

The Many Voices of Contemporary Piedmontese Writers

The Many Voices of Contemporary Piedmontese Writers

By

Andrea Raimondi

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



The Many Voices of Contemporary Piedmontese Writers

By Andrea Raimondi

This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2016 by Andrea Raimondi

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-9964-X

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9964-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	vi
Acknowledgements	vii
Introduction	viii
Chapter One.....	1
Piedmont's Linguistic Variety and Literary Production	
Chapter Two	37
Subversive Writing: The Language of Alterity in Pavese's <i>Ciau Masino</i>	
Chapter Three	69
Beppe Fenoglio: Language and Identity in <i>I racconti del parentado</i>	
Chapter Four	98
Continuity and Discontinuity in Piedmontese Literature of the 1960s and 1970s	
Chapter Five	130
Trends in Contemporary Narrative Production	
Conclusion.....	162
Appendix A	166
Theories on Language, Identity, and Alterity	
Appendix B.....	177
A Current Linguistic Map of the Region	
Bibliography	183
Index	209

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. B.1. Carta delle parlate del Piemonte (from Allasino et al. *Le lingue del Piemonte* [Torino: IRES, 2007], 10)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book originated from a PhD thesis submitted to University College Cork in 2015. For this reason, my sincere gratitude goes, first of all, to my supervisor, Dr Silvia Ross, for her understanding and advice, and to the members of the Department of Italian, UCC. I would also like to thank Prof. Patricia Kennan for her encouragement and help, Prof. Umberto Capra for guiding me through the bookshops and libraries of Turin, and Prof. Hussein Mahmoud for his assistance in understanding the Arabic words and phrases in Tawfik's novel. Special thanks to Benito Mazzi, who has been very generous with his time, and to my relatives and friends for their help with Piedmontese terms. I am much obliged to Erika Borgna for allowing me to use her inspiring picture as the book cover. I would finally like to express my gratitude to Victoria Carruthers and everyone at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their support and for believing in this project.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to undertake a linguistic analysis of a group of narratives written by twentieth-century authors hailing from the same Italian region: Piedmont. The novels and short stories examined stand out for the intriguing ways in which they operate across a variety of linguistic codes—Italian, Piedmontese, English, and *pastiche* (with some rare excursions into French). Drawing on methodological tools such as linguistic and philosophical theories on the relationship between identity, alterity, and language, I intend to explain the reasons for multilingualism¹ in the works of Cesare Pavese, Beppe Fenoglio, and Primo Levi, among others, as well as the ideological positions that may lie behind their linguistic strategies.

At the same time, I point out that such a multilinguistic inclination may have also been influenced by the region's socio-geographical context, and by the political events that have occurred in Piedmont since around the sixteenth century. As will be investigated in the following sections, Piedmont has held a prominent place in the modern and contemporary Italian scene. Yet at first, due to its peripheral position, the region straddled French and Italian territories at a remove from both political and literary centres for a lengthy period. Then, during the nineteenth century, it was Piedmont's ruling class, with its diplomatic ties to France, that led the

¹ I adopt the term *multilingualism* to refer to the use of two or more languages in a literary text. In a multilingual text, the languages can be kept separate, and each associated with different characters, professions, social statuses, etc. This is what happens, for example, in Pavese's *Ciau Masino*, for which I have used the Bakhtinian terms "heteroglossia" and "polyphony." Literary multilingualism can also lead to a more or less extended mix of different languages into one hybrid code. Such is the case of Fenoglio's *Racconti del parentado* and Mazzi's novels. Instead, whenever I use the term "plurilingualism," I refer to the repertoire of languages in a given society or a geographical area, and to an individual's ability to use such varieties for the purposes of communication. Therefore, Piedmont is a plurilingual region, since many individuals have the ability to switch from one code (i.e. Standard Italian) to another (i.e. Regional Italian, local vernacular, or minority language) according to context or the interlocutor. See the distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism made by the Council of Europe (2001).

unification process of the peninsula, thus moving the region into the heart of Italy's political and cultural context.

As a consequence, a group of Piedmontese writers, including Massimo D'Azeglio and Giovanni Faldella, being attracted to Italian literary models and having to prove themselves at their ease with the Tuscan Italian, strove tenaciously to master a more appropriate tongue than their native vernacular, generally deemed gibberish and unrefined.² At the same time, these writers did not want to distance themselves from their original linguistic roots, nor from Piedmont's peripheral position. This "tensione bipolare del linguaggio," as scholar Giovanni Tesio defines it (1991, 347), has in some fortunate cases brought about a multilingual line, starting presumably with Giuseppe Baretti, then continuing more visibly with Faldella, Pavese, Fenoglio, and, finally, some contemporary writers. In their most linguistically heterogeneous works, the use of dialect helps to foreground local identities and marginal cultures over and against the standardising tendencies brought about by those in power, whereas traces of foreign languages clearly reveal an intention to broaden the region's cultural horizons and, particularly during Fascism, attempt to escape the grip of an authoritarian regime.

In the first chapter of this study, a linguistic overview of Piedmont between the fourteenth and mid-twentieth centuries will be provided against the region's sociohistorical background. The aim of the chapter is to underscore the linguistically heterogeneous nature of Piedmont, where different and sometimes opposite influences have intertwined and overlapped over the years. At the same time, particular attention will be

² "Barbaro gergo" ([1804] 2012), meaning "uncivilized jargon," is a well-known definition of Piedmontese vernacular found in Vittorio Alfieri's autobiography. Although ambiguous, it tells much about the relation between the Piedmontese and their parlance. Like most people in the second half of the eighteenth century, Alfieri would in fact have spoken dialect and he was fond of it. Yet he felt somewhat embarrassed about its apparent coarseness and considered it inappropriate for literature. As historian Alessandro Barbero notes, modern Piedmontese dialect had already begun to take shape, and its written form to stabilise, in the seventeenth century, together with the "universale luogo comune sulla sua rozzezza, per cui ci si vergogna di parlarlo di fronte agli altri italiani" (2008, xvi). For example, in Carlo Giambattista Tana's *'l Cont Piolet*, a comedy composed in the late seventeenth century and written in a mixed form of Italian and Piedmontese, the female character Rosetta is concerned about the coarseness of her idiom. Her preoccupation leads to a sort of inferiority complex: "A dio ch' 'l piemonteis 'l è tant grossé: / chi sa mai s'am antèndrà?" (in Fassò 1979, 148; Piedmontese dialect is said to be very coarse: / who knows if they will be able to understand me?). All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

paid to the literary production of the period (such as texts that present code-mixing strategies) and relevant linguistics essays.

The second and third chapters represent the core of the present study. In chapter two, after outlining the literary trends between the World Wars and focusing on Pavese's contribution to spreading the myth of America, I will analyse the main linguistic varieties employed in *Ciau Masino* (published posthumously in 1968) through the lens of alterity. By using some concepts borrowed from philosophy and linguistic anthropology, I demonstrate how different codes may highlight the coexistence of *other* languages and cultures than those imposed by dominant groups.

The third chapter examines Fenoglio's *Racconti del parentado* (written between the 1950s and early 1960s, and collected for the first time in 1978) by adopting some studies on the language-identity relationship. After an introduction to the short stories, I first investigate the function of the Langhe dialect and other non-standard varieties by means of some examples. I then proceed to illustrate how dialects may act as powerful bonding agents, contributing to assert speakers' belonging to a specific social group.

The fourth chapter deals primarily with the socio-economic and linguistic transformations that took place in Italy during the Boom years and the 1970s. On the basis of specific sociolinguistic studies (Berruto 1983; Manlio Cortelazzo 1972; 1977; Pellegrini 1975), I carry out an analysis of some relevant Piedmontese novels of the time (such as *Vogliamo tutto* [1971] by Nanni Balestrini, Primo Levi's *La chiave a stella* [1978], as well as *La donna della domenica* [1972] and *A che punto è la notte* [1979] by Fruttero and Lucentini) in order to understand how and to what degree they reflect the ongoing changes of the time and whether they maintain the plurilinguistic regional tradition.

In the last chapter, after an introductory section on the current socio-cultural state of affairs in Italy and Piedmont, I will investigate some linguistic strategies carried out by Benito Mazzi and Younis Tawfik to demonstrate, respectively, how the use of substandard codes can still express a strong sense of regional identity in Mazzi's *La formica rossa* (1987) and *Nel sole zingaro* (1997), while foreign languages in Tawfik's *La straniera* (1999) may be of help in legitimising the Other. Finally, Appendix A represents a compendium of the language/identity theories and methodologies I have used in tackling the texts. In Appendix B, I illustrate the current linguistic situation of Piedmont. The image at the end of this section, which shows the linguistic fragmentation of the region, aims at helping the reader to understand the distinctive, linguistically variegated situation of Piedmont.

With this study, I attempt to fill a gap in the research on Piedmontese literature. In fact, although some critical studies on the use of dialect or English exist on individual authors and works (e.g. Meddemmen on Fenoglio's use of English and Villata 2013), and some important contributions to the history of Piedmontese literature have appeared in print, too (such as Clivio 2002; *Piemonte e letteratura nel '900* 1979), no current, systematic study that includes different Piedmontese writers under the language/identity theme has (to my knowledge) been published to date. My contribution thus proposes to shed new light on Piedmontese literature by including some contemporary writers in the literary debate and particularly by identifying a common thread of research among different authors (that is, multilingualism) against the region's sociohistorical background.

CHAPTER ONE

PIEDMONT'S LINGUISTIC VARIETY AND LITERARY PRODUCTION

Piedmont before Italian Unification

Before embarking on a literary-linguistic analysis of the texts by Pavese, Fenoglio, and others, it is first of all necessary to draw attention to the concept of region, which is particularly problematic considering the complex and multifaceted Italian historical and political framework. I will therefore circumscribe the object of my study in the sections that follow, providing some background on Piedmont's historical importance, its role in nation building, its linguistic history, and its literary production.

Dealing with regional literature may be a thorny exercise, first and foremost because of the concept of region itself, given that there is no single, commonly accepted definition of the term,¹ and second because of the uniqueness of Italy's regional system. The Constitution, drafted in 1947, brought in new intermediate bodies between local and central authorities, namely the regional ones. Italy's *regioni* are entities endowed with both administrative and legislative powers, whose competences are established by articles 114 to 133 of the Charter (Edye and Lintner 1996, 336). In particular, the way the Constitution aims at harmonising “the requirements of autonomy with unitary interests referring to the State as the body representing the whole national community” is “absolutely

¹ According to Keating, the term “has a multiplicity of meanings in the various social science disciplines and the historical traditions of European countries and is politically loaded and sensitive because the very definition of a region as a framework and a system of action has implications for the distribution of political power and the content of public policy” (1997, 383). In Smouts' view, instead, “[i]t is a characteristic of the region to have neither a definition nor an outline. The empirical criteria which allow the socio-economic entity to be recognised as sufficiently homogeneous and distinct are vague and mixed” (1998, 30–1). Ellis and Michailidis (2011) provide more information on the problematic concept of region in European history.

original” (D’Atena 2013, under “The Constituent Assembly chooses Regions”). Varying degrees of regional autonomy have been achieved through the distinction between five special regions—Aosta Valley, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, and Trentino-Alto Adige—enjoying home rule, and fifteen ordinary regions. The regional structure relies on a complex system of balances between the State’s and the regions’ functions as well as on a regime of checks to which the regions are subjected. Except for five *regioni a statuto speciale*, which were introduced in 1948, the ordinary regional system came into being in full in 1970, while the 2001 constitutional reform granted all regions further power and autonomy.²

Apart from their relatively recent administrative status, Italian regions have a long and indisputable tradition. The current regional system is neither artificial nor invented, since it harkens back to pre-unitarian states. Italy, unlike France, Spain, and England, lacked the centripetal forces which could have organised its territory around a strong capital city. Rather than one large city, several centres developed, all relatively powerful and scattered throughout the peninsula. Around them, different societies, languages, and literatures came into being. Since the Late Middle Ages, Italy’s *stati regionali* (that is, medium-size, politically independent entities between municipalities and nation states) have “supplied the building blocks of a process of political unification” (Ellis and Michailidis 2011, 7). Alongside the use of the Tuscan vulgar tongue, shared only by literary elites for centuries (and which became the national language as a result of the prestige gained by the poetry of Dante and Petrarca, as well as Boccaccio’s prose), the use of distinct dialects has long been an expression of the vivacity of regional culture. The history of Italian language and literature has thus been marked by an intense relationship between the periphery of the country and its cultural centre, that is, Tuscany, particularly Florence. Tuscany has indeed played a pivotal role in the cultural tradition of Italy, but the importance of other regions is also evident.³

The territorial object of my study, Piedmont, is the second largest Italian region, home to nearly 4,400,000 people. Piedmont is one of the most peripheral (and certainly the westernmost) of all Italian regions. The region presently known as Piemonte is surrounded by the Alps to the northwest and the Ligurian Apennines to the south. To the east, the Ticino

² For an in-depth analysis of Italy’s regional system see Levy (1996) and Mangiameli (2013).

³ A diachronic analysis of multilingualism in Italian literature is provided by Contini (1970; 1972). Refer also to Segre (1991), who focuses on the use of multiple linguistic varieties in the Italian literature of the twentieth century.

and Sesia rivers separate the region from Lombardy. Piedmont borders the western tip of Emilia-Romagna to the east, with Liguria to the south, France to the west, and Switzerland and the Aosta Valley to the north. Its territory is divided into eight provinces, and the region has the second highest number of municipalities (or *comuni*) after Lombardy at 1,206. The core of the region is the Po Valley, a large plain extending in southwestern Piedmont crossed by the Po River and its tributaries. Nevertheless, the region's geography is varied: about 43% is mountainous, but there are also extensive areas covered by hills (30%) and plains (26%). The capital of Piedmont, as well as its economic and cultural centre, is Turin, a city with a current population of about 896,000 inhabitants (GeoDemo 2015).

Whereas today Piedmont can be identified by its borders on the map, it was not always considered a distinct geographical entity nor an administrative body with a capital city, defined boundaries, and powers. Furthermore, the region of Piedmont was not always known by this name. As historians have attested, “[i]l nome del Piemonte appare per la prima volta nel 1193, quando i ‘castellani di Piemonte’ sono menzionati in un accordo fra il comune d’Asti e il marchese di Saluzzo” (Barbero 2008, xiv). Starting approximately from the thirteenth century, the term *Piemonte* began to spread to the rest of Italy, though different meanings were attributed to it. In short, at first it indicated a variously identified group of territories belonging to Lombardy. Afterwards, from around the fourteenth or fifteenth century, a new meaning associated Piedmont with the Italian domains progressively occupied by the French House of Savoy, which included the area currently corresponding to modern-day Piedmont, the Aosta Valley, the county of Nice, and the region of Savoy. Finally, Piedmont as referred to today originated from the transfer of the capital city of the Duchy of Savoy from Chambéry to Turin in 1560, and from subsequent military conquests and political resolutions.

Despite sharing some characteristics with other regions, the case of Piedmont is distinctive within the national panorama. Being a *terra di frontiera*, the region has been open to foreign influences more than other areas. Linguistically speaking, its history was at first marked by French-Italian vernacular bilingualism—with French being used by the upper-classes and local parlances by the illiterate majority. A third linguistic variety, Latin, employed by churchmen and diplomats, remained the prevalent written code until the end of the sixteenth century. Later, when the House of Savoy was charged with unifying Italy under one language, Tuscan Italian was preferred over Piedmontese because the latter was considered peripheral and lacking an aura of literariness and distinction.

The region played a key role in spreading the Tuscan variety all over Italy, a language that initially sounded foreign to the Piedmontese themselves but whose mastery was deemed a hard-fought achievement.

As mentioned earlier, Piedmont straddled Italy and France for centuries—two areas that were both culturally and linguistically different. Such differences encouraged a hybrid language situation. In his *De vulgari eloquentia* (ca. 1303), for instance, while considering the necessity of Italy's linguistic unification, Dante rejects the varieties used in cities like Turin and Alessandria because they are so peripheral:

che non possono avere parlate pure; tanto che, se anche possedessero un bellissimo volgare – e invece l'hanno bruttissimo, per come è mescolato coi volgari di altri popoli dovremmo negare che si tratti di una lingua veramente italiana. Perciò, se quello che cerchiamo è l'italiano illustre, l'oggetto della nostra ricerca non si può trovare in quelle città. (43; bk. 1, ch. 15)

Dante considered the Piedmontese vulgar tongue “bruttissimo” since it was too contaminated by other varieties to be taken into account as a national language. The poet was looking for a pure form of language and rejected those idioms that were exposed to many linguistic influences. In fact, in the fourteenth century, the Tuscan linguistic variety was less widespread in Piedmont than other regions, while Piedmont was one of the first regions where a local linguistic variety was codified.⁴ However, a small number of literary texts would surface only at the end of the fifteenth century. At this point, Piedmontese was not as yet an autonomous literary variety, being caught between the major linguistic varieties of French and Tuscan Italian.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and up to the eighteenth century, French was the dominant language in Piedmont, used at court and among aristocrats and intellectuals. This influence is evident because words of French origin are still present in Piedmontese local parlance, the

⁴ The earliest written example of the Piedmontese vulgar tongue is represented by the *Sermoni Subalpini*. It consists of 188 parchment leaves on which twenty-two sermons are written in prose, and is ascribed to the end of the twelfth century. The text was intended for the use of priests throughout the liturgical year. Apart from Latin quotations, they are written in Piedmontese vernacular, although French and Franco-Provençal influences are also noticeable. For a detailed study of the *Sermoni Subalpini* and the written use of Piedmontese, consult Clivio 1970; Danesi 1976.

phonetic system of which has been affected as well.⁵ During the fifteenth century the impact of Tuscan vulgar increased via the ongoing relationships between some courts of Eastern Piedmont and those of Milan and Mantua. As Marazzini observes, the Marquisate of Monferrato, in particular, had a “funzione di cerniera tra il Piemonte più francesizzato” (2003, 344) and the rest of northern Italy, more exposed to the influence of Tuscany.

It took some time for the Tuscan variety to spread as significant achievements took place following a series of language policies imposed from above. After the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, which put an end to the conflict between Spain and France for the control of Italy, the French armies abandoned Piedmont and Savoy, two territories that had been occupied during the Italian Wars and subsequently returned to the Duchy of Savoy. One year later, Duke Emmanuel Philibert decided to move the capital from Chambéry to Turin. In doing so, he made an overtly political decision in an attempt to escape the influence of France and shift the focal point of the region eastwards. In the same year, despite him being a French native speaker, the duke ordered the use of the “lingua volgare” (Fiorelli 2008, 68) in judiciary and administrative acts. Yet he did not specify which variety of Italian vulgar tongue he had in mind. Certainly, Piedmontese lawyers and judges could not master Tuscan perfectly, and thus probably used Piedmontese “embellished by Latin words and constructions” (Clivio 1976, 73). In any case, the decision stimulated the use of Italian local parlances within the Savoy territories at the expense of French and Latin. As for spoken usage “this policy surely favored Piedmontese,” whereas “when it came to writing the *lingua volgare*” an already codified language was preferred, hence the recourse to Tuscan Italian and French (73). The duke also encouraged the presence of Italian intellectuals and scientists at his court, among them novelist and poet Giraldo Cinzio and Tuscan typographer Lorenzo Torrentino. A new cultural environment was thus promoted in Turin where Italian culture and literature were considered more important than ever.⁶

⁵ For instance, the mute vowel *e* and the intermediate *ö*, which can be found in many Piedmontese dialect words, are both phonemes present in the French phonetic system, but not in the Italian one. See Parry (1997, 238–9).

⁶ The duke's son, Charles Emmanuel I (1562–1630), wrote some poems in Piedmontese vernacular, French, and Tuscan Italian, and was the patron of Alessandro Tassoni. Giovan Battista Marino was also invited to his court in 1608 as well as Giovanni Battista Guarini, whose most prominent work *Il pastor fido* (1590) had its first performance in honour of the Duke's marriage. On Charles Emmanuel and his poetry see Cognasso (1969, 132–7); Doglio (1979).

During the sixteenth century, the dominance of the Tuscan vulgar tongue grew stronger. This linguistic variety was “ormai saldamente fondata (come dappertutto del resto) sul primato della grammatica di Bembo, accolta anche dalle tipografie” (Marazzini 2003, 344). As for printed works, the first Italian grammar book, Giovanni Fortunio’s *Regole grammaticali della volgar lingua*, came out of the press of the Vercelli-born Bernardino Guerralda in 1516. In addition, Gabriele Giolito de’ Ferrari, born near Vercelli in 1508 (and who later moved to Venice), was one of the major publishers of literature in the Tuscan vernacular. Later in the sixteenth century, Piedmont gave birth to the region’s first talented writer, Giovan Giorgio Alione. Born to a noble family of Asti in 1460 or 1470, he wrote poems, especially farce, which were published for the first time in 1521. In the wake of Teofilo Folengo’s macaronic language, which was generated as a reaction against the Bembian model in the outermost courts of northern Italy during the sixteenth century, different linguistic codes were combined in his poems and theatrical works. Alione’s farces are based on Piedmontese vulgar, but French and macaronic Latin (a mixture of Classical and non-standard Latin) are also used. The author’s linguistic choices ultimately contributed to the literary prestige of regional parlance.⁷

Such a tendency towards literary multilingualism ran alongside the process of Tuscanisation, which was more evident in Eastern Piedmont. In the years between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Piedmontese writers and intellectuals, while acknowledging Tuscan supremacy, did not however accept it passively. Marazzini mentions the example of Stefano Guazzo, writer and diplomat from Casale Monferrato, a town in the province of Alessandria, and author of the grammar book *Gli avvertimenti intorno allo scriver thoscano* (1597). In his book, despite accepting Pietro Bembo’s teachings on writing, he re-evaluates the use of dialect elements in conversation. Matteo di San Martino, another sixteenth-century Piedmontese poet and grammarian, represents an even more extreme example. He criticises the supremacy of the Tuscan language in poetry by proposing a heterogeneous code, made up of Latin, Tuscan, and Piedmontese words and phrases. However, he promotes such an ideal linguistic *pastiche* after studying the Tuscan language thoroughly and compiling a grammar book in 1555, entitled *Le osservazioni grammaticali*

⁷ In one of his best texts *Farsa del Braco* (1521), Alione mixes Asti dialect with other Piedmontese varieties and Milanese vernacular, since one of the characters is from Milan. The mocking effect serves to poke fun at some of the characters and highlights the humorous side of their adventures. For an analysis of Alione’s language see Villata (2008).

e poetiche della lingua italiana, with which he aspires to become a poet or, as he writes, “per istruire me stesso ne i miei componimenti” (Marazzini 2003, 345). To those who accuse him of not being able to compile a grammar book and become an Italian-speaking poet because of his belonging to a border region, he replies that the will to master a new language, along with zealous study, makes him better than Tuscan-born writers. The conquest of Petrarca's idiom by assiduous work and its manipulation to create an original linguistic medium would remain a distinctive habit of some Piedmontese writers, who took up the practice of drawing up long lists of Piedmontese words and their Tuscan equivalents in order to “faticare sulla lingua per conquistare l'arte” (346).⁸

From the first half of the seventeenth century, France regained a position of control over Piedmont that would last until the end of the eighteenth century. French was imposed as the national language in the French territories of the Duchy of Savoy and played a prominent part in the education of Piedmont's young aristocrats and upper middle-class individuals. During the same period, French became the most influential language in Europe. It was the language of culture as it somehow inherited the universal function of Latin, establishing itself as “strumento e segno del razionalismo cartesiano e dell'Illuminismo” on the European scene (Morgana 1994, 698). Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a considerable number of French words entered the Italian vocabulary through different channels: fashion, diplomacy, politics, and, of course, literature and theatre. In the first half of the eighteenth century several French theatre troupes came to Italy, though they stopped in Piedmont most of the time. From the second half of the century onwards they began to visit other regions as well, thus contributing in the spreading of French culture and language to the rest of Italy.⁹

In spite of this French influence, during the eighteenth century the House of Savoy decided officially to introduce the teaching of Italian language in some state schools. After reforming the University of Turin in 1729, Victor Amadeus II, Duke of Savoy and King of Sardinia (also called Piedmont-Sardinia, which is the title given to the Savoy state after receiving Sardinia from the Austrian Habsburgs in 1720), brought in the

⁸ See Matteo di San Martino (1999); Corti ([1977] 2001, 224–46).

⁹ Words like *stoffa*, *colpo di stato*, *patto sociale*, and *burocrazia* are all of French origin, while *toilette*, *claque*, and *troupe* are just a few examples of unadapted French terms that entered the Italian lexis during the eighteenth century and are still in use today (Marazzini 1998, 313). In the same period, syntactic constructions modelled on French entered Italian too, like *venire da* followed by the infinitive form of the verb, clearly derived from French *passé récent* (Serianni 2002, 585).

teaching of Latin grammar through manuals written in Italian. In 1733 the teaching of Italian was made compulsory—even if restricted to elite secondary schools—and a chair of Italian and Greek eloquence was established at the University of Turin in 1734. In the 1750s, Piedmont-Sardinia became stronger than any other Italian state. The reforms carried out by Victor Amadeus II, which also affected the army and diplomacy, the taxation system, commerce, and industry, successfully continued with his successor Charles Emmanuel III, whose long reign lasted from 1730 to 1773. The subsequent annexation of the provinces of Novara and Alessandria gave the kingdom a more modern political and administrative structure, even though it remained an authoritarian state inspired more by French absolutism than by reformative principles.¹⁰

The attitude of Piedmontese people towards the French language changed dramatically when Savoy territories were occupied by Napoleon's troops and the region was forcibly annexed to France. After the French revolutionary government replaced the House of Savoy and took control of Piedmont in 1799, a process of francisation was attempted. French was to become the language of schools and public administration in Piedmont, while local dialects were considered a useful medium to help the French language spread to the whole region. As stated in a report by the provisional Piedmontese government in 1799, "il dialetto nostro [è un] misto di voci italiane, e Francesi [e] ha una pressoché eguale analogia coi due idiomi, a segno che il giovane Piemontese entra nella società con disposizioni eguali ad apprendere le due lingue" (in Marazzini 1991, 66). The *Regolamento* of 1802 concerning public instruction gradually introduced the study of French in the schools of Piedmont. A list of grammar books was suggested, and pupils were also recommended to teach themselves by making comparisons between French and dialect words. Contrary to what had been claimed, Piedmontese vernacular revealed itself as a major source of problems for pupils, since "si trovano a studiare allo stesso tempo la [lingua] italiana, la latina e la francese, e nessuna di queste è per loro naturale, in quanto sono abituati al dialetto" (in Marazzini 1991, 69–70). Moreover, French was spoken almost exclusively in Turin, while regionally it was known only to the upper classes.

As soon as the French language became a symbol of the enemy's oppression, the preference for Italian began for chauvinistic reasons. The Turinese Francesco Galeani Napione's *Trattato dell'uso e dei pregi della*

¹⁰ On Victor Amadeus II's reign and school reforms, consult Ennio Russo (1969) and Symcox (1983).

lingua italiana can be considered Piedmont's linguistic manifesto of that time, as well as an example of the political value ascribed to language. Published for the first time in 1791, then reprinted in 1813, the treaty outlines the history and use of Italian in Piedmont, giving special emphasis to Emmanuel Philibert's decision to introduce it in judiciary and administrative acts in 1560. In the author's opinion, this was a choice that had to be followed since the Duke of Savoy's decision was consistent with a precise political plan of building a strong, independent state west of the Alps. Although Napione also opposed the excess of Tuscan purism in the Italian language, French remained the enemy par excellence to him. For this reason, he tried to persuade Victor Amadeus III to adopt the Italian language officially for his territories in order to resist French language and culture. The treaty was crucial because it attracted great attention from other regions, thus allowing Piedmont, or at least a part of its intellectual elite, to break its cultural isolation from the rest of the Italian regional states. What is more, from that moment on the Piedmontese situation of French-Italian bilingualism began to change in favour of the Italian language.¹¹

On the other hand, a good number of Piedmontese intellectuals of the early nineteenth century were still in favour of a condition of French-Italian bilingualism with prevalence to the French language. One of them was historian Carlo Denina, who hoped for the adoption of French as the official language of the Savoy State by virtue of its affinity with Piedmontese. According to his treaty *Dell'uso della lingua francese* (1803), French was preferable to Tuscan Italian since the latter had become too literary and unsuitable for everyday conversation owing to the excess of purism imposed by the members of the Accademia della Crusca. Denina believed that such an imperfect condition of bilingualism was

¹¹ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a movement called *Purismo* began to develop among the intellectual circles of northern Italy partly due to the aversion to the French language. Purists were contrary to any language innovation, neologism, and foreign influence on the Italian language. For them, any term of French origin was particularly "sozzo, sconcio," or "un vocabolo pari a bestemmia" (in Serianni 2002, 590). On the contrary, they considered the Tuscan Italian of the fourteenth century as the best variety of Italian ever spoken, and they hoped for its adoption throughout Italy. Although Napione could be considered the forerunner of the Purist movement, its major representatives were not Piedmontese. Purists eventually did not succeed in stopping the influence of the French language, but they nonetheless contributed to the hostility of Piedmontese intellectuals against it during the first half of the nineteenth century. For an in-depth analysis of Napione's works, see Beccaria (1983) and Marazzini (1982).

suitable for Piedmont, which could truly become a region of transition between French and Italian culture.

Dating back to some years earlier is Vittorio Alfieri's well-known linguistic attempt of *spiemontizzarsi* by learning Tuscan Italian and abandoning both local parlances and French linguistic influence. Before leaving Asti, Alfieri was a decent French speaker and used dialect with friends and relatives, but was not able to master Dante's idiom correctly. More importantly, he needed a refined language for his tragedies since he knew he could not use the "barbaro gergo," ([1804] 2012, 32), as he called the Piedmontese dialect of his time (see note 2, page ix). For this reason, in 1776 he went to Florence to learn a literary language through which he could speak to posterity. During his research, Alfieri avoided plain or colloquial expressions and included archaisms and terms of the Tuscan literary tradition. After leaving for Florence, he began to gather notes to prove his will to also study the spoken Tuscan vernacular. The notes (initially written in French, then in Italian) would be published in 1983 under the title *Appunti di lingua e letterari*, which Beccaria describes as "[i]l primo vocabolario domestico dell'uso toscano" (Beccaria and Sterpos 1983, 491). It is a lexical compendium made up of over six-hundred Tuscan terms with corresponding Piedmontese or French translations that the writer grouped together to improve his conversational language. According to Dionisotti, Alfieri's desire to "spiemontizzarsi" is an exemplary sign "della tenacia in lui dell'origine piemontese, del peso di quel provenire dall'ultima regione d'Italia acquisita alla letteratura italiana, onde nel linguaggio poetico delle sue tragedie la forza e l'impaccio insieme quasi di una prepotente ruvidezza barbarica e di una ingenua e paziente devozione scolastica" ([1967] 1999, 41). As will be noted later, Alfieri's determination to learn and master a new idiom was significant, as it encouraged future generations of Piedmontese writers to research the living Tuscan language (and, in general, linguistic varieties different from their own) in order to enrich their literary tongue.¹² Such an apparently contradictory linguistic stance is in fact representative of Tesio's above-mentioned "tensione bipolare del linguaggio," which characterises several Piedmontese writers as will clearly emerge from my linguistic investigation in the subsequent chapters.

¹² A comprehensive overview of Alfieri's linguistic research is provided by Perdichizzi (2009) and Tomasin (2009).

Piedmont during the Unification Years

Despite the contradictions and difficulties associated with Piedmont's involvement in nation building, the region played a prominent part in the formation of modern Italy. The Italian Unification process, which had its crucial years between 1859 and 1861, was long and troubled. Not only was it difficult to achieve, but it was also forced. Italy was still an aggregation of macro-regions and political spaces up to 1860, each with its own cultural, historic, and linguistic identity. The only way to assemble them into a unified country in a relatively short time was to compel them to stay together. The Unification was then decided and conducted by a few men—aristocrats, churchmen, lawyers, and officers, Piedmontese for the most part—with the consent and oversight of the House of Savoy.¹³

However, the Unification of Italy started long before that date, having its roots in the 1820s when a group of young patriots called *Carbonari* formed secret societies to obtain rights from the governments that ruled the different parts of Italy. One of their masterminds was Giuseppe Mazzini. While in exile in France he founded a movement named *Giovane Italia*, whose aim was to create a united country with a republican form of government. But, first of all, it had to educate people before encouraging them to rise up against foreign occupiers and conservative governments. Although Mazzini's political activism had some success in different parts of Italy, all his insurrectional attempts failed—such as the first Savoy uprising in 1833, the attempted invasion of Genoa in 1836, and the revolts in Lombardy and Tuscany. Despite this, the legacy of Mazzini contributed to spreading democratic and republican principles in Italy.¹⁴

In 1848 another attempt to unify Italy failed when Charles Albert of Piedmont declared war on Austria and invaded the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. The House of Savoy then had the opportunity to achieve the goal it had been longing for; that is, to incorporate Lombardy into its territories and put itself at the head of the unifying movement. A decisive battle was fought in Novara on March 23, 1849, which gave the Austrians an undisputed victory. As a consequence, Charles Albert abdicated in favour of his son Victor Emanuel II.

Already Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Piedmont under Victor Emanuel II, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, held a decisive role in the process of Unification. A moderate liberal descending from a long-established Piedmontese noble family, after

¹³ For an analysis of the role of Piedmont during the *Risorgimento*, see Nada 1993.

¹⁴ For a detailed study of Mazzini's politics, refer to Sarti 1997.

he was appointed Prime Minister of Piedmont in 1852 he knew that the only way to unify Italy was to divert the attention of European powers towards the Italian situation. Thus, in 1854, when France and England intervened in support against Russia in the Crimean War he negotiated an alliance and sent an expeditionary corps of about 18,000 men to Crimea that performed brilliantly. As a result, Piedmont was able to assume a place among the victors at the Congress of Paris in 1856. Cavour persuaded his audience that Piedmont's ambitions and its allies' interests coincided with an anti-Austrian policy (Saladino 1970, 11–2). Three years later, he arranged a secret meeting with Napoleon III. The agreement was for a war to be waged against Austria for the acquisition of the Lombardo-Veneto by Piedmont. Napoleon III would provide 200,000 soldiers, but he would receive Savoy and Nice in exchange. Cavour would only have to arrange for Austria to invade Piedmontese territories—the sole condition needed for France to enter into war against Austria. Cavour succeeded in his attempt as the war broke out on April 23, 1859. French troops helped the Piedmontese army and together defeated Austria after winning battles at Magenta, Solferino, and San Martino in June 1859. Piedmont obtained Lombardy and ceded Savoy and Nice to France. In the meantime, Tuscany, Modena, Parma, and the northern Papal States had rebelled and asked to be added to Piedmont.¹⁵

In 1860, the democratic movement gained momentum as Giuseppe Garibaldi led a volunteer force (called *I Mille*) to free southern Italy from the Bourbon grasp. While Piedmontese troops occupied the central Papal States, the *Mille* defeated the Bourbon army near Caserta. After other victorious battles, Garibaldi was ordered to stop and deliver the territories he had won to Victor Emmanuel II, who would be saluted as *Re d'Italia* on March 17, 1861. The Kingdom of Italy was officially announced and Turin appointed its capital. Rome and the eastern regions remained to be gained. In 1866 Venice was annexed and, four years later, the military forces of Victor Emmanuel invaded Rome. In October 1870 the acquisition of Rome was confirmed by plebiscite and the city was made capital of the Kingdom. Italy had to wait until the end of World War I to gain Trentino-Alto Adige, Istria, and Trieste.

The presence of the *Casa Savoia* guaranteed a sense of continuity between the Kingdom of Piedmont and the Kingdom of Italy. They managed to embody the unitary cause and were able to act as a strong point of reference for all political and social forces that aimed to unite Italy. Besides, in the panorama of political equilibrium among European

¹⁵ On the life and politics of Cavour, see Romeo 1984.

powers, the Savoy House was considered the only body able to carry out the process of unification.

Historians have often used the term *piemontesizzazione* to refer to the extension of Piedmont's legislative, administrative, and political structures in the regions annexed to the Kingdom of Italy (Saladino 1970, 63). During the first forty years of the Kingdom, nine out of fifteen Prime Ministers were either Piedmontese or came from the former Kingdom of Piedmont. It was a process imposed from on high without any parliamentary discussion. Actually, at the beginning of the newly formed country, the idea was to preserve the autonomy of the new regions and respect pre-unitarian differences. Then, the outbreak of the Second War of Independence and rebellions in the south led to a centralised form of state with the 1861 and 1865 laws establishing the new order. The Constitution of Italy remained the *Statuto Albertino*, so named as it was conceded by King Charles Albert of Savoy in 1848. It guaranteed considerable control to the King as the executive power belonged to him alone. He had the right to choose his most faithful collaborators to form the core of the new bureaucracy. The perfect symbol of these reformations is the *Prefetto*, a public servant under the authority of the Home Office and a representative of the crown in the provinces (Header 1983, 121).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the discussion on the *Questione della lingua* became particularly animated in Piedmont. The core of the matter was the necessity to find the best Italian vernacular to be used as the national language. Eventually, Alessandro Manzoni's ideas on language, summarised for the first time in 1847 in a letter to Piedmontese linguist Giacinto Carena, became the most influential. According to Manzoni, the best Italian language variety was the Florentine—"nell'uso attuale e vivente" (1987, 207)—spoken by the well-educated classes. In Manzoni's opinion, it was better to teach a language that was actually spoken somewhere in Italy rather than adopting the lifeless models of literary tradition. In 1860, he was appointed senator of the Kingdom of Sardinia, and the Ministry of Education invited him to become a member of a commission whose aim was to "ricercare e proporre tutti i provvedimenti e i modi coi quali si possa aiutare a rendere più universale in tutti gli ordini del popolo la notizia della buona lingua e della buona pronunzia" (in Serianni 1990, 41). The commission decided to spread the Italian language through state schools based on Piedmont's school system. This means that it was based on the Casati Law (named after Gabrio Casati, Minister of Education from 1859 to 1860), which made primary education free for four years and compulsory for the following two years, while the Italian language gained an important role in the education of children.

At the time of Unification the Italian language was known only to a few. According to De Mauro, only 2.5% of the population could speak the national tongue fluently in 1861 (1970, 42).¹⁶ Although not sufficient to fight the high level of illiteracy, the Piedmontese school system was nonetheless among the most advanced in Europe at the time.¹⁷ In 1877, the Coppino Law, which owes its name to the Minister of Education Michele Coppino, raised the age of compulsory attendance to nine and punished the families of children who did not attend school.¹⁸ In addition, the Italian government commissioned the compilation of a dictionary based on the living use of the Florentine, the first edition of which, entitled *Novo vocabolario della lingua italiana secondo l'uso di Firenze*, was published between 1870 and 1897.

Therefore, together with the political merger, Piedmont also took charge of the country's linguistic integration. Tuscan Italian was a language that the House of Savoy first imposed on itself, then on Piedmont, and finally on the whole Kingdom of Italy. As mentioned, the learning of Italian was a difficult achievement for Piedmontese political elites and intellectuals as well. As evidence of their linguistic apprenticeship, between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, drawing mainly from Alfieri's example, some writers would compile personal notes and documents in their local vernacular, as seen for instance in the lists of Piedmontese words or expressions translated into Florentine. The Vercelli-born writer Giovanni Faldella recorded Tuscan words and expressions in a personal dictionary between the 1860s and 1880s, but published much later under the title *Zibaldone* in 1980. Massimo D'Azeglio behaved in a similar way: he left a series of personal notes about the Tuscan language that denoted his particular interest in Tuscan sayings of the period (Marazzini 1984, 218). These few examples demonstrate the level of difficulty, even for well-educated people, in learning and mastering a new language as well as the

¹⁶ This estimate was later modified to 9.5% by Castellani (1982).

¹⁷ During Unification, Piedmont was the region with the lowest rate of illiteracy (about 54%) and with the highest level of literacy among females aged six years and above. In 1871, 51% of Piedmontese women had the ability to read and write (Serianni 1990, 19). On the education of women in Italy in the nineteenth century see also Soldani (2009).

¹⁸ Prior to these laws, in the 1820s Charles Felix of Savoy had enacted a *Regolamento scolastico*, providing free elementary schools in every city and village of the kingdom as well as the teaching of Italian to primary-school pupils. Charles Albert had launched another school reform in 1840, with which the Italian language became an important subject in secondary schools. Although these reforms did not attain the expected results, they demonstrated a new attention reserved to the role of the school system in teaching Italian (Marazzini 1984, 256).

ambivalent relationship between the Italian of the literary tradition and local idioms.

In the Unification years, Piedmontese literature also assumed a pedagogical role. The greatest editorial phenomenon of the last decades of the nineteenth century was *Cuore* by Edmondo De Amicis. Born in Liguria in 1846 (part of the Kingdom of Sardinia at that time), and having grown up in Piedmont, he wrote *Cuore* in 1886. The novel, set in 1881–2, takes the form of the fictional diary of Enrico Bottini, a middle-class boy who attends third grade at an elementary school in Turin. To Enrico's diary nine short stories are added, the protagonists of which are children from other regions. Nowadays, *Cuore* is regarded as “uno degli strumenti più potenti di unificazione culturale nazionale (in senso psicologico e psico-antropologico)” (Asor Rosa 1975, 928). Its pedagogical intent was to promote the values and ideals elaborated by the northern bourgeoisie during the *Risorgimento*: a strict sense of sacrifice and duty, respect for the family, sympathy for the poor and a sentiment of belonging to a united nation. Despite its ubiquitous paternalism and persistent pathetic tone, *Cuore* was extremely popular and read by generations of schoolchildren up to the twentieth century. The success of the novel also contributed to spreading the national language, especially among the middle class. Based on Manzoni's teaching, De Amicis adapted the language of the novel to spoken Florentine. The result was a rather simplified code, without syntactic complexities and Piedmontese words but rich in Tuscan idioms (like “dare le croste” instead of *picchiare*, or “far querciola” in place of *camminare con le mani in terra e le gambe in aria*) and, at the same time, marked by “una certa regolata patina di arcaismo,” as Tempesti points out (1991, 4).

In 1905 De Amicis published *L'idioma gentile*, a very successful compendium of spoken Italian. De Amicis was originally a dialect speaker who learned Tuscan Italian through classical writers and during his stay in Florence. Like Manzoni, he paid attention to the language spoken in everyday situations, elegant but far from academic. Having experienced the challenge of learning and mastering Italian, De Amicis insisted on the study and defence of a unified language as an act of love for one's country and an opportunity to broaden one's regional horizons. At the beginning of his *L'idioma gentile*—which takes the form of “un'autobiografia linguistica, garbatamente romanzata, con l'aggiunta di personaggi” (Tempesti 1991, 4)—he asks his readers “che vale amar la propria lingua se non si studia?” (De Amicis [1905] 2006, 62). Then he adds that a national language should be studied “non soltanto per amore, ma per interesse nostro” (63), and also “per dovere di cittadini” (64), thus implying both civic duties and

the possibility of communicating more easily. The linguistic debate on the opportunity to adopt a centralised form of language continued for several decades, thus proving that De Amicis' concerns expressed in *L'idioma gentile* were well founded.¹⁹

As has been noted, some Piedmontese writers did not restrict themselves to simply adhering to Tuscan linguistic rules, but retreated from the imposition of a unique linguistic model. This is the case of the members of the artistic movement known as *Scapigliatura*, which included writers, painters, and musicians from northern Italy. The idiolect adopted by the writers was a mixture of literary language and dialects, vibrant and full of lexical creativity, which would eventually lead to Gadda's heterogeneous style.²⁰ Piedmont contributed to the movement with a group of artists who formed a society called Dante Alighieri in 1863. Giovanni Faldella, born near Vercelli in 1846, can be considered the most representative of this. He is the author of *Figurine* (1875), a successful collection of short stories “che lo rivelano definitivamente come scrittore estroso e anticonformista, impegnato in quella ricerca stilistica che resta la costante e l'elemento di assoluto rilievo delle sue opere migliori” (Cicala and Tesio 1998, 434).²¹ Another collection, entitled *Verbanine*, was published in the *Gazzetta Letteraria* in 1878, then as a volume in 1892. The stories are set in the Lake Maggiore area and are full of inventive and lively descriptions. In 1879 he wrote a novel entitled *Rovine*, while the novella *Madonna di fuoco e Madonna di neve* appeared in 1888. Among minor *scapigliati*, Achille Giovanni Cagna, a close friend of Faldella, is an intriguing writer too, whose linguistic traits—influenced by Faldella's style and interspersed with Piedmontese and Tuscan—are clearly visible in the collection of short fiction *Provinciali* (1886) and *Alpinisti ciabattoni* (1888), a farcical

¹⁹ Boero and Veronesi (2009) provide an excellent overview of *Cuore*. On De Amicis' linguistic works, see Tosto (2003) and Benucci (2008).

²⁰ For a detailed analysis of the *Scapigliatura*, refer to Contini (1953, 7–48) and Tessari (1980).

²¹ The linguistic habits of the upper classes were occasionally mocked by the *Scapigliati*. Faldella employed French terms, together with Piedmontese and English words, to give birth to an extremely original *pastiche* in some of his works, especially with ironic purposes, as is evident in the following excerpt taken from *Il male dell'arte* where an intentional abuse of words of French origin is made: “[f]ummo invitati ad una *soaré* del barone Nobilara, che le pose la semplice intestazione di *tè danzante*, molto bene accomodata in questa stagione di accozzi strambi, quali sono i discorsi della Corona, i *Caffè cantanti* e i Risotti mascherati” (in Morgana 1974, 106).

novel on the misadventures of a group of people during a mountain excursion.²²

As Giuseppe Zaccaria points out, “l’opera di Faldella e di Cagna pone in primo piano il problema del linguaggio letterario, da conquistare attraverso uno sperimentalismo mistilingue che denuncia l’insoddisfazione nei confronti di ogni omologazione accentratrice e generalizzata (la lingua nazionale proposta da Manzoni)” (1997, 16). As mentioned earlier, after an accurate recording of Tuscan words of the nineteenth century, and after perfectly mastering this linguistic code, they interspersed their literary language with Piedmontese and foreign terms, thus pushing Italian to its limits and creating an experimental type of writing, in which dialect in particular “dà voce a ciò che è periferico e provinciale, integrando e contestando, insieme, ogni progetto di unificazione forzata” (16). As we will see in chapter two, to a certain extent, the linguistic experimentation which Pavese carries out in *Ciau Masino* is most probably influenced by Faldella’s and Cagna’s prose, since the refusal to conform to a single linguistic code is a permanent feature of Pavese’s early work, together with the desire to mock the highbrow narrative of the time and open Piedmontese literature to foreign influences.

Simultaneous with the spread of the Tuscan variety in Piedmont and multilingual experimentation, the second half of the nineteenth century saw the birth of vernacular theatre and narrative, as well as the circulation of the first periodicals written in Piedmontese dialect. Such apparently contradictory events are no surprise, since the region’s linguistic identity often proceeds on parallel tracks. Around the same time, the Kingdom of Piedmont was about to disappear and merge into a new country. Dialect was thus used for nostalgic purposes; that is, as a way to make old Piedmont survive. The first steps towards Piedmontese theatre date back to 1857, when Giovanni Toselli founded his acting company, the *Compagnia drammatica nazionale*. The use of dialect in plays like *La Cichin-a’d Moncalé* (literally meaning “Francesca da Moncalieri,” an adaptation of Silvio Pellico’s *Francesca da Rimini*) “diventerà ben presto un fatto sociale che coinvolge anche il popolo minuto accanto al tradizionale pubblico borghese e aristocratico” (Clivio 2002, 337). Vittorio Bersezio soon became the most popular actor of the time, gaining fame with his

²² For further readings on Faldella see chapter one of Tesio (1991) and Ragazzini (1976). For an insight on Cagna’s theatre and narrative, see Tamiozzo Goldmann (1988) and Sarasso (1972).

comedy *Le miserie 'd monsù Travet*, written in dialect and performed for the first time in Turin in 1863.²³

A year earlier, Luigi Pietracqua set to print *La Gasëta d'Gianduja*, the first periodical in Piedmontese vernacular. The narrative in regional parlance was closely connected to the circulation of periodicals, since the first novels in dialect appeared in periodicals as romanzi d'appendice. As Tesio points out, only in Turin, “dal 1866 al 1915 si stamparono una ventina di periodici in dialetto” (1981, 265). The most successful feuilleton writer was the above-mentioned Pietracqua, his most representative work being the historical novel *Don Pipeta l'Asilé*—first serialised in *La Gasëta d'Gianduja* in 1867, then published in volume in 1868—in which “si incrociano due modelli narrativi: il feuilleton e il romanzo storico” (Tesio 1986, 291).²⁴

In the second half of the nineteenth century, a real *anglomania* ran parallel to such a resurgence of interest in regional cultures in Piedmont. The Industrial Revolution, the wealth of the British Empire, and the stability of its political system brought English language and literature to the fore. New words describing recent advances and products entered the Italian vocabulary in their original forms, such as *ferry boat*, *whisky*, and *jersey*, while others were Italianised (e.g. *bilancio*, *locomotiva*, and *coalizione*). In the nineteenth century, English words, either translated or kept in their original form, also entered Italian via other channels: for example the success and translation of Walter Scott's historical novels, and the dissemination of the periodical press in the second half of the century (Cartago 1994, 735–6). In 1859 the spread of English in Italy was also encouraged by law, since the *Legge Casati* provided for the teaching of English in secondary schools.

That said, the first major lexical transfers from English into Italian actually date back to the seventeenth century. At that time, modern science and political theories began to develop in England, and Italian intellectuals showed a certain interest in them. The influence of England and its language grew during the eighteenth century, although Italians who could actually speak English were scarce. During that period, knowledge of the English language was indeed of secondary importance in Europe and Italy,

²³ Bersezio also founded *La Stampa* in 1867, still the most important Piedmontese newspaper. On the birth of Piedmontese theatre, see Rizzi (1984) and Albina and Tesio (1990).

²⁴ *Asilé* is a Piedmontese term meaning “acetaro, che fa o vende l'aceto” (“Asilé” 1830). The novel, written in Turinese vernacular, indeed tells the story of a vinegar pedlar in the Turin of the eighteenth century. See Croce (1914, 139–50). On Monti's Italian translation of Pietracqua's novel, see Tesio (1975).