RIVISTA DI FOLKLORI E LITTIRATURA SICILIANI

ARBA SICULA

JOURNAL OF SICILIAN FOLKLORE & LITERATURE

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GAETANO CIPOLLA

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ARBA SICULA è l’organu ufficiali dà società siculu-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 na vota l’annu in doppiu volumi versus settembri. Pi comunicari direttamenti cû diritturi, pi mannari materiali pà rivista, pi l’abbunamenti e pi informazioni supra a nostra società, scriviti a Gaetano Cipolla, PO Box 149 Mineola, New York 11501. I materiali ricivuti non si restituisciu nu si nun si manna puru na busta affrancata cù nomu e l’indirizzu.

ABBUNAMENTI

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

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ARBA SICULA is the official journal of the Sicilian-American organization by the same name whose principal objective is to preserve, study, and promote the language and culture of Sicily.

ARBA SICULA is normally published once a year, 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, PO Box 149, Mineola, New York 11501. The materials received will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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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the Language and Culture of Sicily

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Attention Arba Sicula Members!
Our address has changed

While Arba Sicula’s official address remains the same as before, our mailing address from now will be:

**Arba Sicula/Gaetano Cipolla**
P. O. Box 149
Mineola, New York 11501

As Professor Cipolla will go to St. John’s University only sporadically, please send all your communications, dues and other materials, to Arba Sicula at this address. This will avoid delays and make communication more efficient. We will still hold our events at St. John’s University.

**Acknowledgments**

The Editor expresses his gratitude to Mary Ann Castronovo Fusco for her careful proofreading of the journal. Her help is invaluable in eliminating errors that inevitably occur.

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# ARBA SICULA

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**VOLUME XLI, NUMBERS 1 & 2, SPRING & SUMMER 2020**

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DICHIARAZIONI DU SCOPU DA NOSTRA ASSOCIAZIONI


Circamu la canuscenza d’un senzu di cuntinuazioni ntra nui stissi, e picchissu amu pigghiatu un simblu anticu di li Siculi (la stirpi principali in Sicilia prima di lu stabilimentu di li Grechi) pi suttaliniari la seriità di lu nostru scopu e pi marcari nni li menti di la juvintù nostra un signu di l’antichità di la so eredità. Nui semu, prima di tuttu, intirissati ca la chiavi di l’arma Siciliana (la lingua di li nostri avi) fussi cunsirvata e studiata cu preggiu e attinzioni. 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 aumentari la canuscenza di la nostra stissa eredità.

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

Ristampammu ntà pagina precedenti a dichiarazioni dû scopu accussì comu fu scritta ntò primu numiru di Arba Sicula ntò 1979. A copiammu esattamenti comu fu scritta senza fari currezioni. Comu si vidi, a lingua canciau nanticchia; semu forsi chiù attenti a comu scrivemu in sicilianu, ma mi pari
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 largest collection of bronze objects ever found in Sicily. The design dates from about 1300 years 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...
ca in linea di massima amà statu fidili a l’ideali espressi nta sta dichiarazioni. Si canciau l’edituri, non canciau 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 finanziamenti e grazzii 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 anchì pû cuntinutu e pà lingua, e poi ntô 1988 pigghiau a direzioni dà l’organizzazioni comu Prìsidenti.

Arba Sicula ha crisciuatu assai nta quarantunu anni, non sulu pû numiru di l’abbunati, ma puru pi l’ottima riputazioni ca godi ntô munnu. A società havi soci ca si trovanu principalmentu ntà zona metropolitana di New York, ntà California e poi ntà tutti i Stati Uniti, macari nta l’Alaska e l’isuli Hawai. Tra i rivisti italiani, Arba Sicula è a rivista chìu populari d’America. A niautri nni pari picca cosa aviri chìu di 1400 abbunati, picchì pinsamu ca i
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 of 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 use of computers and laser printers (the first issues of *Arba Sicula* were printed using a manual typewriter), but in its content and language. In 1988 Prof. Cipolla assumed the duties as President of the organization. Arba Sicula has grown a lot in forty-one 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 slightly more than 1400 subscribers is small because we know that there

Arba Sicula XLI
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 quarantunu anni di vita, di travagghiu pi dari n’idea chiù giusta dà cultura siciliana e di so contributi ô munnu. E’ un tra-guardu ca attravirsamu cu umiltà e cu granni cumpiacenza pi chiddu c’avemu fattu, ma puru cà spiranza ca putemu rializzari ancora assai dicchiù nta l’anni dû terzu millenniu.

Arba Sicula ha statu n’ispirazioni pi tanti Miricani d’origini siciliana. Annu dopu annu am’à prisintatu u megghiu dà cultura siciliana, dannucci mutivi di essiri orgugliusi 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 è 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 orgugliusi di nostri contribbuti.
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 subscribers. 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 organizations have been founded throughout the country, and they look to us as for inspiration and support. Without fear of sounding immodest, we can say that by shining a truer light on Sicily and Sicilians, Arba Sicula, has made a difference and can be proud of its contributions.

Annunciu/Announcement

To Our Members

As you probably know, Arba Sicula had to cancel its annual tour of Sicily for 2020. It was scheduled to depart on June 1, returning to New York on June 13. This was the first time in 25 years that we had to cancel the tour. It was most disappointing to us and to the 45 participants who had sent their deposits. Under the circumstances, Arba Sicula refunded all the deposits to the participants, even though deposits usually are non-refundable.

At this time, we do not know what the situation will be in 2021. Hopefully the Covid19 crisis that has caused so much devastation will not be a threat to the tour. Sicily weathered the storm well and it is returning to normal as I write. The United States, unfortunately, is still suffering and may not defeat the virus for a while. Let us hope that by next summer we will be able to resume our tour, which has brought such great joy to all participants. We will announce our plans in the next Sicilia Parra in November/December 2020. Hopefully we will be able to resume our programs at St, John’s University in the future as well.

Stay well, wear masks and avoid big crowds.

Gaetano Cipolla.

Arba Sicula XLI
Puisia siciliana

Omini
di Maria Nivea Zagarella

Nni torna u mari rassignatu
i morti:
pagghia supecchiu sunu,
‘nutili,
n’t’a sta Terra.

Foddi sbannuti
partunu:
rispirati i ranni,
nnucenti i nichì
cu nu ponu nenti,
li manuzzi friddì...
jelu r’a notti
cu cci porta a morti.

Cainu l’omu
ccu a so stissa carni
Cainu ccu la terra
c’addattò nascennu.

E cchiù nun havi
cufina u mari
a cògghiri a llammicu,
abramu e chiaj
ri s’t’anneju di Morti.
Sicilian Poetry

Men
by Maria Nivea Zagarella
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

The resigned sea gives back
the dead,
excessive straw,
useless,
upon this earth

Crazy and lost
the desperate adults
depart,

the innocent little ones
can’t do anything,
their little hands
frozen by the cold of night
that brings them death.

Murderous man
against his own flesh,
murderous the earth
that breast fed them since birth.

The sea no longer has
enough straw baskets
to collect drop after drop,
woes and laments
of this drowning of bodies,
‘A Camula
di Tindaro Spadaro

Li sonni, levi pinseri in libbirtà,
ca parunu scunnessi, ogni tantu,
sunnu sureri di brutti virità!
Chistu è un sonnu/camula e lu cantu
pri rusiceri ‘a testa a tanta genti
da dormi!! Trasu ’nta ‘nu campusantu
mentri tutti li morti, me’ parenti,
sutta un cipressu teninu cungressu.
Mi fazzu terra/palla e pripuntenti
m’arrozzu tele ‘nto menju e ddu cipressu
diventa tribunali e iù imputatu.
Lu prisidenti di lu me’ prucessu,
lisu/ nannu miu, juduci a latu
tutti l’autri mei morti pianeti,
una saetta mi jietta ‘n lampu: “Imprimis sfacciatu
accala l’ali e spostati chì amari!
Chi nuvità è chista ‘stamatina?!’
‘U centru è miu! A tia nun cumpeti!
Mettiti allatu all’autri! Caminal’
Russa la facci, senza pipitari,
m’arrossu, mentri la vuci
virrina la midudda mi ritorna a spirtusari:
“E ora dicci: ‘nzocchè ca ti sfera,
lu senziiu e nun ti fa chìu raggiunari?
Petra di la me’ petra, trista terra,
re di lu munnu eri e annannu annanu
cadisti e ora cunnuci ‘na guerra
da porta o sonnu eternu! Parra o nannu!”
Tutt’arrunchiatu suttu di ‘na cruci:
“Ma di chi guerra parri sonnu e dannu?!”
Spìu trimannu c’un filiddu ‘i vuci.
E iddu sbotta. “Un mi cugghiuniari,
lu sai di ‘nzoccu parru... testa ‘i nuci!
T’avìa addutatu lu chìu puru mari,
tila d’azzolu in campu sirenu,
paradisu di pisci e d’dampaì
tu nun ni putisti fari a menu
di trasurarlu in càntaru fìenti
chinu ‘i catrami e d’ogni vilenu!
Difènniti si poi.” Ma iù nenti.
The Moth
by Tindaro Spadaro
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

These dreams, these light free thoughts that seem to be nonsensical, sometimes, are the purveyors of some ugly truths. This is a dream/moth and I sing it to plague the brain of many folks who are asleep! I entered a cemetery while all my dead relatives are holding a convention. I made myself a ball/dirt and stubbornly got in the midst of it. A tribunal was held under the cypress tree and I was the defendant. The President of the process was the sun/my grandfather. The judges at his side were my dead kin as planets. One hurled a lightning bolt at me, “First, brazen face, lower your eyes and move back! What gall have you to take my center space? That is my spot! It does not belong to you. Stand next to the others! Go on and walk!” With a red face, without saying a word, I moved back, while his piercing voice continued to drive holes inside my brain. “And now speak up, what’s making you behave in such a senseless and unreasonable way? Stone of my stone, poor and wretched earth, King of the world, and slowly you fell and now you’re wagering a war that leads to the eternal sleep! Speak to your grandfather!” “What war are you referring to, you awful dream?” tremblingly I asked with a feeble voice. He angrily replied: “Don’t pull my strings, you know exactly what I mean, you knucklehead!” I had given you the mot limpid oceans, a great blue canvas on a tranquil field, a paradise for fish and fishermen and you could not help but transform it into a stinking and filthy cesspool, all full of tar and every kind of toxins. Defend yourself, if you can.” I did not speak. Now I feel I have a cross upon my chest and the weight of his accusations increased
Or’haiu la cruci supra di lu cori
e lu so’ pisu si fa chiù criscenti
ogni mumentu sutta li palori.
E ancora iddu azzicca li cuteddi:
“Pri curpa di milianta fumalori,
ca ti chiantasti supra di la peddi,
pirdisti lu culuri e lu riciatu
e ‘u celu, prima regnu d’l’aceddi,
havi l’ozonu tuttu spirtusatu
chinu d’aceddi si, ma di lamera!”
Lu rimorsu mi percia lu custatu
e mi svampa ‘nte vini ‘na bracera
dunni me’ nannu ciuscia la so’ ‘ncagna:
“Voscu, jardinu, pasculu, ciurera,
armaluzzi di chiana e di muntagna
e conchi d’acqua e ciumi d’argentu,
t’avia raccamatu la campagna
comu sciallu di festa. Poi lu ventu
unchiò la vela di la to’ pazzia!
La natura ‘mpistasti di cimentu
e cogghi e scippa e abbrucia e scafunia,
e ammazza e tagghia, persa la saluti,
t’arridducisti quasi all’agunia!
E si nun canci testa, tu niputi
prestu finisci comu li to’ fratì!”
D’i judici li facci rinziccuti
e ‘i vavareddi tutti sbaracchiati
mi fannu sautari l’arma ‘n pettu!
E sunnu’accussì forti li tuccati
casascu, a testa sutta, di lu lettu
passannu di lu sonnu a la rialtà
tuttu..., nun dicu comu, pri rispettu!
Li sonni, levi pinseri in libbirtà.
Ca parunu scunnessi, su’ pri veru
spissu fureri di brutti virtità!
Ma iù durmeva!? O puru no! Speru...

Curtisia di *Lumie di Sicilia*
with each new word that he pronounced.  
Still he kept sticking knives into my brain.  
“Owing to many thousands of smokestacks,  
that you set up on the surface of the skin,  
you lost all color and can hardly breathe,  
and the sky, the first kingdom of the birds,  
has its ozone shield full of gaping holes.  
It’s full of birds but they are made of steel!”  
Remorse is piercing through my sorry flank,  
and I feel a brazier burning in my veins,  
on which my grandpa keeps stoking the flames:  
“Forest, gardens, grazing fields and flower beds,  
small animals of the plains and mountains,  
limpid pools of water and silver streams:  
I had embroidered the whole countryside for you,  
like a shawl women wear in times of feasts.  
Then wind the sails of your insanity  
filled! You infested nature with cement,  
Then with your gathering, cutting, burning,  
searching, killing, chopping down, your health  
was lost, and now you are at your life’s end.  
If you don’t change your head, my dear grandson,  
you will end up just like your brothers did.”  
The withered and dry faces of those judges  
and the wide opened pupils of their eyes  
made my soul jump inside my very chest!  
Their accusations were so powerful that I  
fell off my bed and landed on my head,  
awakening from awful dream to reality.  
I won’t say out of decency what happened!  
These dreams, these light free thoughts  
that seem to be nonsensical, sometimes  
are the purveyors of some ugly truths.  
But was I sleeping or not? I hope I was…

Courtesy of *Lumie di Sicilia*
Sonettu 26
di Giacomo da Lentini

A l’airu claru ò vista ploggia dari
Ed a lu scuru rendiri claruri;
e focu arzenti ghiaccia divintari,
e fridda nivi rendiri caluri
e dulzi così multu amariari,
e di l’amari rendiri dulzuri;
e due guerrieri nfìn a paci stari,
e ‘nfra due amici nascirici erruri.

Ed ò vista d’Amor cosa più forti,
ché’era firutu e sanòmi firendu
lu focu dunni ardia stutò cu focu;
la vita chi mi dè fue la mia morti,
lù focu chi mi stinsi ora ne ‘ncendu,
d’amor mi trassi e misimi in su’ locu.

Io m’aggiu postu in cori a Diu sirviri
di Giacomo da Lentini

Io m’aggiu postu in cori a Diu sirviri,
com’iu putissi jiri in paradisu,
ò santu locu, c’aggiu auditu diri,
o’ si mantien sollazzu, jocu e risu.

Senza mia donna non vi vurria jiri,
chidda c’à blonda testa e claru visu,
chi senza lei non putiria gaudiri
estandu da la mia donna divisu.

Ma no lu dicu a tali intendimentu,
perch’iu piccatu ci vulissi fari;
si non vidir lu so bel portamentu

e lu bel visu e ’l morbidu sguardari:
chi ’l mi teria in gran consolamentu,
veggendu la mia donna in ghiora stari.
Sonnet 26
by Giacomo da Lentini
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

I have seen rain fall when the sky was clear
and darkness being rent by glowing light
and burning blazes turn to frozen ice
and ice-cold snow start radiating heat;
and sweet things mightily becoming sour
and bitter things become sweet to the taste
and two harsh warriors abide in peace
and in good friends some enmity arise.

And even stranger things I’ve seen of love,
who wounded me and healed me wounding me;
dousing with fire the fire ablaze in me
The life it gave me was in truth my death,
the fire he put out now burns within me.
He took love out and put me in his place.

I Have Decided to Serve God, Our Lord
by Giacomo da Lentini

I have decided to serve God, our Lord,
so I may earn a place in Paradise,
that holy realm that I have often heard
merriment, laughter and great joy supplies.

Without my lady though, I would not go,
the one who has blond hair and a bright face,
because without her I just would not know
what joy is, were she in another place.

But I do not say this because I mean
to perpetrate a sinful act with her;
I simply want to see her noble mien
and her sweet face and her soft loving eyes.

Oh what great consolation, oh how keen
to see my lady basking in her praise!
it would be a most welcome consolation
to watch my lady in her glory station.
Circuli di puisia
di Nino Bellia

Carissimi puetti dà Trinacia,
stimu assai a cu’ scrivi ’n Sicilianu
cu’ non ni fa dipèrdiri ’u sbrannìri.
Ma dicissi ’i finilla ccu stu meli
cà càrrica, n’attàssa e n’arrimodda,
paroli zuccarùsi e ’mmizzigghiati
-’i ciuriddi, ’i bidduzzi e ’i curineddi -
sta glicimia di disinenzi e rrimi
comu si cu’ sintissi ’i versi nostri
n’aviss’a pirdunari e cumpatiri.

Forsi ca non ci abbasta sta Sicilia?
La storia so, li so diversi genti
la Musa di scritturi supiriùri
la musica di cunzunanti antichi
vuci di matri e vuci di muntagna
’i paroli ’nzitàti ntò travagghiu
cçà ràdica ntà-raggja e ntà spiranza.

Paroli forti e duri comu sciara
paroli fatti ’n casa comu ’u pani
ccà crusta ca fa sgruscìu surtà ’i renti
paroli ’i ciumù, quannu cala ’a china
livantàta e timpesta, lampi e trona
paroli c’acchiànunu e ca scinnunu
comu ’i-bbummi sparati àutì àutì
jochi ’i focu ’nta dì dî siri di stati
cà doppu ’i botti u cielu torna mutu.
Ccà ci vulissi ’n cantu ginirali
cc’aricchia supra a terra
’n stampu di crita, sùffuru e minèra
’n frantoiu d’alivi e azzòlu finu
’n parmentu di-rracini e d’amarizza
Avènnu u supra e u surtà di cantari
juncemu l’arti nostra e ’u sintimentu:
addinucchiuni, cc’aricchia supra a terra
’chianànnu a-ccorpu d’ala supra ’i munti
’mmiscànnuni ccò ventu di scioccu
’scutannu ’i strati e ’i tetti dê paìsi
e ccu l’occhi vutàti a-gghiri ò mari.

Ancora sta Sicilia è centru ’i munnu
e li puetti sunu sintinelli
vigghianti notti e-gghiornu, ò primu avvisu.
Poetry Clubs
by Nino Bellia
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

My dearest poets of Trinacria,
I hold in great esteem those who still write
in our Sicilian tongue so it does not lose
its splendor, but I think it’s time to stop
using such honey that can freeze and weaken us,
such sugar-coated words and whimsy things
like pretty flowers, sweet little hearts,
this glycemia of rhymes and endings,
as though we’re asking those who hear our lines
to forgive us and feel sorry for our songs.
Perhaps our Sicily is not enough?
Its history, its many various people,
the Muse of its superior writers,
the music of its ancient consonants,
the voices of the mothers, of the mountains
the words embedded in the toil of men,
deeply rooted in their anger and their hope.
Strong words and hard like lava stone,
homemade words, like bread kneaded at home,
whose crust will crackle under your teeth,
torrential words, like when the river floods
when the storm brews with lightning and thunderbolts,
words that rise and fall like the great fireworks
hurled high into the air on summer nights,
when after the blasts the sky regains its silence.
What we need here is a general song
that can correct the currents in the sea,
an earthen stamp, some sulfur and a mine
an olive press and a fine coat of blue,
a millstone for crushing grapes and bitterness.
Having the high and low of which to sing,
we can add our art and then our feelings:
Kneeling, and putting our ear upon the ground,
fly up to the mountains with beating wings,
blending ourselves with the scirocco wind,
listening to our streets, the roofs of towns,
and with our eyes turned toward the sea.
Zibibbu grapes, cuccia, allacallà:
This Sicily is still the center of the world.
And all its poets are like sentinels
who watch both day and night for the alarm.
Tornu
di Giuseppe Garofalo

Tornu doppu tant’anni di pinari
Ntra chista terra suspirata tantu,
guardu sti scogghia, sti grutti, stu mari
e non pozzu tratteniri lu chiantu.
E sti varuzzi ntra chist’acqui chiari,
sutta sti celu di cilestri mantu,
bedda marina di Casteddammari,
eu sulu parru cu tia, eu sulu cantu.

Ma cantu ntra na spiaggia sularina
a lu ventu a li pisci, a li macchiuna,
mentri na vela bianca s’avvicina.
Pari fantasma a lu chiaru di luna,
la prua addrizza versu la marina,
ntona lu marinaru na canzuna;
cu la so vuci di mistizia china
l’ecu si perdi dintra sti gruttuna.
Returning Home
by Giuseppe Garofalo
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

After so many years of suffering
I returned to this beloved land of mine.
Gazing upon the rocky shores, the grottoes
and the sea, I cannot hold back my tears.
I see small boats, bobbing on the clear water,
the beautiful marina of Casteddammari,
under the light blues mantle of the sky.
I speak to you alone, alone I sing.

But I am singing on a solitary shore,
to the wind and to the fish and to the bushes,
while a white sail approaches from the distance.
It has a ghostly look in the moonlight,
its bow's directed toward the marina,
the sailor then begins to sing a song
with a voice that seems full of desolation,
its echo dissipates inside the caves.
Sicilia
di Damiano Coraci

Ora ti criju, si, Sicilia mia,
chi ha statu sempri, sempri abbannunata,
ora ti criju, prima 'un ti criria
c’ha statu e si tutt’ora disprizzata.
E soffri lu me cori e l’arma mia,
pì li disprezzi to, mia terra amata,
vidennu chi sta terra di valuri
scurciata sempri e senza nuddu onuri.
Si tali e quali comu lì viddani:
dopu purtari a luci e pani e vinu,
su disprizzati peju di lì cani.
La sortì ‘ngrata segui di cuntinuu
A tia e a lì to figghi siculani…
Sicilia mia,… forsi è lu distinu!
Sicily
by Damiano Coraci
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

Yes, now I believe you, my Sicily,
you have been always set adrift, always.
Now I believe you, I did not before,
that you have been and still you are reviled,
and in my heart and soul I bear much sorrow
for how you have been shunned, beloved land,
seeing how an island of such worth has been
so pilfered dry and left without much honor.
You fate has been the same as that of peasants.
After they bring to light both bread and wine
they are reviled much worse than animals.
This sad ingratitude continues without pause
For you and your Sicilian family
my Sicily, perhaps it is your destiny.
A felicità
di Maria Teresa De Sanctis

U mari.
Pari ca 'un finisci, forse accussì è.
A felicità no.
Nautra cosa, nautru tuttu.
U mari. L'unni. U motu ca un finisci, perpetuu.
Comu a felicità. O forsi no.
Ma idda esisti, c'è, nni nostri sonna, nni nostri disii,
esisti pi cchistu, pi cchistu eterna, comu l'unna.
E l'unna va e veni,
torna e ritorna,
cmpu i nostri pinzeri ca vannu
a chiddu ghiornu tannu quannu,
ajeri, avantieri o forsi chissà,
ancùora li sintivi chiddi vuci,
tu i viria chiddi sorrisi e sulu ura capisti
ca chidda era a felicità.
U mari mi talia,
l'unna ca veni surridì e si carria ogni cosa.
E u mari, iddu felici, iddu capiu.
Happiness
by Maria Teresa De Sanctis

It seems endless, maybe it is.
Not like happiness.
Another order of magnitude, all else.
The sea. The waves. Continuous, perpetual motion.
Like happiness. Or maybe not.
But it exists, it’s there, in our dreams, in our desires,
for this it exists, for this it’s eternal, like the wave.
And the wave comes and goes,
it comes back again and again,
like our thoughts as they go
to that day when,
yesterday, the day before yesterday or maybe who knows,
you still heard those voices,
you saw those smiles and only now you did understand
that yes, that was happiness.
The sea looks at me,
the coming wave smiles and takes away everything.
And the sea is happy, he understood.
U mennulu sciurutu
di Gaetana Vitanza Mazzotta

Unn’è chi ti nni vai
figghiuzzu miu?
cerchi travagghiu
binessiri e dinari
e ti lamenti
e chianci
picchi unn’è facili truvari
chiddu ca lu to cori
a li figghiuzzi tua
vulissi dari.

E curri e vai pi lu munnu
e truovi lu to pani
e la to paci.

Ma u mennulu sciurutu
e li muntagni bianchi di nivi frisca
or ora caduta
cà di luntanu pari pusata ddà
pi casu di manu di pituri
e lu sciuru ca si sciamina
e nftta l’aria di la valli
nuñ li putrai cchiù viriri né sentiri
si un ti pirsuari a turnari
a la to terra.
The Blooming Almond Tree
by Gaetana Vitanza Mazzotta
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

Where are you going, my sweet child?
You're looking for a job, good living, money
and you complain and weep
because it is not easy to find
what in your heart you'd like to give
to your own children.
And so you run around the world to find your bread and your peace.

But the blooming almond tree and the mountains, white
with fresh new snow that from afar seems to have been placed there
by chance by a painter's hand and the scent that emanates
and perfumes the air in the valley you will not ever see or smell
if you do not convince yourself to return to your land.
A Dama Bianca
di Rosa Gazzara Siciliano

U cuntu di lu Vespru missinisi
non sulu pi li dami è ricurdatu
Dina e Clarenza, o pi àutri 'mprisi:
a mità strata fra veru e 'nvintatu.

Non sacciu si 'nvinzioni o cosa vera,
però la tradizioni popolari,
non rinnennusi cuntu in chi manera
la resistenz’avia giustificari

d’u populu ‘i Missina chi vincia
’n cunfruntu di l’esercitu angioinu,
attribbüi lu meritu a la via
aperta ‘i Diu, chi mannò pi distinu

la Madonna d’a Littra, a pruttitura
e custodi materna di Missina.
Cchiù voti cumpariu na signura
vistuta ‘i biancu sup’ a Caperrina,

spannennu un velu ‘i negghi p’ammucciari
a vista di terribbili angioini
a cità nostra. Puru, a quantu pari,
idda stissa ch’i manu so divini

rispincìu i proiettili e i saitti.
A dama Bianca, chi facia ’ttirriri,
maiustusa nta l’aspettu ‘mmenz’e lotti,
curria d’un latu a l’àutru cu l’arduri

chi non putia essiri umanu.
L’otru e u quinnici austu propia ‘i l’annu
milliducentuottantadui, ch’i manu
u velu biancu so ’nnava stinnennnu

a prutizzzion’i Missina assediata.
Vint’anni doppu cci fu n’austru fattu:
Robertu, figghiu ‘i Carlu, e na maniata
di Angioini, nta lu burgu dittu
The White Lady
By Rosa Gazzara Siciliano
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

The tale of the Vespers of Messina
is famous not only for the ladies
Dina and Chiarenza, or other deeds,
half-way between the truth and myth.

I do not know if this is fantasy or true,
but popular tradition needed to
justify how the harsh resistance happened
without knowing exactly how it did.

The people of Messina who were winning
the war against the Angevin brigades,
attributed the merit to the way opened
by God who sent for our good fortune
the Lady of the Letter, the protectress
and maternal guardian of Messina.
A lady dressed all in white clothes appeared
above the Caperrina hill more than once.

She spread a veil of fog above our city
to hide it from the evil Angevins.
She even tried, as popular tradition
maintains, to thwart the bolts and the projectiles
with her divine hands. The White Lady,
who was majestic, and quite terrifying,
right in the middle of the intense battle,
boldly ran from one side then to the other.

No human could have done what she did then.
The eight and the fifteen of August of the year
one thousand two hundred eighty two, with her hands
the white veil she unfurled above the city

that was held under siege by the French troops.
Twenty years after that something else occurred:
Robert, the son of Charles, together with
a group of Angevin militia set up
di Santa Cruci, misiru i so tenni.
Ntò mentri ch’i surdati missinisi
’ssituanu a Missa, di lu cielu vinni
la Dama Bianca. La vittiru i Francisi

supra d’u munti di la Caperrina.
Un surdatu la scanciò pi surviglianti:
’na freccia cci scagghiò, ma fu a ruina
pirchì a saitta girò nta n’istanti

p’arreri,’n coddu a iddu e cci firiu
l’occhiu a l’intrepido jastimaturi.
Si dici chi Robertu decidiu
di livari lu bloccu militari

ch’i cincu misi assediava Missina
e ’ccuminzari a trattari la paci,
firmata doppu, pi grannì furtuna.
A quantu nui sapemu, a storia dici

millitricentudù, fu cosa fatta.
Rolbertu l’angioinu rinniò onuri
cu lu trattatu di Calascibetta
a prodiggiusa Matri d’ogni cori.

È tradizzioni, è cuntu, è maravigghia.
Missin’havi na Matri pruttittura
chi, Dama Bianca, lu so velu pigghia
e la cummogghia cu ’ntinzioni pura.

È cuntu delicatu, cummuventi
chi accarizza lu cori. Madunnuzza,
Tu non T’arrenni, e a nui chi semu nenti,
Tu sempri nni ’ricogghi ’ntè To’ brazza.

Passanu l’anni, i seculi, però
cridiri chi na Dama celestiali
ogni tantu cumpari, pirchì pò
’ssennu la Matr’i Gesù, non fa mali.

U cori havi bisognu di sti cuntu,
ajutanu a campari cu spiranza.
Madonna, o Dama Bianca, non fa nenti,
sì sempri Tu, Matruzza, la sustanza.
an encampment in the suburb of Santa Cruci.
While the good soldiers from Messina were participating in the Mass, out of the sky, the White Lady showed herself. The French saw her appear above the Caperrina hill.
A soldier understood she was a spy and shot an arrow against her. But that brought his downfall. The arrow turned around, just like a boomerang, and struck the eye of the blasphemer who had dared so much. People say that king Robert at that point decided he would stop the armed blockade that for five months had laid siege to the city and that he would begin to talk of peace. Soon after, as we learn from history, in the year one thousand three hundred two the Treaty making peace was duly signed. Robert, the Angevin, paid homage then with the great Treaty of Calascibetta to the prodigious Mother of all hearts.

It’s a tradition, it’s a tale, a wondrous thing. Messina has a Mother who protects it who as the White Lady, takes her veil and spreads it over it with her pure intent. It is a delicate and moving tale that soothes the heart. My sweet Madonna, you don’t give up, we who are just nothing, are always welcomed in your warm embrace.

The years go by, the centuries as well, but to believe that a celestial Lady, once in a while appears because she can, being God’s Mother, can’t do any harm.

The heart has need of tales like these. They help mankind to live with hope. Madonna or White Lady, doesn’t matter. You’re always the same substance, Sweet Mother.
Narrativa Siciliana

Li farfalli di lu baruni Martinaro

Cuntu di Carlo Puleo
Traduzioni in sicilianu di Lucio Zinna

Na bona parti di burgisi e di viddani di la Baaria e di li paesi finitimi c'avianu aiutatu Garibaldi ‘nta la so’ mprisa ‘n Sicilia, ‘un appiru chiù firucia chi lu dicretu proclamatu a Salemi di lu Dittaturi putissi essiri mai appricatu, speciarmenti dopu li fatti – anzi li fattazzi – di Bronti e li azioni pi contrastari a tutti chiddi ch'avianu crirutu pi daveru a la prumisa di sezzjunari e spàrtiri li tirreni di propietà di li accrisiastici. Ma ni lu 1862, stu disìu addivintò rialtà pi meritu di lu ‘mpegnu e la vuluntà di Simuni Corleo, ch’arrinisci a fari
A large group of bourgeois and peasants of Bagheria and the neighboring towns who had given aid to Garibaldi in his Sicilian conquest no longer believed that the Salemi decree proclaimed by the Dictator would ever be applied, especially after the facts, indeed the ugly facts, of Bronte and the repression against those who believed in the promise that the lands owned by the clergy would be really parcelled out and divided among them. But in 1862, the dream became a reality thanks to the commitment and tenacity of Simone Cosimo Pettineo.
passari a lu parlamentu la liggi, assai cummattuta, chi fu ditta di l’antitesi, a furma di dicretu, cu nu scartu di suli cinqu voti. E fu accussì chi nta lu 1865 quasi ducentumila ettari di tirrenu foru livati a li viscui e a li abbati e partutti a li viddani.

Puru lu granni feu di l’Accia fu sezziunatu e assignatu a milertriccentu viddani e ntra chisti milli e otto eranu famigghi baarioti. Li tirreni di ddu feu foru subitu chiantumati a vignetu e pi chìu di di un quartu di seculu li ’ntroiti ricavati dretturu quarchi ristoru a na pocu di famigghi, tantu chi na parti di beneficiari si portiru accattari altri tirreni, di proprietà di li nobili. Ma a la fini di lu XIX seculu la fillossera strurìu li vigneti, mittennu a dinocchiu l’economia vitivinicula. Tanti appiru a cancieri cultura e passaru a la cultivazioni di ortaggi e ciriali; tanti altri appiru a migrari a li Stati Uniti, na pocu si vinneru lu tirrenu.

Cosimu Pettineo, un viddanu a lu sirviziu, comu camperi, di lu baruni Martinaro, dopu quarchi annu di curtivazioni di li so cinqu tummini di tirrenu avuti cu la spartizioni, pigghì iddu puru la dicisioni di vinniri. E chista è la so storia.

Ci foru tanti passaggi di proprietà in maniera violenta o traumatica. Un casu a parti fu propiu chiddu di lu camperi Cosimu Pettineo chi ogni tantu, ’mpristava picciuli a lu figghiu di lu baruni proprietariu di lu feu, a l’ammucciuni di so patri. Lu baruneddì si prisintava ogni vota cu la scusa di fari cuntrolli, senza spicificari quali, datu chi, pi la visita, iddu stissu ’un sapia mancu ’nzoccu si cultivava. Lu camperi, cunsignànnucci li dinari, stava accura, ogni vota, di farisi firmari na cammiali. Lu giuvinottu, cu li manu pirciati, cu lu vizziedio di lu jocu e di li ballarini, cuntinuava a dumannari ’mpristati.

Sta situazzioni tirò avanti p’un certu nummaru d’anni, finu a la morti di lu baruni patri. Quannu lu picciottu appi ogni pussessu di li beni, fici lu giru di li pussidimenti, pi prisintarisi a li amministraturi e a li dipinnenti e accussì cunfirmari cu la so presenza chi lu novu patruni era oramai iddu. Lu camperi Cosimu, ’nfurmatu chi la visita di iddu era vicina, lu aspittò a la prisenza d’un nutaru e di na pocu di viddani, quarcunu di chisti armatu a la vista, cu fucili a tracoddu. Lu baruni si prisintò, di lu so parti, accumpagnatu di lu secretariu e chistu, dopu lu saluti, addumannò a Cosimu di essiri ’nfurmatu pi filu e pi segnu di la situazzioni economica di l’amministrazioni di lu feu. Lu camperiammustrò li documenti e li reggisti undinarii e, a la fini, sparpaggì supra lu tavulu li cammiali chi lu baruneddì avia spinziramenti firmatu ’ntra na pocu d’anni. Chistu, chi ’un avia precisa cugnizioni a quantu veramenti assummas-siru li debbiti accumulati, arrìstò come fussi di petra e di poi la so reazzioni fu chidda di parrari aisannu la vuci cu tonu autorevuli. A la fini tinni a pricisari: «Iu nun haiu nudda ’ntinzioni di onorari sti cammiali, picchi li sordi ’mpristati

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Arba Sicula XLI
Corleo, who managed to pass in Parliament the much controversial law known as “antithesis,” in the form of a decree, by a margin of only 5 votes. So in 1865, about two hundred thousand hectares of land were taken away from bishops and abbots and divided among the peasants.

The great fiefdom of the Accia was also carved into lots and assigned to one thousand three hundred peasants, of which one thousand eight families were from Bagheria. The land of that fiefdom was immediately planted in vineyards and for more than a quarter of a century the income obtained allowed a certain well-being so many families, so much so that, for the most part, the beneficiaries found themselves investing by buying other land owned by the nobility. But at the end of the 19th century the phylloxera destroyed the vineyards, bringing the wine economy to its knees. Many were forced to change their crops by cultivating vegetables and cereals; some were forced to emigrate to the United States; others sold the land.

After cultivating the five acres of land he had received through the distribution, Cosimo Pettineo, a farmer in the service of Baron Martinaro as a caretaker, also decided to sell. And here's his story.

Many similar transactions took place in a violent or traumatic manner. An emblematic case was precisely that of the caretaker Cosimo Pettineo who, from time to time, lent sums of money to the son of the Baron who owned the fiefdom, without the knowledge of his father. The Baronet presented himself every time under the guise of carrying out unspecified checks, since in reality he himself was not even aware of what was cultivated. The caretaker, when the money was handed over, took care, every time, to get a promissory note. The young man, a great skier, with the soft spot for gambling and dancers, kept asking for loans.

This situation lasted for a number of years, until the death of his baron father. When the scion entered in full possession of the properties, he made the rounds of his possessions, to introduce himself to managers and employees and in the meantime to validate with his presence the new management of the administration. The farmer Cosimo, informed of his imminent visit, waited for him in the presence of a notary and a small group of peasants, some of whom were visibly armed, with a rifle on their shoulders. The Baron showed up, in turn, accompanied by his secretary, who, after exchanging pleasantry, asked Cosimo to be briefed on the economic situation concerning the administration of the fiefdom. The caretaker exhibited ordinary documents and records and, finally, openly displayed on the table the promissory papers that the Baronet had cheerfully signed over the years. The latter, who had not realized the true amount of debt accumulated, was flabbergasted and reacted by raising his voice with
di sicuru eranu lu ricavatu di arrubbatini a dannu di me patri.» E, chinu di risintimentu, carricò la dosi: «E vui, di modestu camperi, comu putiavu puseriri tutti sti dinari? E di poi, iu nun m’arricordu d’aviri firmatu tutti sti cammiali, pensu chi na pocu sunnu fàusi.»


A stu puntu lu baruni si taliò ’ntunnu cu’ aria arraggiatizza e nun appi autra cugnintura chi firmari, sbattennu, poi, fastiddiavu, la pinna supra lu tavulu. Si nni niscìu poi senza salutari a nuddu e avviannusi versu la carrozza si vutò cu lu secretariu: «Amunì, chista è la quarta farfalla, puru idda vulata via.»

Li nobili chiamavanu “farfalli” li feura chi pussirianu e chi a manu a manu jianu pirdennu.

authority. Finally, he made it clear: “I do not intend to honor these promissory notes, because the money provided was for sure the proceeds of thefts perpetrated against my father.” And at the brim of resentment, he added, pressing, “As a modest caretaker, how could you dispose of all that money? Besides, I don’t remember signing so many promissory notes, I think a lot of them are fake.”

Cosimo listened silently waiting for him to let off steam; calm in appearance, he turned and wrinkled the cap he held in his hand. Then he began with a firm voice: “Young man, have you ever deigned to take a tour of the fields? Watching the peasants at the end, twisted by fatigue and dressed in rags? What do you know about my nights under the dew guarding the harvest? In these parts it is customary to raid the harvest and even the livestock, by some caretakers and often with the blessing of their masters. Your good-natured father knew these stories well. For over fifty years my family has been entrusted with this little fiefdom, but you were always engaged in other things... Now, either you immediately honor these promissory notes or sign me the act of sale of the fiefdom and the notary here has already prepared the document. And after you sign, I advise you never to be seen around here again. Know that the money I gave you was all mouthfuls of bread that these farmers and I took out of our children’s mouths. Even the money from the sale of my five acres of land at the Accia ended up in your pockets. For three generations of my family we have given you our blood, while you were having a jolly good time.”

At that point the Baron looked around visibly angered air and found no other solution than to sign, then, resentfully, threw the pen on the table. He then went out without saying goodbye to anyone. He walked towards the carriage and turned to his secretary to say: “Come on, this is the fourth butterfly that has flown away.”

The nobles called their fiefdoms that they were gradually losing “butterflies.”

After about a year, the caretaker Cosimo was found dead in a country path of the fiefdom. He had been killed with two shots from a sawed-off shotgun. The killer was never found, but many were convinced that the Baron had been behind the murder.
Nuttata di cauru

Di Santiaco
(Curtisia di Arte e folklore di Sicilia e Lia Mauceri)

Lu suli, di l’ultimi jorna di giugnettu, avia lassatu lu furnu addumatu e
di la so vucca nisceva na fara ca ntrusciava l’aria, di dda notti di luna
china, nta na vamparighia senza ciammi.

Nnirìa non puteva dormiri e cu la facci sudata comu Siddu l’avissi ab-
buddata nta un vacili chinu d’acqua, nisciò fora a pettu nudu, causi curtì e
zocculi a li pedi.

Caminava pi sunniarisi, ma li stratì sularini marcavanu di chiù lu so
statu d’animu.

La luna jucava “ammuccia ammuccia” cu ddi quattru nevuli ca c’eranu e
ogni vota ca scumpareva, iddu, si sinteva chiù sulu di quantu era. (La muggheri e
li figghi eranu a passari la stati a Zafarana in casa di la soggira, comu tutti l’anni.
Iddu, pi lu so travagghiu, avia aspittari la secunna chinnicina d’austu pi ripusarisì).

Circau na funtanedda pi rinfriscarsi tanticchia, ma nta dda vicinanza non
ni truvau; penza e ripenza ci vinnì in menti lu "lavaturi pubblicu" a lu chianu
di Cifulì e addrizzau ammeri ddà.

Strata facennu vitti, sutta la banchina, na lanna di buatta, pi sfizziu ci desi
na pidata ed iddu, ammenzu ddu silenziu, fici tantu di ddu scrusciu ca ad iddu
parsi d’aviri svigghiatu tuttu lu quarteri.

Pintutu, comu pi farisi pirdunari, la pigghiau cu la manu e la pusau
unn’era, a tempu a tempu.

Quanu arrivau, vitti, sutta na mpinnata, na saja, unni scurreva, comu na
ciumara, tanta acqua cristallina. Pi subbitu s’abuddau la testa, poi guardannu
a dritta e a manca, davanti e darreri e vidennu ca non c’era mancu n’alma, si
calau causi e mutanni e comu lu fici so matri, si ci stinnicchiau dintra. Parsi
d’abbruvisciri!

A la ntrasatta, mentri si scialava, l’abbaìari di un cani c’assicutava na jatta,
lu fici suprasaltari, vagnatu stissu si vistìu e assittannusi nta un scaluni di la
cresìa si gudìu ddu spittaculu.

Pareva d’assistiri a un film di cartuni animali: lu cani cu la lingua di fora,
sia pi la cursa a perdi ciatu ca pi lu cauru, stava arreri a la jatta, lu so mussu
quasi tuuccava la cuda d’idda, ma, pi quantu si sfurzava, non varagnava tirrenu.

La jatta cu fintì e contrafintì, cu furriati a tutta vilucità, cu sauti e firmati di
bottu, si schirmiava e la situazioni non canciava pi nenti: sempri una avanti e
l’altro arreri.

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Arba Sicula XLI
A Hot Night

By Santiaco
(Courtesy of Arte e Folklore di Sicilia and Lia Mauceri)
Translated by Gaetano Cipolla

In the last days of July, on a night with a full moon, the sun had left an open oven from whose mouth issued a breath of hot air that seemed on fire though there were no flames. Nniria could not sleep. His face was full of sweat as though he had immersed it in a washtub full of water. He went outside in shorts, a pair of sandals and without a shirt.

He walked to distract himself, but the deserted streets weighed heavily on his state of mind.

The moon played hide and seek with the few clouds in the sky and every time it disappeared, he felt even more alone than he was. (His wife and children had gone to spend the summer in Zafferana at the mother-in-law’s house, as they did every year. He stayed in town to work waiting to join them the second half of August for this vacation.)

He was looking for a water fountain to cool down a bit, but there weren’t any in the neighborhood. But he recalled there was a public lavatory in the Cibali square, and he headed for it.

As he walked, he saw a tin can under the curb and kicked it on a whim, but it made such a racket that he thought he had awakened the whole neighborhood. He regretted it and picked up the can and slowly put it down.

When he arrived, he saw a canal full of limpid running water shielded by an overhanging cover. He immersed his head completely in the water completely, then looking to the right and left, back and front, and seeing there was nobody around, he removed his shorts, his underwear and, naked as he had come into this world, laid down in the canal. He felt as though he had come back to life.

Suddenly, while he was enjoying the refreshing dip he heard a dog, barking after a cat. It startled him and he came out of the canal and still wet put his clothes back and sat by the church step to watch the show.

It was like an animal cartoon. The dog had his tongue hanging out on account of the chase and the heat. In the chase the dog’s mouth seemed close to the cat’s tail but it never managed to reach wily cat. The cat, with sudden change of directions, quick moves, and sudden stops and jumps, was fencing with the dog and the situation remained static: the cat ahead and the dog behind.

Nniria was hoping that the dog would catch the cat, but it did not end like that. After running around the square a few times, the dog finally gave up, and with its tongue hanging out and its tail between its legs, went back where he had come from.
Nnirìa, nta lu so cori spirava ca lu cani ci l’avissi fattu ad acchiappari la jatta, ma non fu accussi. Doppu na para giri di dda chiazza lu cani s’arrinniu e cu la pantaciata e la cuda ammenzu a l’anchi si niturnau di unni era vinutu.

Dda scena ci fici veniri in menti e davanti a l’occhi na vicenna di quann’era picciutteddu, sfullatu nsemi la famigghia, pi la guerra, a Santu Nuddu.

Era l’annu 1943, Catania avia subbitu lu primu bombardamenlu e lu quarteri Ancilu Custodi, essennu vicinu a lu portu e a la cintrali elettrica, avia avutu li primi casi sdirrubbati.

Nnirìa e li so’ parenti alluggiavanu nta na casa ammenzu a un jardinu d’aranci e lumii e pi varagnarri qualchi lira, aiutava lu patruni di casa nta li facenni ca si prisintavanu.

Ddà, canusciu Ciuzza, figghia di lu massaru, chiù o menu di la so stissa età ma agili e forti comu na pudditra. Macari idda si dava versu nta lu jardinu e spissu mentri travagghianu, facevanu scummissi a curriri, oppuru, l’unu ad acchiappari a l’autru e comu ddu cani, era sempri iddu a perdiri.

Na matina, doppu aviri avriggiutu na dicina panara di lumii, Ciuzza dissi a Nnirìa: facemu na cursa a cu’ arriva primu a la casessa pi sdivacari li panara dintra li cufina -. Iddu non si lu fici ripetiri: nta la so menti cuvava lu disidderiu di vinciri almenu na vota.

C’un panaru chinu nta ogni manu, si misiru in linia e poi parteru a tutta vilucità. Sta vota, forsi pi li pisu, Nnirìa era avanti, ma prima d’arrivari attruppuca nta un spuntuni di petra e cascau, spiddizziannusi, avennu li causi curtì, li dinocchia. Ciuzza si firmau a colpu, vidennu ca lu sangu ci nisceva a frotta, spaccau na pocu lumii cu li denti e ci l’appugiau supra pi stagghiarici lu sangu e disinfittarici li sgargiuni, ma sapennu pi spirienza propria l’effettu di dda midicazioni, pi non farici sentiri né duluri e né bruciuri e macari pirchi lu disiava di tantu tempu, si l’abbracciau mpiccanu li so labbra cu chiddi d’iddu.

- Biniditta cascata! - Dissiru nsemi, quannu pigghiaru ciatu.

Ora lu sangu non scurreva sulu di li carni di Nnirìa, ma puru di li so’ cori.

Un jazzu cunzatu di fogghi di frummintuni dintra la pagghialora profumata di zagara, fu lu nidu di lu so’ amuri.

N’amuri sbriciu sbriciu, senza nteressi e ne pritisi, n’amuri ca Matri Natura addota a la picciuttanza.

Eranu comu un jadduzzu e na puddastredda, lu spinnu di l’unu era chiddu di l’autru e l’amuri tuppuliava ogni tanticchia.

Pi iddi tuttu lu munnu era paru, mancu li vicenni di la guerra li frasturnavanu: ci bastava na taliata e qualchi minutu di tempu pi cunsacrari la vogghia ca ci bruciava dintra.

Nuddu lu sappì, nuddu si n’accurgiu diddu fattu, forsi pirchi, senza vullrlu, idda non puteva aviri fighi e lu piriculu ca un jornu puteva scuppiari la...
That scene brought images of events that had occurred when he was young. He had moved to Santu Nuddu during the war to avoid the bombardments of the city. It was 1943. Catania had already been hit and the Angelo Custodi neighborhood, near the port and the electric power plant, had already had a few houses demolished.

Nnirìa and his relatives were living in a house in an orange and lemon grove, and to earn a few lire he helped the owner of the house by doing some chores.

He met Ciuzza there, the farmer’s daughter, who was about the same age as he. She was agile and strong like a foal and she helped with the chores in the grove. While they worked, they played games challenging each other in races in which he was always the loser.

One morning, after harvesting about ten baskets of lemons, Ciuzza said to Nnirìa, “Let’s see who can run faster to dump the lemons inside the crates.” He agreed, hoping that he could win at least one time.

With the basket full of lemons, they started running at breakneck speed. This time, perhaps on account of the weight, he was slightly ahead, but before reaching the crates, he tripped on a rock and fell, and as he was wearing short pants, scraped his knees. Ciuzza stopped immediately and, seeing how he was bleeding, cut some lemons with her teeth and placed them on the wounds to stop the bleeding and disinfect the wounds. But knowing how it feels to pour lemons on a wound, to alleviate his suffering but also because she probably had yearned to do it for a long time, she hugged him and pressed her lips on his.

“Blessed fall!” they said in unison when they could breathe again.

Now the blood was not running out of Nnirìa’s knees but from his heart as well.

A bed of leaves inside the haystack perfumed by the scent of orange blossoms became the nest of their love.

It was a quick and unpretentious love, a love with which mother nature endows the young. They were like a young rooster and a little chick. The desire felt by one was quickly shared by the other and love kept often knocking at their doors.

For them, the whole world was leveled ground. All they needed was a glance and a few minutes of time to consecrate the desire that was burning in their bodies.

The events of the war did not concern them. She could not have any children and there was no risk that one day the bomb of pregnancy would explode on them.

Then the war ended. Nnirìa and Ciuzza went their separate ways with the same simplicity as when that unknown feeling had begun to burn inside.
bumma di la gravidanza, non ci fu mai.

... E poi finiu la guerra, Nnirìa e Ciuzza si lassaru cu la stissa semplicità di comu quannu ddu scanusciutu sintimentu aveva ncuminciatu a cutturiarici anima e corpu.

In principiu lu distaccu si ntisi, si scrissiru pinsina littre di focu, ma ddu focu, di un jornu a l’autru, pirdiìu l’ardenza e non bruciau chiù.

Poi la luntananza fici lu restu, chiudennu ogni cosa dintra lu casciolu di la menti.

Ntuttuna, mentri Nnirìa era dintra ddi pinzeri, un raggiu di suli scunzau dda tavula china di piacevuli ricordi.

La notti, si ni jeva: la Vita riturnava a mettiri ogni cosa a lu so postu e grapeva la porta a lu novu jornu.

Nnirìa si susiu, si stirau jammi e vrazza, si stricau l’occhi e si ncaminau ammeri la so casa pi ripighiarisi di lu sonnu persu. Dicisi di non jiri a travagghiari e si curcau.

A dda stissa ura dintra la fabbrica la zotta aveva pigghiatu lu cumannu, ma dda jurnata n’avia unu menu di sagnari.
their bodies and souls.

At first, they felt the pains of separation and they wrote each other passionate letter but the embers from one day to the next eventually lost their glow and finally died out.

Distance completed the rest, locking everything inside the drawer of the mind.

Suddenly, while Nniria was lost in thought, a beam of sunlight interrupted that moment full of pleasant memories.

The night was ending. Life was putting everything in its rightful place, while opening the door to a new day.

Nniria got up, he stretched a bit, rubbed his eyes and started to walk toward his house to recoup the lost sleep. He decided not to go to work that day and went to bed.

At that same hour, in the factory the whip had taken command, but on that day there was one less person to make bleed.


Puru ca non è assai canusciutu nta li Stati Uniti, Meli non è na fiura ltitiraria minuri. Ha statu chiamatu “il poeta siciliano perfetto” e incarna l’essenza di la Sicelitudini ntô so vita e nta li so opiri. Si avissi scrissu in italianu, mmeci di usari la lingua siciliana, avissi statu unu dî chiù granni pueti dû XVIII seculu non sulu in Italia ma anchì in Europa. Mario Apollonio dissi ca Meli scrissi puissi ntra li chiù auti e chiù puri di l’Europa dû XVIII seculu. Ha statu chiamatu lu
Since Peter of Aragon was called by Sicilians to help them in their war against the French, known as the Sicilian Vespers of 1282, Sicily and Spain shared a common destiny. The Aragonese first and then the Spaniards from 1296 to 1860, when Sicily became part of Italy, ruled the island, with a brief interruption in the 18th century. That is longer than any of the other foreign dominations of the island, except the Greeks. It is therefore no surprise that Sicily and Spain have had a long relationship.

I could have chosen several topics and authors to highlight the cultural relationship between Spain and Sicily. I narrowed my focus to one Spanish writer who is emblematic and represents the spirit of Spain: Miguel de Cervantes. And while I have encountered interesting connections between Cervantes and Antonio Veneziano and Luigi Pirandello, I wanted to present a writer who is as emblematic of Sicily as Cervantes is of Spain. That figure for me, without hesitation, is Giovanni Meli. Before I discuss his connection with Cervantes, allow me to say a few words about him.

As this marks the 400th anniversary of Cervantes’ death, 2015 marked the 200th anniversary of Meli’s death. This past December, Florence Russo and I traveled to Palermo to participate in a four-day conference in honor of Sicily’s greatest poet, who was born in 1740 and died on December 20, 1815. Sicily’s three major universities paid homage to its most celebrated poet. As I have devoted a great deal of time writing about and translating his works into English, I was asked to edit three volumes of his poems for a new series of books by Nuova Ipsa Editore of Palermo. In 2015, to celebrate the anniversary I published a large bilingual anthology that contains some of Meli’s most representative works.1

Although he is not well known in the US, Meli is not a minor literary figure. He has been called “The perfect Sicilian poet”2 and he embodies the es-
novu Teocritu pir la so puisia bucolica, rivaleighgia cu La Fontaine comu scritturi di favuli cu li so 90 favuli puetichi ca yo traduciu, ha statu chiamatu lu novu Anacreonti e li so odi d’amuri sono cilibrati pir la so sensualità rarefatta e lu linguaggiu dilicatu e hannu statu tradotti in tanti lingu, tra cui lu venezianu, tedescu e francisi. Meli è lu pueta chiù tradottu dû so tempu e l’unicu testu pueticu talianu mai tradottu in finlandisi è unu di Meli. W. Goethe traduciu li primi ottu versi di la so puisia “L’occhi” in tedescu.


Ntra lu 1785 e lu 1786 scrissi un lunghissimu puema epicu ntitulatu Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza. La prima edizioni fu pubblicata ntô 1787. È cumposta di 12 canti scritti in ottavi in rima, la tipica cumpusizioni siciliana di cui Giacomu da Lentini nvintau lu sunettu cu la junciuta di 6 versi. Ogni cantu ha circa 100 ottavi. Un annu prima di la morti junciu na canti ca chiamau “La Visioni”, ca pò essiri cunziddirata na sorta di spiegazionu dû signifi catu d’l’opira ca lu pueta crideva ca la critica non avia caputu. Lu puema è di circa decimila versi di puisia ca traduciu in pentametri nglisi cu l’ultimu disticu di ogni ottava rimatu.

La me decisioni di traduciri st’opira si basa principalmente supra lu semplici fattu ca avia apprizzatu immensamenti lu puema. L’inventiva di Meli, la so capacitè di tinirimmi intririssatu a li novi avvinturi di Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza, la frischizza dû so linguaggiu, la so suttili irunia, la vivacità di li so descrizioni di la natura siciliana, la saggizia di un filosofu naturali e lu so tipicu scetticismu sicilianu mi parevanu cungeniali a la me anima.

La traduzioni fu un votu di fiducia in Meli, e nta lu Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza, na puisia ca rifletti, forsi in modu chiù cumpletu di qualsiasi autra di li so opiri, la personalità di l’auturi e i cunflitti dû so tempu. Stu Don Chisciotti sicilianu pò essiri studiatu comu un documentu storico ca incarna lu rapportu dinamicu ntra li idei di l’Illuminismo e li ideali prufunnamenti conzirvaturu di la sucietà siciliana ataccata a li tradizioni; un record di costumi suciali e tradizioni di na società ca finu a pocu tempu fa non avia canciatu sensibilmenti; un mumentu mpurtanti nni la lotta ntra li classi suciali; e un’opira littiraria di nutevuli purtata e prufundità nni la tradizioni di Pulci, Ariostu, Tassoni e Berni.
sence of Sicelitude in his life and in his works. Had he written in Italian, instead of using the Sicilian language, he would rank as one of the major poet of the 18th century not only in Italy but in Europe as well. Mario Apollonio said that Meli wrote some of the “loftiest and purest poetry in 18th century Europe.” He excelled in every genre he touched. He was called the new Theocritus for his bucolic poetry, he rivaled La Fontaine as a fable writer with his 90 poetic fables that I’ve translated, he has been called the new Anacreon and his odes of love have been celebrated for their rarefied sensuality and delicate language and have been translated into many languages, including Venetian, German, and French. Actually, Meli was the most translated poet of his time and the only Italian poem ever translated into Finnish is one of Meli’s. W. Goethe translated the first eight lines of his poem “L’occhi” (the eyes).

Giacomo Leopardi identified two Italian dialect writers who would last the test of time: Carlo Goldoni and Giovanni Meli. Time, I regret to say, has been more kind to Goldoni than to Meli. That is something I have tried to correct for the last 25 years. Meli truly needs to be better known. If poets are, as I believe, the best ambassadors of a people, as I have tried to show by publishing a series of bilingual books called “Poets of Arba Sicula,” with 16 volumes in print, Meli is truly a privileged ambassador of the Sicilian people, giving a voice to their concerns and values, their beliefs and attitudes toward the world.

Between 1785 and 1786, he wrote a very long mock epic poem entitled Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza. The first edition was published in 1787. It consists of 12 cantos written in rhymed octaves, the typical Sicilian composition from which Giacomo da Lentini; invented the sonnet by adding 6 lines. Each canto has about 100 octaves. One year before his death he added another canto that he called “The Vision,” which may be considered a kind of explanation of the meaning of the work which the poet believed had been misunderstood by critics. The poem is about ten thousand lines of poetry that I translated into English pentameters with the last couplet of each octave rhyming.

My decision to translate this work was based primarily on the simple fact that I had enjoyed the poem immensely. Meli’s inventiveness, his ability to keep me interested in the novel adventures of his Don Chisciotti and Sanciu Panza, the freshness of his language, his subtle irony, the vividness of his descriptions of Sicilian nature, the wisdom of a natural philosopher, and his typical Sicilian skepticism seemed congenial to my soul.

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3 My translation of the Moral Fables was published originally in 1988, but it is now part of the anthology The Poetry of Giovanni Meli, op. cit.
4 Goethe entitled his translation “Sizilianisches Lied” and may have read the poem while he spent some time in Sicily in 1787.
Pirchi Meli scigghiu i dui pirsunaggi di Don Quijote e Sancho Panza? Quannu cuncepiu lu so ambizziusu prugettu, era beni cunsapevuli dî possibili rischi chi cumpurtavanu. Senza dubbìu i dui pirsunaggi - simbuli viventi di li forzi opposti a l’interno di l’omu - suddisfacevanu i so bisogni psicologici. Meli sapeva benissimu ca lu so testu fussi giudicatu da lu puntu di vista dû capulavoru cervantianu. La so selezioni di li pirsunaggi spagnoli fu fatta probabilmenti comu un invitu apertu pir cunfruntari li dui opiri. E tanti critici hannu fattu esattamenti chistu, arrivannu a la conclusioni ca, mentri l’opira avia molti meriti, non avia pututu nchianari ô liveddu dû mudellu. Ddi critici c’hannu misuratu lu Don Chisciotti sicilianu cu lu so omolugu spagnolu (Emiliani, Settembrini, De Sanctis e Cesareo) cioè, ca l’hannu cunziddiratu na semplici cuntinuazioni o estensioni di lu Don Quijote - un’imitazioni di un’opira inimitabili - hannu fattu un granni disserviziu a Meli. Iddi non hannu caputu li so obietttivi. Meli era un artista troppu espertu pir non aviri caputu ca l’imitazioni era distinata a falliri finu di lu principiu. Lu so Don Chisciotti fu pinzatu in modu diversu e avia obietttivi diversi di pirsiguiri ô so ritornu supra la terra. Mentri lu cavaleri

A lu principiu di li so avvinturi, duranti na timpesta di nivi, lu so sceccu sciddicau supra lu ghiacciu e nzemmula cu Sanciu yenu a finiru su na critazzu. /At the beginning of their wandering, in a snow storm, Sanciu and his donkey slid down a slope covered with ice. Illustrazioni di Beppe Vesco.

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Arba Sicula XLI
My translation was a vote of confidence in Meli, and in the Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza, a poem that reflects, perhaps more fully than any other of his works, the author’s personality and the conflicts of his time. This Sicilian Don Chisciotti can be studied as a historical document embodying the dynamic relationship between the ideas of the Enlightenment and the deeply conservative ideals of tradition-bound Sicilian society; a record of social customs and traditions of a society that until recently had not changed appreciably; an important moment in the struggle between social classes; and a literary work of considerable scope and depth in the tradition of Pulci, Ariosto, Tassoni, and Berni.

Why did Meli choose the two characters of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza? When he conceived his ambitious project, he was well aware of the possible risks involved. Undoubtedly the two characters -- living symbols of the opposing forces within man-- fulfilled his deep-seated psychological needs. Meli knew very well that his work would be judged from the perspective of the Cervantian masterpiece. His selection of the Spanish characters was probably taken as an open invitation to compare the two works. And many actually did, coming to the conclusion that while the work had many merits, it had failed to live up to the model. Those critics who have measured the Sicilian Don Chisciotri by his Spanish counterpart (Emiliani Giudici, Sanciu assisti a na scena d’amuri tra na vidua e un marinaru. / Sanciu is helpful in fostering a new love between a widow and a young fisherman who celebrate their new found love in a dance. Illustration by Beppe Vesco.)
sicilianu avia la stissa fisununia di lu so pridicissuri, campau in un tempu diversu e parrai cu na vuci diversa. Lu pirsunaggiu di Sancho Panza suffriu na metamorfosi ancora maggiori, la cui manifestazioni chiù evidenti fu la so elevazioni a lu rangu dû lu patruni. Lu puema sicilianu s’intitula *Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza*. Lu rumanzu spagnolu s’intitulava *El genioso hidalgo Don Quijote de La Mancha*. Lu nomu di Sancho non c’era. Stu spustamentu di enfasi è chiù mpurtanti di quantu pari, comu putemu vidiri tra pocu. Li dui opiri non divunu essiri conziddirati un originali e un’imitazioni, ma chiuttostu dui manifestazioni diversi dû stiissu archetipu.

Don Quijote e Sancho Panza, come dissi Bakhtin, sunnu na coppia archetipica: un’unioni inezeparabili e separata di opposti. Don Quijote non puteva esistiri sulu, comu Cervantes mparau dopu la prima avvintura solitaria dû so eroi. Miguel De Unamuno, cummintannu l’acquisizioni di Sancho di parti di Don Quijote comu so scuderì, dissi:

“Ora Don Quijote è completu. Avia bisognu di Sancho. Avia bisognu di iddu pir putiri Parrari, cioè di pinzari a vuci auta cu franchizza e scutari lu sonu dà propria vuci ntô munnu”.

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Settembrini, De Sanctis and Cesareo) that is, who have regarded mere continuation or extension of the *Don Quijote* -- an imitation of an inimitable work -- have done a great disservice to Meli and have failed to understand his goals. Meli was too consummate an artist not to have realized that imitation was doomed to failure from the beginning. His Don Chisciotti was conceived in a different manner and had different goals to pursue on his return to earth. While the Sicilian knight had the same physiognomy as his predecessor, he lived in a different time and spoke with a different voice. The character of Sancho Panza underwent an even greater metamorphosis, the most obvious manifestation of which was his elevation to the rank of his master. The Sicilian poem is entitled *Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza*. The Spanish novel was entitled *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de La Mancha*. Sancho’s name did not appear in it. This shifting of emphasis is, in reality, more important than it seems, as we shall see shortly. The two works must not be considered an original and an imitation, but rather as two different manifestations of the same archetype.

Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, as Bakhtin noted, constitute an archetypal couple: an inseparable and separate union of opposites. Don Quijote could not
Non duvissimu vidiri a Meli comu un imitaturi di Cervantes, ma chiuttostu comu un pueta in cui l’archetipu fu ativatu. Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza eranu accussì vivi in Meli comu avianu statu vivi in Cervantes. Ma la coppia antitetica fu sintuta di Meli in modu diversu. Lu fattu ca Sanciu divintau pir Meli la mità duminanti di la coppia, rapprisenta nu spustamentu di li cumpunenti pir suddisfari la pusizioni psicologica e filosofica di Meli versu lu munnu. Sta riorganizzazioni fu la reazioni piculari e unica di Meli a l’archetipu, causata da tutti ddi fatturi ca contribueru a fari d’iddu l’omu chi era. Meli, pir usari un termini caru a Unamuno, parissi un sustinituri dû Sanchopanzismu. La difer- firenza tra Meli e Cervantes è ca la bilanza ca cunteni li dui mità di l’archetipu pisava di chiù ô latu di lu scetticismu pir lu pueta sicilianu. Ma anchi si lu scetticismu era un atteggiamentu priduminanti in iddu, non si pò diri ca iddu fussi ncapaci di ottimismo. Né fussi veru diri ca lu so atteggiamentu empirista ci mpidiva di nutriri fidi idealistichi. Infatti, lu pueta appi a cumpattiri ntra sti due atteggiamenti divergenti pir tutta la so vita, infatti, chista è la caratteristica chiù evidenti di la sua puisia.

Meli pò essiri difinutu comu un empirista cu tindenzi idealistichi, un rialista cu na nclinazioni pir lu sognu, un omu scetticu ca avia punti di vista ottimistici, un omu ca si basava supra i fatti ma nclinava a essiri guvirnati di principi. Lu Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza fu la ncarnazioni di tali cunflittu. Nta na littra scritta ntò 1804 a Filippo Rehfues, discriviu lu cunflittu in termini vividì. Cunfirmau chi la so prioccupazionì pir tutta la vita avia statu:

“Pensare ai modi più plausibili per organizzare e ordinare la società degli uomini in modo che i giusti non fossero sopraffatti dagli ingiusti, gli onesti avrebbero trovato il modo di vivere senza essere oppressi o umiliati, la virtù sarebbe stata presa in considerazione a suo favore, e le leggi non sarebbero state utilizzate per la tratta vile, .... Ma poi, realizzando la mia umile condizione di
exist alone, as Cervantes learned after his hero’s first solo adventure. Miguel De Unamuno, commenting on Don Quijote’s acquisition of Sancho as his squire, said:

“Now Don Quijote is complete. He had need of Sancho. He needed him so as to be able to talk, that is, to think aloud with frankness and listen to the sound of his own voice in the world.”

Meli should not be seen as an imitator of Cervantes, but rather as a poet in whom the archetype was activated. Don Chisciotti and Sanciu Panza were as alive in Meli as they had been in Cervantes. But the antithetical couple was experienced by Meli in a different manner. The fact that Sanciu became for Meli the dominant half of the couple, represents a shifting of the components to suit Meli’s psychological and philosophical stance toward the world. This re-arrangement was Meli’s peculiar and unique reaction to the archetype, brought about by all those factors that contributed to making him the man he was. Meli, to use a term dear to Unamuno, would seem to be a proponent of Sanchopanzism.

The difference between Meli and Cervantes was that the scale containing the two halves of the archetype was weighted more on the side of skepticism for the Sicilian poet. But even though skepticism was a predominant attitude in him, it cannot be said that he was incapable of optimism. Nor would it be true to say that his empiricist’s attitudes prevented him from harboring idealistic beliefs. Indeed, the poet was continuously torn between these two divergent attitudes throughout his life, in fact, this is the most evident characteristic of his poetry.

Thus, Meli can be defined as an empiricist with idealistic tendencies, a realist with a penchant for dreaming, a skeptical man who harbored optimistic views, a man who relied on facts but tended to be governed by principles. The Don Chisciotti and Sanciu Panza was an embodiment of such a conflict. In a letter written in 1804 to Filippo Rehfues, he described the conflict in vivid terms. He confirmed that his life-long preoccupation had been:

“To think of the most plausible ways to arrange and order the society of men so that the just would not be overcome by the unjust, the honest would find ways of living without being oppressed or humbled, virtue would be given the consideration due to it, and the laws would not be used for vile trafficking, .... But then, realizing my humble condition as a private and the imbecility of my spirit, I would consider myself completely mad, promising myself I would no longer venture beyond the sphere of my desires or thoughts: ... Now this state of perpetual contradiction with myself prompted me to mask with the allegory of Don Chisciotti e Sanciu the periods of deliriums and the lucid intervals of good sense.” (My translation.)

privato e l’imbecillità del mio spirito, mi considererei completamente pazzo, promettendomi che non mi avventuravo più al di là della sfera dei miei desideri o pensieri: ... Ora questo stato di contraddizione perpetua con me stesso mi ha spinto a mascherare con l’allegoria di Don Chisciotti e Sanciu i periodi dei deliri e gli intervalli lucidi di buon senso.

La prioccupazioni di Meli pir tutta la vita, comu De Sanctis suttuliniau nta lu so famusu saggiu – fu la ricerca di la saggiza. In tutta la so puiusia lu principiu aristotelicu di la mudirazioni è custantementi ludatu. La felicità, si existi na cosa di stu geniri, cunsisti in non pirmettiri mai a li nostri disidderii di supirari i cunfini di nostri mezzi pir arrivaricci. Meli esalta sempri la saggiza dû bon sensu, di l’approciu mediu di lu strata a la vita. Nni lu Cantu III, ottava 5, parra attraversu lu so Don Chisciotti a favuri di la mudirazioni:

“Chiù chi si voli, chiù si pati, amici:
lu riccu stissu, si la brigghia cedi
a li proprii disii, oh chi cunstrastu!
Martiriù ci addivinta lu so fastu.”

Li atteggiamenti filosofici di Meli foru chiddi di un empiricu. Iddu crideva ca tutta la conoscenza passa pir li sensi. Avia granni ammirazioni pir Bacon chi chiamau lu Colombu di la filosofia moderna - e pir omini comu a Galilei e Telesiu. Si fidava sulu di li leggi di la natura. Sti cumpunenti di la persunalità di Meli foru ncarnati di Sanciu, l’omu ca si ntirissava sulu di chiddu ca era tempu prisenti, ca cridiva sulu a chiddu ca puteva vidiri cu li so occhi e tuccari cu li so manu.

La riazioni di Meli ô capulavoru di Cervantes è prividibili. Pir un omu ca cridiva in tuttu chiddu ca è tangibili, veru, raziunali, materialista e di sensu cumuni, lu Don Quijote di Cervantes ci avia a pariri n’esagirazioni, na cum-minazioni ridiccula di fuddia e virtù. Meli, comu dichiara nta la “Visioni” (ottava 46) cridiva di essiri lu primu omu a cumprenniri la vera lizioni murali cuntinuta ntô Don Quijote. Lu pirsunagghiu di Don Quijote pir iddu era un diamanti muntatu nta un aneddu di chiummu. Un veru filosofu pò apprizzari li so abunnanti virtù pirchì sapi cerniri lu frumentu di la pagghia. Lu tragicu difettu dû pirsunagghiu di Don Quijote era la so incapàcità di valutari li so forzi rispettu a zoccu si prupunia di fari, cioè li so prugetti cumpurtavanu sempri forzi maggiuri di chiddu ca pussideva iddu. E chistu nta l’universu melianu era na rizzetta pir l’infelicità.

Lu Don Chisciotti di Meli incarna li ideali suciali dû pueta e sunnu chiaramente espressi in tutta l’opira. Li ricchi, li putenti e i nobili sunnu custantimenti criticati, mentri li viddani, li pasturi -- nsumma chiddi ca sunnu li produtturi di la ricchizza sunnu esaltati. La giustizia suciali, la fini di lu sfruttamentu pirenni di li classi lavoratrici pir parti di nobili parassitari, lu dirittu di ogni
Meli’s life-long concern—as De Sanctis pointed out in his famous essay—was a search for wisdom. Throughout his poetry the Aristotelian principle of moderation is constantly praised. Happiness, if such a thing exists, consists of never allowing our own desires to exceed the boundaries of our means to attain them. Meli always exalts the wisdom of common sense, of the middle-of-the-road-approach to life. In Canto III, Oct. 5, he speaks through his Don Chisciotti on behalf of moderation:

“The more you want, the more you suffer, friends. 
And if the rich themselves gave a free rein 
to their desires, what conflicts would there be!
Their pomp would soon become sheer agony.”

Meli’s philosophical attitudes were those of an empiricist. He believed that all knowledge was made possible by the senses. He had great admiration for Bacon whom he called the Columbus of modern philosophy—and for men such as Galilei and Telesio. He trusted only in the laws of nature. These components of Meli’s personality were embodied by Sanciu, the man who cared only for what was “present tense,” who believed only what he saw with his own eyes and touched with his own hands.

Meli’s reaction to the Cervantian masterpiece is predictable. For a man who believed in everything that is tangible, real, rational, materialistic, and commonsensical, Cervantes’ Don Quijote had to appear as an exaggeration, a risible combination of foolishness and virtue. Meli, as he stated in the “Vision” (octave 46) believed he was the first man to understand the true moral lesson contained in the Don Quijote. The character of Don Quijote for him was a diamond mounted in a lead setting. A true philosopher would appreciate his many virtues because he would know how to distinguish the wheat from the chaff. The tragic flaw in Don Quijote’s character was an inability to gauge his powers *vis à vis* the task at hand, that is, his projects always involved greater powers than he possessed, which in the Melian universe was a recipe for unhappiness.

Meli’s Don Chisciotti embodies the poet’s social ideals and they are clearly expressed throughout the work. The rich, the powerful, and the titled are constantly denigrated, while the peasants, the shepherds—in short those who are the producers of wealth—are exalted. Social justice, an end to the perennial exploitation of the working classes by the parasitic noblemen, the right of every person to work, the establishment of an international tribunal to settle cases, the abolition of wars, were ideas that Meli embraced whole-heartedly, and are

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pirsuna a lu travagghiu, l’istituzioni di un tribunali ntiraziunali per risorvirì i casi, l’abolizioni di li guerri, eranu idei ca Meli abbracciava cu tuttu lu cori, e sunnu li ideali chi animanu a lu so Don Chisciot. Ntô Cantu XII lu Cavaleri incidìu li so idei di riforma di l’ordini suciali e pir ripurtari a Astraea, la dea di la giustizia, supra la terra supra lu truncu di un vecchiu arburu cuntortu. Irunia di la sorti, chistu fu lu stissu arburu ca causau la so morti. Ma è puru na forma di cunnanna pir ddi idei ca lu munnu com’era non puteva accittari.

Quannu vitti li incisioni, e sintiu la spiegazioni di Don Chiscio ca rapprisintavanu lu so pianu pir addrizzari lu munnu, Sanciu ridicolizzau l’idea e sfidau a lu cavaleri comu segui:


Li ideali umanitari di Meli - incarnati di Don Chiscio -eranu in cunflittu esternamenti cu li atteggiamenti di na nobiltà radicata e ntransigenti, riluttanti a rinunciari a li so privilegi e, internamenti, cu chidda parti rialistica e scettica d’dui stissi ca cunziddirava lu compitu di canciari lu tissutu suciali di l’isula un tentativu scioccu e senza spiranza. In Don Chiscio, Meli pruittava i so disidderii pir la giustizia umana, la libertà e na chiù giusta divisioni di la ricchizza ntra li populi dû munnu. Ma, a lu stissu tempu, sti disidderii duvivanu essiri rapprisintati comu li sonnura di un pazzu deliranti. È assiomaticu ca nzemmula a li palori sani, saggi e idealistichi chi metti in bucca a Don Chiscio, lu pueta lu fa ntrrupicari custamenti mittennuici piani foddi e mpraticabili in bucca, comu ntô Cantu III quannu, in unu di li pochi episodi di origini cervantiana, Don Chiscio canta li lodi di l’età di l’oru a un gruppu di pasturi. Meli sapeva esattamenti quantu miseramenti vivevanu li pasturi siciliani ma fici suggestiri a Don Chiscio ca li pasturi avissiru a diventari astronomi e puetti ntô so tempu liberu, un’idea foddi ca pò essirì caputa sulu comu un tentativu di scalzari a lu so eroi.

Mentri Don Chiscio era na massa di apprendimenti non diggiruti, un
the ideals that animate his Don Chisciotti. In Canto XII the Knight carved his ideas for reforming the social order and bringing Astraea, the goddess of justice, back to earth on the trunk of an old, contorted rowan tree. Ironically, it is the same tree that caused his demise, which underlines Meli’s belief that those ideas would never be accepted by his world.

When Sanciu saw the carvings, and heard Don Chisciotti’s explanation that they represent his plan to straighten out the world, he ridiculed the notion and challenged the knight as follows:

74, Sanciu replied: “You’ve made a giant step from trunk to world and then from world to trunk. You will not lead me by the nose again, nor will I swallow such a phony line. Do you believe that straightening the world is simple like the pinching of tobacco, or splinting broken arms? Just one, two, three? I bet you cannot straighten out this tree!”

Don Chisciotti accepted the challenge and tried to straighten out the tree, but he struggled so hard he ruptured himself. He died a most unchivalrous death, which poor Sanciu underlined by saying, “Who ever heard of an Errant Knight dying of hernia!”

Meli’s humanitarian ideals -- embodied by Don Chisciotti -- conflicted externally with the attitudes of an entrenched and intransigent nobility, unwilling to give up any of its privileges and, internally, with that realistic, skeptical part of himself that considered the task of changing the social fabric of the island a foolish and hopeless attempt. In Don Chisciotti, Meli projected his yearnings for human justice, liberty and a more equitable division of wealth among the peoples of the world. But, at the same time, these yearnings had to be represented as the dreams of a delirious fool. It is axiomatic that along with the sane, wise and idealistic words he lets Don Chisciotti speak the poet constantly undermines him by putting insane and impractical plans in his mouth, as in Canto III when, in one of the few episodes that are of Cervantian origin, Don Chisciotti sings the praises of the Golden Age to a group of shepherds. Meli knew exactly how miserably Sicilian shepherds lived yet he has Don Chisciotti suggest that they should become astronomers and poets in their spare time, an insane idea that can only be understood as an attempt to undermine his hero.

Whereas Don Chisciotti was a mass of undigested learning, a conglomerate-

9 (See Don Chisciotti’s agenda for social reforms carved on a tree trunk. Also, see notes to Canto XII, octaves 60-67).
conglomeratu di nozioni non assimilati e senza un principiu unificanti, Sanciu era un omu gnuranti chi crisciu finu a diventari un filosofu naturali, nautru Esopu, lu scritturi di favuli chi Meli ammirava chiù di tutti. L’espirienza e la suffirenza lu trasfurmarunu di cuntadinu analfabeta a un omu stimatu, saggu e prudenti. Ntô capitulu ca fu scrittu 27 anni dopu la prima edizioni, Meli immaginau di essiri visitatu ntò sonnu di Sanciu chi risedi ora a li Campi Elisi nzemmula a li antichi filosofi. D’iddu sapemu ca quannu Don Chisciotti muriu, i giudici di l’aldilà appiru quacchi difficurtà a dicidiri unni mannallu. Na para vulevanu chi fussi connannatu a cchiappari lu ventu cu na riti pir tutta l’eterità pir tutti li so pazziii. Ma autri non eranu d’accordu. A la fini, diciseru ca pir la so anima gintili, lu so bon cori e li so boni ntinzioni ci pirmitteru di trascurriri sei misi a pigghiari lu ventu e l’autri sei nta l’Elysium. Chistu è l’epitaffiu chi Sanciu scriviu supra la balata di Don Chisciotti:

97. «La cinniri ch’è sutta sta balata. 
fu spogghia d’un’Eroi di desideriu;
chi mai sappi cunsari na ‘nzalata,
nonostanti pretisi in tonu seriu
di cunsari lu munnu: allurtimata,
la Parca esercitannu lu so imperiu,
don Chisciotti ristau cripatu e mortu,
Sanciu zoppu, e lu munnu ancora è tortu”.

Sanciu, tuttavia, appi na granni trasfurmazioni. Di analfabeta ca era a lu principiu, na tabula rasa cumpleta, divintau un omu saggiu, rispettatu e ammiraru di tutti. Dutatu di intelligenza nativa e bon sensu, Sanciu divintau un filosofu naturale. Iddu attribuisci la trasfurmazioni a li so esperienzi di vita e la suffirenza e soprattuttu a li pazzii dû so patruni ca foru li so maestri. Ntô Canto X attribuisci a li azioni di Don Chisciotti lu meritu pir aviricci nzignatu chiddu chi sapi:.

14. A tanti lumi ch’aju avutu d’iddu,
nun ci aju agghiuntu da la parti mia
ch’applicarli a li fatti; ed unni chiddu
vidi lu munnu comu lu disia
jeu lu criju com’è, criju ch’è friddu
lu jazzu, e chi lu focu ardi e quadia;
sicchè li stissi idei cu divers’usu
vi fannu un pazzu ed un giudiziusu.

Lu Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza è na meravigghiusa escursioni nta l’immaginazioni chi prisenta ô litturi un ntirissanti viaggiu, riccu di dramma,
tion of undigested notions without a unifying principle, Sanciu was an ignorant man who grew to become a natural philosopher, another Aesop, the fabulist whom Meli admired most of all. Experience and suffering changed him from an illiterate peasant into a highly esteemed, wise and prudent man. In the chapter that was added 27 years after the first edition, Meli imagined being visited in a dream by Sanciu who resides in the Elysian Fields together with the ancient philosophers. From him we learn that when Don Chisciotti died, the judges of the afterlife were in a quandary. Some wanted him to be condemned to capture wind with a net for all eternity for all his follies. But some did not agree. Finally, they decided that for his gentle soul, his good heart and his good intentions he would be allowed to spend six months catching wind and the other six in the Elysium. This is the epitaph that Sanciu wrote on Don Chisciotti’s tombstone:

97. “The dust that lies beneath this slab of stone
Is what remains of one would be hero
Who never knew how to prepare a salad,
And yet presumed in all sincerity
He would repair the world. And finally,
As Fate its own dominion exercised,
Chisciotti died and entered the death gate;
Sanciu was maimed; the world is still not straight.”

Sanciu, however, undergoes a great transformation. From being an illiterate, a complete a tabula rasa, he becomes a wise man respected and admired by all. Endowed with native intelligence and common sense, Sanciu becomes a natural philosopher. He credits his life experiences and suffering and primarily his master’s follies as his teacher. In Canto X he credits Don Chisciotti’s deeds for teaching him.

14. “To the enlightenment received from him
I’ve added nothing of my own, except
that I have shone it on the facts, and where
he sees the world as he would have it be,
I see it as it is. And I believe
that ice is cold, and fire burns and warms.
The same ideas, used in differing ways,
will make one man a fool, another wise.”

The Don Chisciotti and Sanciu Panza is a wonderful excursion in imagina-

10 (See Don Chisciotti’s agenda for social reforms carved on a tree trunk. Also, see notes to Canto XII, octaves 60-67).
cumeddia e puisia inventiva, e offri un seriu e mpurtanti missaggio di riforma
sucialì e di cunnanna di li disuguaglianzì dù sistema sicilianu, ristannu un putenti
documentu chi promovi la pace, la giustizia suciale, nu sfruttamentu chiù giustu
di li risorsì naturalì dù munnì e na distribuzioni chiù equa di li ricchizzi pir lu
poplu sicilianu. Lu Don Chisciotti e Sanciu Panza di Meli junci un capitulu
ntirissanti e mpurtanti a la stissa missioni chi animava l’eroi Cervantianu, chiddù
di sognari davanti a probabilità difficilissimi, lu sognu mpossibili di na sucietà
chiù umana, giusta e pacifica.
tion that while presenting the reader with a delightful journey, full of drama, comedy and inventive poetry, offers a serious and important message of social reform and condemnation of the inequities of the Sicilian system, remaining a powerful document promoting peace, social justice, a better exploitation of the world’s natural resources and a fairer distribution of wealth for the Sicilian people. Meli’s Don Chisciotti and Sanciu Panza adds an interesting and important chapter to the same quest that animated the Cervantian hero, to dream against impossible odds, for a more humane society, just, and peaceful society.
Lu Pani

di Gaetano Basile

Un amicu chi abbita in Francia di tant’ anni, mi dissi ca di Palermu ci mancava sulu lu pani "... sai... la mafalda cù ciminu supra...
E niautri Palirmitani dicemu "bonu comu lu pani" in tempi di crackers e di schiticchi chiù latti e menu cacau.
Un cocciu di frumentu canciau, in effetti, la vita di nostri antichi e rivuluziunau la storia, la cultura, la vita.
Lu levitu pir fari unchiarì la pasta pari ca lu nvintau na serva pir fari dispetu a la patruna: ittau nta l’impastu di acqua e farina, i resti di la birra dû.
A friend who has lived in France for many years, told me that he only missed the bread of Palermo. "You know... The *mafalda* with the sesame seeds on it... .

And we Palermitans say "good as bread" in times of crackers and snacks more milk and less cocoa.

"Those who eat bread... " said Homer to distinguish the civilized peoples from the barbarians who did not know what bread was. Atheneo wrote that in Athens seventy-two types of bread were made, and there were fourteen types in Selinunte. Bread made of wheat barley, oats, rye, was a specialty of the Greek cities of Sicily.

A grain of wheat changed, in fact, the life of our ancients and revolutionized history, culture, life.

The yeast to make the dough rise seems to have been invented by a servant who to spite her mistress threw in the mix of water and flour what was left of the master’s beer, a very common drink of antiquity, especially in ancient Egypt.

In short, she invented the brewer’s yeast that we in Sicilian, rightly call *criscenti*.
patrungi, na vippita assai cumuni a li tempi antichi. Suprattuttu nni l’anticu Egittu.
Nsumma, nvintau lu levitu di birra ca niautri, in sicilianu chiamamu giustamenti criscenti.
Di li Farauni lu sigretu finiu supra li tavuli di li Arabi e Ebrei:-”Betlemmi” significa esattamenti ”casa dû pani” ...
Pari ca propriu nni niautri, in Sicilia, lu canusceru li Rumani, ma sulu ducentu anni prima di la nascita di Cristu.
Si faceva cù graniu duru vistutu, lu ”farru” pir cui Nicu Valeriu scrissi ca l’imperu di Roma, chiù ciù cù ferru di li spati, si fici cù farru nta li piatta.
Li mpiraturi rumani usaru lu pani nta li campagni elettorali, comu ficiru chiù tardu i nostri pulitici cu la pasta: “vi lu ricurdati?”
”Panem et circenses” gridavanu i rumani e lu pani si lu ficiru cu lu frumentu ca Verre rubbava in Sicilia ca era lu ”granariu di Roma”. Ma non sulu chiddu rubbau ddu proconsuli.

Pir lu pani si ruvisciarunu guverni e si cacciarunu fora puru i re: ”ordini pani, disordini fami” si diceva quannu scuppiavanu li ”rivolti dû pani”.
Nel 1862, la ”tassa supra lu macinatu” imposta di lu novu regnu d’Italia, pruvucau rivoluzioni ca costrinseru a li Savoia a annullari lu dicretu. Vi vogghiu ricurdati ca fu propriu lu pani ca contribbuiu a dari a li nostri nanni dda ”funzioni suciali” ca è lu matriarcatu: facennu lu pani in cumuni cu li autri fimmini eranu nfurmati di tuttu. Pir falla brevi, ccu lu pani nasciu lu curtighiu, o si prifiriti lu ”gossip” chi mi pari chiù eleganti.
Pliniu, lu pani si lu manciava cu li ostrichi, Pascoli cu nu filu d’ogghiu supra, me nannu cu li minnarini; Veltroni lu adora cu la ciocculatta....
Custioni di tempi e di gusti.
I Palirmitani hannu un veru cultu pir lu pani: tutti sunu nfurmatissimi supra li orari di la sfurnata, pirchi a tavula lu pani avi a rrivari cauddu di furnu.
Li nostri passioni pir lu pani sunu comu chiddi pulitichi: c’è cui stravidi pir la mafalda e ccui pir lu pariginu.

Du beddi mafaldi palirmitani

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68
Arba Sicula XLI
From the Pharaohs the secret ended up on the tables of Arabs and Jews: "Bethlehem" means exactly "house of bread"...

It seems that the Romans learned about it in Sicily, but only two hundred years before the birth of Christ.

The “farro” was made with raw hard wheat, for which Nico Valerio wrote that the Roman Empire, more than with the iron of swords, was made with the “farro” in the bowls.

The Roman emperors used bread in the election campaigns, as our politicians did a little later do with pasta: “Do you remember that?”

"Panem et circenses” shouted the Romans and they made their bread with the grain that Verre stole from Sicily that was the "granary of Rome". But that was not the only thing that the proconsul stole.

Governments were overthrown for bread and kings were thrown out as well: "Bread equals order, hunger disorder" was said when the "bread revolts" broke out.

In 1862, the "ground tax" imposed by the new Kingdom of Italy provoked riots that forced the Savoy king to abolish the decree.

I would like to remind you that it was precisely bread that helped to give our grandmothers that "social function” that is known as matriarchy: By making bread in common with other women, they were informed on everything. Long story short, *curtigghiu* was born with bread, or, if you prefer, "gossip," which I think is more elegant.

Pliny, ate bread with oysters, Pascoli with a drizzle of oil on it, my grandfather with mandarins; Veltroni loves it with chocolate.

It’s a matter of time and taste.

The Palermitans have a real cult for bread. Everyone is very informed about the times the bread is taken out of the ovens, because at the table bread must arrive hot from the oven.

Our passions for bread are like political ones: there are those who go overboard for the *mafalda* and those who prefer the Parisian.

*Scalitti, rosette, sfilatini* are like parties that have their loyal and devoted audience: don’t even try to make them change their minds.

Nostalgics of the good old times still remember, with tears in their eyes, the "twisted cimi" and the "makallë”, while those who have become city dwellers torture you by singing the joys of the *vastedda* or the *vastidduni* (...a question of size...) round-shaped peasant loaves.

The Italian loaf, is still called *pistuluni* here because it resembled the first portable firearms, while the *cucchia*, that is, the pair, is the "binary result" of two *pistuluni* put together...

The *ciminàuru* from the Greek "kyminon àgrion" has always been of great
Scalitti, rusetti, sfilatini, comu partiti cu lu so pubblicu fideli e divotu: non pruvati mancu a faricci canciari opinioni.

I nostalgici dû bon tempu chi fu ricordanu ancora, cu li lacrimi a l’occhi, li "cimi torti" e lu "makallè", mentri chiddi ca venunu di li campagni vi torturanu cantannuvi li gioi di la vastedda o di lu vastidduni (... custioni di grannizza...) pani di campagna di forma rutunna.

Lu filuni talianu, cè si chiama ancora pistuluni pir ricordu di li primi armi di sparu purtabbili, mentri la cucchia, overu la coppia, è "risultatu binariu" di dui pistuluni misi nzemmula...

Granni mpurtanza ha sempri avutu ntô nostru pani lu ciminàuru, di lu grecu "kyminon àgrion", ritradottu nta lu quasi talianu "cimino" ca, giustamenti lu dizionariu Zingarelli definisci comu "parte superiore della canna da pesca".

Si propriu vuliti chiamallu in italiano putiti diri puru "sesamu.”

Ma nun pinsati ca si pozza apriri quacchi porta.

Nta la civilità cuntadina di na vota, lu pani si faceva ntô furnu di li casa: lu pani, non scurdaminillu, fu la basi di la nostra alimintazioni.

Spissu manciatu sulu, anzi pani e cutieddu, comu si diceva schirzannu puru supra la miseria!

Ma, comu diciunu i cuntadini “pani e vinu ’nforzanu lu schinu... Vulissi nvitarivi a aviri chiù rispettu pir lu pani: non lu iccati mai.

"Un tozzu di pani" rapprisintava na vota la carità e nui priamu pir aviri “lu nostru pani quotidiana” comu signu di la benivolenza divina. "Guadagnarsi lu pani” significava prima l’attività dû travagghiu. Quannu ancora c’era lu travagghiu...
importance in our bread. When translated it sounds almost Italian, "cimino" but, the Zingarelli dictionary defines it as "the top of the fishing rod".

If you really want to call it in Italian just say "sesame," even if nothing is going to open up.

In the peasant civilization of yore, bread was made in the oven of the house: bread, let us not forget, was the basis of our food, often eaten alone, indeed the saying was "bread and knife," making a joke about our poverty.

But, as the peasants say, “Pani e vinu 'nforzanu lu schinu...” (Bread and wine give strength to your spine).

I would like to invite you to have more respect for bread: Let’s not throw it away.

"A piece of bread" once represented charity, and in praying we ask for “our daily bread” as a sign of divine benevolence. Another way to describe work was “Guadagnarisi lu pani,” which means “earning one’s bread." That is, when there was still work...
Puisia di lu munnu

Un ponti pueticiu ntirnaziunali

Siguennu lu cunsigghiu di lu nostru amicu Stanley Barkan, havi un pocu di tempu ca cullaburu cu Germain Droogenbroodt ca cuminciau na pubblicazioni assai intirissanti ca si chiama POINT, abbreviazioni di Point International, ca havi comu obbiettivu di condividiri puisii scritti in diversi lingui cu l’intentu di criari un ponti di cumunicazioni e canuscenza ntra li populi du munnu. Germain è un pueta Belga ca vivi ntâ Spagna e scegghi ogni simana na puisia, la traduci in nglisi cu l’aiutu di Stanley Barkan e la manna a diversi tradutturi specialisti nta varii lingui e dopu pubblica li traduzioni nta l’Internet accumpagnannu la puisia cu na immagini di na foto, na pittura o na illustrazioni. Li puisii sunnu pubblicati nta na duzzina di rivisti littirarii e nta siti di l’internet in 24 lingui. Li puisi recenti foru liggiuti di 60,00-70,000 pirsuni nta un situ littirariu cinisi. L’obbiettivu di la “Puisia di la Simana” è di offriri puisia ca ogni litturi pò apprizzari, pi criari un ponti umanu ca passa li frunteri. Oggi, chiù assai di prima, lu munnu avi bisognu di puisia.

At the suggestion of our good friend Stanley Barkan I have been collaborating with Germain Droogenbroodt who started a very interesting and worthwhile publishing venture called POINT, short for Poetry International whose goal is to share poetry written in many different languages as an attempt to build a bridge of understanding between the people of the world. Germain, who is a Belgian poet living in Spain, selects a poem every week, translates it into English with Stanley Barkan’s help and shares it with translators who specialize in different languages and then disseminates them in the internet, combining each poem with a painting or photograph. The poems are then published in a dozen international literary magazines and on websites in 24 languages. The recent poems were read by 60,000 to 70,000 persons at a Chinese literary site. The goal of the “Poem of the Week” is to offer poetry that every poetry reader can enjoy, a human bridge, crossing all borders, which this world needs more than ever before.

I thought that it would be important for Sicilian to be included among the 24 languages that currently translate the “Poem of the Week,” not only because it adds depth to our understanding of the world but also because it shows that Sicilian is an excellent tool of communication. I have not kept count of how many poems I have already translated into Sicilian. I am sure there are many more that are not included in this little anthology. But I am glad to share some of the poems with you. These poems, written by South American, Chinese, Moroccan poets and of other nationalities, give ample evidence that the peoples of the world share basic and elementary needs. The human race is one. Its members may have different colored skin and other differences, but deep down we share common goals and needs.
Li prieri di li picciriddi

di Bertolt Brecht, (Germania, 1898 –1956)
Tutti li traduzioni in sicilianu sunnu di Gaetano Cipolla

Li casi nun s’avissiru a bruciari.
I bummarderi nun s’avissiru a canuscirì.
Li nuttati avissiru a essiri pi dormiri.
La vita nun avissi a essiri na punizioni.
Li matri nun avissiru a chianciri.
Nuddu avissi ad ammazzari a nuddu.
Tutti avissiru a costruirì quacchi cosa.
Ddà ognunu putissi aviri fiducia in tutti.
I picciriddi duvissiru arrivaricci.
E puru li vecchi.

La ricerca

di Verónica Aranda, (Spagna, 1982)

Circaiu ntò to corpu ghirlandi di siti,
na vanedda di granati ripopulata
di li grigi scuiattuli dù silenziu,
quacchi cuddata di suli malva
o dda decisioni ca dura picca
cia si va miditannu ntra lu caminu.

La finestra

Di Forough Farrokhzad, (Iran, 1935-1967)

Quannu a me fidi pinneva
di lu filu debbuli dà giustizia
e nta tutta la città
li cori di me lampadi
stavanu pi essiri fatti a pezzi,
quannu l’occhi nnuccenti dù me amuri
eranu cuperti dù fazzulettu niuru dà liggi,
e funtani di sangu sghicciavanu a ciumara
di li tempii dù disidderiu,
quannu a me vita non era chiù nenti,
nenti chiù di lu ticchi tocchi dù riroggu ô muru,
scoprìu ca yo avia,
assolutamenti avia
ad amari comu un pazzu.

Arba Sicula XLI
The Pleas of the Children
by Bertolt Brecht, (Germany, 1898 –1956)
Translation Germain Droogenbroodt – Stanley Barkan

Houses should not burn.
Bombers should not be known.
Night should be for sleep.
Life should not be a punishment.
Mothers should not cry.
None should kill anyone.
Everyone should build something
There one could trust everyone.
The young should achieve it.
The old as well.

Search
by Verónica Aranda, (Spain, 1982)
Translation: Wolfgang Klinck

“I searched in your body for the garlands of thirst,
for the path of pomegranates
revived by the grey squirrels of silence,
for a mauve sunset,
or that rapid decision
that fades away in the alleys of meditation.“

The Window
by Forough Farrokhzad, (Iran, 1935-1967)

When my faith was hanging
by the weak thread of justice
and in the whole city
the hearts of my lamps were
being torn to pieces,
when the childlike eyes of my love
were being blindfolded by law’s black kerchief,
and fountains of blood were gushing forth
from the distressed temples of desire,
when my life was no longer anything,
nothing but the tick-tock of a wall clock,
I discovered that I must,
that I absolutely had to love madly.
**Li quasi morti**

di Amina Mekahli, (Algeria)

I pedi mmiscati n menzu i cadaviri di palori
m’arrampicaiu pi nesciri
comu un lampu di luci ntra i ruvini
Lu stomacu sciddicava supra a sputazza di lingui senza ecu
Mi fici u bagnu
Comu na mimoria ntò niuru dû me calamaru
L’aricchi mi rimbumberunu cu li ciuciulieri di li pinni
cia trimavanu pù ventu,
Comu fogghi di carta bianchi
O comu vistiti di li morti.

**Appoju a testa supra**

di Dariusz Tomasz Lebioda (Polonia, 1939)

Appoju a testa supra a to minna vogghiu sentiri
u misteru di la vita lu caudu comu a lucu rivela
lu sensu internu di la cueti di cui soffri
Ascutu lu battitu regulari dû to cori e mi pari
cia sugnu naufragatu in terra – l’unni di li to palori silinziusi
mi sbatulianu una doppu l’autra
e m’ammultanu sempri chiù luntanu dintra lu funnu
di na terra scanusciuta, luntanu di lu funnu
di la to arma

**Arba di spiranza**

di Anna Keiko, (Cina)

La luci di l’arba
inesorabilmenti cancella li traccia di la notti,
lu tempu cuntinuua a scurriri,
ammatula vuilissi ca si firmassi
comu na fotu scattata di na machina fotografica
pirchì l’amuri è prizziusu
quantu un fruttu supra l’arburu
Amuri miu, tu si comu la luna
cachiana ntò celu; nzoccu po’ succediri,
unni si si, ti tegnu ntò me cori
di quannu ti vogghiu beni lu me munnu canciau
pirchì du’ cori truvamu na casa di tinirizza
li rai di lu suli jocanu cu li cordi di lu cori
e addumanu n’arba di spiranza.
The Almost Dead  
by Amina Mekahli, (Algeria)

The feet intertwined in the corpses of the words  
I crawled up  
Like a beam of light on ruins  
The belly gliding on the saliva of languages without echo  
I bathed  
Like a memory in the black of my inkpot  
My ears resonating with the whispering of the feathers  
that shivered by the wind,  
like blank sheets of paper,  
or as graveclothes...

I Nestle Close  
by Dariusz Tomasz Lebioda (Poland, 1939)

I nestle close to your breast  
I desire to hear  
life's mystery warmth like light reveals  
the inner sense of quietude you suffer with  
I listen to your regular heartbeat and I seem  
to be a castaway on shore – one by one I am  
battered by the waves of your silent words  
and pushing me farther and farther into the deep  
of the unknown land, away from the depths  
of your soul

Sunrise of Hope  
by Anna Keiko, (China)  
Translation by the author and Germain Droogenbroodt

The light of dawn  
erases the traces of the night  
relentlessly, time goes on flowing  
although I wish it would stop  
like a picture fixed by the camera's lens  
because as valuable like fruit in a tree is love  
Like the moon ascending at night  
so you are, my love, whatever happens  
wherever you are, I keep you in my heart  
since I am in love with you my world has changed  
because two hearts found a home of tenderness  
sunrays play on the heartstrings of love  
lighting up the dawn of hope.
Aquila

di Germain Droogenbroodt, (Belgium)

Li corvi volanu in frotta
l’aquila vola sula
—Luchino Visconti

L’aquila vola
sulitaria
accussì vicinu ò paradisu
comu u pueta
c’aspetta cu pacienza
l’arrivu di nu versu

Finu a quannu la pinna
ratta na para di righi
ancora in dubbiu
supra lu significatu
la prigrizzia di
daricci un nomu.

Jorna c’hannu a veniri

di Pinelopi Ntountoulaki (Grecia)

A lu tempu quannu li strati su diserti
e la genti ca nesci si metti na maschira
si pò vidiri quacchi airuni cu li pedì nta un lagu.
Corvi, picciuni sarvaggi,
passunu ntall’aria
cantantu
Spartennusi la gioia cu lu munnu.
Lu gelu duna postu a lu suli
Li dubbiì diventanu spiranzi.
Poi ti venì di pinzari:
“È veru ca megghiu jorna hannu a rrivari”.

Arba Sicula XLI
Eagle
by Germain Droogenbroodt, (Belgium)

The ravens fly in swarms
the eagle flies alone
—Luchino Visconti

So close to heaven
flies the eagle
lonely
as the poet
who patiently waits
the arrival of a verse

till the pen
finally scratches a few lines
still doubting
the sense
the idleness
of naming.

Days to Come
by Pinelopi Ntountoulaki, (Greece)

At a time when roads are empty
and people getting out wear a surgical mask
you may see a heron dipping his feet into the lake.
Blackbirds, wild pigeons, sparrows fly around
they sing
share their joy with every soul.
The frost gives way to the sun
uncertainty transforms into expectation.
Then you start thinking:
“It’s true that better days shall come!”
Li segreti dà furesta
di Clara Janès, (Olanda)

Niuru ntò niuru
e lu niuru, niuru
spaccatu d’un raggiu
e si apri lu mari
auta la biancura
finu a li scogghi
finu a quannu li sonnura
si tuffanu a la lavanca.

N’aricchina lassata nta la manu
di Taeko Uemura, (Giappuni)

Sempri sinteva la so vuci
cà mi murmuriava
ma non la cunfunnìa chì me suspiri
vistu ca mi tuccavanu l’aricchi
li purtava cu riguardu.
Na vota canciaru di culuri
pi l’emozioni
Una d’iddi mi spirìu dintra lu mari
ma l’autra mi la tegnu nta la manu
Comu ricordu di dd’aricchina di perni
C’appì a perdìri na nuttata.

Panorama di paci
by Germain Droogenbroodt

Di l’autru latu dà finestra
un jardínu di aranciari
lu profumu di la zagara
duna a la testa
nun c’è genti
nun ci sunu machini
un celu senza nevuli
sulu un corvu
da loda la perfezioni
dû silenziu.
The Secrets of the Forest
by Clara Janés, (Spain, 1940)

Black in the black
and in the black, black
crossed by lightning.
And the sea opens up
and throws the whiteness
up to the reef
from which dreams
want to smash themselves.

An Earring Left in My Hand
by Aeko Uemura, (Japan)
Translation by Mariko Sumikura, Germain Droogenbroodt & Stanley Barkan

All the time I heard
Their whispering voice
But I didn’t mix it
With my sighs
Because they touched my ears.
I wore them cautiously.
Once they changed color
For excitement
One of them disappeared in the sea
But the other I hold in my hand
As memory of a pearl earring
I must have lost some night.

Peaceful Panorama
by Germain Droogenbroodt

On the other side of the window
a garden with orange trees
Intoxicating
the perfume of the blossoms
No people
no cars
a cloudless heaven
Only a blackbird
praising the perfection
of silence.
Non fora di lu munnu
di Ion Deaconescu, (Romania, 1947)

U pueta non si scorda mai
li radichi dû focu
né la luci di lu munnu.
I so occhi aperti a la miravigghia
pircipisciunu l’autru latu di lu munnu
Darreri la ncuititudini di l’arba.
a la ripa dû so cori
l’infinitu arrina.

Comu
di Amir Or, (Israeli, 1956)

Comu t’ù pozzu diri? Sì ’n’sopportabili vicina,
tu si frutta ca scoppia ntô cori,
sì lu nomu ca la vuca muta porta
comu lu mari ntà palma di la terra.
Toccu, e haju nvidia pi la manu ca tocca;
tuccannu, bramu di tuccari ancora.
Lu scantu nun passa nta stu mumentu immobili
Tu si ccaddintra, ccà è dintra di ccà.
Ccà brucia lu focu di l’arma,
non consumannu lu focu di lu cori.

La casa dû munnu
Di Eugenio de Andrade (Portugallu)

Lu ciuriddu
di cannila
supra u tavulu
--u pani, u vinu, a rosa—
Lu jancu subbitaniu
dû lettu apertu,
n’eternità
di spartiri cu ttia
millimetricamenti
Not Beyond the World
by Ion Deaconescu, (Romania, 1947)
Translation Gabriela Căluțiu Sonnenberg – Germain Droogenbroodt

The poet will never
Forget the roots of fire
Nor the light of the word.
His eyes, widened (because) of wondering
Perceive the other side of the world
Behind the restlessness of dawn.
At the shore of his heart
Strands the infinity.

I

How
by Amir Or, (Israel, 1956)

How can I tell you? You are unbearable close,
You are fruit bursting in the heart,
You are the name the mute mouth bears
Like a sea in the palm of the earth.
I touch, and envy my touching hand;
Touching, I yearn to touch.
The fear at this motionless moment doesn't pass by:
You are here inside, here is inside here.
Here burns the fire of the soul,
Not consuming the fire of the heart.

The House of the World
Eugénio De Andrade, (Portugal, 1923 -2005)
Translation Germain Droogenbroodt – Stanley Barkan

The tiny
flower of the candle,
on the table
—the bread, the wine, the rose—
the sudden whiteness
of the open bed,
eternity millimetrically
to share with you.
Scriviri puisii
di Germain Droogenbroodt (Belgiu)

Truvari lu fraggili bilanciu
ntra lu silenziu e la palora
ntra la strata
e la diviazzioni
ntra zoccu 'un havi nomu
e chiddu ca pò siri numinatu
iccari un ponti
supra l’abissu prufunnu
ntra la carta e la pinna.

Epitaffiu pi Joaquin Pasos
di Ernesto Cardenal, (Nicaragua, 1925 – 2020)

Passiava a pedí ccà nta sti strati
senza travagghiu, senza postu e senza un sordu
sulu pueti, buttani e barbuni
canuscianu i so versi.
Nun avìa mai statu a l’estiru.
Avìa statu carzaratu
Ora è mortu.
Nenti monumenti p’iddu.
Però
ricurdativi di iddu quannu ci sarannu ponti di cimentu,
granni turbini, tratturi, funnachi cuperti di lamer argentu,
guerni boni.
Pirch’iddu nta li so puisii purificau a lingua dù so populu,
cu la quali un jornu si scrivirannu i cuntratti cummirciali,
a Costituzzioni, i littri d’amuri
e i dicreti.

Arrivau na libbeddula
di William Zhou (Cina)

Stannu a la riva d’un lagu,
mi gudeva la bedda matinata.
A l’improvvisu,
na picciula libbeddula
si vinni a ripusari supra la me spadda
e mi cangiau accussì
tòn arbùru di primavera.
Writing Poetry
by Germain Droogenbroodt ((Belgium)

To find the fragile balance
between silence and word
between the road
and the deviation
between the nameless
and the nameable
to bridge
the deep abyss
between paper and pen.

Epitaph for Joaquín Pasos
by Ernesto Cardenal, (Nicaragua) (1925 – 2020)
Translation Germain Droogenbroodt

He used to walk here, along these streets,
without job or position and without a peso.
Only poets, prostitutes and bums
knew his verses.
He was never abroad.
He was in prison.
Now he’s dead.
He hasn’t any monument... But
remind him when you have concrete bridges,
big turbines, tractors, silver barns,
good governments.
Because he purified in his poems the language of his people,
in which one day trade agreements will be written,
the Constitution, the love letters,
and the decrees.

A Dragonfly Arrived
by William Zhou, (China)
Translation in cooperation with the author by Germain Droogenbroodt

Standing at the shore of a lake,
I enjoyed the early morning.
Suddenly,
a small dragonfly arrived
and took a rest on my shoulder
turning me into a spring tree.
Dda scagghia di nenti

di Carolyn Mary Kleefeld, (USA)

traduzioni di Marco Scalabrino

O tu chi sì accussì arrassu
e puru accussì ncuttu
nna lu to siliniziusu pussessu di mia—
è a tia chi ju vogghiu beni
o a unu chiuttostu chi nun canusciu?

Ed è la distanza ntra nuatri
a ginirari la nostra ntimità?

O scanusciutu,
pirchi la to vuci
avi tanta ricchizza—
na ricchizza chi tuttu fa prijari
lu me cori spiricinu?

O ciatu di la me vita,
staiu forsi ammicciannu li stiddi
d’un sonnu chi mai e poi mai pò essiri?

C’è sulu s’abbannunu
fora di la morti?

Arràssami di l’ùmmiri
chi pèrcianu la me vita.

Pighhiami, abbrazzami,
nna dda scagghia di nenti
chi p’un mumentu
mi fa sèntiri cumpleta.

Gravità spirituali

di Iuliana Pasca, (Romania, 1991)

Na scura simbiosi di passiari
dintra li sinapsi di li stiddi
Dumanna puru di vurricari la me arma
Quannu moru.
That Sliver of Nothingness
by Carolyn Mary Kleefeld, (USA)

O you, who are so distant,
yet so intimate in
your silent possession of me—
Am I loving the unknown,
rather than you?

Is it the distance we keep
that breeds our intimacy?

O unknown one,
why does your voice
hold such richness—
a richness that brightens
my waning heart?

O breath of life,
am I searching for the stars
of a dream never to be?
Is there only this oblivion
outside of death?

Lurch me from the shadows
that leach my life.
Take me, embrace me

in that sliver of nothingness
that for a moment,
can feel so complete.

Spiritual Gravity
by Iuliana Pasca (Romania, 1991)
Translation Luliana Pasca – Stanley Barkan

An obscure symbiosis of wandering
through the synapses of stars
demands also to bury my soul
when I die.
Pircaiannu la peddi rascusa
M’abbruzzu lu cori cauddu
Comu na matri a luttu.

Di li prufunnità senza macchi
Li nostri armi
Darannu vita a essiri nteliggenti.

Sulu tannu la luci dura ancora
Brillannu internamenti.

**Diu**

**di Thór Stefánsson, (Islanda)**

La maggior parti di lu tempu
l’omu guida la so navi
cu l’occhiu a un corsu mediu
senza tanta difficurtà
comu si la so esperienza
avissi misu lu pilotu automaticu
di la ragiuni umana,
la tulliranza e l’amuri.

Ma quacchi vota è comu
na manu invisibili e disumana
discunnetta lu pilotu automaticu
e guida la navi dilibbiramenti
proprìu supra li scogghi,
faccu sautari la muntagna in aria
cu tutti l’abitanti dû paìs
nzemmula cu l’equipaggiu di la navi
nta nu scoppìu di raggia senza freni.

Sta manu utilizza
la maggior parti di lu tempu
lu nomu di Diu.
Passing through its rough skin,  
I’ll embrace the hot heart  
like a mourning mother.

From the still undefiled depths,  
our united souls  
will bring to life bright beings.

Only then shall the light last  
glowing from within.

God
by Thór Stefánsson, (Iceland)
Translation by Stanley Barkan and Germain Droogenbroodt in cooperation  
with the author

Most of the time,  
man steers his ship  
by the middle course  
without much difficulty,  
as if his experience  
had put it on automatic pilot  
of human reason,  
tolerance, and love.

But sometimes it’s like  
an invisible, inhuman hand  
disconnects the automatic pilot  
and steers the ship deliberately  
right onto the rocks and blows up the mountain  
with the people of the country  
along with the crew of the ship  
in an uncontrollable outburst of rage.

Most of the time,  
the hand misuses  
the name of God.
**Eternu**

di Sepideh Zamani, (Iran)

Quacchi vota m’insonnu a me patri
di l’urtima tilifunata.
Mi dissi, “T’aspittava.“
E yo era cuntentu
p’aviri chiamatu a l’ura giusta,
ammatula ca chiddu fu
lu nostru addiu,
curtu in virtità
ma longu na eternità,
eternu comu li tetti ò spissu bagnati
e li jurnati umidi di Shai,
eternu comu li cuntadini
chi aprunu la terra
turmintannu la terra
a ogni primavera
pi vurricaricci simenza.

**Paci**

di Nilavro Nill Shoovro, (India)

Prima d’arrivari a la virtità
l’omu havi a patiri
suffrenzi fisichi e mintali
agunii nta la vita,
un piriudu di esami,
di trobbuli e di peni.
Arrivannu a la virtità
s’arriva a un ciumi
d’acqua frisca e rilassanti
c’astuta la siti
e duna mumenti
d’estasi e di gioia
felicità suprema,
paci interna
ca illumina
l’arma scura.
Eternal
by Sepideh Zamani, (Iran)

I dream sometimes
of my father in our last call.
He said, “I was waiting for you.”
And I was delighted
for calling in time,
though it was our farewell
which was short
but long as eternity:
eternal like the frequently wet roofs
and humid days of Shahi,*
eternal like farmers
who plow in order to sow seeds
and loosen and harrow the soil
each spring.

Peace Within
by Nilavro Nill Shoovro, (India)
Translation Germain Droogenbroodt- Stanley Barkan

One has to undergo severe
Mental and physical sufferings
Agony and turmoil in life
Before arriving at the Truth
A testing time, a period
Of severe anguish and pain.
On arriving at the Truth
You reach the stream
Of fresh, soothing waters
To quench the thirst
To gain moments of
Ecstasy, joy and Supreme –
Bliss, to bring peace within
And enlighten the dark soul.
L’anni ntra tia e mia
di Paul Celan, (Bukovina, 1920–970)

Quannu chianciu, i to capiddi s’arriccianu.
cu l’azzolu di to occhi
prippari la tavula dù nostru amuri:
un lettu nta la stati e l’autunnu.
Bivemu zoccu naustru prîparau,
non tu, né yo e mancu un terzu.
Bivemu nzinu a l’ultimu vuccuneddu vacanti.
Nni taliamu nta li specchi dù prufunnu mari
e nni passamu autri piatti:
La notti è notti, cumincia dù matinu,
mi trova curcatu a latu ‘i tia.

Di la finestra umana
di Raja Rajeswari Beetha Raman, (Malesia)

Di la finestra umana
l’occhi vittiru un celu serenu
cà s’affunnava nta lu scuru.

Di la finestra umana
l’aricchi sinteru na vucitta duci
svighiatasi supr’à costa.

Di la finestra umana
lu nasu sintiu un profumu
purtatu di la boria.
Di la finestra umana
vittì fiducia
scurriri nta na ciumara.

Havi assai tempu ca lu celu pirdìu lu sonnu chinu,
ca la terra pirdìu lu risu a bucca aperta,
e ca l’umanità pirdìu la so prumissa!
The Years from You to Me
by Paul Celan, (Bukovina, 1920–1970)

Again curls your hair, when I cry.  
With the blue of your eyes  
you set the table of our love:  
a bed between summer and fall.  
We drink, what someone has brewed,  
who was neither you, nor I, nor a third:  
we sip an empty and a last.  
We watch ourselves in the mirrors  
of the deep sea and quickly pass each other dishes:  
the night is the night, it starts with the morning,  
it lays me next to you.

From the Human Window
by Raja Rajeswari Beetha Raman, (Malaysia)  
Translation by Stanley Barkan in cooperation with the author

From the human window,  
eyes caught sight of a quiet sky  
sinking in the dusk.  

From the human window,  
eyears heard a sweet voice  
awakened on the coast.  

From the human window,  
the nose sniffed an aromatic scent  
escaping in the breeze.  
From the human window,  
I witnessed trust  
flowing in a stream.  

The sky has long lost its deep sleep,  
The soil has long lost its hearty laugh,  
The human has long lost his pledged promise!
**Ricota**

di Maria Do Sameiro Barroso, (Portugallu)

Passu ntra autri porti,
quannu la luci m’ammutta
e l’acquazzina luccica a l’arba
Supra li petali di rosi e la scuma di lu mari.
Propriu comu a prima sillaba dà notti silinziusa,
vogghiu parrari
d’ummiri e d’ancili azzoli.
A me vita era accussì.
Sugnu na scintilla, un mumentu,
na crozza bianca,
un crepusculu,
un pisciteddu nta nu stagnu.
Natu nta l’acqua, ntà fragranza
e nta lu vinu duci
di na ricota d’annata d’oru.

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**Li minzogni ranni**

di Erich Fried (Austria, 1921–1988)

Li minzogni ranni
Nun hannu veramenti
li jammi curti.
Li so jammi
Parunu curti
ma sulu
p’amparissi.
Li brazza
di li minzogni ranni
sunnu accussi longhi
capponnu fari jammi
o scheletri
di la virità.
Harvest
by Maria Do Sameiro Barosso, (Portugal)
Translation Germain Droogenbroodt – Stanley Barkan

I'll pass through other doors,
when the light pushes me
and the dew shines in the morning
on rose petals and the foam of the sea.
Just like the first syllable of the silent night,
I will talk
about shadows and blue angels.
So was my life.
I am a spark, a moment,
a white skull,
a twilight,
a small fish in a pond.
I swim in water, in fragrance,
and in the sweet wine
of an golden-aged crop.

The Big Lies
by Erich Fried (Austria, 1921–1988)
Translation Germain Droogenbroodt – Stanley Barkan

The big lies
don't really have
short legs.
Their legs
only appear to be short
because their arms
are so long.
The arms
of the big lies
stretch so far
that of the truth
they can make legs
or skeletons.
Lu 12 magiu 2020, la Sicilia persi un artista eccezionalmenti dutatu, cu la morti improvvisa di Francesco Sciortino di Bagheria (PA) a causa di un’emurragia cerebrali. Avia 52 anni.


Natu lu 26 aprili 1968, Sciortino trascurriu parti di la so infanzia nta li Stati Uniti, e a l’età di 2 anni disignava parsunaggi di Disney a manu libira. A 14 anni vincìu lu primu premiu in un concorsu pir giuvini fumettisti a lu Tiatru Massimu di Palermu.

Duranti la so carrera, Sciortino rializzau opiri a pinna e inchiostru, acquarelli e ogghiu, ed esibbiu li so opiri in Toscana, a Ginevra e a Nova York, e puru in diversi città dà Sicilia. Evocannu na sensibilità astuta, i so ritratti vividi, li so sintimintusi naturi morti, li sceni di combattimenti epici e i paisaggossessionanti si trovanu in cullezioni privati nta entrambi i lati di l’Atlanticu.

I viaggi di Sciortino in Turchia ispirarunu na spettaculari seri di pitturi di musicisti sufi e dervisci ca danzanu furiannu, completati...
Sicily lost an exceptionally gifted artist on May 12, 2020, with the sudden death of Francesco Sciortino of Bagheria (PA) from a cerebral hemorrhage. He was 52.

Encompassing the sacred and the secular, Sciortino’s artworks reflect his homeland’s cultural complexity and transcend borders and beliefs. In the catalogue to a 2009 exhibit featuring several paintings from Sciortino’s surrealistic “Illuminazioni” series—in which dazzling geometric pavements lead through open windows to a beckoning horizon—Giovanni Avanti, then president of the province of Palermo, wrote, “Every possible Sicilian characteristic is found in the work of self-examination that the artist Francesco Sciortino suggests,” offering us “an imaginary bridge between what we are and what we could be.”

Born on April 26, 1968, Sciortino spent part of his infancy in the United States, and by age 2 was drawing Disney characters freehand. At 14 he took first prize in a competition for young comic strip artists at Palermo’s Teatro Massimo.

During his career, Sciortino executed works in pen-and-ink, watercolor, and oil, and exhibited in Tuscany, Geneva, and New York, as well as in several cities in Sicily. Radiating an astute sensibility, his vivid portraits, evocative still

Già di quannu era carusu, Sciortino avia cummattutu cu lu diabeti e i so effetti, ma non parrau mai di la so malatia. Ntò 2006 appi lu trapiantu dù
Oltre la battaglia / Beyond the Battle (1994). Olio su tela /oil on canvas.
pancreas e di li reni. Curatosi dû diabeti, lu so sistema immunitariu ristau cum-prumisu, ma iddu cuntinuau a dipingiri. La crisi dû COVID-19 ca mposi lu rinviu di analisi medichi essenziali ca potevanu evitari, secunnu la so famigghia, l'emurragia fatali. La participazioni a li funerali di l’artista lu 13 maggiu fu limitata a causa di la pandemia, ma na fudda si ricugghiu fora e scuppiau in applausi e grida di "Evviva Francesco" mentri lu so tabbutu nisceva di la Chiesa dû Santu Sepulcru di Bagheria.

Tranquillamenti fiduciusu nni li so prodigiusi capacità, appassionatu di menti e gentili ntô cumpurtamentu, Sciortino odiava la viulenza e si dilettava di li meravigghì dà natura. Nta lu so ultimu post su Facebook - na foto di un paru di ciuri esotici ca iddu avia cultivatu, ca sboccanu sulu pir na jurnata - scriviu: "Oggi lu me ginirusu passiflora mi rialau sti du surprisi.” Ntò so soggiornu fin troppu brevi supra sta terra, Francesco Sciortino suscitau a lu stissu modu stupuri, attraversu la brillantizza di la so arti.

Na selezioni di li opiri di Francesco Sciortino si po’ vidiri a: http://www.francescosciortino.it/index.html

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Francesco Sciortino mentri travagghia ntu so studiu / Francesco Sciortino at work in his studio.
lifes, epic battle scenes, and haunting landscapes are found in private collections on both sides of the Atlantic.

Sciortino's travels to Turkey inspired a spectacular series of paintings of Sufi musicians and whirling dervishes, completed between 1989 and 2016. His large-scale pieces for religious and civic institutions include La rivolta degli schiavi (The Slave Revolt) and Il battesimo di Kamud (Kamud’s Baptism), depicting episodes in local history, for Enna’s Palazzo Chiaramonte in 1998 and Mater Misericordiae, a masterful Madonna and Child (2013), in the church of Santa Maria della Catena in Palermo. Reviving his early interest in illustration, Sciortino recently had been working on a graphic novel.

From childhood, Sciortino struggled with diabetes and its effects, yet he never publicly discussed his illness. In 2006, he underwent a pancreas and kidney transplant. Cured of diabetes, he was immuno-compromised but never stopped painting. The recent COVID-19 lockdown forced the postponement of essential medical appointments that might have prevented the fatal hemorrhage, according to his family. Attendance at the artist’s funeral on May 13 was restricted because of the pandemic, but a crowd gathered outside and erupted in applause and cries of “Evviva Francesco” as his coffin was carried from Bagheria’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Quietly confident in his prodigious skills, keen of mind, and gentle in demeanor, Sciortino abhored violence and reveled in the wonders of nature. In his final Facebook post—a photo of a pair of exotic flowers that he had cultivated, which bloom only for a day—he wrote, “Today my generous passionflower gave me these two surprises…” In his own all-too-brief sojourn on this earth, Francesco Sciortino likewise elicited astonishment, through the brilliance of his art.

A selection of Francesco Sciortino’s works can be seen at: http://www.francescosciortino.it/index.html

Francesco Sciortino si rilassa/ Francesco Sciortino resting.
La nostra lingua

Pubblicamu c'è un testu di Anthony Di Pietro ca spissu contribbuisci quacchi articulu a lu giornali Lumie di Sicilia pubblicatu a Firenzi di lu nostru Mario Gallo. Si tratta di na satira di comu parranu certi siciliani ca hannu persu la so lingua divintannu miricani. Imaginu ca pi cu è sicilianu e abbita in America lu testu ca segui non prissent grossi difficoltà, ma pi un sicilianu ca non capisci lu nglisi lu testu è certamenti un duluri di testa. Li palori in cursivu sunnu tutti palori nglisi sicilianizzati. Cresi è la trascizioni fonetica di crazy = foddi, pazzu.

Cunvirsazioni in America

Di Anthony Di Pietro
curtisia di Lumie di Sicilia

In... sicinglismo.


Poi a ma pigghiatu u subuei pi iri a visitari a Statua da Liberta’ aia diri ca dda sutta nne tunnel era scantusu e quanta genti ca acchianava e scinniva de carr. A genti era di tutti i razzi; ianchi, niuri, cinisi, spagnoli, indiani nsomma di tuttu u munnu. Poi a ma pigghiatu nu stambotto ca na purtatu propria sutta e peri da statua.
Our Language

We are publishing a text by Anthony Di Pietro who often contributes pieces to the journal *Lumie di Sicilia* published in Florence by our friend Mario Gallo. The piece is a satire of the way certain Sicilians speak who have lost their language while becoming Americans. I imagine that if you are Sicilian and live in the United States you will have no difficulty understanding what the person is saying, but if you are Sicilian and do not understand English the text is certainly going to give you a migraine.

Conversation in America

By Anthony Di Pietro

from *Lumie di Sicilia*

In Sicul-English.

But are you crazy? You took a big chance by going to New York with a car that’s a jalopy. Didn’t you see how many holes were in the trunk? It’s a good thing it did not break down otherwise you would have had to push it to the gas station. I imagine that in New York you enjoyed yourself and that you also did some shopping. But did you go to Broadway? Did you see how many beautiful shows they offer? I was there last year for Christmas and then we stayed there until the New Year. What great fun we had! We went to bed in the hotel in the early morning. In the morning we went for breakfast that was included in the hotel and in the hall where the food was there was an abundance of goodies: pancakes, sausages, waffles, cup cakes, bacon, lots of fruit such as pineapple, melon, strawberries, peaches, papaya and many types of yogurt. Then as much coffee as you wanted. You just get up, get any cup you like and choose whatever coffee you prefer. You can put milk in it or cream. There’s tea as well, many types: black, green and in fruit flavored.

Then we took the subway to go visit the Statue of Liberty. I must say that in the tunnel it was scary and there were so many people going up and down from the cars. People of every race: white, black, Chinese, Spanish, Indians, in sum from everywhere in the world. Then we took a steam boat that brought right to the feet of the statue.

Arba Sicula XLI 103
Na na dittu ca a statua ha statu fatta di nu *girmanisi* ma ca veramenti ha statu a Francia a rialariccella e miricani. Ch’e’ bedda a statua, iavi na cruna nna testa e nu *buccu* nno vrazzu mancu, nna chiddu rittu iavi na fiaccola. Che bedda a statua ma e’ puru accussi *big*. Poi na ma spustatu a *Taimisi squer*, Maria da genti e tutti ca *appusciaunu cu* a destra e cu a sinistra. Nenti nun m’ha piaciutu, i *pipul* sunu accussi maleducati.

A manziornu avivumu fami e nun vulivumu spenniri assai sordi po pranzu e a ma dicisu di iri a mangiari a *Middanol*. Io veramenti e’ ristatu ca ucca aperta pi chiddu ca ma n’ha *chargiatu* pi quattru *amburghi*, dui freni fri e na para di buttigghi i acqua; era megghiu ca ni ni iumu a fari u *lonci* nno ristoranti; di sicuru avissi statu *cchiu cip* ma *nevi jorchi* e *nevi jorchi*.

Nno tardu a ma passatu po *Roccaffella Senter*; Maria quanta genti, era chinu chinu e ch’erunu beddi chiddi ca dda sutta facevuni u *ais schett*. Certu ca chiddi ca nunnerunu pratichi quanti arrumazzuni ca a na pigghiatu e quanti *bleck and blu* s’annu fattu. Si iu mi mittissi nparu di *rollischet* mi rumpissi u *nneck*. Pero’ che bedda dda statua d’oro ca c’e’ sutta a funtana; certu ca ccà a Merica cosi belli nu nni mancunu e poi ara vistu quant’e’ iautu u *christmas tri* e quanti *lait* c’ha na appisu. Oggi a ma avutu na iurnata *bisi’ e sugnu tantu *taiar* ca appena arrivu all’hotel mi tiru nto lettu e dormu commu nu *beibi* finu a dumani.
They told us that the statue was made by a German but that it was a gift from France to the Americans. How beautiful she is. She has a crown on her head and in her left arm she holds a book, while in the right arm she holds a torch. She is beautiful but she is also very big.

Then we went to Times Square. Mother of God, how many people all pushing left and right. I didn’t like anything there. The people were uncouth and ill mannered.

At noon we got hungry and we did not want to spend much money and so we went to eat at a Mcdonald’s. I was left with my mouth hanging when I saw what they charged for four hamburgers, two French fries and a couple of bottles of water. It would have been better if we had lunch in a restaurant; surely it would have been cheaper, but New York is New York.

Later we went by Rockefeller Center, Mother of God how many people were there. It was full to overflowing. The people below who were ice skating were beautiful. But there were some who were not so good on the skates and many fell and got a lot of black and blues for the falls. If I put on a pair of roller-skates I would probably break my neck. But the golden statue below the fountain was something to see. America is not lacking for beautiful things. Did you see how tall the Christmas tree was and how many lights it had? Today we certainly had a busy day and I am so tired that when I get to the hotel I will lay on the bed and fall asleep like a baby until the next day!
La nostra lingua

The Parrata of Catania and Surrounding Towns
by Gaetano Cipolla

In the following dialogue between a fishmonger and a client, the author is using the parrata of Catania which is classified as an eastern variety spoken on the island. We have tried to highlight some of the distinguishing features of this variety that manifests itself in various ways. The major differences from other parrati is the lack of metaphonetic change of the stressed vowel o and e, the assimilation of the consonant r into the following consonant, and other features that we will describe after the reading. I think if you read the notes before reading the dialogue it would help you to better understand the text as well as to get an introduction into the parrata of Catania. After you have understood the explanations, you will be able to do the exercise at the end. This text, mimicking the spoken speech of fishmongers from Catania is not easy to read and understand primarily because the writer chose to put it down on paper as a fishmonger might write it, that is, without paying attention to accents and using grammatical marks to identify pronouns, short forms of article and alternative endings of verbs, spelling words according to the local pronunciation which is different from that of other areas of the island. A native speaker of Sicilian would automatically process all the nuances of the text and would fill in the gaps, but someone studying the language would encounter difficulties. Let us try to identify some of the points that might cause difficulties in understanding.

The client is ordering half a kilo of saddi. You will not find this word in the vocabulary. It is the way Catanesi pronounce words containing an r followed by another consonant. The r disappears and is replaced by the consonant that follows. Thus, saddi is the word sardi (sardines). This is the first major difference that distinguishes Catanese from other parrati. You will see many examples of this simple rule in this text. A few examples will be sufficient: in Catania mortu is pronounced mottu, terzu is pronounced tezzu, spertu is pronounced spettu, porta is pronounced potta, arbitru is pronounced abbitru, etc.

I vogghiu di chiddi. The i is a direct object pronoun, not a definite article. It should have been written Ì because it stands for li and it means “them”. The client says “I want them from those you keep in the other room.”

Nabbanna. Should have been Ddabbanna. Nabbanna means one place, ddabbanna means in the other place.

Chisti non su boni? (These are not good?). Another important rule to
remember: In most of the parrati of the eastern side of the island no metaphonetic change occurs. This refers to the practice of changing words that have a stress on the vowels e and o to ie and uo. For example ventu (wind) and centu (one hundred) become vientu and cienitu, while porcu and ponti become puorcu and puonti. The word bonu in the parrati that practices metaphonetic change would be buonu.

Darimmilli di ’llautri! The correct way to write this is “darimmilli di l’autri,” (What difference would it make to you if you gave them to me from the other sardines?) The double mm and double ll of darimmilli are required by the pronunciation. The writer also wrote “di ll’autri” with two ll for the same rule. It is a natural tendency in speech to double the consonant of the word that follows an accented word or a two-letter words such as pi or di. Thus, pi mmia (for me), cu ttia, (with you) è vveru (it’s true).

Ca ’nna ll’autru. Should be Ca nna l’autru (that in the other). This follows the same rule as in point 1.

Avissunu a moriri. Avissunu is imperfect subjunctive of aviri, which normally would be written avissiru. In the Catanese parrata the author uses this ending throughout. Also, she uses the third-person plural endings in unu when elsewhere you might see anu. For example: Passunu for passavanu, vulevunu for vulevanu, accattaunu for accattavanu, etc.

Chisti su chiddi ca vi ristanu. (These are the ones that remained.) Notice that the verb “ristanu” is in past tense, not the present tense. The past tense is normally written “ristaru or ristarunu”. The same ending is used for vi purtanu stamatinu! Which should have been “vi purtaru or purtarunu”. Considering the stress falls on the a, it should be written as “ristànu”. The present tense of these two verbs are rèstanu and pòrtanu, which have a stress on the first syllables.

Vossia appoi quannu i ’ssaggia. (Then when you taste them.) I ssaggia is equivalent to li assaggia.

E ne vogghiu mancu pagati ora. (And I don’t want you to pay for them now.) Notice the contraction of ne, which should have been written as nè vogg-ghiù. It stands for nun li vogghiu (I don’t want them).

Chio’ ssai should have been written as chiossai, (much more).

No navia vistu mai! It should been written as non n’avia vistu mai (I have never seen anything like these).

Avanti passunu pi un chilu. The ending of the verb passunu tells us it’s in the present tense. Elsewhere it could have been written “passanu”. The author uses this ending throughout. The fishmonger is giving him 200 grams free.

Prima ca io e me mugghieri nnu putemu mangiari! Note the contraction nnu which should have been written nni’ù contracted from nni lu. (My wife and I couldn’t possibly eat all of it.)
Putissuvu sabbari i pisci pi misi e misi! (You could preserve the fish for months and months.) The verb is imperfect subjunctive. We know that Sicilian uses this tense instead of the conditional. In hypothetical sentences, Sicilian uses the imperfect subjunctive: “If I were rich, I would buy a car” in Sicilian is si fussi riccu, maccattassi na machina. Both verbs are in the imperfect subjunctive. The verb sabbari is the local pronunciation of sarbari or sarvari.

Chiddu ca potta u cammiu. (The one who drives the truck). Potta= porta. Cammiu is derived from camion.

Chiddu ca ci rubbanu u cammiu. (The one who had his truck stolen.) Notice what happens with the verb rubbanu, which is past tense. The infinitive is rubbari (to steal). What would the present tense be in the same person? Ròb-banu. We saw the pattern before with purtari and ristari, in which the shifting of the stress caused the change from o to u and from e to i.

Era d’accoddu chi latri. (In my opinion, he was in cahoots with the thieves.) D’accoddu= d’accordu. The word chi should have been written ch’i, contracted from cu li (with the).

Vistiti di chiddi ca custunu cari, cosi fimmati! (Suits that cost a lot, designer clothes!). Notice the verb custunu instead of còstanu and fimmati instead of fermati.

Ca ci custau assaiuni comu si fussuru turisti ricchi assai. (That cost them a great deal as if they were very rich tourists). Notice augmentative form of assai, to which the suffix uni was added to amplify its meaning. Thus, granni becomes grannuni, cristianu becomes cristianuni, fimminua becomes fimminuni. 17. E vui capiti ca pi fari sti cosi, ci vonu soddi! (You understand that to do these things you need money!) Notice soddi= sordi.

Ma tannu u truvaru tuttu ‘ttaccatu, e puru sruppiatu bonu! (But at the time they found him tied up and beaten pretty badly!) Notice how in this case the author could have used lu truvànu instead of u truvaru. The meaning is the same. Struppiatu bonu!= Struppiatu bonu! From struppiari, to hurt, maim. Interesting to point out that the pronunciation of the first syllable “sru” is very close to the English sound of words like “street,” “streak” and very different from the Italian strada.

Ma non sanu a scurdari! (But they must not forget.) Non sanu is equivalent to non si hannu. In Sicilian the verb duwiri (to have to, must) is seldom used, except in literary texts. The text is equivalent to Nun si divinu scurdari.

Ci lu purtau so jennuru. (Her son-in-law brought it to her.) Ci lu purtau so jennuru. Another distinguishing feature of the parrata from Catania is that words that begin with a g, like generu, gattu, gammiru, the g sound is replaced with the y sound. Hence yenneru, yattu, yammuru. In other parrati the g sound is dropped completely and the words will be pronounced enneru, attu, ammaru.
Chiacchiri

di Giovanna Caccialupi

courtesy of Lumie di Sicilia

Don Michilinu datimi menzu chilu di saddi, ma non di chisti! I vogghiu di chiddi ca tiniti nabbanna!
- Ma picchì, Don Pippinu? Chisti non su boni?
- Eh bonu, e facitimi cunentu! A vossia chi costa darimmilli di ’llautri!
- Vulissi sapiri cu vi metti sti pulici ’nta testa! Ca ’nna l’autru frigurifiru tegnu i pisci cchiu’ frischi Vu giuru supa all’anima di me matri, avissunu a moriri i me figghi, avissi a ’nnurbari di tutti e du occhi, si chisti non sunu saddi magnifici, si putissunu mangiari i picciriddi cu stomucu sfasciati!
- Michilinu, chisti su chiddi ca vi ristanu d’avanzitajeri, ammeci nabbanna aviti chiddi ca vi purtanu stamatina!
- Don Pippinu mi miravigghiu di vui... vui non siti omu ca po dari retta e maligni ’mmidiusi, e fazzu finta ca mancu vi sintiu… facemu na cosa, ora io vi dugnu chisti, vossia appoi quanu i ’ssaggia mi diri comu sunu! E ne vogghiu mancu pagati ora, mi pagati dopu ca vi mangiati! Va beni accusii? Siti cunentu? Anzi è megghiu ca vi nni dugnu chchio’ ssai picchi’ sapuriti comu a chisti no navia vistu mai!
- No, no Michilinu caju a fari cu tutti sti pisci?
- Ma mangiati, mangiati ca oggi ci semu e dumani cu sapi?
- E’ inutili, sempri vossia avi a vinciri, Michilinu!
- Eccu a vossia, un chilu e ducento, avanti passunu pi un chilu, e non vi lamintati!
- Ma è troppu stu pisci, si vasta prima ca io e me mugghieri nnu putemu mangiari!
- Ma picchì vossia non avi u cungelaturu?
- No, e chi mi ni fazzu?
- Comu, chi vi ni faciti? Putissuvu sabbari i pisci pi misi e misi! A Signora Salmeri l’avi, ci u purtau so jennuru, u maritu da figghia minzana, chiddu ca potta u cammiu di dda fabbrica ca c’è a C.
- Io u canusciu sulu di vista, u vidu passari ogni tanto, non è chiddu ca ci rubbanu u cammiu, du anni fa? Mentri era in viaggiu ’ncuntinenti?
- Si... rubatu! Secunnu mia era d’accoddu chi latri, ma no viditi quantu spennunu, dopu ca succidiu u fattu? A mugghieri e i figghi anu un vistitu novu ogni dumunica: vistiti di chiddi ca custunu cari, cosi fimmati! E ora si ccattau macari a macchina nova e in casa anu tanti comodità! A mia mu cuntau me
niputi ca va a scola ca figghia di na so vicina di casa. L’annu passatu ’nda stati si piggianu na casa in affittu vicinu o mari ca ci custau assaiuni comu si fussuru turistì ricchi assai, e tutti i siri ’nvitaunu genti a mangiari pisci bonu! St’annu pa prima comunioni da figghia tra vistiti, ristoranti e fotografo ci custau comu un matrimonio! E vui capiti ca pi fari sti cosi, ci vonu soddi!

- Ma tannu u truvaru tuttu ’ttaccatu, e puru sruppiatu bonu! E a truvallu fu a polizia, e non pensu a polizia non rinisceva a capiri si era na cosa vera o appiffinta! E poi veni di famighia di genti travaghjaturi e onesti!

- Iddu potti ‘ngannarì a tutti, ma a mia no! Ci su cosi ca a polizia non ci fa casu! Prima du fattu, quannu passava u fruttivendulu, so mugghieri ccattava si e no du chili di frutta a simana e di chidda ca custau cchiù picca! Dopu, criditimi si accatta tutti i primizii e in granni quantita’! Io u sacciu picchì mu dissi u fruttivendolo in persona! E chistu è nenti! Me cugnata visti a muggheri ’nda merceria ca c’è a T. e mentri me cugnata ccattava sulu su spagnolette, idda ammeci ccattava cuttuni pi raccamu da megghiu qualita’ e in gran quantita’.

- Ma forsi raccama pi lavuru, prima quannu era signurina u faceva, e macari ccatta pi cuntu di clienti!

- Nooo! E quannu raccama? E’ sempri pedi pedi! A matina ccumpagna i figghi a scola, poi si ccatta a spisa, a poi l’avi a aviri u tempu pi cucinati, pulizziarì comu a tutti i matri di famighjia? O pomeriggiu l’avi a sistimari a cucina? Avi a stirari? Avi a lavari? Poi na tadda basciurata si nni va a truvari a so matri e poi torna a casa ’ntempu ’ntempu pi priparari cacchi cosa di mangiari! No, no, a polizia si fici mentiri ’ndo saccu, ma a mia, a Michilinu, no!

- Mah! E cu ci capisci nenti! Comunque a mia u cungilaturu non mi servi! Ogni vota ca mi servi u pisci, vegnu ccà e mu ccattu!

- bonu faciti! U sapiti chi fannu i Zaccà, di quannu anu u cungilaturi u pisci su vanu a ccattari a T. e ni mia no ci venunu cchiù. E vossa u capisci ca su clienti ca io perdu, specialmente ca iddi ni ccattaunu sempri assai, certu, ogni vota i so figghi mi facevunu scimuniri, vulevunu tagghi patticolari, di quannu studianu ’ndo cullegiu aviu nu briscitù chinni di mutetti, mancu mi ricoddu chi mi addumannaunu, e poi non erunu mai contenti. Pidochi ripigghiati su! Cettu di quannu anu cacchi soddu! Ma non sanu a scurdari ca so patri prima di rricchiri cu cumecciu d’aranci, faceva u zappunaru a jurnata! E poi caro don Pippinu vi dico na cosa: secunu mia no ci si po arricchiri travaghjannu onestamente! C’è sempri cacchi cosa sutta! Io e travaghjatu sempri e vui u sapiti, e sempri puvureddu sugnu!

- Cetti voti pò essiri fortuna o u sapirici fari!
- Nooo, c’è sempri sutta acchichosa!

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Esercizziu 1

True or False

1. Don Pippinu voli accattari sulu menzu chilu di sardi. ______ ______
2. No voli li sardi ca sunnu esposti picchì non ci parunu frischi. ______ ______
3. Don Michilinu giura supra all’anima di so matri ca sunnu frischi. ______ ______
4. I sardi di Michilinu sunnu boni puru pir li malati di stomacu, iddu dici. ______ ______
5. Don Michilinu ci duna chiossai di un chilu. ______ ______
6. Don Michilinu nun si nteressa di cosi pirsunali di li so clienti. ______ ______
7. A Don Pippinu lu frigurifiru nun servì accatta tuttu friscu. ______ ______
8. Lu yenneru di la signura Salmeri fa lu farmacista comu misteri. ______ ______
9. Don Michilinu cridi di essiri chiù inteligenti di la polizia. ______ ______
10. La famigghia Zaccà prima accattava lu pisci nni Michelinu, ora non chiù. ______ ______

Esercizziu 2

The following list of words are written in the local parrata of Catania. Write them as they would be written in the vocabulary. For example, Potta=porta

1. Spettu ____________
2. Cummecciu ____________
3. Soddi ____________
4. Viddi ____________
5. Tadda ____________
6. Cettu ____________
7. Patticolari ____________
8. Mi ricoddu ____________

Esercizziu 3

Lu pirsunaggiu di don Michilinu, lu pisciaru, è un tipu ntrissanti. Circati di descriviri lu so carattri scigghiennu li aggettivi o la frasi chiù apprupriati pir iddu. Choose only the descriptions that are true to compile a profile of his character.

1. Don Michilinu è sinceru, gnuranti, bravu cumpircianti.
2. Don Michilinu si fa i fatti so, sapi tuttu di tutti, ama a li so clienti.
3. Don Michilinu è assai curiusu, non si nteressa di li so clienti, non canusci a tanti cristiani dû quarterì.
4. Don Michilinu cridi di essiri chiù nteligenti di tutti, non sapi vin-niri so pisci, nun fa casu a cu accatta nni iddu e cu non accatta.
5. Don Michilinu nun è suspittusu, cridi zoccu’l’altiri ci diciunu.

Esercizziu 4.
The last paragraph of Don Michilinu is relatively difficult to understand. Can you translate it into English? Here it is:

Bonu faciti! U sapiti chi fannu i Zaccà, di quannu anu u cungilaturi u pisci su vanu a ccattari a T. e ni mia non ci venunu cchiù. E vossia u capisci ca su clienti ca io perdu, specialmente ca iddi ni ccattaunu sempri assai, certu, ogni vota i so figghi mi facevunu scimuniri, vulevunu tagghi patticolari, di quannu studianu ’ndo collegiu aviumu briscitutu chini di muttetti, mancu mi ricoddu chi mi adduman-naunu, e poi non erunu mai contenti. Pidocchi ripigghiati su! Cettu di quannu anu cacchi soddu! Ma non anu a scurdari ca so patri prima di ricchirisi cu nummecciu d’aranci, faceva u zappunaru a jurnata! E poi caro don Pippinu vi dico na cosa: secunnu mia non ci si po accattari travagghiannu onestamente! C’è sempri cacchi cosa sutta! Io e travagghiatu sempri e vui u sapiti, e sempri puwurredu sugnu!

- Cetti voti pò essiri fortuna o u sapirici fari!
- Nooo, c’è sempri sutta acchicosa!

Esercizziu 5.
As in other parrati, when you combine an infinitive of a verb with a direct object pronoun in the spoken language, the infinitive loses its ending. For example, non vogghiu mangiarlu ora, becomes non vogghiu manciallu ora. It’s basically the same as happens with porta that became potta. In this case, the infinitive ending is dopped and the l of the object pronoun is doubled. Thus, iddu non vossi pagari lu cuntu – non vossi pagallu.

In this exercise replace the direct object with a pronoun and rewrite the sentence: model: A mia mi piaci manciari lu pani cauddu=
A mia mi piaci manciallu cauddu.
I like to eat the bread when hot
I like to eat it hot
1. A fari stu eserciziu non è difficili.
2. A diri la virtità ci voli curaggiu
3. Luigi non vosi purtari a li picciriddi ô cinima
4. È megghiu pagari li debbiti subbitu
5. È cosa di pigghiari a cauci a stu scimunitu.
Eserciziu 6.

In the following sentences you will see contracted words. Try to identify them and provide the full text without the contractions. Follow the example: *si putissunu mangiari i picciriddi* = *si li putissunu mangiari i picciriddi*.

1. *U pisci su vanu a ccattari a T.*

2. *Ogni vota ca mi servi u pisci, vegnu ccà e mu ccattu!*

3. *Ma non sanu a scurdari ca so patri*

4. *A mia mu cuntau me niputi*

5. *Si vasta prima ca io e me mugghieri nnu putemu mangiari!*

The answers to the exercises follow.
Risposti a li esercizzii / Answers to the Exercises

Esercizziu 1

1. Don Pippinu voli accattari sulu menzu chilu di sardi.  
   Veru
2. No voli li sardi ca sunnu esposti pirchì non ci parunu frischi.  
   Veru
3. Don Michilinu giura supra all’anima di so matri ca sunnu frischi.  
   Veru
4. I sardi di Michilinu non sunnu boni puru pir li malati di stomacu,  
   iddu dici.  
   Fausu
   Veru
6. Don Michilinu nun si nteressa di cosi pirsunali di li so clienti.  
   Fausu
7. A Don Pippinu lu frigurifiru nun servi pirchì accatta tuttu friscu.  
   Veru
8. Lu yenneru di la signura Salmeri fa lu farmacista comu misteri.  
   Fausu
   Veru
10. La famigghia Zaccà prima accattava lu pisci nni Michelinu,  
    ora non chiù.  
    Veru

Esercizziu 2

1. Spettu  
   Spertu
2. Cummecciu  
   Cummerciu
3. Soddi  
   Sordi
4. Viddi  
   Virdi
5. Tadda  
   Tarda
6. Cettu  
   Certu
7. patticolari  
   Particulari
8. Mi ricoddu  
   Mi ricordu

Esercizziu 3

1. Don Michilinu è  
   bravu cummirciànti.  
2. Don Michilinu  
   sapi tuttu di tutti.  
3. Don Michilinu è  
   assai curiusu  
4. Don Michilinu  
   cridi di essiri chiù nteligenti di tutti  
5. Don Michilinu è  
   suspittusu.

Esercizziu 4 -Translation

--And it’s good that you do! Do you know what the Zazzà family has been doing since they got a refrigerator? They go buy the fish in T. and they no longer buy from me. And you understand that these are clients that I lose, especially because they used to buy a lot of fish. Naturally his sons would drive me crazy every time, they wanted special cuts, because they were students in a private school they grew to be finicky. I don't even remember what they used to ask me, but at the end they were never satisfied. They
are like bizarre lice, that’s what they are! Of course, because they have a few bucks. But they must not forget that their father before making a fortune selling oranges was a day laborer, hoeing the fields. And then, my dear, Don Pippinu, I tell you something. In my opinion, you can’t get rich by working honestly. There is always something underneath it all. I have always worked and you know it and I am still poor!

-- Sometimes people succeed because of luck or knowhow.

-- Nooo! There is always something underneath it all!

Esercizziu 5

1. A fari stu eserciziu non è difficili. A fallu non è difficili.
   It’s not very difficult to do this exercise.
   You need courage to tell the truth.
3. Luigi non vosi purtari a li picciriddi ò cinima Luigi non vosi puttalli ò cinima. Luigi did not want to take them to the movies.
4. È megghiu pagari li debbiti subbitu. È megghiu pagalli subbitu.
   It’s better to pay the bills right away.
5. È cosa di pigghiari a cauci a stu scimunitu. È cosa di pigghiallu a cauci.
   This idiot deserves to be kicked.

Esercizziu 6

1. U pisci su vanu a ccattari a T. U pisci si lu vanu a ccattari a T.
2. Ogni vota ca mi servi u pisci, vegnu ccà e mu ccattu! Ogni vota ca mi servi u pisci, vegnu ccà e mi lu accattu.
3. Ma non sanu a scurdari ca so patri ma non si hannu a scurdari ca so patri
4. A mia mu cuntau me niputi A mia mi lu cuntau me niputi
5. Si vasta prima ca io e me mugghieri nnu putemu mangiari! Si vasta prima ca io e me mugghieri nmi lu putemu mangiari.
La Cucina Siciliana

Pasta cu li ciciri e cipudda

Di Benedetta Lino
(di The Taste of Tradition: A Collection of My Family's Recipes, Legas)
(Na rizzetta facili e diliziusa)

Sta zuppa è accussì crimusa e gustusa ca sugnu sicura ca vuiautri la priparati accussì spissu comu a mia.
(Pir quattru o sei piatti prncipali)

Ngridienti:

5 lattini di 15 unzi di ciciri sculati e pulizziati.
1 grossa cipudda o dui di grannizza media tagghiata in pezzi di dui- tri cm.
5 tazzi d’acqua
1/4 di tazza di ogghiu d’aliva extra virgini.
3 cucchiarati di sali
1 cucchiara nica di spezzi niuru tritatu
1 1/3 tazza di ditalini o nautru tipu di pasta nica.
furmaggiu rattatu parmigianu, rumanu o picurinu.
Sicilian Cuisine

Garbanzo Beans, Onion and Pasta Soup

Di Benedetta Lino
(from The Taste of Tradition: A Collection of My Family's Recipes, Legas)
(My fast, easy and delicious recipe)

This soup is so creamy and satisfying that I know you will want to make it as often as I do.
(Makes 4 to 6 main dish servings)

Ingredients:

5 15-ounce cans garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
1 very large onion or two medium onions, cut into 1-inch pieces
5 cups water
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 1/2 cups ditalini or other small pasta
Grated parmigiano, romano or pecorino cheese

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Istruzioni:

Nta na granni pignata mittiti li ciciri, la cipudda, l’ogghiu d’aliva, sali e spezzi nzemmula nta l’acqua. Faciti bugghiri l’acqua supra lu focu a timpiratura media-auta. Ridduciti la timpiratura e lassati cociri finu a quannu la cipudda divernta modda e crimusa e li ciciri tenniri. Circa 45 minuti.

Mittiticci la pasta e ruminatila. Junciticci menza tazza d’acqua pi diluirì nanticchia lu brodu.

Faciti cociri la pasta al dente.

Sirviti la zuppa nta un piattu funnutu e sprizzaticcci supra nanticchia di ogghiu.

NOTA: Nautra virsioni di sta rizzetta ca mi piaci cucinari è di junciricci dui pezzi di accia tagghiati a pizzudda, 2 carroti, scucciati e tagghiati a cilindri, 1 buatta di 14.5 unzi di pumadori tagghiati, nzemmula cu la so acqua e 2 spichi d’agghiu tritatu o tagghiatu finu finu. Junciticci 1/4 di cucchiara nica di spezzi niuru.

Sta virsioni porta la zuppa a nautru liveddu chiù autu; lu piattu è riccu di sapuri e assolutamenti diliziusu.

(Servi di 6 a 8 pirsuni)
Directions:

In a large pot combine garbanzo beans, onion, water, olive oil, salt and pepper. Mix well, cover and bring to boiling over medium high heat. Reduce heat and simmer until onion becomes very soft and creamy, and garbanzo beans are very tender, about 45 minutes.

Stir in the pasta. Add from 1/2 to 1 cup of water to thin out broth. Cook pasta until al dente.

Ladle soup into individual soup bowls and drizzle with olive oil. Serve with grated cheese.

NOTE: Another version of this recipe that I like to make, is to add 2 stalks chopped celery; 2 carrots, peeled and chopped; 1 14.5 can diced tomatoes, undrained; 2 cloves of garlic, chopped or thinly sliced; 1/4 teaspoon of black pepper.

This version takes this soup to a whole different level; it is rich in flavor and absolutely delicious.

(Makes 6 to 8 servings)
In Memoriam

Connie Mandracchia DeCaro
(1931—2020)

Connie De Caro was a long-standing member of Arba Sicula. In addition, Connie published two successful books with Legas that amply demonstrated her love and knowledge of Sicilian history. She also loved opera, as you can see from the covers of the two other books she wrote. She has now joined her beloved Aristide De Caro, a true Palermitan. Arba Sicula and I mourn the loss of two important and loyal members. We publish below Vincenza Russo’s parting words.

The Italian American Women’s Center held a memorial service to honor Connie as a notable contributing member to I.A.W.C. Connie began her membership in the early 1990s and was quickly elected as a board member. When the I.A.W.C. book club was started as a recurring program, Connie volunteered to moderate. The book club has been held and enjoyed regularly ever since. In the later years, she was not able to be as active as she would have liked, but remained friends with many of us and she will surely be missed.

Connie and Aristide DeCaro had a special bond and were passionate about their work. Aristide was a Westinghouse research development engineer where he was successful in patenting several inventions in electrical light sources. Connie was a teacher, and as an author, was most notably recognized for her most popular historical book, titled Sicily, The Trampled Paradise.

— Vincenza Russo

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In Memoriam

Joseph Tusiani
(1924-2020)

In 1979, I edited a 40-page insert of *La Parola del Popolo*, then the oldest Italian language journal in the United States, a journal in which Joseph Tusiani’s work was frequently featured. Tusiani had introduced me to Egidio Clemente, the editor. My collaboration with the journal grew and I was named Co-direttore until Clemente passed away and the journal ended publication. The responsibility to write the introduction to the homage fell on me, not only because of my role in the journal but also for my decades-long relationship with Joseph Tusiani. As an undergraduate I had been his student at NYU’s Graduate School. After finishing my studies, we joined the Faculty of H. Lehman College the same year, I as an instructor, he as a tenured full professor. We parted ways when the City’s financial crisis forced Lehman College to retrench many of its younger faculty members (including me), but our relationship continued and we collaborated on some projects. One that comes to mind was his translation of Tasso’s *Mondo Creato* for which I wrote the notes. Eventually, I became Tusiani’s publisher, first with his *Dante’s Lyric Poems* and then with his most popular book, *Dante’s Divine Comedy as Told for Young People by Joseph Tusiani*. 

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This last book is probably his best seller. He always joked about the royalties I sent him at the end of each year, pointing out that with all the books he had written I was the only publisher who sent him royalties!

What I wrote about Tusiani in 1979, almost 41 years ago has not changed. What I said then corresponds with what I have always felt through the years. Indeed, the bond of friendship grew stronger in time, even though we did not see each other that often. But we communicated by email or phone and I joined him at some public events, such as the one held at the Columbus Citizens Foundation in Manhattan where a delegation from San Marco in Lamis, including the mayor, came to New York to pay homage to their most famous citizen. I recall how together with Maria Passaro and other colleagues we travelled to San Marco for a conference in celebration of Tusiani’s 75th birthday. I had never seen such universal admiration and affection bestowed by the town’s people on one of its citizens. But Tusiani enjoyed such admiration everywhere. He was given the key to the City of Florence; the Italian Republic gave him its highest recognition; NIAF paid homage to him at an impressive gathering in New York. The list of the recognitions he received is too long to mention.

I prefer to recall the more intimate events we shared, such as the ones at the Metropolitan Opera House where Tusiani invited us once or twice a year for many years. He had a subscription to a box that sat eight people and I recall how he always sat in the back, allowing his guests to sit up front: a measure of his old world class that mandates that you treat your guests better than yourself. He was always the perfect host. A few months before Tusiani passed, Giuseppe Perricone, Luigi Bonaffini and I went to visit him in his apartment in Manhattan for lunch. He was in good spirits and though he had suffered a stroke that left him impaired, he was able to sit with us for lunch. I prepared a simple but delicious “bucatini with zucchine” for us. After tasting the bucagini, Joseph who did not know that I dabbled in cooking, rarely, as my wife points out, turned to me and said, “Tu sei bravo in tutto!” He was far too generous with me. The
last time the three of us visited him for lunch, a few months ago, Luigi prepared “bucatini all’amatriciana,” but this time Joseph remained in his chair because it would have been too difficult to join us at the table. While he did not seem to be suffering, it was clear that his condition had deteriorated. While we finished the luncheon, Joseph dozed off and I shook his hand to say goodbye. We left him as he closed his eyes to rest. That was the last time we saw him.

Tusiani’s passing, expected as it was, left a void that is difficult to fill. He was always so generous with his praise and his encouragement. My dedication to Sicilian studies grew out of his suggestions. And the first copy of all the books I have written was always addressed to him. Uncannily, in spite of his impairments, he was always very quick to read the book and respond. When we saw him last, my copy of Giovanni Meli: Social Critic was by his chair. I regret that he never got to see the last book on Antonio Veneziano. My sense of satisfaction in publishing the book was muted because of it. He, who was the most prolific translator of all time, was always amazed by the number of translations I had done. Just his translation of Pulci’s Morgante, thirty five thousand lines of poetry, stands as a monument to his immense self-discipline and stamina. That was only one of many equally impressive projects to which he signed his name.

After his stroke, those who knew him expected that the end would soon arrive. But he did not give up. Though physically impaired, his mental acuity sustained him till the end. Amazingly, during the few years that followed he wrote almost two thousand poems, a selection of which, (365 to be exact) were published with the title Poesie per un anno (2014-2019) edited by Antonio Motta and Cosma Siani. The poems are a heart-rending excursion into the meaning of life and death. I would like to quote the last two lines of the last poem of the collection:

Sopra di me albeggia / l’ultima luce del mondo

which I will translate as

Dawning over me / The last light of the world.

Expressing the joy and hope that a new dawn announces, combined with the sad realization that it would be the last, these two lines show that Joseph had accepted the inevitable, convinced that death is not the end of things, as he had already stated in the previous poem when he declared himself to be “Parte vivace e vera /dell’infinito,” a true and living part of the infinite.

I also want to share with you a poem that Joseph sent me after he was inspired to learn Sicilian by reading my Learn Sicilian/ Mparamu lu sicilianu:
Sulu un capitulu
Joseph Tusiani

Granni na vota mi sinteva, ora nicareddu,
Lu munnu pussideva, ora ‘un haju nenti.
E puru na cosa auta ancora resta in mia,
zocch’era pena è ora un innu ‘i gioia.
S’a terra trema, i palazzi crollanu,
si lu mari ngrossa, l’unni avanzanu,
a terra scumparisci, ma u suli veni poi,
squillannu la so trumma stralucenti.
Chi nomu hè dari a sti timpesta e paci,
a stu scuru ca va, sta limpidizza
ca resta? Chi hè capiri di la me scunfitta
e gloria? Nenti. M’aju a cunvinciri
cia chistu è un cuntu di tutti i jorna,
sulu un capitulu di na storia umana.
Only a Chapter

Joseph Tusiani

I felt so great and now I feel so small,
I owned the world and now I nothing own,
And yet there’s something in me still so tall,
It is a paean what was just a moan.
If the earth trembles, up are buildings blown;
If the sea swell and surging tidelands fall,
No shore remains in sight, and yet the sun
Waits to explode with its bright clarion call.
How shall I name this tempest and this peace,
This dark that goes, this limpidness that stays?
What shall I make of my defeat and glory?
Nothing. I will convince myself that this
Is but a tale of ordinary days,
Only a chapter of a human story.
Ricinzioni


Ricinzioni di Santi Buscemi


Comu tradutturi di Capuana, (*Profiles of Women, Epos; Nine Sicilian Plays by Luigi Capuana*, Mellen; and *Sicilian Tales and The Marquis of Roccaverdina*, Dante University of America), sugnu moltu ntrissatu a la criscita di Capuana comu scritturi e intellettuali, ed è a stu propositu ca la ntroduzioni di Cocuzza a sti dui brevi opiri è accusi utili. Ben prima di scriviri *The Little Decameron and Vampire*, Capuana avia studiatu lu munnu di li fatti e di li dimonii in diversi cullezioni di li so favuli. Tuttavia, Cocuzza spiega chiaramentu comu, versu la

Reviewed by Santi Buscemi

This is the third work by Prof. Marina Cocuzza published by Legas Press. The first, with Lorna Watson, was *The King of Love and Other Fairy Tales*, a translation of several tales by Giuseppe Pitrè, another great Sicilian writer, who influenced Capuana. The second, with Joseph Farrell, is *The Dragon’s Nest*, selected stories and plays by Capuana. Both are worth the reader’s time. This present collection, however, comes as a gift to anyone, whether knowledgeable of Capuana and the other veristi or new to the world of nineteenth-century Italian literature.

As a translator of Capuana myself, (*Profiles of Women*, Epos; *Nine Sicilian Plays by Luigi Capuana*, Mellen; and *Sicilian Tales* and *The Marquis of Roccaverdina*, Dante University of America), I am quite interested in the growth of Capuana as a writer and intellectual, and it is in this regard that Cocuzza’s introduction to these two short works is so helpful. Well before he wrote *The Little Decameron and Vampire*, Capuana had delved into the world of fairies and
fini di la so carrera, Capuana happi a luttari ntelletyalmenti cu la so lealtà a lu pusiativismu e lu so nteress pir lu fantasticu, dimustranu puru nni li so primi opiri comu Profili of donn e Giacinta.

Capuana continuau a crisciri ntelletyalmenti finu a la fini di la vita. I so opiri successivi, in particulari Vampiru, mustranu la volontà di non abbannu nari cumpletamenti lu pusiativismu, ma di ammettirri ca la scienza non è sempri in gradu di spiegiari la “magia” a l’internu di lu natura. Cocuzza nni ricorda, infatti, chi a la fini dila so carrera Capuana si siparau di dda “tiuria maliditta di l’ossirvazioni”, unu di li funamenti di lu verismu, di cui è patri.

La cosa chiù mpurtanti di la ntroduzioni di Cocuzza, tuttavia, è la so chiariza. Troppu spissu, li accademici cadunu nconsciamenti nta la trappula di nnamurarisi di li proprii paroli. Si scordanu chi, scrivennu supra la littiratura chi amanu, hannu bisognu di ottniri chiariza e mmidiatiza supratutto. Hannu bisognu di ntroduciri a li litturi laicu, in particulari, a zoccu è tantu eccitanti e prizziusu nta dda littiratura e di spiegiari comu pò arricchiri la so vita. Cocuzza ha evitatu dda trappula! Lu so stili, sia nni li storii tradotti sia ni la so ntroduzioni critica, renni relativamenti facili pir li novi litturi di Capuana comu cumprenniri lu geniu di stu scritturi sicilianu, pir troppu tempu ignuratu di lu munnu di lingua nglisi.

Li storii di The Little Decameron prisentanu a lu Dr. Maggioli, la cui funzioni, comu suttulinia Cocuzza, è “simili a chidda di lu narraturi nni li favuli”, rinnennu d’accussi chiù evidenti lu cullegamentu ntra li opiri di fantasia di Capuana e chista. Capuana spissu metti medici nta li so storii e, chiù di na vota, si cumportanu comu rapprisintanti di l’auturi. Chistu è veru anchi nta lu primu romanzu, Giacinta, unnu un medicu arriva a mità strada nni la storia comu un opacu riflessu di lu stissu auturi. D’accussi, l’analisi di Cocuzza di li storii in The Little Decameron nni furnisci autri nfurmazioni lucidi e prizziusi supra lu sviluppu di Capuana comu scritturi.

Analizzannu “Premonition” di lu Terzu Jornu di lu Little Decameron e “The Happy Man” di lu Decimu Jornu, Cocuzza spiega ca, nta sta fasi di la carrera di Capuana, i so dubbi supra lu pusiativismu hannu jucatu un rolu mpurtanti nni la so tiuria littiraria. Nni cunta ca, specialmenti nta sti storii, “quacchi vota li eventi sunnu spiegati di causi canusciuti, mentri in autri casi parunu essiri duvuti a casu, quannu l’interventu o na fatalità isulata cuntrolla oscuramenti la vita di lu pirsunaggiu”.

I cummenti di Cocuzza supera “Vampiru” sunnu ugualmenti istruttivi, ma zoccu culpisci nta la so traduzioni di stu volumi (“A Vampire” e “The Fatal Influence”), è ca lu so stili esprimi l’idea ca, qualunque fussi la so epistemologia
demons in several collections of his *fiabe* (fairy tales). However, Cocuzza explains quite clearly how, toward the end of his career, Capuana struggled intellectually with his loyalty to positivism and his interest in the fantastic, as demonstrated by his activities vis-à-vis spiritualism. She does this against the background of Capuana’s amazing ability as a literary psychologist, demonstrated even in his earliest works like *Profiles of Women* and *Giacinta*.

Capuana kept growing intellectually to the end of his life. His later works, especially *Vampire*, show a willingness not to abandon positivism completely but to admit that science is not always able to explain the “magic” within nature. Cocuzza reminds us, in fact, that late in this career, Capuana divorced himself from that “cursed theory of observation,” one of the foundations of *verismo*, of which he is the father.

The most important thing about Cocuzza’s introduction, however, is its clarity. Too often, academics unconsciously fall into the trap of becoming enamored of their own words. They forget that, in writing about the literature they love, they need to achieve clarity and immediacy above all. They need to introduce lay readers, especially, to what is so exciting and valuable about that literature and to explain why it will enrich their lives. Cocuzza has avoided that trap! Her style, both in the translated stories and in her critical introduction, make it relatively easy for new readers of Capuana to understand the genius of this Sicilian writer, too long ignored by the English-speaking world.

The stories in *The Little Decameron* feature Dr. Maggioli, whose function, as Cocuzza points out, is “similar to the story teller in the fairy tales,” thereby making the connection with Capuana’s earlier imaginative works and this one more apparent. Capuana often places doctors in his stories and, more often than not, they act as the author’s representative. This is true even in this first novel, *Giacinta*, where a doctor arrives mid-way in the story as an opaque reflection of the author himself. Thus, Cocuzza’s analysis of the stories in *The Little Decameron* provides us with additional lucid and valuable insight into Capuana’s development as a writer.

In discussing *The Little Decameron*’s Day Three, “Premonition” and Day Ten, “The Happy Man,” Cocuzza explains that, at this stage in Capuana’s career, his doubts about positivism played an important role in his literary theory. She tells us that, especially in these stories, “sometimes events are explained by known causes, while in other cases they appear to be due to chances, when the intervention or an isolated fatality obscurely controls the character’s life.”

Cocuzza’s comments on *Vampire* are equally instructive, but what is striking in her translation of this volume (“A Vampire” and “The Fatal Influence,”) is that her style captures the notion that, whatever his artistic epistemology, Capuana always retained a deep interest in human psychology. Indeed, both
artistica, Capuana sempre mantenei un prufunnu nteressi pir la psicologia umana. In effetti, entrambi li storii ricordanu na vuci e un atteggiamentu (chi Cocuzza manifestau) prinsenti nta li primi opiri di Capuana comu Profili di Donni e lu so primu tetsu di narrativa pubblicatu, “Dr. Cymbalus” (talia la traduzioni di Santi Buscemi e Brian Zuccala nta lu Journal of Italian Translation, Vol XI, n.1, primavera 2016.)


Capuana era maestru pir criari frasi longhi, cumplessi, ma straurdinarimente chiari, chi a voti sunnu difficili di traduciri cu na versione nglisi chiara. Nta sti casi, a lu bravu tradutturi si cunzigghia di taggliari li frasi longhi nta frasi chiù curtì. Pir ovvii mmutivi st’operazioni è spissu difficili e piriculusa. Ma Cocuzza rinesci a gestire frasi cumplessi in manera filici. Pir esempiu, nta lu Quintu Jornu di The Little Decameron, lu Dr. Maggioli dici:

“…il mio amico, attratto dalle pubblicazioni occultiste della signora Blavatsky e del colonnello Olcott, era andato a Adyar, nella provincia di Madras; e, fatto il suo noviziato mistico, di sette anni, nelle solitudini del Himalaja, aveva ricevuto la comunicazione dei grandi poteri dell’antica occulta scienza Indiana posseduta dai mahatma del Tibet, come dire dai grandi maghi, depositari gelosi di una scienza a petto della quale la nostra fisica e la nostra chimica, coi loro più meravigliosi trovati, sembrano veri giochi da fanciulli.”

Inveci di circari di imitari la cumplessa struttura di Capuana, Cocuzza dividi stu paragrafu in due frasi nglisi gestibili: “…as it was known by the mahatma in Tibet. This is to say they were great magicians…”

Stu volumi ha statu na lìttura assai utili. Tutti chiddi chi sunnu ntirissati a la lìttiratura taliana, e suprattuttu a chidda siciliana, ponnu apprizzari non sulu la traduzioni di la prof.ssa Cocuzza di sti opiri mpurtanti ma puru in modu particulari li so cummenti critici. Stu volumi è un ottimu tentativu di fari canuscri megghiu la grannizza di stu scritturi sicilianu a lu munnu di lingua nglisi.
stories are reminiscent of a voice and attitude (which Cocuzza has captured) present in Capuana’s early pieces like Profiles of Women and his first published piece of fiction, “Dr. Cymbalus,” (See the translation by Santi Buscemi and Brian Zuccala in The Journal of Italian Translation, Vol XI, no.1, Spring 2016.)

Indeed, Cocuzza’s translation of all the works in this volume is quite on the mark. She captures Capuana’s literal sense, but she is also quite good at providing English figures of speech for Italian idioms that cannot be rendered literally. For example, in Day 1 of the The Little Decameron, Capuana writes, “E Lost Loiterer? Non sopportò tanta sventura; e si fece saltar la cervella, senza lasciare la ricetta dei due mirabili trovati.” Cocuzza correctly finds the equivalent expression in English by translating the phrase with “he blew his brains out.” The same can be said about “mirabili trovati,” which she translates as “fantastic remedies,” rather than the more literal “wonderful ideas.” The latter is more appropriate to the story’s theme.

Capuana was a master of creating long, complex, yet spectacularly clear, sentences that are sometimes difficult to render into an equally clear English version. In such cases, the translator is best advised to break these sometimes paragraph-long sentences into shorter units. For obvious reasons, this is often difficult and dangerous. But Cocuzza manages the task quite well. For example, in Day 5 of The Little Decameron, Dr. Maggioli states:

“…il mio amico, attratto dalle pubblicazioni occultiste della signora Blavatsky e del colonnello Olcott, era andato a Adyar, nella provincia di Madras; e, fatto il suo noviziato mistico, di sette anni, nelle solitudini del Himalaja, aveva ricevuto la comunicazione dei grandi poteri dell’antica occulta scienza Indiana posseduta dai mahatma del Tibet, come dire dai grandi maghi, depositari gelosi di una scienza a petto della quale la nostra fisica e la nostra chimica, coi loro piú meravigliosi trovati, sembrano veri giochi da fanciulli.”

Instead of trying to imitate Capuana’s complex structure, Cocuzza breaks this paragraph into two manageable English sentences: “…as it was known by the mahatma in Tibet. This is to say they were great magicians….”

This work is a very worthwhile read. Anyone interested in Italian, especially Sicilian, literature will welcome Prof. Cocuzza’s translation of these important works and be especially appreciative of her critical comments. This volume goes a long way toward revealing the greatness of this Sicilian writer to English speakers.
La lingua taliana parata oggi deriva di lu dialettu toscanu. L’Italia, comu autri paizi, usava numirusi lingui reggionali. A differenza di autri paizi comu la Francia, la Spagna e l’Inghilterra ca foru capaci di unificarisi sutta un uniu sovranu e svilupparunu na lingua comuni, l’Italia non divenni un paizi unificatu finu a lu 1861. La frammintazioni si riflettìu nta li lingui parrati nni li vinti reggioni taliani. Tutti parravanu na versoni lucali di la lingua ereditata di li Rumani, lu latinu. La prima lingua neulatina che acquistau abbastanza pristigiu pir essiri usata di li puetu fu lu sicilianu ntò XIII seculu, sutta lu mpiraturi Federicu II. Pir li primi centucinquant’anni, la puisia taliana fu scrittìa in sicilianu, comu Dante dichiarau. Cu lu tempu, però, la Tuscana, grazii a li so tri granni puetu Dante, Petrarca e Boccacciu, e ma-cari pir lu putiri ecconomicu e puliticu di Firenzi, supirau lu sicilianu comu linguaggìu littirariu. Versu la mità du XVI seculu lu Tuscanu avia divintatu la lingua prirrfta pir documenti scritti, documenti governativi ecc. Li talians continuaruunu a parrari li so lingu reggionali; ma cu l’istruzioni pubblica, la pulitica e lu logoramentu generaziunali sti linguu hannu persu tirrenu custamente, na cosa ca continua ancora oggi. Fortunatamenti, assai pirsuni qualificatìu hannu circatu di firmari la marea ca minaccia di estinziunìu sti lingu. Gaetano Cipolla, attraversu i so anni di inzignamentu e lu so travagghiu comu prìsidenti

Reviewed by Joseph L. Cacibauda

The Italian language spoken today is derived from the Tuscan dialect. Italy, like other countries, was home to numerous regional languages. Unlike other countries like France, Spain and England that were able to unify under one ruler and developed a common language, Italy did not become a unified country until 1861. The fragmentation was reflected in the languages that were spoken in the twenty regions of the country. They all spoke a local version of the language inherited from the Romans, Latin. The first neo-Latin language that acquired enough prestige to be used by poets was Sicilian in the thirteenth century, under the Emperor Fredrick II. For the first one hundred and fifty years, Italian poetry was written in Sicilian, as Dante stated. In time, however, Tuscan, thanks to its three great poets, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, as well as Florence’s economic and political power, surpassed Sicilian as the literary language. By the middle of the 16th century Tuscan had become the language of choice for written documents, government records, etc. Italians continued to speak their regional languages; but through wider education, politics, and generational attrition these languages steadily have waned, a trend that continues today. Fortunately, many scholars have devoted themselves to stem the tide that threatens these languages with extinction. Gaetano Cipolla, through his years of teaching and his work as president of Arba Sicula is one of these scholars. His latest work focused on
di Arba Sicula è unu di chisti. Lu so urtimu volumi si cuncimtrau supra a Antonio Veneziano (1543-1593), lu chiù famusu pueta dû Rinascimento sicilianu. Cipolla truavu un’anima affini in Venezianu ca fu un firoci difinsuri di la lingua siciliana e scrisi suprattuttu in sicilianu, dicennnu ca non vuleva essiri un pappayaddu usannu na lingua di autri genti. Venezianu crideva ca scriviri ntò so propiu linguaggiu maternu era lu megghiu modu di esprimiri i sentimenti ca si agitavanu dintra l’arma dû pueta.


**Umbra infelici, chi sequendu veni**

> Umbra infelici, chi sequendu veni  
> di lu miu corpu li stanchi v estigi,  
> chi voi di mia? Chi cerchi? Non conveni  
> a mia tua compagnia, nè a tia mia ligi,  
> Tu sai chi, poi chi persi lu miu beni,  
> su tuttu landru e mustrulu a l’effigi:  
> lassami in paci sulu e tu ti teni,  
> ch’iu a tia t’attassu et a mia tu m’afligiri. (p.50)

Cu leggi pò apprizzari l’intunazioni milodica dû sicilianu puru si non è capaci di pronunziari li palori e fari attinzioni a lu ritmu a paraguni di la versioni nglish ci puru dimistra la granni abilità di lu tradutturi. Ma comu ammetti G. Cipolla, “La traduzioni cerca di essiri lu chiù vicinu possibili a l’originali, usannu un pentamitru iambicu... Circari di seguiri lu schema di la rima altirnata siciliana avissi mpostu troppi cumprumisi cu lu significatu e lu ritmu di lu versu.” Iddu, però, fa rimari li ultimi distici di ogni ottava.

La vita di Veneziano ha statu china di pulemichi e problemi. I so cuntempuranii lu cunziddiravanu arruganti, promiscuu, “incontinente nei sentimenti familiari e nell’amore”, un iconoclasta e cu na granni mancanza di rispettu pir li istituzioni; però, li so canzuni spirituali nta la secunna sezioni sunnu sintimenti e prieri di santi, forsi pir circari di farisi pirdunari pir li so numirusi trasgressioni nta lu munnu dopu la morti.
Antonio Veneziano (1543-1593), the most famous poet of the Sicilian Renaissance. Cipolla finds a kindred soul in Veneziano, who was a fierce defender of Sicilian and wrote mostly in Sicilian, saying he did not want to be a parrot using other people’s languages. Veneziano believed that writing in one’s maternal language was best to express the feelings stirring in the poet’s soul.

This 147-page book presents 142 octaves translated from the critical edition by Gaetana Maria Rinaldi: *Libro delle rime siciliane*, 2012. Gaetano Cipolla selected them to exhibit a “wide sampling of the breadth and scope of Veneziano’s works.” The opening sections of *canzuni amurusi* (love songs) to Celia are imaginative outpourings of a poet’s yearnings and affection for his beloved. The poems consist of eight lines, typical of Sicilian poetry, each line having eleven syllables. The rhyme scheme is AB-AB form. Consider the following example:

**Unhappy Shadow Who are Following**

Unhappy shadow who are following  
the tired footprints of my worn-out body,  
what do you want from me? What do you seek?  
Your presence does not suit me, nor mine you.  
You know that after losing my beloved,  
I feel dejected as my looks confirm.  
Leave me alone in peace and you hold still,  
for you depress me, and I give you chill.

The reader will appreciate the melodic intonation of Sicilian even if one is not adept at pronouncing the words and be mindful of the rhythms compared to the English, however adroit the translations. But as Cipolla admits, “The translation tries to be as close to the original as possible, using an iambic pentameter ... Trying to follow the Sicilian alternating rhyming scheme would have imposed far too many compromises with the meaning and rhythm of the line.” He does, however, rhyme the final couplets of each octave.

Veneziano’s life was rife with controversy and problems. His contemporaries regarded him as arrogant, promiscuous, “incontinent in familial feelings and in love,” an iconoclast and one with a great disrespect for institutions; yet, his spiritual songs in this second section are the sentiments and prayers of saints, perhaps to hedge his chances of forgiveness of his many transgressions in the afterlife.
Pensu a lu nomu di to figghiu e to

Pensu a lu nomu di to figghiu e to:
cincu littri ha Iesús, cincu Maria,
e criju quanta grazia mai pò
essiri in creatura ch’in tia sia;
anzi piamenti chiù innanti dirrò
ch’havendu iddu la carni sua di tia,
si tu in l’essiri to iddu in lu so
potissi esserti equali, lu farria.

L’inclinazioni di Venezianu a ridiculizzari i pirsunaggi pubblici fu spissu la causa di so problemi giuridici. Non puteva risistiri la tentazioni di criticari li politici. Si lamenta di chistu nta una di li so puisii di sdegnu: “Fra la mia lingua e la manu fu liga /di scriviri né diri cosa vili, / Hora (ohimè, chi chiangiu la fatiga) / semu la musa ed iu fatti crudili: /... chi larva infami, ch’insolenti striga / mi storciu, mi guastau, mi cangiau stili?” La lingua pizzuta di Venezianu fu rispunzabili pir li so guai cu la liggi. La so ultima ncarcirazioni si rivilau fa-tali quannu scuppiau un incendiu nta la prigiuni ca era puru na fortizza chi cuntineva ammunizioni. L’ammunizioni esplosiru e lu vurricarunu nzemmula a autri priggiuneri.

Lu so forti ingegnu si manifesta puru nta la satira “Cornaria” in cui lu pueta si rivolgi schirzannu a un poviru cristianu di nomu Trivignu ch’avia statu cornificatu di so mugghieri, dicennucci ca essiri “curnutu” non è na cosa accussì brutta. È un distinu ca culpisci a tanti omini e chi iddu duvissi accittari la cosa cu pacienza, birchi puru Napuliuni era curnutu, come appi a diri Totò, lu famusu comicu napulitanu, quacchi seculu dopu a Venezianu.

Cornaria

Comu spiss’erra lu giudiziu humanu,
poi chi lu veru lumi è già perdutu
e di la dritta via ndì va luntanu!
Ntendu, Trivignu miu, per risolutu
chi multu l’haij a mali e assai t’affrunti
quandu t’è dittu chi tu sì un cornutu.
Lassa ssi toi chimeri e ssi toi cunti,
ascuta e duna fidi a zoccu iu dicu
e ssi primuri toi mettili a munti.
Comu rivali no, ma comu amicu
ti provirò chi li corna su honuri
per novu stilu e per costumi anticu,
I Think of Your Son's Name and Then of Yours

I think of your son’s name and then of yours;
five letters Jesus has, five has Maria,
and I believe that you possess all graces
that can exist in any human being.
In fact, as I now piously declare,
since he received his body from your own,
if you in your own being, he in his,
could be made equal, surely he’d do this.

Veneziano’s penchant for ridiculing public figures was often the source of his legal problems. It seems he couldn’t resist the opportunity to lampoon them. He laments this in one of his Disdain poems: “My tongue and hand agreed not to write down/or ever say unworthy and vile things. . . Alas, (the struggle took a toll on me)/ now we have grown unkind, my Muse and I./ What wicked ghost, what witch most rude and vile, / ruined and twisted me, and changed my style?” Veneziano’s sharp tongue was responsible for his problems with the law. His last incarceration proved to be fatal, as a fire broke out in the prison which was also a fortress that contained munitions. The munitions exploded and buried him together with other prisoners.

His sharp wit is also on display in the satire “Cornaria” in which the poet playfully addresses a poor fellow named Trivignu who was cuckolded by his wife. He tells him that being a “cornutu” is not such a bad thing for it is a fate that befalls many men and he should take it in stride. Even Napoleon was a cuckold, as Totò, the famous Neapolitan comedian was to say a few centuries after Veneziano.

On Being a Cuckold

Once people have lost sight of the true light
and they have strayed away from the straight path
they often cannot tell what’s wrong or right.
My dear Trivignu, I know, as you’ve said,
that you resent and feel embarrassment
when folks say you have horns upon you head.
Leave all these fantasies and tales behind,
listen and trust what I’m about to say,
and your cares keep in a big pile confined.
Not as a rival, no, but as a friend,
I’ll prove to you that horns are to be prized,
as ancient custom and as a new trend,
cu favulusi e cu veri scritturi,
per prosi e poesia, talchi t’acqueti
si di lu diri miu puntu ti curi.


Ricinzioni di Gaetano Cipolla

Wild fennel (finucchieddu sarvaggiu) è la secunna cugghiuta di puisia di Marisa Frasca. La prima ricota ntitulata Via Incanto Poems from the Darkroom, pubblicata puru cu Bordighera Press, stabiliu la riputazioni di Marisa comu na nova vuci mpurtanti ntra li pueti Italu-Miricani. Sta nova ricota cunferma ca Marisa è na puitissa la cui riputazioni è distinata a crisciri anchi a liveddu naziali. Mentri esplora aspetti pirsunali di firiti ca hannu cundizziunatu la so esperienz di vita—la perdita di so patri, la dispirazioni di la matri ch’appi a cummattiri cu la vita senza un maritu, lu so difficili adattamentu a la vita nton paisi straneru, li so anzii nta lu passaggiu a la maturità di fimmina, si iazza supra li cuntingenzi di tempu e spazziu pir divintari espressioni di spinnu univirsali. Chistu è infatti chiddu ca i veri pueti rinesciunu a fari: trasfurmannu zoccu è patticulari, individuali e attaccatu a lu tempu in quacchi cosa ca parra cu la vuci di la cullettività, ca po’ essiri condivisu, capetu e sintutu nta li chì funnuti spazi di l’arma quasi immediatamenti. Puisii di stu tipu non hannu bisognu di nterpretazioni. Nta la puisia “Sutta lu celu di Lampidusa 2016” Marisa si rivolgi a lu corpu anniatu di na picciridda ca avia circatu di arrivari a la costa dà Sicilia senza putiricci junciri, comu a tanti autri. Liggemu la puisia:
endorsed by writers of renown and wit, in prose and poetry, whose word can be most comforting, if you pay heed to it.

_Sicilian Rhymes of Love, Disdain, and Faith_ is Cipolla’s latest volume in the “Poets of Arba Sicula” series, which has already published 16 other volumes. Veneziano’s inclusion signals his importance for Sicilian letters. He was known as the Prince of Sicilian poetry and was universally admired, even by Miguel De Cervantes, the author of _Don Quijote_, who shared a cell with him in Algiers when both were captured by pirates. A very informative introduction, coupled with the excellent translation, make this volume worthy of the volumes that preceded it. Together they open a window onto great works of literature written in Sicilian whose existence was not known in this country.


Reviewed by Gaetano Cipolla

_Wild Fennel_ is the second collection of poems published by Marisa Frasca. Her first collection, _Via Incanto, Poems from the Darkroom_, also published by Bordighera Press and reviewed in these pages, established Frasca’s reputation as an important new voice among Italian-American poets. This new collection confirms that Marisa Frasca is indeed a poet whose reputation is bound to achieve national recognition for her work. While exploring personal pockets of hurt—the losses that have conditioned her experiences, her father’s death, her mother’s despair at having to cope with life without a husband, her own difficult adjustments to life in a foreign country, her own anxiety in becoming a woman, her work rises above the contingencies of time and space to become expressions of universal longings. That is, in fact, what true poets manage to achieve, to transform what is peculiar, individual and time-bound into something that speaks with the voice of the collective, that can be shared, understood and felt in the deepest recesses of our soul almost immediately. Such poems have no need of interpretation. “Under the sky of Lampedusa 2016” Frasca addresses the drowned body of a little girl who was trying to reach the coast of Sicily but, like so many, did not make it. We should read the poem in its entirety:

Arba Sicula XLI
Dimmi picciridda
Chi nomu scigghiu pi tia to matruzza
Era un rialu
Era un ciuri

Dimmi picciridda
Quannu li to minnuZZi cuminZiu a sbucciari
to frati si ncaricau cu nu bastuni
di teniri a bada a li to pritinZenti.

Tinevi lu brazzu di to patri caminannu.
Scummettu ca iddu surrideva ammuccioni quannu li giuvini
dicevanu ca era bedda.

Pir li vecchi dû villaggiu ntò disertu
erì tu un ciatu d’aria frisca.

Forsi na turri auta quannu nchianasti supra la varca dà spiranza
senza putiri navigari l’urtimu menzu migghiu
Dimmi picciridda
chi nomu am’à dari
a st’omini chi maschiri
carriana lu to corpu ntà barella

Chi nomu
a l’omini dû sarvataggiu
cemìttunu un cartillinnu supra la to cavigghia nniricata--#99.

Li primi quattru strofi probabilmenti riflettronu l’espirienza di Marisa,
da diventanu sintimenti universali ca tutti capisciunu, puru chiddi ca nasceru
a lu sud dû desertu dû Sahara. Riflettronu l’orgogliu di li ginituri ca si preianu
di aviri na bedda figghia, li nomi affittuusi cu cui la chiamanu, ciuri, gioia, lu
frati ca si ncarica di pruteeggiri l’onuri di la soru mentri idda crisci. Chisti sunnu
atteggiamenti peculiari di li famigghi siciliani, ma sunnu puru univirsali. Nta la
so simplicità la puisia è cummuventi pirchì la morti di la picciridda cci rubbau
tutti li gioi futuri ca putevanu prisintarisi a la menti quannu caminava tinennu
la manu di so patri.

Nta sta puisia, lu distinu di la picciridda non si veni a sapiri finu a qua-
tru versi prima di la fini e chistu servi cumu contrappuntu a chiddu ca vinni
prima, dannu chiù risauu a la differenza ntra li spiranzi di na giuvini vita e la
dura rialtà di la so morti. Comu in tanti alturi puisii la rialtà rinesci a ntrudiri
nta la cuntimplazioni di li costa di Marisa. Piggiamu un esempiu: la puisia ca
duna lu titulu a lu volumi: “Ode to Wild Fennel”. È na odi a li qualità magich
Tell me little one
What name your precious mother chose to give you
Was it a gift
Was it flower

Tell me little one
When your breast began to bud
Did your brother frown
Stand firm with stick in hand to scare your suitors

Did you walk holding your father’s arm
I bet he secretly smiled when young men called you beautiful

For elder faces of your desert village
Were you a breath of air

Maybe high tower when you climbed the boat of hope
Never making that last 1/2 mile across
Tell me little one
What name
To give these men in face masks
Carrying your drowned body on a stretcher

What name
To search & rescue
Tagging your blue-black ankle--#99.

The first four stanzas probably recall Frasca’s own experiences, but they become universal feelings shared by all, even those born south of the Sahara desert. They speak of the universal parental pride in the beauty of a young girl, the endearing nicknames used to address her as a flower or a joy, the natural protective stance of the brother as the young girl matured into a young woman, the unspoken pride of the father in his daughter beauty. There are peculiar attitudes of Sicilian families, but they are also universal. This poem in its simplicity is poignant not only because it bemoans the loss of a human life, but more so because the child’s drowning robbed her of the future joys that she could dream of as she walked holding her father’s hand.

In this poem, the fate of the little girl is not learned until four lines from the end, and this acts as a counterpoint to what came before heightening the difference between the hopes of her young life with the harsh reality of her death. As in so many other poems, reality has a way of intruding on Frasca’s contemplation of things. Take, for example, the poem that gives the title to this collection, “Ode to Wild Fennel.” It is a thoughtful ode to the magic qualities

“My heart swells/ you still appease the poor man’s hunger, / trim appetites of the rich grown too fat, / take root by the graves of the dead / where human wars are over. / I wish I could be a charitable plant / with no sense of self importance, / no clever perspectives, / dinking sunlight & filaments of rain, / assisting all sentient beings in need / but I’ll say no more about that. / They prescribe medication / for this kind of talk in America--where I / struggle like hell to be merciful. / I could speak a well of anger / about new wars, border walls & and how / the clock is moving / between one breath & another for all of us.”

Nta l’ultima stanza, Marisa ritorna a lu finucchieddu e ammuccia la so facci nta la so eleanza virdi tastannu lu sapuri di duci licurizzia e un mumentu di felicità non cumplicata. Forsi mi sbagghiu, ma mi pari ca nta stu volumi la spizioni intima ca Marisa fa di lu so munnu si allargau pir abbracciari un munnu chiù vastu. Ci sunnu puisii supra a Masetto di Lamporecchio, na storia di seduzioni assai divirrenti ca veni di lu Decameron di Boccaccio, nautra supra a Veronica Franco e supra a Rosa Balistreri e na longa puisia ndirizzata a li Italu-Miricani ca portanu la cappeddu MAGA ca si scurdarunu ca iddi foru puru immigranti. Eventi di natura quotidiana, lu viviri ntra lu caos puliticu ca domina li jurnati dù païsi puru ntrasunu nta la so cuscenza. Nta la puisia “Mine is only a nightmare” Marisa si svigghia durante la notti ntò panicu pir circari la carta virdi di emigranti e li certificati di nascita di li figghi comu riazioni a li minacci contra a li immigranti ca si sentunu di Washington.

Ogni puisia apri na nova finestra nta lu munnu di Marisa. Ogni puisia
of fennel filtered through old wives’ tales and mythology. Fennel wards off spirits, restores lost vision, helps breast milk. It grows everywhere, in the road, in gravel driveways of stately homes and neighborhoods. These descriptions are interrupted by the line that changes the quiet tone, “in a world where despair and disparity grow, / wild fennel you sneak up on us like love.” The intrusion of the outside world on the contemplation of the fennel is irresistible in the next stanza:

My heart swells/ you still appease the poor man’s hunger, / trim appetites of the rich grown too fat, / take root by the graves of the dead / where human wars are over. / I wish I could be a charitable plant / with no sense of self importance, / no clever perspectives, / dinking sunlight & filaments of rain, / assisting all sentient beings in need / but I’ll say no more about that. / They prescribe medication / for this kind of talk in America—where I / struggle like hell to be merciful. / I could speak a well of anger / about new wars, border walls & and how / the clock is moving / between one breath & another for all of us.”

In the last stanza, Frasca returns to the fennel and buries her face in its green elegance to enjoy its sweet licorice scent and a moment of uncomplicated happiness. I may be wrong but it seems to me that in this collection Marisa’s intimate reconnoitering of her inner world has expanded to embrace more of the world at large. There are poems about Masetto di Lamporecchio, a hilarious tale of seduction from Boccaccio’s Decameron, a poem about Veronica Franco and Rose Balistreri and a long poem addressed to the Italian-Americans who wear MAGA hats and have forgotten that they were immigrants, too. Current events, the political turmoil in today’s world gripping the country have also intruded in her consciousness. In the poem “Mine is only a nightmare” she wakes up in the middle of the night to search for her green card and the birth certificates of her children in response to the immigration threats coming out of Washington.

Each poem opens a new window into Frasca’s world. Each poem could give rise to a much longer discussion of her themes and her treatment of them.

Arba Sicula XLI
putissi ispirari discussioni assai chiù longhi di li so temi e di comu li sviluppa. Ma mi cuntentu di diri quattru paroli sura l’ultima sezioni dû libru, na cullezziun di testi scritti in prosa ma si leggiunu comu puisia. Lu tema di la perdita è di novu pinitranti ed è cunnessu cu la perdita di so patri quannu aveva unnici anni e di la so amica d’infanzia Anna. La so amicizia cu idda avia statu senza cunfini. Nta la “Letter to Anna” Marisa prova a spiegari a la so amica morta e a se stissa pirci non pruvau mai di cuntattalla dopu ca avia emigratu in America. Idda scrivi “I meant to write. I’ve told you over and over in my mind. I meant to write when the family settled. We never settled anywhere but into our losses. Before we could say in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, my Family disintegrated. At age eleven I became ninety-nine” L’ultima frasi si rifirisci a la morti di so patri e a li problemi chi la famiggia affruntau pir supravviviri in America. La littra è n’apologia cummuventi a la so amica ma è puru na manera pir truvari un modus vivendi cu l’immagini di so patri e di Anna. Anna e Marisa passavanu lu tempu girannu pû paisi e unu di li so posti era un palazzu abbannunatu. Quannu Marisa riturnau ntô paisi dopu tanti anni iu a visitari lu palazzu ca ntô frattempo avia statu ristauratu di un architettu. Marisa truvau lu curaggiu di battiri a la porta e quannu l’architettu ci apriu idda ci dumannau si puteva vidiri la casa. L’architettu ci dumannau cu era e quannu idda rispunniu, iddu ricanusciu lu nomu e ci dissi ca idda assumighiava assai a so patri. L’architettu parrau cu rispettu e ammirazioni pi lu patri di Marisa. Si ricurdau ca era un bravu fotografu e ci mustrau fotografii di so figghi e Marisa ricanusciu, taliannu lu sfunnu, ca eranu foto scattati nta lu studiu di so patri. L’architettu ci cuntau ca quannu ntô paisi si sparsi la nutizia di la so morti la chiesa fici na missa a la quali participau quasi tuttu lu paisi pi dimustrari la so stima d’iddu.

Sta littra pir Marisa è comu fari li cunti cu li so perditi equivalenti a chiddu ca li Greci chiamanu anagnorisis, na forma di di canuscenza che porta a la libbirazioni. Vicinu a la fini di la littra Marisa veni a capiri ca nuddu pò mai fari rinasciri cu è mortu e ca la morti ha persu un pocu di lu so duluri, d’accussi comu “your silent scream, Anna, is losing its sting as I keep writing, investigat-ing, trying to make meaning.” (Anna, lu to gridu mutu perdi nanticchia di lu so bruciuri mentri continuu a scriviri, a investigari, a circari di capiri).

But I would like to address the last section of the book, which is a collection of prose pieces that read like poetry. The theme of loss is again pervasive and it’s connected to loss of her father when she was young and the loss of her childhood friend, Anna, who was her dear companion in daily excursions around town. Their friendship was all encompassing. In the “Letter to Anna,” Frasca tries to explain to her dead friend and to herself why she never tried to get in touch with her after she emigrated to America. She writes, “I meant to write. I’ve told you over and over in my mind. I meant to write when the family settle. We never settled anywhere but into our losses. Before we could say in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, my Family disintegrated. At age eleven I became ninety-nine.” This is a reference to the loss of her father and the difficulties faced by the family to survive in America. The letter is a heart-rending apology to her best friend as well as a coming to terms with the image of the father and Anna. Anna and Marisa used to spend time wandering around town and one of their favorite places was an abandoned palazzo. When she went back to town after many years in America, Frasca went to look at the palazzo, which in the meantime had been restored by an architect. She found the courage to knock on the door and when the architect answered she asked if she could see the inside. The man asked her who she was, and when she told him, he recognized the name and connected her to her father, saying she was the spitting image of him. The man spoke with respect and admiration for her father who was a gifted photographer. He showed her photos of his children and she could recognize the background used by her father as he composed the photographs. She learned from him that when the town learned of her father’s passing, they held a memorial in the church that was attended by nearly the whole town as a sign of their esteem.

This letter was for Marisa a way of coming to terms with her losses. It was what the Greeks call anagnorisis, a form of recognition that leads to liberation. Near the end of the letter, Marisa acknowledged that no one “can bring back what no longer lives” and that “death looses some of its sting... Like your silent scream, Anna, is losing its sting as I keep writing, investigating, trying to make meaning.”

Clearly this book of poetry is illuminating, thoughtful and passionate, and Marisa Frasca is a welcomed and refreshing voice among Italian-American poets.
Libbra ricivuti / Books Received

AA.VV, La puisia di Maria Nivea Zagarella, piccola antologia critica, Stampa a Contatto, 2019.
Nino Bellia, Sperduti nel buio, Ntra scuru e lustru, Viagrande (CT), Algra Ed. 2019.

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Arba Sicula XLI
Arba Sicula Also Recommends

**La lirica di Giovanni Meli**, a cura di Gaetano Cipolla. This volume is in Sicilian and Italian. This is volume 1 of the 3 volumes slated to be published by Nuova Ipsa of Palermo. It is a critical edition of Meli’s odes, sonnets and canzunetti, with an introduction, and critical analysis of every poem, variants, and linguistic notes by Gaetano Cipolla. In Italian and Sicilian

**Bitter Trades, A Memoir**, by Giovanna Miceli-Jeffries.

BITTER TRADERS explores new territory in the rich landscape of memoirs of immigration and displacement. With a cool but passionate eye, Giovanna Miceli Jeffries welcomes into the harsh terrain of her native Sicily, devastated after World War II, impoverished and caught between the ancient and the modern. Without sentimentality or false nostalgia, she welcomes us into the complex and passionate lives of the people among whom she must learn and unlearn what it is to be a woman. A beguiling and utterly original volume.
ISBN 978-1939693-21-1. 290 pages, $18.00

**Between Two Worlds: Sicily and America**, by Luisa Lo Cascio

A story about a Sicilian Immigrant who came to America and the daughter who went back to Sicily to uncover her father’s tumultuous past.
Mparamu lu siciliano by Gaetano Cipolla. This is an adaptation of Learn Sicilian for Italian speakers. It is basically the same text, but addressed to an Italian-speaking audience. The adaptation was done in collaboration with prof. Alfonso Campisi who teaches Sicilian at the Université de la Manouba in Tunis. ISBN 978-1-939693-25-9, 326 pages, + 1 DVD $32.00.

Learn Sicilian/Mparamu lu siciliano by Gaetano Cipolla is the first college textbook for learning Sicilian. It contains a complete description of the language with a wealth of exercises and of cultural material written in a way that makes learning Sicilian fun. It is accompanied by a DVD with all the answers to the exercises as well as the audio for all the readings and dialogues. ISBN 1-881901-89-0, 336 pages, price $32.00, plus $4.00 for shipping and handling. It comes with 1 DVD.

Antonio Veneziano, Sicilian Rhymes of Love, Dismay, and Faith, edited and translated by Gaetano Cipolla. This is collection of 142 Sicilian octaves by the most important and influential poet of the Sicilian Renaissance. ISBN 9781939693396, 148 pp., $16.00

The Lady of the Wheel, by Angelo Coniglio. This is an interesting novella that explores the Sicilian dilemma: how to make sure that infants that cannot be taken care of by their poor families receive the care they need. ISBN 18190186-6, 84 pp. $12.00

The King of Love and Other Fairy Tales, G. Pitrè, is a bilingual (Sicilian/English) volume that contain 12 Sicilian fairy tales translated into English and amply annotated by Lorna Watson and Marina Di Stefano. This is a wondrous journey into the Sicilian imagination. ISBN 188190184X, 174 pp. $16.00

Arba Sicula XLI
First to Last Picking, by Sebastiano Santostefano. This is a wonderful account of life in Connecticut for Sicilian immigrants after World War II. It is full of insights into Sicilian-Americans, their ways of coping and their struggle to become Americans while keeping Sicilian values alive.

ISBN 1881901807, 260 pp. $22.00

Vincenzo Ancona’s Malidittu la lingua/Damned Language, recently reprinted in a new format and with two accompanying CDs or one DVD of the poet reciting his work in Sicilian. Ancona’s book is certainly well known to the members of Arba Sicula, especially those who live in the New York area. Ancona was an institution in the Castellammare del Golfo community and still is remembered with affection and admiration.

ISBN 0921252145, 204 pp. $20.00

Francesco Lanza’s Sicilian Mimes: a Gallery of Sly and Rustic Tales, is a classic of Sicilian humor that has delighted many generations of Sicilians since its publication in the 1920’s. The book had never been translated into English, like so many worthy others, and I felt that it had important things to say about Sicily and Sicilians, even as a parody of them. If you want to laugh at the same things Sicilians find funny, if you want to know what their taboos are, this is the book to read.

ISBN 18890173-4, 144 pp. $14.00

After Laughing, Comes Crying: Sicilian Immigrants on Louisiana Plantations, by Joseph L. Cacibauda. This novel is based on the author’s ancestral research through the Mormon Church’s archive, books and newspapers and it follows the life of Giovanni Graci, a farmer in Sicily, his decision to leave the island, the crossing and his experience on a sugar plantation in Southern Louisiana. The story is emblematic of so many Italian immigrants’ tales, told with compassion and realism. An excellent guide to our shared past.


Arba Sicula XLI
**Tornu/The Return, Sicilian Poems**, by Antonino Provenzano, translated into English by Gaetano Cipolla. This is the second volume of poetry written by Arba Sicula’s Vice President, following his successful book *Vinissi/I’d Love to Come Back*. Provenzano’s style has grown freer and less attached to traditional forms, while keeping his sense of humor intact. This book confirms once again the talent and special gifts the poet showed in his first book and then some.


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Prof. Rao has included a thorough and well researched summary of the major events of Sicilian history, touching also on Sicilian literature. His grammar is useful as well for all Sicilians wishing to learn the language. Prof. Rao’s comments in most cases are applicable to Sicilian at large. This is a most useful book for anyone interested in Sicily.


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**Sicily The Trampled Paradise, Revisited**, By Connie Mandracchia De Caro, II Edition. This is a completely revised and updated version of the book that was sold out. Mrs. De Caro has added new chapters and expanded her narrative to enhance historical insights into the complex history of Sicily.


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**Giovanni Meli: Social Critic**, edited, introduced and translated by Gaetano Cipolla. This anthology contains some of Meli’s commentary on life in Sicily and particularly in Palermo. The poems include reflect the poet’s social philosophy. Some of the poems were never published in his lifetime because they were too critical of the lifestyle of Palermitan nobility.

ISBN 9781939693372, paperback, 164 pp, $16.00

ISBN 188190145-9, 258 pp. $18.00.

Sicilian: The Oldest Romance Language, by Joseph Privitera.

In this study, Dr. Privitera demonstrates that Sicilian is not a dialect nor a corruption of Italian. Dr. Privitera convincingly argues that Sicilian is the most ancient of the romance languages. In addition, he compiles a list of words derived from other languages such as Latin, Greek, Arabic, Spanish, Catalan and Provencal.


Introduction to Sicilian Grammar, by J. K. “Kirk” Bonner, edited by Gaetano Cipolla. This is the first comprehensive grammar of the Sicilian language available for English speakers. It is also the first serious attempt at treating the various different forms of spoken Sicilian as expressions of the same underlying language. Dr. Bonner’s work ought to dispel the notion that Sicilian is not a language, but a dialect. The price includes a copy of The Sounds of Sicilian, by Gaetano Cipolla. This 32 page booklet is a description of Sicilian sounds accompanied by an interactive CD to teach students pronunciation. It should be bought in conjunction with Introduction to Sicilian Grammar. For $27.95 One can buy both, including shipping.
A Thousand Years in Sicily: from the Arabs to the Bourbons, by Giuseppe Quatriglio. This is the third edition of a classic. See the review of this book in the book review section. If you’re interested in Sicilian history, this is one book one ought to have. ISBN 0921252-17-X, 228 pp. $16.00.

History of Autonomous Sicily, By Romolo Menighetti and Franco Nicastro, Translated into English by Gaetano Cipolla. This is the most comprehensive history of Sicily from the signing of the Special Autonomy Statute for the Island in 1947 to the present. To understand the political, economic and social situation of modern day Sicily, this is your book. ISBN 1881901289, 340 pp. Price $18.00.

Altavilla, Sicily: Memories of a Happy Childhood, By Calogero Lombardo
“I wrote this book for the children of the family who will never know what this place was,” said Calogero Lombardo. This is more than a recollection of childhood memories. It is an interesting and insightful look at the reality of Sicily and Sicilians written with wit and a sense of humor.

Don Chisciotti and Sanciu Panza, By Giovanni Meli, Introduction, Notes and Translation by Gaetano Cipolla. Revised edition. This is not a translation of the Spanish novel, but an entirely original rethinking of the archetypal couple of Don Quijote and his squire Sancho, written in verse and from a Sicilian perspective. This is an essential book to understand the Sicilian psyche. Gaetano Cipolla’s translation is superb. ISBN 1881901-33-5. 320 pp.-Bilingual volume (Sicilian/English), price $18.00.

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This is a revised edition of Dr. Barbera’s entertaining and well documented account of the eventful period that goes from the Norman conquest of Sicily to the death of Frederick II. This is required reading for all who are interested in Sicilian history. ISBN 1-881901-05-X. Paperback 160 pp. with illustrations. $12.00.

**Remember Me Young**, by Cecelia Tumminello De Luso
This is the story of Sicilians who came to America with limited funds and no knowledge of how they would survive. Here they were forced into a results-driven world. Language and education were not always within their reach. Easy money was dangled in front of them. Listen as the ripples of war, suicide and abuse along with my memoirs, proverbs, folklore and unconditional love unfold.
ISBN 1-881901-94-7, 152 pp. $16.00

**The Poetry of Giovanni Meli**, introduced and translated by Gaetano Cipolla. This volume, too, was sent free to all members in good standing. If you missed out, you can still order it from Legas. It is the most impressive anthology of the poetry of the greatest Sicilian poet of all time.

**Pirati supra la nivi/Footprints in the Snow**, by Nino Provenzano. This is the third anthology of poems by Provenzano in which he shows a greater command of his medium, while presenting a more reflective view of his world.
ISBN 9781939693150, paperback 128 pp. $16.00
A Sicilian-American Comedy by Joseph J. Corso Jr.

This is an episodic, fictional account of four generations of a Sicilian family: one part of which emigrates to America, while others stay behind. It is a tale of La famiglia, filled with acts of sacrifice and sacrilege, love and malice, mystery and murder.


The Taste of Tradition: A Collection of My Sicilian Family's Recipes, by Benedetta Lino.

The Taste of Tradition is a cookbook filled with recipes and poetry from a traditional Sicilian family. Many of the recipes have been passed down through the generations. This is a cookbook that will please everyone and will make a wonderful addition to cookbook collectors.

ISBN 978-1-939693-17-4, 158 pp. $16.00

La puisia di Maria Nivea Zagarella:

This is volume XVI of the series Pueti d'Arba Sicula/ Poets of Arba Sicula that introduces to American audiences a gifted and sensitive poet from Francofonte, masterfully translated into English by Gaetano Cipolla.

ISBN 978-1-939693-18-1, 166 pp. $16.00
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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. In addition the site contains information on the island’s traditions, history and legends. Check out his site at: www.siciliancookingplus.com
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