ARBA SICULA è l’organo ufficiale della società siculo-americana dû stissu nomi ca si proponi comu obbiettivu principali di prisirvari, studiari, e promoviri a lingua e a cultura siciliani.

ARBA SICULA è normalmenti pubblicata dui voti l’annu, ntâ primavera e nta l’autunnu. Pi comunicari diretamente cù diritturi, pi mannari materiali pà rivista, pi l’abbunamenti e pi informazioni supra a nostra società, scriviti a Gaetano Cipolla, Languages and Literatures Department, St. John’s University, 8000 Utopia Pkwy, Queens, NY 11439. I materiali ricevuti non si restituisciu ni nun si manna puru na busta affrancata cù nomu e indirizzu.

ABBUNAMENTI

Cu si abbona a la rivista, diventa automaticamente sociu di Arba Sicula. Cu n’abbunamentu annuali i soci ricivunu du nummira di Arba Sicula (unu, si pubblicamu un numiru doppiu) e due di Sicilia Parra. Arba Sicula è na organizzazioni senza scopu di lucr.

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ARBA SICULA is normally published twice a year, in the Spring and in the Fall. To communicate with the Editor, to submit materials for publication, to subscribe and to obtain information on our organization, write to Gaetano Cipolla, Languages and Literatures Department, St. John’s University, 8000 Utopia Pkwy, Queens, NY 11439. The materials received will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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Those who subscribe to the journal, automatically become members of Arba Sicula. Annual dues entitle the members to two issues of Arba Sicula (or one if a double issue) and two of Sicilia Parra. Arba Sicula is a Non-Profit Organization.

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A R B A  S I C U L A

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DICHIARAZIONI DI LU SCOPU DA NOSTRA ASSOCIAZIONI

“ARBA SICULA é, prima di tuttû, la riflessioni in ritardu, di na nicissità sintuta di na cumunitá etnica stabiluta nni li Stati Uniti d’America pi difiniri, prisirvari e difúnniri la nostra antica ereditá p’assicurari la so vera supravvivenza. Mentri ca l’orientazioni nostra é littiraria, lu nostro métudu é storicamenti evucativu cu l’intinzioni di nun passari supra nuddu aspettu di la cultura Siciliana comu indignu di la nostra esaminazioni e análasi. Lu scopu di stu sforzu é, allura, di riscupriri zoccu é ligittimamenti nostru ntra tuttu lu sintasi d’un populu isulanu pussidennu rádichi nni l’esperienzi storichi Siciliani, Italiani e Americani e macari ligami chiú antichi cu tutti li nazioni di lu Meditirraniu.


Pi la fini di rializari st’intinzioni, ARBA SICULA invita a tutti ca ponnu vantari armenu un avu Sicilianu, a unirisi cu nui in un sforzu culittivu pi aumintari la canuscenza di la nostra stissa ereditá.

Stu disignu é pigghiatu di na midagghia d’urnamentu ca rchiudi na specia di cru ci dicurtiva. Un esemplari si trova nni lu Museu di Siracusa Fu truvata a San Cataldu e fa parti di l’Adrano Hoard, la chiú granni cugghiuta d’uggetti di brunzu ca á statu truvata in Sicilia. Lu disignu é di circa 1300 anni avanti Cristu. di la civilitá Sicula.”

Ristampammu ntâ pagina precedentì a dichiarazioni dû scopu accussì comu fu scritta ntô primu numiru di Arba Sicula ntô 1979. A copiammu esattamenti comu fu scritta senza fari currezioni. Comu si vidi, a lingua canciau
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR OUR ORGANIZATION

"ARBA SICULA is, above all else, the overdue reflection of a felt need by an established ethnic community of the United States of America to define, preserve and disseminate our ancient heritage in order to assure its undistorted survival. While our orientation is literary, our approach is historically evocative and intended to overlook no aspect of Sicilian culture as unworthy of our examination and analysis. The purpose of this effort is, therefore, to rediscover what is legitimately ours within the composite synthesis of a displaced island people possessing immediate roots in the Sicilian, Italian and American historical experiences, as well as far more ancient linkages to every nation of the Mediterranean.

We seek recognition of a sense of continuity within ourselves and for that reason have chosen an ancient symbol of the Sikel people (the predominant strain in Sicily prior to its settlement by the Greeks) both to underscore the seriousness of our intent and to stamp upon the minds of our youth a sign of the antiquity of their heritage. We are, above all, concerned that the key to the Sicilian soul (the language of our forefathers) be preserved and studied with attentive appreciation.

To the end of fulfilling these declared intentions, ARBA SICULA extends to all and any able to claim at least one Sicilian grandparent, an invitation to join us in a collective effort to increase our consciousness of our common heritage.

This design is taken from an ornamental pendant enclosing a sort of cross decoration from the Sikel civilization. A sample is in the Museum of Syracuse. It was found at San Cataldo and is part of the Adrano Hoard, the
nenticchia; semu forsi più attenti a comu scrivemu in sicilianu, ma mi pari ca in linia di massina amà statu fidili a l’ideali espressi nta sta dichiarazioni. Si cancianu l’edituri, non cancianu u disidderiu di travagghiari pi ddi stissi motivi ca ficiru nasciri a nostra società.


Arba Sicula fu salvata grazzii a Mons. Santi Privitera e a Charles Cappellinu ca l’aiutarunu finanziariamenti e grassii a Gaetano Cipolla ca prima si pigghiaiu a direzioni dà rivista facennula maturari non sulu dû puntu di vista dà grafica usannu u computer (i primi numiri si stampavanu cu na machina di scriviri manuali) ma anchi pà cuntinutu e pà lingua, e poi pigghiau a direzioni di l’organizzazioni. Arba Sicula ha crisciutu assai ntà l’urtimi diciassetti anni, non sulu pù numiru di l’abbunati, ma puru pi l’ottima riputazioni ca godi ntô munnu.

A società havi soci ca si trovanu principalmenti nta zona metropolitana di New York, ntà California e poi ntà tutti i Stati Uniti, macari ntà l’Alaska e l’isuli Hawai. Tra i rivisti italiani, Arba Sicula è a rivista chiù populari d’America. A niautri nni pari picca cosa aviri chiù di 2500 abbonati, picchì pinsamu ca i
largest collection of bronze objects ever found in Sicily. The design dates from about 1300 before Christ.”

We reprinted on these pages the statement of purpose published in the first issue of Arba Sicula twenty one years ago. We reproduced it exactly as it appeared without any corrections. As you can see, our language has changed a little. We are perhaps a bit more conscious of how we write in Sicilian, but I think that we have remained faithful to the ideals that prompted our predecessors to found this publication. If the editor has changed, the desire to work toward the achievement of the same goals that spurred our foundation has not.

Perhaps I ought to provide a brief history of our association for the members who are new to it. Arba Sicula was founded in 1979 by a small group of Sicilian-Americans living in Brooklyn composed by Gaetano Giacchi, Joseph Palisi, Alissandru Caldiero, Sebastianu Passione, Mons. Santi Privitera, Mons. Anthony Failla and others who met monthly in the basement of St. Finbar’s Church. These people can be considered founding members of the organization, even though the title of founder belongs rightly to Gaetano Giacchi who at the beginning was the one who did the most to promote the organization.

The presidents of our society have been the following: Joseph Palisi, 1979-80; Gaetano Giacchi, 1980-86; Santi Privitera 1987; Charles Cappellino 1987-88; and Gaetano Cipolla 1988-present. The editors of Arba Sicula have been only two: Alissandru Caldieru from 1979 to 1986 and Gaetano Cipolla from 1987 to the present. Our other publication, Sicilia Parra was originally edited by John Randazzo of our Los Angeles Branch, and it was published for a few years. A new series of Sicilia Parra began in 1989 and continues to the present with Gaetano Cipolla as editor. Henry Barbera was Co-editor until 2000. As you may know, Henry passed away on Sept. 24, 2000. Gaetano Cipolla’s responsibilities of producing the newsletter were alleviated by the appointment of Giuseppe Provenzano as Associate Editor in 2003. Unfortunately, Giuseppe moved to Europe a few years ago and now it’s again Gaetano Cipolla who is mainly responsible for Sicilia Parra.

During the first phase, Arba Sicula was very successful in organizing recitals and performances in churches and schools, but its membership never rose above 700-800. Then there was a period of stagnation because of illness and other reasons which jeopardized the organization (1985-7).

Arba Sicula was saved thanks to Mons. Santi Privitera and Dr. Charles Cappellino who helped with donations, and thanks to Gaetano Cipolla who first assumed the duties of editor of the journal, making it more mature not only from a graphic point of view by introducing the the use of computers.
Siciliani d’America sunu assai numirusi e n’avissimu aviri 10,000 almenu! Ma l’autri rivisti specializzati si cunsiddiranu furtunati si hannu 300-400 abbunati. Nautra cosa: tanti rivisti stannu in circulazioni dui, tri anni e poi fallisciu.

Arba Sicula chist’annu fa trent’anni di vita, trent’anni di travagghiu pi dari o munnu n’idea chiù giusta dà cultura siciliana e dì so contributi ô munnu. E’ un traguardu ca atravirsamu cu umiltà e cu granni cumpiacenza pi chiddu c’avemu fattu, ma puru câ spiranza ca putemu rializzari ancora assai dichiù nta l’anni dû terzu millenniu.

Arba Sicula ha statu n’ispirazioni pi tanti Miricani d’origini siciliana. Annu dopu annu amà prisintatu u megghiu dà cultura siciliana, dannucci mutivi di essiri orgogliosi di essiri Siciliani. Autri società siciliani hannu statu funnatu nta stu paisi e guardanu a niautri pi ispirazioni e sustegnu. Arba Sicula câ so luci illuminau a Sicilia e ê Siciliani facennucci canusciri a tutti u megghiu latu d’iddi. Senza piccari di superbia, nta sti anni u nostru pisu s’ha fattu sentiri e pi chissu putemu essiri orgogliosi dì nostri contribbuti.
and laser printers (the first issues of Arba Sicula were printed using a manual
typewriter), but in its content and language, then assuming the duties as presi-
dent of the organization. In 1988 Prof. Cipolla assumed the duties as presi-
dent of the organization.

Arba Sicula has grown a lot in thirty years, not only in the numbers of
subscribers, but also for the excellent reputation it enjoys all over the world.
While we may think that our list of over 2,500 subscribers is small, because we
know that there are many Sicilian-Americans out there and we should have ten
thousand subscribers, we are the most popular journal of Italian studies in this
country. Other specialized Italian journals struggle along with 300-400 sub-
scribers. Furthermore, many of them fold after two or three years.

Arba Sicula has been an inspiration to many Sicilian-Americans. It has
made available to them the best of Sicilian culture and year after year has
offered them reasons to be proud of their heritage. Many other Sicilian orga-
nizations have been founded throughout the country, and they look to us as
for inspiration and support. Without fear of sounding immodest, Arba Sicula,
by shining a truer light on Sicily and Sicilians, has made a difference and can be
proud of its contributions.
Puisia Siciliana

III
Di Renato Pennisi

Unu sta supra lu pisolu,
pazzu pueta
cia spercia canti malanovi.
Canta li rivuturi nta ‘n biveri,
dici ca l’ omu
fu pigghiatu ppi fissa,
camina lascu lascu
di sta saggizza streusa.

Ogni paisi havi
lu so pueta, pazzu pueta,
ogni quarteri.
La so saggizza mpinci
nta preuli e ramagghi,
canta murritti a li fuani,
dici chi havi trimila amanti
e su’ li stiddi e li galassii.
Quannu vidi ‘n parrinu
fa ‘n friscu e jetta ‘n piritu,
pazzu pueta,
e senza ‘n sordu né virtù.
Pazzu pueta
nta sta vanedda sugnu ju.
Someone sits upon a step
A crazy poet
Who comes up with ill-fated songs,
He sings the storm inside the stagnant pool,
He says that man was mocked
And walks at a distance
From this crazy wisdom.

Every town has
a poet
a crazy poet,
every neighborhood.
His wisdom gets stuck
on grapevines and scrub,
he sings lamentations to the owls,
he claims he has three thousand lovers
and they are the stars and galaxies.
When he sees a priest
he whistles and lets out some air.
Crazy poet,
He does no have a cent nor has he virtue.
The crazy poet in this side street
is me.
La zanzara
Di Giovanni Anselmo

Chi notti chi passaiu pi na zanzara
na gran disgraziata e gran buiana
c’u sapi r’unni vinni, ri quali tana
circava ri punzicchiarimi a beddu cori.

Un omu rabbiusu un s’addummisci
Unn’è ca quantu iunci, afferra e spara
picchi, pi surisfari a dda zanzara
e ghinchici u rarreri e abbuttari io?

Allura stagniatu lassu u lettu
e mettu a dari corpa ri linzolu
naturalmenti idda pigghia u volu
e u babbu a passiari cà e ddà.

Mi misi ntesta nco mmave’ a curcari
lu rroggiu chi batteva i quarti d’ura
cull’occhi aperti sì, pi la paura
io persi a notti, ma nun mi muzzica.
The Mosquito
By Giovanni Anselmo

What a night I spent for a mosquito!
A real disgraceful and most vexing bitch!
Who knows where she came from, or from what nest
she tried to sting me to her heart’s content.

An angry man can never fall asleep.
It’s not just reaching, grabbing, shooting.
Why do I have to suffer to satisfy
and fill up the behind of this insect?

So I got up out of my bed in wrath
and I began to use the sheet as weapon.
Naturally, she simply flew away
And I was left there walking like a dolt.

I then thought I should not go back to bed.
The clock was ringing every quarter hour
and I with eyes wide open out of fear
just wasted a whole night, but with no bites.
**Piciniu**  
Di Gaetano Capuano

Nun mi raccapìzzu chiù!  
Di piciniu chicchiù arrancu

A uerra e a paci  
castìu e premiu  
eppuru  
c’è cu’ cuva piccati  
sardu ò scrusciu d’e catini

Nanni ... catananni  
nsignanu duttrini  
’ndifisa d’ a santa libirtà  
ma unni quannu e pirchì  
furunu mai caputi  
niànnu a fidi  
di ssu cumannamientu

E iu  
ncagnu sparru  
murtiplicu assummu  
e u cuntu nun torna

Nun mi raccapìzzu chiù  
Chicchiù arrancu  
ma nun calu u jimmu.
Elegy
By Gaetano Capuano

I cannot understand it.
I mumble and I stutter
from my troubles,

I praise and damn
both war and peace
and yet
there’s someone
hatching sins
deaf to the sounds of chains.

Grandparents, ancestors,
teach doctrines
defending holy liberty,
but where when and why
were they ever understood
denying trust
in this commandment

And I
get angry, mispeak,
I multiply and add
but the count is wrong

I cannot understand it any more
I mumble and I stutter
but I don’t bend my hump.
Lu ciatu di Diu
Di Maria Rosaria Mutolo

Iu ciriu ca u Signuruzzu, quanu criò lu munnu,
era accussì priatu ca lu pigghiò ntê manu,
e firriannulu e girannulu
si rummuliava suddisfattu dicennu:
“Cca ci misi lu mari, cca ci misi la terra,
tutti l’ arburi sunnu só postu so,
‘i ciumi scurrinu versu u mari:
m’arrinisciù bonu stu munnu!”

E la cuntintizza di lu Signuri fu tanta
ca, mentri stu munnu ci firriava tra li manu,
l’ avvicinò a la vucca e lu vasò:
‘na vasata, di chidddi cu lu scrusciu,
ca fici trimari tuttu l’universu.

E propriu ddà,
unni Diu appuiò li so divini labbra,
nasciu la Sicilia!
The Breath of God
By Maria Rosaria Mutolo

I think that when the Lord created the world,
He was so pleased he took it in his hands
and turning it around he thought to himself:
“I put the sea in here, I put the land right there,
all of the trees are in their proper places,
all of the rivers run down to the sea:
I’m pleased of how this world came out!”

And our sweet Lord was so content
that while the globe whirled round in his hands
He brought it to his mouth and kissed it
but with such a smacking, noisy kiss
he made the universe vibrate.

And in the spot, exactly where
the Lord had touched it with his holy lips,
that was the spot where Sicily emerged.
Oggi
Di Giovanni Micali

a Biagio Cascio

Troppu sunu li tinti e l’mbrugghiuni
Li disonesti cu li malfatturi
Lu munnu è chinu di li lazzaruni
C’è sempri tantu fangu e disonuri!
E d’accussì la vita ... frati miu
Santa pacenzia ...e comu voli Diu!
Ognunu dici li cosi nun veri
Minzugnari nni trovi sempri tanti
‘Mbruggianut tutti di milli maneri
‘Ngannnanu puru a Cristu cu li Santi!
Chiddi ca ti parinu veri amici,
Cu lu tempu diventanu nimici.
Nun si pò aviri fidi, e c’è l’ingannu;
‘Ntra Centu, li falsi novantanovi!
Li Vili e ’ngannaturi fanu dannu
Amici veri e liali nun nni trovi;
La Moda Oggi, di li tempi prisenti
Falsa genti, cu falsi cumplimenti!
Si trovi ‘nveru amicu, pi furtuna!
Sempri cu buntà ... volici beni
Fa comu s’iddu si la to pirsuna
Senti li so gioi, duluri o peni;
Lu bonu spera nni l’aiutu Divinu
Ca l’omu lupu ha Satana lu Cainu.
Giardini, 18 Gennaio 1970
Today
By Giovanni Micali

The evil people and the scoundrels are too many,
too many the dishonest and corrupt.
The world is full of mud and of dishonor!
That’s how life is, my brother!
Holy patience and let the will of God be done!

You always find deceitful people ‘round.
They swindle everyone in myriad ways;
they even cheat the Lord and all the saints.
The ones who seemed to be true friends
in time become the worst or enemies.

You cannot trust a soul, deceit abounds;
out of a hundred, ninety nine are false!
The cowardly deceivers cause you harm,
you cannot find a true and loyal friend.

It is the fashion of today, these are our times:
fake people and fake compliments!
If you by luck can find a friend,
love him with goodness all the time,
behave as though he were your own person,
share all his joys, his troubles or his pain.
Good people place their hope on divine help,
for wolfish man has Satan as his Cain.
Ottantun’anni
di Frank Piazza

Staiu arrivannu a ottantun’annu
Di na latata nchianu e l’autra scinnu.
Ora ca l’anni si vannu cuntannu
Nenti accattau chiù e nenti vinnu,
puru li forzi mi vannu mancannu,
privu di tanti cosi chi nni spinnu.
E tu omu spertu chi camini
Dumannu s’iddu sai unn’è a to fini.

Sintiti a cui v’adura e vi cumprenni
Chini d’affettu chi vi vonnu beni
E cu tantu di amuri vi pritenni,
è l’omo chi u nfernu ncori tenti,
passa lu tempu tra li chiova e peni;
curri a li voti dunni nonci apparteni:
l’omo è umanu, è di dunni discinni
pirchì ritorna arrè di dunni vinni.

Amuri ca ti scurri dintè vini,
Suspiri ncurunati di baciati,
Siliniziusi notti stiddiati,
Nuvuli straviati picurini,
Chi sunnu di lu celu ncatinati,
Rosi frunnusi cu puncenti spini:
chisti biddizzi ca su disprizzati
l’omo l’avissi a teniri ntò cori
e si ittassi l’odiu profunnu
fussi lu paradisu pi stu munnu.
Eighty-one Years Old
By Frank Piazza

I am about to hit eighty one years!
I’m climbing from one side, descending from the other!
Now that we’re counting every year that comes,
I do not buy a thing, nor do I sell.
Even my strength is waning bye and bye.
I lack for many things that I would like.
And you, confident man, walking down the street,
do you know where you will end up some day?

Listen to those who love and understand you,
who are full of affection and good will
and who look after you with boundless love;
But man who harbors hell inside his heart,
spends all his time between sharp nails and woes;
He often runs where he does not belong;
but man is human and he can’t cheat fate,
because he will return where he came from.

Love that runs deep inside your veins,
sighs crowned with kisses,
silent nights all full of stars,
streaming puffs of clouds,
that are enchained up in the sky,
abundant roses with some prickly thorns,
so many beauties in this world are poorly prized.
If man were to reject hate from his heart,
this world would surely be a paradise.
A cunnessioni Sicilia-Tampa
Di Lorraine Mangione
tradotta in sicilianu di Gaetano Cipolla

Assittata nta la casa na fimmina,
na fimmina ca non avia mai vistu,
mi tirau dintra di la strata—
è nicaredda, si movi lentamenti,
ma sicura,
nchiana dui, tri scalunati di petra
fino all’urtimu pianu
(casi una supra di l’autra)
È amica di me cucini
Pirciò semu
quasi cucini puru niautri
o boni amici almenu.
Mi dici di chiamari a Tampa
A so frati nta l’America
accussì iddu sapi ca sugnu ddà,
nanticchia dû so novu paìsi vinni ccà.
Iddu, ora ca sunu vecchi, venì raramenti.
U maritu d’idda non c’è cchiù.
so frati sta luntanu
i figghi si nni ieru ntà città.

Fazzu a chiamata. Sugnu assai emozionata,
nun pozzu parrari pi l’emozioni.
Parramu nanticchia, parranu nanticchia,
so frati e io parramu chiù d’idda.
Mi pari di parrari cu me cucinu.
L’occhi dà fimmina cantanu in niuru scuru.
Idda scuta cà cuncintraziuni d’un chirurgu
comu si putissi passari di ddu latu,
nta ddu munnu ca si purtau a so frati.
Ora parranu chiù viloci, chiù animati:
a vita a Tampa è bona, caudda, china.
Parramu di figghi.
A vita ntô so paìsi è puru bona, caudda
ma non tantu china.
A signura mi duna quacchi cosa pi biviri.
Sicily Tampa Connection
By Lorraine Mangione

Sitting in a woman’s house, 
a woman whom I have never met—
pulled me in from the street—
she’s tiny, moving slowly
but decidedly
up two-three flights of stone stairs
top floor
(the houses stacked vertically).
She is a friend of my cousins
so we are now like cousins
or at least good friends.
She asks me to call Tampa
to speak to her brother in Tampa,
fratini in America
so her brother would know that I am here,
a bit of his new country has come to her,
and her brother would know that she is here.
He comes so seldom now that they are old.
Her husband is gone,
her brother is far away,
her children have moved to the city.

I call. The delight overwhelms me.
I choke.
We talk, they talk a little.
Mostly the brother and I talk,
and it is like talking to my own cousin.
The woman’s eyes sing in jet black.
She listens with the concentration of a surgeon.
As if she could pierce through to this
new world that took her brother.
They talk, faster and more excited now.
Life in Tampa is good, warm, full.
We speak of children.
Life in her village is also good, warm, but not so full.
The lady gives me something to drink.
Fami? Hai fami?
Non c’è mai occasioni d’aviri fami ccà.
Milli grazii. Mi ringrazia
À ringraziu
E ora semu comu cucini.
Fame? Are you hungry?
Never a moment to be hungry here.
Mille grazie. She thanks me.
I thank her,
and we are like cousins now.
Picciotta a la ricota  
di Maria Emanuele

Nuvembri strugg pinsera  
nutra lu giallumi di li pampini  
cripitiannu disiu.  
Li farfaricchi cunnuttati  
nutra nsirragghi di fraschi  
nescinu fora, unu pi unu,  
a spargiri ntall’aria  
pruvulicchia ‘i malia.  
La picciotta  
calata a cogghiri aliva ntra l’erva  
ammustra li gammi.  
Si scannallanu li granati  
pinnenti di ‘n arvulu d’oru.  
Idda si vota  
allisciannu la purpa di li cianchi.  
Nuddu smiccia  
è l’ostru sbannutu  
ca cci isa li fareddi.  
Spussata ‘i ricota  
la bedda  
sdillassa li membra ‘n terra  
aspittannu manna di celu.  
L’occhi  
jocanu a ncatinari lu senziu  
di la natura  
ntra li pinnulara.  
Ora li granati  
chiovnu  
supra li so mani tinciuti d’aliva.
Young Woman Harvesting
by Maria Emanuele

November burns thoughts
in the yellowing of blooms
rustling up desire.
The little demons hiding
amidst the tangled leaves
come out, one by one,
spreading powder of seduction
in the air.
The young woman
bending to gather olives in the grass
shows her legs.
The pomegranates,
hanging from a golden tree
are scandalized.
She turns around
stroking her fleshy thighs.
Nobody is looking
it was the midday wind
that lifted up her apron.
Exhausted
by the harvesting
the beauty
relaxed her limbs
upon the ground
waiting for manna from the sky.
Her eyes
try chaining as a game
the sense of nature
between her eyelashes.
Now the pomegranates
rain
on her hands stained with olives.
Non mi lamentu
di Turiddu Bella

Un tali ca abitava in Lituania
si rivulgiu in Cummissariatu
pp’aviri un passaportu, e ghiri all’estiru
in occidenti, nta qualunquì Statu:
Allura ci spiau lu Commissariu:
—Non si cuntentu ccà, unni si natu?
—Non mi lamentu.—Siddu non mi sbagghiù
sudisfattu non si di lu travagghiu.

—Non mi lamentu, affattu.—Annunca spiegami
Non si cuntentu forsi di lu clima?
—Non mi lamentu.—Ma siddu voi partiri,
a quali scopu mi l’ha diri prima.
Si disfiziatu di na mala socira?
—Non mi lamentu.—O puru non hai stima
ppi lu rigimi?—No, chi va a pinsari...
Partu ca ddà mi pozzu lamintari!
I'm not Complaining
by Turiddu Bella

A man who lived in Lithuania
went up to the Police Commissioner
to get a passport so he could go abroad
to any country of the West, he said.
So the Police Commissioner asked him:
“Are you not happy here, where you were born?
“I’m not complaining.” “Am I wrong to say
you are not satisfied with your profession!”

“I’m not complaining at all.” “So, explain!
Perhaps you are not happy with our climate?”
“I’m not complaining.” “If you want to leave,
however, you must tell why you want to go.
Are you cursed with a bad mother-in-law?”
“I’m not complaining.” “Or you don’t have trust
in our own government?” “No, it’s not that!
I’m leaving ‘cause o’er there I can complain.”
Lu malu distinu
Di Vito Blunda

Ch’è stranu di li omini u distinu!
Chiù ttempu passa chiù cala a sustanza;
E quasi cumminissi essiri vinu
chi cu lu tempu aumenta d’impurtanza.
Certu, finu a rrivari a li trent’anni
ogni scarpuzza si senti nu stivali.
Ma doppu chi cumincianu i malanni,
cummattiri ogni jornu contr’i mali.
Si poi arrivamu a triplicari i trenta,
scupremu tanti così cu lu scantu.
Picchi li casi, i chesi e li cunventa
sunu chiù vecchi e puru vannu tantu?
Pi c’un capisci a forza dâ murali,
senza vilenu vi la vogghiui diri:
l’omu invicchiannu sempri menu vali.
Li cosi antichi inveci fannu arricchiri.
Awful Destiny
by Vito Blunda

The destiny of man is really strange!
The more time passes, the more substance wanes.
It would be better maybe to be wine
which grows in value as time passes by.
Surely, until we reach the age of thirty,
even a slipper thinks that he’s a shiny boot,
but afterward, when troubles come our way,
we have to struggle every day with woes.
If then we manage to reach ninety years of age,
we fearfully discover many things.
Why do the houses, churches, monasteries
become more valuable as they grow old?
For those of you who don’t yet understand
I’ll say it plainly without any malice:
the older men become, the less they’re worth,
but ancient things instead will make you rich.
S i quarcunu lu taliava ’nfacci e iddu pinsava ca ’nni la taliata l’avissi vulutu smaccari, eranu guai e tagghi d’ugliu: allura Manueli s’abbintava comu ’na saitta, nun dannucci timpu a dda pirsuna di scansarisi di la so’ furia armarisca. A curpi di cauci ’nni li canneddi di li gammi, pugna ’nni la facci e sputazzati, lu jttava ’nterra riducinnulu privu di senziu e a mala partita, cu lu sangu ca cci curria ’nni li masciddi e ’nni lu cuddu, ca pari a cchiù murtu ca vivu. E si nun ci fussiru stati no una, ma due pirsuni chi pi casu passavano ’nni ddi paraggi, l’inferuciutu avissi cuntinuatu a cafuddari finu ’nfunnu.

Accussì era lu so carattiri, troppu pirmalusu: certu ca tutta sta bili cci vinia pi la so ’nsfirmità.

Manueli facia lu facchinu di chiazza; puru essennu di vascia statura, tarchiatiddu e rubustu, era dutatu di na forza straordinaria. Nun era però tantu marvaggiu comu si cridia finu a quannu nun vinia, assecunnu la so’ mentalità, smaccatu.

Assumigliava in modu ’mpressiunanti a lu re Vittoriu Manueli, cu li baffi ’nturciuniati, la facci sempri nnichiata a principiu di sciarra e li gammi curti

Li sacchi di centu chila cu ’na manu, senza lu minimu sforzu, si li mittiva ’nni li spaddi e a unu a unu li scarricava ’nni lu carrettu di masciu ’Ntoniu, chiddu c’arricampava granagli di li viddana, pi cuntu di don Caliddu ’ntisu “pinnadoru”.

Quannu, facinnu stu pistignu, c’eranu pirsuni ca lu taliavanu, allura si pigliava un saccu e si lu mittia sutta l’ascidda pi fari abbidiri ch’era troppu furzutu. La stissa vapparia facia cu li casci di pasta di centucincu chila di lu stabilimintu San Giseppi, quannu spissi voti vinia chiamatu in aiutu di lu carritteri, un dipinnenti di lu pastificiu, masciu Ninu Muntana.

’Ntutti li carriatini vulia sempri dimustrari ca era lu cchiù forti facchinu di la chiazza ... e pi chissu era lu prifiritu di li putiara, di li cummircianti e di li cravunara ca sparagnavanu facinnu iddu lu duppiu travagliu di l’a1tri.

Di casa stava in un dammusu di via Pecora ca tinia sempri pulitu. Si fidiva a fari tutti li cosi di casa: a mizzujumu cucinava calannucci ’nni la pignata di
If somebody looked him in the face with the intention of making fun of him, it meant trouble and fights. Then Manueli hurled himself against the man, not giving the poor fellow a chance to get away from his brute fury. With kicks on the shins, blows to the face and spits Manueli would throw him to the ground and beat him senseless until the blood ran down the man’s jaws and neck, making him look more dead than alive. And if there were not one but two men who happened to pass by, the wild man would continue to vent his fury.

That was his character, very touchy. Of course, his anger came from his infirmity.

Manueli worked as a porter in the square. In spite of the fact that he was short, he was stout and solid possessing extraordinary strength. He was not as bad as some believed, unless of course he was convinced that people were mocking him.

He looked in a marvelous way like the King Victor Emanuel. He had turned up moustaches, short legs and a face that looked like he was ready for a fight. He was able to pick up one hundred kilo sack with one hand without much effort. He put it on his shoulders and unloaded the sacks one by one onto the cart belonging to Master Ntoniu, the fellow who collected grain from the peasants on behalf of don Caliddu, nicknamed “golden feather”.

When he did his work, if there were people around he would pick up the sack and carry it under his arm to show that he was the strongest there. He did the same showing off with the 105-kilo boxes of pasta from the St. Joseph factory, when he was called as to help by the carter, master Nínu Muntana, an employee of the pasta factory.

In all the jobs he performed he made a point of showing he was the strongest porter in the square... and for this reason he was the favorite of the store owner and businessmen e coal merchants who saved money because he did the work of two men.

He lived in an attic on Via Pecora and kept his place always tidy. He was able to do everything around the house: a noon he cooked for himself, boiling
crita ‘na mezza chilata di spaghetì o attuoppaddeddi o pizziatini di pasta chi eranu lu scartu di lu stabilitimintu e di li casci. Appena cotta, si la cunzava cu la sarsa di pumadoru o cu l’asciattu, grattannuci supra tumazzu vicchii. La sira, quannu cci ‘nn’era bisugnu, si lavava li robbi ‘nni la pila, stinninnuli dintra. Quann’eranu sciauti, la matina prestu si stirava li pantaluna e li cammisì comu ’na vera massara.

La duminica nun travagliava; si vistia cu l’abitu di ‘ntoccu, cammisa bianca, scarpi allusciati cu lu fumu di la pignata, svarbatu la sira prima da maschì Giuvanninu Picuni, lu varbiri vicinu a la chiazza, unn’era abbonatu pi farisi la varba ‘na vota la simana. Doppu mangiari, niscia versu li quattro e accuminciava a passiari di punta a punta ‘nni “lu chianu baruni”, ’nzemmula a lu so uncu amicu Vicinzu Carusu, “lu vanniaturi”, vicinu di casa, cu mizzu sicarru addumatu, danna fumazzati potenti, tantu cu ca passava ‘nni lu paraggi, cacciava lu fumu cu li mani.

Lu vanniaturi, cchiù vasciu d’iddu, di curpuratura minuta ca paria un picciddru di ’na dicina d’anni, avia accanzatu sta ‘ngiuria di “carusu” pi la so vucidda tenurinali, ca arcuni mali lingua, smaccannulu e scimmiannulu, lu tenurinali lu ficiru addivintari “teni-u-rinali”.

Quannu li pisciara vinianu di Portu 'Mpeducli o di Siculiana pi vinniri lu piscatu, pigliavanu sempri ad iddu pirchi, vanniannu, si faciva capiri beni: “Pisci vivi ora ora scaricarau a lu chianu baruni : sardi, mirluzzi, pisci palummi, calamara e autru. ’Mmeci l’autru vanniaturi Ciccu bumma, cu la vuci arragatata e stunata, nun si facia capiri.

Manueli vinia caputu di Vicinzu muvinnu li mani, ljita ‘nni la frunti, ‘nni li labbra, e lu stissu facia l’amicu, comu si fussi statu anchi iddu surdumutu. Manueli pi unnici misi l’annu paria a li genti assa religiusu; ma era veramenti accussì? Jva a la Missa di duminica e ’nni lu cuppu di lu sagristanu, ca cugliva la limusina tra li fidili, cci mittia du’ sordi ; pua accattava tri o quattro lumina e tri o quattro cannili di cira, a secunnu lu guadagnu di la simana, e li purtava a la vicina chisa di Santu Antuninu, unni c’era la statua di San Caloiru, e cci l’addumava.

Ora sta chisa fu scunsacrata e la statua fu purtata a la Matrici, e misa ’nni la navata a manu manca.

Ma ’nni lu misi d’agustu, Manueli era cchiù ’nfvuratu: nun si sciarriava cu ccu lu smaccava, si faciva la cruci tri voti quannu passava vicinu li chisi, vasannu cu li mani ‘mmucca ... pirchi spirava ’nni la grazia ....

Di la prima finu a la quarta duminica d’agustu, ala rifriscata, si vinirava nni la chisa lu santu ’miaculusu numentru fora ’na dicina di tammurirnara ’ntunavanu la “diana”, ’na tammurinata spiciali ca vinia lu piaciri a sintila. A la fini, lu capu ciurma masciu Peppi Nobili, ca era lu cchiù bravu, jttava li mazzoli
about half a kilo of spaghetti or other types of pasta left over in the boxes of pasta from the factory. As soon as it was cooked, he added tomato sauce or tomato paste, grating some old cheese on top of it. At night, if necessary, he washed his clothes in the wash basin and hung them up to dry inside. When they were dried, he ironed his pants and shirts early in the morning like a true housewife.

On Sundays, he did not work. He would get dressed nicely with a white shirt, shoes shined with the smoke of the pot. The night before he had been given a shave by master Giuvanninu Picuni, the barber near the square, with whom he had contracted to get a shave per week. After eating he went out about four in the afternoon, and would walk up and down the Baruni square, together with his only friend, Vicinzu Carsu, “the hawker” who lived near him. He smoked half a cigar and exhaled some mighty puffs so that whoever passed nearby had to fan the smoke away with his hands.

The “hawker” was shorter than he was. He had a tiny body so that he looked about ten years old. He had been given the nickname of “carusu” (boy) because he had a voice of a tenor, but some bad mouths made fun of the name and played with the word “tenurinali” which means “tenor like” into “teni u rinali,” which means “he’s holding the night urinal”.

When the fishmongers came from Porto Empedocli or Siculiana to sell their catch, they always called him to hawk their fish. He hawked with a clear voice: “Fresh fish just now unloaded at Baruni square: sardines, codfish, dove fish, calamari and other fish” The other hawker, Ciccu Bumma, had a rasping and unpleasant voice and people did not understand him.

Manueli and Vicinzu understood one another moving their hands, with fingers on their foreheads, and on their lips. It was as if Vicinzu was deaf mute too.

Manueli seemed quite a religious man eleven months out of the year. Was he truly religious? He attended Mass on Sundays and placed two cents in the cup that the sacristan passed around and he lit three or four wax candles, according to his earnings for the week and brought them to the nearby Church of St. Antonine where there was a statue of St. Calogeru and lit them.

Now that church was deconsecrated, the statue was brought to the Mother Church and placed on the left nave.

During the month of August, Manueli seemed even more full of fervor; he did not fight with anyone for mocking him, he crossed himself three times when he passed near a church, kissing his hand with his mouth because he was hoping for a grace.

From the first to the fourth Sunday in August, people venerated the miraculous saint inside the church while outside about ten drummers played
all’aria e li ripigliava a volu, criannu alligria ’nni li genti cu battuti di manu ca facivanu arridiri a Manueli tantu ca videmma iddu battiva li mani.

Cci spirava tantu nni la guarigiuni, stu poviru disgraziatu, c’accussì putissi maritarisi. Pi sta co sa cci avia tintatu Vicinzu cu li viduvi e quarchi fimmina anziana bisugnusa, ma truvava sempri li porti chiusi.

La quarta duminica d’agustu, versus mizzujumu, quannu stava niscinnu di la chisa la statua di San Calò, vidinnu ca lu Santu nun cci facia la grazia, Manueli, di la cantunera ’nfunnu a la chiazza, comu un pazzu furiusu, cu na vuciazza lamintusa e rabbiusa contro lu Santu, cci fici li corna cu ddu’ mani.

Du’ carrabinera, ca eranu di sirviziu “in alta uniformi cu lu pinnacchiu ’ntesta”, di cursa l’acchiapparu e lu cunsignaru a li guardii cumunali ca si lu purtaru quasi di pisu a la caserma di la benimirita di via Regina Elena.

Doppu la festa, ca finia sempri cu li spari di li mascetti e lu castiddu di fucu preparatu di lu zu Vicinzu Butticè, chiamatu lu maschittaru, a Manueli lu lassaru liberu.

Lu ’nnumani di prima matina si prisinta a la prima Missa di patri arcipreti, ’nginucchiannusi, chiancinnu e dumannmmu pirdunu. Patri Picilli allura cci fici capiri ca nun vastavanu sulu li cannili e li lumina, ma cci vulivanu anchi li prighieri, pi putiri spirari ’nni lu ’mraculu.

Manueli capì all’abbicu l’arcipreti e accumincia daccapu a cumpurtarisi comu l’autri anni. Ma sti sceni si ripitianu annu doppu annu e nun si capiva si li genti avivanu pietà o si addivirtivanu. A ddi tempi li pirsuni nun cuncipianu la festa senza la vuciata e li gesti di Manueli e assistivanu a lu spittaculu sutta lu suli liuni, ca dava un caudu putenti, chiamatu appuntu ancora oj “lu caudu di San Calò”.

Chi cosa si putia fari allura pi fari finiri sta storia?

Cci vonsi tuttu lu bon sensu, la pacinzia e, pirchì no?, lu geniu di Vicinzu Carusu, l’unica pirsuna a cu era ligatu Manueli chi ascutava li so cunsigli senza pipitari (pi tantu iddu sulu era capaci di piciniaricci comu si fussi un omu normali e senza difettu) chi risurvi pi ’na vota e pi sempri l’annusu problema. C’un muvimentu di labbra e di manu Vicinzu cci fici capiri ca avia sbagliatu ’nnirizzu: “San Caloiru nun era lu Santu di li surdumuti, ma chiddu di li guaddarusi”. 
the “Diana” a special piece of drumming that was a pleasure to hear. In the end, the head drummer, master Peppi Nobili, who was the most expert, would hurl the sticks in the air and catch them in flight, evoking admiration and good cheer. People clapped their hands and Manuelli enjoyed the spectacle and clapped his hands as well.

He was so hoping for the healing miracle, this wretched fellow, so he could get married. Vicinzu had tried to fix him up with some widows or some older needy woman but he always found the doors shut.

On the fourth Sunday of August, at around noon, when the statue of St. Calogeru was about to come out of the church, seeing how the saint had not granted the miracle to him, Manuelli like a wild man ran from the corner of the square and with a woeful, angry voice screamed at the statue and with both hands gave him the sign one gives to cuckolds.

Two policemen who were there in their high uniforms and plumes up on their heads grabbed him quickly and handed him to the town guards who almost carried him to the police station on via Regina Elena.

After the feast, which always ended with some fire works and the fiery castle, prepared by uncle Vicinzu Buttìcè, known as “firecracker,” Manuelli was let out of prison.

The day after, early in the morning, he appeared at the first mass before the Parish priest, Father Picilli, and kneeling before him began to weep and ask for forgiveness. The priest explained that lighting candles was not enough. He needed to pray too to hope for a miracle.

Manuelli understood the parish priest in his own way and he resumed to behave as he had in the past. The scenes were repeated year after year and it was not clear whether the people had compassion for him or were simply amused. Those days people did not conceive a feast without Manuelli’s screaming and gestures and enjoyed the spectacle under the dog days sun which was very hot and was then called “The heat of St. Calogeru,” as it is today.

What had to be done to make the story end?

To do so they had to rely on the good sense and patience and why not, the genius of Vicinzu Carusu, the only man who had a link of friendship with Manuelli who listened to his advice without saying a word. (Besides he was the only one who could converse with him as though he were a normal person.) Carusu resolved the long-standing problem. With a movement of his lips and hands, Vicinzu made Manuelli understand that he had been praying to the wrong saint: “Saint Calogeru was not the saint protector of deaf-mutes, he was the saint protector of those suffering from hernia.”
L’appuntamentu di me patri

Di Cecelia Tumminello Deluso
tradottu in sicilianu di Gaetano Cipolla

I raggi dû suli ca passavanu attraversu i buttigghi culurati ca me matri tineva supra a finestra disignavanu na struttura comu luci ca ballavanu.

Stava priparannu u pranzu vistuta cu na vistina di casa: na vistina a ciuri, nu fardali inamidatu, aricchini e scarpi chî tacchi auti. Era sempre pronta ncasumai arrivassì quacchi ospiti inaspettamenti. Non avia autru chiffari chi livarisi u fardali.

Scantata iazzau lu sguardu versu lu suffittu unni si sinteva “rasca, rasca, ci ci”. Sautau narreri e indicannu u suffittu dissi “va rasca li corna di lu diavulu”. Lu scoiattulu stava circannu di farisi u nidu supra u tettu. Me matri non era amanti di l’animali. Ci dissi a me patri, “Si ddu scoiattulu sporgi a testa di lu suffittu ci dugnu na mazzata cu la pignata!”

Me patri ca era n’omu di granni energia e determinazioni nchianau supra u tettu p’aggiustari lu purtusu. Quannu lu sintiu idda nisciu pi vidiri chi faceva. Iddu diceva sempri “nsignati l’arti e mettila di parti.” Oggi aggiustava u tettu, dumani faceva u cuntadinu e dopudumani forsi u scarparu. Mentri me matri si avvicinava, lu scoiattulu saltau verso di me patri. Idda gridau “Nick, accura!” Idda iazzau u marteddu comu pi difennirisi, ma inveci sciddicau e cadiu supra u tettu. Mentri sciddicava s’aggrappau a na rama di n’alburu e cadiu nterra.

Subbitu me matri ci dissi mi si assittava. Cci purtau un biccheri d’acqua e ci misi un fazzulettu bagnatu supra a testa. Chistu era u rimediu universali sicilianu. Si ti scantavi, ti facevi mali o non ti sintevi bonu, subbitu si faceva stu ritu cumpostu di tri fasi. In quacchi modu inspiegabili aiutava.

Quacchi jornu dopu, me matri si misi a ridiri accussì forti c’avia i lacrimei nta l’occi. “Nick,” ci dissi, “pinsannu a la to facci scantata non sapia si pigghiari na machina fotografica o si t’avia pigghiari mentri cadevi.”

Dopu ca si misi in pensioni, me patri amava travagghiari ntô so giardineddu e farisi un pinnicuni sutta u pergolatu. A pergola era fatta di pali di lignu e era cuperta di racina russa di na banna e niura di l’autra. A tutti niautri nni piaceva mangiari la racina quannu maturava.

Dopu ca fineva u pranzu me matri sbirgava i faccenni dà casa. Spissu diceva “Signuri vi ringraziu ca Nick havi stu giardinu, sinnò l’avissi sempri ntra li pedi.” Idda sapeva ca iddu poi ntraseva purtannuci a virdura bedda fatta.

Essennu cattolichi non mangiavanu a carnì venerdì. E allura pi cena idda priparava suppa di cucuzza e pumadoru, basilicò e ova.
My Father’s Rendezvous

By Cecelia Tumminello Deluso

The sun streaming in the kitchen window passing through the colored glass bottles that my mother kept on her windowsill made a pattern that looked like dancing lights. She was preparing lunch dressed in her usual daytime stay-at-home clothes consisting of a floral house dress, a starched apron, earrings and high heeled shoes. She was always ready for unexpected guests, all she needed to do was remove the apron.

Startled, she looked up at the ceiling, “Rasca, Rasca, ci ci.” She jumped back and pointed at the ceiling saying, “Va rasca li corna di lu diavulu” (go scratch the devils horns). Lu scoiattulu, the squirrel, was trying to make a nest on the roof. My mother was not a lover of animals. She said to my father, if that scoiattulu sticks his head through the ceiling, “ci dugnu na mazzata cu la pignata!” (I’m going to whack it with the pot).

My father being a man of high energy and determination went out to fix the roof. He climbed the roof and fixed the hole. Hearing him she went out to see what he was doing. He always said “nsignati l’arti e mettila di parti (learn the trade and put it aside). Today he would be a roofer, yesterday he was a farmer and tomorrow he may be a shoemaker. As my mother approached, lu scoiattulu was jumping toward him. She screamed; “Nick, accura!” (watch out). He lifted his hammer to defend himself but instead he slipped and plopped on the roof. As he was sliding off the roof he grabbed a tree limb and landed on the ground.

Quickly my mother told him to sit down, got him a glass of water and a cold wet cloth for his head. This was a Sicilian cure-all. If you were scared, hurt yourself, or just not feeling well, there you were doing this three part ritual. Somehow it always helped.

A few days later my mother started to laugh so hard she had tears in her eyes. She said, Nick, I was thinking of the look of fright on your pale face and didn’t know if I should catch you or get a camera.

Since retiring, my father enjoyed working in his vegetable garden and taking an afternoon nap under the grape arbor. The arbor, made up of wooden slats, was covered with red grapes on one side and black grapes on the other. Everyone enjoyed picking them and eating them as they ripened.

As soon as lunch was over, Mommy busied herself with women’s work. She often said, “Signuri vi ringraziu ca Nick ave stu giardinu, sinno l’avissi sempri ntra li pedi.” (Thank you God) that Nick has this garden or else he
Dopu ca ci levava li erbazzi e li pulizzava iddu purtava i virduri a me matri e poi s’assittava supra na seggia a sdraia ca era sutta dà pergola unni si puteva mentiri un tavulu chì seggi a latu. A pergola cu dda bedda racina e ddi fogghi abbunnanti ci dava nu pocu di friscura nta li jurnati caddi d’austu.

Chiddu ca niautri non sapevamu era ca me patri assittatu sutta a pergola aveva n’appuntamento c’èn scoiattulu.

Dopu nni descriviu lu scoiattulu c’avia u pilu niuru e na gran cuda tisa como la piuma di lu carabineri supra lu cavaddu, e occhi furbi ca talivatu ogni messa ca faceva.

Avia cuminciatu c’èn tri scoiattuli ma dui d’iddi avianu pirdutu interessi e sulu chiddu avia turnatu.

Cu gran pacienza, ogni jornu, circau di faricci manciari quacchi cosa dî so mani. U scoiattulu s’avvicinau a picca a picca finu a quannu ci saltau supra i spaddi e cuminciavau a manciari nuciddi miricani dà so manu.

Iddu, sintennu ca me matri stava scupannu darreri a iddu, la chiamau suttavuci: “Jennie, Jennie! Veni ccà, talia, talia!” Idda si vutau e vidennucci u scoiattulu supra i spaddi e pinsannu ca u putissi assartari ci desi un gran corpu cà so scupa, Pamfiti, pamfiti. “Oh Madonna mia, Chi cci facistì?” dissi me patri. Iddi taliaru u scoiattulu ca paria mortu nterra. Ma iddu si riappi e sâ scappau supra l’alburu zuppicannu.

Me patri guardarau a me matri cu l’occhi di fora, scantatu e dissi: “Poviru Pippineddu, dopu du misi di daricci a manciari iddu finalmenti avia pigghiuatu fiducia in mia e ora ci va a diri è so amici di non aviri chiù fiducia nta l’omu chì nuciddi miricani e di stari attenti pi na fimmina sarvaggia cu la scupa.”

L’invernu vinni e a storia fu cuntata tanti voti facennu ridiri l’amici e li parenti, specialmenti quannu me patri cuntava ca iddu non avia vistu mai a me matri ristari senza paroli cu l’occhi spalancati comu s’avissi vistu a nu fantasma.

Poi subitu vinni l’estati e me patri nni invitau a tutti pi canusciri u so novu amicu Giorgiu, lu scoiattulu.

Taliannu ntô giardinu vistimu ca non c’era mancu na scupa in giru.
would be always under my feet). She knew he would soon bring in the mature vegetables.

As Catholics we never ate meat on Fridays So for dinner she was going to make suppa di cucuzza e pumadoru, basilicò e ova. (Squash soup made with tomato basil and eggs).

After he weeded and watered and brought the vegetables to my mother he sat in his lounge chair under the arbor which was large enough to cover a table and chairs. The lush grapes and leaves made a cool covering on this hot August day.

What none of us knew was he was having an afternoon rendezvous cu lu scoiattulu (with a squirrel).

He later described this beautiful scoiattulu with black fur and a stiff bushy tail like the plume on the mounted policemen’s hat from the old country with white bristles, (lu pilu niuru cu la cuda tisa comu la piuma di lu carabineri supra lu cavaddu) and occhi furbi (wise expressive eyes) that watched his every move.

He started with three scoiattulu but two of them soon lost interest. Only this one came back. Patiently, day in and day out, he tried to get the squirrel to eat from his hand. Closer and closer the scoiattulu came and on this day the scoiattulu jumped on his shoulder and ate the peanuts from his hand.

Hearing my mother starting to sweep behind him, he called her “Jennie, Jennie; Veni talia, talia! (look, look) in a hushed voice.

She turned around only to see lu scoiattulu on his shoulder. Thinking he was going to attack him again, she quickly hit him with the broom. Wack! Plop! Oh! Madonna Mia, chi ci facisti? (Mother Mary what have you done? They both stood speechless looking at the dead squirrel.

To their surprise, regaining his strength and limping quickly ran up the tree.

My father, looking at my mother whose eyes were wide with fright, said “Poviru Pippineddu, after two months of feeding him, he finally trusted me and now all he can do trust that man with the peanuts, and watch out for the crazy lady with the broom.”

Winter came and the story was retold many times. Bringing laughter to friends and relatives, especially when my father said he never saw my mother speechless before and her eyes looked like they had seen (a ghost).

Soon, summer came and we were all invited to meet his new friend Giorgiu lu scoiattulu.

We all looked around, there was not a broom in sight!
Oggi pù Jornu dû Patri, mi ricordu di me patri, ca io chiamava Pop ca è simili ô “papà” sicilianu. Di carusittu passava i jurnati cu me matri ca era sempri indaffarata a cucinari, lavari e occuparisi dî so quattro figghi. Pop era chiddu ca mantineva a famigghia cû so travagghiu. Diceva ca “a responsabbilità dà matri era di occuparisi dà famigghia ntà casa.” Pop travagghiava sempri.

Mentre io crisceva, Pop quacchi vota mi purtava ô giardinu zoologicu o a Coney Island o a visitari i nostri parenti ntô Bronx e a Staten Island. Datu ca vivevamu a Brooklyn sti viaggi eranu emozionanti, comu si issimu ntôn paesi straneru.

Quannu avia 14 anni ci dummannaiu a me patri di purtarimi a vidiri na partita di baseball chî Yankees. Pop dissi ca “U Baseball non è intirissanti”. Inveci mi proposi di purtarimi a vidiri n’opira. Mi purtau a vidiri UMatrimoniu di Figaru di Mozart e a mia di tannu mi ha sempri piaciutu l’opira. Pop mparau ad amari l’opira di carusu in Sicilia unni tutti canuscevanu i miludii di Verdi e di Puccini.

Quannu Pop arrivau ntê Stati Uniti all’età di 16 anni, stesi a Boston pi 10 anni, ma poi dicidiiu di veniri a N.Y. Ci dumannaiu, “Picchì ti nni isti di Boston?” Mi dissi: “Vinni a New York pi sentiri cantari a Enricu Carusu e poi picchì c’eranu chiù possibilità di travagghiu a N.Y.”

Ci dumannaiu comu mai avia vinutu in America. Mi rispunniu: “Vinni in America pi truvari travagghiu e p’aiutari a me famigghia. Avia intenzioni di ristari ccà na para d’anni e poi riturnari ô me pais unni avia crisciutu.” Poi aggiunciu: “Pruvaiu a riturnari na para di voti e mi purtau puru a famigghia a Vizzini, ntô 1932. Ci rimammi 9 misi ma poi capiu ca avia divintatu troppu miricanu e non putia chiù viviri ntôn paiseddu. Accussì turnannu a New York. Grazzii a Diu!”

Ci dumannaiu, “Pop, picchì non ti purtasti a to famigghia cu ttia in America pi viviri tutti assemi?” Me patri mi rispunniu ca “A me vita a ddi tempi era assai dura quannu arrivaiu ntô 1912. Appi a mparari na nova lingua e truvari un travagghiu ca pagava bonu era difficili. C’eranu assai pregiudizi contra ê taliani. Assai Miricanu pinsavanu ca nuautri eramu tutti mafiusi.” Poi continuau: A paraguni dà vita cuncitata e i condizioni di viviri dà maggior parti di li Taliani a Boston e a New York, u paiseddu unni viveva a me famigghia era nu paradisu
On this Father’s Day, I remember Pop, short for Poppa, which is a term of endearment in Italian. As a child, I spent most of my time with Mom who was always cooking, cleaning and caring her four children. Pop was the breadwinner. He said “It’s the mom’s job to take care of the family at home” Pop was always working!

As I grew older, Pop would sometimes take me to the Zoo or to Coney Island or visit relatives in the Bronx and Staten Island. Since we lived in Brooklyn these trips were exciting, like going to a foreign country.

When I was fourteen, I asked my father, “Would you please take me to the ball game to see the Yankees play?” Pop said, “Baseball is not very interesting, instead I’ll take to see an opera.” He brought me to see Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* and I've loved opera ever since. Pop learned to love opera as a boy in Sicily where everyone was familiar with the melodies of Verdi and Puccini.

When Pop arrived in the U.S. from Sicily at the age of 16, he lived in Boston for ten years, but he then decided to come to N.Y. I asked him, “Why did you leave Boston?” He said, “I came to N.Y. first to hear Enrico Caruso sing and second because there were job opportunities in N.Y.”

I asked him why he had come to America. He said, “I came to America alone to find work and to help my family in Italy. I planned to stay for a few years and then return to my family and home town where I grew up.” He added, “I tried to return several times and even brought the family to Vizzini, Sicily in 1932 where we lived for nine months, but I realized that I become too American, and could not live in a small town again, so we returned to New York. Thank God.”

I asked Pop, “Why didn’t you bring the rest of your family to America so you could all be together?” Pop said, “The life I experienced in America from the time I arrived in 1912 was very hard. I had to learn a new language and finding a good-paying job was very difficult. There was also a lot of prejudices against Italians. Many Americans believed we all belonged to the Mafia.” He continued, “Compared to the hectic life and poor living conditions of most Italians in Boston and N.Y. the little town where my family lived in Sicily was a paradise of tranquility. I preferred to help my family by working here so they could continue to live there.”
di tranquillità. Accussì prifiriu aiutari a me famigghia travagghiannu ccà in modu ca iddi putissiru campari ddà.


Me patri non amava a guerra e l’ammazzatini senza sensu. Ntô 1914 mentri era a Boston riciviu l’avvisu di richiamu dâ leva militari. Duvia turnari in Italia pi fari u surdatu. Puru so patri ci cunsigghiau di turnari, ma iddu avia un cucinu ca era anarchicu e iddu ci cunsigghiau di non ci iri picchì era probabili ca mureva nta guerra.

Pop dissi: “Ascutaiu tutti i boni ragjuni di me cucinu, l’anarchicu, pi non riturnari in Italia e chiddu ca mi dissi mi cunvinciu. Non turnaiu in Italia e tanti dî me amici di carusanza mureru nta guerra.”

Ci dumannaiu picchì non vosi fari u militari pû so paisi e mi rispunniu: “L’America è ora u me paisi e dicchiù,” aggiungiu, “si avissi turnatu in Italia ntô 1914 probabilmenti tu non fussi natu e ora non fussimu ccà a fari sta cuvirsazioni.”

Mi ricordu comu era orgugliusu quannu mi vitti pigghiari u diploma di High School e poi a lauria di l’università dà Scola Graduata dà Fordham University. Iddu appi sulu tri anni di scola furmali in Italia, ma s’insignau iddu a leggiri e a scriviri in italianu e ‘nglisi. Avia na mimoria straordinaria e si ricurdava i paroli di tanti opira. Mi dissi na vota: “Studia assai picchì l’istruzioni è assai mpurtanti. E’ a porta pûn futuru di successu.”

Pop mi fu sempri vicinu ntê bisogni. Era carpinteri di prufissioni e quannu accattaiu a prima casa iddu vinni e cuvirthiu u scantinatu facennumi na bedda sala di ricricazioni. Era veru bravu nta so prufissioni. Vossi sapiri comu l’avia mparatu.

Mi spiegau: “Quannu avia 13 anni me patri mi mannau a stari cu me ziu ca era mastru carpinteri a Catania. Travagghiaiu pi 4 anni cu iddu p’apprenniri u misteri e mû mparaiu sutta a so guida rigurusa e attenta. Quannu vinni in America a 16 anni era abbastanza bravu pi travagghiari a fari pianuforti pà compagnia Hamlin di Boston.”

Pop m’aiutau a accattarimi a prima machina, na Chevrolet Impala ca custava $2,000. Avia sulu $500 e pû restu vuleva mpristarli di la banca. Me patri mi dissi: “Picchì pagari interessi pû prestitu? Ti li dugnu io i sordi chi mancanu.” Accittaiu e poi ripagaiu u debitu a picca a picca nta l’anni siguenti.
Pop had a sensitive and gentle soul. He would even cry when he listened to some emotional scene from an opera like *La Bohème*. Mimi’s death scene always “broke him up”. Yet he was also very strong and courageous. He said, “Once a big Irishman called me a stupid guinea wop. I went after him with an ex and he quickly apologized. I taught him a lesson not to insult Italians.”

My father also hated war and senseless killing. In 1914, while he was living in Boston, he received a draft notice to return to Italy and serve in the Italian Army. His father even urged him to return. However, a cousin who was an anarchist advised him not to go or he would probably be killed.

Pop said, “I listened to all the good reasons my cousin, the anarchist gave me not to return and they made sense, so I did not return to join the Italian Army. Many of my childhood friends who were drafted and went to war were killed.”

I asked Pop why he didn’t return to serve his country. He said: “America was my country, and furthermore,” he added, “if I had returned to Italy in 1914, there was a good chance you would not have been born and we would not be having this conversation.”

I remember how proud Pop was when he saw me graduate from High School and from College and then from Graduate School at Fordham University. He only had three years of formal education in Italy, but he was self-taught. He learned to read and write in Italian and in English and he also had an incredible memory and was able to remember the lyrics of many operas. He always told me: “Study hard because education is very important. It’s the door to a successful future.”

Pop was always there when I needed him. He was a cabinet maker by trade and I bought my first house on Long Island, he came over and I assisted him in converting the basement into a beautifully paneled recreation room. He really was very skillful at his trade. I asked him how he had learned it.

He said: “When I was 13 years old my father sent me to live with my uncle who was a master cabinet maker in Catania. I worked as his apprentice for 4 years and learned the trade under his keen and rigorous supervision. When I came to America at age 16 I was skilled enough to make pianos for the Hamlin Piano Co in Boston.”

Pop also helped me buy my first car, a 1960 Chevy Impala which cost $2,000.00 I only had $500 and was going to finance the rest, but Pop said: “Why pay interest on a loan? I will give you the rest of what you need.” I accepted his offer as a loan and paid it back over the years.

When I was nine years old, my parents moved from Brooklyn to Queens. They bought a single family house in Corona for $3,500 and my parents lived there many years. Pop had made many improvements on the house over the
Quannu io avia 9 anni i me ginituri si trasfireru di Brooklyn a Queens. Accattaru na casa a na famigghia a Corona pi $3,500 e iddi stesiru ddà pi tanti anni. Pop ci fici tanti travagghi di miglioramentu a la casa. Me matri però era stanca di nchianari e scinniri scali dû scantinatu finu ô dammusu e cci dumannava spissu a me patri di accattari nautra casa a un liveddu. Me patri finalmenti cunsintiu e ntô 1965 truvarunu na bedda casitta stili ranch a un liveddu a Oceanside a Long Island.

Me matri fu filici ntâ so nova casa c’avia un giardineddu darreri. Sfortunatamenti ntô 1969 si ammalau di cancru e muriu. Me patri fu distruttu dà perdita di so mugghieri, dà so cumpagna di vita c’avia statu cu iddu pi ccchiù di 50 anni.

Pop continuau a viviri ntâ so casitta pi li prossimi 17 anni. I me soru e io ievamu a visitarlu spissu e iddu vineva a stari cu ognunu di niautri pi stari assemi. Quannu fici 90 anni si ammalau e fu purtatu o spitali picchi ci vinni a malatia dû cori. Iu a visitarlu e ncuraggiarlu a sintirisi megghiu ma era dipressu e si sinteva tristi pi la perdita di so mucchieri e dî so amici: Mi dissi “Aiu fattu na vita longa e bona e ti auguru a ttia di fari u stissu. Sugnu prontu pi partiri.” Muriu u jornu dopu tranquillamenti ntô sonnu. Mi ricordu sempri ca me patri fu un giganti ca m’aiutau a essiri chiddu ca sugnu oggi.
years. My Mom was tired of climbing steps from the basement to the attic to clean this big house and she kept urging Pop to move into a ranch, one floor type house. Reluctantly Pop agreed. They found a cute ranch house in Oceanside, L.I and moved in 1965.

My Mom was very happy in her new house which had a little garden in the back. Unfortunately, a few years later, she became ill and in 1969 she died of cancer. Pop was devastated at losing his wife and life long companion. They had been married over 50 years.

Pop continued to live in his ranch home for the next 17 years. My sisters and I would visit him often and he would spend time in each of our respective homes to be with family. In his 90th years, he became ill and in the hospital being treated for congestive heart failure. I went to visit him and encouraged him to get well but he was depressed, feeling very sad at having lost his wife and his friends. He said: "I've had a long and good life and wish you have a good one too. I'm ready to go!" He died the next day, quietly in his sleep.

I'll always remember Poppa as a giant of a man who helped me become what I am today.
Sirragghiu, quannuo scurava, mittevamu u firruggiu.- Com’è successu, allura, ca ti pigghiarunu? Dui donni parlanu suttavuci; sunu assittati, l’una accantu a l’autra, supra na panca di lignu dà chesa di sant’Aita a Pidata. Una di li dui si iazza, pir un attimu, e, ‘nginucchiannusi sutta a santa, scoti a testa e murmuria:— Aita, pir dda petra unni lassasti a stampa dû to pedi, ora ti dumannu: pirduna i mala carnì ca di mia fícìru straminiu.

Nu saristanu arriva, strascinannu i pedi, cu l’astuta cannìli in manu: fà signu ca si nn’hannu a ghiri Ricogghiunu a truscìa, cu nu gestu rapidu si signanu a frunti e suspiranu:

Fu una di ddi voti ca accadiu u fattu. Chistu è u cuntu di nu piscaturi, ca abitava vicinu a turri dà tunnara, a Mondellu, supra l’attaccu dî Saracini, ntà nuttata dû 15 austu dû 1562.—Era na notti senza luna, u scru si fiddiava, aviamu appena astutatu a cannìla, pirchì ntra tricchi e barracchi, prima di novì, i picciotti nun dannu rizetu, ca si sinterunu i campani sunari. Chi fu? Quaccunu rispunnu: i turchi sunu junti a la marina! Pirati cu li facci d’infernu, sbarcarunu a la lanterna dû molu. Possibli, dissi, finu a dintra i nostri casi? E accussì, mi allazzai la cinta, e scappai. Me mugghiieri gridau— Accura! Pensa è to’ figghi!—
Ancient Chronicles
The Turks Have Landed on Our Shores!

By Antonia Arcuri

Translated into English By Gaetano Cipolla

In the serraglio we locked our doors when darkness fell. “How did they manage to capture you then?” Two women are whispering, sitting down one next to the other on a wooden bench inside the Church of St. Agatha, the Step. One of them got up for a moment then kneeling below the Saint shook her head and whispered: “St. Agatha, in memory of that stone where you left your imprint, I ask you now to forgive those scoundrels who had their will with me.”

A sacristan arrived shuffling his feet with the candle extinguisher in his hands and motioned to the women that they had to go. They gathered their sack and with a quick gesture they crossed themselves and sighed:

“Without this relief I would not be alive,” said the younger woman. They went their separate ways, one going up Vespers Street, the other down. Maruzza who had kneeled to pray had lived in the old serraglio quarter from birth. Her father, not having any male children, took her along when there was work. They did not have to go far to the sea: from there it was all downhill.

One of those times the deed occurred. This is

Touareg, by Nicolò D’Alessandro, China Ink.

U rapportu dì surdati dà Reali Marina fu laconicu: — “In data 15 austu, a li decì di sira, cù fauri dû scuru surdati saracini hannu attaccatu dui galeotti di piscaturi, depridannuli e facennu du priggiunerì: nu piscaturi e u so unicu figghiu.”

A la stissa ura e ntà stissa chesa, i du donnì si rincontranu. —Maruzza, non mi aviti dittu, ancora, comu vi pigghiaru,” dissi Maria-Teresa Schiavu. — Fu na notti senza luna, pir la festa di l’Ascinsioni. Me patri mi dissi: — Vestiti! Ammucciati i capiddi dintra na birritta scura di lana, e nu paru di pantaluni, stritti â cinta, mi ficiru pariri n’omu. A gentì di mari non ama fimmini pedipedi.

*Arab galley from La cantigas de Santa Maria, by Alfonso el Sabio (1221-12840. From Arabs and Normans in Sicily and Southern Italy, Riverside Press, 2007.*
the tale of one of the fishermen who lived near the tower of the tuna factory, in Mondello, relating the attack by the Saracens on the night of August 115, 1562. “It was a moonless night, the dark was so thick you could slice it. We had barely put out the candle since between this and that the boys before nine o’clock will not stay still, when we heard the bells ringing. What was it? Someone answered: ‘The Turks have just landed on our shores! They’re pirates with hellish faces and they landed at the lantern of the pier.’ Is it possible, even in our own homes? And so I tightened my belt and ran. My wife yelled out: ‘Be careful! Think of the children!’” The tower’s guardian had seen everything from a distance and had rung the bells. The soldiers arrived, you could hear rifle shots. “I can still hear the voices of the Saracens in my ears. They shouted ‘I laha illa Allah, God is God.’ We too were shouting: ‘They landed under Mt. Pellegrinu. Let’s run away! No, let’s shoot! With what, sticks?’ They captured a fisherman and his son. A hellish night,” related Ninu Mastrupaulu, the oldest fisherman on the pier and he crossed himself.

The report of the soldiers of the Royal Navy was laconic: “On August 15, at ten in the evening under the cover of darkness, Saracen soldiers attacked two fishing galleys, robbing them and taking two prisoners: a fisherman and his only son.”

*Arab cavalry from La cantigas de Santa Maria, by Alfonso el Sabio (1221-12840. From Arabs and Normans in Sicily and Southern Italy, Riverside Press, 2007.*


—E come fu ca turnastivu- dissi l’amica, giarna in faccia e cun filu di vuci.

—Chistu è nu sigretu ca nun pozzu rivelari a nuuddu; ma quannnu turnai, e turnai sua, i turmenti non avianu finutu: certi monachi mi ficiru nu prussu! E io giurava e spirgiurava ca non avia mai rinnigati u nostru signuri! Cu l’aiutu di sant’Aita e di santa Brigida sugnu ccâ! Si abbraccianu i due donni, poi si salutanu: una nchiana e l’autra scinni.

di Dialogos Corleone www.corleonologos.it

curtisia di Lumie di Sicilia
At the same time and in the same church, the two women met again: “Maruzza, you did not tell me yet how they captured you,” said Maria-Teresa Schiavo. “It was a moonless night on the Feast of the Ascension. My father told me: ‘Get dressed!’ I covered my hair under a dark woolen hat and I put on a pair of pants and tightened my belt. They made me look like a man. Sea folk do not like to have women around. We were returning after catching sardines and bonitos. I kept thinking ‘tomorrow I will go to the Vucciria market and I will sell our share to Master Andrew.’ We were poor, we managed to make something when the fishing boats went out. We wanted to go back to port when the youngest of the men said: ‘Let’s wait a bit, this way we will the fireworks.’ I was happy because I had never seen them close up. My father was upset. I thought he was just tired. The fireworks had just begun when I heard some people screaming: ‘Mercy to God, the Turks!’”

“My father threw a blanket over me. I don’t know how long I stayed like that. It seemed a century to me, but then they saw me. They took me together with my father. I heard the voice of one of them who shouted orders. Then, nothing any more. When I woke up I saw many rugs on the ground and women all around me. They did not speak my language, but they smiled and laughed, except the older one who clapped her hands and gave orders. They did not treat me badly at all, on the contrary! I can’t tell you how many times they bathed me. They left me alone. In a group of women, afterward, I found one who spoke my language. She too had been captured, poor thing! She told me that if I wanted to live I had to change religion. No! You can ask me anything except that! You cannot touch the saints. But then little by little, I relented. What’s more important, your body or your name? A name or faith? I would no longer be Maruzza, but perhaps this was my only hope to stay alive. I chose the name Fatima, on account of the Madonna of the three little shepherds. I became Fatima, one of them, but in my heart I remained a Christian. How long was I there? About ten years, more or less. They made me work as a cleaning woman. Those people are fanatics for cleanliness and for praying.”

With an ashen face and barely audibly her friend asked her: “How did you return?”

“That is a secret that I can’t relate, but when I returned, and I returned alone, my torments were not over. Some monks took me to the tribunal. I kept swearing and swearing that I had not rejected our Lord. Then with the help of St. Agatha and St. Brigida I made it here.” The two women embraced, then bid good bye to each other and went their separate ways: one going up the street, the other down.

From Dialogos Corleone www.corleonedialogos.it
Courtesy of Lumie di Sicilia
A nostra rivista ha pubblicato una para d'articoli su 'l'opera di fotografo Nino Bellia. N'a su numiru vossimu includiri du fotografii di l'urtimu calinnariu COES 2009 ca nni desi in Sicilia duranti a nostra visita annuali. / We have often shown the work of photographer Nino Bellia in Arba Sicula. These two are from his most recent calendar COES 2009 that he gave us this year during our annual visit. They are two magical Sicilian landscapes.
Saggi / Essays
I Siciliani hannu u sensu di l’umorismu?

di Gaetano Cipolla

I Siciliani sunu canusciuti pi non essiri troppu expansivi comu i Napulitani. Iddi sunu rapprisintati ntà stampa e tv comu cristiani ncazzati, boi-muti sempri chiù pronti a scuppiari cu rabbia ca cù risu. U scritturi francisi Guy de Maupassant ca visitau a Sicilia ntò 19esimu seculu ossirvau a diffirenza tra Napulitani e Siciliani e fici nutari ca ntò sicilianu “attruvati dda gravitàdi l’arabu”. E D. H. Lawrence ca passau assai tempu a Taurmina e scissi ddà Lady Chatterley’s Lover (ca è a storia di l’intrighi di so mugghieri cu omni localsi e specialmenti cu Giuseppe d’Allura, un carritteri di Castelmola, appi chistu di diri supra i Siciliani: “Sti Siciliani sunu tutti seri e niuri dintra e senza spiranza”. E scritturi comu Leonardo Sciascia, Vincenzo Consolo e Gesualdu Bufalinu, tutti siciliani, spissu e vulinteri rappresentanu i Siciliani comu cristiani rassignati, taciturni e dispirati ca non sannu né cantari né ridiri. Paolo Arena, auturi di La Sicilia nella sua storia e nei suoi problemi (Palermo: F. Agate Ed. 1949), u libbru cchiù appassiunatu supra a Sicilia ca haiu mai liggiutu, afferma ca ogni artista sicilianu, ogni filosofu e ogni scritturi è na fiura tragrica, un pazzu introspettivu, un cantanti di milancunii e desolazioni ca strinciunu u cori ntà na mmorsa di chiantu; iddu è nu investigaturi senza cori, n’omu ca si pizzia e pizzia a l’autri finu ò puntu ca c’è na strana fratillanza di cori, spiritu e timpiramentu tra u nostru populu e a Russia di Dostoyevsky”. Arena manteni ca a Sicilia produciu “granni scritturi, pinsaturi e puetti, ma mancu un surrisu dû tempu dî Rumani”.

Chistu è n’apprezzamentu assai pessimisticu dû caratteri di Siciliani. I media miricani sutta forma di cinema, libri e programmi ntà televisioni unni ci su Siciliani hannu contribbuitu assai a criari l’immagini dû sicilianu comu un omu solitariu, taciturnu, riflittenti e arraggiatu ca non sapi apprizzari na risata, na canzuna o l’umorismu. Pinsati, pir esempiu, è pirsunaggi dà famigghia Corleoni ntè film dû Padrinu. U pirsunaggiu di don Corleoni, rapprisintatu di Marlon Brando prima e poi di Robert De Niro nun surridiu mancu na vota nta tutti i dui film. Si mi ricordu bonu, l’unica vota ca don Corleoni mustrau n’aspettu menu pisu mancu, meni i denti di scoccia d’aranciu pi scantari a so niputeddu, prima di moriri supra na troffa di pumadoru. A rapprisintazioni di Al Pacino comu Michael Corleoni fu ancora chiù scura. Pacino rappresenta a Michael comu un tipu silinziusu e forti ca pari c’avisì u pisu di tutta a so famigghia supra i spaddi. Non sapi rilassarisi. Si iddu avia u sensu di l’umorismo nun lu dimuestra a nuddu. Non fa miravigghia allura si i Siciliani hannu a
Do Sicilians Have a Sense of Humor?

By Gaetano Cipolla

It is widely believed that Sicilians, unlike the Neapolitans, are typically not very expansive with their emotions. They are usually represented by the media as brooding, somber characters who are more prone to explode in anger rather than in laughter. The French writer Guy de Maupassant who visited Sicily in the nineteenth century observed a difference between Neapolitans and Sicilians and pointed out that in the Sicilian “you find much of the gravity of the Arab.” And D.H. Lawrence who spent quite a bit of time in Taormina and wrote Lady Chatterley’s Lover there, which is the story of his wife’s affairs with local men and especially Giuseppe d’Allura, a carrettiere from Castelmola, wrote the following about the character of Sicilians: “These Sicilians are all grave and black inside and without hope.” And writers like Leonardo Sciascia, Vincenzo Consolo and Gesualdo Bufalino, all Sicilians, have frequently portrayed them as sullen, resigned, taciturn and desperate individuals who do not know how to sing or laugh. Paolo Arena, author of La Sicilia nella sua storia e nei suoi problemi (Palermo: F. Agate Ed. 1949), the most passionate book on Sicily I’ve ever read, observes that every Sicilian artist, every philosopher, every writer is a tragic figure, an introspective madman, a singer of melancholia and desolations that constrict the heart in a vice of crying, he is a heartless investigator, a man who tears himself and others apart, harsh to such a degree that the strange brotherhood of heart, spirit and temperament between our people and Dostoyevsky’s Russia becomes manifest...” He claimed that Sicily had produced great writers, thinkers, and poets, “but not a single smile from the Roman era forward.”

This is indeed quite a pessimistic appraisal of the character of Sicilians. The American media in the form of movies, books, and television shows in which Sicilians play a role have contributed in no small part to the image of the Sicilian as a lonely, taciturn, reflective and angry character who is unable to enjoy laughter or singing or humor. Consider for example, the character of the Corleone family in the Godfather movies. The figure of Don Corleone as played by Marlon Brando first and Robert De Niro, as the younger Corleone in part II, never cracked a smile or laughed throughout the length of the two movies. If I recall correctly the only time Don Corleone showed a lighter side was when he put fake teeth made from an orange rind to scare his grandson, before he fell dead among his garden tomatoes. Al Pacino’s portrayal of Michael Corleone was even more somber. Pacino portrays Michael as the strong, silent
riputazioni di genti ca porta sempri facci tristi, cu l’anguli dà bucca vuotati pi
sutta, comu isuli senza cuntattu cu nuddu. A sicilitudini signifika oggi
scuraggiamentu, rassignazioni, fatalismu e silenziu cupu. Secunnu stu ritrattu i
Siciliani sunu incapaci di ridiri d’iddi stissi e dû munnu ca ì circunna. Nta stu
saggju vogghiu esplorari stu mitu e circari di rispunniri a dumanna: “I Siciliani
hannu un sensu di l’umorismu? Sannu ridiri d’iddi stissi e dû munnu?”

Naturalmenti, quannu si tratta di Siciliani non si pò mai essiri categorichi
e assoluti pà semplici ragiuni ca iddi sunu cristiani cumplicati e quannu unu
penza di aviri truvatu a chiavi subbitu appari nautra porta unni a chiavi non
apri cchiù. Ad ogni modu, u stereotipu dû sicilianu senza umorismu ha statu
stabbilutu e codificatu e na vota ca sti stereotipi sunnu accittati universalmenti,
è difficili di curreggirli. Ma

stasira vogghiu sminuzzari
stu stereotipu a picca a picca
e dimusstrari ca i Siciliani
sannu ridiri d’iddi stissi e di
l’autri e ca iddi apprezzanu
u scherzu. Infatti, a mia pari
cu hannu un sensu di
l’umorismu assai sviluppatu
cu lì accumpagna duranti i so
tre mila anni di storia. Anzi,
considdirannu dda longa e
difficili storia cu visti tanti
populi diversi ca vinnunu
n’Sicilia e si nni ieru, fussi
veramentu ironicu si i Siciliani
non avissiru sviluppatu u
sensu di l’umorismu. Sulu
taliannu i fatti traggichi dà so
storia attraversu u specchiu
deformanti dû circu equestri
i siciliani hannu suprav-
vissutu finu a oggi comu
pinsaturi indipinnenti; sulu
aduttannu n’atteggiamentu
riflissivu ca è accittatu di tutti
ntà l’isula comu a giusta
risposta contru i vicissitutini
dà vita i Siciliani hannu

Pubblicamu a fotu di Salvatore Zanchì vincitrici du 17esimu
Trofeo Interaziendale ASC 2005, mannata di Nino Bellia.
chavi quacchi cosa di l’umorismu pirandellianu./ We publish the
winning photo by Salvatore Zanchì of the 17th Trofeo
Interaziendale ASC 2005, sent by Nino Bellia, because it
contains a bit of Pirandellian humor.
type who bears the weight of his family’s woes upon his shoulders and he cannot let himself go. If he had a sense of humor he certainly gave no evidence of it. No wonder that Sicilians have gotten the reputation of being people who always wear long faces, with the corners of their mouths turned downwards, sad, islands unto themselves. Sicelitude has come to mean for some discouragement, resignation, fatalism and brooding silence. Sicilians, according to this portrayal, are incapable of laughing at themselves and at the world around them. Tonight I want to explore this myth and try to answer the question: do Sicilians have a sense of humor? Do they know how to laugh at themselves and at the world?

Of course, dealing with Sicilians you cannot be too categorical and absolute in one way or the other, for the simple reason that they are really complex individuals and the moment you think you have found the key another door presents itself on which the key does not work. Nevertheless, the stereotype of the humorless Sicilian has been established and codified and once such stereotypes become universally accepted, it is very difficult to correct them. But tonight I will try to chip away at this stereotype and suggest that Sicilians know how to laugh at themselves and at others and they know how to enjoy a joke. Indeed, I think they have a highly developed sense of humor that has accompanied them through their three thousand years of history. Considering their long and tortuous history that has seen so many different people come and go as conquerors, it would be quite ironical if Sicilians did not develop a keen sense of humor. Only by seeing the tragic events of their history through a carnival reflecting mirror could Sicilians have survived to this day as independent thinkers, only by adopting a reflective attitude that is universally accepted on the island as a just response to the vicissitudes of life could they have overcome the ever present temptation to become tragic figures. That attitude is expressed in a nearly untranslatable exhortation that you hear Sicilians use often as advice to others when things get too overwhelming for them. The expression is “futtitinni!” No matter how important things are, no matter how upset others may get, this advice tells people that nothing is worth getting sick over it. “Futtitinni” means “don’t let it weigh on you too much, don’t be obsessive about it!” This expression that is typically Sicilian was brought to a grotesque dimension by Pirandello when he invented “la filosofia del lontano” for one of his characters. “The philosophy of distance” was a character’s response to the tragedies of life. In order not to be too upset by painful events, this Pirandellian character projected them into the past, pretending they happened not that day or the week before, but years ago. Thus one day his young daughter died and he responded by being cheerful as though the death had occurred many years before. Pirandello’s “filosofia del lontano” is a form of “futtitinni”
pututu vinciri contru a tintazioni di divintari pirsunaggi traggichi. Stu atteggiamentu si esprimi cu na esortazioni ca i Siciliani usanu pi dari un cunsigghiu quannu i cosi dà vita minaccianu di supraniarili. L’espressioni ca è quasi intraducibili è “futtitinni!” Non importa la serietà dû problema, o si la genti pò arraggiarisi, stu cunsigghiu dici a la genti ca non c’è nenti stut munnu ca vali la pena di ammalarisi. “Futtitinni!” voli diri “non ti prioccupari troppu, non ti criari n’ossessioni!” Sta espressioni ca è tipicament siciliana fu purtata a na dimensioni gruttisca di Pirandellu quannu invintau a “filosofia dû luntanu” pi unu dì so pirsunaggi. A “Filosofia dà distanza” era nu modu di rispunniri a li tragedii dà vita di stu pirsunaggiu. Non vulennu ammalarisi pi li cosi storti dà so vita, stu cristianu proiettava ntô passatu chiddu ca cci succedeva duranti a jurnata o a simana prima. Na vota cci muriu na figgia giuvani e iddu rispunnivu assai allegramenti comu si a morti avissi accadutu assai anni prima. A “filosofia dà distanza” di Pirandellu è na forma di “futtirisinni” un pocu esaggirata. Nasci di lu stissu atteggiamentu ca metti  a paci dû spiritu, a tranquillità dû pinseri cchiù auti di l’altalena dà la vita. E un disidderiu di lividdari a strata china di petri e vulli supra la quali i Siciliani hannu sempri duvutu caminari: è un modu di arranciarisi.

to the nth degree. It is born from the same attitude that places inner peace, tranquility of mind, above the ups and downs of daily life. It is a desire to smooth over the rough and rocky road on which Sicilians have had to walk, a way of coping.

I would like to tell you a little story that I read in a local publication from Valclelunga Pratameno that the editor Salvatore Nicosia sends me regularly. It seems that the local priest delighted in relating the story of a family who lost their patriarch in the hospital of Caltanissetta. They were immediately approached by a funeral director who offered his services. He was a fast talking man, well dressed, with dark glasses who convinced the disconsolate family that his firm could be trusted to provide unparalleled services to bury the deceased. He offered to take care of everything, the coffin, a suit for the dead, a funeral car to take the body back to Valclelunga, he even offered to provide a priest, if the town did not have one, quoting a price for each item that he was adding. Having itemized everything, the total came to a mere two million and three hundred thousand lire, but seeing that they seemed such a “nice” family, he would, of course, give them a three hundred thousand lire discount. Before they could reflect on the offer, he pushed a contract before the confused and grieving son who, overwhelmed by the avalanche of words, signed it. But as they walked out of the hospital, they realized what they had done, and began to question the deal. “We should have said no,” said the son, “but he didn’t give us a chance to say a word”. The uncle voiced his disappointment, too. But it was the newly made widow who in spite of her inconsolable grief came up with the following remark: “Tantu pi chistu, tantu pi st’autru,” she said,” ci mittemu chistu e ci mittemu st’autru, macari u parrinu ci vuleva mettiri, e mmenu mali ca lu muortu ci lu misimu nuatri.” (“So much for this, so much for that,” she said, “we will provide this service and that service, he even wanted to provide the priest! Thank God that we provided the body…”). The woman did not have to complete the sentence. But she meant, “God only knows what he would have charged if he had to provide the body too,” a very funny remark worthy of Pirandello. The woman clearly rose above the sorrow and suffering of the moment forgetting her loss momentarily in the smile that must have accompanied her remark. That is an example of Sicilian humor. And it reminds me of something that Cicero, the great Roman orator who spent a year in Marsala as a high official of Rome, said about Sicilians two thousand years ago. Indeed, he would have been very surprised to hear Sicilians characterized as humorless individuals. For him Sicilians were “an intelligent race, but suspicious and endowed with a wonderful sense of humor.” He even added that “no matter how terrible a situation may be, Sicilians always have a witty remark to make about it.” (Nunquam tam male est Siculis, quin aliquid facete et com-
miseria, mittennu di parti u so duluri e a so perdita, nta lu surrisu ca sicuramenti accumpagnau chiddu ca dissi. Chistu è n’esempiu di umorismu sicilianu. E mi porta a la mimoria na frasi ca dissi Ciciruni, u grannti oraturi rumanu ca passau un annu a Marsala comu un importanti funziunariu di Roma, quasi du mila anni fa. Iddu, sintennu diri ca i Siciliani non hannu sensu di l’umorismu, nni fussi surprisu. I Siciliani pi iddu eranu “na razza intelligenti, ma suspittusa c’avi nu spiccatu sensu di l’umorismu.” A chistu iunciu ca “non importa quantu terribbili pozza essiru a situazionu, i Siciliani hannu sempri quacchi cosa ncignusa di diri” (Nunquam tam male est Siculis, quin alicquid facete et commode dicant... promptae gens linguae). Dda frasi comica dà povira vidua è na pirfetta illustrazioni di la penetranti caratterizzazioni di Ciciruni.

U stissu Ciciruni nni lassau nautra storia che testimonia comu i Siciliani sannu mettiri umorismu nta i situazioni cchiù spinusi. C’era un Sicilianu ca stava cummisirannu c’un so amicu ntô so giardinu vicinu a n’alburu di ficu ca so mugghieri avia usatu pi mpinnìrisi. L’omu accusau lu pedi di ficu dicennu ca era responsabbili pà morti di so mugghieri. L’autru sicilianu ci fici i so condoglianzu prima e poi ci dumannau ò so amicu adduluratu: “Senti, mû putissi dari mutru pedi di ficu comu a chistu? Vulissi chiaritaru ntô me giardinu.” L’amicu spirava ovviamenti ca so mugghieri putissi essiru ispirata di l’alburu a fari la stissa cosa.


Quannu era carusu a Francavigghia di Sicilia ogni sira assittati cu l’amici davanti ò bar si schirzava sempri scambiannuci battuti. Quannu a televisioni era na cosa nova e a genti si divirtia cu l’arti di cunvirsari chiiù di quantu fannu ora, u passatempo preferitu era u parrari. U tema dà cunvirsazionu puteva essiri a politica, u palluni, i maldicenzi, ecc. Ma u stili era sempri u stissu: battuti tagghienti, sfuttenti, schirzusi e quacchi vota offensivi. Anzi, chiddu ca l’omini siciliani si diciunu schirzannu, si praticatu in America finissi certamenti a pugni e cauci, ma in Sicilia si scherza accussì. Basta ca certi cunfini non sunu attraversati. I Siciliani sannu quali sunu i cunfini e li scerri succedinu raramenti o quasi mai. Vi dugnu na para d’esempi. Si quaccadunu cuntava ch’avia statu a Catania cridennu d’aviri fatto cosa granni, un modu pi svunchiaricci u palloncinu era di dumannarici subitu: “Ci baciasti i baddi ô liotru?” E ccà cuminciava na serii di battuti avanti e arreri pi vidiri cu nisceva vitturiusu. (Forsi a stu puntu v’avissi a cuntari a storia dû liotru ca comu sapiti è u simbulu di Catania. Quannu iemmu a Catania cù gruppu di Arba Sicula ci cuntaiu a storia a nostra guida e ogni
mode dicant... promptae gens linguæ) The poor widow’s funny utterance is a perfect illustration of Cicero’s insightful characterization. Cicero himself told another little story that testifies to the ability that Sicilians have to inject humor in the most difficult situations. As the story went, a Sicilian was commiserating with a friend in his garden next to a fig tree that his wife had used to hang herself. He accused the tree of sharing some responsibility for his wife’s act. The other Sicilian expressed his deep condolences and then proceeded to ask the bereaved friend: “Can I please have a seedling from this fig tree? I’d like to plant it in my garden!” hoping perhaps that his wife might be induced by the tree to commit the same act.

I think that this tendency by Sicilians to come up with a witty remark that somehow overturns a difficult situation can be considered an Italian trait. Certainly, the taste for funny retorts, for the appropriate witty “battuta” is as Italian as spaghetti. Boccaccio actually devoted two full days of his Decameron to the “motti arguti”. But on Sicily it has a special character.

As a young man growing up in Francavilla di Sicilia I experienced every night playful ribbing and sometimes cutting retorts exchanged by the people sitting at the outdoor caffè. When TV was still a novelty and people enjoyed the art of conversation more than they do today, the favorite pastime was talk. While the topic of conversation may have been politics, soccer, town gossip, the style of the exchanges remained always the same: cutting, sly, playful, at times even offensive. Indeed, what Sicilian men say to one another in a joking manner would quickly degenerate into a fight in the United States, but in Sicily it is accepted as long as certain boundaries are not crossed. Sicilians know what these boundaries are and such exchanges almost never result in brawls, or very rarely. I can give you a couple of examples. If someone boasted of having spent the day in Catania, a way of cutting his down to size was to ask him: “cci baciasti i baddi ô liotru?” This usually was enough to start a series of remarks back and forth to see who was going to end with a winning hand. (As an aside, I should tell you the story of the liotru, which as you know is the elephant that symbolizes the city of Catania. When in Catania with the Arba Sicula tour I told the guide the story of the Liotru and we ritually stand behind the statue and blow a kiss to its rear end. Once, the Mayor of Catania, Umberto Scapagnini, came to St. John’s and before I introduced him to our audience I said, “Mr. Mayor, if you see a group of Americans from your office blowing kisses to the elephant, know it’s the members of Arba Sicula.” As a response the Mayor, who is actually a medical doctor, told us that the elephant does not have external testicles. The people of Catania who are notoriously macho could not stomach the idea that the symbol of their city was an elephant without balls.
annu u nostru gruppu si metti darreri l’elefanti e ci manna vasuneddi. Na vota u sinnacu di Catania, Umberto Scapagnini vinni a St. John’s University e prima di prisintarlu ci dissi: “Signor Sinnacu, si quacchi vota affacciannusi dû so ufficiu vidissi un gruppu di miricani ca mannanu baci ô liotru, chiddu è u gruppu d’Arba Sicula.” U sinnacu ca è medicu pi risposta nni cuntau ca l’elefanti nun havi i baddi esterni, ci l’havi interni. U populu di Catania ca è macho non putea suppurtari l’idea ca u simbolu dà so città non aviss i palli ca si vidinu, e ficiru na culletta pi mettiricci palli esterni ô liotru. Ed è accusi ca u liotru di Catania havi palli falsi ci pennunu ntra li gammi.

Mentri semu a Catania e vistu ca i catanisi hannu nu spiccatu sensu di l’umorismu non mi pozzu tratteniri di cuntarivi sta sturiella cuntata di Santi Correnti. Na fimmina sta parchiggiannu a so machina quannu nautra machina s’infila nto so postu. A fimmina arragiatissima ccì dici in sicilianu: “Chi fa, u spettu?” ca ntà parrata catanisi pò significari “voli fari l’espertu?” oppuri “Chi fa, voli ca io aspettu a Lei?” L’omu sapi benissimu ca a fimmina vuleva diri u primu significatu, ma iddu cu tantu di facci tosta rispunnuu, “No, signura, nun m’aspittassi. Aiu tantu chi ffrari oggi.”

Recentemente Gilbertu Idonea ca fici un programma a St. John’s University cunfirmau ca i battuti pi li quali i catanisi sunu famusi sunu parti dà cultura ca macari “i vu’ cumpra”, i vinnituri ambulanti dû nord Africa hannu cuminicatu a rispunnu a tonu pur sapennu pocu talianu. Forsi è nta l’aria ca si rispira.

Pari naturali ca i Siciliani hannu u sensu di l’umorismu. Dopo tuttu, iddi invintaru a cameddia. Fu Epicarmu di Siracusa ca vissi tra u 528 e u 453 aC, vali a diri, nta l’ebbica d’oru dà città, ca fu cunsiddiratu u patri dà cameddia dû filosofu Platuni. Iddu scrisi 36 cumeddi di li quali non ristau quasi nenti, sulu quacchi scena. Na scena, cuntata di Santi Correnti nta lu libru La Sicilia che ride di unni pigghiaiu na parti di sti notizii, nni pirmetti di fari un profilu di Epicarmu comu n’omu istruitu ca era aggiornatu supra a filosofia dû so tempu. A scena è n’applicazioni dà filosofia di Eraclitu ca diceva ca u munnu è in flussu custanti e ca a rialità scurri comu ntôn ciumi canciannu sempri. N’omu purtatu in tribbunali di unu a cui ci avia a dari sordi si difinniu dicennnu ca siccomu i cosi canciannu continuament i iddu non era chì l’omu ca s’avia mpristatu i sordi e picciò non ci avia a dari nenti ô cridituri. U giudici accittau u so ragiunamentu e l’assulviu. U cridituri però era n’omu scatru puru iddu e aspittau ca u filosofu niscissi dû tribunalu e û pigghiau a corpo. Di novu in tribunali, u cridituri si difinniu cu so stissu ragiunamentu: siccomu a rialità scurri continuament l’omu c’avia bastunatu ô filosofu non era chì iddu. U giudici appi a assorviri puru ô cridituri.

Epicarmu fu forsi unu tra tanti ca foru bravi a fari parodii. Giuseppe Pitrè dici ca i parodii eranu famusi in Sicilia ancora prima di Egemone Tesio ca
and made a collection to have a prosthesis applied to the statue. So now Catania’s liotru has a pair of fake testicles between its legs.)

While we are in Catania, and since Catanese have a wicked sense of humor, I can’t refrain from telling you this little story related by Santi Correnti: A woman is about to park her car when another driver gets in front of her and takes her spot. The woman, fuming in anger, asked him in Sicilian “Chi fa, u spettu?” which means, “What are you doing, you’re being smart, a wise guy?” or if could mean “What are you doing, should I wait for you?” The man knew perfectly that she meant, but answered shamelessly: “no, signura, nun m’aspittassi. Ai tantu ‘i fari oggi.” (No, madam, don’t wait for me. I’ve got a lot to do today.”

Recently actor Gilberto Idonea who performed a one man show at St. John’s University confirmed that the “battuta” for which Catanese are famous is so much part of the culture that even the “vù cumprà,” the street vendors from northern Africa, have begun in their limited Italian/Sicilian exchanging repartees with their clients. It must be in the air!

It seems natural that Sicilians should have a sense of humor, after all, they invented comedy. It was Epicharmus of Siracusa, who lived between 528 and 453 BC, that is, at the time of the city’s golden age, who was credited by Plato as “the inventor of comedy.” He wrote thirty-six comedies, which unfortunately did not survive, except some of the titles and some scenes. One scene related by Santi Correnti from whose book La Sicilia che ride some of this material is derived, allows us to characterize Epicharmus as a learned man who was conversant with the philosophy of his time. The scene is an application of the philosophy of Heraclitus who claimed that the world was in constant flux and that reality flows in an ever-changing stream. A man who was brought to court by a creditor argued that since all things change the fellow who made the debt originally is no longer the same man and therefore owes nothing to the creditor. The judge apparently bought his argument and let him off. The creditor, however, was a good match for the man because he waited for the sly philosopher to come out of the court house and gave him the beating of his life. Back in the court house, the creditor paid him back with his own coin. He defended his actions claiming that since reality flows incessantly, he was not the same man who beat the sly philosopher. The judge of course had to find in favor of the defendant.

Epicharmus was perhaps one of the first in a long line of writer who excelled in parodies. Giuseppe Pitrè claims that his parodies were famous in Sicily even before Egemone Tesio was credited by Aristotle for inventing parody. Pitrè says that Sicilians have always been great parody writers, even though other regions of Italy, at least in literature, seem to have excelled more. Pitrè
fu cunsiddiratu di Aristotili comu u patri dì parodii. Pitrè dici ca i Siciliani hanno statu sempri bravi scritturi di parodii puru ca autri regioni taliani hannu forsi chìu fama pi chistu. Pitrè nni desi quacchi esempiu nta littiratura. Pi tutti li famusi puisi d’amuri, frasi famusi, pruverbi o canzuni, i Siciliani hannu scrittu parodii d’iddi. Pirmittitimi di mustrarivi chiddu ca vogghiu diri: quattru versi bastanu:

Vegnu a cantari li biddizzi toi:
La prima cosa li biunni capiddi;
L’occhi e li gigghia su du niuri gioi,
Li dintuzzi su perni minutiddi.

Divintaru subbitu a parodia ca segui:

Vinni a lodari sti bruttizzi toi:
La prima cosa li brutti capiddi;
L’ucchiuzzi l’arrubbasti a qualchi voi
Due varcucazza amari li masciddi..

Mi ricordu ca quannu eramu studenti nni divirtevanu a canciari li paroli di famusi canzuni. Pir esempiu la famusa aria dû Rigolettu, “La donna è mobile, qual piuma al vento...” divintava pi niautri na quartina oscena. Non vi dicu i paroli ma scummettu ca in Sicilia non c’è omu da me età ca non sapi a mimoria i paroli di sta parodia.

Non surprenni di truvari l’applicazioni di Epicarmu dû principiu d’Eraclitu ca riemergi comu un leitmotiv ntòn travagghiu di nautru dammaturgu sicilianu quasi dumila e cincucentu anni dopu: Luigi Pirandellu. U vincituri dû Premiu Nobel di Agrigentu basau tanti di so scritti supra u principiu ca a vita scurri continuamenti, canciannu, rimpastannu l’omu in modu ca iddu non pò pinsari oggi di essiri chiddu ca era aieri. U flussu è tali ca iddu nega ca l’omu pozza aviri na identità. Mentri pensa di essiri una e a stissa pirsuna, in verità non è nuddu. Non sulu non è nuddu, ma tutti chiddi ca venunu a cuntattu cu iddu hannu n’opinioni differenti supra a iddu. D’accussì iddu è tanti pirsuni diversi, una pi ognunu ca û canusci. Sti cuncetti foru usati ntòn romanzu Unu, bessunu e centomila e ntè so drammi.

Ma l’opira di Pirandellu è cunnessa in modu strittu cû cuncettu di umorismu. Ntòn 1908 scrissi nu studiu supra l’umorismu nta lu quali misi i basi teoretichi pi na gran parti dà so opira. Iddu definiu l’umorismu comu u “sintimentu dû cuntraiu” ca pò essiri spiegatu subbitu comu u processu ca nni pirmetti di vidiri chiddu ca c’è darreri l’apparenzi, e chistu rivela quacchi cosa
provided many examples in poetry. If there is a famous love poems, or famous saying, phrase, proverb, or song, Sicilians have written a parody of it. Let me show what I mean: a love poem, I will quote three lines of it:

Vegnu a cantari li biddizzi toi: I come to sing about your beauty
La prima cosa li biunni capiddi; The first thing is your golden hair
L’occhi e li gigghia su du niuri gioi the eyes and lashes are two black gems
Li dintuzzi su perni minutiddi. Your teeth are like little shining pearls

Vinni a lodari sti bruttizzzi toi: I came to praise your ugliness
La prima cosa li brutti capiddi; the first thing is your ugly hair
L’ucchiuzzi l’arrubbasti a qualchi voi Your eyes you stole from some ox
Due varcucazza amari li masciddi. Two rotten bitter apricots your jaws.

I can recall from my own experience how as young students we had fun turning such famous arias as *La donna è mobile* from Verdi’s Rigoletto into an obscene quatrain. I won’t tell you what it was. But I don’t think there is anyone in Sicily who doesn’t know by heart what I am referring to.

It is not surprising to find Epicharmus’ application of Heraclitus’ principle reemerging as the leitmotiv’s of much of the work of another Sicilian playwright nearly two and a half millennia later: Luigi Pirandello. The Nobel Prize winner from Agrigento based much of his writing on the idea that life flows incessantly, changing, reshaping man continuously so that he cannot claim to be today the same man he was yesterday. The flow of change is such that it denies man his identity. While he thinks he is one and the same person in reality he is no one. Not only is he no one, everyone who comes into contact with him has a different opinion of what he is. He is therefore as many men as the people who know him. These concepts are expressed in his novel *Uno nessuno e centomila* and in some of his plays.

But Pirandello’s opus is inextricably bound with the concept of humor. In 1908 he wrote an essay on humor that provided the theoretical bases for much of his work. He defined humor as the *sentimento del contrario* which can be explained quickly as a process that allows us to see behind appearances revealing something that overturns our first impression of things. He described two steps in the process: the first is when we become aware that something is not quite as it should be, for example, when we see an elderly woman who has plastered her face with too much makeup. This is what he called the “avvertimento del contrario” that causes us to laugh or make fun of her. But if we then reflect that the woman has a much younger husband whom she desperately wants to keep from noticing her aging, we realize a deeper meaning.
ca capuvolgi a nostra prima mprissioni dì così. Discriviu du momenti dû processu: u primu è quannu n’accurgemu ca quacchi cosa non è comu avissi ad essiri, pir esempiu, quannu videmu na fimmina vecchia ca si metti troppu bellettu nta facci. Chistu si chiama “l’avvertimentu dû cuntrariu” ca nni fa ridiri d’idda o pigghiarila in giru. Ma si poi riflittemu ca dda vecchia havi un maritu giuvani a cui idda dispiratamenti ci voli fari vidiri ca non è tantu vecchia, capemu a un liveddu chiiu funnu. Non putemu cchiu ridiri d’idda, anzi u nostru risu è macchiatu di cumpassioni. E’ a stissa cosa di quannu videmu quaccadunu sciddicari nterra. A nostra prima reazioni è di ridiri, ma si videmu ca dda pirsuna si fici mali cadennu, u nostru risu diventa nautra cosa.

L’emblema di stu tipu di umorismu è u diu Gianu c’havi du facci, una ca ridi e l’autra ca chianci, o comu diceva Pirandellu, a faccia ca ridi sta ridennu di chidda ca chianci. A chìu caratteristica forma di umorismu sicilianu è dû tipu pirandellianu.

L’umorismu sicilianu è generalmenti riflessivu, ironicu, vutatu contra a iddi stissi, direttu versu cu parra. Vi fazzu quacchi esempiu cuminciannu chì pruberbi. Comu diceva Vitalianu Brancati, i pruberbi siciliani non sunu malizziusi come chiddi dà Toscana. Cunsiddirati, pir esempiu, chistu “Scappari non è virgogna, quacchi volta è sarvamentu di vita!” Chistu va contra u modu accittabili d’essiri pà siciliani (Scappari davanti a na minaccia generalmenti veni cunsiddiratu n’attu di pusillanimità. Ntà Sicilia s’havi a stari fermi a difisa dû propriu onuri) Eppuru, stu pruberbiu nni dici ca i Siciliani sannu ridiri e sunu pragmatichi dopu tuttu. Ma u pruberbiu ca cuanta pi tantu di ddu tipu di umorismu direttu contra a iddi stissi è chistu: “ringraziamu a Diu pi chiddu chi nni duna, e a lu re pi chiddu chi nni lasa!” nta lu quali i Siciliani esprimunu a so rassignazioni profunna a essiri suggetti a forzi ca non ponnu cuntrullari mentri caminanu u so viaggiu ntà vita.

We can no longer laugh at her, we understand her better, our laughter has become tinged with compassion. It’s the same when we see someone falling down. Our initial reaction is to laugh, but if we see the person hurt himself, our laughter turns to something else.

The emblem for this Pirandellian humor is the god Janus who has two faces, one that laughs and one that cries, or as Pirandello would say, the face that laughs is laughing at the crying face. The most characteristic form of Sicilian humor is of the Pirandellian kind.

Sicilian humor is generally reflective, ironic, inward turning, self-directed. Let me give you a few samples starting with some proverbs. As Vitaliano Brancati pointed out, Sicilian proverbs are not malicious or sly as Tuscan proverbs are. Consider the following: “Scappari non è virgogna, quacchi vota è sarvamentu di vita!” Running counter to the accepted mode of behavior (in Sicily, to run away from a fight is generally deemed a shameful act. You must stand your ground!), this proverb says that Sicilians are pragmatists with a sense of humor, after all. But the proverb that speaks volumes of the Sicilians’ inward-turning humor is, “ringrazianu a Diu pi chiddu chi nni duna, e a lu re pi chiddu chi nni lassu!” (We thank God for all he gives us and the King for all he leaves us!), in which the Sicilians express their profound resignation to being subjects to forces beyond their control while continuing unperturbed their journeys through life.

Jane Vessels’ article on Sicily published in National Geographic (Aug. 1995) offers us another example of Sicilian humor. Describing the creativity of Sicilian epithets heard in Palermo’s congested streets, Vessels painted this delightful vignette: “Picchi sono? (Why are you honking?)” a man yelled from another car. “Mi piaci a musica!” (I love the music,) she replied. “E eu ci rumpu i cuornu a so maritu!” (I’m going to break your husband’s horns,) the man shouted. She retorted, “E eu cci nni fazzu nautru paru!” (Then I’ll just make another set for him.) For those who do not know what cuorna means, I have to offer an explanation. In threatening to break her husband’s horns, the man is accusing the woman of being an adulteress. A man’s head is adorned with horns when his wife cheats. Not only is the woman unrepentant about her presumed adultery, but to have the last word, she brazenly asserts her intentions to engage in another extramarital affair, thus regaling her husband with another set of horns. Hence, the inward-turning quality of her retort. If the anecdote is not true, it is certainly “bien trouvé!”

That Sicilians have a sense of humor can be testified by their willingness to play practical jokes on one another. Some of you may know or have heard the name of the most famous Sicilian actor, Angelo Musco. He performed in many plays by Martoglio and Pirandello and achieved the status of a star in
Ca i Siciliani hannu u sensu d’umorismu si pò vidiri di li scherzi ca si fannu tra d’iddi. Tanti di vuatri canusciunu a Angelo Musco, u chiù famusu atturi comicu dà Sicilia. Iddu fici tanti parti ntè cumeddi di Martoglio e di Pirandellu e divintau famusu comu na stidda di Hollywood di oggi. Si cuntanu tanti aneddoti supra d’iddu pi dimustrari u so geniu umoristico. Un jornu era nta strata principalì di Catania, a via Etnea, e stava passannu u tram elettricu. Iddu ci fa signali di firmarisi e quannu u tram si ferma e apri a porta, Musco appoggia u pedi e si attacca i lazzi d’à scarpa lentamentì. Quannu finisci iaza l’occhi e ci dici ò conducenti ca lu guardava cu l’occhi spalancati: “Grazzii, si nni pò ghiri”. Nta nautru aneddotu Musco era ntrò risturanti co nu cullega e siccomu eranu poviri tutti dui, ordinarunu un piattu di sosizza pi tuttu dui, mintennusì d’accordo a nominari un santu pi ogni caddozzu di sosizza ca si mangiavanu. Ma Musco aveva fami e cuminciau a circari u cumpagnu, numinnannu du santi nta na vota. “San Petru e Paulu” e si pigghiau du caddozza. U cullega capiu u giocu e iazzau a tirata dicennu: “Sant’Allfu, San Cirino e San Filadelfu” e si pigghiau tri caddozza. Musco pi non ristari nnarreri gridau “Tutti i santi” e si pigghiau tuttu chiddu ca ristava ntô piattu.

Stu tipu di scherzu non era tantu insolitu. Vi dugnu nautru esempiu di nu scherzu fattu di Martoglio è lìttrì dò so giornali umoristicu D’Artagnan. Pi fari crisciri l’abbonamenti ò giornali, Martoglio prumittivu pi ogni novu abbonatu un Incendio di Mosca ncurniciatu. A genti capiu ca si trattava di nu quatru dû famusu incendiu di Mosca dû 1812 duranti a guerra napoleonica. Tanti ci caderu e ricevettiru na scatuledda unni normalmenti s’accattavanu fiammiferi svidisi e dintra da scatuledda na musca ca l’ali bruciati.

Italy comparable to modern-day Hollywood stars. There are many anecdotes that testify to his quick wit. One day he stood at the main street of Catania, via Etna and flagged the electric trolley that was passing by. The trolley stopped and opened the door. Musco leaned against the first step of the trolley and proceeded slowly to tie his shoe laces. When he finished, he removed his foot from the step and looking up at the astonished driver, said: “Grazie, puo’ andare!” In another anecdote Musco was in a restaurant with a colleague and as they were both poor they decided to order one dish of sausages for the two of them agreeing to name a saint for each section of the sausages they ate. But Musco was hungry and started cheating. He named two saints, “San Pietro e Paolo” and took two sections of sausages. The colleague caught on and said: “St. Alfio, St. Cirino and St. Filadelfo” and proceeded to take three sections of sausages. Musco upped the ante and yelled “Tutti i Santi!” (All Saints) and took all that was left on the plate.

This kind of behavior was not altogether uncommon. I will give one example of a joke played by Nino Martoglio on the audience of his humoristic journal “D’Artagnan”. To increase subscriptions to the journal Martoglio once promised to send new subscribers a framed “Incendio di Mosca”, which people understood as a painting of the famous fire that occurred in 1812 in Moscow during the Napoleonic war. Many fell for it and received in exchange for their subscription a small box normally used to sell Swedish matches and inside the box a fly with singed wings. Martoglio was playing with the word “mosca” which means both fly and Moscow.

If practical jokes are a manifestation of Sicilian humor, Sicilians reserve a special place for humor in their poetry. In their popular poetry humor occupies a conspicuous presence. I could cite many examples of poems I have published in our Arba Sicula journal. I try to include one or two comic poems in each issue. The comic element is certainly one of the most pervasive among the poems I receive. I could recite many humorous poems from the many poets I have translated. Since I was talking about Martoglio let me start with him. The “D’Artagnan” was in fact the journal in which he published most of the poems that were later collected in Centona. Making fun of his Catanese compatriots was Martoglio’s stock and trade. Whether he was featuring shoe-makers from Palermo holding a scientific discussion on the cure for tuberculosis or listening to the unenlightened but eminently comic explanation of how birth marks are produced on pregnant women or what Darwin’s theory of evolution meant for mankind, Martoglio displayed a sense of humor that is not unlike Boccaccio’s. I will read you one poem entitled
Lu suli e la luna

Chi nni vuliti, caru amicu miu,
a mia m’ha fattu sempri sta’ imprissioni:
ca a pettu di lu suli su’ un schifiu,
là luna e tutti li costillazioni.

Lu suli è fattu di ‘na costruzioni
cà fa ‘n caluri, salaratu Diu,
cà s’arristora ‘na populazioni ...
E inveci, ccu la luna, non quariu!

‘N mumentu ... Approvu zoccu aviti dittu,
lù suli ci la vinci, in questa classi;
ma ... in quantu a lustru, mi pariti pazzu.

La luna nesci quann’è scuru fittu
e ju sparagnu sopra l’ogghiu a gassi ....
lù suli nesci a jornu; chi nni fazzu?

Siccomu non pozzu citari tutti i puetti ca hau tradottu, ognunu di li quali
havi nu sensu di umorismu assai sviluppatu, mi limitu a scegghiri un pueta ca
forsì non è tantu canusciutu comu Venezianu o Meli o Martoglio. Si chiama
Vincenzo Ancona e traduci un volumi dì so pusii intitulatu Malidittu la lingua.
Vi leggiu na para di puetti:

Nna l’arca di Noe’

Si cunta chi Noè facia acchianari
tutti l’armali ’nta l’arca chi fici.
Un elefanti si ’ntisi ammuttari,
si vota, viri un puci, e a chiddu dici:
“Ohè! N’atru minutu ’un pò aspittari?
Cca nun c’è prifirenza, semu amici.”
“Scusami, hai ragiuni a diri chistu,”
dissi lu puci. “Tu ’un t’avia vistu!”
The Sun and the Moon

My dear old friend, what else can I reply? I've always felt this way, I don't know why! The stars and Moon, when all is said and done, are worthless when compared to our own Sun.

The Sun was made precisely in a way to give us heat, thank God, throughout the day, making the people comfortable, ok. The Moon gives out no heat! What can I say?

-All right! I do agree with what you said. As far as giving heat, the Sun is champ, but as for giving light, I think you strayed.

The Moon comes out when it's pitch dark, therefore, I save the gas I need to light the lamp; the Sun comes out in day light: what’s it for?

I cannot possibly go through all the great poets that I have translated into English, all of whom have a considerable number of poems which highlight their keen sense of humor, I have to limit my choice to one poet whose work is perhaps not as well known as Veneziano’s, Meli’s or Tempio. His name is Vincenzo Ancona and I translated a volume of his entitled Malidittu la lingua. I will read a couple of short poems by Ancona:

In Noab’s Ark

They say that Noah made all animals climb into the ark that he had made. An elephant felt someone pushing him, he turned and when he saw a flea he cried, “I say, can’t you hold on for one more minute? There is no preference here, we are all friends!” “I'm sorry, what you say is very true,” replied the flea, “But I just didn’t see you.”
Desideriu di 'nnuccenti

Un nuzzinteddu su cinc’anni appena
dici a papà, “Mi vogghiu maritari.”
“Buh!” ci fa lu patri. “E chi gran lena!
Hai ’na zita? E a cu t’a pigghiari?”
“Ma quali zita? Nun vali la pena.
Vogghiu a la nonna chi mi sapi amari.”

“Ma, no, Pitruzzu,” fa lu ginituri.
“Chidda è me matri, ’un ti la poi spusari!
E’ veru chi ti porta tantu amuri,
ma è me matri. ’Un ti la poi pigghiari!”
“Picchí, Papà, nun semu fra niatri?
E tu ’un ti maritasti cu me matri?

Putissi continuari all’infinitu ch’i puissi comichi di altri puetti ma vogghiu parrari di nautri aspettu di l’umorismu sicilianu ca è assai cumuni ntà Sicilia. Si tratta di l’umorismu ca nasci di l’eccentricità dà popolazioni. Probabilmenti u litturi sapì ca ci sunu assai eccentrici ntà Sicilia. Basta leggiri na para di Novelle per un Anno di Pirandellu pi ncuinterari un gran numiru di pirunagji a storia di li quali evoca ddu tipicu risu pirandellianu macchiatu di tristizza, dduItalicum acetum ca ti fa ridiri e chianciri ô stissu tempu. Staiu pinsannu a n’omu ca si chiama Chiarchiaro ca tutti cunsiddiravanu nu jettaturi, unu ca purtava sfurtuna, unu ca quannu spuntava davanti facia canciari direzzionu a tutti, mentri si mintevalnu i mani ntè sacchetti pi tuccari ddu cornettu russu contra u malocchiu e tuccarisi na parti dû corpù ca non vi dicu quali è, ma immaginu ca vuautri u sapiti. A ogni modo, stu jettaturi nfuatatu dà sacietà e impossibilitatu a travagghiarì e guadagnarì comu campari, iu nta nu giudici pi dumannarici na patenti comu jettaturi d’accussi iddu puteva farisinni na prufissionu, dumannannu è nigozianti na somma di sordi pi non stari davanti u so nigoziu.

Già minziunaiu u Dutturi Fileno, u pirunagji ca invintau a “filosofia dû lontanu” ca taliava ò presenti c’un paru di cannucchiali ca iddu usava in manera inversa taliannu du latu chiù granni pi vidiri lu munu alluntanatu.

Una di me stori preferiti è chidda dü prufissuri Lamis, nu espertu di religioni ca scrisi du grossi volumi supra a l’eresia di Catari e ddu jornu quannu avia discutiri u tema a lu quali avia didicatu a so vita i so studenti misiru i mpirmiabili sopra dî seggi nta l’aule a quanu u prufissuri ca era menzu orbu ntrasiu nta la classi, fici a chiù brillanti lezioni dà so vita a n’aule china di mpirmiabili bagnati.
An Innocent Wish

An innocent young boy five years of age said to his father: “I want to get married!”
“Go on!” the father joked. “You’re in a hurry! Have you a girl friend? Who’s your wife to be?”
“What girlfriend? They’re not worth the bother. I want the one who loves me: my grandmother.”
“Oh, no, Pitruzzu,” said the father then.
“She is my mother. You can’t marry her!
It’s true she loves you with great tenderness, but surely you can’t marry my own mother?!”
“Why not, Dad? Aren’t we one family?
And what about yourself? You married mine!”

While I could continue at infinitum with humorous poems from a number of poets, I want to make reference to another aspect of Sicilian humor that is also very pervasive on the island. It is the humor that is born from the eccentricities of the people. You probably know that there are a lot of eccentric people in Sicily. All you need to do is read a few of Pirandello’s Novelle per un anno and you will meet quite a few characters whose stories evoke the typical Pirandellian laughter tinged with sadness, that Italicum acetum that makes you laugh and cry at the same time. I am thinking about the man named Chiarchiaro whom everyone considered a iettatore, a bringer of bad luck, whose sole appearance would make people change direction, reaching for the red horn against the malocchio or touching a part of their bodies to ward off evil, a gesture that Sicilians perform routinely when faced by dangerous situations. I won’t tell you what part that is, but you can guess. At any rate this iettatore, shunned by society and unable to make a living, went to a judge and expected him to give him a license as a iettatore, so he could exploit it as a profession by asking store owners for a fee not to stand in front their stores.

I already mentioned Dr. Fileno, the character who invented the Filosofia del lontano who looked at the present using a pair of reversed binoculars so that he would see everything far away.

One of my favorite short stories is the one about Professor Lamis who was an expert of religions who had written two volumes of the Cathars Heresy and on the day when he was going to discuss the topic on which his whole being evolved his students placed their raincoats on the chairs and left the room. When the Professor came in, as the rooms was dark and he was nearly...
Pirandellu avia na bedda fantasia, ma nta Sicilia nu scritturi non n’havi bisognu necessariamenti. Basta ca iddu si talia attornu e discrivi chiddu ca vidi nta la vita d’ogni jornu. I pirsunaggi ca incontra pi strata sunu chiddi ca ci dunanu u materiali pi li libri.


“C’era un barberi c’avia a barberia a Corleoni. U nigozziu era apertu sulu di notti.” Pi capiri ci voli nanticchia di riflessioni.

“Unu caminava lungu a via Terrasanta spurgennu a testa dintra ogni negozio e gridannu ‘Pi pi, po po pó’ Faceva finta di essiri na machina.”

“Una era la duchissa di Virdura ca cuminciau a perdiri a intisa e a vista quannu avia novant’anni. Si virgugnava di ammettirli e faceva finta di putiri vidiri e sentiri. Puri quannu era completamente surda e ceca si minteva davanti a na gaggia unni c’era un beddu canarinu ca idda ascutava. Quannu u canarinu muriu a famighja pi non dirici ca era mortu misi un luminu giallu nta gaggia. A duchissa campau nautri deci anni e continuau a assittarisi surridennu davanti a gaggia p’ascutari u cantu di l’acedduzzu preferit. Quannu u luminu divintava fracitu, a famighja ci nni minteva nautru friscu.”

“Unu era Pietro Battaglia e si videva caminari in via Ruggeru Settimu recitannu versi dâ Divina Commedia di Dante. Spissu smitteva di ricitari e indicannu c’un iditu un passanti cci diceva: ‘Stu invernu tu morirai!’” lassannu ddu poviru disgraziatu stralunatu e tuccannusi dda parti dû corpi ca non vi dissi prima.


Continuau a nigari ca li canusceva pi asai tempu finu a quannu appi a ammitiri a virtà. Ci desiru sordi a la ballerina pi cunmuggheriori a cosa e decisiru di riturnari a Paleremu. A stazioni, ddu stissu jornu, Enricu niscennu na caramella di ntà sacchetta e comu si fussi nenti ci la uffriu a so mugghieri, dicennucci: “Ma chi, sì ancora siiddiata?”
blind, he thought the room was crowded and gave the most magnificent lecture of his life to a room full of wet raincoats.

Pirandello had a wonderful imagination but in Sicily a writer does not necessarily need it. All he has to do is look around and describe what he sees in his daily life. The characters he meets in the street are the ones who will provide him with his material.

A very funny book I read recently is Roberto Alajmo’s *Nuovo Repertorio dei pazzi di Palermo* which is a compendium of characters one is likely to meet walking around the city streets. Let me give you a few entries that I have translated into English: Each entry starts with the word *uno* or *una*, meaning there was a man or a woman who…and then he notes down his/her eccentricities. By the way, these are apparently not invented. They’re actually true.

“One was a barber who had a barber shop in Corleone. His shop was open only at night.” This requires a bit of reflection to understand.

“One habitually walked along Via Terrasanta, sticking his head inside every store shouting: ‘Pi pi, po po po’. He pretended he was a car.”

“One was the Duchess of Verdura who began to lose her hearing and her eyesight when she was ninety years old. She was ashamed to admit it and pretended that she was able to hear and see. Even when she was deaf and blind she sat in front of the cage where she had a beautiful canary pretending that she was listening to it. When the bird died the family, not to tell her the bad news, put a yellow lemon in the cage. The Duchess lived ten more years and continued to sit smiling in front of the little cage to listen to her favorite bird singing. When the lemon became rotten the family replaced it with a fresh one.”

“One was named Pietro Battaglia and you could see him walking on Via Ruggero Settimo reciting lines from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Often he stopped his recitation short and pointing to a passerby would warn him: “This winter you will die!” leaving the poor fellow in distress” and I add, touching the part of his body I did not mention before.

“One was attorney Enrico Anzon who one day out of the blue ran away from his wife whom he had married six months before. He just vanished. The poor woman informed the police and tried to locate her husband discreetly. Finally, after some time, he was recognized in Florence where he was living with a young dancer. His wife and brother went to Florence and waited for him to come out of the hotel with the dancer. Mr. Anzon pretended not to see them. Finally, his wife yelled “Enrico!” He did not lose his composure and said, “Madam, who are you? I don’t know you!”

He continued to deny knowing them for a long time until he had to admit the truth. The dancer was paid off to keep quiet and they decided to

Nautra fotu du 17esimu Trofeo Interaziendale ASC 2005, mannata di Nino Bellia, intitulata “Lassatimi taliari”di Alfredo Rizzo/ We publish another photo for the 17th Trofeo Interaziendale ASC 2005, sent by Nino Bellia, entitled “Let me look!” by Alfredo Rizzo.
return to Palermo. At the train station, that same day, Enrico nonchalantly took out a candy from his pocket and offered it to his wife, saying: “Ma chi sì, ancora siddiata?” (What? You’re still mad at me?)

I want to add one of my own to the eccentricities of Sicily. In Taormina, during one of our Sicilian tours my wife and I were returning to our hotel after lunch and as it was already siesta time there were very few people on Corso Umberto, which is the main street. It was a hot afternoon and suddenly out of a little side street emerged a gaunt man with spirited eyes who at the top of his lungs yelled out in Sicilian “Berlusconi, Berlusconi, sì na minchia chìna d’acqua!” which translated politely is equivalent to “Berlusconi, you are a hot air balloon!” but it means a bit more than that. In the sleepy silence of the city the sentence echoed loudly. He repeated it a second time as he moved down the street, but before he could disappear in another little side street, a jeweler came out of his store and called out: “Giovanni, ...” and blew him a raspberry so loud it shook the walls. He obviously knew the man and the whole episode seemed like a ritual that was performed on a regular basis. The peaceful somnolence of the hot afternoon was broken for no more than a minute. Then everything returned to normal, as if it had never happened. The jeweler went back into his shop and the wild political commentator vanished. Only in Sicily!
Certi voti nni dumannamu pirchi i furmazioni autonomisti veri o nazionalisti o indipendentisti in Sicilia non hannu mai avutu successu in termini eletturali ammatula u diffusu e palpabbili sicilianismu in ogni sitturi dà sucietà e puru cù forti e sicuru attaccamentu à so identità pi parti di Siciliani. Si attribuisci a curpa ô bisognu, ô clientilismu, ma autri populi, chiù bisugnusi di niautri parunu chiù orgugliusi e soprattuttu chiù cuirenti ntê so dicisioni pulitichi.

A nostru avvisu, u problema sta ntô fattu ca l’identità naziunali siciliana è debbuli ntà percezioni comuni, sfucata, quasi in crisi, ed è di st’analisi ca bisogna partiri pir riconquistarla, altrimenti, comu dicia u storicu Tituni, si scinni fatalmente di “Nazioni a Reggioni”, senza ca nn’accu.orgemu, pirdennu câ nazionalità tutti i nostri diritti di Populu.

Nta chistu a Sicilia pari accomunata ntà svintura a nautru populu, chiddu bielorussu, ca havi sì l’indipennenza ma ca quasi nâ voli, delegannu a na classi pulitica e a nu dittaturu filorussu a proprìa vita, quasi virgugnannusi dà so storia. A Bielorussia, divitata indipindenti pir abbannunu, soffri di nostalgia pir essiri di novu culonia russa; quacchi vota nni veni di pinsari ca a Sicilia, si l’Italia si sfasciassi, facissi a stissi fini.

Si leggi ccà e ddà ca l’identità naziunali è figghia di tri cosi, tutti scarsi ntà Bielorussia (e in Sicilia): a prisenza di na classi dirigenti, di na elite cumpatta e diffusa a la guida dà sucietà e cunsapevuli dà pròpria missioni storica di avanguardia di na nazioni, a prisenza di nu statu (pi niautri sulu na “reggioni” sia puru cu tanti seculi di statu, nu statu ca ... non avia mai esistuto prima), na tradizione littiraria mai ntirrutta (no comment supra u sicilianu, puru vivissimu comu lingua parrata).

Tintamu di generalizzari l’osservazioni e di capiri quali sunu i punti ca “fannu” na nazioni e chi si pò fari pir raffurzarli. Tintamu d’accussì na Trilugia dà Nazioni siciliana

**A - AREA: ECUNOMIA E SUCIETA**

1) prisenza di na classi dirigenti, di na elite pulitica, ecunomica e sociali cumpatta: nni niautri a massima aspirazioni è farisi “rotariani” (cu tuttu u rispettu
In Search of Sicilian Identity

by Tipheus
(www.altrasicilia.org)

Translated into English by Gaetano Cipolla

Some times I ask myself why Sicilian autonomist, nationalist or independentist political parties have never won success in election in spite of the fact that there is a palpable and widespread Sicilianism in every sector of society and in spite of the Sicilians’ strong attachment to their identities. The fault is usually attributed to need, or political patronage. But other people even more needy than we are seem more proud and, most of all, more coherent in their public decisions.

In our opinion, the problem lies in the fact that national Sicilian identity is weak in the perception of most, out of focus, almost in a crisis. and it is from this analysis that we must depart to reconquer it, otherwise, as the historian Titone used to say, we drop down from “Nation to Region” without realizing it, losing with it all of our rights as a People.

Sicily seemed to share this wretched fate with another people, the Bielorussians who have obtained their independence, but they almost do not want it, delegating to a political class and to pro-Russia dictator its own life, almost ashamed of its history. Bielorussia, which became independent out of abandonment, suffers nostalgia to be again a colony of the Russians. Sometimes I think that Sicily, if Italy were to fall apart, would end up the same way.

A national identity is the daughter of three things, so people say here and there, all of which are scarcely present in Sicily and Bielorussia: the presence of a leading class, of an elite that is united and widespread guiding society, aware of its own historical mission as the avant-garde of the nation; the presence of a State (for us only a Region, albeit with many centuries of statehood, a state, that is, that never existed before), an uninterrupted literary tradition (no comment on the Sicilian language, even though it is quite alive as a spoken language).

Let’s try to generalize our observations and understand what are the points that contribute to making a nation and what can be done to reinforce them. Let’s try this way to come up with a Trilogy of the Sicilian Nation:

A--Area- Economy and Society

1) Presence of a leading class, of an political, economic and social elite that is united. In Sicily, the highest aspiration of people is to become Rotarians.
pir la meritoria associazioni) o ntrasiri ntà “massoneria” ntà loggi ca si chiamanu “Mazzini”, “Garibaldi”, o nta l’ “opus Dei” a sirviziu dû centralismu dà curia rumana; a quannu na “eteria” che cugghissi imprendituri, prufissiunisti, prufissuri universitari, burocrati pubblici vutat à causa dà Sicilia?

2) aviri interessi ecunomici propri e cuntraposti a chiddi dû paìsi ca tenta di assimilaricci: ccà iemù megghiu, si tratta però di spiegari è Siciliani ca qualunqui cosa, o quasi, fa l’Italia, à fa contru i nostri interessi. Tanti non lu sannu ... o sunu rassignati.

3) aviri un giustu gradu di autosufficienza ecunomica, energetica, etc.: puru ccà non ci sunu dubbi, ma u populu sicilianu, drugatu di l’assistenza è comu suetta l’incantesimu dà Fata Morgana. Sapi di essiri poviru, ci l’hannu inculcatu sinu dà nascita. Sapi ca a maggiori furtuna è “emigrari ò cuntinenti”, ma pir furtuna non è affattu d’accussì pir leggi divina, ma sulu pà subalternità ca ni scigghiemmu.

4) aviri cunfini geografichi dati dà natura: chista è l’unica cosa ca nni salva sempri, comu dicia u “catechismu puliticu dû sicilianismu” di Michele Amari. Puru ca facissuru u ponti, Diu non vogghia, i cunfini dà Sicilia e a so indivisibilità sunu un fattu incontrovertibbili.

5) aviri nu associazionismu, sportivu, sinnacali, di tempu libiru, culturali, etc. supra basi siciliana: ccà c’è assai, assai di fari, ma non è impossibili, bisogna sulu capirlu ... ntê comunità à l’estiru va già megghiu ca in Sicilia pir esempiu ...

B - AREA: PULITICA E DIRITTU

6) aviri nu statu propriu: anchi na “reggioni siciliana” ca di fattu è nu statu cunfidiratu, ccù Parlamentu chiù anticu dû munnu, non è nu scarsu puntu di partenza. Si tratta di valurizzarlu, anzichì di picunarla ogni jornu, anchi si a amministrarla ci sunu pupa di pezza di l’Italia. Bisogna sempri distinguiri l’istituzioni di cui à guverna.

7) aviri tradizioni giuridichi e ordinamenti giudiziari propri: ccà stamu mali. I liggi siciliani sunu brutti copii di chiddi taliani e l’ordinamentu giudiziariu è autonomu in minima parti. Ma na forma di associazionismu populari putissi purtari a l’ARS cu sapi quanti pruposti di liggi e allura...


Arba Sicula XXX
(with all the respect due to this worthy association) or to enter the “Masons” in lodges that are named “Mazzini,” “Garibaldi,” or “Opus Dei,” serving the central powers in Rome. When will there be an association that gathers together entrepreneurs, professionals, university professors, and public bureaucrats devoted to the cause of Sicily?

2) Having our own economic interest counterpoised against those of the country that’s trying to assimilate us: here we are doing better, but we need to explain to Sicilians that everything, or nearly everything, that Italy does, is against our own interests. Many don’t know this...or are resigned.

3) Having a proper level of economic, energetic self-sufficiency, etc. Here also there are no doubts, but the Sicilian people, drugged by government assistance is under the spell of the Fairy Morgana. They know they are poor, they have been indoctrinated for this since birth. They know that the greater luck they can hope for is to “emigrate to the continent”. But fortunately this is not so by divine law, but only through the subordinate role we chose ourselves.

4) Having geographical borders given by nature: this is the only thing that always saves us, as the “political catechism of Sicilianism” of Michele Amari said. Even if they managed to build the Bridge, (God forbid) the borders of Sicily and the impossibility to divide it are incontrovertible facts.

5) Having our own form of associationism, in sports, in unions, free time, culture, etc. on Sicilian bases: here there is much that needs to be done, but it is not impossible. We simply have to understand it...In the communities abroad it is better than on Sicily, for example.

B--Area. Politics and Rights

6) Having our own State, even a Sicilian region that is in fact a confederated State, with a Parliament that is the oldest in the world, is not a bad beginning. We need to add value to it, instead of chipping away at it every day, even if those who govern Sicily are a bunch of straw puppets of Italy. We always need to make a distinction between the Institution from those who govern.

7) Having an autonomous judicial system of our own, at least: in this, we do not fare well. Sicilian laws are bad imitations of the Italian laws and our judicial system is barely autonomous. But a popular form of associationism could bring to the ARS numerous proposals of new laws and then...

8) Having an historically recognized capital. Palermo is undoubtedly the Sicilian capital, but it is also the symbol of the hated and inefficient regional centralization. We ought to distinguish the administration to be decentralized, from the role as “showcase capital” to appreciate it more. The game Italy plays, I think, is to mortify the ancient capitals of the South, especially Naples, to avoid their becoming again growing centers of power. Divide and conquer,
na Sicilia policentrica, cu roli differenziati, e risanamul’antica capitali ... Ma avremu l’Italia contru ...

9) aviri nu sistema scolasticu autonomu ca valurizzi statutu, lingua, littiratura e storia proprii: ccà semu propriu a l’annu zeru.

10) aviri tuteli internaziunali pä nostra autonomia: e di cui? Sunu tutti “amici” di l’Italia, a cuminciari di li USA! Forsi a Russia, ma è nu discursu assai longu ca ccà putemu sulu minziunari ...

C - AREA: CULTURA E LINGUA

11) tradizioni littiraria: ha statu sempri suttamisa a chidda taliana, anchi ê tempi di l’indipennenza, ma dû 1860 ha statu nu disastru. Ci voli nu veru revival dà lingua e cultura siciliana.


13) aviri nu bilinguismu ufficiali: annu zeru.

14) aviri nu sistema autonomu di media e TV: annu zeru o quasi.

15) aviri na religioni distinta dû paisi “assimilanti”: improponibbili, comunquì non è a nostra situazionì (anchi si na maggiuri autonomia organizzativa interna dà chiesa cattolica siciliana, a cui autocefalia di Roma ha duratu finu ô 1870, duvissi ntrasiri ntà nostra agenda, accussì comu nu ravvicinamentu di chista ê soru chiesi orientali cu li quali ha statu tagghiatu ogni rapportu, ma sempri ntô quatrù di nu statu laicu e libbirali).

Supra sti temi si putissi avviari na riflessioni chiù prufunna, ma ccà vossimu appena minzinarli

Senza sti caratteri a Sicilia rischia di ristari espressioni giugrafica o terra di cunquista.
isn’t that the practice? But we have an ace up our sleeve. If Messina, Catania, and Palermo ally themselves ideally, who could stop them? But we would have Italy against us...

9) Having our own educational system that emphasizes our statute, our language, our literature and history. In this sector, we have to start from zero.

10) Having international guarantees for our autonomy: But from whom? They are all friends of Italy, beginning with the United States. Perhaps Russia, but that is a long story that we can barely mention...

C--Area: Culture and Language

11) Our literary tradition has always been subjected to the Italian, even at the times of independence, but from 1860 onward it has been a disaster. We need a veritable and true revival of the Sicilian language and culture.

12) Having a Sicilian linguistic koinè. Why not start from the literary Sicilian (archaic and of learned people) to adapt it later to the needs of every man. Even Israel and Greece succeeded in this, even Bielorussia with the dialect of Minsk. What about us? We continue to pursue the “local tongues” and phonetic spelling, the daily barbarization and commingling with Italian!

13) Having an official bilingual status: we are at year zero.

14) Having an autonomous system of media and TV. We are at year zero or near zero.

15) Having a different religion from the assimilating country. Our situation is not altogether out of the question (even if a greater organizational autonomy within the Sicilian church, whose autocephaly from Rome lasted until 1870 should be part of our agenda, just as should be a rapprochement with the eastern churches with whom we have severed relationship almost completely. This should be done in the context of a lay and liberal state).

These themes deserve to be pondered more profoundly. Here we simply wanted to mention them.

Without these considerations Sicily risks to remain a geographical expression or a land to be conquered.
La partenza dall’ Italia e la mala vita in America

di Orazio Iannuzzo

Un sociu di Arba Sicula, a signura Carol Drago Russell, nni mannu stu libbriceddu di versi siciliani, scritti di lu nannu maternu e pubblicatu ntò 1913, cà spiranza forsi di guadagnari quacchi sordu. U pubblicamu esattamenti comu fu stampatu senza currezioni o cummenti. Capisciu ca è difficili intirpritari chiddu ca voli diri Iannuzzo e spissu puru io appi dubbi, ma cu non rinesci a interpritarì i paroli dù pueta, liggissi a traduzioni angli. Iannuzzo parra di li suffirenzi di l’immigrati siciliani a l’iniziu dì seculu vintesimu cu granni efficacia ammatula ca a so scrittura è sgrammaticata e senza pritisi littirarii. E’ ovviu ca Iannuzzo non era na pirsuna istruita e iddu stissu si chiama gnuranti, ma cu tuttu chissu u libbriceddu havi a forza dà virtità e l’effettu di n’accusa contru u guvernu talianu ca usava l’emigrazioni pi risorviri problemi interni e contru a sucietà miricana ca pi tutti l’emigrati fu nu incubu a l’iniziu Ci foru assai discriminazioni, sfruttamentu e violenza praticati contru a iddi. A quantu nni dici a signura Russell, Orazio Iannuzzo appi setti figghi. Putemu diri allura ca in quacchi manera i problemi di cui parra ntò libbru foru supirati. Ma a so tistimunianza parra dû nostru passatu e vali a pena di liggirla.
A member of Arba Sicula, Mrs. Carol Drago Russell, sent me this little book of Sicilian poetry, written by her maternal grandfather and published in 1913 in the hope of making a few cents to live on. We reproduce it exactly as printed without corrections or comments. It’s difficult to make out what Iannuzzo was trying to say. The words are joined in the wrong places and they’re spelled phonetically. I was able to make out what Mr. Iannuzzo was saying in most cases, and translated it into English. So if you have a problem with his Sicilian, read the English translation which will help you to make sense of the original. Orazio Iannuzzo wrote about the suffering experienced by the immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century with great effectiveness even though his grammar is very poor and his poems are without literary ambitions. It’s obvious that Iannuzzo was not a schooled person as he himself declared, but in spite of that, his little book has the force of truth behind it and has the effect of an accusation against the Italian government who used emigration to solve internal problems and against American society that was a nightmare for many immigrants at the beginning. There was much discrimination, violence and exploitation. But as Mrs. Russell tells me Orazio Iannuzzo had seven children in America. So we presume that somehow the problems he faced at the beginning were overcome. His words are, however, a witness to our past and are worth reading.
Nel l’anno 1906
La mia famiglia sula la lasciai
Che per l’america mi volgi lidei
Che io al mondo nonciaia iuto mai
Fu comu untrannu della fare sei
Che a mio padruzzo piangeno lasciai
Doppo che appi volgiuto lidei
Ne padri ne madre ascoltai.

Sintiti ed ascoltati buoneagenti
Che di stu munno cini siemo tanti
Fidelì cristiani ognuno senti
Della smossa chiccedì limigranti
Si Dio mi dassì forza alla mia menti
Stampassi poesie inabontanti
Nell’italia ce male viventi
Vero li sanno fare li briganti.

Ora sintiti delle subbagenti
Che li denari vuonno colle iunti
Per! giusta leggì nonci tocca nenti
La compagnia li paga a tutti punti
Che sine l’occhi noncia viti nenti
Vili portano apeggi mali punti
Io vi lugiuro nonci dati nenti
Che la finuta viditi li cuntì.
1
In the year 1906 I left my family alone
because my mind turned toward America
where I had never gone before in my life.
It was like the betrayal of the Pharisees
Leaving there my sweet father crying.
After my mind had been made up
I did not listen to my mother or my father.

2
Listen to me and hear me, you good people,
for in this world there are many of us
faithful Christians who can feel
the rupture that regards the immigrants.
If God would grant the power to my mind
I would print poems in great abundance.
In Italy there are some evil people
who know how to behave like awful brigands.

3
Now listen all about the subagents
who always ask for money by the handful.
By law they do not have the right to any;
their companies pay them their rightful salary
for even if there’s nothing wrong with your eyes*
they manage to make matters worse for you.
I swear to you, don’t give them anything,
lest in the end you’ll have to see the bill.

*One of the problems often cited for sending immigrants back to their countries was “trachoma,” a disease of the eyes that affected some southern Italians.
4
Amici ata scoltari sti paroli
Massima menti sata viaggiari
Fermo vi lata teniri lu cuori
Ci su personi vi vonno rubari
Io vi lo giuro a parola dionori
L’occhi nun vilata fari midicari
Si vi cuntucino ni qualche dottori
Quelli su grana che vanna mangiari.

5
A Palermo ci su li scarafuna
Ci su personi che robano grana
Ognuno nesci per la sua fortuna
Di là casa si parti senza grana
Alummarcco li scippa lammuttuna
Si passa la visita unachiana
Lu comantanti la carta ci duna
Lu cuori cu lavi ruttu ci lu sana.

6
Ni achianamo contenti sopra mari
Che nusapiamo unni namaghiri
Lu vapuri si metti a viaggiari
Lu stumaco si metti a rivolgiri
Ognuno chi sipo dipusitari
Nella cucetta ni voliemo iri
O Dio chi mi potissi attormintari
Mace speranza che posso moriri.
4
My friends, you have to listen to my words
Especially if you have to go traveling.
You must maintain a steady heart
for there are people who intend to rob you,
I swear to you upon my word of honor
You must not let them medicate your eyes
If they should take you to some doctors,
that’s money that they want to steal from you.

5
There are many scoundrels in Palermo,
there are men there who will steal all your money.
Everyone leaves his home to make his fortune
they leave their home without any money,
then at the embarkation you’re pushed and shoved
You get a medical check up right there on board
The captain hands you then your papers,
and if you have a broken heart he cures it.

6
We are glad we have climbed upon the sea
But we don’t know where we must go.
The steamship starts to travel on its journey,
our stomachs then begin to churn
everyone who can, will try to rest.
Down in his berth he wants to stay.
Oh God if only I could fall asleep,
but there is hope that I can die.
7
Quando siamo arrivati nalto mari
Sini fanno preghierì allo signuri
Di sta timpesta nata liberari
Benchì che viafìnniemo tutti luri
Alla Madonna mittiemo acchiamari
Nataintari vu madri d’amuri
A San Giuseppe nunnama scurdari
Lu padri chi na iuta tutti luri.

8
La campana chi sona di la suppa
Ognuno la cavetta sua si accarppa
Chi si piglia di colira si curca
Ce lu dottori la visita marca
Lu cuginieri la carni si spurpa
Lu incantinieri chi vinni la pappa
Lu capitano che sista ala puppa
Lui lusapi lura chi si sbarca.

9
A Nova iyorka mittiemo arrivarì
La nuova terra misi a comparìri
Li navi si vidìeno viaggiari
Colli banderi di tanti maneri
A Gesu Cristo a ma ringrazìari
Che supra mare nunificì muriri
A duna duno mittiemo a sbarcarì
tChe nunsapiemo unnìna maghirì.
When we had sailed far out to sea  
We all began to pray to our Lord  
To free us from this storm besetting us. 
Although we all insult you at all hours 
We all began to call on our Madonna. 
You have to help us, Mother of love. 
Let’s not forget our own Saint Joseph, 
the father who assists us at all hours.

When the bell sounds it’s time for soup  
everyone goes to grab his little cup.  
Those who are too sick just go to bed.  
The doctor comes and checks on them.  
The cooks consume the meat down to the bone  
(so) does the person who sells you the bread  
The Captain who remains up on the deck,  
he knows the time when we will disembark.

We are arriving in New York, 
the new land started to appear,  
you could see many ships steaming by,  
all bearing flags of different shapes and colors.  
We have to give our thanks to Jesus Christ  
Who did not let us die on the high seas  
One by one we started to disembark  
and none of us knew where he had to go.
Arrivanno allo sbarco intrastalluni
Cinierimo bastanti cristiani
Uomini e donni ittati alla gnuni
Cunna via sordi moremo di fami
Eramo chiusi intra lu cammaruni
Numpassava ne vino e nemeno pani
Lu friddo che trasia di lu purtuni
Stamo muriennu come tanti cani.

Doppo arrivanno intra la battaria
Tutti addimisi ogni criatura
Entra na cammara granti in cortesia
Eremo misi inta tanta pagura
Priganno la gra Vergine Maria
Centanni ni semprava ogni ura
Che ia non saccio si ritorno ia
O puramenti qualche criatura.

Massima menti che nonavi biglietto
Quello ni nesci foddi pazzo e matto
Anchi chi nomo si sintissi sperto
O puramenti che si senti scarto
Amici lu sapiti e vi laverto
Che tutti quando vi lo fazzo appato
Di quanto chianto e lagrimi chi ghietto
Risguardo e taliava come unmatto.
10
When we arrived inside a great hall,
There were so many people there,
Both men and women slouching on the sides.
If you did not have money you just starved.
We were locked up inside a large hall
They did not pass around with bread or wine
The cold that entered from the door was such
we were all freezing to our death like dogs.

11
After we arrived in that great noise
all of the people were rounded up
inside a large room with courtesy.
We were all overtaken by great fear
praying to the good Virgin Mary.
Each hour there seemed like a century
That I don’t know if one had to be sent back*
Or simply some young person.

12
Especially if he does not have a ticket
The man would go completely off his head, insane
Even if someone thought he was an expert
Or simply felt that he was very smart,
my friends, you know and I give you warning
to everyone and I do it for you in view
Of all the weeping and the tears I shed
I look and see him looking like a madman.

*(I am not really sure what the poet meant to say here.)
13
Dunque mia cari amici si a scoltati
Benghi li mia piaroli non so creduti
Nel mondo cisono scenziati
Sono ridutti arsi della siti
Diquanto ci ni siamo disperati
Sparsi comi li pecori smarriti
Spartuti delli mogli e delli frati
Che siamo sparsi nelli stati uniti.

14
Prenno li cinque cento deputati
Iamo piangeno peggio dei viti
Di altri nazioni disprizzati
Chi ningiuria e che ne fa feriti
Si ricurriemo e mittemo avvocati
Li nostri paroli nonso creduti
Della patria siamo bandonati
Edi essi sempre introno su siduti.

15
Privi siamo di padri e di parenti
Privi dei nostri amici tutti quanti
Privi della nostra patria potenti
Privi siamo anchì dei santi
Privati dei santi sacramenti
Dello coverno a vinni la casanti
Ascoltatimi a mici Budienti
Chivirraccunto li quai elighianti.
13
Therefore, dear friends, if you are listening, though you may not believe my words, there are many scientists in the world and they’re reduced to suffering harsh thirst, so many men in utter desperation are like a herd of sheep that’s lost, we’re separated from our wives and from our brothers dispersed in every corner of the United States.

14
To the five hundred deputies we go complaining and to weep worse than the ...(vines?)* All the other nations feel great disdain for us and insult us and cause injuries to some. If we complain and call upon a lawyer our words are not believed at all Our homeland has abandoned all of us, While they still remain seated on their thrones

15
We are bereft of fathers and of relatives, We are bereft of all our friends, bereft of our own powerful homeland, we are bereft even of our saints we are bereft of all our holy sacraments. From the government there came the ..... (?) Listen to me, my friends, obediently and I will tell you of my woes and tears.

*The word is “viti” which can mean vines, screws or lives, but none of them fit the context.
16
Pei popoli nessuno ci pinzatì
Che siamo nei precipizii caduti
Che dei nostri terri numinatì
Che li tisori sono dicaduti
Dei piantì e delli belli strati
Prenno li terrimota su caduti
Che perdi la’mici che perdi li frati
Che perdi li ziani e li niputi.

17
Causa dei ministri Riali
Dei nostri genitore siamo privi
Di quanto miglia nunsi po cuntari
Che passamo lu mari piu’ suttili
Che provano strapazzi e penì amari
Che tutti quanti presi degli abili
Dopo lamortì viniemo a trovari
Che nessuno ni accendi li cannili.

18
Che ni trovamo intra na terra strana
Naquì stamo la carta cittadina
Che nonna viemo piu’ na buona frama
Comì li cani che nonnanno padruna
Disprizzata la carnì Italiana
Chì vemo mali tratti edammuttuna
Che non avemo ne vita ne grana
Ingiuriati per dechi e lazaruna.
None of you think about the population
and see that we fell into an abyss,
and that of all the lands we named,
all of the treasures have been lost.
The trees and beautiful streets
Following the earthquake have been destroyed*
Some lost their friends, others lost their brothers
Some lost their uncles, other lost their nephews.

Because of the Royal ministers
we have all been deprived of our parents
and cannot count how many miles apart we are.
for we have crossed the seas more .....**
we suffer from fatigue and bitter woes,
we are all overtaken with bitterness
and after we die we will come and see
that no one comes to light a candle for us.

We find ourselves in a foreign land
We have to get the citizenship papers
but we no longer have good reputations.
Just like dogs that don’t have a master
Italian flesh is very much despised
And we are badly treated and pushed a round
And we don’t have a life or any money
And are insulted as Dagos and hoodlums.

* It’s probably a reference to the 1908 Messina earthquake that destroyed the city and killed 60,000 people.
** The word “suttli” can mean “subtle, thin, weak” but again it does not fit the context.
Ocari amici achi siemo ridutti
   Di qualunque scippamo malitratti
Di quanto e granti questa mala sorti
   Siamo ridutti pegio dei matti
Notti e giorno inpericolo di morti
   Infatti li treni edi altri mali arti
Siamo ridutti a tuppiari porti
   Perche non aviemo ne grana ne carti.

Cristoforo per noi ciavia pinzato
   Pei suoi Italiana dari aiuto
E benedetto chi la nutricato
   Benedetto il giorno che a nasciuto
Che Gesu Cristo forza cia via dato
   Che li statti uniti avia scruputo
Che grazia al Re via domantato
   Per aviri succursso e tanto aiuto.

Ma lu primo fu isso disprizzato
   Lu terzo achi di lultimi avinuto
Li palaccazzi chi non anno stato
   Tienino li sua leggi e lu statuto
Aiutatimi Dio saramentato
   Che non aviemo ne riparo ne aiuto
Lu taliano e piu disprizzato
   Contutto che lamerica a scruputo.
19
O my dear friends, what have we come to?
We’re badly treated by everyone
This awful destiny is oh so mean
we are worse off than people who’re insane.
We are in danger of death day and night,
we are reduced to knocking upon doors
in front of trains and other evil places
because we have no papers and no money.

20
Christopher had thought about us long ago
to try to help his own Italian folk,
May he who nourished him be blessed forever
And blessed be the day when he was born
For Jesus Christ had given him the strength
To come discover the United States
For he had asked the King
To get assistance and support.

21
But he the first to be insulted was
the third to those who came last
the awful Polish men who have no state
who are the keepers of the statute and the laws.
Help me, Lord of the sacraments,
for we have neither shelter nor assistance,
Italian folks are here the most despised
despite the fact that they discovered America.
22
Chi mala sorti dei Italiani
Che nessuno pruvidi sti mischini
Che carcolati peggio dei cani
E pigliati per stupiti e critini
Che notti e giorno circomo lu pani
Siamo come li corsi alli catini
Che pi fortuna nun provamo la fami
Chi ni livamo ciunchi deirini.

23
l'Italia che di bellezzi sia dornata
Che di tutti ti trovi scansosciuta
Con molti palazzi ammobigliata
Che di minieri doro si tessuta
Di gassi e di cravoni caricata
Edi tutta fruttami anniboluta
Nonce nessuno che grapi na strata
Per nustria la povera vita.

24
Dovi 'e mia mamma che mi nutricau
Comi davanti locchi mi spiriu
Di tanto tempo che mi sustintau
Pi stu munnu mi sempra chiffiniu
Che di lu ghianto formamo nu lau
Che facemo la menti e granti piu
Quando che la miarroba mia ammallau
Di la colira molto assutuliu.
22
What woeful fate befell Italians
no one provides for these poor people
who are considered worse than dogs
and deemed to be just stupid idiots
who day and night are looking for some bread.
We are like dogs tied to the chains
And if by luck we do not suffer hunger
we get up with our kidneys destroyed.

23
Italy that is adorned with beauties
that are unknown to everyone
arrayed with many beautiful palaces
You who are woven with great mines of gold
replete with gas and coal abundantly
And laden with all kinds of fruits ….
There is no one who opens up a way
to make improvements on poor people’s lives.**

24
Where is my mother who did nourish me?
How she disappeared before my eyes
after so many years that she sustained me!
This world just seems to have come to the end
and all the crying forms a mournful dirge
made up of lamentations and great cries.
When my own property disappeared
I suffered a great deal out of the wrath.

* The poet used “anniboluta” which may be “indebolita” in Italian meaning “weakened”, but in the context it does not make sense. He probably meant “laden” “loaded” which would be the opposite of what he wrote.
** The poet used “nustriari” which probably means “provide industry” like the Italian “industriare” (sic).
25
Riali Maesta sacra cruna
   Penzati di spizzari sta catina
La vostra altezza mi perduna
   Perche lamenti mia unne tanta fina
Che nessuno riparo ni ni duna
   Prego la principissa e la regina
Dei l'Italia astato la patruna
   Di quanto e bella la regina Elena.

26
Amici mi scusati tutti quanti
   Perche troppo confusa la mia menti
Si questa poesia une confinanti
   Pure che sia stampata malamenti
Prego li Italiani li amigranti
   Di aquistar sta storia solamenti
Che la fatto Iannuzzo lignonanti
   Achi la compra nonci costa nienti
Deicsoldi per voi nonso vastanti
   Che nella tasca vostra nommifanenti
Amici ia vi prego tutti quanti
   Scosati tutti chi sti parti senti.
25
Your Royal Majesty, Holy Crown,
consider breaking down this chain
Your highness will forgive me
if my poor mind is not so fine.
No one is thinking of assisting us.
I beg the princess and the Queen
who has been mistress of all Italy,
Queen Elena who is so beautiful.

26
You must excuse me all, dear friends,
because my mind is awfully confused
If this my poem is not to the point
Even though it has been poorly printed
I beg all the Italian Immigrants
To only buy this story that was written
By me, Iannuzzo, the ignoramus.
Those who will buy it will not spend much.
Ten cents for you are not enough
for in your pocket they won’t do a thing for me.
My friends, I beg you everyone
to please excuse all the things you’ve heard.
Semu cunte di putiri pubblicari dui fotografì scattati du nostru sociu Joe Zarba, nu fotografu sinsibbi ca
ama a Sicilia. Joe nni Mannau na para di calinnarii decurati chi so beddi fotografì di l'isula and cossimu
condividiri u so tracagghi chi nostri soci. La fotu di supra fa vidiri a scugghiera sattà a Taormina. Chidda
di satta, beddi pumadoru ca invitanu a fari na sarsa spiciali.

We are pleased to publish two photographs by Arba Sicula Member Joe Zarba, a sensitive photographer who
loves Sicily. Joe has sent us several calendars illustrated with his beautiful pictures of the island and we just
wanted to share some of his work with the membership. The picture above shows the coastline below
Taormina and the one below some most inviting Sicilian tomatoes.
Pittura Siciliana/Sicilian Painting

Essennu chistu u trentesimu annivirsariu dà nostra rivista, vossimu spirimintari aggiungennu pagini a culuri tramiti li quali si po’ apprizzari megghiu u talentu e a qualità di l’opiri. Ringraziamu u Museu Mandralisca e u so Diritturi e u nostru caru amicu Nicolò D’Alessandro, scusannuci di non aviri pututu usari tuttu u so saggiu introduttivu.
Six Contemporary Sicilian Painters

Every year when the Arba Sicula group goes to Cefalù, the local authorities organize a reception for us in the office of the City Council on the request by the President of the Fernando Santi Institute, Luciano Luciani. Prof. Cipolla is the American representative of this body. The event is a great occasion to cement the relationship between Arba Sicula and the city’s authorities. After the ceremony that includes refreshments and local goodies to eat, the group is invited to visit the famous Mandralisca Museum that contains many great works of arts, paintings, sculptures and art objects from the archeological excavations, as well as the famous “Unknown Sailor” by Antonello da Messina. This year the Arba Sicula group received a special honor. The museum, which was closed the day of our arrival because they were preparing a new exhibition, was opened especially for us and we got to see the exhibit before it was open to the public. In addition to not paying the 8 euros for the entrance fee, thanks to the town’s authorities, the Museum’s Director last year gave us some books about the museum and the exhibits that have been held there. One of those books, entitled Artisti Contemporanei, published by the Fondazione Culturale Mandralisca and it contains a selection of painting, sculptures, put together by our old friend Nicolò D’Alessandro who also curated the show. Nicolò whom the readers of Arba Sicula have known for many years, is one of the most important artists in Sicily, a great draftsman, art critic, writer and a man of vast culture. Wanting to share with our members some of the many artists who work in Sicily and unable to include all those included by Nicolò in the book, we have decided to limit our choice to six Sicilian painters. Nicolo had included painters, sculptors and woodcutters from other nations that I too would have included gladly. I don’t want to be accused of being a chauvinist. I know that Sicilians are not the only ones with talent, but space was limited and so we chose only Sicilian painters.

As this is the thirtieth anniversary of our journal we wanted to experiment by adding a few color pages which would make it easier to appreciate their talent and the quality of their work. We express our gratitude to the Mandralisca Museum and its director and to our dear friend Nicolò, to whom we apologize for not being able to use his introductory essay in its entirety.
L’arte di sti urtimu dicenniu rivela na pusizioni criativa ca, ribaltannu a prusittiva intillettuali e procedurali dû passatu, esalta a casualità, l’erru, u nenti, l’incuirenza, l’immurali e u non pinseri. Si abbannuna ô disordini e ô rifiutu di ogni rispettu pà logica e pû pinseri. Esprimi in definitiva u “non pinseri” imprimanu unni è giustificatu u “causu” comunicativu.

Sta ginirazioni, siparata dà storia e rinnuta schizufrenica di li accadimenti comunicativi, si esprimi caoticamente cu ogni metodu cunvinzionali. Si impigna in opiri ca vannu di l’installazioni a la brutta pittura, a la fotu digitali, “esemplifi-cannu” a realtà d’ogni jornu. Sunu assai attratti, i novi ginirazioni, dû “nenti speciali” e travagghianu su strati intuitivi e irrazionali, di quacchi interessi e a voti puru origginali, ma chi a la fini producimu contributi distorti e impirsuni nta nu universu artisticu pucu autenticu e funzionali sulu pi l’interessi di nu sistema consumisticu. E allura?


Ma è daveru accussì difficili accurgirisi ca u re è a nuda, mi dissi. Pruvmam a dirlu tramiti u travagghiu, l’impegnu di quacchi artista.

Scrissi in quacchi parti ca u cunflittu ntra a vecchia cuncizioni di l’arti e a nova è puramentu formalì. L’arti di oggi è spittaculu, moda, arredamentu, decorazioni, esaltazioni dû superfluu, di chiddu ca non dura, dû causu e dà ricerca dû causu.

E già quasi nu seculu ca distruggemu, nigamu, circamu “novi immagini” di l’omu, scavamu dintra li aspetti menu studiati e irrazionali dû nostru pircipiri, circamnu “soluzioni” a vote banalissimi e irrazionali, a vote giniusi, a vote contradditorii. Agennu pir scarti, nigazioni e rifiuti nni modificamu, nni identificammu cu la “nova immagini” di l’omu. L’arti oggi è ricerca, ma non libbrità.

L’atteggiamentu modernu di l’arti in apparenza è problematicu, ma in cuncretu discrivi banalmentu a realtà ma in manera debbli. Tutti oggi fannu
Six Contemporary Sicilian Painters

Introduction by Nicolò D’Alessandro

Translated into English by Gaetano Cipolla

The art of this last decade reveals a creative position that, overthrowing the intellectual and procedural perspective of the past, exalts casualness, error, nothingness, incoherence, the immoral and non thought. It abandons itself to disorder and to the rejection of every respect for logic and thought. It expresses finally the dominant non thought where communicative chaos is justified.

This generation, separated from history and made schizophrenic by communication events, expresses itself chaotically with every conventional method. It gets involved in work that go from the installation to bad painting, digital photos, exemplifying every day reality. The new generation are greatly attracted by the “special void” and working on intuitive and irrational strata, of some interest and at times even original, but in the end they produce distorted and impersonal contributions into an artistic universe lacking authenticity and functional only for a system based on consumption. So then?

When I accepted the Fondazione Culturale Mandralisca’s invitation to curate this show, I had a few moments of perplexity. How to offer the public a choice of works without taking into account the dictates of fashion? How to ignore the work of the installers, of the full time experimenters, of those eternal researchers whose proposals and exploits fill the pages of every art journal, without succumbing to the furious and foreseeable invectives by militiant critics and cultural contractors? But is it really so difficult to see that the King is wearing no clothes? Let’s try to say it through the work, the engagement of some artists.

I wrote some time ago that the conflict between the old conception of art and the new one is purely a formal one. The art of today is spectacle, fashion, furniture, decoration, exaltations of the superfluous, of the ephemeral, chaos and the research for chaos.

It has already been a century that we have been destroying, denying, seeking new images of man, digging inside the less studied and irrational aspects of our perceptions, looking for “solutions” sometimes very banal and irrational, sometimes genial, and at other times contradictory. Acting by selections, negations and rejections we have altered and identified ourselves with the “new image” of man. Art today is research, but not freedom.
arti tramiti i teurii, i paroli propri e di l’autri. Ma l’arti non havi bisognu dâ littituratura, almenu nta stu sensu. Na ragiuni ci havi a essiri si na pratica manuali millennaria comu a chida dà pittura, di l’incisioni, dà scultura cunntinua indisturbata a viviri, puru ca u clima cci issi contru, puru ca l’immagini pircurriu autri strati tecnologicamenti chìu siduttivi e atraenti, puru ca l’ atteggiamentu cumuni dà cultura, dà critica d’ arti ca si virgogna di la “tradizioni”.

Si non annuiatu, sugnu sinceramenti perplessu a sicutari i cronachi chi s’occupanu di sagumi di picciriddi mpinnuti a li alburi o di “papi inclinati” di artisti quotati ntà borsa o di subiri, appuiai di nu potiri ottusu e cunsenziuenti, rassegni d’arti finanziati chì sordi pubblici trabbuccanti di custusi installaziono o incomprensibili oggetti spacciati pir arti ntra anarchia e stupidità. Sti novi prufeti scansafatichi di l’arti cunimpurania, chìu adatti ô fideli pubblicu consumaturi, rimbecillitu di midia, nta l’estesu tirritoriu multimidiocri ca ci summergi, sunu veramenti nuiusi e ripititivi ntò so inettu tintativu di fari passari a midiocrità pi cultura.

Non putemu trascurari dicchiù na cosa funnamentali: è di fattu nu scontru ntra dui culturi o megghiu, nu avvileni e disordinatu cunfrontu ntra dui logichi diversi. Sta cultura currenti, mi pari vogghia farisi nutari pir la so furia iconclasta dû distruggiri u passatu ipotizzannu l’omu novu e prupunennu n’arti ca nuddu disiddera; è talmenti cariata di miccanismi dî midia, accussì prurumpenti e “difinitiva” di murtificari ogni raggiunevuli pulessibilità di nu veru dialugu e di na vera cundivisioni. Di contru chistu agevula, pù culleziunista e pù pubblicu, attrazioni versu i valuri passati e trapassati. U mircatu veru di l’arti è sustinutu di li qualità ricanusciuti dû passatu. U pubblicu vota i spaddi a la produzioni cunimpurania chìu di quantu si voli fari cridiri.

Sarrà facilmenti intuibbili a quali cultura sti artisti straurdinari, ospiti da Funnazioni Culturali Mandralisca, cù so travagghi diu chiarinu di vuliri apparteniri.

Ci ritornanu in menti i paroli di nu granni maestru dû Tiatru, Carmelo Bene, quannu nta li anni sittanta augurava ô tiatru “stupitu e sciancatu” na bedda epidemia grazii a la quali s’avissi riturnatu a ridiri. Aspiru, e apertamenti lu scrivu, a n’arti di meravigghia e di biddizza e non di scannalu e dû sinsazionalismu a tutti i costi.

Vogghiu ritruvari ancora a pulessibilità di leggiri li immagini di l’arti cu dda sirenità ca necessita â littituratura d’un bonu libru ca nni riali idei, ca sia a misura di la capacità e sensibilità di intirpritari u munnu.

A scelta chi fici pir sta edizioni si basa su principi semplici. Travagghi, autenticità e misteri sicuru sunu i cundizioni chi m’hannu guidatu ntà selezioni di sti straurdinari artisti e cumpagni di avvintura. Personalità assai differenti
The modern attitude toward art is problematic in appearance, but in a concrete sense it describes reality in a banal and weak way. Today everyone makes art through the theories, their own words and the words of others. But art does not need literature, at least not in this sense. There must be a reason that a millennial manual practice such as painting, woodcutting, sculpture continues to survive undisturbed even though the climate is against it, even though the image journeyed on more seductive and attractive technological roads, even though the common attitude of culture and art criticism was ashamed of the “tradition”.

If not vexed, I am sincerely perplexed to follow the chronicles that occupy themselves with profiles of children hanging from trees or of “Bending Popes” by artists who are traded on the stock exchange or to be subjected to art review financed by obtuse political power with public money overflowing with exorbitant installation costs and incomprehensible objects passed off as art between anarchy and stupidity. These new lazy prophets of contemporary art, more in tune with the faithful consuming public, are really bothersome and repetitive in the awkward attempt to make mediocrity pass as culture.

We can no longer ignore one fundamental thing: we are dealing with a clash between two cultures or better, between a depressing and disorderly confrontation between two different ways of thinking. Our present culture, it seems to me, wants to be known for its destructive iconoclastic fury against the past, hypothesizing a new man, and proposing an art that nobody wants. It is so induced by the media, so overflowing and “definitive” that it mortifies every reasonable possibility of a real dialogue and sharing. This makes it easier, for the collectionist and for the public, to be attracted by the values of the past. The public turns their shoulders to the contemporary production more than one would like to make us believe.

It is easy to intuit on the bases of their work to which culture these extraordinary artists, presented by the Fondazione Culturale Mandralisca, belong.

We are reminded of the words of great master of the theatre Carmelo Bene, when in the seventies he wished the “lame and stupid” theatre a nice epidemics thanks to which the world would then be able to start laughing again. I aspire, and I openly declare it, to an art that makes us wonder, to beauty and not to scandal or sensationalism at all costs.

I want to find again the possibility to read the images of art with the serenity required by a good book that gives us ideas, that possesses the capacity and the sensibility to interpret the world.

The choices I made for this edition are based on simple principles. Work, authenticity and professional expertise are the conditions that guided me in
ntra d’iddi, esigenti ntô travagghiu, ca esercitanu onestamenti cu so talentu, impignati a cuntari a rialtà c’apparteni a tutti.

Assai sunu dì virtuosi, instancabili travagghiaturi, irrecupirabili ’nnamurati dû so misteri, ma soprattuttu nuuddu fingi di essiri diversu di chiddu ca è. Nuuddu cerca di esprimersi attraversu i linguaggi attuali, negaturi dà rialtà, nuuddu resta ncantatu o si lassa trascinari di lu non eleganti gustu impiranti. Fidanu suulu supra u so talentu, supra a so scelta di vita basata supra a lu sacrificiu e a fatica.

Vogghiu pruponiri culleghi artisti non cunfiziunati, ma autentichi ca si imponunu suulu pir la so bravura. A “rivoluzioni” estetica la fannu fari a l’ autri, poichè cui lavora veramenti non havi tempu pir falsi impegni rivoluzionari. L’arti pò truvari ancora i risorsi pir produciri indignazioni e reazioni salutari ô cinismo, a la mistificazioni currenti.

Senza umbra di prioccupazioni di pariri non attuali e non adirenti ê dittami di nu impastu d’internazionalismo di li arti figurativi, canusciuti comu d’ avanguardia, da assai tempu affermu di sicutari comu omu e comu artista, u sognu e a ricerca dà “biddizza”, nta la spiranza chi, sunu paroli di Giovanni Paulu II ntà littra a li artisti, a “biddizza” salverà u munnu.
the selection of these extraordinary artists and comrades in the adventure. Very different personalities among them, very exacting in their work, who exercise their talent honestly, committed to relate reality that belongs to all.

Many are virtuosi, indefatigable workers, unredeemable lovers of their profession, but most of all nobody pretends to be different from who he is. Nobody tries to express himself through the present idioms, deniers of reality, nobody remains enchanted or allows himself be pulled by the dominant elegance-lacking taste. They trust only their talent, their life choices based on sacrifices and work.

I want to submit to you colleague artists not manufactured, but authentic who stand out because they are very good. They leave the aesthetic “revolution” to others, because whoever works really does not have time to commit himself to false revolutionary struggles. Art can still find resources to produce indignation and healthy reactions against cynicism, against mystifying currents.

Without a shadow of a worry that I might appear not current and not adhering to the dictates of an international mixture of figurative art, known as avant-garde I have been stating for a long time as a man as an artist, that I pursue the dream and the search for “beauty,” in the hope that beauty will save the world, as John Paul II said in his letter to the artists.
Vincenzo Ardizzone, Omaggio a Guttuso, olio su tela oil on canvas 50x60 cm. 1996.

Vincenzo Ardizzone nasciu a Palermu ntô 1951 e studiau ô Liceu Artisticu di Palermu e a l’Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera di Milanu. Vivi e travaghia a Roma. Ha espostu i so opiri in tanti mostri pirsunali a Roma, Milanu e Palermu.
Vincenzo Ardizzone was born in Palermo in 1951. He studied at the Liceo Artistico of Palermo and at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera in Milan. He has exhibited his work at numerous personal shows in Rome, Milan and Palermo.
Pasquale Basile, Figura con paesaggio, tecnica mista su carta, Figure with Landscape, mixed technique on paper, 31,3X22,3 cm, 2001.

Pasquale Basile nascu a Missina ntô 1945. Vivi e travagghia a Terracina (Latina) dû 1972. Vincituri di tantissimi premi, Basile ha espostu i so opiri in numirusi cîtà d’Italia e a l’estiru, nà Malesia, Russia, Inghilterra, Isuli di Capu Virdi, eccetera. Di tutti i pitturi inclusi nta st’articulu Pasquale Basile è l’unicu ca i litturi di Arba Sicula hannu pututu canusciri picchi già pubblicammu quattru o cincu opiri so na para d’anni arreri.
Pasquale Basile was born in Messina in 1945. He lives and works in Terracina (Latina) since 1972. Winner of many prizes, Basile has held numerous shows of his work in many cities in Italy and abroad, in places like Malaysia, Russia, England, the Cape Verde Isles etc.. Of all the painters included in this article, Basile is the only one whose work the readers of Arba Sicula have already seen since we published four or five of his paintings a few years ago.

Ernesto Lombardo nacque a Tripi (Messina) il 2 di settembre 1934. Si diplomò all’Istituto Statale d’Arte di Palermo. Dopo la sua prima esperienza artistica giovanile a Missina, si trasferì nel Nord verso la metà degli anni Sessanta, e poi a Albissola. Collaborò e partecipò a numerosi mostri personali, premi e rassegne d’arte a livello nazionali e internazionali. Le sue opere si trovano in collezioni pubbliche e private in Italia e all’estero. Attualmente risiede e lavora a Roma.

Ernesto Lombardo, dal ciclo “Leda e il cigno”: Metamorfosi, olio su tela, / from the cycle “Leda and the Swan”: Metamorphosis. oil on canvas, 60 X 80 cm, 1999.
Ernesto Lombardo was born in Tripi (Messina) on September 2, 1934. He received a diploma from the Istituto Statale d’Arte of Palermo. After a youth artistic experience in Messina he moved to the North near the end of the Sixties and then to Albissola. He collaborates and participates in numerous personal art shows, prizes, and reviews at the national and international levels. His work is represented in private and public collections in Italy and abroad. At present he lives and works in Rome.
Lillo Messina nascì a Missina il 19 giugno 1941. Passò a so infanzia e a so giovinezza in una frazione situata proprio sopra a spiaggia Paradiso. U ligami con mari, a presenza dû quali era accussì forti e fisica veni fattu ancora chiù intensu dà tradizioni di famiglia: so nannu, so patri e i so zii foru tutti omini di mari. Studiau a l'Istituto d'Arti di Missina e poi a chiddu di Reggio Calabria Ntô 1961 si trasfirsce a Roma pi fribuintari l'Accademia di Belle Arti cu maestri comu Pippo Rizzo e Mino Maccari. Ha fattu tanti mostri pirsunali in Italia e all’estiru.
Lillo Messina was born in Messina on June 19, 1941. He spent his childhood and youth in a section of the city situated right near Paradise Beach. The link with the sea, whose presence is so “physical” and strong in him, is made even more intense by his family traditions: his grandfather, his father and his uncles were all seamen. He studied at the Art Institute of Messina first and then in Reggio Calabria. He moved to Rome to study at the Accademia di Belle Arti under Pippo Rizzo and Mino Maccari. He has held numerous one man shows in Italy and abroad.
Vincenzo Sciamè was born in Sambuca di Sicilia in 1941. He completed his studies at the Istituto Statale d’Arte of Palermo where in 1961 he began his artistic activity, taking part in numerous national and international shows, winning many prizes. His work is represented in public and private collections in Italy and many foreign countries. He works in Rome and Velletri. He has painted a number of murals in Ustica and he has painted a 60-square meter mural in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Cisterna di Latina.
Nino La Barbera was born in Mazara del Vallo (Trapani) on the third of January 1945. He studied at the Art Institutes of Messina and Palermo. He has lived and worked in Rome since 1962. He has won numerous First Prizes in Lorica, Valle Roveto, Casteldaccia and Rossano Calabro. He has participated in the last two editions of the Biennale of Milan. And he has exhibited his work in numerous personal shows.

_Nino La Barbera, Tracce di lontani rituali, Serie Selinuntina, oli su tela./ Traces of Distant Rituals, Selinunte Series, oil on canvas, 140X100, 1998._
A Nostra Lingua

Nniminagghi di Santa Flavia

di Francesco Lojacono Battaglia


1. U papa l’avi e nun l’usa,
a fimmina u pigghia dû maritu,
a cattiva l’aveva e u pirdiu.

2. Trasi tisa e nesci modda.

3. Dui luentìni,
dui pungenti,
quattru zocculi
e na scupa.

4. Vranca muntagna
niura simenza,
l’omu chi simina
sempri penza.

5. Nicu cu quattru peri,
granni cu dui peri,
vecchiu cu tri peri.

6. Fora virdì,
dintra russu
e i feddi mussu mussu.
We publish a selection of riddles from the book *Ciuriu Solantu* by Francesco Lojacono Battaglia, printed in 1992. The book is a collection of Cantilenas, tonguerwisters, riddles, proverbs and idiomatic expressions from the territory of Santa Flavia and it was sent to us by Mr. Battaglia’s wife. We are grateful to her. The answers to the riddles are on the last page.

1. *The Pope has it, but he does not use it,*
   *a woman takes it from her husband*
   *the widows had it but she lost it.*

2. *It goes in stiff and comes out soft.*

3. *Two shiny,*
   *two pricklies,*
   *four clogs*
   *and a broom*

4. *White mountain,*
   *black seed,*
   *the man who sows*
   *is always thinking*

5. *Small on four feet,*
   *mature on two feet,*
   *old on three feet.*

6. *Green outside,*
   *red inside,*
   *and slices all over your mouth.*
7. Ci sunnu quattru soru quannu veni una, si ‘nni va l’atra.

8. Cari ‘nterra e nun si rumpi, cari a moddu e si squagghia.

9. U moddu percia u duru.

10. S’accurza davanti e s’allonga d’arreri.

11. Camina e nun si movi.

12. Cu lu fa u vinni cui l’accatta nun l’usa cui l’usa nun u vidi.

13. U duru, u maturu e u mastru chiantaturi.

14. Tunnuliddu, tunnuliddu tuttu natichi e nasiddu.

15. Giru tunnu, giru tunnu bicchieri senza funnu bicchieri nun è ‘nnumina zoccu è.

16. A morti di me matri è la me vita quannu moru io torna me matri.

17. Trasi, tocca e si nni va.

7. There are four sisters:  
    when one arrives,  
    the other leaves.

8. Falling on the ground, it does not break,  
    falling in water it will dissolve.


10. It gets shorter in front  
    and grows long in the back.

11. It runs but it goes nowhere.

12. He who makes it, sells it,  
    he who buys it, does not use it,  
    he who uses it does not see it.

13. The hard, the ripe,  
    and the master sower.

14. It’s nicely round  
    it’s all thighs and has a little nose.

15. Turning round and round  
    it’s a glass without a bottom,  
    but it is not a glass,  
    try and guess what it could be.

16. The death of my mother is my life,  
    when I die my mother returns.

17. He comes in, he touches and disappears

18. Hair above,  
    hair below,  
    and in the middle the curious.
19. Un omu e 'na dimmna a fannu
dui omimi a ponnu fari
dui dimmini nun a ponnu fari.

20. Scinni ridennu
e 'nchiana ciancennu.

21. Cc'è un cannistru di rosi e ciuri
a notti si grapi e u jorno si chiuri.

22. Lassa stari, nun mi tuccari,
fammi spuggghiari ca ti fazzu arricriari.

23. Armaluzzu senza peri,
comu fai a caminari?
Porti a casa di darreri
ma si bonu di manciari.

24. Nun nasciu,
nun addattau,
sema nasciri muriu.

25. Don Marianu, don Marianu,
chi faciti ‘nta stu chianu?
Nun manciati, nun viviti
siccu e longu vi faciti!

26. U papa l'avi grossu
e ci voli tantu beni
‘ntra la manu su teni.

27. Nun è pecura
e avi a lana
nun è porcu
e avi 'nziti.

28. Nun è mari e batti l’unna,
nun è porcu e avi ‘nziti,
nun è pecura e si tunni.
19. A man and a woman can do it
two men can do it
two women cannot do it.

20. It climbs down laughing
It comes up weeping.

21. There is basket a roses and flowers,
at night it opens and during the day it closes.

22. Stop, do not touch me,
let me undress and I will give you pleasure.

23. Little animal without feet,
how do you manage to walk?
You carry the house behind
but you’re so good to eat.

24. He was not born,
he did not nurse,
without being born he died.

25. Don Marianu, don Marianu,
what are you doing in the square?
You don’t eat and you don’t drink,
yet you grow just long and thin.

26. The Pope has a big one
and he loves very much
and he keeps it in his hand

27. It is not a sheep
and it has wool
it is not a pig
and it has bristles.

28. It’s not the sea and it has waves
it’s not a pig and it has bristles
it is not a sheep and yet you shear it.
29. Quattru quartari misi a buccuni
nun si nni jetta mancu un mucunci.

30. C’è un munacheddu
vistutu di biancu
c a manu o ciancu.

31. Biancu nasci,
ru ssu pasci
e nivuru mori.

32. Si ti levu a cammisedda
si cchiù duci, figghia bedda.
29. Four big jugs placed upside down
and they do not spill a drop.

30. There is a little monk
dressed in white
with a handle on the side

31. It is born white
it grows up red
and it dies black

32. If I take off your little shirt,
you will be sweeter, my sweet child.
Risposti/Answers

1. (U cugnomu, the last name)
2. (A pasta ‘nna pignata, pasta in the pot)
3. (A vacca, the cow)
4. (U scrivanu, the writer)
5. (L’ornu, man)
6. (U muluni, the watermelon)
7. (Li staciuni, the seasons)
8. (A carta, paper)
9. (A stizzania, drops of water)
10. (A strata, the road)
11. (U roggiu, the clock)
12. (U tabutu, the coffin)
13. (A simenza, u fruttu e u campagnolu, the seed, fruit and peasant)
14. (U ciciru, chick beans)
15. (L’aneddu, the ring)
16. (La nivi, the snow)
17. (U mericu, the physician)
18. (L’occhiu, the eye)
19. (A cunfissioni, the confession)
20. (U catu, the pail)
21. (U celu, the sky)
22. (A ficurinnia, the prickly pear)
23. (I babbaluci, the snails)
24. (Adamu, Adam)
25. (U sparaciu, the asparagus)
26. (L’Aneddu, the ring)
27. (U monacu, the monk)
28. (U furmentu, wheat)
29. (I minni di vacca, a cow’s tits)
30. (U rinali, the night pot)
31. (U ceusu, mulberry)
32. (A ficu, the fig)
A farm hut in Agira, photograph by Joe Zarba.
Curiusità Giografichi dà Sicilia


Ora vulissi farivi un picculu esami pi vidiri si canusciti beni la Sicilia. Si sapiti ‘nzirtari unni si trovanu sti païsiddi, senza circarili nta l’Internet, l’edituri vi mannerà come rialu u distintivu di Arba Sicula. Pi identificari
There are so many cities, towns, villages, hamlets, fractions of towns in Sicily that often even Sicilians don’t know where to begin to identify them without the name of the province capital. For example, if someone were to ask you to locate Mungiuffi, what answer would you give? For those who don’t know, Mungiuffi is a little town between Taormina and Messina hidden in the mountains. In addition to the remoteness of these little towns, there are some that have extremely strange names that make you laugh or weep, depending on whether you happen to live in them. Here are some examples of unique names whose story I would be pleased to learn if anybody knows it. I would like to know where the name of “Omumortu” (Deadman) that is located in the province of Agrigento, came from for example. I would like to know why another town is called “Impisu” which means “Hung”. Surely that town can’t be a cheerful place, just the inhabitants of “Fimminamorta” (Dead woman) cannot be too pleased with the name. Nor the people living in “Malupurtusu” (Evil hole). It could be that this last name has something to do with the famous Neapolitan section described by Boccaccio in the story of Andreuccio da Perugia. Who knows? But what do you think of the name “Passupisciaru” (Fishermen’s Passage). Could it be that all the travelers who passed by there were fishermen or sailors? Or could it be that the “word “pisciaru” refers to another etymology? It’s a little embarrassing to have to say “Imbriaca” (Drunk Woman) if someone asked you “where are you from?” or “Scannata” (Slaughtered), “Muschitta” (Mosquito), “Muculufa” (Woman’s Name), or “Ursittu” (Little Bear).

But after all, just as we cannot choose our mother or father, we cannot choose the place where happen to come into the world. If we don’t like it we can always move. But I am convinced that the people living in “Gualtieri Sicaminò” (Walter Went for a Walk?) don’t even pay attention to the oddness of the name. If they lived in America, however, after a few years of trying to make Americans understand how to spell the name they surely would have shortened it or changed. Who knows how many have rejected the name of their town because it was too difficult to write?
i paesi, basta dirci in quali province si trovanu e mandarci una copia di sta
pagina a Gaetano Cipolla, st. John’s University, Queens, NY 11439.

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I would like to give you a little test of your geographical knowledge about Sicily. If you can guess where the towns listed below are, without finding it in the Internet, I will send you one of the Arba Sicula lapel pins. To identify the town just give me the name of the province in which they are located. Send copy of this page with your answer to Gaetano Cipolla, st. John’s University, Queens, NY 11439.

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Tradizioni Siciliani

Natali pà famigghia Grizzaffi

Di Elise Michel
(Curtisia dû Bayou Catholic)

Tradottu in sicilianu di Gaetano Cipolla

A cucina taliana è rinumata in tanti paesi e è ò centru di tanti festi
taliani inclusu Natali. Tena Russo Grizzaffi nasciu e fu crisciuta a
Morgan City. Iso ginituri vinniru ntè Stati Uniti di Alia, Sicilia, nta l’urtimi anni
dû 1800.

Datu ca i tradizioni sunu associati cû manciari, Grizzaffi dissi ca i
priparazioni cumincian simani prima di Natali. “A festa di Natali pà nostra
famigghia cumincia facennu i cosa duci. Niautri î facemu a prima o a secunna
simana di dicembri,” dissi Tena. I membri dà famigghia venunu di autri città e
si ricogghiunu ntà casa dà nanna pi priparari i pasti e a ‘nsalata d’alivi.

“Quannu a famigghia è tutta nsemmula i simani prima di Natali, i figghi
pigghianu a sorti i nomi di chiddi a cui ci hannu a dari u rialu,” dissi Grizzaffi.
Sta alternativa di dari un rialu a na pirsuna sula è praticata ntè granni famigghi.

Grizzaffi dissi ca non sunu sulu i frati e soru ca si scanciunu riali, lu fannu
puru i carusi e i patrozz.

“I cosa duci e a ’nsalata di alivi ca pripara a famigghia fa parti di nautra
nostra tradizioni,” dissi Grizzaffi, “cioè di dari sti cosi a li vicini e a l’amici.”
Idda dissi ca assemi a so figghia Donna Burke, sti cosi duci fatti in casa cci
portanu ê so cumpagni di travagghiu e ô capufficiu.

“Ammatula ca tanti tradizioni taliani hannu statu ’mmiscati chî festi lucali,”
Grizzaffi dissi, “a tradizioni culinaria ristau ancurata solidamenti a li so radichi
siciliani. Tuttu chiddu chi manciamu pi Natali—u pani cu l’anciovi, a sosizza
taliana, ecc., fannu parti dà nostra eredità, lassata di me nanna. E tuttu risali â
Sicilia,” dissi Tena.

Nta tutti li parti di l’Italia, artigiani creanu prisepi elaburati. “Stu prisepiu,”
dici Tena, “è l’unica decorazioni natalizia ca associu ca nostra eredità culturali
taliana.” Idda cuntinua, “A missa di Natali ristau na parti mpurtanti dà tradizioni
natalizia pi l’Italiani.” Prima ievamu a Missa di menzanotti e poi turnavamu a
casa e manciavamu sosizza e pani talianu e chidda era a nostra tradizioni. Ora
iemu a Missa dà Vigilia e poi tutta a me famigghia veni a me casa e continuamu
Italian cuisine is renowned in many countries and is the center of many Italian holidays and customs, including Christmas. Tena Russo Grizzaffi was born and raised in Morgan City; her grandparents came to the United States from Alia, Sicily, in the late 1800s.

Because the traditions focus so much on food, Grizzaffi said preparations begin weeks before Christmas Day. “My family’s Christmas starts with the baking of the Christmas cookies. We usually do that the first or the second weekend in December,” she said.

Family members come in from out of town and gather together at the grandmother’s house to bake Christmas cookies and make the Italian olive salad.

While the family is all together the weeks before Christmas, the siblings pull names to see who each person will give a Christmas present to, Grizzaffi said. This alternative to each person having to give presents to every person in the family is common among large families.

Grizzaffi said that in addition to the siblings pulling names for Christmas gift-giving, the children and their godparents exchange gifts as well.

The cookies and Italian olive salad that the family gathers to make is the center of another holiday tradition, according to Grizzaffi: “We give them to neighbors and to friends every year. Some of them give jars of the Italian olive salad also. Grizzaffi said that she and her daughter Donna Burke also bring these homemade treats to work to share with their employers and co-workers.

Although many of the Italian customs have blended with the local customs for her family, Grizzaffi said the cuisine is the tradition that has remained truest to her Sicilian roots. “All of the food that we have for Christmas—the Italian anchovy bread, the Italian sausage, all of it goes back to my grandmother. It goes back to Sicily,” she said.

Throughout Italy, craftsmen make artistic elaborate manger scenes. These “nativity cribs” are the sole decoration that Grizzaffi associates with her Italian heritage.
a festa. D’accussì u manciari nataliziu cunsisti di sosizza taliana, purpetti, torti e cosi duci taliani.

“Manteniri i tradizioni taliani ntè festi ha statu un modu pi teniri a famigghia chiù unita,” dissi Grizzaffi. “E’ na cosa ca tutti vonnu cuntinuari picchi sannu ca io non pozzu fari tuttu. E pi chissu venunu nni mia pi aiutarimi a priparari tutti i cosi.”

Grizzaffi dissi ca non tutti i famigghi taliani hannu mantinutu i tradizioni siciliani antichi, quarcunu li abbunnunau o l’ammiscau cu chiddi miricani. “Pi chissu io portu avanti a tradizioni chî me amici taliani e cercu di tinirla semprì prisenti.”

**Na Rizzetta pi fari u pani cu l’anciovi**

Di Tena Russo Grizzaffi

1 mpastu pi fari u pani
1 scatula di filetti d’anciovi senza ogghiu e tagghiati a pizzudda
1 cipudda picciridda
Na para di spicchi d’agghiu tagghiuzzati
Riinu
Ogghiu
Parmiggianu o rumanu rattatu
Pipi spezzi niuru


Iccaticci di supra u furmaggiu, u riinu e u spezzi. Mintiti a tiella ntò furnu a 400 gradi finu a quannu diventa cottu. Nisciti la tiella dû furnu, spruzzaticci nanticchia di ogghiu. Po’ essiri sirvutu caudu o friddu e tagghiatu a quadretti.

In sicilianu chistu si chiama “Sfinciuni” e puru a “facci dà vecchia” facennu riferimentu a tutti li rughi ca si vidinu ntò pani finu.
The Catholic Mass has remained all important part of the Christmas tradition for Italians. “We used to go to the midnight Mass, and then we’d come home and have Italian sausage and Italian bread, and that was the custom. Now we go to the Christmas vigil Mass, all my family comes over, and we continue the gathering that way,” Grizzaffi said.

According to Grizzaffi, the Christmas meal consists of traditionally Italian dishes such as Italian sausage, meatballs, cakes, and Italian cookies.

“Keeping alive the Italian practices in their holiday customs has been a uniting experience for her family,” Grizzaffi said. “It’s something they all look forward to because they know I’m not going to do it by myself anymore, so they have to be there to help with the cookies and everything,” she said.

Grizzaffi said that not all Italian families have continued the traditions passed down by their ancestors. “I think that in our area some have kept the Sicilian tradition and some have let it go, and that’s one reason why I’ve managed to bring it to some of my Italian friends. They don’t have the tradition anymore so I try to keep it alive that way.”

A Recipe for Sicilian Anchovy Bread
by Tena Russo Grizzaffi

1 Loaf frozen bred dough, defrosted
1 can of anchovy filets, drained and minced
1 small onion, minced
Several closes of minced garlic
Oregano
Olive oil,
Black pepper

Spray a cookie tray with sides wil olive oil or Pam. Spread dough in the pan by rolling and stretching the dough. Flatten dough to about one inch. Let rise until about double in size. While working dough, moisten with olive oil if necessary. Light brush top of dough with olive oil. With finger make dents into top of flattened dough about one inch apart. In the dents, alternate separately bits of the minced onion, garlic and anchovies and press in with finger.

Sprinkle with cheese, oregano and black pepper. Bake at 400 degrees until lightly browned. Remove from oven and drizzle with olive oil. It may be served warm or cold. Cut into small squares. This bread is called “Sfinciuini” or “facci di vecchia” which translated into an “old woman’s face” referring to the wrinkled top of the finished bread.
Send Us Your E-mail

If you are connected to the Internet, please provide us with your e-mail address. It would make it easier and less expensive for Arba Sicula to get in touch with you to notify you about upcoming events, to send you invitations to events at St. John’s University and to keep you abreast of things. The database will not be shared with anyone and will be used only for the purposes mentioned. I will ask our web master to prepare a form that you can fill out when you log into our web site. Alternatively you can send me your e-mail at cipollag@stjohns.edu. This is especially important for the members who live in the New York metropolitan area and in the tri-state area of NY, NJ & CT as they are more likely to come to events held at St. John’s University.

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Visit Us on the Internet

OUR ADDRESS IS: www.arbasicula.org

Check out our newly updated web page on the INTERNET. We have completely revised the look and the content of the Arba Sicula site. While some of the items have remained the same, the content of Arba Sicula has been changed to include a good number of articles from Arba Sicula XXIX. The content of Sicilia Parra has also been updated to include an abundant sampling of issue no. XX-1. Our book offering has also been updated to include books published in 2006. So come visit us. I am sure you will enjoy our new look. Go to www.arbasicula.org and join the 45,000 people who have visited our site so far. By the way, you can also use arbasicula.com or arbasicula.net to get to our page.

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Mr. Vincent Ciaramitaro, former owner of Joe’s of Avenue U in Brooklyn, has developed a web site that contains many of the recipes used in the famous Focacceria Palermitana. Check out his site at: www.siciliancookingplus.com
Plus the island’s traditions, history and legends.
Libbra ricivuti/ Books Received


Rosa Maria Ancona, E furono le stelle, lontane... Palermo: Collana Thalia Biblioteca d’arte e cultura, 2009.


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