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**Translating Passage and Rescue at the Edge of “Fortress Europe”:
Ethics, Sicilianness, and the Law of the Sea**

Abstract: Davide Enia’s 2017 *Appunti per un naufragio* makes generous use of Sicilian dialect, both attributed to characters (including Enia’s *alter ego*) and within the narrative voice. The ethical importance of this and other forms of Sicilian specificity is not lost on his translators into English and French (Antony Shugaar and Françoise Brun, respectively), both of whom have translated Enia’s work before. *Appunti per un naufragio*, however, occasions a less transparent strategy than in the past for both translators, who have opted to maintain the Sicilian dialect sociolect in significant ways in their TTs (*Notes on a Shipwreck* and *La Loi de la mer*). Enia’s deployment of dialect and his translators’ maintenance of that dialect in translation function in parallel fashion as gestures of resistance against national frameworks such as Standard Italian language and the logic of nationally sovereign borders.

Key Words: migration, dialect, ethics, Sicily, Mediterranean, rescue, “Fortress Europe,” “law of the sea,” resistance.

Il tono di voce fu costantemente basso e misurato, in pieno contrasto con quella stazza imponente. Talvolta, nelle sue frasi, pronunciate con i suoni delle sue terre—era nato sulle montagne del profondissimo Nord italiano, laddove il mare è più astrazione che altro—affioravano parole *del mio dialetto*, il siciliano.

(Enia, *Appunti* 12; *emph. added*)¹

Introduction

Davide Enia’s *Appunti per un naufragio* is the product of the Palermo-born writer, actor, and playwright’s twenty-some visits to the Sicilian island of Lampedusa in the aftermath of the October 3, 2013 shipwreck to embed himself with longtime friends Paola and Melo.² Once there, he immediately set about interviewing and

¹ “His tone was consistently low and measured, in stark contrast with that imposing physique. Sometimes the words *of my dialect*, Sicilian, surfaced from his phrases, pronounced with the sounds of his lands—he came from the mountains of the Italian ‘deep North,’ where the sea is more of an abstraction than anything else.” Unless otherwise indicated, translations from Enia’s texts are mine. *Appunti per un naufragio* was the recipient of the 2017 *Premio Anima Letteratura* and, in 2018, the *Premio SuperMondello* and the *Premio Mondello Giovani*.

² In a decade characterized by record-level crossings of the Mediterranean, the shipwreck on October 3, 2013 on Lampedusa—in which over 360 people died—marked a watershed of awareness in Italy and indeed throughout Europe. The anniversary of that shipwreck is commemorated on the island itself, as Enia recounts in *Appunti*. The third of October has now become a rallying date for activist and memory groups who organize events like the *Annali d’Italianistica* 38 (2020). *Nation(s) and Translations*