

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HALF-FOREIGNERS

With a few, rare exceptions, Italians who migrated to North America never learned English all that well. Many, especially women, didn't learn it at all. The majority stopped at five hundred mangled words, with English roots and Italian endings, to be used in a life that was restricted to work, saving and raising children. The best study conducted on the topic is an essay by Alberto Menaini:¹

The situation was greatly different for their children, with a series of unexpected and dire consequences. The children went to school, played in the streets, went to the movies, practice sports and, in so doing, learned English. The new language put them on the same level as their peers and the rest of the population, but separated them from their parents. Even the old folks who had managed to learn English could only pronounce it with a strong accent that embarrassed their own children and was ridiculed by native speakers. This phenomenon is not discussed in the official statistics, nor is it present in diplomatic reports and it is never mentioned during colonial banquets. Generally, the phenomenon was barely noticed even in the memoirs of the few second-generation Italians who wrote those stories after they had gone on to great success and brilliant careers in other fields. A few instances appear in autobiographies and novels written in English by the second generation. I was able to secure one of these autobiographies, full of interesting biographical and family information, from a student of mine, Olga Peragallo.²

One of the best American writers of Italian origin was John Fante, whose autobiography, *Dago Red*, was translated into Italian. First of all, we must pay attention to the fact that the title includes one of the most common slurs used by Americans to demean Italians: *Dago*. This is a word that provoked many fist fights and occasionally pushed enraged Italians to draw knives from their pockets.

1 Alberto Menaini (1904-1984). Linguist and scholar. The book mentioned is *At margini della lingua*. Firenze, Sansoni, 1947.

2 Olga Peragallo (1910-1943). *Italian American Authors and their Contribution to American Literature*. New York, Yanni, 1949. The book was published posthumously with an introduction by Prezolini.

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I am nervous when I bring friends to my house; the place looks so Italian. Here hangs a picture of Victor Emmanuel,³ and over there is one of the cathedral of Milan, and next to it is one of St. Peter's, and on the buffet stands a wine pitcher of medieval design; it's forever brimming, forever red and brilliant with wine. These things are heirloom belonging to my father, and no matter who may come to our house, he likes to stand under them and brag.

So I begin to shout to him. I tell him to cut out to be a Wop and be an American once in a while. Immediately he gets his razor stropped and whales hell out of me, clouting me from room to room and finally out the back door. I go into the woodshed and pull down my pants and stretch my neck to examine the blue slices across my romp. A Wop, that's what my father is! Nowhere is there an American father who bears his son this way. Well, he is not going to get away with it; someday I'll get even with him.

I begin to think that my grandmother is hopelessly a Wop. She is a small, stocky peasant who walks with her wrists criss-crossed over her belly, a simple old lady fond of boys. She comes to the room and tries to talk to my friends. She speaks English with a bad accent, her vowels rolling out like hoops. When, in her simple way, she confronts a friend of mine and says, her old eyes smiling: "*You lka go the Sester scola?*" my heart roars. *Mamma!* I'm disgraced; now they all know that I am Italian.

My grandmother has taught me to speak her native tongue. By seven, I know it pretty well, and I always address her in it. But when friends are with me, when I am twelve and thirteen, I pretend ignorance of what she says, and smirk stiffly; my friends don't know that I can speak any language but English. Sometimes this infuriates her. She bristles, the loose skin at her throat knits hard, and she blasphemes with a mighty blasphemy. (169-170)

One of the first books written in English by an Italian immigrant that came to the attention of American critics was *Son of Italy*, by Pascal D'Angelo. The book, which includes prose and poetry, is the extraordinary narration of the hardships he faced as a foreign worker in America and his passionate effort to achieve poetical expression. When it first came out it was welcome with great enthusiasm and it is, to this very day, a fundamental book for understanding the history

3 Most likely Vittorio Emanuele II, first king of unified Italy (1820-1878).

of immigration. Here is what it says about the difficulties of learning English:

None of us, including myself, ever thought of a movement to broaden our knowledge of the English language. We soon learned a few words about the job, which was the preliminary creed; then came *bread, shirt, gloves* (no kid gloves), *milk*. And that is all. We formed our own little world—one of many in this country. And the other people around us who spoke in strange languages might have been phantoms for all the influence that they had upon us or for all we cared about them. (68)

And here it is, the creation of a “little world,” a world separated from that of the others, as if they were ghosts. And here are also the first token words, without emotion or value, indispensable in the concrete world.

Francesco Ventresca⁴ was a teacher. When he first arrived to these shores he was a pick-and-shovel worker and, in an extraordinary case of strong will, decided to start going to school at 21 years of age. He became so absorbed in studying that he eventually became chairperson of a foreign language department in a [non-specified] college. In his memoirs he wrote:

From that moment on I started living with my fellow countrymen with my body only, but not with my heart and mind. While they were chatting, playing cards and cursing, I was busy reading out loud my English lessons and looking up word definitions in the dictionary. My companions would look at me strange and finally one of them said: “Cecco,⁵ if you go on like this you are going to go crazy.” The prophecy didn’t scare me. And I kept reading, reading and reading.

This separation from his Italian companions in “heart” and “mind”

⁴ Francesco Ventresca (1872-1954). *Personal Reminiscences: Celebrating Sixty Years in America (1891-1951) and Fifty Years as a Teacher of Foreign Languages*. New York: Ryerson, 1937. Ventresca was originally from Introdocacqua (Molise), the same town as Pascal D’Angelo.

⁵ Cecco. Nickname for Francesco.

is noteworthy in that it is related directly to the notion of education. The hostility for and rejection of education is so strong that, to them, studying is the equivalent of madness. From their point of view, the necessity to adopt the new language is responsible for the shrinking of their native tongue and for the impoverishment of their emotional world. Often ^{it} also pushed them to renegade their very names and to adopt English ones. At times this was the result of the immigrants' wish to become completely American and no longer be considered *wops* or *dagos*; foreigners targeted by the antipathy of landlords; policemen and civil servants. Sometimes it was the Americans' difficulty in pronouncing their foreign names that suggested the change, informally at first, then officially. Changing names was very easy; requiring only the approval of a judge. In many cases the new last name was the English translation of the Italian family name, thus *Papa* became *Pope*; *Vendi* became *Green*; and *Ferraro* was translated with *Smith*. In other occasions the change was a pejorative, as was the story I read in the memoirs of Constantine Panunzio.⁶

The first important incident in that American house was the change of name. George Annis, my landlord, who—as I discover later was almost illiterate—could not pronounce my Italian name. He thus suggested that I changed it. At first I was stunned and I thought how my parents [sic]⁷ would have reacted, since they gave me that name on purpose, to perpetuate my grandfather's. But I wanted to become as similar as possible to an American and it seemed there was no other way: I let George change my name into a genuine American name. This is not an uncommon experience for many immigrants to America. Even today, some change it out of expediency; others take the initiative to be American at least in their name. But in most cases the change is forced by the landlord. In some cases the changes are funny. The name I was given by George was over the top as far American origins are concerned. It

6 Constantine Panunzio (1884-1964). *The Soul of an Immigrant*. New York, Arno Press, 1969.

7 The original text by Panunzio is in English. Prezzolini translated *parents* with *parenti*. This is apparently an oversight. *Parenti* in Italian means relatives. From the context it is rather clear that it was the parents (*genitori*) not the relatives who named the author of the memoirs.

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was American in its nature and it smelled of *Americanism*. For a period of three months I was called Mr. Beefsteak. When I found out about the real meaning of the word I rebelled. I didn't want to be known as a cut of meat. Then George changed my name again into Frank Nardi, and Frank Nardi I was until I went to school and could return to my original name.⁸ In the meantime with my relatives I felt the humiliation of having changed my name. I sent them a bunch of envelopes already addressed to Frank Nardi, telling them they should use them to send me their letters. I later found out that many other immigrants had done the same thing to hide the fact that they had changed their names.

Even in the larger picture painted by *The Grand Gennaro* by Garibaldi Lapolla—the story of the rise and fall of an Italian family—the problem of the split between the two languages appears:

The older son of the "great" Gennaro learned English incredibly fast and was proud of it. When mother spoke to him in Italian he would always answer in English. "Why in English, Roberto?" his father would ask. "Do you want to forget your sweet language?" His younger brothers were following his example. Then Gennaro decided to follow in the steps of signor Monterano and bought an English grammar and started studying with his wife. But his accent made his children laugh despite the fact that his cadence was harmonious and full of sibilants.

Joe [sic] Pagano,⁹ author of a series of sketches and vignettes titled *The Pascanos*,¹⁰ in a short story describes a gathering of Italian Americans on the occasion of a baptism. Hanging on a tavern's walls are the portraits of Roosevelt¹¹ and Mussolini: the first with tired

8 Panunzio was born in Molfetta (Bari). In all likelihood his birth name was *Constantino*, later anglicized in *Constantine*. It is very common to run into Italian Americans whose last name is *Constantino*, spelled with an *n* in the first syllable but with the traditional Italian ending *o*. This is probably a transcription error on the part of an English-speaking clerk. The additional *n* allows the original name to conform partially to English orthography.

9 Jo Pagano (1906–1982).

10 *The Pascanos*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1940.

11 Franklyn Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945). He served as the 32nd President of

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eyes behind spectacles, the other with a black beret and a belligerent jaw. Also on the walls are the American and Italian flags, crossed like scissors. It's a rainy day, the tavern is filling up and soon the large room is crowded, with people gathered in small groups:

(...) some sitting and some standing, chatting and laughing and bantering in Italian American lingo—*Yah, I sez him... Woudi' toba like ta know*—and other similar expressions.

The stories narrated in English by Italian American authors bring to light the pain, the poverty, the humiliations, the betrayals, the miscommunication and the confusion that are usually kept hidden during the official speeches, the banquets and social events that attract politicians, Chambers of Commerce functionaries, lawyers, travel agents, fraudulent bankers and other new rich. Those stories are really moving. And at the center is always the linguistic tragedy, the tragedy of impossible expressivity, the demolition of words and, therefore, thought. This tragedy devastated the Italian American psyche in two different ways. The first was the *impoverishment* of the lexicon. The immigrant *cafone*¹² picked up only the most mechanical and functional aspects of the linguistic mixture made of *jobba* [job] and *pezzè* [pieces, dollars]. The other phenomenon was the schizophrenia, the split in the immigrant's soul between Italian and American identities, often represented by the conflict between two generations: fathers and mothers against their grandparents on one side; and against children, grandchildren and their friends on the other.

There were obviously several exceptions. For instance, people who ended up in the countryside were luckier than those who stayed in the cities. Those who went to California found better conditions than on the Atlantic coast; people with even minimal education resisted better than the illiterate. However, the general picture remains the same. The language and the lingo of Italian Americans reveal the crisis of the spirit and the customs.

the United States, from 1933 to 1945.

12 *Cafone*: southern Italian term used to designate farm laborers. The origin of the word is still disputed. It is now used as an insult, meaning crude, rude, ill-mannered, crass. Italian Americans use the term with its vernacular pronunciation, *gawoon*.

Part Six

Caricatures and Characters from the World of the Transplanted

FARFARIELLO
THE *CAFONI* OBSERVED BY A BOURGEOIS

I don't know who the first writer was who jammed a word from the Italian American lingo into an Italian-language poem, but this I know for certain: he couldn't have cared less about art. The same must have felt those who came after him and created a genre that turned out to be a cross between a storytelling musical and a Vaudeville-like act, the kind of show that had great success in small theaters in all the Little Italies of the United States between 1890 and 1940. Farfariello, alias of Eduardo Migliaccio,¹ was the most important, original and popular interpreter of this genre. He had phenomenal success all over the United States and also in Italy. He succeeded in attracting a non-Italian public that nicknamed him "The Italian Harry Lauder."² For those who don't know Lauder, just as I didn't know before I began researching Farfariello, he was a Scottish baritone who became greatly popular in those times with a repertory of popular songs. Yet, Farfariello, as far as I am concerned, was something else. He was a critical and moralistic observer with a satirical vein. He was, in a sense, a historian of the curious characters that lived (and live) in the world of the Transplanted: on one side the *cafoni*; on the other side their exploiters. In order to portray them accurately, he used the lingo of Italian Americans because it was the most effective way to reproduce their identities. He created the caricature-characters of the *cafone scostumato* [offensively uncouth bore], *Pasquale Passaguai* [Pascal Always-in-Trouble], the *cafone risagliuto* [new-rich], the *cafone patriota* [patriot], the *cafone nervoso* [irritable, anxious], the *cafone sciampanone* [squanderer], the *cafone cantante* [ever-singing], the *cafone 'ngannato* [gullible, deceived], the *cafone socialista* [socialist] and finally... *In presidente dello globbbo* [the president of the social club.] In total he

1 Eduardo Migliaccio (1882-1946). With the stage name *Farfariello* [Neapolitan dialect: Little Butterfly] he created dozens of characters, based on the satirical representations of *cafoni*. Farfariello is a vernacular term that indicates a vainglorious individual who talks incessantly saying all sorts of insane and absurd things boastful and with no credibility.

2 Henry "Harry" Lauder (1870-1950). Songwriter, singer and entertainer.

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created some five hundred characters that mirrored the sociological and anthropological types of Italian immigrants. The writers of satirical poems knew they were handling controversial material, and in fact on paper they used to underline with a red pen the words taken from the lingo to emphasize their provenance. To them this was not poetic material. In order to understand the difference, we should go back to the use of Italianized English words by other true artist-writers, such as Gioacchino Belli³ and Giovanni Pascoli.⁴ In one of his sonnets Belli gives a cabinet maker the responsibility to explain the meaning of *gratis* and *picnic*, vulgarized and Italianized into *aggratis* and *picchenicche*. The first word is from Latin; the second ← *continue on this line* → from English by way of French; *insert* () *insert* ()

Sto *picchenicche* è una parola grega,
Che vvo' di': *ppagà er pranzo a un tanta testa*

[This *picnic* is a Greek⁵ word / that means: *each one pays for his own lunch*.]

The sonnet ends with these words:

Be' ... dunque... *aggratis* significa a *uffragna*
Picchenicche vòddi': *ppaghi chi mmagna*.

[Well, then, *gratis* means for free / *picnic* means: if you eat you'll pay.]

For Belli, foreign words adapted to the Italian ear are a local-color issue. His satire has to do with social classes: the man-of-the-people from low-class Rome explains with all sorts of errors the meaning

3 Gioacchino Belli (1791–1863). Author of the most famous collection of sonnets in *romanesco*, the street dialect of Rome. Mostly composed between 1830 and 1839, a selection was first published in 1866.

4 Giovanni Pascoli (1855-1912). He is one of Italy's best-known poets. By training he was a scholar of classical languages, in particular Latin. His works were unconventionally anti-rhetorical and his style revolutionized Italian poetry.

5 "Greek" may be the metonym used in Roman dialect to indicate an incomprehensible language. Normally, Italians use "Arabic" instead of "Greek" for this purpose.

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of new words used by the wealthy, adopted from a language he calls "Greek." English words underwent the same treatment by the writers of Little Italy (even if they didn't know Belli).

In Pascoli, the artistic use of English or Italian-English words gives a veneer of local color in the well-known poem *Italy*.⁶ Here the touch of local color has a sentimental and patriotic value, tinged with nostalgia. No one else was able to bring the Italian American lingo to such a high level of cultural and emotional expression. Pascoli is also the only one, as far as I know, who was able to extract new effects from the rhyme of Italian words and words of the new lingo imported from America.

Venne, sapendo della lor venuta,

Gente, e qualcosa rispondeva a tutti

Joe, grave: "Oh, yes, è fero, vi saluta.

*Molti bisini... oh yes... No, tiene un frutto-
stendo..... Oh yes, vende checche, candi, scrima.
Conta moneta! Può comprar coi frutti.*

Il *buschetto* non rende come prima.

Yes, *un salone* che ci ha tanti bordi.

Yes, l'ho visto nel pigliar la stima.

Hearing about their arrival,

people came. Everyone got an answer from

Joe, serious: "Oh yes, he is *fero* and says hello.

Lots of business, oh yes... No, he owns a
fruitstand. Oh yes, he sells *cakes candy icecream*.
He makes *money*. He can buy with fruit.

The *basket* is not as profitable as before.

Yes, a *saloon* with many *boards*.

Yes, I saw him boarding the *steamer*.

I won't debate Livingston's analysis of those words and his claim that

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6 Composed in 1904 it was published in the collection of poems *Primi poemetti* (Bologna, Zanichelli, 1905).

Pascoli used them incorrectly, perhaps because of his limited knowledge of English. The issue is not Pascoli's philological precision, rather his artistic ability to use new material. He understood both its validity and limits. Those words are like tiles introduced into a mosaic to give it a sense of primitivism, like Middle Ages paintings with the crown on the Madonna's head made of real gold with precious stones rather than painted.

Pascoli's smiles are unlike Belli's full-mouth laughs: they are hints of sweetness and understanding. Pascoli is taken by surprise by these new beings that appear unexpectedly in the middle of Tuscany—where he lived at the time—carrying the echo of a faraway experience, the resonance of money, customs and words. In the same way, French or Arabic words must have impressed thirteenth century people who heard them in the mouth of other Italians: merchants and navigators who had traveled to foreign lands and were bringing back foreign smells, animals and rare specimens never seen before. In order for those words to become poetry, however, they require the magical touch of someone like Pascoli, curious like a smart peasant and sensitive like a girl.

The storytellers and Vaudeville artists—Farfariello first among them—were cut of a different cloth. They wrote thousands of poems with music performed in Italian theaters. Texts and scores were printed on thin sheets of paper with funny vignettes from woodcuts and sold everywhere in the stores and newsstands of the Little Italies. The authors used the lingo as an identification badge. Then, alas, when they tried to write serious poetry, they would switch back to the kind of Italian laden with clichés that schools had taught them. But, even in these songs one can still find an implicit attitude of superiority by the semi-educated class toward southern peasants. Yet, they left behind images of a *cafone* who, with his poor, limited and concrete language, could express his defiance, scorn and pain for the tribulations he had to endure in America. It is the kind of attitude and emotion that surfaced in all its clarity in the apologue regarding a no-nonsense female character who was reading a script, written in passable but stereotypical Italian by some know-it-all high-school dropout. The playwright insisted that she should use the word *palazzo* instead of the standard term *building*. “What are you talking about?”

she asked. “You call this *bilingo a palazza*?” Under the pressure of capitalist exploitation; of racism from the Irish who were competing for the true profession of the Catholic faith; and the disdain of the Anglo-Saxon ruling class; the *cafoni* developed a language that was much livelier than the sausage-stuffed semi-official Italian made of dead expressions preserved under brine in a dictionary, and good only for patriotic rhetorical plays.

Eduardo Migliaccio was born in 1880 [sic] in Cava dei Tirreni⁸ where his well-to-do Neapolitan family used to spend the summer. His grandfather migrated to the United States, invested his fortune in a Pennsylvania mine but—based on what I heard from the last descendants in the family—ended up losing everything. His grandson arrived here probably when he was eighteen years old. He found a job in a bank but didn’t last long. That kind of work wasn’t for him. According to an interview he gave to the periodical *Americolo*⁹ (founded by Fiorello La Guardia), to make ends meet Farfariello started working as a scribe, writing letters under dictation for illiterate immigrants to their Italian relatives. He discovered feelings, expressions and personalities that made a deep impression on him. Like many Italians he could write rhymes with ease. In fact, he was only thirteen years old when he wrote his first sonnet (Apollo,¹⁰ apparently, forgave him.) In his earlier years, in Naples he had admired the work of the “*grandissimo Malacceta*.”¹¹ In New York he hung out with Italians and started going

7 *Palazzo* is a polysemic word that means both “sumptuous palace” and “ordinary large building.” Apparently, Italian Americans used the word *palazzo* to indicate an elegant and luxurious building; while a modest apartment building was called *bilingo*.

8 Cava dei Tirreni is in the province of Salerno, near the southern-most end of the Amalfi coast.

9 *Americolo*. Periodical founded by Fiorello La Guardia before he became mayor of New York. The venture ended in failure. The only references to the periodical are in the catalogs of the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library. It was published by La Guardia Publishing Co. in 1925. Editor F. H. La Guardia. NYPL has Volume 1, 2; up to n. 48 (1925-1926).

10 Apollo was the Greek god of music and poetry.

11 Nicola Maldacea (1870-1945). Neapolitan comedian, songwriter and performer. His satirical monologues made fun of the élite as well as the plebes.

to the local theaters where wannabe entertainers were performing. It didn't take long before he decided to try, confident that he could do better than them. His first gig was in a small variety theater where he was paid seven dollars a week. In a short time he became a success.

Cleverly, he used the material he had learned working at the bank and as a scribe, and he started with satirical portraits and caricatures of the people he had met. Later in his career, he said he had realized that "the Italian community was infested with all sorts of swindlers who devised every possible scheme in the world to scam and bleed the poor *cafoni*." Apparently, he was animated by the spirit of a reformer, something very rare in an Italian, and even more in a Neapolitan.

And maybe he was sincere. Poor Italian immigrants were squeezed by their oppressive American bosses, but also by the more odious exploitation of small southern-Italian wheeler-dealers who could barely read and count, but knew how to take advantage of fellow countrymen with the callousness of usurers and the avidity of merchants. Before legitimate Italian banks opened branches in New York, Chicago and San Francisco, the communities were dominated by were so-called bankers, notaries or travel agents that took advantage in every way possible of the ignorance of the immigrants and who, systematically, would go bankrupt and flee back to Italy with bags full of money. Nothing in this world was as expensive as ignorance and Italian immigrants were the ideal victims predestined to pay the tribute that naïveté and ignorance have always paid to knowledge and cunning. Who knows? Maybe Farfariello's songs helped alerting the immigrants of the most obvious scams perpetrated by despicable shysters and crooks. Many of these were genuine criminals and convicted felons who had entered the United States at a time when no passport was required. Indeed, many were pushed to leave Italy by the local police, happy to see them go. Unfortunately, though, in the end, in artistic terms, Farfariello left us with a much stronger and vivid caricature of the gullible immigrant, rather than the satire of the scamming élite.

Descriptions portray Migliaccio's as tall and stocky, with gray, penetrating eyes and bushy eyebrows. His photos as a young man show a handsome adolescent with typical Neapolitan features, a pleasant smile, a vivacious spirit and luminous eyes. His grandfather

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was deeply disappointed when he decided to become an entertainer. For a solid, respectable bourgeois family it wasn't considered proper to have a child who worked as a clown. I was told that his grandfather never went to see him perform. Migliaccio, however, maintained a behavior in line with his social class. In his family he imposed very rigid morals, he was quiet and, if anything, private and somber. A person who did business with him told me that he behaved more like a funeral home director than a Vaudeville comedian. He always dressed impeccably in the fashion of the time, in spats, with a black jacket, striped pants, whirling a cane. He didn't like to travel. An American observer mentioned seeing him often alone, sitting at the table of a café in Little Italy, intent on observing clients and passers-by. From his own word we know that he was picking his caricatures from real life, trying to penetrate their thoughts. Like many artists, he took care of the most minute details of his characters. For instance, he made all his wigs by himself. He used fake beards and moustache or, sometimes, full-face masks. He had a mid-range voice, not too powerful but pleasant. He had a very wide repertoire, with an estimated five hundred characters. He also imitated famous personalities of his days. Among the most successful ones was Enrico Caruso. Often he impersonated women, or a Bowery bum,¹² or an Italian recruit in the American army. In the course of one show he would impersonate about five or six of them. At times he was doing four shows a day.

Farfanello's caricatures—as well as those of other performers—reveal the real problems and the emotional issues of the immigrants of the first generation. We see these poor people confronting the new circumstances of their lives, often unable to understand what was going on around them and constantly penalized because they could not make sense of reality. Thus, the general theme turns out to be their animosity toward the country that had lured them in with the myth of easy wealth. Hopes and dreams crashed, followed by the tears or ridiculous stories of their tragedies; of the conflicts with the law; of the rejections by women; of the humiliations when they spoke English. The emblem of this whole world is the mythical figure of

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12 Reference to the famous New York skid row; location of flop houses and cheap taverns; patronized by alcoholics, vagrants and beggars.

Pasquale Passaguai, who runs into every trouble imaginable (the name Pasquale in Neapolitan dialect already suggests a bumbling idiot.) At the same time, we see the re-evaluation of the motherland that slowly becomes a mythical entity thanks to her ancient glories and, most of all, for having given birth to Christopher Columbus, without whom America would not exist. Here is the origin of the consoling myth that for centuries has comforted Italians in all their defeats: "When today's oppressors were small barbaric tribes, Italians were already a great civilization." Typical of the first theme is the invective *America Sanemagogna*¹³ [America daughter of a whore] that closes a sonnet by Carlo Ferrazzano.¹⁴

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Chi dice ca l'America è civile
 Nun tene lu cerviello sestimato:
 Questa è la terra de lu tradimento;
 Questa e' la terra de lu scusumato.
 Addò vedire a li paise nuoste
 Ca na figliola quannu fa l'ammore
 Vene l' innamurate a qualunque ore
 S'a piglia e se la porta a divertì?
 E quannu se ritira
 Si parla sulamente
 A pate o a mamma, siente:
 No lanche? Mi go ve!
 Chi nasce qua nasce senza vergogna:
 Questa e' la terra cchiù sanemagogna.

Those who claim America is civilized

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Doesn't have a functioning brain:

This is the land of betrayal;

This is the land of the vulgar.

Where do you see in our home towns

one word <hometowns>

That when a girl is being courted

Her lover comes at any hour

And takes her out to have fun?

13 *Sanemagogna*: phonetic rendition of son of a gun.

14 Carlo Ferrazzano. *La Merica Sanemagogna* [America Son-of-a-Gun]. Quoted by Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale in *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience*. New York, Harper Perennial, 1992.

And when she gets back
 If she speaks at all
 Her father or mother only hear
 "No like? Me go away?"
 Those born here are born without shame:
 This is the most *sannaggina* land.

e doote fortunata (157)

Typical of the second theme is the skit *Orrè Italy* [Hurrah Italy], in the style of the *Commedia dell'arte*.¹⁶ Here is the text, by the same author:

Na serra dentro na *barra* Americana dove il patrono era americano, lo *visco* era americano, la birra era Americana, ce steva na *gheruga de loffari* tutti americani: solo io non era americano; quanno a tutto nu momento me metrono mmezzo e me dicetero: "Alò spaghetti: *in mericano men?*" "No! no! Mi Italy men!"
 "Tu blacco enze?" "No, no!" "Tu laico chistu contri?" "No, no! Mi laico mio contri! Mi laico Italy!" A gusto punto me chiaviene lo primo *fait!* Dice: "Orrè for America!" Io tuostro: "Orrè for Italy!"
 Un ato *fait*. Dice: "Orrè for America?" "Orrè for Italy!" N'ato *fait* e n'ato *fait*, fino a che me facetero addurmentare, ma però "orri for America" non o dicetel!

continue. No break, No indent in next line

Quanno me scietate, me trovatè ncoppo lu marciapiedi cu nu *pulizio* vicino che diceva: "*Chitoppe bonna!*" Io ancora stunato *allucate*: "America nun *guddle!* for orri Italy!" Sapete li *pulizio* che facete? Mi arrestò. Quanno fu la mattina lu *giorge* mi dicete: "*Wazzo muro laste naitè?*" Io risponnete: "No *tarche* inglese!" "No? Tenne dollari?" E quello porco dello *giorge* nun scherzava, perchè le dice *pezze* se le pigliai!...

[One evening in an American bar, where the owner was American, whiskey was American, beer was American, there was a gang of loafers, all American. I was the only non American. Suddenly they surrounded me and started talking: "Hello spaghetti, you American man?" "No! No! Me Italy man!" "You Black Hand?" "No, no!" "You like this country?" "No, no! Me like my country. I like Italy." At this point I took the first fight [punch]. He says:

See new version, attached in next page

¹⁵ "You don't like it? Me go away."

pelele

¹⁶ *Commedia dell'arte* is a genre of theater performance born in Italy in the sixteenth century. It spread to the rest of Europe with enormous success. It was based on improvisation and the use of masked characters. Each mask identified a type or personality that the audience immediately recognized.

"Hurrah for America!" Me, tough guy: "Hurrah for Italy!" Another fight. He says: "Hurrah for America?" "Hurrah for Italy." Another fight and another fight, until they knocked me out, but "hurrah for America" I didn't say it.

When I woke up I found myself on the sidewalk next to a policeman who was saying: "Get up, bum!" Still out of it, I looked at him: "America no good! Hurrah for Italy!" You know what the policeman did? He arrested me. The following morning, the judge asked me: "What's the matter last night?" I answered: "No talk English!" "No? You have dollars?" And that pig of a judge wasn't kidding, because he took ten pieces [dollars].]

This is not high poetry. Actually, to be honest, it isn't even poetry. But at least it's alive. At the same time, the petty bourgeois that finished college in Italy, or at least high school or even vocational schools, were "making the presses squeal" as we used to say. Their poems were in correct Italian, a language with no contact with reality; full of clichés and bombastic images; teary or bleating; always false and rhetorical; leftovers of memories and rhyme repertoires such as the literary pusrules of Riccardo Cordifero. Sometimes you could hear the effects of this rhetoric even in authors who were writing in English, like Arturo Giovannitti.

In comparison, these caricatures, created for commercial reasons (the ten *pezze* is the compensation Ferrazzano received for his pieces,) had a purpose and were welcome by a public that felt their sting and appreciated their satirical intent. Rough, uncouth, many times with *double entendres*, they were coming out of a historical necessity and, to this day, they are among the few genuine documents left of the first period of Italian immigration to America.

July 15, 1962

My informant p 275-276
sketches

One evening in an American bar [*barra*], where the owner was American, whiskey [*visco*] was American, beer was American, there was a gang of loafers [*ghenga de loffari*], all American. I was the only non American. Suddenly they surrounded me and started talking: "Hello spaghetti, you [*tu*] American man [*men*]?" "No! No! Me Italy man [*men*]!" "You Black Hand [*In blacco enze*]?" "No, no!" "You like [*In laico*] this country [*contri*]?" "No, no! I like [*laico*] my country [*contri*]. I like [*laico*] Italy." At this point I took the first fight (punch) [*fait*]. He says: "Hurrah [*Orrè*] for America!" Me, tough guy: "Hurrah [*Orrè*] for Italy!" Another fight [*fait*]. He says: "Hurrah [*Orrè*] for America?" "Hurrah [*Orrè*] for Italy." Another fight [*fait*] and another fight [*fait*], until they knocked me out, but "hurrah [*Orrè*] for America" I didn't say it.

When I woke up I found myself on the sidewalk next to a policeman [*pulizio*] who was saying: "Get up, bum [*Ghitoppe bomba*]!" Still out of it, I looked at him [*allucate*]: "America no good [*gudde*]! Hurrah [*orè*] for Italy!" You know what the policeman [*pulizio*] did? He arrested me. The following morning, the judge [*giorge*] asked me: "What's the matter last night [*Wazzo maro laste naitè*]?" I answered: "No talk [*toche*] English!" "No? You have dollars?" And that pig of a judge [*giorge*] wasn't kidding, because he took ten pieces

[pezzè].]

ALMERINI, SENECA, CASTELLUCCI:
THE UPPER CLASS LOOKS (DOWN)
AT THE IMMIGRANTS

Doctor Achille Almerini,¹ ear, nose and throat specialist graduated from medical school in Italy and moved to New York where he opened a successful practice with mostly Italian clients. With a difficult personality, always complaining and grumpy, he left America three or four times and finally returned to Italy where he concluded his life. His was the typical example of the chronic unhappiness that grabs many immigrants who, while they are in America are nostalgic for Italy; but, as soon as they go back, they realize they can't do without America which, in the meantime, has become a sort of addiction.

Like most of the people in his social class he was not satisfied with *fare l'America*. He was struck by the coarseness and ignorance of the former *cafoni*, but mostly by their vanity after they had made money or achieved some measure of success.

The nationalist undertone of those times can be read in a couple of his sonnets.

L'ITALIANITÀ COLONIALE

È una cosa piuttosto complicata:
Consiste soprattutto nella pratica
Di porger l'altra guancia o l'altra natica
S'uno ti dà un ceffone o una pedata.
Non guasta aver la casa mobiliata
D'una *Victrola* o una pianola asmatica
Sui cui suonare, come di prammatica
L'inno fascista di qualche serenata.
Se un *giuda* purchessa torna d'Italia
Decantando il Vesuvio e i macheroni
Fondigli un busto o almeno una medaglia.
Ma se chiede: "Perché non t'insaponi?
Perché mandare qui tanta canaglia?"
Digli che sei paesano di Marconi.

e delete (?) replace with (?)

¹ Achille Almerini (1881-1947).

II

Dante non serve: nessuno sa chi sia.
 Cristoforo Colombo serve a poco,
 Dopo ch'hanno scoperto in alto loco
 Che un norvegese gli spianò la via.
 Meglio Marconi! La radiofonia
 È attaccaticcia come il vizio del gioco:
 Con quella tu, sdraiato accanto al fuoco,
 Ci hai gli sport, l'arte e la filosofia.
 Ci hai tutto quel che vuoi. A udir Marconi
 Resta di stucco il *giuda* purchessia:
 Non basta più se tu non t'insaponi.
 È convinto. Confonde i maccheroni,
 Le vongole con la radiofonia:
Gee whizz! ma sono *smart* questi cafoni!

COLONIAL ITALIANNNESS

The thing is complicated.
 It consists mostly in offering
 The other cheek or the other butt-cheek
 When one slaps or kicks you.
 It also helps to have a house furnished
 With a *Victrola* or an ashtatic keyboard
 So you can play, as one should,
 A fascist hymn and serenades.
 If a *giuda*,² whoever he is, returns from Italy
 Praising Vesuvio and maccheroni
 Cast a bronze statue or at least a medal for him.
 But if he asks, "Why don't you wash?"³
 Why do you send here so many criminals?"

² Here *giuda* stands for *Giudeo* [Jew]. *Giuda* in Italian refers commonly to Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Jesus. The assonance between *Giudeo* [Jew] and *Giuda* makes the two terms almost interchangeable. *Giudeo*, in turn, was the common adjective for Jewish and Jew throughout the nineteenth century in Italian, later superseded by *Israelita* [Israelite] and, more recently, by *Ebreo*. The term *Giudeo*, with many phonetic variations, is still present in several dialects. In the context of this poem, the term *giuda* clearly conveys disdain and contempt.

³ Implying "Why don't Italians wash?"

Tell him that you and Marconi⁴ are fellow countrymen.

II

Dante is useless, nobody knows who he is.
 Christopher Columbus is of little help
 After the higher-ups discovered that
 A Norwegian opened the way for him.
 Marconi is better! Radiophony
 Is sticky like a gambling addiction:
 With it, laying down by the fire,
 You get sports, art and philosophy.
 Everything you want. When he hears Marconi
 Even the *giuda*, whoever he is, is stunned:
 It no longer matters if you don't wash.
 He is sold. He confuses macheroni and
 Clams with radiophony;
Ge wibiz! Aren't they *smart*, these cafoni!"

In other compositions we can read the irritation toward Americans who keep foreigners at bay; the antipathy toward Jewish competitors (regularly called *giudei*);⁵ or the protest against prohibition that prevented Italians from drinking wine, as in the following *Noah Got*

Drink.

LA SBORRNIA DI NOÈ

Well, fin d'allora un proibizionista
 C'era e fu Cam, che visro il padre brillo
 E sbottonato, *screamed*... cacciò uno strillo,
 Da far invidia a un prete metrodista.

Sem e Giaphet, che s'erano provvista
 La cantina, gli disser: "St'a tranquillo!
Keep quiet!" e appuntarono uno spillo
 Dove le brache facean brutta vista

⁴ Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937). Winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1909, he is attributed the invention of the radio.

⁵ As explained in a previous footnote, in this poem the author uses the much stronger *giuda* instead of *giudei/giudei*.

*insert a footnote mark here,
 The text of the footnote is in next
 page (referendum)*

insert speaker

PAGE 279 footnote after *Noah Got Drunk*

The reference is to a less well-known biblical episode whose protagonist is a drunken Noah (Genesis 9:24).

Text of the footnote to be inserted at page 279

Quando Noè lo seppè, il giorno poi,
 Chiarnò Giafer e Sem, e disse: Bravi!
 Sia benedetto chi uscirà da voi!

Ma quanto a Cam, *sun of a gun*, se i suoi
 Nipoti gli somigliano stano schiavi
 Vostrri: *sian waiters or elevator boys*."

NOAH GOT DRUNK

Well, since the beginning a prohibitionist
 Existed and he was Ham, who, having seen his father drunk
 And exposed, *screamed*... He let out a scream
 that could make a Methodist minister jealous.

Shem and Japheth who had filled up
 The cellar, told him: "Calm down!
Keep quiet!" and with a pin closed his pants
 Where they were showing an ugly sight.

When Noah found out the next day,
 He called Japheth and Shem and said: "Good!
 Blessed will your descendants be!"

About Ham, *sun of a gun*, if his descendants
 Look like him, let them be your slaves:
 Let them be *waiters or elevator boys*."

This piece is in standard Italian, not in lingo and not even *slang*.
 The Italian American lingo appears instead in his most famous sonnets,
 full of sarcasm, whose function is to ridicule the enriched *cafone*. Here
 is one where such character speaks:

*LEGENDA: Italian American terms in the original are in italics.
 † kept the Italics also in the translation.

white
 white

1
 Tongo lo *storo* in basso di cità,

E quando vuoi puoi farmi il *telefono*:
 Viemmi a trovare, ogni momento è buono:
 Martina e sera il *business* mi tien la.

Distanze? Eh! Cento *blacchi*, non canzonzo:
 Ma la distanza a te che te ne fa?
Don chers, con tutte le comodità
 Di tutti i treni e i *carri* che ci sono.

Non è un gran *trubel*, basta che tu provi:
 Alla terza *Aveni* è *Tolineta*:
 Prendi il treno e discendi in *Assonstrita*,
 Fai quattro *bloccchi* a destra e vedi scritto
 Fra *Landetca* e il *ridlestita*:
 "Qui si parla italiano" e lì mi trovi.

in *telos*in *telos*in *telos*

II

Vedi all'Italia, se anche ci hai moneta,
 Magari non ti stimano per niente:
 Sono paesi piccoli e la gente
 Sa le faccende tue dall'A alla Zeta.

Qui, più ci hai *morghes* sul *ridlestita*
 Più *tsi* tu diventi *prominente*,
 E più *tsi* ti fanno presidente
 Le società, più sei analfabeta.

Con l'amicizia poi d'un pezzo grosso
Polistiscia, *bartenda* od avvocato
 Da *Mistar so end so* diventi un *boss*:
 Poi ti fanno il banchetto, tal e quale
 Come da noi lo fanno al deputato,
 E ti mettono in coppa del giornale.

III

Ma *scitia* che prende tempo, e te l'ho scritto
 (È meglio certe cose dirle prima):
 Non credere che sceso dalla *stima*
 Trovi le *pezze* in mezzo dello *stritto*.
 Non aver fretta d'arrivare in cima:

Chi troppo corre non cammina ritto,
 Nel *bismiss* si comincia zitto, zitto,
 Dal poco e miere solo chi concima.

L'America non è come al paese:
 Non esser *stingi*, perché *guarda male*,
 Ma se puoi cerca di salvar moneta.

Enniè, lascia che te lo ripera,
 Perché questa è la cosa più essenziale:
 Prima di tutto imparati l'inglese.

IV

Difficile? Non tanto quanto credi:
 Sei giovane e fai presto ad imparare:
Oltrair, dersoll, scianp, go om, gherare!
 (A un seccatore che ti vien fra i piedi).

E quando non ti puoi capacitare
 Tu chiedi: *Uazz de matter?* Se mai vedi
 Una guagliona ci si dice: *ledi*:
 E dà del *Mistar* fino al tuo compare!

Ma imparati l'inglese, perché se
 Domandi la tua strada in italiano
 A uno *scainatore*, o a quel del *fuuttistendo*
 Quello, sia piemontese o siciliano,
 Per far veder che ne sa più di te,
 Sai che riponderà: *ai du not anderstendo*.

V

Vedi un po' gli altri: i *germanesi*, i *scini*
 (Ma sì, i *giudal*) se san l'americain:
 Tu contentati d'essere italiano
 Ma *spicca* come *spiccano* i vicini.

Neniorra l'ha scoperta Verrazzano!
 D'accordo, già lo sanno anche i bambini:
 Per cui se senti mai gridarti *ghini!*
 Non ci far caso, è un *lofar* o un villano.

Non cercare di farlo persuaso!

È inutile! Finisce che quel là
Ti fa un *blecchià* o ti fracassa il naso.

E tieni a mentel quando si fa il *fait*
Chi le busca ci ha torto e chi le dà
È uno *smart fello end evingsolhair*.

VI

Ormai è una leggenda vecchia e sciapa
Che noi qui siamo un branco di straccioni:
Gli *arrisc*, si sa, che son loro i padroni
Ci soffian dentro per l'amor del Papa.

A quelli che ci toglì dalla capa
Che a Roma c'è i briganti coi tromboni.
Bisogna compatirli ... son coloni
Anche loro e han le sue teste di rapai!

Che ce n'importa? Ne abbian fatte tante
Per affermare l'italianità
E mò facciamo il monumento a Dante!

Me lo saluta lei? direbbe Oronzo⁶
Ma in colonia, nun te ne incarcà!
Se l'ideale è *cfp*, più *cfp* è il bronzo.

I

I have a *store* in the lower city
And when you want you can make me *telephone* call:
Come by, anytime is good:
Morning and evening the *business* keeps me there.

Far? Eh! One hundred *blocks*, no kidding:
But the distance, what's to you?
I don't care with all the conveniences,
With all the trains and *cars* running around.

It's not a big *trouble*; just try;

⁶ The meaning is rather obscure, however, from the context it is probably similar to "Yeah, sure, that will be the day." The reference is to erecting a monument to Dante.

On Third Avenue there is the elevated track:
Take the train and get off on Houston Street
Go four blocks to the right and you will see the sign
Between the undertaker and the real estate:
"Italian spoken here." That's where you'll find me.

in italics

in italics

II
You see, in Italy, even if you have money
Chances are they don't respect you at all:
In those small towns people
Know your business from A to Z.

Here, the more mortgage you have on your real estate
The easier it is to become prominent,
And more easily they make you president
Of the club, even if you are illiterate.

With the friendship of a big shot
Politician, bartender or lawyer
From *Mister so-and-so* you can become a boss;
Then they give you a banquet, the same way
In Italy they do for a senator
And they put you on the newspaper's front page.

upper case (S) in both cases (so-and-ss)

III
But *sure*, it takes time. I wrote you about that
(It's better to say certain things up front):
Don't believe that as soon as you get off the steamer
You can find *pieces* [dollars] in the middle of the street.

in italics

Don't be in a hurry to climb to the top:
Those who run don't walk straight,
In *business* one starts quiet and slow,
From little, and only those who fertilize can reap the harvest.

delete and replace with (will)

America is not like back home:
Don't be *stingy* because it *looks bad*
But if you can, try to save money.

delete (and)

Anyway, let me repeat it
Because it's the most important thing:
First of all, learn English.

IV

Hard? Not as much as you believe:
You are young, you will learn quickly:
Abright, that's all, shut up, go home, get out of there!
(To a pest that gets in your way).

And when you can't make sense of things,
You ask: *What's the matter?* But if you see
A cure broad, you call her: *lady*;
And call *mister* even your best friend!

Learn you English, because if
You ask directions in Italian
To a *shoeshine* or at that *fruit stand*,
That guy, even if he is Piedmontese or Sicilian,
To show you he knows more than you,
He is going to answer: *I do not understand*.

V

Take a look at the others: the *Germans*, the *scini*
(Yes, the *giuda!*) they know American:
If you content yourself to be Italian
Then *speak* like your neighbors *speak*.

New York was discovered by Verrazzano!
True: even children know that:
So if you hear someone call you *guinea!*
Ignore it, it's a *loufer* or a boor.

in studies

Don't try to persuade him!
It's useless. It will finish with that guy
Gives you a *black eye* or smashes your nose.

And keep in mind! When you get into a *fight*
Who takes the bearing is wrong and who gives it
Is a *smart fellow* and *everything is abright*.

VI

By now it is an old and rite legend
~~that we here are a bunch of beggars:~~
The *Irish*, we know, they are the bosses,
They fan the flames out of their love for the pope.

delete and replace with (That here we are but a herd of bums!)

You can't get it out of their heads
That in Rome¹ there are brigands with flint guns.
Pity on them... they are ^{peasant} celebrant too,
And among them there are blockheads!

What do we care? We worked so hard
To affirm our Italian-ness
So, now, let's make a monument to Dante!

^ Say hi to him for me! Oronzo² would say
But in the colony, don't volunteer for the job!
If ideals are *cheap*, bronze is even *cheaper*.

←¹ Rome here stands for Italy (synecdoche).
←² Oronzo: generic name, needed for rhyming.

Pasquale Seneca's (1890-1952)⁷ work was similar to Almerini's, but

instead of satirical verses he preferred a sort of jocular narrative. He was a teacher of Italian at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Seneca took aim at the president of a fictional Italian association, in one of those colonial events where the main attraction was the vanity and ignorance of the immigrants who were trying to imitate the rituals of American society. *Il Presidente Scoppetta ovvero la Societa della Madonna della Pace* [*The President Scoppetta or the Madonna of Peace Society*], printed at the author's expense, is a series of comical satirical vignettes of Italian American customs, dedicated to Eduardo Migliaccio (Farfariello) and clearly inspired by his satirical works.

This is not exactly a work of art. The official events represented were taken from reports that appeared in the *Opinione*,⁸ a Philadelphia newspaper. The humor is too facile and obvious and the narration has no depth. In Seneca's pamphlets the members of this fictional society fight with each other; beat each other up; stab one another; maneuver to steal each other's official position; deliver ungrammatical speeches

⁷ Pasquale Seneca (1890-1952). Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.

⁸ *Scoppetta* in Sicilian means double-barrel shotgun.

⁹ *L'Opinione*. (1906-1935). Philadelphia, PA.

SEE NEXT PAGE
286 BIS with
the complete
edited text

insert <no>

delete and replace with <peasants>

insert period

more to the margin - smaller font

insert quotation marks. After the closing quotation marks, insert <>>

It should read:
< "Say hi to him for me!" >

insert space before </>

PAGE 286 BIS this replaces the last three stanzas of the poem, footnotes included.

You can't get it out of their heads
That in Romeⁱ there are no brigands with flint guns.
Pity on them... they are peasants too,
And among them there are blockheads!

What do we care? We worked so hard
To affirm our Italian-ness
So, now, let's make a monument to Dante!

"Say hi to him for me!", Oronzoⁱⁱ would tell me.
But in the colony, don't volunteer for the job!
If ideals are *cheap*, bronze is even *cheaper*.

ⁱ Rome here stands for Italy (synecdoche.)

ⁱⁱ Oronzo: generic name, needed for rhyming.

similar to those in the *Commedia dell'arte* and so forth. The goal is to induce laughter through verbal misunderstandings. The characters all are immigrants from the town of *Brigantello* [Little Brigandville] in southern Italy who settled in one of the major cities of the Union. The main character is Francesco Saverio Scopetta, founder of the newspaper *La Calzetta d'Italia*¹⁰ and owner of a *passage* agency. What kind of passages these were, it's left vague, although, some claimed it was the passage that money made from other people's pockets to his own. Obviously these people were mean spirited and were spreading gossips that the president had a rather dubious past, and that he had to flee his hometown to avoid being arrested by the authorities. In any case, he now was one of the richest members of the community and a very powerful *politiscia* [politician]. Of average stature, stocky; with small and lively eyes; a red and fleshy nose and thick moustache, he gave the impression of being smart and funny. This was Scopetta. He would be everywhere and take care of everything by himself. Scopetta here and Scopetta there. He knew what wedding would take place even before the spouses themselves knew they were getting married. And there would be no shoot-out before he had determined who was going to be shot. He was much, much more involved than a Rossini's *factotum*.¹¹ His enemies had their work cut off for them in trying to denigrate him! Scopetta was highly aware of the great services he had rendered to his fellow *paesani* and of the credit he had accumulated with the entire colony. "I, I" he used to say, "I *startated* (started) Italianism and analfabetism in this nationality." ["*To bo startato l'italianismo e l'analfabetismo in questa nazionalità.*"]

Among the society's activities there are *picchinnichi* [picnics], banquets and weddings; schemes for a *cavaliere*¹² medal; rivalries

10 Pun. *Calzetta* plays on the phonetic similarity with *Gazzetta* (Gazette), *Calzetta* in standard Italian means ankle sock. The expression *una mezza calzetta* (half a sock) is used to indicate a person of little consequence, worthy of little or no consideration.

11 Reference to Gioacchino Rossini's character of Figaro in the opera *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. *Factotum* is Latin for Jack-of-All-Trades.

12 *Cavaliere* literally means knight. It is an official title bestowed by the Italian government on individuals who have distinguished themselves in their fields of endeavor. The title is given both to Italians and foreigners and it is highly coveted especially abroad among descendants of Italian immigrants where it is a rarity.

lower case (e)

delete (or) replace with (of)

among groups; patriotic parades; members' funerals... In short, every imaginable occasion for mooching food; making bombastic speeches; engaging in conflicts of vanity and interests; showing off recently acquired wealth that were—and still are—the *raison d'être* of Italian American associations.

Even with the exaggerations of caricature, President Scoppetta reflects the conditions of the community that existed, more or less with identical characteristics, in stagnant immigration centers on the outskirts of large American metropolitan centers. The sharp-eyed observation on the part of a few educated individuals marked a conscious distance between the urban class and the peasants who had just undergone the process of urbanization. This is a distinction that is as old as Italian literature. Pretty similar is the inspiration (to use a term adopted by our local Italian poets) of *Dante's Adventures in America*,¹³ by V.A. Castellucci, clearly the pseudonym of an author who could not use his name. I picked up some clues that lead me to believe it must be a Florentine, probably a priest. In one of his satirical poems, the protagonist, Virgilio F. Publus,¹⁴ a colonist—that is a *cafone*—trudges through vernacular insecurities by mixing together languages and creating some kind of Italian American vocabulary.

Virgilio came to America before Dante and when the latter arrives, he welcomes him with his horrendous language:

Finalmente Dante, ti hai deciso di¹⁵ approdare su queste sciove
sarpando l'Atrelante con la stessa *sinna* che trasportò *maiselfe lazz*
tam ego. L'appinessa di questo momento mi fa dimenticare *evritinga*:
 dimenticar persino *la depression*, il *ripillo del doctissimo mandamento*
 e la vittoria di La Guardia...

[Finally, Dante, you decided to land on these shores sailing the
Atlantic with the same *steamer* that carried *myself lots of time ago*.
 The *happiness* of this moment makes me forget *everything*. I even

13 Castellucci, V. A. *Le avventure di Dante in America: poemetto satirico umoristico*. New York, Italian Publishers, 1935.

14 The reference is to Publius Vergilius Maro, the Ancient Rome's poet author of the *Aeneid*, and Dante's guide through the Inferno.

15 Substandard Italian for *ti sei deciso a*.

invest 2,1)

forget the *depression*, the *repeal* of the *Eighteenth amendment*¹⁶ and La Guardia's victory...]

This language is way overdone, too heavy-handed, and doesn't have the plebeian mocking value of popular songs. Here one can hear an educated person from a small town imagining how the *cafoni* speak Dante's language. Even the dialect words aren't real: they are artificial, created for comic effect like in Pig Latin. I can't imagine any immigrant ever using the word *gretti* for great or *sciore* for beach. The theme, however, is similar to that of the other examples I mentioned.

solite (in)

¹⁶ The Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, promulgated in 1919, prohibited the manufacture, sale, transport, import, or export of alcoholic beverages. (It is not generally well known that the amendment did not prohibit the purchase or consumption of alcohol.)

PROFESSOR SAUSAGE BECOMES COMMENTATORE

A while ago a friend of mine from Australia told me the story of how Professor Salsiccia [sausage] was given the title of *Commentatore della Repubblica Italiana*.¹ Earlier, he had received the title of *canaliere* by the king during the Fascist regime. My friend thought I would get outraged, instead he only succeeded in making me laugh. I answered: "It fits perfectly." "Why?" he asked. "Because when I was younger—I explained—the title of *commentatore* was used for mockery. And *ignominioso*² was an outright expression of scorn. These titles have been given to so many less-than-respectable individuals that young people considered them terms of ridicule, not as rewards to be aspired to as achievements in their future lives."

I met Professor Salsiccia the first time I was invited to teach a summer course at S. University, in Australia. In the suburbs of that city there lives an enterprising Italian community with its fruit-and-vegetables and fish markets. They had raised money and were able to endow a chair in Italian. The majority of the community did not speak Italian but mostly some dialects and broken English. Yet, they vaguely understood that in this new country their origins in a land known for arts, sciences and letters still had some cachet. On the occasion of great banquets, they would trade in Italian celebrities with the same ability reserved for selling fish in the market or get the general contract for a real estate venture. With absolute ease they could mix together Dante, Verdi, Puccini³ and Marconi regardless of who they were and what they had done. The students called him *Salsiccia* for the color of his skin, closer to the gray variety of Tuscan *cacciatore* than the pinkish *laganega* of Lombardy. The name referred also to his body, swollen with fat and overflowing with human odor; a body that he moved with great pump down the streets, advancing with a majestic

1 *Commentatore della Repubblica* is an official title and honor bestowed by the Italian government. It has higher standing than the more common *canaliere*.

2 Title commonly given to the members of the *Camera dei Deputati* [House of Representatives].

3 Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924). One of Italy's most famous opera composers. His best-known works are *Tosca*, *Turandot* and *La Bohème*.

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posture and always admiring his own self-importance. He believed that people who had arrived at his level in life behaved in that manner. He wasn't smart about anything and his body represented his vision of the world. When I first arrived at the university he made sure I understood I owed my appointment to him and him alone that he was an important person at the university and that the Italian consul trusted him. About himself, he would say: "I follow my bosses' orders." His bosses were top university administrators to whom he would try to kiss up with regular Christmas and New Year's cards; with words of obsequy and servility and with poorly chosen wine gifts. An expert in the *arte del porvenir*,⁴ he even gave one of his superiors a *Borsalino*⁵ hat as a gift. Unfortunately the hat did not become the face of the person whom he regaled: nature gave him a penchant for kissing up to his bosses but not the sharp eye of an artist.

From the very beginning of our conversation I was struck by the complete absence in him of taste and artistic sensibility, of subtlety and critical ability. He was a teacher of Italian, but he could not tell the difference in the sound of a verse by Petrarca and one by Dante. His knowledge of the language was atonal. He had learned the words but the words had no cultural or emotional resonance for him. When he spoke, the words were like metal pieces in a linotype machine, all melting at the same temperature. When I talked to his colleagues, they said the way to evaluate him was not by his intelligence or acuity, but by simple grammar and syntax. I happened to replace him once in a language class and I noticed he was using a twenty-year-old book. If anybody mentioned that the book was deficient in many ways, he would look at them askance, as if that were a personal insult. He had a total phobia of learning and changing what he had learned. Just the idea of changing the textbook to him felt like a criticism to his doctrine. Later, I also realized that he had no interest whatsoever in Australian literature. Whenever a contemporary author was mentioned, he would prick up his ears as if he smelled a trap and would only mumble some previously memorized trite clichés. Textbooks were the only source of his

4 *Arte del porvenir*: Spanish idiom: the art of seeing ahead; foresight.

5 Famous brand of Italian fedora-style hats.

culture. His knowledge was based on anthologies; memorized passages; and critical essays published in some abridged version of a survey of Italian literature published for middle-school children. He never had a personal opinion and always found shelter behind somebody else's critical assessment. His publications were dry, bookish and boring. In general, they consisted of collections of documents bunched together without any critical consideration. Complex and intricate points were always left without footnotes or, at most, were basic repetitions of information found in encyclopedias or anthologies. Astounding was his inability to comprehend the value of different sources and their prestige. The *Peretola Review*⁶ and the *Nuova Antologia* for him were at the same level. The historical contingencies didn't matter. Whether a particular statement was made during a banquet or in a private letter or published in a book, it was all the same to him. It was in the documents, thus, it was enough. The more pages he put together the greater his work appeared to him, because it seemed that his brain resided in his backside. He called this: *scholarship*. The sense of humor that abounds among Anglo-Saxons was completely missing in his conversation. He would take everything seriously, even himself and his degrees. He had learned nothing from the country that adopted him except self-delusion. He would look at me with apprehension because I didn't have a *laurea*.⁷ Someone must have told him I had done a few decent things for Italian literature, otherwise I am sure I wouldn't have been allowed to join other *laureati* [college graduates] like him. At the graduation ceremony at the end of the academic year he would wear his gown with great pride; careful that his mortarboard fit perfectly; with honor cords and tassel perfectly straight and aligned. He took his task as usher very seriously; he would stand by the door collecting invitation cards or he would lead the participants to their seats. His face and gestures showed a profound sense of self satisfaction. One could find him inevitably at every sermon, academic function and funeral. On some of these occasions I noticed that in the days when he ~~could wear~~ cap and gown he would swell up. I mean it in real,

6 Imaginary journal. Peretola is a small, rural town near Florence.

7 Italian university degree, equivalent to a baccalaureate. With the degree comes the title of *dotore*.

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physical terms. He was born to be an officer good for parades, but instead he had become a professor. Yet, his real nature would come through in those functions. He liked to project a sense of authority. Whenever he could, his girth would inflate, his face would expand and his words would become even more pompous and bombastic. Clichés and common places would reach incommensurable proportions.

This was the moment when his only real passion revealed itself. This peculiar individual, insensitive to art; ignorant of philosophy; for whom religion meant only participation in Sunday social functions; would be moved to tears—literally—in front of the idea of power signified by a uniform, a beret, a cord or a little star. He would have done god-knows-what for an extra bar on the epauletts of the prison-guard uniform he was mentally wearing. I understood all this when I heard him deal with students who were taking one of his courses. He would literally sweat from the pleasure of having people under his power, people who, if they passed his course, one day would look back and know they owed to him the glory of wearing a mortarboard and golden honor cords.

I kept wondering how a person with no literary interest could end up occupying a position that was so diametrically opposed to his nature. Finally, I found an answer: One should never believe that in social life there is such a thing as unexplainable and unreasonable fortune. Those who climb high must have some kind of qualities.

The only question is whether the qualities match the nature of their success. In his case, Professor Salsiccia advanced by *providing services*.

First of all, he was a faithful executor. There are so many arrogant scholars who are too busy with supposedly serious work and would never lower themselves to taking care of administrative duties. Salsiccia was only too happy to comply. He kept a meticulous archive with a card for each student where he reported every grade with comments on their progress. He truly enjoyed this job. To him, teaching Italian meant to keep the archive up to date. He was also performing the same kind of services for the Italian consul. The overworked consul didn't have the time to take care of school diplomas for Italians or Australians. Whenever new immigrants arrived with school-related problems, he would ask Salsiccia to solve them, and he was as happy

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as a seal in a pool to show his worth. He would look at the new arrivals with condescension and with the promise that he would take care of the problem. At the end of the conversation he would dismiss them with a pat on the shoulder, the same pat he was glad to receive from the university's higher-ups. That's how such an egregious ignoramus managed to become someone in Australia and in Italy. Without any human interest and artistic taste, with no intellectual curiosity, he had plenty of the wisdom of the peasant who has to navigate between the avid landlord, the sly merchants and the stubborn animals. All his acumen was directed, day and night, at playing different human elements against each other. And he became very good at that. He convinced the consul that he was a powerful figure at the university, where his colleagues considered him a little more than a dunce. With the university administration, he looked like he was the representative of Italians in Australia, a group of people the administration wanted to tap for donations. The administration could not judge him as a teacher in a discipline of which they were ignorant. The consulate considered him an ignoramus but thought that if Australians were so dumb as to give him a professorial position there was no harm in maintaining the fiction. When he got any kind of recognition from the consulate, he would use it with the university with the result of added cachet and a small salary raise. When the consulate sent him to Italy, several Italian academics who were hoping to be invited to Australia welcomed him with open arms, befriended him and treated him with the same kind of flattery that he would use to endear himself to his superiors. These very academics are now trying to get him a chair in an Italian university after he retires from his position in Australia. In the meantime they gave him an honorary doctorate.

On some occasions, though, Professor Salsiccia got involved in situations that were beyond his abilities. In those cases, his retreats have become famous. When he hitched his cart to a powerful person and, as sometimes happens, this person didn't come out on top, Professor Salsiccia felt guilty, but only because he didn't play the right card. Then, he did an about face. And since he had no finesse, wisdom or cleverness, he did so in such a coarse and transparent way that he got caught. He had bet on Fascism. He associated himself with the regime

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because he was convinced it would last a long time and even published books with the support of pro-Fascist organizations active in Australia. When Australia entered WWII against Italy, he understood the game was over and the ground had shifted under his feet. Always accustomed to be on the side of the authorities—like a good, solid cop—he wrote a letter to the city's newspaper denouncing Mussolini. The newspaper published it immediately as a sign of genuine conversion.

This is not to say that he was evil. To be evil, one has to have some inner strength, and Salsiccia has none of it. I saw him try to destroy harmless, defenseless people. But he didn't do it out of evil. It was just due to his ambition and vanity, none of which was commensurate with his abilities and strengths. In one occasion, he wanted to tear down the dissertation of a poor devil, an Italian Australian who had slaved for years doing research and trying to collect hard-to-find sources. The candidate wasn't particularly bright but he could interpret those materials as well as Salsiccia. He also didn't speak very good English, but neither could Salsiccia. Salsiccia had the accent of the low class districts where he grew up. For instance, he would pronounce *foist* for *foist* and similar amusing things. In any case, he took a position against the dissertation not out of meanness but because of his swollen ego and the need to exercise authority. I remember I defended the poor devil, that dissertation toiler: my argument was that at that same university there were several professors who wrote English as badly as the doctoral candidate. Also, since the university was forcing people to write a book, even those who never had any intention to write one; the university was bound to tolerate that its library shelves would fill up with such monstrosities. In conclusion, a bit deviously, I reminded him that the departments gave a hundred dollars to professors who needed an editor to improve their language. Why couldn't something similar be done for a student as well? My subtle ironies, more than the objective value of the dissertation, carried the day. The dissertation was approved, contrary to the opinion expressed with a chuckling voice by Professor Salsiccia.

A few years after my Australian visit, I heard he had been invited to give lectures at Italian universities. I also heard about the mockery he drew behind his back. Once, he sent a circular letter to Italian

professors to inform them that he had been charged with an important responsibility and he could offer teaching positions to Italian students in Australia. This was immediately after WWII when jobs in Italy were extremely scarce. The hope to go to Australia triggered a great competition. Some professors took him seriously and many students believed in the scam. It never happened. Australia didn't need professors, and even less it needed students to teach Italian. Professor Salsiccia did these kinds of things out of sheer vanity. When I confronted him about it, I realized he had no idea how much hurt he had caused. His only motive was his desire to aggrandize himself.

To conclude: for all these reasons I believe it was a good idea to award to him the honor of commendatore of the Italian Republic. This shows that the times haven't changed. In the eras of Prime Ministers Giolitti [1892-1921]; Mussolini [1922-1943]; and Scelba [1954-1955];* the orchestra conductor has changed, but the music has stayed the same.

New York, May 27, 1955

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8 Mario Scelba (1901-1991). Italian politician, prime minister from 1954 to 1955. He is most famous for being *Ministro degli Interni* (Minister of Interior Affairs, a portfolio that includes the state police) from 1947 to 1955, when riot-control police often handled labor strikes and anti-government demonstrations with violent methods.

A SMARTO EDITOR

Era *smartio* il dabben uomo,
 Conosceva il *bisimisse*,
 Era amico del *polisse*
 E in colleggio non andò.¹

From an Italian American song

[He was *smart*, the good man,
 He knew his *business*,
 He was friends with the *police*
 And he didn't go to college.]

I couldn't find the original text of the lecture given by Fortune Pope at the International University of Social Studies² on the occasion of the official inauguration of the Chair of Journalism. He was preceded by a speech titled "Italy's New Social Structure" given by the Italian minister Antonio Segni.³ In the course of the ceremony Pope received an honorary degree and a gold medal from the university. I was only able to get a summary of a conversation he had with some students after the lecture. These curious young people wanted to find out more about the *Progresso Italo-Americano* and they asked if they could interview the speaker, as is common place in America. Here is the dialogue that ensued.

Student: Is it true that you have modified the Italian language used in your newspaper?

Pope: Of course, otherwise nobody would be able to understand it. A newspaper cannot reach out only to people who know the language or those who reach it. These were aristocratic ideas of the Fathers of Italian *Risorgimento*. We had to confront the real issues. I am going to

1 Colleggio. Misspelling for *collegia*. In standard Italian it properly means boarding school. In Italian American it has the same meaning as in English.

2 Our research on institutions with this name yielded no results.

3 Antonio Segni (1891-1972). He was prime minister in two occasions and president of Italy from 1962 to 1964 when he resigned after a stroke.

tell you the story of what really happened to a naive and clueless Italian who wanted to rent out his house. He placed a paid announcement in the newspaper with a text that sounded something like this: "For rent, masonry-built house, no heat, no super, long-term commitment, next to elevated railroad." He got no inquiries. After several tries, this clueless Italian went to the person in charge of classified ads to complain. The employee took a look and as soon as he finished reading he broke out laughing. "But of course" he said, "how can you think you can find anyone with this thing? Let me take care of it for you." So, he edited the texts as follows: "For rent house of *bricchi* [bricks (formal Italian: jugs)], no *stima* [stream (formal Italian: estimate, respect)], no *gentiore* [janitor (formal Italian: parent)], long *lista* [lease (formal Italian: list)], next to *olivetta* [elevated railroad (formal Italian: small olive)]. The next day the house was gone.

Student: Did you make other changes besides including the jargon of Italian Americans?

Pope: Of course. Our newspaper is in Italian but we are trying to bring the language closer to the American language, that is, the language spoken by the majority of our readers.

Student: Can you give us some examples?

Pope: Sure. This is where you can see the fruits of our technique. Standard Italian says *rivolgere un invito: we say estendere un invito* [extend an invitation]. We don't write *stupro* for rape; for us it is *assalto* [military-style assault]. We use *Casa Comunale* [Town Hall] instead of *municipio; corte* [courtyard] not *tribunale; confrontare* [to compare] instead of *affrontare* [to face]. In our neighborhoods even Jesus speaks like us. In our language he teaches: "Date ai poveri le vostre *possessioni*" ["Give your possessions to the poor"] instead of "*quello che avete*" ["what you have"]. Don't you think this is a great innovation? If I donated 100,000 dollars to the Accademia della Crusca⁴ to complete its dictionary project, it would certainly include me among the authors quoted with reverence by the institution.

Student: Say, do your innovations also include grammar and syntax?

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⁴ Accademia della Crusca [Academy of Bran]. The oldest academy of linguistics in the world, founded around 1570 by Florentine scholars, philologists and writers. It is the most authoritative, albeit non-official, arbiter of proper Italian language.

Pope: Our readers don't really care much. Does it really matter if the singular word *vaglia* [postal money order] does not change in the plural and remains simply *vaglia*? We turn the plural into *vagli*, which is the inexistent form of the inexistent singular *vaglio*. Calling it an error is sophistry. Do you think anybody noticed that we announced that the book *Trattatus de instructione confessorum* [*Treatise on the Training of Confessors*]⁵ is a "theology treatise"? A bit of *latinorum*⁶ gives us a good reputation even if we can't translate it. Sometimes we give ourselves a bit more latitude. For instance: we cannot allow the verb *partorire* [to deliver a child] to use the auxiliary verb *avere*. Therefore we say: "La signora è *partorita*" [the lady is delivered] instead of *ha partorito* [delivered].⁷ For us the board of education *fa noto i nomi* [communicates the names; in correct Italian: *rende noti i nomi*] of the teachers suspected of being Communist Party members.

Student: Supposedly, you take a similar approach to other foreign languages as well.

Pope: Well, since we don't speak any, we rely on our fact-checker in chief. He is also in charge of the creative order of our *spellatura*⁸ [spelling; in standard Italian *spellatura* means skinning or flaying], or, as you say in Italian, *ortografia* [orthography]. It looks good when you see in print words like *Gesammelle Renden* [correct spelling: *Gesammelle Räden*], a book by a respected prelate. The Library of Congress most likely must believe it is a totally new book.

Student: Did you also have a chance to change history or geography?

Pope: Certainly. Axel Munthe⁹ was a famous Swedish tenor, at least

5 Antonius Archiepiscopus Florentinus. *Trattatus de instructione seu directione simplicium confessorum*. Köln, Zell, ca. 1468–1470.

6 The reference is to a famous episode in Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*. The illiterate protagonist, Renzo, argues with the priest don Abbondio, complaining that he uses *latinorum* to confuse and deceive. *Latinorum* is pig-Latin for *Latin*.

7 The incorrect use of the auxiliary verbs (*essere* and *avere*) in compound tenses is an immediate marker of lack of proper education and is highly stigmatized.

8 *Spellatura* in Italian means skinning, flaying. It is the operation to remove the skin (*pelle*) from an animal.

9 Axel Munthe (1857–949). Swedish psychiatrist and archaeologist. A polymath and polyglot, he lived in Italy.

• Curzio Malaparte (1898–1957). Italian journalist and writer. His real name was

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for the readers of our newspaper. Curzio Malaparte is a French journalist. The trade attachés in foreign embassies are “Jewish diplomats.” The Università di Pavia owns an institute in Florence. In Buenos Aires, Argentina, on May 30, 1952, a strong wind, the *bora*, was blowing so hard it felt like Trieste. And Italian President Luigi Einaudi must have been surprised when he found himself opening a Catholic university in Piacenza. Guido d’Arezzo, thanks to our intervention, became the “regulator of music.” And Lorenzo de’ Medici must worry sick up in heaven at the thought that Florence will host a symposium on his “development and completion...”

Student: This is really something. It is good that you finally introduced to Italy—that has such lousy newspapers—a renovated Italian language full of sharp and subtle innovations. And you also gave us the opportunity to learn it in your very publication.

Pope: This is nothing! Did you know I elevated Giotto’s fame by announcing that in Pomposa some experts found a lost canvas¹⁰ of his work? Isn’t this a true revolution in the history of painting? In comparison this is going to blow away the studies of [Giovanni Battista] Cavalcaselle, Bernard Berenson, Emilio Cecchi, Mario Salmi, Roberto Longhi...” But this is not all. I even invented the modern

Kurt Suckert. *Malaparte* means “the bad side.”

- Università di Pavia, founded in 1361. Pavia, near Milan, was the capital of the Longobard kingdom from 568 to 774.
- *Bora* is the wind from the north-east that blows toward the Adriatic sea, typical of the city of Trieste.
- Luigi Einaudi (1874-1961). Italian politician and economist. He was the first president of the Italian republic from 1948 to 1955.
- The city of Piacenza is indeed the seat of a branch of the *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* [Catholic University of the Sacred Heart] with headquarters in Milan.
- Guido d’Arezzo (991/992—ca 1033). Musicologist. He is considered the inventor of modern musical notes and staff notation.

- 10 Giotto di Bondone (1266/7-1337). Painter and architect, he reintroduced perspective into western painting. His most famous works are the cycles of frescos respectively in the church of San Francis in Assisi and the Scrovegni chapel in Padua.
- Famous Benedictine abbey in northern Italy whose first traces go back to 874.
 - There are no known paintings on canvas by Giotto.

- 11 Giovanni Battista Cavalcaselle (1819-1897). Writer and art critic.
- Bernard Berenson (1865-1959). Art critic and professor. His best known work is *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*. New York, Phaidon, 1952.

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technique of journalism-as-riddle. People believe we print so many errors and outlandish stuff because we are slovenly scoundrels. Not true. Do you want to know the real secret? We want to sharpen our readers' minds. For instance, recently we published this news item, with no supporting context. We placed it in the middle of the paper, without particular emphasis, with the headline "Meeting between Dino Grandi and István Bethlen"¹² we published the following article:

The Italian minister of foreign affairs arrived today in Hungary from Poland. He was given a warm welcome by the local authorities, the population and the Italian colony. Minister Grandi immediately went to visit the Hungarian minister of foreign affairs Bethlen. They examined a series of issues concerning Italian-Hungarian relations and the problems that are presently destabilizing Eastern Europe. After the conversation the ministers declared their satisfaction at the progress made.

Undoubtedly some of our readers must have been delighted. For us, instead, it was just sheer joy to realize that nobody caught on to our practical joke. At the top, above the headline, we didn't add the warning that this event took place thirty years ago. For a newspaper editor the best insurance against mistakes is that his readers will never be able to call him to task. When one realizes this, believe me, it inspires great confidence. At times we do the same with statistics we receive from Italy. They are totally useless. Just imagine: we once published an item stating that on such-and-such a day the port of Brindisi¹³ had a total traffic of 600,000 passengers. I made Brindisi the first port in the world. Not even New York can compete with it. And, no need for corrections. This also is part of the journalistic technique I am teaching you now. A well made newspaper never admits its errors. Not

- Emilio Cecchi (1884–1966). Art and literary critic.
- Mario Salmi (1889–1980). Art critic and historian.
- Roberto Longhi (1890–1970). Art historian.

12 Dino Grandi (1895–1988). Minister of foreign affairs from 1929 to 1932.

13 István Bethlen (1874–1946). Hungarian prime minister from 1921 to 1931. Brindisi. City on the coast of Apulia. The port of Brindisi presently is an active naval passenger traffic hub, with service primarily to Greece.

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only. Its readers should never become suspicious. I gave you examples that prove that it is possible to publish anything without consequences. For instance we wrote both that "Italy's southern regions have the highest suicide rate" and that "Italy's southern regions have the lowest suicide rate." You, Italian youngsters, should learn from those of us who live on the other side of the ocean that you can do anything you want. And if you do that, not only will you make money, but you will be asked to teach, and you will even be supported by the prestigious presence of the prime minister. Here are our recommendations for the new generations of Italians: follow the example of the journalists from the other side of the ocean; move the Italian language to tears; shake up syntax; correct history, orthography, data and dates. If you do so, you will receive praise by the new Italy, the new Italy born in the name of democracy....

[I could go on, if anybody wished.]

New York, November 25, 1955

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