaves through which my father spoke were whispering so softly I could only just make out the words. Rest is what they said, what I heard, rest. I have worked so hard, Dianeira, I would welcome rest at last. I am sure that’s what they said. Wait for me. If I am not back by the fifteenth month, then . . .

Dianeira  Heracles –

Heracles  Wait for me.

Dianeira  Then gone again . . .

I am afraid, Hylllos.

Hylllos  You always are, mother. He can look after himself.

Dianeira  The distant beat of foreboding . . . like the crack of a branch, the cry of a migrating bird . . . Hylllos, you must go and find him. Go today. Bring him back safely. We’re late, but maybe not too late.

Fear closes in.

Quickly. Go.

Hylllos  I will find him, Mother, have no fear.

Irene  Hylllos will go out of the house, out of the village, to find his father in a country not so big you can’t walk it eventually. And now, for the first time, the shadow of destiny falls over him too, the son, as he seeks and comes closer to his father. His father’s shadow begins to cover him, merges with his own shadow. Hylllos walks eastward, towards Euboea.

Hylllos  I’ll meet someone eventually who has some news.
A shepherd, a soldier. And then I’ll find him. It’s not as if I know him that well, this heroic father of mine. He comes home weary from his labours, dives into my mother’s bed, ruffles my hair, says little, says nothing. Now doesn’t even ruffle my hair, looks at me with surprise as I grow almost as tall as him.

Heracles You’ve grown, you keep growing.

Hyllus Do I detect distaste at my height? Then he goes away again. My mother cries. Then weeks of sadness and silence. And always his unspoken name hovers over us. Well, someone will tell me where he is because everybody in Greece is always talking about the great man, my father Heracles.

Dianeira does not have the relief of movement and search. She has to stay still and wait, all movement in the imagination. Imagination too is a breeding ground for anger, but for the moment she and her woman friends are content to muse about darkness, life and geography and borrow from our poet Sophocles his sketches of the night.

First Chorus Here comes the night, draping herself in her sequined cloak of stars.

Second Chorus Shimmering.

Third Chorus See rather the night as a womb, heaving, pulled apart, rent asunder, she pushes forth in terrible pain, the sun.

First Chorus Later, enfolds him again, caressing him, she has already forgotten the pains to come, the loving mother, the tender night.

Third Chorus Again and again, recurrent birth pangs and then forgiveness as she closes him into herself.

Second Chorus But only the sun can penetrate the crannies of the earth, the hollows of the oceans, and tell us where Heracles might be.

First Chorus They say Heracles can hold back the two continents as they move towards each other, about to crash and splinter.

Second Chorus He was last seen battling the waves on the edges of the earth.

Third Chorus I heard he was storming the battlements of a rich city.

Second Chorus I call on the sun to light up the continents, search him out, and tell me where the child of Alcmene and of the lightning god Zeus is to be found.

First Chorus You tremble, Dianeira, like a bird who’s lost its nest and fears finding it even more, in case it is revealed to be empty. Too many labours, you say, worse than the sea, they come one after the other, wave upon wave of works, yes, Dianeira, too many adventures, but hold on to hope, that sturdy crag face of our destiny, and then remember that in a human life nothing ever stands still.

Second Chorus Not the stars
    not misery
    not wealth
    they come, they are taken away
    someone rejoices
    yes, but someone else then cries out in pain.

Third Chorus And so, hold tight to your hopes. Zeus is not without care for his children.

Dianeira You mouth the banality of hope, but you understand nothing. You don’t know what it is like to be me, you’re too young. Youth basks in its ease and thinks there is no such thing as time, but wait until you get
married. Pain after pain after pain, husband, children, you'll never sleep in peace again, believe me, not for the rest of your life. I'm already the widow of his labours, I've tasted that loneliness, I don't want to swallow widowhood whole. And you see, usually when men go away, they tell you not to worry, but this time –

*  

Heracles In Euboea, Dianeira, in Euboea . . . ease, at last, peace, or, well, maybe death. And yet, see. I am like a god in my strength, but I am a man too and my father Zeus wants me to know fear, and to know what it is to triumph over fear – like a man, a godly man. Wait for me. If after fifteen months I haven't returned, then . . . but until then, wait patiently, without fear.

*  

Dianeira I have waited. Fifteen months. You tell me to hold on to hope.

Irene A messenger is a strange being. He has no name, he is the messenger. He comes running, always breathless, and brings news. Sometimes good, sometimes bad, but most often seemingly good but really bad. Pass the parcel and unwrap the worm. In those days, there was always a messenger or two, who came running hot off the press and dropped a bombshell. This one's no exception. He's running across the plain, through a narrow street, up to the house, onto the terrace, here he is.

Messenger I wanted to be the first person to bring you the good news, my lady, your husband is alive and well, and will soon be home.

Irene Dianeira knows better than to trust the first appearance of words. She checks.

Dianeira What are you saying, how do you know this, where have you heard it?

Messenger The herald of your own house, Lychas, is making his way here to tell you, but he is surrounded by so many people he has to keep stopping to trumpet the good news and answer questions. So I decided to beat him to it.

Dianeira He's coming back . . . at last . . . he's safe . . . throw off this damp cloak of foreboding Dianeira, lift your face to the light

Here comes Lychas himself to tell me more.

Irene Lychas has a name and so he is more than a messenger. Who is he? A house herald, that is a messenger attached to a particular house, who brings messages back and forth, a kind of postman. Unfortunately, he has ideas of his own, a tragic complication. How he missed Hyllus, we don't know. One took the lower route the other the higher one. Lychas is not breathless because he's made a more leisurely way to the house, talking to everyone as he came. He is covered with dust from the road but dignified, as a house herald must be.

Lychas I bring you welcome news, lady Dianeira, your husband is completing his final rites of thanks to the gods and will be home soon.

Dianeira What kept him away for so long?

Lychas He had to serve the woman called Omphale, himself dressed as a woman.

Dianeira Dressed as a woman . . . humiliating.

Lychas Yes, and that's why he took a few extra months to sack the city of the King Eurytos.
Dianeira That's in another part of the country, I don't understand.

Lychas You see, Heracles blamed Eurytus for his enslavement to a woman. He was a guest at the house of Eurytus and the king started to make fun of him, mocking his bows and arrows, saying he couldn't shoot straight, he was no hero at all, and eventually Eurytus threw him out of his house.

Irene Now I must tell you this is what you call a likely story. The rules of hospitality were so stringent in those days, even the most debauched and insane tyrant would think twice before throwing any guest out of his house, but listen and listen to a slight tremor in the tale Lychas tells.

Lychas Heracles was furious. One day he spotted one of the sons of Eurytus standing on a high cliff looking for some runaway horses. He sneaked up behind him and pushed him over the cliff. Now, Heracles had killed this man by stealth and treachery, not in open combat. Zeus became angry with the unheroic behaviour of his son and punished Heracles by making him dress as woman and become the servant of Omphale. Heracles always blamed Eurytus for making him behave badly, and as soon as he was freed from his service to Omphale he sacked the city of Eurytus, killed the King, collected the bounty and enslaved the women. He sends you this small group here, they have been following me, they are coming now, look at them. It's too bad, isn't it? Their houses have turned to ashes, their husbands to bones, and they start a life of misery, drudgery, as slaves without names. That's how it goes, my lady, but your husband is safe, and comes home to you in triumph and you must rejoice.

Dianeira Rejoice . . . your husband comes back to you . . . And yet, look at these woman making their way slowly up the hill coming to stand before me now, humble and silent, who are they? They were wealthy, some of them, inhabitants of a strong and safe city, and then one day, war, ravage, rape and servitude. They had names, now nameless, refugees. Look at this one, so young, a terrible grief seems to course through her veins and make her shiver, but on her face, no expression, not a flicker, and see how beautiful that face is . . .

(to Iole) Tell me who you are, child, I can't help feeling you must once have had a name you bore with pride, I can see it even now, in your stillness. Don't be afraid of me. What is your name? Tell me.

Lychas, why doesn't she answer? Tell me who she is.

Lychas I don't know. She sobs sometimes but she never speaks, not a word. Perhaps we ought to respect the pride of grief and not press for answers.

Dianeira I will not add to the suffering of these wretched women.

They cast the shadows of the future. How easily it happens. Especially to women. One day, daughters of kings, wives of heroes, and the next sex or kitchen slaves. Ripped open, beaten. Fortune is unstable and the gods manic-depressive. Grim demons lurk around the corners. I am afraid . . . And yet he is on his way back, my hero, I am safe, am I not? Rejoice, and be kind, be kind.

Lychas, take these women into the house and let them be well treated.

Lychas I would have expected nothing else from a lady so gracious.

Irene You've no doubt detected that Lychas is covering something up. And so he rakes the soil and prepares it for the seeds of anger. What is worse than to feel you've been lied to? Who doesn't revile the man who goes on television and appeals for the discovery of the child he has
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

himself killed? We feel such fury when our politicians deny all wrongdoing the day before their crimes are revealed. It never does good to cover up, but at the moment Dianeira is taken in and looks at these women with pity, and also with the fear of contagion, should this evil destiny be catching. And so she acts with compassion, but the messenger, the nameless messenger, has been listening to all this in silence and now he is angry. Why? Perhaps a mixture - the one who has the truth can’t help feeling angry when he listens to blatant lies and also because his own importance as a messenger has been overshadowed by Lychas. He feels unappreciated, and in that terrain anger rises quickly.

Messenger Lady Dianeira, in all that Lychas has said to you the only true statement is that Heracles is alive and coming home.

Dianeira What do you mean?

Messenger Heracles didn’t sack the city of Eurytos to revenge his dignity but to satisfy his lust. He fell in love with Iole. He wanted her. Her father, this Eurytos, would have none of this and now the city lies in ruins and Iole has been brought to your house as Heracles’ new wife.

Dianeira Who told you this?

Messenger Lychas himself has been saying it to all and sundry. It’s only here he’s kept it hidden, thinking you would hear nothing within the walls of your house. And so it is that you are the last to know what concerns you most.

Dianeira Call Lychas here.

Messenger If he denies any of this, he will be lying.

Irene In that great story by Sophocles, Oedipus, two messengers argue about the facts of Oedipus’ birth. One wants to reveal all, the other to cover it up. Both men want the best, but their attitude to truth diverges. The one who wants to cover the facts up believes that truth is inevitably tragic and it would be better to live without such pain. He is proved right, although we might say that it is our search for the truth that makes us human. However, this is not the subject of our story except for one thing: hearing of the truth late is the worst. When a comfortable deception is brutally cut by the truth, it leaves a wound where rage must breed.

Dianeira And now what must I do? Here comes Lychas. Confront him. Calmly, show nothing. She showed nothing, walking into my house wrapped in my husband’s lust.

Lychas The women are safe in your house, I will go to Heracles and tell him of your kindness, what message from you should I add?

Dianeira You’re in a hurry to leave and yet you took your time in coming here, we have more to say to each other.

Lychas I’m at your disposal.

Dianeira Will you entrust me with the truth?

Lychas Yes, at least the truth of what I know.

Dianeira Who is the young woman you brought here?

Lychas She’s from Eurytos. But if you’re asking whose daughter, I have no way of knowing.

Messenger Lychas, that girl you say you know nothing about, didn’t you refer to her as Iole, the daughter of King Eurytos?

Lychas When did I say that? Find a witness who’ll agree I said it.

Messenger You shouted it all over the market place, every Trachinian has heard as much. I was there.
Lychas I was only reporting hearsay. Rumour. That's not the same as facts.

Messenger But you said you were leading Iole to the house of Dianeira to be Heracles' new wife.

Lychas By God, who is this man?

Messenger Heracles was forced to dress as a woman to serve Omphale but that was just one of his labours, he took it in his stride. It was never shame that drove him to destroy the city of Eurytos, Heracles never has time for shame, it was desire. Lust. Love. The goddess. Aphrodite.

Lychas I can't keep talking to this idiot. I must go.

Dianeira But it is not an idiot woman you are dealing with, Lychas and I beg you by the gods, I beseech you to tell me the truth. I know that human beings are by nature changeable, inconstant even. I know too that love rules even the gods with its caprices. And so, who would I be to complain or to resist this power? I cannot blame my husband if he is the victim of desire nor can I be angry with this woman who does not wish me ill, I am certain. But you - you -

If you're lying because Heracles ordered you to, you are unwise. On the other hand, if it's your own idea and you're doing it to spare me, you are making a mistake. I would rather know the truth. I'll find you out in the end, Lychas, because liars are always found out. Are you afraid? What can be bad about truth?

It isn't as if Heracles hasn't had women before on his travels. Have you ever heard me complaining? And I won't be harsh to this girl, no matter how deeply she's sunk into her own passion for him. I only feel pity, because her beauty has destroyed her life and that's something I know about. Lives must bend to the sway of the wind but truth is hard to flatten. Tell lies to whom you please, but not to me.

Messenger See how reasonable she is, how superior, human too, ready to forgive the weaknesses of men, and you want to belittle her with your lies.

Dianeira The truth, Lychas.

Lychas The messenger speaks true: Heracles was seized by a dreadful longing for this girl. And so he destroyed her city and took her. He didn't ask me to hide anything from you, I alone wanted to spare you such pain. My mistake, but now that you know everything, I beg you for his sake and for yours to be kind to this girl. The strength of Heracles always bent everything before him, but here he was laid low by his passion for this girl.

Dianeira Women of Trachis, let us go in now, and you, Lychas, fear nothing. We'll be sensible and we'll be wise - I won't try to fight single handed against the gods on this matter. But you cannot go back to Heracles without one gift when he sent you here with such an abundance, such a crowd of people. Wait here.

First Chorus Zeus, Poseidon and Hades divide the world between them, but one flick of her rosyplump finger and those great gods leave the heavens, the air and the underworld and run to her, tripping foolishly over their lust. Megagoddess, the powerful Aphrodite.

Dianeira So. That's it. And I opened my door to the girl like some poor benighted sailor who takes on a seemingly light cargo, but it's the instrument of his own shipwreck he's lugging on board. Because she must be my end.

What will happen to the two us? Under the same roof, ha, under the same blanket, waiting for him to take one of us in his arms. No need to ask which. And this is my
reward for the long years of looking after him, his house, things, children.

It isn't the first time, but then he was discreet, the odd woman on his travels, but now he expects me to share his marriage, or worse. What am I supposed to do? Watch complacently as her youth blooms triumphant and I wilt to nothingness, unwanted, shrinking into invisibility. She'll blossom, take up more and more room, and I'll be squeezed into a corner, a thin and wrinkling shadow. His eye will always turn to her, moth to light, bee to flower, desire to beauty, and all I'll see of him is an evading back of the head, a quickly departing heel. And then they say it's unbecoming of a woman to be angry in such circumstances, it's so common after all, I should behave with dignity, because I'm getting old and what can I expect, bees will still be bees.

First Chorus Let me part the curtain, dust down history. Remember the beautiful sad virgin, the girl Dianeira, let her come on to the empty stage of memory, crouch down. Now look, who comes on?

Second Chorus The River Akllos takes on the shape of a bull for the fight. Now comes Heracles, marching from Thebes, carrying his club, his bow and his arrows. You recognise him by muscle and height. Both after this girl, who will bed her. One has to die.

Third Chorus And now she is here, invisible, intent, the goddess of desire, Aphrodite, umpire wand in hand. She will decide. She hardly notices the girl. The girl's beauty holds no interest for the goddess, it is the men's desire she thrills to. She watches coolly as they fight.

Dianeira Look at Iole, there she stands, aloof, apart, radiates loveliness, her loss laced with pride. She will seduce him with her indifference and he'll get drunk on his guilt. And where will I be?

Second Chorus The fight: dust and groans mingle and rise from the ground. Heads butt, fists beat on bone and air, bows and hands tangle with horns as legs climb onto a beast's back and hooves clamber up a human trunk.

First Chorus I, the chorus, who was there, who am always there, can't describe it as well as I might because of the confusion of cracking foreheads and the pained groans that ooze out of the tangled mass of flesh.

Dianeira Desire. I hated being the cause of it but I fear even more not causing it. His eyes will slide over me as he searches her out through the house. What am I do? Kill her now, here, but he'll know and he'll despise me, everyone will cast me off as vile. He'll cast me off anyway. How come he gets to kill anyone who stands in his way? What other labour have I ever had but to keep his desire? Oh you gods, why have you done this? Do you expect me to sit here meekly and watch my own disappearance? Does he?

First Chorus And where was the beauty in this whirlwind of blood, groans? As far away as she could. She sits on a mound, wrapped in her loveliness, a shimmer of innocence.

She keeps her eyes shut tight, not wishing to see the brutal horror they say she causes. She sits and waits for the tap tap on her shoulder of a husband.

Second Chorus She saw nothing, but I, the chorus, the spectator of history, saw it all and I can tell you what happened, even though she, subject of this tale, cannot. She can only wait, anxious, pitiable.

Dianeira Desire. No good praying to Aphrodite. She was never a friend.

Third Chorus She waits, her face distorted by fear.
Dianeira Desire. Who knows about desire? What am I trying to remember? The river god, the bull, no, no, someone else, the half-horse, half-man, that monster of desire, Nessos... I'd forgotten, made myself forget... Nessos...

Second Chorus Suddenly, a wail, then silence. She feels a hand–

Heracles Come, Dianeira, come with me.

Third Chorus – and she is quickly –

Second Chorus – brutally –

Third Chorus – led to marriage.

First Chorus Like a calf to the slaughter.

Second Chorus Blood.

Dianeira Nessos...

Third Chorus Yes, now she is a woman and now she is alone.

Dianeira Only a few days after my marriage. We were crossing the river. The current was strong and the river too deep. Heracles was encumbered with all the paraphernalia of the great hero.

**THE RIVER BANK**

Dianeira (shouts) Heracles!

Heracles I have to protect my bow and arrows from the water and these clubs are cumbersome. I can’t carry you myself, Dianeira.

Dianeira And then he came out of the woods, shaggy, black, gamboling friskily and made his way towards us.

Dianeira (shouts) Heracles!

Heracles Climb onto the back of this beast, Dianeira, he will swim you across the river.

Dianeira But–Heracles...

Heracles Don’t be afraid of him, he’s a centaur, a beast of burden with human pretensions. Kick him if he goes too slowly, I’ll be behind you.

Dianeira What is your name?

Nessos Nessos, my lady.

Dianeira Nessos... But in the middle of the river... with his hands, human hands, he started... first my legs, then up... up... hands and water... I screamed.

Heracles shot him with a poisoned arrow, from the back...

He dragged him up onto the river bank.

Heracles Beast, low mangy hairy foreign beast, not to be trusted, uncontrolled appetite, ignoble in your actions, and now that I’ve killed you, as you deserve, I have to apologise for it and go and make a sacrifice to the gods to purify myself.

* Timberlake Irene stopped talking. She said that’s all we’d paid her for, she was thirsty. We argued that was no place to stop, she hadn’t given us a resolution, but she remained silent, her mouth tightly shut, her eyes increasingly veiled. After a while, we put more money into her plate and ordered brandy for all of us.

Irene So: Dianeira was angry about getting old. She hadn’t known she was getting old until Heracles made
her see herself in Iole's reflection and, of course, her story isn't finished yet, although it could be. Many stories of anger finish in a blank. Now I'll tell you about the centaur Nessos. There were a lot of centaurs in those days, colonies of them, these horses with a human torso and arms, mocking eyes, in essence horses, but untamable and anarchic, and all of them with those wonderfully sensual hands. There are still some today in these parts, people say they hear them galloping through the woods at night. There were all kinds of other monsters too, like the chimera and the many-headed giant serpent Hydra but they belong to other stories although a few of them might come into this one. Well now, you know how powerful and also how heavy horses are and how terrible it is to watch them die. Heracles went off immediately to ask forgiveness of the gods for shooting him like that in a flare of anger, and Dianeira was left alone with the dying, the human monster. And this is the story of the anger of Nessos.

Nessos Why did he kill me like that, Dianeira? From the back too.
Dianeira I'm sorry ... I didn't mean to cry out, I couldn't help it.
Nessos Never been touched down there before?
Dianeira Please . . .
Nessos We're good with our hands, I thought you liked it.
Dianeira I didn't understand at first, I thought it was the water.
Nessos Ha ha, he wouldn't know how to make you feel that, would he, too busy, too much in a hurry, ha ha.

Dianeira Stop it! You're disgusting! Still, I'm sorry you're dying.
Nessos I can feel the poison, look at this wound, it's oozing black. He didn't have to use poison, he could have just wounded me if he couldn't control his anger. Why didn't he carry you over himself? Because he cared more for his weapons. He didn't have to use poison . . . I'm beginning to feel the fire. It's going to be horrible, I'm going to be in terrible pain. You know, Dianeira, monsters feel pain more sharply than humans, we're not used to it.
Dianeira Can I clean the wound for you?
Nessos What's the point? The poison's inside. Your husband is a thoughtless man, Dianeira, prone to the moment, let me be blunt, he is a stupid man.
Dianeira Stop it.
Nessos And stupid men don't know how to resist temptations. He protects you now and kills anyone who wants you, but one day he'll turn away from you to follow the diaphanous drapes of youth. I know these heroes, their attention span is short.
Dianeira Stop it!
Nessos Stupid men take what they want, they don't calculate the consequences. Now I am going to do you a favour and give you a great gift, even though you have been the cause of my death. Ahh – it's coming, it's coming, burning red coals charring the inside of my flesh.
Dianeira Nessos . . .
Nessos I can't see any more. I only wanted a little fun, you humans are so absolute . . . now listen to me. Collect this blood and put it in that wooden vessel.
Dianeira Do you see the very centre of my wound, don't be afraid, look, where the flesh is charred black.
Dianeira Yes ...

Nessos The blood pouring out, more now ... I can feel it, entwined with the black poison.

Dianeira Yes, Nessos.

Nessos Don't let it go over your hands, put the vessel here, just under there, is it filling?

Dianeira Yes ...

Nessos Fast, eh, look how much blood we centaurs have. Now keep this a secret and when, one day, and it will happen, when the desires of Heracles wander away from you, then anoint your husband's cloth with this magic liquid and he will love you again. I promise, word of a centaur ... And listen carefully, you must be sure this liquid is never exposed to sunlight or to heat, keep it in the dark, in the dark ... until you need it, only then, always in the dark, secret, Dianeira, remember my words ... Hide it from Heracles. Ahhh ...

_Scream of agony from Nessos._

Heracles I'm clean now, I've prayed to the gods, I've poured water over my hands,

  Why did you make me so angry?

Nessos Why didn't you control yourself, Heracles?

You're a man. You're supposed to be rational –

Heracles How could I? Why did you provoke me?

Nessos You shot me in the back.

Heracles I ought not to have done that, but I've washed my hands and prayed. I had to take revenge.

Nessos For what, Heracles? I was only doing what I do best. A little mischief. Harmless.

Heracles You're a monstrous usurping hybrid who shouldn't be here at all.

Nessos I don't want to die. And not tortured like this. Not like this.

Heracles I can't help that. You didn't deserve to live.

Nessos I didn't deserve this torture, and it'll be slow, I know it'll be slow.

_Cry of agony._

Heracles Come, Dianeira. Look, my hands are clean. Don't cry. He made me so angry. I couldn't let him get away with it. Don't keep looking at him. He's no more than a beast. Let's go.

Nessos Don't forget me, Dianeira.

Heracles Come, quickly.

TRACHIS

Dianeira I see you are ready to leave us, Lychas. Here is the gift I promised you for my husband.

Take this casket in which I have folded a robe which I wove myself during these long months of waiting. It is to be worn when he makes his sacrifices to the gods, when he needs to be seen in the full splendour of the hero, only then. Tell him to keep the robe well hidden from the sun so that its brilliance may not fade. Make haste. As for a message ... what can I say ... words of love might splinter against his indifference ... no words then. Hurry.

Lychas I will move swiftly, dear lady, and do all you have asked.

Dianeira What have I done? Dreadful doubts casts their shadow.
Irene You can be angry and hit out, scream, kill. But you can also be angry in a manner so hidden even your actions seem unwilled. This invisible, unfelt anger multiplies fast, undetected, unpreventable.

Dianeira What have I done . . .

Irene The anger that can’t be admitted is the worse. It goes under and rots all.

Dianeira That magic, what have I done?

Irene I can’t tell you if Dianeira knew what she was doing. How can I know? Anger could have paralysed her mind but made her hands more active than ever. That’s not unusual in these women.

Dianeira screams.

First Chorus I hear Dianeira! Why these screams.

Second Chorus Let’s go in, quickly.

Dianeira Women of Trachis, what have I done? Look, look there.

Gasps.

First Chorus Black.

Second Chorus A boiling mass.

Third Chorus Curdling.

First Chorus Black, oozing, look, it hardens.

Third Chorus Crumbles.

Second Chorus Shrinks.

First Chorus Leaving molten dust, this pulsating thing, not-thing.

Third Chorus Dust, still heaving. A mound of dust.

Dianeira I used that square to anoint the robe I sent to Heracles.

Third Chorus You anointed the robe?

Dianeira Yes, I had a magic ointment given to me long ago by a friend, well, a centaur who . . . He told me to keep the ointment away from the sun and from the heat of the fire. I did this and today I applied it to the robe under the cover of darkness and then I put the robe in the casket, well protected, as you saw, with my instructions to Lychas. Then I put the square of cloth I used to impregnate the robe of Heracles on the stone by the window and thought no more of it.

Third Chorus That?

Second Chorus Specks still moving, smoke, then nothing.

Dianeira What have I done?

Why would that centaur do me a good turn? Heracles shot him with a poisoned arrow. Because of me. Heracles
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

had steeped the arrow in the blood of the monstrous Hydra.

Third Chorus The many headed snake? That Hydra?

Dianeira Yes, who else? When Heracles killed the Hydra, I forget how, one of his works, he steeped some of the arrows in the monster’s blood. But of course. Nessos would have wanted to destroy the man who caused him such pain, treacherously too, I have to admit that, Heracles shot him in the back, that wasn’t very heroic.

Second Chorus But Dianeira, I’ve heard that the putrid blood of the monstrous Hydra made even the gods ill when they smelled it.

Dianeira Yes . . . I’d forgotten. I wanted his desire back. The centaur told me to take his blood as it mixed with the thick black liquid from the arrow, he told me it would make Heracles burn with love for me. Burn . . . But I remember how dark, how thick, how disgusting it was, well, sometimes desire too . . . I didn’t question it then, but now I believe this magic . . . I wonder . . . magic given in such anger and hatred, how can it lead to good . . . If Heracles dies, I will die too.

I wanted desire, not the world’s contempt, no, I couldn’t take that.

First Chorus Softly, Dianeira. Don’t let your fears rile ahead of events. You don’t know . . .

Dianeira I don’t know . . .

Second Chorus You didn’t plan to kill him.

Dianeira No, I didn’t. Plan.

Third Chorus You can’t be condemned for an unfortunate mistake.

Dianeira A mistake, yes, if there’s no ill intent, but how do you know what intents form in a muddled and desperate heart? And fear, fear confuses intent too. What have I done? What did I mean to do? How can I know that?

First Chorus You must be quiet now, Dianeira, say nothing more. We can see Hyllos running towards the house. Here he comes. He will reassure you, or at least give us news.

Irene The last time we saw Hyllos, if you remember, he was walking through Greece looking for news of his father. And he was innocent, casting almost no shadow, a son who loved his mother and searched for his father, normal. Now his story begins, his own terrible story.

Dianeira Hyllos, my child, come to me, you look tired, pale, hurt. Let me look at you, I think you’ve even grown a little more, is your hair darker? Come close.

Hyllos I have only three things to say to you. I wish you had never been born. I wish, if you had to be born, you had never been my mother, and I wish you were dead.

First Chorus Hyllos, such words – to your mother!

Hyllos She is not my mother, she is disgusting, she is evil.

Hyllos Murderer!

Dianeira Hyllos! How dare you talk to me like that?

Hyllos You dared murder my father.

Dianeira Take back those words.

Hyllos As well take back what has happened. It’s there, it happened, manifest, it can’t be erased now, made not to have happened. Murderer! Look at what you’ve done.
Dianeira I don't know what I've done.

Hyllos I'll tell you. I won't spare you.

Here, look.

It didn't take me long to hear news of my father. I was told he was on his way back from the ravaged city of Eurytos laden with the spoils of his victory, weapons, treasures for you, hundreds of heads of cattle. He made his way to Cape Canean where there is a promontory overlooking the sea, and it was there he set out altars to pray to Zeus his father and thank him for his victory. That's where I saw him, surrounded by his army, as he was about to sacrifice some of the animals he had taken. It was there too that Lychas found him, Lychas: bearing your murderous gift, your finely woven robe.

Heracles (delighted) From Dianeira? Woven by her? For me?

Ah, it's magnificent.

Hyllos He put it on as you had instructed, keeping himself in the shade. And then, fit, tall and proud in the splendour of his robe, my father led twelve oxen to the altars. He seemed so happy, so glorious, and as he began his prayers his noble face was suffused with pride and with joy. I was standing in the crowd, but I was proud too, mother, that this splendid man was my father. The branches caught fire and crackled and the flames began to leap. He prayed, his face lit by the fire, maybe by the god. Heracles God of the heavens and of all victories, Zeus, my father, I stand here to thank you for my triumph. The city razed to the ground, bounty, slaves, and for you these oxen. From you, Zeus, my strength, my purpose, and my hope. Accept these gifts, god of lightning, and stretch down the flames of your power to your mortal son, Heracles. Grant me a safe return, grant me days of peace, grant me my promised rest, grant me the time to enjoy the fruits of my labour. Let your prophecy be fulfilled, father, and let me rest at last.

Hyllos It was then, mother, that a sweat suddenly glistened over his skin as the robe seemed to fold itself around his body and cling, as if it had been glued to his entire frame. He began to scratch himself, all over, scratch, scratch, right in the middle of the sacrifice. It was as if the cloth was gnawing at his bones, he couldn't scratch hard or deep enough. He twisted himself around and around, scratching, clawing. And now we could see that the poison was feasting slowly on his skin the way a snake wraps itself tightly around a limb. He began to scream and called for Lychas to come to him and tell him why he had plotted his ruin and decided to kill him with this poisoned cloth. Poor Lychas tried to tell him the gift came from you but as he spoke a new spasm of torment coursed through the limbs of my father and he grabbed Lychas by his heel and hurled him against a rock. His head cracked open, brain oozed onto rock.

I had loved Lychas, Mother, it was from Lychas I learned to be proud of my father, you never talked about him, Lychas told me all the stories. And now, all that was left was a white paste matted with blood dripping slowly down the rock to the sea.

The people began to shudder in horror and to emit a stifled shout, a cry kept subdued by fear as my father began to throw himself on the ground, then jump up again, writhing in agony, yanked like a yoyo by the invisible hand of the poison. His cries clanged from the mountains of Lochris to the rocky crag of Euboea. At last, wearied, he fell to the ground cursing his marriage to you, woman of evil luck, who had always harboured his death in her heart. And as he lifted his eyes from the smoke, he spotted me in the crowd, weeping, weeping. And my father called out to me.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

Heracles  Child . . . come here. Child, don’t run away from my torment. Come to me, my child.

Hyllos  I ran up to him, mother, but I could not embrace him because of his pain.

Heracles  Child, don’t let me die here on this desolate promontory. Take me away with you. Take me to the sea.

Hyllos  We did as he bid, carried him with much trouble and effort onto a ship where he bellowed his pain to the waves. Landed on the coast and now he makes his way here. Whether you will see his corpse or the living breathing wreckage of the man, I can’t say, but I will make you look at what you’ve done. Yes Mother, clever plot, but you have been found out. All Greece will echo with your evil and I pray that the guilt and torment of all the furies of Hell will pay you back in kind for what you’ve done.

First Chorus  Hyllos . . . This is your mother, show due respect and don’t transgress the law.

Hyllos  She usurps the name of mother, pollutes it with her presence.

            I hear my father, the greatest man on earth, the best of fathers, I’ll make you face him, let him do what he will with you.

            I’ll take you before him and if he has the strength, he’ll kill you and I won’t care.

First Chorus  Look, Hyllos, your mother glides slowly towards the house, not a word.

Hyllos  Let her slink away, slithering murderess.

Second Chorus  Still your mother.

DIANEIRA

Hyllos  Is there anything in her behaviour to show she ever gave birth? That crawling piece of evil flesh is not a mother.

First Chorus  I can feel a lament threading its way through the house, what now?

Third Chorus  A draught of misery, a trembling of walls . . .

First Chorus  Let’s go in, I see Dianeira’s nurse.

Nurse  She moves from room to room, she won’t speak, I follow her. Look. First she went to all the altars in the house.

Dianeira  The things I cannot say . . . Yes, I knew.

Nurse  She glides through the house, touches each object, vases, her loom, a seat of stone.

Dianeira  I felt no surprise. I knew it was poison, would kill him. I knew . . .

Nurse  Then she went into the bedroom, sat in the middle of their bed.

Dianeira  The things I cannot say: some pleasure in those screams of pain. Because of my own pain, all these years, when he first took me, when he left me, when he came back, when children came and now when he chose to discard.

Nurse  She loosed both brooches from the shoulders of her robe.

Dianeira  The things I cannot say: I don’t feel pity, not even sorrow, not now. And yet, there must have been love. Now kneaded, pounded, pulled into the shape of anger. Why was this my life? Passive, always in the dark, waiting for the dawn, a new day, a return, a farewell, waiting.
And finally waiting to disappear burned by jealousy, well, let him burn instead.

Nurse I saw then she had a sword in her hand.

Dianeira Hyllos, that I cannot bear: to be orphaned of my child, abandoned by him and hated, no - the house empty of children and of love, no, not that.

Nurse She cried out and mourned her abandoned hearth and the ashes grown cold. She cried out and I rushed to call Hyllos to help me.

Dianeira The things I cannot say: I don't mind if I die now, I wouldn't have minded earlier, what has this life been for? There's nothing there. Let the night come down with its shimmering blanket of nothingness, let the night cover me.

Nurse And she pierced her side with the sword.

Dianeira The things I cannot say: I look for the pattern now, the diagram giving my life sense, but I see nothing. It was all a waste of breath.

Nurse How did she find so much strength in her arm, what woman kills herself with a sword?

Hyllos Why are you calling me? Can't you hear the screams of my father wending their way up the hill? I must go to him. And then she will face her torment.

First Chorus She is already dead, Hyllos.

Third Chorus Killed herself.

Second Chorus With a sword, heroic act and manly.

Third Chorus Condemned by you.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

First Chorus Go.
First Chorus Go now. To your father.

Irene I can stop now. Unless you give me more brandy and a few more bills in there, eh?

Dianeira is dead, dead in anger. What kind of a life was that? Of what significance? All shadows and quiet, sometimes it makes you angry just to remember those lives. I can go on. Because now the story takes a right-angle turn. Now we have the great man, once strong and beautiful, the man of great works, ravaged and humiliated by disease and now we have his anger and the scarring of his son. Listen.

The women of Trachis laid out the body of Dianeira ready for burning and then moved slowly out of the house as they heard the heavy tread of a mournful procession winding its way up the hill.

Second Chorus I don’t want to be here.
Third Chorus I don’t want to see any of this.
Second Chorus Why do we always have to witness these horrors?
Third Chorus I never asked for this.
Second Chorus I think I’d rather die myself.
First Chorus Here they come. Strangers. They carry him with tenderness and care, but he may be dead.
Second Chorus That would be best, but he might only be asleep.
Third Chorus Hyllos walks at the front, head bowed.
Second Chorus I really don’t want to see this.

DIANEIRA

Third Chorus I can see the body and a shudder run through it.
First Chorus They put the litter down. They’re so gentle with him, these strangers.
Second Chorus He lifts his head.
Third Chorus Hyllos stands beside him.
Heracles Child, dear child, where are you? Take my hand. My son...

Now comes the pain, I can feel it clawing my flesh, digs deep, deeper. Hyllos, if only you could take my sword, and slice, slice off the pain at my neck, here, head from neck, it’s easy, do it. Oh you furies from Hell, let my life close up now.
Second Chorus I shudder at the sight of this man. Such a man, so much pain.

Heracles I worked so hard. All my life. Painful even in the telling. I never stopped. I crossed swords with a thousand men, I braved an army of giants, I mastered the wild beasts of the earth, I purified my country of diseases and the scourge of monsters. Look at my hands. I throttled the ox-eating lion with them, I subdued the hissing invincible many-headed Hydra. I tamed those lawless horses with the heads of men, the anarchic centaurs, and I even dragged the three-headed dog of the underworld to the light. That was before, no after, I killed the dragon who guarded the golden apples on the far edges of the world. How many other labours? And I always won. No one beat me at anything, ever. And now look at me. Mown down by the blind sweep of misfortune. No, not tāte. Her. What neither Greek nor stuttering Barbarian could do, she’s done by wrapping this cloak of venom around me, she, without a sword, her hatred only, she’s turned me inside out, revealed me to be no
more than a girl, a girl. Crying, begging for help, I have no strength, not even courage, I'm a girl, a girl.

Cries.

I can't bear this pain, this flaming itch. It flicks and then it grips and then it throttles every limb. Look at your father, Hyllos, look at this gangrenous puppet, limbs jerking in all directions, screeching distress, that's what she's done. No respite. Never again.

I always did my duty, followed my calling without complaint. I, son of the noble Alcmene and son also of a god, look at me now, shredded.

Screams.

Hyllos Father . . .

Heracles Bring her to me, bring her here, Hyllos. Never mind that she is your mother, that she suckled you, cradled you, bring her out and deliver her into these hands. Still strong. Quickly, Hyllos, show yourself to be a true son of mine, waste no time. And let me see whether you feel more for your father or for your mother when she lies before you mangled by my hands as she's mangled me. Go.

Hyllos Father . . .

Heracles I may be nothing now, but I can still inflict on her the same torment she's inflicted on me. Bring her to me and I'll pull out of her one by one sounds that declare Heracles always takes revenge on the wrongs done to him.

Irene Our parents are the great heroes of our mythology, our Olympian gods. To watch them fall is unbearable. Hyllos sees his great strong father cry like a girl and he can’t help despising Heracles a little. Hyllos then begins to feel the most painful anger of all, anger against oneself.
TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER

desires back to her. She wanted to save the house from Iole's long shadow, keep her marriage, protect the family and me too, Father, your oldest son – if you were to install as your wife and my mother a girl not much older than I.

Heracles Who in Trachis is so expert in drugs?

Hyllos Nessos the centaur gave her the charm many years ago and told her it would rekindle the dying embers of your love.

Heracles Olololola. I see the shape of my fate now, the man-monster galloping from Hell with his deadly revenge. Your father is no more, Hyllos. Darkness for me now.

Call your brothers and your sisters, call my mother, that proud bride of Zeus. Why? What was it all for? Her marriage, bearing me? Nothing, all in vain.

When you are all gathered I will disclose the final predictions concerning my fate.

Hyllos When you left for your last works, our family scattered, Father, but I am here. Speak to me, I will assist you as best I can.

Irene All his life Hyllos longed for the intimacy and the confidence of his great and absent father. He feels a moment of joy at not having to share it, being the only one there, at last recognised and valued. So he believes. He can't know that when parents die they behave no differently than when they lived.

Heracles Now listen carefully, Hyllos, and prove to me you are indeed my son and not some bastard of your mother's. It was my own father Zeus who told me I would never die at the hands of a human being. I thought he was promising me immortality or at least a heroic combat with a god. Now I see all he meant was that the hatred and anger of a mortal being, of an

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animal, would be stored cold in the jaws of hell, waiting for me.

And Zeus said more when I went to consult his sacred oak. I remember how the branches bent down to me and the leaves murmured in soft tones that all my work, all that endless effort would one day come to an end. And I thought the branches were singing of ease to come, retirement, rest at last, but they were only mouthing words of death. Of course! Only in death do we rest from our labours. Ha ha. That was the prediction! Now it all twists together and glistens in the light. My destiny made manifest.

What was all that work for? Nothing. Vanity. Passing. You, my child, must now help your father. Be my companion and my friend, do not make me repeat any of this twice and do what I ask with joy and with due respect for the law that orders sons always to obey their fathers.

Hyllos These words said so solemnly frighten me, Father, but I will obey.

Heracles Hold out your right hand, touch mine and swear.

Hyllos Here is my hand.

Heracles Pray also for unending torment as punishment if you fail.

Hyllos I can keep my promises, Father, but even so I ask for punishment if I fail.

Heracles See the peak of Mount Octa over there. You will carry me to that peak in your own arms, my son.

Hyllos Yes, Father, I will do that.

Heracles When you reach the mountain peak, cut off the branches of some deeply rooted oaks and add the strongest
branches of an olive tree. Then make a pyre and use the
soft branches of a fir tree to light it. And on that pyre,
Hyllos, you will throw my live body.

Hyllos Your body, alive –

Heracles You will throw my live body on the fire. And
you will do all this without a tear, not so much as a
moan or the least sign of mourning.

Hyllos You can’t ask this of me.

Heracles I have told you what you must do, if not, you
are someone else’s son, not mine.

Hyllos You are asking me to be your killer.

Heracles I am asking for you to end this torment, to
be my healer.

Hyllos How can I cure your body by burning it live?

Heracles It is mercy.

Hyllos It is killing.

Heracles Mercy-killing then. Take friends with you if
you cannot bear to do this alone. Don’t cross me now,
Hyllos, don’t make me angry.

Hyllos Father, I will carry you there, that I cannot
refuse.

Heracles And you will prepare the wood for the pyre.

Hyllos Yes, I can do that, but I cannot let my hands
bring on your death.

Heracles I don’t care who lights the pyre.

Hyllos No one will agree to be your murderer.

Heracles I am the one in pain. It’s what I want.

Hyllos I cannot kill my own father.

Heracles You understand nothing.

Hyllos My gesture, my guilt.

Heracles My pain.

Hyllos Father, please, release me.

Heracles Too late: you swore and the gods witnessed.
Now one other small favour . . .

Irene Listen to the gasp from Hyllos. This intractable
and totally self-absorbed father, asking for what now?
And where can Hyllos turn? To Zeus, his father’s father,
who seems to have mocked Heracles all along?

Heracles Do you know the daughter of Eurytos?

Hyllos You mean Iole?

Heracles Yes, I mean Iole. Hyllos, she shared my bed,
I don’t want an unknown stranger to lay his hands on
her when I’m gone. I have decided you will marry her.
Obey the sacred duty you owe your father and do not
confound your good behaviour by disobeying me over
this small matter.

Hyllos Father: Iole’s presence caused my mother’s death,
your unendurable pain now. Who would ask me to marry
her but someone whose mind was beset with poisoning
spirits or by the avenging hounds of Hell. I would rather
die than share a house, a bed with my most hated enemy.

Heracles I’m the one who is dying.

Hyllos You can’t see any more, Father, but she’s coming
out of the house now, as if summoned by her hated
name. And I can see from here triumph on her face.
Don’t forget you killed her father, burned her city, took
her by violence.
Heracles I loved her.

Hyllos Strange manifestation of love, Father, but now you’re dying, writhing in agony, and she gloats on your pain, on my mother’s death. What I see is a curl of pleasure on her cold lips. Don’t ask me to marry such malice.

Heracles It’s what I want. It’s the fulfilment of my fate.

Hyllos Is it fulfilling your fate to prevent me from living?

Heracles I’ve had enough of your disobedience and your doubts. If you disobey me in this, I’ll call down the vengeance of the gods, and believe me they will wait for you and they will destroy you.

Hyllos Your mind is sick.

Heracles And you’re arousing my pains again, I can feel them unfurling, Ah – you’re doing this to me.

Heracles begins to moan, louder.

Hyllos I am lost, I don’t know where to turn.

Heracles Listen to the man who gave you life.

Hyllos You’re asking for the impossible, it’s against every feeling.

Heracles Obey, ask no questions.

Hyllos Make an end of you with my own hands – marry in hatred.

Heracles Don’t turn over your actions so much when I am the one commanding them.

Hyllos Where are the rules? All my life I loved you and trusted you.

Heracles Then trust me now. Don’t arouse my pains. Take me to the mountain quickly.

Hyllos Father, how can I love my children if I loathe my wife?

Heracles Love.

Hyllos Didn’t you love my mother?

Heracles I hate her now.

Hyllos Father, please, let me decide: give me back my life.

Heracles We must look to my death.

Irene It could go on, this argument, but in the end, fathers do eat their sons if they can, there is no other myth that rings so true. I know you young people like to think differently, but you give yourselves the illusion of too much power. You do what your fathers tell you in the end, one way or the other, even now, you’ll die by their order. You can hear that death from here, right now, taking place up north. That’s another story. A story of obedience.

--- And now the long arm of Heracles bows down the head of his son and turns this young man full of hope and life and possible love into a man overflowing with resentment, anger. And so it continues.

Hyllos I can’t disobey you, I’ll do as you say, and if what I do is wrong it’s by your command, Father, and not of my own will.

Heracles I did as my own father asked . . . Laboured, laboured, never questioned, never complained. Do I reproach him now for the grim and itching end he’s kept for me? Do I accuse him of falsehood when I heard promises from him that made me dream of ease? No. I bow my head to him. I accept, as a man does, as a son must. Now lift me up, gently, before a new spasm contorts my body. Carry me, child.

Hyllos Yes father.
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Sob and groan from Hyllos, murmurs of women.

Heracles Now my hardened soul must clamp itself shut. No cries, no cries. And let this act you perform with such reluctance fill you with joy because it is my release, my child, long awaited. This is the end of the man I am.

Hyllos Let us carry him to the mountain, friends, and let the world grant me forgiveness for what I am about to do.

First Chorus And we will follow this procession since we have witnessed these awful sufferings. We must remember, however, that all that has happened has been the will of the god.

Hyllos The will of the god, oh yes, let us contemplate, as we carry my father Heracles to that mountain, the heedless carelessness of these gods. They call themselves our fathers, Zeus called this man his own seed, his mortal son, and yet Zeus looks on his pain unmoved, if he bothers to look at all. Here is my father enduring in anguish this god-given ruin, it brings out our human pity, horror and compassion, but what do the gods feel? Not even shame.

Irene The procession made its way slowly up the mountain. There were no more cries from Heracles. Iole and the women of Trachis watched as his wrecked body burnt down to ash. Iole never said a word. She never said a word when she married Hyllos. She never said a word to her children. What was there to say? the bitterest anger is silent. And so anger threads its way through generations. There is only one more curve to the story. One morning, some years after his marriage, Hyllos went to Iole.

Hyllos Iole . . .

Irene Naturally, she gave no answer, did not even turn to look at him.

Hyllos Iole, for years now we’ve lived in bitter hatred, anger . . .

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Irene She turned then to look at him, bland, confirming those words.

Hyllos Iole, my life was ruined by the hatred of my parents for each other. Do you want to ruin our children?

Irene She stares at him, still with no expression.

Hyllos What if I let you go? Would you then forgive my father and my family?

Irene Hyllos watches for a flicker but there is none, maybe a slight widening of the eyes.

Hyllos You could go back to your city, rebuild it even. Leave the children here while they are young.

Irene Iole smiles now and Hyllos mistakes the smile.

Hyllos You would be free, you could rebuild your life, the city of your father, and when this is done the children could come to you and we could end this anger.

Irene But Iole’s smile is the smile of refusal. She has suckled her children with her anger, she is her anger, how can she relinquish the anger that she is? Anger is her life, her identity, and even a not too unpleasant habit. She shakes her head and Hyllos feels his own anger rising again, fury at her stubbornness, and he shakes her, shakes her hard.

Moans from Iole.

Hyllos I wanted to stop this.

Irene He shakes her harder, so hard it hurts. More anger for both, another notch of hatred.
Iole's city was never rebuilt. The ruins are over there, you can't see much now, but you can visit them. The family had descendants but they became scattered and unimportant. And the gods looked on, indifferent, and then they changed too and were forgotten.

Eventually, people stopped telling the story, this terrible story of anger, and it too was forgotten. It happened so long ago. At least I believe it was a long time ago, but I am tired now and need to rest.

* 

Timberlake We left her, nodding over her brandy and put a few more notes in the plate. Outside, in the clear night, we could hear the guns of the country north of the border, where there is always a war. And then we drove silently back to Athens.