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A TRANSLATOR'S VIEW OF GADDA'S LANGUAGE:
THE *PASTICCLACCIO*'

This article is dedicated to
the memory of Bob Dombroski

Introduction

The following comments grew out of a translation of Carlo Emilio's Gadda's masterpiece, *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, which I have been working on for a few years.¹ Gadda is considered today to be the giant among Italy's modern prose writers: in the words of one of his bibliographers, Andrea Cortellessa, he has assumed the status of "lo scrittore prototipo: sfida all'emulazione, serbatoio citazionale, monumento di valore" (159).² Critical consensus during the last decade of the century regarding the many-sided qualities of this extraordinary writer-figure seems to have secured him a firm place as the major Italian prose writer of the last century, as well as one of the major twentieth-century European writers, next to names (Joyce, Kafka, Proust, etc.) which have reached canonical status.

This widespread judgment is not so much due to the novelty of Gadda's themes, nor to his experimentation with the conventions of prose narration, nor, despite the great importance of this facet of his work, to his linguistic originality. Gadda's importance largely consists in the power of a prose which achieves, as Emilio Manzotti has written, "a rare density of expression, a "white-hot" quality that inscribes itself on our memory with aphoristic conciseness" (1993, 17).

In spite of this, the reception of Gadda's work in English-speaking countries has not been a success, and he remains relatively unknown here. Departments of Italian studies here have likewise been much slower than their European counterparts to include Gadda in their course lists. The main reason is translation. Aside from a few short pieces buried in the

back issues of reviews, only two of Gadda's works have appeared in English: *That Awful Mess on Via Merulana*, William Weaver's 1965 version of *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (which appeared in Italy in 1957), and, in 1968, *Acquainted with Grief* (Weaver's title for the 1963 *La cognizione del dolore*). Leaving aside other considerations concerning the English reception of Gadda's work, my claim, shared by many other Gadda scholars, is that Weaver's version of the *Pasticciaccio* is inadequate. This study demonstrates some aspects of his version and compares it with my own translation and that of the French version, which appeared in 1963. I also attempt to explain some features of Gadda's writing which might appear to defy adequate translation.

1. General observations

The most easily observable, and probably the most easily describable, trait of the *Pasticciaccio* (but also of most of Gadda's writing) is its lexical richness and variety. Such variety in the *Pasticciaccio* is favored by a double foundation of Roman dialect (though there are present in lesser measure napoletano, molisano, abruzzese, milanese or lombardo, veneziano and others, not to mention a heavy presence of foreign borrowings) and an Italian which is elevated, or literary, or to put it more precisely, scholastic, meaning heavy with elements G. Contini calls "di una cultura nobilmente liceale" (83) — an Italian which, in general, raises the register of Gadda's prose far from the *lingua d'uso*.

So the page in the *Pasticciaccio* gathers together dialectal words (of many regions), and pan-Italian words, the latter coming from extremely dissimilar phases, varieties and applications of Italian, such as trecento terms and contemporary terms; formal, colloquial and trivial Italian; or the sectorial: the scientific, bureaucratic, or technical. In other words a kaleidoscope of varieties which one can attempt to classify with the diasytematic information of the kind often given in dictionaries, when they indicate whether or not a word or expression belongs to the unmarked standard "core" of the language that can be used at all times and places.³

Diachrony

Gadda pays particular attention to *diachronic* variety ("Vita storica del vocabolo e del modo espressivo. Impossibilità di astrarre da un riferimento storico della lingua parlata e scritta", 3: 492): to the historical development of language, including outdated or former lexical, orthographical, syntactical or grammatical forms. In the *Pasticciaccio*, diachronic variety usually takes on the form of archaic terms (*sitire*, *cemeteriale*, *redimito*, *parvolo*,

aulire, etc.), but also outdated syntactical-grammatical constructions (*nel di lei animo, laniando capra, resosi defunto*, etc.).

Geographical variety

"I dialetti. Il diritto di alcuni modi più ricchi, o più vigorosi, de' dialetti stessi... a entrare nell'elenco dei padri e coscritti. Dò palla bianca ai meteci e inserisco in una mia prosa il ligure galuppare (per scioppiare, francese bouffer) e il romanesco gargarozzo.", Gadda writes in his essay "Lingua letteraria e lingua d'uso" (3: 492). Linguistic conditions determined by space, or geography (*diatopic* variation) are notoriously exploited by the author; these include dialects (linguistic systems tied to a specific region, without "officially" standard orthographical or grammatical rules) and colloquialisms linked to place (such as in the case of laborers who, at eight in the morning, *son già dietro da tre ore a sudare*, Italianized form of a Northern dialect expression corresponding to the progressive). Roman dialect, together with elevated or scholastic Italian, makes up the "background" texture of the *Pasticciaccio*: not only in the speech of the "collettività fabulante", but in the narrative sections and in the many-layered polyphony of free indirect discourse. The contribution of G. G. Belli, "uno dei più grandi ed autentici 'poeti' del nostro Ottocento, e di tutti i nostri secoli in genere" (4: 1145), is evident in such words as *baccajà, paino, fojetta* and so on. But the Roman and other dialects in the novel, as in Gadda's other works, are never adopted for mere naturalistic verisimilitude, but blended into a more general "macaronism" which affects the narration at the minimal and maximal levels of syntax (for example the narrator's comment "perché quanno non cià sordi er mejo impiego che po trovà una vedova è de trovanne un attro che se la risposa") and morphology (reduced articulated prepositions such as *n, pe, and a'*, for instance, indicative of Gadda's characteristic commingling of the literary-archaic and the dialectal), as well as vocabulary (*pispillorio, tritticò, aranciasse*, etc.).

Informal - formal

Similar to and sometimes inclusive of the above categories, *diastatic* variety, meaning formal or informal lexical items (*disserare* versus *aprire, vigere* versus *valere* and so on) is heavily present, often linked also to linguistic conditions differentiated by social class: the "sociolects" (so-called by analogy with "dialect"). Gadda's attention to diastatification produces a vertical sequence that tends toward extremes. The text constantly moves, therefore, from the "aulico" or rarified (*parrolo, clivo, smorire, rancura*, etc.) to the trivial and plebeian (*racchia, zoccola, buggerone* and so on).

Situation

Language variety due to situation is fully exploited (such as in the long, comic *excursus*, in chap. 6, of telephone language and interference, a “naufragio del testo” which serves as emblem of the author’s overall preservation, in writing, of the pandemonium of reality):

Lui—ginio! Eh, sì, sì, Lui—ginio!... momentaneamente irreperibile. Sì... no... già... perfettamente. No, no... al Toraccio nun l’aveveno trovato. In parole povere, uccel di bosco. Da quanto le diligenze auricolari del Di Pietrantonio pervennero infine a racimolare dal naufragio del testo (il crepitio del microfono e l’induttanza della linea sonorizzavano il testo: interferenze varie, da contatto urbano, intercicalavano, straziavano la recezione), apparve a un dipresso che l’incauto Enea Retalli o Ritalli, sive Luiginio (ma evidentemente Luigino) aveva dato a tinger la sciarpa... trentasei quintali di parmigiano! brondi ghi barla? spediti ieri da Reggio Emilia... Parla il tenente di vascello Racace. Brondi, brondi! Tenenza carabinieri Marino! Di parmigiano stagionato brondi... gasa del signor ammiraglio Mondegùggoli! Società Bavatelli di Parma, sì, a mezzo camion... Tenenza carabinieri di Marino, precedenza di servizio. Trentasei quintali, sì, tre camion, partiti ieri alle dieci. No, la signora gondessa è in gliniga... In gliniga dal signor ammiraglio... a via Orà—zio: Orà—zio! Sì, signorsì. No, signor no. Mo domando. Precedenza servizio polizia, questura di Roma. Trentasei quintali da Reggio Emilia, tipo Parma, di prima assoluta! Il signor ammiraglio ha fatto l’oberazione lunedì: l’oberazione della vescica: della vesci—ca. Sì, signorsì... No, signor no.

Ciò che fu possibile estrarre da un tal guazzabuglio fu, insomma, che il Retalli avea portato a tinger la sciarpa a una donna dei Due Santi, sulla via Appia, certa Pàcori, Pàcori Zamira. Zamira! Zeta come Zara, a come Ancona! Zamira!... sì, sì, Zamira! nota a molti, se non a tutti, in quel di Marino e di Albano, per i molti suoi meriti: se non per tutti i suoi meriti (2: 139-40).

Diaintegrative varieties

Foreign borrowings, which are many in Gadda, are often subsequently and grotesquely deformed according to what Gadda calls the “uso spastico della parola” (σιμπατία, Greek poetic form of the Italian *simpatia*) or italianized phonetically (*Bedecke* for *Baedeker*, *Borùclin* for *Brooklyn*, *Eisenberg* for *Heisenberg*, etc.), or both in whole syntagma, such as *aphasia coram telephono*, macaronic Latin roughly meaning “speechlessness before the telephone”.⁴

Superimposed meanings

Diaconnotative words have associative and occasional meanings superimposed on their basic meanings - in contrast to their static conceptual

meanings — that are often difficult to describe context-independently; for example the German *Führer*. The most conspicuous use of diaconnotative variety in the *Pasticciaccio* comes from the many epithets used for Mussolini: *Testa di Morto*, *del Quo*, *buce*, *Caciocavallo*, *rachitoide acromegalico*, *Mascellone*, *Predappiofezzò*, *Merda*, *Truce in cattedra* and so on.

Technical varieties

The specialized vocabulary of various occupations is a constant feature in Gadda, for example legal (*nuncupar*, *causali*, etc.) or financial terms (*fidecommisario*, *accredito*) or words from science and the technical professions (*anadromi*, from zoology, *vagotonici*, from medicine, *quanto*, from physics, to name a few). Mock-technicalisms, invented by the author, also abound: *manuaptazione-prolazione*, *gravidico*, *ungulazione*, etc. The explosion of metaphoric and antiphrastic use of language in the *Pasticciaccio* is probably much better represented by the author's use of scientific technicisms than by any other lexical category. Extraordinary transfers of meaning and hyperbolic analogies through the use of such technicisms contribute most to the "baroque" texture, as in this example concerning the catabolic product of a hen:

... un cioccolatinone verde intorcolato alla Borromini come i grumi di solfo colloide delle acque àlbule: e in vetta in vetta uno scaracchietto di calce, allo stato colloidale pure isso, una crema chiara chiara, di latte pastorizzato pallido (2: 206).

Frequency

Diafrequential variety is usually indicated in dictionaries when a word is marked as "rare". Mostly it is linked to diachronic variety, to words that are marked "obsolete" or "obsolescent", though often the item is not quite out of use in some areas (*fumea*, *inspirazione*, *fistula*, etc.). There is also a quite heavy adoption of rare variants in spelling (*mugine*, *rancura*, *viglietto* and so on).

"Substandard" items

Dianormative variety includes items that are considered substandard or illiterate, for example the common English word *ain't* for the present indicative of the verb *to be*. There are many examples of what might be considered substandard Italian in the novel, at the level of vocabulary (*fare la bua* instead of *far male*; *signorino* for *sedere* etc., as well a wide range of idiosyncrasms), grammar and syntax, much of it linked to the use of those dialects or dialectal varieties considered less "refined" (the rustic speech of the Roman countryside as opposed to Venetian or Milanese, for example).

The importance of diaphasic change

Lexical variation due to time (*diaphasic* variety), not in the sense of diachrony or variations that rely on the history of the language, its passage to one form to another over a long period, but to reformulation during an enunciation, is very significant for the study of Gadda's prose. In the *Pasticciaccio* there is a heavy use of gemination, that is, the doubling or repetition of the same concept using synonyms or the so-called "doublets" belonging to the different categories already mentioned.⁵ A frequent feature in Gadda is the reformulation, gemination and re-gemination within one sentence or paragraph into different registers or even different languages - as in this triple reformulation from *La cognizione del dolore*, where the subject is horses at the starting gate at a horse race: "ed era per le corse, alle mosse, cioè alla partènsa, con l'esse, che di quando in quando la chiamavano però anche starting." This is a diaphasic reformulation which consists of a specialized term, then a common Italo-milanese term (note the metalinguistic gloss of "con l'esse", a feature also very frequent in Gadda), then an English equivalent. Another example of diaphasic variation comes from the beginning of the *Pasticciaccio*, when the narrator, or one of the narrators, is referring to Ingravallo's thoughts on the philosophical category of cause. What the narrator calls the "molteplicità di causali convergenti" which results in a crime is named "anche nodo o groviglio, o garbuglio, o gnommero, che alla romana vuol dire gomitolò."

"Descrizione metonimica"

The last category mentioned here is both a micro- and macroscopic feature of Gadda's extremely dense pages: what Emilio Manzotti calls "descrizione metonimica" or "descrizione per varianti alternative" (1996, 201-325). This refers to the tendency in Gadda to offer a summary of a plurality of descriptions, which pass through many reformulations, in a series, and in which all the lexical variety just described comes into play simultaneously. To assert one thing, in the text, recalls, by association, alternative assertions within the paradigm of all possible assertions (whence the frequent passage from one "voice", with its own linguistic features, to another within the same paragraph, or page). In fact the most extraordinary thing about all these linguistic excursions is that they nearly always occur *simultaneously*. We may often find gathered together within a single sentence any number of these diatypes: the dialectal with the literary-archaic, technical, trivial and colloquial words, or even a scientific term given dialectal shading and vice-versa. Some examples will be examined shortly.

The great variety poured onto the page is in part due to a prodigious mimetic capacity, the ability to reproduce that particular speech of a given environment, and also to reproduce individual peculiarities (idiolects also have a very important role), but that material seems to follow a non-law of humoral leaps and arabesques. Gadda's use of dialects, for example, is totally inconsistent: if the auxiliary verb *avete* is *avite* in the dialectal speech of Ingravallo (itself a mixture of romanesco, napoletano and molisano-abruzzese) on pages 46 and 47, it remains *avete* on following pages and elsewhere. The dialectal speech of other characters also (in direct, indirect or free indirect discourse) is rendered only sporadically. Gadda's use of dialects, therefore, is far from that of Pasolini's in his Roman novels, for instance, where the use of dialect is uniform and sustained. Instead Gadda's potpourri of diatypes follows a seemingly lawless scheme of humoral jumps and caprice.⁶ The single fragment "Donde la giustificata prescia de l'Utorità, che verso le dieci si cangiò in furugozzo" mixes Roman dialect (*prescia*, *Utorità*), Lombardisms (*furugozzo*) standard Italian (*verso le dieci*, *la giustificata*) and literary Italian (*donde*, *si cangiò*).

Faced with a prose that seems characterized by a total lack of homogeneity, one stylistic or lexical constant is the underlying texture upon which that richness is overlaid: an elevated Italian, literary, or, as said before, scholastic - that of words such as *ridischiudere*, *irradiare*, *predicare* (not in the sense of "preach" but of "ascribe to a logical category, formulate a judgement"), *foco*, *redimito*, *molcere*, *parvolo*, *nel di lei animo* (for *nel suo animo*), *verno* (for *inverno*) and so on. This common denominator is well above the *italiano medio*: Gadda's prose, in fact, generally avoids any sort of *medietas*.⁷

2. An analysis "per exempla"

Two brief specimens of Gadda's prose in the *Pasticciaccio*, syntactically parallel (that is consisting of a nominal theme then developed) allow us to see the extent of lexical variation, which is, in general, spread throughout the text.

Il caso Piroficoni non aveva ancora afflitto le cronache dell'Urbe: il Testa di Morto in feluca sitiva già, per altro, la penna di pavone dell'indiziato, da potersela infilare dove lui s'infilava le penne: de parone o de pollo guasto che puzza.

Il mal capitato Piroficoni fu ridotto in fin di vita a busse da un taliana di quelli: perché gli si voleva estorcere ad ogni modo, in «camera di sicurezza», la veridica ammissione d'aver istuprato certe bimbe. Paracadde giù da' nuvoli e implorava che no, che non è vero un corno: ma ne buscò da stiantare. Oh mani generosi del Beccaria! (2: 92-4; italics mine)

In the first sample the hyper-colloquial and dialectal prepositional clausula of specification "*de pavone o de pollo guasto che puzzà*" transposes into extremely informal Italian the miserable pretension of Fascist "pseudo-giustizia", as the narrator calls it several lines later, for which what counts is not at all justice but merely the theatrical exhibition of severity, indicated by a narcissistic *penna di pavone*. But in a metaphorical reference to the chivalrous code of battle, the craving of the *Testa di Morto in feluca* (one of the hundred and one appellations Gadda substitutes for Mussolini, never directly named according to the scheme of *damnatio memoriae*) for the suspect-adversary's helmet-plume is refined by the literary-archaic *sitire*, "to thirst after", in combination with the rhetorical emphasis and classical reminiscence of *Urbe* (Rome, by antonomasia). *Sitiva* is a diastratic opposite of the extremely informal *puzzare*, contributing to the ironic distancing of the narrator from his material in the first part of the sentence. The case of the hapless Pirroficoni (the name an obscene Gaddian play on the Greek πυρρος, "flame-colored" or "inflamed" and the Italian *fico* probably in its meaning as male or female genital organs, but also the fleshy tumor or growth between the buttocks) *non aveva ancora afflitto* the newspapers, another example of elevated Italian, along with the juridical term *indiziato*, "suspect", and *feluca* (a boat-shaped, two-pointed or cocked hat limited to the dress uniforms of high officials, named after the boat it resembles in shape). But the probably obscene allusion of the reflexive locution *dove lui* (that is, the *Testa di Morto*, Mussolini) *s'infilava le penne* represents another extreme, here of brusque informality (and doubly allusive, then, if we take the name *Pirroficoni* to be a nod to the Italian *ficcone*, derived from the verb *ficcare*, "to stick or thrust in", synonym of "infilare", and which means "chi si intromette senza rispetto, sfacciatamente, in ciò che non lo riguarda", very much the case with Mussolini's interest here). In the second, longer sample, the victim is beaten to within an inch of his life by the extremely colloquial deixis *a busse da un taliana di quelli*, the masculine singular agent *taliana* possibly a memory of a poem by the Milanese poet Delio Tessa, entitled *A Carlo Porta* (in which we also find the form *Mussolina*): a likely source, since the subjects of Tessa's tragic civic invective are the sepulchral presence of *il Duce* and Fascist persecution of a "pover ... Talian":

... e la cossa che importa, che sufraga
sola [...] l'è de fach de cappel a chi ghe dà
la collobia al porscell;
impara a saludà
donca per straa la zucca

negra del Mussolina e citto li
 citto, che tant per ti
 rusca e balla, per ti bona Taliana,
 come ai temp de Franzisch,
 per ti l'è bast,
 [...]
 e descors e reson
 no serven di politech seccaball,
 eternament e senza remission
 ghe l'èet d'avè sui spall
 coi durezz di travers e el spelament
 puttasca e nagott olter! (Brevini 89)⁸

Taliana, in this context, might also be a topical allusion to the spoken Italian of the Germans, or, better, of the Austrians, in particular the Croatian soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; as may be found, in fact, in the work of Carlo Porta.⁹ "Taliana" would therefore stand for an Italian of Nordic build, large and sturdy, and of brutal manners, precisely like the Croats immortalized by Porta. Both these possible sources for the word would give sense to "di quelli", which is a locution characteristic of Gadda, modeled on the dialectal intensifier "de quj": together a form of reticence and of antonomasia. It is worthy to note that, because of its Fascist setting, Gadda never uses the noun "italiano" to refer to the populace, but only degraded forms such as "talianka", "taliani" or "taliana".¹⁰ The action of this member of an ad hoc gang is raised to the precise *estorcere*, "to take possession unjustly through violence, threat or fraud"; the ironic detachment of that verb sustained moreover by the oxymoronic quote "camera di sicurezza"—anything but safe here—and by the refined legal locution *veridica ammissione*. A confession, then, withheld by the opposite lexical extreme of the decisive, hyper-colloquial *che no, non è vero un corno*: not guilty, that is, *d'aver istuprato*, with its prothetical -i, (since the previous word ends in consonant) between literary-archaic and regional and dialectal. The informal and possibly ironic *bimbe* (we are not told the age of the victims) takes us in the other direction, that of "*camera di sicurezza*" for example, irony sustained by the nice verbal coinage *paracadde* forming part of the refined amalgam of the dialectal or spoken *paracadde giù da' nuvoli* (the idiomatic expression shaded from the more pedestrian *cadere* or *cascare dalle nuvole*). *Paracadere*, though of obvious formation, is a Gaddian coinage or nonce-word now registered in Battaglia. The poor Pirroficioti suffers with the regional-colloquial *ne buscò* ("prendere una buona quantità di botte" - or *busse*), derived from the Spanish *buscar*; *da stiantare* is a Tuscan variation of the already colloquial *schiantare* ("da morire, da crepare"), which

is immediately refined in the direction of Latin antiquity by the vocative allusion to the *mani* (the spirits of the dead to whom relatives pay homage with gifts, in ancient Roman religion), here to the spirit of Cesare Beccaria, celebrated jurist and author of *Dei delitti e delle pene*, an early attempt to reform the penal code and do away with, among other practices, precisely torture as means to extort confession. The opposition between the *Manes*, beneficial spirits of the dead living through works and the memory of their virtue, and the negative, funerary *Testa di Morto* echoes that between *sitire* and *puzzare*; the allusion in Gadda to Beccaria may also involve Beccaria's grandson, Alessandro Manzoni (indubitably the most important literary source for the *Pasticciaccio*), to whom the entire passage pays particular homage for its defense of a victim of official abuse.

Above all —and I should speak here also of syntax— both passages are refined mixtures of dialectal or colloquial locutions (*a busse da un taliana di quelli, ne buscò da stiantare, non è vero un corno*, etc.) and terms and expressions from an elevated register (*sitire, estorcere, istuprato*, etc.) through which the colloquialisms are filtered and elevated themselves into a hyper-literary *pastiche*.

3. Lexical inventions and translation

The mention of the Gaddian coinage *paracadde* opens up the subject of the enrichment of the vocabulary through previously unheard-of combinations of terms, or else neologisms derived from any number of diatypes or even languages. These are formed in several different ways (roughly: by derivation, composition, contamination, and mock latin or other mock-languages, not to mention neologisms in meaning and plays on words). Adequate translation will generally depend on understanding their formative logic. For example, such explicit derivations that use diminutive suffixes like *-ino*, *-etto* or *-uccio*, or that use the augmentative *-one* or else the pejorative *-accio*, forming words such as *tesoruccio* or *pezzaccio*, would normally be rendered with a locution in English. There are other neologisms, however, formed by derivation, such as *chilometrare* (from *chilometro*, of Greek origin) and *digitativo* (from *digitale* < Latin *digitalis* plus the adjectival suffix *-ativo* < Latin *-ativus*, *-a*, *-um*) which must be re-created in various ways. For the first a possible translation is the English nonce-word “to mile” (in the progressive “miling” in the specific passage). For the second, which again refers to the poor Pirrofici, called by Gadda “il peritoso e digitativo galante” for his ill-fated habit of sending hand signals to his married lover from the street up to her window, a locution like “the chivalrous expert in dactylology” (the latter term meaning “the art of

speaking by signs made by the fingers" in the OED), though not a neologism, seems to retain the ironic comicity intended by the author.

Things are much stickier with neologisms formed by composition, because the translator must first understand from what they are composed (and they may be formed using Latin, Greek, Italian, Italic dialects, or others words from any number of European languages), and then, as with other invented words, why they were composed and what they mean. A case in point is the adjective *cinobalànico*, formed of the Greek *Βάλᾱνος* meaning "gland" or "acorn" but also "glans penis" (the meaning here), and *cwn* "dog"; then given the adjectival suffix *-ico* for the meaning "of or like the penis of a dog". The prefixes *cino-* and *cyno-* are common in Italian and English, respectively, though the use of words derived from *Βάλᾱνος* is rare in both tongues, with no adjectival form reported. The passage in which the composed adjective appears concerns the hysteria of the mob as it prejudicially clamors for a sacrificial victim or scapegoat following a crime, regardless of guilt or innocence: "l'orgasmo cinobalànico dell'anticipato giudizio" (*orgasmo* here meaning excitement or frenzy). If one knows the vulgar expression "a cazzo di cane", meaning "fatto malissimo" the compositive origin, and hence the meaning, of "cinobalànico" becomes clear. Weaver notices this and provides one of his very rare glosses: "A word invented by Gadda, a Greco-italian adjective created from an obscene Roman dialect expression meaning badly done" (it is not, in fact, Roman dialect), but then he translates it as "cynobalanic". This, although it is derived from the same roots, points to no English expression (there is, in English, no literal equivalent of "a cazzo di cane"), so the term is meaningless. One solution is "cephalobalanic", which is similarly formed and is a mock-scientific equivalent of a coarse English expression ("dick-headed", etc.) close in meaning to the vulgar Italian.

The case is similar with the terms *gravidico* and the derived combination *ossequienziale-scaricabarilistico*, used in a pseudo-scientific/burocratic passage describing the pressure of the Fascist hierarchy on the lower-ranking police officers involved in investigation: "La cascatella delle telefonate gerarchesche, come ogni cascatella che si rispetti, era ed è irreversibile in un determinato campo di forze, qual è il campo *gravidico*, o il campo *ossequienziale-scaricabarilistico*." Joan McConnell in her useful (but not always accurate) *A Vocabulary Analysis of Gadda's Pasticciaccio* reports *gravidico* as an invented composition by Gadda made from *grave* < Latin GRAVIS and *dico* < Latin DICO, DICERE, and gives its meaning as "to speak heavily or imprecisely" (158). Battaglia, however, reports the meaning as simply "gravitazionale", derived from *gravidò* and given the adjectival suffix,

though the sole author cited for its use is Gadda himself. Given the author's penchant for word play, the adjective, if it is a coinage, is probably used for its similarity with the roots mentioned by McConnel, although its base meaning seems to be the one given by Battaglia, especially since it is used elsewhere to refer unequivocally to the field of gravity. The composition *campo ossequienziale-scaricabarilistico*, translated by Weaver in typically uninspired fashion as "field of obsequiousness and pass-the-buckdom" (*scaricabarilistico* defined by Battaglia, again with Gadda cited as authority, as "che tende a riversare su altri l'onere o la responsabilità di una scelta o di un'incombenza gravosa"), is probably better rendered as "obsequient-buckconveyant field" (though the English reader has to do a little more work than the Italian), especially since *ossequienziale* is a contamination derived from *ossequiente* and not listed, obviously, in any dictionary.

4. Misunderstandings, loss of formal features, obscure sources.

What is relevant for a 'good' translation

The losses of formal features in the Weaver version are not by any means limited to his rendition of Gadda's neologisms. Just in terms of the lexicon, there is a constant banalization of Gadda's language (*accileccare* becomes "dazzle"; *sororale*, "sister-like"; *ridischiudere*, "re-open"; *ascesi*, "ascent"; *ziggrinate*, "knurled, streaked" etc.). Weaver's version regularly tends towards the very *medietas* Gadda appears to take every possible step to avoid. This is true also as regards dialectal words (discussed below): Weaver shuns attempts to render not only their comic and expressive qualities, but also the artificial, literary use of dialect in Gadda.

A look at the following passage will help to see some specific problems of translation. We have already looked at one of the words there (*cinobalànico*) and seen that the page deals with a mob calling out for the bloody, summary trial and execution of an innocent. Here we have an analysis of the Fascists' use of punishment for its theatrical and ultimately repressive value:

«Adoperare » l'avvenimento —quel qualunque avvenimento che Giove Farabutto, preside a'nuvoli, t'abbi fiantato davanti il naso, plaf, plaf — alla magnificazione d'una propria attività pseudo-etica, in facto protuberatamente scenica e sporcamente teatrata, è il giuoco di qualunque, istituto o persona, voglia attribuire alla propaganda e alla pesca le dimensioni e la gravezza di un'attività morale. La psiche del demente politico esibito (narcisista a contenuto pseudo-etico) aggranzia il delitto alieno, reale o creduto, e vi ruggia sopra come belva cogliona e furente a freddo sopra una mascella d'asino: conducendosi per tal modo a esaurire (a distendere) nella inane fattispecie d'un mito punitivo la sudicia tensione

che lo compelle al pragma: al pragma quale che sia, purché pragma, al pragma *coïte que coïte*. Il crimine alieno è « adoperato » a placar Megera anguicrinita, la moltitudine pazza: che non si placherà di così poco: viene offerto, come laniando capro o cerbiatto, a le scarmigliate che lo faranno a pezzi, lene in salti o mamillone ubiquo e voraci nel baccanale che di loro strida si accende, e dello strazio e del sangue s'imporpora: acquistando corso legale, per tal modo, una pseudo-giustizia, una pseudo-severità, o la pseudo-abilitazione a' dittaggi: della quale appaiono essere contrassegno manifesti e l'arroganza della sconsiderata istruttoria, e l'orgasmo cinobalànico dell'anticipato giudizio (2: 92).

Weaver has:

"To exploit" the event — *whatsoever* event *Jove Scoundrel, big-cheese in the cloud department, dropped in your lap, plop*— to the magnification of one's own pseudo-ethical activity, in fact protuberantly theatrical and *filthily* staged, is the game of the institution or person who wishes to endow propaganda and *fisheries* with the weight of a moral activity. The displayed psyche of the political *madman* (a *narcissist of pseudo-ethical content*) grabs the alien crime, real or believed, and roars over it like a *stupid*, furious beast, *in cold blood*, over an ass's jawbone: behaving in such a way as to exhaust (to relax) in the inane *matter* of a punitive myth the *dirty* tension that compels him to action, action *coïte que coïte*. The alien crime is exploited to placate the *snaky-maned* Megaera, the mad multitude: which will not be placated with so little: it is offered, like a ram or *stag to be torn to pieces*, to the *disbeveled women* who will rip it apart, *light of foot, ubiquitous and mammary* in the bacchanal which their cries kindle, purpled with torment and blood. In this way, a pseudo-justice assumes a legal course, a pseudo-severity, or the *pseudo-habilitation of the finger-pointings* whose manifest countersigns seem to be both the arrogance of the ill-considered magistrate's *investigation* and the *cyno-balanic excitement* of the anticipated sentence (119-20; I have underlined passages I find problematic).¹¹

Battaglia lists *fianta* as meaning "sterco bovino o equino", though the verbal form is not listed and is probably coined by Gadda ("Giove Farabutto", god of the weather, is an appropriate producer of that substance since he often takes on the guise of a bull). In Gadda when a god plays a trick on us it is usually disruptive and scatological: one of the author's earliest memories of such a cosmic joke, recorded in several writings, is of a pigeon soiling, from on high, his ice-cream cone in Milan's *Galleria*. Weaver's misleadingly benign verb "to drop", with the indirect object "in your lap", do away with all diainegrative variety, and do not preserve the associative meanings intended by the author. *Pèsca* or *pèsca* (depending on the accentuation of the *e*), far from having the nonsensical

meaning "fisheries", are listed in Battaglia as "critica fatta con acrimonia" or "botta, percossa" (*pèsa*) or else "vantaggio ottenuto con mezzi ingannevoli o con la frode" (*pèsa*, used in this signification by Manzoni in *I Promessi Sposi*): much more appropriate, in this context of propaganda, extortion, and punishment. In the allusion to the Biblical Samson's brandishing an ass' jawbone before his enemies, a *freddo* used to modify *furente* makes much less sense as "in cold blood", than as "pointlessly" or "without reason", given the wielder's cruel stupidity (expressed with *cogliona*, of a much lower register than Weaver's "stupid"). Likewise, a punitive myth (the "inane fattispecie d'un mito punitivo") is a case in point, not, in any case, a vague "matter". Farther down, the use of "snaky-maned" for "anguicrinito", in a passage filled with references to Greek antiquity and Greek-derived lexicon, is a drastic, but not uncommon, banalization and lowering of register, especially since the same root Greek *angui-* is also used in English. "Light of foot" is part of a compound misunderstanding or ignorance of the Greek references here (*Megeira anguicrinita*, *lene*, *mamillone*, *baccanale*, etc.), comprehensible in view of the fact that most of the items derived from Greek and referring to a bacchanal are also homophonic puns with other more common words. *Lene* first of all, is an adjective meaning "light" but also the plural noun "bacchantes" or female votaries of Dionysius; likewise *mamillone*, which is a Gaddian pun on *mammillona* (two ems) ("squaldrina, bagascia", derived from *mammella*) and *mimallone*, (one em) which means, precisely, "chi partecipa al tripudio dionisiaco": synonymous, therefore, with *lene*. It is hard to see how anyone can be described as "mammary". Folk etymology (something in which Gadda, good classical scholar that he is, never unknowingly indulges) produces "pseudo-habilitation of the finger-pointings" for *pseudo-abilitazione a' dittaggi*, in which *dittaggi*, with its double *t*, has no kinship at all with *dito*, but is a dialectal (from lucchese) and literary term meaning "diceria, voce pubblica", derived from the Latin *dictus*, past participle of *dicere*. I have not dealt with the modernization, in Weaver's version, of Gadda's Italian archaisms, nor with the dialectal elements which are here, as elsewhere, ignored, nor with the leveling of Gadda's syntax.

Two more short passages show how inattention to Gadda's grammar may lead to mistranslations (and, on occasion, unintelligibility; while Gadda's Italian, though arduous at times, always reveals richness of meaning, not the opposite).

La nipote! La nipote albana, fiore dell'eterna gente sabellica.
L'afflato dei predatori. Già. Le sabine non c'era più bisogno di toglierle...
così profonde! attesa della notte mediatrice, tepide carni dell'alba. Le

albane ci pensavan loro, oggi, a scegne a fiume. E il fiume andava, andava, superati i clamori, a raggiungere, al lido, l'indefettibile attesa dell'eternità. (2: 24)

The semantic density of this free indirect discourse registering Ingravallo's musings regarding the roster of the Balduccis' surrogate "nieces" (usually mere serving-girls recluted from Rome's countryside by the sterile wife, Liliana, and fertile prey for the man of the house) is compounded by homophonic and homographic synonyms (*attesa* in two of its connotations), as well as by the use of ellipsis (*toglierte... così profonde!*) and a crowd of allusions to Roman antiquity. Weaver renders this:

The niece! The Alban niece, flower of the eternal Sabellian people. The afflatus of the predators. Yes. There was no need to *seize those Sabine women . . . so radically!* waiting for the night's mediation, the warm flesh of dawn. The Alban women, nowadays, came down to the riverbanks on their own. And the river flowed on, and on, *overcoming all din*, to reach, at the sea's edge, the *inexorable, waiting eternity* (17; I have underlined passages I find problematic).

In this tough *cryptogram* (a dense concentration of allusive signifiers) which departs, like so much in Gadda, from grammatical and syntactical norms, every word must be weighed for its full range of meaning, to be conserved if possible in translation. *Già*, in this context, is probably not a simple affirmative, but may mean "formerly": the *afflatus*, or overmastering impulse, of the Roman predatory male (the entire passage alludes to the Alban and Sabine people, who inhabited the central region of the Apennines near Rome; in particular the rape of the Sabine women organized by Romulus, the founder of Rome) is no longer necessary, since the Alban women now come to Rome by their own will.¹² Battaglia registers the adjective *profondo*, whose inflexion in the above sample identifies it as modifying the plural feminine noun *sabine*, as meaning "che manifesta completa umiliazione". Its alteration from adjective to adverb (modifying "to seize") in the above English rendition must be counted as an error, however, mainly because it deprives the passage of meaning (how does one rape "radically"?). The error is compounded by the misunderstanding of *attesa*, nominalization of the verb *attendere*, meaning "hope", and the preposition *di* (in the contracted form *della*, indicating possession): not "waiting for the night's mediation", therefore, but "hope of night the mediatrix". The nominal value of *attesa* and the genitive function of the preposition are ignored again in the closing expression "inexorable, wait-

ing eternity". A rendering, then, which better preserves the original meaning as well as its density might be:

The niece! The Alban niece, flower of the eternal Sabine race, and the afflatus of the predators. Once. There was no longer any need to seize those Sabine women... so available! The offering now, during night the mediatrix, of daybreak's warm flesh. Today the Alban women came down to the river by themselves. And the waters flowed, streaming past the clamor to reach, at the shore, eternity's unfailing vigil. (de Lucca 14)

The following tables offer additional analytic comparisons between some passages of Gadda's original text, William Weaver's 1963 translation, and my own.

Weaver:

The female personality—Ingravallo grumbled mentally, **as if preaching to himself**—what did it all mean?... The female personality, typically **gravity-centered** on the ovaries, is distinguished from the male insofar as the very activity of the cortex, **the old gray matter**, of the female, is revealed in a **comprehension**, and in a revision, of the reasoning of the male element... The woman's morality-personality **turns for affective coagulations and condensations to the husband...**[139]

...forced **sister-like** συμπατία in the regards of her own sex.

de Lucca:

The female personality —Ingravallo grouched inwardly, as if **affirming its properties** to himself — what was that all about?... The female personality, typically **centergravitated** toward the ovaries, differs from that of the male in so far as the very activity of the cortex, **in th'**

Gadda:

La personalità femminile — brontolò mentalmente Ingravallo quasi **predicando** a se stesso — che vuol dire?... 'a personalità femminile, tipicamente **centrogravitata** sugli ovari, in tanto si distingue dalla maschile, in quanto l'attività stessa della corteccia, **int' 'o cervello d' 'a femmena**, si manifesta in un **apprendimento**, e in un rifacimento, d' 'o ragionamento dell'elemento maschile... La moralità-individualità della donna si rivolge per addensamenti e per coaguli affettivi al marito...[106]

predicando: here clearly "indicare cose o persone come fornite di particolare qualità, caratteristiche, ecc." or, better, from logic: "attribuire un predicato a un soggetto; ascrivere a una categoria logica; formulare un giudizio" (Battaglia). Not in the sense of 'annunciare, proclamare' which is the meaning of 'preaching'. Passage is a long, analytical disquisition by the inspector-philosopher Ingravallo on female personality.

centrogravitata: coined by Gadda from the technicism "centro di gravitazione" ("punto di un corpo da cui si suppone che si eserciti una forza onde esso è attratto o intorno al quale si muove") and verb "gravitare" ("appoggiarsi; tendere verso un

brains of wimmen, is expressed in an assimilation, and in a re-making, of a reasoning — if you can call it reas'nin' — of the masculine element... The morality-individuality of the woman is concentrated on and emotionally solidifies around the husband...

...forced sororal συμπατὶα
towards the co-sexed...

punto o muoversi intorno a esso per effetto della forza della gravità; orbitare"). English "center of gravity" and "gravitate" ("tend to move toward a certain point or object as a natural goal or destination; be strongly attracted to some centre of influence. Freq. followed by **to, towards**" - OED). The verb "centre" from which Weaver creates "gravity-centered" means "place in the centre; concentrate or focus on; be situated on a fixed centre; move round a focal point" (OED). "Gravity-centered" expresses neither the technical point ("have as its centre of gravity") nor meaning of "gravitate" ("be strongly attracted to some centre").

apprendimento: used by G. to mean "far proprio, prendere, imparare". "Comprehension"; faculty of understanding; the act of including, containing, comprising".

assimilation: "faculty of making others' concepts, doctrines, styles, opinions one's own".

La mentalità-individualità della donna si rivolge per addensamenti e per coaguli affettivi al marito: "per" here introduces a complement of means, not of end. Not "per ottenere addensamenti e coaguli affettivi dal marito" (Weaver: "turns for affective coagulations and condensations to the husband") but "per mezzo di addensamenti" etc.

sororale: literary English "sororal" retains Gadda's register.

Weaver:

For her, from the Tiber down, there, there beyond the crumbling castles, and after the blond vineyards, there was, on the hills and mountains, and in the brief plains of Italy, a kind of great fertile

Gadda:

"..due salpingi grasse, zigrinate d'una dovizia di granuli, il granuloso e untuoso, il felice caviaie della gente. Di quando in quando dal grande Ovario follicoli maturati si aprivano, come cicche d'una melegrana: e rossi

womb, two swollen **Eustachian tubes**, streaked with an **abundance** of granules, the granular and **greasy**, the happy caviar of the race. From time to time, from the great Ovary ripened follicles opened, like pomegranate **seeds**: and red grains, mad with amorous certitude, descended upon the city, to encounter the male **afflatus**, the vitalizing impulse, that spermatic aura of which the ovarists of the eighteenth century wrote their fantastic treatise.

de Lucca:

For her, beyond the Tiber, there, there behind the castles in ruins and after the blond vineyards lay, on the hills and the mountains and the plains of Italy - like an immense fertile womb with twin, copious salpinxes shagreened with a cornucopia of granules - the granulous, the unctuous, the beatific caviar of the generations. And from time to time in the great Ovary ripe follicles opened, like pomegranates, whose ruddy kernels, mad with amorous assurance, tumbled towards the Eternal City to encounter the afflatus of the male: the enlivening impulse, that spermatic aura of which the ovists of yesteryear spun their fables.

chicchi, pazzi d'un'amorosa certezza, ne discendevano ad urbe, a incontrare l'afflato maschile, l'impulso vitalizzante, quell'aura spermatica di cui favoleggiavano gli ovaristi del Settecento." (24)

"salpinge grasse" (Battaglia: "salpinge uterina o ovarica: nell'apparato genitale interno femminile, il condotto che collega ciascun ovario con la parte superiore dell'utero; tuba di Falloppia.")

"Eustachian tubes" are, instead, "canals leading from the pharynx to the cavity of the tympanum" (in the ear). The correct English term is "salpinxes" or "Fallopian tubes". Lexical error.

"zigrinate" (Devoto-Oli: "conferire ad una pelle, tessuto o simili un aspetto ruvido o granuloso")

"streaked" for "zigrinate": the correct English term is "shagreened", same etymology and technical meaning. Lexical and stylistic error.

"dovizia" literary term (Devoto-Oli: "straordinaria abbondanza o ricchezza; copia")

"abundance" lacking in lexical-stylistic terms.

"untuoso" used probably by G. to mean both "grasso" and "suntuoso, splendido" oppure "profumato". (from Latin "unctus"; Orazio "uncta patrimonium" etc.) *Not* pejorative.

"greasy": pejorative meaning, "dirty"; falling-off of tone: error in register.

"felice caviare" not "happy" ("contento") but "beatific", "fortunate" "prosperous" "desired" and sim.

Lexical and stylistic error.

"ciche": "pellicina che separa i semi della melagrana e di altri" (Battaglia).

"ne discendevano ad urbe": "ne" refers to "follicoli", "ad urbe": Latin. "descended upon the city" falling off of tone.

"di cui favoleggiavano gli ovaristi del Settecento." "*favoleggiare*": "raccontare favole, congetturare vanamente, arzigogolare".

"of which the ovarists of the eighteenth century wrote their fantastic treatise." Falling off of tone both for "wrote" and "eighteenth century"; "treatise" singular, cannot be attributed to "ovarists", plural.
 "ovaristi": English rare "ovist" or more common "ovarist".

Weaver:

the typical psychosis of the frustrated woman, the discontent, the woman humiliated in her soul: almost, indeed, a **disassociation** of a panic nature, a tendency to chaos: that is, a longing to begin all over again from the beginning: from the first Possible: "a return to the Indistinct." Since only the Indistinct, the Abyss, the Outer Darkness, can **re-open** a new spiritual **ascent** for the chain of determining causes: a renewed form, renewed fortune. For Liliana, it was true, the inhibitive **powers** of the Faith **were still in force**, and more the cohibitive ones: the formal **proclamations** of Doctrine: the symbol operated as light, as certitude. **Radiated** in the soul. Thus ruminated Ingravallo. The twelve lemmata had had the effect of channeling her psychoses towards the **funnel** of a holograph will, perfectly legal. **The accounts of death were settled down to the last fraction of a cent.** Beyond the confessor and the notary lay the limpid spaces of Mercy. Or, for others, the unknown liberty of **not being**, the **eras of freedom**.

de Lucca:

the **characteristic psychosis of unsatisfied women** or deeply humiliated souls. Almost, in a word, a panic **dissociation**, a tendency to chaos; a longing to start again from zero, from the prime possibility: a "regression to the indeter-

Gadda:

la psicosi tipica delle insoddisfatte, o delle umiliate nell'anima: quasi, proprio, una dissociazione di natura panica, una tendenza al caos: cioè una brama di riprendere da capo: dal primo possibile: un «rientro nell'indistinto». In quanto l'indistinto soltanto, l'Abisso, o Tenebra, può ridischiudere alla catena delle determinazioni una nuova ascesi: la rinnovata sua forma, la rinnovata fortuna. Valevano ancora a Liliana, era pur vero, le potenti inibitive e, più, le coibitive della Fede: gli enunciati formali della dottrina: il simbolo operava come luce, come certezza. Irradiata nell'anima. Così rimuginava Ingravallo. I dodici lemmi avevano avuto per effetto di incanalare la di lei psicosi verso l'imbuto di un testamento olografo perfettamente legale. Il bilancio della morte era chiuso al centesimo. Al di là del confessore, e notaro, i limpidi spazi della Misericordia. O, per altri, l'ignota libertà del non essere, gli evi liberi. [105-6]

dissociazione: psychological term used by Ingravallo, reader of "libri strani" which contain "questioni... da manicomio: una terminologia da medici dei matti". "Il disgregarsi degli elementi della personalità unitaria che si riflette nel campo ideativo..." (Battaglia). Eng. equiv. **dissociation**, not "disassociation".

primo possibile: philos., fr. "primum" ("primum mobile"; Eng. "prime Cause" ecc.). "Prime" = "primary, fun-

minate". In the sense that only the indeterminate, the Abyss or the Darkness, can **newly disclose**, to the chain of determining causes, a new ascesis: a renewed form, a renewed fortune. For Liliana, it was also true, the inhibitory or, better, the cohibitory **puissances** of Faith were still **impelling**: the formal **precepts** of doctrine; the symbol operating as light, as certitude. **Irradiated** on the soul. Thus Ingravallo **mused**. The twelve lemmas had had the effect of channeling her psychosis towards the **conduit** of a perfectly legal holograph will. **Death's budget was balanced to the digit**. Beyond the confessor and the notary, the pure spaces of Mercy. Or, for others, free ages, the unknown freedom of non-being.

damental, from which others are derived". Alludes to the "catena delle determinazioni" in G's text.

ridischudere: "re-open" ("riaprire") synonym which does not conserve diastatic variety of original.

ascesi: "s.f. Metodo ed esperienza del credente che si propone di conseguire (sempre con l'aiuto della Grazia) la perfezione spirituale mediante gli esercizi ...; vita di rinuncia" (Battaglia). Gadda here is using the term derived from ecclesiastical Latin "ascesis" in a passage dealing with Liliana's renunciation of worldly goods ("quel turpe elenco di averi").

valevano: "avere potenza, autorità". "Were still in force" = "to be operative". Lexical error.

le potenti: learned deformation or psycho-analytic reference (?). "the powers" falling off of tone.

enunciati: "principi dottrinali". Not "proclamation" from "proclaim" ("announce, make public, publish" etc.).

irradiata: "riempita di luce o virtù intellettuali o spirituali". Eng. equiv. "irradiated", not "radiated".

non essere, gli evi liberi: formal language.

5. *Rendering dialects*

For the translator the question of dialects in Italian literature, and in Gadda especially, whose use of vernaculars is not motivated by a desire for mere naturalistic verisimilitude in the representation of speech, raises a great number of contrasting, though linked, issues. As Albert Sbragia notes, Gadda's literary expressionism "is firmly grounded in the historical anomalies of the Italian language, in the ongoing vitality of the nation's dialects after unification, and on the uniquely archaic characteristics of literary Italian" (Sbragia 5). Gadda's inexhaustible recourse to the reserves of dialect, which distinguishes his expressionism from that of great writers of other European languages, therefore constitutes a fundamental dilemma.

English-speaking dialectologists' definition of the word "dialect" differs from that of their Italian colleagues because there has always been a

much richer development of purely diatopical varieties in Italy. To these correspond a still flourishing dialectal literary tradition which for centuries has successfully held its own with a much-debated national language. The importance of this elementary fact, that "l'italiana è sostanzialmente l'unica grande letteratura nazionale la cui produzione dialettale faccia visceralmente, inscindibilmente corpo col restante patrimonio" (Contini 26) means, among other things, that the use of diatopical varieties of Italian in Gadda, as in other authors, implies a pluri-secular and completely diverse set of connotations in contrast to their use in other tongues, particularly English.

Dialects in Italy, then, are mainly diatopical varieties with radically different statures and traditions. This helps to explain why the very definition of the word "dialect" differs from Italy to the English-speaking world, where it is characterized more broadly as any variety associated with speakers of a given type, whether geographically or otherwise defined, e.g. members of a given social class, males/females, people of shared ethnic background, etc. Thus, linguists involved mainly with English speak of a "middle-class dialect", for example, where "dialect" must be distinguished from "register" (i.e. the manner of speaking particular to a certain function that is characteristic of a certain domain of communication: the language of parents to their children, of political rallies, of the courtroom and so on).

So in Italy the notion of dialect as a mainly diatopic feature, that is a *horizontal* rather than *vertical* plurilinguism, is predominant, while, because of the historical reasons given above, *diasituative* and *diastatic* differences are stressed in English (hence the appearance of the word "sociolect"). For the translator this means many things, the first of which is that the chief connotation of any Italian dialectal item, its specific regional association, must be forfeited. Second, and perhaps as important for practical purposes of translation, is the fact that the actual use of dialect in Italy, in contrast with its use in English, usually indicates appurtenance to a community defined more in geographical, and less in socio-economic terms. De Mauro tells of how Italy's first king, Vittorio Emanuele II, habitually used his native Piedmontese dialect even in meetings with his ministers (1: 16-17), and today an educated, upper middle class Venetian or Sicilian is more likely to speak dialect than Italian with his peers. Though some areas exist where English dialects quite divergent from Standard English are spoken by higher socio-economic groups, the linguistic horizon is totally diverse as regards what is, after all, a very far-flung community with a "central" language the forms of which are spoken from Los Angeles to Dublin to Capetown, and from Jamaica to Canberra to Bombay, and whose dialect-

tal literary traditions have never attained anywhere near the same status as those of Italy.

There are many reasons, therefore, why it is unreasonable to render an Italian dialect, the product of a specific region and enjoying an often considerable literary status, with a localizable English vernacular. Thus Weaver's statement, that "to translate Gadda's Roman or Venetian into the language of Mississippi or the Aran Islands would be as absurd as translating the language of Faulkner's Snopses into Sicilian or Welsh" (xxi) is as true as it is disingenuous: it would not be, in fact, good practise to transpose what have been the sophisticated vernaculars of two of Europe's major cultural centers, with long and glorious written traditions (as witnessed by the examples of Belli and Goldoni, among others), into an untaught back-country idiom from the deep United States South or the queer speech of poor island fishermen off Ireland's western reaches. In his translator's forward Weaver further misrepresents Gadda's use of dialect in the *Pasticciaccio* when he asks that the English-speaking reader "imagine the speech of Gadda's characters, translated here into straightforward spoken English, as taking place in dialect, or in a mixture of dialects" (xxi). Leaving aside the question of how the English-speaking reader can conjure up an unspecified dialectal speech the essence of which he has been warned can and should not be translated, Weaver makes no reference whatever to, nor has any strategy to deal with, the major functions of dialect in the novel, as in Gadda's other works. Given the impossibility of translating into another tongue the *aura parlativa* peculiar to a geographical region, the translator may choose to maximize other connotations of dialectal items which can be transferred to the target language. Since those other functions may, at least in theory, be exploited by the translator, it is good to understand what they are.

The motives and morphologies of Gadda's style are extremely complex, and it is not my aim here to add to the already very lengthy bibliography concerning them.¹³ Briefly, the problem of rendering the *Pasticciaccio* in English is to find, or invent, as far as possible, equivalents for Gadda's general, sustained and brilliant deformation of written and spoken Italian, of which the use of dialects is only a part.¹⁴ Gianfranco Contini offers probably the most succinct portrayal of this general deformative logic:

... una prima fase del narratore riflette linguisticamente, *non per mera verosimiglianza naturalistica nel dialogato*, ma ibridandosi in un 'macaronico' dialettale che invade estemporaneamente l'*historicus*, mentre grumi materici vengono prelevati dal vernacolo, l'ambiente natio [...] A una successiva sosta fiorentina corrisponde un becero convenzionale, nutrito di

continuità con vecchi succhi letterari (Leonardo, Machiavelli, Cellini) [...] Infine il soggiorno romano giustifica la miscela romanesca, con intrusioni più meridionali ma comunque pluridialectali [...] *Nondimeno tutto s'instaura su una differenzialità di base ancora più antica, e anteriore a un qualsiasi aspetto di simbiosi vernacolare.* "Tendo a una brutale deformazione dei temi che il destino s'è creduto di proponermi come formate cose ed obbiettivi": così comincia Gadda una sua professione di arte poetica [...] Sappiamo che "deformazione" è un termine tecnico della sua riflessione, atto a indicare la modificazione che ogni sistema di relazioni subisce nel flusso eracleo dell'esistere. *La deformazione linguistica appare dunque una specificazione poetica di questa deformazione basilare [e] ... rivela l'estrema irregolarità ed ecletticità dei materiali e la sinuosità della linea che, a volerla tracciare (ma già l'assunto si paleserà illegittimo), separerebbe il 'normale' dal deformato. [...]* *La persuasione del carattere asimmetrico e composito della deformazione deve valere da prefazione permanente alla lettura anche del Gadda narratore, intriso di aggressiva realtà ma non naturalista* (62; italics mine).

Section two has already shown the asymmetric and compositive, not to mention hyper-literary, character of Gadda's use of dialect.¹⁵ Since the function of dialectal items in the *Pasticciaccio* is deformative and anything but consistent, one of many elements of a general stylistic strategy based on the eclectic mix of diatypes, the translator in English may therefore choose to use a palette, not necessarily dialectal, of morphologically deformative stylistic and rhetorical tools available in English. It is not a question, then, of using specific English dialects for Gadda's identifiable Italian ones (though dialectal words may of course be used), but of finding other diatypes according to an analogous asymmetric and compositive method. The "irregular" linguistic texture may be conserved, to some degree, though the comic and other effects linked to the specific regional character of dialect are lost.

A minimal, but extremely typical, example of Gadda's deformative strategy is the inconsistent presence of the reduced articulated prepositions such as *de'*, *pe*, and *a'*. Depending on the context, these may have either hyper-literary or dialectal shading. The translator often cannot offer a specific reduced prepositional form as an English equivalent, but may use, in the immediate vicinity, the apocope *th'* for *the*: a form which is, like so much of Gadda's Italian, both literary (it is registered in Shakespeare) and dialectal (in widespread use in American dialect literature, although it does not point to any specific provenance). The Roman *un paro* (for *un paio*) may likewise be translated with the English synaeresis *a coupla*, which points to no real origin (not strictly dialectal, since it gives form to a pronunciation heard from the United Kingdom to California). Other forms,

such as the aphaerese (an initial vowel that is lost so that the consonant which follows it clusters with the initial consonant or vowel of the next word, as in *it is* -> *'tis*) or syncope (the loss of a consonant and consequent fusion of the syllables on either side of it, often involving loss of the second vowel, as in *by his* -> *by's*, or the loss of a vowel, as in *medecine* -> *med'cine*) may, to some small degree, recuperate certain deformative functions of Gadda's dialects. At other times the dialect in the *Pasticciaccio* functions mimetically, comparable to traditional models in Italian literature from Porta onwards: in the voices of certain characters, such as the *romanissima* Manuela Pettacchioni, or in a choral, free indirect discourse (the epos of *la gente der popolo*). In such cases "a straightfoward spoken English" has been used, although here too the expressionistic component of the original, the "grotesque" aspects of a dialect, often undermine any linguistic and dialectal, or philological, purism. For this reason the English adopted is "straightforward" (Weaver's term) but often syntactically, lexically or orthographically deformed: for the Roman comment of Ingravallo's landlady, Margherita Gelli, "E mo me prendono per un'affittacamere! Io affittacamere? Madonna santa, piuttosto me butto a fiume", rather than Weaver's "And they take me for a common landlady! Me? Rent out my rooms to just anybody? Merciful Heavens, I'd rather throw myself in the river" I have preferred the less stilted "And now they have me down as a rooming house keeper? Me keeper of a rooming house? Gawd, I'd just as soon chuck myself off some bridge!"

Dialect often surfaces in the narrative in the guise of a leit-motif tied to a character, as in this description of the Neapolitan dottor Fumi:

il tono s'indurì, s'enfatizzò nel crescendo, ruga verticale 'n miezz'a fronte: (2: 174)

where the frequent movement, Italian -> dialect, creates a contrast with the elevated tone of the beginning. As seen also by the examples in 2.2, at other times dialectal words (often from more than one region, in this case Neapolitan and Milanese) appear in the text as if encapsulated within a linguistic collage, unjustified by the presence of a character, and seemingly outside of any traditionally realistic procedure:

prolati i labbri in un suo broncio baggiano, di maccherone treene, da innamorare tutte le Marie Barbise d'Italia: co in coppa a a'capa 'o fez, co o' pernacchio dell'Emiro. Emiro de sàbet gräss. (2: 132)

Such use is to be considered part of a general and polymorphous linguistic expressionism, on the same plane with, for instance, the adoption

of technicisms. In fact the two diatypes are often mixed, as in this sentence from a painstaking description of the fob of a watch:

Nella cornice era incastonato un bellissimo diaspro, con tegumento d'una lastrina d'oro, de dietro, a rivoltallo fra li diti. (2: 108)

Weaver:

In the frame there was set a beautiful jasper, with the tegument of a little plate of gold, on the back, when you turned it in your fingers. (142)

de Lucca:

A splendid jaspis was mounted in the frame, backed with a plaquette of gold, behind, when you toined it in your fingers. (120)

Lest the reader think from the above quote that I have adopted the disastrous strategy of substituting Brooklynese for Roman, it must be said that I have used English speech types from New Zealand to Flushing, with a preponderance of American. I have thought it best not to have a single strategy to deal with dialects in the novel, except not to use consistently any single English variant or dialect in rendering any single Italian one. I have, rather, decided to include on my palette as many expressionistic techniques as I can find. These range from a very mixed use of vernacular and slang to an adaption of the macaronic techniques of, for example, Raymond Queneau or Georges Perec, to deformations based on other contextual cues. The orthographical deformations which are the hallmark of American and English "dialect" literature have not been used when non-standard syntactical forms might suffice, except where those orthographical variants are consecrated in works that cannot be considered "dialect" works (William Gaddis, Robert Coover, James Joyce, to name a few). If I have used mainly American techniques and deformations, that is simply because there are more of them and I know them well. I am helped, of course, by the fact that Americans very heartily diversify their language with, quite randomly, several local variants, even if the origins of those variants are not known, or known perhaps only vaguely, through mass media or other sources. I am also far more acquainted with the nonstandard forms of my countrymen than I am with that of the British Isles and its possessions or ex-posessions including Ireland.

This approach is similar in some ways to some translators' attempts to render in English the *terza rima*. It has rarely been attempted in its strict form in English, or if it has, the result has been an inverted, distorted and padded language that is unspeakable and not very legible. Some Dante

translators like Robert Pinsky have formed a more flexible definition of rhyme, or of the kind and degree of like sound that constitute rhyme. Similarly, I've tried to "translate" dialect forms in several different ways, according to the use made of them by Gadda (in dialogue, in free indirect discourse linked to a character, by narrator or narrators and so on). One example, and an extreme example of orthographical deformation, can be seen in the rendering of the Roman of Commendatore Angeloni, employed in the ministry of finance. In this case contextual cues from Gadda's text have been used. Compared to the Roman of the presumably uneducated concierge Manuela Pettachioni, his diction, in my version, is largely correct (although they both speak the same dialect). But since Gadda endows him with a large, runny nose that he must constantly blow (he's teary and upset during a police interrogation), his English is of the stuffy nose variety: a substitution, then, of an idiolect for a dialect, that might approach the comic deformation which is behind Gadda's use of vernacular.

Appendix

"*Making use of*" the event - that *whatsoever* incident that *rogue weatherman Zeus* might've *dunged in front of your nose, plup, plop* — to the greater glory of a characteristic pseudo-ethical activity, in verity protuberantly put on and slimily staged, is the game of whosoever, individual or body, wishes to confer on propaganda or *tirade* the weight and scope of a moral activity. The psyche of the *frenzied politico* on display (pseudo-ethical narcissism) gets its claws on another's real or supposed felony, to roar over it like a brute with dick for brains *pointlessly* furious over an ass' jawbone; managing in that way to exhaust (to pacify) with the inane *paradigm* of a punitive myth, the *sordid* tension that forces him to act, whatever act, as long as he acts, acts *coûte que coûte*. And presto, the other's crime "made use of" to placate *anguimane* Megaera, or mad multitude mollified not wi' so little, like *sacrificial* goat or hart unto the whirling, dissheveled *wretches or maenads* who rend it to pieces, everywhere ravenous in the pyrral combustion of the bacchanalia kindled by their howls, and festooned purple-red with blood and torment. A pseudo-justice and a pretend severity, an *ersatz patent given the vox populi* thus acquire legal course, of which both the arrogance of a rash and *summary trial* and the *cephalobalanic hysteria* of an overhasty sentence are plain confirmation (de Lucca 106; underlining mine).

NOTES

¹Some excerpts have been published in: "Forum Italicum," Vol. 34, No. 1, Spring 2000; "Differentia," 8-9 Spring 1999; "The Edinburgh Review of Gadda Studies," October, 2000.

²"the prototype of the writer: challenge to emulation, reservoir of quotation, monument of worth."

³Lexically relevant items can receive, by means of labels or usage notes, any of the following types of diasystematic markings: *diachronic*, *diatopic*, *diaintegrative*, *diastatic*, *diaconnotative*, *diatechnical*, *diafrequentative*, and *dianormative*. Mostly for brevity's sake, I have used some of these terms below:

⁴One of the sources for Gadda's deformation of foreign borrowings is the work of Belli (an essential source for the *Pasticciaccio*, not only for Roman dialect), who often transforms foreign words or Latin ecclesiastical terms into macaronic Italian, for example in the sonnet *Er Rosario in Famiglia*:

Avemmaria... lavora... grazia piena...
Nena, vòì lavorà?... ddominu steco...
Uf!... benedetta tu mujjeri... Nena!...
Er bbenedetto er frù... vva che tte sceco?...
Fruttu sventr'e ttu Jeso. San... che ppenal...
ta Maria madre Ddei... me sce fai l'eco?...
Ora pre nobbi... ma tt'aspetto a ccena...
Peccatori... Oh Ssiggnore! e sto sciufeco
De sciappotto laggiù ccome sce venne?
Andiamo: indove stavo?... Ah, ll'ho trovato:
Nunche tinora morti nostri ammenne.
Grolia padre... E mmò? ddiavola! bbraghiera!
Ho ccapito: er rosario è tterminato:
Finiremo de dillo un'antra sera.

⁵"I dopponi li voglio, tutti, [...] e voglio anche i triploni, e i quadruplioni [...] e tutti i sinonimi, usati nelle loro variegate accezioni e sfumature d'uso corrente, o d'uso raro rarissimo. [...] Non esistono il troppo né il vano, per una lingua. [...] E in lingua nostra, che la parola si puo' stirare, contrarre e metastatare (palude, padule: femminile e maschile) secondo libidine, come la fusse una pasticca tra i denti, ecco qua: [...] non voglio mollare né palude né padule, né il femminile né il maschile: e mi riserbo di usare di entrambe le forme (lessicali)." 3: 490-91.

⁶On Gadda as Sternian humorist, see Giancarlo Roscioni, "Gadda umorista." In *Strumenti critici* 75, 1994, 147-162.

⁷Gadda's vocabulary follows "rules" which are the exact opposite of the prescriptions he gives in a grammatical and stylistic handbook written during his employment at RAI called *Norme per la redazione di un testo radiofonico*:

Evitare le parole desuete, i modi nuovi o sconosciuti, e in genere un lessico e una semantica arbitraria, tutti quei vocaboli o quelle forme del dire che non risulti-

no prontamente e sicuramente afferrabili. Figurano tra essi:

- a) i modi e i vocaboli antiquati;
- b) i modi e i vocaboli di esclusivo uso regionale, provinciale, municipale;
- c) i modi e i vocaboli, talora arbitrariamente introdotti nella pagina, della supercultura (p.e. della supercritica), del preziosismo e dello snobismo;
- d) i modi e i vocaboli delle diverse tecniche; della specializzazione;

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