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An Exploration of Ignazio Buttitta's Sicilian Dialect  
Poetry in English*

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# **Translating Poetics of Place, Memory and Identity**

## **An Exploration of Ignazio Buttitta's Sicilian Dialect Poetry in English**

**Anouska Zummo**

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of PhD

University of Durham

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

August 2018

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

The thesis explores a selection of Ignazio Buttitta's Sicilian dialect poems in English translation, presenting the process of translation as a means of understanding the text as a linguistic (and therefore linguistically representative) message, a cultural embodiment (and spatially situated) embodiment of *topoi*, and an ideological (politically active) tool for the preservation of identity. Three folios of translations have as their focus these angles of investigation respectively, prefaced by an exploration of the polycentric Italian linguistic context and discussion of the terms 'language' and 'dialect'. The research addresses individual linguistic choice, initially through attempts to mirror the style and impact in English, moving on to address culturally representative translation practices and, finally, the subjective persona of the poet and translator within the translations. The poems traverse Buttitta's lifetime of writing, addressing the influence of a sense of fading or threatened identity, which impinged upon regional culture and local means of expression; I look at collective memory, preservation of memory and place through language as a form of repository, acknowledging the onus on translation into a *lingua franca*. This leads to an in-depth repositioning of the visibility of translational processes and decision-making, foregrounding the translator's textual encounters in order to maximize understanding of the workings of language in transfer. The underlying drive of the research is to uncover a poetics of place and memory of which dialect is singularly depictive and, in so doing, to examine multifaceted approaches that seek to transfer such linguistic, cultural and ideological significance in English translation.

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also across different countries, jobs, homes, through the first and ongoing steps of parenthood, and loss.

Life and death entered my life in their respective extremes of light and darkness over the course of this research. I became mother to my wonderful son, Mattia, and lost my own beautiful mum, Clare. In celebration of the hope and future of my son, in a world in which free voices speak with equal value, and in loving memory of the cherished past shared with my mum, whose light and love of life remain unparalleled, this thesis, with much gratitude and love to all those listed above, is dedicated to:

*Mattia Jesse Austen Zummo*

*and*

*Clare Elizabeth Mallorie Munden*

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**Figure 1.** *Occupazione delle terre incolte in Sicilia* (Guttuso, 1949-50).

**Figure 2.** *Salvatore Carnevale* (Artist unknown, *Istituto Ricerche Studi Arte Popolare 'Agrigentum'*, n.d.).

## Abbreviations

### Works by Ignazio Buttitta:

<b>Prime</b>	<i>Prime e nuovissime</i>
<b>Pani</b>	<i>Lu pani si chiama pani</i>
<b>Paglia</b>	<i>La paglia bruciata</i>
<b>Trenu</b>	<i>Lu trenu di lu sulì</i>
<b>Peddi</b>	<i>La peddi nova</i>
<b>Poeta</b>	<i>Io faccio il poeta</i>
<b>Piazza</b>	<i>Il poeta in piazza</i>
<b>Pietre</b>	<i>Pietre nere</i>

### Translation Terms:

<b>TL</b>	<i>Target Language</i>
<b>SL</b>	<i>Source Language</i>
<b>TT</b>	<i>Target Text</i>
<b>ST</b>	<i>Source Text</i>

### Dictionaries:

<b>AHD</b>	<i>The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language</i>
<b>DPS</b>	<i>Dizionario Del Parlar Siciliano</i>
<b>OED</b>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<b>OED [online]</b>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary [online]</i>
<b>VSI</b>	<i>Vocabolario siciliano-italia</i>

## Introduction

Yet who would wish to discourage the peoples of the world from translating, merely because it is *fundamentally impossible*? –Thomas Mann (1970: 211).

### Research rationale and original contribution

Poetry in translation presents an enigma, the exploration of which contributes to the general study of poetics and translation. Yet the working practice does not reveal itself in the end product in conventional procedure and my research places emphasis on these very processes that have tended to remain beyond the framework of final translations.

This research explores translation into English of Ignazio Buttitta's Sicilian dialect poetry, putting forward translational strategies of recreating the effects and significance of the poet's linguistic choice. My translation of Buttitta's poetry coupled with reflexive commentary, detailing translational decisions and providing thematic discussion, provides the first in-depth study of his work in English and contributes to the macro-narrative of Sicilian writings, Italian Studies and Translation Studies. The focus on a specific poet and region offers a perspective on the manifold challenges of dialect translation whilst effectively applying translation as a lens through which to interpret and analyse Buttitta's poetry. These elements of the research provide a practice-based, creative exploration that bridges several disciplines in its scope. The principal questions of the research are put forward below.

### Research Questions

**What was the historical context of the language-dialect debate in Italy around Buttitta's time of writing and how significant is his choice to write in dialect?**

A development of the 'language-dialect' discussion and the ways in which dialect poetry challenges the standard language contributes to the ongoing debate surrounding language and dialect and also specifically raises questions concerning the literary preservation, and representation, of identity. These elements of the research contribute to Italian Studies and studies of Italian poetry as well as to Translation Studies and translation of dialect poetry.

The inherent dualism in dialect poetry presents an obstacle for translation because the use of dialect is suggestive of sociolinguistic, political and contextual factors not only addressed via the dialect as vehicle of poetry but implicit in the dialect as a representational choice. Haller (1999: 6) addresses writing in dialect as a 'deliberate and conscious choice'. Likewise, Karantzi (2009: 462) writes that 'For cultured writers the decision to write in dialect is always a conscious choice, one based on the recognition of the inferior status of the language adopted'. Brevini (1989: 23) suggests that 'lo scrivere in dialetto, per l'assurdità stessa che implica, obbedisce prima di tutto ad un bisogno espressivo del soggetto'<sup>1</sup>. The objective is to examine whether my exploration of Buttitta's dialect poetry via translation can contribute to the transfer of cultural, sociolinguistic messages inherent in dialect and render in translation the significance of the poet's choice to use it.

### **What does Buttitta try to achieve through his dialectal poetry? What are the principal themes and objectives of his writing?**

The research aims to identify key themes in Buttitta's work, aligning the development of his subject matter with events in Sicily, Europe, and in his private life. The thesis seeks to present the poet's ideologies and the ways in which he applies dialect to handle his discourse. The first chapter provides a

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<sup>1</sup> [My translation: unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own:] 'writing in dialect, for the same absurdity that it implicates, obeys an expressive need of the subject, before all else'

brief biography of his life and publications, which sets the context for the presentation of his poetry in the folio chapters. The research aims to address dialect as a means of representing certain themes and as a linguistic tool for conveying the reality that Buttitta wished to express.

### **How can translation inform its reader of the various sociolinguistic and socio-political nuances in dialect poetry?**

The research melds the study of translation, Italian studies and creative writing into an exploration of language transfer and cultural representation.

Balma (2011: 1) writes

Literature authored in Italy's many dialects presents editors, translators and readers with a conundrum. While these linguistically challenging texts have progressively managed to gain more widespread acceptance during the twentieth century, the fact that their ideal readers inevitably tend to inhabit a geographically limited area makes it difficult (and sometimes impossible) for them to appeal to a broad audience both within and outside the Italian borders.

Balma (ibid.) adds 'The lack of a sizeable readership that is capable of truly comprehending the often subtle and idiomatically specific references contained in these works runs the risk of making them less than viable from both a critical and a commercial perspective'.

There seemed to be a research gap in Translation studies (henceforth TS), in terms of dialect literature and dialect poetry in translation, and also a gap in creative writing studies, in terms of creative translation as subject matter. Within the realm of dialect poetry translation itself, Sicilian is not widely diffused. Bonaffini (1997b: 279-280) notes

Italian literature is the only great national literature for which dialect literature is an integral part; yet dialect poetry, for reasons stemming from its traditional condition of



subalternity and limited diffusion but also due to objective difficulties inherent in translation itself, given the scant knowledge of dialects outside of Italy, has been mostly ignored by translators until very recently, with the result that it remains largely untranslated, particularly its most recent output.

The thesis examines the journey between Sicilian and English in depth, and the interpretive potentials within the art of translation are applied to the specific translation of Buttitta's dialect poetry, suggesting that translation as threshold for interpretation can bring to light inferences and significances of dialect when analysed and explored along a 'landscape' of translation. This landscape depicts translation as a moving story, narrating the passage dialect makes between its original poetry and its translations, probing dialect *in* translation and the textual movement this involves. Neubert and Shreve (1992: vii) define TS as 'the empirical study of the relationships among the translator, the process of translation, and the text'.

I apply multiple translation strategies as a means of examining the features of dialect poetry, probing the linguistic particularities or characteristic elements by seeking to find their correspondents or representative counterparts in English. Using the target language to explore the source language is a means of highlighting and interpreting certain unique aspects of the Sicilian dialect, explaining them to an envisaged Anglophone reader and analysing their significance.

**How should dialect poetry be translated in order to portray the regionally orientated messages of the original, with their focus on place and memory?**

Haller's contributions, *The Hidden Italy* (1986) and *The Other Italy: The Literary Canon in Dialect* (1999) are particularly significant, having been credited as "opening the door" to the study of Italian dialect literature within the Anglophone world' (Balma, 2011: 3). Haller's detailed process of presenting

biographical and contextual information provides a cultural framework accompanied by a translator's discourse. Balma's criticism (amongst fervent praise) of Haller's anthology is that it 'does not consider how linguistic barriers influence the impact of texts produced in dialect when compared to literature authored in Italian' (ibid.: 4). Perhaps it is enough that readers understand that a different effect exists; perhaps we cannot, in fact, render accurately the effect of that difference, yet I aim to recreate the singular, regional character of Sicily embedded in language. Bonaffini (1997b: 283) claims

dialect is by nature a distinct and marginal language with respect to a standard language, and all the speakers of dialect consider it such – that is, they are conscious of speaking a language which in some way is in opposition to another, more widespread and important, even if they are in a totally dialect-speaking setting where the opposition is only virtual. This means that translation from dialect must in some way reflect its uniqueness and diversity, even if the various solutions may take very different forms.

How should a translator convey this uniqueness and diversity in practice? Bell (1991: 10) asserts that 'Translation theory finds itself today seriously out of step with the mainstream of intellectual endeavour in the human sciences and in particular in the study of human communication, to our mutual impoverishment'. Brandimonte (2015: 35) draws attention to a large issue facing discussion of dialect translation, namely, the gap between theory and practice. Balma (2011: 1) writes of dialect translation that it involves the 'application of a strategy that has more often been theorized than put into practice'.

One focal point of translation from any source is the optimization of strategy in order to most effectively communicate the original. My research addresses the originality within Buttitta's work, initially looking at what

distinguishes him and his poetry and working towards a practical exploration of how to present his style and content in English. His particular emphasis on, and affection towards, dialect as his expressive medium results in my contemplative first chapter on what exactly constitutes a dialect and how does it differ, if at all, from a language. I address how this difference emerged and I return throughout the thesis to the underlying question of what translation does, can do, or ought to do to present the specific challenges of dialect in the target language.

### **What are the specific constraints and challenges of translating dialect poetry?**

My research seeks to identify strategies that are effective in their communication of Buttitta's specific messages and meanings, not solely in drawing attention to speech that differs slightly from Standard English in translation, but in studying a poetic style and aiming to transfer it complete with its dialectal idiosyncrasies. I present current notions of best practice, experimenting with existing theories and adapting strategies to suit individual poems, acknowledging the various debates and criticism of a multitude of techniques and approaches. The above lines of enquiry are addressed by the following methodology.

### **Methodology**

My research provides explanation of practice and observation of process. The attention dedicated to the exploration of dialect translation produces, in the very act of reflection, an informative analysis, which, it is hoped, may have repercussions in terms of translating from non-standard language and dialect. The reflexive commentaries vary in their focus from translational strategies to the poems' socio-historical context. This research applies translation as a lens through which to interpret and analyse a broad selection of Buttitta's poetry,

ranging from some of his earliest works to some of his latest. The interdisciplinary scope of the research results in a dual focus on poetic interpretation of thematic content and reflexive discussion of translational decisions. The analysis accompanying each poem varies in terms of focus, structure and placement; at times, the analysis is translation-orientated and appears interlineally or after the fully translated poem, depending on how I interact with the poem during its translation. In terms of readability, I experiment with the effects of the analysis becoming part of the translated poem on the page, whereas for other poems the discussion follows separately. At times, the analysis is more interpretive and engages with Buttitta's own strategies and themes, his lexical choices and intentions. This allows me to balance self-evaluation in terms of my translational decisions alongside Buttitta's original motivations and choices.

Each discussion surrounding the translations contributes to the broader research of the thesis (using translation as a tool for interpreting and conveying Buttitta's poetry and its medium of dialect), applying specific translation approaches to single poems, categorized according to their main focal point, although at times these inevitably overlap. Each reflexive commentary addresses the challenges of the poem in question, relating discussion to the applied translation approach and/or to Buttitta's style or thematic content. At times the translation approach affects the transfer of content; in other instances the content dictates the translation strategy. In this way, the shared focus upon Buttitta's writing and my own engagement with it receive equal attention and contribute to a deeper understanding of the poet's work, as well as the ways in which translation can be applied creatively to portray the singularities and challenges of dialectal poetry.

Data for this analysis was gathered by keeping a log of translation commentary as I worked on each translation. Over a period of five years, I could chart my decision-making process and understand how it developed

the more familiar I became with Buttitta's writing and the more experienced I became as a translator of his poems. Often, as I translated, I wrote notes between the lines, glossing words or adding reminders to myself; I sometimes mirrored the translation by rewriting the sentences multiple times on the opposite side of the page, or interlineally. I kept notes after a certain period of time spent translating some poems, and left others aside for a while, reattempting their translation when I had become more fully informed of their historical context. I studied Buttitta's life and events in Sicily and Italy during the whole translation process, and this research complemented my understanding of each poem. Different poems were translated according to different objectives and strategies and, while not consistent, I began to benefit from multiple and varied approaches to each poem.

Where techniques or strategies were similar within the same folio, and depending on certain points of interest in terms of sociolinguistic and socio-political concerns, I adapted the discussion accompanying the poems accordingly. For this reason, some commentary revolves around Buttitta's context, poetics, style, influences and the broader Sicilian and Italian narrative, whilst other discussions concentrate exclusively upon lexical choices and the linguistic focal points of the poem.

### **Thesis overview**

The thesis is composed of four chapters, working from a broader exploration of the Italian linguistic context, to focusing on Sicily and Buttitta specifically, before addressing translational challenges posed by dialect and culminating in practical folios of work undertaken. These form the creative component of the thesis and present the poetry translations accompanied by a descriptive analysis of the processes involved.

Chapter 1 provides an exploratory backdrop to Italy's linguistic situation, the historical context of its linguistic polycentrism, and the

emergence of dialect writing, its characteristics and role in literature as a non-normative expression. I examine the consolidation and subsequent centralization of the standard Italian language and probe the effect of developing notions of nation on linguistic expression of identity. Addressing a sense of literal and metaphorical exile, the reasons behind the choice to write in dialect are explored against changing attitudes towards, and usage of, dialect. This first chapter seeks to define the terms 'lingua' and 'dialetto', a fundamental endeavour in light of the fact that my translation processes highlight transfer and observe representation of dialect specifically. *La lingua siciliana* and *il dialetto siciliano* are used, at times, interchangeably, and yet it is important to locate both etymological and regional understanding of the terms in their Italian context. Notions of superiority and 'standard' come to the fore here, which paves the way for similar discussion in terms of TS discourse in the following chapters, where these notions come to be acknowledged as problematic and relevant concepts. Chapter 1 explores the language-dialect debate regarding Italy's many dialects, questioning the various historical motives for linguistic classification and changing sociolinguistic perspectives. This provides the background for a further discussion of Buttitta's personal motives for writing in dialect and the role he intended it to play in his poetry.

Chapter 2, the first folio, addresses predominantly linguistic-orientated translation from dialect, examining various theoretical stances and discussing the limitations of conventional approaches. I look at dialect as subaltern language that deviates from the norm, and address syntactical mirroring, phonological nuance, metrical, literal and semantic translation, exploring how manipulation of the target language (henceforth TL) can replicate the SL effects linguistically.

Chapter 3, the second folio, suggests that in order to effectively render dialect in translation, the concepts of dialectal place and translational space

play a key part in the representation of culture and language transfer. I look at the use of place as a figurative, metaphorical and representative function in Buttitta's poetry, addressing how this sense of place may be transferred in translation. Acknowledging the sense of place inherent in the Italian language(s), I explore the spatial element of dialect poetry, arguing that it is a stylistic and representative component, which in itself requires translation. I explore dialect as a linguistic construction of place and space, suggesting that these are emblematic and symbolic. In looking at the marginalized zones of dialect poetry and poetry translation, I examine the textual depiction of place, addressing ethnographic practices applied to translation. I put forward the practice of 'landscaping' text using narrative in order to create a translation space.

In Chapter 4, the third folio, I look at the recreation of context in translation and address the performative nature of Buttitta's poetry; this chapter details the subjectivity of interpretation as part of the *mise en scene* of language in translation. Buttitta's sense of ideological purpose is referred to throughout this chapter, returning frequently to his role as a self-proclaimed poet of the people and yet, in turn, a thief. With attention to prefaces to his work, critical commentary that surrounds his work, and his own use of language, the poet is the focal point. This chapter challenges frequently held notions of untranslatability and additionally disputes traditional dichotomies in the field of TS. I look at the roles of the translator and reader respectively, underlining the importance of subjective translation and interpretation and making an argument for the involvement of the reader in the translational process.

The research is concluded by a discussion of the limitations of translating dialect. The conclusions readdress the scope of the project, aligning its results with its initial objectives. A theory regarding the translator's role is established not as an objective but as a decisive aftermath

of observation, discussion, and practice. This research, to apply Haller's (1999: x) phrasing, 'ought ultimately to build bridges between regions, provoke curiosity for little-known aspects of dialect culture, help preserve an important linguistic heritage, and bring fresh insights for the pursuit of literary studies'.



# Chapter One

## Ignazio Buttitta's Linguistic Choice

### 1. Overview

There is much debate enveloping correct usage of the term 'dialect'. This factor does have an effect on treatment, especially in literary and academic circles, of dialect as a literary endeavour and translation of dialect is no exception. Whether or not this has prompted the lack of attention towards dialect and its translation cannot be immediately determined, but Welle (1990: 286) states 'Contemporary Italian dialect poetry, and I want to emphasize the dubious scientific status of the term "dialect," dramatizes the present Italian linguistic situation and raises a number of issues of importance to Translation Studies'. Likewise, Bentley (2002: 82) has called for 'the importance of the Italo-Romance dialects in linguistic research' and Haller (1999: 8) argues that 'If literature mirrors the collective human experience of a civilization, the dialect canon must not only be included as an integral part of the monument; it could also serve to highlight unity through diversity'.

TS has many interesting fields and fascinating subfields, but translation of a minority language or dialect poses its own unique challenges. Bonaffini (1997b: 280) remarks 'Undoubtedly, the translation of dialect poetry poses peculiar problems which go beyond those encountered in translating from Italian, and each translator adopts a somewhat different approach, providing several possible methods and techniques'. The problems (or challenges) are addressed and analysed in chapters 2 to 4.

This chapter explores the terms 'lingua' and 'dialetto' within their Italian context, addressing in particular linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociopolitical factors. It is necessary to outline not only the significance of the terms but also their difference in relation to each other. Welle (1990: 286) observes that 'Connotations regarding superior and inferior, of "original" and

"derivative", which begin to revolve around the terms "language" and "dialect" during the Renaissance, indicate the close interrelationship of social and political issues with linguistic and literary matters'. This point is fundamental in determining linguistic differentiation but also sociological perspectives of, and attitudes towards, dialect as both a language of poetry and a source language (henceforth SL) in translation. The chapter addresses the notion of dialect as canon (1.2.2.), focusing on Buttitta's use of dialect and its role and relevance within his poetry, bringing to the fore the concept of identity in relation to place and recreated in language.

The chapter incorporates an overview and profile of Ignazio Buttitta by way of a biographical section (1.4.), which sets Buttitta's life and writing against the backdrop of social and political events in Sicily and beyond. This section presents Buttitta's writing chronologically in order to explore the changing nature of his poems thematically across the lifetime of the poet's writing. In this way, we see the influences of his changing world. We see the poems adapt and mature in order to survive these changes and, thematically, we see within the poems the timeline of events that influenced their composition. We can observe the changing landscape of both Sicily and dialect poetry in the midst of a world fighting for the preservation of identity. This provides a contextual framework of Buttitta's life and writings in line with historical events that surrounded the poet and his publications, addressing critical discourse and providing an overview of themes, exploring their relevance and the way in which dialect is used to portray the thematic content. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the methodology and strategies applied in Chapters 2–4, looking at the reflexive structure of my translation approach and laying the groundwork for the creative and practical elements to follow in a preface to the folios.

## 1.1. Linguistic perspective

Welle (1990: 286) remarks 'A rich but problematic linguistic diversity has been one of the distinguishing features of the Italian peninsula throughout its long history'. Bentley (2002: 83) posits that 'From the strictly linguistic point of view, there is no difference between a language and a dialect' (see also Maiden, 1995: 3). Likewise, Lepschy (1996: 1) observes that

the distinction between language and dialect may (and perhaps ought to) be looked at from at least two different points of view, one which we can call linguistic, and the other which we can call social and cultural. From a strictly linguistic viewpoint, I think most scholars would agree that there is no difference whatsoever between language and dialect.

This, if arguable from a strictly linguistic standpoint, is not necessarily valid in terms of the connotative values of the terms 'language' and 'dialect'. The problems facing definition relate to social and cultural factors that surround usage of the terms and which imply in their respective definitions an attitude not only towards the linguistic aspects of either term but also towards their speakers. 'Socially, the ruling classes are supposed to use the language, and the term "dialect" is employed to designate non-standard varieties, or minority languages (or lesser-used languages, as some of their upholders prefer to call them)' (Lepschy, 1996: 2; see also Loporcaro, 2013: 3). This, on a national level, carves notions of economic, linguistic or social inferiority because language is intricately related to understanding of identity and, to some extent, social status. When dialect is spoken, it is socially, rather than linguistically, associated with a lower class register and economic and social assumptions succeed from this. Gokak (1952: 119) argues

All speech is the expression of the human spirit. How, then, can we maintain that a particular dialect or language is inherently superior to another? The notion of

'correct' and 'incorrect' arises when, from among a number of dialects, one happens to dominate the others by being selected as the channel of national literature and civilization. A 'standard' therefore implies convenience and social prestige, not superiority.

Although Florentine, merely 'one of the crowd' (Maiden (1995: 3) of dialects, established itself as a literary language and subsequently the basis for the Italian language as it is today, it seems erroneous to designate other Italian dialects as dialects of Italian since they either predate, or developed in parallel to, Florentine. 'Romance vernacular', by this logic, is a more appropriate term for the dialects that did not rise to the national status of Florentine. However, vernacular – 'language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people of a country or region', as defined in the *OED* (2014 online), refers more explicitly to class and function, and does not rigidly align itself as a language or dialect. Etymologically, the Latin '*vernaculus* "domestic, native"' (ibid.: 2014), refers to speech that is indigenous and spoken as one's mother tongue; 'not learned or imposed as a second language' (*OED*, 2014: online). It does not infer deviation from a common ancestor.

One definition of dialect is put forward by the *AHD* (2014: online): 'A variety of language that with other varieties constitutes a single language of which no single variety is standard: the dialects of Ancient Greek'. 'Dialect' in the Italian context conforms to this and, in any case, is only fitting as a variety when it refers back to a common language of Latin. In this sense, Latin could be termed the 'common' component and the standard Italian that developed from the Florentine vernacular would be best deemed the *koiné*, a form of aggregate, as defined below.

### 1.1.1. European variations

Acknowledging that plurilingualism is a common feature across Western Europe, De Renzo (2008: 45) observes the singularity of the co-existence of language and dialect in Italy, suggesting that the 'persistenza di lingua, dialetti, minoranze linguistiche vecchie e nuove rappresenta un *unicum* nella storia europea'<sup>2</sup>. The first issue to highlight is that 'dialect' provokes different connotations in different languages and that, therefore, in searching for any clear understanding of its meaning, it is important to locate its significance in the Italian context specifically. Berruto (2005: 82) draws attention to the difficulty in affixing a generic definition to the term 'dialect' in any linguistic context, remarking 'Of the terms currently employed in linguistics and sociolinguistics, "dialect" is perhaps the one which enjoys the widest range of meanings and embraces the most dissimilar contents in any given language situation'. The meaning of the word has changed over time and according to linguistic context. It is generally used to denote variations of the standard language but such variations generally stem from the standard rather than existing parallel to it; 'non si intende semplice divergenza dallo standard nazionale, ma sistema linguistico autonomo'<sup>3</sup> (Bonaffini, 1995: 211).

The *OED* (2014: online) defines 'language' as 'The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured or conventional way' and 'dialect' as 'A particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group'. The latter, as used in reference to the English language, denotes diastatic and diatopic factors and yet actually allows Italian dialects to fit both classifications.

Berruto (2005: 82) suggests that 'Dialect may mean something different and even very different according to the specific repertoire within which it is

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<sup>2</sup> [Trans.] 'the persistence of language, dialect, old and new minority languages represents a unicum in European history'

<sup>3</sup> [Trans.] 'one does not mean simple divergence from the national standard, but an autonomous linguistic system'

situated' but De Mauro (1978: 10) addresses the specific meaning of the term in Italy, in comparison with other European countries:

Bisogna avvertire che in Italia il termine *dialetto* ha un senso molto diverso da quello che ha in area francese o anglo-sassone, dove è riferito a varietà d'uso locali della lingua nazionale. Una lingua non è mai esattamente identica a se stessa in tutti i punti di un'area e in tutti gli strati della società: varia, più o meno accentuatamente<sup>4</sup>.

If we accept that every language deviates from itself, the distinction between language and dialect results in analysis of standard language as opposed to non-standard language. This point, central to any discussion of what constitutes a 'language' as opposed to a 'dialect', has been raised by Trudgill (1999: 17) who states that 'a standardized language is a language one of whose varieties has undergone standardization' and Lepschy (1996: 2) who, referring to English, argues that sociolinguists 'go against ordinary usage, when they take the "linguistic" viewpoint and state that Standard English is just one English dialect among others'. In turn, Maiden (1995: 229) observes

no human language is structurally homogeneous. Different subgroups within a linguistic community use their common language in systematically different ways, and individual speakers know, and command, a repertoire of subvarieties of their language.

When looking at dialect as a linguistic choice, this point is key; however, it is important to note that the element of choice was not always present and that dialects often held the position of mother tongue. It is therefore necessary to

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<sup>4</sup> [Trans.] 'It must be noted that in Italy the term *dialect* has a very different meaning with respect to French and Anglo-Saxon versions, wherein it refers to a variety of regional use of the national language. A language is never exactly identical to itself in all points of an area and in all layers of society: it, in more or less marked ways, changes'

examine the definitions and connotative values of the terms as they appear in individual languages. Berruto (2005: 82) notes that

Italy's *dialetti* are not the same thing as the *Dialekte* of Germany or the British dialects. As an illustration of these situations, the structural difference between the standard and the dialects in Italy is much greater; Italo-romance dialects have their own history, many of them have a (notable) literary tradition.

As shall be noted in this chapter, there is frequent reference to the prestige of a language as measurable by its literary output and, in turn, literature plays an important role in developing concepts of nation. With divergent histories and separate literary traditions, the Italian dialects challenge the notion of derivation and hierarchy between language and dialect. In looking at the significance of the terms in different contexts of usage, Maiden (1995: 4) clarifies that

What is normally meant by a 'dialect' in the parlance of Italian dialectology is the characteristic speech of the natives of a particular town or region (although it could also be applied to the speech of a particular social group), as contrasted with the characteristic speech of other places, where all the speech varieties concerned are 'cognate'.

Whilst this may indeed summarize what is normally intended, the definition leaves little allowance for notions of 'regional language' and 'sociolect' to come into their own. Tabouret-Keller (1999, cited in Jones, 2014: 37) defines regional language as 'a language used in part of a nation-state only, without necessarily being subordinate to a supra-regional standard' and Taylor (2006: 37) distinguishes between 'dialect' and 'sociolect' by outlining 'Dialect as the topographical variety and sociolect as the social variety of language'.

The phonological approach has it that 'dialects differ from the standard in respect of the range of speech sounds they possess' (Maiden, 1995: 235). Dialectal literature also challenges the prevalent notion that dialect is solely manifested by characteristic speech. Scholars refer to origins of dialect in order to explain and position the Italian dialects in relation to the standard language but, with no contextual reference, one definition cannot easily be applied to all varieties of usage. The notion of the languages being 'cognate' posits the dialects on a spectrum of deviation from a unified, ulterior whole. We can observe, in the following section, the shifting relations of hierarchy and linguistic inception between Latin and the vernaculars.

### **1.1.2. Latin and the vernaculars**

There existed in Italy, prior to unification, city-states controlled by foreign powers or the Vatican, and Tosi (2001: 1) refers to pre-unification Italy as a 'geographical expression'<sup>5</sup> rather than a united kingdom. Languages of the city-states outlined their borders; metaphorically, linguistic variation was a border. As De Renzo (2008: 44) notes, 'per molti secoli la maggior parte dei cittadini italiani conosceva e praticava solo il dialetto o altre lingue, ma non l'italiano'<sup>6</sup>.

It would appear that the diminishing control exercised by the Roman administration led to the fruition of various vernaculars, allowing them to prosper. The changing nature of power relations has had a prominent role in the development of Italy's dialects. Elcock (1967: 212) has explored what he terms the 'evolution' that differentiated Vulgar Latin from its later Romance idioms. He argues that the dividing line between Latin and Romance became

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<sup>5</sup> Italy is described in this way by Austrian politician, Prince von Metternich. (Tosi, 2001: 1)

<sup>6</sup> [Trans.] 'for many centuries most Italian citizens knew and used only dialect or other languages, but not Italian'



'more rapid only in consequence of the weakening of the social and political cohesion which had formerly tended to hold it in check' and notes that

With the disappearance of the Roman administration, the speakers of romance vernacular from different parts of the former Empire, on account of local phonetic change and varied lexis and semantic choice rather than of any far-reaching modification of accent and syntax, became increasingly unable to understand one another (ibid.).

With a diminishing central authority, variations accumulated strength and the issue of 'semantic choice' to which Elcock refers here is relevant as it renders local phonetics the controlling factor in distinguishing vernacular, as opposed to a standardized form of communication, more enforced when the Roman administrative bodies held greater power and influence.

Varvaro (2013: 21), too, refers to 'the overwhelming linguistic heterogeneity of the Italian peninsula at the time of its annexation to Rome'. In a period of fluctuation from a higher authority, local constituents advanced and cultivated their languages of difference. Elcock does not infer regional choice though; these changes seem to have matured as reflections of local difference, rather than as intentional or politically orchestrated rupture. The concept of linguistic unity was being pursued and, in the wake of this severance from dominant Latin, the notion of an Italian language (initially as a written form for the literate) was intended for practicality and accessibility.

When addressing the linguistic and geographic unification in Italy, it is necessary to note that the dialects of Italy are not varieties that stem from a central point (other than their inceptive Latinate base). They are self-contained wholes whose peripheries were the outskirts of their geographic territory. Hass and Ramminger (2010: ii) draw attention to the evolving interrelations between the languages:

The dynamics of the multilingual culture of early modern Europe go from rivalry to cross-fertilisation, from an agenda of defence of Latin – or matter-of-fact statements of the superiority of the Latin language – and newly found assertiveness of the vernaculars to concerted bilingual strategies of propaganda and outreach.

This factor is significant in addressing the dialect tradition as what Haller (1999: x) has referred to as 'a myriad of separate regional traditions that run parallel to the "official" literature in Tuscan in a sort of literary bilingualism, rather than deriving from it'. Haller (ibid.) refers to a 'dialect prism' and criticizes critics who have tended to classify a canon of dialect as a diminutive of the official literature in Tuscan. His reference to the 'regionally defined genius of Italy's literary landscape' (1999: x) supports this. In addressing a canon of dialect later in this chapter, this point is sententious. The representation in literature of various regions in their specific vernaculars returns to regional segments of Italy that existed singularly and with little kinship to a wider linguistic canon. Seen thus, dialects are not delineative; they are prototypal and exemplary of a prior linguistic reality.

Berruto (2005: 82) notes of the Italo-Romance dialects that, 'Partly autonomous, they came into being at the same time through the transformation of Latin' and Bentley (2002: 83) claims that the Italian dialects 'have developed independently from the same ancestor, Latin, and are by and large mutually unintelligible'. Ripetti (1996: 508) argues that 'The Romance speaking world was basically a concatenation of related dialects, each one resembling the dialects close to it geographically'. The dialects of Northern Italian regions reflect the parlance of nearby countries at times more closely than they do the dialects of Southern Italy, from which they are geographically further removed. The key point here is that variations were regionally marked, rather than sociologically inferior and that, geographically,

language difference represented international border proximity rather than affinity to an Italian context.

Even Latin had an intermediary role, similar to the principal *lingue francae* in Europe today. Vaughan (1928: 56) adds to this that within the myriad of varieties spoken in the Roman Kingdom, there existed sub-versions: 'In the peninsula itself Oscan, Umbrian, and Etruscan were spoken in addition to Latin and each of these had dialects of its own' and, in terms of spoken languages even within Latin that spread over an expansive territory, 'we should have to presume that the Latin spoken in various parts of the Empire would show marked differences in pronunciation' (ibid.). Latin itself was not exempt from the language/dialect debate. As Stevens (2006: 115) argues

Aeolism, the idea that Latin is a dialect of Greek, was a matter of debate among a wide range of authors and readers in the Roman world. Often interpreted psychoanalytically, the idea is better understood as articulating a grudging ancient awareness that languages and social groups, including seemingly distinct groups like 'Greeks' and 'Romans,' are in fact always 'mixed,' and thus that identity is a matter of fluid participation in shared social practices.

Whatever conclusion one may reach, it is clear that the issue of appropriate terminology has always stimulated debate. Such debate reflects applications of the term 'dialect' across European languages, in spite of markedly different linguistic contexts. The term 'dialect' appeared in many other European languages in common usage before its occurrence in Italy (see Lepschy, 1996: 4). The term in Italy, ambiguous at its time of adoption and affected by various other usages, is still tainted by incongruence and fruitful scholarly disagreement. A discussion, here, of the exclusively linguistic perspective, is useful in further understanding such disagreement.

### 1.1.3. The Standard

Italian dialects are defined against the Italian language as 'standard' (henceforth nominalized as the 'Standard'). To examine the etymology of the term 'standard' (itself a word subject to debate in terms of its usage, see Trudgill, 1999: 117) helps to understand the relative recentness of the concept with regard to language. Lepschy and Tosi (2002: 75) identify the relevance of pre-standard as opposed to post-standard deviation:

Another relevant term, which goes back to Greek and became widely used among linguists in the same years in which *standard* acquired popularity, is *koiné*. This is the Greek adjective *koinós*, which means 'common' [...]. In 'Common Indo-European' [...] the designation 'common' suggested a period before the family split into the different branches which developed from it. The term *koiné* pointed instead to an aggregation, a unification superseding a set of previously separated entities.

Lepschy and Tosi go on to describe the difference between the situation in Italy and several other European countries. It would appear that written language and the concept of a literary language were driving forces behind any need to standardize language. We might, on reflection, note the connotations of the flag-bearing standard, and its inference of language as national emblem. Avolio (2013: 60) refers to the term, 'con una metafora di immediata evidenza, un'entità con cui tutti i membri di un gruppo, in questo caso uno Stato-nazione, si identificano'<sup>7</sup>. Looking at the situation on a macro-European level, Prys-Jones (2013: 7) notes that Europe developed 'the concept of the nation state in the modern era and the emphasis on having a more uniform culture across a state'. Tosi (2001: 1) notes that 'earlier unification achieved by most European countries laid the foundations for the spread and standardization of their national languages, whereas the survival of Italy's

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<sup>7</sup> [Trans.] 'with a metaphor of immediate relevance, an entity by which all the members of a group, in this case a nation-State, identify themselves'

internal linguistic diversity provided a unique case of multilingualism within a modern nation state'.

This emphasis on nation building was later reflected in publishing standards and the influence of the media but also needed to be implemented from childhood. 'Policies were developed within the sphere of education, in particular, to support this objective. This policy development had a particularly detrimental effect on all languages which were not adopted as state languages' (ibid.: 7). Such policies played a key role in manipulating the terms and their definitions: the Italian dialects may linguistically be termed 'languages' but this does not abate sociological prejudice nor does it suffice in terms of applying for protective legislation (as I observe in section 1.3.3.).

The fate of certain languages and dialects seemed bound to their position in regards of national representation and cultural influence; Trudgill (1992: 71) writes of 'language determination', which 'refers to decisions which have to be taken concerning the selection of particular languages or varieties of language for particular purposes in the society or nation in question'. The concept of nation is an important one: establishment of a national literature affected a previously more relaxed or impartial stance towards dialect. Lepschy and Tosi (2002: 76) acknowledge the purpose of creating international prestige and national unity:

the main European standard languages tend to consolidate in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the emergence of the modern national literatures. [...] With French and English this reflects the power of the unified state, and is based on the idiom of the capital (Paris and London).

Comparing this to Italy, Lepschy and Tosi comment that, owing to its conservative nature, Italian had fixed its Standard before many other European languages, suggesting, however, that 'there was a price to pay for

this privilege: this was possible because Italian was a literary rather than a spoken language (the spoken languages were the dialects)' (ibid.). At a time when this written language was Latin, it would appear appropriate that the ensuing spoken variations were termed Romance vernaculars and, as such, dialects of Latin or Latin dialects. Interestingly, this difference was not always class-based and this differs from alternative usage in other languages of the term 'dialect', which is suggestive of a less well-spoken variety that tended to be commensurate with poorer literacy or education levels and, in the past, was indicative of lower social class. Richardson (2002: 6) refers to the Italian dialects as 'the mother tongues of the élites of the Renaissance, as they were for Italians of all classes'.

Lepschy (1996: 1) points to the fact that association with a particular linguistic origin can distinguish between dialects on a national, as well as an international, scale:

In historical linguistics, comparative philologists sometimes speak of dialects with reference to related idioms [...] or to idioms belonging to the same family: in this sense one has Slavic, or Germanic, or Romance dialects, even though, individually, they may be referred to as standard languages, like Russian or Polish, English or German, French or Spanish respectively.

*I dialetti* in their Italian sense, seem to be more associated with differentiation and distinction than with unity and standardization. If, linguistically, they are ranked as languages (or may have the right to be so) then it is actually their mutual incomprehensibility, their lack of standardization, that ranks them as dialects – *dialectic* in the sense that they are juxtaposed with the Standard. In this one sense the dialects differ from the Standard, which has been diffused into a national mother tongue. De Mauro (1978: 10) refers to this horizontal (as opposed to vertical) sense of differentiation: 'Quando invece parliamo di dialetti italiani noi intendiamo invece riferirci a lingue anche profondamente

divergenti nella struttura sintattica e fonologica e nel vocabolario dall'italiano comune<sup>8</sup>. Linguistically, then, we may begin to speak not of 'inferior' but of 'alternative' languages, which exist alongside the Standard and '[c]ostituivano un tempo la lingua abitualmente usata anche da coloro che potevano e sapevano usare l'italiano'<sup>9</sup> (ibid.). What is clear, though, is that language has always presented itself as a question in Italy. The issue of terminology came into focus only when people began to *choose* their language and express preference according to medium. Broadly speaking, it would be simple to define dialects as non-national languages, in the sense that, in both spoken and written form, they contain variations.

Maintaining the linguistic viewpoint, Lepschy and Tosi (2002: 77) argue that the 'main linguistic difference between the years of unification and today is that Italian is now also a spoken language' and Maiden (1995: 254) even attributes phonological variation in spoken Italian to the fact that many only encountered it in its written form, resulting in the fact that some of 'the most striking areas of deviation from standard pronunciation occur precisely where orthography is ambiguous'.

Even within this scenario as distinct from written language, the spoken form contains many variations and linguistic definitions are further complicated by the notion of 'popular Italian', which followed as a hybrid form of vernacular, and regional Italian, defined by Cortelazzo (1972, cited in Lepschy and Tosi, 2002: 78) as 'the kind of Italian which has been imperfectly acquired by those who have a dialect as their mother tongue'. Lepschy and Tosi (ibid.) acknowledge that

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<sup>8</sup> [Trans.] 'Instead, when we speak of Italian dialects we actually mean to refer to languages that differ even substantially in the syntactic and phonological structure and in the standard Italian vocabulary'

<sup>9</sup> [Trans.] 'once constituted the language habitually used additionally by those that were able, and knew how, to use Italian'

This modern, more colloquial Italian, exists. We owe its existence to the fact that Italian has become a spoken language: for the first time in its history it is a mother tongue for a large proportion of Italians. Of course, this has certain consequences for the definition of a standard.

'Mother tongue', in the above citation, refers to a rather skewed intermingling of standard Italian infused with the colloquial or, as Cortelazzo suggests, improper or unrefined usage as a result of dialectal influence (see also Berruto, 2005: 83). The coalescence of the two results in popular Italian, although it might be assumed that varying levels of dialectal influence created difficulties in establishing a standard popular Italian. Taylor (2006: 49) renders this dialectally influenced language as a 'subgenre' of 'substandard' Italian, 'defined sociolinguistically in terms of low social status' (ibid.).

Andrighetti (2009: 54) underlines the general scholarly consensus that 'spoken Italian has always been regional in nature because it derives from the imposition of the literary standard on the various dialect-speaking populations of Italy', concluding, though, that precise definition is challenged by dispute over categorization of linguistic features pertaining to regional influence. Cortelazzo (1995: 108) then outlines the fact that 'l'italiano regionale' ought more profitably to shift subject and become entitled 'gli italiani regionali' (regional Italians), based on the fact that 'È difficile trovare un parlante italiano che, soprattutto nella pronuncia e nell'intonazione, e nel lessico, non presenti tracce di regionalità'<sup>10</sup>.

The effect of the dialects in enriching Italian itself is also notable. As De Renzo (2008: 48) observes 'Entrando in ambiti prima riservati esclusivamente al dialetto, l'italiano si è progressivamente arricchito di nuovi usi e di

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<sup>10</sup> 'It is difficult to find an Italian speaker who, moreover in pronunciation and intonation, and in lexicon, does not present traces of regionality'



registri'<sup>11</sup>. Cortelazzo (1995: 108) also suggests that this new dialectally influenced Italian was one last linguistic stamp of resistance on the part of dialectophones, remarking

L'italiano popolare pare proprio essere l'ultima tappa di un viaggio interrotto del dialettologo verso la conquista dell'italiano, una specie di vicolo cieco oltre il quale non si è in grado di procedere; ne risulta un italiano imperfetto che non riesce a porsi come modello, neppure tra le masse, di italiano unitario.<sup>12</sup>

Most helpfully, and to conclude this linguistic search for distinction, Sobrero (1990, cited in Andrighetti 2009: 60) remarks that 'Italian and dialect were increasingly viewed as the two endpoints of an Italian linguistic continuum, with regional Italian falling at an undetermined location in the middle'. If linguistic perspectives fail to differentiate between language and dialect, we may address the sociolinguistic perspective, addressing the literary and cultural influences on Italy's linguistic spectrum.

## **1.2. Sociolinguistic perspective**

Sociolinguistic viewpoints, while further adding to the dilemma of distinguishing between the terms, do help to understand why such distinction exists. De Renzo (2008: 44) notes that, going against linguistic coexistence, 'si è sviluppata nell'ultimo cinquantennio una intesa dinamica sociolinguistica che ha modificato i rapporti tra le lingue e i parlanti'<sup>13</sup>. Brevini (1989: 13) writes that the dialect poet 'utilizza insomma un codice

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<sup>11</sup> [Trans.] 'Entering into zones previously reserved exclusively for dialects, Italian has progressively enriched itself in new uses and new registers'

<sup>12</sup> 'Popular Italian seems to be the last stop of an interrupted journey of the dialectophone towards the conquest of Italian, a type of blind alley beyond which it is not able to proceed; the result of this is an imperfect Italian which is unable to proffer itself as a model, even amongst the masses, of unitary Italian'

<sup>13</sup> [Trans.] 'over the last fifty years an intense sociolinguistic dynamic has developed, which has modified the relations between the languages and their speakers'

vistosamente anti-comunicativo'<sup>14</sup>. Yu (2017: 61) suggests that societal factors segregate speech use and that subcultures characterized by non-standard language produce speakers who are 'legitimate member[s] of that society in full command of its standard oral code'. Burke (1981: 25) suggests that 'Language reflects society, or rather, "echoes it"' likening linguistic usage to codes with social meanings:

language indicates loyalty. The use of Sicilian rather than Italian may express solidarity. So may the use of the various forms of criminal slang, *i gerghi della malavita*, as Italians call them. In this latter case we may suspect that a 'counter-culture', that is, a subculture in conscious opposition to ordinary society, is expressing itself in an 'anti-language'.

The resonating factor of the idea of 'codes' is that these do not apply solely to sub-cultures but to any communicative circles. They can also reflect national changes, or linguistic refusal of such changes, and Weisstein (1962: 235) notes in the case of industrialization in Germany, that 'in the initial stages of the industrial age with its levelling tendencies dialect literature [...] recommended itself as a potent antidote'. Burke (1981: 25) adds that 'Social groups use private languages to socialise their new recruits, to make them think with the group, or to exclude outsiders'. Brevini (1986: 688) argues that 'il recupero di questi codici corrisponde infatti ai bisogni di identità e di memoria diffusi nelle società post-industriali'<sup>15</sup>.

Comune (2013: 30) writes 'La diglossia lingua-dialetto esprime anche l'opposizione alto-basso, modello-antimodello che è la caratteristica della storia sociolinguistica della tradizione letteraria'<sup>16</sup>. Bellos (2011: 335)

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<sup>14</sup> [Trans.] 'In short, it uses a conspicuously anti-communicative code'

<sup>15</sup> [Trans.] 'The recovery of these codes corresponds, in fact, to the widespread needs for identity and memory in post-industrial societies'

<sup>16</sup> [Trans.] 'The diglossia language-dialect also expresses the high-low opposition, model-antimodel which is the characteristic of the sociolinguistic history of literary tradition'

summarizes that speech 'is a highly pixelated way of telling people who you are. That is something that all forms of human speech share, and it is perhaps the only thing that is truly universal about language'. These pixels of language indicate difference as much as similarity, simultaneously being fragments as much as images of a whole context; they indicate something shared as well as elements of social, political or cultural division. 'Different sounds are used to communicate membership of communities' (ibid: 334) and differentiation, whilst motivated by both positive and negative intentions, is also fundamental to individual and social constructions of belonging. Indeed, Gobbi (1990, cited in Titone, 1994: 69) writes of dialect code as reflecting 'desire to give the conversation a confidential tone and thus diminishing inter-personal distance' or 'stereotype words deemed to have no real translation in the other code' (ibid.).

In light of a universalist view of language variation, the 'conscious opposition' that Burke describes could better be termed 'conscious alternation', and I would argue that this may often be as subconscious as it is conscious in daily parlance. Written language, however, demonstrates purposeful choice and one of the major differences between written and spoken language is the degree to which that language is pre-meditated. Addressing sociolinguistic connotations of 'coarse' as opposed to 'pure' language, Ripetti (1996: 509) insists that 'there is no such thing as a "crude" or a "pure" language, just as there is no structural difference between a language and a dialect. These distinctions are subjective and social, rather than linguistic', stemming perhaps from deep connections with historical identity and self-expression.

### **1.2.1. Dialect and the Self**

Reina (1997: 18) draws attention to a sense of the dominant paternal language and the inferior, submissive maternal dialect in his (translated) citation of the Calabrian poet Dante Maffia:

now / that I write / with my mother's language / I feel things more deeply, / words  
have substance / they're not dead, consumed, / they belong to no one / it's as if they  
were / springing from a blaze of water.

Reina examines the 'expressive potentials of the various languages' (ibid.), indicating that poets were experimental, often not opting explicitly for dialect as opposed to standard language but using either as part of the combined language of poetry, without critical distinction. Here, the impression of belonging is two-fold: that 'the words belong to no-one' suggests that they are not a product of the national language and therefore permit a sense of autonomy; that the language is, however, of the mother, reveals a sense of the poet's familial belonging to both a person and a language. The decision to write in dialect has political implications and is, therefore, not only a choice but also a statement. Brevini (1986: 687) writes of 'il dialetto come lingua del corpo e dell'istinto'<sup>17</sup> and notes that 'La piú recente poesia dialettale rappresenta, da un lato, un fenomeno da coniugarsi con la piú generale ripresa del particolarismo culturale registratasi nel dopoguerra, quale reazione alle tendenze universalistiche e spersonalizzanti diffuse dalla civiltà industriale'<sup>18</sup> (ibid.: 686).

Writing of German dialect literature, Weisstein (1962: 239) notes that 'literature of this kind touches upon the universal condition of man not abstractly or in philosophical language, but only to the extent in which it is reflected in specific and, preferably, localized events and circumstances'. In his psychological analysis of the trend, Spagnoletti (1997: 14) describes the conflicting allegiances of dialect poets: 'Every poet has felt the somewhat

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<sup>17</sup> [Trans.] 'dialect as language of the body and of instinct'

<sup>18</sup> [Trans.] 'The most recent dialect poetry is, on the one hand, a phenomenon to be combined with the more general recovery of cultural particularism registered in the post-war period, as a reaction to the universalistic and depersonalizing tendencies diffused by the industrial civilization'

intellectual need to compete with poets in Italian or, as is frequently the case, with the other side of himself that thinks in Italian'.

The paradoxical nature of language is therefore perfectly embodied in Italy and Italian dialect poetry acknowledges both the unifying and differentiating aspects of language, confirming regional affiliation with the dialectal reader yet impeding the 'foreigner' from setting metaphorical foot on the poet's ground. Steiner (1998: 33) states that 'Diction is both a code for mutual recognition – accent is worn like a coat of arms – and an instrument of ironic exclusion.' Reina (1997: 15) notes

This has also entailed a strong drive to reclaim one's dignity, both in the spontaneous reiteration of ritual forms of oral communication, and in the expression of a knowledge which is most often born from a local rather than a national experience.

The various dialects surfaced prominently as voices marking out territory and this inevitably resulted in a need to remain, as Reina (*ibid.*) suggests, 'enclosed within the natural anthropological and territorial boundaries'. Reina (1997: 15) observes that this reclamation was a reaction against urban modernity and uniformity. The dialects additionally sought to reawaken a regional consciousness perceived to be fading. Dialect poetry has the added role of immortalizing in written language a time or place personified and remembered in a specific language. It inserts itself into the collective memory of a group of speakers, stimulating recollection and recognition.

Non-standard dialect literature is 'closely connected to popular culture and the politics of local identities' (Karantzi 2009: 464) and is a means of inserting a minor culture on the broader cultural stage in response to a political arena that has suppressed or marginalized that minority. Again, the search for something lost, or on the verge of being lost, persists and dialect poets 'often aim at the reinvention of languages now frequently half-buried in

the consciousness of the speakers through the effect of standardization' (Reina, 1997: 14).

In creating poetry in dialect, poets wrote for members of the same language world. Through translation of their own work from dialect to standard, they elevated their publications to the national poetic canon and additionally opened dialogue between regions and the nation. *Accent is worn like a coat of arms* is evocative, for it signals a defence strategy applied in dialect poetry, particularly during periods in which that identity was threatened or called into question but which must, in order to serve a poetic rather than linguistic agenda, overcome regional affiliation and elevate the poem through standardized language. Frequently, however, these self-translations were conducted from the dialect into the standard language, and not vice versa, indicating that for dialect poets the language of poetry was the mother tongue while the *vehicle* of poetry was the standard language. Nadiani (2011: 47) argues 'This shift has to happen in Italy, a country where people say "one country, many cultures" which are nonetheless submerged by the "official" culture of the country, which is in turn overwhelmed by the global one'. This renders the terms 'vehicular' and 'vernacular' two opposing constructs of language in Italy because, in order for the works to travel and acquire recognition, they needed to shed the vernacular and standardize themselves.

'Regional varieties can have geographic limitations and sociolinguistic significance, then, because speakers want them to do so and use them accordingly' (Machan, 2016: 628). The public and private motives entangled in dialect poetry send different messages. Reina (1997: 20), referring to Mengaldo, emphasizes the territorial claims of dialect, relating both to geographical and inner place: 'The widespread practice of linguistic creativity has shown that the poet's essential need to convey his inner discourse

through a language as "jealously private", "endophasic", as possible can now be met by dialects'.

Owing to censorship and altering attitudes towards dialect, its guise has been one of a changing, delicate nature. The contrary nature of dialect is described by Zanzotto (1981, cited in Welle, 1990: 287), referring to Pasolini's legacy.

It was necessary [for Pasolini] to find a point in which to bring himself together, without, on the other hand, that this point would become yet another deceit camouflaged by a monocentric logoi, terrifying, capable of annihilating every zone of marginality. On the contrary, the most important dream-myth of Pasolini was to act in such a way that the marginal would enter into the central and then to go out of it again leaving there its sign and its trace.

Pasolini did not wish to replace one language with a dialect; he wished instead for the promotion of difference and the co-existence of zones of marginality, expressed through different dialects. Pasolini (1951, cited in Comune, 2013: 30) wrote against the use of literary Italian and 'contrapponeva, con Gianfranco Contini, alla tradizione della lingua centralizzata, al canone monolitico della lingua perfetta e quasi astorica nella sua assoluta purezza, la tradizione plurilinguistica che da Dante discende a Verga'<sup>19</sup>.

The concept of reclaiming dignity with regard to the intentional return to, and promotion of, dialect is prevalent in Welle's description of Pasolini's proceedings. This epitomizes the hierarchy of the national language and the sense of borders, of inner and outer discourse and belonging that borders represent. 'Monocentric logoi' is 'terrifying', threatening to annihilate marginality, which leads to a sense of powerlessness and dread. Dialect

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<sup>19</sup> [Trans.] 'with Gianfranco Contini, opposed the tradition of the centralized language, the monolithic canon of the perfect and almost astorical language in its absolute purity, with the plurilingual tradition which from Dante descends to Verga'

poetry appears, by this analogy, to be an invisible entity, almost an absence, leaving a 'trace' without a calculable presence. The 'deceit' referred to by Zanzotto criticizes the logos imposed by a standardized language, by a growing nationalistic sentiment. 'Another deceit' implies that the changing aura of Italy as nation was, at this time, insincere or incomplete – even a falsehood. The word 'trace' reinforces the hunt, the searching pursuit of place. The myth and the dream are elements of fantasy, longing or desire, but they nonetheless note the absence or marginal presence – the distance of the 'trace' that it dreams of leaving on the centralized. This beautiful 'dream-myth' refers back again to the image of a lost place, a future sought place or, indeed, a linguistic utopia that may not exist. Haller (1992: 556) writes that 'the neo-dialect poets are frequently in search of a lost world that lies between the tragic and the utopian'.

Is that concept of unified, unthreatened language the sense of utopia that at times appears in dialect poetry? Do the dialects, in their reciprocal diversity, serve to represent a natural Babel of discourse that can have no ulterior tongue? We might, with poetic licence, take this pursuit of unifying and accessible language to be applicable to the human search for common language, to the utopic search for unimpeded discourse, shadowed constantly by an instinctive need to protect and defend identity and the freedom to express that identity through language. We might note that the battle for equilibrium between dialect and the national language mirrors the balance between the source and receptor language in translation. The balance is a 'dream-myth' indeed, when too often the second language outweighs the original, absorbing or domesticating it. In bringing a dialect to another national language, English as a target language should not re-enact the oppression of the dialect's linguistic *other*. I aim to avoid a domesticated translation approach because I feel this would risk the same cultural oppression of dialects by a standard language. Domestication can,



intentionally or not, re-enact the 'invasion and retreat' described by Pasolini, and would ignore the dialectal purpose of the originals, a notion the following section explores.

### **1.2.2. Dialect and the Poetic Canon**

As Italian dialects are not mutually comprehensible, this signals a multitude of micro-canon, which have one feature in common – that of being 'other' than the standardized language. Ó Ceallacháin (2007: xiv) writes of poetic movements and pursuits as characteristic of the 1900s up to the Neo-Avantgarde, referring to definitive errands and including dialect poets within these:

while challenging the legitimacy of the *io*, twentieth century [Italian] poetry can be seen in some respects to take 'egocentricity' to its extreme limits, as one is often left with the poetic voice that is still subjective, but bereft of the 'significato universale' that originally characterized the lyric genre.

Other models were being explored in terms of their 'preconscious or subconscious levels of language' (ibid.); poets engaged in a sense of language being representative of the self and in different forms of the language manifesting different versions of the self. Ó Ceallacháin (2007: xiv) refers to the dominant model of lyricism and the fact that its

preoccupation with linguistic purity and formal perfection, is frequently challenged in the modern period by a widening of the linguistic spectrum to embrace a plurality of registers, the use of allegorical forms, an engagement with historical reality, and a readiness to problematize the figure of the poet's own persona as a character, albeit as a first person, within the work.

The poet as a conscious figure emerged irrespective of linguistic framework and dialectal poetry inserted itself within the broader interests of a growing desire for realism in the early twentieth century. Ó Ceallacháin (*ibid.*: xv) writes that Sanguinetti (1969) underlines the appearance of 'un fronte di realismo' (a front of realism). The larger dilemmas at the time were for Futurist poets and Realist poets bringing forth alternative models. Dialectal register formed one such model, but Ó Ceallacháin (2007: xvi–xvii) suggests that, instead of these alternatives resulting in separate canons, divisions were drawn between movements

(1) 1900-1920: The years of avant-garde experimentation; (2) 1915-1945: The decades of lyrical introspection; (3) 1945 onwards: Realism and existential lyricism; (4) 1960 onwards: Neo-avantgarde experimentalism.

Francese (2005: 49) adds Neo-realism, which 'emphasized content over form, a reaction to "the dominion of the word over the world" that characterized Italian literature under Fascism'. Brevini (1986: 690) notes that dialect poetry matured its sense of 'immediatezza, di nostalgia, di ingenuità, che ha costituito l'altra faccia dello sperimentalismo novecentesco. La poesia in dialetto diviene la sede di un riconoscimento in senso psicologico'<sup>20</sup>. Again, Ó Ceallacháin (2007: xv) highlights specific approaches, and conformity within approaches, as the defining drive of the early twentieth century:

Questions of lyrical subjectivity and the viewpoint of the poetic persona are closely related to the broad issue of what we may call poetic realism: to what extent can or should poetry engage directly with the objective reality of the world in its socio-economic, material or historical dimensions?

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<sup>20</sup> [Trans.] 'immediacy, nostalgia, ingenuity, which was the other side of twentieth century experimentalism. Poetry in dialect becomes the seat of a recognition in the psychological sense'

In answering these questions, the early twentieth century deemed language to be subservient to the higher pursuits of the poetic canon at large and dialect writing would not seem to have been directly addressed as a distinct division. Rather, thematically, poets pursued similar issues, but by varying linguistic mediums; the content rather than the language in which it was written remained the focus. Yet Haller (1999: 6) draws attention to the initial distinction between the Latin literary canon and the vernacular canon, suggesting that the latter opened up an entirely new style and perspective:

More recent discussions, however, have insisted on the importance of dialect literature. Some scholars have even argued that Dante's *De vulgari Eloquentia*, the stylistic encyclopedia and first geolinguistic treatise, contains an embryonic review of dialect literature, through quotations of verse from a vernacular canon that began to take shape at the time of Dante's pioneering Italian writing.

Botterill (2005: xviii) underlines the importance of Dante's work in claiming that

A natural, spoken, living language – like Italian – is, axiomatically, *superior* to an artificial, unspoken, dead one – like Latin. This is a moment of extraordinary significance in Italian, indeed Western, cultural history; it is the Declaration of Independence of the 'modern languages'.

He goes on to note a vital distinction 'not so much between two particular languages – Italian and Latin – as between two different *kinds* of language, one "natural" and one "artificial"' (ibid.). Invisible borders were drawn between the 'artificial construction' of writers, and the language spoken by common people<sup>21</sup>. Bonaffini (1997b: 279) has a more positive view of the status quo:

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<sup>21</sup> See also Ewert, 1940, on Dante's motivations for vernacular writing.

Dialect poetry has even been able to penetrate those prestigious editorial circuits from which it had always been excluded, bolstered by the recognition and encouragement of influential critics, even vying with Italian poetry for the attention of a readership that is no longer local or regional but instead national and international.

Francesco (2005: 45) posits that 'verse in the regional languages of the Peninsula has prospered because, following Pasolini's example, many poets now refuse more accessible and marketable forms of expression'. Consolo (1995, cited in Francesco, 2005: 45) presents the dialectal tradition as a form of regional narration, reasoning that 'the return to documentation and to historiography must have poetic expression as its starting point. Only then can we begin to narrate again'. Poets engaged in regional history, opting to render local subject matter in local language. This narrative focus not only inspired the content but also the sense of belonging. Bonaffini (1997b: 279) notes the neodialect poets

are nowadays turning to dialect rather than to standard Italian as their medium of expression, [for] reasons which carry far-reaching and deeply rooted implications (literary, psychological, political, existential, anthropological): recent dialect poetry is part of a broader reaction to the alienating effects of postwar industrial society, which especially in the seventies meant the rehabilitation of ethnic history and memory.

Perhaps Bonaffini is too dismissive of standard Italian as he terms it 'the impersonal language of the mass media [which] cannot recognize or transcribe' personal roots or individual histories. Dialect as a literary language, however, refers only to the fact that it may, additionally, be used as such. It does not render the dialect as a language *of literature per se*. Brevini (1986: 691) notes the

capacità del mezzo di condizionare i risultati della poesia, si osservi come anche le esperienze maturate sulla linea piú canonica della letteratura novecentesca (si pensi a Giotto e a Pasolini) tendano, malgrado tutto, a disporsi in aree infrequentabili da parte della poesia in lingua.<sup>22</sup>

One presiding feature of dialect in literary or poetic works is that it maintains the oral nature of its origin; it is speech in writing, particularly adapted to the stage precisely because of its theatrical character, particularly adapted to realist poetry because of its subjects.

Dialect as what might be described as an alter-language or sub-language evades simple classification. There are motives for writing in dialect that may be common to all dialect writers – although not all 'aspire intentionally to belong to a regional category of literature' (Petrocchi, 2011: 67) – but this would be unsubstantial as a definition of canon. Welle (1990: 286) locates mutual inclination, rather than canonical attributes:

[I]t must be emphasized that no single factor unites the numerous Italian poets who choose to write in a dialect, one common denominator might be found in the desire to maintain regional and national cultural identities in an increasingly global society.

This identifies a mutual intention, what might be termed a canonical *purpose*, rather than a canonical product. The inference, however, is that dialect poets write for linguistic preservation rather than literary contribution. Haller (1999: 3), on the contrary, refers to a 'pervasive dual literary canon', arguing that 'plurilingualism and its literary expressions are in fact a quintessential, fundamental aspect of Italian civilization' (ibid.). This is problematic, though,

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<sup>22</sup> [Trans.] 'ability of the medium to condition the results of the poetry; we may observe how even the matured experiences on the most canonical line of twentieth-century literature (Giotto and Pasolini) tend, despite everything, to place themselves in areas unfrequented by poetry in the standard language'

as it separates dialect and non-dialect literature into categories with few differentiating features beyond this initial linguistic distinction.

In a country of literary polycentrism, the language as opposed to the content defines the poetry in terms of its initial reception. The language used may equate to accessibility, or lack thereof, but does not inherently signal a text's position within a genre. Reina (1997: 20) asserts that 'The challenge of neodialect poetry in the South, therefore, today seems at work on two fronts simultaneously: language and subject matter', expanding on this that

It frequently relied on the allegorical fable or parable, the invective, satire, the song of love or protest, sketches and local events, descriptiveness and gnomic sententiousness, blasphemous wisecracks and epigrammatic wordplay, almost always in keeping with a markedly ethnic and broadly conservative lore, which contributed to underline its differences with respect to elitist Italian literature. (ibid.: 17)

Bearing in mind the added incorporation of register and sociolect into literary diversity, to return to the idea of canonical separation, the notion of two distinct branches of literature in Italy is unsubstantiated. Haller (1999: 3) points to the resource within the dualism of Italy's languages:

The peninsula's endemic bilingualism of Latin and vernacular in the Middle Ages, and of a literary standard and dialects thereafter, has not only enriched and enlarged the chorus of voices, it has also served as a strategic resource for Italian writers.

Haller identifies additional prevailing regionalisms in Italian life, from cuisine to politics and art treasures. Language was one form of regional preservation but there were other art forms that tended (and continue) to amplify regional origins. Works written in standard Italian incorporate speech in dialect to

differentiate between social classes and regional origin of characters. Camilleri adopted this strategic use of dialect, as did Capuana.<sup>23</sup>

The function of Italian dialects in literature may tentatively be separated into two strands: the first aims at assimilation into the major canon (of existing Italian poetry) whereby the dialect as written language is a feature extraneous to its content and success; the second strand is proactive, and aims at the formulation of a minor canon of dialect writing, of which dialect is integral, if not authoritative. This second strand of dialect writing has the political function of combatting what Karantzi (2009: 463) has termed 'dedialectisation', noting that 'Contrasts between dialect speakers and non-dialect speakers delineated broad cultural differences: rural (or frontier) versus urban, uneducated versus educated, even irrational versus rational' (ibid.: 460).

With restrictions placed on dialect writing under Mussolini's rule – such as censoring dialect or banning it entirely – we see that dialect literature emerged as a challenge to absolute power, and that literature in standard Italian or dialect began to take political as opposed to canonical stance. As Ó Ceallacháin (2007: xvi) aptly summarizes, 'any attempt at the schematic reduction of such a multi-faceted and inherently complex body of works runs the risk of gross over-simplification'.

### **1.3. Sociopolitical perspective**

#### **1.3.1. National versus regional language**

Perhaps the malleability of the language(s) of Italy is both culturally indicative and important. Instead of attempting the arduous task of categorizing what has thus far evaded categorization in any convincing way, it is more productive to examine why the language is used in the ways it is

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<sup>23</sup> See Camilleri, Andrea (2011) *La Setta Degli Angeli*, and Capuana, Luigi (1970) *Il Marchese di Roccaverdina*. See also Tomasi Di Lampedusa, Giuseppe (2009) *Il Gattopardo*.

and why connotations of language and dialect cause reactions that may seem incongruous with their linguistic differences, or lack thereof. Again, Lepschy (2002: 36) highlights that the differences are sociological, correlated to subordination, and that 'all dialects are languages (in the sense of perfectly formed human idioms), but not all languages are dialects, because an idiom is considered a dialect insofar as it represents a "lower" level subordinated to a "higher" one'. Likewise Haugen (1966: 923) over thirty years earlier, established the respective lexical autonomy and dependence of both terms:

'Language' as the superordinate term can be used without reference to dialects, but 'dialect' is meaningless unless it is implied that there are other dialects and a language to which they can be said to belong'. Hence every dialect is a language, but not every language is a dialect.

This begins to explain the adjectival role in the term 'Italian dialects' and on the basis of this notion of 'belonging' it is possible that the dialects belong *to* Italy, in which case they are Italian dialects but not dialects *of* Italian. To return to a definition of Italian dialect, the notion that it is in some way inferior or subservient to standard Italian is not linguistically, or historically, valid. 'Such a label creates the erroneous impression that the dialects are merely deviant and possibly inferior varieties of the Italian language. It also creates the false expectation that the dialects will be structurally much the same as Italian' (Maiden, 2002: 32). Notably, the standardization phenomenon that is often attributed to the unification onwards had begun much earlier and economic as well as political reasons played a part. Maiden (*ibid.*) addresses the lack of political centrality as markedly responsible for the flourishing of so many dialects:

The Italy of 1860, like that of a thousand years earlier, was fragmented into countless 'dialects', the locally divergent outcomes of the spoken Latin of Italy. The majority of



Italians knew no other language than their local dialect. Up to a point, this lack of linguistic unity is a reflection of the lack of a politically unified Italy.

Different scholars attribute various phenomena as accountable for either the flourishing, or diminishing, usage of the dialects. Many (such as De Renzo, 2008: 46) propose unification as the driving force behind dissemination of the standard language.

Italy was politically unified in 1861 and De Renzo (ibid.) pinpoints unification as the pivotal beginning of focus on linguistic standardization, noting that 'L'affermazione di uno stato unitario porta con sé infatti l'esigenza di un'organizzazione statale e di una burocrazia più omogenea su tutto il territorio nazionale'<sup>24</sup>. In light of this, Reina (1997: 15) identifies a surge of interest in ethnology in the wake of unification:

It is not incidental that right in the aftermath of the political unification of Italy there was an increased interest in ethnological research and a wide spread proliferation of studies on folklore and popular culture, which required numerous transcriptions from the oral tradition.

Here, Reina infers a reversal of drive, intent on reclaiming 'one's dignity' (ibid.), suggesting that dignity had been compromised in consolidating a literary standard because it had come at the sacrifice of ethnic identity, and this was to be reclaimed. The political unity of the country appeared to act as both an incentive and a stimulus for dialectal writing to expose the divergent regional histories prior to unification.

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<sup>24</sup> [Trans.] 'The affirmation of a unitary state in fact brings with it the need for state organization and a more homogeneous bureaucracy across the whole national territory'

Berman (1985, cited in Brevini, 1986: 686) writes that 'uno dei temi centrali nella cultura negli anni Settanta è stata la riabilitazione della memoria e della storia etnica come elemento vitale dell'identità personale'<sup>25</sup>. In this light, unification and the merging sense of crossed cultures that it brought foreshadowed the trend of globalization that has since domineered. This is substantiated by nothing but hindsight, yet Reina (1997: 18) additionally refers to this initial language-orientated instability and doubt:

Might this be a way of foreshadowing the cultures of the second millennium on the basis of a new awareness that, safeguarding identities, guarantees man in his essence of *ratio* and *verbum* against planetary de-individualization, which risks progressively depriving nationalities of meaning, as the latter had deprived of meaning all regional differences? It is difficult to say.

De-individualization is one uncanny result of unification. Italy as a nation needed to establish an identity and one that encompassed all its prior city-states. One means of ensuring that the individual histories survived in memory was to ensure their linguistic durability. The sense of omen that Reina notes is, again, perhaps only valid as modern projection in retrospect but the 'surge' to which he refers does suggest that, to some extent, people in individual regions wished to more concretely, and more memorably, define their regions. Aristodemo and Meijer (1979: 712) compare the recuperation of the oral tradition in the second half of the nineteenth century as a reaction to national unification and against intense industrialization in the twentieth century, arguing that it was an attempt 'di salvare una originalità regionale o locale'<sup>26</sup>, and that 'la nostalgia di salvare un passato inventariandolo si può incontrare e mescolare ambiguamente con l'impegno di stimolare la presa di

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<sup>25</sup> [Trans.] 'one of the central themes in culture in the seventies was the rehabilitation of memory and ethnic history as a vital element of personal identity'

<sup>26</sup> [Trans.] 'to save a regional or local originality'

coscienza di una cultura subalterna a cui si riconosce la possibilità di un ruolo attivo'<sup>27</sup> (ibid.).

The hierarchy of nationalized language over mother tongue gradually appeared, and was then to be manipulated and exaggerated by Mussolini and his Fascist regime. Mussolini's attempts at centralizing the Italian language may have proved fruitful as a means of further uniting the Italian regions but his oppression of regional voice in the process ran like an exorcism of provincial history and local identity. Where they had once been subaltern to Latin, dialects became inferior to Standard Italian. Poetry written in dialect was censored in periodicals and Bonsaver (2007: 63) notes that 'in the summer of 1932 Mussolini launched his famous policy declaring all literature in dialect unworthy of fascist literature and therefore deserving of marginalization'. Bonsaver (ibid.) places emphasis on the 'absurdity of such an order in a country whose dialects were, in many regions, the prime medium of communication and cultural expression'. Richardson (2001: 71) claims that 'Dialects were another aspect of linguistic usage at odds with the unitary ideology of Fascism', observing that in the 1930s 'the Ministry of Education began to instruct the press not to publish dialect texts or even to discuss dialect' (ibid.). For Mussolini, consolidating his power, subaltern language morphed, it would seem, into threat. Grossman (2010: 53) highlights this in her acknowledgement of relations between power structures and language, drawing attention to the threat that calibres of speech and expression pose to the absolutism of power:

Imprisoned writers, banned books, censored media, restrictions on translations, even repeated attempts to abolish what are called 'minority languages' are all clear

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<sup>27</sup> [Trans.] 'the nostalgia of saving a past by inventorying it can be met and mixed ambiguously with the commitment of stimulating the conscience of a subaltern culture, which is recognized as having the possibility of an active role'

indications that tyrannies take language, books, and access to information and ideas very seriously – much more seriously than democracies do.

But more than merely exercising oppression, Mussolini looked outwards, wishing to create a unified Italian image. Brevini (1986: 690) observes

mentre il monolinguisimo postunitario nasceva da un'esigenza puramente strumentale, che non poneva in discussione la legittimità del dialetto nella comunicazione familiare o in generale privata, con il centralismo fascista anche a quel livello viene insinuata nei parlanti la cattiva coscienza del loro strumento, connotato in termini, non solo di inadeguatezza, ma anche di vergogna, di rozzezza e di marginazione.<sup>28</sup>

The effect of nationalization on dialect is reiterated by Welle (1990: 286) in his reference to Pasolini's regionalism, exerted in dialect:

The movement for Friulian regional autonomy (in which Pasolini took part from 1945 to 1948) was connected in the poet's mind with a strong Italian regionalism, a regionalism that had been suppressed during the Fascist period with its emphasis on nationalism and autarchy.

Mussolini's mistaken belief was that he could sculpt a people by maintaining a tight-fisted grasp on the language they spoke, demonstrating not only the 'Fascist intolerance of regional cultures, but also the weakness of a regime that feared any popular initiative which might emerge outside its control' (Coveri, in Tosi, 2001: 7). Spagnoletti (1997: 13) examines the discrepancy between the 'exceptional flowering' of poetry in dialect and the 'unstoppable decline of the

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<sup>28</sup> [Trans.] 'while post-unification monolingualism arose from a purely instrumental need, which did not question the legitimacy of dialect in family communication or in private generally, with fascist centralism even at that level speakers came to feel the insinuation of the bad conscience of their instrument in terms, not only of inadequacy, but also of shame, rudeness and marginalization'

various local idioms in every region of Italy' and describes the 'national language being the language of the father, of authority, of power' (ibid.). The mother tongue, by contrast, was then the language of source, instinct and freedom. It was also linked inevitably to local place as opposed to national place. It is these contrasting senses of place that reverberate throughout Italian dialect poetry. Buttitta's creation and representation of place is examined in Chapter 3, and place in relation to language and the self is explored within all folios (Chapters 2–4).

### 1.3.2. Language and Dialect in Sicily

The Sicilian dialect, in terms of its historical character, is an interesting case study in its own right; Sicily's geographical position lying just off the 'boot tip' of Italy, physically renders it Italy's *other*. Haller (1999: 305) writes that 'a crossroads of cultures and languages, Sicily, with its brilliant Svevan court of Frederick II, was one of the first regions to develop contacts with other areas of the peninsula and Europe, which led to a first supraregional literary vernacular koiné', adding that

Sicily has both a rich theatre and a thriving poetry in dialect spanning from the Renaissance to our days. It seems that through time Palermo and Catania were the cradles for the evolution of a dialect literature and a Sicilian literary koiné. (ibid.)

One is quick to note that what is written observationally of Sicily tends towards the romanticized, the passionate and the heartfelt, as in the following example: 'La lingua e il territorio sono due entità inscindibili. Per Camilleri la Sicilia è lo spazio "mitico" in cui nasce la sua scrittura, è un luogo dell'anima, è l'archetipo del "locus" che tutti gli isolani custodiscono'<sup>29</sup> (Comune, 2013: 27).

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<sup>29</sup> [Trans] 'Language and territory are two inseparable entities. For Camilleri, Sicily is the "mythical" space in which its writing is born, it is a place of the soul, it is the archetype of the "locus" that all the islanders guard'

While it is necessary to retain a distance from excessive portrayals of an overly mythological Sicily<sup>30</sup>, certain impressions of the powerful sense of identity form much of what is written about the island. Bufalino (2008, cited in Tribulato, 2012: 1) observes:

Tante Sicilie, perché? Perché la Sicilia ha avuto la sorte ritrovarsi a far da cerniera nei secoli fra la grande cultura occidentale e le tentazioni del deserto e del sole, tra la ragione e la magia, le temperie del sentimento e le canicole della passione. Soffre, la Sicilia, di un eccesso d'identità, né so se sia un bene o sia un male.<sup>31</sup>

Returning to the ever present notions of exile with regard to language and national identity, it is interesting to note the ways in which the South and the Southern islands were used as locations for the punishment of *confino* (confinement) during Mussolini's earlier years. Confinement was internal exile, and the punishment for heavily censored poets considered to be a threat to the regime was to be 'exiled' to Lipari or the South, which is indicative of internal attitudes towards the *Mezzogiorno*.

Tribulato (2012: 2) writes that 'Sicily was settled by colonists from Ionic-speaking Euboea as well as colonists from various parts of the Doric world: classical Sicily is characterized by a steady dialectal convergence triggered by the political influence of Doric Gela and Syracuse'. Comune (2013: 28) observes '*diàlektos* in greco significa colloquio, dialogo, modo di parlare, parlata. E *diàlektos* sta per pertinente al dialogo, specialmente al disputare e al dibattere'<sup>32</sup>. Tribulato (2012: 3) additionally highlights the 'unique sociolinguistic setting of Sicily's colonial culture' and Maiden (1995: 7)

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<sup>30</sup> Fiorentino (2006: 11) describes Sicily as 'Island of Myth'.

<sup>31</sup> [Trans. by Tribulato, 2012: 1] 'Why "many Sicilies"? Because over the centuries Sicily has acted as a hinge between dominant Western culture and the allure of the desert and sun, between reason and magic, between emotional restraint and heated passions. Sicily is suffering from an excess of identity – which may be either a good or a bad thing'

<sup>32</sup> [Trans.] '*diàlektos* in Greek means colloquium, dialogue, a way of speaking, parlance. And *diàlektos* stands for relevance to dialogue, especially to dispute and debate'

acknowledges that 'in the first half of the thirteenth century Florentine still did not stand tall in the crowd of Romance dialects, and as yet enjoyed none of the cultural importance, as a literary language, of Sicilian' also noting the presence of this literary influence in 'early lyric poetry and in some Tuscan writers' (ibid.: 130). Comune (2013: 28) observes that

I poeti dell'Italia del Nord, nella loro ammirazione per la letteratura che veniva d'oltralpe, l'avevano imitata con passione utilizzando persino la lingua dei loro modelli; i poeti siciliani se ne erano sufficientemente distaccati per creare nella loro lingua. Così era apparsa una poesia siciliana ricercata, colta, aristocratica, che cantava l'amore cortese come i trovatori, una poesia di grande pregio come la poesia provenzale.<sup>33</sup>

Sicily, whilst geographically more remote from other mainland interconnected provinces, occupies the strange position of being less influenced by mainland linguistic shifts and yet heavily influenced by multiple occupations throughout the history of the island. Comune (2013: 28) writes 'Non possiamo non ricordare le numerose occupazioni subite dai Siculi (Fenici, Greci, Romani, Vandali, Arabi, Normanni, Spagnoli, Austriaci, Borboni) e dire quanto ogni occupazione abbia lasciato delle tracce nella lingua'<sup>34</sup>. Comune (2013: 29–30) observes

Gli storici della lingua asseriscono che in Italia per tanti anni è esistita una situazione diglossia: la lingua italiana per lo scritto e il dialetto per il parlato. Questa situazione era più accentuata nelle regioni meridionali a causa della poca mobilità sociale [...] e

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<sup>33</sup> [Trans.] 'The poets of Northern Italy, in their admiration for literature that came from beyond the Alps, had passionately imitated it even using the language of their models; the Sicilian poets were sufficiently detached to be able to create in their own language. So Sicilian poetry appeared researched, cultured, aristocratic, singing courtly love like the troubadours, poetry of great value like the Provençal poetry'

<sup>34</sup> [Trans.] 'We cannot not remember the numerous occupations undergone by the Siculs (Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Vandals, Arabs, Normans, Spaniards, Austrians, Bourbons) and say how much each of these occupations has left traces on the language'

dal più elevato grado di analfabetismo. Inoltre essendo la Sicilia un'isola, l'isolamento linguistico fu maggiore.<sup>35</sup>

But increasing exposure to Italian through the media meant that in the early twentieth century, Sicilian 'underwent morphological changes' (Cipolla, 2005: 19). Pasolini also noted the threat from the media, particularly television, as it imposed a single language with gathering speed.<sup>36</sup> This illustrates the chain of influence present in standard and non-standard language use. Italian was in flux, developing and influencing both dialectal use and the grammatical systems of the dialects themselves. Spoken Sicilian dialect remained, perhaps, stagnant. It is precisely this sense of grammatical fissure, however, that equips dialect for writing of the past and present. Interestingly, neither the Neapolitan nor the Sicilian dialects originally possessed future, subjunctive or conditional tenses, confining their linguistic capabilities to the laborious present or the nostalgic past, suited therefore to depicting a rural life that was fast disappearing. Cipolla (2005: 19) writes

Leonardo Sciascia once noted that Sicilians are so pessimistic about their future that in their language the future tense does not exist. [...] The Sicilian's outlook must be seen as a continuous, losing struggle between progressive, idealistic tendencies against a more conservative and realistic philosophy. This explains the stagnation that is characteristic of Sicilian society.

The Sicilian dialect claims to have no future. Privitera (2004: 16) cites the case of Proto Sicilian: 'It does not have the future, conditional, the perfect tenses,

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<sup>35</sup> [Trans.] 'Historians of the language claim that a diglossic situation has existed in Italy for many years: the Italian language for written works and dialect for spoken discourse. This situation was more pronounced in the Southern regions owing to the low social mobility [...] and a higher degree of illiteracy. Moreover, Sicily being an island, the linguistic isolation was greater'

<sup>36</sup> See Spagnoletti (1997: 13)



nor the present subjunctive<sup>37</sup>. From a linguistic viewpoint, Steiner (1998: 237–238) has written of the inherent power of the conditional tense in providing humans with the ability to imagine an alter-reality:

I have suggested that the grammars of the future tense, of conditionality, of imaginary open-endedness are essential to the sanity of consciousness and to the intuitions of forward motion which animate history. One can go further. It is unlikely that man as we know him would have survived without the fictive, counter-factual, anti-determinist means of language, without the semantic capacity, generated and stored in the 'superfluous' zones of the cortex, to conceive of, to articulate possibilities beyond the treadmill of organic death and decay.

This startling hypothesis, I argue, is applicable not only to human use of language but also to language as an organic entity itself (see Gokak, 1952: 13). Reverberating images of the dormant *Mezzogiorno* come to mind, notably in Tancredi's haunting phrase from *Il Gattopardo*: 'Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi'<sup>38</sup> (Tomasi Di Lampedusa 2009: 50). This emerged in response to Garibaldi's invasion of Sicily in 1860, after which the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was overthrown. Steiner (1998: 238) analyses his statement, suggesting that the evolution of language *precedes* the evolution of the species. The forced evolution of language, likewise, ensures its own survival, for 'It is in this respect that human tongues, with their conspicuous consumption of subjunctive, future, and optative forms are a decisive evolutionary advantage. Through them we proceed in a substantive illusion of freedom'. Again, perhaps with poetic licence, we may apply this outlook to the Sicilian language. In order to flourish or simply survive, and thereby remain capable of encapsulating Sicilian culture, it had to adapt. This, perhaps loosely, points towards an Italy of progress and future projection,

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<sup>37</sup> See also Bonner (2001: 127).

<sup>38</sup> [Trans. by Colquhoun, in Tomasi Di Lampedusa, 1961: 21] 'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change'

forming itself as a young nation. The initial lack of these critical tenses in the South is suggestive of economic backwardness (and higher illiteracy levels) in comparison to the faster-paced North. Zinna (1997: 381) notes 'Illiteracy in Sicily reached extremes of 70.89% in the demographic census of 1901, of 56.97% the next decade, as compared to a national average that reached, respectively, 48.49% and 37.43%'. And Grassi et al. (2004, cited in Morillas, 2011: 90) write that

from Unification onwards, the Italian education system should have offered a common language to Italians, but it was not able to achieve this because of the disastrous situation in schools. Badly prepared teachers barely understood the language they were supposed to be teaching, and absenteeism in some areas of the south approached one hundred per cent.

Romantic notions could paint Italian as futuristic and dialect as language of yesterday and today. Dialect, on these grounds, is dutifully equipped for fiction and illusion in the present, tales and fables in the past, and is *reconstructive*, rather than constructive.

Haller (1999: 305) observes that 'Today, despite a massive Italianization process taking place at all levels, Sicily represents one of a few last strongholds of dialect use' and notes 'The process of Italianization was gradual; Gabriella Alfieri aptly distinguishes between Italian *in* Sicily (up to the Risorgimento) and Italian *of* Sicily (thereafter)' (ibid.). The Italian dialects seemingly remained static, resisting linguistic change almost as though they did not wish to incorporate a changing, globalizing world into their traditional, almost immobile vocabularies. With those dialects protected from alteration and influence, one could almost believe the changing pressures not to exist. This changed with the outbreak of two World Wars, which forced

dialectal writing to take account of the outside world. This factor would later align dialectal poetry with the realism canon (1940 onwards)<sup>39</sup>.

Francesco (2005: 48) writes of Vincenzo Consolo's dialect writing that he 'restores dignity to the language that gave birth to literary Italian, the Sicilian dialect' (see also Devoto, 1978: 203), suggesting that Consolo's linguistic choice was ideological and consisted of retrieving 'words that cannot be found in any Italian dictionary, but have their own history and philological dignity, whose etymologies link back to Greek, Arab, French, Spanish' (Consolo, 1993, cited in Francesco, 2005: 48).

The dialects did not change structurally; they were, instead, turned to as a source of expression, excavated on the basis of their proximity to reality and the new need to shift this reality into poetry, or vice versa. Brevini (1986: 689) writes that dialect poetry offers 'un supplemento di identità e di resistenza, il supporto di una cultura radicalmente altra da quella egemone'<sup>40</sup>. The grammars of the dialects affected their use and the poetic subjects to which they were applied. I would suggest that Buttitta opted for dialect as his closest expressive medium for his depiction of his Sicily and the Sicilian people; I would also argue that such a choice countered the monoglot uniformity and erasure of regional voice that shadowed Italy throughout much of his writing but that, first and foremost, it was a personal language. Bentley (2002: 83) notes that what she terms 'sister languages of Italian [...] are normally referred to as dialects for historical and socio-political reasons, for instance, the fact that they do not have official recognition as national languages'. This, whilst unfortunate, is more useful in differentiating between the terms.

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<sup>39</sup> See also Nadiani (2011: 31–48) 'In its local and individual varieties, with an inaccurate thus different spelling, it has taken on the function that is usually attributed to the "winning" language in a country' (39).

<sup>40</sup> [Trans.] 'a supplement of identity and resistance, the support of a culture that is radically other from the hegemonic one'

### 1.3.3. Dialect and Nation

Linguist Max Weinrich's oft-cited claim that 'a language is a dialect with an army and a navy' (1944, cited in Ripetti, 1996: 509) halts notions of linguistic inferiority, if not linguistic differences, and draws attention to the power structures inherent in the formation of attitudes towards linguistic unity as representative of national unity. Attempts at defining 'regional language' and 'dialect' increase in difficulty when, nationally and internationally, these terms take effect. Cavadier (2003: 250-251) notes that 'While it is important to communicate effectively within the modern nation-state, even more crucial to the manifestation of identity is the demarcation and boundary function which language can play'. The role of language in nation building and the relation between dialect and anti-nation is of crucial importance. Referring to the case in Germany, Weisstein (1962: 234) notes that

The emergence of genuine dialect literature [...] must be seen against the backdrop of a prolonged struggle for the purification of the language – with the concomitant repudiation of regional impurities – and an increasingly strong desire for political and cultural unification of the nation.

We can observe the link between linguistic purity and nationalistic sentiment, expressed (or imposed) in all spheres of life. Linguistic difference challenged national and cultural unity and was attacked by anti-regionalists who, to borrow Weisstein's (1962: 235) description of similar repudiation in Germany, 'fiercely combatted anything designed to perpetuate the fragmentation of their fatherland'. Linguistic differentiation, Prys-Jones (2013: 7) suggests, also matters on the grounds of preserving heritage:

It is widely agreed that languages are an extremely rich part of Europe's cultural heritage. Languages express identity and provide a link for speakers of a language with their past, present and future. Embedded within languages there is a great deal

of knowledge about the world and the human experience. When languages become extinct, this knowledge is lost.

It is therefore in the interests of safeguarding the Sicilian language that it be distinguished from the Standard. Maiden (1995: 4) addresses the multiplicity of determinants in categorization:

Among the Romance varieties usually recognized as 'languages' are the national idioms of nation-states, such as Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian and Romanian. [...] Others, such as Catalan, Sardinian, Dalmatian and Rhaeto-Romance in Switzerland, are also traditionally recognized as languages, because of their cultural importance, because they have also been accorded official recognition by the state in which they are used, because of their sharp distinctness from other Romance varieties, or through any combination of these factors.

The Sardinian language is protected under the European Charter for Minority Languages (Tandello and Zancani, 1996: ix) as, linguistically speaking, Sardinian falls into a certain category of dialects that vary significantly from all other varieties. 'Some of the descendants of Latin spoken on the periphery of Italian territory are regarded by many linguists as constituting "different languages" just by virtue of their structural differences from most other Italian varieties. This is the case with Sardinian' (Maiden, 2002: 33). It follows that the dialects protected under the category of minor languages are to be found on the peripheries of the peninsula, less influenced by centralizing, standardizing forces, left to develop freely and, at times, under more influence from surrounding international languages. 'It is generally accepted that the Romance dialects of Italy are divisible into two sectors' (Maiden, 1995: 234) and this geographical correlation with similarities and differences between the dialects has been mapped out in terms of linguistic boundaries or 'isoglosses' (see also Lepschy and Lepschy, 1991: 42), which Maiden (ibid.)

defines as 'delineation of the geographical limit of some linguistic feature'. Ripetti (1996: 508) elaborates,

For example, the Spezia-Rimini isogloss separates the Tuscan dialects from the northern Gallo-Italian dialects. The northern Italian dialects are more similar to other Gallo-Romance dialects, like French, than they are to Tuscan, not because they derive from French, but because they share with French common traits due to the fact that they are all part of the same sub-group of Romance languages.

These isoglosses denote 'separate language families as well as past political and social boundaries' (ibid: 509). 'In such repertoires,' writes Machan (2016: 627), 'bundles of isoglosses traditionally have demarcated language borders, and these may well coincide with geographic borders. [...] But bundles and even isoglosses themselves are abstractions that make the porous into the impermeable', representing 'an abstract linguistic boundary' (ibid.).

The term 'culture' is frequently present in justifications of terminology; Maiden (1995: 4) suggests that the 'label "language" is usually attached to those Romance dialects which have acquired political and/or cultural prestige' and by this one can interpret manifestations of culture brought about through language or implementation of politics implemented through language. 'What primarily determined the pre-eminence of Florentine in Italy was the flowering of Florentine culture, and particularly the literary prestige – rapidly diffused in Italy and beyond – of writers such as Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, who wrote in Florentine' (Maiden, 1995: 7; see also Hill, 1928: 123).

Dialects came to be addressed in terms of their cultural heritage but, politically, had lost the power to make claims of linguistic protection *per se*. Sicilian is classed as a dialect and, as such, is not protected. The welfare of the 'dialect', therefore, is threatened by its lack of international acknowledgement

as a form of heritage and subsequently decreases in importance to its own speakers. Tanello and Zancani (1996: ix) draw attention to the fact that

the distinction between dialect and language is not only problematic, but can have important social and even financial consequences. For example, while the European union recognizes Sardinian and Friulian as languages, Piedmontese or Venetian are still dialects, and this prevents them from receiving any contributions from Brussels.<sup>41</sup>

Lepschy (1996: 6) corroborates this, stating that the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages, situated in Brussels

often receive[s] from Italian organizations requests for financial assistance in supporting lesser-used idioms, but they have to turn them down because these idioms are officially classified as dialects and not languages, and dialects do not enjoy the protection of the Council of Europe, which is generally more receptive than individual states to the value of multilingualism.

Prys-Jones (2013: 7), referring to the *Atlas of the World's Languages* (UNESCO) lists '128 languages within the European Union that are considered to be endangered. All languages that are treated as a separate language, and not a dialect, have their own ISO- Code'. However, Parry (2002: 49) suggests that forms of support are in place that aim to provide a platform for the advancement of local language and culture:

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<sup>41</sup> Parry (2002: 47-59) states that 'a number of other languages gained official recognition by the state as "minority languages"' (48) and has cited that 'On 25 November 1999, Law 482, *Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche* was approved by the Italian Senate and published in the 20 December issue of the *Gazzetta Ufficiale*. Article 2 reads: In attuazione dell'articolo 6 della Costituzione e in armonia con i principi generali stabiliti dagli organismi europei e internazionali, la Repubblica tutela la lingua e la cultura delle popolazioni albanesi, catalane, germaniche, greche, slovene e croate e di quelli parlanti il francese, il franco-provenzale, il friulano, il ladino, l'occitano e il sardo' (48).

Broadly speaking, provided there is local demand, the State offers limited funding to protect and promote the local language and culture [...] and there are various clauses regarding publishing in the local language, its use on radio and television, and the establishment of bodies to promote the local language and culture.

Parry goes on to note that the list proved controversial; certain dialects were to be categorized as minority 'languages' whilst others were to remain dialects, 'regardless of prestige or the number of speakers' (ibid.). In this sense, there is no bureaucratic or statistical logic in place to enable an authoritative outline either of what constitutes a dialect or what entitles that dialect to be classified as a minority language and thereby granted protection. Prys-Jones (2013: 8) states

There are 23 officially recognised languages which are the working languages of the Union. There are more than 60 indigenous regional and minority languages with five of these being recognised as being semi official (Catalan, Galician, Basque, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh). All other languages have no official status in the EU.

Parry (2002: 49) gives the example of Cortelazzo who, 'echoing the doubts of many Italian linguists', wrote to *La Repubblica* in December 1991, asking 'con quali argomenti, al di là del puro atto di imperio legislativo, si possono porre su piani così diversi sardo e friulano da un lato e ogni altro dialetto italiano dall'altro?'<sup>42</sup> (ibid. 49). To go by the inclusion of certain dialects on the list of minority languages and the exclusion of others, this is a question that still has no answer. To experience difficulty in defining a dialect as opposed to a language might be admissible but to posit entirely spurious criteria as to what constitutes one dialect as a minority language and not another seems more

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<sup>42</sup> [Trans.] 'On which grounds, besides the pure act of legislative empire, can you place Sardinian and Friulian on the one hand and every other Italian dialect on the other?'



like passivity on the part of the European Union (EU) or powerlessness on the part of groups of 'dialect' speakers themselves.

The terminology within the EU is suggestive of discrepancies within nomenclature and subsequent legislation. Endangered languages<sup>43</sup>, by way of example, are classified by UNESCO (2003, cited in Prys-Jones, 2013: 7) as follows:

A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it. Use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains and cease to pass it from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children.

Analysing statistics becomes challenging when a language has no political support and this situation worsens when prescribed definitions are ambiguous. Parry (2002: 48) examines irregularities between figures of Italians who use dialect in all interactions, noting that – particularly in the Sicilian survey results – there are differences, possibly relating to use of dialect correlating to complete lack of knowledge of Italian, the use of dialect alongside Italian, or dialect heavily influencing Italian when used:

Lo Piparo draws attention to the fact that in Sicily, where a very detailed sociolinguistic survey has been carried out for the Osservatorio Linguistico Siciliano, there is a significant discrepancy between ISTAT figures for 1988 and the OLS ones for 1984–5: according to the former, 25.4% use Sicilian in all interactions, but only 5.6% do according to the earlier, but much more finely tuned, OLS survey.

This all appears strange when we consider that in Italy 'habitual use of Italian in all situations by a majority of Italians may not be much older than the last quarter-century' (Maiden, 2002: 31). Parry (2002: 48) concludes that 'Italian,

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<sup>43</sup> For further discussion of endangered regional languages in Italy, see also Coluzzi, Paolo (2009).

especially today, cannot be conceived as one homogeneous variety, but as a continuum of varieties spanning a wide range of registers and uses'. Burnett (2013: 262) addresses the significance of the classification 'minority language' as 'any language used by a minority in demographic terms within the European geographical context, without taking into account any one language's popularity or majority status elsewhere in the world'.

Bentley (2002: 82) argues that 'Much less investigation has been carried out on languages which have a small number of speakers, varieties which are not the official codes of independent states, and languages which do not have a long-standing literary tradition'. Again, 'minority language' is a term that denotes various linguistic entities. De Bot and Gorter (2005: 612) refer to *heritage languages* as the term used in North America to denote 'the languages of immigrant, refugee, and indigenous groups' while the European equivalent term 'minority language' 'seems the more common designation' (ibid.). They acknowledge, though, that 'due to a number of factors, there is a major divide in many, though not all European countries, between immigrant and refugee groups on the one hand and indigenous language groups on the other hand' (2005: 612) and make a further distinction between *regional minority (RM) languages* and *immigrant minority (IM) languages* (De Bot and Gorter, ibid.).

The European Council's Resolution of the 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism notes that 'linguistic and cultural diversity is part and parcel of the European identity; it is at once a shared heritage, a wealth, a challenge and an asset for Europe' (Prys Jones, 2013: 7). Such statements highlight the importance of such heritage but the fundamental acknowledgement of the 'challenge' posed to Europe seems to remain in writing only.

## 1.4. Ignazio Buttitta: poetic profile

### 1.4.1. Ignazio Buttitta: a biography

Ignazio Buttitta was a Sicilian dialect poet, born in Bagheria, district of Palermo, on 19 September 1899. He died in his hometown on 5 April, 1997. Grillandi (1976: 201) writes of Bagheria that 'era allora in balía di una miseria appena credibile ed essa fu la prima lezione del ragazzo'<sup>44</sup>. Tedesco (1965: 63) also describes Buttitta's 'infanzia amarissima' (incredibly bitter childhood) and in *La paglia bruciata* (1968: 22, henceforth *Paglia*), Buttitta recalls 'L'ingiustizia la scopriro nelle facce dei poveri, nei piedi nudi dei bambini, nelle condizioni dei braccianti che partivano all'alba con una cipolla e un pezzo di pane, e tornavano a sera strascinando i piedi'<sup>45</sup>. Grillandi (1976: 201) remarks that 'Fu cosí che Buttitta cominciò ad amare chi soffre, anche se la condizione in cui egli viveva, dati i tempi, era quella di una famiglia modestamente benestante'<sup>46</sup>. Grillandi (ibid.) also notes that 'Il padre infatti gestiva un piccolo negozio di generi diversi'<sup>47</sup> and Buttitta recalls (in *Paglia*, 1968: 22):

Quando mio padre mi diceva: chi ha pietà degli altri dà le proprie carni ai cani, io non capivo il significato di quelle parole. Diceva pure: sono rimasto orfano e nessuno mi diede mai un pezzo di pane. Mi cresceva con il fiato mia madre. Era analfabeta mio padre; ed io ho capito dopo, che il patimento distorce i sentimenti ed abbrutisce l'uomo.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> [Trans.] 'it was at the time at the mercy of a barely credible poverty and this was the boy's first lesson'

<sup>45</sup> [Trans.] 'I discovered injustice in the faces of the poor, in the bare feet of the children, under the conditions of the labourers who left at dawn with an onion and a piece of bread, and returned in the evening dragging their feet'

<sup>46</sup> [Trans.] 'It was in this way that Buttitta began to love those who suffered, even though the condition in which he lived, given the times, was that of a modestly wealthy family'

<sup>47</sup> [Trans.] 'His father, in fact, ran a small shop selling various goods'

<sup>48</sup> [Trans.] 'When my father told me: he who takes pity on others gives his very flesh to the dogs, I did not understand the meaning of those words. He also said: I was an orphan and

Buttitta and Buttitta (2007: 327) note 'Maschio di una coppia di gemelli viene dato a balia e trascorre un'infanzia travagliata di cui rimane eco nella sua poesia'.<sup>49</sup> Of this nurse, Buttitta (1968: 15) himself recalls that she prayed and made him repeat with her:

Signore, salvatemi l'anima, datemi la salute, il pane quotidiano, il vino l'acqua il sale, e non dimenticate il pepe. Si rivolgeva a me: 'Ignazio, ripeti.' Io ripetevo, e lei continuava. 'Signore, scansatemi di tentazioni, di peccati mortali, di fame arretrata e di cattivi vicini.' Io ripetevo, e lei: 'Signore, la notte è lunga; non mi lasciate sola; se viene il diavolo mi ruba il mio bambino.' Ripetevo e tremavo.<sup>50</sup>

Buttitta (ibid.) reflects that this daily practice remained in his memory his whole life, affecting how he came to view the Lord and daily struggles. 'Quelle preghiere sguazzano ancora nella mia memoria; seguitai a ripeterle tutte le sere sino a dopo sposato; incredulo, che arrivassero in cielo, e che il pane e il lavoro lo mandasse il Signore. Mi pareva di parlare agli uccelli'<sup>51</sup>. Tedesco (1965: 63) writes that, in pursuit of money, Buttitta's father took his son to work in his shop, 'impedendogli, al conseguimento della licenza elementare, di continuare gli studi'<sup>52</sup>.

Self-taught, Buttitta carried out many jobs as a young man, including working at a butcher's, a grocer's, and as a salesman. Grillandi (1976: 202)

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nobody ever gave me a piece of bread. My mother brought me up on her breath. My father was illiterate; and I understood later that suffering distorts feelings and shakes a man'

<sup>49</sup> [Trans.] 'A male of twins he was cared for by a nurse and spent his childhood working, of which an echo remains in his poetry'

<sup>50</sup> [Trans.] 'Lord, save me my soul, give me health, daily bread, wine water salt, and do not forget the pepper. She turned to me, "Ignazio, repeat." I repeated, and she continued. "Lord, scare me of temptations, of deadly sins, of hunger and of bad neighbours." I repeated, and she: "Lord, the night is long, do not leave me alone, if the devil comes he shall steal my baby." I repeated and trembled.'

<sup>51</sup> [Trans.] 'Those prayers are still in my memory; I continued to repeat them every night until after I married; incredulous, that they would go up to the sky, and that the Lord would send bread and work. It seemed to me that I was speaking to the birds'

<sup>52</sup> [Trans.] 'preventing him, at the time of obtaining his primary certificate, from continuing his studies'

notes that 'Ignazio rimase al negozio fino al 1916, anno in cui venne chiamato [...] al fronte'<sup>53</sup>. Zinna (1977: 415) writes 'In 1916 he was drafted and fought on the Piave'. Having returned home in 1920, 'socialista convinto' (Tedesco, 1965: 63), he went back to work in the store. Grillandi (1976: 202) remarks that 'Buttitta si rimise a lavorare in negozio. Trascorsero in tal modo altri dieci anni, mentre il suo orizzonte culturale si andava allargando'<sup>54</sup>.

In 1922 he founded a club named after the socialist Filippo Turati, which published a weekly sheet *La povera gente* (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 328). Actively anti-Fascist, he led an uprising in the same year and took part in the Resistance; the uprising was, as Zinna (1997: 415) describes, 'a popular revolt against taxes'. Grillandi (1976: 202) suggests that

la sua presa di coscienza dei problemi politici ed economici del momento giunse a fargli guidare una sommossa popolare contro il cosiddetto 'Comune chiuso', cioè contro l'imposizione dei dazi comunali. Diecimila contadini, opportunamente sensibilizzati, bruciarono, in un solo giorno di violenze inaudite, tutte le garitte daziarie dei dintorni di Palermo.<sup>55</sup>

In 1923, *Sintimintali*, his first volume of dialect poetry, was published. In 1927, writes Grillandi (1976: 202), 'si sposò con una maestra elementare conosciuta in treno. Lui si stava recando a Messina a vendere formaggi e salumi. Dal matrimonio nacquero quattro figli: due maschi e due femmine'<sup>56</sup>. *Marabedda*, a love song, followed in 1928 (Zinna, 1997). In this period, together with

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<sup>53</sup> [Trans.] 'Ignazio remained at the shop until 1916, the year in which he was called [...] to the front'

<sup>54</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta went back to work in the shop. Ten more years passed in this way, during which time his cultural horizon broadened'

<sup>55</sup> [Trans.] 'his awareness of the political and economic problems of the time came to make him drive a popular uprising against the so-called "Closed Commune", that is, against the imposition of municipal taxes. Ten thousand peasants, opportunely sensitized, burned, in a single day of unprecedented violence, all the garages in the district of Palermo'

<sup>56</sup> [Trans.] 'he married an elementary teacher whom he met on the train. He was going to Messina to sell cheese and salami. Four children were born of the marriage: two boys and two girls'

Giuseppe Ganci Battaglia, he co-edited the Palermitan monthly journal of dialect poetry, *La Trazzera*, which, Zinna (1997: 415) writes, 'would be shut down by the Fascist regime shortly after', in 1929. The regime, notes Grillandi (1976: 203), 'non tollerava pubblicazioni del genere'<sup>57</sup>.

In 1930, Buttitta opened a shop in Bagheria. Grillandi (1976: 203) writes 'L'iniziativa conobbe rapido successo, tanto che il poeta poté presto inaugurare una fiorente succursale a Milano'<sup>58</sup>. At the 1943 bombing of his hometown of Bagheria, Buttitta and his family moved to Milan, where he set up his own business, and 'his aim was to achieve a certain financial well-being that would allow him to devote himself exclusively to poetry' (ibid.). Other scholarship confirms that, at this time 'Gode di un certo benessere che gli permette di dedicarsi nei ritagli di tempo alla sua passione, coltivata sin da adolescente, la poesia'<sup>59</sup> (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 327). This dream, however, was put on hold with the outbreak of the Second World War, as 'L'invasione della Sicilia da parte degli Alleati gli impedisce di ritornare nell'Isola per salvare quel che resta della sua attività'<sup>60</sup> (ibid.: 328–329). Zinna (1997: 415) writes that

In 1944 he fought in the resistance; the following year he was arrested by the Fascists (he was later saved by the Allies). Back in Sicily again, he found his store-houses looted and was forced to return to Milan, where he took up his business again.

Buttitta participated in anti-Fascist resistance in Lombardy and was arrested twice for his actions. He did not return to Sicily until 1960, and then remained there until his death in 1997. It was at that point that, owing to his

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<sup>57</sup> [Trans.] 'did not tolerate publications of that kind'

<sup>58</sup> [Trans.] 'This initiative had rapid success, so much so that the poet was soon able to inaugurate another thriving branch in Milan'

<sup>59</sup> [Trans.] 'He enjoys a certain level of well-being that, with the passing of time, allows him to dedicate himself to his passion, cultivated in adolescence, poetry'

<sup>60</sup> [Trans.] 'The Allied invasion of Sicily prevented him from returning to the island to save what was left of his business'

acquaintance with Renato Guttuso, he met Vittorini and Quasimodo (Zinna, 1997). Zinna (ibid.: 415) writes that

Having attained some financial security with his business, in 1970 the poet moved back to Sicily for good, devoting himself only to poetry. Until his death he lived in Aspra, in a villa he owns, a mecca for scholars and admirers.

Buttitta and Buttitta (2007: 329) put this occurrence much earlier, in the middle of the 1950s, but make the same claim that Buttitta entrusted his business to other workers and was able, finally, to 'bring his poetry into the piazzas' (ibid.). Borelli (1969: 397) observes that 'this unusual poet of contemporary ballads has been buffeted by life. He has followed many trades, always driven by his desire to become rich so he could retire and write poetry'.

Buttitta formed his political ideology early in life (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 328) and fought on the frontline during the First World War, called upon to fight at 18 years old, after the Battle of Caporetto (1917). He attended numerous political marches in Bagheria (ibid.). A notable protest took place on 1 May, 1922, regarding calls for the introduction of the eight-hour working day. Also in 1922, on 15 October, the eve of the March on Rome, Buttitta was at the head of a populist uprising against the tightening of municipal taxes, which resulted in his arrest along with other collaborators from his club (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 328). During the political elections of 1924 he presented the list of the Socialist Party but immediately afterwards joined the Communist Party, which he remained loyal to for the rest of his life (ibid.).

During these early years, his poetry appeared in the fortnightly *Il Vespro Anarchico*, which, under the guidance of Paolo Schicchi, conducted a vehement anti-Fascist campaign (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 328). Buttitta's poetry circulated in 'fogli clandestini' (ibid.) over the course of these troubled

years. In 1943 he moved to Codogno, in Lombardy, and the Allied invasion of Sicily prevented him from going back to salvage what remained of his business. Forced to remain in Lombardy, he threw himself into the partisan cause, and was arrested twice. After the Liberation, he was able to return once more to Sicily but, upon finding his home and shops plundered and ruined, went back to Lombardy, where his wife and children were (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 329). Grillandi (1976: 204) concludes:

Ormai celebre, un patriarca della poesia dialettale e della sua terra, Buttitta si dedica ora a percorrere, uno per uno, tutti i casolari e i paesi della Sicilia, recitando i suoi poemetti, per amore della sua gente e della poesia, tanto che la sua figura fisica appare inconfondibile e fa quasi parte del paesaggio.<sup>61</sup>

#### 1.4.2. Changing poetics

After the publication of his first two books of poetry, Buttitta did not publish anything for over twenty-five years. The gap in his publication witnessed, and was likely to have been the result of, substantial changes in Sicily, Italy, and the rest of Europe. Di Marco (2013: 10) observes

La terza opera è stampata dopo più di un quarto di secolo, cioè dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, la lotta antifascista, la caduta della monarchia e del fascismo, il referendum e la nascita della Repubblica, la Costituzione del 1948, e l'avvento della Democrazia Cristiana in un clima di sfrenato anticomunismo clericale e filo-americano.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> [Trans.] 'By now famous, a patriarch of dialectal poetry and his land, Buttitta is now dedicated to covering, one by one, all the farmhouses and villages of Sicily, reciting his poems, for the love of his people and poetry, so that his physical figure appears unmistakable and is almost part of the landscape'

<sup>62</sup> [Trans.] 'His third book was printed after more than a quarter of a century, that is, after the Second World War, the anti-fascist struggle, the fall of the monarchy and fascism, the referendum and the birth of the Republic, the 1948 Constitution and the advent of Christian Democracy in a climate of unbridled clerical and pro-American anti-communism'.



The vast range of events that took place between Buttitta's earlier productions – beginning at twenty four years old – and his later ones is noteworthy. We see the encroaching threat of change from the World Wars and Buttitta and Buttitta (2007: 327) note that 'Buttitta ha vissuto in prima linea: le lotte contadine, le due guerre, l'antifascismo, la lotta contro la mafia e la classe politica post-bellica'<sup>63</sup>. Di Marco (2013: 10) goes on to specify the particulars of the situation in Sicily:

La Sicilia era stata scossa dalle lotte contadine contro il latifondo, dalle lotte dei minatori siciliani, dalla violenza antipopolare della mafia rurale e dal massacro – prima e dopo l'indimenticabile strage di Portella della Ginestra – di sindacalisti e dirigenti politici dei ceti bracciantili e di tutto il movimento contadino in Sicilia.<sup>64</sup>

*Lu pani si chiama pani* (1954, henceforth *Pani*) emerged after this tumultuous period, published by an older, more mature Buttitta who had been heavily influenced by these events. The nature of dialect poetry itself had evolved, acquiring 'an awareness of its own value' (Licata, 2002: 214) and, owing to this, 'aspired to artistic responsibility. Put simply, it aimed at becoming nothing less than an integral part of the literary landscape of twentieth-century Europe, shaking off its regionalistic, folkloristic and popular tendencies' (ibid.). Tedesco (1965: 19) notes that, upon opening the volume, 's'accorge subito della sua diversa qualità'<sup>65</sup> and observes, critically:

E veramente le poesie di questo volume segnano – dopo un'originale lotta, svoltasi, strenua e silenziosa, negli anni del pieno trionfo fascista ma conclusasi più tardi dopo

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<sup>63</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta lived first hand through: the peasant struggles, the two wars, anti-fascism, the struggle against the mafia and the post-war political class'

<sup>64</sup> [Trans.] 'Sicily had been shocked by the peasant struggles against the large estates, the struggles of the Sicilian miners, the antipopular violence of the rural mafia and of the massacre – before and after the unforgettable massacre of Portella della Ginestra – of trade unionists and political leaders of armed groups and by the whole peasant movement in Sicily'.

<sup>65</sup> [Trans.] 'the reader is immediately aware of its different quality'

la liberazione – la completa liberazione dagli arcadici motivi e dalle formule di comodo di una poesia 'popolare' che è considerata tale solo perché si esprime in dialetto e, non possedendo un contenuto umano nuovo, favoleggia di un suo remoto mondo di purezza e di bellezza; segnano il nascere, certo difficile e a volte contraddetto, di una poesia realistica nella concezione e nel risultato, piena, come è, di amoroze illuminazioni del mondo della natura e degli uomini.<sup>66</sup>

His work had taken a political turn, notably in the publication that followed two years later, in 1956, *Lamento pi la morti di Turiddu Carnivali* (Lament for the death of Turiddu Carnevale), a Sicilian trade unionist murdered in Sciarra at the hands of the Mafia. Zinna (1997: 416) notes that the poem 'is sung with fiery, sorrowful tones, as in Lorca's famous *Llanto* for Ignacio Sanchez, but on classical foundations: the *chanson de geste*'. After this emerged *La Peddi Nova* (1963, henceforth *Peddi*) and, in the same year, *Lu trenu di lu suli* (henceforth *Trenu*) and *La vera storia di Salvatore Giuliano*. Zinna (*ibid.*) notes

1963 is the year of *Lu trenu di lu suli* (The Train of the Sun), on the drama of emigrants, and the collection *La peddi nova* (The New Skin), in which the poet, in the face of the new climate caused by the nuclear threat, raises a song of hope, so that men will not give up: the day of liberation will come; in such a wait, the poet wants to wear 'a new skin' and instill new life to his song, dispelling any disheartening.

We can observe a sharp political shift in Buttitta's writing from this stage on: he was a more established poet and his dialectal voice had come into its own. Di Marco (2013: 11) observes that 'Il profilo poetico sul terreno civile e politico di Ignazio Buttitta è ormai chiaro, matura la sua voce di cantore del riscatto

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<sup>66</sup> [Trans.] 'And indeed, the poems of this volume mark – after an original, strenuous and silent struggle, held in the years of the full Fascist triumph, but which ended later, after the liberation – the complete liberation from the arcadian motifs and the comfortable formulas of a "popular" poetry, which is considered to be such only because it is expressed in dialect and, without possessing a new human content, favours a remote world of purity and beauty; they mark the very difficult and sometimes contradictory birth of realistic poetry in the conception and the result, full, as it is, of amorous illumination in the world of nature and men'

siciliano, alta e diffusa in Italia e in Europa la sua fama',<sup>67</sup> going on to note that Buttitta then published *La paglia bruciata* (1968), and then two volumes which he published in his seventies, *Io faccio il poeta* (1972, henceforth *Poeta*) and *Il poeta in piazza* (1974, henceforth *Piazza*). In 1974, Buttitta also reworked an anonymous theatrical piece, *Il cortile degli Aragonesi*. Again, Zinna (1997: 417) writes

*Il poeta in piazza* (The Poet in the Piazza, 1974) betrays the rethinking which took place in the West after the news of Stalin's purges and the pressure put by the Soviet regime on dissident writers. The poet reaffirms his faith in socialism: not in the one embodied by a regime or the dictatorship of the party, but in the one that can be born, one day, if men learn to change from within, if they are able to bring out their inner selves: it is no use to have a new suit with old sentiments, or to have money in the bank and no books in the house.

Buttitta's biographical entry in *Treccani Enciclopedia* (2016: online, henceforth *Treccani*) notes 'Nella produzione successiva il crisma dell'ufficialità sembra avere un po' indebolito le motivazioni originali della sua poesia (tra l'altro tradotta in francese, russo, cinese, ecc.): *Io faccio il poeta* (1972); *Il poeta in piazza* (1974); *Pietre nere* (1983)<sup>68</sup>. Yet *Paglia* is a deviation from his other works; Zinna (1997: 416) observes that

In *La paglia bruciata* (Burnt Straw) (1968), in addition to recounting the story of the Cervi brothers, exemplum of his social and political commitment, the poet retraces the stages of his existence: he looks inward and observes human passions. Here and there, he adopts the patterns of narrative poetry.

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<sup>67</sup> [Trans.] 'Ignazio Buttitta's poetic profile was, on civil and political grounds, by this time clear, the voice that sung of Sicilian redemption was a mature one; his fame had spread far and wide across Europe'

<sup>68</sup> [Trans.] 'In subsequent production, the critique of officiality seems to have somewhat weakened the original motivations of his poetry (translated, moreover, into French, Russian, Chinese, etc.): *Io faccio il poeta* (1972); *Il poeta in piazza* (1974); *Pietre nere* (1983)'

It is written in both Italian and dialect, although Grillandi (1976: 208) claims that 'il miglior Buttitta [è] quello in vernacolo'<sup>69</sup> and that 'L'uso del dialetto induce invece *La paglia bruciata* a esiti di commozione e di resa poetica notevoli'<sup>70</sup> (ibid.: 209).

'Buttitta è ormai celebre; da gran tempo uscito dal limite del paese, della gloria di Bagheria; tradotto in italiano da Quasimodo, tradotto in francese, recitante con la sua voce di ferro e i suoi poemi al pubblico di Mosca e della Siberia.'<sup>71</sup> (Levi, 2007: 10)

Buttitta's anthological *Prime e nuovissime* (1983, henceforth *Prime*) and *Pietre Nere* (1983, henceforth *Pietre*) were the last works that Buttitta published in his lifetime, although 'the theatrical work *Colapesce: leggenda siciliana in due tempi* (1986) ought also to be remembered' (Treccani, 2016: online, [my trans]).

Whilst Buttitta remained faithful to the use of dialect as a poetic medium, it is interesting to note that there are small signs not so much of Italianization of his language, but of a move to addressing a wider audience throughout Italy as his poetry matured. A simple indicator of this might be that his last three anthologies have titles in standard Italian, as opposed to earlier anthologies, which have dialectal titles. *Prime* contains much of Buttitta's earlier work (1922–1954) but was published in 1983, although this title is less relevant as it fits into the conventional means of publishing 'new and selected' works by an already established poet. But the typical practice of naming poetry anthologies with a title poem from within the selected works reflects this slight shift in Buttitta's approach. Titles such as *Lu pani si chiama pani* (1954), for example, or *Lu trenu di lu sulì* (1963) and *La peddi nova* (1963)

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<sup>69</sup> [Trans.] 'the best Buttitta is the one in dialect'

<sup>70</sup> [Trans.] 'instead the use of dialect induces in *La paglia bruciata* results of emotion and noteworthy poetic performance'

<sup>71</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta is by now famous; having long since broken free from the limits of his hometown, from the glory of Bagheria; translated into Italian by Quasimodo, translated into French, reciter with his voice of iron and his poems to the public of Moscow and Siberia'

are all in dialect, as are their corresponding poems, whereas when we move to Buttitta's later publications we can see that 'U pueta nta chiazza' is the dialectal title of the anthology *Il poeta in piazza* (1974) and 'I petri nivuri' is the dialectal title of the same anthology *Pietre Nere* (1983). Whether this was Buttitta's own deliberate or subconscious choosing is unknown; it could also have been the effect of publishing requirements. Such linguistic choice could also be reflective of place of publishing, as his earlier collections were published in Palermo and his later ones were published in Milan (an exception being *Pani*, which was published in Rome). The choice could also, more positively, reflect the poet's growing reception throughout Italy and, additionally, more inclination on the part of non-Sicilian Italians to read his dialect poetry. We know that several anthologies were also published with their corresponding Italian translations, an example of this being Quasimodo's Italian translation of the poems in *Pani*.

Tedesco (1965: 21) remarks that the 'temi della poesia di Buttitta vogliono ora discendere, dunque, dalla presente e viva condizione economica e umana dei proletari siciliani'<sup>72</sup> and notes that prominent themes are 'il desiderio di pace, l'amore per la terra, la speranza dell'avvento di un mondo migliore dove il lavoro non sia una maledizione, le poche gioie e i duri dolori delle madri contadine'<sup>73</sup> (ibid.). Haller (1999: 307) writes:

Among the twentieth-century poets, Ignazio Buttitta is one of the most impressive. More of a literary outsider, Buttitta stands out for his free verse, as well as his strong political and social engagement. His poems, owing much to the rich treasures of proverbs and popular culture, and longing to be recited, express the sufferings of the Sicilian peasant, the day labourer, the fate of the emigrant, but also feelings of hope.

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<sup>72</sup> [Trans.] 'themes of Buttitta's poetry now want to descend from the present and vivid economic and human condition of the Sicilian proletarians'

<sup>73</sup> [Trans.] 'the desire for peace, the love of the land, the hope of the advent of a better world in which work is not a curse, the few joys and hard pains of the peasant mothers'

In *Treccani* (2016, online [my trans.]), it is noted that

His poetry, of both popular inspiration and along consciously literary lines, has evolved from its initial sensualism between Arcadian and D'Annunzian lines [...] to the epic-lyrical and almost storytelling tones of labour and celebration of the struggles of the Sicilian people.

### 1.4.3. Critical discourse

Buttitta and Buttitta (2007: 327) note that Buttitta established fruitful relationships with Giuseppe Pipitone Federico, Luigi Natoli, Giuseppe Nicolosi Scandurra and numerous other poets and intellectuals of the time. After publication of *Sintimintali* (1923) – for which another dialectal poet, G. Pipitone Federico wrote the accompanying preface – and *Marabedda* (1928), his friendship with Vincenzo De Simone, a prestigious figure in the sphere of dialectal literature, 'quasi un dittatore allora della poesia dialettale'<sup>74</sup> (Tedesco, 1965: 64), made it possible for Buttitta to spend time with Alessio Di Giovanni, Filippo Fichera, Antonio Negri and Giuseppe Pedalino (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 327–328). Whilst in Lombardy, he spent a lot of time with Quasimodo and Vittorini (and Quasimodo in fact provided the translations for *Pani*, 1954). Leonardo Sciascia was another great friend of the poet, and Buttitta, in *Piazza* (1972: 133), writes 'Leonardu Sciascia, u scritturi; ca metti focu nto focu, e abbagna a penna nto surfaru culato e n'abbrucia i manu pi suffucari l'abusu: sicilianu di Racarmutu, ca penna spata e cu pettu scutu'<sup>75</sup>. Sciascia (2007: 15–16) notes:

Con Ignazio Buttitta non c'è da aspettare: la sua presenza è immediatamente quella del poeta: nel fisico, nello sguardo, nel movimento di togliersi e rimettersi gli occhiali

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<sup>74</sup> [Trans.] 'at the time almost a dictator of dialectal poetry'

<sup>75</sup> [Trans.] 'Leonardo Sciascia, the writer who sets fire within fire, and wets his pen in molten sulfur, and burns his hands to suffocate the abuse: Sicilian Racalmuto, with his pen a sword and his chest a shield'

o di portarseli sulla fronte (un movimento che sembra adeguarsi non ad una esigenza oculistica, ma a un *vedere* interno, a un rapporto con le cose interiormente scelto, a una collocazione di esse in una prospettiva ad ogni momento inventata e rinnovata).<sup>76</sup>

(This poetic presence is addressed in Chapter 4, in order to portray the performability of Buttitta's narrative presence as poet.)

In 1953, Buttitta won a 'Catholic' prize for 'Lamentu d'una matri', and *Peddi* received the Carducci prize. Buttitta was awarded the Premio Viareggio in 1972, for *Poeta*, and an honorary degree in literary subjects by the Facoltà di Magistero of the University of Palermo (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 330). His poetry has been translated in France, Spain, Greece, Romania, China and Russia and there are several extant translations of his poems in English (such as those by Vitiello, included in Bonaffini [1997a: 418–424] and several contributions by Dieli).

Di Marco (2013: 9) writes in a melancholy fashion of the reaction to news of Buttitta's death, suggesting that there was an 'impegno a tener vivo quell'istintivo amore dal basso che la gente conserva per un vecchio poeta di cui sente parlare, ma del quale conosce poco se non dalle sommarie idee che si tramandano sulla sua opera'<sup>77</sup> and that 'La notizia della sua morte riempì i giornali italiani della domenica, e così si proseguì – più o meno – per qualche altro giorno ancora'<sup>78</sup> (2013: 9). Lina La Mattina, a Palermitan poet who writes in her native Sicilian, in her second book of poetry *'Na Vuci A La Scurata* (1997), published a poem written two days after Buttitta's death. 'A 'Gnaziu

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<sup>76</sup> [Trans.] 'With Ignazio Buttitta there is no need to wait: his presence is immediately that of the poet: in his body, in his look, in the gesture of removing and putting on his glasses or wearing them on his forehead (a gesture that seems to relate not to an optical requirement, but to an internal vision, to a relationship with the things interiorly chosen, to a placement of them in a perspective at every moment invented and renewed)'

<sup>77</sup> [Trans.] 'commitment to keep alive that grounding instinctive love that people conserve for an old poet whom they've heard in conversation but of whom they know little other than a summary of ideas handed down from his work'

<sup>78</sup> [Trans.] 'News of his death filled the Italian Sunday newspapers, and proceeded in this way – more or less – for a few more days'

Buttitta' has been translated into English by Arthur and Alice Dieli (Appendix 1).

Buttitta's legacy in terms of reigniting literary use of dialect was to become a new trend in the coming years. Tomaiuolo (2009: 1) notices 'that the same year Buttitta died (1997), the "stolen" Sicilian dialect which seemed to be "lost forever" began acquiring a new status in Italy thanks to the success of Andrea Camilleri's most famous fictional character: Inspector Salvo Montalbano'. Tomaiuolo, here, refers to Buttitta's poem 'Lingua e dialettu' (see 2.10), which laments the dying dialect, deemed to be fading from regional memory and usage. Camilleri's linguistic experimentation and his treatment of dialect as a literary device has contributed significantly to a readdressing of the literary role of dialect. Buttitta's son, Antonino Buttitta (2004, cited in Tomaiuolo, *ibid.*), notes that

il commissario Montalbano, convertito dai lettori di Camilleri in simbolo con forte carica mitica, quanto più resta radicato nel suo spazio etnico (ambienti, parole, cibi e così via), tanto più assume connotati universali e dunque familiari a lettori delle più diverse culture.<sup>79</sup>

Giuseppe Battaglia's poems *La terra vuota* and *La piccola valle di Alí* are centred 'around the backward agricultural setting of Aliminusa, a small town near Palermo that was stripped of its pride through history, leaving only the dialect as an (inadequate) weapon to fight for the people, in their silent suffering and shameless exploitation' (Haller, 1999: 307). The passionate tone in Giuseppe Battaglia's poems, Haller (*ibid.*) notes, 'is often reminiscent of Buttitta's'.

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<sup>79</sup> [Trans.] 'The further Inspector Montalbano – converted by Camilleri's readers into a strongly mythically charged symbol – is rooted in his ethnic space (environment, words, food and so on), the more he assumes universal, and therefore familiar, connotations to readers of the most diverse cultures'



Grillandi (1976: 204) writes that French television produced a programme on Buttitta, together with Cicciu Busacca, and Borelli (1969: 397) notes that 'In 1963 the BBC of London broadcast a program on his life and works'. Privitera (2004: 88) writes

Sicilian poetry has suffered a grave loss...another brother has left us: Ignazio Buttitta. With him a vibrant voice of the Sicilian people has disappeared. He was ninety-seven years old. A poet, a story-teller, a poet of the streets...[he interpreted] the soul of his people.

Buttitta is renowned for his social and political commitment and he uses poetry not only to draw attention to issues but to elevate the troubles of the poor through the language of the working classes. He depicts significant Sicilian events in a poetic narrative, revitalizing the traditional forms of the 'cantastorie'. His voice grows ever angrier as his poetic anthologies progress, retreating slightly towards the end of his life and writing career into reflection and gentler tones of introspection and contemplation. Levi (2007: 10) writes

Buttitta è noto soprattutto per i suoi canti popolari, per quelli che i cantastorie van cantando sui vecchi motivi: le cantate di Carnevale, di Portella della Ginestra, di Giuliano, e così via; e per le poesie popolari di protesta e il feroce lamento del libro *Lu pani si chiama pani*. In tutte queste opere il motivo poetico è in quell'epica popolare, che trova nei suoi versi forme linguistiche nuove e piene di violenze.<sup>80</sup>

Cocchiara (1963, cited in Grillandi, 1976: 202) described *Marabedda* as 'un lungo canto d'amore la cui voce richiama le sinfonie dell'usignolo'<sup>81</sup> and Pasolini (ibid.), in 1952, defined the poem as 'un retorico canto d'amore

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<sup>80</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta is best known for his popular songs, for those which the "storysingers" go about singing on the old motifs: the songs of Carnevale, Portella della Ginestra, of Giuliano, and so on; and for the popular poetry of protest and the fierce lament of the book *Lu pani si chiama pani*. In all of these works the poetic motive is in that popular epic, which in his verses finds linguistic forms that are new and full of violence'

<sup>81</sup> [Trans.] 'a long love song whose voice recalls the symphonies of the nightingale'

mescolato a dannunziani richiami per una vita primitiva<sup>82</sup>. Grillandi remarks that 'Non era ancora quella la strada di Buttitta, che un venticinquennio piú tardi innesterà piú proficuamente la propria vena sentimentale in un anelito di rivolta e di riforma sociale'<sup>83</sup>. Tedesco (1965: 13) defends the importance of the work, however, whilst underlining that it initially fell into an undesired category that would not come to define Buttitta's work: 'Pure, questi e altrettali versi piacquero molto allora, e però qui vi si è fatto riferimento per mostrare chi e che cosa doveva opporsi Buttitta per diventare il poeta che egli è oggi'<sup>84</sup>. Of *Pani*, Grillandi (1976: 205) notes

Qui già la descrizione del paesaggio è sottesa a un impeto polemico e, a contrapposizione del sole che spunta dal mare, ecco appaiono le madri povere, che danno proprio quel sole come cibo ai lattanti, e gli zappatori sono senza terra e poco pane e obbediscono già a quella liturgia che verrà instaurata da Buttitta, che vuole i poveri anche connotati in modo diverso nei confronti dell'altra gente.<sup>85</sup>

By the time of *Trenu*, Grillandi (ibid.: 206) observes that Buttitta, 'piú consapevolmente, tende già a far rinverdire la tradizione dei cantastorie isolani'<sup>86</sup>, and 'Il suo modello non è piú Domenico Tempio, "u profissuri", ma i canti anonimi che Ciccio Busacca e gli altri giullari popolari vanno declamando per tutta l'isola'<sup>87</sup>. Grillandi (ibid.: 207) claims, *Peddi*, more so

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<sup>82</sup> [Trans.] 'a rhetorical love song blended with D'annunzian calls for a primitive life'

<sup>83</sup> [Trans.] 'It was not yet the path of Buttitta, who, twenty-five years later, will more successfully engage his sentimental vein in an appeal of rebellion and social reform'

<sup>84</sup> [Trans.] 'Indeed, these and other verses were much liked at the time, and yet here reference is made to show who and what was to oppose Buttitta in becoming the poet he is today'

<sup>85</sup> [Trans.] 'Here the description of the landscape is subdued to a controversial impetus and, opposed to the sun rising from the sea, here are the poor mothers, who give that sun as food to infants, and the zappers are earthless and have little bread and already obey that liturgy that will be established by Buttitta, who wants the poor also connoted in a different way to other people'

<sup>86</sup> [Trans.] 'more consciously, already tending to revive the tradition of the storyteller islanders'

<sup>87</sup> [Trans.] 'His model is no longer Domenico Tempio, "the professor", but the anonymous songs that Ciccio Busacca and the other popular jesters go about the whole island declaiming'

than *Trenu*, 'raggiunge in pieno il suo scopo che è quello di una orgogliosa, e perfino superba rappresentazione di un tempo: il nostro, e di un popolo: quello siciliano'<sup>88</sup>. Finally, by the time of *Piazza* (1974), Grillandi (1976: 213) observes that 'Qui il poeta dialettale e popolare [...] si fa interprete di una cruda condizione popolare: quella della rabbia e dell'odio'<sup>89</sup>. Of his linguistic choice, Buttitta (1981, in Della Monica, 1981: 36) claims 'Non l'ho preferito io, è nato con me il mio dialetto'<sup>90</sup>.

#### 1.4.4. Dialect as Linguistic Choice

De Renzo (2008: 46) underlines that in Italy, even in the 1950s, data confirms 'una conoscenza dell'italiano molto modesta'<sup>91</sup>. From this period onwards, industrialization and urbanization, 'con la forte emigrazione interna in direzione Sud-Nord; l'estensione dell'accesso all'istruzione e soprattutto l'ascolto televisivo immettono con forza l'italiano nei circuiti comunicativi quotidiani'<sup>92</sup> (ibid.). Haller (1996: 74) notes

Outside Tuscany and Rome, the literary standard was, until the mid-twentieth century, a variety which belonged for the most part to an educated élite, and which most writers had to acquire as 'second language', since the dialects constituted the real mother tongues for the vast majority of the population.

Linguistic purism would exorcise dialect from literature, 'believing it inappropriate for a literary language to be too close to everyday speech' (Maiden, 1995: 7). 'But not only was Italian structurally remote from the

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<sup>88</sup> [Trans.] 'fully achieves its purpose, which is that of a proud, and even superb, representation of a time: ours, and a people: the Sicilian one'

<sup>89</sup> [Trans.] 'Here, the dialectal and popular poet [...] becomes an interpreter of a crude popular condition: that of rage and hatred'

<sup>90</sup> [Trans.] 'I didn't give preference to it, my dialect was born with me'

<sup>91</sup> [Trans.] 'a very modest knowledge of Italian'

<sup>92</sup> [Trans.] 'with strong internal emigration from South to North; the extension of access to education and, moreover, listening to the television strongly emit Italian into daily communicative circuits'

everyday speech of most Italians, it was also functionally remote, in that it had remained elevated above the needs of everyday life' (ibid.: 8). We can observe that the formation of unified identity became key in the paralleled construction of linguistic unity, 'since language generally plays a central role in determining the character of a national identity' (Caviedes, 2003: 250), exemplified in Susini's (1981, in Della Monica, 1981: 30) equation that 'lingua codificata = unità'<sup>93</sup>. Mullen (1996: 4) notes

The repression of subordinated cultures and languages by the dominant culture and language is paralleled by, and frequently associated metonymically with, other repressed elements that erupt from the 'unconscious' of the text to disturb, contradict, or at least complicate its conscious signification.

And is this not linguistic escapism, to some degree? A desire to use dialect 'to tear up the margins, to go far away, to "run off the road"', in Zanzotto's words (1997, cited in Balma, 2011: 6). This sense of choice is relevant as the translations address transferral of sociolinguistic messages in Buttitta's poetry (in Chapters 2–4).

Della Monica (1981: 11) describes use of dialect as 'uno dei fenomeni più estesi, diffusi e resistenti del nostro Paese'<sup>94</sup> and Brevini (1989: 13) highlights a point that has come to be one of this study's most central interrogations of Buttitta, 'perché egli con un gesto contraddittorio, anacronistico, in apparenza scarsamente motivato, sceglie di scrivere in dialetto?'<sup>95</sup>. Brevini (ibid.: 22) suggests that 'La poesia dialettale contemporanea nasce in queste nuove aree di individualismo e soggettività, "mondi vitali", "province finite di significato" contrapposti al mondo collettivo

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<sup>93</sup> [Trans.] 'Codified language = unity'

<sup>94</sup> [Trans.] 'one of the most extensive, diffused and resistant phenomena of our Country'

<sup>95</sup> [Trans.] 'why with a contradictory, anachronistic gesture, apparently scarcely motivated, does he choose to write in dialect?'

del sistema sociale'<sup>96</sup>. Referring to the decade 1945–55, Zinna (1997: 415) writes that Buttitta's poetry was 'modeled on the rhythms of popular songs, which present moments of crude realism, whose function is to involve, ideologically and emotionally, the people who – implicitly or explicitly – are always his privileged interlocutors'. His poetry laments war and the effects of ruling forces on 'the Sicilian people, deprived of its potential for self-realization, oppressed by ancient and new dominations' (ibid.: 417). There is a world lying on the outskirts of both the poet's linguistic world and the reality of the place in which this linguistic world is spoken. The choice to use dialect can be seen, metaphorically, as a means of drawing attention to the dominant world that is ever-encroaching on the poet, whilst escaping from it into a language that cannot be entered by exterior forces.

Brevini (1989: 22) remarks that the use of dialect 'autorizza anche il poeta a compiere la deviazione linguistica, che lo conduce a recuperare la propria individuativissima parlata'<sup>97</sup>. As Haller (1996: 74) writes, 'It is probably no coincidence if historically some of the most flourishing periods of dialect poetry coincide with political and linguistic crisis' and Zinna (1997: 415) writes of Buttitta that 'the poet soon takes to the piazzas, recovering an archaic orality, spurred by the very use of dialect'. I draw a comparison here with what Duranti (2006: 294) writes about Belli's usage of his dialect 'l'uso di un linguaggio vivacemente osceno gioca un ruolo importante di autenticità ma anche di liberazione da reticenze e repressioni implicite nel linguaggio formale e colto'<sup>98</sup>, noting the difference between Belli's dialect sonnets and the 'ultra-convenzionali e incredibilmente piatte composizioni in italiano dello

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<sup>96</sup> [Trans.] 'Contemporary dialect poetry arises in these new areas of individualism and subjectivity, "vital worlds", "finite provinces of meaning" as opposed to the collective world of the social system'

<sup>97</sup> [Trans.] 'also authorizes the poet to carry out linguistic deviation, which leads him to recover his own most singular speech'

<sup>98</sup> [Trans.] 'the use of a lively, obscene language plays an important role of authenticity but also of liberation from implicit reticences and repressions in formal and cultured language'

stesso Belli per misurare il contrasto ideologico e linguistico tra i due modi – e mondi – di espressione'<sup>99</sup> (ibid.).

Forgacs (2004, cited in Hargan, 2006: 58) argues on the subject of Roman varieties in the film, *Roma, città aperta*, that this 'reappropriates Rome for its ordinary citizens and erases the traces of the Fascist regime', suggesting that these dialogues are actualizations of 'linguistic resistance' and 'alternative uses of language' (ibid.: 59). Hargan (2006: 58–59) concludes from this that

in its linguistic strategy, the film also reappropriates language for ordinary citizens, after the rhetorical excesses associated with Fascism, with its emphasis on promoting a national language for purposes of aggrandizement and its view of dialect as belonging to an earlier world.

Hargan sees resistance, then, in the strategic use of this decentralized dialogue, 'with its humour and non-cooperation with the Nazi and Fascist authorities' (ibid.: 59) as resistance that overwrites the imposed new norm. In instances of the loss of the regional, we can therefore sense submission, a 're-channelling' of diluted attitudes (Hargan, 2006: 62). Insubordination is expressed through the use of dialect and Forgacs (2004, cited in Hargan, ibid.: 64) sustains that such devices

are among the ruses of power available to subaltern peoples in situations of domination in which they have no legal outlets to express dissent. In creating horizontal cohesion among the dominated, they may be said to constitute in themselves an 'art of resistance'.

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<sup>99</sup> [Trans.] 'ultra-conventional and incredibly flat compositions in Italian by the self-same Belli to measure the ideological and linguistic contrast between the two modes – and world – of expression'

Haller (1999: 307) writes of Mario Grasso, in whose poems 'memory becomes a metaphor for existence. For Grasso, the dialect represents *o' munnu di la virità*,<sup>100</sup> the language of the father, of the dead'.

Restoration and loss are dominant themes in dialect poetry, applying the language simultaneously as both a counterfactual tool (a means of constructing a region that would seem to perish from living memory if its language were to die) and a means of realist writing, which conjures an enduring sense of place. Consolo (1993, in Francese, 2005: 48) writes that he 'exhumes a specific lexical patrimony, names objects, evokes characters emblematic of a vanished world', and Brevini (1986: 689) notes that dialect emerges as '*verità dimenticata, come territorio profondo che resiste alle trasformazioni*'<sup>101</sup>. For this reason, regional cuisine, local streets, familial scenarios and local folklore abound in dialect poetry that directs itself away from the centrifugal pull of classical poetry or the illusive canon of Italian poetry.

Regional identity presented in writing – as in dialect poetry – and regional identity in motion – as enacted through the process of translation from dialect – reiterate an image of exile. The notion of distance or removal from a place and the pursuit of defining and capturing that place as if it were lost characterizes the poetry of Ignazio Buttitta, for whom Sicily was temporarily absent. Writing in the Sicilian dialect became, for Buttitta, a means of bridging a gap, a means of evoking a place that he no longer inhabited through the language belonging to his island. Loss and pursuit feature in Buttitta's writing, reinforcing nostalgia and hope simultaneously. The fragility of identity that resides in language but also the weapon that this language may provide exist in polarized tones throughout his body of work.

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<sup>100</sup> [Trans.] 'the world of truth'

<sup>101</sup> [Trans.] 'forgotten truth, like a profound territory that resists transformations'

Contini (2007: 36) refers to 'le tue mani ladre'<sup>102</sup> in a letter of 30 June 1981 to the poet, and Buttitta returns repeatedly to the idea that language is an entity that may be stolen, usurped, and forbidden, rendering it both an active weapon and a defensive shield. Eco (1981, in Della Monica, 1981: 39) summarizes the use of dialect diplomatically, prioritizing the issue of choice:

il problema del ricupero delle tradizioni dialettali e del dialetto come lingua di base, capace di favorire la comunicazione di valori locali, in alternativa ai valori imposti dai mezzi di massa, ritorna come problema di un 'ricupero di autonomia'. In altri termini, il dialetto è una condanna per chi non ha mai potuto impadronirsi della lingua nazionale; ma deve essere una possibilità positiva per chi lo può scegliere come secondo strumento espressivo.<sup>103</sup>

Brevini (1989: 22) writes that 'la scelta del dialetto obbediva ad una precisa convenzione retorica e letteraria, legata ad un contesto comunicativo e soprattutto ad un pubblico ben identificati'<sup>104</sup>.

### **1.5. Buttitta in Translation: Preface to the folios**

The thesis now puts forward the creative and practical component of the research. The following folios present translations of Buttitta's poetry in English, divided according to three lines of exploration that have emerged as prominent markers within this chapter: linguistic, cultural and spatial, and sociopolitical. These three angles, although interrelated, are natural divisions stemming from discussion thus far and, within these divisions, I explore

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<sup>102</sup> [Trans.] 'your thieving hands'

<sup>103</sup> [Trans.] 'the problem of the recovery of dialectal traditions and of the dialect as a basic language, capable of favouring the communication of local values, as an alternative to the values imposed by mass media, returns as a problem of a "recovery of autonomy". In other words, dialect is a condemnation for those who have never been able to master the national language; but it must be a positive possibility for those who can choose it as a second means of expression'

<sup>104</sup> [Trans.] 'the choice of dialect obeyed a precise rhetorical and literary convention, linked to a communicative context and above all to a well-identified public'



various strategies. Haller (1992: 556), discussing Brevini's 1990 *Le parole perdute* discusses the motivations for writing in dialect, namely 'as a lost language of the past (sociological and ideological reasons); as a nostalgic and mythical language (psychological and autobiographical motives); or as the mother tongue (linguistic and stylistic reasons)'. I decided to explore, with minor adaptation, these three key motivations. Regarding the structural format of the folios, I have based my focal points (dispersed amongst the folios) loosely around Jones' (2011: 30–31) criteria:

- *Rhythm (metre)*
- *Other sound features*
- *Conventional approach and theme: the lyric, for example, or love poetry*
- *Parallelism, where one text segment echoes another in syntactic and/or semantic terms*
- *Deviation from norms of syntax*
- *Associative and register-specific meaning*
- *Reference to implicit background knowledge*
- *Ambiguous or multiple meanings*
- *Image and metaphor*

Each translation is presented as a sub-section, accompanied by a commentary, providing a description of process and transfer. These commentaries oscillate between attention paid to methodology and translational practice and broader discourse of Buttitta's poetics, at times using the content or style of the poetry to explore the poet's purpose, thematic overtones, and the poetic function of the dialect. The translated poems themselves vary in style and format, sometimes in playful experimentation, and other times in order to more effectively explore the strategy in place.

Owing to Buttitta's extensive poetic production, 27 poems have been selected (9 per folio); they traverse Buttitta's lifetime of writing, with poems from his early years up to his last anthology and are exemplary of the

exploratory themes that I apply to their interpretation. In their anthology of Buttitta's collected works, Buttitta and Buttitta (2007: 330) note that 'Una peculiarità delle opere di Ignazio Buttitta è il fatto che spesso esse raccolgono testi di tempi diversi'<sup>105</sup>. I have, within each individual folio, presented the poems in chronological order; in this way, we see the gradual evolution of style and theme.

The premise for the commentary is that the practice helped me to reflect on cultural transfer and representation of the foreign in English translation; it called for reflection and for an introspective analysis of cultural handling. Krzywoszynska (2015: 312) writes that the narration of 'attending to the challenges of translation helped my reflexivity around research practice'. Likewise, Jordan (2002: 107) has noted

self-narration is inescapably one of the things we do when we write and translate culture, that this can still retain scholarly qualities and that there will always be, in cultural translation, a tension between field diary (the self) and field notes (the other).

The main criticism of this approach is lack of objectivity and Weissbort (1989: xi) writes that 'few can be so detached that they are able to function creatively and to observe and comment on themselves at the same time'. Yet it has its uses, 'perhaps as an exercise in self-awareness' (ibid.), and the approach also promotes a conscious awareness of choices made, which, in terms of cultural translation is key, 'when what is needed is a principled approach from which the rest would flow' (Bell, 1991: 27). Weissbort (1989: xi) suggests that, although detailed commentaries or translation monographs 'may well be on the way to becoming an accepted critical genre, there is a continuing need for

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<sup>105</sup> [Trans.] 'a peculiarity of Buttitta's works is the fact that they collate texts from different periods of time'

further sharing by a variety of translators of the kinds of insights that are not necessarily accommodated in the final text'.

In order to narrate the passage of dialect into a second language, I implement reflexive commentaries on work undertaken. While literary translators often use the preface to introduce their translation, at the end of this preface the discursive presence of the translator is usually concluded. Sturge (2007: 58) suggests that this practice tends to result in justification of choices made, or even in apology: 'The preface itself typically bemoans the difficulty of the task and the translator's own shortcomings, without, however, really retracting his or her authority to have made the translation'.

I incorporate a more in-depth translation commentary because it permits a backstage, 'translator's cut' experience for the reader. At times, the commentary is inserted within the translation itself, the narration of the process becoming part of the reflexive strategy. Again, Sturge (*ibid.*: 66) suggests of reflexive approaches that they 'can turn attention to the processes of cross-cultural communication and of translation itself'. My position is an interesting one, for, as Jones (2011: 113) claims, 'I am both translating subject and researcher. This gives a rich insider view'. The problematic elements of my position (lack of distance and objective opinion) mean that I fully accept the self-evaluative stance. I am aware that this exploration is subjective; indeed, it is my intention that these working translation folios be so, a catalogue of my choices, decisions, considerations and challenges. Perteghella and Loffredo (2006: 7) write of a 'privileged exploratory space', worth quoting at length:

Translation logs and diaries, drafts or think-aloud protocols, or acts of self-translation – in other words, everything recording the process of translation, as it unfolds in the mind of the translator – represent an important attempt to trace the self-reflection of a translational development: the target text turns into the inscription of the translating

subjectivity in the act of self-reflection and ultimately self-translation. Thus, translation is revealed to be a privileged exploratory space in which many voices converge and reshape each other. Whether the translator's or the author's, these voices become, in translation, performances of personae interrelated.

The notion of tracing self-reflection is explored throughout this thesis, relating to an examination of the benefits of incorporating an ethnographic stance when translating from dialect. Relevant here, though, is the way in which such exploratory space might be rendered as part of an interactive process of translation. These procedures, in rendering the TT as a subjective interpretation, transcribe the translator's input and can be used to communicate this input, making process part of product.

I describe only my translation, not wishing to make the mistake of those described by Neubert and Shreve (1992: 11), who 'proceed to propose their perfectly legitimate, but particular, statements as global ones'. Being aware of the negative possibilities of that approach, I offer no objective judgements, only descriptive analysis, reflexive commentary and evaluative conclusions based on the extent to which I feel the individual and varied strategies resolve (or fail to resolve) certain challenges specific to the rendering of Buttitta's depiction of Sicilian culture and the poet's individual application of Sicilian dialect. Translation strategy, defined by Lörcher (1991: 76) as 'a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language to another' concentrates on practice and the development of best practice, in line with the subjective demands of each poem or my objective for the outcome of the poem, rather than being applied translation theory. I 'try to indicate the kinds of things the formal translator has to think of and cope with, and something of the aggravations of being balked, and the pleasure – or at least the relief – of discovering solutions' (Moffett, 1989: 152).

## 1.6. Concluding remarks

This chapter has examined the specific characteristics of dialect as a medium of expression, both historically and in relation to Buttitta's poetry. In order to differentiate from Standard Italian, the Sicilian dialect will henceforth be referred to as such, for reasons of clarity and consistency. This is also in keeping with contextual usage of the term within its own meta-narrative (neo-dialect poetry, dialect poets, dialectal writing, and so on). Italy holds on tightly to its dialects, under both political and personal guises. 'L'Italia è il paese delle piccole patrie, di una struttura policentrica, della diversificazione linguistica e culturale'<sup>106</sup> (Comune, 2013: 30). Whilst a lingua franca allows us to communicate easily, other stories lie in other tongues. Haller (1999: 7) insists that 'At a crucial moment when national borders are becoming more fluid, and when nation-states are merging into a united European continent, the urge for a redefinition of regional identities takes on particular importance'. Whether it is more or less important now than it ever was, I shall leave for the reader to decide, but translation of these works is paramount, if for no other reason than the fact that, as Haller (ibid.: 4) observes, 'there is a lack of broad panoramic views of the literary treasures in *dialect*.'

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<sup>106</sup> [Trans.] 'Italy is the country of the little homelands, of a polycentric structure, of linguistic and cultural diversification'

## Chapter Two, Folio One

### Linguistic Rendering

#### 2.1. Foreword to Folio 1

Following discussion of linguistic distinctions between 'dialect' and 'language', the first folio takes as its subject a linguistic exploration of the rendering of Buttitta's Sicilian dialect in English translation. The translations explore predominantly linguistic strategies, with sections on metrical equivalence, phonology, rhyme, semantic analysis, syntactic equivalence, literal translation, transfer of style and dialectal symbolism, lexical transfer and neutralization and substitution. Malone (1988: 4) discusses 'Primary Organizational Components', which he breaks down into the categories of Semantics, Syntax, Phonology, and Phonetics. I have aimed, following this, to explore these key components. Armstrong (2005: 4) puts forward three levels of linguistic analysis 'phonology (the sound level); grammar, comprising morphology (word formation) and syntax (sentence formation); and lexis (vocabulary)'. I have loosely based this folio on exploration of these levels, sometimes in isolation and, other times, in overlapping analysis.

Whilst only natural to attempt to render all desirable features in translation, I have chosen to concentrate on specific features in categorized sections, for the ease and attention of the reader, and in order to focus at length on each strategy. Holmes (1988: 86) states that translators have a '*hierarchy* of correspondences', meaning that a preference will come to be expressed for one or several elements of the poem over others. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 21) argue that words have accumulative meanings, in which case 'the translation may be able to retain only one signified, preferably that which in the context has priority. This is the reason why it is almost impossible to fully translate poetry'. Raffel (1988: 38) notes

To understand truly requires more than merely mechanical application of 'rules.' The translator must first be able to decipher, through the shifting, sometimes miasmatic web which language weaves out of phonology, syntax, and lexicon (vocabulary), the 'true' meaning of what he is translating. That is, the translator must first understand, as fully as possible, his text.

I attempt to provide my understanding of the overall text, whilst focusing in detail on one or more of my prioritized elements and I accompany this focus with an overview of the poem in question. I have chosen to include the originals alongside the translations, for ease of reference, and also in terms of comparing the translation choices with the original language.

### **2.1.1. Linguistic Rendering**

The objective is to explore linguistic means of transferring dialect, examining the role of dialect as non-normative linguistic choice. Weisstein (1962: 236) remarks 'Dialect literature, as the majority of contemporary writers on the subject define it, presupposes an author's awareness of the difference between his creations and those of his more universally recognised fellow artists'. In light of this, we may address the subaltern function of dialect as a linguistic tool. Linguistic analysis is also often the means by which poetry translations come to be evaluated. Jones (2011: 10) remarks:

Turning now to poetry translation as product, there are many published critiques of translated poetry, typically based on contrastive analyses of source and target texts in terms of linguistic and stylistic features. Their main focus is often on the writers and texts in question, and therefore implications for poetry translation in general tend to be brief or implicit.

Jones concludes, though, that such analysis can 'support further poetry translation research, particularly in linking poetry translation into a broader theoretical framework' (ibid.: 11). Armstrong (2005: 1) suggests that 'linguistic problems, being "structural" and hence built into a text, may be less visible, and capable therefore of inducing a lack of awareness in the translator that a problem is being posed'. As 'language is central both to thought and to cultural identity' (ibid.: 3), it seemed appropriate to begin with a linguistic-orientated exploration. With Newmark's (1988, cited in Armstrong, 2005: 4) comment, that 'any translation is an exercise in applied linguistics', the initial translation practice became centred around dialect as a language system.

Discussion of linguistic-orientated translation strategies could not proceed fully without acknowledgement of the concept of equivalence. Erdinast-Vulcan (2012: 41) suggests that 'translation is both the same and other, both familiar and strange [...], taking place between a "source language" (a home-language, as it were) and a "target language", a language of "arrival"'. This outlook prompted me to consider the seemingly steadfast concepts of 'source' and 'target' respectively, and to develop an approach that explored the middle ground in more detail. TS discourse often seeks the finite and the permanent in translation practice but it would be more fruitful to address the multiplicity of potentials within interpretation of a text. This concept of two texts (source text and target text, henceforth ST and TT) I find to be a limiting approach when translating because the inference that one text must be drawn out of another suggests that there is but one content to be transferred, which reduces the interpretive scope of textuality when, conversely, it is translation that ought to open up the interpretive potentials of a text.

This brings us on to address function, as the 'most common notion of translation per se in a prototypical sense views a translation as having the same text function as the original or serving the same intended function' (Krein-Kühle, 2014: 22). Whilst this is fitting for non-literary text whose



function is the transfer of information for specific purposes, the function of a literary text is rather more difficult to identify; functional constancy is perhaps too volatile and changeable a premise to put forward as the 'defining criterion of translation' (ibid.: 23). Function as regards subjective intention, however, is a concept that may be examined in a more useful light, for the purposes of literary translation, as it defines function as personal and as relevant to a particular interpretation in a specific context. 'Indeed, it is almost a truism that a meaningful notion of equivalence must consider extra-linguistic/extra-textual factors, but certainly cannot rely on such factors, such as purpose, alone' (Krein-Kühle, 2014: 21). It is more fitting, in this case, to address subjectivity (or function as subjective) within the spectrum of interpretation. The role of subjective interpretation is the reason for which the concept of equivalence in translation is problematic, not because it is necessarily impossible, but because it appears as something akin to tampering with the natural potentials of meaning. Bellos (2011: 309) outlines the fact that 'The only certainty is that a match cannot be the same as the thing that it matches' and Folena (1991: 5) argues that 'equivalenza non significa identità, neppure per il senso'<sup>107</sup>.

That the receptor language is capable of producing a translation that is entirely equal in value may or may not be possible; it may be possible at certain points of the text, whilst not at others. Lefevere (1975a: 28) writes that 'one equivalent is as good as another' in terms of compromises made in poetry translation, which suggests that multiple elements of equal value may be possible and that, to this end, it is more productive to write not of 'equivalence but equivalents' (ibid.).

'The term roughly assumes that, on some level, a source text and a translation can share the same value, and that this assumed sameness is what

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<sup>107</sup> [Trans.] 'equivalence does not mean identical, not even in terms of sense'

distinguishes translations from all other kinds of texts' (Pym, 2010: 6). 'Equivalent in value' suggests that the words generate the significance that they would were they to be read in the original language; the reader-context therefore plays a firm role in defining temporally relevant equivalence. The readership is taken into consideration by Dryden in *Preface to the Fables* (1700), who wished that his readership be able to read Vergil in 'such English as he would himself have spoken, if he had been born in England, and in this present age' (cited in Schulte and Biguenet, 1992: 26). This approach is heavily domesticated and 'creates an illusion of remembrance which helps to embody the foreign work into the national repertoire' (Steiner, 1998: 365). O'Neill (2012: 129) criticizes the pursuit of equivalence for precisely this reason, in that it results in translation practice that is centred around the TT:

Possibly the most entrenched and unquestioned preconception at the root of translation theory is that of the function of translation being purely the transferal of meaning. This leads to an automatic judgement of a translation based on notions such as equivalence or domestication, in turn bringing the focus on to the target-text: whether it is loyal to the original or not, or whether it reads in the target-text as though it had originated there.

Equivalence in the sense of duplicate meaning via a different word in a different language is practical when transferring units of information that are operative, as House (1997) has outlined. The difference, I would argue, is that operative translation has as its aim the wish to transport information that will be formulated in order to operate something outside of the text, i.e., an appliance. Poetic translation, meanwhile, is introspective, and seeks translation as a means of continual search for meaning within the text. It is language that seeks attention as language, rather than as instruction. Parks (2014: 4) observes that

translation draws attention to itself as language rather than simply as content. In this regard it partakes of the arrogance of literature. That is, experience tells us that it is literature that usually assumes the right to deviate from more ordinary ways of saying things, to draw attention to itself as language. True, its deviations often then atrophy into the conventions of a recognizable poetic style, but it is characteristic of the most dynamic literature to deviate even from these.

If it is the aim of poetic translation to draw attention to the language, it is also the translation that must seek to explore meaning between languages; that is, to explore the very essence of meaning and recreation of meaning. In seeking to identify function and intention, when addressing interpretation, it is this lack of grounded, finite interpretation that poetry *intends* to highlight. Parks (ibid.: 9) elaborates on this:

We can all agree that the intention of a technical manual is to explain something, the purpose of a contract to establish a series of terms and conditions, but can we feel so confident when considering a poem or a novel? [...] We might almost say that its intention is to avoid being seen to have a limited intention.

This outlook is simultaneously freer and more problematic. If we remove the burden of finite intention or fixed interpretation, the translator is left with nothing tangible except the acceptance of the value of subjective interpretation. Yet it is necessary to observe manifold components of the text to which the translator can be more or less 'faithful', which often runs against rather more reductive dichotomies, of which TS has a long history.

Strict polar opposites dominate much of the discourse in a way that, whilst providing rigid working methodologies, often do nothing to dispel the notion of firm divides between 'original' and 'translation', between 'author' and 'translator', between 'source' and 'target'. It appears to me that the 'target' is in keeping with the dichotomy of 'good or bad' translations and successes

or failures, which is not to say that these do not exist. But these are reductive points of departure as there is little attention dedicated to the passage between the texts. France (1997: 7) notes that 'theorists and critics of translation [...] have worked for the recognition of the essential and creative role played by the art, questioning the supposed difference between "original creation" and translation'. Jones (2011: 43) draws attention to 'the sheer variety of relationships between source and target poem that seem allowed in the modern poetry translator's habitus', noting:

What appears to distinguish translating poetry from translating most other genres is the attitude to textual equivalence – that is, degree and type of 'sameness'. Achieving semantic and functional equivalence is central to the technical translator's habitus (ibid.).

Eco (2001: 11) makes poetry an exception to equivalence, arguing that 'If we translate term by term in accordance with a criterion of synonymy in order to preserve the propositional content' such equivalence 'cannot hold for poetic utterances' (ibid.). Bell (1991: 6) asks 'If equivalence is to be "preserved" at a particular level at all costs, which level is it to be?' In line with this, I have selected specific criteria and aligned my translation practice with a particular focus for each poem of this folio, aiming to explore certain levels of equivalence over others. In exploring specific areas of equivalence, I feel that equal attention is paid to the ST and TT, at least in terms of engaging with the prioritized element under consideration. The notion of equivalence can, at times, be helpful, but only when the translator takes it as a more elusive, philosophical engagement with the nature of meaning.

Holmes (1988: 53) argues that equivalence 'like "sameness", is asking too much' and puts forth instead the ideal of 'counterparts', suggesting that, in seeking these, 'the translator is constantly faced by choices, choices he can

make only on the basis of his individual grasp (knowledge, sensibility, experience...) of the two languages and cultures involved, and with the aid of his personal tastes and preferences'. This element of choice foregrounds the subjective and personal relationship with poetic meaning, in stark contrast with the formal, rather more unyielding concept of equivalence. Such an attitude exalts equivalence as a feature pursuable as a result of a personal journey through the poem, rather than as a pre-existing element that is innate to the craft of translation; subjective engagement foregrounds equivalence as a relative rather than omnipotent aspect, the pursuit of equal value through exploration of meaning. Egan (1987: 227) suggests that it is in the very essence of language that poetic significance rests, referring to

a misapprehension about poetry: the idea that it is essentially a word-game rather than a raid on the truth, an attempt to put words on some intuition/idea/feeling, some insight which precedes language and which never finds perfect expression because all words are metaphors, middlemen to experience.

The pursuit of equivalence in meaning, at the expense of literal translation, is explored in this folio; the 'raid on the truth' is sought, but it is sought frequently on a lexical basis and through means and ways governed by language because it is the essence of the dialect as a form of language that I seek to represent. The following folio attempts to represent Buttitta's dialectal voice, and the significance of the dialect as a linguistic choice and vehicle for his poetry.

### **2.1.2. Selection Process**

Poems selected for this folio begin with Buttitta's earliest works. 'Lu Cuntu' and 'Lu Scioperu' are from Buttitta's earliest anthology, *Sintimintali* (1923). 'Lu Cuntu' is subject to a metrical translation approach, focusing on rhythmic

mirroring, while 'Lu Scioperu' receives a semantic exploration. 'La Povira Genti' follows on chronologically (from *Prime*, 1922–1954) and has been selected in order to explore Buttitta's social commitment on a thematic level and to render rhyme on a linguistic level. 'Comu l'àutri' is used for syntactic analysis of dialectal transfer (also following chronologically from *Prime*) and 'Jvanca' (*Prime*) follows as fifth selection to explore literal translation in order to ascertain whether this process permits a more engaged rendering of dialect. 'Un Cristu Ncruci' (*Pani*, 1954) discusses foreignized and domesticated translation strategies. 'La Peddi Nova' explores lexical transfer, and the eighth poem is 'Ncuntravu u Signuri' (*Poeta*, 1972), which moves forward into Buttitta's later works but maintains the thematic discourse of religious imagery, allowing for an exploration of transfer of linguistic symbolism. The final poem selected is 'Lingua e dialettu' (*Poeta*, 1972), which addresses the transfer of phonosymbolic nuance.

## **2.2. 'Lu Cuntu' / 'The Storytale' (*Sintimintali*, 1923)**

A metrical strategy has been chosen in order to explore the rhythms of Sicilian, looking at where the stresses lie and seeking, where possible, to mimic these. Experimenting with metre was a first step towards capturing the Sicilian rhythm in English. Leppihalme (2000: 250) writes that we may observe in the original 'the authorial representation of dialectal intonation and sentence rhythm shown largely through word order and punctuation, for instance the frequent use of suspension points', adding that there is 'practically no phonological or syntactic variation' in the TL. I interpret this to mean that the TT is often punctuated in a formal manner, which tends to reflect the written standard whereas dialectal texts attempt to capture the mannerisms and rhythm of the spoken language. A strategy focusing on metrical transfer could help to maintain the rhythm of the original and would be more likely to concentrate on the specific emphasis of the words and their order.

Yet Lefevere (1975a: 37) has a rather negative view of the implications of metrical translation, which to him implies that the 'translator is not rigorously bound by either sound or sense, and yet he can claim "fidelity" by staying within the metre of the source text, thus more or less preserving its outward form'. My intention is not to claim 'fidelity' at the expense of a good poetic translation but, rather, to focus on the prioritizing of one approach in order that the constraint inherent in such a strategy should highlight particular features of the poem and, moreover, provide a means of concentrating on the rendering of dialect. Raffel (1988: 21–22) draws attention to the differences between languages in terms of their rhythms and subsequent musicality, noting, for example, that the timing of syllable utterance in Italian renders it a 'syllable-timed' language since the type of rhythm 'is determined by the number of syllables (stressed or unstressed)' whereas English is a 'stress-timed' language because 'the stressed syllables in an utterance come at evenly spaced intervals' (ibid.) with those that are unstressed adapting to the speed of the utterance.

I look at the specific stress patterns of the syllables and, while I do not alter the natural emphasis in English, I attempt to place the words in such a way that the overall metre of the sentence is mirrored. Although Eco (2001: 88) writes that metre and rhyme 'are not linguistic, but rhetorical and stylistic, phenomena', since the sound of the poem is the first element that we come into contact with, I have chosen to begin my exploration by focusing on a rendering of these sounds and rhythms, specifically selecting 'Lu Cuntu' for its story-telling rhythm.

Buttitta's poem details murder through a child's eyes, centralizing a broken family. The powerlessness of the mother and child comes across in the poem; the vulnerability of women and children is a theme to which Buttitta's poetry returns constantly. The allusion of Sicily as 'mother' figure brings an immediate father figure to mind, whether or not this was Buttitta's intention.

We see the murder of the matriarch by the patriarch retold from a child's perspective, which adds an element of the macabre to the writing; the jovial, story-telling nature of the poem further emphasizes this effect and the childhood innocence accentuates the reversal of natural dynamics. Ascitutto (1977: 67) remarks of the Sicilian family dynamic that

The father is the head of the household who is expected to bring home the bread. He has complete trust in his wife, to whom he allocates the responsibility of rearing the children and handling the family finances—little as they may be. Thus, the mother becomes the centre of the family, which gives it both a patriarchal and a matriarchal quality.

The metre of the poem is important, as it forces itself onto the oral rendering of the poem with a rhythmic musicality. I have applied a form of think-aloud-protocol to this poem, charting a transcript of my commentary and decision-making. Writing of one poet's engagement with this practice, Jones (2011: 114) comments 'Though it is less clear whether it qualitatively changes translation processes, Jääskeläinen herself reports that she was more lexically literal when thinking aloud than when translating silently'. This awareness of my own decision-making increased choices made with the objective of effectively communicating culture. 'One of the things that "cultural translation" theory does best is to move beyond a focus on translations as (written or spoken) texts. The concern is with general cultural processes rather than with finite linguistic products' (Pym, 2010: 148). Neubert and Shreve (1992: 5) suggest that translation scholars need

to look at what happens to source texts during translation and describe the influence of cultural, linguistic, and textual factors on the processes and results of translation. Instead of promoting one or the other (process or product), they address translation



as simultaneously a *process* and a *result*, there is a product whose success or failure can be evaluated.

Here, this process has the intention of presenting the components and contents of a text along its journey. It is possible to present untranslatable elements along the way and during the process that may never be fully realized *as* translation, but that may be encountered *in* translation. What happens in this intertextual space does not necessarily arrive at the translation product, but is instrumental in the translation process and plays a fundamental role in the formulation of textual understanding on the part of the reader.

I have laid out the translation as follows: the original Sicilian poem, interspersed by my descriptive translation process, which gives, in full detail, my decisions based on syllabic matching but attempting, where possible, to render the TL naturally. **S** = Sicilian, **E** = English, and the numbers indicate first of all the line number, followed by the draft, for example, **E1.1** is the first draft of the first line of the English translation, and so on. I use dots of smaller or greater size to indicate the stress on each word and to indicate how I have matched this in the translation, respectively:

• ●

Rendered such, the stress of the syllables is highlighted by a bold, enlarged point. 'Lu cuntu', selected from Buttitta's first collection of poems, is distinctly song-like and rhymes at the ends of alternate lines in a 'crossed rhyme' pattern, an **abab** rhyme scheme. Although the form of the quatrain is popular in English poetry as well, this element may be overlooked as the pursuit of adequate rhymes would inevitably interfere with precise syllable matching.

. ● . . ● . ● . . ● .

S1 *Jtatti 'nterra 'ntra li scalunati*

My aim is to keep the syllable count as close as possible. The first line is 12 syllables, if 'ntra' is rendered as one. I read the poem aloud, listening to its sounds and rhythms. I translated literally, at first:

● . . ● . . ● . . ●

E1.1 *Flung to the ground down the flight of steps.*

This is 9 syllables and I worked to make it 12. In English each word in literal translation results monosyllabically, which lacks musicality. I played with the English words to make them adopt the silenced half-words in the Sicilian.

E1.2 *O'flung to the ground o-down the flight of steps*

This renders the translation mildly song-like and also mimics a rather theatrical way of recounting action. The action word begins the sentence in both languages, with 'Jtatti' rendered as 'O-flung', even though 'to cast' and 'to throw' were considered. 'Scalunati' is slightly problematic because it implies flights of steps that are interrupted by flat ground. This almost seems irrelevant, except that it firstly denotes a specific type of staircase found in Sicily and it also means the prepositions in the poem rely on an accurate rendering. 'Ntra' means 'amongst' or 'within' and implies space between the steps. The subject is missing in the Sicilian until the second line, 'Ognunu' (each one), which I chose to bring forward in English for clarity.

E1.3 *O'flinging themselves down upon the flight of steps*

The flight of steps remains singular, which is inaccurate, and also implies that they are sitting on the steps, rather than in between flights of steps.

. ● . . . ● . . . ● . ●

**E1.4** *A'flinging themselves down between the flights of steps*

This rendering solves several problems. The action word is rendered more jovial and childlike – almost like the way in which people gather before a performance. The landing space between the steps is evident in the English and the flights become multiple. The subject appears immediately in the English which is the only inaccuracy in a literal rendering but requires a reflexive verb to make more sense. The Sicilian verb is in the past tense while the English uses the present continuous.

. ● . . . ●● . ● . .

**S2** *Ognunu lu sò cuntu riccuntava*

**E2.1** *Each of them his tale he retold.*

This 8 syllable translation is problematic in several ways. It sounds stilted and uncomfortable, in the first instance. It also falls into the trap of making the ungendered subject in the Sicilian male in the English. This can be smoothed over as a generic use of masculine gender, which could also imply female children but it specifies something that in the original is not specified. This is difficult to overcome, as use of 'he' or 'she' becomes specific, again in a way that the original is not.

**E2.2** *Each one their tale they retold.*

**E2.3** *Each one of them their tale they retold*

This adds more syllables but is increasingly unstable as a smooth rendering. To return to the lyrical aspect of the poem and to remain in keeping with the colloquial and song-like use of the 'O' sound in the first line, I tried:

**E2.4** *Each of them their own tale went a'telling*

This is 10 syllables and uses the past-continuous to mirror the use of this tense in the Sicilian. It also introduces the possessive 'their own' to reinforce ownership in the way the article and pronoun function in Sicilian.

. ● . . . ● ● ● . ● .

**E2.5** *Each one of them their own tale went a'telling*

This is 11 syllables and has 5 stressed words in contrast to the 4 stressed words of the Sicilian.

● . . . . ● ● . . ● .

**S3** *Supra di li briganti, o di li fati*

. ● ● . . . ● ● .

**E3.1** *About brigands, or about fairies*

This fails, syllabically, and so I rendered it:

. . ● . . ● . . . ● ● .

**E3.2** *On the subject of brigands, or about fairies*

This is 12 syllables. I changed 'fairies' to 'faeries', which is only different orthographically but somehow captures a more mythical, enchanting and playful element to the content of the stories. I looked into the word 'fati' and found indeed a reference to 'faerie o faery kingdom' (OP, 2010: 1838). 'Briganti', rather more problematically, has direct links with Southern Italy, 'brigante' being a 'person who took part in the political and social unrest which took place in Southern Italy after the unification' (OP, 2010: 1579). It can be rendered as 'bandit, robber, brigand' but possibly conjures different and more generic connotations in English.

● . ● . . ● . . . ● .

S4 *Supra tutti 'ddi cosi chi pinsava*

. ● . . ● . ● . ● . ●

E4 *About anything that flitted through their minds*

Syllabically, this matches. 'Flitted' is an addition but is in keeping with the fanciful nature of fairies, and the light-hearted storytelling ambiance created thus far. Bell (1991: 9) notes

What has to be discovered in the text are the markers of the relationship between sender and receiver(s) (addressee relationship), the channel(s) selected for the transmission of the message (medium) and the function of the discourse (domain).

The addressee relationship in this poem is childhood friendship; the medium is the oral recounting of an event and the function (domain) is the imparting of information amongst friends in a regular, informal context.

. ● ● . ● . . ● . . ● .

S5 *'Cussì ogni sira sulevanu fari,*

This is 12 syllables.

. ● . ● .-.-. ●-.-. . ●

E5.1 *They used to spend every evening like this*

This is 12 syllables, although 'every' when pronounced could slip colloquially into 2 syllables, depending on the speaker, rendering the sentence as 11 syllables. I tried the sentence in a way that reflects the Sicilian syntax:

. ● . . . ● ● . ● . .

E5.2 *Like this they used to spend ev'ry evening*

This lacks naturalness and I tried:

● . . ● . . ● . . ● . .

E5.3 *This was the way they would spend all their evenings*

This sounds more natural and also matches the syllable count, at 12.

. ● . . . ● . . ● .

S6 *Li picciriddi tutti di la strata,*

This is 11 syllables and is matched with:

. ● . . ● . . ● . . ●

E6 *The young-er-sters all of 'em off of the street,*

This option plays on a known word, adapting it only marginally with the owned purpose both of syllable matching and of rendering the non-standard word 'picciriddi'. The colloquial 'off of the street' is almost more colloquial

than the Sicilian 'di la' but I felt it worthwhile in maintaining the tone. Bell (1991: 8) writes that 'we would expect to find, in any stretch of language, *choices* which function as *indicators* of the temporal, physical, and social provenance of the *user* and these we would term *dialect* features'. Bell (ibid.) goes on to distinguish that

Equally expected would be *markers* of the *use* to which the language was being put and these we would term *register* features. For the translator, both dialect and register features are important but, of the two, it is the parameters of register which are probably the more significant.

In this case, both features are significant but it is easy to overlook the function of register within a dialectal context.

● . . ● . ● . . . ● .

S7 *Chi, mischineddi, stanchi di jucari,*

● . ● . . ● . . ● .

E7 *Who, dear poorling'uns, tired-out from playing,*

I tried several options to render 'mischineddi' which is particularly Sicilian in character. In English it could be rendered successfully by adding surrounding adjectives, such as 'poor little sweet things', which is rather laborious. Appreciating the Sicilian skill of rendering multiple adjectives in one word, I played around with English until it did the same. I attempted 'poor-lil'-sweeties' but the last word does not match the context. I tried 'poor-lil'-sweethearts' but it is almost too endearing against the Sicilian. I opted, in the end, for a combination of added adjective and adapted word 'dear poorlings' which captures the sympathetic tone of 'mischineddi' but does not render the use of the Sicilian ending to represent their young age. I finally chose

'poorling'uns' which uses the 'ling' of English to render the small or fragile, and the 'un' as reminiscent of 'little'un', applying a strategy which 'invents new English words on the calque of the Italian ones' (Petrocchi, 2011: 69). This presents the opportunity to use words 'with a kind of through-the-looking-glass feel, something that seems familiar but not entirely so' (Machan, 2016: 617). Catford (1965: 44) argues that such transference

can also be carried out at the level of grammar. In grammatical transference SL grammatical items are represented in the TL text by quasi-TL grammatical items deriving their formal and contextual meanings from the systems and structures of the *SL*, not the *TL*.

Petrocchi (2011: 68) remarks of William Weaver that, in his translations of Gadda's dialect, he is forced 'to find alternatives, and in order to compensate for the limited solutions available in English he savvily invents new words'. Brandimonte (2015: 38) writes that 'si può optare per un linguaggio trasgressivo, consapevoli di violare la norma a livello ortografico – ad esempio, con l'elisione di vocali o consonanti–, grammaticale – introducendo strutture scorrette – o lessicali – utilizzando dei termini non accettati dalla norma standard'<sup>108</sup>. It is possible to create words in English that are recognizable enough to be comprehended, but that steer the reader into the domain of otherness. If such lexical choices can also denote relevant register patterns, the result could be fruitful.

• • • • •

S8 *Vulevanu passari la sirata.*

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<sup>108</sup> [Trans.] 'you can opt for a transgressive language, conscious of violating the norm at an orthographic level – for example, with the elision of vowels or consonants – grammatical – introducing incorrect structures – or lexical – using terms that are not accepted by the standard norm'



The 11 syllables of the Sicilian are matched with:

. ● . . ● . ● . ● . .

E8 *were wanting to while away their evening.*

● . . ● . . ● . . . ● .

S9 *Ora vineva a Turi, di cuntari*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . ● . ●

E9 *And now it came around to Turi's turn to sing*

. ● . . . ● . ● ● . .

S10 *Lu megghiu cunticeddu chi sapia,*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . ●

E11 *The best ol' little tuneling that he knew*

Balma and Spani (2010: 124) discuss 'mirroring the vernacular nature' of Calzavara's dialectal poem 'Can' in English translation:

While it would be naïve to assume that [this] version [. . .] could have the same effect on a native English speaker as the original [dialect] does on a group of Italians who are unfamiliar with its linguistic features; it does mirror the poem *Can* in at least one respect: it causes a foreign reader who is not fluent in English to struggle more than a native Anglophone, much like Calzavara's text does on the opposite side of the language barrier.

The Southern American vernacular was not included as 'equivalent or even similar [to Trevigiano] in linguistic terms; but rather, to explore the possibility of mirroring the vernacular nature of the poem *Can* in an English translation'

(ibid.). The simple use of the apostrophe reflects the nature of spoken language (below), adding to the creation of a 'vernacular nature'.

. . ● . ● . . . ● . . ● .

S11 *E 'nfatti Turi cuminciò a parrari,*

. . ● . ● ● . . ● . ●

E11 *And indeed like that Turi began to speak up,*

The Sicilian is 13 syllables (with 'nfatti' rendered as 3 syllables). I added 'like that' to render 'nfatti', as the literal English 'in fact' sits slightly out of register. This provides 10 syllables, not 13. I considered 'speak up' and added 'indeed' to reflect 'nfatti', which results in 12 syllables. Given the barely audible presence of the 'n' in 'infatti', I settled for this.

● . . ● . . . ● . ● .

S12 *Cu 'na vucidda chi piatà facia.*

● . ● . . ● . ● . ● ● .

E12 *With a little'un voice that brought about pity.*

I matched the 12 syllables of the SL with 12 in English, rendering 'vucidda' as 'little'un voice'. I considered 'voiceling' to mimic 'poorling' in the previous stanza but abandoned it as I felt it wasn't immediately obvious.

● . . ● . ● . ● . ● . ● . .

S13 *Chista ch'ju vi cuntu è la me' storia*

● . . ● . . ● . ● ● .

E13 *This tha' I tell t'you all is my story*

There are 13 syllables in the SL, which I left as 12 in English because I did not wish to add to, or alter, the meaning. I dropped the final 't' from 'that' in order to reflect the 'ch'ju', matching the colloquial slurring of spoken language.

● . . ● . . . . ● . . .

S14 *Senza 'n'anticchia di farfantaria,*

. ● ● . . ● . ● . ● . . .

E14 *Without even a little smitch of make-believe.*

. ● . ● . ● ● . . ● . . .

S15 *Pirchì è scritta ccà 'ntra la memoria*

. ● . ● . ● . ● ● ● . . .

E15 *Because it's written hhere within my memory*

This line matches the original syllable count with only one small difference between the Sicilian and English grammar, this being the translation of 'la' as 'my' instead of 'the', which is inaccurate in English and would sound stilted. It occurred to me to double the consonant in 'here' (hhere) for no other reason than I liked the effect this created on the visual element of the written poem. It admittedly does not capture the harsh consonantal sound of 'cca' which is heavily pronounced in Sicilian, but mirrors it orthographically. Scavuzzo (1982: 280) remarks on the doubled consonants in Sicilian that 'questa caratteristica della pronunzia dialettale [...] costituisce uno dei tratti più personali della fisionomia dialettale del siciliano' and, even orthographically

Accanto a questi suoni che ricorrono sempre di grado forte, tutti gli altri suoni consonantici possono ricorrere anch'essi di grado forte sia in posizione interna, come in iniziale diretta, differendo in ciò profondamente il siciliano dall'italiano<sup>109</sup> (ibid.).

Further observation by Comune (2013: 28) pointed to the fact that 'Una delle caratteristiche dei dialetti meridionali e del siciliano è il passaggio del gruppo delle consonanti ND e MB in NN e MM. [...] il toscano "quando" era in dialetto siciliano *quannu*, "mondo" diventa *munnu*, "piombo" diventa *ghiummu*, "colomba" *colomma*<sup>110</sup>. Knowing this pronounced doubled consonant to be especially reflective of the Sicilian dialect, I was further convinced of my decision to play around with its phonic and graphic effects. Machan's (2016: 633) comment that 'translation itself depends on the recognition that one variety is not another, that there is something that can be rendered as something else, even if only with the decorative flourish' further consolidated this decision.

● . . ● . . . ● . ● .

S16 *Tutta la storia di la vita mia.*

. ● . . ● . . . ● . ● .

E16 *The whole of the story of this life of mine.*

I chose to expand the English, in the interests of matching the syllable count primarily, but also to replicate the rhythm. Malone's (1988: 15) nine strategies,

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<sup>109</sup> [Trans.] 'this characteristic of dialectal pronunciation [...] constitutes one of the most personal traits of the dialectal physiognomy of Sicilian' and 'Next to these sounds that always recur to a strong degree, all the other consonantal sounds may also recur to a strong degree both positioned internally and directly at the start, deeply differentiating, in so doing, Sicilian from Italian.'

<sup>110</sup> [Trans.] 'One of the characteristics of the southern dialects and of the Sicilian dialect is the passage of the group of consonants ND and MB in NN and MM. [...] the Tuscan "quando" was *quannu* in Sicilian dialect, "mondo" becomes *munnu*, "piombo" becomes *ghiummu*, "colomba" *colomma*'

of which one is *diffusion*, 'requires that a source text item be expanded without adding extra information' (cited in Taylor, 1998: 48). I attempted 'all of my life story' but preferred the syntactical reflection of 'the story of this life' and, as I could grammatically accurately place the possessive at the end of the sentence in English in this way, it seemed like a viable solution.

. ● . . . ● . . ● .

S17 *Me' matri era bona la mischina*

. ● . . . ● . . ● . ●

E17 *Me mother were a good'un the poor ol' love*

● ● . . . ● . ● . . .

S18 *Cchiù bona di lu pani misuratu,*

. ● . . . ● . ● . . .

E18 *Much better than the bread agiven-a her,*

. . ● . . . ● . . ● . .

S19 *Ma me' patri era 'nveci la ruvina,*

. . ● . . . ● . . ● .

E19 *But me father instead he were the ruin,*

Azevedo (1998: 28) suggests that 'dialect pronunciation may be represented by quasi-phonetic spelling', which I have adopted below, in 'me father', to function as deviant from the standard. Bonaffini (1995: 211), however, writes that it is necessary to refute 'il concetto di dialetto come linguaggio deviante ed eccentrico'<sup>111</sup> and consider it instead a 'luogo della naturalezza e della

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<sup>111</sup> [Trans.] 'the concept of dialect as a deviant and eccentric language'

spontaneità, la norma linguistica di una determinata comunità e quindi [...] l'esatto contrario di deviazione'<sup>112</sup> (ibid.). Yet my solution is easily recognizable, and must 'function optimally as a marked code that challenges readers, without overtaxing them, to interpret the connotations of the linguistic behaviour depicted' (Azevedo, 1998: 29).

. ● . ● . ● . ● . . .

S20 *Un omu senza cori, scustumatu.*

. ● . ● . ● . . ● . ●

E20 *A bloke without a heart, and a boorish sod.*

I felt that I had found the tone of the speaker, Turi. I could hear his voice recounting the tale; it was a strong, coarse voice and I wanted his translated voice to remain placed in Sicily on those steps, not heavily reminiscent of a British location. I translated 'mischina' as 'poor ol' love', using the English 'old' in its endearing and sympathetic sense. I made the English ungrammatical but not unpleasant, echoing perhaps a child's slightly unformulated grammatical errors, rather than uneducated errors. In L19 I kept the word 'ruin' as the connotations of bringing ruin upon a family held up in English. I extended slightly the sense of 'scustumatu' from immoral or dissolute to 'a boorish sod' but the meaning does not stray too far, the tone is maintained and, in Petrocchi's (2011: 68) terms, 'although the highly-colourful dialects are lost, the vivid caricatures remain'. Admittedly, the added words were in the service of the syllable count, but this constraint brought about a rendering that I felt was in keeping with the tone. The lengthier sentences that this choice produces in English as a result are in keeping with a more verbose, elaborated story-telling parlance that met the context.

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<sup>112</sup> [Trans.] 'place of naturalness and spontaneity, the linguistic norm of a determined community and therefore [...] the exact opposite of deviation'

● . ●. . ● . . . ● . .

S21 *Tintu, malacunnutta, jucaturi,*

● . ● . . ● . . . ● . .

E21 *Nasty, layabout-good-for-nothin', player,*

I considered translating 'tintu' as 'tainted'. 'Malacunnutta' is expressively Sicilian and I couldn't find a word that accurately portrayed it, certainly nothing that matched syllabically.

. ● . . ●. ● . . ●.

S22 *Capaci d'azzuffarisi pi nenti,*

● . . . ● . . ● . ● . .

E22 *Capable o' havin' a row o'er nothin',*

. . . ● . ● . ● . . .

S23 *Di li taverni gran friquintaturi*

. ● ● . . . ● . . ● . .

E23 *A great hangabout in all o' the taverns*

'Frequenter of taverns' was tempting but it rendered the tone differently, 'to frequent' not being an especially common verb in a lower register. Taylor (1998: 78) refers to Halliday's notion of language as a 'social semiotic' and his functional grammar 'looks at how language works – how language is organized and what social functions are represented' (ibid.). Looking at Halliday's (1989) components of field, tenor and mode (cited in Taylor, 1998: 79), I focus on the fact that the mode of the text is 'written to be spoken' (ibid.), the tenor is the father/son, mother/son social relationship and Turi's role in

the poem as informer, and the field implies the discourse between young children, in an informal setting.

. . . ● . . ● . . ● .

S24 *E malu vistu di tutta la genti.*

. ● . ● . . ● . . ● .

E24 *And badly look'd 'pon by all o' the people.*

I considered 'held in low esteem by everyone' but that is relatively formal and does not fit with the colloquial tone. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 17) stress that 'translators must preserve the tone of the text they translate' and, where possible, for this poem preservation of tone was a priority.

. . . . ● . ● . . . ● .

S25 *E a me' matruzza quantu vastunati,*

Sicilian variations for 'mother' are numerous and difficult to capture well in English. Lack of naturalness here could disturb the voice in translation and interfere with the suspension of disbelief that this type of transfer of narrative voice should seek to uphold. 'Matruzza' (and nouns with the 'uzzo/a' ending) relate an added affection, or sweetness. 'Dear' is not a particularly faithful, that is, literal translation but it does sit relatively well with the melancholy tone of desperation. 'Matruzza' is not quite similar enough to 'Mamma', an option I nevertheless considered, and have applied in later translations (In 'Lu Scioperu', p.230, I leave 'Matruzza' in the English version with an explanatory gloss).

. . . ● ● . . ● . ● .

E25 *And at me dear mother how many stickfuls*



'Vastunati' became 'stickfuls'; it could have been 'beatings' but this would have removed the instrument of the violence.

. ● . ● ● . ● ● .

S26 *Ma quanti cci nni detti dd'assassinu;*

. ● ● ● ● ● . . ● .

E26 *But how many ddid he give her the murd' rer;*

● . . ● . . ● . . ● .

S27 *Cc'era lu 'nfernu. Po' certi nuttati,*

'L'infernu' is used more often and in a more jovial or colloquial sense in Sicilian than 'hell' is in English. It does not sound completely unnatural in this context, however, and I opted to maintain the literal translation.

. . ● . . ● . ● . ● .

E27 *It were hell there. And then on certain nightimes,*

● . . ● . ● . . ● .

S28 *Quannu turnava saziu di vinu,*

● . . ● ● ● . . ●

E28 *When he came back 'ome fulfilled up on wine,*

. . . ● ● . ● . . ● .

S29 *Bistimiava, strinceva li denti,*

. ● . ● . . ● . ●

E29 *He swore out loud, and he gnashed his teeth,*

I tried to retain the sense of the Sicilian words closely; I did, however, prioritize the tone of the speaker, opting for 'fulled up on wine', instead of 'satiated', which I did not feel was in keeping with a child's language. I replaced (S29) 'bistimiava' with 'swore out loud' to fit the context, although I would have liked to retain the religious denotation of blasphemy in Sicily.

. ● . . ● . ● . ● .

S30 *Pareva, 'n'addannatu mi pareva,*

● .● .● ● . . ●

E30.1 *Seemed t'me t'be driven mad like he seemed,*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . ● .

S31 *S'arrabbiava contru 'dda nnuccenti*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . . ●

E31 *He got enraged against that innocent lass*

. . . ● . . ● . . ● .

S32 *Di me' matruzza, chi nun rispunneva;*

. . ● . . ● . . ● . ●

E32 *Of me mother, who didn't respond t'him;*

. . . ● . ● . ● . ● .

S33 *Ma chi trimava comu 'n'acidduzzu,*

. . ● . . ● . ● . ●

E33 *But she trembled like a little babby bird,*

I searched for dialectal words for 'bird' in English. This, initially, went against my aim not to substitute Sicilian locations with British locations and the

inclusion of any Anglophone dialect would, inevitably, have the effect of transferring the scene. Many dialectal words in English referring to birds refer to specific species of bird, rather than the animal generically, and so would have added an unnecessary layer of reference. The additional connotation of 'bird' as slang for 'woman', in conjunction with the sweetening and innocence of 'little' and 'babby' which adds a regional (but not geographically specific) tone, seemed to fit better.

Prakash (1998: 6) writes of the frustration and sense of defeat in a difficult translation process but acknowledges that the 'reason for my frustration was that I was trying to translate the poem into standard language that could not embody the poem's gestalt'. Once a translation in [the Kannada dialect] had been established, it was 'smooth sailing' (ibid.). Azevedo (1998: 29) remarks that the translator 'has to seek cross-language or cross-dialect equivalencies' and, certainly in terms of representing socio-cultural implications simultaneously to register, this option has its benefits.

. . ● . . ● ● . . . ● ● .

S34 *E mi strincia chhiù forti a lu sò pettu*

. . ● . ● . . . ● . . . ●

E34 *N' she hugged me in a lot more tight to her chest*

. ● . . ● . . . ● .

S35 *Dicennumi: – Turiddu, Turidduzzu*

. . . ● . ● . . . ● .

E35 *Sayin-a-me: – Turiddu, Turidduzzu*

I retained the original Sicilian name; culturally 'Turi' and all its variations are very Sicilian, although a reader may not be aware of this. There is no fitting translation in English of the name Salvatore, for which the diminutive

abbreviation is 'Turi'. As readers are, by this point, familiar with the child's name, it appears evident enough that this is a nickname. It has the added benefit of retaining a cultural reminder of the original setting.

. ● . . ●● . ● . ● .

S36 *È chistu di tò patri lu difettu.*

. ● . . . ● . ● . ● .

E36 *It's this that's not real right about yer father.*

To replace 'saying to me' with 'a-me' is particularly reflective of North Eastern regional English, although I felt it self-explanatory.

## II

. . ● . . ● . ● . ● .

S37 *Ma 'na sira, 'na sira mmaliditta,*

. ● ● . . ● ● . ● . .

E37 *But one evenin', one curs-ed evenin',*

●● . ● . ● . . ● . .

S38 *Successi . . . Bedda Matri chi successi . . .*

. ● ● . ● . ● . . ● ●

E38 *It took place. . . Holy Mother what took place . . .*

I was tempted to render 'Bedda Matri' (LS38) as 'Beautiful Mother', literally, but thought that this would imply Turi was speaking about his own mother. I opted instead for 'Holy Mother', which represents the reference.

. ● . . ● . . ● . . ● . .

S39 *Successi . . . 'na tirribili minnitta . . .*

. ● ● . . ● . . ● . .

E39 *It took place . . . a terrible ravaging . . .*

. ● . . ● ● . . ● . ● ●

S40 *La vittiru chist'occhi . . . st'occhi stissi*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . ● ● . ●

E40 *These eyes o' mine they saw it . . . these very eyes*

● . . . ● ● . . ● . ● .

S41 *Vittiru a me' patri, a ddu 'nfamuni,*

. ● . . ● . . . ● . . ●

E41 *They saw o' me father, o' that villainous sod,*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . ● .

S42 *Cu 'ncutiddazzu longu 'ntra li manu*

Translation of the 'pejorative Italian suffix' (Petrocchi, 2011: 64) proved challenging, so I opted for 'real' to add emphasis. 'Affectivity also resides in the morphological element in language. For instance, diminutive suffixes like -et and -ette [...] often convey an additional suggestion of prettiness and tenderness' (Gokak, 1952: 12).

. . ● ● ● . ● . . . ●

E42 *Wi' a real long sharpened knife within his hand*

● ● . ● . ● ● . . ● .

S43 *Ca cci lu misi ccà . . senza raggiuni,*

. . ● . ● . ● . ● ● .

E43 *That he went and dug in here . . with no reason,*

. ● . ● . . . ● . ● .

S44 *A me' matruzza lu cuteddu sanu.*

● ● . . . ● . . ● ● ●

E44 *Right down into me mother the whole damn knife.*

● ● . . ● . ● ● ● .

S45 *Ccà, dintra lu cori cci l'appizzau*

● ● . . . ● . ● ● .

E45 *Hhere, inside of 'er heart he plunged it in*

● . . ● . ● . ● . ● .

S46 *Ddu cutiddazzu lustru l'assassinu,*

. ● . ● . ● . ● .

E46 *tthat sharp n' gleamin' knife the murd' rer,*

● . . ● ● . ● . ● . ● .

S47 *'Ntisi a me' matri diri: m'ammazzau. . .*

. ● . ● . ● . ● ● .

E47 *I heard me mother sayin' 'he's killed me. . .*

. ● . . . ● . . . ● .

S48 *Signuri. . Signuruzzu. . lu distinu. . .*

I used 'Lord' to replace 'Signuri' as it seemed more appropriate than 'God', which is not a literal translation. I expanded it to 'oh my sweet Lord' to mirror 'Signuruzzu'.

. . ● . . ● ● ● . . .

E48 *Oh my Lord. . .oh my sweet Lord. . .destiny. . .*

.●.● . .●. . .●. . .

S49 *Jso li vrazza all'aria. . .si turciu*

. ● . . ● . ●. . ● ● .

E49 *She lifted her arms up into the air...writhing*

. ● . ● . . ● . . ● . .

S50 *Lu corpu. . .fici 'na smorfia di scantu. . .*

. ● . ● . ● . . ●

E50 *Her body. . . made a grimace of fear. . .*

Gokak (1952: 11–12) notes a difference between written and spoken language is that 'The written language makes clear the logical relations of words. The spoken language indicates only the main line of thought, leaving the rest to intonation and gesture'. I found it to be the case here that, at the climax of the action, Turi's speech is less coherent. The writing mimics the sense of shock and trauma by becoming less composed, an element I attempted to reflect.

. . ● . .●. . .●. . .

S51 *E la vitti. . .la vitti. . .chi cadiu. . .*

. . ● . . ● . . . ●

E51 *And I saw her. . . I saw her. . .as she fell. . .*

. ● . . . ● . . ● . .

S52 *Vicinu di la porta. . .'ntra lu cantu. . .*

● . . . ● . . . ● . .

E52 *Close to the doorway. . . in the corner*

● . . . ● . . . ● . .

S53 *Vitti lu sangu russu, chi scurria*

. ● . ● . ● . . ● . .

E53 *I saw the red blood, that were streamin'*

. . . ● . . ● . . . ● . .

S54 *E s'allargava 'mmenzu li maruna,*

. . . ● . . ● . . ● . . ●

E54.1 *And it were spreadin' out all over the floor,*

E54.2 *And it were floodin' out all over the floor,*

. ● ● ● . ● . . ● . .

S55 *Gridai tri voti: matri. . .matri mia . . .!*

. ● ● ● . ● ● ● . . ● ● .

E55.1 *I cried out three times: mother. . . my mother. . .!*

. ● ● ● . ● ● . . ● . ● .

E55.2 *I cried out three times: matri. . . matri mia. . .!*



I opted to change 'mother' for the original Sicilian, believing that it 'augments the local flavouring' (Taylor, 2006: 40) and reminds the reader of the Sicilian context. I wished the fact of the translation to remain a constant in the reader's mind and the use of the child's familial naming of his mother seems particularly pertinent.

● ● . . ● . ● . . ● .

S56 *Tri vuci chi pareru tri assaccuna.*

● ● . . ● . ● ● . ● . ●

E56 *Three voices that seemed like three dyin' gaping-gasps.*

● . ● ● . . ● . ● ● . .

S57 *Gridai tri voti e poi . . e poi nun vitti. . .*

. ● ● ● ● . . . . ● ● ● .

E57 *I cried out three times and then...and then I saw nothin'. . .*

. ● ● ● ● . . . . ● ● ● ●

E57 *I cried out three times and then...and then I saw no more*

● ● . ● . ● ● . ● ● .

S58 *Nun vitti nenti. . nun 'ntisi cchiù nenti. . .*

. ● ● . . ● ● . . . ●

E58.1 *I saw nothin'. . I felt nothin' any mmore. . .*

E58.2 *I saw nothin'. . I heard nothin' any mmore. . .*

I changed 'felt' to 'heard' although in this case the original is more ambiguous. Such words cause 'an ambiguity that often forces the translator to explicate a text, rather than embracing what can be a fruitful and intentional opacity'

(Foran, 2012: 3). As 'ntisi' is used in LS47 to mean 'heard', I felt that consistency was more important.

. ● . ● . ● . ● . . ● ● .

S59 *Li gammi nun si tinniru cchiù gritti. . .*

. ● . . . ● . ● . . ●

E59 *Her legs they were no longer standin' up straight. . .*

. ● . ● . ● . . ● .

S60 *Scuppava 'nterra senza sentimenti. . .*

. . ● ● . . . ● ● .

E60 *She collapsed down onto the floor senseless. . .*

### III

● . . ● . ● . ● . . ● .

S61 *Turi trimava ora comu a chiddi*

● . ● . ● ● . ●

E61 *Turi trembled now just like those*

. ● . . ● ● . . . ● .

S62 *Chi tremanu quann'hannu li sudura,*

. . ● ● . . . ● . ●

E62 *that are all a-tremble when they have the sweats,*

● ● . ● ● . . . ● .

S63 *L'ucchiuzzi cci jttavanu faiddi,*

. ● . ● . . . ● ●

E63 *Those sweet little eyes of his they threw out sparks,*

. ● . ● . ● . ● .

S64 *La facci cci facia vinti culura:*

. ● . ● . . . ● . ● .

E64 *His face turned itself into twenty colours:*

. ● . ● . ● . . . ● .

S65 *Lu cori cci battia comu 'n marteddu,*

. ● . ● . . . ● . . . ● .

E65 *His heart there it were a-beatin' like a hammer*

. . . ● . ● . . . ● .

S66 *E lu pittuzza ci manticiava,*

. . ● . ● . ● . ● .

E66 *And his sweet little chest were a-pantin'*

. ● . . . ● . . . ● .

S67 *Pinzava 'ddu mumentu, mischineddu,*

. . ● . . . ● . ● . ● .

E67 *He were thinkin' of that moment, poor littl' thing,*

● ● . . . ● . . . ● .

S68 *'Dda sira mmaliditta iddu pinzava.*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . ● .

E68 *About that curs-ed evenin' he were thinkin'.*

. ● . ● . ● . . . ● .

S69 *Lu chiantu cci vagnava li masciddi,*

. ● . . ● . ● . ● . ●

E69 *His sobbin' it wetted up his littl' cheeks,*

. . . ● . ● . . . ● .

S70 *Li mascidduzzi cavuri, 'nfucati;*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . . ●

E70 *Them sweet little cheeks o'his blazin', 'nflamed;*

I mirrored 'nfucati' (LS70) with 'nflamed' which runs on from the final 'n' of 'blazin'.

. ● . . . ● . ● . . ● .

S71 *Ma sulu nun chiancia, li picciriddi*

. . ● . ● . . ● . ● . ●

E71 *But he weren't cryin' alone, the other youngs*

. ● . . . ● . . . ● .

S72 *L'ucchiuzzi li tinevano vagnati.*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . ● . ● .

E72 *Them little eyes o'theirs they kept them wettened.*

● . ● . ● . . ● . ● . . ● .

S73 *'Ddu cuntu l'avia tantu 'mprissiunati,*

. ● . ● . ● . ● . . . . .

E73 *That storytale had deeply disconcerted them,*

'Impressionarsi' was difficult to render accurately in English, although I did consider 'impressed them' or 'made an impression upon them', the latter of which has the connotation of shock or impact. However, as it is not directly negative in English – and may often infer a more positive response – I changed the verb altogether to 'disconcerted', which more accurately portrays their mood. Eco (2001: 9) writes

The word *connotation* is an umbrella term used to name many, many kinds of non-literal senses of a word, of a sentence, or of a whole text. That words, sentences, and texts usually convey more than their literal sense is a commonly accepted phenomenon, but the problems are (i) how many secondary senses can be conveyed by a linguistic expression, and (ii) which ones a translation should preserve at all costs.

● ● . . . ● . ● ● ●

S74 *Ca quannu Turidduzzu si nni ju*

. . . ● . . ● ● ●

E74 *That when Turidduzzu went on his way*

. ● . ● . ● . ● ● ● .

S75 *Ristaru comu tanti allampanati.*

● . . ● . . ● . ● ● ● ● .

E75 *there they remained like a bunch o' lightnin'-struck 'uns*

The above sentence relied upon the semi-creation of a noun to render 'allampanati' (VSI, 2002: 12), which could, admittedly, have flowed more

naturally had I not been attempting to match the syllable count. However, the attempt to match the combined adjective and noun of the original was a challenge and resulted in a TL version that had naturally shifted away from its own norms to reflect the creativity of the ST. Balma and Spani (2010: 126) suggest that

usage of dialect not only bestows a more legitimate form on the poetic themes that are often rendered flat by the conventionality of language, but also allows the author to make use of a certain autonomy in semantic terms, and at the same time to recuperate that burlesque aspect of reality that sometimes tends to disappear under the weight of the tradition of learned language.

. . ● ● . . ● . . ● .

S76 *E pi 'dda sira lu cuntu finiu. . .*

I changed 'finished', a more literal translation, to 'over', in LE76, which in English has the same finite closure, when aligned with the past remote (Pitrè, 2000: 66) in Sicilian.

. . ● ● . ● . . . ● .

E76 *And for that night the storying was over. . .*

### 2.2.1. Analysis of Metrical and Rhythmic Strategy

My first impressions of the poem were its visual strengths, its setting of a scene and its retelling of an event that plays out within the poem. It is almost like a little self-contained play; indeed, it is an 'account'. I therefore began with the title, and rendered it as 'the story/report/tale/retelling', and wondered how literal my translation ought to be. 'Lu cuntu' summons connotations of a 'chant', in English, rather more in keeping with its Italian translation of 'canto', bordering on being song-like. This, along with the fact

that the character is a child led me quickly to favour 'story' or 'tale' as a more fitting translation. The act of a story is to 'retell' and I considered 'the retelling' as an appropriate rendering. But this lacked the poetic simplicity of 'Lu cuntu'.

This first attempt was carried out at the beginning of my research and many drafts have worked their way into the analytical discussion. Petrocchi (2011: 64) explores Weaver's self-proclaimed 'translation in progress' of Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (1946) and the term rings true for the strategy I applied to the drafts of this poem. Although readability is poor in terms of a published format, the style engages in the act of translation as process alongside translation as product. Bonaffini (1995: 225) claims that it is necessary to 'approfondire l'analisi dei testi in traduzione per poterne concretamente misurare e valutare la resa stilistica e letteraria'<sup>113</sup>. One way to overcome issues of readability would be to have a draft poem alongside the final version in the TL. The positive aspect of inclusion of drafts is the presence of what Jones (2011: 116) refers to as a poem's 'translation lifetime', which begins at first encounter of the source and ends when the translator decides the final draft is ready. I found that placing constraint on a single aspect of the text helped me to focus on the particularities of the sentence stress and overall rhythm of the poem. This, in turn, prompted me to make lexical choices based on words that mirrored the syllables and rhythms of the original. Holmes (1988: 54) suggests of the translator that

the compulsions of the rhyme and metre will very likely lead him to introduce syntactic means and tonal qualities that have no counterpart in the original. If he tries to match the syntax and the tone, on the other hand, he may find himself faced with the necessity to abandon any attempt at finding an appropriate metrical or rhythmic counterpart.

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<sup>113</sup> [Trans.] 'deepen the analysis of texts in translation to be able to concretely measure and evaluate the stylistic and literary output'

Holmes concludes that the translator cannot but admit that 'somewhere something has to yield' (ibid.). Weissbort (1989: x) suggests that 'every translator knows that compromise is implicit – a tissue of compromises, in fact, even if this can itself be the source of much fresh creativity'.

### 2.3. 'Lu Scioperu' / 'The Strike' (*Sintimintali*, 1923)

I

S'avanza la fudda – s'avanza purtannu

*The crowd advances – advances carrying*

Li coppuli<sup>114</sup> 'mmanu – jsannu li vuci;

*Coppolas in hands – raising their voices;*

Ce' è un vecchiu aggubbatu – ca pari me' nannu,

*There's an old hunchback – who seems like me' grandda,*

E porta 'a bannera – a modu di cruci.

*And he carries a flag – in the way of the cross.*

Su vecchi arrappati – su' donni patuti,

*They're the wizened elderly – they're haggard women,*

Picciotti 'i campagna – chi nervi d'azzaru,

*Country youngsters – with nerves o' steel,*

Su' nichì sfardati – chi facci 'ngialluti,

*They're ragged little'uns – with yellowed faces,*

Su' milli... du' mila... – Ma d'unni spuntaru?

*They're a thousand... two thousand... – but where've they all come from?*

S'avanza la fudda: – Vulemu travagghiu!

*The crowd advances: – We want work!*

Rispunni 'na vuci: – Mittiti 'nsirragghiu.

*A voice responds: – Ready to fire.*

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<sup>114</sup> Coppuli, singular: coppola, is a traditional flat cap typically worn in Sicily, Sardinia and Calabria, although they originated in medieval Britain.



## II

La massa s'arresta... – si movi, camina...

*The masse comes to a stop... – moves on, walks...*

Allenta lu passu... – ripigghia di bottu...

*Its pace slows down... – restarts all of a sudden...*

Si ferma 'n'anticchia... – fa comu la china...

*It stops just a bit... – moving like a flood...*

Avanza la fudda – currennu di trottu...

*The crowd advances – running at a trot...*

Un curpu...du corpa... – 'na scarrica 'ntera,

*One blow...two blows...– a 'ntire discharge,*

La genti si sparti... – cu grida, cu chiama

*The people disperse... – some shout, some call*

Chiancennu la matri – cu fujri spera,

*Crying for their mothers – some hope to escape,*

Cu cadi firutu: – succedi la strama...

*Some fall wounded: – a massacre takes place...*

## III

'Na vecchia, mischina, – ch'aveva scuppatu

*An old woman, poor love, – who had fallen*

Firuta a lu pettu – fa sforzi... si susi,

*Wounded at her chest – she strains...she lifts herself,*

S'appoja a lu muru – du bustu 'nsangutu

*She leans against the wall – her bust bloodied*

Lu sangu ci scula: – ci su' du' pirtusi.

*The blood streams down: – there're two holes.*

Allonga lu pedi – vurrissi scappari,

*She stretches out her foot – longing to escape,*

La forza cci manca – lu sangu a li vini,

*She's lacking strength – blood in her veins,*

Cci trema la gamma – nun pò caminari,  
*Her leg shakes – she cannot walk,*  
E cadi gridannu – tri voti: – assassini!...  
*And she falls down shouting – three times: murderers!*

#### IV

Ma eccu ca spunta – trimannu un surdatu,  
*But look who shows up – trembling a soldier,*  
Cu ll'occhi 'nfucati – chi mannanu fiamma,  
*With his eyes enflamed – they're shootin' flames,*  
È unu di chiddi – ch'aveva sparatu:  
*He's one of them – who'd made the shots:*  
Sò matri è la vecchia... – la morta è sò mamma.  
*His mother is the old woman... – the dead woman is his mamma.*

L'afferra... la spinci – l'abbrazza chiancennu...  
*He seizes her...he shakes her – he hugs her close crying...*  
Strincennu li denti – com'arma addannata,  
*Gritting his teeth – like a cussed soul,*  
Dicennuci: matri!? – Matruzza, cumprennu  
*Calling her: mother!? – Matruzza, I know*  
Lu mali chi fici... – pi l'arma dutata,  
*the harm that I've done... – for my father's soul.*

'Matruzza' is 'mamma' with  
heightened affection and  
endearment.

Ti giuru...sparai – sparai pi sbagghiu...  
*I swear to you...I shot – I shot by mistake...*  
'Na vuci cchiù forti: – Arreri 'nsirragghiu...  
*A louder voice: – Ready to fire...*

#### V

– Avanti, sparati – ch'è chista a me' morti,  
*Go on, shoot – this one's dead by me,*  
La morti cchiù santa – lu stessu distinu  
*The saintliest death – the same fate*

Pi mmatri e pi ffigghiu... – tirati cchiù forti,  
*For mmother and for sson... – stronger,*  
'Mmazza la matri... – cci moru vicinu!...  
*I've killed my mother... – I'll die by her side!...*

Un corpu...du corpa – mischinu, ed abbucca  
*One blow...two blows – poor lad, and he falls*  
Di 'ncoddu a sò matri... – La chiama... s'attacca  
*Down upon his mother... – He calls her... he holds her*  
Chiancennu o sò pettu... – Ci vasa la vucca...  
*Crying onto her chest... – He kisses her mouth...*  
La frunti...li manu... – Ma prima ch'assacca,  
*Her forehead...her hands... – But before he passes,*

C'u' filu di vuci – ch'è comu lu ciatu,  
*With a faint voice – that's like a breath,*  
Ci dici: – Matruzza!... – scuttavi 'u piccatu...  
*He says to her: – Matruzza!... forget this sin...*

### **2.3.1. Semantic Equivalence**

The language pairs in question are not irrelevant when approaching specific translations; Fochi (2011: 1) notes that 'the English language has a greater semantic density than the Italian language', for example. Such an observation is significant when applying a semantic strategy. Taylor (1998: 326) defines semantic equivalence as 'the repetition or overlap of semantic features in a text through synonymy, figures of speech, word association within distinct semantic fields, etc.'. Firth (1957, cited in Catford, 1965: 35) defines meaning as the 'total network of relations entered into by any linguistic form', and Catford (ibid.) expands on the notion of relations, highlighting formal relations and contextual relations. Formal relations are 'between one formal item and others in the same language. [...] In *lexis* there are formal relations between one lexical item and others in the same lexical set, and formal co-

textual (collocational) relations between lexical items in texts' (Catford, 1965: 35–36). Contextual relations constitute 'the relationship of grammatical or lexical items to linguistically relevant elements in the situations in which the items operate as, or in, texts' (ibid.: 36), stating that 'The *range* of situational elements which are thus found to be relevant to a given linguistic form constitute the *contextual meaning* of that form' (Catford, 1965: 36).

In light of this, translation of the selected poem attempted to maintain semantic equivalence, a difficulty being the dilemma of 'whether one is translating a series of isolated words or rather words as constituent parts of a poetic image' (Beckett, 2000: 75). 'We are concerned here with a consciousness-raising process, to do with the minutiae of language at every level' (Armstrong, 2005: 5).

I italicized the English lines in order to make them stand out for increased readability. Tedesco (1965: 15) notes that, in 'Lu Scioperu', 'già si scorge la volontà del giovane poeta di rifarsi al mondo del lavoro e ai suoi più scottanti temi'<sup>115</sup>. For the most part, I chose to focus on specific words to render the dialectal voice, homing in on words that I felt characterized the poem. Beckett (2000: 75) draws our attention to two aspects of the poetic word, 'firstly, the intimate relationship which exists between the poet and the word which he chooses to convey his meaning; secondly the inherent creative force of the logos'. The first element I wished to reflect was the movement and sound within the poem and the description of the eclectic group of people within the crowd, united by their oppression and their demand for work. I decided to render 'avanza' in L1 in the present tense 'advances' to match the Sicilian. The second stanza provides a description of those who make up the crowd, and this juxtaposition follows the rather hardier image of an advancing crowd with the meek, humble members of the crowd. They are

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<sup>115</sup> [Trans.] 'we already see the will of the young poet to give himself over to the world of work and its most pressing issues'

elderly, or very young, and Buttitta captures their vulnerability in the wizened faces of the elderly or the yellowed faces of the young.

'Su' nichì sfardati – chi facci 'ngialluti', I rendered '*They're ragged little'uns – with yellowed faces*', the initial dilemma being how to translate 'nichì'. I'd known the word to mean 'small' but to be used in varying contexts, often to denote a tender meekness. Further research provided firstly: adjective, 'piccolo; 2 m. il minore degli figli'<sup>116</sup> (Scavuzzo, 1982: 124) and then 'Nicu, agg. piccolo, *Piccino*. 2. Qualche volta si usa raddoppiato NICU NICU, e allora ha sembianza di superlativo, *Piccino piccino*'<sup>117</sup> (Mortillaro, 1975: 745), although this doubling also functions in Italian. Gokak (1952: 4) writes of 'echoic words in language' and 'sound symbolism' (ibid.). There are varying degrees of translating this word in English, varying from the bland and literal 'small' or 'little' to adding further description such as 'so tiny'. I opted for 'little'uns' which is colloquial, very recognizable and easily adapted to a variety of Anglophone accents. 'Even translators who aim to be mouthpieces need to consider how to communicate with a receptor-language audience, and even the freest adaptations take a poem in another language as a point of reference' (Jones, 2011: 43). Bell (1991: 6–7) argues that translators have

the option, then, of focusing on finding *formal* equivalents which 'preserve' the context-free semantic sense of the text at the expense of its context-sensitive communicative value or finding *functional* equivalents which 'preserve' the context-sensitive communicative value of the text at the expense of its context-free semantic sense.

Essentially, this returns the argument to an age-old dilemma of translating word-for-word (literal translation) or meaning-for-meaning (free translation). Semantic equivalence intends to convey the original cultural significance of

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<sup>116</sup> Trans. 'small; 2 m. the youngest child'

<sup>117</sup> Trans. 'small, *Piccino*. 2. Sometimes it is doubled Nicu Nicu, and in this case is superlative'

the SL – particularly the connotative value of dialect specifically – and is therefore 'engaged in informational or semantic (meaning-bound) discourse' (Becket, 2000: 75), but Venuti (2004: 25) claims that it is difficult to do this in a way that is not inherently domesticated:

Translation is an inscription of the foreign text with intelligibilities and interests that are fundamentally domestic, even when the translator maintains a strict semantic equivalence with the foreign text and incorporates aspects of the foreign-language cultural context where that text first emerged.

Chu (1998: 79) describes the *coppola*, for Sciascia, as a means 'to describe "Sicily" and "the Sicilian" as fundamentally timeless and unchanging entities'. I retained 'li coppoli' as 'coppolas' (with a footnote) in order to, in Petrocchi's (2011: 65) words, 'transfer a foreign phonetic and ethno-cultural reality into the English text'. Decisions regarding specific lexical translations alter according to the poem in question and deliberately avoid adherence to macro-strategies; rather, they are choices based on specific lexis and context in individual poems and the same word might be translated differently in different poems.

The reference to the grandfather in L3, 'me' nannu', I chose to render in non-standard language, mirroring the possessive pronoun with 'me' and then altering 'grandfather/granddad' to 'grandda', which heightens the sense of colloquial, spoken language whilst remaining comprehensible.

Throughout Buttitta's poetry, there is religious imagery, often artfully contrasted with human sin or injustice. Sicily is heavily Catholic and crosses and crucifixes appear in nooks all around the island. The wealth and pomp of the Catholic Church in sharp and sombre contrast with the extreme poverty of many of the islanders comes through in Buttitta's poetry. The poet's own religious stance is obscure within his earlier poems but becomes increasingly prominent as his work evolves. In this, one of his earliest poems, the

references are evident but mild, although Buttitta in one single line (L4) manages to attack patriotism and religion in one swift blow:

E porta 'a bannera – a modu di cruci.

*And he carries a flag – in the way of the cross.*

The fact that the flag is carried like a cross replicates Jesus' walk towards his own death, carrying the very artifice upon which he would be killed. There is something harrowing in the image of the hunchbacked old man carrying this flag; the image is an omen of death and sorrow to come. Religious imagery is also more subtly invoked at the end of the poem in the son's last words to his mother (L46): 'Ci dici: – Matruzza!... – scuttavi 'u piccatu... / *He says to her: – Matruzza!.. – .forget this sin...*', which is reminiscent of Christ's last words to his Father as he dies on the cross: 'Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (in Luke 23:34, *King James version*).

The murder of the mother in this poem may also be viewed as symbolic, for the evils of the son and his matricide seem to represent the anti-natural order of things. In the killing of the very organism that gives life, we can interpret the mirroring of the abuse of the land by the ruling classes. Buttitta uses abuse of the land to signify the greater abuse of nature and, in other poems too, nature is often embodied by the figure of the mother. In this killing of mother by son, we see a terrible sin committed and one which the son blames on his father. We can draw links between the Father as God, or the paternal ruling classes, or even the Fatherland aligned with the presence of the flag in the first stanza, for the son is serving somebody, a greater power, by his actions. He claims to have shot by mistake, but this means that he follows commands blindly, obedient to orders with no sense of moral highground. He is overcome by distress and regret because he has murdered

his mother but he could well have murdered many others had this not taken place. Carlestál (2005: 2–3) writes that

Women seemingly sacrifice themselves for their families while fulfilling their duties, but at the same time they create a lifelong dependence by their children upon themselves and gain a culturally and emotionally very esteemed position – the most central role within this society's most important unit.

Carlestál argues in turn that 'Parallel to this runs an official male ideology making women culturally strongly dependent upon their men. Matrifocality thus gets balanced and indicates that the mother-child unit does not function effectively on its own' (ibid.: 3).

I aimed to capture the onomatopoeia of some Sicilian dialect words and, in Petrocchi's (2011: 69) words 'Although the sound is not exactly identical, the assonance corresponds on the whole and the semantic effect is guaranteed'. It proved especially difficult to adequately reflect the sounds of 'Lu Scioperu' whilst retaining the accurate transfer of meaning in the translation. If we look at these lines:

La frunti...li manu... – Ma prima ch'assacca,  
*Her forehead....her hands...– But before he passes,*

we can observe that there is an internal, parallel, rhyme in 'passes' against 'assacca', which I opted for instead of other alternatives (such as 'died', 'moved on') because of the faint similarity in sound. Had I used 'front' for 'frunti', the image related would be the entire front or chest of the mother and not, as is intended, her forehead.



## 2.4. 'La povira genti' / 'The poor folk' (*Prime*, 1922–1954)

- S1        Lu puvireddu siccu e piatusu  
E1        *The thin, suffering, poor bloke*  
**E1.F      The suffering, emaciated, poor old guy**
- S2        Chi dormi 'nta na stadda o 'nto pirtusu;  
E2        *Who sleeps in a stall or in a nook*  
**E2.F      Who has to sleep in a nook or inside a sty**
- S3        Ittatu n'terra supra lu pagghiuni  
E3        *Over a pallet on the ground he is thrown*  
**E3.F      Down over a pallet on the ground he is thrown**
- S4        E pi cuscinu teni lu pitruni,  
E4        *And for a pillow he keeps a large stone,*  
**E4.F      And for a pillow he uses a large stone,**
- S5        Chi vivi cu lu sordu addimannatu  
E5        *Who lives with pennies in alms he begs*  
**E5.F      Who lives with his pennies from the alms that he begs**
- S6        Li scarpi rutti e tuttu spiddizzatu  
E6.       *The shoes broken and everything in shreds*  
**E6.F      His shoes are broken and everything's torn to shreds**
- S7        Giarnu, malatu, senza nudda cura  
E7        *Pale, ill, without any save*  
**E7.F      Palid, unhealthy, he whom nobody will save**
- S8        C'un pedi fora e natru nsapurtura,  
E8        *With one foot out and the other in the grave*  
**E8.F      With one foot out and the other one in the grave**
- S9        Chinu di guai, di peni e di stenti. . .  
E9        *Full of troubles, of pain and broke. . .*  
**E9.F      Burdened with troubles, with hardship and all broke**
- S10       Eccu, signuri, la poviri genti.  
**E10.F     Here they are, misters, the poor folk.**
- S11       Lu jornateri classi svinturata  
**E11.F     The day-worker of hapless class branded**

- S12 Ca cu li pedi veni cumannata  
 E12 *Who by kicks comes to be commanded*  
**E12.F Who by kickings is commanded**
- S13 Di lu patruini tintu parassita  
 E13 *By his wicked master parasite*  
**E13.F By that wicked master of his, parasite**
- S14 Ca voli di lu poviru la vita;  
 E14 *Who wants from the poor man his life;*  
**E14.F Who wants to take of the poor man his life;**
- S15 Li campagnola, li pirriatura  
 E15.1 *The stone-breakers, the farm workers*  
 E15.2 *The stone-breakers, the countryside farm hands*  
**E15.F The stone-breakers and the countryside farm hands**
- S16 Tutti cumpliti li travagghiatura,  
 E16 *All complete the labours*  
**E16.F All serve to complete the labours of the land**
- S17 Lu sfardatizzu mortu di pitittu  
 E17 *The ragamuffin dying of hunger*  
**E17.F The ragamuffin dying in hungering**
- S18 Ca mischineddu campa sempri afflittu  
 E18.F **Who poor sod lives incessantly a-mongering**
- S19 Chiddi chi sunnu scarsi e malamenti. . .  
 E19.F *All of those who are hard up and live without hope*
- S20 Eccu, o signuri, la povira genti.  
 E20.F *Here they are, o misters, the poor folk*
- S21 L'orbi, li scimuniti, li sciancati,  
 E21 *The one-eyed, the lame, the downbeat,*  
**E21.F The one-eyed, the downbeat, and those who are lame**
- S22 Li fimmini vinnuti pi li strati,  
 E22 *The women who are sold on the street,*  
**E22.F The women who are sold on the street in shame,**
- S23 Lu mbriacuni dintra la cantina,  
 E23.F *The drunkard who inside the tavern abides,*

- S24 Chi vivi di la sira a la matina  
 E24 *Drinking from dusk through to sunrise*  
**E24.F Drinking from the evening through to the sunrise**  
 S25 Lu picciriddu scausu e diunu  
**E25.F The barefoot and starving poor young lad**  
 S26 Orfanu e sulu senza aiutu alunu  
**E26.F Orphaned and alone with no help to be had**  
 S27 Lu carzaratu misu a la prigiuni  
**E27 The inmate to the prison cell led**  
 S28 Pirchì à rubatu appena un guastidduni  
 E28 *Because he just stole a loaf of bread*  
**E28.F Because he has just stolen a loaf of bread**  
 S29 Chiddi chi 'nta lu munnu sunnu nenti. . .  
**E29.F Those who to this world are but a joke. . .**  
 S30 Eccu, o signuri, la povira genti.  
**E30.F Here they are, o misters, the poor folk.**

### 2.4.1. Rhyme

Moffett (1989: 144) writes of herself that 'I am one of an embattled minority which believes that a formal poem's rhymes and metrical arrangements are essential to it and should at all costs be preserved in translation'. Moffett does accept, though, that minor compromises are necessary and Lefevere (1975a: 49) argues

In the absence of a completely satisfactory rhyme word, the translator may decide to settle for a very poor rhyming second best which, in the best case, rises to the level of assonance and in the worst only manages to exhibit some faint resemblance to the sound at the end of the previous line.

But Coates (1998: 104) writes of Nabokov that 'Rhyme he considered "an absurd dictatorship which it was impossible to reconcile with exactitude"' and Lefevere (1975b: 388) suggests that the prioritization of rhyme risks the TT

reading 'like an unintentional parody of its source'. Whilst I agree with both of the above criticisms of the approach, I also think that the context and function of the original poem count heavily. Buttitta's rhyme renders tragic poverty into jovial nonchalance, which has the effect of further shocking the reader. I contend that the clash between rhyme, rhythm, and content is Buttitta's main intention here. The mismatch of the lighthearted rhyme with the gravity of the subject plays an important role. It is for this reason that this particular poem was selected in order to maintain the stylistic use of rhyming effects to stir adverse emotions.

The title is reminiscent of the weekly sheet 'La povera gente' published by Buttitta's culture club 'Giuseppe Turati' in Bagheria in the early 1920s (see Chapter 1, 1.4.1.). I have written the translation in amongst the original poem, detailing the changes I made from the initial, literal translation to the final draft. The lines are numbered as previously described but with F indicating the final draft. I found that, in focusing on rhyme, I felt constrained to change the content of the translation, veering dangerously towards losing the original meaning in order to manipulate rhyme, risking what Barnstone (1993: 229) terms reinvention of 'the formal qualities of the message'. This was an initial difficulty; however, the more time I spent getting to grips with the sense of the poem, the more rhyme seemed to come naturally in the translated version. I think this is partly owing to the way in which Buttitta's poetry reflects speech patterns; when I read the original aloud, the rhyme steers the voice into a balanced, controlled recital. I found that a compromise existed in half rhymes, such as S23 'cantina' with S24 'matina', replicated in English with E23.F 'abides' and E24.F 'sunrise'. The Sicilian 'genti' in the title and at the end of the stanzas was translated initially as 'people', then as 'lot' and 'guys', before rhyming constraints brought 'folk' to my mind. As nothing significant changes in the meaning between 'people' and 'folk', I settled on the latter.

In S29 'Chiddi chi 'nta lu munnu sunnu nenti. . .' is literally 'those who

in this world are nothing', which I elaborated upon for the sake of rhyme. It doesn't change the end result but it does, I admit, alter the content of the original. I accepted this compromise because the English retains the harsh, bitter tone of the sentiment in the Sicilian and I also imagined that Buttitta must have manipulated the choice of his own words in order to maintain his rhyming scheme. Holmes (1988: 54) argues that it is precisely in this area that the pursuit of equivalence is ruptured, to the extent that it must fall either in the meticulous matching at micro level or at an overall sense of matching at the macro level, as 'the translator finds that in selecting a specific counterpart for one aspect of the original poem, he may have made it impossible to find a satisfactory counterpart for another aspect', expanding on this point that

in choosing to use a metrical pattern and rhyme scheme matching that of the original more or less closely within the poetic conventions of the receptor culture, he may have worked himself into a position where he has to do considerable violence to the idiom of the poem, or even the over-all 'content' (ibid.).

In this particular poem, I feel that the 'violence' has been as minimal as possible, largely because the rhyme recreates the unnatural pairing of light-hearted rhythm with a grave subject matter.

## **2.5. 'Comu l'àutri' / 'Like the others' (*Prime*, 1922–1954)**

La matina susennumi mi dicu:

The morning waking up I say to myself:

ora mi fazzu un cori di liuni

now I'll make myself a lion's heart

*firuci comu l'àutri* e nnimicu

fearsome *like the others* and enemy

vogghiu turnari 'mmenzu li pirsuni.

I want to go back among the people.

Cu la maschira nira e minzugnera  
With a mask black and mendacious  
d'omu di munnu passu tra li genti  
of man of the world I go among the people  
stracanciatu nna l'arma e nna la cera  
transformed in soul and in appearance  
e stracanciatu nni li sentimenti.  
and changed in sentiment.

E cuminciu la parti di liuni  
And I begin the part of the lion  
'mmenzu la gran furesta di la vita,  
in the great forest of life,  
unni lu tortu àvi la ragioni,  
where wrong has reason,  
e la giustizia è *pupu di crita*.  
and justice is a *Cretan puppet*.

E allargu li me granfi di 'ngannusu  
And I flex my deceitful claws  
e zoccu afferru dicu: è tuttu miu;  
and whatever I grab I say: it's all mine;  
ma sempri cu li boni, com'è l'usu,  
but always politely, as is normally done,  
battennumi lu pettu 'avanti Diu.  
beating my chest before God.

E arrobbu, 'ngannu, ridu di li peni  
And I steal, I cheat, I laugh at the sorrows  
di l'àutri, cuntentu a li sfurtuni;  
of the others, glad of misfortune;  
'nvidiu a lu puvireddu ddu mucconi  
I envy the poor man his large bite

d'amaru pani chi 'mpedi lu teni.  
of bitter bread that on his feet he holds.

Cchiù 'nganni fazzu cchiù bonu mi sentu;  
The more I deceive the better I feel;  
e quantu cchiù m'allordu godu assai;  
and the more I defile myself the more I enjoy it;  
ammucciu di lu cori lu lamentu,  
hiding the lament from my heart,  
e dicu a ll'omu: *fazzu zoccu fai*.  
and I say to men: *I do what you do*.

Ma siddu restu sulu p'un mumentu  
But if I remain alone for a moment  
e ghisu l'occhi 'ncelu pi disiu  
and raise my eyes to the sky in longing  
davanti lu lucenti firmamentu  
in front of the bright firmament  
mi sentu arriturnari a Diu.  
I feel returned to God.

E tornu zoccu sugnu, picciriddu,  
And I return to what I am, a child,  
davanti di la vita e lu marusu  
before life and the tempest  
chi mi trascina e m'incatina ad iddu,  
that drags me and enchains me to it,  
sbattennumi 'ntra un ciumi assai pitrusu.  
hurling me in a river most rocky.

Iu sugnu comu un sgroppu di sarmentu  
I am like a dry vine  
ittatu 'ntra 'na vaddi sularina  
thrown into a lonely valley

Scavuzzo (1982: 97) describes **Furtura** as: f. forte gelo, tempo fortemente perturbato (PA) Trans. a strong cold/frost/ice/chill, strongly perturbed weather.

strantuliatu di furturi e ventu ———

buffeted by tempests and wind

sbattuliatu di currenti e china. ———

beaten by the currents and flows.

'China' has a variety of connotative values; its literal meaning is **piena** (full) (*Treccani*, 2017: online) but in (Mortillaro, 1975: 220), I found a proverbial meaning of 'vale esser trasportato dalla furia o moltitudine del popolo', [translated in Italian as] '*Andarsene con la piena*' [worth being transported by the fury or multitude of the people].

Sugnu comu a li munti 'na sipala

I am like a hedge to the mountains

'mbrazza a lu rivuturu e tramuntana

taken from the gales and the north wind

chi l'abbatti, la jsa e poi la cala

that demolishes it, lifts it up and then drops it

chi la scinni, la sfarda e si l'acchiana.

that lowers it, tears it up and raises it.

La vita fa di mia chiddu chi voli,

Life does what it wants to me,

mi gira a sò capriccio 'ntunnu 'ntunnu

it spins me at its whim around around

ca mi mancanu l'armi chi idda soli

that I lack the weapons that she habitually

truvare mmanu a l'omini du munnu.

finds in the hands of men of the world.

Oh vita, vita! leva ssi catini

Oh life, life! break these chains

megghiu muriri dintra avuta grutta

better to die in a high cave

unn'è ca vannu l'acceddi rapini,

where the birds of prey go

ed ogni cosa si vidi di sutta,

and you see everything below

ca l'acceddi rapini, almenu chiddi

as the birds of prey, they at least

si mi sgrampanu u cori e lu pizzianu



if pecking at my heart they scratch it  
nun lu fannu pi odiu e 'un lu stranianu  
they don't do it out of hate and they don't find it strange  
ma 'ncelu si lu portanu a li stiddi.  
but in the sky they take it to the stars.

Anni 1927 – 1934

### 2.5.1. Syntactic Equivalence

I have opted to focus on syntactical mirroring in English. Attempting to reflect the Sicilian syntax imposed a heavy constraint on the TL, at times resulting in problematic sentences. It is interesting to equate syntax with a mode of unravelling or storytelling; the order in which the words appear to us (at times, inevitably dictated by grammatical rules) has some bearing on the way in which we depict, interpret and imagine motion.

I decided to imagine the published page layout, and opted to incorporate a glossary of explanations and translator's notes alongside (this technique is addressed by Leppihalme, 2000: 250). The reader is at liberty to read the poem with as much (or as little) interest in the translation process as they wish. The presence of footnotes and, moreover, endnotes, may interrupt the reading process and is sometimes cumbersome even for the most avid reader. If the line of the gaze is drawn across the page, instead, I suggest that this lessens the interruption. Balma and Spani (2010: 122) suggest that, more often than not, editions 'gloss their most challenging regional or provincial linguistic features in a set of footnotes'. Weissbort (1989: xi) observes that as the final product must be able to stand alone,

to a large extent unsupported by glosses or commentary, either in the form of footnotes or embodied in the text, it is inevitable that many of the hard-earned

insights and perceptions will, for all practical purposes, go unrepresented in the 'final' version.

In order to cope with the untranslatability of individual dialect words and idiomatic expressions, I attempted to interject 'lexical elements that confer to the narrative dynamism the same subtle irony and intimate colloquiality established with the reader' (Petrocchi, 2011: 69) seeking to apply 'a law of compensation' (ibid.), a process that Petrocchi (ibid.: 66) observes in Weaver's translation of Gadda: 'When Weaver is unable to translate dialectal forms, he substitutes them with Latin, Greek, or French loanwords, in an attempt to reproduce the same polyphonic feature conceived of by Gadda', noting also that, for Gadda, 'dialects are not accessories, but tools used to reproduce the ethnic and psychological diversity of the characters' (Petrocchi, 2011.: 67).

The syntax in the following lines reads unnaturally in English but poetic licence seems to permit it in a literary context; it also accentuates the spoken nature of language in that the adjectives appear as added descriptions, or afterthoughts, after the noun takes precedence:

Cu la maschira nira e minzugnera / With a mask black and mendacious

I favoured the *DPS* (Scavuzzo, 1982) as it often includes the regional origin of the words. 'Furturi' is Palermitan and, for that reason, I decided to accompany the word with its origin explained. Without knowing for certain which of the possible meanings Buttitta intended, I tried to capture both. The only way I could find of doing this was to add an adjective. 'To go with the flow' accurately renders the Italian structure.

Syntactical mirroring has its strengths as a strategy, because the TL reader's mind is forced to interpret meaning non-conventionally, which contributes to the desired effect of estrangement. This is, however, only

effective to a certain degree; there are instances wherein 'the original ordering and syntactic structure are preserved, but sound so uncongenial to English that they actually invite a different syntactic interpretation' (Grošelj, 2005: 257). In such cases, where meaning itself is restructured, I deemed it preferable to reverse the syntax to create the same sense as the original. In sentences where the meaning remains the same but the syntactic structure is non-conventional, I decided to leave the sentences to accentuate the presence of a foreign structure. The result, of course, is that the poetic style in English is lessened dramatically but with the underlying effect of remaining true to its intentions of foregrounding otherness. This is not unique to dialect, however, and would be applicable to any syntactical difference in any language. Only the combined strategies of syntactical, literal and phonological faithfulness to the SL version can result in a truer rendering of dialect.

Lefevere (1975b: 384) argues that translations ought to 'exist as a literary work of art in their own right and give the reader an accurate impression of what the source text is like'. Undeniably, syntactical mirroring alone is not enough to successfully provide the impression of what the ST is like but one redeeming quality of the strategy is that it enabled me to move away from the confines of syntax and to consider word-order as a means of restructuring content in a foreignizing way. I conclude, though, that where this impacts negatively on the literariness of the translated poem, it cannot alone claim success as a strategy. Such strategies bear exploration, however, and provide moments of release from the standard or expected confines of the TL. Tampering with such expectations paves the way for the translator to consider diverse possibilities and, fundamentally, to better grasp the distinction between what could be done, and what should be.

## 2.6. 'Jvanca' / 'Jvanca' (*Prime*, 1922–1954)

<p>Jvanca, unni si' Jvanca  picciridduzza slava  cu la facciuzza bianca  e li capiddi comu zafarana?</p>	<p>Jvanca, where're you Jvanca  pretty-sweet-little slave girl  with your dear face of white  and your hair like saffron?</p>
<p>Jvanca, unni si' Jvanca...  luntana picciridda di cunfini,  unni l'armuzza stanca  comu 'n'acceddu chi cerca lu niru  si veni a posa tutti li matini  pi putiri 'n'anticchia ripusari?</p>	<p>Jvanca, where're you Jvanca...  faraway little girl from the border,  where is the dear tired soul  like a bird that searches the nest  comes to lay itself down all the mornings  to be able a'little to rest?</p>
<p>Ma dimmi, Jvanca dimmi  si mi voi beni ancora comu prima,  quannu cantannu pi la muntagnola  scinnevi a la funtana e mi ridevi  guardannumi 'ntra l'occhi:  comu si l'occhi avissiru parola  e lingua bona a farisi capiri?</p>	<p>But tell me, Jvanca tell me  if you still care for me like before,  when singing about the hillocks  you came down to the fountain and smiled at me  looking me in the eyes:  as though eyes had words  and a tongue good at making itself understood?</p>
<p>E quanti cosi chi t'avissi dittu  'nta la mè parratura paisana  siddu a la tua nun era differenti.  Ah, quant'è dulurusu  nun si putiri diri  tuttu chiddu chi c'è dintra lu cori  quannu lu cori adduma  e ni cunsuma a picca...a picca...a picca!...  È comu chiddu chi cerca e nun trova  è comu chiddu chi voli e nun pò.</p>	<p>And how many things I would've said t'you  in my local village speech  if from yours it were not different.  Ah, how it is painful  not to be able to say  all that is within my heart  when my heart blazes  and consumes bit.....by bit....by bit!...  It's like he who searches and finds not  it's like he who wants to and can not.</p>
<p>Jvanca! Jvanca! Jvanca!</p>	<p>Jvanca! Jvanca! Jvanca!</p>

<p>Palumma spersa 'nta lu mari granni!</p> <p>Negghia chi manni l'acqua biniditta!  Ti la ricordi cchiù l'ultima sira  quannu lassai pi sempri ddu paisi  lu tò paisi nicu di muntagna  unni c'è sippillutu lu mè sonnu  unni c'è sippillivu lu mè amuri?</p> <p>Dda sira mi dicisti...  Chi mi dicisti Jvanca  l'ultima vota chi ni salutammu  mentri chiancevi supra lu mè coddu  e la trumma chiamava li surdati?</p> <p>Dicisti una parola...  Una parola duci...duci...duci...  chi nun capivu e nun capisciu ancora.  Forsi un salutu...forsi...cu lu sapi?  Fu comu un sonu d'organu dda vuci,  un sonu lentu...lentu...  mi parsi lu lamentu  di 'n'acidduzzu chi persi la mamma  e nni li notti scuri va circannu.</p> <p>Ma poi c'un jditeddu finu...finu...  di la tò manu comu gersuminu,  'na stidda 'nta lu celu mi signasti,  dicennumi cu' l'occhi di guardari.  Era 'na stidda la cchiù luminusa  forsi la megghiu stidda di lu celu  e nni guardava cu l'ucchiuzzi giarni.</p> <p>Ah, Jvanca! dimmi Jvanca</p>	<p>Dove lost in the great sea!</p> <p>Cloud that sends the blessed water!  Do you still remember the last evening  when I left forever that town  your little town of the mountain  where my dream is buried  where I buried my love?</p> <p>That evening you said to me...  What did you say to me Jvanca  the last time we said goodbye  while you cried upon my neck  and the horn called the soldiers?</p> <p>You said one word...  A word sweet....sweet....sweet  that I didn't and still don't understand.  Perhaps a farewell...perhaps...what do I know?  It was like the sound of an organ that voice,  a sound slow...slow...  it seemed to me a lament  from a little bird who'd lost its mamma  and in the dark nights goes searching.</p> <p>But then wi'a little finger subtle...subtle...  from your hand like jasmine,  a star in the sky you pointed out to me,  telling me with your eyes to look.  It was the brightest sky  perhaps the best star of the sky  and it looked upon us with sweet yellow.</p> <p>Ah, Jvanca! tell me Jvanca</p>
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picciridduzza slava	sweet little slave girl
cu la facciuzza bianca	with your face of white
comu la nivi di lu tò paisi	like the snow from your town
e li masciddi fatti di cirasa:	and cheeks made of cherries:
chi mi sintisti diri cu dda cosa	what did you want to tell me with that thing
'nta dda sirata assà silenziusa...?	in that evening most silent...?

### 2.6.1. Literal Strategy

I began to experiment with changes in the visual layout of the translated poems, simply in order to view them differently and to ascertain whether page layout may further enhance, or indeed interfere with, interpretation and perceived accessibility. This experimentation was prompted by my exploration of literal strategy, as I felt the poems in juxtaposition further emphasized the strategy. (From this point on, translations take varying layouts and are presented in a number of different ways.)

Taylor (1998: 326) defines syntactic equivalence as 'the co-occurrence of identical or similar grammatical forms with a higher than usual frequency'. Whilst literal translations often pertain to provide an exact replica of the SL text, they are criticized for lack of fluency in the TL text. Newmark (1988: 73) has a more rigid stance, arguing that 'we do translate words, because there is nothing else to translate; there are only the words on the page; there is nothing else there'. Nabokov resided at the furthest end of this spectrum and insisted upon 'an exhaustive commentary and a rigorous word-for-word translation' (Weissbort, 1989: xii).

Denman (2012: 158) argues of translation that 'It is not a (pretended) repetition of what has been said, but rather the effort to say something that means the same', while Newmark (1988: 73) argues against translation as a

merely lexical process, suggesting instead that 'The basic thought-carrying element of language is its grammar. But since the grammar is expressed only in words, we have to get the words right. The words must stretch and give only if the thought is threatened'. This point is particularly relevant in looking at dialectal lexis, because the words themselves have been selected in direct opposition to any alternative counterpart in national language. Burnshaw's (1960) preface to his translations (cited in Weissbort, 1989: xii) claims that 'the most satisfactory procedure is to provide the non-linguist reader with a lexical and contextual commentary and an *ad verbum*, non-literary translation alongside the original, thereby enabling him to experience the source text for himself'. I think this sense of experiencing the ST is critical, and one means of doing this is to provide a literal rendering. The complication is that it can lessen the impact of the Sicilian poetry because it reads as ungrammatical, under-developed English.

A compromise would be to provide both a literal and a poetic rendering, enabling a reader to see the mechanisms of the SL adapted to TL naturalness. In the process of change, the reader can witness the textual workings in between. Perhaps in this instance we deal with paraphrase, as opposed to poetic rewriting, although Deman (2012: 158) suggests

in the case of paraphrase, we expect that someone understanding a source text ought to understand its replacement likewise. But when a paraphrase is supposed to render a text's import more accessible, then it has the countenance of translation. A translator obliges us by putting unintelligible text into (a) language that we can understand. The difference is subtle, but it defines translation.

Lefevere (1975b: 386) argues that 'The only way in which a really literal translation could be of any help to the half-bilingual reader is in the form of an interlinear version, not as a hybrid creation forever vegetating on the

boundary between the literary and the non-literary'. When monolingual readers encounter a translation, on the other hand, depending on the level of interest in the SL, the literal rendering allows a heightened form of accessibility. In this poem, I attempted to provide a literal rendering whilst freeing the poem from intermedial hybridity; I wished to make it intelligible to the Anglophone reader whilst facilitating access to the original structure.

Access to the SL poem is facilitated by the literal rendering; in instances where words read unnaturally in English or cases wherein word order is non-standard, the words and their order reflect the SL version, permitting engagement with the original. In, for example, 'picciriduzza slava', the English recreates itself accordingly, additionally mirroring the sound in 'pretty-sweet-little slave girl'. The syllable count remains the same and the rhythm is maintained. The English words are individually comprehensible but reflect through hyphenation the Sicilian compilation of meaning. This strategy provides 'manipulated English syntax and lexicon to craft a nonstandard and yet comprehensible style to represent the speech of the [Sicilian] characters' (Azevedo, 1998: 36), enabling closer recreation of context and style. Otherwise, in its attempt 'to recreate a literary dialect, however, translation affects the relationship between the reader and the text' (ibid.: 39). This effect on the reader may form a threshold for closer understanding of the original, a purpose and function that I believe has its strengths. I would suggest that this is only truly effective, however, if accompanied by a poetic rendering that transforms the text on another level, allowing it to stand alone as creative writing.

The choice to place the adjective after the noun estranges the English but I believed the decision to be in keeping with the objective to prioritize literal rendering, especially because there are multiple instances where the sentence ends with a repetition of these adjectives:



Una parola duci...duci...duci... / A word sweet....sweet....sweet

un sonu lentu...lentu... / a sound slow...slow...

Ma poi c'un jditeddu finu...finu... / But then wi'a little finger subtle...subtle...

Perhaps I was not brave enough to entirely follow the SL syntax in the literal rendering for, in this case, a sentence such as the following would be: 'Palumma spersa 'nta lu mari granni! / Dove lost in the sea great!', which I couldn't justify. Jakobson (1959: 236) claims that 'Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey'. There are grammatical rules which a foreignized translation strategy must obey; the extent to which such rules are adhered to can vary according to what must be communicated and what language may be allowed to do, if it deviates from itself. But there are other instances where the order alters the effect in the TL as well as the SL: 'mi parsi lu lamentu / it seemed to me a lament' makes this syntactical style of writing echo the sentiment of lament it describes. Buttitta allows us to hear the cry of someone lost, searching, and the ensuing despair when the object of the search remains lost; this is possible because 'the position assigned to an entity, action, or concept within a line of verse contributes to the overall meaning, text pattern, and poetic effect' (Grošelj, 2005: 255). Lefevere (1975b: 385–386) asserts

It is therefore absolutely necessary not only to expose the idea of a 'literal translation' for the myth it really is, but also to prove that translation of literature, of poetry, is indeed possible, once it has been freed from the obligation to render only sense for sense.

I agree with this claim but I do believe a literal rendering serves a useful purpose. Undoubtedly, in this case, it is the first rendering before the necessary reorganization takes place but these early, ungrammatical renderings when given their own importance and aware of their inevitable

weakness, can contribute to a deeper insight into the workings not only of the SL but also the translator's craft. I enhance the possibilities of literal translation by exploring, in the following poem, contrasts between neutralization and substitution.

## 2.7. 'Un Cristu Ncruci' / 'A Christ on the Cross' (*Pani, 1954*)

### Sicilian

C'è un campanaru àutu  
 a lu me paisi  
 un Cristu ncruci,  
 e un parrinu  
 chi dici la missa.

C'è lu suli chi spunta di lu mari  
 e binidici  
 li casi vasci;  
 fà lúciri li chiacchi di li mura,

e l'acqua spicchiulia di li funtani;

li mammi puvireddi  
 a lu sogghiu affacciati  
 si lu mancianu cu l'occhi  
 stu suli,  
 ci lu dunanu  
 cu li latti  
 a li nutrichi  
 appizzati a li crapicchi;  
 ci gràpinu li porti,  
 si jnchinu li fadala,  
 la conca di lu pettu,

### English Literal Translation

There is a bell tower/steeple tall/high  
 at the my town/village  
 a Christ oncross,  
 and a priest  
 who says the mass.

There's the sun that appears from the sea  
 and blesses  
 the small/low houses;  
 it makes the cracks/chinks/slits in the walls  
 shine,

and the water drops/spits from the  
 fountains;

the poor mummies/mammies/mammi  
 at the doors facing/leaning  
 they eat themselves it up with their eyes  
 this sun,  
 they give it  
 with the milks  
 to their infants/sucklings  
 stuck/attached to their nipples;  
 they open the doors with it,  
 they fill up their aprons  
 the shell of their chest,

li gnuni friddi,  
e li casciuma vacanti.

the cold corners,  
and the empty houses.

Ci su li zappatura  
senza terra  
e pani picca  
a lu me paisi,  
cu peddi sicca  
e sucata a li masciddi,  
comu cútini di porcu  
siccata a lu sulì:  
òmini agghimmati,  
carini torti,  
occhi di nnuccenti carzarati:  
di cunnannati a morti.  
Li zappatura!  
Ossa, siccumi, caddi,  
e centu seculi di pitittu  
supra li spaddi;  
e robi sfatti  
di suduri e tempu,  
e pezzi a li cammisi  
arripizzati  
di manu pupulana  
cu marreddi di cuttuni  
a cridenza  
ntra lu putiàru vicinu.

There are the farmers/diggers/hoers  
without/with no earth/land  
and little bread  
at my town/village,  
with dry skin  
and dribble at their jaws/chops,  
like pork rind  
dried/dried out in the sun:  
men hunchbacked,  
backs bent/crooked/distorted,  
eyes of innocent incarcerateds:  
convicted/condemned/sentenced to death.  
The farmers!  
Bones, callouses,  
and hundred centuries of appetite  
upon/over/on the/their shoulders;  
and clothes undone  
of/by sweat and time,  
and bits/pieces at their shirts  
patched  
by common/popular/public hand  
with skeins/hanks of cotton  
in faith/belief/trust  
from the shopkeeper close by/neighbour

A lu me paisi  
lu populu è sicuru  
ca un ghiornu  
Cristu scinni di la cruci:  
  
ddu jornu

At/In my town  
the population/public/people are sure  
that one day  
Christ will descend/come down from the  
cross:  
that day

lu parrinu un dici missa,  
lu sagristanu  
un sona li campani.

#### **Neutralized translation**

There is a high steeple  
in my town  
a Christ upon the cross,  
and a priest  
who says mass.

The sun that appears from the sea  
and blesses  
the small houses;  
makes the slits in the walls shine  
and the water sprays from the fountains;  
the poor mothers  
at the doors facing  
their eyes soak it in  
this sun,  
they provide it  
with the milk  
to their infants  
suckling at their bosoms;  
they open doors  
they fill up their aprons  
the shell of their chest,  
the cold corners,  
and the empty houses.

There are the farmers  
without land  
and little bread

the priest won't say mass,  
the sacristan/verger/bellringer  
won't ring the bells.

#### **Substituted translation**

There's a bell tower high  
in that there town a-mine  
a Christ on'cross,  
and a priest  
who says us mass.

There's the sun that appears from the sea  
and blesses  
the low houses;  
it makes glimmer the chinks in the walls  
and the water spits from the fountains;  
the poor mammi  
at the doors leaning  
they eat themselves it up with their eyes  
this sun,  
they give it  
with the milks  
to their sucklings  
stuck at their nipples;  
they open the doors  
they fill up their pinnies  
the shell of their chest,  
the cold nooks,  
and the empty houses.

There are the hoers  
without earth  
and tit-bits of bread

in my town,  
with dry skin  
and saliva at their mouths  
like pork rind  
dried out in the sun:  
hunchbacked men,  
backs bent,  
eyes of innocent inmates:  
sentenced to death.  
The farmers!  
Bones, callouses,  
and years of starvation  
upon their shoulders;  
and clothes ruined  
by sweat and time,  
and pieces of their shirts  
patched  
by common hand  
with skeins of cotton  
in trust  
from the shopkeeper nearby.

In my town  
people are sure  
that one day  
Christ will descend from the cross:  
that day  
the priest won't say mass,  
the sacristan  
won't ring the bells.

at my town,  
with skin dry  
and dribble at their chops,  
like pork rind  
dried out in the sun:  
men hunchbacked,  
backs crooked,  
eyes of innocent incarcerates:  
sentenced to death.  
The hoers!  
Bones, callouses,  
and a'hundred centuries clemmin' o'hunger  
over their shoulders;  
and clothes undone  
by sweat and time,  
and bits at their shirts  
patched  
by common hand  
with hanks of cotton  
in faith  
by the shopkeeper close by.

In my town  
folk are sure  
that one day  
Christ'll come down from th'cross:  
that day  
the priest dun't say mass,  
the sacristan  
dun't ring the bells.

### 2.7.1. Neutralization and Substitution

This strategy builds on the literal strategy applied to the previous poem and interested me particularly here, as Buttitta's tone, when neutralized, loses

some of its vitriol and despair, by now such an important feature of his writing. Zinna (1997: 416) notes of Buttitta that

In '*La Paci*' (Peace) he stigmatizes the immense tragedy of war, exalting Christian solidarity. The flag of his political faith is as red as Christ's tunic<sup>118</sup>, who one day will come down from the cross and will take with him 'poor mothers' and 'landless peasants,' and will drive the merchants from the temple.

It is here that Buttitta noticeably separates himself from his contemporaries. In this yearning for Christ's descent, a recurring theme in Buttitta's poetry, we can perhaps discern not only a longing for equality and salvation but also for the worldly humility of Christ; displacing notions of God as a superior being and the worshipped, elated Madonna figure, the Christ figure in Buttitta's poetry holds a peculiar amount of focus. According to Gospel, Jesus endured that which man endures and Buttitta accordingly views some earthly, human quality in him. Christ's suffering is described in the Bible with detailed reference to his physical pain; Buttitta's writing of suffering is, at times, rather biblical. 'This palingenetic impulse is totally absent from the work of popular and populist poets who had freed themselves from the Arcadian allure of old Meli' (ibid.).

Duranti (2006: 295) suggests 'Prima di tutte, nel caso della traduzione in dialetto, la scelta di *quale* lingua usare'<sup>119</sup> precedes other choices. SL dialects can be replaced by supposedly similar dialects or can be rendered into a dialect 'that would reproduce, in the translation, the effect of the dialect of the source text' (Slater, 2011: 95). Duranti (2006: 296) refers to Michael Sullivan's translations of Belli in which he uses a 'dispersed urban vernacular', 'un cocktail che gli permette di crearsi uno strumento flessibile e agile che, al pari

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<sup>118</sup> 'russa era la tònaca di Cristu', in Buttitta, Ignazio (1954: 26), from 'Parru cu tia', in *Pani*.

<sup>119</sup> [Trans.] 'First of all, in the case of dialect translation, the choice of *which* language to use'

dell'originale, riesce ad adattarsi alla forma rigida del sonetto'<sup>120</sup>. Brandimonte (2015: 38), however, claims that neutralization is 'un procedimento erroneo, che non rende giustizia alle intenzioni comunicative dell'autore'<sup>121</sup>. Zanzotto (1987, cited in Balma, 2011: 5) in a letter to John P. Welle remarks that

if the passage from Italian to English (or into another language) is already uncertain, the passage from dialect to a foreign language becomes almost impossible. The dialect cannot be rendered with Standard English. It would be necessary to find some patois or slang that nevertheless was rather widely known in the Anglophone area.

The use of 'Anglophone area' to me suggests unfamiliarity with the wide range of different associations and referents present in English dialects. English, whilst not as linguistically varied regionally as Italian, has its own translational issues as a receptor language because it is one language applied to a multitude of different cultures, each of which alters and uses the language in substantially different ways, not to mention the worldwide adoption of English as a lingua franca; rendering dialect into remote British or diverse US dialects, for example, would alienate the translation for many Anglophone readers, either linguistically or culturally. The line 'the priest won't say mass / the priest dun't say mass' reflects a mild example of spoken pronunciation imposed on written language. 'Dun't' has an internal rhyme with 'un' in Sicilian and I think is comprehensible when read aloud.

Azevedo (1998: 42) notes that translators 'do not necessarily have at their disposal a dialect that approximates, let alone replicates, the connotations of the original', arguing that 'As a result, they may have to represent orality through the creation of an approximative, perhaps *ad hoc*

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<sup>120</sup> [Trans.] 'a cocktail which permits him to create a flexible and agile instrument that, on par with the original, manages to adapt itself to the rigid sonnet form'

<sup>121</sup> [Trans.] 'an erroneous procedure, which does not do justice to the author's communicative intentions'

literary dialect, and in so doing they will risk masking, misrepresenting, or obliterating the sociolinguistic variables inherent in the original' (ibid.). I have attempted to capture the sociolinguistic variables through ungrammaticality, but also to represent the orality precisely via a more colloquial use of language and to foreground the beauty and force of the words through lexical choices that I felt accurately transferred tone. Winston (1950: 184) argues that 'in most cases the translator is obliged to invent a new language that gives the impression of dialect speech without reference to any particular locality. There is a loss, of course'. This degree of loss is difficult to entirely avoid; perhaps the language, whilst slightly blander, at least avoids direct affiliation with any foreign regional identity. Yet Brandimonte (2015: 39) underlines the relevant truism that 'una perdita parziale sarà sempre preferibile ad una perdita totale'<sup>122</sup> and Leppihalme (2000: 250) observes that 'The more important a feature, the more loss there is if the translation downplays it'. The juxtaposition of these two strategies highlights the occurrence of such loss; although neutralization communicates the meaning and the sense, substitution enhances the tone and inherent intention of the poem.

Bonaffini (1997b: 281) acknowledges that the Anglophone world is 'profoundly affected by the question of vernaculars' and, while Zanzotto may be right about the fact that Standard English cannot render a foreign dialect, a dialect of English only renders the SL dialect as something it is not, which is inaccurate translation as opposed to a translation that may be blander and inefficient in communicating the dialect. Neither, in my opinion, is sufficient in terms of effectively communicating the style and character, indeed, Welle chose to 'not follow the path suggested by Zanzotto' (Balma, 2011: 5). Balma (ibid.: 6) argues that 'Allowing Italian dialect literature to inhabit some sort of Anglophone vernacular shell could be seen as a perilous activity' but adds

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<sup>122</sup> [Trans.] 'partial loss will always be preferable to total loss'



that the majority of translators avoid this tactic. However, playfulness in this sort of transposition is appealing and there are 'multiple solutions to those who wish to put forth a translation of Italian dialect poetry that bears some vernacular features, some noticeable distance from the standard language' (Balma, 2011: 6). It is this distance in Buttitta's poetry from the standard language that I am attempting to capture in English translation. Many anthologies opt for a trilingual format (dialect, standard Italian, standard English) but Balma (*ibid.*: 10–11) has put forward his preference for a quadrilingual translation approach that incorporates a version of the text in vernacular English, a 'hybridization of multiple language varieties', also noting that almost all 'extant English translations of Italian dialect poetry have opted for the fifth strategy' (*ibid.*: 9), that of standardization. I have provided a literal translation first, which enabled me to alter the target language into a neutralized version and a substituted version afterwards.

Certain changes are minor, such as: 'in my town / in that there town a-mine', which reflects a neutralized translation of the content and a foreignized substitution which takes the Sicilian grammar and uses its form to estrange the English version. The 'emphatic adverb "there" between a demonstrative adjective and its nominal referent is typical of widespread non-standard usage' (Howard, 2013: 710), what may be described as a dialectal element without regional specificity. Similarly, 'the poor mothers / the poor mammi' are more formal and domesticated, and informal and foreignized, respectively. In: 'and little bread / and tit-bits of bread' the words are not unfamiliar and express both colloquial usage and lower register. Howard (2013: 710) suggests that such choices, 'while not strictly dialectal in nature, do give a flavour of archaic otherness strongly denoting provincialism'. I felt it important to highlight the destitution that lack of bread represents: 'In Italy and Sicily, bread is sacred, as it is the symbol of the Holy Eucharist which stands for the body and blood of Christ' (Asciutto, 1977: 63). When Buttitta

repeatedly refers, throughout his poetry, to the lack of bread, this symbolism is present but subtle. The poor are forgotten, hungry, and the absence of bread signifies the absence of the bare minimum.

Jakobson (1959: 232) writes of the necessity for a 'linguistic acquaintance' with the word described and claims that 'An array of linguistic signs is needed to introduce an unfamiliar word'. The line: 'eyes of innocent inmates / eyes of innocent incarcerates' introduces a foreignized version of the SL word, but one that is familiar enough to its Standard to stand alone. Petrocchi (2011: 68) writes of Weaver's translations of Gadda that he

refuses to translate Italian dialects by employing dialects native to North-American regions. Consequently, in order to adapt cultural or social aspects to his idiolect, he foreignizes his translation by introducing the reader to a foreign reality that maintains its original identity.

Weinberg (1982, cited in Hargan, 2006: 56) claimed that 'Latin languages are particularly colourful, exploding with expletives for which literal translations would never do'. Taylor (2006: 37) notes the problems of translating the 'texture' of regional speech patterns 'into languages that do not readily bend to the very specific linguistico-cultural contexts' and, looking specifically at the translation of dialect and sociolect in film translating, he notes of film language that it 'can be seen to display neutralising tendencies, remaining more within the sphere of the standard variety of language', remarking, further to this, that within 'the two major strategies for translating film, dubbing and subtitling, the latter moves ever further towards a standard language through its very nature as a written, and therefore more formal, genre' (ibid.: 38). Taylor (2006: 39) also notes a shift from the 'more specific to the more generic, in that lexis, terminology, and expressions specific to regional and social varieties need to be generalised in order to guarantee

comprehension over wide geographical and social divides'. It occurs to me that I translate pen in hand, reading words and transmitting them immediately to paper. If I were to pretend to 'dub' the poem as an oral recital, however, different language (instinctively more natural, less neutralized, less formal) comes very quickly. I neutralized 'a Christ upon the cross' and substituted with 'a Christ on'cross'; the difference is subtle but the second version captures the oral, spoken nature of the dialect.

One of the characteristics of Buttitta's poetry is that, even if articulately crafted, it appears to be spontaneous. It comes across as spoken language that has been written down, speech that pauses and jumps, lists and falters. Gregory and Carroll (1978, cited in Taylor, 2006: 42) suggest that a script is 'written to be spoken as if not written'. Just as neutralized or formalized translated language passes through a process which sometimes renders it 'translationese', scripted language may divert from actual spoken language. The substituted version 'and dribble at their chops' retains the length but is more natural and colloquial, focusing more on the informal register associated with dialectal speech. Taylor (2006: 39) notes that neutralization 'reduces a text to sense and standard forms of language'. It is important to remember a simple distinction that is particularly relevant to dialect writing, which is, as Anderman (2007: 8) observes, that 'people rarely speak the way they write'. This is a useful observation that can easily be overlooked; not only does translation tend toward more formal writing, at times it falls prey to making the TT even more academic and formal than the original.

Lastly, to examine the feasibility of substituted TL dialect effect, this example 'and years of starvation' / 'and a hundred centuries clemmin' o'hunger' introduces a TL dialect word ('clemmin'). It stems from Old English and is still in use in Yorkshire, with variations of its significance. The reader might require a glossary, although the context is possibly strong enough to explain its meaning. Petrocchi (2011: 67) suggests that 'dialect is not an end in

itself, but it plays a specific supporting role'. Rather than the whole poem being rendered in a TL dialect, I think a mixture of words from different dialects (even hybrid variations, so as not to substitute geographical alignment) has a certain effect and as Balma and Spani (2010: 124) state, 'it is also a strategy that guarantees the usage of some dialect-like features in an Anglophone rendition'. Relationality, as discussed by Baker (2014: 168) as a characteristic of narrative theory, encompasses the difficulty of choosing dialect or register in translation as a means of representing individual elements across languages, concluding that

Any dialect or register acquires a certain value or set of associations as a result of being configured within a specific narrative or set of narratives, and cannot be detached and made to shed these associations in order to replace a dialect or register in another narrative environment unproblematically.

This consolidates my conviction that the dialect of Buttitta's poetry ought not to be translated into a British dialect, other than an 'invented' or creative deviance from standard language because such replacement would inevitably carry with it problematic associations and implications; many dialects denote social background, education levels, age and gender in a cultural environment that would not match the original. It would also render the translation somewhat fictitious, applying language to a people and context that is invented and this is in direct opposition to the objectives both of dialect writing and realism.

## 2.8. 'La peddi nova' / 'The new skin' (*Peddi*, 1963)

1. Certu era bellu scriviri	It was certainly beautiful writing
2. comu un briacu	like a drunk
3. a la taverna a b'viri,	at the taverna to drink,
4. chi guarda la buttigghia	who looks a'the bottle
5. e ci parra,	and talks to it,
6. e ridi a lu bicchieri	and laughs at the glass
7. chi svacanta	which empties
8. e torna a ghinchiri arreri.	and goes back to being full.
9. Scriviri mprinatu d'amuri:	Writing impregnated wi' love:
10. la gravidanza, li dogghi, lu partu,	pregnancy, labour pangs, birth,
11. lu tempu esattu	the exact time
12. pi fari un figghiu	to have a child
13. e nasciri na puisia.	and bear a poem.
14. Certu era bellu;	Indeed it was beautiful;
15. ma ora sugnu spirtusatu,	but now I am punctured,
16. lazzariatu di dintra,	Lazarused within,
17. e scrivu	and I write
18. cu lu duluri chi mi torci	with the pain that writhes within me
19. comu un sarmentu a lu furnu;	like a sarment in the oven;
20. com'unu assicutatu di li spirdi	like one pursued by ghosts
21. muzzicatu di li api.	stung by bees.
22. La storia di st'anni fucusi	The story of these inflamed years
23. ha zappatu cu l'ugna	has dug its nails
24. dintra di mia,	inside of me,
25. e restu scantatu a taliari	and I am left aghast to watch
26. l'omini tutti	men all of them
27. mpinnuliati a un filu,	hanging by a thread
28. a un distinu sulu,	to one sole destiny,
29. dintra na varca di pagghia c'affunna.	inside a boat of straw that sinks.

30. Sentu ca la me vuci	I hear that my voice
31. chi li chiama di luntanu	that calls them from far away
32. havi limmiti e cunfini d'amuri	has limits and borders of love
33. e mori nni l'aria.	and dies in the air.
34. Voggh'essiri un cocciu di rina	I want to be a grain of sand
35. nni la rina di la praja;	in the sand of the beach;
36. un pisci nni la riti cu l'àutri	a fish in the net with the others
37. mpignati a sfunnari	absorbed with breaching
38. la gaggia chi li chiuj.	the cage that encloses them.
39. Mi vogghiu svacantari, scurciari,	I want to excavate myself, shed,
40. farimi la peddi nova	make myself a new skin
41. comu lu scursuna.	like the black serpents.

### 2.8.1. Connotative transfer of dialect

Turning to examine the connotative capacity of words that are used symbolically, I was faced with the choice of maintaining SL lexis and glossing the connotative value, or attempting to replace the SL lexis with TL lexis that stimulates the same, or a similar connotation. Beckett (2000: 78) argues that 'There is a correspondance, in the Baudelairean sense of the word, between the *signifiant* (that which designates: the word) and the *signifié* (that which is designated: the object)'. Grillandi (1976: 208) argues that the dialect in Buttitta's poem is central to its overall success in accomplishing symbolic effect:

Qui egli ha già affinato i propri mezzi, in una dimensione mediana che riscatta gli antichi moduli veristici con un complesso gioco simbolico, rinnovato di continuo dagli apporti sensibili di un dialetto duttile e ricco come pochi altri linguaggi,

aderente al pensiero fino a confondersi con esso, pur lievitandolo<sup>123</sup>.

I read the Sicilian poem aloud, listening to the sounds of the poem and getting a feel for its movement, rhythm and voice. I have aimed to keep the syntax as similar as grammatically possible, for example: (L3) *a la taverna a biviri* was initially translated as *drinking at the taverna*, but quickly became *at the taverna to drink*. The word 'taverna' was kept as an echo of the original setting, in the hope that it is relatively well known in English. Sentences such as *Certu era bellu scriviri* contain the problematic *bellu*, which does not read so naturally in its literal English translation. But the objective is to transfer the general spirit of the original, and for this reason *beautiful* has its place.

The first Sicilian word that posed a problem was *spirtusare*, which is rendered in Italian by 'forare: fare un buco a' (Rubery and Cicoira, 2010: 1865), and therefore, *to pierce, to prick, to punch, to puncture*, while in Italian, *forare* or *bucare* function as standard synonyms. *Punctured* (L15) seemed fitting as it seemed to accurately denote *riddled with holes* whilst also carrying the connotation of being somewhat deflated and injured.

*Lazzariato* (L16) brought me immediately to think of Lazarus, restored to life by Jesus. I was unsure of how to handle this as a verb, unusual even in Italian, but poetically applied by Buttitta. Having played around with *Lazarused/Lazarus-ed*, I worked towards *Lazarused inside*, but lacked confidence in this result; such an unfamiliar word perhaps halts the poem, rather than taking the reader (certainly one unfamiliar with the parable) to the true significance. Contextually, I also questioned whether the biblical association, undoubtedly evident to readers of a Catholic upbringing, would survive in English, certainly in its verbal form. However, considering 'how the English-

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<sup>123</sup> [Trans.] 'Here he has already refined his means, in a median dimension that redeems the ancient veristic modules with a complex symbolic game, continually renewed by the sensitive contributions of a ductile dialect and rich in a way that few other languages are, adherent to thought until it gets confused with it, while transforming it'

speaking mind is likely to frame the same thought' (Raffel, 1988: 39), I left it, slightly reluctantly, as *Lazarus within*. I considered incorporating further detail of the parable for the sake of clarity, such as *reborn within as Lazarus*.

The final line on black snakes, *li scursuna*, led me to discover that these snakes shed their skin as it grows, but also in the aftermath of injury, which gave more resonance to the poem. The title 'New skin' comes from this line, and seems to yearn for a new beginning and also for the capacity of regeneration, echoed in both the stanza on childbirth, in connection with the creation of poetry, and L16, relating to Lazarus coming back to life. These images collaborate to provide an image of new, or secondary, life or existence, of the human and animalistic capacity for self-preservation through change and adaptation, particularly as a result of injury or wrongdoing. The reinvention of the self is prominent as a theme, especially as a survival technique with the 'connotazione di un dolore e di una delusione corale, ormai storici, e al fallimento di una speranza individuale'<sup>124</sup> (Grillandi, 1976: 206). The leaving behind of something also features large, as with the procreation of poetry/children, and indeed the skin itself.

The drowning of sorrows in the taverna (L2-8), and the repetitive monotony of the refilling glass (and, indeed, the persistent shedding of skin) shows a self that seems to yearn simultaneously to abandon (in alcohol or in shedding skin) and to be absorbed (as with the image of the fish in with the rest, L26). The net image pertains to a feeling of entrapment, as does the sensation of being trapped within your own skin. The sinking straw boat (L29) and the fish seeking to free themselves (L37) are juxtaposed images of helplessness (and resignation to this helplessness) and also of hope (where perhaps there is none). The *sarment* (L19) is another example of this, meaning a climbing vine shoot, but also connotative of a stem that will grow back if cut.

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<sup>124</sup> [Trans.] 'now historical, connotation of a pain and of a choral delusion and to the failing of an individual hope'



Buttitta's poetry often contains this dual image of desperation and loss alongside hope and desire for change. A certain feeling of powerlessness in the face of challenge or imposed struggle characterizes much of his writing.

The image of the vine has religious connotations too; Christ is often described as the 'vine' and, whether religiously or otherwise, the vine bears fruit, which echoes the theme of growth and regeneration. This sarment, in Buttitta's example, however, is in the oven, stifled and dying – if not dead, burnt. The Sicilian relation with the land and its fruits is a powerful one, that Buttitta often relies on for poetic purposes. Here the image speaks of both life and death, again, two comments that he often juxtaposes. Referring to the anthology, Grillandi (1976: 206) remarks that

la poesia della *Peddi nova* appare siciliana in ogni sua piega, fin nelle giunture piú segrete. Gli schemi obbediscono a una tensione interna cui sono subordinate tutte le componenti del discorso poetico: dalla inflessione alla cadenza, dalla rima alla varie e non tutte dolci assonanze<sup>125</sup>.

Following this observation, a focus on lexical transfer allows for more grammatical and syntactical freedom but, in placing constraint on lexical choices, it allowed me to consider the connotative and denotative values specific to the dialect words in question.

## 2.9. 'Ncuntravu u Signuri' / 'I met the Lord' (*Poeta*, 1972)

S1 Ncuntravu u Signuri pa strata

E1 *I met the Lord along the way*

S2 e ci dissi:

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<sup>125</sup> [Trans.] 'the poetry of the *Peddi nova* appears Sicilian in each of its creases, even in the most secret joints. The patterns obey an internal tension to which all the components of the poetic discourse are subordinated: from the inflection to the cadence, from the rhyme to various – and not all sweet – assonances'

E2 *and said to him:*  
 S3 non t'affrunti a caminari scàusu?  
 E3 *are you not ashamed walking barefoot?*  
**E3F** *aren't you ashamed to walk barefoot?*

S4 Era stancu.  
 E4 *He was tired.*  
 S5 L'ossa arrusicati da càmula,  
 E5 *Bones reddened by woodworm,*  
 S6 a tònaca sfardata;  
 E6 *his tunic torn;*  
 S7 a vucca sicca  
 E7 *his mouth dry*  
 S8 e circava acqua.  
 E8 *and he was searching water.*

S9 Faccia pietati e vidillu;  
 E9 *It brought pity to see him;*  
**E9F** *It pitied me to see him;*  
 S10 ma pinzannu chiddu chi nni fici  
 E10 *but thinking what he's done*  
 S11 pu piaciri di mittierinni o munnu  
 E11 *for the pleasure of putting us in the world*  
 S12 e vidirinni arrubbari  
 E12 *and seeing us steal*  
 S13 odiari  
 E13 *hate*  
 S14 assicutari i dinari,  
 E14 *running after money,*  
 S15 e godiri du mali di l'àutri...  
 E15 *and enjoying the evil of the others*  
**E15F** *and rejoicing in the sorrows of others*  
 S16 vi dicu a virità  
 E16 *to tell you the truth*

- E16F** *I'll tell you the truth*  
 S17 non mi spuntò na lacrima.  
 E17 *no tears came to me.*
- E17F** *I didn't shed a tear.*
- S18 E facia mprissioni  
 E18 *And he made such impression*  
 S19 un picciottu di trentatrianni  
 E19 *this young'un of thirtythreeyears*  
 S20 beddu  
 E20 *beautiful*
- E20F** *handsome*  
 S21 g'avutu  
 E21 *tall*  
 S22 ussutu,  
 E22 *angular*
- E22F** *bony*  
 S23 e l'occhi d'ova di palumma  
 E23 *and the eyes of dove eggs*
- E23F** *and th'eyes o'eggs of a dove*  
 S24 figghiati nta pagghia.  
 E24 *born in the straw.*
- E24F** *birthed int' straw.*
- S25 Facia mprissioni  
 E25 *It makes an impression*  
 S26 dda taliatura d'omu  
 E26 *that gaze o'man*  
 S27 ca trasceva nto cori  
 E27 *that crossed int'my heart*  
 S28 cu ventu di ciatu;  
 E28 *with the wind of breath;*  
 S29 nto cori  
 E29 *int' my heart*

- S30 comu lingua d'agneddu  
 E30 *like a lamb's tongue*  
**E30F** *like the tongue o'th'lamb*
- S31 e crapicchi da matri.  
 E31 *at its motha's nipples.*
- S32 Ma pinzannu chiddu chi nni fici  
 E32 *But thinkin 'bout what he done*
- S33 pu piaciri di vidirinni  
 E33 *out of pleasure of seein'us*
- S34 scippari l'occhi unu cu l'àutru,  
 E34 *rippin' the eyes one of the other,*
- S35 scurciari unu cu l'àutru,  
 E35 *flayin' one another,*
- S36 ammazzarinni,  
 E36 *killin' one another,*
- S37 e chiantari banneri di vittoria  
 E37 *and plantin' flags o'victory*
- S38 nte panzi di morti...  
 E38 *int' bellies o'the deads...*
- S39 vi dicu a virità  
 E39 *to tell you the truth*
- S40 non mi spuntò na lacrima.  
 E40 *I didn't shed a tear.*
- S41 Ci dissu sulu:  
 E41 *I only said to him:*
- S42 megghiu si non nascevi,  
 E42 *better if you'd not been born,*
- S43 non scinnevi nterra  
 E43 *didn't come down n'earth*
- S44 e non murevi a cruci.  
 E44 *and didn't die ont'cross.*
- E44F** *and didn't die 'pon cross.*

- S45 Nuàtri fussimu nenti, ci dissi,  
 E45 *The rest of us would be nothing, I said to him,*  
**E45F** *Us others we'd be nothing, I told'im,*  
 S46 né pampini e né ciuri  
 E46 *not leaves n' nor flowers*  
 S47 e mancu carni punciuta di l'api  
 E47 *and not even flesh stung by th'bees*  
 S48 e manciata di vermi.  
 E48 *and eaten by worms.*  
 S49 Fussimu nenti,  
 E49 *Were we nothin',*  
 S50 negghi senza timpesta  
 E50 *clouds with no storms*  
 S51 e senza trona e lampi nto celu  
 E51 *and without thunder and lightning int' sky*  
 S52 e tirrimotu nterra, nenti!  
 E52 *and earthquakes n'earth, nothin'!*
- S53 Era stancu,  
 E53 *He was tired,*  
 S54 mi taliava e chiancia  
 E54 *he looked at me and wept*  
 S55 comu unu nnuccenti  
 E55 *like an innocent*  
 S56 c'acchiana o patibulu.  
 E56 *climbing the gallows.*  
**E56F** *going up t'the gallows.*

Dicembre / December 1971

### 2.9.1. Dialectal Style and Linguistic Symbolism

The anthology from which this poem is taken signifies a turning point in Buttitta's thematic discourse; here, he moves away from his angry, political

focus and towards poetry of introspection, reflection and gentler contemplation. In this poem, Buttitta seems to be questioning life, examining faith and belief. Here we see a harder-faced poet, evident in his lack of tears in a sentence which is repeated and preceded by the claim 'vi dicu a virità / I'll tell you the truth'. The poet is unashamedly honest, almost brutal in his honesty, seeming to lack the very compassion of which Christ is representative. There is a growing sense of despair in humanity, the echo of which may be found in all Buttitta's last three anthologies. This melancholy is displayed in outbursts of anger or desperation but, more harrowingly, often in quiet regret. I chose this poem, in light of this, to explore the symbolism in Buttitta's style and lexical choices. With symbolism that is specific to Sicily, this focus proved particularly challenging.

In this poem, we might interpret Christ as a mirror onto Buttitta the poet, which is not to suggest that the poet views himself as superior to humankind, rather as separate, alone, misunderstood and, most importantly, *sacrificed* at the expense of others. This view of himself as a writer removed or distant from his subjects reverberates throughout Buttitta's poetry, with increasing intensity in his final works. In the mirroring sense, in such lines as S4/E4: 'Era stancu / He was tired', we can glimpse this projection of personal exhaustion onto the Christ figure.

In Buttitta's description of Christ's physical beauty, we might also interpret a longing for his own past youth. Buttitta's one-word-per-line list of adjectives, by now so characteristic of his style, sends sudden visual impressions in short bursts, exactly as they might occur in reality when taking in a sight: S20/ E20F 'beddu / handsome', S21/E21 'gàvutu / tall', S22/E22F 'ussutu / bony'. The poet mentions Christ's age in line S19/E19: 'un picciottu di trentatrianni / this young'un of thirtythreeyears' and we know that, in 1972, Buttitta was seventy-three, an old man.

I considered making the English ungrammatical, for example, using 'he were tired', but I felt uneasy about this as it reduces Sicilian dialect to an ungrammatical version of the Standard, which it is not. Certainly it varies grammatically from Italian and I would like to strive to capture this, but grammatical variation may be possible without inaccuracy. I initially translated 'figghiati nta pagghia' as 'born in the straw' but I felt that I had unwittingly abandoned the real meaning of the original. The translation as a literal rendering is not inaccurate but, in back-translating 'born', the Sicilian version would have read 'natu nta pagghia'. I settled with 'birthed in the straw', which I felt more accurately captured the primitive sense of the word 'figghiatu' and then rendered 'nta' as 'int', as it retains the harsh consonantal sound of the 't' in 'nta'. This does slightly tilt the accent of the poem towards the typical dropped 'th' in 'the' from regional Yorkshire pronunciation but, as I deliberately steer clear of placing the English roots in one location, I felt that one word didn't strongly emphasize that connection.

I tried to mirror the Sicilian syntax, for example, in LS23: 'e l'occhi d'ova di palumma', by translating it in LE23F as 'and th'eyes o'eggs of a dove' instead of my first attempt in LE23: 'and the eyes of dove eggs'. The first solution was plainer and more English; the image is an unusual one and, whilst I liked the sound of 'dove-egg-eyes', I felt that the Sicilian syntax ought to be maintained where possible. I also attempted to follow the Sicilian syntax in line S30: 'comu lingua d'agneddu', by changing my original word order in LE30: 'like a lamb's tongue' to LE30F: 'like the tongue o'th'lamb', which, when read aloud, captures the spoken mode and also heightens the emphasis on both 'tongue' and 'lamb', which the English possessive tends to lessen.

LS45: 'Nuàtri fussimu nenti, ci dissi' I translated as LE45: 'the rest of us would be nothing, I said to him' but opted in the end for LE45F: 'Us others we'd be nothing, I told'im'. 'Us' and 'others' when read aloud slur together in the same way that 'nuàtri' does and is more in keeping with the Sicilian than

the rather more verbose 'the rest of us'. I also briefly considered 'nowt' as a translation of 'nenti' but, once again, felt uneasy about rendering the Sicilian ungrammatical to such an extent in English.

LS55: 'comu unu nnuccenti' I played around with for a while, coming up with options such as 'like an innocent / like an innocent one / like an innocent'un / like an innocent man', before deciding that the rendering of 'innocent' as a noun ought to be carried over into English. The form exists in Italian and is not particularly dialectal but it is a word that Buttitta uses throughout his poetry, with the heavily accented 'nn' and the dropping of the initial vowel 'i': I thought that I could at the very least capture the Sicilian sound as the English word is phonologically similar. I chose 'like an innocent' and then removed the initial vowel, replacing it with an apostrophe: 'like an 'nnocent', hoping that the word is orthographically recognizable enough. Although it was no longer necessary to keep the 'an', I left it in place as it simply prolongs that 'n' sound from the Sicilian. Doubled vowels in English do not tend to change the pronunciation of the consonants themselves; rather, they affect the vowel sound, and so the elongated 'n' seemed to work here. When read aloud in English, the apostrophe indicates not only the absence of the letter but the absence of the standard preceding pause between the words and the reader's eye ought to move quickly enough to render the pronunciation 'like an'nnocent' all joined together. Whilst two consonants might not have dramatically changed the English pronunciation, three arguably do.

Likewise, in LS38: 'nte panzi di morti', I translate this as LE38: 'int' bellies o'the deads'. While 'the dead' in English would be accurate, I liked 'deads' as a solution because it serves on the one hand to foreignize the English slightly and, on the other hand, to represent the exact way in which Sicilian (and, in this case, Italian) works. The dead are countable and multiple and the collective noun in English diminishes the strength of this effect.



William Weaver 'tells of a discussion with an Italian author who insisted that the expression *i morti* should be translated, not as "the dead" as Weaver had written, but as "the deads"' (n.d. cited in Farrell, 2007: 59), arguing 'with impeccable logic but faulty semantics, that the corpses in question were more than one' (ibid.).

The final 's' of the English gently mirrors the final 'i' of the Sicilian, after the harsher 't' and 'd' sound in the Sicilian and English respectively ('morti' and 'deads'). With the added countability of the plural 'panzi' and 'bellies', the English retains perfect sense, although the word is technically inaccurate and estranged from the Standard alternative. This estrangement has its own function and, I would claim, strengthens the sentence, which is of a harrowing nature to begin with. The flag planted in the earth in victory is a familiar image but Buttitta's rendering of human flesh as the ground in which the flag is planted emphasizes his consistent image of the body at one with nature, juxtaposed with the fight for territory. He makes the flag symbolic of murder and death, which, in his lifetime, it was. It is anti-patriotic; the flag is not a glorious symbol worth fighting for, it is a tyrannous oppressor, a banner under which humans kill.

Montillaro (1975: 34) offers 'far salire, innalzare, *Montare, Sollevare, Tirar su*' as a definition of 'acchianari' and, whilst I had initially opted for 'climbing' (LE56), I therefore rendered 'c'acchiana' (LS56) as 'going up t'the'. The apostrophes needed to be applied throughout, for consistency, and they render the poem more colloquial, when read aloud. For example, I translate the Sicilian LS52: 'e tirrimotu nterra, nenti!' as 'and earthquakes n'earth, nothin'!' using the translation of 'on earth' to capture the melting sounds of the Sicilian 'nterra'.

## 2.10. 'Lingua e dialettu' / 'Language and dialect' (*Poeta, 1972*)

Un populu  
mittitilu a catina  
spugghiatilu  
attuppatici a vacca,  
è ancora libiru.

A people  
place them in chains  
strip them  
stopper up their mouths  
they are still free.

Livatici u travagghiu  
u passaportu  
a tavula unni mancia  
u lettu unni dormi  
è ancora riccu.

Take away their work  
their passport  
the table where they eat  
the bed where they sleep  
they are still rich.

Un populu,  
diventa poviru e servu,  
quannu ci arrobbanu a lingua  
addutata di patri:  
è persu pi sempri.

A people,  
become poor and servile,  
when they steal our language  
gifted from forefathers:  
it's lost forever.

Diventa poviru e servu,  
quannu i paroli non figghianu paroli  
e si mancianu ntra d'iddi.

They become poor and servile,  
when words don't bear words  
and are devoured amongst themselves.

Mi nn'addugnu ora,  
mentri accordu a chitarra du dialettu  
ca perdi na corda lu jornu.

I realize this now,  
as I tune the guitar of dialect  
that it loses a chord a day.

Mentri arripezzu  
a tila camulata  
chi tisseru i nostri avi  
cu lana di pecuri siciliani.

While I darn  
the worm-eaten cloth  
woven by our ancestors  
with wool from Sicilian sheep.

E sugnu poviru:

And I'm poor

haiu i dinari  
e non li pozzu spènniri;  
i giuelli  
e non li pozzo rigalari;  
u cantu,  
nta gaggia  
cu l'ali tagghiati.

I have money  
and cannot spend it;  
jewelleries  
and I cannot gift it;  
a song,  
in a cage  
with clipped wings.

Un poviru,  
c'addatta nte minni strippi  
da matri putativa,  
chi u chiama figghiu  
pi nciuria.

A poor one,  
who sucks at arid tits  
of a putative mother,  
who calls him her son  
for spite.

Nuàtri l'avevamu a matri,  
nni l'arrubbaru;  
aveva i minni a funtani di latti  
e ci vippiru tutti,  
ora ci sputanu.

We had a mother,  
she was stolen from us;  
she had fountains of milk in her breasts  
and everyone sipped from them,  
now they spit.

Nni ristò a vuci d'idda,  
a cadenza,  
a nota vascia  
di sonu e du lamentu:  
chissi non nni ponnu rubari.

We are left with her voice,  
the cadence,  
the low note  
of the sound and the lament:  
these they cannot steal from us.

Nni ristò a sumigghianza,  
l'annatura,  
i gesti,  
i lampi nta l'occhi:  
chissi non nni ponnu rubari.

We are left with a likeness  
the tread,  
the gestures,  
the flashes in the eyes  
these they cannot steal from us.

Non nni ponnu rubari,  
ma ristamu poviri

They cannot steal from us,  
but we are left poor

e orfani u stissu.

and orphaned all the same.

Gennaio 1970

January 1970

### 2.10.1. Phonological Nuances

I turn now to explore phonological equivalence and pay attention to the rendering of the musicality of the original dialect in translation, echoing the cultural importance of sound. Raffel (1988: 12) makes the layered argument that:

No two languages having the same phonology, it is impossible to re-create the sounds of a work composed in one language in another language.

No two languages having the same syntactic structures, it is impossible to re-create the syntax of a work composed in one language in another language.

No two languages having the same vocabulary, it is impossible to re-create the vocabulary of a work composed in one language in another language.

Raffel (ibid.: 14) distinguishes between phonology and syntax 'One governs the sounds a language chooses to work with; the other governs the structure into which those sounds must fit'. Lefevere (1975b: 384) describes phonemic translation as 'the attempt to render mainly the sounds of the source text in the target text', and Catford (1965: 23) writes that in 'phonological translation SL phonology is replaced by equivalent TL phonology, but there are no other replacements except such grammatical or lexical changes as may result accidentally'. Catford (ibid.) is critical of the strategy, remarking 'Phonological translation is practised deliberately by actors and mimics who assume foreign or regional "accents" – though seldom in a self-conscious or fully consistent way' and argues that 'Both phonological and graphological translation must be included in a general theory of translation because they help to throw light

on the conditions of translation equivalence, and hence on the more complex process of total translation' (1965: 23).

Lefevere (1975b: 384) writes of phonemic translation that it 'works best when it translates least', suggesting that there are instances of success, such as 'onomatopoeic calques and in its calques of proper names' (ibid.: 385), concluding overall, however, that as a strategy it 'is positively harmful. By concentrating on sound only, it distorts all the other aspects of the source text and reduces it to a *curiosum*, a bilingual parody, incapable of survival in the literature of the target language' (1975: 385). This view is dismissive of the all too important instances of success, wherein the foregrounding of the sound and rhythm enhances transfer of the ST; in instances where attention to replication of sound risked harming the poetic content or transfer of meaning, I considered a *phonemic-focused* strategy, that is, the prioritization of phonemic transfer or, more aptly, phonosymbolic word use. Haller (1999: 307) writes of Buttitta: 'One of his poems, *Lingua e dialettu*, compares the gradual loss (and Italianization) of the dialects to a guitar's gradual loss of its strings'. There is an inherent focus, then, on the sounds of the dialect and the way in which these sounds signal difference, or otherness from another language. Buttitta (1981, in Della Monica, 1981: 36) writes of dialect that 'Lo parlava mia madre mentre mi allatava. Ho imparato anche l'italiano, è necessario; lo parlo ma sotto c'è il sangue vivo del dialetto. L'uomo che non parla in dialetto perde la sua identità: si snatura'<sup>126</sup>. O'Neill (1975: 344) observes that 'This nostalgic, memorial evocation of an idyllic, perfect world of youth and innocence [...] is, of course, more than understandable in the climate of the early forties in Italy' and Pasolini (ibid.), on his own choice to write in dialect, comments that is has

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<sup>126</sup> [Trans.] 'My mother spoke it while she breastfed me. I also learnt Italian, it's necessary; I speak it but beneath there's the living blood of dialect. A man who does not speak in dialect loses his identity: he distorts himself'

divenuta oggetto di accotata nostalgia, sensuale in origine (in tutta l'estensione e la profondità dell'attributo) ma coincidente poi con la nostalgia di chi viva- e lo sappia - in una civiltà giunta a una sua crisi linguistica, al desolato, e violento, '*je ne sais plus parler*' rimbaudiano.<sup>127</sup>

The poem is one of Buttitta's most profound works against the diminishing usage of dialects. Published nearly fifty years after his first collection, *Poeta* was produced after the poet had returned to Sicily, around 1960, after having lived in Milan (circa 1943-1960). Della Monica (1981: 13) writes that 'ci sembra un nostalgico e molto spesso elitario ritorno a un passato che non c'è più, che non può più rivivere nella sua integrità, un rimpiangere il "paradiso perduto" di ogni presunta età felice'<sup>128</sup>. Zinna (1997: 417) writes of Buttitta's poem that it addresses the Sicilian people 'frustrated in their ideals by a rigged Risorgimento [...] and by corrupt politicians, who have surrendered them to the oppression of the Mafia', going on to describe it as

A history of robberies, the last of which, the most serious, is that of dialect: a people is not enslaved as long as it has a language, it becomes 'poor and enslaved' and loses all hope only when it is robbed of it. The poem 'Lingua e dialetto' is the highest, most heartfelt expression of Buttitta's art.

My translation of this poem attempts to retain the nuances brought about through the dialect in the SL, opting at times to reflect the emphasis as a

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<sup>127</sup> [Trans.] 'become the object of nostalgia, sensual in origin (in all the extension and depth of the attribute) but coinciding then with the nostalgia of those who live – and know it – in a civilization that has reached its linguistic crisis, the desolate, and violent rimbaudian, "*je ne sais plus parler*"'

<sup>128</sup> [Trans.] 'it seems to us to be a nostalgic and very often elitist return to a past that no longer exists, that can no longer relive in its integrity, a regret of "lost paradise" of every alleged happy age'

direct consequence of syntactical choices and by shadowing the lexical choices of the original as closely as possible. Machan (2016: 634) argues:

At a more narrowly linguistic level, however much vocabulary and syntax they may share, languages and dialects (conventionally understood) always remain distinct structural entities, or it would be impossible for any one speaker to evaluate the well-formedness of any sentence as well as to translate that sentence from one language or variety into another.

Publications of Italian dialect poetry in translation put forward various approaches to rendering Italy's dialects to the Anglophone world. William's 1981 translation of Belli's sonnets from Romanesco to English is characterized by an absence 'of willingness to strive for an English rendition that avoids forcing the original poems into a standardized Anglophone shell' (Balma, 2011: 3). Although acknowledging that many of the lexical features were matched, Balma (*ibid.*) notes that Williams 'did not legitimately attempt to insert some evidence of their phonological and syntactical uniqueness when he transplanted them into modern American English'.

In this poem, my focus was on the mirroring of sounds, looking in particular at 'how certain sounds communicate culture-specific information' (Armstrong, 2005: 4). Problems arose when a certain term 'produces "static" or interference, in the form of unwanted resonance or "connotational meaning"' (*ibid.*: 5), for example, the word 'arrubbare' I firstly translated as 'to rob' but its recurring presence in different contexts throughout the poem made 'steal' more faithful as a solution in English. In L3, I used 'strip' instead of my former choice of 'undress' simply because it is phonologically closer to 'spugghiatilu', and there is little scope to effectively mirror the sound more closely. In L4 I use 'stopper' to mirror 'attuppatici' as there is some internal resemblance of sound. With nouns, there is very little scope to produce phonemic translation that does not digress problematically from the denotative values.

Phonological equivalence in this poem has been achieved to some extent, and to greater or lesser extents in various parts. Lefevere (1975a: 20) argues that the phonemic translator's 'target text is merely an approximation to the sounds of the source text as filtered through the "phonemic grid" of the target language', a point which, on close inspection of this poem in English, I feel inclined to agree with. 'All too often the much-sought equilibrium between dominance of sound and undercurrent of meaning is shattered' (ibid.:26).

One significant theme in the poem is that of dialect itself and the cultural heritage it represents. Buttitta, over his lifetime of writing poetry, masters the use of dialect as a representative tool, used to lament what he perceives as a gradual fading of regional identity. This, together with his personal longing for distanced place, posits dialect as a means of accessing the concept of homeland. Zinna (1997: 381) notes that 'The rapid erosion of dialects surprises P.P Pasolini; regarding Buttitta's heartfelt lamentation in the poem 'Lingua e dialettu', he writes:

And in the whole world around me, dialect seemed destined to become extinguished in epochs so distant as to appear abstract. It seemed that the Italianization of Italy had to be founded on a wide contribution from below, dialectal and popular in nature (and not on the substitution of the pilot literary language with the managerial pilot language, as later happened) Among the other tragedies we have experienced [...] in the last few years, there has also been the tragedy of the loss of dialect. (ibid.)

## **2.11. Concluding remarks**

The selection of strategies sheds light on some of the approaches available to the translator of dialect poetry and, whilst these strategies may be seen to have conditioned the outcome of some of the poems, they resulted in the identification of solutions which would otherwise, perhaps, have been less apparent. It is clear from this first folio that 'Nonstandard speech is not just an



alternate, optional way of saying the same thing: rather, it marks the characters using it and affects their mutual relationships in a way that standard language cannot replicate' (Azevedo, 1998: 42). The linguistic-orientated approaches explored in this folio have served principally as a platform to familiarize myself with the sounds and rhythm of Sicilian and Buttitta's application of style, with the specific lexical and semantic particularities of dialectal transfer, and with syntactical differences and experimentation with form in the TL. Lefevere (1975b: 388) argues against exclusive concentration 'on one aspect of the source text only, rather than on its totality', suggesting that

weakening is caused by either a failure to grasp the communicative value of words in either source or target language, or in both, or by the policy of subordinating the communicative value of words to the imperatives of sound, metre, prose, or rhyme (ibid.).

Placing restrictions upon the strategies applied helped me to unearth unfamiliar ways of approaching language transfer. Jones (2011: 2) suggests that 'Understanding a poem, therefore, presumably involves interpreting the potential meanings conveyed by all these features'. The interpretation of potential meanings also infers the understanding of these meanings as they appear collectively – the poem at a macro-textual level, so to speak. Where the attempts fail in terms of their poetic elegance, I may at least claim to have remained 'within the parameters of the goal which [I] have set' myself (Beckett, 2000: 81).

To a certain extent, in this specifically linguistic-orientated selection, we can observe that the generic challenges of translation remain; dialect perhaps makes them more astute, or apparent. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 14) observe that 'What is true inside a language is equally true between variants

of the same language and dialects', yet Winston (1950: 184) observes that 'Nowhere does the translator need and take more latitude than in the translation of dialect' suggesting also that 'Certainly it is impossible to lay down any rules for the translation of dialect' (ibid.).

What is possible and, it seems to me, preferable, is to produce a non-standard rendering that is not rigidly or perceptibly attached to any TL dialect. This involves a degree of loyalty to both languages, allows the translator to become a creative practitioner in his or her own right, and advocates non-normative deviance. This involves language that clearly distances itself from the Standard, without aligning itself categorically to any dialect, which would run 'the risk of distorting the sense of the dialect' (Welle, 2000, cited in Balma, 2011: 6) but also, it is hoped, avoids the risk of bland rendering without local colour. The inventive nature of such a strategy is truer to the art of poetry itself; its deviation from the Standard is aligned with the nature of dialect poetry and its attention to the impact and character of the ST's regional culture remains paramount.

Eco (2001: 13) remarks 'We decide how to translate, not on the basis of a dictionary, but on the basis of the whole history of two literatures', summarizing that 'Translations do not concern a comparison between two languages but the interpretation of two texts in two different languages' (ibid.: 14) and Simon (1996, cited in Krzywoszynska, 2015: 314) additionally claims 'The solutions to many of the translator's dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but rather in an understanding of the way language is tied to local realities'. Whilst Jakobson (1959: 234) advocates that any translating activities 'must be kept under constant scrutiny by linguistic science', Lung (2000: 273) argues that 'An appropriate and communicative translation requires interlingual and cross-cultural efforts that go beyond the level of mere linguistics', and Lefevere (1975b: 384) is fervent in his conviction that 'translators tend to be satisfied with a mere rendering of the linguistic

elements of the source text, ignoring those elements of it which, because they belong to a different time, place, and tradition, must also be interpreted by the reader'. My strategies in this chapter have sought to represent the essential windows to time, place and tradition through attention to language and via linguistic means and have shed light on many linguistic-orientated challenges of dialect translation. I contend that such strategies merit the attention of the dialect translator, although I agree that they need to incorporate contextual and culturally-focused practice in order to better communicate their message to the reader. This leads me to explore an ethnographic and cultural rendering of dialect in translation in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Three, Folio Two**

### **Cultural and Spatial Rendering: The Poetics of Place and Memory**

#### **3.1. Foreword to Folio 2**

Chapter 1 outlined the polycentric nature of Italy, the historical affiliation between place and language and Buttitta's representation of, and relationship with, place in his dialect poetry. Chapter 2 presented a predominantly linguistic-orientated collection of strategies and Chapter 3 seeks a connection between the representation of place in Buttitta's dialect poetry and the use of strategies in translation to make cultural transfer effective. This stems from a prevalent sense of linguistic exile that is relevant to the position of both the dialect poet and the translator, for dialect poetry is poetry that exists outside that of the standardized language and translation, too, exists in its own removed sphere of literature that does not partake of national claim.

Both dialect poetry and translation, in this sense, inhabit a place that exists at the peripheries of national discourse; both are expatriated, to some extent, and the journey of language in translation becomes more acute when the SL is dialect, accustomed to inhabiting a space that is somewhat removed from its own centralized 'other'. Even-Zohar's polysystem theory puts forward 'the concept of a centre and a periphery shaping the literary polysystem' (1990, cited in Tarif, 2016: 38). Absence and exile either from a geographical or geo-linguistic place surface as unifying features between the crafts of dialect poetry and translation.

In this folio, I explore spatiality in translation, highlighting the specific challenges of context and referents, with which dialect is embedded. I address the poetics of place defined by O'Rawe (2007: 79) as 'recurring narrative and thematic procedures associated with the representation of the Sicilian space'. I use dialect translation to open up translation discourse and translation to

shed light on the significance of dialect poetry. Having looked at the borders (metaphorical and otherwise) between language and dialect in Chapter 1, in this chapter I examine what such borders represent in terms of the transfer of significance in translation. Machan (2016: 618–619) writes

Geographic borders may be real enough, designated by fences, gates, and legal restrictions, but they are likewise liminal places marking various kinds of regional transition. Borders divide other places, that is, but they are also literal areas with their own figurative and symbolic meanings, shaped (in part) by the cultural forces that pass through them.

I address the handling of realist language, focusing on place, semantic markers of place and the ways in which these are used to signify a primary world – 'mondo originario' (Eco, 1981 in Della Monica, 1981: 41). Brevini (1986: 688) writes that

Oggi si tornano invece a recuperare proprio quegli spessori, incaricati di comunicare un modello antropologico radicalmente diverso: non solo dunque varietà squisita disponibile all'esercizio letterario, "lingua della poesia", ma anche "lingua della realtà", al seguito della quale, senza necessariamente scadere nei sentimenti dialettali, affluiscono sulla pagina i valori e i costumi della civiltà che in essa si è espressa<sup>129</sup>.

Foregrounding the depiction and rendering of place and Buttitta's creation of a '*paese dell'anima*' (Silone, 1968, cited in O'Neill, 1975: 343) the culture-specific language of the original is translated in this folio in keeping with reconstruction of place as the prime focus. This requires discussion of translation as a potentially culturally aware and ethical act. Place is addressed in terms of its representative role in capturing and preserving identity and

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<sup>129</sup> [Trans.] 'Today, however, we are returning to recover those very thicknesses, which are responsible for communicating a radically different anthropological model: not only of the exquisite variety available for literary exercise, "language of poetry", but also "language of reality", following which, without necessarily falling into dialectal sentiments, the values and customs of the civilization expressed in it flow onto the page'

anchors the core of this research principally through the way in which it examines the notion of place as construed through language and the ways in which this language is representative of place. In centralizing space and place as key themes of textual enigma as well as translation practice, this notion is of key importance to the discipline of TS, which at its heart deals with transferral and relocation of language.

In turning my attention to this 'spatial turn', the dichotomy of movement on the part *either* of the original author or the target reader (set forth most notably by Schleiermacher, ([1813]1992) is repositioned to suggest that it is the text that undergoes movement. O'Neill (2012: 135) argues that

Cultural context is created in the act of reading, and is re-created with each new reading. If the source-text is translated anew with each reading of the translation (blueprint), it must depend on the nature of the subjectivity of the individual reader in the target-language as to how the source-text/language/culture is construed. Importantly, the complicity of translation as such in cultural misrepresentation, 'the imperial impulse', when we find it, is revealed for what it is: as belonging to human subjectivity and not as innate in translation as such.

In seeking to avoid such an impulse, recreation of cultural context is a strategy applied to the poems in this folio. Megrab (1998: 61) writes that the cultural context 'is a set of cultural predispositions (conventions, beliefs, values and assumptions) internalized in the mind of the individual but socially determined. The interpretation of a text therefore becomes the product of a social (or inter-subjective) practice'.

This chapter focuses on dialect as a linguistic construction of place and attempts to transpose this feature, for 'No model that fails to account both for geography and for a range of social variables is likely to offer much of a description or prediction of what the speakers actually have to say', (Kretschmar, 2009, cited in Machan, 2016: 628). The centrality of place and

landscape in Buttitta's poetry and the ways in which he uses dialect in order to recreate these elements prompts an exploration into culturally and spatially aware translation. The objective is to look at ways of transposing Buttitta's dialectal textualization of Sicily, reflecting the ways in which the poet creates and constructs Sicily in his poetry.

### **3.1.1. Cultural and Spatial Rendering**

The role of translation in ethnography is now widely acknowledged; the role of ethnography in translation is making much the same progress (Krzywoszynska, 2015: 311). I view Buttitta's dialect as a linguistic means of expressing the relationship between self and place and this perspective leads me to an ethnographic interest within my translation approach. The growing repercussions of ethnography in cultural translation seem particularly relevant in a subfield of TS that addresses the representation of place and self through linguistically subaltern means. 'One of the reasons for the difficulty – even impossibility – of achieving a faithful or perfect translation of poems is the cultural-social component that the translator has to face' (Zid, 2014: 2026). As my research focuses on the differences between regional and national culture and the differences between these and the receptor culture, and in order to carry out a culturally sensitive approach to the representation of others, it is firstly necessary to briefly address the concept of cultural translation itself, which Jordan (2002: 101) defines as:

a holistic process of provisional sense making. It implies trying to render accessible and comprehensible, first to the self and then to others, one's experience of aspects of ways of life – either one's own life made strange, or lives which are different from one's own.

The element of cultural translation that appeals to my sense of what effective encounter entails is the attention paid to critical, contextual understanding of language in situ; that is, a thorough analysis of the meaning of language as it is used within its context. This mode of study has its advantages (its disadvantages being lengthy fieldwork and various degrees of awareness of anthropological practice) yet Jordan (*ibid.*: 104) notes 'how different this layered translation over time is from the rapidly conducted textual translation of the classroom'. Robinson (2012: 2) also advocates this degree of linguistic and cultural analysis, arguing that

Professional translators need to be able to slow down to examine a problematic word or phrase or syntactic structure or cultural assumption painstakingly, with full analytical awareness of the problem and its possible solutions. Slow analysis is also a powerful source of new knowledge.

I am interested in making the culture in question accessible and the translator as mediator of this accessibility ought to provide a window to the way the language reflects this culture. Naaijken (2010: 3) notes that translations 'constitute a special case of cultural dynamics as, in a sense, they both repeat and change cultural artefacts: they are existing texts revived in a new form'. Translation looks at the referent and the means of depicting this referent; it is therefore a hybrid artefact itself, resting between the borders of two cultures.

The ethnographic approach attempts to 'translate field experiences and findings (usually) into text for people who were not there, bridging as well and as reflexively as possible the gaps between presence and absence, between languages, understandings of the world, behaviours and beliefs' (Jordan, 2002: 96). Again, there is this prominent sense of breaking through time, space and place from which we are culturally, linguistically or geographically removed.



To produce cultural translation is not a question of replacing text with text (although this may well form part of the endeavour) but of co-creating text, of producing a written version of a lived reality, and it is in this sense that it can be powerfully transformative of those who take part. (ibid.: 98)

Translation carried out with ethnographical practices in mind has at least two benefits. Firstly, the cultural 'other' is, or ought to be, represented with a keener awareness of the sensibilities of representation; secondly, the reflexive practices accompanying the translation procedure document the way in which linguistic and cultural decipherment of meaning constitute a halfway space in which identities interact more or less consciously.

On the subject of hybrid space, it is right to acknowledge 'The Third Space', which is 'in-between the designations of identity' (Bhabha, 1994: 4) and 'this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (ibid.). Jordan (2002: 102) claims of Bhabha's Third Space that it 'is also the creative, dynamic space of action and interaction, the space for negotiating worlds through words. It is an ethical space, demanding self-knowledge, clear-sightedness, a readiness to listen and a preparedness to change', highlighting that it is not always present, but 'springs from a desire to better understand what happens when cultural "others" meet' (ibid.). This Third Space, which Jordan (2002: 101) praises 'as one of the most richly enabling spatial metaphors inflecting contemporary practice in anthropology – and particularly as one which is immensely fertile as far as cultural translation and language are concerned', has been influential in my approach to cultural transfer.

The focus on the process of encountering, understanding and rendering the 'other' naturally leads to issues regarding the persons,

experiences, and texts involved. The act of narrating various procedures, within both ethnography and translation, exemplifies awareness of the subjective and/or cultural bias involved in the interpretation of otherness. The space in which this reflexive narration takes place is therefore crucial, and Smith (1996, cited in Krzywoszynska, 2015: 312) argues that we ought to move away from viewing translation as a means of uncovering the 'truth' about the 'Other' in the home language, and towards seeing translation as a hybrid in-between space between 'the two languages, two cultures, researcher and researched'. This is also suggestive of the fact that perception and representation of the 'other' often intricately manage to portray more about the interpreting reader and his or her culture. Jordan (2002: 103) contends that cultural translation is characterized by its physicality, by the sensory experience that the overall encounter embodies, terming it 'translation with the whole person' and providing a list of what this constitutes:

Cultural translation within ethnographic encounters:

- is heuristic, extended and multi-level;
- does not involve translating a given text, but creating that text and progressively translating as one goes along;
- uncovers the processes of meaning-making within the 'Third Space';
- dramatizes conflicts, tensions and resolutions;
- shows translation getting done;
- does not present a translation without a self-reflexive infrastructure;
- may have inspirational flashes but is not uniformly smooth and polished;
- is porous, fragmentary, ragged and open-ended;
- is aware of the history, politics and power dynamics within which it is taking place. (ibid.)

I have based the structure of this folio loosely around these elements, seeking principally to explore the historical, political and situational context at Buttitta's time of writing and to provide a window into my decision-making

processes and lines of thought. The translation strategies are progressive, seeking to portray the act of 'meaning-making' and this self-reflexive infrastructure aims to increase the cultural sensitivities both of translator and reader.

Koster (2014: 141) observes that, owing to an increase in sociological perspectives in translation, instead of focusing on the position of translated literature in the target culture, 'the focus is shifting towards approaches that view translation as part of the international or transnational exchange of culture', elaborating on this point that, 'the focus within these approaches is not only on translations as mere texts, but also on the role and position of translation and translators in the production, reception and distribution of literary texts' (ibid.: 141–142). Whilst it is not the specific focus of my research, it is worth noting the polysystems approach put forward by Even-Zohar (2000 [1978]) which, as Koster (2014: 144) summarizes, essentially suggests that the translation of literature 'functions within the broader context of the literary polysystem of the receiving culture, which in itself functions within the broader context of a larger polysystem in relation to among others cultural, political, social and economic systems'.

In foregrounding the spatial element, I create an axis along which to focus my translational practice. Dialect in Buttitta's poetry functions either implicitly or explicitly to illicit images of place, to summon memories of place, to conjure a place in the mind through language and to trigger associations of this place through its embodiment in language. It sets up invisible or imaginary borders, creating a form of regional geography of language and a linguistic mapping of place, 'all of which negotiate in particular and complex ways the relationship between the material, the geographical and the textual' (O'Rawe, 2007: 83). Translation, too, has its borders, its border crossings and overlaps. While dialect is seen as recreating or representing place in language, translation, on the other hand, is interested in transferral and reconstruction

of place and language. The encounter between dialect poetry and translation is therefore an interesting one, and one in which preservation of place is paramount. I treat place as the core focal point, which ought to remain at the centre of textual reconstruction.

### 3.1.2. Selection Process

I begin this second folio with 'Cantu di carritteri' (*Sintimintali*, 1923), which observes the notion of Time-Place-Tradition, followed by 'Sicilia Luntana' (*Prime*, 1922–1954), focusing on the semantic marking of place through 'landscaping'. I identify the notion of distance created by Buttitta's style and use an analysis of lexis in order to recreate markers of place in translation. The third poem is 'Pueta e Zappaturi' (*Pani*, 1954) in which I look at the mirrored layout of the poem in terms of its visual aesthetics. 'Nun sugnu pueta' (*Pani*, 1954) permits an exploration of the cultural significance of the poet figure and 'Littra a una mamma tedesca' (*Pani*, 1954) provides an analysis of poetic style and identity, offset by an 'other' place. The sixth selected poem 'Lu Servu' (*Pani*, 1954) addresses the peasant figure and dialect as a tool for the depiction of realism. 'Lu tempu e la storia' (*Peddi*, 1963) follows as an exploration of the dialectal canon. 'Un seculu di storia' (*Poeta*, 1972) addresses the relationship between dialect, place and the self and 'Si mori dui voti' (*Poeta*, 1972) concludes the folio, exploring *la Sicilianità*, observing the way Buttitta uses and recreates Sicily in his poetry.

### 3.2. 'Cantu di carritteri' / 'The Song of the Carter' (*Sintimintali*, 1923)

Nuttatta silinziusa e senza stiddi, Celu alluttatu 'nsinu a li carcagna, Dormi e riposa tutta la campagna, Nun zurrichianu cchiù mancu li grididi.	Night silent and without stars, Sky swept up to the heels, Sleeps and rests the whole countryside, They rub-rub no more even the crickets.
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<p>'Nfunnu, 'dda sutta, 'nfunnu a la stratuni  Cc'è un carritteri chi cantannu veni:  Canta lu sò duluri, li sò peni,  L'ultimu addiu e l'ultimu vasuni.</p> <p>Ciuri di canna!  Ora ca ti lassai finiu lu munnu  E lu curuzzu miu soffri e s'addanna.</p> <p>Ciuri di via!  Tu mi dicisti: – Turi, unn'è chi vai?  Ju ti risposi: – A chianciri pi ttia!</p> <p>Canta, e lu scrusciu di lu sò carrettu  Mi dici chi cantannu s'avvicina,  Canta, ma la sò vuci sularina  Spremi lu cori miu dintra lu pettu.</p> <p>Chi 'mpressioni chi mi fa pruvari!  Pari l'ultima vuci d'un murenti,  Chi 'mpressioni chi 'stu cori senti,  Poviru cori miu! Chi cci pò fari.</p> <p>Senti ca canta puru lu gadduzzu,  Senti lu cori miu – Cucurucù –  Canta 'na vota o cori! canta tu,  Canta 'na vota, poviru curuzzu!</p> <p>Ciuri d'aranci!  Vurria cantari tutta la nuttatta,  Ma quannu cantu ju lu munnu chianci.</p>	<p>Down, from below, down the street  There is a carter who singing comes:  He sings his sorrow, his pain,  The last addio and the last kiss.</p> <p>Ciuri of canna! (Cane flowers)  Since I left you the world has ended  An' this dear heart of mine suffers n' hurts</p> <p>Ciuri blossom away!  You said to me: – Turi, where're you off?  I responded you: – To cry over you!</p> <p>He sings, and the scrunching of his cart  Tells me that his singing draws nearer,  He sings, but his lonely voice  Squeezes my heart inside my chest.</p> <p>What pain he makes me feel!  His seems like the last voice of one dying  What pain that this heart feels,  Poor heart of mine! What can I do.</p> <p>I hear that the cockerel sings too,  My own heart hears – Cucurucù –  Sing to the end o heart! you sing,  Sing to the end, poor dear heart!</p> <p>Ciuri of oranges!  I would like to sing the whole night,  But me when I sing the world cries.</p>
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### 3.2.1. Time-Place-Tradition

Writing of Bufalino's work, O'Rawe (2007: 89) suggests that the author 'insists upon ordering the objects of the past as part of a discourse of literature', observing that in reading this

according to the codes of a naturalist or 'storico-antropologico' vein of Sicilian fiction, and assigning authority to the dominant literary mode of realism, Bufalino is, like Consolo, creating a complex *mise-en-abîme* by which the past can only be read through literature, which is understood as a more reliable referent than history. (ibid.)

It is possible that Buttitta uses dialect to reflect a disappearing world and a landscape on the brink of extinction; his poetry acts as a repository both for the language in which it is written and its subject matter. Leppihalme (2000: 249) writes that the

regional variety also signifies temporal remoteness, representing as it does the variety used in his region in the first half of the 20th century, before such influences on the language as greater mobility due to improved communications and the advent of radio and television.

We can see, in the figure of the carter, the lone song of an individual and his means of transport threatened by worldly changes and a sense of a dying reality. The dialect of the poet faces much the same fate. Levi (2007: 10) writes that

L'arte dei pittori dei carri va scomparendo, con la sostituzione dei motori ai cavalli: ma quello che i vecchi maestri dipingono ancora tocca, come un tempo, il cuore della gente, ornamento, prestigio di bellezza, narrazione simbolica. In mezzo a questo

mondo, e con la sua tradizione, la sua retorica e la sua passione, sta, pienamente coerente con esso, la poesia di Ignazio Buttitta.<sup>130</sup>

The narration is indeed symbolic; Buttitta immortalizes both his dialect and the object of his poetic gaze, rendering the landscape through dialect as textually permanent. Place is representative of belonging; the figure of the carter is embedded in the landscape, but Buttitta uses this fissure to exemplify his own sense of dread, and the drawing near of the force of change. Ross (2013: 455) has written of 'linkage between the spatial and identity formation' and this might be applied to translation through examination of the role of this linkage in creating an individual sense of belonging through language. Lefevere (1975b: 389) argues

The criterion should [...] be the structural value of the time-place-tradition elements in the source text. Consequently the translator will first have to distinguish between what belongs, in the source text, to the cultural tradition of the time (what is culture-bound) and what is vital information for the right understanding of the source text as a whole (what is structure-bound).

This criterion proved useful for this particular poem, as it seeks to capture a traditional image in poetry through the use of the dialect as befitting the context. Therefore, both culture-bound and structure-bound elements coalesce significantly to provide the intended effect. Buttitta captures an image of a carter, a traditional sight that he recreates in his poem, symbolic of a fading reality, a slow-paced world, steeped in tradition. We see the images of Sicilian life also in Renato Guttuso's paintings, as Tedesco (1965: 18) remarks:

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<sup>130</sup> [Trans.] 'The art of the carriage painters is disappearing, with the replacement of the horses with engines: but that which the old masters still paint touches, as before, the heart of the people, ornament, prestige of beauty, symbolic narration. In the midst of this world, and with its tradition, its rhetoric and its passion, and fully consistent with it, is the poetry of Ignazio Buttitta'

Il riscatto dell'esperienza viva, permette in questo modo al poeta, riprendendo un soggetto d'antica tradizione isolana e pure alcune immagini di una canzone popolare, di darci nel Cantu di carritteri una rinnovata raffigurazione di una costumanza tipica del mondo popolare siciliano; che tra l'altro, giungerà fin nei quadri di Guttuso.<sup>131</sup>

In this poem, I pay attention to the Sicilian syntax, building on the sense of creativity inherent in constraint in Folio 1, focusing on mirroring where possible in the English version. Taylor (1998: 326) defines syntactic equivalence as 'the co-occurrence of identical or similar grammatical forms with a higher than usual frequency'. In this type of experiment, it is impossible to fully capture the Sicilian syntax without making the English ungrammatical but I push the TL to the limits of comprehensibility in order to mirror the unravelling of motion. The syntactic mirroring was one attempt to manipulate the TL into following the sound and pace of the SL; the word order has an important narrative function and a domesticating approach would have repressed this. Firstly, I focused on the title, opting for the less common 'The Song of the Carter', rather than 'The Carter's Song', simply because it mirrors the Sicilian syntax. In losing the Saxon genitive, the English word order unavoidably prioritizes the song, rather than the carter. After reading the poem, I minded this increasingly less, as it seems the focal point of Buttitta's observation. Tedesco (1965: 19) writes:

Questo carrettiere che va per uno stradale di campagna, sotto un cielo nero, un cielo vestito di lutto sino ai calcagni – il secondo verso della prima quartina è uno dei più originali di tutta la raccolta – è immagine viva di una particolare realtà, non

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<sup>131</sup> [Trans.] 'The redemption of live experience allows the poet to resume a subject of ancient tradition on the island and some images of a popular song, to give us in Cantu di carritteri a renewed depiction of a typical habit of the popular Sicilian world; which, among other things, will go on to reach Guttuso's paintings'



scomparsa del tutto nell'Isola anche oggi; la prima figura di una poesia che si va facendo autentica e vera<sup>132</sup>.

Francesse (2005: 44) refers to Benjamin's 'Messianic moment' as 'instances when allegorical vision recalls dialectical images, reconfiguring them so as to catalyze their liberating potential'. We may presume that the carter sings in dialect and we may even interpret 'song' in a vaguer manner; his speech and his sound, like his trade and his landscape are threatened by impending change.

The first line, below, is a direct syntactic mirroring of the Sicilian word order; it does not sound entirely unnatural in English. The foregrounding of the noun before the adjective accentuates the importance of the noun 'night', which would more commonly succeed the adjective in English.

Nuttatta silinziosa e senza stiddi      Night silent and without stars

Reversing the word order is a simple means of getting inside the mechanics of the SL. The word reversal has the effect of slightly simplifying the English, but I would argue that it concentrates the focus effectively on the objects described. As the first line is atmospheric, the word order also presents a form of stream-of-consciousness effect in English. 'Starless' was the more immediate option as a translation of 'senza stiddi' but there is something preferable in the use of 'without stars' as it deviates slightly from the more normal way of describing a starless night.

Nun zurrichianu cchiù mancu li griddi. They rub-rub no more even the crickets.

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<sup>132</sup> [Trans.] 'This carter going along a country road, under a black sky, a sky dressed to the heels in mourning – the second verse of the first quarter is one of the most original of the whole collection – is the living image of a particular reality, which has not completely disappeared on the Island even today; the first figure of a poem that is authentic and true'

The fourth line is more problematic from this point of view, as 'even' or 'not even' should go at the beginning of the line in natural English. Eco (2001: 45) argues that a translation that results in richer suggestions than its original 'might be an excellent piece of work in itself, but it is not a good translation'. This would seem to suggest that, at times, it is faithfulness to the act of translating that remains superior in spite of 'felicitous' (ibid.) enrichment of the TL. Again, 'faithfulness' as a term neglects the translator's double bond of fidelity; 'Translating sometimes means rebelling against one's own language' (Eco, 2001: 46).

I resigned myself to a less natural rendering in order to preserve word order. I enjoyed the slight reinvention of the effect in English, especially because the original itself is unconventional. Tedesco (1965: 28) observes that

l'intento primo del Buttitta, per la sua esplicita dichiarazione, è di usare il 'parlato' dei siciliani d'oggi nelle sue più chiare e monde espressioni: quello stesso intento che già lo portava consapevolmente nella composizione giovanile *Cantu di carritteri* ad adoperare il vocabolo *griddu* (grillo) invece dell'equivalente *ariddu*, che gli appariva più volgare e meno comprensibile ai più<sup>133</sup>.

This is also true for lexis whereby I employ the Sicilian original in order to preserve sound, such as the retention of 'Cucurucù', the sound of the cockerel, which is 'phonologically and graphologically English – but insofar as it has any formal and contextual meaning, this is derived from membership of a lexical set in [Sicilian]' (Catford, 1965: 44). The base replication through voice of animal sounds is imagined to be universal; retaining this difference through context allows for a higher foreign presence in the TL and the

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<sup>133</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta's first intention, by his own explicit declaration, is to use the "spoken" language of today's Sicilians in its clearest expressions: the same intention that already consciously led him, in his youthful composition *Cantu di carritteri*, to use the word *griddu* (cricket) instead of the equivalent *ariddu*, which appeared more vulgar and less comprehensible to most'

associative meaning is replaced by new sound but remains nonetheless evident. Yet Gokak (1952: 6) argues 'Even echoic words are no more intelligible than other words in a language, to the foreigner who does not know the language. *Cock-a-doodle-do* is, as an imitation of the sound it seeks to represent, as inaccurate as *kikeriki* in German or *cocorico* in French'. It is in this way that

lo esercizio di codesta pulizia linguistica, durante quarant'anni di carriera poetica, lungi dal configurarglisi dall'uso del vero linguaggio demotico siciliano, gli si presenta come il migliore dei modi per apparire nella maniera più attuale sempre più latamente popolare, sempre più modernamente siciliano<sup>134</sup>. (Tedesco, 1965: 28)

Nasi (2008) writes of the 'melancholy' of the translator, referring to the sense of unreachability within the ST via the TL; I had difficulty with the last line 'Ma quannu cantu ju lu munnu chianci'. In English this type of emphasis would often be rendered by stressing the pronoun, such as 'But when *I* sing the world cries' but I didn't like this as it deflects from the subtle, peetering out of the last line. I tried to leave it simply as 'But when I sing the world cries', which holds its own as an effective translation but does not carry the emphasized pronoun. This is because the Sicilian would make perfect sense without the inclusion of 'ju', as 'cantu' has the conjugation of the verb with the first person already in place. The insertion of 'ju', therefore, is a subtle but necessary emphasis, which I intended to replicate. 'But I, when I sing' doesn't quite work and would need a comma to succeed fully, and so I attempted 'But me when I sing the world cries'. It reads slightly awkwardly in English but I found myself enjoying that awkwardness. It closes the poem centred round

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<sup>134</sup> [Trans.] 'the exercise of this linguistic cleansing, across forty years of poetic career, far from configuring it from the use of the true Sicilian demotico language, presents itself as the best way to appear in the most current way ever more popularly, ever more modernly Sicilian'

the hopelessness of the speaker/poet, who equates this fading song with disappearing reality and nostalgia, suggestive of a pure simplicity that has been overtaken by an outside force.

### 3.3. 'Sicilia Luntana' / 'Sicilia Faraway' (*Prime*, 1922–1954)

Comu ti chianciu	<u>How</u> I long for you	(5/5)
ora ca ti persi	<u>now</u> that I've lost you	(6/6)
Sicilia sfortunata,	Unfortunate Sicilia,	(8/8)
ca venire nun pozzu	<u>because</u> I cannot come	(7/6)
a vidiri la genti	<u>to see</u> all of the people	(7/7)
di la me' terra;	<u>from</u> my own homeland;	(5/5)
e li centu paisi,	<u>and</u> the hundred villages	(7/7)
e li milli jardini,	<u>and</u> the thousand gardens	(7/6)
e l'occhi lustru	<u>and</u> the lucid eyes	(5/5)
di la picciuttanza;	<u>of</u> all that youthfulness	(6/6)
e li facci scavati	<u>and</u> the faces that are hollowed	(7/8)
e nivuri di suli	<u>and</u> blackened by the sun	(7/6)
di li vecchi jurnateri;	<u>of</u> the old day-to-day workers	(8/8)
e l'occhi funni,	<u>and</u> the profound eyes	(5/5)
e li capiddi sciotti	<u>and</u> the loose and let-down hair	(7/7)
di lacrimanti matri	<u>of</u> tearful mothers	(7/5)
sutta nivuri scialli	<u>beneath</u> their shawls of black	(7/6)
all'antu di li porti	<u>at</u> the thresholds of the doors	(7/7)
c'aspettanu li figghi.	<u>who</u> are waiting for their sons.	(7/7)
Comu ti chianciu	<u>How</u> I long for you	(5/5)
terra mia luntana:	<u>homeland</u> of mine faraway	(7/7)
sbarracu l'occhi	<u>I narrow</u> my eyes	(5/5)
e nun ti vidu mai;	<u>and</u> I never see you	(6/6)
strinciu li vrazza	<u>I reach</u> out my arms	(5/5)
e nun si cu mia;	<u>and</u> you are not with me	(6/6)
chiamu, ti chiamu,	<u>I call</u> , I call you	(5/5)

e mi rispunni sulu	<u>and</u> the only response is	(7/7)
l'affannu amaru	<u>the</u> bitter breathlessness	(6/6)
di 'stu cori ruttu.	<u>of</u> this my broken heart.	(6/6)

Canzuni di picciotti	All the songs from the youngsters	(7/7)
(e carrittera	<u>and</u> the cart drivers	(5/5)
pi li stratuna;	<u>on</u> the big main road;	(5/5)
càudu e pruvulazzu	All of that heat and the dust	(7/7)
a li sipali	<u>around</u> the hedgerows	(5/5)
e ficudinnia	<u>and</u> figs-of-India	(6/6)
cu lu giummu 'ntesta;	<u>with</u> the bud on their heads	(6/6)
occhi arrubbati	and captivated eyes	(6/6)
di picciotti schetti	<u>of</u> unmarried lasses	(6/6)
tra pampini e ramagghi,	<u>amongst</u> the leaves and branches	(8/8)
e cannistri d'aranci	<u>and</u> baskets of oranges	(7/7)
e panara di racina	<u>and</u> panniers of grapes for wine	(8/8)
e quartaruna 'ncoddu	<u>and</u> pails of water at necks	(7/7)
cu la guccia fridda,	<u>with</u> its chilly droplet	(6/6)
e vuci di luntanu...	<u>and</u> voices from faraway	(7/7)
'A ttia cu l'acqua!	<u>'You</u> there with the water!	(6/6)
E ciuri a li capiddi	<u>And</u> flowers hung about in hair	(8/8)
e vampi nni lu celu	<u>and</u> lightning up in the sky	(7/7)
e Sicilia, Sicilia p'ogni banna.	<u>and</u> Sicilia, Sicilia at every turn	(13/13)

Comu ti chianciu	<u>How</u> I long for you	(5/5)
terra mia luntana.	<u>homeland</u> of mine faraway.	(7/7)

Anni 1940–1946

### 3.3.1. Landscaping place

This translation addresses interpretation of spatial identity and its reconstruction in the TT, explored in the foreword to this folio (3.1.). I developed the concept of textual 'landscaping' as an abstract means of accessing the poems, and the space and place they signify. This process documents the passage that language makes in translation, foregrounding encounters with dialect and looking keenly at how it represents place. Detailed in each reflexive commentary, this denotes a passage of interactive engagement, of linguistic crossing and overlap, and refers to a visual place both figuratively in my mind as a translator, and literally, in terms of my working environment. I aim to reflect my translator's viewpoint and the way in which the text presents itself to me. Owing to the fact that this translation practice concentrates on the representation of place and reconstruction of context, 'landscape' appeared to me as a useful means of creating a panoramic exposure of the encounter and relationship between the two textual worlds. Their encounter happens not in a separate space, in my mind, but in a fluid, interconnected continuum and so, to represent this space, a shared forum or landscape came to mind as a translational image.

Ross (2013: 455) suggests that 'Landscape has developed as a concept customarily associated with the visual arts and with the rendering of a scene through the act of painting'. One of the greatest accomplishments of Buttitta's poetry is that the poems seem to remember Sicily, actively preserving this memory in visual shots that conjure vivid images of place; in this poem in particular, landscape is created through list-like images that use nouns as a means of situating the description.

I use the term 'landscape' as a means of addressing the broader situational context of each poem and to chart the ways in which dialect refers inherently to this shared landscape between poet and reader. Exploration of the role of place can centralize the relationship between language and dialect,

between dialect and poetry, and between poetry and translation. Ross (2013: 455) reasons that 'Anchoring the spatiality of the text in a defined territory can serve to explore shared features across artistic works which address an area that has common topographies, agricultural and architectural practices, language or dialect, and cultural and socio-historical backgrounds'.

Writing of *Sweeney Astray* (1983: vii), Heaney (cited in Pattison, 2006: 86) writes of 'shared experience' and 'feels that his intimacy with the same landscape gives his translation authenticity'. Possibly, it is this shared experience that the translator might, in the first instance, seek to have and, afterwards, to reconstruct for the reader. For this reason, the translation sits opposite the original and reflects its structure and lexical positioning. It is necessary, I believe, to look at the relationship that a text holds with the environment in which it was produced and the effects of that environment upon the text. This seems particularly relevant in dialect translation because the language is pointedly spatially orientated.

One role of dialect is that it linguistically personifies place and the translator must examine exactly how to make this locked language part of the landscape of the translated poem. In doing so, the translator extends this landscape to the reader. The notion of inherent familiarity, of belonging; the sense of partaking of a particular place through its language and being able to wander within the borders of an otherwise closed language space is seemingly what makes dialect poetry so 'untranslatable'. I felt I needed to open up my translational working space and engage in the interrelated presence of the texts as I encounter one and construct the other. Neubert and Shreve (1992: 1) observe that

A source text is embedded in a complex linguistic, textual, and cultural context. Its meaning, communicative intent, and interpretive effect draw upon its natural relationships in that environment. It is a daunting task to pull a text from its natural

surroundings and recreate it in an alien linguistic and cultural setting. The text belongs to a dynamic cultural and linguistic ecology. The translator uproots it in a valiant attempt to transplant its fragile meaning.

Buttitta's poetry is constantly seeking Sicily and, in so doing, seems to seek that sense of self that is incomplete when removed from place. In returning to the notion of place as 'constitutive' of identity, we might now also look at language playing much the same role in the formation of identity. Petrocchi (2011: 69) suggests 'One's own space is mapped by what lies outside, it derives coherence, tactile configuration, from the pressure of the external'.

Many of Buttitta's poems focus on the poet's distance from Sicily at the time of writing and the use of dialect functions as a means of connecting him with place. Balma and Spani (2010: 121) describe Calzavara's use of dialectal poetry to return to his homeland, 'which seems to function as a shelter from the outside world – the journey within his memory that brings back images and figures that characterized his youth'. The dialect poem, therefore, is a space which this place inhabits. Comune (2013: 28) writes of the use 'del dialetto che diventa un surplus di identità, un valore aggiunto'<sup>135</sup> and contends that

la lingua vive in uno spazio, è l'espressione di un territorio e strumento della gente che lo abita ed è evidente che la lingua di ogni autore va studiata e immersa nel vissuto che l'ha vista nascere perché ognuno crea e rielabora moduli linguistici in maniera propria<sup>136</sup>. (ibid.: 27–28)

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<sup>135</sup> [Trans.] 'of the dialect that becomes a surplus of identity, an added value'

<sup>136</sup> [Trans.] 'language lives in a space, it is the expression of a territory and instrument of the people who live there and it is clear that the language of each author must be studied and immersed in the experience that saw it come into being because each one creates and re-elaborates linguistic modules in their own way'



It is surely no coincidence that during a period (1940s) characterized by invasion of space, contention for geographical space, migration, emigration, the nationalist and extremist formulation of ideal appearance and subsequent hiding of identity, that place emerges as an entity to be protected, encapsulated in writing and saved. Place needed to inhabit zones that were less immediately affected by war, to find a space in which to survive if only in memory, needed to migrate to the sanctuary of words on pages. Places were changing, borders were moving and were threatened by change or disfigured by war. The spatial element in modernist writing is a response to the changing physical environment, and Ross (2013: 453–454) notes that

Italian Studies is no exception to this increased attention to place and space in the text, as signalled by the emergence of critical monographs and articles dedicated to the spatial and its representation in, and importance to, Italian literature such as, for instance, scholarship examining the city or region in Italian literary production.

It could be Italy's linguistic situation that prompts such attention, for it may be seen as a 'single but non-homogeneous linguistic and cultural space', to adopt Jones' (2011: 17) description of the ex-Yugoslav region. Search for place, as explored in Chapter 1, characterizes much dialectal writing – and Buttitta's poetry. As place plays an important role in the formation of identity, language is, then, the voice through which one expresses this identity.

In writing, discourse itself becomes objectified; distanced from its producer. Interpretation is a reply to this distantiating, this objectification, and it is through interpretation of the text that the self not only comes to know the self but is in fact constituted (Foran, 2012: 6).

Writing of Consolo's return from Milan, Francese (2005: 48) notes that the author does not find Sicily as he left her, 'Consolo cannot return to a

recomposed world – to the "olive trees" of his youth – and to the internal and external harmony of times past, because they no longer exist'. Francese emphasizes the fact that Consolo

expresses his rage by placing plainly in view, ekphrastically, the remains of what was and now appears to be destined for extinction. Through the collaboration of word and image, and the plurality of witness it affords, Consolo involves readers in the destiny of those 'olive trees,' a fate they are implicitly asked to share. (ibid.)

There is a distant, removed self (the poet) in this poem, recalling colour, remembering the landscape, speaking it into being, along with its movements and sounds. It is hard to separate the poet figure from the speaker or voice of the poem. Winston (1950: 182) notes that the translator 'must also be able to tell where the quality of the language ends and the personal quality of the author begins'. Here, I look at how the poem 'constructed and transmitted images and discourses within a complex intra-cultural and inter-cultural space' (Jones, 2011: 48). This poem is stream-of-consciousness by design, in that the repetitive, list-like appearance is like a stream of memories, snapshots or a series of images, one after another. I focused on the syllable matching approach (explored in Chapter 2, Folio 1) in order to keep the rhythmic, list-like pattern of the original poem. The numbers in parenthesis detail the original syllable count followed by the translated result. The repetition and syllabic count that I tried to mirror plays a substantial part in recreating this effect; the idea of syllabic matching was initially an experiment, placing a degree of constraint over a feature of the poem that seemed important. I was reluctant, though, because I assumed such syllabic fidelity could prompt a non-literal rendering that matched the syllables but lost the sense. In actual fact, the effect was the opposite; the more restricted I was by the syllable count, the more I focused on the content of the sentences as units

and the more I concentrated on building the rhythm using words that I felt to be as close as possible to the originals.

The poem builds momentum; it feels as though the pace should gradually quicken. This gives the impression that memories trigger other memories, that they flow faster and faster, trailing off at intervals after the lists of 'e/and' respectively. The lists of 'and' captured my attention upon the first reading and I decided from the first draft that this repetition ought to be matched where possible, right down to the positioning in the English sentence. As such, 46 out of 50 lines match the beginning word of the SL (underlined) and where the match is slightly delayed, this was in the interest of preserving English syntax to the extent that it didn't read awkwardly or simply incorrectly.

Buttitta's *nóstos* 'evokes a return home, to childhood, memories, traditions, and affects' (Francese, 2005: 47). Consolo (1994, cited in Francese, *ibid.*) describes this *nóstos* as 'the re-visiting of our "olive trees" – the tangible signs of our individual and collective contributions to civilization and society'. Nostalgia seems to flood through the poem but many of the referents, symbols, images and memories are not pleasant ones. Many depict labour, intense heat, thirst contrasted with lack of water, haggard workers and tearful mothers. Mourning is present within the poem; we are made aware both in the title and first line that this is a faraway place, a lost place, and one that is wept over or longed for. The countryside and rural working life, flecked with relief and lightheartedness (flowers in hair and songs from the young) are the subjects of the memories but this is indicative of how distance renders these scenes beautiful because they are absent from the poet's reality. Much of the content is not desirable – the image of the tearful mothers, for example, is not a pleasant memory but it creates a sense of belonging, home and shared experience, even if this entails suffering – and yet depicts 'the rural life of Sicily with its hardships and beauty' (Haller, 1993: 288). We come to know

that the speaker has a broken heart and an 'affannu amaru' / 'bitter breathlessness' which is suggestive of physical pain as a result of longing for home – homesickness in a literal sense but also nostalgia in its true form (from the Latin, 'our pain'), delivering 'il senso piú profondo di quel movimento a ritroso, che a Fortini sembrava assimilabile al pascoliano ritorno "dove son quelli che amano ed amo"<sup>137</sup> (Brevini, 1986: 691).

Writing of Pasolini's relationship with Casarsa, O'Neill (1975: 343) observes that it 'is not part of the geographical world, but rather the symbol of a world complete in itself, an absolute (and therefore perfect) idyllic world of youth and innocence'. The effect of place reverberates even on the body of the distanced poet, in his bitter breathlessness he is physically wounded by his removal from the place he describes. We can practically hear this pained breathlessness as the poem reaches its climax. The pain, we might assume, stems from spatial and temporal distance from the idyllic setting, which embodies the youth and innocence from which the poet now feels removed.

People and faces appear in the writing, giving a visual, almost photographic element to the poem. Many of the nouns capture physical aspects of the people and place described but the characters of the poem seem more generic figures than acquaintances of the speaker. Rather, Buttitta writes of these figures as if he were no longer one of them but an observer from afar. Certainly, his reference to the 'picciuttanza' does not indicate that he includes himself. Neither is he one of the women or mothers, nor is he a day-worker. His physical distance removes him from the people as much as his occupation does. Indeed, the figures in the poem represent the island, rather than being key figures in Buttitta's life. They are, 'to use Eliot's term, objective correlatives of the poet himself, loaded with the emotion that is his, deriving from the consciousness he has of the fleeting nature of the world and its

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<sup>137</sup> [Trans.] 'the deepest sense of that backward movement, which seemed to Fortini akin to the pascolian return to "where there are those who love and I love"'

inhabitants which he contemplates' (ibid.: 344) and, in this way, 'are persons representing a state of innocence, of unawareness, and are attractive precisely because of these qualities, but at the same time they are poetically intensified by the awareness [...] of a different reality on the part of the poet' (O'Neill, 1975: 344).

I studied Buffoni's (2011) translations of Robert Fergusson's poems from Lowland Scots into Italian (included in Appendix 2). These poems were 'thematically centred on descriptions of the city of Edinburgh and its inhabitants' (ibid.:15). Buffoni accompanies the original text with three Italian versions, the first of which is a literal rendering, the second of which is a translation into the Milanese dialect and the third of which is a translation from the Milanese into Standard Italian. Buffoni (2011: 15) remarks that 'I was unable to resist making use of a progressively more savage synthesis as I experienced an anthropological identification with the actualized spirit of the speakers'.

The version in Milanese dialect immediately struck me as more in line with the original Scots; there are harsh, consonantal endings which manage to recapture the Edinburgh landscape and cold, Scottish winter. The dialectal version seems stronger and more natural, with ellipsis and exclamation as naturally follows a lively dialectal voice and, in occasionally distancing itself from the Scots version, seems to capture its essence more effectively in the sense that the poem seems 'at home'. This sense of 'anthropological identification' resonated with me; whilst I cannot truly connect to the poet's absence from 1940s Sicily, I can relate to feeling far away from home, a feeling that is common, perhaps, to many readers of the 21st century. What mattered, in terms of effectiveness in the translated text, was that the feeling of homesickness was transferred and that the specific sense of place and distance from this place was recreated.

Slater (2011: 93), in looking at how voice may change in translated stories, outlines the usefulness of examining 'what happens to the voice of the narrator when a story undergoes the process of interlingual translation'. She identifies the spatial element (spatial adverbs, demonstratives, place names) within narrative as markers that can be used to establish both voice and 'the position from which the narrator speaks and thus allows the reader to hear where the narrator is coming from, both literally and metaphorically' (ibid.). Slater infers, however, that these markers must automatically change in translation, as a result of the ways in which such markers are interpreted and re-encoded. We can observe use of place names and markers of place in Buttitta's poetry, which function both as geographical markers and cultural referents in the poems, and look at 'how a poem typically creates, in relatively few words, a richly-detailed, self-contained "text world" of places, events and characters' (Stockwell, 2002, cited in Jones, 2014: 33). Regarding the anchoring of the original voice in the narrator's storyworld, Slater (2011: 98) defines voice in terms of the 'spatial, temporal, and cognitive location in which the narrator is anchored in the world of the narrative [...] with the focus here on markers of spatial positioning' and suggests that the challenge in translation lies in identifying 'the range of lexical markers that can be used to trigger influences' (ibid.).

The reader of the translation is positioned differently to the reader of the original poetry; they must, then, be guided into the landscape of the original and this can be done by bringing textual signposts of place to the fore. Slater (2011: 105) suggests that 'the way a text cues readers to map a narrator's position within a translated storyworld shapes readers' engagement' with voice, adding 'Place-names and adjectives that derive from these place-names are also used to map the storyworld' (ibid.: 110). It is for this reason that I carried out a lexical analysis of what I deemed to be semantic markers of place, in order to seek to recreate these in translation.

I have provided a lexical analysis (Appendix 3) of nouns, verbs and adjectives in order to prioritize recreation of lexis. Where the nouns make multiple appearances, I have numbered them chronologically. Slater (2011: 102) looks at lexical markers used in narration that can be interpreted as signposts, which she describes as 'textual signals' that 'can be used to construct the location in and from which' the narrator tells his or her version of events. This poem is particularly visual in nature and Buttitta's list-like description of Sicily creates an image in the mind's eye. Eco (2001: 32) notes that 'Since verbal language does not show images or colours, the rhetorical device by which one tries to suggest visual effects through words is called hypotyposis'. Nouns make up the most part of the poem's vocabulary, with noticeable repetitions of 'Sicilia' (x3), 'Homeland' (x3), 'Eyes' (x4), 'Hair' (x2) and 'water' (x2). Many of the nouns detail parts of the body or landscape and, as such, the body becomes part of the landscape and vice versa. The figs-of-India (prickly pears) are given heads. The fact that 'eyes' is the most repeated noun is telling, for this is the Sicily that the poet 'sees' in remembrance, from far away (temporally and geographically). The verbs, by way of contrast, are sparse and predominantly negative ('lost', 'cannot', 'long', 'call' – to no avail) and often refer to the physical or emotional. This may signify Buttitta's awareness of 'the futility of this enterprise' (O'Rawe, 2007: 93) to resuscitate place.

There are remarkably few verbs in the poem; it is a present state of loss and longing and the lack of verbs functions to create a stagnant, mourning stillness on the part of the speaker. The adjectives are often visual and tend to refer to land, the body and colour. Faces are 'hollowed' through outdoor work, 'blackened' by labour under the sun. The body is 'old' as a result of work and age, contrasted with youth, flowers, the voice and song. And amidst all of this there is the longing, which becomes very physical: longing with thirst and desire, for water, for the young girls, for Sicily, for the fruit of the land. The

interaction of the body and landscape renders one of the other, creating physicality of the landscape and a landscaped body.

### 3.4. 'Pueta e Zappaturi' / 'Poet and Digger' (*Pani, 1954*)

Dammi la **manu**,  
tu ca zappi la **terra**  
e manci picca,  
**maistru** e **patri**  
di la **rima** ricca.

Give me your **hand**,  
you who hoe the **earth**  
and eat scraps,  
**maestro** and **father**  
of the rich **rhyme**.

Tu scrivi ntra la **terra**  
e lassi **signi**,  
iu ntra la **menti**  
fazzu li **disigni**.

You write in the earth  
and leave **signs**,  
I in my **mind**  
make **drawings**.

Unni tu affunni  
li lucenti **lami**  
spuntanu **frutti**  
**ciuri** ed **arvulami**:  
unni m' affannu iu,  
**lacrimi** umani.

Wherever you labour  
the bright **blades**  
**fruits** appear  
**flowers** and **trees**:  
wherever I labour,  
human **tears**.

Iu ntra la **carta**  
scrivo li **canzuni**,  
tu ntra **terra**,  
e accorda lu **zappuni**.

I on **paper**  
write **songs**,  
you in the **earth**,  
and the **hoe** follows.

Iu **gaddu**, cantu  
di prima **matina**,  
tu la **cartedda**  
l'ovu e la **gaddina**.

I **cockerel**, sing  
in the early **morning**,  
you are the **basket**  
the **egg** and the **hen**.



Iu **paparina**

mmentu lu **frumentu**:

tu chiddu chi lu fa'

cu lu so **stentu**.

Dammi la **manu**,

tu ca zappi la **terra**

e manci picca,

smovi dintra di mia

sta **terra** sicca;

scippacci l'**erbi**;

rumpi li **timpuna**,

spètrala, simina,

e fanni **orti** e **ghiardina**,

**mari** di **frutti**

e di **ciuri**

cu **venti** a nacalora

e **umbri** ncappiddati

e **vasati** d'**acceddi**:

**vasati**

cu li **pizzi** vagnati d'**acquazzina**.

Dammi la **manu**,

tu ca zappi la **terra**

e manci picca,

smovi dintra di mia

sta **terra** sicca;

nàscinu **ciuri**

ti dugnu lu **ciavuru**,

nàscinu **fogghi**

**curuni** d'**addauru**.

I **little poppy**

in amongst the **wheat**:

you the one who grows it

with its **hardship**.

Give me your **hand**,

you who hoe the **earth**

and eat scraps,

move within me

this dry **earth**;

rip out the **weeds**;

break up the **clods**,

unstone it, sow,

and make **vegetable patches** and **gardens**

**seas** of **fruit**

and of **flowers**

with **winds** that oscillate

and **shadows** hatted

and **birds' kisses**:

**kisses**

with their **peckers** wet with **dew**.

Give me your **hand**,

you who hoe the **earth**

and eat scraps,

move within me

this dry **earth**;

**flowers** are borne

I'll give you their **scent**,

**leaves** are borne

a **crown** of **laurel**.

### 3.4.1. Aesthetics and Sensorial Translation

Here, I look at how aesthetic criteria can be applied to translation to foreground the cultural significance embedded in dialect. Zinna (1997: 416) writes 'Buttitta assimilates the *craft* of the poet to that of the peasant, who writes in the earth as the poet writes in the minds'. Buttitta uses natural symbols and nouns to create a visual picture. The hoer is 'written into presence' (Francese, 2005: 55) and the poet recreates a landscape through juxtaposition and comparison. Tedesco (1965: 11–12) writes

Ignazio Buttitta, grazie ai legami quotidiani, anche se non proprio organici, che ha sempre mantenuto con chi lavora, ha percorso il secondo cammino, lottando, bisogna dire chiaramente, contro una vena di 'ingenuo' e cantabile sentimentalismo che gli frenava la aspirazione più forte di moderno poeta dei diseredati e dei ribelli. Così egli ha potuto dire in *Pueta e zappaturi*<sup>138</sup>.

Kendall (2006: 132), writing of the challenges of orthography and translation of Japanese haiku into English, notes that the focus 'remained on finding the most appropriate way of recreating the visual sense that the original poem evokes, and this includes replacing iconic clues in the source text with verbal clues in the target text, rather than searching for equivalents'. This focus on orthographical differences can be juxtaposed with the way I examine dialect as opposed to standard language, as it magnifies the qualities of varying expressive systems and their peculiar challenges to translation.

Dialect words belong to a language world that is isolated from 'equivalence' or standard language synonyms. Near-equivalents may be found, but 'nacalora', for example, which I have translated as 'oscillates', has

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<sup>138</sup> [Trans.] 'Ignazio Buttitta, thanks to his quotidien links, although not quite organic, which he has always maintained with those who work, has taken the second path, struggling, it must be clearly stated, against a vein of "naïve" and songlike sentimentality that stifled his aspiration – stronger as a modern poet – of the disenchanting and rebellious. He was able to say this much in *Pueta e zappaturi*'

no direct equivalent. Amidst such words are uses of language that are, perhaps, more resonant to native Sicilian speakers, such as 'mari di frutti / seas of fruit' and recurring images of arid ground or absence of water. This juxtaposition is poignant for a location surrounded by water, yet dry and thirsty. Buttitta writes here, and in many poems, about drops of water or dew, and the reader might sense the importance of these droplets in a land where water is scarce.

The poet returns to his idiosyncratic use of nouns to create a poem that draws an image through words. Aiming to reconstruct the visual nature and create aesthetic emphasis, I highlighted all of the nouns. I opted for 'laurel' as I wanted to retain its connotative value – evergreen, and laden with Grecian significance, particularly prominent in Sicily owing to its Greek historical influence. The process of crowning with laurel stems from the representation of Apollo. Of this accumulation of images, Kendall (2006: 138) writes

In the translated text of *Kinuta* (Zeami 1998), the translators [...] used colour-coded shapes on the original text to highlight the repetition or near-repetition of key words, characters and concepts, so that they could rework them into the English translation.

Based on the vividness and accumulation of nouns in the original poem, I placed these words in bold font to allow them to stand out from the original. Writing of the technique 'show don't tell' used in creative writing workshops, Pattison (2006: 88) suggests that 'Skilful use of this technique helps writers to achieve what books about creative writing call "suspension of disbelief", that is, to create a world that seems completely authentic although it is imagined' and Comune (2013: 29) observes a similar pattern emerging, though in fiction, in Camilleri's serialized detective Montalbano, remarking that 'Facendo così Montalbano-Camilleri "situano" nello spazio di quella terra di Sicilia,

circondata dal mare, il loro vivere e il loro narrare'<sup>139</sup>. These words therefore appear 'louder'; the actions and nouns come to the fore and this stylistic change highlights the key use of Buttitta's lexical choices to set his scene. I set the translation next to the ST because the Sicilian is largely phonetic and I have sought not to alter the word order dramatically in English. This means that an avid reader can access the sounds of the original. Egan (1987: 227) argues 'Nor should we overlook the suggestive power of the imagination', adding

A propos of the contribution made by the imagination, I would insist that a translation ideally appear in dual-language format: the very look of the original words is nourishing: one can derive from them some intimation of a reality on which the mind feeds even without our knowing it. (ibid.)

I would also include the cover image of *Peddi*, 'Zappatore', by Pippo Rizzo (1931) alongside the poem.

De Saussure (2004: 59) has argued of language that it 'is a system of signs in which the only essential thing is the union of meanings and sound-images, and in which both parts of the sign are psychological'. When we look at a poem, we are drawn past the words to the associations they trigger; when these words are changed, and the readership has no knowledge or memory of the collective experience which dialect seeks to reference, the translation ought to reconstruct elements of this original context. De Saussure writes that

The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses. (ibid.: 61)

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<sup>139</sup> [Trans.] 'In this way Montalbano-Camilleri "situate" in the space of that land of Sicily, surrounded by the sea, their life and their narration'

It is in considering these 'sound-images' that sensorial criteria enter the translational methodology. In this poem, we can take the example of 'spètrala', which is onomatopoeic, and which I rendered 'unstone', using the ST word to create a new TL word, which carries the sound and significance. Buttitta wants the reader to 'hear' this 'unstoning' and this 'un-making' of the earth. If the recollection or 'imprint' abounds in the hearing or viewing of language, it thereby follows that this imprint will alter if the word itself is altered.

### 3.5. 'Nun sugnu pueta' / 'I am not a poet' (*Pani, 1954*)

S1	Nun pozzo chiànciri
E1	I can't cry
S2	ca l'occhi mei su sicchi
E2	'cause my eyes are dry
S3	e lu me cori
E3	and my heart
S4	è comu un balatuni.
E4	is like a boulder.
S5	La vita m'arriddussi
E5	Life has reduced me
S6	asciuttu e mazziatu
E6	arid and wrought
S7	comu na carrittata di pirciali.
E7	like a crushed stone.
S8	Iu nun sugnu pueta;
E8	I am not a poet;
S9	odiu lu rusignolu e li cicali,
E9	I hate the nightingale and the cicadas,
S10	lu vinticeddu chi accarizza l'erba

E10 the breeze that caresses the grass  
 S11 e li fogghi chi cadinu cu l'ali;  
 E11 and the leaves that fall with wings;  
 S12 amu li furturati,  
 E12 I love storms,  
 S13 li venti chi strammianu li negghi  
 E13 the winds that disperse the fog  
 S14 e annèttanu l'aria e lu celu.  
 E14 and clear the air and the sky.  
 S15 Iu nun sugnu pueta;  
 E15 I am not a poet;  
 S16 e mancu un pisci greviu d'acqua duci;  
 E16 and not even an insipid freshwater fish;  
 S17 sugnu un pisci mmistinu  
 E17 I am a wild fish  
 S18 abituatu a li mari funnuti:  
 E18 used to deep waters:  
 S19 Iu nun sugnu pueta  
 E19 I am not a poet  
 S20 si puisia significa  
 E20 if poetry means  
 S21 la luna a pinnuluni  
 E21 the hanging moon  
 S22 c'aggiarnia li facci di li ziti;  
 E23 that lightens the faces of the lovers;  
 S23 a mia, la menzaluna,  
 E23 me, I like the halfmoon  
 S24 mi piaci quannu luci  
 E24 when it shines  
 S25 dintra lu biancu di l'occhi a lu voj.  
 E25 in the white of the ox's eyes.  
  
 S26 Iu nun sugnu pueta;  
 E26 I am not a poet

S27 ma siddu è puisia  
 E27 but if it's poetry  
 S28 affunnari li manu  
 E28 to sink one's hands  
 S29 ntra lu cori di l'omini patuti  
 E29 into the heart of suffering men  
 S30 pi spremiri lu chiantu e lu scunfortu;  
 E30 to wring it off its weeping and discomfort;  
 S31 ma siddu è puisia  
 E31 but if it's poetry  
 S32 sciògghiri chiacchi a lu coddu,  
 E32 to loosen the noose from the neck,  
 S33 gràpiri l'occhi a cui nun vidi,  
 E33 to open the eyes of those who see not,  
 S34 dari la ntisa a li surdi,  
 E34 to give hearing to the deaf,  
 S34 rùmpiri catini e lazzi e ljami,  
 E34 to break chains and snares and ties,  
 S35 e sùsiri di nterra  
 E35 and raise from the ground  
 S36 l'omini caduti  
 E36 the men who are fallen  
 S37 e senza spranza:  
 E37 and without hope:  
 S38 (un mumentu ca scattu!) . .  
 E38 (one moment 'cause I must go!) . .  
  
 S39 Ma siddu è puisia  
 E39 but if it's poetry  
 S40 chiamari ntra li fùnnachi e li grutti  
 E40 to call from the foundries and caves  
 S41 li genti persi abbannunati e rutti,  
 E41 people who are lost, abandoned and broken,  
 S42 e dare la vuci all'antu

E42 and to give voice to the labour  
 S43 all'omini aggubbati  
 E43 to the crooked men  
 S44 supra la terra  
 E44 on the ground  
 S45 chi suca sangu e suduri  
 E45 who suck blood and sweat  
 S46 ncanciu di pani pica  
 E46 for little bread  
 S47 e alivi salati;  
 E47 and salted olives;  
 S48 e scippari  
 E48 and tear  
 S49 di lu funnu di li surfari  
 E49 from the bottom of the sulphur  
 S50 la carni Cristiana  
 E50 the Christian flesh  
 S51 chi squagghia e si cunsuma  
 E51 which melts and is consumed  
 S52 cunnannata a lu nfernu:  
 E52 condemned to hell:  
 S53 (un mumentu ca scattu!) . .  
 E53 (one moment 'cause I must go!) . .  
  
 S54 Ma siddu è puisia  
 E54 But if it's poetry  
 S55 vuliri milli  
 E55 to want thousands  
 S56 centumilia muccatura bianchi  
 E56 hundred thousand white tissues  
 S57 p'assuppari l'occhi abbuttati di chiantu;  
 E57 to dry eyes swollen from crying;  
 S58 vuliri lettira moddi  
 E58 to want soft beds



S59 e cuscina di sita  
 E59 and pillows of silk  
 S60 p'arripusari l'ossa ndulurati  
 E60 to rest the aching bones  
 S61 di cui travagghia senza abbentu e sosta;  
 E61 of those who work without repose and pause;  
 S62 e vuliri tutta la terra  
 E62 and to want all the land  
 S63 un gran tappitu di pampini e di ciuri  
 E63 a great carpet of leaves and flowers  
 S64 p'arrifrisari nta lu so caminu  
 E64 to refresh along the way  
 S65 li pedi nudi di li puvireddi:  
 E65 the bare feet of the poor:  
 S66 (un mumentu ca scattu!) . .  
 E66 (one moment 'cause I must go!) . .  
  
 S67 Ma siddu è puisia  
 E67 But if it's poetry  
 S68 fàrisi milli cori  
 E68 to make oneself a thousand hearts  
 S69 e milli vrazza  
 E69 and a thousand arms  
 S70 ed abbrazzari mammi puvireddi,  
 E70 and to hug poor mothers,  
 S71 sicchi di tempu a la malipatenza,  
 E71 withered from long endurance,  
 S72 senza latti a li minni,  
 E72 with no milk at their breasts,  
 S73 cu li carusi mbrazza:  
 E73 with babies in their arms:  
 S74 quattr'ossa stritti  
 E74 four tight bones  
 S75 ntra li petti bramanti d'amuri:

- E75 inside chests thirsty for love:  
 S76 (un mumentu ca scattu!) . .  
 E76 (one moment, 'cause I must go!).
- S77 dàtimi una vuci putenti  
 E77 give me a powerful voice  
 S78 ca pueta mi sentu:  
 E78 because I feel like a poet:  
 S79 dàtimi un stinnardu di focu,  
 E79 give me a standard of fire,  
 S80 appressu a mia li schiavi di la terra,  
 E80 the slaves of the land close by me,  
 S81 na ciumara di vuci e di canzuni:  
 E81 a flood of voices and of songs:  
 S82 li strazzi all'aria,  
 E82 the rags in the air,  
 S83 li strazzi all'aria,  
 E83 the rags in the air,  
 S84 assammarati di chiantu e di sangu!  
 E84 soaked in tears and in blood.

Maggio / May 1954

### 3.5.1. The Poet Figure

In this example from *Pani* (1954), Buttitta uses poetry to challenge conventional views of the poet, rendering the poet figure somewhat of a saviour amongst the poor, with what could be viewed as religious undertones. In the introduction to the French translation of *Pani*, Levi (1958, cited in Nigro, 1963: 12) wrote of 'poesia che è essenzialmente rappresentazione' and that 'Bisogna vederlo [...] Ignazio Buttitta, nella luce spietata della Sicilia: ...clamoroso, con la sua voce di ferro... o mormorante, ripetendo una parola due, tre, quattro volte per farne forse, secondo un antico modulo

inconsapevolmente ereditato, con l'iterazione, una immagine'<sup>140</sup> (ibid.). Tedesco (1965: 12) remarks that it is in this poem that Buttitta manages to 'uscire anche in polemica contro i voli "lirici" di tanta letteratura vernacola',<sup>141</sup> and yet, importantly, he continues that 'la *pars destruens* di questo "manifesto" poetico giustamente è rivolta pure contro il giovane Buttitta che nel lontano 1927 aveva sacrificato all'Arcadia dialettale, nell'idillio pastorale *Marabedda*, tutto infiorettato di madrigali amorosi'.<sup>142</sup>

To describe the structure of 'Nun sugnu pueta' once again, we see the long list form, an unravelling memory that picks up pace as it increases in emotion. The poem is made up principally of nouns that, again, frequently refer to the land and the body: children, the workers, and the constant return to that revered figure, around which *la Sicilianità* revolves, the mother. This poem is important in terms of Buttitta's broader poetic discourse because he is exploring his own identity and challenging conventional connotations of the poet and poetic identity. He dismisses nightingales and cicadas, the breeze caressing the grass, and replaces these images of serenity with harrowing images of malnutrition, poverty, desperation and the incessant labour of the land, 'tears' and 'blood' being the last nouns of the last line of the poem. Zinna (1997: 416) suggests

The poet, who is both like other men and different from them, lives the life of everyone, but with a particular sensibility that makes him a *thief* – Buttitta had written in one of his poems—because he goes among his fellow men, sinks his hands

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<sup>140</sup> 'You must see him [...] Ignazio Buttitta, in the ruthless light of Sicily: ... resounding, with his iron voice ... or murmuring, repeating a word two, three, four times to make it perhaps, according to an ancient form unconsciously inherited, with the iteration, an image'

<sup>141</sup> [Trans.] 'come out, even controversially, against the "lyrical" flights of so much vernacular literature'

<sup>142</sup> [Trans.] 'the destructive part of this poetic "manifesto" is also rightly directed against the young Buttitta who, long ago in 1927, had sacrificed to the dialectical Arcadia, in the pastoral idyll *Marabedda*, all embellished by loving madrigals'

in their hearts and opens *everyone's* brains / like a pomegranate / and sucks out their thoughts.<sup>143</sup>

Whilst the poem is not conventionally poetic, it uses its language, content, style and rhythm to do exactly what the poet intends it to do, that is, undermine the normative content of poetry. Buttitta is writing of real life in Sicily, the relationship between man and the land ever present. And yet, the poet walks amongst these views and images remaining slightly distanced from them. O'Rawe (2007: 92) observes

By discussing the Sicilian place as text, and by employing textual and material metaphors in the construction of a textual map of Sicily, and recycling a series of *topoi* and *loci communes* about the literary foundation of Sicilianness and Sicilian identity, the Sicilian writer and intellectual occupies a peculiar role in relation to his community.

The poet is physically removed from this toil and yet wishes desperately to end it. It is poetry, then, that can give relief (although I suspect it provides more relief to the poet than his subjects) but in order to do so it must use language that depicts that scene, lifting it from its environment and placing it in words on the page.

We (translator and reader) are interpreting Buttitta's poetry, interpreting the place rendered by the language and the poet's presence within that language and within the place he writes about. This element renders translation not only as an exploration of culture and linguistic embodiment of culture but also of the identity of the poet, the poetic persona within the poetry, and ways in which language is used as a marker of both place and the relation of self to that place. One important observation on the grounds of cultural difference is the way in which the figure of the poet itself

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<sup>143</sup> Buttitta, I. "Pueta e latru," in: *Ariu di Sicilia*, supplement to *Po't'u cunttu*, n. 8, Palermo, 4–30–1954. (Footnote in Zinna, 1997: 416)

means different things. The sometimes subtle but nonetheless noteworthy differences in perception of the poet figure from culture to culture bear representation within translation. Buttitta's specific role in Sicily lends character to his poems and influences his reception on home ground. He published poetry as something for the masses, as opposed to a socially elite written art. Bassnett (1998: 57) draws attention to the opposite status of poetry in general in the Anglo-Saxon world, noting that

[a] delicate sensibility has further been encouraged in the Anglo-Saxon world by questions of class consciousness, for as English literature established itself in the universities in the early years of this century, so poetry rose up the social scale, away from the masses and towards an intellectual and social elite.

Whilst this scenario is changing, the tendency of the Anglo-Saxon world to view twentieth century poetry from other cultures in the same light could distort its reality and it is necessary to remember that poetry has changing functions in different nations. 'This is of great significance to the translator, for such cultural differences may well affect the actual process of translating. Poetry as cultural capital cannot be consistently measured across all cultures equally' (ibid.: 58). Poetry as a tool for political activism is discussed in Chapter 1, but bears repetition here as a reminder that the cultural context of the poem and its poet can shape reception of the poetry because realization of its non-elitism makes it more accessible. Bassnett (1998: 58) makes observations about Neruda's poetics that could equally apply to Buttitta:

Neruda saw the role of the poet as speaking for those who had no power to speak. The poet, for him, gave a voice to the voiceless. Elsewhere the poet has taken on the role of the conscience of a society, or as its historian. In some cultures, the poet is a shaman, a creator of magic, a healer. In others the poet is a singer of tales, an entertainer and a focal point in the community.

Bassnett additionally remarks that 'in Latin America, and in Chile, after Pablo Neruda's death in 1973 people took to the streets, and even illiterate peasants and workers in the barrios could quote from his vast poetic output' (ibid.: 57). The comparison stands for several reasons. For instance, Sciascia (in Buttitta, 1972: 10), in his preface to *Poeta*, writes:

Chi scrive questa nota, piú volte, di fronte ai libri di Buttitta, si è trovato a fare il nome di Neruda: e ad evidenza si può confermare qui, su certi canti, il richiamo. Ma una poesia come 'U rancuri' – verità di fronte a se stesso e quindi, contro se stesso, rancore – Neruda non l'ha mai scritta, non la scriverà<sup>144</sup>.

### 3.6. 'Littra a una mamma tedesca' / ' Letter to a German mother' (*Pani*, 1954)

Mamma tedesca,	German mamma,
quannu t'arriva sta littra	when you get this letter
ntra ddu paisi	in your country
nicu e luntanu;	small and faraway;
ntra dda casa tirrana	in your low house
c'un ghiardineddu chiusu di sipali	with the little garden bordered by hedgerows
e un cancellu di lignu:	and a wooden gate:
mamma tedesca,	German mamma,
quannu t'arriva sta littra,	when you get this letter,
appízzala	put it
a lu ritrattu di to figghiu,	on the picture of your son,
a lu capizzu di ddu lettu biancu	at the bedside of that white bed
chi t'arristò vacanti.	which you're left with empty.

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<sup>144</sup> [Trans.] 'On more than one occasion, in front of Buttitta's books, the writer of this note has found himself thinking of Neruda; here, in certain songs, we can clearly confirm his echo. But a poem like "U rancuri" – truth in front of himself and, therefore, against himself, rancor - Neruda has never written, nor will ever write'

Mamma tedesca,  
ti scrivi ddu surdatu talianu  
chi t'ammazzò lu figghiu.

German mamma,  
it's that Italian soldier writing to you  
the one that killed your son.

Maliditta dda notti  
e l'acqui di lu Piavi  
e li cannuna e li bummi  
e li luci chi c'eranu;  
malidetti li stiddi  
e li prigheri e li vuci  
e lu chiantu e li lamenti  
e l'odiu, malidetti!

That cursed night  
and the water of the Piave  
and the cannons and the bombs  
and the lights that were there;  
cursed were the stars  
and the prayers and the voices  
and the weeping and the cries  
and the hatred, cursed!

Era accussi beddu to figghiu,  
mamma tedesca,  
lu vitti all'alba  
cu la facci bianca  
di picciriddu ancora addummisciutu.

He was so handsome your son,  
German mamma,  
I saw him at dawn  
with his face white  
like a child still asleep.

Ch'era beddu to figghiu:  
paría ca supra dd'erba  
l'avíssiru pusatu li to manu,  
adaciu, p'un mumentu, addinucchiuni,  
pi cughír Ricci un ciuri:  
paría aspittassi un fasciu di ciuri.

How handsome your son was:  
it was as though on the grass  
they had placed your hands  
kneeling, for a moment, down there  
to pick him a flower:  
it was as though he awaited a bandage of flowers.

Ma tu nun c'eri,  
mamma tedesca,  
quannu lu vrudicai  
a lu 'nnumani;  
nun c'eri a scavari  
la fossa cu la pala;  
nun c'eri quannu  
ci accarizzai

But you weren't there,  
German mamma,  
when I buried him  
on that morrow;  
you weren't there to dig  
the ditch with the shovel;  
you weren't there when  
I stroked

li manu  
e ci spustai di davanti all'occhi  
un ciuffu nfutu  
di capiddi biunni;  
nun c'eri  
a vίδiri comu la terra  
si lu manciassi a picca a picca:  
un ghiditu, na manu,  
un pedi, la facci;  
e l'ultima palata,  
e la terra chi crisci  
chi crisci e fa la carni terra.

Nun c'eri,  
mamma tedesca;  
ma poi ti ntisi  
chiànciri e gridari  
ntra dda càmmara,  
sula,  
di ddu paisi luntanu;  
ti vitti jttata  
supra di ddu lettu  
vacanti di to figghiu,  
e fuddari la testa  
sutta lu cuscinu,  
e turciriti li manu,  
e vuci e vuci,  
comu si ntra lu pettu  
scatinati  
avissi centu armali  
e mille vucchi a fari lu lamentu.

Sempre ti vitti e viu,  
mamma tedesca,

his hands  
and I brushed away from his eyes  
a thick tuft  
of blond hair  
you weren't there  
to see how the earth  
swallowed him up bit by bit:  
a finger, a hand,  
a foot, his face;  
and the last shovelful,  
and the earth that grows  
that grows and makes the flesh earth.

You weren't there,  
German mother;  
but then I heard you  
crying and shouting  
in that room,  
alone,  
in that faraway country;  
I see you thrown down  
upon that empty  
bed of your son's  
and sink your head  
beneath the pillow  
and wring your hands,  
and cry and cry,  
as if in your chest  
unleashed  
had a hundred animals  
and a thousand mouths to make your lament.

I always saw you and see you,  
German mamma,



vistuta di nívuru,  
li vrazza all'aria,  
e dintra l'occhi porti  
lu figghiu mortu  
cu li manu ncruci.

dressed in black,  
your arms in the air,  
and in your eyes you carry  
your dead son  
with your hands crossed.

Sempri ti vitti  
poi ca turnai  
cu l'avutri surdati,  
mmenzu fuddi di mammi filici,  
quannu lu trenu firmava.

I always saw you  
when I came back  
with the other soldiers  
amidst the crowds of happy mothers,  
when the train came to a stop.

Sempri ti viiu  
si ntra la notti sentu,  
tra muru e muru,  
lu cantu di na mamma.

Always I see you  
if in the night I hear  
from wall to wall,  
a mother's song.

Mamma tedesca,  
iu, l'assassinu  
ca ti livai lu figghiu;  
comu pozzu dòrmiri  
ed abbrazzari li me picciriddi?  
Comu pozzu passari  
mmenzu a l'òmini boni  
senz'essiri assicutatu,  
e crucifissu a lu muru?

German mamma,  
I, the murderer  
that took your son from you;  
how can I sleep  
and hug my little children?  
How can I walk  
amongst good men  
without being chased  
and crucified to the wall?

Tu ci jucavi mmenzu lu jardinu,  
lu criscivi cu lu ciatu  
cu li suspira:  
iu mi nznignava a sparari  
comu megghiu putissi  
ammazzari a to figghiu.

You played with him in the garden,  
you grew him with breath  
with sighs:  
Me I taught myself to shoot  
as best I could  
to kill your son.

Mamma tedesca,	German mamma,
mammi di tuttu lu munnu,	mothers of all the world,
vi chiamu!	I call you!
Ognuna,	Each of you,
la petra cchiú grossa	the biggest stone
vinissi a ghittalla	come and throw her
supra di mia:	upon me:
muntagni di petra,	mountains of stones,
muntagni di petra,	mountains of stones,
scacciati la guerra.	crush the war.

### 3.6.1. War and Peace: Buttitta's Poetic Identity

Buttitta reflects on the beauty that remains with those who die young, comparing his ageing self, with seeming envy, to the everlasting youth that untimely death brought about. He juxtaposes this with the ongoing youth that age brings, in that he was able to have children, then grandchildren. The blond hair of the corpse emphasizes the tragic untimeliness of the son's death. The son's bed is white, a colour often associated with innocence and purity; the reference to this bed is also intimate and indicative of the youth of the son, who still lived and slept at his mother's house. His face is white too, again creating an image of innocence. In *Paglia* (1968: 22–23), Buttitta writes:

Ho qui sul tavolo i ricordi di un nemico ucciso: la fotografia e le lettere della madre. Glieli tolsi dalla tasca senza rimorso e con odio. Era piccolo come me, mi somigliava; col tempo somigliò ai miei figli; ora ai miei nipoti. Lo vedo disteso sull'argine del Piave preciso come prima. Più bello di prima! Io sono diventato vecchio, lui no<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>145</sup> [Trans.] 'I have here on the table the memories of a murdered enemy: the photograph and the mother's letters. I took them from his pocket without remorse and with hate. He was young like me, he resembled me; in time he resembled my children; now my grandchildren. I see him lying on the bank of the Piave just like before. More handsome than before! I became old, he did not'

I looked at the themes of war and nature in the poem. The German mother's house is described in a picturesque way; I wondered why Buttitta had constructed such a quaint village-type house and not imagined the mother in an urban flat. I realized, as I was translating the orderly hedgerows and wooden gate that enclose the garden, that what the poet is really doing is constructing a sense of quiet homeliness, an environment that is peaceful, rural and, in being so, untouched by the smoke and industrialization fuelled by war. He places the mother as far as possible from the noise and industry of war zones. He separates her from fighting and death, using the garden to enclose her with nature. This choice functions in two ways. Firstly, it is suggestive of war being an unnatural force that is contrary to, and destroys, nature. It also posits the 'mamma' of the poem as representative of mother nature, who gives birth and raises children, setting this against the moment where war takes this life. This is emphasized in a visceral manner where the poet describes the hundred animals and their thousand mouths within the mother's chest as she cries.

Buttitta directly juxtapositions the mother's nurturing role and the evil of war, describing the mother raising the child, playing with him in the garden (again, a figment of his imagination) whilst he learned to shoot as best he could. Buttitta removes both nature and the mother figure from the horror of war, but only spatially. He connects with the mother via a written letter; words once again cross both national and political borders. Life crosses borders, as does death.

The repetition of 'you weren't there' is harrowing; a mother should naturally not be present at her son's death. This poem universalizes the mother figure and the cry of 'mothers of all the world' beseeches the mother's revenge. Buttitta also describes the soldier's desperate guilt and regret over his murdering a man; he acknowledges that this man is human and he does this by focusing on the human figure that unites all humankind, the mother.

The poem also juxtaposes the suffering of the soldier against the suffering of the mother; one who takes life against one that gives it, yet they have both lost something as a result of this killing. Buttitta does not address sides of the war, nor does he focus on political motives. Instead, he universalizes the pain that unites both parties. War kills the soul, it seems Buttitta is saying, as well as the body. The soldier fears he can no longer sleep at night; he can no longer hold his children or walk amongst 'good' men.

The first uncertainty was the rendering of 'mamma tedesca', which is repeated as a form of address; I considered 'German mother' after readily dismissing the syntactical matching of 'Mother german'. 'German mother' would have been an accurate solution were the original Sicilian 'Matri tedesca' but I felt the use of the word 'mamma' to be important. In English, as in Italian and Sicilian, 'mother/madre/matri' is slightly more generic; 'mamma' is more indicative of the addressee being the child of that mother. I considered 'Mum' or even 'Mummy', settling briefly on the latter. Yet this solution was flawed because 'Mummy' is much more childlike than 'Mamma', which is often used by Italians even in adulthood; it seemed necessary to weigh in on the effects of such an important name – a 'kinship term' (Maher, 2011: 140) in the poem. Until I knew how to address this mother, I could not proceed with the translation. The names we call our parents are deeply embedded in cultural familiarity and, as 'Mamma' is fairly comprehensible in the Anglophone world (it is even used at times), I opted to retain the original word.

One major difficulty between Sicilian and English is the Sicilian use of the reflexive verb, often applied to verbs that are not reflexive in the standard language. Where Buttitta writes of the bed 'chi t'arristò vacanti' his Italian translation (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 111) renders it: 'ch'è rimasto vuoto'. Whilst only a subtle difference, it is precisely the traces of Sicilian speech that I seek to incorporate, and as such I reversed the English word order:

a lu capizzu di ddu lettu biancu            at the bedside of that white bed  
chi t'arristò vacanti.                            which you're left with empty.

I made a similar decision for the line: 'Sempri ti viù / Always I see you', instead of the more conventional 'I always see you', and again: 'Era accussi beddu to figghiu, / He was so handsome your son,' because it reflects the tendency of spoken language to add the subject almost as a clarifying afterthought.

My strategy was to focus on the use of beseeching and heartbreak in the voice of the speaker. It is a gentle poem, unlike several others that have war and death as their subject. This poem is haunting in its quiet desperation; we can almost hear the trembling of the speaker's voice, and he himself is haunted by the mother figure after he has killed her son. He sees her on the platform, he hears her at night. There is a lingering presence of the mother in his mind. I played around with the English syntax in order to mirror the Sicilian but aimed essentially to focus on the way the poet uses dialect to talk about human suffering. Looking at the line: 'lu criscivi cu lu ciatu / you grew him with breath', I initially translated this as 'you raised him with breath' but eventually chose 'you grew', which is less conventional in English but does make sense and I intentionally applied this strategy to mirror Sicilian parlance. I also gendered the stone, in the case of the following line: 'vinissi a ghittalla / come and throw her', firstly because I was attempting to keep the Sicilian as exact as possible and, secondly, because the femininity of the stones seemed in keeping with the strength of the mother figure in the poem.

### 3.7. 'Lu Servu' / 'The Servant' (*Pani*, 1954)

Tu nun si omu,                                    You're not man,

sí pècura tusata;  
sceccu a lu pitturali  
e a la muntata.

you're sheep shorn;  
ass at the chest  
and at the harness.

Sèntili li ciatuna  
chi sbutti di lu pettu;  
spúталu stu vilenu,  
fatti lu catalettu.

Listen to the breathlessness  
that you throw from your chest;  
spit out this poison,  
and make yourself a casket.

Chiama curvazzi nívuri  
a fàriti la festa  
si dopu tantu pàtiri  
carnazza ti nni resta,

Call the big black crows  
to throw yourself a party  
if after much pain  
you've any flesh left,

si li patruna l'ossa  
nun ti li macinaru  
pi fari sirratura  
e codda di scarparu.

if the masters your bones  
haven't ground up  
to make sawdust  
and shoe-maker's glue.

Tu nun si omu,  
sí un cani senza denti  
chi scippa carcagnati  
ed è cuntenti.

You're not man,  
you're a dog with no teeth  
who takes a kicking  
and is content.

Porcu chi duna carni,  
saimmi, lardu e nziti  
e mancia ghiànnari sicchi,  
favi e trunza purriti.

Pork that gives meat,  
fat, lard and bristle  
and eats dry acorns,  
beans and rotten cores.

Tu sí na cuttunina  
chi all'avutri cummogghi;  
mentri c'attassi e tremi  
di friddu e senza spogghi.

You are a quilt  
that covers the others;  
while you freeze and tremble  
of cold and with no clothes.

Pignata senza vugghiu,  
coci, jnchi la panza,  
e sutta di la tavula  
fai la contralanza.

A pot that doesn't boil,  
you cook, fill your belly,  
and beneath the table  
you do the contralance.

Tu nun sí omu,  
sí carni ntra la chianca,  
cu junci la pattia,  
l'accatta e si l'abbranca.

You're not man,  
you're meat upon the counter,  
the contractor comes,  
buys it and takes it away.

Davanti lu patruni  
ti metti sull'attenti,  
comu un pupu di pezza  
ca joca cu li venti.

Before your master  
you stand alert,  
as though you were a puppet  
that plays with the winds.

Attacati na màzzara,  
megghiu ca ti subbissi,  
nimicu a li to figghi,  
a li to carni stissi.

Tie a rock about yourself,  
better that you surrender,  
enemy of your children,  
to your own same flesh.

Sí un schelitru all'addritta  
tiratu di la fossa;  
sfàrdati sti rubazzi  
quantu ti cuntu l'ossa.

You're a skeleton standing  
pulled up from the grave;  
rip off those rags  
and I'll count your bones.

Siddu a lu to paisi  
c'è un campanaru àvutu,  
acchiànacci ddà supra  
e fai l'ultimu savutu.

If in your town  
there's a high steeple,  
climb right to the top  
and make the last leap.

Iu vegnu, t'arricogghiu,  
fazzu n'arrufuluni:  
stu beddu cumplimentu  
è pi lu to patruni.

I'll come, gather you up,  
I'll make a box:  
this fine compliment  
is for your master.

### 3.7.1. Dialect and Realism

Buttitta foregrounds human suffering here, as in many of his poems, but goes so far as to suggest that life itself is better ended than endured in the conditions he describes. Buttitta highlights the poor treatment of workers in Sicily through his dehumanization of his subject and it appears that, where there is no distinction between man and beast, we encounter a dangerous philosophical and moral dilemma. Stimulated seemingly by a memory from his childhood, in *Paglia* (1968: 22), Buttitta recalls:

Ricordo: entrò in bottega un uomo e mi chiese una cassetta vuota. Non lo guardai in faccia: me ne sarei accorto; lo vidi poi passare con la cassetta in testa, portava al cimitero una bambina. Il padre era lui: un morto che accompagnava una morta<sup>146</sup>.

I wished, in translating this poem, to maintain the sense of deprivation and the desolate tone as 'when we want to translate a poem we first construct a reading of it which will take into account both the nature of poetry to be open enough to engage its readers and its characteristic of making its readers feel' (Boase-Bier, 2006: 51). Brevini (1986: 690) writes of 'dialetti, strumenti della piccola patria, parlate contadine'<sup>147</sup> and Buttitta uses dialect to reflect the language that would have been spoken by the subject of his poem, 'versi rudi, anche rozzi, come quelli di Lu Servu'<sup>148</sup>, as Tedesco (1965: 22) observes. On the emergence of such poems, Nigro (1963: 11) writes

Buttitta si era rifatto. Era un poeta nuovo, pubblicamente investito come tale dalle lacrime, dai lamenti delle madri sui figli morti ammazzati (in guerra o nelle lotte

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<sup>146</sup> [Trans.] 'I remember: a man entered the shop and asked me for an empty box. I did not look him in the face: I would have noticed; I then saw him pass by with the box on his head, he was taking a little girl to the cemetery. The father was him: the dead accompanying the dead'

<sup>147</sup> [Trans.] 'dialects, instruments of the little homeland, peasant speech'

<sup>148</sup> [Trans.] 'rough, even uncouth verses, like those of Lu Servu'



sindacali e contro la mafia), dalle sofferenze e dalle doglianze dei contadini oppressi, degli uomini scontorti dalla bestialità dello sfruttamento nei latifondi<sup>149</sup>.

One example of dialect as a tool for the depiction of realism is the volume *Pani* (1954, the full title of which, simply translated, is: *Bread is called bread*), in which Buttitta included realist illustrations by his friend, the artist, Renato Guttuso. (An extract from a painting of Guttuso's – 1952 – is also on the cover of *La Paglia Bruciata*, 1968.) I believe it is essential to discuss Guttuso's illustrations because they function as a backdrop to the Sicily Buttitta describes in his poems; they underline the title of the volume, which has both a literal and proverbial meaning, and in their realist expression exemplify the beauty of the *vita quotidiana*.

Critically, the combination of these visual and poetic arts contributes to a macro-tradition in Sicilian writing, 'a tradition which is, it has been argued, "citationary" and intertextual' (O'Rawe, 2007: 79). Buttitta's poetry brings Guttuso's images to the foreground, insisting that the images are metaphors for his dialect poetry and that dialect holds a place in the language of poetry. Morillas (2011: 106-107) notes that '[i]n the 1950s and 1960s, literature used dialect to highlight a sphere of reality that until that moment had not been much mentioned – the world of the countryside and of economic difficulty', also remarking that 'dialect is simply a marker of narrative verisimilitude' (ibid.: 107), which again returns to Buttitta's use of Sicilian to denote realism. Zinna (1997: 415) remarks 'Buttitta's poetics is more clearly defined in the decade 1945-55; to this period, in fact, he wrote the texts that show the social commitment characteristic of much of his work'. Buttitta is not alone in this social commitment. Ascianto (1977: 68) writes that 'Many Italian and Sicilian

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<sup>149</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta had remade himself. He was a new poet, publicly invested as such by tears, by the lamentations of mothers over their sons murdered (in war or in the labour struggles and against the mafia), by the suffering and the grievances of the oppressed peasants, by the men suffering from the bestiality of exploitation on the estates'

writers, such as Giuseppe Verga, Grazia De Iedda, and Ada Negri, and the poets Giacosa, Artuso Grof, Pascoli, and others have immortalized the peasant' and Bagot (1912, cited in Ascitutto, *ibid.*) summarizes that the peasant figure 'represents the best and most virile blood in Italy and perhaps in Europe'. Green (1957: 153, cited in Ascitutto, 1977: 64) describes Sicilians as men who 'are their own masters even in poverty' and Haller (1999: 308) observes

Luigi Capuana, after initial scepticism, became convinced of the dialect theatre's importance in the development of a national theatre. His plays, such as *Malia*, *Lu cavaleri Pidagna*, and *Lu paraninfu*, are portraits of the world of peasants and petit bourgeois characters; they were performed on stages throughout Italy and Paris.

The peasant figure also represents the majority of Sicilians at this point in time; Renda (1990, cited in Bonanzinga, 2011: 188) notes that 'in 1946, around one thousand Sicilian families still owned almost one third of the entire territory, whereas hundreds of thousands of farmers eked a living at subsistence levels'.

Guttuso and Buttitta shared a common background – both were born in Bagheria and used painting and poetry respectively in order to communicate visions of life, a life that, over the course of both their artistic endeavours, was endangered or threatened. Both were associated with the Italian Communist Party and their works provide a form of social commentary, drawing the viewers' or readers' attention to those without a public or political voice. The political affiliations of both artists' work are present in their images and words, bringing peasant life and common language to the forefront of their communications. Guttuso's earlier paintings had focused on the theme of land occupation by peasants.



**Figure 1.** *Occupazione delle terre incolte in Sicilia.* (Guttuso, 1949-50).

In reference to Guttuso's painting, *Occupazione delle terre incolte in Sicilia*, (1949-50, Figure 1), Pucci (2008: 326) describes the artist's representation of peasants, linking his images with political symbolism:

Guttuso's peasants are now contextualized by the land that is the object of their struggle, but despite the title's insistence on the Sicilianness of this scene, the landscape represents a kind of Italian anywhere, or everywhere. [...] The land occupations are represented as the physical engagement of the southern peasant population with the Italian nation, from which it had historically felt alienated.

Buttitta himself writes of Guttuso in *Piazza* (1974: 133) 'u paisanu miu, ca nni scinni da cruci tutti i jorna e tutti i jorna spara e farisei cu punzeddu caricatu

a lupara: un mafiusu da libirtà, sicilianu comu nuàtri'<sup>150</sup>, contributing to what O'Rawe (2007: 87) terms 'an intertextual dialogue which confirms the resilience of this textual discourse on Sicily'. (For further biographical accounts of Buttitta's relationships with his contemporaries see Puleo, 1988.) Buttitta's dialect poetry addresses the oppression of regional language whilst Guttuso's most realistic works of around the same period (1940s – 1950s) address the oppression of the Sicilian peasants in the years following the Second World War; the vivacity with which the artist undertook this task diminished gradually but there are sociological messages encoded in his works and his illustrations alongside Buttitta's poems (in *Pani*) unify pictorial expression with verbal expression. The poet and artist bridge gaps in their attention to the language of the poor as a poetic language and their daily labours as worthy of artistic expression. Grillandi (1976: 206) writes that Buttitta applies 'Una lingua arcaica e petrosa, dove le forme antiche riaffiorano dopo oblii secolari e ancestrali cesure, dove i rapporti tra poeta e popolo sono finalmente reali, come i sentimenti'<sup>151</sup>. Again, Pucci (2008: 316) has described the political affiliation of Guttuso's art:

As Communists and exponents of socially engaged art, the painter Renato Guttuso and film-maker Giuseppe De Sanctis devoted much of their work to the theme of land in these years of peasant activism. In this they were participating in the Communist Party's consensus-building strategy of collaboration between the intellectual and working classes.

The same national representation may, in a different way, be said to take place in Buttitta's poetry. Through explicit reference to Sicily, most evidenced

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<sup>150</sup> [Trans.] 'my fellow countryman, who comes down from the cross every day and every day shoots the Pharisees, with his brush loaded with little bullets: a mafioso of freedom, Sicilian like us'

<sup>151</sup> [Trans.] 'An archaic and porous language, where ancient forms re-emerge after centuries-old and ancestral caesuras, where the relationship between poet and people is finally real, like feelings'

by his use of the Sicilian language, the poet is nonetheless drawing on a linguistic situation that applied to most regions and native dialects of Italy at the time of his writing. Reina (1997: 17) notes that

Only in the aftermath of W.W.II, and to a large extent thanks to the influence exerted by Pasolini (but perhaps, more indirectly, Gadda as well), a different, pro-dialect attitude was beginning to emerge, even in the South. Dialects were gradually being seen as flexible idioms capable of being exploited for the sake of poetry, rather than as primary signifiers tied to the experience of reality.

The choice to write poetry in Sicilian outlines the setting of Buttitta's poetry, whilst, simultaneously, ideologically emphasizing Sicilian as a language of poetry, one that was increasingly surfacing as a stance against nationalist imposition of a standard language. There are non-verbal creations of 'voice' in Guttuso's paintings, images encoded with contextual and political messages, as is the case in Buttitta's poetry. It is important for both artists that location prevails as a fundamental context to their works. Ghassempur (2011: 51) outlines that 'For people who are denied economic and social power, verbal power provides important compensation'. Reclamation, in terms of land and language as possession and identity, asserts itself as a theme for both artists and it is the union of Guttuso's illustrations with Buttitta's poetry that adds to the political inference of dialectal writing and peasants as a visual and verbal subject. The combination also suggests that the poems were partially intended for the working classes who, although largely illiterate, understood the poems when read aloud. Sicily and dialect become microcosmic examples in Buttitta's poetry for the macro-narrative of events taking place in Italy, and this dichotomy is also present in Guttuso's choice of artistic subjects.

This regional setting also partakes of what Pucci (2008: 329) describes as 'the necessity of contextualizing man in his landscape'. In Guttuso's art and

Buttitta's poetry, this contextualization is emphasized. The realism of both artists' endeavours gives a voice and identity to those represented in the words and images. Ascitto (1977: 66) writes that the 'contadino (peasant) has his eye on survival. Despite his poor education, the members of this class hold on to the ideal of the dignity of work and loyalty to the family'. Pucci (2008: 332) notes what she terms 'iconographic' choices in Guttuso's work:

Through its exhibition at the 1950 Biennale, *Occupazione* assumed the status of a manifesto painting for Guttuso's new realist idiom [...]. This subdued and non-antagonistic representation of the occupations of the land is ultimately a highly pragmatic painting that ensured international visibility for the peasant movement and for Guttuso's work at a culturally and politically sensitive moment for the Italian left.

The political stance underwritten in Guttuso's work and the toning down of his representations reflect a silencing of voice in a visual medium: Buttitta's poetry uses voice and the medium of language to conjure realist images of the life he describes. In both artists' work there is a sense of desire for the visibility of their impoverished subject. I note similarities between the 'voice' encrypted in Guttuso's artworks and Buttitta's dialect as forms of political confrontation. In writing about censorship of literature under Mussolini, Bonsaver (2007: 65) notes that 'works fell afoul of the regime's dogmatic directives with regard to the representation of suicide or the use of dialect, or because of their satire of Italy's autarkic effort'.

### 3.8. 'Lu tempu e la storia' / 'Time and history' (Peddi, 1963)

Quantu strata,	How much road,
quantu lacrimi	how many tears
e quantu sangu ancora, cumpagnu.	and how much blood left, companion.

La storia zappa a cuntimitru  
e l'omini hannu li pedi di chiummu.

History hoes by the centimetre  
and men have feet of lead.

Nun parra l'amarizza  
chi mi cummogghia lu cori stanotti,  
né lu scuru supra li muntagni,  
ma lu silenziu  
di seculi luntani.

It's not bitterness talking  
that covers my heart this night,  
nor the dark above the mountains,  
but the silence  
of centuries faraway.

È la puisia  
chi tocca lu pusu di la storia:  
la vuci risuscitata di Maiakowski,  
lu chiantu di Hiroshima,  
lu lamentu di García Lorca  
fucilatu a lu muru.

It's poetry  
that touches the pulse of history:  
the resuscitated voice of Maiakowski,  
the cry of Hiroshima,  
the lament of García Lorca  
shot against the wall.

Quannu ti pari c'arrivi,  
sì a l'accuminzagghia, cumpagnu;  
nun t'avviliri di chissu,  
seguita a svacantari  
puzzi di duluri,  
àvutri vrazza  
doppu di tia e di mia virranu.

When you feel like you've arrived,  
you're at the beginning, companion;  
don't be disheartened by that,  
keep emptying  
wells of pain  
other arms  
after you and me shall come.

A l'ingiustizia c'ammunzèdda negghi  
e nverni friddi  
supra li carni di la terra,  
ciusciacci lu focu di lu to amuri.

Upon injustice we stack up the clouds  
and cold winters  
over the flesh of the earth,  
blow upon it the fire of your love.

Nun ti stancari di scippari spini,  
di siminari a l'acqua e a lu ventu;  
la storia nun meti a giugnu,  
nun vinnigna a ottuviru,

Do not tire yourself tearing out thorns,  
to sew in the water and the wind;  
history reaps not in June,  
does not grape pick in October,

havi na sula staciuni:                   it has one sole season:  
lu tempu.                                   time.

Nun t'avviliri, cumpagnu,               Do not be disheartened, companion,  
si nun ti sacciu diri                   if I don't know how to tell you  
quannu lu suli                           when the sun  
finisci di siccari                       will finish drying  
li chiai di la terra.                   the plagues of the land.

### 3.8.1. Dialect: the local, the national, and the universal

Dialect writing functions as an expressive alternative and corresponds to personal need. Calvino (1981, in Della Monica, 1981: 22) argues that 'La ricchezza lessicale (oltre che espressiva) è (cioè era) una delle grandi forze del dialetto. Il dialetto fa aggio sulla lingua quando comprende voci per cui la lingua non ha corrispondenti'<sup>152</sup>. Poet Diego Valeri (1981, cited in Della Monica, *ibid.*: 25–26) argues that its use stems from personal necessity, because 'ognuno fa, deve fare, ciò che la sua natura gli comanda: l'uso del dialetto "in letteratura" sarà utile soltanto se personalmente necessario'<sup>153</sup>.

Brevini observes 'Il dialetto non si propone piú come la lingua di un mondo, ma come la lingua dell'io'<sup>154</sup> (1989: 23). The intention of dialect in poetry seems to be to elevate the content, as opposed to the language itself, to literature, uplifting the reality of the working classes to the realm of poetry by establishing a literary existence for these 'inferior' worlds. Buttitta applies dialect as a tool to articulate realism; Sciascia (2007: 16) notes 'Nel suo raccontare, tutto è immagine, metafora, ritmo. E procede per sprazzi, per

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<sup>152</sup> [Trans.] 'Lexical richness (other than expressive) is (that is, was) one of the great strengths of dialect. Dialect makes updates to language when it comprehends voices the likes of which have no correspondents in the language'

<sup>153</sup> [Trans.] 'Every one does, must do, that which nature comands of him: the use of dialect "in literature" will be useful only if personally necessary'

<sup>154</sup> [Trans.] 'dialect no longer proposes itself as language of a world, but as language of the self'



improvvisi illuminazioni di particolari, di dettagli; e con iterazioni ugualmente improvvisi'<sup>155</sup>. Reina (1997: 17) argues that

The practice of vernacular dialectality, then, when not instrumentally pursued for folkloric, sociological or broadly political use, tended to be connected more with 'nature' than with 'culture' in the popular vein.

Reina (ibid.) suggests that the contents of dialectal literature may share themes or markedly populist ideals but that the language *per se* was used as a suitable and realistic vehicle for local memories and fables, instead of a literary memoir of the dialect, and provides an interesting analysis of the established characters of traditions; when traditions were already 'illustrious', they produced elitist texts in keeping with contemporary Italian poetry, thus inferring that dialect alone signified place of writing, but the poetics within a poem sought assimilation to the Italian canon. Elitist Italian literature and the classical tradition probe the human condition while dialect writing argues against this categorical 'unification' of humanity in poetry, veering more towards regionalized solidarity and the outlining of difference. It localizes the condition and the human. Brevini (1986: 691) suggests that 'l'autore dialettale, obbedendo al "genio" del suo mezzo, oppone la sua fedeltà al concreto e anzi alla figura umana'<sup>156</sup>.

The human in dialect writing is a neighbour, a friend, a member of the family, a tangible figure; the condition in dialect writing refers explicitly to a way of life particular to a region. The classical tradition had little place for smaller, more regional existence. Dialect poetry in particular offered a sanctuary for local life and a resource of language capable of portraying it

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<sup>155</sup> [Trans] 'In his recounting, everything is image, metaphor, rhythm. And it proceeds in flashes, by sudden illumination of particulars, of details; and with equally abrupt iterations'

<sup>156</sup> [Trans.] 'the dialect author, obeying the "genius" of his means, opposes his fidelity to the concrete and indeed to the human figure'

without aggrandizing it. Dialect writing was able to communicate on an international scale through the magnification of the regional<sup>157</sup>. Microcosms adapted themselves to macrocosms in theatre and art, in ways that they were unable to achieve in reality. In its revolutionary bolt from classicism, dialect is an equivalent of artistic realism, and yet it adopts a contradictory conservatism in the strive to locate a lost paradise, to retrieve or recall place and language in its true form, and is not subject to change in the way that the standardized language will always be. Marcuse (2001, cited in Francese, 2005: 47) also observes that the 'sensitivity of the individual is not only the medium for the *principium individuationis*, but also for its opposite, universalization, so that from within the resulting dialectic of the universal and the particular may emerge *humanitatis*, solidarity among individuals'. Haller (1999: 306) notes

While Meli and Tempio brought Sicilian to the level of a literary language, Martoglio instead went in the opposite direction, stressing the local features of the dialect. His sonnets interpret – often sarcastically – the Sicilian world – including such topics as *omertà*, the Mafia, Darwinian theory, and modern technology – adopting a dramatic language full of dialogues.

Dialect does not tend to succumb to the changes that the national language accepts – or cannot refuse. Economic, scientific and technological terms insert themselves freely into the national language, especially when this language engages in international dialogue, but may never be fully absorbed in dialect. Internationally, literature in a standard language opens itself up to translation and interpretation, prompting discourse and the interchange of words with other languages. Lorenzini (1999, cited in Ó Ceallacháin, 2007: xv) points to the fact that twentieth century Italian poetry was reaching out to a 'broader European dimension'. Dialect poetry, by contrast, presented voices

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<sup>157</sup> For further discussion of cultural transfer in translated dialectal theatre see De Martino Cappuccio, 2010.

'that move in alternative directions' (ibid.) and looked explicitly to the concept of an Italian canon in order to define itself but proved less inviting to translation and dialogue on an international platform. 'For no matter how accomplished a piece of dialect literature may be from a purely artistic point of view, it will always be confronted with a double barrier impeding its march toward universal recognition' (Weisstein, 1962: 223). Karantzi (2009: 462) argues that

Conversely, folk literature, although often in dialect, frequently attempts to approximate to the modes of the national language. The rationales vary enormously, but the one unifying element behind all dialect literature is an allusion, explicit or implicit, to the national literature. Dialect writing tends to proclaim either its ability to reach as high as the national literature or, more frequently, to treat lowly topics that the national literature cannot treat. Sometimes, paradoxically, it claims to do both at once.

This limits the reception of work in dialect, rendering it an internal, introverted language, contrary to the national language, which seeks international definition as well. Dialect writing, then, retains a sense of former self, truer to its intrinsic history; it is self-addressing.

This brings us to the notion of landscape in a literal as well as a figurative sense. The translator's journey back through a poem and eventual rendering of the poem in new language leaves a trail. This is the broader landscape of translation, as I apply it, a journey made by, and the space inhabited by, the translator. Each original poem contains a 'viewing' that needs to be reconstructed in translation. It follows that what translation needs to do is transfer the landscape of the original and, in so doing, create its own landscape of intertextual journey. This produces a sort of translation memory, a means of retrieving the translational pathway because it has been mapped out along the way. House (2014: 5) observes 'The inherently reflective nature of translational action reveals itself in a translator's focus on the situatedness

of a text, and his/her recognition of the interconnectedness of text and context. As texts travel across time, space and different orders of indexicality in translation, they must be re-contextualised'. A further benefit of this mapping out of translational action is that future readers and translators can access the translation in its entirety, incorporating the translator's subjective involvement as a history of translation practice and building on this translation landscape in order to extend the continuum and produce future rewritings.

Petrocchi (2011: 64) paraphrases Gadda (in *I viaggi*), in suggesting that 'Dialects are the mirror of popular spontaneity against rhetoric and unveil traces of human history', concluding 'Therefore, the ontological level entails an ethical one as well' (ibid.). It is the handling of perceived difference that is indicative of the translator's approach to both source and target cultures and it is necessary to put forward a disposition towards both cultural movement and self-transformation as the result of textual encounters. This disposition responds to part of the original motivation for some of Buttitta's more resistive poems.

Questo intende dire Buttitta nei suoi versi più recenti, che vogliono tendere la rete su tutto il feudo della terra, non su un solo paese: e che tuttavia restano quelli di Bagheria, della Sicilia, di quella lingua siciliana, che è fatta di pomice e di fuoco.<sup>158</sup>  
(Levi, 2007: 12)

The artistic choice to home in on a seemingly remote 'island' of narrative has the capacity to lead a reader to interpret the unwritten universals. Reina (1997: 16) has written of two tendencies present in dialect poetry: 'From time to time, however, the chosen path necessarily forced the system either

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<sup>158</sup> [Trans.] 'This is what Buttitta intends to say in his most recent verses, which want to stretch the net across the entire feud of the land, not only on one country: and which in any case remain those of Bagheria, of Sicily, of that Sicilian language, which is made of pumice and fire'

downward (description of local peculiarities), or upward (tendency to record minimal details of the universal human condition)'. This dichotomy is further complicated by the fact that, at times, either direction implies the other. The local, small-scale, 'peculiar' can represent the universal human condition, and the latter can also disintegrate and refer to the local within the universal. Dialect is particularly self-referencing and yet has the capacity to use its local peculiarities to implicate and address grander human universals. The regional can depict the universal but, paradoxically, this is only possibly by withdrawing or differentiating itself from it.

Buttitta here makes one of his firmest points; he brings politics into poetry in a definitive rejection of poetry as a romantic, decadent pastime for the elite. Tedesco (1965: 20) observes that, from the 25 April 1945, Buttitta created strong friendships with Bontempelli, Cagli, Levi, Quasimodo, Vittorini and other writers and artists 'e proprio con alcuni di essi egli rimarrà poi in stretti rapporti durante il primo esplodere delle lotte sociali del secondo dopoguerra e la contemporanea battaglia per un'arte realista. Ed è in quel tempo che legge Maiakovski e Neruda'<sup>159</sup> (ibid.).

Much of Buttitta's poetry was written in a climate of censorship and further censorship in translation in the form of a domesticated approach would result, I argue, in a severely diluted representation of the Sicilian original. The nature of my research attempts to erase the second censorial path of the work in dialect, that is, exempting the poems from passing through a second censorship when translated. To clarify this point, Buttitta began publishing his poetry in 1923 – one year after Mussolini began his leadership. Fascism developed a conscientious theory that part of the State's duty was to mould the moral outlook of its people. Dialect poets and, indeed,

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<sup>159</sup> [Trans.] 'and with some of them he goes on to remain in close contact during the first explosion of social warfare in the post-war period and the contemporary battle for realistic art. And it is at that time that he reads Maiakovski and Neruda'

any poets writing in the intermission between the two wars and under the power of Mussolini were aware of the national implications of what they wrote and the language in which they wrote it. We can therefore assume that, for a poet such as Buttitta who was capable of speaking and writing in Italian, personal inclination or instinct to write in dialect becomes, in this period, a political stance.

Francese (2005) writes of Vincenzo Consolo's 'poetics of memory' and similarities may be drawn between the purpose of his linguistic choice and Buttitta's. One element is the 'linguistic investigation motivated by the desire to restore a lost dignity to the popular dialects of his native Sicily by using their vocabulary in such a way as to enable them to gain national acceptance' (ibid.: 44) and another element is 'his contributions to collaborative ekphrastic investigations of the civic and natural vestiges of the Island's past' (ibid.). O'Rawe (2007: 91) suggests that we might also identify 'an ethical function' through 'recovery and memorializing'. Buttitta aligns himself with other famous poets in an attempt to universalize the objectives of his poetry and also to highlight affinity of subject matter. Zinna (1997: 417) observes of Buttitta that

he also goes from certain satirical tones of the previous works to the comical and grotesque, while his poetry becomes more *cultured* and less *spoken*, more allusive. His vision of life has not changed, but he senses the possibility of different viewpoints in observing it; whether or not consciously, Buttitta's poetry contains both Zeno's paradox and the relativism of Gorgias and Pirandello.

He writes of time as a human weight, a common fate and one that transcends geographical and linguistic borders. In the words 'supra li carni di la terra, / over the flesh of the earth,' the poet moves from his named homeland and begins to address worldly afflictions and the shared burden of humankind. More particularly, he references other poets – and politically active ones – to

exemplify solidarity and to remember their acts through poetry. It is a homage amongst poets and is also resistive to the tendency of time to forget and memory to erase. Dialectologist Giacomello (1981, in Della Monica, 1981: 26) reflects 'Non penso che un rinnovato interesse ai dialetti potrebbe caratterizzare una "nuova" cultura, se non nel senso di un "umanesimo" da ricercare nella parte più genuina di noi stessi'<sup>160</sup>. Buttitta also refers to the future, as if his time were drawing to an end. In the use of 'vrazza / arms', he hints at future change and the promise of action:

àvutri vrazza	other arms
doppu di tia e di mia virranu.	after you and me shall come.

Buttitta's poetry by this point has become more confident; it has matured into an introspective pondering of human universals.

Now the poet can contemplate *The Mystery* and ask the great question asked by men of all epochs, the same as Leopardi's shepherd: who am I and where do I come from. And conclude that mystery is life's greatest, most beautiful dream: it is poetry. (Zinna, 1997: 417)

### 3.9. 'Un seculu di storia' / 'A century of history' (*Poeta*, 1972)

Accusu i politici	I accuse the politicians
d'oggi e d'àeri:	of today and of yesterday:
Crispi e compagni,	Crispi and his lot,
pridicatura da monarchia,	predators of the monarchy,
beccamorti e fallignami	gravediggers and carpenters
ca nchiuvaru a Sicilia	that nail Sicily
viva nta cruci.	alive to the cross.

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<sup>160</sup> [Trans.] 'I don't think that a renewed interest in dialects could characterize a "new" culture, if not in the sense of a "humanism" to be researched in the most genuine part of ourselves'

Accusu i Savoia,  
i primi e l'ultimu  
re e imperaturi,  
fascista e talianu  
ncurunatu di midagghi  
scippati cu sangu  
ndo cori di matri.

Un seculu di guerri,  
un seculu di stragi:  
c'è ossa di siciliani  
vrudicati nte diserti,  
nta nivi,  
nto fangu di ciumi:  
c'è sangu di sulfarara,  
di zappatura,  
di matri scheletri  
e picciriddi sparati  
nte chiazzu da Sicilia.

Non hanno vuci e gridanu  
l'ammazzati du '93  
chi petri nte sacchetti  
e la fami nte panzi vacanti.

Non hannu vuci e gridanu  
cu coddu sutta i pedi di baruna,  
cu l'ossa sturtiggnati du travagghiu;  
ca lingua i cani e u ciatu e denti.

Tri ghiorna di macellu  
di martorii e beccamorti  
di lamenti e chiantu

I accuse the Savoia,  
the first and the last  
king and emperor,  
fascist and 'talian  
crowned with medals  
torn with blood  
from the hearts of mothers.

A century of wars,  
a century of massacres:  
there's Sicilian bone  
buried in the deserts,  
in the snow,  
in the mud of the rivers:  
there's blood of sulphur miners,  
of diggers,  
of skeletal mothers  
and gunned-down young'uns  
in the piazzas of Sicily.

They have no voice and they cry out  
the murdered of '93  
with stones in their pockets  
and hunger in their empty bellies.

They have no voice and cry out  
wi'their necks under th'feet o'the barons,  
wi'their bones d'storted by work;  
with dog's tongue and pant and teeth.

Three days of slaughter  
of morgues and gravediggers  
of lament and weeping



nte casi di poviri.

in the houses of the poor.

Ci fu carni a bon prezzu  
nte tavuli di baruna;  
a bon prezzu  
pi sovrani di Roma;  
a bon prezzu pi Crispi,  
macillaru di corte; e Lavriano  
ginirali e sicariu  
pagatu a ghiurnata.

There wa' meat at good price  
on the baron's table;  
at good price  
for them rulers o'Rome.  
at good price fo' Crispi,  
butcher of the court; and Lavriano  
general and killer  
paid by the day.

L'avemu cca  
ancora cca  
chi stissi facci  
e u cori di sarvaggi  
i *scannapopulu*;  
ci liccamu i pedi,  
ci damu u votu,  
l'ugnia pi scurciarinni;  
a corda pi nfurcarinni;  
a mazza e a ncunia  
pi rumpirinni l'ossa.

We have'em hhere  
still hhere  
wi'the same faces  
and savage hearts  
the *publicslayers*;  
we lick their feet,  
we give them our vote,  
nails to flay us with;  
the rope t'hang us with;  
a club and an anvil  
to break our bones.

L'avemu cca  
ancora cca a mafia,  
assitatta nte vanchi d'imputati  
a dittari liggi;  
a scriviri sentenzi di morti  
chi manu nsangati.

We have'em hhere  
still hhere the mafia,  
sittin' a'the benches o'the trials  
dictatin' law;  
writin' death sentences  
wi' bloodied hands.

L'avemu cca  
i compari da mafia  
chi manu puliti,  
i firrara di chiavi fàusi,

We have'em hhere  
accomplices o'the mafia  
wi' clean hands,  
the locksmiths o' false keys,

i spogghia artari ca cruci nto pettu;  
unni posanu i pedi sicca l'erba,  
sicca l'acqua  
spuntanu spini e lacrimi pa Sicilia.

the altar raiders wi' a'cross a'their chests;  
where they set foot the grass dries up,  
the water dries up  
thorns and tears pop up over Sicily.

L'avemu cca  
l'affamati du putiri;  
l'affamati di carni cruda,  
ca cridinu a Sicilia  
un porcu scannatu  
e ci spurpanu l'ossa.

We have'em hhere  
the power hungry;  
those hungering after raw flesh,  
that believe Sicily to be  
a stuck pig  
and they pick her bones.

Si si sicilianu  
isa u vrazzu,  
grapi a manu:  
cincu banneri russi,  
cincu!  
Adduma a pruvulera du cori!

If you're Sicilian  
raise your arm,  
open your hand:  
five red flags,  
five!  
Ignite th'powder keg o'your heart!

Si si sicilianu  
fatti a vuci cannuni,  
u pettu carru armatu,  
i gammi cavaddi di mari:  
annea i nimici da Sicilia!

If you're Sicilian  
make your voice a cannon,  
your chest a tank,  
your legs horses o'the sea:  
drown th'enemies o'Sicily!

L'avemu cca e cantanu  
i rusignoli ammaistrati  
c'agghiuncinu lacrimi di nchiostru  
e lacrimi da Sicilia,  
e stornellanu u misereri  
a gloria di patruna.

We have'em hhere and they sing  
the tamed nightingales  
who add tears of ink  
and tears of Sicily,  
and they sing the death-cry  
to the glory of the patrons.

Cantanu odi o suli  
o celu

They sing odes t'the sun  
t'the sky

o mari  
a zagara,  
e portanu a Sicilia ntronu  
cu velu niuru di malamaritata.

U furnu svampa  
e ghetтанu cinniri a palati,  
incapaci d'impastari  
i cori di siciliani  
e farinni unu a tri punti  
tridici voti chiù granni da Sicilia.

A Sicilia non havi chiù nomi  
né casa e paisi;  
havi i figghi sbattuti pu munnu  
sputati comu cani,  
vinnuti all'asta:  
surdati disarmati  
chi cummattinu chi vrazza.

Chi vrazza,  
i rami viridi da Sicilia,  
arrimiscanu a terra,  
rumpinu timpuna,  
siminanu  
e fanno orti e ghiardina.

Chi vrazza...,  
fabbricanu palazzi,  
costruiscinu scoli,  
ponti,  
officini  
e aeroporti.

t'the sea  
a'the orange blossom,  
and bring Sicily t'the throne  
with a black veil of unhappy marriage.

The oven ablazes  
and they throw ash in bucketfuls,  
incapable of kneading  
the hearts o'Sicilians  
and make of them one with three points  
thirteen times bigger than Sicily.

Sicily no longer has a name  
nor home or country;  
it has children spread the worldover  
spat out like dogs,  
sold at auction:  
disarmed soldiers  
who fight with their arms.

Such arms,  
the green branches of Sicily,  
they mix up the earth,  
break up the clods,  
sew  
and make vegetable-patches n' gardens.

Such arms...,  
they make buildings,  
build schools,  
bridges,  
workshops  
and airports.

Chi vrazza,  
i lapi di meli da Sicilia  
grapinu strati,  
spirtusanu muntagni,  
svacantanu a panza da terra.

Chi vrazza,  
i surdati senza patria,  
i sfardati,  
i carni senza lardu  
vestinu d'oru i porci di fora.

I chiamanu *terroni*,  
zingari,  
pedi fitusi;  
e hanno i figghi e i matri  
chi cuntanu i ijorna  
cu l'occhi vagnati;  
e stu cielu ca vasu,  
e sta terra chi toccu  
e mi canta nte manu;  
e seculi di civiltà  
sutta i pedi.

A sicilia non havi chiù nomi;  
ma miliuna di surdi e di muti  
affunnati nta un puzzu  
ca io chiamu e non sentinu,  
e s'allongu i vrazza  
mi mùzzicanu i manu.

Io ci calassi i cordi di vini,  
i riti di l'occhi  
pi tiralli du puzzu;

Such arms,  
the honeybees of Sicily  
they open streets,  
perforate mountains,  
empty the belly of the earth.

Such arms,  
the soldiers without homeland,  
the ragged,  
the meat without lard  
they clothe in gold the pigs out there.

They call them *terroni*,  
gypsies,  
fetid feet;  
and they have children and mothers  
countin' the days  
with their eyes wet;  
and this sky that I kiss,  
and this earth that I touch  
and it sings within my hand;  
and centuries of civilization  
beneath my feet.

Sicily no longer has a name;  
but thousands of deafs and dumbs  
collapsed in a well  
who I call and they don't hear,  
and if I reach out my arms  
they bite my hand.

I would lower the ropes from my veins,  
the nets from my eyes  
to pull them up from the well;

pirchè cca nascivu  
e parru a lingua di me patri;  
e i pisci  
l'aceddi  
u ventu,  
puru u ventu!  
trasi nt'aricchi  
e ciarlaria nsicilianu.

because hhere I was born  
and I speak the tongue o' my fathers;  
and the fish  
the birds  
the wind,  
even the wind!  
comes in my ears  
and prattles in Siciian.

Cca nascivu,  
e si mi vasu i manu  
vasu i manu di me morti;  
e si m'asciucu l'occhi  
asciucu l'occhi di me morti.

Hhere I was born,  
and if I kiss my hands  
I kiss the hands of my deads;  
and if I dry my eyes  
I dry the eyes of my deads.

Cca nascivu,  
addattavu nte minni di sta terra,  
ci sucavu u sangu:  
si mi tagghiati i vini,  
vi bruciati i manu!

Hhere I was born,  
I suckled at the breasts of this land,  
I sucked the blood:  
if you cut my wrists,  
you'll burn your hands!

Non è veru c'amamu a Sicilia  
si avemu a storia nto pugnu  
e l'affucamu;  
non è veru  
si addumanu u focu  
e l'astutamu;  
non è veru mancu  
si stamu un ghiornu libiri  
e pi cent'anni servi.

It's not true that we love Sicily  
if we have history in our fist  
and we set fire to it;  
it's not true  
if we light the fire  
and we put it out;  
it's not true even  
if we're free for a day  
and for a hundred years servants.

Non dumannamu pirdunu a storia  
ora ca nni scurdamu  
i martiri di tutti i tempi

We don't ask forgiveness from history  
now that we've forgotten  
the martyrs from all times

ca mèsiru u coddu sutta a mannara  
senza chianciri:  
Di Blasi, unu!

Ora ca nni scurdamu  
i torturati nte galeri,  
i cunnannati a vita,  
i nfurcati,  
e l'arrustuti vivi nte chiazzi.

Petri e fangu  
pi cu supporta a miseria,  
petri e fangu  
pi cu batti i manu e putenti  
petri e fangu  
pi cu non metti u coddu  
nta furca da libirtà:  
u dicu e siciliani,  
e mi scatta u cori!

E fu aèri,  
(a data non cunta)  
io vitti chainciri i matri  
nto Chianu da Purtedda,  
e Saveria Megna  
addinucchiata supra l'erba  
parrari cu so figghiu ammazzatu.

Idda u videva,  
io no:  
u foddi era io  
si doppo vitti nersciri di fossi  
tutti i morti pa libirtà da Sicilia:  
vivi

who placed their necks under the axe  
without crying:  
Di Blasi, for one!

Now that we've forgotten  
the tortured in prison,  
those sentenced to life,  
the hanged,  
and those roasted alive in the piazzas.

Stones and mud  
at those who support misery,  
stones and mud  
at those who clap at the powerful  
stones and mud  
at those who don't put their necks  
in the gallows of freedom:  
I say to Sicilians,  
and my heart bursts!

And it was yesterday,  
(the date doesn't matter)  
I saw the mothers crying  
at the Chianu da Purtedda,  
and Saveria Megna  
knelt on the grass  
talking to her murdered son.

She saw him,  
I no:  
I was a fool  
if after I saw'em coming outta the graves  
all them dead for Sicily's freedom:  
alive

a migghiara  
a marusi  
cu focu nta l'occhi!

a thousand  
billowing  
with fire in their eyes!

Dammi la manu  
Cola Lombardu,  
(io parrava cu iddu!)  
sfardati a cammisa, ci dissi,  
fammi videri i pirtusa nto pettu  
sfunnatu di baddi taliani.  
A Bronti, ci, dissi,  
nto Chianu i San Vitu  
dopu cent'anni cu passa  
senti ancora a tò vuci:  
moru pu populu!

Give me your hand  
Cola Lombardu,  
(I spoke to him!)  
tear off your shirt, I told him,  
let me see the holes in your chest  
punctured by 'talian bullets.  
To Bronti, I said,  
at Chianu i San Vitu  
after a hundred years gone by  
I still hear your voice:  
I die for my people!

Cuntami a storia  
Turiddu Carnivali,  
(io parrava cu iddu!)  
figghiu du nfernu e du paradisu,  
cuntami a storia!

Tell me a story  
Turiddu Carnivali,  
(I spoke to him!)  
son of hell and of heaven,  
tell me a story!

Nta stu pugnu c'è a morti,  
ti dissiru;  
nta stu pugnu i dinari,  
ti dissiru;  
e tu :  
a morti,  
a morti!  
e ci turcisti u pugnu.

In this fist there's death,  
they told you;  
in this fist money,  
they told you;  
and you :  
death,  
death!  
and you wrung your fist!

L'indumani  
a Sciara  
i cumpagni

The dayafter  
in Sciara  
his companions

u purtavanu a spada:	carried him 'pon their shoulders:
quattru,	four,
sudati,	sweatin',
un passu doppu l' àutru.	one step after th'other.

Ntutt' unu	All at once
a cascìa	the coffin
divintò leggìa,	became light,
ci scappava di nmanu:	and slipped from their hands:
u mortu un c'era nta cascìa,	the dead wasn't in the coffin,
caminava in prima fila	he walked in the front line
nmenzu i banneri russi;	amongst the red flags;
a testa, tuccava u celu!	his head, it touched the sky!

Cu camina calatu	He who walks bowed
torci a schina,	distorts their back,
s'è un populu	if it's a people
torci a storia.	they distort history.

Settembre / September 1970

### 3.9.1. Dialect, Place, and the Self

The narrative voice embedded in Buttitta's poems led me to look at poems as compositions that invite many forms of expression. Jones (2014: 35) writes that poets signal 'complex, indeterminate meanings – explicitly via lexis and grammar, and implicitly via sound, non-standard voice, extratextual allusions'. This poem is brimming with allusions and specific references to Sicilian history, and uses the first person narrative to enforce the sense of accusation ('Accusu / I accuse'). In a process of what Slater (2011: 95) refers to as 'narrative worldmaking', Buttitta's poem tells a story; it poses as a platform for voice and incorporates the presence of the poet. Grillandi (1976: 213) writes 'Buttitta lancia come bombe le sue ottave popolaresche, che non hanno



alcuna velleità di comporsi in unità di poema, sí quella di indicare una stortura, una deformazione terribile'<sup>161</sup> and Dario Fo (1997, cited in Lo Bianco, 2013: 83) observes, 'Il tema centrale era la necessità storica della Sicilia di liberarsi dalla mafia'.

In this poem, with its Sicilian story and dialect, we can apply the concept of voice as 'a synonym for "speech representation"' (Slater, 2011: 95). If we are to listen to the sub-altern as opposed to the supra-regional voice, we need to pay attention to markers of that regional voice. Grillandi (1976: 212) notes that, in this anthology 'Buttitta tende ad avvicinarsi ai grandi modelli della poesia dialettale, soprattutto al Belli per la veemenza delle invettive, il senso popolaresco del linguaggio'<sup>162</sup> and becomes poet of the people, 'se per poeta popolare si intende, come forse giustamente deve intendersi, colui che usi il linguaggio del popolo nella sua nuda asprezza per dare al popolo una voce'<sup>163</sup> (ibid.). Sciascia, in his introduction to *Poeta* (1972: 9), writes 'Le radici popolari e contadine della poesia di Buttitta [...] non fanno di lui un poeta popolare se non nel senso di poeta che sta dalla parte del popolo',<sup>164</sup> claiming that *Poeta*

è forse il suo piú difficile, piú complesso. C'è il Buttitta impegnato di sempre; ma c'è anche, sempre piú carico di rifrazioni, di echi, di rispondenze, di avvertimenti e presentimenti, un Buttitta incontenibilmente assalito dalla simpatia di tutto e di tutti; un Buttitta che risponde con tutti i suoi sensi, con tutto il suo essere, quasi moltiplicandosi, alle cose che lo assalgono. Ma c'è, alta su tutto, la coscienza: e tutto vi

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<sup>161</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta launches his popular octaves like bombs, which have no ambition to compose themselves in unity as a poem, except to indicate a distortion, a terrible deformation'

<sup>162</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta tends to approach the great models of dialect poetry, especially Belli for his vehemence of the invectives, the popular sense of language'

<sup>163</sup> [Trans.] 'if by popular poet we mean, as perhaps must rightly be meant, he who uses the language of the people in his bare harshness to give the people a voice'

<sup>164</sup> [Trans.] 'The popular and peasant roots of Buttitta's poetry [...] do not make him a popular poet if not in the sense of a poet who is on the side of the people'

si devolve e confessa – i sensi, l'impegno, l'ideologia, l'ars poetica, la parola stessa. E senza assoluzione.<sup>165</sup> (ibid.)

Buttitta's poem emerges as a collective accusation and a united Sicilian voice; it also serves as a memorial to those who 'Non hanno voci e gridanu / have no voice and cry out'. The dialectal voice is used as an accusation; it is precisely this voice that orchestrates the attack, as we see here:

Si si sicilianu	If you're Sicilian
fatti a voci cannuni,	make your voice a cannon,

Examining voice as representative of place requires that the translator familiarize him or herself with the place from which this voice originates. Anderman (2007: 7) remarks

Giving each character a voice of his or her own requires, however, that the translator first has an awareness of where the characters live, their social position and their own, personal idiosyncrasies in the source culture, and also the ability to find the lexical and grammatical means of matching expressions in the target language.

Slater (2011: 114) asks: 'Is voice itself a function of place, and how does the presentation – and translation – of voices reflect its locational basis?' On place names, Slater (ibid.: 110) also suggests that multiple choices are available to the translator,

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<sup>165</sup> [Trans.] 'is perhaps his most difficult, most complex. There is the engaged Buttitta of before; but there is also, ever more loaded with refractions, echoes, responses, warnings and presentiments, a Buttitta incontinably assailed by his sympathy for everything and everyone; a Buttitta that responds with all his senses, with all his being, almost multiplying himself, to the things that assail him. But there is, high above all, the conscience: and everything is devoted and confessed – the senses, the commitment, the ideology, the ars poetica, the word itself. And without acquittal'

such as retaining the different names and deciding whether or not to include a note to explain the place-names to the reader of the translation; translating all the synonyms for one place as the same place-name in English [...] or omitting all of the specific place-names entirely.

Slater also suggests (2011: 111) that such decisions are linked to the purpose of the translation. With my own purpose being to foreground place, it would seem natural to maintain the place names and provide a note for the reader. The inclusion of notes does inescapably also foreground the translator's presence and results in a reader who 'is constantly moving between the storyworld' (Slater, *ibid.*) of the translator's commentary and that of the original text. Translators must choose how to handle spatial referents in the ST and such choices affect the reader's understanding of voice and 'how voices derive their qualities from the way they are linked to locations in storyworlds' (Slater, 2011: 113). Buttitta has selected real places with their dialectal names to tap into the collective memory of his readership. His historical memorializing additionally taps into a geographically induced inclination on the part of Sicilian writers, as Sanna (1987, cited in Francese, 2005: 46) observes with reference to Consolo:

Consolo schematizes the divergent approaches of Sicilian writers in geographical terms, claiming that Eastern Sicily has always been, for geographical and topographical reasons, more susceptible to the whims of nature, earthquakes, for example, and the eruptions of Etna. As a result, 'existential and psychological problems are grist for the mill' of the writers of that region. In contrast, those from Western Sicily – where the mining of sulfur in the nineteenth century created a historically new category of industrial workers, a phenomenon that gave rise to violent conflicts of capital and labor – tend to structure their narratives in more logical terms of reason and history.

O' Rawe (2007: 84) also notes Consolo's 'imaginary topography' and 'literary mapping', acknowledging that 'it is not intended as a truth claim, but rather as a contribution to a collective textual (or textualized) discourse on Sicily' (ibid.), and we can see Buttitta rooted in the Western grouping:

Divisione ideale, immaginaria [...]: occidentale ed orientale, storica ed esistenziale, poetico- lirica e prosaica, mitica e razionale, simbolica e metaforica. Penso, da una parte, dalla parte orientale, a scrittori come Verga, Brancati, Vittorini, Quasimodo, D'Arrigo, Bonaviri; [...] dall'altra, dalla parte occidentale, a poeti come Alessio Di Giovanni o Ignazio Buttita, a scrittori come Pirandello, come Sciascia, come Lampedusa, a pittori come Guttuso e Caruso<sup>166</sup>. (Consolo, 1986, *Sirene siciliane*, cited in O'Rawe, 2007: 84)

O'Rawe (ibid.), too, draws attention to Sciascia's own stance (in his essay 'Pirandello e la Sicilia', 1961) on the differing geographical literary traits, suggesting that this fracture is attributable to 'the Greek and Arab civilizations which have conquered Sicily and produced a difference which is both anthropological and historical'.

Sense of belonging to place is construed in this poem as something inevitable and which comes to define the individual. In Stanza 24, Buttitta writes: 'Cca nascivu, / Hhere I was born,' and, in two words, we hear bitterness, pride, despair and resilience. The foregrounding of 'Cca' emphasizes the significance of the place, the reason for my choosing to reverse a more standard English syntax. In the lines that follow, this sense of belonging becomes primitive and there is, once more, reference to Sicily as 'mother'.

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<sup>166</sup> [Trans.] 'Ideal, imaginary division [...]: Western and Eastern, historical and existential, poetic-lyric and prosaic, mythical and rational, symbolic and metaphorical. I think, on the one hand, on the eastern side, of writers like Verga, Brancati, Vittorini, Quasimodo, D'Arrigo, Bonaviri; [...] on the other side, on the western side, of poets like Alessio Di Giovanni or Ignazio Buttita, of writers like Pirandello, like Sciascia, like Lampedusa, of painters like Guttuso and Caruso'

We see Buttitta's familiar trait of likening the poor to animals in order to further demean their social standing ('ca lingua i cani e u ciatu e denti / with dog's tongue and pant and teeth'). Balma and Spani (2010: 121) address the symbolism of animals in Calzavara's poetry, suggesting that

If symbolic animals dwell in his bestiary, like a fly or a mouse that represent the existential concerns that trouble mankind, or perhaps those that are metaphors for the destiny of human beings (like a horse who is forced to engage in the laborious work of a beast of burden,) the most emblematic role is nevertheless attributed to the figure of the dog, seen [...] as a model of genuine humanity.

Balma and Spani add to this that 'the dog (and also the other animals of his bestiary) became an interlocutor of the painful existence of the poet' (ibid.). Buttitta continues in this derogatory fashion by drawing attention to the way in which Sicily and Sicilians are viewed in other parts of Italy. Toor (1953, cited in Asciutto, 1977: 65) notes that Italians 'laugh at the swarthy, muscular, Sicilian with his stark code of honour, his lack of sophistication, his peasant directness' and the 'they' and 'us' distinction is presented in such instances as:

I chiamanu <i>terroni</i> ,	They call them <i>terroni</i> ,
zingari,	gypsies,
pedi fitusi;	fetid feet;

It was interesting to briefly consider the differences between translating from Sicilian as opposed to translating from Italian (see Italian version in Appendix 4). Levi (2007: 11) argues:

Per questo, per essere del tutto siciliana, pensata e detta in siciliano, con le inflessioni, le cadenze, le rime, le violenze, le dolcezze siciliane, va letta nel suo testo siciliano, ed

è veramente intraducibile, se non a costo di un notevole impoverimento, in lingua italiana'<sup>167</sup>.

## Levi adds

E se in questo libro sono pubblicate, a fronte, le traduzioni italiane, fatte dal poeta stesso in modo letterale, esse dovrebbero, a mio avviso, servire soltanto di aiuto per il lettore non siciliano, che con esse potrà affrontare il testo originale, e sentire la forza chiusa nelle sue parole.<sup>168</sup> (ibid.)

Ethnographical practices highlight the role of introspective, narrative reflexivity in research, underlining that 'the key moment of translation happens not once the spoken word has been written down, but in the lived and embodied environment of research itself' (Krzywoszynska, 2015: 314). What comes to the fore, in light of this increasing awareness of the importance of ethnographically sensitive translation, is the relevance of the role of place in characterizing language, language that is constitutive of self, and voice, therefore, as a key marker of place and self. It emerges that the transfer of voice in translation must carry with it its markers of self and place.

Ross (2013: 455) argues that 'If place and space are bound up with people and the social (and vice versa) it follows, then, that identity should form a constituent part of the spatial and that place should provide the forum within which to practice identity'. Pagano (2011) argues for a broader definition of landscape as a newly accessible entity, no longer exclusively for the elite. This notion of a space within which to 'practice identity' plays a key

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<sup>167</sup> [Trans.] 'For this reason, to be completely Sicilian, thought and spoken in Sicilian, with the inflections, cadences, rhymes, violence, Sicilian sweetness, it should be read in its Sicilian text, and is truly untranslatable, if not at the cost of a significant impoverishment, in the Italian language'

<sup>168</sup> [Trans.] 'And if in this book the Italian translations are published, opposite, done by the poet himself in a literal way, they should, in my opinion, serve only to help the non-Sicilian reader, who with them can affront the original text, and feel the strength enclosed in his words'

role in my transformation of translational space, both in terms of practising the translator's identity and practising the identity of the poet and the poem. Place as emblematic of self or as representative of cultural identity is emphasized in dialect poetry by a language that stands for, or encompasses, place; it uses language to highlight the difference from an 'other', which brings to the fore 'the fissure between language and experience' (Krzywoszynska, 2015: 312).

The translator must seek, then, either to rupture this fissure – which would presumably lead only to a surface level comprehension of the language or a substitution of the referred experience in the original writing with connotations in the reader's mother tongue – or, as I find preferable, to communicate the experience to which the language refers, reconstructing it in translation and representing the experience as part of the translation. As the language of the poem must change, I have chosen to focus on the representation of place in the original language and to seek to retain this sense of place as part of the 'experience' of reading Buttitta's textual depiction of Sicily and Sicilian stories. Sack (1993: 329) writes on the relationship between place and self:

The argument has been that place and space are constitutive of nature, social relations, and meaning. Just as these elements are part of place, so too can they be found in the self: people are natural beings, social beings, and intellectual beings. How these are connected by the self depends on how they are connected by the places the person occupies. People are always in a place, and places constrain and enable.

Sack also suggests that 'self and place are themselves mutually constitutive' (ibid.). The poems act as repositories of cultural memory and preserve the poet's language. O'Rawe (2007: 79) writes of the use of 'literary cartographies

and topographies of Sicily' that 'use figures and metaphors which unite the material and the symbolic'.

To the foreign reader, dialect is 'other' within a national 'other'; region is distinct from the TL culture and language of reception. Ross (2013: 456) observes

Region, moreover, is seen as that space situated somewhere in-between the national and the local. Historically, geographers have engaged in chorology, the study of regions or space, by means of the differentiation of one region from another, a distinction based on factors such as terrain, climate, and culture.

The exploration of rendering of place must therefore examine regional specifics; it must account for geographical character, idiosyncrasy and flavour, whilst at the same time remembering that the new reader resides outside this shared place. Foran (2012: 5) argues that 'Language constitutes the self and yet is always other to the self; it is always both *from* and *for* the Other'. This analysis renders language, and certainly poetry, as instinctively addressed at others and, in the case of Buttitta's poetry, at others who inhabit the same geographical place and who are united, even when removed from this place, by a shared language. This is emphasized by continuous use of 'we' and 'here'. Krzywoszynska (2015: 314) emphasizes the fact that 'Language is a public affair, and meaning in language is constructed by reference to a set of experiences and understandings that form a particular culture shared by a group of people. As a result, meaning is always contextual, local and in flux'.

### 3.10. 'Si mori dui voti' / 'One dies twice' (*Poeta*, 1972)

Li paroli boni

*The good words*

cari e umani



*kind and human*  
custanu nenti  
*cost nothing*  
e non sacciu pirchi  
*and I don't know why*  
l'omini li sparagnanu.  
*men spare themselves of them.*

Li paroli di cunfortu  
*Words of confort*  
ca medicanu u duluri,  
*that medicate the pain,*  
e dunanu tempu o cori d'abbacari  
*and give to the heart time to heal*  
e a menti di ripusari,  
*and to the mind to rest,*  
nni quagghianu nte vucchi  
*they congeal in our mouths*  
e nn'agghiuttemu amari.  
*and we gulp them down bitter.*

La buntà,  
*Kindness,*  
c'agghiorna i facci  
*brings day to faces*  
e pitta arcubaleni  
*and paints rainbows*  
nto celu di l'occhi,  
*in the sky of the eyes,*  
l'ammucciamu nte negghi  
*we hide it in the clouds*  
prima di nasciri.  
*before being born.*

E nn'avemu bisognu  
*And we need it*  
io e vuàtri  
*me and you others*  
ca criditi u pueta  
*who believe the poet*  
un dumanneri di pezzi vecchi;  
*a beggar in rags;*  
mentri cusi mantelli cilesti  
*while he sews sky blue mantles*  
chi manu di matri  
*with a mother's hand*  
pi quadiari u munnu.  
*to warm the world.*

Tutti n'avemu bisognu,  
*We all need it,*  
comu a terra malata  
*like an ill land*  
c'addimanna acqua  
*that demands water*  
cu a gula sicca:  
*with its dry throat:*  
comu u celu  
*like the sky*  
c'ammustra a facci lavata  
*who shows its face washed*  
e stenni linzola  
*and hangs out sheets*  
si lu ventu stramina li negghi.  
*if the wind breaks up the clouds.*

Ed è inutili strinciri i denti  
*And it's useless to grit our teeth*

e attirantari li vrazza;  
*and stiffen our arms;*  
u marusu acchiana u stissu,  
*the breaker rises the same,*  
arrivota l'unni,  
*overturns the waves,*  
sbatti nte scogghi du pettu.  
*beats against the rocks of the chest.*

Basta na taliata  
*One look is enough*  
a li voti,  
*at times,*  
na magia di l'occhi,  
*a magic of the eyes,*  
na sbuccata du cori  
*an overflow/outburst of the heart*  
p'arrivisciri un mortu chi chianci.  
*to resuscitate the weeping dead.*

L'omini u sannu,  
*Men know it,*  
sannu parrari  
*they know how to talk*  
cu cori nta l'occhi  
*with their heart in their eyes*  
e non lu fannu:  
*and they don't do it:*  
l'usanu pi ngannari,  
*they use them to cheat,*  
pi cuvari odiu,  
*to brood hate,*  
pi chiantari furchi.  
*to plant forks.*

Parru cu cori prenu  
*I speak with a gravid heart*  
e cu scantu chi sgravassi  
*and with the fear that unburdens*  
i me dogghi di pirsiguitatu,  
*my labours of one persecuted,*  
di diavulu nta chesa,  
*of devil in the church,*  
d'agneddu scannatu;  
*of slaughtered lamb;*  
di ugnati  
*of scratches*  
nte carni tenniri di picciriddu  
*in my tender boy's flesh*  
ed arrappati d'oggi:  
*and that wrinkled one of today:*  
u feli m'acchiana a vucca!  
*venom comes up in my mouth!*

Ed è pi tantu disfiziu  
*And it's for all this bitterness*  
si sacciu sulu chianciri e sfardari  
*if I know only to cry and rip apart*  
sti fogghi di carta  
*these sheets of paper*  
ca sunnu bianchi  
*that are white*  
e mi pàrinu nìvuri;  
*and seem to be black;*  
si cercu cunsolu  
*if I seek comfort*  
nta n'acceddu chi canta,  
*in a bird that sings,*

(poviru Saba!)  
*(poor Saba!)*  
nta un cani chi m'aspetta;  
*in a dog who awaits me;*  
nta na parola d'amuri  
*in a word of love*  
rubata o ventu,  
*stolen from the wind,*  
caduta du celu,  
*fallen from the sky,*  
piscata nto funnu du mari.  
*fished from the depths of the sea.*

Non mi dicitu  
*Don't tell me*  
chi tuttu è pirdutu,  
*that all is lost,*  
vi pregu;  
*I beg you;*  
si mori dui voti.  
*we die twice.*

Aspittati dumani,  
*Wait for tomorrow,*  
dumani,  
*tomorrow,*  
ogni ghiornu, dumani!  
*every day, tomorrow!*

Gennaio / January 1966

### 3.10.1. La Sicilianità

This section explores the broader notion of *la Sicilianità* – 'Sicilianerie', as Bufalino (2002, cited in O'Rawe, 2007: 80) terms it, or 'sicità' (2003, *ibid.*),

in Sciascia's words – using the poem to probe an inherent cultural outlook embodied in the dialect, seeking to locate aspects and traits of the Sicilian character, which are reflected in its language and, in turn, in Buttitta's poetry. It is necessary, then, to explore the Sicilian condition and character in a broader sense, in order to look at manifestations of this on a micro level in Buttitta's poetry. I examine how Sicilian identity is captured and preserved in Buttitta's poetry and this, in turn, explores language as a partial determinant of cultural outlook, owing to the fact that the Sicilian identity seems simultaneously mirrored in, and engineered by, the language. In representing Sicily in translation, means of doing so seek to remain authentic and culturally sensitive. This section addresses *la Sicilianità* as a study on the particular character and outlook of Sicilians, particularly as manifested in their dialect, but it is useful here to briefly consider nature versus culture in terms of 'linguistic patterns as a strongly influential or even determining factor in cognition' (Sturge, 2007: 18).

Dialect reflects regional as opposed to national reality but this cultural relativism would imply that 'there is no general reality at all, only particular realities located in particular cultural settings' (ibid.). It is the task of any translator to tap into a foreign reality and render it in a language that does not accompany that reality but if it *is* language that configures that reality in the first place, can language that has not constructed that reality from the outset hope to recast it in translation? If there is, instead, one fixed reality that we all experience differently, language remains the tool for expressing experience of this reality. Sturge (2007: 18) suggests

More common, milder versions of cultural relativism would allow that we are all looking at what is biologically the same world, but from culturally mediated or 'situated' perspectives that differ and that must be examined on their own terms, not in terms of their conformity with or divergence from an ideal, universal truth.

It is tempting to render the mother tongue as the one reality; the language in translation must then necessarily adapt to this reality in transit. Such an erroneous act can be subconscious but the careful deconstructing of the meaning of foreign terms as they are locally comprehended and applied is useful in avoiding this trend. 'The grammatical information in these terms needs to be made available in the English versions without the aid of a convenient "equivalent" in English grammar' (ibid.: 21).

The stimulus for language is disciplined by culture and yet this culture responds to its linguistic embodiment in a cyclical manner. Writing of Pirandello as representative of Sicily, Ascutto (1977: 59) observes

the artist is in essence a miniaturist. He cannot capture in his work of art the totality of the world around him. The painter, no matter how large his canvas, can only portray what the limitations of his medium allow him. The playwright is confronted with the same problem. He reacts to his world both intellectually and emotionally, and when he sits down to create his world, in which his characters have their being, it is a world in miniature.

We may use individual poems, and certainly Buttitta's collective works, as a means of looking at the poet's world in miniature; where Buttitta makes universalist claims, he does so from, and in relation to, his surrounding landscape. Francese (2005: 52) suggests that Goethe and nineteenth-century travellers like him 'whose Grand Tours took them through Sicily for the purpose of gaining knowledge of the self and knowledge of the other' come to represent for Consolo an unearthing: 'even while not seeing, or, better, misinterpreting [*stravedendo*] many aspects of Sicilian reality, they gave *visibility* to that *evidence* that, according to Sciascia, was previously invisible to Sicilians' (Consolo 1988, cited in Francese, ibid.: 52–53). This feature of making visible a certain Sicilian *evidence* is observable in Buttitta's work, heightened

by his socialist commitment and his detailing of 'disappearing and decaying Sicilian landscapes [...] motivated by the desire to allegorically recover material signs of Sicilian history and civilization' (Francese, 2005: 51). In this way the poems take a proactive stance as:

efforts to valorize the dialect as a language of culture and literature, they evince an allegorical mode of creation: emblems of a process of decay are re-appropriated and re-presented in a way that enables them to interact in a transformative way with the present so as to influence the future. (ibid.)

In this poem we glimpse a sense of fatalism; Buttitta writes a Sicilian story through depiction of family, hardship, the relationship with the land, manual labour, the haunting politics of the island enveloped in projected hopes for change, the love and prestige that circulate the mother figure and the interconnections between parenthood, love, language, land and identity. Asciutto (1977: 66) describes the family as 'the institution which enabled the Southern Italian to survive and to which he feels loyalty', in Gambino's words: 'sangu de me sangu [blood of my blood]' (1974, cited in Asciutto, ibid.). Buttitta expresses his feelings towards his island and his compatriots with increasingly heartfelt compassion; his poetic voice itself partakes of the ferocious directness of emotion attributed to the islanders. Wall (1956, cited in Asciutto, 1977: 65) tells us that 'in Sicily, love, hatred, physical desire, hunger and so on are expressed as they are felt. Such frankness and directness is nearer to the classicism of the ancient world than to the Romanticism of modern Europeans'. It is not the intention of this section to infer that there is one generic Sicilian character but rather to examine impressions and observations of Sicily and its transmitted expression in Buttitta's poetry. One such recurring observation is a sense of stoicism and self-strength in the face of internal and external repression, a trait attributed to several Sicilian writers.



Asciutto (1977: 63) states: 'Like his fellow Sicilians, Pirandello seems to have developed a stoic resignation to the hardships that came his way' while Levi (1958, cited in Asciutto, *ibid.*) claims: 'Two laws that Sicilians seem to live by are "the law of honour and the law of love"'. There is the ever present reference to the mother figure: '*chi manu di matri / with a mother's hand*' set in recurrent contrast to the evils brought about, most notably, by men in power. The internal 'laws' of Sicily are as intricate as they are intriguing, externally romanticized and misunderstood. They are part of the Sicilian identity in a powerful manner; such laws have also contributed to internalized corruption of power and their relation to the poet's sense of self is therefore multifaceted and underscores much of his writing.

Stockwell (2002: 14) writes that 'one of the main functions of literature is to defamiliarize the subject-matter, to estrange the reader from aspects of the world in order to present the world in a creative and newly figured way'. Whilst, in terms of poetry in translation, it may be more appropriate to think of familiarizing the reader with the subject-matter, it is also true that a careful balance must be implemented between making new and rendering the foreign familiar, that is, domesticating the foreign content.

Buttitta's dialect poetry does not seek to defamiliarize so much as elevate the beauty of speaking and writing about the real, in the language of his reality. 'Just as the realist novel deploys concrete detail to create a feeling of vivid totality, realist ethnographies focus on the minutiae of everyday life, generalized as "typical" within a theoretical framework that seems to represent a culture in its totality' (Sturge, 2007: 56). I must not present Buttitta's Sicily as in any way generic or as constitutive of every Sicilian outlook, yet it may be viewed as representative and also, canonically, partakes a trend of Sicilian writing that postulates place as representative of identity, as Sciascia (2003: 967) observes '*certo è che la cultura siciliana ha*

avuto sempre come materia e come oggetto la Sicilia<sup>169</sup>. O'Rawe (2007: 79), too, writes of the 'predilection of Sicilian authors for place-writing'.

### 3.11. Concluding remarks

This chapter has foregrounded the use of place in Buttitta's dialect poetry together with the use of spatial considerations in translation as an interrelated means of practising or performing identity. In both spheres, the *lieu* is best viewed 'as a symbolic instrument rather than a physical site' (O'Rawe, 2007: 91). The presence of place in Buttitta's dialect poetry and the importance I attribute to the space in which translation happens has provided a spatial element to the exploration and transposition of meaning and has built upon the notion of literary dialect words as 'sites of memory' in O'Rawe's (2007: 82) adaption of Pierre Nora's *Les lieux du mémoire* (1984–92). To summarize, in the words of Ross (2013: 460), I have shown

that space and place can be harnessed as a constructive and valuable fulcrum around which concepts such as identity, alterity, and conflict (and potentially a myriad of others) can be analysed rewardingly in a wide range of literary production, and that critical engagement with the spatial has the capability to yield insights that might otherwise remain unexplored.

Machan (2016: 620) argues 'Language and dialect boundaries certainly do matter [...] although it is not grammatical structure but speakers who determine how and when', summarizing that

social divisions built on language can be as situational and porously impermeable as other kinds of borders. A language can become a symbol of a nation, then, even if it is neither unique to that nation nor the only language that nation speaks. (ibid.)

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<sup>169</sup> [Trans.] 'Sicilian culture has certainly always had Sicily as subject and object'

Holmes (1988: 58) observes that 'all translations are maps, the territories are the originals. And just as no single map of a territory is suitable for every purpose, so is there no "definitive" translation of a poem', going on to suggest that

What we need is a variety of inevitably less-than-definitive versions for a variety of purposes: strictly metrical translations, perhaps, but also free-verse renderings, prose poems, even glosses cum commentaries, each of them a map which in its own way can help us to reconnoitre the territory better. (ibid.)

The outlining of exploratory space highlights the importance of the spatial in translation activity. Again, as is emphasized in later discussions in Chapter 4, translation is the physical embodiment of textual interrelations and the notion of performing identities and overlapping voices is key. Kendall (2006: 143) notes

Clearly there are strong parallels between the postmodernist investigations of the intertextuality of texts and the crossing of boundaries that occurs in the act of translation. In both spheres, creativity plays an important role in the recontextualization of source works and the development in the target work of a new mode of writing.

I would add to this exploratory space a third dimension of translational activity, the reader. One solution, therefore, seems to be to generate the connotative values inherent in dialect and to stimulate a translation space that allows the new readership to partake in the translation process while sharing in the experience of the original poem and its place. Reconstructing the landscape of the original poetry is a means of transferring the visual and spatial elements inherent in dialect. If this space contains interrelating performances, then the reaction and response to the translation is also

embedded in the extended space which translation constitutes or inhabits (and which translation creates and enables), as observed in the rendering of poetic identity, in the following folio.

## **Chapter Four, Folio Three**

### **Socio-political Rendering: Poetics of Memory, Ideology and Identity**

#### **4.1. Foreword to Folio 3**

This folio builds upon discussion of place from Chapter 3 and examines Buttitta's poetry through a socio-political lens, exploring the embodiment of memory, ideology and identity. This focus extends to the practice of translation itself, probing the onus on the translator of dialect poetry in terms of representation of a minority voice.

I look at the poems across the landscape of their translational experience, bringing this process full circle to look at the reader's role. I examine the paratextual space, searching beyond language for non-linguistic enhancement of content and, in finding a way of representing features that evade linguistic transfer, address textual enhancement of expression. In light of prior discussion of the recreation of identity (3.5.1. and 3.6.1.), here I look at identity as an element to be performed within translation. Inspired by the oral and performative nature of Buttitta's poetry, I explore the theatrical element of poetry as performance, addressing the way in which dialect is used to narrate regionally specific events and positing voice as a poetic tool for the rendering of place. The concept of Buttitta's narrative comes to the fore and I explore his poems as repositories of memory, representations of ideology and a means of story-telling the island's history. In light of this, I consider translation, too, as a narrated process.

It is within this sphere that I address the subjective presence of the translator, whilst aiming to locate the source poet through translation and render his voice. Brevini (1986: 687) writes that *'fra i titoli di merito del dialetto, oltre alle sue capacità di veicolare significati di fronte alla derealizzazione che sembra affliggere l'italiano, non si dovrà scordare il*

decisivo rapporto intercorrente fra dialetto e creatività individuale<sup>170</sup>. This brings me to explore the poet as subject and, lastly, translation as a form of interactive workshop, which addresses the subjectivity and interpretive contribution of the reader. The final section provides an overview of the handling of Buttitta's themes and style in line with his changing poetics.

#### **4.1.1. Narrating Creative Identities: the Poet and the Translator**

On the subject of the physicality of textual interpretation, Gaddis Rose (1998, cited in Perteghella and Loffredo, 2006: 5) suggests that literary translation is

also a form of literary criticism [...]. What translating does is to help us get inside literature...we should feel we are moving inside what we are reading, examining literature from the inside, a way of making sure that we feel it from within

and it is this three-dimensional element that I believe is particularly relevant to translation from dialect and the sense of belonging to a particular place that it represents. In using this characteristic of dialect writing to influence my translation process, it is therefore important that translation too becomes a locus.

O'Neill (2012: 126) observes 'Translation as a humanistic enterprise, bridging the gap between peoples, also perceives difference problematically – there is a gap to be bridged'. Whilst this point is applicable to all areas of translation, literary translation, possibly more than other genres, addresses this difference either as problematic or, alternatively, as a resource. Translation from dialect presents a gap between non-standard and standard language worlds and it is necessary to address the broader situation of the dialect poem, in terms of being able to represent what the language stands for.

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<sup>170</sup> [Trans.] 'among the titles of merit of dialect, in addition to its ability to convey meanings in front of the derealization that seems to afflict Italian, we must not forget the decisive intercurrent relationship between dialect and individual creativity'

This is particularly relevant when dealing with texts written in a language that is subordinate, as the broader cultural discourse to which they partake is also subordinate. If it is this resistive attitude to subordination manifested in language that I as translator am attempting to trans-create, I ought to avoid rendering such language as inferior to the new language, which would be a risk in any domesticating approach. Referring to minority language within a text, Mullen (1996: 4) notes 'The reader again and again confronts the untranslatability of the subordinated cultural discourse into the language of the culturally dominant other'. The role and nature of such language needs, alongside its ideological objective, to become part of what is encountered in translation.

To acknowledge the untranslatable as a feature of language is not to place constraint on translation; it is to acknowledge humility in this very human enterprise. I now address the role of creativity in translational practice in light of, and perhaps because of, constraint posed by the seemingly untranslatable fields of dialect and poetry. Boase-Beier (2006: 48) suggests that 'translation of poetry in particular allows for the maximum of creativity on the translator's part', going on to assert that 'Poetic language can thus be seen as a language marked by specific characteristics which include the stretching of standard language by creative deviation of its norms' (ibid.). Arguably, carrying out translation under constraint provides a greater potential for creativity. Perteghella and Loffredo (2006: 9) write refreshingly on this subject. In response to the view that it is impossible for the translator to 'evade the influence and constraints imposed by both the source text and other external determinants', they suggest, instead, that 'looking from a different angle, the exercise of one's own creativity turns out to be directly proportional to the constraints to which one is subject; in other words, the more one is constrained, the more one is creative' (ibid.). This provides hope, in the case of

dialect poetry translation, positing its additional translation challenges and the constraints inherent in them as opportunities for creativity.

On creative restraint, Duranti (2006: 293) refers to 'Testi, insomma, dove la funzione creativa (che ritengo all'opera in ogni processo traduttivo) viene stimolata al massimo dalle maggiori difficoltà che il testo originale presenta rispetto alla norma'<sup>171</sup>. On this same subject, Holman and Boase-Bier (1998: 6) suggest that 'creativity is often intimately tied to constraint, it is a response to it, it is enhanced by it'. It is true that, at times, the original writing is placed under constraints that the translation is not; the original may 'be constrained by prevailing political views, or, more substantially, by censorship' (Holman and Boase-Bier, 1998: 5). Lefevere and Bassnett (1998: 6) suggest 'A comparison of original and translation will not only reveal the constraints under which translators have to work at a certain time and in a certain place, but also the strategies they develop to overcome, or at least work around those constraints'.

In turning to the incorporation of non-linguistic and paratextual aids to enhance the representation of dialect (in 4.5.), the annotated poem becomes an adaptation and, here again, TS is burdened with dispute over terminology. Whilst there is a trend of 'creative blurring of the distinction between different kinds of translations, versions, adaptations and more distant relatives' (Hardwick, 2000: 12), it is my belief that a translation may involve a certain degree of adaptation in order to succeed in translating elements that may elude transfer on a solely linguistic basis.

The rendering of the translation as at least partial adaptation does not mean that the translation is therefore *not* a translation, but rather that it explores the full depth and breadth of its resources in order to fulfil its

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<sup>171</sup> [Trans.] 'Texts, in short, where the creative function (which I believe is at work in every translation process) is stimulated to the maximum by the greater difficulties that the original text presents with respect to the norm'



purpose. Although House (2014: 1) actually incorporates the extra-linguistic within her description of the 'linguistic-textual operation', that is 'translation which is subject to, and substantially influenced by, a variety of different extra-linguistic factors and conditions'. She explains that it is 'this interaction between "inner" linguistic-textual and "outer" extra-linguistic contextual factors that makes translation such a complex phenomena' (ibid.). Here, the extra-textual is not viewed as an asset that falls outside of the realm of translation practice; rather, it is an element that inherently accompanies translation practice in order to fully convey contextual factors. Raffel (1988: 157) writes of the art of 'balancing different claims' as the definitive feature of the art of translating poetry:

The strictly linguistic claim on the translator, though of course it is a substantial one, is not – though to most people it would seem to be – the most pressing. What I consider the most important, and also the most difficult, claim to deal with is what might loosely be termed the aesthetic: How is the translator to reproduce in the new language the peculiar force and strength, the inner meanings as well as the merely outer ones, of what the original writer created solely and exclusively for and in different language and a different culture?

This chapter addresses the extent to which the translator's subjectivity and resulting translational presence is desirable, inevitable and, possibly, a source for creativity with a potentially fruitful outcome.

The missing element in so much writing about poetry and translation is the idea of the ludic, of *jouissance*, or playfulness. For the pleasure of poetry is that it can be seen as both an intellectual and an emotional exercise for writer and reader alike. (Bassnett, 1998: 65)

The element of translation as a transformative experience, which ought to foreground creation rather than imitation, is put forward by Edwards (2011: 19):

we are surrounded by signs of a world being transformed, of the latent transformability of what we know as the real: by foreign languages, by dreams, and by all the forms of art, where not only poetry but narrative, theatre, painting, sculpture, photography, music, dance, architecture, transfigure our way of undergoing the whole of our experience, not by imitating but by new-creating, by proceeding not according to *mimesis* but to *anaktisis*.

Although Buttitta's ideology is evident in his poetic content, this folio attempts to create TL poems that draw attention to his use of language as a means of accentuating his views, foregrounding his dialectal voice as the poet's chosen medium of communicating his message.

#### **4.1.2. Selection Process**

The first poem selected is 'Garibaldi in Sicilia' (*Prime*, 1922–1954), in which I examine recreation of context through representation of dialect as historical memory. The second poem, 'Parru cu tia' (*Pani*, 1954), addresses the performability of Buttitta's poetry, examining the role of identity through voice. 'Lamentu d'una madri' examines the Madonna figure, representation of the mother and the concept of the textually embedded 'semantics of remembrance' (Steiner, 1998: 494). 'Lamentu pi la morti di Turiddu Carnivali' (*Trenu*, 1963) addresses translation as (political) narrative and explores paratext to aid reconstruction of context. 'Lu trenu di lu sulì' (*Trenu*, 1963) foregrounds the sense of exile or journey and looks at the depiction of foreign and domestic 'Others'. 'Li pueti d'oggi' (*Peddi*, 1963) addresses nature and the way in which dialect symbolizes truth-telling. 'U pueta e a puisia' (*Piazza*, 1974) looks at the onus on translation practices from dialect in line with

Buttitta's purpose and 'U tempu longu' (*Piazza*, 1974) applies creative writing practice to dialect translation, exploring the reader's subjective identity. 'I petri nìvuri' (*Pietre*, 1983) concludes the folio with an examination of tone and theme.

#### 4.2. 'Garibaldi in Sicilia' / 'Garibaldi in Sicily' (*Prime*, 1922–1954)

Marsala era luntana  
 e lu suli di maju  
 addumava lu mari  
 e la carina  
 di lu vapuri 'Lumardu'  
 saziu d'acqua.

Marsala was far off  
 and the sun of May  
 set alight the sea  
 and the bottom  
 of the 'Lombard' vapour  
 satiated by water.

Garibaldi, a la testa  
 di li coppuli russi,  
 passava a cavaddu  
 pi li stratuni  
 mpruvulazzatu di Salemi.

Garibaldi, at the head  
 of the red berrets,  
 passed by on horseback  
 on the dusty great streets  
 of Salemi.

Sbardi di lònari  
 e di palummi ntra dd'occhi  
 salutu di pampini e di rami  
 rivirenci di canni  
 risati russi di li ficudinnia  
 paramenti di sipali  
 e tuttu l'oru biunnu a lu frumentu  
 natava nni dda facci e li capiddi.

Storms of skylarks  
 and of doves in those eyes  
 salutes of leaves and of branches  
 reverences of canes  
 red laughter of the figs-of-india  
 paraments of hedgerows  
 and all the blond gold of the wheat  
 swam in that face and hair.

Fimmini a li porti  
 cu li nutrichi mbrazza,  
 vecchi a li finestri  
 cu li vrazza aperti,

Women at the doors  
 with their babes in arms,  
 the olds at the windows  
 their arms open,

jurnateri all'antu	day workers in the field
cu li zappuna all'aria,	with their rakes up in the air,
ghiommara di carusi scavusi e riversi:	elbows of the barefoot and lively kids:
bùmmuli d'acqua friddi	jugs of cold water
cannatuna di vinu	tankards of wine
fadalati d'aranci	aprons of oranges
vasati a tradimentu	underhand kisses
a di luntanu.	from a distance.

Passava Garibaldi	Garibaldi went by
cu la spata puntata a li tiranni;	with his sword pointed at the tyrants;
e la me terra	and my land
si suseva additta	raised itself upright
e si sbracava lu so cori granni!	and threw open its great heart!

1954

#### 4.2.1. Dialect and Historical Memory

Bonnefoy (1992: 188) promotes investigation at the macro level, claiming that we should attempt to find the original motivation for the poem, 'to relive the act which both gave rise to it and remains enmeshed in it'. Denman (2012: 168) writes of Bakhtin that he 'is most celebrated for his attention to those forces opposing the centripetal, for their resistance to power and affirmation of marginal identities', claiming that he 'understood linguistic discourse to be "ideologically saturated", and he is among many authors to have noted the link between demarcating language boundaries and the cultivation of national consciousness' (ibid.). Albanese (2011: v) writes that

the de-centralized vantage point of those who write from the margins acquires an increasingly important role in a national cultural context [...], one in which the cultural space of Sicily becomes an ideological filter through which Italian society is interpreted and critiqued.

To return to the idea of an interpretive landscape, this term refers to the surrounding setting of the original that provides information not explicitly offered by the poem itself. It is the conceptual apparatus that permits a broader understanding of the contextual narrative of the original. Interpretive landscape refers to the paratextual and abstract information offered by the context and the ability to interpret the context in depth that adds to the interpretive scope of the reader's potential impressions. Simply, it is all the information contained within the original text and its context that, without its language and cultural belonging, is not automatically present in the (assumed) interpretive field of the reader. Adapting this premise to translation from dialect, the translations ought, then, to provide a detailed contextualization of setting, looking at meaning as constituted by and in place. In the same vein, Sturge (2007: 24) highlights the necessity of the ethnographic role in cultural translation, arguing that, 'Since meaning arises out of specific situations, it can only be successfully re-presented through detailed contextualization, through an interpretive reconstruction of the original words' linguistic context, cultural context and immediate setting'<sup>172</sup>.

Likewise, Krzywoszynska (2015: 313) highlights use of reflexivity to 'identify the significant spaces of meaning beyond language, and as a result extend the scope of research beyond linguistic equivalence and into the local relationship between experience and expression'. As regards translation, such a practice could include introductory pages of explanatory information, detailing contextual, social, historical, and cultural information relating to the dialect, specific terms, their context of use and their local significance.

We know that this poem is based on historical events, with which Buttitta is likely to have been familiar. Perhaps the poet relates to Garibaldi's

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<sup>172</sup> On the 'objectivist' and 'relativist' views of language, see Danesi, 1989: 326.

own period of exile from Italy and identifies with his revolutionary spirit. Riall (1962: 4) writes: 'By the early 1840s, newspaper reports had already begun to speak of Garibaldi as a romantic "bandit leader"' and this could be why the poem romanticizes historical events; as the *garibaldini* arrived at Marsala and Garibaldi was declared dictator of Sicily, one account describes locals as 'bewildered, ignorant, surprised by the news' (ibid.: 208). Writing of Garibaldi's men, Riall (1962: 208) notes

Only the Sicilians among them could communicate in (more or less) the same language as the inhabitants of Marsala – a serious problem when the expedition lacked even the most rudimentary maps of the territory they had come to 'liberate'. There were no great scenes of enthusiasm on either side.

The victory at Calatafimi changed this, as Duggan (2002, cited in Riall, 1962: 210) describes 'many Sicilians who up to this point had been reluctant to commit themselves now threw caution to the wind and declared openly for "Italy and Victor Emmanuel"'. Yet the habit of adapting memory for political purpose must not go unnoticed. 'Control of the posthumous memory of Garibaldi was central to this secular yet monarchical vision of Italian national identity. Official efforts concentrated on creating a conciliatory cult of national heroes' (Riall, 1962: 4) and, in this vein, 'monuments were raised to Garibaldi all over Italy. Whether on horseback or on foot, sword in hand or pointing toward future glory, [...] Garibaldi was to become a secular saint, a symbol of Italian unity' (ibid.: 4). Buttitta, too, adapts the figure of Garibaldi for his own purposes. He replicates the military symbolism in mirroring it with the gesture of the peasants. This could be seen as an almost satirical rendering of the openhearted belief in political change. Be it the sword or the rake raised in the air toward future glory, Buttitta, like Garibaldi, had yet to witness its coming:

jurnateri all'antu  
cu li zappuna all'aria,

day workers in the field  
with their rakes up in the air,

This is echoed by Riall's (1998: 1) words when she asks 'why did Sicily acquire a reputation among Italian liberals as a graveyard for political ambition, a region of riot and revolution where constitutional government could not work and efforts at reform were doomed to failure?' This might bring forth notions of the islanders' character; as Asciutto (1977: 66) observes: 'The Sicilian learned to be wary of the powers that ruled over him and he fought against any invasions into the privacy of his family rule', epitomized memorably by Tomasi di Lampedusa, in *The Leopard* (1961: 124):

all those rulers who landed by main force from every direction who were at once obeyed, soon detested, and always misunderstood, their only expressions works of art we couldn't understand and taxes which we understood only too well and which they spent elsewhere: all these things have formed our character, which is thus conditioned by events outside our control as well as by a terrifying insularity of mind.

Buttitta's renarration of events acts as a warning, perhaps, or at least as an alignment of the past with the present. Francese (2005: 45) describes narration as 'synonymous with the sharing of experience', suggesting that 'storytellers are defined by their ability to give counsel for their audience, their stories are future-oriented: their purpose is to impart knowledge that will be useful to the audience in the future' (ibid.). Film director Fellini (1981, in Della Monica, 1981: 45) refers to dialect as 'la chiave di volta che ci aiuta non di rado a capire

da dove veniamo e quindi a darci un orientamento verso dove stiamo andando o vogliamo andare'<sup>173</sup>.

The sense of marginal identity implicitly implies another identity to which the former is rendered marginal. Buttitta writes of the 'Lombard vapour' and 'la me terra' which, whilst it may have welcomed Garibaldi, does not align itself with the same historical root. The poet also renders the stereotypical great heart of the Sicilian people as the means by which Garibaldi 'liberated' the land; he returns the power to the Sicilians in suggesting there were open arms and no resistance. Bassnett (1998: 58) suggests that, beyond the Anglo-Saxon tradition, 'Elsewhere the poet has taken on the role of the conscience of a society, or as its historian'. Indeed, in this poem, we see Buttitta's narration as 'a way of re-visiting history and of speaking metaphorically of our present' (Francese, 2005: 56). Buttitta uses traditional scenes and imagery to create a sense of home and this also serves to portray his affiliation (even across historical distance) with the place described, an element Nora (1989: 14) terms 'prosthesis memory', but he transcends mere affiliation with the island's history and instead goes as far as to create 'the rhetorical construction of the self as an authority qualified to comment on it' (O'Rawe, 2007: 82).

In terms of translational concerns, Loffredo (2006: 167) writes that the translator must consider

first, the relationship between the individual and the community; second, the destabilization of language, that is, the linguistic struggle animated by the restoration of a language long lost, in which the notions of difference, identity and power are dismantled and relocated [...]; third, the sounds and the rhythm of the poeticness of [...] voice.

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<sup>173</sup> [Trans.] 'the keystone that often helps us to understand where we come from and therefore to give us an orientation towards where we are going or where we want to go'



I chose to foreignize the English writing, offering a sense of the estranged naming of a non-native object, as in 'figs-of-india', not 'prickly pears'. I felt the choice captured the exact wording and naming of the Sicilian but, as Eco (2001: 39) notes: 'It is on the basis of interpretive decisions of this kind that translators play the game of faithfulness'. I considered including a glossary alongside this poem, detailing the context. The figure of Garibaldi is well known, his specific exploits in Sicily perhaps less so. Armstrong (2005: 1) reasons that 'good general knowledge will include a recognition of where one's general knowledge ends, and hence when a reference tool is required'. Indeed, if publishing the poem, I might include an excerpt of this commentary's discussion of historical context, for as Taylor (1998: 80) states: 'If there are any elements that do not match the target culture context, they must be accounted for'.

#### 4.3. 'Parru cu tia' / 'I'm talkin' to you' (*Pani, 1954*)

S1	Parru cu tia,
E1	I'm talkin' to you,
S2	to è la curpa;
E2	yours is the fault;
S3	cu tia, mmenzu sta fudda
E3	with you, in the crowd
S4	chi fai l'indifferenti
E4	playing it casual
S5	ntra na fumata e n'otra di pipa
E5	between one pipe-smoke and another
S6	chi pari ciminera
E6	like a chimney
S7	sutta di sta pampera
E7	beneath the peak
S8	di la copula vecchia e cinnirusa.

E8 of your old ashen coppula/cap.  
  
 S9 Parru cu tia,  
 E9 I'm talkin' to you,  
 S10 to è la curpa;  
 E10 yours is the fault;  
 S11 Guardatilu chi facci!  
 E11 Look at his face!  
 S12 La purpa supra l'ossa un àvi tracci  
 E12 There's no trace of meat on those bones  
 S13 ci la sucau lu vermi di la fami;  
 E13 the worm of hunger sucked that up;  
 S14 e la mamma  
 E14 and the midwife  
 S15 ci addutau ddu jornu  
 E15 gave him as dowry that day  
 S16 chi lu scippò di mmenzu a li muddami:  
 E16 who wrenched him from inside the flesh:  
 S17 pani e cipudda.  
 S18 bread and onion.  
  
 S19 Parru cu tia,  
 E19 I'm talkin' to you,  
 S20 to è la curpa.  
 E20 yours is the fault.  
 S21 si porti lu sidduni  
 E21 if you carry the packsaddle  
 S22 e un ti lamenti;  
 E22 and you don't complain;  
 S23 si lu patruni, strincennu li denti  
 E23 if the master, gritting his teeth  
 S24 cu lu marruggiu mmanu e la capizza  
 E24 with stick in hand and the halter  
 S25 t'arrimodda li corna e ti l'aggrizza,

E25           that blunts your horns and moulds them,  
 S26           ti smancia li garruna,  
 E26           he consumes your shanks,  
 S27           ti fudda ntra li chianchi purpittuna,  
 E27           punching between your fleshless hips,  
 S28           t'ammacca ossa e spaddi,  
 E28           bruising bones and shoulders,  
 S29           ti sfricunia li caddi,  
 E29           he rubs your callouses,  
 S30           ti scorcia li custani,  
 E30           he skins the strap wounds  
 S31           ti spurpa comu un cani,  
 E31           he skins you like a dog,  
 S32           e supra la to carogna  
 E32           and over your carrion  
 S33           ci sputa e ti svirgogna.  
 E33           he spits and shames you.  
 S34           Parru cu tia,  
 E34           I'm talkin' to you,  
 S35           to è la curpa.  
 E35           yours is the fault.  
 S36           Ti dici lu parrinu:  
 E36           The priest tells you:  
 S37           (li beni di lu munnu  
 E37           (the goods of the world  
 S38           su fàusi  
 E38           are false  
 S39           e murtali  
 E39           and mortal  
 S40           ca ddà supra tutti scàusi  
 E40           because up there barefoot  
 S41           arrivamu  
 E41           we all arrive  
 S42           e tutti aguali);

E42 and all equal);  
 S43 e tu ci cridi  
 E43 and you believe it  
 S44 e cali la tistazza  
 E44 and lower your big head  
 S45 comu na pecura pazza,  
 E45 like a crazy sheep  
 S46 e nun t'adduni  
 E46 and you don't see  
 S47 ca sutta lu rubbuni  
 E47 that under the robes  
 S48 c'è un utru pi panzuni  
 E48 there's a goatskin for a stomach  
 S49 e la saurra  
 E49 and the ballast  
 S50 nfoca lu jocu di la murra;  
 E50 sets alight the game of morra;  
 S51 e tu ci cridi e ti scordi  
 E51 and you believe it and you forget  
 S52 dda tana e ddu pirtusu  
 E52 that den and that hole  
 S53 unni sdivachi l'ossa;  
 E53 where you overturn the bones;  
 S54 e li to figghi ntra dda fossa  
 E54 and your children in that pit  
 S55 cu li panzi vacanti  
 E55 with empty stomachs  
 S56 e li vrazzudda all'aria,  
 E56 and their littl'arms in the air,  
 S57 giarni comu malaria,  
 E57 yellow like malaria,  
 S58 sicchi e sucati  
 E58 dry and sucked  
 S59 com'umbri mpicccati

E59           like shadows stuck  
 S60           a lu muru,  
 E60           on the wall,  
 S61           schèlitri e peddi di tammuru;  
 E61           skeletons and drum skin;  
 S62           ca si disianu farfalli  
 E62           that they long to be butterflies  
 S63           pi essiri vistuti,  
 E63           to be dressed,  
 S64           agneddi pi sèntiri càvudu:  
 E64           lambs to feel warm:  
 S65           e gatti e cani pi spurpari ossa.  
 E65           and cats and dogs to strip bones.

S66           Parru cu tia,  
 E66           I'm talkin' to you,  
 S67           to è la curpa  
 E67           yours is the fault  
 S67           si la to casa pari un barraccuni  
 E67           if your house seems like a shack  
 S68           di zingari sfardati:  
 E68           of stray gypsies:  
 S69           la scupa ntra n'agnuni  
 E69           the broom in the corner  
 S70           e scorci di patati,  
 E70           and potato skins,  
 S71           lu cufularu cinniri,  
 E71           ash in the hearth,  
 S72           di crita la pignata:  
 E72           the clay pot:  
 S73           e to muggheri l'ossa  
 E73           and your wife the bone  
 S74           di pècura spurpata;  
 E74           of skinned sheep;

S75           li matarazza chini  
 E75           the horsehair mattress  
 S76           di crinu di zabbara  
 E76           made of agave leaves  
 S77           e matri patri e figghi  
 E77           and mother father and children  
 S78           tutti ntra na quadara;  
 E78           all in a cauldron;  
 S79           lu sceccu a vista d'occhi,  
 E79           the donkey in plain sight,  
 S80           chi piscia e fa scumazza  
 E80           that pisses and makes scum  
 S81           gialla, ca la ristuccia  
 E81           yellow, because the stubble  
 S82           ntra li vudedda sguazza;  
 E82           rinses his gut;  
 S83           e fradicia, appizzata  
 E83           and rotten, hung  
 S84           a pignu ntra l'arcova,  
 E84           like a pine in the alcove,  
 S85           una cucuzza pàpara  
 E85           a rotten pumpkin  
 S86           ca premi russu d'ova;  
 E86           that leaks red yolk  
 S87           e la fami chiantata  
 E87           and hunger planted  
 S88           all'antu di la porta  
 E88           on the doorstep  
 S89           cu li granfazzi aperti  
 E89           with its grasping hands open  
 S90           e la vuccazza torta.  
 E90           and a distorted gob.  
  
 S91           Sfarda sta cammisazza arripizzata,

E91           Take off this patched shirt,  
 S92           tíncila e fanni un pezzu di bannera,  
 E92           rip it up and make a piece of flag,  
 S93           trasi dintra li casi puvireddi,  
 E93           go into all the poor houses,  
 S94           scinni nni li carusi carzarati,  
 E94           go in amongst the jailed lads,  
 S95           sduna pi li stratuna e li trazzeri,  
 E95           place yourself on the streets and paths,  
 S96           chiama picciotti e vecchi jurnateri,  
 E96           call the young'uns and labourers,  
 S97           cerca dintra li fúnnachi e li grutti,  
 E97           look inside the stores and the caves,  
 S98           l'omini persi, abbannunati e rutti,  
 E98           men lost, abandoned and broken,  
 S99           grídacci cu la vuci d'un liuni:  
 E99           shout with the voice of a lion:  
 S100          «genti, vinni lu jornu a li diuni!»  
 E100          'all you hungry lot, your day has come!'

S101          Sfarda sta cammisazza arripizzata,  
 E101          Take off this patched shirt,  
 S102          tíncila e fanni un pezzu di bannera,  
 E102          rip it up and make a piece of flag,  
 S103          russa comu la tònaca di Cristu,  
 E103          red like the tunic of Christ,  
 S104          pi torcia lu to vrazzu e lu to pusu:  
 E104          to torch both your arm and your wrist:  
 S105          unniala a li venti a pugu chiusu:  
 E105          wave it in the wind with a closed fist:  
 S106          russu era la tònaca di Cristu!  
 E106          red was the tunic of Christ!

#### 4.3.1. Buttitta as Orator: Dialect, Voice and Performance

Buttitta read this poem at Palma di Montechiaro where, in April 1960, a convention was held on the backward working conditions in certain areas of Sicily. Buttitta, alongside other poets, attended and Cellura (2017) remarks: 'Palma di Montechiaro, da paese depresso, diventa teatro di una Sicilia che vuole cambiare'<sup>174</sup>. My objective is to explore Buttitta's voice and 'what is at stake is the rendering of a highly individual narrative voice, so intimately and evocatively interwoven with culture' (Fochi, 2011: 169). Interconnected influences on the spoken nature of poetry in Sicily mean that the transfer of voice is an important cultural element. Bonanzinga (2011: 187) observes that 'Sicily, after all, was the cradle of both Greek bucolic poetry and of the Italian vernacular – that interaction rather than separation has characterized relations between social strata (hegemonic-subordinate, rural-urban) and mediums of cultural transmission (oral-written)'.

Satriani (1997, cited in Lo Bianco, 2013: 79) writes that the performative element of Buttitta's poetry and its communicative intentions characterize the poet as 'un personaggio che si colloca in questa galleria di cantori maestri di verità per i contenuti, per le tecniche con le quali questi contenuti venivano realizzati, per la capacità comunicativa, per la dimensione spettacolare, per il coinvolgimento della piazza'<sup>175</sup>. Jones (2011: 46) argues:

Nevertheless, 'speaking for' a source poet is central to the habitus of poetry translators. This implies that performing the source poet's identity is seen as more important than performing one's own, at least in the translated poem (the translator's identity may be more prominent in paratexts such as a translator's introduction [...]).

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<sup>174</sup> [Trans.] 'Palma di Montechiaro, from depressed town, becomes a theatre for a Sicily that wants to change'

<sup>175</sup> [Trans.] 'a character that places himself in this gallery of master singers of truth for the content, for the techniques with which these contents came to be made, for the communication skills, for the spectacular dimension, for the involvement of the piazza'



Jones (2014: 33) also draws attention to the limited discussion centred around how poetry translators tackle voice, suggesting that: 'How poetry translators engage with regional voice is even less explored'. Dialect poetry is a form of language that reflects (indeed, emphasizes) the spoken form and Duranti (2006: 294) writes of the capacity of dialect as 'una lingua "bassa", "locale", del tutto priva di tradizione scritta'<sup>176</sup>. Anderman (2007: 8) observes:

With the interest in the written mode long pre-dating the study of spoken language, it is hardly surprising that, in the teaching of foreign languages, translation paid scant attention to linguistic variation and that texts were routinely translated into the standard variety of the target language. As a result, in the transfer from source to target language, the specific characteristics of the individual voices disappeared and a new blander text emerged, devoid of the force and colour of the original.

I considered using recordings of the poet's voice with the intention of reconstructing the original, drawing on the oral and auditory capacity of dialect to evoke narration, performance and context. 'The poem's precise sounds could be communicated only by a sound recording or a live performance, but with the assistance of the preliminary comments, at least the general nature of the phonology should be more or less decipherable' (Raffel, 1988: 34).

I found a voice recording of Buttitta reading this poem, which changed the way I responded to it. As I transcribed the audio clip that precedes the poetry reading, there was so much to be gleaned from listening to Buttitta's voice that I felt as though I had only superficially encountered the poem on the page. Lesser (1989: 127) writes of the first time that she heard the poet Göran Sonnevi read in Finnish:

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<sup>176</sup> [Trans.] 'a "low", "local" language, completely deprived of written tradition'

the word intonation takes on an entirely new meaning once you have heard his voice. It rises at the end of each enjambed and often brief line; the stress on each word is extraordinary, the stress on the first word of a new line even more extraordinary. Still more crucial is the underlying rhythmic pattern or the shifting of rhythmic patterns. And the pauses of different durations, the beauty of the various silences. I can scarcely describe the sensation transmitted through the labyrinth of my inner ear when that voice entered for the first time [...]. But why had I not discovered this reading the poems on the page, even when I read them out loud?

Likewise, my encounter with Buttitta's poem read aloud changed the way I went about translating his poetry. From this point on, I attempted to find recordings of his recitals, although unfortunately such renditions are scarce. Having heard a selection, I hear his voice, now, when I translate; it has significantly altered my previous tendency to opt for lighter, less 'loaded' words in English, a 'general raising of the register', one of Howard's (2013: 705) criticisms of Burgess's translation of Belli's sonnets. Buttitta and Buttitta (2007: 329) observe that: 'La poesia di Buttitta era fatta per essere recitata. Sono state numerose le sue recite in Sicilia e nel mondo'<sup>177</sup>. Loffredo (2006: 160), translating Barthes, notes that: 'Listening to someone's voice enables us to enter into a rapport with otherness' ('l'écoute de la voix inaugure la relation à l'autre') and this otherness presented itself markedly when I listened to 'Parru cu tia', as it highlighted the unguarded emotion present in Buttitta's voice. Contini (2007: 33) notes:

La poesia dialettale [...] è però una poesia in cui il dialetto diventa matericamente oggetto della rappresentazione. Dunque invece popolare: e popolare significa che deve essere eseguita. [...] La poesia di Buttitta pertanto esige esecuzione, e la si

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<sup>177</sup> [Trans.] 'Buttitta's poetry was made to be recited. There have been numerous recitals in Sicily and abroad'

intende perfettamente soltanto se si è sentita dalla sua, come l'ha definito un critico, voce di ferro<sup>178</sup>.

Loffredo (2006: 160) observes: 'Indeed, the listening activity represents the sensuous dimension of the translator's experience', adding that

'Voice' and 'listening to a voice' are generally referred to as acoustic and auditory phenomena, and it is not without difficulty, and resistance, that they can be applied to writing, unless an oral performance of a poem, for instance, is involved.

Ancona's (1990) anthology *Malidittu la lingua (Damned Language)*, for example, 'is accompanied by two tapes with the poet's readings of the Sicilian texts' (Haller, 1993: 287). I include the transcript and translation of Buttitta's introduction to the poem, alongside the recording, in Appendix 5.

It is my contention that the inclusion of the recording will allow the reader to 'affrontare il testo originale, e sentire la forza chiusa nelle sue parole'<sup>179</sup> (Levi, 2007: 11). Levi adds: 'Tutta la poesia di Buttitta, del resto, è fatta per l'espressione orale, per essere detta o cantata alla gente, come un discorso'<sup>180</sup> (ibid.). In terms of the physicality of dialectal voice Sciascia, in his preface to *Poeta* (1972: 9), argues

la vera lettura è quella che si ascolta, quella che viene dalla voce del poeta, inseparabilmente, unicamente. E non è che diffidi della scrittura: è che ritiene assolutamente indissolubile da sé, dalla sua vita, dal suo corpo, dalla sua voce, quel raccontare il mondo, quel goderlo e soffrirlo e ribellarsi che è la sua poesia. Da ciò la

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<sup>178</sup> [Trans.] 'Dialectal poetry [...] is, however, poetry in which the dialect becomes materially the object of representation. So, instead, popular: and popular means that it must be performed' [...] 'Buttitta's poetry therefore demands execution, and it is understood perfectly only if it is heard from his own, as a critic has called it, voice of iron'

<sup>179</sup> [Trans.] 'face the original text, and feel the force locked in his words'

<sup>180</sup> [Trans.] 'All of Buttitta's poetry, moreover, is intended for oral expression, to be spoken or sung to people [...] like a speech'

sua sprezzatura delle regole, codificazioni e convenzioni grammaticali e ortografiche; la sua *invenzione* del dialetto siciliano secondo la voce<sup>181</sup>.

Winston (1950: 186) suggests that 'translation is the creative process within a fixed framework. Possibly the translator's creative satisfaction is like the actor's, whose lines are already written'. Such 'stage directions' (Eco, 2001: 51) might be glimpsed in the translation of poetry when we come to look at its use of space and place on the page. The poem is implicitly blueprinted for performance and the translator, like the director, can choose the extent to which such guidelines or instructions are followed. I found that I made different choices when I read the poem as if I were speaking the content. This led to my inclination to use harsher words, some slang, and to turn to grittier vocabulary to reflect Buttitta's anger.

S/E80    chi piscia e fa scumazza / that pisses yellow and makes scum

I approach such decisions with caution, however, as Buttitta's poetry, whilst sometimes graphic and rough, is not rude or vulgar and I have taken care not to '[fall] prey to the confusion which sometimes obtains in readers of British English between what is colloquial or vulgar and what is regional or dialectal' (O'Sullivan, 2008: 94).

The attention to the poet's voice also helped me to develop my own voice as translator of Buttitta's poetry, a relationship that by this stage felt relatively developed. Pattison (2006: 92) argues that

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<sup>181</sup> [Trans.] 'the true reading is that which one listens to, the one that comes from the poet's voice, inseparably, uniquely. And it is not that he distrusts writing: it is that he considers it absolutely indissoluble from himself, from his life, from his body, from his voice, that recounting of the world, that enjoyment of it and suffering of it and rebelling against it that is his poetry. Hence his disregard of rules, codifications and grammatical and orthographic conventions; his *invention* of the Sicilian dialect according to the voice'

A creative writing experience will help translators to find not only their own words but also their own voice. Those translators who have become aware of the nature of their own voice are better able to find the writer's voice and their own.

This resulted in my identification of a specific set of criteria to observe in the translation of this poem, namely those put forward by Loffredo, (2006: 167): silence, pause, absence/space, sibilance, resonance, all of which helped me to identify the 'double-edgedness of sounds' (Gokak, 1952: 6), learning to seek what Gokak (ibid.) calls 'the echoism with which every language is instinct. It is on the echoistic substratum present in language that the poet builds his gorgeous onomatopoeic effects' and also to experiment with the mimicking of sounds. As Loffredo (2006: 171) discusses:

the process of translation is illustrated as a relationship between the text and the translator, and as an exploration of textuality, starting with a listening activity. From this perspective, the translator's choice is to translate a voice and to provide a dramatization of her listening experience, as well as an illustration of the process itself whereby this voice is heard.

Particular suffixes in Sicilian conjure linguistic addition, such as meekness or affection. The true beauty of Sicilian, in my opinion, comes from the fact that it effectively describes its world in a brusque, often aggressively graphic manner, but within this rather forceful, hardy language is expressiveness, lively playfulness and wit, the abounding fatalism and darkness interspersed with longer, open-vowel structures of light relief. An example is:

S/E83	e fradicia, appizzata	and rotten, hung
S/E84	a pignu ntra l'arcova,	like a pine in the alcove,
S/E85	una cucuzza pàpara	a rotten pumpkin
S/E86	ca premi rissu d'ova;	that leaks red yolk

As Ogden and Richards (1936, cited in Gokak, 1952: 10) point out, words evoke attitudes by their sound qualities, by the 'immediate emotional accompaniments due to past experience of them in their typical connexions' and by emotions which 'arise through the recall of whole situations', concluding: 'There is an emotional tinge in all expression' (ibid.).

Perhaps there is an element of 'untranslatability' in a poet's voice and a voice in dialect adjoins a realm of subaltern reference to the existent degree of otherness in translation. The inclusion of the original voice alongside the poem (through a voice recording) could permit the reader to hear Buttitta's reading, a paratextual inclusion that lifts the poetry off the page as was Buttitta's tendency. Such focus 'will help bridge cultural divides and give speakers of other languages and countries voices that "sing" in translation' (Anderman, 2007: 14).

#### 4.4. 'Lamentu d'una matri' / 'A mother's lament' (*Pani, 1954*)

Nel giorno dell'eccidio di Portella della Ginestra

On the day of the Portella della Ginestra massacre

I

Ddu primu di maju  
la musica ntisi  
di fora sunari,  
e a l'omu vicinu  
chi ancora durmia,  
lu còtulu forti:  
'Ca susiti, Turi,  
la musica sona,  
Li Causi vinni!  
E dissi a me figghiu:

On the first of May  
I heard music  
playing outside,  
and the man nearby  
who was still asleep,  
I shook him roughly:  
'Up get up, Turi,  
the music is playing,  
Li Causi is coming!  
And I said to my son:

'La còppula nova  
stu jornu ti nzaju,  
ca porta spiranza  
lu primu di maju'.

'Your new còppola  
you'll wear it today,  
'cause it brings hope  
on the first of May'.

## II

Grapivu la porta,  
lu sulì trasiu,  
e tutta di russu  
la casa jnchiu.

I opened the door,  
sunlight flooded in,  
and the house was all  
filled with red.

A l'omu ci ngastu  
un ciuru a l'acchettu;  
lu vasu e l'abbrazzu  
cu amuri e rispettu.

On this man I threaded  
a flower in his buttonhole;  
I kiss and hug him  
with love and with respect.

A patri e a figghiu  
ci junciu li manu:  
'Li Causi parra,  
curriti a lu chianu'.

I joined the hands  
of father and son:  
'Li Causi is speaking,  
run on upstairs'.

La còppula nova  
me figghiu si misi.  
'Evviva Barbatu!'  
di fora s'intisi.

His new coppola  
my son had on.  
'Long live Barbatu!'  
was heard from the street.

Mi parsi lu cori  
scappari d'un latu,  
isavu li vrazza:  
'Evviva Barbatu!'

I felt like my heart  
had skipped a beat  
I raised my arms:  
'Long live Barbatu!'

## III

Poi ntisi sparari  
ddà supra, sparari;

Then I heard shooting  
from above, shooting;

di l'occhi un ci vitti,  
mi misi a gridari  
davanti la porta:  
'Cummari! Vicini!  
Di sangu nnuccenti  
nni fannu lavini!'

E sdetti a muntata  
ntra petri e ntra fossa  
scurciannu cu spini  
la carni di l'ossa.

Cadeva nn'arri,  
scuppava abbuccuni,  
cu manu e cu denti  
faceva zappuni.

E sempri acchianava,  
lu cori vughenti,  
e vuci di matri  
e fummu e lamenti.

Fu ddocu, ca vitti  
lu figghiu ammazzatu:  
mi parsi lu munnu  
c'avissi scuppatu.

IV

Figghiu!  
Ca pirchi t'ammazzaru,  
quali mali facisti,  
ci dicia:  
tu eri na palumma,  
di zuccaru e di meli.

my eyes saw nothing,  
I began to shout  
in front of the door:  
'Cummari! Neighbours!  
they're making streams  
of innocent blood!'

And I threw myself on the slope  
amongst stones and ruts  
thorns scratching  
flesh from bone.

He fell down,  
fell face down,  
with hands and with teeth  
made a hoe.

And my heart in tumult  
still racing and beating,  
and mothers' voices  
and smoke and weeping.

And it was then, that I saw  
my murdered son:  
It felt to me that the world  
had collapsed.

My boy!  
Why have they killed you,  
what harm did you do,  
I said to him:  
you were a dove,  
of sugar and honey.



Figghiu!

Tutta sangu sta facci!  
Cu st'occhi lacrimusi  
ti la vogghiu lavari:  
pìgghiati lu me ciatu,  
l'ultimu ca mi resta,  
e grapi l'occhi ancora,  
ca lùciri, li vogghiu  
vìdiri n'`autra vota.

Figghiu!

A l'alba comu prima  
nun ti pozzu chiamari  
e cunzari cu l'ogghiu  
lu pani chi ti dava.

Figghiu!

Jornu nun spunta mai  
di ti lassari sulu.  
Quannu tu fai caminu  
iu sugnu appressu a tia,  
unni tu dormi  
mi fazzu cuscinu  
e li me vrazza  
su la to cummogghia,  
unni tu trasi iu trasu,  
e siddu focu avvampa,  
iu mi ci avventu supra,  
e si ci sunnu spini,  
iu mi li mettu ncoddu,  
e siddu chiantu sbutta  
lu cori miu l'assuppa.

My boy!

Your face all bloodied!  
With tears from my eyes  
I want to wipe it:  
take this breath of mine,  
the last one I have,  
and open your eyes once more,  
because I want to see them alight  
one more time.

My boy!

At dawn like before  
I can't call you any more  
and spread with oil  
the bread I gave you.

My boy!

There'll never come a day  
that I won't be with you.  
When you go for a walk  
I'll be at your side,  
wherever you sleep  
I'll be your pillow  
and my arms  
will be your blanket,  
wherever you enter I'll follow,  
and if there's fire blazing  
I will throw myself upon it,  
and if there are thorns,  
I will put them in my neck,  
and if tears break out  
my heart will soak them up.

O figghiu miu d'amuri,  
la to còppula nova,  
eterna ora ti servi  
pi lu viaggiu longu.

Oh my son of love,  
your new còppula  
eternal now you need it  
for the long journey ahead.

#### 4.4.1. Semantics of Remembrance

This poem focuses on what Steiner (1998: 494) refers to as 'the semantics of remembrance', which refers to the capacity of language to embody and trigger cultural memory. The stimulus of that culture in image and sound directs the TL reader to the 'remembrance' embedded in the original language which, without collective cultural recollection, is absent from readers' own remembrance. Steiner (ibid.) claims

Only time and native ground can provide a language with the interdependence of formal and semantic components which 'translates' culture into active life. It is the absence from them of any natural semantics of remembrance which disqualifies artificial languages from any but trivial or ad hoc usage.

When language is transferred from the ST to the TT, it inevitably loses its capacity to tap into reserves of memory in the second readership. Eco (2003: 48) puts forward a suggestion akin to unveiling the mind's eye of an ST in stating: 'The only solution is to figure out what kind of world the original sentence pictures, and then to see what kind of sentence in the destination language can contribute to create the same world-picture in the mind of the reader'. Eco's term 'world-picture' harks back to the concept of languages as world-views, in the cyclical sense proposed by the Sapir-Whorf theory:

the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are

distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (1929, cited in Steiner, 1998: 91)

Likewise, Steiner (*ibid.*: 90, following Trier, circa 1930) summarizes: 'Every language structures and organizes reality in its own manner and thereby determines the components of reality that are peculiar to this given language'.

I considered the role of Buttitta's poetry in contributing to a textual remembrance. O'Rawe (2007: 80–81) suggests that such 'texts are positioned as monuments to a disappearing place, an idea that has a particular resonance in terms of critical debates around cultural memory'. As Bassnett (1998: 65) suggests, certain words trigger realms of cultural referents and these 'words are embedded into the cultural system. They cannot be translated literally, even though literal meanings exist'. Tarif (2016: 39) writes of memory as being an inherent feature of the translation process and suggests that different approaches either re-member the ST to greater or lesser extents:

'dis-memberment' implies taking liberties with the source text and a certain dilution of the original text as a consequence. On the contrary, 're-memberment' suggests the preservation of the integrity of the source text and a greater adequacy or accuracy to the source text.

In terms of a culturally significant event, the internal resonance of the poem was at the forefront of what I wished to communicate through translation. Bonanzinga (2011: 188) remarks that the massacre described in the poem is amongst 'the most obscure pages of Sicilian history', referring to the fact that on 1 May, 1947, members of Salvatore Giuliano's gang 'shot at farmers gathered to celebrate Labour Day' (*ibid.*) during the Labour Day Parade at Portella della Ginestra. Di Marco (2013: 17) remarks

un popolo può anche patire secolari angherie, le stragi della mafia come a Portella, la rischiosa e incerta lotta per la terra contro il latifondo, il doloroso viaggio dei treni del sole verso terre lontane e straniere che danno un lavoro che anch'esso può uccidere come fa il gabelloto, ma la sua identità conservata nella lingua diventa sacra e intoccabile, è la libertà, la cultura, la memoria, l'avvenire.<sup>182</sup>

The 'gabelloto' (derived from the Sicilian 'gabella' – a tax) is an interesting Sicilian figure. Albinì and McIllwain (2012: 32) note that this man was a type of overseer of land, who 'rented out the use of the land to farmers or, in some cases, chose to sublet the land to another overseer known as a *sotto-gabelloto*'. The power of this figure lay 'in his skillful and violent acquisition of land' (ibid.: 34) and this power was used to exploit Sicilian peasants, resulting in peasant revolts. Albinì and McIllwain (ibid.: 35) then note that 'the government came to view the gabelloto and his guards, as compared to its own army, as being a more cost-effective and efficient counterinsurgent force in the fight against the peasant revolts'. All of this hints at the complicated power struggles in rural Sicily.

Beginning with a historical event that would be familiar (and trigger emotional response) on the part of a Sicilian reader, the translator has to set about transferring the context and ensuring that its significance is carried across. We know from the subheading of the title that the poem details the events of a massacre. Certainly in Europe, the connotative value of 1 May is self-evident. The translator, however, may need to add explanatory detail regarding the figure of Li Causi, who was a Sicilian politician and leader of the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI). He was passionately engaged in the fight for land reform and the struggle against the Sicilian Mafia.

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<sup>182</sup> [Trans.] 'A people can endure even secular anguish, massacres by the mafia such as Portella, the risky and uncertain struggle for land against the estates, the painful journey of the sun trains to distant and foreign lands that provide work, that can also kill, like the gabelloto does, but their identity preserved in language becomes sacred and untouchable, it is freedom, culture, memory, the future'

Poems such as this allow Buttitta to present his ideologies through spatial and historical identification; he narrates the past in dialect in order to consolidate a sense of belonging to that shared history and also to partake in a form of literary activism. Francese (2005: 46) writes of Consolo's literature:

In reacting against a current of Sicilian literary art that goes back to the nineteenth century Naturalist Giovanni Verga, which sees history as an illusion and looks instead to nature and myth for explanations of a Sicilian 'essence', Consolo proposes that all Sicilian writers shoulder the burden of retrieving lost aspects of the Island's history.

Such a statement also applies to Buttitta. He selected a representative figure, who stood up against injustice and defended the voiceless labourers. Brevini (1986: 689) suggests that 'la poesia in dialetto può farsi testimone della verità degli esclusi, ricordandoci il prezzo del progresso'<sup>183</sup>. Ross (2013: 458) suggests

identity formation plays an important role in regional representations; for instance, tensions such as those between rural and urban cultures and communities characterized a number of periods and locales, and more recent accounts of urban life and changes in demographics and social practices in cities such as Florence, Forte dei Marmi, or Prato, are often typified by a sense of nostalgia for a 'simpler' past.

The question at the forefront of translation of this poem was: how does the translator transmit the emotional load that non-existent memory triggers? Triggers such as 'Evviva Barbatu' effectively signify more with the added gloss that Barbatu was, in Casarrubea's (2005: 249–250) words,

apostolo della libertà, simbolo delle aspirazioni di quell'antica colonia del '400 fondata dal condottiero albanese Scandeberg e divenuta, assieme alla Corleone di Bernardino Verro, una delle capitali delle lotte dei lavoratori nei latifondi. Fu

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<sup>183</sup> [Trans.] 'poetry in dialect can bear witness to the truth of the excluded, reminding us of the price of progress'

quest'ansia, questo anelito, mentre nasceva la Repubblica, a svegliare il dio pagano dormiente e a trasformare Portella della Ginestra nel tempio del sacrificio<sup>184</sup>.

We are dealing with what may be termed a 'poetics of memory' (Francese, 2005: 44). The positioning from the poet's perspective is fictitious but it allows him to narrate the action first-hand. Brevini (1986: 691) observes that one characteristic of the dialect tradition is 'quella ad incarnare la voce, a trasformare la confessione in monologo drammatico, fino ad un vero e proprio *topos*, quello della galleria di personaggi, suscitati a narrare la loro vicenda, secondo un ben collaudato modello epigrammatico'<sup>185</sup>. This shared experience and the triggers of association with place must be re-landscaped in translation.

Recreating the interpretive landscape of the original that the dialect serves to stimulate also provides interpretive scope for TL readers, allowing them to partake in the shared experience that dialect evokes through its 'explicitly memorializing function of this poetics of place' (O'Rawe, 2007: 91). Retention of dialectal identities, in place names and people's names, was one way of achieving this.

#### 4.5. 'Lamentu pi la morti di Turiddu Carnivali' / 'Lament for the death of Turiddu Carnivali' (*Trenu*, 1963)

Ancilu era e nun avia ali	Angel he was and had no wings
nun era santu e miraculi facia,	he was no saint but miracles he worked,
'n cielu acchianava senza cordi e scali	in the sky without rope or steps he ascended

---

<sup>184</sup> [Trans.] 'apostle of freedom, symbol of the aspirations of that ancient colony of the fifteenth century founded by the Albanian leader Scandeberg and became, together with the Corleone of Bernardino Verro, one of the capitals of workers' struggles in the large estates. It was this anxiety, this yearning, while the Republic was born, to wake the sleeping pagan god and to transform Portella della Ginestra into the temple of sacrifice'

<sup>185</sup> [Trans.] 'that of embodying the voice, of transforming the confession into a dramatic monologue, right up to a true *topos*, that of the gallery of characters, who were inspired to tell their story, according to a well-tested epigrammatic model'

e senza appidamenti nni scinnia;  
era l'amuri lu so' capitali  
e 'sta ricchezza a tutti la spartìa:  
Turiddu Carnivali nnuminatu  
ca comu Cristu nni muriu ammazzatu.

Di nicu lu patruzzu nun canuscìu,  
appi la matri svinturata a latu  
campagna a lu duluri e a lu pinìu  
ed a lu pani nivuru scuttatu;  
Cristu di 'n cielu lu binidicìu  
ci dissi: «Figghiu, tu mori ammazzatu,  
a Sciara li patruona, armi addannati,  
ammazzanu a cu voli libirtati».

Turiddu avia li jorna cuntati,  
ma 'ncuntrava la morti e ci ridia  
ca videva li frati cunnannati  
sutta li pedi di la tirannia,  
li carni di travagghiu macinati  
supra lu cippu a farinni tumìa,  
e suppartari nun putìa l'abbusu  
di lu baruni e di lu mafiusu.

s'arricughhìu li poviri, amurusu,  
li dorminterra, li facci a tridenti,  
li manciapicca cu' lu ciatu chiusu:  
lu tribunali di li pinitenti;  
e fici liga di 'sta carni e pusu  
ed arma pi luttari li putenti  
nni ddu paisi esiliatu e scuru  
unni la storia avia truvatu un muru.

Dissi a lu jurnataru: «Tu si' nudu,

and with no support he descended;  
it was love his capital  
and this wealth he shared with all:  
Turiddu Carnivali was his name  
who like Christ to death was slain.

As a child his father he knew not,  
he had his unfortunate mother at his side  
his companion in suffering and in sorrow  
and black bread earned in sweat;  
Christ in the sky blessed him  
told him 'Son, you die slain,  
in Sciara the masters, cursed souls,  
kill at those who want freedom'.

Turiddu had his days numbered,  
but he met death and laughed at it  
'cause he saw his brothers condemned  
beneath the feet of tyranny,  
their flesh ground by work  
made into mince on the chopping block,  
and he could not bear the abuse  
of the baron and of the mafiusu.

He gathered the poor, lovingly,  
the groundsleepers, their trident faces,  
the nibble-eaters with their short breath:  
the court of the sinners;  
and he made alloy of this flesh and wrist  
and weapons to fight the powerful  
in that exiled and obscure town  
wherein history had found a wall.

He said to the day-worker 'You, you're

e la terra è vistuta a pompa magna,  
tu la zappi e ci sudi comu un mulu  
e si' all'additta comu na lasagna,  
veni la cota ed a corpu sicuru  
lu patroni li beni s'aggranfagna  
e tu chi fusti ogni matina all'antu  
grapi li manu ed arricogghi chiantu.

Ma fatti curaggiu e nun aviri scantu

ca veni jornu e scinni lu Misia,  
lu socialismu cu' l'ali di mantu  
ca porta pani, paci e puisia;  
veni si tu lu voi, si tu si' santu,  
si si' nnimicu di la tirannia,  
s'abbrazzi a chista fidi e a chista scola  
ca duna amuri e all'omini cunzola.

lu socialismu cu' la so' parola  
pigghia di 'n terra l'omini e l'acchiana,  
e scurri comu acqua di cannola  
ed unni passa arrifrisca e sana  
e dici: ca la carni nun è sola  
e mancu è farina ca si scana;  
uguali tutti, travagghiu pi tutti,  
tu manci pani si lu sudi e scutti».

Dissi a lu jornateri: «Ntra li grutti  
'ntra li tani durmiti e 'ntra li staddi,  
siti comu li surci di cunnutti  
ca v'addubbatu di fasoli e taddi;  
ottùviru vi lassa a labbra asciutti

naked

and the earth is dressed in magna pomp,  
you hoe it and sweat for it like a mule  
and you're as dead flattened as lasagna,  
the harvest comes and in one sure blow  
the master reaps the goods  
and you who were each morning at the field  
open your hands and gather tears.

But find you some courage and have no  
fear

the day'll come when the Messaia descends,  
socialism with its wings of cloak  
that brings bread, peace and poetry;  
come if you want it, if you are saint,  
if you're enemy to tyranny,  
if you embrace this faith and this school  
that gives love and to men consoles.

socialism with its words  
takes men from the ground and lifts them up  
and flows like water from fountain  
and wherever it passes it refreshes and heals  
and says: that flesh is not leather  
nor is it flour for kneading;  
we're equal all of us, work for us all,  
you eat bread if you work for it and sweat.

He said to the day-worker: 'In the caves  
in the dens and in the stalls you sleep,  
you're like mice in the sewers  
that you must fill yourselves with beans and  
cores  
October leaves you with dry lips



giugnettu cu' li debiti e li caddi,  
di l'alivi n'aviti la ramagghia  
e di la spiga la coffa e la pagghia».

Dissi: «La terra è di cu la travagghia,  
pigghiati li banneri e li zappuna».

E prima ancora chi spuntassi l'arba  
ficiru conchi e scavaru fussuna:  
la terra addiventau una tuvagghia,  
viva, di carni comu 'na pirsuna;  
e sutta lu russiu di li banneri  
parsi un giganti ogni jornateri.

Curreru lesti li carrubbineri  
cu' li scupetti 'n manu e li catini.  
Turiddu ci gridau: «Fàtivi arreri!  
cca latru nun ci nn'è, mancu assassini,

ci sunnu, cca, l'affritti jornateri  
ca mancu sangu ci hannu 'ntra li vini:  
siddu circati latruna e briganti,  
'n palazzu li truvati, e cu l'amanti!».

Lu marasciallu fici un passu avanti,  
dissi: «Chistu la liggi un lu cunsenti».  
Turiddu ci rispuse senza scanti:  
«Chista è la liggi di li priputenti,  
ma c'è na liggi ca nun sbagghia e menti,  
ca dici: pani a li panzi vacanti,  
robba a li nudi, acqua a l'assitati,  
e a cu travagghia onuri e libirtati!».

La mafia pinsava a scuppittati;

and June with debts and callouses,  
of the olives you're left with the twig  
and of the corn ears stubble and straw'.

He said 'The land is of those who work it,  
take up the flags and the hoes'.

And just before the break of dawn  
they made valleys and dug graves:  
the earth became a banquet table,  
alive, made of flesh like a person;  
and beneath the reddening of the flags  
each day-worker seemed a giant.

They came running the carabinieri  
with chains and rifles in hand.  
Turiddu shouted at them 'Get back!'  
'cause here there are no thieves, killers  
neither,  
there are, here, miserable day-workers  
that not even blood have they in their veins:  
if you are after thieves and brigands,  
in the palace you'll find them, and with  
their lovers!'

The marshall took a step forward,  
said 'This is not consented by law'.  
Turiddu answered him unafraid:  
'That's the law of the prepotents,  
but there's one law that doesn't err or lie,  
that says: bread to the empty bellies,  
clothes to the naked, water to the thirsty,  
and to he who works honour and freedom!'

The mafia thought with rifle blows;

'sta liggi nun garbava a li patruna,  
eranu comu li cani arrabbiati  
cu' li denti appizzati a li garruna;  
poviri jornateri sfurtunati  
ca l'aviti di supra a muzzicuna!  
Turiddu si guardava di dd'armali  
e stava all'erta si vidia sipàli.

'Na sira turnò in casa senza ali  
l'occhio luntanu e lu pinseri puru:  
«Mancia figghiuzzu miu, cori liali...»;  
ma lu guardau e si lu vitti scuru:  
«Figghiu, tu nun mi pari naturali».  
e s'appujau 'na manu a lu muru.  
«Matri», dissi Turiddu, e la guardau:  
«Bonu mi sentu». E la testa calau.

«Figghiu, cu fui t'amminazzau?  
Sugnu to' matri, un m'ammucciari nenti».  
«Matri, vinni lu jornu»; e sospirau:  
«a Cristu l'ammazzaru e fu 'nnucenti!».  
«Figghiu, lu cori miu assincupau,  
mi ci chiantasti tri spati puncenti!».  
Genti ca siti ccà, faciti vuci:  
dda matri si lu vitti mortu 'n cruci.

Sidici maju l'arba 'n cielu luci  
e lu casteddu àutu di Sciara  
che guardava lu mari chi stralluci  
comu n'artaru supra di na vara;  
e tra mari e casteddu na gran cruci  
si vitti dda matina all'aria chiara,  
sutta la cruci un mortu, e cu' l'aceddi

that law does not apply to landowners,  
they were like angered dogs  
with their teeth driven into their shanks;  
poor unfortunate day-workers  
that have them biting down upon you!  
Turiddu knew well those animals  
and stayed alert when seeing bushes.

One evening he came home without wings  
his eyes long off and his thought too:  
'Eat my dear son, loyal heart...';  
but she looked at him and saw him dark:  
'Son, you don't look like yourself.'  
And he rested one hand at the wall.  
'Matri', said Turiddu, and he looked at her:  
'I feel good'. And his head drooped.

'What's happened, they threatened you son?  
Hide nothing from me, I'm your matri'  
'Matri, the day has come'; and sighing:  
'They killed Christ – an innocent man!'.  
'Son, my heart's stopped on me,  
you've stuck stinging swords in me, three!'  
All you lot here raise your voices:  
as his mother saw him die on the cross.

Sixteenth of May the dawn shines in the sky  
and looking out at the gleaming waves  
is the castle in Schiara up on high  
like an altar above a grave;  
and betwixt castle and sea a great cross lies  
you see it in the clear air the morning gave,  
beneath the cross a deadman, and wi' the  
birds

chiantu ruttu di li puvureddi.

the poor's broken cry is heard.

Gridava: «Figghiu!» pi strati e vaneddi  
la strangusciata matri chi curria  
versu lu mortu a stramazamareddi,  
a fasciu di sarmenti, chi camìa  
dintra lu furnu e ventu a li purteddi:  
«Curriti tutti a chianciri cu mia!  
Puvireddi, nisciti di li tani,  
morsi ammazzatu pi lu vostru pani!».

In street and alley she screamed 'Son!'  
the anguished mother running by  
like a madwoman towards the dead man,  
a bundle of shoots to set burning  
inside an oven and wind at the grates:  
'Run all of you and cry with me!  
Poorlings, in burrows born and bred,  
he was murdered, slain for your bread!'

«Carrubbineri, mi si' cristianu...  
- Nun mi tuccari, levati di ddocu,  
nun vidi ca su' torci li me manu  
e addumu comu pruvuli a lu focu;  
chiddu è me figghiu, vattinni luntanu  
quantu lu chianciu e lu duluri sfogu,  
quantu ci sciogghiu dda palumma bianca  
c'havi dintra lu pettu a manu manca.

'Carrubbineri, but if you're a Christian...  
-Don't touch me, get yourself out of my way,  
can't you see my hands are wringing  
and light up like powder to the fire;  
he is my son, get yourself away  
so I can cry and vent my pain,  
so I can unleash the white dove  
that he has to the left inside his chest.

Carrubbineri, mi si' cristianu,  
nun vidi ca ci cula sangu finu?  
Fammi 'ncugnari ca ci levu chianu  
dda petra ch'havi misa ppi cuscinu,  
sutta la facci ci mettu li me manu  
supra lu pettu 'stu cori vicinu  
e cu' lu chiantu li piaghi ci sanu  
primu c'agghiorna dumani matinu.

Carrubbinere, but if you're Christian,  
don't you see that pure blood is running?  
Let me come close and I'll slowly lift  
the stone that you'd set as a pillow,  
beneath your face I'll place my hand  
above your chest this heart nearby  
and with my tears his wounds I'll heal  
before tomorrow morning comes.

Prima c'agghiorna trovu l'assassinu  
e ci scippu lu cori cu' 'sti manu,  
lu portu strascinannu a lu parrinu:  
e ci dicu: sunati, sacristanu!  
Me figghiu avia lu sangu d'oru finu

Before the break of day I'll find the killer  
I'll rip him of his heart with these hands,  
I'll drag it before the priest:  
and I'll say: ring out, verger!  
My son 'ad blood of pure gold

e chistu di pisciazza di pantanu,  
chiamaticci na tigrì ppi bicchinu  
la fossa ci la scavu cu' 'sti manu.  
Figghiu, chi dicu, la testa mi sguazza,  
ah, si nun fussi ppi la fidi mia,  
la socialismu chi grapi li vrazza  
e mi duna la spranza e la valia;  
mi lu 'nzignasti e mi tinevi 'n brazza  
ed iu supra li manu ti chiancia,  
tu m'asciucavi cu lu muccaturi  
iu mi sinteva moriri d'amuri.

Tu mi parravi comu un confissuri  
iu ti parrava comu pinitenti,  
ora disfatta pi tantu duluri  
ci dugnu vuci a li cumannamenti:  
vogghiu muriri cu' 'stu stissu amuri  
vogghiu muriri cu' 'sti sentimenti.  
Figghiu, ti l'arrubbau la banneru:  
matri ti sugnu e cumpagna sincera!»

Sidici maju l'arba ncelu luci  
e lu custeddu àutu di Sciara  
taliava lu mari chi strallucci  
comu n'artaru supra di na vara;  
e tra mari e casteddu na gran cruci  
si vitti dda matina all'aria chiara,  
sutta la cruci un mortu, cu l'acceddi  
lu chiantu ruttu di li puvireddi.

and he of putrid swamp piss,  
call him a tiger to gravedig  
the ditch I'll dig it wi'my own hands.  
Son, what am I saying, my head's wallowin',  
ah, if it weren't for my faith,  
socialism that opens my arms  
and gives me hope and longing;  
you taught me n' you held me in your arms  
and on your hands I cried,  
you dried me with your handkerchief  
I felt myself die o'love.

You talked to me like a confessor  
I talked to you like I were penitent,  
now defeated by so much sorro'  
I give voice to the commandments:  
I want to die with this same love  
I want to die with these feelings.  
I've robbed you of the flag, my son:  
Your mother I am and true companion!

Sixteenth of May the dawn shines in the sky  
and looking out at the gleaming waves  
is the castle in Sciara up on high  
like an altar above a grave;  
and betwixt sea and castle a great cross lies  
you saw it in the clear air the morning gave,  
beneath the cross a dead man, wi' the birds  
the poor's broken cry.

#### 4.5.1. Narrating context and exploring the paratext

I suggest that non-verbal and paratextual features (explored in detail by Batchelor, 2018) combined have the potential to enhance the transfer of

Buttitta's political message. This approach attempts to utilize paratextual<sup>186</sup> phenomena to give prominence to encoded messages in dialect that may be evoked by the use of cultural 'props' and additional context, rather like 'back-up materials' as Jones (2013: 3) refers to 'paratexts'.

In 1993, Schreiber (cited in Krein-Kühle, 2014: 22) presented a binary definition of translation, including 'text-translation' and 'context-translation', 'the former being governed by predominantly text-internal invariants (form or content) and the latter by text-external invariants (intention or effect)'. In transferring context, I deem it useful to explore paratext and translational aids in order to linguistically and non-linguistically convey the significance. Translation needs to function as a repository of the contextual landscape of the artwork, particularly in the case of dialect poetry in which the language itself forms part of this contextual panorama. Brevini (1986: 691) writes:

Questo bisogno di rendere testimonianza ad un mondo attraverso la sua lingua si manifesta sul piano stilistico nella crescente fortuna riscossa fra i dialettali dell'ultima generazione dalle forme narrative, indizi di una mobilitazione della memoria tanto più pressante quanto più le forme di vita di cui essa è depositaria<sup>187</sup>.

I wished to communicate this sense of dialectal function within the translation and considered a brief preface, inferring the resonance of the original dialect. As Tedesco (1965: 28) states:

Naturalmente, mentre nell'Isola la coesistenza dialetto-lingua italiana si fa sempre più evidente, è la autenticità e la singolarità della materia ispirativa e della resa

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<sup>186</sup> For detailed discussion of paratexts in translation, see Gil-Bardají et al (2012).

<sup>187</sup> [Trans.] 'This need to bear witness to a world through its language manifests itself on the stylistic level in the growing fortune levied among the last generation of the dialectal poets from the narrative forms, clues to a mobilization of memory, all the more pressing inasmuch as the life forms of which it is depositary'

espressiva che certificano ancora la possibilità di una poesia dialettale siciliana; che è appunto il caso, mi pare, del *Lamentu* di Ignazio Buttitta.<sup>188</sup>

This poem is a reaction to a historical Sicilian event and is the reconstruction in poetry of a true occurrence. Tedesco (ibid.: 23) writes that on the 16 May, 1955 (one year after the publication of *Pani*), the socialist trade unionist, Salvatore Carnevale, was murdered

ed è nell'empito dello sdegno umano e della condanna civile che questo tristo episodio della lotta politica provocò che Buttitta, avendo ritrovato nella tradizione delle storie [...] larga materia di studio e di approfondimento del suo canto tendenzialmente popolare, rinnovò questo genere con le splendide ed intense ottave narrative di *La morti di Turiddu Carnevali*, dove riappare la 'classica' rima 'ntruccata<sup>189</sup>.

Tedesco (ibid.) observes that this poem was first published on the occasion of the 2nd National Congress of Popular Culture but was then reprinted in *Trenu*, with the new title: '*Lamentu pi la morti di Turiddu Carnevali*', adding that 'esiste pure un'edizione discografica che si avvale dell'esecuzione del cantastorie siciliano Ciccio Busacca, quello stesso che la canta in giro per l'Isola e l'ha fatta conoscere in Italia e in Europa'<sup>190</sup> (see also Buttitta and

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<sup>188</sup> [Trans.] Naturally, while on the island the coexistence of dialect-language is increasingly evident, it is the authenticity and the singularity of the inspirational subject matter and expressive rendering that still certify the possibility of a dialectal Sicilian poetry; which is in fact the case, it seems to me, in *Lamentu*, by Ignazio Buttitta.

<sup>189</sup> [Trans.] 'and it is in the midst of the humiliation and civil condemnation that this sad episode of political struggle provoked Buttitta, having found in the tradition of the *stories* [...] a great deal of study and deepening of his tendentiously popular song, to renew this genre with the splendid and intense narrative octaves of *La morti di Turiddu Carnevali*, where the "classic" 'ntruccata\* rhyme reappears' \*Ntruccata refers to rhyming patterns where the final two verses are rhyming couplets and the last line of the first rhymes with the first line of the second.

<sup>190</sup> [Trans.] 'there is also a recording that uses the performance of Sicilian singer Ciccio Busacca, the singer who sings it around the Island and has made it known in Italy and Europe'

Buttitta, 2007: 329). The 'cantastorii' (story-singers), so Bonanzinga (2011: 194) writes:

travelled throughout Sicily and [...] sung mainly about 'happened events' – such as the crimes of the mafia and bandits, sensational murders, or disasters – in the public squares and village fairs, with a self-accompaniment on guitar as well as depicting scenes of each story on a big painted banner.

Sometimes 'a vernacular poet was requested to write a particular text' (ibid.), as in the case of Ignazio Buttitta and Ciccio Busacca. Figure 2 is an example of such a 'painted banner'.



**Figure 2.** *Salvatore Carnevale.* (Istituto Ricerche Studi Arte Popolare 'Agrigentum', n.d.)

This scenario allows the poet and 'cantastorie' to (re)narrate an event, reconstructing it in poetry and song. Infused with the poet's presence, the work is a moving story and Buttitta's poems are an act of narration. Translation too can adopt this narrative character and the translator, in



responding to the poetry, creates a narration of the translation process. In a review of Buttitta's *Paglia* Borelli (1969: 396) writes

Today in Sicily we still find the old-fashioned ballad singer. He still goes from village to village displaying his screen, on which he has painted in various sections the episodes of an event that really took place. His tale in verse is a commentary on the painted scenes. The man sings it to his audience, accompanying himself or interspersing musical phrases on some instrument – a bagpipe or guitar. This is the method used by Buttitta, a Sicilian poet.

In order to provide this encounter with original context, I considered non-linguistic aids to enhance the interpretive process in translation. This could involve, for example, inclusion of the painted banner detailing the story visually. Scott (2012: 13) suggests that 'intermedial translation alerts us to the activation of other senses and the slippages between them' and Baker elaborates on the narrative approach that it is less interested in textual patterns, more in 'one-off textual or non-textual choice' (2014: 159), also observing that it is 'realisable across a variety of media, with narrators able to draw on an open-ended set of resources in elaborating any story: written and spoken text, images, diagrams, colour [...] among other resources' (ibid.: 159–160). Garrido Vilariño (2011:65) writes of paratranslation that

[T]he concept also emerges as a reaction to the fact that translation is too much focused on the process of mediating between linguistic forms, obviating all extra-textual conditioning factors, which in many cases are at the centre of the translational process and not merely its context.

Garrido Vilariño adds that it may be viewed as 'a concept that can be used to describe the intentional cognitive processes (ideological forms and constructions) behind the mechanisms of cultural transfer' (ibid.: 67). Mediation between linguistic forms is not insufficient; it is rather that, in

emphasizing the different needs of dialect translation, I suggest that paratextual elements can be instrumental in trans-creating the contextual framework of the original, something upon which dialect translation may rely more heavily than other types of literary translation. As Federici (2011: 5) observes: 'translation[s] of regionalized narratives go through an additional level of scrutiny in terms of the perceived motives behind the use of the vernacular, dialectal, popular, or local features of the source language'.

Baker (2014: 170) remarks that translators 'are constantly faced with new genres and subgenres that do not always provide ready frameworks for intelligible narratives within the target culture', and the translation of dialect poetry certainly falls into a subgenre of non-mainstream ST and relatively un-narrated translation. We deal, in fact, with overlapping narratives, these being the translator's co-textual narrative and the narrative within the original poetry. Baker's (2014: 160) view supports this cyclical endeavour: 'Every translation operates within a specific, local environment, but it also contributes to the stock of narratives circulating within and beyond that environment'. Buttitta makes this poem a personal narrative yet it allows us to examine the broader public narrative of Italy, the role of dialect poetry, and how this is 'inflected by numerous personal narratives and negotiated over time through the input of many individuals' (ibid.: 165). This is achieved with

una dimessa e provocatoria felicità espressiva, attuante, oltre il resto, un significativo *epos* di parlanti siciliani, che va di pari passo con un progresso storico che se, nel poeta, ambisce alla ufficialità socialista, non è tuttavia meno carico di densi succhi universali<sup>191</sup>. (Grillandi, 1976: 214)

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<sup>191</sup> [Trans.] 'a modest and provocative expressive happiness, implementing, beyond the rest, a significant *epos* of Sicilian speakers, which goes hand in hand with a historical progress that if, in the poet, aspires to socialist officialism, is not less charged with dense universal flavours'

Readers might be informed of textual movement and 'memorial' within the Sicilian tradition:

a tradition of Sicilian writing, dominated by Sciascia, in which the object of description (whether it be Sicily, Sicalianness, or the Sicilian landscape) is always refracted through multiple intertextual references. Individual texts therefore both constitute this tradition and are constituted by it. (O'Rawe 2007: 83)

This information could also be presented by way of a brief preface. The poem addresses the very real struggle of peasants against landowners and mafia involvement in the running of the land. As Ascitutto (1977: 70) observes: 'A discussion of Sicily cannot exclude the Mafia', and Grillandi (1976: 214) writes of this poem that

Le parole che Buttitta mette in bocca a Turiddu Carnevale attuano veramente la tanto attesa interazione tra cultura popolare e coscienza civile, tra la parola letteraria e quella scritta, in una operazione che ha la spontaneità delle cose e degli avvenimenti naturali.<sup>192</sup>

The more research I carried out into the historical events that inspired the poem, the more I wanted to incorporate this background into the finished translation. Pattison (2006: 91) remarks that:

The act of translation itself becomes an act of discovery as the translator looks into the subject in depth, doing much of the groundwork that the journalist would have done before writing the original article. Translation's position on the continuum slides backwards and forwards, depending on the level of creative input involved.

I wanted to tap into the recreation of historical memory; Chapter 3 addressed

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<sup>192</sup> [Trans.] 'The words that Buttitta puts in the mouth of Turiddu Carnevale really implement the long-awaited interaction between popular culture and civil conscience, between the literary and written words, in an operation that has the spontaneity of things and natural events'

'the idea of sites of memory as both material and symbolic spaces' (O'Rawe, 2007: 91) and Buttitta and other writers employing this technique become 'agents of commemoration, engaged in an endless process of preserving, transmitting and interpreting the meaning of these sites through their writings' (ibid.). Levi (2007: 9) notes

La tradizione dei cantastorie, che vanno di villaggio in villaggio, sulle piazze o nei teatri e cinematografi, e raccolgono le folle ai loro versi e alle loro antiche cantilene, non si è mai interrotta: nei versi e nella chitarra di Ciccio Busacca ritrovi lo schema del passato e le vicende attuali dei banditi, della mafia, dei contadini, dei sindacalisti, del popolo.<sup>193</sup>

The poem might be described as reclamation of power; it carries forward a significant event, ensuring it is not forgotten: 'vien fuori davvero, da queste ottave, la figura non retorica di un popolo che affolla in una sintesi guttusiana di grida di pugni chiusi di bandiere tutta la realtà della lingua e della nazione'<sup>194</sup> (Grillandi, 1976: 214). The intricacies of power in relation to place are detailed not only within the subject matter of the poem, but also through its language. Sack (1993: 326-327) suggests

It may appear [...] that the power of place is secondary to social power, in that the latter seems to impart the power to place. This is not the case, as the theory of territoriality reveals, precisely because the various forms of social power cannot exist without these territorial rules. Territorial and social rules are mutually constitutive, which is the concrete meaning of the new, often overused term spatiality.

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<sup>193</sup> [Trans.] 'The tradition of "storysingers", who go from village to village, squares or theatres and cinemas, and gather the crowds to their verses and their ancient songs, never stopped: the lyrics and guitar of Ciccio Busacca find the pattern of the past and the current events of bandits, mafia, peasants, trade unionists, people'

<sup>194</sup> [Trans.] 'it really comes out of these octaves, the non-rhetorical figure of a people that crowds in a Guttusian synthesis of the shouts of closed fists of flags all the reality of language and nation comes to the fore'

I wished to engage the reader in the historical significance of the event in the poem. Does the poem, for example, become more significant to a reader if they know that Buttitta recited its first verse to his son the day before he died? I placed this information next to the translation, rather than in a preface or foreword:

Angel he was and had no wings  
he was no saint but miracles he worked,  
in the sky without rope or steps he ascended  
and with no support he descended;  
it was love his capital  
and this wealth he shared with all:  
Turiddu Carnivali was his name  
who like Christ to death was slain

"The mystery will accompany me"; these are the last words I heard my father say the day before he died. [...] he opened his eyes and recited the first verse of *Lamento per la morte di Turiddu Carnevale*: "Ancilu era e non avì ali". This is the voice of my father's that I hold onto and this is the memory of it. This voice, this memory, has traversed and will still continue to traverse the many hours of my insomnia and I tried to work out what was the mystery hiding behind these words, behind this message *Ancilu era e non avìa ali*'.

Nino Buttitta (2013, cited in Lo Bianco, 2013: 81  
[my trans.]

'a comparison is established, not irreverent for the "religious" but "secular" imagination of the people, between the unjustly murdered unionist and Jesus Christ, the first and most certain symbol of the righteousness who sacrifices himself because of the faults of others and for the good of all'. (Tedesco, 1965: 29)

An extensive glossary is perhaps more hindrance than help to the reader and, possibly, ignored. The translator's presence in the preface, similarly, may be overlooked. It would therefore seem desirable to insert these explicative details into the translations themselves as part of a new, aesthetically designed reading space that is translation in action. This form of translated text is annotated and, perhaps, aesthetically less pleasing but culturally more informative and effective at reconstructing context through paratext. We can view such paratext in translation as a means of carrying out an ultimate act of conservation within the act of transfer. Alongside the translation runs

contextual, historical, personal narrative, which creates setting and informs the reader of background information, in this case, the relationship between the poet and one of his most well-known poems, rendering the translation an archive of context.

#### 4.6. 'Lu trenu di lu sulì' / 'The train of the sun' (*Trenu*, 1963)

Turi Scordu, surfararu,  
abitanti a Mazzarinu;  
cu lu Trenu di lu sulì  
s'avventura a lu distinu.

Turi Scordu, sulphur miner,  
resident of Mazzarinu;  
with the Train of the sun  
ventures to his destiny.

Chi faceva a Mazzarinu  
si travagghiu nun ci nn'era?  
fici sciopiru na vota  
e lu misiru ngalera.

What did he do in Mazzarinu  
if work there was none?  
he went on strike one time  
and they put him in prison.

Una tana la sò casa,  
quattru ossa la muggheri;  
e la fami lu circava  
cu li carti di l'usceri.

His home was a den,  
four bones his wife;  
and hunger searched for him  
with the cards of the usher.

Sette figghi e la muggheri,  
ottu vucchi ed ottu panzi,  
e lu cori un camiuuni  
carricatu di dugghianzi.

Seven children and a wife,  
eight mouths and eight bellies,  
and his heart a truck  
loaded with grievance.

Nni lu Belgiu, nveci, ora  
travagghiava jornu e notti;  
a la mogghi ci scriveva:  
nun manciati favi cotti.

Instead in Belgium, now  
he works day and night;  
writes to his wife:  
eat more than cooked beans.

Cu li sordi chi ricivi

With the money you receive

compra roba e li linzola,  
e li scarpi pi li figghi  
pi putiri jri a scola.

buy sheets and stuff,  
and shoes for the kids  
so they can go to school.

Li mineri di lu Belgiu,  
li mineri di carbuni:  
sunnù niri niri niri  
comu sangu di draguni.

The mines in Belgium,  
the coal mines:  
are black black black  
like dragon's blood.

Turi Scordu, un pezzu d'omu,  
a la sira dormi sulu;  
ntra lu lettu a pedi fora  
smaniava comu un mulu.

Turi Scordu, a piece of man,  
sleeps alone at night  
in a bed with his feet out  
restless as a mule.

Cu li fimmini ntintava;  
ma essennu analfabeta,  
nun aveva pi ncantarli  
li paroli di pueta.

He tried it on with women;  
but being illiterate  
had not the words of a poet  
to charm them.

E faceva pinitenza  
Turi Scordu nni lu Belgiu:  
senza tònaca e né mitra  
ci pareva un sacrilegiu.

And he did penance  
Turi Scordu in Belgiu:  
with no cassock nor miter  
it seemed to him a sacrilege.

Certi voti lu pinseri  
lu purtava ntra la tana,  
e lu cori ci sunava  
a martoriu la campana.

Sometimes his thoughts  
took him to the den,  
and his heart sounded  
like a funeral bell.

Ca si c'era la minestra  
di patati e di fasoli,  
nni dda tana c'era festa  
pi la mogghi e li figghioli.

Because if there was the soup  
of potatoes and beans,  
in the tana there was a party  
for his wife and children.

Comu arvulu scippatu  
senza radichi e né fogghi,  
si sinteva Turi Scordu  
quannu penza figghi e mogghi.

Like a torn down tree  
without roots or leaves,  
Turi Scordu felt  
when he thinks of his wife and sons.

Doppu un annu di patiri  
finalmenti si dicisi:  
'Mogghi mia, pigghia la roba,  
venitinni a stu paisi'.

After a year of suffering,  
he finally decided:  
'bring your belongings, love,  
come to this country'.

E parteru matri e figghi,  
salutaru Mazzarinu;  
li parenti pi d'appressu  
ci facevanu fistinu.

And mother and children left,  
said goodbye to Mazzarinu;  
their relatives following  
in farewell.

Na valiggia di cartuni  
cu la corda pi traverse;  
nni lu pettu lu nutricu  
chi sucava a tempu persu.

A cardboard suitcase  
with a rope tied around it;  
the baby at the breast  
suckling to no avail.

Pi davanti la cuvata  
di li zingari camina:  
trusci e sacchi nni li manu,  
muntarozzi nni la schina.

She in front of her brood  
of gypsies walked:  
with bundles and bags in her hands,  
a great mound on her back.

Lu cuvata cu la ciocca  
quannu fu supra lu trenu,  
nun sapeva s'era ncelu. . .  
si tuccava lu tirrenu.

The brood with the hen  
when they boarded the train,  
didn't know whether they were in the sky. . .  
or touching the ground.

Lu paisi di luntanu  
ora acchiana e ora scinni;  
e lu trenu ca vulava  
senza ali e senza pinni.

The faraway country  
comes and goes;  
and the train flew  
without wings and without feathers.



Ogni tantu si firmava  
pi nfurnari passaggeri:  
emigranti surfarara,  
figghi, patri e li muggheri.

Patri e matri si presentanu,  
li fa amici la svintura:  
l'emigranti na famigghia  
fannu dintra la vittura.

'Lu me nomu? Rosa Scordu'.  
'Lu paisi? Mazzarinu'.  
'Unni jiti?' 'Unni jiamu?'  
Unni voli lu distinu!'

Quantu così si cuntaru!  
ca li poviri, si sapi,  
hanno guai a miliuna:  
muzzicati di li lapi!

Quannu vinni la nuttata  
doppu Villa San Giovanni  
una radiu tascabili  
addiverti niche e granni.

Tutti sentinu la radiu,  
l'havi nmanu n'emigranti;  
li carusi un hannu sonnu,  
fannu l'occhi granni tanti.

Rosa Scordu ascuta e penza,  
cu lu sapi chi va a trova. . .  
n'àtra genti e nazioni,

Every once in a while it stopped  
adding passengers to the furnace:  
sulphur-mining emigrants,  
children, fathers and their wives.

Fathers and mothers introduce themselves,  
the misfortune makes them friends:  
the emigrants make a family  
inside the carriage.

'My name? Rosa Scordu'.  
'My hometown? Mazzarinu'.  
'Where are you going?' 'Where're we going?'  
Where destiny takes us!'

How much they talked about!  
because the poor, you know,  
have a thousand troubles:  
stung by bees!

When nighttime came  
after Villa San Giovanni  
a pocket radio  
gave relief to young and old.

Everyone listened to the radio,  
an emigrant held in his hand;  
the children are not sleepy,  
and their eyes grow wide.

Rosa Scordu listens and thinks,  
who knows what I'm going to find there. . .  
another people and nation,

una storia tutta nova.

a whole new story.

E si strinci pi difisa  
lu nutricu nsunnacchiatu  
mentri l'occhi teni ncoddu  
di li figghi a lu sò latu.

And to defend herself she holds tight  
her baby drifting off  
never taking her eyes from  
her other children by her side.

E la radiu tascabili  
sona musica di ballu;  
un discursu di ministru;  
un minutu d'intervallu.

And the pocket radio  
plays music for dancing;  
a speech from the minister;  
a one minute interval.

Poi detti li nutizii,  
era quasi menzannotti:  
sunnù l'ultimi nutizzi  
li nutizzi di la notti.

Then, news read,  
it was almost midnight:  
there's the last news  
the news of the night.

La radio trasmette:  
*'Ultime notizie della notte.*  
*Una grave sciagura si è verificata*  
*in Belgio nel distretto minerario*  
*di Charleroi.*  
*Per cause non ancora note*  
*una esplosione ha sconvolto*  
*uno dei livelli della*  
*miniera di Marcinelle.*  
*Il numero delle vittime è*  
*assai elevato'.*

The radio transmits: *[in standard Italian]*  
*'Tonight's final news.*  
*A serious disaster has taken place*  
*in Belgium in the mining district*  
*of Charleroi.*  
*For reasons not yet known*  
*an explosion has shattered*  
*one of the floors of the*  
*mines at Marcinelle.*  
*The number of victims is*  
*very high'.*

Ci fu un lampu di spaventu  
chi siccò lu ciatu a tutti;  
Rosa Scordu sbarra l'occhi,  
focu e lacrimi s'agghiutti.

There was a flash of fright  
that dried up everyone's breath;  
Rosa Scordu covered her eyes,  
fire and tears she gulped.

La radio continua a trasmettere:  
*'I primi cadaveri riportati  
alla superficie dalle squadre di soccorso  
appartengono a nostri  
connazionali emigrati  
dalla Sicilia.*

*Ecco il primo elenco  
delle vittime.*

*Natale Fatta, di Riesi provincia di Caltanissetta*

*Francesco Tilotta, di Villarosa provincia di Enna*

*Alfio Calabrò, di Agrigento*

*Salvatore Scordu. . . '.*

Un trimotu 'Me maritu!  
me maritu!' grida e chianci,  
e li vuci sangu e focu  
dintra l'occhi comu lanci.

Cu na manu e centu vucchi,  
addumata comu torcia,  
si lamenta e l'ugna affunna  
ntra li carni e si li scorcia.

L'àutra manu strinci e ammacca  
lu nutricu stramurtutu,  
ca si torci mentri chianci  
affucatu e senza aiutu.

E li figghi? cu capisci,  
cu capisci e cu un capisci,  
annigati nmenzu a l'unni  
di ddu mari senza pisci.

The radio goes on to transmit: *[in S. I.]*

*'The first reported bodies  
on the surface of the rescue teams  
belong to our  
national emigrants  
from Sicily.*

*Here is the first list  
of names.*

*Natale Fatta, from Riesi in the province of  
Caltanissetta*

*Francesco Tilotta, from Villarosa in the province  
of Enna*

*Alfio Calabrò, from Agrigento*

*Salvatore Scordu. . . '.*

An earthquake 'My husband!  
my husband!' she shouts and weeps,  
and the voices blood and fire  
in her eyes like spears.

With one hand and a hundred voices,  
burns like a torch,  
she weeps and nails sink  
into herself, grazing her skin.

The other hand tightens and bruises  
her baby numb,  
because it writhes while she cries  
choking and with no help.

And the children? Some know,  
some know and some don't,  
drowned in the midst of waves  
of that fishless sea.

Rosa Scordu, svinturata,  
nun è fimmina e né matri,  
e li figghi sunnu orfani  
di la matri e di lu patri.

Rosa Scordu, hapless,  
neither woman nor mother,  
and her children are orphaned  
of their mother as well as their father.

Misi attornu l'emigranti  
ca nun sannu zoccu fari;  
sunnu puru nmenzu a l'unni:  
stracinati di ddu mari.

The emigrants stand around them  
not knowing what to do;  
they too are in the wave:  
swept away by that sea.

Va lu trenu nni la notti,  
chi nuttatta longa e scura:  
non ci fu lu funirali,  
è na fossa la vittura.

The train goes on into the night,  
what a long, dark night:  
there was no funeral,  
the carriage is a grave.

Turi Scordu a la finestra,  
a lu vitru mpicccatu,  
senza occhi, senza vucca:  
è un schelitru abbruciatu.

Turi Scordu is at the window,  
pressed upon the glass,  
with no eyes, with no mouth:  
he is a burnt skeleton.

L'arba vinni senza lustru,  
Turi Scordu ddà ristava:  
Rosa Scordu lu strinceva  
nni li vrazza, e s'abbruciava.

Dawn came without light,  
Turi Scordu remained there:  
Rosa Scordu held him tight  
in her arms, and burnt herself.

#### 4.6.1. Rendering the 'Other'

I have chosen this poem to explore the juxtaposition of 'us' and 'other' between Sicily and Italy. The term 'emigrant' within the same country is telling; it is also interesting to note that the line: 'When nighttime came / after Villa San Giovanni' foretells darkness, as it is the last stop the Train of the Sun made in Sicily before crossing to the Italian mainland. The train was given this name, since it transported Sicilians to the mainland for work. Buttitta

plays with the inherent sense of light and hope, depicting a journey that would end in darkness and tragedy.

Buttitta creates visual impressions of two places and the journey between them, enabling the reader to envisage the characters in Sicily, Belgium, or on the train. The standard Italian in the ST breaks through into the Sicilian chatter on the train, still associated with the media and a world outside the one the passengers are familiar with. The journey north towards a 'better life' is equated with disaster. Francese (2005: 44) writes, 'the "Souths" of the world [...] are those places where the myth of a utopian North is constructed. For this reason Southerners need to wilfully counter their inherited complexes of inferiority and subalternity'. Emigration is a theme in Buttitta's poetry, influenced by the large numbers of Sicilians leaving Sicily and, in particular, by the mass emigration to the mining areas of Belgium (tainted, later, by the disaster at Marcinelle, which is the subject of this poem).

By this stage of writing, Buttitta's inspirations 'saranno i fuorilegge, la mafia, i contadini, i sindacalisti, il popolo'<sup>195</sup> (Grillandi, 1976: 206). There is a tone of lament and nostalgia; Buttitta focuses on one character in order to represent the plight of many, a recurring technique of his. Specifically, he addresses what Cadell (2008: 418) describes as 'a difficult journey towards and across the complex relationship between motherland and origin'. Buttitta came back to Sicily after his period living in Milan but he did not emigrate abroad and was aware that many who did were never to return. Here, again, is one of the most notable features of the dialect 'canon', 'è un'accettazione fondata sul mandato che il dialetto stesso sembra presupporre: quello di testimone linguistico, insieme, di un'esperienza privata e di un mito autobiografico, ma anche e soprattutto di un patrimonio collettivo, di un'eredità culturale, di una situazione antropologica ineluttabilmente

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<sup>195</sup> [Trans.] 'are to be the outlaws, the mafia, the farmers, the syndicalists, the people'

condannati, eppure decisivi per l'uomo contemporaneo'<sup>196</sup> (Brevini, 1986: 691). Buttitta's experience permits him to write of 'the *Nostos*, the home he left behind' (Erdinast-Vulcan, 2012: 48).

Buttitta's colloquial style is one of the most striking elements of his poetry and one of the challenges in translating this poem was to capture the 'standard vs. dialect contrasts present in the original' (Azevedo, 1998: 28), for the same contrast must be maintained in the translation, in order to represent the difference and juxtapose the voices. Morillas (2011), exploring the Neapolitan novel *Montedidio*, by Erri de Luca, suggests that dialect itself acts as a protagonist, voicing the thoughts of the speaker in dialect against a backdrop of Italian narrative. Morillas (2011: 89) notes the contrasting volumes of the languages, particularly in sharp opposition to one another:

Italian is a silent language learnt in books, whereas Neapolitan is the noisy tongue that the residents of Montedidio use to communicate between themselves; Italian is written and Neapolitan is spoken. Neapolitan is defined as fluid, lively and alert like the protagonist's good eye; his other eye, the slower one that can barely see, is the Italian eye.

In his *Sonetti romaneschi*, 'Belli states in no uncertain terms that the language of the Italian literary tradition cannot tell the story of "nnoantri" (we others)' (Howard, 2013: 709). In Buttitta's poem, dialect is perceptive and bound within familial structures while Italian is impersonal and its silence renders it more distant. The dialect is alive and dominant in a way that Italian at the time was not, at least in Sicily. Fundamentally, in this poem, it is the 'dialogic counterpoint' (Azevedo, 1998: 41) that must be rendered, as 'absence of that counterpoint entails the loss of the ideological function of dialect' (ibid.).

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<sup>196</sup> [Trans.] 'that of a linguistic witness, together, of a private experience and of an autobiographical myth, but also, above all, of a collective heritage, a cultural heritage, an anthropological situation inevitably condemned, yet decisive for contemporary man'

I attempted to differentiate between the dialect and standard Italian in English translation by making the non-standard speech appear consistently as spoken language, and the news report contrasts this with its formality, its function as language written to be read aloud. Referring to Belli's sonnets, Balma (2011: 3) emphasizes the split in original readership accessibility, noting that 'the average Italian reader would have been able to understand slightly less than two thirds of the lyrics in question'. Briguglia (2009, cited in Brandimonte, 2015: 40) writes

Le strategie proposte spaziano dal lasciare i dialettismi in lingua originale, aggiungere note esplicative o precisazioni come 'disse in dialetto' o 'aggiunse in dialetto', creare una lingua artificiale non standard o che comunque la modifichi senza rimandare ad un contesto geografico preciso. In questo caso, si tratta di quella che viene comunemente definita opzione interdialezionale, la più usata nella pratica traduttrice. Altri autori non scartano a priori la strategia di tradurre dialetto per dialetto, tenendo conto delle conseguenze nella lettura e nella ricezione del testo di arrivo.<sup>197</sup>

It is also relevant to note that the dialectal voice creates an implied relationship between the self and its domestic 'other'. Yu (2017: 62) points out that 'The value of a linguistic variety is not intrinsic, or neutral, but varies in relation to the variety it is contrasted with'. This approach draws attention to the often overlooked 'other side of the variation' and the heterogeneity of the standard language. It also reveals another aspect of Toury's (1995) 'standardization' law – and, while I do not agree with the absolutism of such

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<sup>197</sup>[Trans.] 'The proposed strategies range from leaving the dialectisms in their original language, adding an explanatory note or precisions such as "said in dialect" or "added in dialect", creating a language that is artificial, non-standard, or that in any case is modified without being associated with a precise geographic context. In this case, we turn to what is commonly defined as the interdialectal option, the one most used in translation practice. Other authors do not discard a priori the strategy of translating dialect in dialect, keeping in mind the consequences in the reading and reception of the text in progress'

'law', instances of increased, or more noticeable, standardization in translation from dialect possibly offer an illustration of how this law is indeed at play. Yu (2017: 63) draws attention to the nature of the TL, observing that, while translated language may manifest greater standardization or normalization in terms of stylistic variation when compared to the ST, it may also introduce heterogeneity within the standard that is different from that in the ST but not insignificant. Yu's approach is an interesting one, which may be applied to translation from various ST registers or sociolects into standard TL language as it challenges assumptions that 'standard language is neutral and of a single register' (ibid.), outlining that, while dialect is more associated with an 'other' culture, register is comprehensible nationwide and, while context-dependent, does not pose barriers to comprehension.

In changing dialect in translation by using TL varieties, the translator may sever the internal references of the domestic other (standard Italian) of which the SL reader would most likely be aware. In fact, it is this awareness that creates part of the strength of the dialect as a subaltern language. Reina (1997: 15) writes of dialect as the explication of difference, namely:

attitudes aiming to justify the privileged adoption of abstract categories of a way of life or of a personal culture (Sicilian, Neapolitan, Molisan, Calabrian...), distinct from that of the nation as a whole, seen for the most part as something far away and almost alien, have been able to take root and build momentum.

It is the sense of otherness and representation of what lies beyond the norm that translation from dialect must seek to maintain and protect. 'In other words, translating into a standard language, the translator cannot capture the eccentricity of vernacular speech, its function as an alternative, a non-normative deviation from the norm' (Bonaffini, 1997b: 280). Farrell (2007: 63) questions the capabilities of standard English to render the nuances inherent



in the use of non-standard language, suggesting that subaltern choice 'questions the nature of language, pointing to its role not as system of communication but as cypher of power'. I believed it necessary, in light of this, for the translation to signal its dialectal and standard counterparts, which I have done in parentheses. I am not convinced it changes the effect of the news reading in English; another option would be to include a voiceover of the original news broadcast or, possibly, the corresponding broadcast in English.

Whilst dialect is used as an explicative device in the original poetry, the translation, since it cannot transfer the dialect, must find a means of representing the role of dialect in or alongside the translated language. The use of register, without running the risk of over- or under-translating, is a move towards linguistic representation of alterity, which does not impose domestic referents as strongly on the language of the ST. The translator must also take care in terms of creating an 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, and must not alienate those whose speech does not conform to standard language. The translator must, instead, find a culturally unifying variant, which can be 'presented as the spoken register of the standard language, the mainstream classless background voice of "us"' (Yu, 2017: 63). Azevedo (1998: 30) suggests that 'a translator strives to preserve the tension that the original text establishes between the reader and the other represented by the characters using the dialect'. This is complicated, and Bonaffini (1995: 212) observes that

la perenne opposizione lingua-dialetto viene spinta al di sotto della soglia della conflittualità, questo diventa pressoché impossibile nel momento in cui viene introdotta l'altra lingua, la lingua standard, nei cui confronti il vernacolo dovrà necessariamente diventare eccentrico, deviante. È dunque il contesto plurilingue, ricco di opposizioni e di contrasti interni, che complica maggiormente il compito del traduttore, costretto a strategie compensatorie inevitabilmente riduttive ed

insoddisfacenti ad esprimere quella diversità che si manifesta nella sua pienezza solo di fronte al linguaggio standard.<sup>198</sup>

Where it appears that dialogue 'cannot totally extricate itself from the canons of written language' (Taylor, 2006: 47), I considered (hypothetically) the possibility of including other media alongside the poetry, to communicate what Krzywoszynska (2015: 316) calls 'more-than-linguistic spheres of meaning'. With films in dialect, rendering the dialect in subtitles is not perceived as being problematic in the same way as literary translation. Taylor (2006: 43) observes of Loach's films that 'much of the essential ideational content can be gleaned from the attention to detail in the visual component. The bleak housing estates, the conditions of urban poverty, the poor clothing, etc. are eloquent in description'. This is one useful feature of film, which provides its own visual information for those viewers unfamiliar with Britain, and who watch the film dubbed or subtitled. As regards this poem, perhaps adjoining the note before the speech: *in standard Italian* beforehand is sufficient in terms of alerting readers to the variety of speech and the differences from the standard language this dialect may signify.

Woodham (2006, cited in Jones, 2014: 38) advocates a 'disjunctive approach', whereby target audiences practise their suspension of disbelief and allow a translation to 'exist in both the target place (signalled by target regional voicing) and the source place (signalled by author-world knowledge, place-names, etc.)' (ibid.). It is possible to combine these places, and look at how source world-knowledge transfers to target world-knowledge in keeping

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<sup>198</sup> [Trans.] 'the perennial language-dialect opposition is pushed below the threshold of conflict, this becomes almost impossible when the other language is introduced, the standard language, in whose contrasts the vernacular must necessarily become eccentric, deviant. It is therefore the plurilingual context, full of oppositions and internal contrasts, which complicates the translator's task, forced into compensatory strategies that are inevitably reductive and unsatisfactory in expressing the diversity that manifests itself in its fullness only in front of the standard language'

with contextual signposts and landmarks. Whether we apply 'filtering and standardizing' (Hargan, 2006: 68) or linguistic matching and creative playfulness, suffice it to say that, in order 'to appear real in the target context' (ibid.: 67), subjects must undergo adaptation.

#### 4.7. 'Li pueti d'oggi' / 'The poets o'today' (Peddi, 1963)

*A / For Cesare Zavattini*

Pueta mpignatu mi dicinu p'offisa; comu si nun avissi la cammisa e li robbi di ncoddu e li scarpi a li pedi.	Poet engaged they tell me to offend; as if I had no shirt and clothes on m'back and shoes at my feet.
Comu s'un manciassi pani pi stari all'additta e nun mi stinnicchiasi a dòrmiri cu la panza china, la notti.	As if I didn't eat bread to stay upright and didn't lay me down to sleep with my belly full, at night.
Pecura senza lana e sceccu senza cuda mi vurrissiru: n'abortu di natura.	Sheep without wool and ass without tail they'd have me: an abortion of nature.
Ca tali sunnu li pueti d'oggi, acceddi senza gorgia, acceddi orbi cu l'ali spinnati: hannu lu munnu a mètiri ed arricioppanu spichi ntra lu pettu vacanti.	That such are the poets of today, birds without tune, birds blind with their wings clipped: they've the world to reap and they gather thorns in their empty chest.
Schetti in viduvananza sunnu;	Celibates in widowhood they are;

sunatura stunati  
ca cercanu l'accordu  
supra un filu di chitarra.

tone-deaf players  
that search for the chord  
over a guitar string.

E nun sannu  
ca lu pueta è marinaru  
chi pisca cu lu tartaruni,  
ca è aciddaru  
cu li riti cunzati  
tutti li staciuni.

And they don't know  
that the poet is mariner  
who fishes with the trawl,  
that he's bird-catcher  
with the nets spread  
all of the seasons.

E nun s'addunanu  
ca la puisia  
havi li radichi ntra la terra  
e li rami ciuruti  
aperti all'aria  
comu vrazza d'omu.

And they don't realize  
that poetry  
has its roots in the earth  
and branches blossomed  
open in the air  
like the arms o'man.

Pueti senza mpegnu, vi salutu;  
cughiti pruvulazzu!  
'Sulità e santità'  
sunnu li vostri paroli;  
ma la virità,  
oggi e pi sempri,  
resta mmenzu all'omini.

Unengaged poets, I salute you;  
gather dust!  
'Solitude and sainthood'  
are your words;  
but the truth,  
today and always,  
remains in 'amongst men.

#### 4.7.1. Nature and the poet's truth

I found this poem to be representative of Buttitta's stance on the poet figure and the poet's role. His tone is scathing, as seen in previous poems, towards the 'typical' poet figure and conventional poetry. He reinforces his stance by rendering it an honest, unassuming one; it is 'the truth', as he describes it, without pretence. I opted initially to translate the title as 'Today's poets' but returned to my aim to mirror the Sicilian syntax where possible and settled

for 'The poets of today'. I then altered this slightly to 'The poets o'today' to mirror even more closely the joined 'd'oggi' of the original, which is possibly nothing more than the common merging of Sicilian (and Italian) vowel sounds. The first line's 'Pueta mpignatu' I struggled with, considering 'committed', 'busy', 'on a mission' or 'obligated' before choosing 'engaged' as I felt it captured the meaning of the Sicilian word in this context. This lexical choice also seems more in keeping with the following, again scathing, accusations that this is 'as if I had no shirt / and clothes on my back / and shoes at my feet' and also with the address of the last verse 'Unengaged poets', which would not have worked as well had I opted for any of the other alternatives. Buttitta is challenging the sense of poetic engagement and returns to his frequent juxtaposition of 'them/they' with himself. He retains his status as poet of the people but does so by distinguishing avidly between that which he is not and conventional notions of poetry and the poet figure, as well as from other poets. He criticizes these, using his oft-applied image of the bird and rendering it tuneless, voiceless or without song, which I eventually rendered as 'birds without tune'. I felt this tied in more effectively with the later reference to the guitar strings, in a way that 'voice' or 'song' would have done less effectively.

I attempted to recreate the dialectal voice by focusing on the sounds of the original poem. After reading the ST aloud many times, I felt that there were many gentle sounding words, but with a frustrated underlying tone, a departure from Buttitta's often harsher, heavily consonantal language, which he often applies in accusational poems. Here, instead, he is using the lightness of language as his weapon, drawing upon natural imagery to offend in his distortion of it, for example, the clipped wings of the birds or their blindness, the celibates in widowhood and the gathered thorns in their chests.

Buttitta aligns himself with a mastery of nature; he is at one with it, returning to his beloved sea as symbol with the poet as mariner and planting

poetry within the earth – the result a natural blossoming, rather than a forced construct. I tried to recreate this by making the English echo the gentleness of the sounds and by applying the same images that Buttitta conjures. Whilst it may be more natural in English to have translated 'ca lu pueta è marinaru' as 'that the poet is a sailor', I preferred 'that the poet is mariner' to retain the emphasis that the lack of article creates. 'Seafarer' may have depicted the same instinctive relationship between man and the sea but I chose mariner simply because of the phonologic similarity. I attempted to recreate the reflexive 'e nun mi stinnicchiasi a dòrmiri' by using 'and didn't lay me down to sleep', which ought to be 'myself' in grammatically correct English but is familiar enough in its colloquial and romantic version here. It was a rare opportunity to mimic the vowel sound of Sicilian reflexive verbs in the first person and I didn't hesitate to use it. I used 'shoes at my feet' instead of the more common 'on my feet' to translate 'a li peddi' and 'on m'back' to translate 'di ncoddu' as it was the closest I could get to mirroring the adjoined 'n' of 'ncoddu'. This apostrophized merging is a subtle strategy but one whose solution I feel is effective in recreating the lulled, linked vowel sounds of the original.

Pinotti (2000, cited in Petrocchi, 2011: 67) writes of Gadda that he deemed dialects to be "'spoken" instruments related to life, and by spoken he means a synonym of experiences orientating human knowledge towards truth' and Petrocchi (ibid.) writes that he 'conceives of dialects as mimetic languages that are close to reality and human nature'. This 'truth-telling' is what makes poetry so important, indeed, so necessary. It is language devoid of political manipulation and marketing tricks, particularly relevant in today's world of false news and media dishonesty, just as within Buttitta's era of propaganda and a world at odds with itself, dialect being 'a reaction against the incursions of the fascist régime on the autonomy of art' (O'Neill, 1975: 361). Grillandi (1976: 205) observes 'nelle cadute sentimentali che la infiorano (solo

molto più tardi Buttitta riuscirà quasi sempre a fare aggio sul sentimento), è tuttavia densa di un verismo sociale che preannunzia gli esiti maggiori della *Peddi nova*<sup>199</sup>. Petrocchi (2011: 67) claims that 'dialects represent communicative means that are immensely vital to achieving the knowledge of truth, even in a partial and indefinite way'. Through this function of 'truth-telling' the poet simultaneously provides the justification for his poetry and aligns this to natural inclination, exempt from artifice.

#### 4.8. 'U pueta e a puisia' / 'The poet and poetry' (*Piazza, 1974*)

Ora ca un cuntu nenti	Now that I recount nothing
e a puisia non servi	and poetry has no use
e sugnu aceddu spinnatu	and I am a plucked bird
chi non vola	that doesn't fly
non canta e non fa nidu	doesn't sing and makes no nest
io parru ancora a l'òmini	I still speak to men
e restu un foddì chi ragiunu.	and remain a fool who reasons.

A vuci a duna a nascita	The voice is given at birth
e un pozzu diri a vucca	and I can't say to my mouth
did non parrari,	not to speak,
a l'occhi di non chiànciri,	to my eyes not to cry,
o cori di non risatari	or my heart not to beat
e a menti di non circari a virità	and to my mind not to search truth
orba nte strati	blind in the streets
chi stulitìa paroli fàusi.	that raves false words.

Cà chistu è u misteri	That this is the trade
di cu nasci pueta	of one born a poet
e tira acqua limpida	and pulls limpid water

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<sup>199</sup> [Trans.] 'in the sentimental plunges that blossom (only much later will Buttitta almost always succeed in comfortably delivering sentiment), this poem is nevertheless full of a social verism that foretells the principal outcomes of the *Peddi nova*'

e lassa a trùbbula a siccaru nto puzzu.

and leaves the murky to dry up in the well.

Cà omu sugnu e unu d'iddi  
cu a carni a l'ossa  
e u tempu chi passa  
e lassa rasti a lèggiri.

'Cause I'm a man and one o'them  
with flesh a'my bones  
and time that passes  
and leaves trails to read.

Unu d'iddi chi scatina pusa  
e agghiunci vrazza e vrazza  
pi cancellari u martiriu  
e rumpiri i cruci radicati nta terra.

One of those that unchains wrists  
and links arm to arm  
to erase martyrdom  
and break the crosses rooted in th'earth.

Unu d'iddi chi sfarda negghi  
e adduma falò  
pi fari a notti jornu nto specchiu du celu.

One o'those that shatters the clouds  
and ignites bonfires  
to make the night day in the mirror of the  
sky.

Unu d'iddi chi comu tutti i pueti  
porta u munnu ncoddu chi lacrimía sangu  
e u vidi giuiri e cantari  
cu l'occhi di l'omini c'hannu ancora a nasciri.

One o'those like all the poets  
carries the world on his back that cries blood  
and sees it rejoice and sing  
with the eyes of men yet to be born.

Un foddì!  
Un foddì e un pueta  
ca cridi l'òmini arbuli  
e iddu cughituri senza abbentu;  
ca cridi l'òmini mari  
e iddu marinaru e piscaturi  
cu a riti a strascicu;  
ca cridi l'òmini minera,  
minera d'oru finu,  
e iddu minaturi cu pala e picu  
chi scava oru a palati.

A fool!  
A fool and a poet  
who believes men to be trees  
and himself a gatherer without requiem;  
who believes men to be sea  
and himself mariner and fisherman  
with the net dragging;  
who believes men to be mines,  
mines of pure gold,  
and himself miner with shovel and pickaxe  
who digs gold by the bucket.



Un foddì!  
Un foddì e un pueta  
ca cridi chi a puisia  
mpastata nto cimentu,  
squagghiata nto ferru,  
siziunata e atumizzata  
non mori e camina nte strati.

E iddu a vidi caminari,  
tràsiri nte casi,  
jucari chi picciriddi,  
fari stiddi  
balluna  
pupi di carta  
e nzignaricci a diri matri.

Tràsiri nte casi  
di notti e di jornu  
e allattari i nichì  
cu i minni da matri,  
talialli cu l'occhi da matri,  
cantaricci u sonnu nta naca  
cu a vuci da matri.

Un foddì e un pueta  
ca cridi chi a puisia  
dormi cu nuàtri,  
sonna cu nuàtri,  
e all'arba sbaracca i finestri  
e nn'ammustra u sulì.

Un foddì e un pueta  
ca cridi chi a puisia  
non havi occhi e nni vidi,

A fool!  
A fool and a poet  
who believes that poetry  
kneaded into cement,  
crushed into iron,  
cut up and atomized  
dies not and walks the streets.

And he sees her walking,  
sliding into houses,  
playing with the youngsters,  
making stars  
balloons  
paper puppets  
and teaching them to say mother.

Slide into the houses  
by night and by day  
and breastfeeding the smalls  
with the mothers' tits,  
watching with a mother's eyes,  
singing them to sleep in their cradles  
with a mother's voice.

A fool and a poet  
who believes that poet  
sleeps among us,  
dreams among us,  
and at dawn throws open the windows  
and shows us the sun.

A fool and a poet  
who believes that poetry  
has no eyes and sees us,

non havi manu e nni tocca,  
non havi focu e nni quadía;  
ca è fora e dintra di nuàtri  
peddi e carni di l'omu.

has no hands and touches us,  
has no fire and warms us;  
that it's outside and within us all  
skin and flesh of man.

Un foddi e un pueta  
ca cridi chi a puisia  
non è pani limusinatu  
ma pani di tutti  
e cu nni mancia campa cuntenti  
e cu un nni mancia  
resta affamatu  
e cu a panza vuncia di feli.

A fool and a poet  
who believes that poetry  
is not begged bread  
but bread of everyone  
and who eats it lives content  
and who doesn't eat it  
is left hungry  
and with bellies swollen with venom.

Un foddi e un pueta  
chi chiddu chi cogghi e pisca  
e chiddu chi pisca e scava  
u dunnu a l'àutri;  
e a iddu attocca u suduri,  
i lacrimi,  
e quasi sempri a gioia  
ammiscata o duluri.

A fool and a poet  
that which he gathers and fishes  
and that which he fishes and digs  
he gives to the others;  
and to him comes sweat,  
tears,  
and almost always joy  
mixed with pain.

Un foddi ca non voli cridiri  
ca siddu i pueti un ci fussiru  
u munnu fussi u stissu,  
l'omini i stissi,  
e a vita un canciassi.

A fool who does not want to believe  
that if there were no poets  
the world would be the same,  
men the same,  
and life would not change.

Un foddi chi ragiuna  
e non voli mòriri foddi.

A fool who reasons  
and does not want to die a fool.

5 marzo / March 1973

#### 4.8.1. Poets and Purpose: translation as onus

Across the timeline of Buttitta's poetry we can witness the passage from youthful romantic hopefulness, to growing frustration, vitriol and, in the end, hopelessness. His poetry 'contributes to the projection, through art, of an imaginary world, which implicitly reveals a desire to escape from an unbearable reality' (Francese, 2005: 56). We can identify instances where Buttitta links the role of the poet with that of the sacrificial Christ figure:

who believes that poetry  
is not begged bread  
but bread of everyone  
and who eats it lives content

Other instances render this figure an altruistic provider:

e chiddu chi pisca e scava	and that which he fishes and digs
u dunnu a l'àutri;	he gives to the others;

Such poems indicate 'la ripresa maggiormente maturata e soprattutto critica dello studio di quella particolare tradizione letteraria libertaria isolana, di cui si avvantaggerà visibilmente nell'immediato prosieguo il lavoro del nostro poeta'<sup>200</sup> (Tedesco, 1965: 22). Coming to the end of my selected translations of Buttitta's work, I contemplated the poet's intentions and his own sadness at the reality he was experiencing, particularly in the disappearance of a linguistic world he sought to preserve. I have used this poem as a gateway to explore poetic purpose in terms of Buttitta's engagement with dialect as a

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<sup>200</sup> [Trans.] 'the more mature and above all critical recovery of the study of that particular literary libertarian island tradition, which will benefit visibly in the immediate continuation of the work of our poet'

vehicle for his poetry, and the onus on translation in English to transfer his message.

In addition to the challenging nature of the research, there is also, it must be hoped, a regenerating element at work. Pasolini (1947, cited in Welle, 1990: 287) highlights the importance of translation as an act of revival for dialects. Addressing his translations into Friulian, he argues that 'Friulian has need of translations this being the most probative step for its promotion to a language'. Observing its current status as an oral and, at times, 'stultified provincial literary tradition', to borrow from Welle's (ibid.) description of Friulian, my translations seek to have a revitalizing effect on the function and reception of dialect as a source for translation. Again, Pasolini's work instigated my interest in the concept of foregrounding the periphery, put forward by Welle (1990: 287):

The translations of the *Academiuta* were not the product of a provincial backwater that was interested in promoting its colorful 'folklore'. On the contrary, the refractions that they produced, Pasolini's Friulian version of T.S Eliot for example, represent an attempt to bring the center to the periphery.

This concept of the metaphorical and geographical periphery runs throughout this thesis as being an important sense of the 'other', fundamental in forming awareness through language of the existence and whereabouts of boundaries. The marginalization of place and the politics of memory have, in turn, influenced my translation process. The notion of retrieval, of conjuring a place through language and summoning a reader to that place dominates the objective of the translations, which is to make the receptor language – and subsequently the reader – journey to the place sought and present in the original dialect.

Being physically outside the dialect, in the sense that the reader may not comprehend Sicilian, and Buttitta's absence from the island of Sicily creates a shared perception of *seeking* a place, with language as the means of doing so. The translator, in turn, seeks that place but seeks it as something to be transferred and reconstructed. In terms of Sicilian, this becomes an excavation of a literary language that risks becoming just a memory. It is this threat that is present in the poetry of twentieth century Sicily, deriving from that threat in the sea, in the air, unremittingly approaching from the horizon throughout the Allied invasions. Fatta (2015: 171) writes

L'atteggiamento nei confronti di tale demarcazione, dunque, potrebbe portare a considerare i margini quale *limes* che possa riparare dall'incerto e dal nemico, in quanto capace di fornire una delimitazione fisicamente stabilita e predefinita (e perciò difficilmente revocabile) D'altro canto, si potrebbero percepire tali confini come assenti a causa del loro essere così aperti, e quindi capaci di offrire condizioni più favorevoli per la conquista da parte di ipotetici invasori (portatori di guerre e povertà), agevolando nel tempo un sentimento di insicurezza e indifferenza nei riguardi del mare<sup>201</sup>.

Loss is prevalent also in the approach to, or reception of, works in translation. This study has investigated elements of loss within translation as owing largely to shortfalls in the approach and *therefore* present in the end result, rather than inherent in the translation process itself. This has led the study to address the subjectivity of the translator, noting firstly the Anglo-American trend or preference towards invisibility and smooth transfer, and acknowledging Venuti's (2008: 13) accusation that the translator's invisibility

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<sup>201</sup> [Trans.] 'The attitude towards this demarcation, therefore, could lead to considering the margins as *limes* that can repair from the uncertain and from the enemy, since it is able to provide a physically established and predefined (and therefore hardly revocable) delimitation. On the other hand, such borders could be perceived as absent because of their being so open, and therefore capable of offering more favourable conditions for the conquest by hypothetical invaders (bearers of wars and poverty), facilitating a feeling of insecurity and indifference towards the sea'

is 'symptomatic of a complacency in British and American relations with cultural others, a complacency that can be described – without too much exaggeration – as imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home'. Pym (2010: 21) writes of Venuti that he 'is concerned not so much with the ways minor cultures are deceived as with the effects that naturalness ("fluency") has on the way major cultures see the rest of the world', concluding that 'If all cultures are made to sound like contemporary fluent English, then Anglo-American culture will believe that the whole world is like itself'.

The wider purpose and greater significance of poetry translation are also important. More significantly and appropriately than the general terms adopted in the dichotomic debate on macrostrategies, Jones (2011: 7) suggests that intercultural repercussions are offshoots of poetry translation, 'especially when the poems move from a "non-globalized" language used in a limited area into a "globalized" language used across the globe [...]. This can also help the source-language community to assert itself internationally'.

If poetry translation presents a multiplicity of challenges to the craft of translation, dialect poetry accentuates these challenges and pushes the theoretical and practical boundaries of the discipline to new levels. Indeed, Jones (ibid.) writes that 'Cross-cultural transmission need not always be purposeful – it may simply happen as a side-effect of poetry translation'.

Poets and translators look back to the past for inspiration and to renew interest in forgotten trends. 'While the roots of Italian dialect poetry extend to the sixteenth century, the second half of the twentieth century has witnessed a renewed interest in the poetic possibilities afforded by Italian dialects' (Welle, 1990: 286). This revival not only benefits past poetry, but also serves to create the poetry of the present, in translation or as influence on new writing. This redressing of poetry in the present has multiple effects and repercussions, not least because it reignites interest in a national sense of what poetry may

represent, drawing local and foreign attention to that which is embodied in language.

Looking inwards, Jones (2011: 7) suggests that 'People from the source culture may also see translation as confirming or even enhancing the symbolic capital of "their" poet'. Translation can serve to redirect or reignite cultural capital that may have suffered dwindling recognition on its home shores. This is noted by Di Marco, who also observes that posthumous translation can result in the readdressing of a poet who may, internally to the source culture, have been forgotten, or have reached the stage where his name is well known, but whose works (aside from a few quotable lines or citable titles) may have slipped from public consciousness or familiarity. With reference to Buttitta's work in Sicily, he laments that 'Già, eccoci al punto dolente: non c'è più almeno da vent'anni un libro di Buttitta in una qualsiasi libreria, tranne alcune pubblicazioni'<sup>202</sup> (2013, cited in Lo Bianco, 2013: 10). Tarif (2016: 38) suggests that translation 'may be seen as a way of not forgetting the literary legacy of other cultures but also as a way of re-generating the body of literature of the translating culture'.

There is a form of onus on major or prominent languages, particularly those that, through aggressive colonial pasts, may have imposed their language on other cultures, often to the extent of eliminating minor languages. On this point, Graddol (1998, cited in Jones, 2011: 52) notes that 'English [...] is the main language of about 350 million people, including those of an economic and cultural superpower, and is the world's most important non-native language'. It serves as a point of access, and it is this role that subjects the English language to particular scrutiny in terms of its translation practices. It does not only dictate its own translation stance, but the norms to which it adheres have the power to affect other cultures and their own access to

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<sup>202</sup> 'And yet, here we arrive at the sore point: for at least twenty years there have been none of Buttitta's books in any bookshops, with the exception of a few publications'

foreign works. 'As a lingua franca, English is also a middle ground via which other languages gain access to foreign works' (Munden, 2013: 15). Foran (2012: 1) observes that 'The paradox of the universality of English in our era is that on the one hand it permits more dialogue and communication; on the other hand, we must ask: what are the dangers of a homogenisation of a dialogue into one language alone?'

'Languages tend to die when they receive no translations at all' (Pym 2010: 21) and, to return to the notion of onus in translation practice, the initial interest in the languages needs to be present and translation can stimulate this. Crystal (2003: 21–22) argues that such movements can slow or even halt language decay:

The existence of vigorous movements in support of linguistic minorities, commonly associated with nationalism, illustrates an important truth about the nature of language in general. The need for mutual intelligibility, which is part of the argument in favour of a global language, is only one side of the story. The other side is the need for identity – and people tend to underestimate the role of identity when they express anxieties about language injury and death.

Today there is no excuse to let any language fade into the realms of antiquity. Losing languages in the dialogue of humanity, to place things on a broad spectrum, is to lose ways of meaning, ways of pursuing meaning and ways of perceiving meaning. The aforementioned onus does not relate solely to minority languages and cultures but also major languages and cultures that risk gross political and intellectual isolation. Lysandrou and Lysandrou (2001, cited in Crystal, 2003: 25) argue 'If English can facilitate the process of universal dispossession and loss, so can it be turned round and made to facilitate the contrary process of universal empowerment and gain'. To summarize this notion in Haller's (1999: ix) words 'The broadening of the chorus of voices, and the redefining of a canon that has often been neglected



or marginalized, ought to make a contribution towards a deeper understanding of pluralism as a resource and a treasure'.

#### **4.9. 'U tempu longu' / 'Hymn to Life' (Piazza, 1974)**

A sittant'anni e doppu  
mentri cala u sipariu  
e accurza a vista,  
l'omu leggi 2 Nuvembri  
nto calannariu di l'occhi.

Ma stamatina,  
senza grazia accanzata,  
io leggiu Pasqua e risurrezioni;  
e viu davanti a mia  
u tempu longu,  
i strati aperti,  
u celu nettu  
e senza trona chi scàttanu.

E diri ca c'è a guerra,  
a caristia,  
e popoli pronti a scannarisi.

E diri c'haiu a carni scurciata,  
i pedi spinati,  
e u cori  
chi si jinchi e svacanta ogni ghiornu;  
e c'haiu voggia d'erba  
e di pani càudu  
e di vucchi e d'occhi chi vagnanu  
e scippanu i siccumi du cori.

D'unni veni sta luci

ca m'illumina l'occhi  
e mi fa vídiri u lustru nto scuru,  
u celu nte funnali  
e a gioia lùciri nte lacrimi?

Cu sfardò i negghi  
ca chiòvinu sangu  
e mi fa vídiri u munnu rinasciri,  
a terra allúngarisi,  
e u celu gràpirisi  
e tràsiri nta àutri celi?

Cu mi fa vídiri  
i muntagni vivi,  
l'arbuli additta  
e u sulì ca i vesti  
e u ventu c'arrimina e ci parra?

Non è a puisia;  
a puisia adduma e s'astuta,  
affunna nterra e mori,  
acchiana ncelu e cadi:  
havi l'ali di pagghia.

Zocch'è e pirchí,  
guardu a campagna e ciurisci cu mia,  
guardu u mari e mi pari u me lettu,  
guardu u celu e ci trasu cu cori?

Zocch'è e pirchí,  
io sugnu sulu  
e viu genti e banneri  
e òmini d'ogni lingua  
e mi sentu carni ncurpurata

e ciumi nte ciumira?

Zocch'è e pirchí  
mi sentu natura  
chi mori e rinasci  
ed haiu i carni tèniri?...

Stamatina addivintavu omu.

20 gennaio /January 1973

**(Draft 5: 8/6/2015)**

At seventy and afterwards  
while the curtain is falling  
and sight shortens,  
the man reads 2 November  
in the calendar of his eyes.

But this morning,  
with no mercy earned,  
I read Easter and resurrection;  
and I see in front of me  
the long time,  
the open streets,  
the sky clean  
and without thunder bursts.

And yet there's the war,  
famine,  
and people ready to cut others' throats.

And yet I have grazed flesh,  
thorns in my feet,

and a heart  
that fills and empties every day;  
and I long for grass  
and for hot bread  
and for mouths and eyes that water  
and rip the dry roots from my heart.

Where does this light come from  
that brightens my eyes  
and lets me see the lustre in the darkness,  
the sky in the depths  
and joy shining in the tears?

Who slashed the clouds  
that are raining blood  
and lets me see the world be reborn,  
the earth unravel,  
and the sky open itself  
and transcend into other skies?

Who lets me see  
the mountains alive,  
the trees upright,  
and the sun that clothes them  
and the wind that ripples and talks to us?

It isn't poetry;  
poetry flares up and burns out,  
sinks to the ground and dies,  
rises in the sky and falls:  
it has wings of straw.

What is it and why do I  
look at the countryside and it blossoms with me,

look at the sea and it seems like my bed,  
look at the sky and soar there with my heart?

What is it and why  
am I alone  
and see people and flags  
and men of every tongue  
and feel like embodied flesh  
and a river within the rivers?

What is it and why  
do I feel nature  
dying and being reborn  
and my body goes weak...?

This morning I became a man.

#### **4.9.1. Textual Encounters**

I here put forward the responsibility of the translator as facilitator and explore the figure of the reader as an active component in translation interpretation. I look at movement between texts as a form of interpretive continuum, as opposed to the isolated goals of 'source' and 'target', creating a process that involves the reader from the outset in terms of engagement with the final product. Hermans (2014: 286) observes that 'The large majority of translations are made for readers who do not have access, or have no easy access, to the original, and as a result translations and originals tend to circulate independently of each other', adding that, 'the conventions of translation make it hard to detect in the translation itself how translators have personally engaged with the texts they are presenting' (ibid.: 286–287).

In reading a translation, the reader has chosen a textual encounter that is centred around a language journey and it would therefore seem interesting

to expand upon the reader's knowledge of the continuum into which they enter. One dilemma faced by the translator is the extent to which meaning can be determined within the text and when this search for meaning may fall to the reader. In order that the reader grasp the core significance of the translated version, they need to encounter both the original and the final version *in* translation. Additionally, as Daoudi (2011: 203) notes 'This new literary voice from the margins of the standard language of literature can lose its efficacy and significance in translation through the change of its intended readership'. The challenge is therefore twofold. We must address the role of the dialect within translation and bring the new readership as close as possible to the contextual language world of the former readership. Düttmann (1994: 31) argues that

One justifiably assumes that the translator renders a service to someone who does not know another, foreign language; but in doing so, one extinguishes translation, one accords to it the role of a mere means employed by multilingual subjects to secure communication among these languages.

And yet, translation of literary texts is more than this; the pursuit of meaning is, in a sense, their founding and unifying quality. 'These questions are not only of concern to the translator but also to any discipline that seeks to explain, or at least describe, the experience of being in the world; a world in many senses constituted and constructed from our linguistic engagement' (Foran, 2012: 2). Sturge (2007: 56) writes of 'developments in translation theory away from the search for accurate reproduction of identifiable, fixed meanings and towards a view of translation as interested, partial, mutable and polysemic', while Denman (2012: 159) criticizes the notion of meaning as a fixed construct: 'Getting one's message across, conveying sense, texts full of meaning, words seeming hollow, all of these depend on the assumption that

meaning exists as an object, rather than an event', reasoning that, 'if meaning is a dynamic verb, then we will understand it to denote a process' (ibid.: 158).

In interpreting translation as it takes place, the reader is permitted the freedom to surpass traditional discourse boundaries and, specifically, in addressing dialect poetry in translation, readers gain awareness of the cultural significance of the text. Megrab (1998: 63) suggests that it is the role of the translator to 'constrain the plurality of meanings and create a way to bridge the ideological gap between the two languages throughout the process of transformation from the SL into the TL', but, if there is an ideological gap, it would seem more instrumental to bridge understanding and facilitate the perception of ideological differences. 'Readers apply various patterns of selection, retrospection, anticipation, and formulation of their own expectations in the process of making sense of a text' (ibid.: 61) and 'without the direct involvement of the reader it will remain incomplete' (Boase-Beier and Holman, 1998: 15).

If the reader's function as interpreter is expanded upon, this places less importance on the translator but only to the extent that it is not the translator's responsibility to produce a finite text. On the other hand, if the translator's responsibility is to facilitate and allow for many possible interpretations, he or she remains the medium via which these interpretations have to stem. 'The implications of this approach hint at crucial aspects of the creative process in translation, whereby the translator's subjectivity becomes visible, indeed, it is magnified in a newly recreated text, while critically engaging in a dialogue with the source text' (Loffredo, 2006: 159). By extension, the reader may critically engage in the same dialogue, to some extent a more privileged dialogue, since they may also bear witness to the translator's relationship with the original text. Czerniawski (1994: 8–9) claims that perhaps 'the better judges of poetic translation are those ignorant of the source language. They have no choice but to fix all their attention on the

target-language text'. I propose something in between, wherein the reader does, to some extent, encounter the ST, at least that translatable significance facilitated by the translator. I have produced drafts of this particular poem (4.9.), which may be found in Appendix 6. Such drafts might be included in a future publication or online forum and would permit readers to engage in the translator's progress with the text.

Within such a forum, the reader could choose strategies to focus on and the notion of composition would be foregrounded. For example, they could select 'syllabic matching' and an online software programme would present the number of syllables in the Sicilian original, accompanied by a word-for-word translation. The reader could then insert a syllabically matched translation and view translations by others. The reader would also have the possibility of selecting the 'free/creative translation' option and using the literal translation as blueprint. Ideally, there would be access to an online dictionary or glossary of the words and their synonyms.

The subjectivity of interpretation can be valued as an asset. This is particularly true of translation, which manifests the translator's interpretation in a rewriting and spotlights interpretation (and reinterpretation) as a work of art in its own right. Perteghella and Loffredo (2006: 6) write

Subjectivity not only avoids 'killing' the author but it also brings about the 'birth' of the translator as co-author. Indeed, in the affirmation of translation as a mode of writing, the understanding of its processes cannot be detached from the writerly import of the translator's subjectivity.

I would add to this the subjectivity of the reader. This approach presents a certain degree of freedom for the translator, liberating the task of translation from the perpetual insistence that there is a preeminent version that has to be accessed or located. This is paramount to an understanding of what



constitutes creative translation: the dichotomy between 'free' and 'literal' translation often does neither practice any justice and results in the opinion that 'TS is characterized by antagonistically opposing positions, be it with regard to technique, text, language or culture' (O'Neill, 2012: 126).

Other more liberal techniques might be encouraged; from a literal blueprint, readers could 'trans-create' their impressions of the text, working firstly with different mediums in order to build confidence with a foreign language. Writing of a workshop entitled 'Painting with Words', Pattison (2006: 89) says

In order to encourage workshop participants to see the act of translation as an original act of writing, we progress from literary images to images that are visual in nature such as shape-poems, delving deeper into the links between writing, translation and other creative arts, such as drawing and painting.

Another option is to introduce a sound recording of the original poem; this allows readers to familiarize themselves with the poem's rhythm, tone, and the voice of the poet. Prakash (1998: 6) writes of a translation workshop between the languages of Kannada and Gujarati<sup>203</sup>:

First, we listened carefully to the source texts. We slowly let the source text's rhythms and images sink into us. Ignorance of each other's language was made up for by the explanatory use of not just English and Hindi, but also sounds, gestures, diagrams, acting out – those semiotic acts not purely linguistic.

Readers could be informed of different focus points, such as the replication of syntax, recreation of context, transfer of lexis or semantics as key objectives. It

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<sup>203</sup> The poem involved was 'An Afternoon' by Raoji Patel, a Gujarati poet, who Prakash (1998: 6) describes as 'a deeply nativist symbolic poet'. The images of the poem were from rural Gujarat and the rhythm was that of his dialect.

would be useful to relay such decision-making processes, and one means might be a translator's log or transcript of think-aloud protocol.

Most process-based studies of poetry translating rely on translators' memories of how they translated a text. As these may not always reflect accurately what translators actually do, we also need to examine how poetry translators work in real time. A key data source here is the 'think-aloud protocol' ('TAP'): the transcript of an audio-recorded running commentary in which a translator describes what she or he is doing and thinking while translating. There are very few TAP studies into poetry translation. (Jones, 2011: 10)

These are examples of hypothetical instances whereby the reader might translate and partake in intertextual dialogue.

Reading as rewriting, and translation as its paradigm, turns out to be the very act whereby the conception of the source text precedes its consumption, and, by inverting spatio-temporal coordinates, the translator allows the source text to be shaken out of its fossilized state of finished product. (Perteghella and Loffredo, 2006: 10)

Leppihalme (2000: 258) suggests that, in this way, 'The translator also seems to want to educate his readers as receivers by guiding their responses in advance'. Readers can be encouraged to familiarize themselves with the creator of the work they wish to translate, 'to achieve a balance between entering the world of the poet and providing a personal interpretation' (Foran, 2012: 5). This approach is not the ultimate rendering of an original work; it is a threshold *to* that original work. Those at whom translation is aimed may also, in this light, be interactive shapers of the translating process. The reader is the final link in the continuum of intertextuality, putting aside the notion of two clearly defined and separate texts (or textual spaces).

My research has sought both recognition of the translator and redefinition of the space he or she inhabits. On this point, Perteghella and Loffredo (2006: 8) suggest that 'Redefining the translator means recognising that the translator is a problematically constituted, and an intricately functioning, subjectivity, whose paradoxical condition is to inhabit in-betweenness, and more precisely the undefined – and indefinable – space between source language and target language'. I claim that there is an element of playfulness to translation, an element of entering into previously isolated territory and centralizing it. Pattison (2006: 86) remarks of translators that 'It is their ability to both work within and expand the boundaries that makes them better at their craft'.

#### 4.10. 'I petri nìvuri' / 'The black stones' (*Pietre*, 1983)

A Roberto Roversi / For Roberto Roversi  
 ai suoi anni lunghi / to his long years  
 ed ai miei corti / and to my short ones

<b>I petri nìvuri</b>	<b>The black stones</b>
1. Sugnu cca	I'm here
2. sulu	solo
3. stanotti	tonight
4. a scriviri e pinzari	writing and thinking
5. ca i ricordi, i ricordi,	that the memories, the memories
6. na petra oggi e nàutra dumani	one stone today and 'nother tomorrow
7. addiventanu muntagni	become mountains
8. e nni purtamu ncoddu sinu a morti...	and we carry them upon us until death. . .
9. chi morti!	what death!
10. A pinzari	Thinking
11. ca i petri	that the stones
12. sunnu nichi e grossi,	are little and large
13. nìvuri e bianchi,	black and white
14. – chiù nìvuri ca bianchi –;	– more black than white –;
15. e chi l'omini	and that men
16. (io)	(me)
17. destinati pi natura	destined by nature

18. a scavari nna mimoria,	to dig around in memory,
19. n'affannamu a circari	tiring ourselves out looking for
20. i pertri nìvuri	the black stones
21. c'hannu i chiaj aperti,	that have open wounds,
22. sempri aperti,	always open,
23. e i vavareddi vagnati.	and wet pupils.
24. E diri	Saying
25. ca sunnu i petri	that it's the stones
26. i petri bianchi	the white stones
27. c'adornanu i muntagni	that adorn the mountains
28. e spicchianu l'arba d'ogni matinu;	and mirror the dawn of every morning;
29. iddi nn'ajsanu di nterra	they raise themselves from the ground
30. quannu i furturi nn'annorbanu	when the ice-winds blind them
31. e nni sbàttinu a facci abbuccuni.	and they beat them into faces.
32. L'omini u sannu, penzu,	Men know this, I think,
33. u sannu; e senza vulillu	they know this; and without meaning to
34. scordanu i petri bianchi	they forget the white stones
35. chi cantanu a vita	that sing out our lives
36. e mai i petri nìvuri	and never the black stones
37. chi ripetinu u misireri:	that repeat the misery:
38. l'amanu chiù assai.	they love them much more.
39. I matri,	The mothers,
40. i matri fannu u stissu:	the mothers do the same:
41. mettinu nn'artàru	they place 'pon the altar
42. i figghi tinti	the tainted sons
43. ca i carricanu di peni	who fill them wi' pain
44. e non aduranu i boni	and don't adore the good ones
45. ca i cunsolanu	who console them
46. e ci asciucanu i lacrimi.	and dry them of their tears.
47. Nni ricordu una di sti matri:	I remember one such mother:
48. una tutta focu e chiantu	one all fire and tears
49. affirrata a gaggia da Curti d'Assisi	clinging to the bars at the Court of Assisi
50. – io era picciriddu –,	– I was a boy –,
51. ca trasia e niscia a testa da nfirriata	who slid her head in and out of the bars
52. e vasava e rivasava	and kissed and kissed again
53. u figghiu assassinu,	her murderer son,
54. du voti assassinu,	two times murderer,
55. cunnannatu a vita.	convicted for life.
56. U vasava; u vasava	She kissed him; she kissed him
57. e non taliava	and didn't look
58. a colpu d'occhiu sparatu	with one fleeting glance at
59. l'àutru figghiu, cristianu,	the other son, Christian man,
60. nna gaggia	in the cell
61. assolto e nnuccenti.	absolved and innocent.

62. M'attuppassi l'occhi	I covered my eyes
63. ora ca la ricordu	now that I recall
64. pi non vidilla, straziata,	to not see her, harrowed,
65. davanti a gaggia	before the bars
66. tràsiri e nesciri a testa	sliding her head in and out
67. e manciarisi u ferru a muzzicuna.	and eating mouthfuls of iron.
68. M'attuppassi l'occhi	I covered my eyes
69. pi non vidiri l'assassinu,	to not see the murderer,
70. du voti assassinu:	two times murderer:
71. iddu!	him!
72. chianciri nna gaggia	crying in the cell
73. mentri tutti u talianu.	while everyone looked at him.
74. Du voti assassinu;	Two times murderer;
75. iddu, du voti	him, two times
76. io quantu voti assassinu?!	me, how many times a murderer?!
77. Nno Piavi sugnu,	I'm at the Piave, I am,
78. avanzu	I advance
79. sparù	I shoot
80. ammazzu:	I kill:
81. nno Piavi sugnu!	at the Piave, I am!
82. All'arma bianca cummattu	At the white weapon I fight
83. panzi sbudeddu	gutted bellies
84. morti scarpisu, morti!	dead trampled, dead!
85. E tutti comu mia	And they're all like me
86. armali e cristiani	animals and men
87. nnimici e taliani	enemies n' 'taliani
88. arditi e spavintati	hardy and afraid
89. sarvaggi e vattati	wild and baptized
90. nno nfernu e nparadisu nn'artaru e n furca misi:	in hell and in heaven on the altar and the fork:
91. tutti comu mia,	all like me,
92. assassini comu mia!...	murderers like me!...
93. Vivu sugnu,	Me, I'm alive,
94. tremu ancora:	I'm still trembling:
95. mi paria veru.	it seemed real.
96. I petri nìvuri.	The black stones.
7 Maggio 1981	7 May 1981

#### 4.10.1. Tone and theme

This poem is the last in my selection of Buttitta's poetry. It has been selected owing to its position as title poem from Buttitta's final anthology. It was, therefore, a challenging moment in my translation process as I was aware that my doctoral engagement with Buttitta's poetry was drawing to an end. Dated 1981, this was written in the poet's old age, sixteen years before his death.

With *Pietre nere* (Black Stones) (1983) Buttitta returns renewed to the roots of his poetry, to his first collection, *Sintimintali*. Stressing the lyric-elegiac aspect, his poetry now becomes poetry of memory: *black stones* are the bitter memories that have become stratified. Buttitta is no longer the *poet in the piazza*: he is old and his villa in Aspra is visited by journalists and poets, he is considered a wise man. But he is sad: he does not fear death, but solitude saddens him; even his hope for a better world – always steadfast – seems to be waning: haunted by haste, men seem to him ghosts or talking machines, 'puppets of fog': they have lost their blood and voice. (Zinna, 1997: 416)

One prevalent theme is that of life and death. Although we suspect it, Buttitta confirms that he makes himself the subject of the poem by referring to Piave. At life's end, the poet is remarking of the regret and guilt that haunt the aging individual, who draws closer to a time when, religiously and perhaps morally, he must answer for his lifetime wrongs. In *Paglia* (1968: 22), Buttitta writes 'La guerra la feci senza capirne il significato. Sul Piave, giocavo, lanciavo pietre sul fiume: le facevo rimbalzare sul filo dell'acqua. Sul Piave, ho sparato'<sup>204</sup>. Grillandi (1976: 202) writes

L'esperienza della guerra affinò la sua umanità e la sua tensione verso il socialismo; ma di ciò egli si accorgerà dopo. Sul momento, quella terribile avventura rimase in

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<sup>204</sup> [Trans.] 'I took part in the war without understanding its significance. At the Piave, I played, I tossed stones into the river: I made them bounce across the waterline. At the Piave, I shot'

lui, in apparenza senza fruttificare [...] e così fece la guerra senza intenderne pienamente il messaggio profondo<sup>205</sup>.

Of note, once again, is the mother figure. Yet this time, Buttitta returns to the mother's love as imperfect or blind. He firstly compares a mother's love to the black stones – that human or universal tendency to embrace failings or weakness, possibly because they represent the darker side of human nature. The mother's love, paradoxically, must, in loving that which she has created, love past the sin, beyond evil.

Women as mothers, in extreme cases, sacrifice their own moral judgement for love of their children; it is a love that outlasts human error and it has to do so in order to rise above humankind. God's love of his son, we are told, is this paradox of self-sacrificing, ethereal strength. The mother figure in this poem is clinging at the prison bars, drawing on images of the Madonna at Christ's crucifixion. The figure of Mary, or Maria, mother of Christ, tends to be more focused on in Sicilian daily life than the figures of God or Jesus. Rev. Blunt (1823, cited in Asciutto, 1977: 60) writes 'To this day, the shops and houses of Italy and Sicily are provided with a figure or painting of a Madonna or Saint', to which Asciutto adds 'This veneration of the Saints and the Blessed Mother often appears to upstage Jesus, but Italians have mixed their ancient Roman polytheism into their Catholic faith' (ibid.). We see this fixation with the mother as a constant theme of Buttitta's poetry; it is characteristic of Sicily generally and therefore part of his realism. It is also a fundamental element of the Christian faith. The Son of God, Jesus, walks as a human being and suffers as we suffer; he also endures our fate, death. We can identify with his

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<sup>205</sup> [Trans.] 'The experience of the war honed his humanity and his tension towards socialism; but he was to become aware of this later. At the time, that terrible adventure remained in him, seemingly without fructifying [...] and as such he took part in the war without fully understanding its real message'

suffering and women, in the Madonna, identify with the worst fate of a mother, that of outliving her child. Ascitto (1977: 69) observes

The woman inherits the veneration of all the family members, as is the custom in the tradition of the family rule. She is not a slave. [...] She feels deeply and is an active participant in moulding the attitudes of her children and in perpetuating the rule of loyalty of the family.

The mother's love binds them to this Madonna figure and Buttitta writes that he, or the adult in the poem, had to cover his eyes to avert his gaze from her suffering. It was too much for him to bear. Pasolini (1997, cited in Lo Bianco, 2013: 81), in 'Scritti corsari', writes that 'quest'umile uomo di Bagheria, sentimentale, estroverso, ingenuo, tormentato dalla mancanza di amore materno che lo ha reso orfano e ossesso, è quello che si dice un buon poeta'<sup>206</sup>, and Sciascia (ibid.: 81–82) writes of

un sentimento che si può dire materno [...]. La Sicilia-madre è anzi la chiave della poesia di Buttitta: entità a volte astratta e spericolata sull'orlo del sentimentalismo, più spesso concreta nelle dolorose antinomie, nelle sanguinose contraddizioni; e nella sempre più chiara coscienza delle proprie antinomie, delle proprie contraddizioni; della propria storia<sup>207</sup>.

Buttitta returns to his prominent use of colour within this poem and, as one of his final works, the contrastive use of black and white may also be seen to symbolize his worldly outlook. The world, in his old age, seems clearer to

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<sup>206</sup> [Trans.] 'this humble man from Bagheria, sentimental, extrovert, naïve, tormented by the lack of maternal love that made him orphaned and obsessive, is what is called a good poet'

<sup>207</sup> [Trans.] 'a feeling that can be called maternal [...]. Sicily-mother is indeed the key to Buttitta's poetry: an entity sometimes abstract and reckless on the verge of sentimentality, more often concrete in painful antinomies, in bloody contradictions; and in the ever clearer awareness of his antinomies, of his own contradictions; of their own history'



him, more proverbially black and white in its clarity. The questioning tone from his earlier poetry has completely disappeared and he makes claims and forceful assertions about the nature of humankind. His voice is stronger, more self-assured, but it is also critical. He retains his typical sense of despair, contrasted occasionally with hopefulness, but there is also a quiet resolve lingering in these last lines of a lifetime's work.

Buttitta seems more critical of humanity and yet, in his despair, there is a prominent acceptance of human nature. He writes, now, not to improve this nature, but as an observer, growing ever more removed from the body of people he describes. His poetry is reflective and earnest; it no longer probes the human condition but, rather, presents it with conviction. The dedication at the beginning of the poem is testament to this sense of coming to the end of his life and writing – the two seem one and the same. Buttitta did in fact have a long life but he refers to his short years in the dedication, as if aware of the fleetingness of life and time. There is also the sense that Buttitta writes of himself as the universal 'man' but uses this to reflect back on himself. In a line such as 'e chi l'omini / (io)' (L15/16), he is aware that his reflection refers to mankind and yet, simultaneously, himself individually as one of these men.

The reference to the mountain of stones implies that the poet sees both the bigger picture and also, within that frame, the smaller components of a life fully lived. He uses the colour white to refer to purity and innocence and black to refer to human sin or erring, remarking, though, that human nature loves that which makes it human and not god-like, loves the black stones 'chiù assai' (L38). In *Cappidazzu paga tutto* (1882), a play by Nino Martoglio and Luigi Pirandello ([1917]2011), I identified an instance in Scene V where La Zi Vittula cries, 'Unni cci su' li petri nivuri!'<sup>208</sup> (ibid.: 192). Consolo, in *La Sicilia*

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<sup>208</sup> [Trans.] 'Where there are the black stones!'

*passeggiata* writes of the resuscitation of those stones, 'quelle pietre' (1991, cited in O'Rawe, 2007: 88) and

calls for a recognition of the need for 'parole' to restore 'pietre' (and here again he is operating in a citationary fashion – quoting indirectly Carlo Levi's seminal 1955 account of his journey through Sicily, *Le parole sono pietre*, and creating a textual *mise-en-abîme*). (ibid.)

In lines 77–81, the rhythm and layout of the poem reflects the poet's tread on the battleground and the short, sharp consonantal sounds emphasize this. The onomatopoeia of 'shoot' in English mirrors this well, although I debated whether or not to add the personal pronoun ('I advance', 'I shoot'). In the end, I included the pronoun simply because, without it, the English loses momentum as the reader questions who is doing the advancing and the shooting.

I attempted to retain the non-standard writing style by using abbreviations in English, seeking to mirror speech patterns. Initially, this was on a simple level, such as rendering 'I am alone' as 'I'm alone' in L1 which, although a subtle change, makes a difference to the tone of the poem when read aloud. The tone becomes more informal and direct, as if the poet is speaking. I then went on to make more noticeable changes to standard writing, inserting apostrophes in order that, when read aloud, the poem retains a spoken style. An example of this is SL87 'nnimici e taliani', which became EL87 'enemies n' 'talians'.

One difficulty occurred when handling the markedly Sicilian inversion of the verb and personal pronoun, for example, in SL77 'Nno Piavi sugnu'. As this is a distinct marker of Sicilian speech, both in regional Sicilian Italian speech and in Sicilian dialect, I was interested in preserving the style although the effect in English may admittedly be redundant. I played around with 'I'm

at the Piave, I am' in EL77, which is a typical device in reported speech or spoken storytelling. It is more effective in EL81, 'at the Piave I am', because there is no need in English to repeat the personal pronoun as it has been clarified several lines earlier.

#### **4.11. Concluding remarks**

This chapter has addressed the key themes that prevail in Buttitta's work during his later poems, identifying the changes in his subject matter towards the end of his life. The socio-political lens through which his poems are examined in this folio draw attention to the translator's subsequent responsibility and debate in terms of translation onus. For this reason, it was crucial to address the reader figure and my envisioning of their engagement with the translation process. I made connections between my narration of this translation experience and Buttitta's own narration and re-narration of his life and his island's stories, addressing the poet's purpose and my own translational ideology. This aligned with an exploration of Sicilian historical events and the representation of such events through translational aids, such as paratext, voice recording and image. This required familiarization with Sicilian history as well as with Buttitta's personal life, which colours his reaction to the events he describes. His fixations with the mother figure, war, and the passing of time recur throughout his poetry, becoming particularly prominent in his later poems. Finding a balance between Buttitta's personal narrative and the Sicilian stories he recounts was one challenge of this folio.

## Conclusion

This thesis has explored translation of Buttitta's Sicilian dialect poetry through representation of the poet's dialectal voice and the ways in which it offers a significant perspective, linguistically, sociolinguistically and ideologically. My translations provide insight into the Sicilian dialect and its role in colouring Buttitta's poems; they attempt to shed light on translational practices relating to poetry and dialect and to foreground in the latter a focus on place. Whilst by no means a comprehensive study of translation from dialect (I focus exclusively on one poet) nor of Buttitta's entire poetic output (I focus on a selection of poems), I believe this choice to result in a representative corpus, which has permitted me to explore the given selection in depth. This contributes substantially to the broader field of Sicilian dialect poetry, for Buttitta's poetry 'traduce in versi un secolo di storia sociale, politica, intellettuale della Sicilia'<sup>209</sup> (Buttitta and Buttitta, 2007: 327).

The thesis has addressed the research questions presented in the Introduction, the first of which was to look at how Buttitta's poetry is positioned in the Italian language-dialect debate and the linguistic, historical context of his poetry. Chapter 1 provided the background to the poet's publications, allowing their subsequent discussion in the folios to be set against a contextual framework of contemporaries, influences, social engagement and Sicilian and European events. The exploration of the terminology, sociolinguistic and socio-political perspectives has positioned Buttitta's personal and public motives within the broader setting of the Italian linguistic debate.

The second research question regarded what Buttitta tried to achieve through his dialect poetry, and the principal themes, ideologies and objectives of his writing. Chapter 1 presented the poet's background, highlighting that

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<sup>209</sup> [Trans.] 'translates in verse a century of Sicily's social, political, intellectual history'

his poetry traverses two world wars, witnesses much change and difficulty within Sicily, and deals critically with political and historical events. This contextual setting provides the framework for the research to attempt, in the folio chapters, to analyse the progressively dark nature of his writing in terms of theme and ideology, in line with the effects of dialect as his linguistic medium for portraying social issues. The research has identified subject matter such as love, war, the mother figure, time and age are incorporated into Buttitta's re-narration of historical moments, turning island stories into poetry, recounting Sicilian figures and political events and retelling mass emigration through poetry.

Concentrating on Buttitta, as a key figure in Sicilian dialect poetry, has enabled me to gain an in-depth knowledge of his poetic output and the events and wider context of Sicilian life at the time of his writing. It has also allowed me to familiarize myself with Buttitta's writing style and poetics and to observe changes across his work as he matured as a poet, creating 'his own poetics of Sicilian identity' (O'Rawe, 2007: 89), a substantial portion of which this research has made available in English.

The folio chapters addressed the research question of how translation can inform its reader of the various sociolinguistic and socio-political nuances in dialect poetry. A limitation of this study is the extent to which it engages with real readers, as opposed to strictly hypothetical readers, as in the long-established tradition of the 'translator-interpreter-disseminator'. This limitation, however, provides scope for further research; it also allowed me to translate for *any* reader, for the fictional construct of a reader, in keeping with the act of writing poetry. I have prioritized the reader figure as an important construct when translating and the translations as 'final' products have taken into consideration the reception and engagement of future readers as a core element in their production. This provides a corpus of translated dialect poems that envisage the interaction of potential readers.

My translations seek to experience the cultural world of the poems and the language in which they are written and to enable readers in turn to experience the same. Boase-Bier (2006: 51) sums up my view on the role of the translator, when she writes: 'A translator will want to capture that mental and emotional state and allow the readers of the translation in turn to experience their own version of these feelings'. I place an immense value on individual interpretation, which adds to the collective perspective on Buttitta's poetry, and on culturally informative readings that, it is hoped, engage in the function and effects of the poet's chosen medium. Egan (1987: 234) remarks that 'There are very few great translations around, but I am grateful for many of the less successful ones – as I am for anything which opens a door into somewhere I have never travelled'.

A further research question sought to identify how dialect poetry should be translated in order to convey the regionally orientated messages of the originals, with their focus on place and memory. I have examined the relation between place and identity in Buttitta's poetry, looked at how reconstruction of place in the memory is conveyed through dialect and lexical choices, and addressed the re-stimulating of collective public memory of certain key historical events.

My final research question addressed identification of the specific constraints and challenges of translating dialect poetry. One challenge specific to translation from dialect is the representation in the TL of its deviation from the Standard. This can be achieved in many ways, such as altering spelling, experimenting with a phonetic transliteration and creation of neologisms. The poems that notably differ from Standard English without locating themselves in a British dialectal context I felt to have been successful in representing the non-normative.

In addressing certain questions throughout this research, many more have come to the fore, 'which may not have straightforward answers but then

perhaps the most fruitful questions are precisely those that provoke more questioning; more wonder at the world in which we find ourselves' (Foran, 2012: 2). I now have an affirmed belief that research ought to produce as many questions as it answers.

For this reason, the challenges posed by dialect poetry must allow for a myriad of creative solutions to be adopted in the translation process, and a reticence to explore different solutions is just as problematic as the dated, flawed presumption that these important works of literature are somehow inferior to their counterparts authored in a standard, widely spoken language – for no other reason than potential said reticence has to constitute another obstacle to their increased diffusion and popularization. (Balma, 2011: 8)

By way of research contribution, this translation into English of a selection of Buttitta's largely un-translated poems contributes to Italian and Sicilian studies, as well as to the field of TS and, specifically, the translation of dialect poetry. A selection of translated poems that present an in-depth study of the poet, his linguistic context and socio-political ideology, is intended to contribute to knowledge of Sicilian history in English, the availability of the poems themselves in English, and to cultural engagement with the representation of minority voices in translation.

Although a number of anthologies and critical texts have been devoted to this subject, it should come as no surprise that there currently are only a handful of periodicals in Italy that focus exclusively on poetry in dialect, and that these publications are virtually unknown. (Balma, 2011: 2)

In drawing attention to a lesser-known, under-researched field of poetry translation, I have also brought to light gaps in the wider discourse of TS, revealing some out-of-date beliefs and redundant dichotomies. The focus of

linguistic, cultural and spatial, and ideological features, and the exploration of these elements through various strategies, highlights not only the multifaceted, layered qualities of non-standard language in translation, but also the numerous means of addressing their individual challenges. My focus on a selection of translational procedures has built upon, and contributed to, many diverse approaches to dialect translation. Azevedo (1998: 42) claims

translation can only be considered successful to the extent that it manages to capture the nuances inherent in the linguistic diversity of the original, in order to preserve, even if in a modified fashion, the manifestation of individual voices, each endowed with a significance of its own.

Poetry speaks of individual expression, contains cultural emblems of identity, and provides a keyhole into a different world. It is not my belief that the loss spoken of in poetry translation exists any more or any less than in other fields of translation but rather that, where such loss may exist, it is projects such as mine that seek to reduce it. A certain degree of loss is inevitable, though, as Eco (2001: 48) assures, 'losses can be *compensated* for'. The imperfections may be viewed as succinct moments wherein human differences come to the fore and an obvious answer is not forthcoming, although 'the vitality of the translation is necessarily different from that of the original, and, in this way, [it] is preserved' (Whitehead, 2012: 55).

We may conclude that these imperfect versions are stories retold. Brevini (1989: 23) argues 'Ciascuno ha la propria storia e la propria lingua. E la prima può acquistare nuove suggestioni se raccontata nella seconda'<sup>210</sup>. One's own story, we may conclude from this, might be seen in a new light in another language; translation is a transformative process for the translator, too, which is heavily reliant upon insight and instinctive connection. Egan

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<sup>210</sup> [Trans.] 'Everyone has their own story and their own language. And the former may acquire new suggestions if told in the latter'



(1987: 234) alludes to 'that silent chemistry which catches the translator at a profound level; some impulse akin to the mysterious process whereby words begin to turn into poetry' and, to this extent, 'a translation, like its original and inspiration, can *be*, every bit as real and significant as any other work created in the new language' (Raffel, 1964-5: 458). Schulte (1987: 2) claims that translators experience 'an intense reaction to linguistic, psychological, anthropological and cultural phenomena'; as these folios have sought to exemplify and explore, 'the translator's special role is by no means a passive and mechanical one, but rather that of an artist, a re-creator, and an actor' (Zid, 2014: 2027).

The end of one language and the beginning of the other (and hence the concepts of 'source' and 'target') interfere with notions of gradual passage of meaning and decipherment, and reduce the focus placed on the concept of emergence, that *coming into being* that happens within and during translation. Jones (2011: 10) writes

The examination into processes is not intended as a means of defending these, as this would inevitably risk the tendency to artificially construct processes in order to retrospectively defend them. The objective of such retrospective examination is to outline the principles of subjectivity, to acknowledge the instinctive reaction leading to specific choices and to allow the possibility of addressing the 'possible' translation choices that were eliminated, and discuss reasons why.

Examining the space in which this occurs brings to light interactive means of engaging with text and comprehending cultural others. If we can at least try to capture its idiosyncrasy, its personality, its 'self', we are story-telling and story-sharing in the most human of ways. DuVal (1990: 31) concludes that

since *dialect* by its very nature is, even in the minds of its speakers, distinct from some greater language and unique in its distinction, and since the individual writers in that

'dialect' will use those distinctions in unique ways, the problem of translating dialect has no single solution.

Yet Eco (2001: 21) claims that 'what interests scholars is no longer the relationship between source and target but rather the effect of the translated text on the target culture'. I have developed a natural narrative of my own as translator of Buttitta's works and have contemplated how such narrative might be inserted amongst the translations, were they to be published. This owes, in part, to my increasing awareness of the gap between the theoretical handling of poetry translation by academics and the readers for whom it is produced. Weissbort (1989: ix) suggests that 'translation theorists increasingly address each other rather than a wider public, which might benefit from some of these discussions' and 'within the "discipline" itself the distance between critics and practitioners seems, if anything, to be growing' (ibid.). Partially responsible for the problem could be the belief 'that readers want to be lulled rather than informed, and that nobody is interested in what happens privately – both assumed to be consenting – between translator and translated' (Weissbort, 1989: x).

Still, it is tempting to wonder about ways of creating alternative target texts of this and other regionally-based literary works – translations with a different agenda, that of giving target readers a better idea of the linguistic richness and identity of the source text. (Leppihalme, 2000: 267)

Whilst much remains to be explored in this fascinating area of study, I believe my research has exposed many of the weaknesses in traditional, conservative and, moreover, theoretical approaches to an art that has the potential to be creative, innovative and, not least, practical. A combination of approaches and overlap of interests have characterized the research contribution. Where there are limitations in scope or accomplishment, I have acknowledged these

accordingly; it is my belief that research must be as self-aware as it is bold, and as modest and self-critical as it is confident of its own imprint.

In addressing the regional and the local, we can glimpse the universal; in foregrounding dialect we can learn about the inner workings and intentions of language. This research has focused on a Sicilian poet who is not widely known to the Anglophone world. I hope to have presented a valuable selection of Buttitta's poetry and, through translation, to have shed light on aspects of the Sicilian dialect and culture that remain relatively undiscovered within Anglophone circles.

## Appendix

### 1a) 'A 'Gnaziu Buttitta', Lina La Mattina (1997: 34)

Gnaziu, ti vitti ajerì  
e mentri chiancennu ti vasava li manu  
'ntisi 'na vuci:  
eri tu, assittatu sutta lu cèvusu  
e mi parravi, mi cuntavi, m'insignavi,  
eri tu, abbrazzatu a l'amanti  
ca ti rideva dintra l'occhi,  
eri tu, mentri acchianavi la scala  
arrampicata a lu muru e t'appuiavi  
a lu cori d'Ancilina pri nun cadiri.

.  
Ma nun c'eranu griddi nè aceddi cantarini  
a fati l'ecu a li tò palori,  
nun c'era lu mari cu li pisci d'argentu  
c'ascutavanu di 'nfacciu  
e mancu lu sulì e li muntagni d'Aspra  
«supra la testa a salutari»!  
Cantavi sulu tu nni lu silenziu  
e canti nni la menti!

.  
La tò puisia 'Gnaziu, ca pri tutti  
è ventu ca sdradica pinzera  
zappuni dintra l'arma  
punzeddu ca pitta 'mmenzu li neggghi;  
pri mia, è puru ciatu  
ca 'nzinu a la morti mi portu;  
è carni viva sutta la peddi spirtusata;  
è ciumi chi curri, sdirrubba, trascina  
è aguggia carripezza, arraccama,  
funtana cabbivira, bracara chi quadia.

.  
Ti vitti ajeri 'Gnaziu  
cu lu cappottu novu di la festa  
li scarpi e la burritta  
prontu a parriri, cu la valigia pisanti  
di li jorna, pri l'ultimu viaggiu  
ca nuddu ti potti sparagnari.

.  
Ti visteru di la tò bannerera  
ma nun vai a leggiri 'n Cina o 'n Siberia  
e mancu a li pedi di Lenin o di Majakovskij.  
la cumèta ca passannu 'mpindu 'm Palermu  
e ti vinni a pigghiari  
a cavaddu di la sò cuda  
di stiddi ti voli 'mbriacari

mentri aspetti lu bannituri cu la trumma  
ca leggi la sintenza.

.  
'Mmenzu jardina di mennuli e castagni  
ti fa sentiri ciarameddi:  
a sunari sunnu li pastura ca ,n terra avevanu  
panzi schitti e caddi nna li cori.  
Tra filera d'ancili d'oru  
mpastati di meli... attrovi  
li tò «picciriddi sfardati  
'nvidiati di li porci ca li videvanu  
vistuti e senza cuda nna lu fangu».

.  
Ti porta vulannu supra lu 'nfernu  
a visitari puituculi e nnimici  
ca ti misiru 'ncruci, appagnati di li versi  
ca 'nchiuvavanu fascisti...  
e nun sapevanu ca la puisia  
abbatti mura, sfunna porti  
squagghia cuddari di ferru!

.  
Ora, comu agneddi arrustuti  
nni la fùrnaci sempri addumata  
cu l'occhi e la lingua di fora  
addumannanu aiutu:  
vulissiru appinnularisi a li tò pedi  
o macarì a li pinzera.

.  
Ti vitti ajeri 'Gnaziu  
nna l'occhi ca lassasti apposta a vanidduzza  
nni la 'ngagghia di sulì c'arrubbasti a lù celù  
nní la puisia c'arristò pittata  
nni la facci bedda e risulenti comu quannu  
cu ali di carta facevi vulari palummi;  
capivu ca lu 'ncuntrasti arreri lu Signuri!

**1b) 'To Ignatius Buttitta' (translated by Arthur and Alice Dieli, 1997)**

Ignatius, I saw you yesterday  
and while crying and kissing your hands  
I heard a voice:  
it was you, seated under the mulberry  
speaking, telling stories, teaching me,  
it was you, with laughing eyes  
embraced with admirers,  
it was you, while climbing the stairway  
clinging on the wall and leaning against  
the heart of Ancilina so as not to fall.

But there were no cheers and no birds sang

to echo the sounds of your words,  
no sea with its silvery fishes  
listening to you  
without the sun or the mountains of Aspra  
"to salute you overhead!"  
Only you sang in the silence  
and you sing within me!

Your poetry Ignatius, which for all  
is a wind that blows cares away  
tills the soil of the soul  
a palette knife that paints among the clouds;  
a pure force  
that will be with me 'til I die;  
it's living flesh under a spiritual skin;  
it's a running river that destroys, thrashes  
it's a needle that repairs, embroiders  
a fountain that waters, a brazier that glows.

I saw you yesterday Ignatius  
in your new holiday coat  
shoes and beret  
ready to leave, with a heavy suitcase  
laden with your days, for your last journey  
from which no one was able to keep you.

You were dressed in your sash  
but not to do a reading in China or Siberia  
nor at the feet of Lenin or Mayakovski:  
the passing comet stopped at Palermo  
it came to take you  
by backwards mounted horse  
to be inebriated by the stars  
while you await the sound of the trumpet  
that announces the sentence.

In a garden of almonds and chestnuts  
they'll let you hear bagpipes:  
whose players are those who on earth had  
empty stomachs and injured hearts.  
Between lines of golden angels  
kneaded with honey... you find  
your "bedraggled kids  
envied by the pigs that saw them  
dressed and not sitting in the mud".

They fly you over the inferno  
to view the poet denigrators and enemies  
who crucified you, troubled by the verses  
that nailed fascists...  
they didn't know that poetry

can knock down walls, smash doors  
dissolve handcuffs!

Now like roasted lambs  
in the ever burning furnace  
with buggered eyes and hanging tongue  
they ask for help:  
they would like to stay at your feet  
or even in your thoughts

I saw you yesterday Ignatius  
with eyes you purposely left squinting  
in the slit of sunlight you stole from the sky  
in the poetry that remained painted  
on the beautiful laughing face when  
with paper wings you made doves fly;  
I could tell you again encountered the Lord!

April 7, 1997

This poem was published two days after Buttitta's death.

## 2.) 'The Daft Days', by Robert Fergusson, translated by Franco Buffoni, 2011

1.

Now mirk December's dowie face  
Glowrs owre the rigs wi' sour grimace,  
While, thro' his minimum o' space  
The bleere'ed sun,  
Wi' blinkin light and stealin' pace,  
His race doth run.

2.

Frae naked groves nae birdie sings;  
To shepherd's pipe nae hillock rings;  
The breeze nae od'rous flavour brings,  
Frae Borean cave;  
And dwynin Nature droops her wings,  
Wi' visage grave.

*I giorni pazzi [Standard Italian]*

Ora il volto triste di dicembre oscuro spia da sopra i tetti con smorfia amara, mentre -  
percorrendo il tragitto più breve - il sole dall'occhio cisposo, con vivida luce e passo  
furtivo, corre la sua corsa.

Dai boschi nudi nessun uccello canta; del piffero del pastore nessuna collinetta risuona; la  
brezza non porta fragranze profumate dall'antro boreale... E la natura abbassa le ali, con viso  
grave.

*I ultim dì de l'ann [Milanese dialect]*

1.

Adess t'el vedet propi,  
Inscì trist, ch'el guarda giò,  
El par adree a sguajtamm  
Sto oeucc de nebia sbarlusenta!  
E l'è el sò...  
Ma el para nanca ver!

2.

E dent i bosch  
I usij i canten pu,  
Se sent pu nient,  
Nanca i odor del vent.  
El mond el par adree a morì,  
Senz on lament.

### 3.) Lexical Analysis of 'Sicilia Luntana' (*Prime*, 1922–1954)

#### Nouns

Sicilia (1)	(landscape)
people	(body)
homeland (1)	(landscape)
villages	(landscape)
gardens	(landscape)
eyes (1)	(body)
youthfulness	(body)
faces	(body)
sun	(landscape)
day-to-day workers	(body)
eyes (2)	(body)
hair (1)	(body)
mothers	(body)
shawls	(body)
thresholds	(landscape)
doors	(landscape)
sons	(body)
homeland (2)	(landscape)
eyes (3)	(body)
arms	(body)
response	(body)
breathlessness	(body)
heart	(body)
songs	(body)
youngsters	(body)
cart drivers	(body)
road	(landscape)
heat	(landscape)
dust	(landscape)



hedgerows	(landscape)
figs-of-India	(landscape)
bud	(landscape)
head	(body)
eyes (4)	(body)
lasses	(body)
leaves	(landscape)
branches	(landscape)
baskets	(landscape)
oranges	(landscape)
panniers	(landscape)
grapes	(landscape)
pails	(landscape)
water (1)	(landscape)
necks	(body)
droplet	(landscape)
voices	(body)
water (2)	(landscape)
flowers	(landscape)
hair (2)	(body)
lightning	(landscape)
sky	(landscape)
Sicilia (2)	(landscape)
Sicilia (3)	(landscape)
turn	(body/landscape)
homeland (3)	(landscape)

### Verbs

Long (body/mind)  
 have  
 lost  
 cannot  
 come (body)  
 see (body)  
 waiting  
 long (body/mind)  
 narrow (body)  
 see (body)  
 reach (body)  
 are not  
 call (body)  
 call (body)  
 hung (body)  
 long (body/mind)  
 captivated (body)

### Adjectives

Unfortunate  
Lucid (body)  
youthfulness (body)  
hollowed (body)  
blackened (body)  
old (body)  
profound (body)  
loose (body)  
let-down (body)  
tearful (body)  
black (body)  
bitter (body)  
broken (body)  
big (physical)  
main (physical)  
unmarried (physical)  
chilly (landscape)

#### 4.) 'Un seculo di storia' (*Poeta, 1972*) *Versione Italiana*

Accuso i politici  
di oggi e di ieri:  
Crispi e compagni  
predicatori della monarchia,  
beccamorti e falegnami  
che inchiodarono la Sicilia  
viva alla croce.  
Accuso i Savoia,  
i primi e l'ultimo  
re e imperatore,  
fascista e italiano,  
incoronato di medaglie  
strappate con il sangue  
dal cuore delle madri.  
Un secolo di guerre,  
un secolo di stragi:  
ci sono ossa di siciliani  
sotterrate nei deserti,  
nella neve,  
nel fango dei fiumi:  
c'è sangue di zolfatari,  
di zappatori,  
di madri scheletri  
e bambini uccisi  
nelle piazze della Sicilia.  
Non hanno voce e gridano  
gli ammazzati del '93  
con le pietre nelle tasche  
e la fame nelle pance vuote.

Non hanno voce e gridano  
con il collo sotto i piedi dei baroni,  
con le ossa storciolate dal lavoro;  
con la lingua di cani  
e il fiato ai denti.  
Tre giorni di macello  
di mortori e beccamorti  
di lamenti e pianto  
nelle case dei poveri.  
Ci fu carne a buon prezzo  
sulle tavole dei baroni;  
a buon prezzo  
per i sovrani di Roma;  
a buon prezzo per Crispi,  
macellaio di Corte;  
e Lavriano  
generale e sicario  
pagato a giornata.  
Li abbiamo qui  
ancora qui  
con le stesse facce  
e il cuore di selvaggi  
gli scannapopolo;  
gli lecchiamo i piedi,  
gli diamo il voto,  
le unghie per scorticarci,  
la corda per impiccarci;  
la mazza e l'incudine  
per romperci le ossa.  
L'abbiamo qui  
ancora qui la mafia,  
seduta sui banchi degli imputati  
a dettare legge;  
a scrivere sentenze di morte  
con le mani che sanguinano.  
Li abbiamo qui  
i compari della mafia  
con le mani pulite,  
i fabbri di chiavi false,  
gli spoglia altari con la croce sul petto;  
dove posano i piedi secca l'erba,  
secca l'acqua,  
spuntano spine e lacrime per la Sicilia.  
Li abbiamo qui  
gli affamati del potere;  
gli affamati di carne cruda,  
che credono la Sicilia  
un porco scannato  
e le spolpano le ossa.  
Se sei siciliano  
alza il braccio,

apri la mano:  
cinque bandiere rosse,  
cinque!  
Accendi la polveriera del cuore!  
Se sei siciliano  
fatti la voce cannone,  
il petto carro armato,  
le gambe cavalli di mare:  
annega i nemici della Sicilia!  
Li abbiamo qui e cantano  
gli usignuoli ammaestrati  
che aggiungono lacrime d'inchostro  
alle lacrime della Sicilia  
e stornellano il miserere  
a gloria dei padroni.  
Cantano odi al sole  
al cielo  
al mare  
alla zagara,  
e portano la Sicilia sul trono  
col velo nero  
di mal maritata.  
Il forno avvampa  
e buttano cenere a palate,  
incapaci d'impastare  
i cuori dei siciliani  
e farne uno a tre punte  
tredici volte più grande della Sicilia.  
La Sicilia non ha più nome  
né casa e paese;  
ha i figli sparsi per il mondo  
sputati come cani,  
venduti all'asta  
Soldati disarmati  
che combattono con le braccia.  
Con le braccia,  
i rami verdi della Sicilia  
rimescolano la terra,  
rompono le zolle,  
seminano  
e fanno orti e giardini.  
Con le braccia,  
fabbricano palazzi,  
costruiscono scuole,  
ponti,  
officine  
e aeroporti.  
Con le braccia,  
le api da miele della Sicilia  
aprono strade,  
perforano montagne,

svuotano la pancia della terra.  
Con le braccia,  
i soldati senza patria,  
gli stracciati,  
e carni senza lardo  
vestono d'oro i porci di fuori.  
Li chiamano terroni  
zingari,  
piedi fetenti;  
e hanno i figli e le madri  
che contano i giorni  
con gli occhi bagnati;  
e questo cielo che bacio,  
e questa terra che tocco  
e mi canta nelle mani;  
e secoli di civiltà  
sotto i piedi.  
La Sicilia non ha più nome;  
ma milioni di sordi e di muti  
sprofondati in un pozzo  
che io chiamo e non sentono,  
e se allungo le braccia  
mi mordono le mani.  
Io gli calerei le corde delle vene,  
le reti degli occhi  
per tirarli dal pozzo;  
perché qui sono nato  
e parlo la lingua di mio padre;  
e i pesci  
gli uccelli  
il vento  
pure il vento!  
entra nelle orecchie  
e ciarla in siciliano.  
Qui sono nato,  
e se mi bacio le mani  
bacio le mani dei miei morti;  
e se mi asciugo gli occhi  
asciugo gli occhi dei miei morti.  
Qui sono nato  
allattai nelle mammelle di questa terra  
le succhiai il sangue;  
se mi tagliate le vene,  
vi bruciate le mani!  
Non è vero che amiamo la Sicilia  
se abbiamo la storia nel pugno  
e la soffochiamo;  
non è vero  
se accendiamo il fuoco  
e lo spegniamo;  
non è vero nemmeno

se siamo un giorno liberi  
e per cent'anni servi.  
Non chiediamo perdono alla storia  
ora che abbiamo dimenticato  
i martiri di tutti i tempi  
che misero il collo sotto la mannaia  
senza piangere  
Di Blasi, uno!  
Ora che abbiamo dimenticato  
i torturati nelle galere,  
i condannati a vita,  
gl'impiccati,  
e gli arrostiti vivi nelle piazze.  
Pietre e fango  
per chi sopporta la miseria,  
pietre e fango  
per chi batte le mani ai potenti  
pietre e fango  
per chi non mette il collo  
nella forca della libertà:  
lo dico ai siciliani  
e mi scoppia il cuore!  
E fu ieri  
(la data non conta)  
io vidi piangere le madri  
nel Piano di Portella  
e Saveria Megna  
inginocchiata sull'erba  
parlare con il figlio ammazzato.  
Lei lo vedeva,  
io no;  
il pazzo ero io  
se dopo vidi uscire dalle fosse  
tutti i morti per la libertà della Sicilia:  
vivi  
a migliaia  
a marosi,  
e il fuoco negli occhi!  
Dammi la mano  
Nicola Lombardo,  
(io parlavo con lui! )  
straccia la tua camicia, gli dissi,  
fammi vedere il petto  
bucato dalle pallottole italiane.  
A Bronte, gli dissi,  
nel Piano di San Vito  
dopo cent'anni chi passa  
sente ancora la tua voce  
muoio per il popolo!  
Raccontami la storia  
Turiddu Carnevale,

(io parlavo con lui!)  
 figlio dell'inferno e del paradiso,  
 raccontami la storia!  
 In questo pugno c'è la morte,  
 ti dissero;  
 in questo pugno i denari  
 ti dissero;  
 e tu:  
 la morte,  
 a morte!  
 e gli torcesti il pugno.  
 L'indomani  
 a Sciara  
 i compagni  
 lo portavano a spalla:  
 quattro,  
 sudati,  
 un passo dopo l'altro.  
 Di colpo  
 la cassa  
 diventò leggera.  
 gli scappava dalle mani:  
 il morto non c'era nella cassa,  
 camminava in prima fila  
 fra le bandiere rosse;  
 la testa,  
 toccava il cielo!  
 Chi cammina curvato  
 torce la schiena,  
 se è un popolo  
 torce la storia.

**5a.) Transcript of Buttitta's spoken introduction to 'Parru cu tia' (Lo Iacono, 2010: online)**

'È venuto il momento della poesia. Se la poesia è balsamo, se la poesia è fuoco, allora è necessaria. Io leggo una poesia, "Parru cu tia", perché è necessario parlare con qualcuno, parlare col popolo specialmente cu populu sicilianu, cu ddi siciliani addummiscuti, e che dorminu e ch'avi assai chi dorminu e che un poeta vini ca, vini ca un poeta e si n'avi a ghiri cu cuori tagghiati a pezzi, rumputo, picchè quannu vidu a una orbu ca dumanda a luci è già orbu e dumanda a luci rintra [...] già u n'avi luci e u n'avi né chidda e mancu chidda. Quando leggo i risultati dell'inchiesta, un poeta senti ri rintra pugnalati dunque perché a un certo momento a me mi paria di essere in una casa di pena, in una casa di pena, dunque io recito "parru cu tia" lirica dialettale naturalmente perché io sugnu poeta siciliano, canto, scrivo in questo dialetto nostro e canto questa nostra terra cu 50 secoli di civiltà darrerri i spaddi... e poi arriviamo a Palma di Montechiaro [la platea applaude] chi picciriddi a dieci anni, a dodici anni chi travagghianu 14 ore. Ci abbiamo tutto un passato di glorie, abbiamo i vespri, abbiamo il '20, abbiamo il 1848, poi u '60 e poi si arriva a Palma, e viremu i cristiani torti, cristiani chi chiancino, chi chiancino mentre la civiltà cammina. È doloroso questo, dunque parru cu tia'

## 5b.) My translation

'The moment for poetry has come. If poetry is balm, if poetry is fire, then it is necessary. I'm going to read a poem, "Parru cu tia", because it is necessary to talk to someone, to speak with the people, especially Sicilian people, with those Sicilians who aren't awake and that sleep and who've been sleeping for a long time and that a poet comes, a poet comes here and has to leave with his heart in pieces, broken, because when I see a blind man who asks for the light is already blind and asks for light, he has neither the light of one nor the light of the other. When I read the results of the investigation, a poet feels re-stabbed therefore because at a certain moment I think I am in a house of punishment, in a house of punishment, so I recite "parru cu tia" dialectal lyric naturally because I'm a Sicilian poet, I recount, I write in this dialect and I recount our land with 50 centuries of civilization at our backs ... and then we get to Palma di Montechiaro (audience clapping) with youngsters of ten years, twelve years who work for fourteen hours. We have a whole past of glories, we have vespers, we have the '20, we have 1848, then the '60 and then we get to Palma, and we see the distorted people, people who cry, who cry while civilization walks. This is painful, so parru cu tia'

## 6.) Draft versions of 'Hymn to Life' (*Piazza*, 1974)

### The long time (Draft 1: 5/5/2012)

At seventy and afterwards  
while the curtain is falling  
and sight shortens,  
the man reads 2<sup>nd</sup> November  
in the calendar of his eyes.

But this morning,  
with no mercy earned,  
I read Easter and resurrection;  
and I see in front of me  
the long time,  
the open streets,  
the sky clean  
and without thunder bursts.

And yet there's the war,  
famine,  
and people ready to cut others' throats.

And yet I have grazed flesh,  
thorns in my feet,  
and my heart  
that fills and empties every day;  
and I long for grass  
and for hot bread  
and for mouths and eyes that water  
and rip the dry roots from my heart.



From where does this light come  
that lights up my eyes  
and lets me see the lustre in the darkness,  
the sky in the depths  
and joy shining in the tears?

Who slashed the clouds  
that are raining blood  
and lets me see the world be reborn,  
the earth unravel,  
and the sky open itself  
and transcend into other skies?

Who lets me see  
the mountains alive,  
the trees upright,  
and the sun that clothes them  
and the wind that ripples and talks to us?

It isn't poetry;  
poetry flares up and burns out,  
sinks to the ground and dies  
rises in the sky and falls:  
it has wings of straw.

What is it and why  
do I look at the countryside and it blossoms with me,  
look at the sea and it seems like my bed,  
look at the sky and soar there with my heart?

What is it and why  
am I alone  
and see people and flags  
and men of every tongue  
and feel like flesh incorporated  
and a river within the rivers?

What is it and why  
do I feel nature  
that dies and is reborn  
and I have tender flesh...?

This morning I became a man.

### **A long time (Draft 2: 13/3/2013)**

At age seventy and after  
as the curtain begins to fall  
and sight shortens,  
the man reads 2<sup>nd</sup> November

in his eyes' calendar.

But on this morning,  
without earned grace,  
I read Easter and resurrection;  
and see in front of me  
a long time,  
the streets open,  
the sky clean  
and with no thunder claps.

And say that there's the war,  
famine,  
and people ready to cut each other's throats.

And say that I've got flayed flesh,  
thorns in my feet,  
and a heart  
that fills and empties every day;  
and that I long for grass  
and for hot bread  
and for mouths and eyes that water  
and rip the dry roots from my heart.

From where comes this light  
that lights up my eyes  
and lets me see the luster in the darkness,  
the sky in the depths  
and the joy shining in the tears?

Who slashed the clouds  
that are raining blood  
and lets me see the world reborn,  
the earth stretch out,  
and the sky open  
to transcend into other skies?

Who lets me see  
the mountains alive,  
the trees on their feet,  
and the sun that dresses them  
and the wind that rustles them and talks to them?

It isn't poetry;  
poetry turns on and off,  
sinks to the ground and dies  
rises in the sky and falls:  
it has wings of straw.

Why and for what  
do I look at the countryside and it blossoms with me,

do I look at the sea and it seems like my bed,  
do I look at the sky and I transcend with my heart?

Why and for what  
am I alone  
and I see people and flags  
and men of every tongue  
and I feel like flesh incorporated  
and a river in the rivers?

Why and for what  
do I feel nature  
that dies and is reborn  
and I have but tender flesh...?

This morning I became a man.

### **The long time (Draft 3: 14/3/2013)**

At age seventy and after  
as the curtain is falling  
and sight shortens,  
the man reads 2<sup>nd</sup> November  
in his eyes' calendar.

But this morning,  
with no earned grace,  
I read Easter and resurrection;  
and see in front of me  
the long time,  
the open streets,  
the sky clean  
and without thunder claps.

And to say that there's the war,  
famine,  
and people ready to cut each other's throats.

And to say that I have flayed flesh,  
thorns in my feet,  
and a heart  
that fills and empties every day;  
and that I long for grass  
and for hot bread  
and for mouths and eyes that water  
and rip the dry roots from my heart.

Where does this light come from  
that lights up my eyes  
and lets me see the lustre in the darkness,

the sky in the depths  
and the joy shining in the tears?

Who slashed the clouds  
that are raining blood  
and lets me see the world reborn,  
the earth stretch out,  
and the sky open  
to transcend into other skies?

Who lets me see  
the mountains alive,  
the trees on their feet,  
and the sun that dresses them  
and the wind that rustles them and talks to them?

It isn't poetry;  
poetry turns on and off,  
sinks to the ground and dies  
rises in the sky and falls:  
it has wings of straw.

What is it and why  
do I look at the countryside and it blossoms with me,  
look at the sea and it seems like my bed,  
look at the sky and go there with my heart?

What is it and why  
am I alone  
and see people and flags  
and men of every tongue  
and feel like flesh incorporated  
and a river in the rivers?

What is it and why  
do I feel like nature  
that dies and is reborn  
and I have but tender flesh...?

This morning I became a man.

### **The long time (Draft 4: 20/3/2013)**

At age seventy and after  
as the curtain is falling  
and sight shortens,  
the man reads 2<sup>nd</sup> November  
in his eyes' calendar.

But this morning,

with no earned grace,  
I read Easter and resurrection;  
and see in front of me  
the long time,  
the open streets,  
the sky clean  
and without thunder claps.

And even if there's the war,  
famine,  
and people ready to cut each other's throats.

And even if I have flayed flesh,  
thorns in my feet,  
and a heart  
that fills and empties every day;  
and that I long for grass  
and for hot bread  
and for mouths and eyes that water  
and rip the dry roots from my heart.

Where does this light come from  
that lights up my eyes  
and lets me see the lustre in the darkness,  
the sky in the depths  
and the joy shining in the tears?

Who slashed the clouds  
that are raining blood  
and lets me see the world reborn,  
the earth stretch out,  
and the sky open  
to transcend into other skies?

Who lets me see  
the mountains alive,  
the trees on their feet,  
and the sun that dresses them  
and the wind that rustles them and talks to them?

It isn't poetry;  
poetry turns on and off,  
sinks to the ground and dies  
rises in the sky and falls:  
it has wings of straw.

What is it and why  
do I look at the countryside and it blossoms with me,  
look at the sea and it seems like my bed,  
look at the sky and go there with my heart?

What is it and why  
am I alone  
and see people and flags  
and men of every tongue  
and feel like flesh incorporated  
and a river in the rivers?

What is it and why  
do I feel like nature  
that dies and is reborn  
and I have but tender flesh...?

This morning I became a man.

### **Hymn to Life (Draft 5: 8/6/2015)**

At seventy and afterwards  
while the curtain is falling  
and sight shortens,  
the man reads 2 November  
in the calendar of his eyes.

But this morning,  
with no mercy earned,  
I read Easter and resurrection;  
and I see in front of me  
the long time,  
the open streets,  
the sky clean  
and without thunder bursts.

And yet there's the war,  
famine,  
and people ready to cut others' throats.

And yet I have grazed flesh,  
thorns in my feet,  
and a heart  
that fills and empties every day;  
and I long for grass  
and for hot bread  
and for mouths and eyes that water  
and rip the dry roots from my heart.

Where does this light come from  
that brightens my eyes  
and lets me see the lustre in the darkness,  
the sky in the depths  
and joy shining in the tears?

Who slashed the clouds  
that are raining blood  
and lets me see the world be reborn,  
the earth unravel,  
and the sky open itself  
and transcend into other skies?

Who lets me see  
the mountains alive,  
the trees upright,  
and the sun that clothes them  
and the wind that ripples and talks to us?

It isn't poetry;  
poetry flares up and burns out,  
sinks to the ground and dies,  
rises in the sky and falls:  
it has wings of straw.

What is it and why do I  
look at the countryside and it blossoms with me,  
look at the sea and it seems like my bed,  
look at the sky and soar there with my heart?

What is it and why  
am I alone  
and see people and flags  
and men of every tongue  
and feel like embodied flesh  
and a river within the rivers?

What is it and why  
do I feel nature  
dying and being reborn  
and my body goes weak...?

This morning I became a man.

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