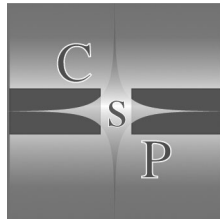


Patois and Linguistic Pastiche in Modern Literature

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Edited by

Giovanna Summerfield



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INTRODUCTION

GIOVANNA SUMMERFIELD

Throughout the centuries, human societies have initiated inter-national links for the benefit of their own economical and social welfare. One should think, for example, of the famous Silk Road, an interconnected series of routes from Asia and the imperial court of China to the Mediterranean and the Roman Empire mainly for the trade of silk and many other commodities, i.e. gold and ivory to exotic animals and plants. This represents a good practical depiction of the concept of internationalization, where the term itself stands for the increasing importance of international trade and general relations, where the basic unit remains the nation. Such a concept and term(s) should not be confused with the more recent “globalization”, a term coined by Theodore Levitt in 1983, in his article, “Globalization of Markets” in *Harvard Business Review* but certainly already valid starting from the sixteenth century and its European forms of colonialism. The term globalization refers, in fact, to global economic integration of many national economies into one global economy, with the consequent abatement of national boundaries. Whereas internationalization maintains the independence of its member-states, the process of globalization implies inter-dependence, integration between and of its member-states that challenges not only their economical status but also their social, political, and cultural identity.

As Claude Truchot writes, in this climate of internationalization and globalization, the creation and implementation of a European Community accelerates the process of assimilation and transformation of separate national identities, with a very interesting and complex linguistic influence on each nation involved. The linguistic regime of the European institutions was established by Article 217 of the Treaty of Rome, in which it is stated that the states’ representatives are free to decide upon the languages to be used, imposing the respect of unanimity. But it is true that the two lingua francas are English and French. Meetings that officials of the member states attend are usually held in these two languages, and sometimes even one; a great number of reports is issued in English; while Article 21 insures that every citizen of the Union can write to the institution in one of the languages of the treaties and receive an answer in that same language it is true that this is left to the discretion

of the citizens and that the majority of the citizens contacting the institutions use English.¹

Globalization thus posits a need for a linguistic standardization or, at the opposite end, widespread multilingualism. An inter-lingual experimentation worth mentioning is, of course, the Esperanto, a universal language, though, lexically, primarily Romanic, invented in the late 1880s to promote international understanding. This resulted into a very pragmatic attempt, with no official language status in any country. Another strategy, which promotes homogeneity, is an “Englishization,” that is a tendency to use English as the lingua franca due to the importance of the technological component in our modern world. Though more successful than the first, this strategy implies “westernization” with a consequent de-evaluation of diversity and of the “minor” or “endangered” languages, and which, in turn, intensifies inequality within and between regions and challenges the role of nation. In this context a series of plausible questions is due. First, if the nation-state is in decline, what is the role of language, since this is the primary symbol of a nation? Secondly, what is the reaction of the citizens of these transformed or better yet agglomerated nation-states? And what is thus their declared sense of belonging, socially and psychologically speaking?

As we know, national, ethnic, and religious identities are asserted through linguistic diversity. Therefore individuals know themselves and others through these socio-cultural and linguistic manifestations. One of the important functions of language is to be constantly declaring to others (and to oneself, to a certain extent) the psychological place held by the person speaking that particular language. It is an individual trait as well as a strong means of socialization and assimilation to one specific group and distinction from another group.²

Within this context of standardization, whether within the European reality or outside of it, in modern literature dialect, patois, and linguistic pastiche have proved to be the marks of identity, of individual and regional nature. Paraphrasing the words of Luigi Pirandello, one tends to use the standard national language to express a rational concept, while one opts to use one’s regional dialect for matters closer to the heart. The literary tradition has always accepted language mixing. Linguists and literary critics have analyzed this phenomenon from different perspectives, separately. An in-depth cooperative study of the causes, conditions, consequences, and limits of language mixing is still needed. Through a plurality of literary subjects, perspectives, and linguistic environments, this publication provides an overview of the linguistic and cultural contributions which underline, in turn, the importance of dialect use and

¹ “Language and Supranationality in Europe,” 99-105

² Joseph, *Language and Identity*, 85-191.

conservation. This book recognizes the international and topical scope of interest in the academia and the public at large through the contributions made by the authors of the respective essays, who come from various parts of the world and from a wide range of disciplines, and also through the international and topical importance of the perspectives offered by these contributions.

In chronological order, this text offers first an analysis of selected novels which reveal the intricate interweaving of morphosyntax, semantics, and pragmatics of Italian, dialects, English, and other languages that contribute to newly established codes. If on one side, in the last years, Italians have witnessed and contributed to the weakness of their national language by adopting English idioms to survive in the market of computers, of media, and business, on the other side, they have been aided in re-building a new linguistic identity that is not only an hybridization but a clear statement of individualization and revival of the regional identities, by the dialects. The latter are, in fact, experiencing an important advancement and awareness, on the part of the new generations, in the artistic world (see, for example, poetic texts and lyrics of folk, rap and reggae songs proposed by new musical bands)³.

The role of dialects in Italian literature has to be analyzed in relation to the “questione della lingua.” In Italy, in fact, the absence of a central government until 1860 allowed regional dialects to develop freely. The foreign dominations made dialects even stronger, since they represented a link about members and a form of revolt and isolation regarding newcomers. Pier Paolo Pasolini, a famous Italian writer and film-maker, asserts to this reality by affirming that even today in Italy “non esiste una vera e propria lingua italiana nazionale.”⁴ Due to the social and historical events, the Italian language is considered by Pasolini as the language of the Italian bourgeoisie while its regional dialects are in a dialectical rapport with the whole industrialized and neo-capitalist world.⁵ To Pasolini, dialect is the last attempt to salvage all that is pure and non-contaminated. Pasolini’s commentary is supported by his professional expertise as a literary critic and scholar but mostly as a poet of dialect. Pasolini wrote, in fact, in the dialect of Friuli or *friuliano*.

³ During recent years, side by side with the more famous and traditional group and individual promoters of the Neapolitan pop and folk music culture, various independent circuits and musical bands have been presenting songs in dialect, in a backdrop of ethno-folk and rap music. Among these the Almamegretta from Naples, I Nuovi Briganti from Messina, Sicily, and the Sud Sound System from Salento, Apulia. To know more about this phenomenon, see “Popular Song and Musical Culture” by Marcella Filippa, in *Italian Culture Studies: An Introduction*.

⁴ “Nuove questioni linguistiche.” *Empirismo eretico*, 5. My translation: “A true national Italian language does not exist.”

⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

According to statistical results of recent years, based on answers from a sample of 2,000 adults to a questionnaire concerning linguistic behavior, 47% use dialect with the whole family; 24% use dialect with some members of the family and Italian with others; 29% use Italian with the whole family; 23% always use dialect with friends and colleagues. From this it appears that there are still 71% of the Italian people who can use dialect as their ordinary language and that dialect seems to be preferred by 47% at home. Also, it is not anomalous to have experiences, in Italy, similar to the one recounted by the linguist Lepschy, in Venice, who, within one hour distance, from the airport to his father's home, made a note of all the languages heard, which amounted to be snatches of thirty different conversations, two in English, one in German, two in Italian (one with a Lombard accent and one with an Emilian accent), and all the others in the local (Venetian) dialect.⁶

As dialect is widely spoken, it is also used as a medium of communication in the written form for its ability to recover personal history and emotional roots, to reveal the hidden being, a part of the self that has been obliterated by the past and/or by post-industrial society. Complex, daring, and important implications that, together with more in-depth analyses and criticisms, have rendered this type of scholarship a respectable category on its own in the modern literary world, which has overcome academic barriers and has attracted the attention of a readership that is no longer exclusively local, but national and international in nature.

For dialect authors, as well as for dialect speakers, dialect is not only a linguistic choice but a socio-political statement, not only as self-assessment but also as a tool to re-evaluate the role and place of an entire group of people who has been marginalized. It is a phenomenon that, as Franco Brevini records in his preface to the anthology *Poeti dialettali del Novecento*, started to take place in the years following World War II; it's a

gaining of access to culture by a wide range of previously excluded social groups with deep-rooted habits of speaking in dialect. During the 1950s [...] for the first time in our tradition we bear witness to the conquest of expressive means by social groups whose formative life experience has been part of a popular, traditional world since their first language is dialect [...] for the first time, breaking with an age-old-narrow-mindedness, and elitism, the Italian intellectual class broadens to include members who don't belong to the upper middle-class bourgeoisie.⁷

⁶ Lepschy, 63-66.

⁷ Brevini, xv.

One of the best confutations of this phenomenon is undeniably the literary saga of Inspector Montalbano by the pen of Andrea Camilleri, who has been able to overcome not only the established prejudices toward dialect as medium of expression but also toward a style and typology of literature, the detective epics. Camilleri's literary recipe is interconnected with the favorite culinary specialty, *gli arancini*, of the protagonist of his *gialli*, a mixture of history, personality, and social reality.⁸

"Gesù, gli arancini di Adelina! Li aveva assaggiati solo una volta: un ricordo che gli era trasuto nel DNA, nel patrimonio genetico;"⁹ this was Salvo Montalbano's inner reaction to his cleaning lady's invitation to a dinner at her house on New Year's Eve. Andrea Camilleri, Montalbano's creator, was not exaggerating when he wrote this statement contained in the homonymous best seller published by the renowned northern Italian editors Mondadori in 1999. As Pino Correnti points out, in fact, in *Il libro d'oro della cucina e dei vini della Sicilia*, arancini or riceballs, a Sicilian culinary specialty, tell about the peoples who contributed to the island: canestrato fresco from the Greeks, rice and saffron from the Arabs, ragout from the French, and tomato sauce from the Spanish. Inspector Montalbano, native of Catania, fervent admirer of *arancini*,¹⁰ is a living proof of this rich heritage; it is in his blood as in his looks and personality traits, and mostly in his language.

Montalbano speaks Sicilian in Camilleri's books and TV series, when he interacts with the women and men he interviews during his investigations, with Adelina, his devoted cleaning lady, with the sister of Gegé, with the criminals he captures and his own friends. Montalbano's author uses Sicilian in reference to proverbs and special potions or recipes, to various lists and extensive descriptions of people. He mixes Sicilian with Italian when he relates the inner thoughts of Montalbano and when he describes his actions, using the former in the background in reference to social comments, news or television programs and in the foreground, at times even forced to the point of rendering this language comical when he has to notate the discussions of Catarella, a goofy but well-connected policeman under the direct supervision of inspector Montalbano.

The linguistic choices of Andrea Camilleri have not jeopardized the success of his literary works; on the contrary, up until 2002, two million readers and six million tele-spectators per episode have been reported. In spite of the

⁸ Following paragraphs on Andrea Camilleri were previously published by the author in *Metamorphoses* 14:1-2, (2006). Northampton, MA: Smith College. 286-293.

⁹ Translation: "Jesus, the riceballs made by Adelina! He had only tasted them once: a memory that had gone deep inside his own DNA, his own genetic patrimony."

¹⁰ On a lighter, cultural, note, I would like to add that this culinary choice is not the equivalent of the American stereotype of donuts as preferred item to consume by policemen. It is indeed an exception in Italian literature and culture alike.

fact that Camilleri does not supply any translations, these sales have been recorded at the national level.

The “phenomenon” Camilleri is an example of the fact that regional dialects and regional identities are alive and well in Italy and within the context of an imposed standardization on the national and inter-national territory by the United Europe. The truth of the matter is that Salvo Montalbano, a pleasant and tender-hearted “commissario di polizia” in Vigàta, an imaginary town of Sicily, faithful to his own island and his Genovese fiancée Livia, talented in solving mysteries, respectful yet a bit distant in his work-related relationships, could not speak a standard Italian. Though he is a fictional character, Montalbano has been forged to be real, to reflect reality. No “real” human being in Sicily, or Italy for that matter, speaks a standard Italian, the Italian that we teach as a foreign language at school or that Italians themselves learn in their own educational institutions. One tends to tailor one’s language to the circumstances and the audiences. One speaks an academic language when writing or presenting scholarly researches; one speaks a more casual idiom with family and friends, borrowing from slang or dialect to appear more approachable, more relaxed, even funnier; one uses a more elementary vocabulary with children and foreigners avoiding clichés or professional patois.

Here art’s imitation of life is an image some may find typical of a localized area, the south and even more specifically the south of Italy, or unsettling and unsophisticated because it does present typical scenes of ordinary life rather than glamorized excerpts of crimes “alla Cosa Nostra” as depicted by Hollywood; mostly Camilleri’s novel pages are pure expressions of what Stephen Sartarelli calls “universal humanity.”¹¹ Maybe it is because of latter that, in spite of the many rejections Camilleri received for the publication of his first novel, *Il corso delle cose*, this Sicilian author and his literary creations are now also well known in France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Holland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Turkey, Israel, Lithuania, Korea, Japan, and the United States of America. In each of these countries, the translators have tackled the prevalence or insertion of the dialect in different manners: some have opted for local dialects that could be corresponding to the original Sicilian; in lack of these some others have created their own original vocabulary, a form of colloquial and witty idiom that even if unable to substitute could convey the context and reason for this linguistic option, while others have just maintained the Sicilian dialect, as in the case of Germany and its translator Moshe Khan where the southern dialect, the dialect from Bavaria, could not be used to confer to the text the sense of “*mediterraneità*.”

¹¹ See “L’alterita’ linguistica di Camilleri in inglese” as posted on www.vigata.org Mar 9, 2002.

In Italy this is not the first time that linguistic pastiche and patois try to coexist with standard Italian within the pages of a book. One can immediately think of two modernists, Carlo Emilio Gadda and Stefano Benni, the former from Milan renowned for *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* serialized in 1946 and published as a volume in 1957, and the latter from Bologna, inventor of the “pluriversità dell’immaginazione” and well known for his articles on *Panorama*, *Il Manifesto* and *La Repubblica* as well as for his sci-fi fiction and stories from a bar. The language of the novel known as *Il pasticciaccio* was literary Italian, with the addition of dialects, puns, technical jargon, and made-up and foreign words, a *macaronic* style language enriched with classical allusions, which stand in marked contrast to the Roman dialect and other Italian dialects.

As attested by William Weaver in his introduction to the 1960s American translation of *Quer pasticciaccio*, Gadda’s is not a dialect novel. Gadda uses the language of his characters to help portray them. At times, he switches from dialect to standard Italian and vice versa in order to infuse greater life in their characters and their activities. The author himself, when writing from his own point of view, uses all of these, but also Neapolitan, Milanese, and occasional French, Latin, Greek, and Spanish expressions. At the same time, he exploits all the levels of Italian, spoken and written: the contorted jargon of the bureaucracy, the high-flown euphemisms of the press, the colorful speech of vendors in Rome’s popular market in Piazza Vittorio. One must not omit from this kaleidoscopic list the neologisms that the author creates, and which sometimes may pass unnoticed due to the vast array of other idioms present.¹²

The language used by Benni is another clever invention and a reflection of the plurilingual world we live in. Some examples drawn from his best seller *La compagnia dei celestini* are: Berlusconi who becomes Mussolardi and lives on a “policottero,” Coca-Cola which becomes Stracola, the policemen or “poliziotti” are transformed into “poliziorchi,” Rimini into Rigolona Marina, the Adriatic into Adrenalio, Swatch into Spatsch, Italy into Gladonia, and the Pope into “la Grande Meringa”. The majority of the characters are introduced by first name, last name, and Tesseraloggia, in parenthesis, where “Tesseraloggia” stands as second last name-- Giulio Fimicoli (Tesseraloggia B 036). In this linguistic bazaar, Benni tells the story of ordinary Italians who communicate also through an actual dialect, the dialect of Emilia Romagna that the author knows so well.

The correlation between these authors and Camilleri seems clear. However, as Giuliana Pieri asserts, in Camilleri the use of the linguistic pastiche has a different function from Gadda's *macaronico*: Camilleri seeks cultural and

¹² *That Awful Mess on Via Merulana: A Novel by Carlo Emilio Gadda*. New York: George Braziller, 1965, viii-ix.

historical identity. This is Camilleri's own idiom, his own “*lessico familiare*,” (family lexicon) one that bears a close resemblance to the spoken language. Finally, it is a choice which underlines the political dimension of language and the culture it represents. By presenting Sicily as a colonized land, a linguistic and cultural melting pot, Camilleri's language becomes the essential vehicle to retrieve memory and the past, and a symbol of the history and identity of the culture it represents.

Like Stefano D'Arrigo, author of the hermetic *Horcynus Orca*, a recount of the hard daily life of the fishermen of Scilli, who convinced of the self-sufficiency of the “lingua” of his literary work, refused to compile a glossary of the Sicilian terminology accompanied by an Italian translation as requested by the publishing company, the conational Andrea Camilleri finds the choice of language a result of necessity. Camilleri decided to maintain his “real” voice:

I started to research the language I used at home with my parents, which was a mixture of Italian and dialect used by Sicily's petite bourgeoisie. I asked myself why it was that we resorted to dialect for some words, but not for others. The answer to the problem came from [Luigi] Pirandello, a distant cousin of [my] mother. Pirandello said that Italian expresses the concept, while dialect expresses the feeling. And that is the logic I followed with my novels.¹³

The connubial existence of a more colloquial and localized idiom does not have to be compared in any way with the linguistic choices of famous American novelists such as Mark Twain and William Faulkner, in their descriptions of the American South. It cannot be seen as an indicator of lack of education or of social rang, as it has been indicated by some critics,¹⁴ for nobody can deny that inspector Montalbano is intelligent and well read: there are several references to his favorite books, from which he quotes entire passages or sentences, such as the masterpieces of the local writers Leonardo Sciascia and Luigi Pirandello, the Bible, the national canon, i.e. Giacomo Leopardi and Alessandro Manzoni, as well as foreign literati, i.e. Simenon and Gogol. Montalbano's written language

¹³ James Panichi, “Andrea Camilleri” on *International Herald Tribune*.

¹⁴ Among the critics who have estimated the Sicilian dialect used by Camilleri as folkloristic and stereotypical for certain social classes, one should mention Matteo Collura (see his article “Via col blues palermitano” printed on the *Corriere della sera* of the 1st of November 1998).

is very polished and grammatically correct, denoting an epistolary fluency but also mastery of linguistic nuances and mannerism.¹⁵

The detective genre, with a vein of humor and the ordinary, does not easily fit into the canon and indeed Camilleri's work has not been taken seriously by the Italian literary establishment, as there is still generally a diminutive attitude towards popular genres. Some critics have placed him in the illustrious tradition of Sicilian literature, and mentioned Verga, De Roberto, Tomasi di Lampedusa, and Sciascia as his masters, though remarking that Camilleri is only the shadow of a shadow of his predecessors. Others have pointed out the fact that his "sicilianitude" and varieties of language are not comprehensible to outsiders, and that for this reason RAI Due chose a Roman actor to play the part of Montalbano and a less charged means of communication. No matter what the adaptation of Camilleri's works, critics, like Raffaele La Capria, cannot but highlight Camilleri's mastery of human comedy, intriguing plots, and implicit social analysis which we find in all his works.

If of pastiche one must talk when mentioning Camilleri, this is not of linguistic nature only. His narrative style is a crossroad of cultural reality and imagination, history and fiction. Andrea Camilleri is, in fact, also the author of what one must call historical novels such as *La concessione del telefono* and *Privo di titolo*. In these works, Camilleri faithfully relates dates, personages, and developments which, without the linguistic aid of a Sicilian of the late 1800s and the beginnings of the 1900s, would seem void of the importance and interest they highly deserve. Departing from real events, Andrea Camilleri creates a *collage* where names are changed, where the obvious is camouflaged but still backed up by pages of testimonials, newspaper clippings, copies of documents and correspondence (true or deliberately false), that confirm the reality he wants to depict. Sinister scenes are alternated by words and happenings that are comical and lighthearted; the social condition of the peasants and their resigned submissions, the harsh reality of fascism and mafia are alternated by a sense of justice and humanity that are representatives of historical as well as modern times in this island of mystery, corruption, and conservatism, exotic beauty, family values, passions, and culinary wonders. The portrait of Sicily that Camilleri paints with brisk brushstrokes and careful physical details as well as "jeux de lumière," the due chiaroscuro, does not offend either the educated reader or the "verace" Sicilian or the Sicilophile for it is indeed a well balanced display of colors, fragrances, and contours. It does not show a unilateral picture of the island. Camilleri's Sicily is poliedric: its shape might have changed along the years (Montalbano himself affirms the ever-

¹⁵ See his letters to Livia, as published within the volume *Gli arancini di Montalbano*, in "Salvo amato..." "Livia mia..."

changing physicality of his motherland); nevertheless its shape is not flat; on the contrary it stands tall. Maybe it is a conic shape like the delicious *arancini*, one that has taken much time to develop:

Adelina ci metteva due giornate sane sane a preparar
[gli arancini]. Ne sapeva, a memoria, la ricetta. Il
giorno avanti si fa un aggrassato di vitellone e di
maiale in parti uguali che deve còciri a foco lentissimo
per ore e ore con cipolla, pummadoro, sedano,
prezzemolo e basilico. Il giorno appresso si prepara
un risotto, quello che chiamano alla milanisa
(senza zaffirano, pi carità!), lo si versa sopra a una
tavola, ci si impastano le ova e lo si fa rifriddàre.
Intanto si còcino i pisellini, si fa una besciamella,
si riducono a pezzettini ‘na poco di fette di salame e
fa tutta una composta con la carne aggrassata, triturate
a mano con la mezzaluna (nenti frullatore, pi carità di Dio!)¹⁶

Camilleri reveals his recipe of success, a mix of genuine ingredients and a long and attentive process. He, as well as us, faithful readers, is rewarded by the final product: an inspector, son of a mother who died during his childhood but who was replaced by the many mothers whom he interviews and to whom he becomes easily attached; colleague of Mimi, the typical Mediterranean macho who, at the end, is softened by the firm grip of Beba, introduced to him by Salvo himself; supervisor of the young Fazio, a punctilious and respectful policeman who looks up to him, and fiancé of Livia, independent woman who becomes frustrated, at times, with Salvo’s engagements and idealisms. Who is this man, after all? “Montalbano sono”¹⁷ and from this simple sentence we know that he is indeed a Sicilian, the product of many civilizations, the image of many contradictions, but also the assertion of an identity of his own, an independence and pride hard to define yet diligently described through a mixture of socio-cultural and linguistic codes.

Camilleri is not the sole subject of the first chapter of this book. Vizumiller-Zocco examines, in fact, three other eminent literary authors,

¹⁶ My translation: It took Adelina two entire days to prepare the riceballs. She knew the recipe by heart. The day before one cooks veal and pork in equal parts at a very low temperature for hours and hours with onion, tomato, celery, parsley, and basil. The day after one prepares a risotto, as it is often referred to as Milanese (without saffron, for God’s sake!), which is then poured on a table. It is mixed to the eggs and cooled. In the meantime, one cooks the peas, a besciamella sauce, and one dies some slices of salami to add to the trite meat (by hand and not by mixer, for God’s sake!)

¹⁷ In this sentence it is the syntax that reveals the regional origin; in standard Italian, Salvo would have to say “Sono Montalbano.”

together with Camilleri, Consolo, Di Donato and Paina, whose narratives represent important examples of linguistic pastiche, or *synglossia*, of invented codes, as vehicles for cultural understanding. In the second chapter of this book, authored by Pietralunga, other Italian authors and phenomena, such as Luciano Bianciardi, are also presented and discussed thoroughly.

Whether these mixings are combinations of regional dialects and national language or of Italian regional idioms and English, they all are blatant aversions against the dominant culture. The dominant culture which they speak of and which they fight against is to be found within Italy's geographical boundaries or outside.

Whereas Italian, as a national language, is confronted with an "aggressione dal basso," which deals primarily with the influence of dialects on literary Italian, a true "esplosione dialettale," this confrontation is two-fold: there is also an aggression coming from the opposite end, "dall'alto" which refers to the influx of new words from the world of technology and from the sciences in general, and from foreign idioms, mainly English.¹⁸

As mentioned by Vizmuller-Zocco, a combination of Italian and English has been identified as *italiese* and brought to the theatrical audiences of Canada. *Italiese* is, in fact, the speech of Italian immigrants, who dialectalized or Italianized English terms. Professor Gianrenzo Clivio has turned it into a subject of study at the University of Toronto and has been working on an *Italiese-Italian* dictionary.¹⁹ Clivio has created an online version on its initial developmental stages, maintained on the Italian Studies website of University of Toronto, through which the community is able to submit *italiese* words and expressions and which should be completed by March 2007.

This type of *italiese* is the language of survival, according to Clivio, where to get an idea across, Italian-Canadians borrow terms and idioms from English; some of them insert whole sentences in English. "Like in every country with a strong Italian immigrant community, happened what happens in Italy when a dialect intermixes with Italian."²⁰

Many Italian-Canadian writers have imported this linguistic pastiche into their works to give a voice to the immigrant population. Lina Riccobene is one of such writers and the focus of Bancheri's contribution to this text, in chapter

¹⁸ Peruzzi, "I dialetti e la lingua," 505. "Aggressione dal basso" stands for an aggression from below, which is equivalent, with the words of Peruzzi, to an "esplosione dialettale," that is to say, a dialect explosion, whereas "aggressione dall'alto" stands for an aggression from above.

¹⁹ Regarding Italian with a heavy mixture of English, an *Italiese* dictionary has already been completed by Anna Barella Sciolette (*L'italiese: dizionario delle parole straniere nella lingua italiana*. Modena: Logos, 2002).

²⁰ As quoted by Antonio Maglio, in his "New *Italiese* for New Generation."

three. She brings on stage the reality of emigration, the use of dialect in the dramatic setting, the theme of marriage by proxy, and the *koine* spoken in Ontario by Italian-Canadians. One of her major theatrical plays, famous in Sicily, her motherland, and played in North-America, even if with different titles, between 1996 and 2005, is *Nun mi maritu ppi procura*. This play deserves its fame not only for its linguistic experimentation which, in actuality, is just an imprint of daily life in immigrant Canada, but for its identity of socio-historical testimony of a language and a culture so dissimilar from the one of their original genitor and from their adopted genitor, and for a light-hearted but firm denunciation of a phenomenon so common in this type of setting, marriage by proxy.

Other types of challenges and paths have been faced and taken by other Italian-Canadian writers. In Quebec, Marco Micone has tried to explore and explain the experiences of Italian immigrants as well, opting, instead of a broken language or an Italian dialect, for a pastiche of a simplified standard French with some patois, English, and Italian expressions. This continuous linguistic shifting, or schizophrenia as Joseph Pivato defines it,²¹ is also the subject of other Italian-Canadian writers in Quebec, like Fulvio Caccia, Antonio D'Alfonso, and Filippo Salvatore. It is a reality common to any Italian immigrant; it is the mark of a hybrid culture that lives in many corners of the American continent and elsewhere and that gains a voice in the dominant culture, in a context where many languages co-exist and only one has earned the first place.

The iron-fist fight is taking place in Italy as well. A hybrid language, a mixture of Italian and English, is spoken by many Italians. According to Nicola Sparano, journalist of the *Corriere Canadese* of Toronto, new words have officially been absorbed by the Italian language (700 words in the Zingarelli dictionary, 500 words in the Garzanti dictionary). Some of these are: Bloggare: to participate in a blog; bookmarkare: to add a page or an internet address to the list of favorite sites; copincollare: to cut and paste a text; fare il merge: to unite, exact translation of "to merge"; feedback: «Dare un feedback», that is to reply to someone; schedulare un appuntamento: to set an appointment; splittare: to divide; zippare: to compress not only a file but also daily objects, and the most controversial and humorous of all of these, scannare: as a synonymous of scannerizzare, to scan images through a scanner (in the *old-fashioned* standard Italian, "scannare" means to slaughter, to kill).²²

²¹ "Five-Fold Translation in the Theatre of Marco Micone." *Canadian Theatre Review* 104. A shorter version of this article is also posted on: http://www.athabascau.ca/writers/mmicone_essay.html.

²² "In Italia sta spopolando...l'italiese." *Corriere Canadese*.

In Europe, firm defense of linguistic purity has always been identified with France but with greater European integration, the battleground has become common to all nations against the supremacy of any one language, and especially English, over any other.

In this climate of linguistic re-invention, invasion, and, even, appropriation, valid for any part of the globe, it seems appropriate to investigate and invest on resources and methods to keep alive some of the menaced and/or potentially at-risk dialects and languages. The teaching of dialects but also the teaching about dialects would definitely allow stepping forward with the overcoming of much ignorance and, consequently, resistance toward a minority group, whether this is seen as a minority because of its history, its economy, or its idioms. It is also a common misconception, especially for learners of foreign languages, to believe that there is only one standard, correct form of a language; one can value this error of judgment to possess an intrinsic snow-ball effect in all areas of our social life.

As Kirk Hazen suggests, whereas learning dialects or about dialects may be a deterrent of cultural prejudices and a powerful enhancing mechanics for a better comprehension of linguistic systems and of linguistic processes, teaching dialects or about dialects could present many challenges, including the questioning and re-examining of certain preconceived ideas about a country, a culture, and its language and about specific “established” social norms versus the “other” social norms. Debate about what is “correct” can become a moral battlefield in which the merits of language use and language instruction according to absolute standards of right and wrong are argued. It is not an easy process and engaging students into discussions is a must. Discussion brings the teacher and the students into an awareness of certain language-related terms and how they are engaged.

The focus of chapters four and five is the mosaic of German dialects and Corsican idiom. Pittman gives a preliminary overview of the linguistic reality of the German-speaking geographical areas and the consequent variations of German, while Jaffe investigates how the variation within the Corsican language is treated in orthography, and how that relates to ideologies of linguistic identity and authority. Part of Jaffe’s chapter deals also with the way that French influences on Corsican are treated.

In this cultural reality, it is worth asking whether the geographical boundaries mark indeed linguistic barriers, changes, and a potential impossibility of coexistence among these diverse idioms. One example that comes to mind is the South Tyrol region. A reality like that of South Tyrol, which is characterized by three linguistic and cultural groups, German, Italian, and Ladin, offers a panorama of great interest for the study of phenomena related to language learning.

The population of South Tyrol comprises 69% German speakers, 26% Italian speakers, and 4% Ladin speakers (with Ladin being classified by the Italian government, since the 1930s, an official Italian dialect). While preserving their integrities, these three linguistic and cultural groups live side by side, but not together. Each group has its own administrative and cultural organizations.²³

According to South Tyrol statutes, every citizen has the right to study his own native language; additionally, in the last few years, they have implemented an introduction of a foreign language from the age of six onward. For the German-speaking population of South Tyrol, education at kindergarten, primary, secondary, and vocational schools is given in German. Italian, the second language (now taught from the first year of primary school), and one foreign language (English from the second year of intermediate school) are both taught in all schools. Only higher-vocational training and the university offer bi- and trilingual educational curricula. The vocational school for health professions is bilingual. Some of the courses are taught in German, others in Italian. The Free University of Bozen-Bolzano offers some courses of study in three languages (German, Italian and English). Also, when Ladin students enter school, they may opt to attend German-Ladin classes or Italian-Ladin classes.²⁴

This pastiche is indeed exemplary, but it is not the only one of success. Shifting from the educational world to the entertainment world, one could not bypass the *oeuvre* of François Ozon, which marries cinematic genres and outcomes to give birth to films that have enthralled both audiences and film critics. The generic and linguistic pastiche of French director Ozon is explored by Angelo, in our concluding chapter.

Wanting initially to remake Cukor's *Women*, Ozon gave a cinematic appearance to the 1960s theatrical play of Dominique Besnehard's *Eight Women*, with a whodunit plot. Add some elements of musicality, a dream-like cast, and a scattered but heart-felt homage to French accomplished show-women, and *voilà*, here comes Ozon's re-adaptation, a net of connection through performances and genres: Catherine Deneuve sings Sylvie Vartan while Isabelle Huppert sings Françoise Hardy; between Deneuve and Emmanuelle Béart, the camera zooms in on a photographic portrait of Romy Schneider while Deneuve and Fanny Ardant repeat lines extrapolated from their cinematic performances under the direction of François Truffaut.

But the pastiche created by film-maker Ozon goes further. It includes elements of daddy's cinema, a.k.a. *cinéma du papa*, the thriller genre of the 50s

²³ Consult Minority Dailies Association, <http://www.midas-press.org/index> and, specifically, its report on South Tyrol, <http://www.midas-press.org/NR/rdonlyres/8D316EC1-EA9C-49AF-9062-600C71B88E6A/0/SouthTyrolpdf.pdf>

²⁴ Katrin Pircher et al. *The German Language in Education in South Tyrol, Italy*.

and 60s, the New Wave, a.k.a. *Nouvelle Vague*, the American musicals (Douglas Sirk and Vincent Minnelli are overtly referenced in Ozon's film) and soap operas, with a Cluedo hint, without inventing a label for his new product. And maybe because of this lack of a label, Ozon's cinematic output remains problematic and marginalized, even though the multi-layered revelations are much deeper than the visual or genre medley lets us see: by the end of the film, we are, in fact, able to discover a complex familial situation, marked by incestuous relationships, homosexuality, extra-marital sex, and even mariticide. And even though all the diverse elements Ozon has drawn and used are seamlessly mended together, the audience is still aware (due to the director's conscious choice) of a huge gap that reigns between the two genders and their two different ways of expressing and living. The dramatic tones, even if camouflaged with musical insertions, fashion's reminiscences, and aesthetical beauties, are impossible to be concealed.

"C'est une joie et une souffrance,"²⁵ says Deneuve-Gaby of the revelation of her husband's death: but this line can be seen as the *leit motiv* of the film, and of anyone's life, to be sure. Within our context of patois and linguistic pastiche, its pertinence is also well founded.

Whether separated, almost marginalized, or re-flourished initiatives, thanks to literary efforts of mere dialect art or in the form of linguistic mélange and to the talents of young innovative musical groups who are eager to mark their identity as individuals with rich historic and cultural background, singular dialects live side by side with well-developed and accepted national standard languages, and their development and establishment are externalizations of joy and suffering, separately and together, at some point. No matter what hilarity or pain these may cause, their presence is undeniable and needs to be credited.

This publication wants to be homage to all who recognize this fact and contribute to afford regional dialects and identities a continuous and deserved exposure. With this text, it is our hope to attract the interest and attention of all literary scholars, linguists, and all students of foreign languages, linguistic and literary studies. It should serve as a unique collection of perspectives and topics of interest to all language and literature *aficionados*.

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²⁵ Incidentally this is a phrase whispered to her character by colleague Jean-Paul Belmondo in *La Sirène du Mississippi* and by Gérard Depardieu in *Le Dernier métro*, both directed by François Truffaut.

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CHAPTER ONE

LITERARY SYNGLOSSIA: VINCENZO CONSOLO, ANDREA CAMILERRI, PIETRO DI DONATO, CORRADO PAINA

JANA VIZMULLER-ZOCCO

Language mixing in literary works produced in Italian has had a long and flourishing history. The history of the Italian language and the origins of Italian literature have been characterized by a tension between what can be termed monolingual expression at one end and plurilingual expression at the other. *Placiti*, *condaghi*, inscriptions (for example, that of the church of San Clemente), sermons, et cetera written in Latin and mixed with or accompanied by a regional “volgare” especially in the XI and XII centuries attest to the fragile hegemony of Latin in documents of practical nature. On the other hand, the existence of poetic compositions such as *Il contrasto e il discordo di Rambaldo di Vaqueiras* and *L’elegia giudeo-italiana*, reflect, albeit in a different manner, the poetic possibilities of the meeting of two (or more) languages. In the XIV century, Petrarca’s *Canzoniere* and Dante’s *Commedia* are emblems of the monolingual-plurilingual tension in poetry: Petrarca’s desired “monolinguisimo” is often compared to Dante’s “plurilinguismo.”¹ Intermediate plurilingual examples abound especially in the graphic form of certain XII and XIII century manuscripts, leading some scholars to suggest a different route for the transmission of Sicilian poetry in Italy.² The fight for cultural hegemony on the part of the *volgari* – as opposed to the use of Latin – has left its mark on the whole of linguistic and literary history in Italy. Instances of the use of two or more language varieties abound, and it is sufficient to list just the four most frequently analyzed: macaronic poetry of Teofilo Folengo, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* of Francesco Colonna, *I Malavoglia* by Giovanni Verga, *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* by Carlo Emilio Gadda. The

¹ Stefano Gensini, *Elementi di storia linguistica italiana*, 169-180.

² Francesco Bruni, *L’italiano letterario nella storia*, 21-23.

tension between what is deemed a monolingual work as opposed to a plurilingual work, nevertheless, does not disappear once literary Italian has obtained its hegemony (thanks to Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua*). It is still present today in literary critics' attitude. According to Pertile, "it is precisely in 'monolingualism – that is, standard Italian – that the only visible alternative to the babble of everyday discourse lies.'³ The uniformity, (or is it "purity"?) of the literary language has been one of the focuses in various histories of literary Italian, and clearly the question has not been resolved. Suffice it to say that there is no consensus as to the definition of literary Italian from a functional perspective. This problem is especially evident in the modern era, when the body of literature is no longer the source of innovation and enrichment of Italian, and the function and therefore the definition of literary Italian has been modified.⁴

Of course the cultural and historical underpinnings of the social and real use of dialects and Italian throughout the modern period facilitated the meeting and intertwining of linguistic forms. The languages that participated in this mixing, however, go beyond the *volgare*/dialect and Latin/Italian dichotomies: there are examples of inclusion of Hebrew, Provençal, French (and Francoitalian⁵), and obviously English in literary works in Italian.

In the modern period, the social phenomenon of mass migration from Italy to the Americas (and elsewhere) has resulted in a new mixing possibility: that of Italian or dialects and the language of the host society, especially in North America.⁶ Thus, for example, Italian American⁷ and *italiese*⁸ were born as expressions of acculturation, psycholinguistic adaptation.⁹ Even though this community language (just short of having achieved a koine status¹⁰) is still alive in many parts of North America, its use in literature is minimal: it has existed in

³ Lino Pertile, "The Italian Novel Today," 1-19, 15.

⁴ Maurizio Dardano, *I linguaggi non letterari*, 414-415.

⁵ Peter Wunderli, "Franko-Italienisch: ein sprach-und literaturgeschichtliches Kuriosum," 1-27.

⁶ The bibliography is by now quite extensive; see, for ex., A. Menarini, "Sull'italo-americano negli Stati Uniti," 145-208 and Hermann W. Haller,

"I dialetti italiani negli USA," 1083-1086.

⁷ Hermann W. Haller, *Una lingua perduta e ritrovata*.

⁸ Gianrenzo P. Clivio, "Su alcune caratteristiche dell'italiese," 483-91.

⁹ Marcel Danesi, *Loanwords and Phonological Methodology*.

¹⁰ Jeff Siegel, *Koines and koineization*, 357-378.

theatrical performances for more than a century¹¹ and continues to be used in comedies and theatre.¹²

In linguistics, it is customary to describe language mixing according to the linguistic level at which this mixing occurs. The view taken is simple: there is always a core (or matrix) language onto which an embedded (or peripheral) language is drafted. Therefore, the perspective is in the majority of cases unidirectional since the base or core language is seen as “borrowing” (a misnomer) or “accepting” some “deviated” form or function. This phenomenon has led to terminology such as *interference*, *transfer* and, in teaching/learning languages, *interlanguage*, or even *malformazioni*.¹³ In other words, it is in the process of borrowing that the core language is somehow “interfered with.”¹⁴

It appears that linguists have as yet to come to an agreement regarding the definition of instances of the meeting of two or more languages and the terminology used obscures the problem somewhat. Thus, there are six terms for four possible linguistic intersections of two or more languages.

1. At the **discourse** or extrasentential level, when items longer than short phrases from two languages are used in the same discourse segment, **code switching** occurs. In a societal situation, code-switching is frequently used among bilinguals for a variety of reasons, and its triggers include, for example, the type of participants, topic, setting, differences in connotation of the two languages, need of clarification, emphasis. An emblematic example of literary use of code switching between a type of Italian and English is Francesca Sghembri’s poem *Meglio Morta che Disonorata*¹⁵:

Mom, whether you like it or not
 I’m going out tonight.
 No figlia-non t’arrischiare,
 Di tuo padre ti vui fa` ammazzare.
 Mom, I’m not a baby anymore
 And soon he has to know
 He ought to let me go.
 Figlia, ti da` volta il cervello?

¹¹ Hermann W. Haller, *Tra Napoli e New York. Le macchiette italo-americane di Eduardoigliaccio*.

¹² By performers such as Charlie Chiarelli in his *Cu Fu*, and dramatists such as Francesca Sghembri in her *Un marito per Maria* and *Tutti a tavola*, successfully represented in Toronto in the last 6 years.

¹³ Antonio Di Sparti, *Lingue a metà. Plurilinguismo e emigrazione di ritorno in Sicilia*.

¹⁴ Carol Meyers-Scotton, “The Matrix Language frame model: Developments and Responses,” 23-58.

¹⁵ Included in the anthology by Nzula Angelina Ciatu, Domenica Dileo and Gabriella Micalieff (eds.), *Curaggia. Writing by Women of Italian Descent*, 29.

Finire vuoi in un bordello?
 Stai muta! – vai a lavorare,
 Stasera se ne puo` parlare.
 No! Mother, you don't understand,
 We're not in Italy anymore –
 Girls here, go out and date
 With their male prospects.
 Zitta, sei ancora una bambina
 E vuoi giocare a signorina.
 Mom, I'm twenty and in love...
 Zitta...zitta si sa poi la voce
 Sara` poi questo no' spiantato
 Non s'e` neppure avvicinato!
 Mother, you can't communicate
 He's nglese! He's not uno di noi.
 We don't want to be married.
 Figlia, che disgrazia!
 Ma come fai a guardarmi in faccia?
 Mother, I'm spending the night out
 Figlia sciagurata!
 Mi vuoi far cadere ammalata?
 Mom, nothing will stop me
 I'm going with him tonight.
 Oh figlia che rovina,
 Meglio tu non torni viva!

Here, the use of the two languages symbolizes the two positions – worlds apart – between the cultural presuppositions of the possibly Sicilian immigrant and the Canadian-born daughter. The tragedy of this situation is illustrated by the fact that the two languages, just like the two cultures, cannot find a common basis. Their separation is complete, and, although the daughter stands at the cross-roads between the two points of view, she is not taking her mother's position. The rhyme in the Italian verses exemplifies a culture that predictably follows rigid precepts; the free verse of the English seems to mirror a “free” society.

The Italian is tinged with Sicilian: Sicilian expressions are made to sound Italian. This mixing is facilitated by the fact that they are cognates (for ex., Sic. *avvicinare* is a transitive verb meaning “to visit”, here made to sound like the Italian *avvicinarsi* “to come closer”; *cadere ammalato* “to fall ill” is Sicilian, and English). For the purposes of rhythm, the infinitive with causative function in the phrase “ti vui fa` ammazzare” has a shortened form and the causative is made to sound Italian.

2. At the **lexical** (therefore intrasentential) level, **borrowing** occurs which brings a lexical item from one language into the matrix/core language. Over

time, this type of borrowing may result in a neologism or relexification through replacement of the existing lexical item by an item from the borrowing language. In literature, lexical borrowing is frequent in cases where the author's need dictates the use of a foreign language item to point to a different culture and its artifacts, names, toponyms, et cetera. For example, in Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints*, the use of dialect or lexical items (written in italics) helps picture the Italian village life better for the reader.¹⁶

3. At the **morphosyntactic** or grammatical level, grammatical language **mixing** or intertwining (also called interference) occurs. Over time, this may result in nativization of the "foreign" grammatical item. In literary works in Italian, a number of examples come to mind, but the most illustrative points to *I Malavoglia* by Giovanni Verga. Language intertwining in this novel involves the use of Italian grammar and Sicilian lexemes and exchange of semantic meanings (calques). In the analysis below, this is the type of language mixing that is studied.

4. At the **phonological** and **phonetic** levels, borrowing is seen as linguistic **interference**.

All of the processes above are based on borrowing: that is the appropriation of an item from one language by another language. Borrowings may be incorporated (or nativized, i.e. treated as native items) or not (left in their foreign form). The more a foreign item resembles the native lexemes, grammar, pronunciation, the more possibility there is for it to become part and parcel of the receiving language. This phenomenon, in a conversation, relies on bilingualism: that is, the speakers of both languages understand the borrowed item's meaning and form. Over time, the meaning and form of the borrowed item become indistinguishable as foreign elements of the borrowing language and bilingualism is not necessary.

Borrowing is a natural consequence of the meeting of two cultures, two peoples and two languages: this process fills the "gaps" one culture and language may have in a conceptual area, it may be the result of prestige of the "foreign" culture in the sphere of economy, politics, arts, technology, etc. It also illustrates the power relationships between languages and cultures, since the types of items borrowed into the hegemonic language are not identical to the items borrowed into the subordinate language and culture. To illustrate this uneven power relationship in borrowing, one example is sufficient: in the language of Italian immigrants in Canada, all manner of lexemes from English find their way of becoming "Italian": *garbiccio*, *yarda*, *pusciare*, and now also

¹⁶ Nino Ricci, *Lives of the Saints*. Other linguistic examples with Sicilian-Italian lexical/semantic mixing are found in Alfredo Stussi, *Plurilinguismo passivo nei narratori siciliani tra otto e novecento?* in Furio Bagnolo e Vincenzo Orioles (eds.), *Eteroglossia e plurilinguismo letterario. II. Plurilinguismo e letteratura*, 490-515.

boosta, *fazool*, etc. English, however, has limited its borrowing in the past to “high culture” items (lexemes referring to musical and other arts) now acceptance is limited to gastronomical terms from the language of Italians, for ex., *latte* (i.e. *caffè latte*), *calzone*, et cetera.

In literature, the most obvious need for using language mixing is the stylistic necessity of presenting to the reader a sense of different culture through the use of lexemes expressing items of flora, fauna, gastronomy, toponymy, etc. To attempt to illustrate a different, minority, ethnic, subaltern, pre-modern or otherwise “foreign” culture by means of a hegemonic, modern (or post-modern) language is impossible if the position taken is a strong Whorfian hypothesis of the relativity of languages;¹⁷ as a consequence, the practical way out is to behave as if a weak linguistic relativity hypothesis is acceptable. A more interesting use of language mixing in literature obtains when two or more languages are an integral part of the plot, content, or ideology of the literary work, as in the example of Francesca Sghembri’s poetry cited above. After all, imagined worlds need imagined languages and language mixing contributes to this ideational process: it is pastiche with a purpose. I have called this type of language mixing *synglossia*¹⁸. In *synglossia*, all the participating languages attempt to share in the grammatical processes of the “core” language.

Linguists and literary critics have studied borrowing from different viewpoints. Code-switching and code-mixing have been analyzed from a linguistic perspective as an integral part of language acquisition, social and ethnic group bonding, pragmatic necessity, individual show of bilingual fluency, et cetera. Clearly, language mixing means these and much more than these general principles in works of literature. What follows attempts to analyze the causes, conditions, consequences, limits of language mixing, the artistic elaborations of the meeting of two or more linguistic codes, in novels and poetry from both the linguistic and literary points of view. The works of the four authors chosen for this purpose represent four different manners of *synglossia*: Vincenzo Consolo’s language mixing involves different historical stages of a language; Andrea Camilleri’s *synglossia* toys with the possibility of democratic language mixing; Pietro Di Donato’s *synglossia* shows the impossibility of the

¹⁷ For an assessment of Whorf’s ideas, see Kristopher H. Kowal, *Rhetorical Implications of Linguistic Creativity. Theory and Application to Chinese and Taiwanese Interlanguages*, esp. pp. 1-55.

¹⁸ I am indebted to Prof. Robert Fisher from York University for having suggested this term to me; Jana Vizmuller-Zocco “Tradition and Innovation without a Revolution: Andrea Camilleri’s *Synglossia*” in K.B. Reynolds, D. Brancato, P. Chirumbolo, F. Calabrese (eds.), *Prospettive di studio sulle trasformazioni letterarie e linguistiche nella cultura italiana*, 17-26.

meeting of two worlds; Corrado Paina's *synglossia* illustrates the postmodern strain of too many viewpoints, languages, cultures at the same time.

It must be underscored that the underlying linguistic and cultural constraints that authors work around vary on account of time period in which the literary work is produced, social presuppositions about language and language mixing, the author's view of the role of language mixing in communicating literary ideas, the openness on the part of the reading public to willingly embrace expressive styles that include more than one language. An analysis of selected parts of works by Vincenzo Consolo, Andrea Camilleri, Pietro Di Donato and Corrado Paina reveal the intricate interweaving of morphosyntax, semantics, pragmatics of Italian, dialects, English and other languages that contribute to these authors' invented codes. Code switching, code mixing, code permeation are all procedures that make language intertwining possible. However, only the last one leads to a full creation of a truly special literary code so clearly exemplified in *I Malavoglia* by Giovanni Verga and *Christ in Concrete* by Pietro Di Donato. The invented codes provide powerful material for the construction of invented worlds, which nudge the perspicacious reader towards interpreting the contemporary world, the one we live in, much more forcefully.

Vincenzo Consolo

As regards style and expression, various types of language mixing are possible. One of the most interesting and the most intriguing possibility has as its promoter Vincenzo Consolo. This author claims that he is an "archaeologist of language"¹⁹ and therefore, from an analytical perspective, his mixing involves the use of the same language but the individual items belong to different diachronic layers of this language, possibly borrowed from other languages. As an illustration of this linguistic archeology, the following is a passage from the epistolary novel *Retablo*²⁰:

Rosalia. Rosa e lia. Rosa che ha inebriato, rosa che ha confuso, rosa che ha sventato, rosa che ha ròso, il mio cervello s'è mangiato. Rosa che non è rosa, rosa che è datura, gelsomino, bàlico e viola; rosa che è pomelia, magnolia, zàgara e cardenia. Poi il tramonto , il vespero, quando nel cielo appare la sfera d'opalina, e l'aere sfervora, cala misericordia di frescura e la brezza del mare valica il cancello

¹⁹ Giuseppe Traina, *Vincenzo Consolo*, 23, 55.

²⁰ Vincenzo Consolo, *Retablo*, 31-33.

del giardino, scorre fra colonnette e palme
 del chiostro in clausura, coglie, coinvolge,
 spande odorosi fiati, olezzi distillati, balsami
 grommosi. Rosa che punto m'ha, ah!, con la
 sua spina velenosa in su nel cuore.

*Lia che m'ha liato la vita come il cedro o la
 lumia il dente, liana di tormento, catena di
 bagno sempiterno, libame oppioso, licore
 affatturato, letale pozione, lilio dell'inferno
 che credei divino, lima che sordamente
 mi corrose l'ossa, limaccia che m'invischiò
 nelle sue spire, lingua che m'attassò come angue
 che guizza dal pietrame, lioparda imperiosa,
 lippo dell'alma mia, liquame nero, pece dov'affogai,
 ah! Per mia dannazione.*

Consolo himself identifies this language as a “palimpsest,” writing on other layers of writing, “this language identifies an author of my type, engaged with history, engaged with social events and on the other hand also an author experimenting with form using a writing that is not of a rationalistic-illuministic type.”²¹ In this, Consolo shows a direct oppositional attitude to the search for mimesis which according to Antonelli characterizes authors writing at the end of the twentieth century.²²

This search for the particular lexeme with dense meaning is present in all of Consolo's works, and is a part of the stylistic procedure of enumeration.²³ The author engages in constructing an elaborated syntax in that his noun phrases are extended by using synonymic pairs from the same semantic field or evoking similar feelings. The linguistic operation results in a highly poetic work, whose purpose is evocative and semantically forceful. Consolo works without concern about the possible impediments to a distracted reader's understanding: in fact, he requires utmost concentration and fullest attention from his readers. Linguistic experimentation is the only answer, according to this author, to the flatness of modern Italian. Clearly, this has an effect on the gap between the writer and the reader, because instead of having a dialogue, the author engages in a poetic monologue.²⁴ The model reader is therefore exactly like the writer:

²¹ Consolo, interview <http://www.italialibri.net/interviste/consolo/consolo31.html>

²² Giuseppe Antonelli, “Sintassi e stile della narrativa italiana dagli anni Sessanta a oggi” in Nino Borsellino and Walter Pedulla. *Letteratura italiana del Novecento*. III. *Sperimentalismo e tradizione nel nuovo. Dalla contestazione al postmoderno 1960-2000*, 682-711.

²³ Ibid, 682-711, 704-705.

²⁴ “E' necessario comunque scrivere, ma scrivere in una forma che sia non piu' dialogante, riducendo la parte dialogica, comunicativa, spostarsi sempre di piu' verso la