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**Social and Linguistic Marginalization, and the Question of ‘Standard’:**

**An Analysis and Translation of Giulio Cesare Cortese’s *La vaiasseide***

By

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Submitted to the Faculty of

Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

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## Introduction

This thesis focuses on Giulio Cesare Cortese's *La vaiasseide*, a mock epic poem written in 1612 in the Neapolitan language, a marginalized Italo-Romance language. This poem is incredibly innovative within the genre of chivalric epic poetry, for it challenges the genre's established linguistic, literary, and gender conventions, offering insight into the intersection of linguistic and social norms. *La vaiasseide* is structured as an epic poem and, more specifically, is clearly based on traditional chivalric epic poetry, which by the early sixteenth century had become one of the most popular and influential genres in Italian literature. However, the poem deviates from the norms of the genre – canonical chivalric epic poetry most features chivalric male knights as the main protagonists; *La vaiasseide*, in contrast, portrays female domestic servants, or *vaiasse* as the main protagonists. The poem's storyline centers on three *vaiasse* – Renza, Carmosina, and Pretiosa. The women wish to get married, but are barred from doing so by their masters, or *padroni*. In response, the women unite and lead a revolt against the social rules imposed on them. Cortese's revolutionary approach to the genre, characterized by the deviation from socio-cultural and literary norms, is reinforced and, in turn, supports a radical linguistic choice, as the poem is written in Neapolitan. In other words, in *La vaiasseide*, Giulio Cesare Cortese diverges from the social and linguistic standard by writing about marginalized people – working class women – in a marginalized language – Neapolitan. In pushing back against the linguistic norms by writing in his home language, Cortese pushes back against the social norms that dictate who can be written about; in advocating for his marginalized language, he is advocating for marginalized people.

For this project, I have engaged Cortese's poem in two ways. On the one hand, I conducted a literary and socio-linguistic analysis of *La vaiasseide*. In the first part of the thesis, I

discuss the linguistic background of Italy in order to contextualize Cortese's choice to write in Neapolitan. Furthermore, I draw upon Cortese's own words in order to analyze the social impact of his linguistic choice and his choice to portray working class women in a genre they are often left out of. On the other hand, I translated a canto of the poem. Of the poem's five cantos, I chose to work with and translate the second canto. I felt drawn to the second canto due to the story arc it contained and the ways it represented the intertwined themes of gender and class. Due to my prior study of translation, I had a method I usually followed when encountering a new word – my first step was always to read the piece in its entirety, in an effort to get a feel for the text. However, right from the start, my translation of *La vaiasseide* departed from that which I am familiar with; I am not fluent in, nor have I ever formally studied, the Neapolitan language; I asked myself – what did it mean to write this poem in Neapolitan? How can that significance be maintained through the act of translation? As Cortese's translator, I had to confront the question of 'standard' language and, in turn, the question of what it means to be a 'non-standard' language. I faced many obstacles as a translator, with issues ranging from practical issues to theoretical. In a practical sense, the act of translating from Old Neapolitan to modern English is difficult, if for no other reason than for the lack of resources, such as dictionaries and vocabularies, between the two languages. In a theoretical sense, I was faced with the daunting task of deciding which languages and language varieties to translate into, and how to best translate a marginalized language. Consequently, my translation is an intrinsic part of my thesis, for it serves as an interpretive tool that complements my literary analysis. Together, the translation and the analysis illuminate *La vaiasseide* as Cortese's response to the growing standardization of the Italian literary and linguistic canon, while raising broader questions about the intersection of linguistic, literary, and socio-cultural norms.

### **The Neapolitan Language within the Linguistic History and Background of Italy**

In order to best understand the marginalized social status of the Neapolitan language, it is necessary to understand the linguistic development of languages in present day Italy, and the ways in which those relationships changed throughout history. Throughout time, the linguistic situation in the Italian peninsula has undergone many periods of change. At every point in the history of the peninsula, there have been multiple languages or language varieties present in coexistence with one another. Italy did not exist as a political entity until the 1860s, and thus, for the majority of its history, the area was broken up into different regions, each of which had a spoken language variety distinct from one another. In many regions, Latin was the language spoken, starting in the 700s; however, it is not a monolithic language. There were two main varieties of Latin – *latino classico* Classical Latin and *latino volgare* Vulgar Latin, also known as vernacular (Patota, 2002). By the mid 700s, both of these varieties were being used, though in different social situations (Eskhult, 2018). Classical Latin was a highly codified written variety of Latin, used only by the educated elite and in formal environments. Vulgar Latin, on the other hand, was the spoken variety of Latin, not subject to as strict of norms and used more informally. In other words, Classical Latin was reserved for a higher register, whereas the vernacular was used more colloquially, within a lower register. Vulgar Latin varied diatopically, as the variety of the vernacular differed from region to region. The language of each region was unique, as they had developed from Latin with the influence of other languages specific to each region. The different varieties of Vulgar Latin continued to develop over time and to depart from the Classical Latin model, eventually leading to linguistic variation which constitutes the ‘dialects’ or regional languages of modern day Italy.

Despite being languages in their own right, the regional dialects derived from Latin were restricted to informal use, as Classical Latin was the official language of the social elite and of academia. However, as time went on Classical Latin began to lose its prestige. This shift in the social standing of Classical Latin was seen for various reasons, some of which include the decline in prestige of the aristocratic social class, and the spread of Christianity, which utilized the vernacular to make religious services more accessible to the populace (Patota, 2002). By the 1200s, many regions throughout the peninsula had started to develop their own literary linguistic varieties based on their local vernaculars (Alkire, 2010). Thus, regional languages began occupying a linguistic function that had previously been reserved for Classical Latin. The decision regarding which language, and form thereof, should be used as the literary standard by academics and writers in place of Classical Latin was constantly discussed in an the everpresent linguistic debate known as *la questione della lingua* in Italy. Of the aforementioned local literary varieties, the literary Florentine variety was chosen to be the standard literary language of the peninsula, instead of the original Classical literary Latin, due to both the economic prosperity of Florence in that time, and to the respect the variety received after its usage by prominent 14th century Florentine authors, such as Boccaccio, Dante, and Petrarch. Florentine (Italian) was eventually codified, first by Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* in 1526. Consequently, Florentine came to occupy the role that Classical Latin had done centuries before; it was the prestigious language, codified and used for literary purposes and amongst the social elite.

Neapolitan greatly differs from others languages of Italy, on every linguistic level, even with the smallest segmentable parts of the language, such as phonetic components of speech. These phonetic and phonological patterns help demonstrate the ways in which Neapolitan differs from Florentine, and are important to an analysis of Neapolitan. There are a multitude of



fascinating phonetic and phonological phenomena present in Neapolitan, such as the palatalization of /s/ and /z/ when they appear before labial and velar consonants. This is seen, for example, in words like *sfizio* [ˈʃfitːsʲə] ‘pleasure’ – wherein the /s/ palatalizes to /ʃ/ before the labial-dental consonant /f/ – and *scugnizzo* [ʃkuˈnːitːsə] ‘rascal’ – in which the /s/ palatalizes to /ʃ/ before the velar consonant /k/ (Ledgeway & Maiden, 2016). Other phonological processes include the weakening of final vowels and consequent merger of final vowels to schwa [ə] (Loporcaro 2013). An example of this is seen in the word ‘amore’, with the final unstressed vowel is reduced to /ə/, rendering the pronunciation as [amˈmərə] (Repetti, 2000). While these phonological processes are typical of the spoken word, some of them can be observed in a written text such as *La vaiasseide*. For example, in Neapolitan, tonic closed /e/ remains in words, unless the vowel in the final syllable is etymologically derived from Latin I or O(U), in which case the vowel shifts and becomes /i/. This is seen in the contrast between masculine *chisto* ‘this’ – wherein the tonic vowel is shifted from /e/ to /i/ due to the fact that the vowel in the final syllable is ‘o’ – and feminine *chesta* ‘that’ – wherein the tonic vowel remains as /e/, since the vowel in the final syllable is not derived from Latin I or O(U) (Vaughan, 1915). This phenomenon is observed in *La vaiasseide* in the phrase *chisto penillo* in Octave 16, literally translated as ‘this suffering’, and in *chesta settimana* ‘this week’ in Octave 10. While this vowel shift is an example of a phonological process observable in written text, most phonological characteristics of Neapolitan are less decipherable in a written text such as *La vaiasseide*.

Instead, linguistic characteristics of Neapolitan are more evident in this text in regards to syntax, morphology, and the lexicon. Take, for example, the gender system present in Neapolitan. Gender is a characteristic of nouns that can be observed in the ways in which associated words, such as articles, change to reflect the gender information of the noun

(Ledgeway & Maiden, 2016). The ways in which grammatical gender functions and is expressed differs from language to language. In Old Neapolitan, gender is expressed through a four-part system; three of the grammatical gender categories are directly derived from Latin, representing the masculine, neuter, and feminine categories. In Old Neapolitan, there is a fourth category derived from Latin neuter nouns that differ synchronically from their etymological origins, an example of which being *a*-plural, a subcategory of plural nouns wherein the plural is formed through vowel alternation (Ledgeway & Maiden, 2016). The four-gender system in Old Neapolitan can be observed through the articles that precede the nouns. In regards to singular nouns, the articles are *llo* for typical neuter, *lo* for both masculine and irregular neuter nouns (such as *a*-plurals), and *la* for feminine. For plural nouns, the articles are *li* for masculine nouns, *llo* for typical neuter nouns, *la/lle* for irregular neuter nouns, and *lle* for feminine nouns. This four-part system of grammatical gender is observed throughout Canto Two of *La vaiasseide*. For example, in Octave 14, the masculine plural *li* is observed in *li guai suoie* ‘her problems’; in Octave 5, the irregular neuter plural (*l*)*le* is observed with an *a*-plural in *le vraccia* ‘the arms’, while the same written form (*le*) is used to represent the feminine plural in Octave 11 with *le doglie* ‘the contractions’.

### **Giulio Cesare Cortese and the Neapolitan Language**

Though Cortese was known for his promotion of Neapolitan through writing, he was part of an era of scholarship that highly valued Florentine as the standard language. Like many other scholars of his time, he studied law, receiving his degree in 1597. Following his degree, Cortese was a member of various courts, most notably that of the Grand Duke of Florence, Ferdinando de’ Medici; this goes to say that Cortese was an established, well-connected member of the leading academic groups of his time. In fact, Cortese was a member of L’Accademia della

Crusca (Serrao & Bonaffini, 2005), an exclusive group of intellectuals focused on determining which language should be regarded as the standard literary language. Cortese used his position within the academic community to promote his language, Neapolitan, promoting it as an alternative to Florentine Tuscan and emphasizing his pride in his language. In the opening octave of *La vaiasseide*, Cortese explicitly connects his linguistic choice to the choice of his subject (the *vaiasse*) and audience (the people of his city):

<p>Io canto comme belle e vertolose          So' le vaiasse de chesta cetate,          E quanto iocarelle e vrocolose,          Massema quanno stanno          'nammorate;          Dirraggio po' l' altre isce belle cose          Che fanno quanno sogno mmaretate:          Ma non faccio li vierze 'n toscane          Azzò me 'ntega onnuno a sto paese.          [1.1]</p>	<p>I sing of the beauty and virtue of the          servant girls of this city, and how          playful and cuddly they are, especially          when they're in love. I'll tell, too, of          the other nice things they do when          they're married. But I'm not writing          my verses in Tuscan; that way          everyone in this town can understand          me.          (Canepa, 2012, p. 8)</p>
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In line with the plan laid out in the first octave of the poem, with *La vaiasseide*, Cortese pushed back against the norms of literary tradition in both language and subject. The choice to write in Neapolitan was direct reflection of Cortese's thoughts about the *questione della lingua*. Cortese was not in support of Tuscan being used as the standard literary language, as he took much pride in his native language. This opinion bled over into his literary works, both in implicit ways – such as his choice to write literature in Neapolitan, a minority language – and in explicit ways,

with him oftentimes directly stating his love for his language and the inherent beauty he saw in it. This can be seen, for example, in his *Viaggio di Parnaso*, as cited by Nancy Canepa (2002):

Siano tutte li vuostre e <i>quinci e unquanco</i>	You can have your ‘hereabouts’ and
E l’ <i>Ostro</i> e l’ <i>Astro</i> e <i>cotillo e cotella</i> ,	‘nevermores’, and ‘purpleal’ and ‘astral’,
Ch’io pe me, tanto, non ne voglio manco,	your ‘that one yonder’ and ‘that other one
De tant’isce belleze, na stizzella.	thither’. As for me, I don’t want a drop of
Tanta patacche avesse ad ogne Banco	such beautified things. If banks only had as
Quanta aggio vuce a Napole mia bella:	many shiny pieces as my beautiful Naples has
Vuce chiantute de la maglia vecchia, C’hanno	words! Solid words of old coin, powerful
gran forza, ed enchieno l’aurecchia [1.24]	words that fill the ears. (Canepa, 2012, p. 2-3)

Cortese ardently defended his language and sought to honor its beauty by using it in literary works. Even within his city, many writers did not write entirely in Neapolitan. However, Cortese (and his colleague and old friend Giambattista Basile) endeavored to tell stories and write poetry entirely in Neapolitan, with Cortese having the most works written in solely Neapolitan at the time. In fact, *La vaiasseide* was one of the first dialect literary works in Neapolitan to be widely discussed and treated as a literary classic (Rak, 1994). For this reason, Cortese is considered to be the father of the Neapolitan literary tradition.

Cortese’s linguistic choice – to write in Neapolitan – supports and intensifies the non-traditional content his poem reflects. Cortese’s desire to push back against the thematic norms of the traditional epic was intrinsically intertwined with his desire to promote the Neapolitan language. This endeavor had a lasting effect on people, an example of which is seen in the “Defennemiento de la *Vaiasseide* contra la cenzura de L’Accademmece Scatenate”

(‘Defense of the *Vaiasseide* against the censure of the Scatenati Academicians’), a defense of the poem, written in 1628 by Bartolomeo Zito. In his defense, Zito emphasized the way in which Cortese took the themes of traditional epic poetry – battle, loyalty, love – and placed them in Naples, making the usually unrelatable elements of epic poetry tangible to his people, as cited by Canepa (2012) in her aforementioned article:

Il’ eie abbasto de mostrarence le chase da lo nnaturale... non potennoce descrivere na guerra, nè na Cetate accampata, isso nce fa vedere Napole tutta a rommore: nè chiazza, o pontone nc’è, che non siamo trommettejate, e scorzete da la Corte, e revotate da li Patrune. Po, lo conziglio de le Bajasse, eie autro, che no retratto de l’ Assemblee, e de le Diete che fanno li personagge granne? La fuga che pigliano le Bajasse eie eutro che chillo spediante, che soleno pigiare li pupole malettrattate ntiempo che se vonno rebbellare da li Segnure lloro? Lo resentemiento che nne fanno li patrune, non eie na mmaggene de chello, che soleno provvedere li Rri contro li rebbelle lloro? [207-208]

It was enough for him to show things as they are, naturally... not being able to describe a war, or an encamped city, he showed us Naples in an uproar: there’s not a square or corner of the city where there aren’t trumpet calls, police roundups, and revolts against masters. What is the council of the servant girls if not a portrait of the assemblies and diets that great personages hold? What is the servant girls’ escape if not that expedient to which mistreated people resort when they want to rebel against their lords? Isn’t the masters’ resentment the image of what kings feel for those who rebel against them? (Canepa, 2012, p.12)

In using the Neapolitan language, Cortese was able to comment on the linguistic issues of his time, in support and defense of his language by using Neapolitan to write an epic poem, in contrast to the traditional literary Florentine Tuscan language. Furthermore, his unconventional choice of language contextualizes and strengthens his departure from the traditional content of epic poetry.

### **Women in Epic Poetry**

In addition to departing from the linguistic norms of traditional epic poetry, Cortese also challenged the predetermined thematic norms of the canon. The content of traditional epic poetry tends to revolve around themes of romance, love, and war, typically centered around chivalric male knights in the pursuit of women and glory for their people. Canonically, women in epic poetry are limited to a select few roles, and are generally relegated to being the love interest of a chivalric man; a damsel in desperate need of saving. As femininity was socially tied to passivity, vulnerability, and submissiveness, there were not many female characters displaying strength and independence. However, that is not to say that strong women were never depicted in epic poetry. Strong female characters are most often remembered in *Orlando Furioso* of Ludovico Ariosto (published in 1516), one of the most popular and read epic poems in Italian literature, seen primarily through the characters of Bradamante and Marfisa, who are female knights. Ariosto was recognized for his innovative methods of representing women in poetry, which spoke the women in his readership, as described by Virginia Cox (2011):

One reason why chivalric romance in its Ariostian formula appealed strongly to women was without a doubt the innovative quality of its representation of women, and especially its creation of the figure of the female knight, one of the most fascinating and distinctive new literary types of the age. (p. 177)

The figure of the female knight is echoed in later epic poems as well; seen, for example, in the *Gerusalemme liberata*, another popular epic poem written by Torquato Tasso in 1581. Tasso follows in Ariosto's footsteps by representing strong women in the role of female knights, namely with his character Clorinda, who is well known for her prowess as a warrior. This pattern is followed even in epic poetry written by women, which can be seen, for example, in *Il floridoro* by Moderata Fonte (written also in 1581), with her depiction of Risamante, a female knight seen as equally powerful to her male counterpart in the poem, Floridoro. Though this representation of women as powerful knights was novel, praise of women through female characters of this variety only spoke to the virtues of a very specific type of women – the female warrior. Masculine women are seen as a flawed being, except in the case of the female knight, as her ability to be both a woman and to excel in a masculine role is seen as phenomenal, as described by Pamela Benson (1992):

A woman who is masculine violates nature, with one exception: if this violation of nature is socially beneficial, it may be described as miraculous rather than unnatural; the woman might be described as temporarily containing a male soul within her female body. Usually, however, those who employ this theory praise women's feminine virtue as superior in kind to men's masculine virtue. (p.5)

Chivalric epic poetry's propensity to represent strong women as inherently masculine overtly ties power to manhood. The masculinization of female knights in epic poetry even goes as far as dictating the perception of the women's bodies – many epic poems with female knights include a scene in which the women are perceived to be men, until they remove their helmet or armor and reveal their gender, much to the surprise of those around them (Benson, 1992, p. 125-126). Thus,

strong women are seen as masculine both in appearance and profession in the case of the female warrior archetype.

In other words, traditional epic poetry only demonstrates a positive portrayal of powerful women when they are depicted as possessing traditionally masculine traits. However, positive views of women's independence in epic poetry is contingent upon their inability to disrupt order or preexisting social codes. Bradamante, for example, is a fantastic knight, but she does not physically challenge any of the male warriors in *Orlando Furioso*. Furthermore, Bradamante fights her battles and makes her journeys in the pursuit of one goal – to be reunited with her lover, Ruggiero, in order to fulfill the prophecy stating that they will be the predecessors of the Este dynasty in Italy. Thus, despite her occupying a traditionally masculine role, she does so in order to fulfill a traditionally feminine one – that of the wife and mother. Strong women in traditional epic poetry are praised when they display an ability to succeed in a traditionally male arena, which inherently limits the type of woman represented as powerful. Furthermore, this style of representation instills the belief that women should be respected, but only when they are accomplished and live up to a set of ideals created by men; this is again echoed by Benson (1992), “The Narrator’s goodwill toward accomplished women does not seem to be in doubt, but the actual existence of such women does” (p. 133). Ariosto, with his *Orlando Furioso* praises his ‘accomplished’ female characters, neglecting the fact that women, in reality, rarely lived up to his lofty ideals, as the standards he created for women were fundamentally unachievable.

The female characters in Cortese’s *La vaiasseide* contrast greatly the traditional representations described above, as seen in various women throughout the poem. In *La vaiasseide* women are primarily represented as *vaiasse*, or female domestic servants, with the three main characters – Renza, Carmosina, and Pretiosa – filling this role. In this way, the



*vaiasse* are depicted in a traditionally passive role and feminine occupation; they do not fulfill the masculine ideals of independence and strength like those of the female knights in traditional epic poetry. However, this does not mean that Cortese portrays these women as weak or helpless. Rather, he recounts a story of those very women revolting against the social order imposed upon them. The *vaiasse* wish to marry their lovers; however they are restricted from doing so by their *padroni*, or masters. In response to the rules preventing them from doing as they please, the *vaiasse* band together to push back against these rules, finding power in collective will. Thus, the role of the *vaiasse* goes directly against the role of women in traditional epic poetry; they are described as powerful, even within their traditionally feminine role of servitude, and they use said power to disrupt the social code that governs their lives. Furthermore, the *vaiasse* are physically depicted as feminine, another contrast between them and the female knight. There is never any doubt that the *vaiasse* are women, unlike the moments in which the female knights are mistaken as men. Therefore, their independence and power is divorced from masculinity in a way that was not seen in the canonical representation of women in epic poetry.

The *vaiasse* are not the only strong women seen in *La vaiasseide*, for one of the most important roles in the poem is that of the *mamma*, or midwife. The midwife plays a central role in Canto Two of the poem, wherein she delivers Renza's daughter and emotionally supports her through the process of childbirth. Madamma Vasta, the midwife, has a detailed knowledge of anatomy and medical science regarding childbirth, and is able to safely deliver Renza's baby despite early-on complications. In a time when medical knowledge was typically seen only in male medical professionals, her knowledge is seen as spectacular. Thus, the role of the midwife does, in some ways, reflect the idea of the "accomplished woman" seen in traditional epic poetry, through the success found in a traditionally masculine field, that of medical professions.

However, Madamma Vasta situates herself in an complex position in regards to the gendered perceptions of her occupation. Midwifery occupies a particularly interesting role in terms of gender dynamics, for it is a medical position – an occupation traditionally relegated to men in that time period – but is also seen as a feminine role, for it deals with birth and childcare. Thus, the midwife occupies a traditionally feminine role, but finds power within that. In fact, she is depicted as so knowledgeable that she, at times, appears to be almost magical. This is seen, for example, in her concoction of remedies that resemble potions, in the effort to aid the pained Renza. In addition to being incredibly knowledgeable in regards to her medical position, Madamma Vasta is also seen as a sage woman with valuable wisdom to impart on her younger counterparts. Her wisdom is a fountain of knowledge that could only have been gained through her life as a woman – she gives Renza advice on relationships, sexual dynamics, and ways to navigate the world more generally, all of which she knows from her lived experience. Thus, despite being depicted as powerful, independent, and wise in the ways in which men typically are portrayed in epic poetry, Madamma Vasta finds power in her femininity through both her female-centered occupation and her wisdom gained through womanhood. In this way, in the roles of both the midwife and the *vaiasse*, Cortese depicts women as powerful, independent, and autonomous through a valorization of traditionally feminine roles and characteristics, departing from the confines in which traditional epic poetry places women.

### **Translation Methodology and Theory**

My literary and socio-linguistic analysis of *La vaiasseide* reveals how Cortese's poem defied both the emerging linguistic standards of Italian and the norms of chivalric epic poetry as a genre. Building upon and expanding this analysis, my translation of the second *canto* of the poem aims at communicating the significance of this poem and the weight of this history.

Though I had studied translation prior to embarking on this project, I had never before worked so closely with a singular text in the way I have with *La vaiasseide*. Early on in my translation process, I read Roman Jakobson's article "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (2007) and had my first encounter with an old Italian adage – *traduttore, traditore*, literally translated to 'translator, traitor'. In essence, *traduttore, traditore* encompasses the idea that a translation is inherently a betrayal, thus making the translator a traitor. It would be impossible to perfectly communicate every single aspect of a text from one language to another; something is bound to get lost in translation. This was far from my last encounter with this Italian expression, as I would often happen across it in the following months. Despite its seemingly pessimistic view of the act of translation, I felt liberated each time I read it; if betrayal is an inherent part of translation, then it is pointless to try to avoid the inevitable. In accepting that I would never, could never, create a 'perfect' translation – the elusive thing that be – of *La vaiasseide*, I was free to decide the aspects to which I wanted to be the most faithful. For example, I knew from the beginning of this project that I intended to abandon the rhyme scheme present in the original text, for the phonetic aspects of the poem were not of the utmost importance to either my interpretation of the text or the characteristics which I hoped to communicate through translation. I was, of course, aware from the start that this project would be a reflection of the text I am translating, and wanted to produce a translation that honored the work of Giulio Cesare Cortese. I began translating first from Neapolitan to Italian, and initially found myself proceeding quite tentatively; I would have many versions of each line of poetry, sometimes as many as eight versions for a single sentence, as I was terrified of mistranslating a word or phrase or the storyline itself. As time went on and I became more comfortable with both translating and the

text itself, I was able to move much quicker, with more confidence, though I never fully lost my fear of misrepresenting the poem.

After having translated into Italian, I began the second part of my translation, from Neapolitan and Italian into English. Though translating into English of course had its benefits, it was much more difficult than translating into Italian had been, at a structural level. The syntax and morphology of Neapolitan is not entirely dissimilar to that of Italian, and thus, I faced no major problems when translating Neapolitan lines of poetry into Italian lines of poetry. English, however, is quite removed grammatically from that of Neapolitan; things such as the order of words in a sentence or the ways in which clauses were pieced together is different between Neapolitan and English, and even between Italian and English. For example, in my original attempt to translate Octave 3 into English, I remained faithful to the structure of the poetry line format and produced the following reading:

She simply gives birth, and is put in salvation  
 Which arrives at once, and birthed a daughter,  
 That seemed like a bladder full of air  
 And directly after the birth, pooped  
 And Menechiello prays, and pleased  
 Says “Go to Tata, daughter of cow/slut,  
 That which has the beautiful legacy to do  
 Needs it to start with a daughter.

With a translation based on faithfulness to the sentence and poetry structure, I felt the meaning of the words slipping away. Thus, I wrote another version of the same octave without following the line structure, producing the following:

Thus, she gives birth, for when the time came she is brought to salvation and births a daughter. Directly after the birth, she looked like a bladder full of air, she pooped.

Menechiello happy and pleased said, “Go to Tata, daughter of cow, for if you want to have a good legacy, it starts with a daughter.”.

Allowing myself to deviate from the poetry line format freed me to focus on the element of the poem I value most – the plot and themes the text presents. Adhering to the poetry line format obscured the meaning of the instructions, for a fidelity to the original syntax rendered the section unclear; in contrast, the significance of the text can be better understood in prose format as it allows more change to happen structurally within the sentences. For example, the first translation reads, “That seemed like a bladder full of air / And directly after the birth, pooped”. Though it is structurally faithful to the original, it is entirely incomprehensible. On the other hand, the second version written in prose reads, “Directly after the birth, she looked like a bladder full of air<sup>1</sup>, and she pooped”. By switching the order of the clauses to put ‘directly after the birth’ earlier in the sentence, the order of events becomes clearer. As seen in my struggle with this octave, I found it particularly arduous to render the words of Giulio Cesare Cortese into poetry line format in my English translation, and soon came to realize that if I were to prioritize the line structure of the poem, I might lose the storyline. Thus, I decided to write the English translation in prose format, with each octave of the original poem translating into a small paragraph of prose. This decision allowed me to focus on the plotline of the poem, the part of the text which I desired to communicate most to my readers.

Though I was constantly working to communicate the plotline of the poem effectively, through the process of translating into English, I noticed something interesting – I didn’t fully

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<sup>1</sup> Balloons were originally made of pigs’ bladders. Thus, Renza is being compared to a balloon directly after birth, for her stomach is still protruding but no longer holding a child

understand my own translation. I understood each word individually, and oftentimes whole sentences and fragments of the plot or the broad outline of the storyline; however, I was unable to decipher the fine details of the story arc in its entirety. For example, in Octaves 19 and 20, a group of *vaiasse* are gathered together and discuss their plans to get dressed up. Two women compare themselves to the mythological figures of Bacchus and Charon. One woman, Rosa, asks who they are, and another, Caradonia, initially thought that they are vegetables rather than gods. Another woman, Caradonia, responds condescendingly and with an air of superiority, informing Rosa that they are the gods of beauty. I had previously understood that the *vaiasse* were together and chatting, and that they were discussing their desire to spruce up. However, it was not until I translated the text into English that the full force of the irony hit me – Bacchus is a male god of wine and pleasure, and Charon is the guide to the underworld, notoriously hideous; neither of them are goddesses of beauty. Thus, though I had understood the general information about the scene through my translation of the octaves into Italian, the humor and details of the joke were lost on me until I translated the text into English. I was shocked; how could I have produced a draft of a translation that my thesis advisor was pleased with, when I couldn't wholly understand what I myself had written? In this way, my initial draft of my English translation proved to be a test of knowledge, a way of reading, a method of studying the text; as Italo Calvino notes in his 1982 essay *Tradurre è il vero modo di leggere un testo*, “Translation is the true way of reading a text... the drama of translation as I've described it is more powerful the closer the two languages are, while between Italian and English the distance is such that translating means recreating to some degree, and the smaller the temptation to make a literal transcription, the more likely the translator is to preserve the spirit of a text” (Calvino, 2023, p. 91). By translating the text into English – my first language, quite removed from Italian – I had to translate not just the words,

but the feeling of the story itself. It felt much like putting on my glasses; though I had been able to see the storyline in my Italian translation, it felt ever so slightly blurry, the plotline always just out of reach. However, as I translated it into English, the story line became clearer to me, more defined. Translation is a method of reading, interpreting, familiarizing oneself with a text, and through my process of doubly translating, I was able to understand the story in a way I may not have been able to otherwise.

Keeping in mind my priorities as a translator – to communicate the story and cultural significance of *La vaiasseide* – I was often being asked and asking myself a range of questions as to how I should translate this text, the most pressing of which regarding what language I should translate into. The decision regarding which language(s) to translate into was not simple. Immediately I knew I wanted to translate into both Italian and English, a choice that was at once both logistical and theoretical. In a logistical sense, I wanted to produce a written work that could be read by members of both the Transnational Italian Studies Department and the Linguistics Department, which would necessitate the use of English in addition to the use of Italian. Moreover, translating the poem two times over would be structurally beneficial as well, as it would be nearly impossible to translate directly from Neapolitan to English. There are very few Neapolitan-English dictionaries or grammar guides, and of those, virtually none focus on the translation of seventeenth century Neapolitan to English. Thus, the task of translating from Neapolitan into English is inherently a multistep process. As stated by Balma (2011), making this process evident to the readers is a valuable endeavor, “The decision to include a version in Standard Italian in a published trilingual work reflects the editors’ awareness of the importance of bearing evidence of the gradual process of translation” (p. 5). Thus, producing a tripartite

translated work would also be beneficial in a theoretical way, as it would demonstrate the many steps I had taken in order to translate such a text.

The act of translation is one that is inherently influenced by the translators themselves. A translation is an intervention in the ‘life’ of a text, and calls into question the definition of authorship, as stated by Venuti (2018):

On the one hand, translation is defined as a second-order representation: only the foreign text can be original, an authentic copy, true to the author's personality or intention, whereas the translation is derivative, fake, potentially a false copy. On the other hand, translation is required to efface its second-order status with transparent discourse, producing the illusion of authorial presence whereby the translated text can be taken as the original. (p. 6)

A translator produces texts that are neither fully original, nor fully derivative; instead, they are an interpretation of the original text itself. Thus, according to Venuti, it is crucial for a translator to make their position within their translation apparent to their readers. Making the gradual and multifaceted process of translation overt to my readers is one of the ways in which I render myself visible within my translation. It is imperative to make it overt that this work is a translation, and that a translation is always colored by the decisions of the translator.

The question of language did not stop once I decided to translate into both Italian and English; not only was the question of which languages pertinent, but also which variety of each language I would (or should) utilize. Since *La vaiasseide* is a work originally written in a regional language of Italy – Neapolitan – I heavily debated which varieties of English and Italian I should use for my translation. Is it better to translate such a text into an antiquated or modern linguistic variety? Is it more faithful to translate into a standard or non-standard linguistic



variety? Translation scholars within the field of Italian dialect poetry have conflicting theories regarding such problems. Some argue that to render a work of Italian dialect literature into a standard language erases the social significance of the use of dialect in the first place, a stance explained by Bonaffini (1997), “In other words, translating into a standard language, the translator cannot capture the eccentricity of vernacular speech, its function as an alternative, a non-normative deviation from the norm” (p. 280). Within this school of thought, to translate a non-standard language into a standard language neglects the significance of the language choice by ignoring the sociocultural relationship between the standard and non-standard languages. Other scholars, however, argue that translating Italo-Romance dialect literature into non-standard linguistic varieties of Italian emphasizes the peripheral position of the marginalized language by underlining its distance from the standard in a pejorative manner, as asserted by Balma (2011) “... arguing instead that ‘if we render the poems into any kind of dialect, slang, or jive talk, we hear them only as the middle- and upper-class Roman would have heard them and hears them now’” (p. 3). In other words, translating a piece of Italo-Romance dialect literature into non-standard varieties of Italian only goes to alienate the readers from the text in a way that reinforces the linguistic hierarchy by forcing the marginalized language and culture to remain in the social position of otherness.

With the aforementioned translation theory in mind, I myself decided to translate *La vaiasseide* from Neapolitan into modern Italian, and modern American English - or more precisely, into my own variety of American English. I did so for two main reasons – firstly, I thought of the effect I wanted my translation to have on my readers, and the feelings I wished to evoke within them. When reading my translation, I want the readers to feel as though they can connect and feel close to the text, in the way that readers of *La vaiasseide* might have felt in

seventeenth century Naples. This, of course, cannot be true for all readers, since we all utilize different linguistic varieties of English and/or Italian, and it would be impossible to tailor the translation to each individual reader. However, with my choice to translate into modern speech, I intend to make the text more generally accessible in the hopes that my translation will transport readers into the text, rather than leaving them feeling as though they are stuck on the outside looking in. Secondly – and to me, more importantly – I thought about the ways in which my linguistic choices would ultimately reflect on Neapolitan, especially for those unfamiliar with the language. To render *La vaiasseide* into a marginalized variety of modern English or Italian, I would inherently be making the argument that the linguistic and sociopolitical situations of a modern-day Italian or English variety can be equated with that of seventeenth century Neapolitan, which would ultimately be both untrue and a disservice to all languages involved.

### **The Question of ‘Standard’**

The choice to translate *La vaiasseide* into ‘standard’ Italian and English forced me to confront a question that seemingly had no answer – what truly *is* a ‘standard’ language? As mentioned above, one could clearly pinpoint a variety of Italian that has been designated as the national standard, mainly for writing, but for spoken language as well. However, within an American context, it is much more difficult to clearly discern what the standard is. The main difference between the linguistic context of Italy and that of the United States is that a discourse such as *la questione della lingua* has never taken place in a similar fashion in America; even amongst intellectuals and scholars, there is no agreed-upon designated standard language. Furthermore, as stated by Bex (1999), different Americans value different varieties of American English, influencing what they consider the ‘standard’ to be, “A commonplace in United States (hereafter US) linguistics is that every region supports its own standard; none is the locus (or

source) of *the* standard. Historically that is a fair assessment, for no long-term centre of culture, economy and government has dominated in the US...” (p. 236). Thus, Standard American English is more an abstraction than an actual language variety. As expressed by Bex (1999), “SAE [Standard American English] is an idealization. Nobody speaks this dialect; and if somebody did, we wouldn't know it because SAE is not defined precisely” (p. 236). Even within singular dialects or regional variations of American English, there is still linguistic variation. This variation, as stated by Greenfield (2011), is on the basis of diverse social identities, “Even within a community of people that speaks one of these more regional varieties, variation intrinsically occurs, often according to age group, social class, gender, political orientation, and other factors, influenced both by proximity to others and as a means of identification” (p. 41). Thus, it is obvious that the concept of ‘standard’ American English is not based on any central qualities of the language itself. Rather, it is instead based on the privilege of the speaker, as argued by Greenfield (2011), “‘Standard English’ is a qualifier ascribed to many ways of speaking (and by extension, though differently, writing) by privileged white people or, perhaps more accurately, any variety of English that has not been associated historically with resistance by communities of color” (p.43). In other words, there is no true standard in American English, but instead ‘standard’ English is merely an intangible conglomeration of the ways in which privileged people speak in America.

As we now know, while there is a clearly designated standard language in Italy, as has been decided through the extensive intellectual debate of *questione della lingua*, the same concept does not exist in America. This, in turn, calls into question what it means to be a ‘standard’ language, in a linguistic sense of the term. In order to best understand what it means to be a ‘standard language’, it is imperative to define the term. As stated by Bex (1999), a standard

language is one that has undergone a process of standardization. Language standardization entails the codification and stabilization of a language. However, even this precise definition gives way to more questions, one of which regards the mode of communication; does standardization refer to that of written or spoken language? Written language tends to change and evolve slower than spoken language. Thus, it is more likely to be the method of communication that scholars attempt to standardize, as it is easier to fixate on a variety of language that is more stable. However, it is important to remember that although written language is more fixed than spoken language, it is far from stagnant. In fact, languages are in a constant and everpresent state of change and variation; as stated by Greenfield (2011) modern language cannot be standardized as they are in a constant state of flux, “Living languages cannot be standardized. The only standard languages—languages with finite boundaries and comprehensively accountable features—are dead languages” (p. 39). Thus, standardization is a process without an end goal, as affirmed by Bex (1999), “I have suggested elsewhere that standardisation is best treated as a process, since attempts to locate a specific standard (product) are doomed to failure, given that all languages (except dead languages) vary and are in a constant state of change...” (p. 199). It then makes sense that attempts at language standardization in Italy have been ongoing for centuries, since the process of standardization is one without a foreseeable end.

While in Italy scholars have extensively debated *what* the standard language is or should be, I argue that a more important question has long been ignored: should there even be a standard at all? The concept of a ‘standard’ language should be rejected on two levels – firstly, on a sociopolitical level, and secondly on a evolutionary linguistic level. Regarding the sociopolitical argument against ‘standard’ language, as we can see in the context of American English, a ‘standard’ language is more so a social abstraction than a definable linguistic variety. The

concept of a ‘standard’ language is based on social privilege; thus, the linguistic variety designated as the ‘standard’ often goes to further privilege those with sociopolitical power and marginalize those without. On a logistical level, even when a country designates a linguistic variety as the standard – as seen in Italian linguistic history with Classical Latin, and then again with Florentine – it is nearly impossible to truly standardize a language. Languages are constantly shifting and evolving; to attempt to standardize language is to engage in a neverending chase in pursuit of an unattainable linguistic idealization. Though it is interesting and valuable to discuss what the standard languages of Italy and America are, it is much more important to note the impracticality of attempting to standardize a language, and the negative social consequences such a process could incur.

### **Conclusion**

How can we understand Cortese’s defiance in the face of the imposition of social and linguistic norms, and how can this defiance be maintained through the act of translation? In response to these questions, I have provided a literary and socio-linguistic analysis of *La vaiasseide* and the context in which this poem was written, conceptualizing the significance of Cortese’s choice to write in Neapolitan, a marginalized language. Such an analysis enriched and in turn was deepened by the translation of part of Cortese’s poem. As Cortese’s translator, I had to confront the question of what it means to be a ‘non-standard’ language, and, in turn, the question of what it means to be a ‘standard’ language in the first place.

My investigation of the socio-cultural significance of Cortese’s choice to write in a marginalized, ‘non-standard’ language raises broader questions about what are standard languages and what it means to exist outside of them. As we have seen, the question of what a standard language is has pervaded the minds of intellectuals, linguists, and writers alike for

centuries. It is a common misconception that a ‘standard’ language – a term with a convoluted definition – is the most sophisticated form of a given language, in terms of linguist structure. As my thesis shows, this is an oversimplification. In reality, the concept of a standard language is inherently tied to the identity of the speaker; linguists have found time and time again that the designation of a standard language is predicated on the social power and privilege of the speaker, rather than on the linguistic value of the variety itself (Greenfield, 2011). Thus, a ‘standard’ language does not only create a set of linguistic norms, but a set of social norms as well. In declaring what a standard language is, we are also declaring who can speak it, where it can be spoken, and what it can be used to be spoken about.

*La vaiasseide*, thus, exists as a blatant effort to push back against the socio-cultural and linguistic regulations inherently imposed by the designation of a standard language. In writing an chivalric epic poem centered on working class women, and by having done so in the Neapolitan language, Cortese departs from tradition and mocks the social and linguistic norms that define the chivalric epic genre. Together, the analysis provided above and the translation presented below elucidate the ways in which *La vaiasseide* was an act of cultural and linguistic defiance; the poem gives voice to Cortese’s rejection to the growing standardization of the Italian literary and linguistic canon, while simultaneously shedding light on the intersection of linguistic, literary, and socio-cultural norms.

## ARGOMIENTO.

*Figliai Renza, e facette na figliola  
 Che lo marito n'appe à spantecare:  
 Ogni vaiassa n'have cannavola  
 E se ne sbigna pe se sgoliare,  
 Vace lo banno, Prezzosa sola  
 scrive à Cienzo, e se vole mmaretare  
 Nce la dà lo patrone, e Carmosina  
 Non pò fuire, e posta à na cantina.*

## CANTO SECUNNO.

## ARGOMENTO.

*Renza partorì una figlia  
 Che suo marito spasimava da tanto tempo:  
 Ogni vaiassa ne aveva desiderio  
 E se ne fuggono per togliersi la voglia  
 Emesso il bando, Prezzosa  
 scrive a Cienzo e vuole sposarsi  
 Il padrone non lo permette e Carmosina  
 Non può fuggire e viene rinchiusa in una  
 cantina.*

## CANTO SECONDO.

## ARGUMENT.

*Renza gives birth to a daughter that her  
 husband had long wished for.  
 Every vaiassa wanted a daughter and went  
 forth to fulfill this wish. As new traveled,  
 Prezzosa writes to Cienzo, wanting marry  
 him, "We should tell my padrone  
 immediately", and Carmosina could not flee  
 and was put away in a cellar.*

## SECOND CANTO.

**R**enza campaie commo na signora

E scette prena ncapo de no mese;  
 Ogne uno le diceva à la bon hora  
 Te vea mamma de Conte, e de  
 Marchese,  
 A Mineco pareva mille anne onne  
 hora  
 Che la moglie trasesse à lo mese  
 Ped avere no ninno ò na nennella  
 Che la portasse à mammara nocella.

(1)

**R**enza visse come una signora

E in un mese, lei rimase incinta,  
 Ognuno le diceva, “Alla buon’ora,  
 Ti vedevo mamma di Conte, e di  
 Marchese”,  
 E a Mineco ogni ora sembravano mille  
 anni  
 Che sua moglie arrivasse all’ultimo mese  
 Per avere un bimbo o una bimba  
 Da portare sulla sedia papale <sup>1</sup>

(1)

**R**enza lived like a lady, and in a

month, she became pregnant. At last,  
 everyone told her, “Go see the mothers of  
 Conte and Marchese”. To Mineco, every  
 hour felt like a million years as he waited  
 for his wife to give birth to the little boy or  
 girl to put on the papal chair<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> la ‘mammara nocella’ era un gioco: due persone si tengono per le braccia e la terza sta seduta sopra

<sup>2</sup> the ‘papal chair’ is a game: two people link arms in order to seat a third person upon their arms



Venne chessa hora, ma la criatura  
 Poco mancaie, che no moresse nfoce,  
 Ma la mammana, che n'havea paura,  
 La capo le ntronaie ad auta voce:  
 Spriemmete figlia, spriemme ca non  
 dura  
 Troppo st'amaro, e venerrà lo doce;  
 Spriemmete bene mio sta ncellevriello  
 Aiutate, te shioshia st'agliariello.

(2)

Venne quest'ora, ma ci mancò poco che  
 la bambina non morisse all'uscita,  
 Ma l'ostetrica, che ne aveva paura,  
 La testa le rintronò ad alta voce:  
 “Spingi figlia, spingi che non dura  
 Troppo quest'amaro, e verrà il dolce  
 Spingi cara, stai calma  
 Aiutati, soffia in questo agliariello<sup>3</sup>”

(2)

Then came the hour, but it was a close  
 call, as the baby girl almost died during on  
 the way out. However, the midwife, who  
 feared that, stunned her head with her loud  
 voice. “Push my dear, with an exertion  
 that doesn't last. First too much pain, and  
 then relief will come. Push hard dear, keep  
 calm. Help, blow into this little bottle<sup>4</sup>”

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<sup>3</sup> era una specie di ampolla in cui la partorientente soffiava dentro

<sup>4</sup> this is a type of small bottle into which women in labor breathe in and out

Puro figliaie, e scette à sarvamíento,  
 Ca ionze l'ora, e fece na figliacca,  
 Che vessica pareva chiena de viento,  
 E subeto che scio fece la cacca,  
 E Menechiello preiato, e contiento,  
 Disse anna à Tata figlia de na Vacca,  
 Ca chillo c'have bella reda à fare  
 Besogna da na scacquera ncignare.

(3)

Così partorì, e fu salva,  
 E quando giunse l'ora, diede alla luce una  
 bambinona,  
 Che sembrava una vescica piena di vento  
 E immediatamente dopo che uscì, fece la  
 cacca  
 E Menechiello, felice e contento  
 Disse “vieni da papà, figlia di una vacca,  
 che chi deve fare una bella discendenza  
 deve cominciare con una figlia.”

(3)

Thus, she gave birth, for when the the time  
 came, she is brought to salvation, and  
 birthed a daughter. Directly after the birth,  
 she looked like a bladder full of air, and  
 she pooped. Menechiello, happy and  
 pleased said, “Come to Dad, daughter of  
 cow, for if you want to have a good  
 legacy, it starts with a daughter”.

Ma la mammana disse: “mo, compare,  
 La mecco nterra, e po tu pigliatella,  
 Ma lassamela nnanze covernare  
 Ca piglia friddo pò la pacionella,  
 Cossì pigliaie lo filo pe legare  
 Lo vellicolo, e po la forfecella,  
 E legato che l’appe lo tagliaie  
 Quanto parette ad essa ch’abbastaie.

(4)

E de lo sango che sghizzato n’era  
 Le tegnette la facce, azzò che fosse,  
 La ninna pò chiu rossolella ncera,  
 Perzò ne vide certe accossi rosse,  
 E po la stese ncoppa la lettèra,

Ma ora l'ostetrica disse, “ora, compare,  
 La poggio a terra, tu prendila dopo<sup>5</sup>  
 Ma lasciamela prima sistemare  
 Altrimenti prende freddo la pacioccona,  
 Così prese il filo per legare  
 L'ombelico, e poi le forbici,  
 E legato che l’ebbe, lo tagliò  
 Quanto a lei sembrò sufficiente”.

(4)

E con il sangue che ne era schizzato  
 Le tinse la faccia, affinché le guance  
 Della bambina avessero una cera più rosata:  
 perciò ne vide certe così rosse.  
 E poi la stese sopra il letto

But now the midwife said, “Now, friend,  
 I’ll put her on the ground and then you  
 pick her up<sup>6</sup>. But first, let me take care of  
 her, otherwise this chubby one will get  
 cold”. So she took the thread to tie the  
 umbellical cord. As soon as it was tied,  
 she took the scissors, and she cut it as  
 much as seemed to be adequate.

She painted her face with the splattered  
 blood, so that the baby’s cheeks were rosy,  
 thus he saw they were so red. She then she  
 laid her on top of the bed, and she cleaned  
 up the arms, legs, and thighs. Then she

<sup>5</sup> era una tradizione per il riconoscimento del figlio appena nato

<sup>6</sup> it was a tradition for the father of a newborn child to as an acknowledge them as their own by picking them up

E conchiaie le vraccia, gamme, e cosse,  
 Lo filo de la lengua po rompette,  
 E zuccaro è cannella nce mettette.

(5)

Po saliaie dinto la sportella  
 No pocorillo de sale pisato,  
 Decenno: Te', ca chiu saporitella  
 Sarrà quanno hai po lo marito à lato,  
 E le mettette la tellectarella  
 Dapò che lo nasillo appe affilato  
 Co lo cotriello, e co lo fasciaturo  
 L'arrauogliaie, che parze pisaturo.

(6)

E le sistemò braccia, le gambe, e cosce,  
 Dopo tagliò il filetto della lingua  
 E ci mise zucchero e cannella.

(5)

Poi cosparses la vagina con  
 Un po' di sale pestato  
 Dicendo: "tieni, che più saporita  
 Sarà dopo, quando avrai il marito a fianco",  
 E le fece il solletico  
 Dopo che il nasino affilò  
 Con il coltello, e con le fasce  
 L'avvolse, che sembrò un pestello.

(6)

broke the thread of the tongue, and put  
 sugar and cinnamon on it.

Then she sprinkled her vagina with a bit of  
 fine salt, saying, "Hold still, she'll be  
 tastier later on when she has a husband by  
 her side", and tickled her. After that she  
 sharpened her nose with the knife, and  
 wrapped her up in the swaddling cloth so  
 that she looked like a pestle.

Po pisaie maiorana, e fasolara,  
 Arùta, menta, canfora, e cardille,  
 E n'erva che non saccio, puro amara,  
 Che se dace pe vocca a peccerille,  
 E disse: Te' se la tenite cara  
 A bere le date sti zuchile,  
 Ca n'haverrà de ventre maie dolore,  
 E se farrà commo no bello shiore.

(7)

Postala nterra po disse, ora susso  
 Auzala mò compare allegramente,  
 E benedicetella, e chillo musso  
 Le vasa, e po la mostra à s'aute gente.  
 Isso lo fece, e se facette russo  
 De prieio, e po la deze à no parente,

Poi pestò la maggiorana, e la fagiolara,  
 Ruta, menta, canfora, e cardi  
 E un'erba che non so, anch'essa amara,  
 Che si dà per bocca ai bambini  
 E disse: “tieni, se vi è molto cara  
 Datele da bere questi succhi,  
 Così non avrà mai dolore di ventre  
 E si farà come un bel fiore”.

(7)

Posatala in terra poi disse, “orsù  
 Alzala ora, compare, allegramente  
 E benedicila, e quel grugno  
 Bacia, e poi mostrala a queste altre persone”  
 Egli lo fece, e si fece rosso  
 Di contentezza, e poi la diede a un parente

Then she weighed the marjoram, *fasolara*,  
 rue, mint, camphor, cardoon<sup>7</sup>, and an herb  
 that I know is quite bitter, which one gives  
 orally to children. She said, “Hold onto  
 this, and if she is very dear to you, give  
 her these these concoctions to drink. Then  
 she'll never have stomach pains, and will  
 be like a lovely flower”.

After he put her on the ground, she said,  
 “Come now, pick her up my friend, go on  
 now merrily, and bless her. And kiss her  
 scowling face, then show her to the  
 others”. He did so and blushed with pride.  
 Then he gave her to a relative, and then

<sup>7</sup> Cardoon is an herb used to make amaro liqueur, which is typically drank after a meal to help with digestion

E cossi l'uno à l'auto la mostraro  
Che commo palla la pallottiaro.

(8)

Mora mo la mammana vertolosa  
Redenno se nzeccaie co la figliata,  
E disse non me stare regnolosa  
Ca chiu fatica è fare na colata,  
- Non dicere commare tale cosa  
Ca tutta quanta me sento schiattata -  
(Essa rresponse) io tengo cellevriello  
De non nce stare chiù co Menechiello.

(9)

De chesto me ne rrido, la mammana  
Rresponse tanno, ca non tanto priesto  
Passarà figlia mia chesta settimana,

E così l'uno all'altro se la mostrarono  
Che come una palla la palleggiavano.

(8)

Ma immediatamente l'ostetrica virtuosa  
Ridendo si avvicinò con la figlia,  
E disse "Non mi stare piagnucolosa  
Che è più fatica fare un bucato"  
- "Non dire, comare, tale cosa  
Che tutta quanta mi sento schiattata" -  
(Lei rresponse) io ho in mente  
Di non stare più con Menechiello":

(9)

"Di questo me ne rrido - l'ostetrica  
Rresponse subito - che non tanto presto  
Passerà figlia mia questa settimana,

from one to the other they showed her off,  
passing her around like a juggling ball.

But right away, the virtuous midwife  
draws near with the girl, laughing, and  
said, "Don't get so whiny, it's more work  
doing the laundry". She responded, "Don't  
gossip about such things. It all makes me  
feel like I'll burst. I have it in mind to not  
stay with Menechiello anymore":

"At this, I laugh" – the midwife responded  
at once – "for this week will pass so  
quickly, my child, that you will stay with

Che farraie co mariteto lo riesto.  
 Tu dice chesso mò ca no staie sana,  
 E lo dolore te leva da siesto  
 Ma nnanze de pescruozzo te ne piente,  
 E farraie comme n'auta. Hora mo  
 siente.

**(10)**

Dice ch'era na vota na zitella,  
 C'have le doglie, e non poteva figliare,  
 E strillanno chiamava chesta, e chella  
 Che venessero priesto ad aiutare,  
 - Che me venga (dicea) ncapo la zella.  
 Se chiu nce cappo à fareme mprenare,  
 Marito tradetore e che m'haie fatto  
 Ca me sento morire, e crepo, schiatto.

**(11)**

Che farai il resto con tuo marito.  
 Tu dici questo adesso che non stai bene  
 E il dolore ti fa perdere la testa  
 Ma prima di tre giorni te ne pentirai  
 E farai come fece un'altra. Ora mi senti.

**(10)**

Si dice che una volta c'era una ragazza al  
 primo parto,  
 Che aveva le doglie, e non poteva partorire,  
 E gridando, chiamava questa e quella  
 Che venissero presto ad aiutare,  
 "Che mi venga (diceva) in testa la roгна.  
 Se di nuovo mi capita di farmi ingravidare,  
 Marito traditore e che mi hai fatto  
 Che mi sento morire, e crepo, schiatto".

your husband. You say this now that you  
 aren't well and that you're losing your  
 mind with the pain, but in three days time  
 you'll change your mind and act as though  
 nothing happened".

She said that there once was a girl who  
 was having contractions but couldn't give  
 birth. The women, screaming, called for  
 someone, anyone, to come and help her, "I  
 would rather contract scabies the become  
 pregnant again" she said, "Traitorous  
 husband you've made me feel like death,  
 like I'll kick the bucket, like I'll burst".

**(11)**

A chille strille corze la Vocciera,  
 E tutte le vecine della strata  
 Mettettero na cosa à la spallera  
 Tanto che nquatto doglie fù figliata,  
 Ma manco la seonna sciuta l'era  
 Quando essa disse à chi l'havea aiutata,  
 Stipame sore mia sta chella; ascota  
 Pe quando figliarraggio n'auta vota.

**(12)**

Voglio dicere mo ca buono saccio  
 De vuie aute zitelle l'appetito  
 Ca tutte pagarissevo no vraccio  
 Pe no morzillo schitto de marito,

A quelle urla corse la Vocciera<sup>8</sup>,  
 E tutte le vicine della strada  
 Misero una cosa alla testiera del letto  
 Tanto che in quattro doglie fu partorita,  
 Ma neppure la placenta era ancora uscita  
 Quando lei disse a chi l'aveva aiutata,  
 “Riponimi, sorella mia, questa cosa; ascolta  
 Per quando partorirò un'altra volta”.

**(12)**

“Allora voglio dire che so bene  
 Di voi altre ragazze la brama  
 Che tutte pagherebbero un braccio  
 Per un piccolo morso di marito,

At these screams, the butcher ran. All of  
 the people in the neighborhood put  
 something at the head of the bed, so that  
 she gave birth after four contractions. But  
 the placenta hadn't even come out yet  
 when she said to those who had helped her  
 and said, “Listen here my sister: just you  
 wait for when I give birth again”.

“Now, I want to say that I know well you  
 girls' desire for a even a little morsel of a  
 husband, for which you'd pay an arm and  
 a leg. And I know you'd rather have hugs

---

<sup>8</sup> la macellaia



E chiu priesto volite quarche abbraccio,  
 Che ve ncignare nuovo no vestito,  
 Uh, mara me, quanno era giovane io  
 Quante carizze fice à Fonzo mio.

(13)

E più presto volete qualche abbraccio,  
 Che indossare per la prima volta un vestito  
 nuovo  
 Uh, povera me, quando ero giovane io  
 Quante carezze feci a Fonzo mio.

(13)

Gaude mo, figlia, che gaudere puoie  
 Ca commo po si vecchia non porraie:  
 Giovane tu puoie fare zò che vuoie,  
 Ma vecchia nò, ca si chiena de guaie,  
 Se na vecchia vo dire li guaie suoie,  
 Uh, negra me, ca no la scompe maie,  
 Ma lassammo da banna ssò parlare  
 Ca passa llora de te covernare.

(14)

Godi ora, figlia, che puoi godere  
 Che quando poi sarai vecchia non potrai:  
 Da giovane tu puoi fare tutto quello che  
 vuoi,  
 Ma da vecchia no, che sei piena di guai,  
 Se una vecchia vuole dire i suoi guai,  
 Uh, povera me, che non la finisce mai,  
 Ma noi lasciamo da parte questi discorsi  
 Che passa l'ora di aver cura di te.

(14)

than a new dress. Ugh, poor me, for when  
 I was young, I so often caressed my  
 Fonzo.

Be happy now, dear one, while you still  
 can, for when you become older you  
 cannot. When you are young you can do  
 whatever you want, but when you are  
 older you can't, because you are full of  
 problems. If an old woman wants to talk  
 about her problems, ugh, poor me, it will  
 never end. But let us leave this  
 conversation aside. It's time to sort you  
 out.

Hora pruoíeme cha chillo arvariello  
 Addove stace chello metredato  
 E damme puro ssò fiascheriello  
 Con chello grieco che non è adacquato  
 E sta grasta co l'uoglio de lauriello  
 Co l'aute cose, ch'aggio apparecchiato  
 Acqua ed uoglio de shiure, e lo  
 cemmino,  
 E nnonza, e meza de zuccaro fino".

**(15)**

Subeto tutto chesto le portaie  
 Madamma Vasta, e derole pe vocca  
 Lo metredato, e grieco, e po l'ontaie  
 Con chelle ogliora, e disse: "Mo te  
 tocca

Ora porgimi quel barattolo  
 Dove sta quel medicamento  
 E dammi pure questo fiaschetto<sup>9</sup>  
 Con quel vino greco che non è annacquato  
 E questo vasetto con l'olio di alloro  
 Con le altre cose, che preparai  
 Acqua ed olio di fiori, e il comino  
 E un'oncia e mezza di zucchero fino.

**(15)**

Le portò tutto questo subito  
 La signora Vasta, e glielo diede per bocca  
 La medicina, e il vino greco, e poi la unse  
 Con quegli oli, e disse, "Ora ti tocca  
 La torta e il piccione, ne avrai poco,

Now pass me that sapling, where the  
 medicine is. And hand me the small bottle  
 with the fenugreek that isn't watered  
 down, and the jar of laurel oak oil with the  
 other things that I prepared – water and  
 flower oil, cummin, and an ounce and a  
 half of fine sugar".

She brought this to Signora Vasta right  
 away, who gave it to her orally – the  
 medicine, the fenugreek, and lastly  
 anointed with the oils. She said, "Now you  
 have to eat the cake and the pigeon, of

---

<sup>9</sup> bottiglione

La torta, e lo peocione, pocca l'haie,  
 E magna à la bon'hora, e po te cocca.  
 E se purgasse fuorze poccorrillo  
 Npizzate (àh, tu sai mò) chisto penillo

(16)

Ma lassammole mo co li guaie lloro  
 E decimmo de Zeza, e de Grannizia,  
 De Meneca, de Ciancia, e quanta foro,  
 Che contra Amore gridaro iostitia,  
 Onne vaiassa fece concestoro  
 De chelle che trassettero a malitia,  
 Pocca primmo de lloro mmaretata  
 S'è Renza, tutta scura e sciallacquata.

(17)

E mangia presto, e poi va' a riposare.  
 E se per caso ti facesse fare un po' di cacca  
 Inserisci (ah, ora lo sai!) questa supposta”

(16)

Ma ora lasciamole con i loro guai  
 E diciamo di Zeza, e di Grannizia,  
 Di Meneca, di Ciancia, e quante furono,  
 Che contro Amore gridarono giustizia,  
 Ogni vaiassa fece una congiura,  
 Di quelle che se la presero  
 Perché poco prima di loro si era sposata  
 Renza, tutta brutta e slavata.

(17)

which you have little. Eat it quickly and  
 then go get some rest. And if it somehow  
 makes you poop a little bit, insert (ah, now  
 you know!) this suppository”

But let us leave them with their problems,  
 and turn to speak of Zeza, Grannitia,  
 Meneca, Ciancia, and those who went  
 against love screaming for justice. Every  
*vaiassa* conspired and became angry that  
 Renza – who was so plain and ugly – got  
 married before them.

Meneca fù la primma che parlaie  
 E co na rraggia che iettava fuoco,  
 E l'ucchie pesciarielle accommenzaie  
 "Havite visto Renza co lo cuoco  
 Como se gaude? e nuie stammo à li  
 guaie  
 E commo cionche maie cagnamo luoco:  
 Hora susso facimmo de manera  
 Ch'onne una gaude nnanze craie à sera.

(18)

"Mo m'allisso", Grannizia le respose,  
 E tanto me strellico, e po me nchiacco,  
 Che faccio cheste masche commo a  
 rose,  
 E propio pareraggio la Dea Bacco".

Meneca fu la prima che parlò  
 E con una rabbia che buttava fuoco,  
 E gli occhi lagrimosi cominciò:  
 "Avete visto Renza con il cuoco  
 Come se la gode? e noi stiamo nella nostra  
 condizione  
 E come, paralitiche non cambiamo mai  
 posto:  
 Ora su, facciamo in modo  
 Che ognuna goda prima di domani sera".

(18)

"Ora mi faccio bella", Grannizia le rispose,  
 "E mi agghindo tanto e poi mi trucco,  
 Che faccio queste guance come le rose,  
 E proprio assomiglio alla Dea Bacco",  
 "Nessuna di voi mi sorpassa in queste cose",

Meneca was the first to speak, and with a  
 fiery rage and closed eyes, she started,  
 "You've all seen Renza with the cook.  
 How is he even happy? And we are stuck  
 with our problems, staying still like a  
 slingshot. Now we'll make sure that we're  
 all happy before tomorrow night".

"Now I'll make myself pretty" Grannitia  
 responded, "I'll dress up and then do my  
 makeup that makes my cheeks rosy. Then  
 I'll just like the goddess Bacchus".

“Nulla de vuie me passa de sse cose,  
 Respose Ciancia, io tutte mo ve  
 smacco,  
 Ca faccio schitto quatto ricce nfronte,  
 E pareraggio po la Dea Caronte.

(19)

“Ah ah che riso, ma non n’aggio voglia  
 Chi è so Caronte, e Bacco, che decite?”  
 Le disse Rosa fosse huorto de foglia,  
 Response Caradonia, te sentite  
 Eie no sanguinaccio, eie na nnoglia!  
 Ente megnogne, è chesto non sapite,  
 Mara me vregogna, ù che scioccheza!  
 Chesse songo le Dee de la bellezza!

(20)

Rispose Ciancia, “io tutte vi supero  
 Mi faccio soltanto quattro ricci in fronte,  
 E poi assomiglio alla Dea Caronte”.

(19)

“Ah ah che ridere, ma non ne ho voglia  
 Chi è questo Caronte, e Bacco, di cui dite?”  
 Le disse Rosa, “fosse un campo di  
 minestra?”  
 Rispose Caradonia, “Sentite  
 Sono sanguinaccio, sono salami!  
 Che cazzo, e questo non lo sapete?  
 Povera me, che vergogna, che sciocchezza,  
 Loro sono le Dee della bellezza!”.

(20)

“None of you outdo me in these things”  
 responded Ciancia, “Now I’ll show you all  
 up by making only four curls in front of  
 my face, so that I look just like the  
 goddess Charon”.

“Ah ah how funny, but I don’t want to do  
 that. Who are this Charon and Bacchus  
 that you all speak of?” said Rosa.  
 “Maybe they are edible vegetables”.  
 Caradonia responded.  
 “Listen to you all – ‘it’s black pudding,  
 it’s salami’. What the hell, you all don’t  
 know this? Poor me, what a shame, how  
 foolish, they are the Gods of beauty!”.

Ma parlammo de chello che nce  
 mporta:  
 Onne una parla mo co lo signore,  
 O pe lo fenestriello, ò pe la porta,  
 E le faccia à sapere lo suo ammore;  
 E pe mostrare ca ped isso è morta  
 Le faccia no presiento, ò no favore  
 Zoè no moccaturu lavorato  
 De pede moscha, ò d'afreco perciato.

(21)

Manco essa havea scomputo de parlare,  
 Che tutte quante nzembre s'accordaro,  
 Quando lo sole stracquo de trottare  
 Pe fare de lo corpo scenne à maro,  
 De ire tutte quante ped asciare  
 Chille pe chi chiù vote spantecare.

“Ma parliamo di quello che ci importa  
 Ognuno parla ora con il signore,  
 O per la finestrella, o per la porta,  
 E le faccia sapere il suo amore;  
 E per mostrare che muore d'amore per lui  
 Le faccia un regalo, o un favore  
 Cioè un fazzoletto lavorato  
 A piede di mosca , o con l'orlo traforato”.

(21)

Neppure finì di parlare,  
 Che tutte quante insieme si accordarono,  
 Quando il sole, stanco di trottare  
 Per andare di corpo scende a mare,  
 Di andare tutte quante per cercare  
 Quello per cui più volte spasimarono.

“But we speak of important matters.  
 Everyone speak now with your man. Or  
 speak out of the window or door, let him  
 know your love. Make him a gift or favor,  
 like an intricate handkerchief with  
 embroidery or lace edging, to show him  
 that you're dying with love for him”

They all together agreed before she had  
 even finished speaking. When the sun  
 went down, tired of hanging in the sky,  
 they went down to the sea to look for that  
 which they had often longed for. Thus, I

Cossì concruso, onne una s'abbiaie  
Decenno: Po nce vederimmo craie”.

(22)

Ma Pretiosa che non potea scire,  
E se sentea schiattare de martiello  
Pe non volere ntutto ascevolire  
Da lo puzzo chammaie no scolariello,  
Che le screvette quanto sappe dire  
C’havea no bello nciegno, e  
cellevriello,  
E fecero na lettera ammorosa,  
Bene mio bello, è che pentata cosa.

(23)

Magnifeco (dicea) muto lustrissemu,  
Che me faie spantecare è ire nzuoccole,

Così concluso, ognuna si incamminò  
Dicendo: Poi ci vediamo domani”.

(22)

Ma Pretiosa che non poteva uscire,  
E si sentiva morire di tormento  
Per non voler venire meno in tutto  
Da un pozzo chiamò uno scolarretto,  
Che le scrisse quanto seppe dire  
Che aveva un bello ingegno, e cervello,  
E fecero una lettera d’amore,  
Cari miei, che cosa meravigliosa, che cosa  
ben fatta!

(23)

Magnifico (diceva) molto illustrissimo,  
Che mi fa spasimare e cullare,

conclude, everyone left saying, “see you  
tomorrow”.

But Pretiosa couldn’t go out. She felt like  
she’d be tormented to death, terrified of  
failing everything. She called on a  
schoolboy from the well, who wrote what  
she said to him with great wit and smarts,  
writing a love letter. My dear ones, what a  
marvelous thing, what a lovely thing!

“Extraordinary” the letter read, “very  
distinguished, which makes me yearn and

Segnò Cenzullo mio caro, e bellissemò,	Signore Cenzullo mio caro, e bellissimo,	sway now. Sir Cenzullo, my dear, you are
Chiù saporito ca non sò li vruoccole,	Più saporito dei broccoli	beautiful, tastier than broccoli. Come on,
Deh vienem'a trovare ca certissemò	Deh, vienimi a trovare che certamente	come to me to find that you are certainly
Haie tuorto, e non me fare tanta	Hai torto, e non farmi tante moine.	wrong, and not to flatter me too much.
nguoccole.	Vieni, labbro mio d'oro, a consolarmi	Come to console me, golden lips of mine.
Viene, musso mio d'oro, à conzolareme	Se no, sono risoluta di sventrarmi".	If you don't, I'm determined to gut
Se no sò risoluta de sbentrareme.	<b>(24)</b>	myself".

**(24)**

Subeto la chiudette; e seiellaie	La chiusero subito; e la sigillarono	She ended it at once, and signed it with
Co pane mazzecato, e lo scolaro	Con pane masticato, e lo scolaro	chewed bread. To make her happy, the
Pe farele piacere la portaie	Per farle piacere, la portò	schoolboy brought her to her dear
A Cienzo zuo moscoliato, e caro,	A Cienzo suo profumato di muschio, e caro,	musk-scented Cienzo. Meanwhile, every
Ntra tanto onne vaiassa se trovaie	Frattanto ogni vaiassa si trovò	<i>vaiassa</i> found the ship <sup>11</sup> , and for this they
Lo guzzo, è già contente ne restaro,	Il gozzo <sup>10</sup> e già ne restarono contente	remained happy. But every <i>padrone</i> waits

<sup>10</sup> è un tipo di barca, tipica di Sorrento. Qui ha un riferimento sessuale.

<sup>11</sup> this specifically refers to a ship typically seen in Sorrento. This ship is also as sexual innuendo.



Ma la Vaiassa onne patrone aspetta  
Non la vedenzo vace à lo trommetta.

**(25)**

Ieze lo banno mò per la cetate,  
E se iettaie à lo Mercato, à l’Huorto  
De lo Conte, perzi à la Caretate,  
Alla Rua catalana, en miezo Puerto;  
Né maie da li patrune foro asciate,  
Ed era lo trommetta miezo muorto  
Decenzo: “onne patrone eie cortese,  
Ed à chi l’ascia dace no tornese.

**(26)**

Ma lassamole ire à la bon hora  
E parlammo no poco de Cenzullo,

Ma ogni padrone aspetta la vaiassa  
Non vedendola, va dal banditore.

**(25)**

Andò il banditore per la città  
E se ne andò al Mercato, all’Orto del Conte;  
perfino alla Carità,  
Ai quartieri spagnoli, in mezzo al Porto,  
Né mai furono trovate dai padroni  
Ed era la trombetta mezza morta  
Dicendo: “ogni padrone è cortese,  
A chi la lascia, dà un tornese<sup>12</sup>.

**(26)**

Ma lasciamole andare alla buon’ora  
E parliamo un po’ di Cenzullo

for their *vaiassa*, and, not seeing her, goes  
to the herald.

The herald went around the city, going to  
to the market, the count’s vegetable  
garden, to the Spanish steps, in the middle  
of the port, and even to the charity. They  
were never found by their *padroni*. And  
with the half dead trumpet, the herald said,  
“every *padrone* is gracious, and to those  
who leave, he’ll give a coin”

But let us leave them at last, and talk a bit  
about Cenzullo, who got the letter from

---

<sup>12</sup> una moneta

Che la lettera havie de la Signora,  
 E disse: “Ahimè, so cuotto co no vullo  
 E no iuorno me pare onne meza ora,  
 Che siamo nzembra, e non nce veda  
 nullo,  
 Pe fare co le iedeta lo cunto  
 De quante vote m’haie co ss’uocchie  
 punto.

(27)

E ieze de corzera à lo Signore  
 Patrone de la bella Pretiosa,  
 E le decette: Io svisciolato ammore  
 Porto à sta toa Zitella vroccolosa,  
 E ped ella aggio mo no crepacore,  
 Che ne pozzo morire, e non è cosa  
 Ca vago (arrasso sia) co lo Demmonio,

Che ebbe la lettera dalla Signora,  
 E disse: “Ahimè sono innamorato cotto  
 E ogni mezz’ora mi pare un giorno,  
 Che siamo insieme, e non ci vede nessuno,  
 Per contare con le dita  
 Di quante volte mi hai punto con quegli  
 occhi”.

(27)

E andò di corsa al signore  
 Padrone della bella Pretiosa,  
 E le disse: “Io, amore sviscerato  
 Porto a questa tua zitella leziosa  
 E per lei ora sono malato di cuore,  
 Che ne posso morire, e non è cosa  
 Che vado (lontano sia!) con il demonio

his lady. It said, “Alas, I burn with love,  
 and every half hour feels like a day that  
 we are together. We don’t see anyone.  
 Count on the fingers how many times I  
 have seen you”.

And he went in a rush to the gentleman,  
*padrone* of the beautiful Pretiosa. He told  
 him, “I passionately love your prissy  
 woman. I’m lovesick for her, so much I  
 could die, I’ll be damned (though far from  
 the Devil!). Thus, we will now go ahead  
 with this marriage”.

Perzò facimmo mò sto matremmonio.

**(28)**

Lo patrone ch’havea buono ioditio,  
 E sapea ca lo Munno era mbrogliato,  
 E de chelle foiute havette nnitio  
 Subeto se fù bello contentato,  
 E chiammano essa co Nota Prabitio  
 Se concrudette lla lo parentato,  
 E s’appontaie che pò l’auta settimana,  
 S’abballasse, e corresse la quintana.

**(29)**

Ma mentre se concerta pe la danza  
 Tornammo à chelle che se ne foiero

Pertanto ora facciamo questo matrimonio”.

**(28)**

Il padrone che aveva sentito bene,  
 E sapeva che il mondo era sottosopra  
 E da quelle fughe ebbe inizio  
 Subito se ne rallegrò  
 E fece chiamare lei e il notaio Prabitio  
 Si stabilì così la parentela  
 E si fissò l’appuntamento alla settimana  
 successiva,  
 E che si ballasse e si corresse la quintana<sup>13</sup>

**(29)**

Ma mentre si decide per la danza  
 Torniamo a quelle che se ne fuggirono

The *padrone* heard well and knew the  
 world was upside-down, and that it all  
 started with the runaways, and he  
 immediately rejoiced. He called her and  
 the notary Prabitio, who then established  
 their kinship. He scheduled the  
 appointment for next week, and told them  
 that one should dance and joust.

But while they decide on the dance, let us  
 turn to those that who escaped. They ran

---

<sup>13</sup> un torneo

Pe farele vassalle à Rè de Franza,  
 Hora chi penzaria fi dove iero?  
 Chi ieze à la Chiazzetta, e chi pe stanza  
 Pigliaie la Cagliantescia, ò lo Quartiero  
 Vasta ca pe lo primmo carnevale  
 Tutte iero à morire à lo spetale.

**(30)**

Ma Carmosina nò perche l'asciaro  
 Quanno foiea, mmiezo li scalandrune  
 Perzò li ture buono le menaro  
 Sempre a cuorpo de tutare, e sgrugne  
 E à bascio la cantina la chiavaro,  
 Che steze sempre ncoppa li cravune.  
 Commo à gatta frostera. Ma dirraggio

Per fare le vassalle al Re di Francia<sup>14</sup>,  
 Ora chi penserebbe mai fin dove andarono?  
 Chi andò nella Piazzetta e chi come stanza  
 Prese il quartiere malfamato della  
 Cagliantescia o il Quartiere  
 Basta dire che per il primo carnevale  
 Tutte andarono a morire all'ospedale.

**(30)**

Ma Carmosina no perché la trovarono  
 Mentre fuggiva, in mezzo alle scale dei  
 bordelli  
 Perciò la testa le riempirono di botte  
 Sempre al corpo la bastonarono e in faccia  
 E giù in cantina la chiusero a chiave

away, and got syphilis. Now who  
 would've thought how far things would  
 go? Those who went to the piazza and  
 those who took to the bad neighborhoods  
 of Cagliantescia or the Quartiere ended up  
 dying in the hospital by the time of the  
 first carnival.

But not Carmosina, because they found  
 her as she fled, on the middle of the  
 brothel's steps. They then beat the crap out  
 of her, hitting her head, and clubbing her  
 body and face. Then they tossed in the  
 cellar under lock and key, and punished  
 her, like a cat without an owner, by having

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<sup>14</sup> per ammalarsi di sifilide

Craie commo scette, e de lo  
mmaretaggio.

**(31)**

Che fosse punita stando con le ginocchia sui  
carboni

Come una gatta senza padrone,

Ma dirò domani come uscì e come si maritò.

**(31)**

*Scompertura de lo secunno Canto.*

*Fine del secondo canto.*

her kneel on hot coals. But I'll tell you  
tomorrow how she got out and how she  
got married.

*End of the second Canto*

**Personaggi; List of Characters**

<i>I personaggi principali; Main Characters</i>	<i>Altri nomi; Other Names</i>	<i>Ruolo; Role</i>
Renza		<i>vaiassa</i>
Pretiosa	Prezzosa	<i>vaiassa</i>
Carmosina		<i>vaiassa</i>
Madamma Vasta	Signora Vasta	<i>l'ostetrica; the midwife</i>
Domenico	Mineco, Menechiello	<i>marito di Renza; husband of Renza</i>
Cienzo	Cenzullo	<i>l'amante di Pretiosa; Pretiosa's lover</i>
Alfonzo	Fonzo	<i>l'amante di Madamma Vasta; Madamma Vasta's lover</i>

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