

## Enthymema XXXVI 2024



### Speed, Rhythm and Language in Niccolò Ammaniti's *Che la festa cominci* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *In altre parole*

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**Abstract** – In his essay *La letteratura circostante* Simonetti identifies in speed the predominant formal aspect of contemporary Italian novel. A case in point is Ammaniti's *Che la festa cominci*, which is strongly influenced by the rhythm of Hollywoodian film editing, translating movie's structure in the novel through the parataxis and the plot. The paper wants to study the rhythm of Ammaniti's narration through one of the most famous screenplay manuals: Snyder's *Save the Cat*. The paper aims to compare this type of narration with Lahiri's *In altre parole*. This autobiographical translingual novel narrates the encounter and learning path with Italian language of the protagonist/narrator. We intend to question the links between an Italian author who searches his narrative models in the Hollywood cinema, repudiating the Italian literary tradition, and a translingual writer who fulfills the opposite path: she abandons American form and language to write in a minor literature.

**Keywords** – Jhumpa Lahiri; Niccolò Ammaniti; Translingualism; Film Studies; Contemporary Italian Novel.

Bonasia, Mattia. "Speed, Rhythm and Language in Niccolò Ammaniti's *Che la festa cominci* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *In altre parole*". *Enthymema*, n. XXXVI, 2024, pp. 270-280.

<https://doi.org/10.54103/2037-2426/24310>

<https://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/enthymema>



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ISSN 2037-2426

# Speed, Rhythm and Language in Niccolò Ammaniti's *Che la festa cominci* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *In altre parole*

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## 1. Narration, Rhythm, Screenwriting and Identity: Some Early Memos

The aim of this article is to study the relationship between speed, rhythm and identity in contemporary Italian fiction through a contrastive analysis of two antithetical novels: Niccolò Ammaniti's novel *Che la festa cominci* (2009) and Jhumpa Lahiri's linguistic autobiography *In altre parole* (2015). Our purpose is to question the links between an Italian author who searches his narrative models in the Hollywood cinema (Ammaniti), repudiating the Italian literary tradition, and a translingual writer who fulfills the opposite path (Lahiri): she abandons American form and language to write in a minor literature and language. As we'll see, if Ammaniti's attention is given to the speed of narrative's rhythm, Lahiri concentrates herself on the formation of identity through language. This article only wants to be a point of depart in a wider study on the relationship between narrative rhythm, language and identity in the contemporary Italian novel, focused on the differences in influences, public and ethics between authors that write in a neo-standard Italian language, and the multilingual and translingual ones.

According to Gianluigi Simonetti, if between the nineteenth and twentieth century "good literature" was mostly thought as a cognitive experience, based on the slow times of reflection: "from the last decades of the twentieth century it becomes an *emotional* experience, based on the relentless dynamism of the flow's aesthetic" (*La letteratura circostante* 21). Nowadays, the success of a work of literature is determined by commercial success and media coverage: "The news is that the prestige is no longer opposed to the market and can arise from the market itself" (22). Notably in Italy during the Nineties there's a paradigm shift: many writers "intentionally absorb, study and reproduce the themes and the rhetoric of mass communication: the rhythms, the colors of pop culture, the strategies of media visibility, the transtestuality of narrative circuits" (25). Simonetti's thesis is that the encounter between literature and mass communication arises from the rhythmic and syntactic necessity of seizing the true prevalent aesthetic of our times: speed. This trend is particularly clear for the Italian generation of "Cannibal Writers", to which belongs Ammaniti himself. Quoting Romano Luperini, in these narrators "we have to point out the total absence of the literary mediation. It's a generation that ignores the previous literary tradition, they are mostly inspired by cinema and television and, if anything, they find some references in American literature read in translation. It's the first generation that writes after the 'death of literature'" (46).

In *La letteratura circostante* Simonetti mostly analyzes the common morphology between contemporary literature, advertising, and logic of consumption. He does focus on cinema, but more in a thematic than in a narratological way. However, in his last essay *Caccia allo Strega* (2023), he studies the reasons why so many books that win the Italian Strega Prize undergo a cinema adaptation (Ammaniti has won the 2007 edition with *Come Dio comanda*). Is it possible that these books are written in sight of their adaptation, that they are written as they were movies?

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La novità degli ultimi decenni consiste da un lato nella quasi totale espulsione del racconto breve dalla ribalta culturale, dall'altro nella trasformazione del romanzo in "macchina da racconto", e da intrattenimento, inserita in un più generale clima di narrativizzazione universale [...]. La storia letteraria si scioglie così nel calderone generale, consumistico e antigerarchico di tutte le altre "storie" [...]. Il romanzo a cui siamo abituati si attiene a un registro realistico piatto, a bassa temperatura formale; se si mescola volentieri a prose ad alto tasso di referenzialità, come il giornalismo e il memoir, rimane però quasi sempre a distanza dalla sperimentazione dichiarata e dalle tecniche dell'avanguardia storica e critica. Benvenuta è da un lato l'adesione a scritture stilistiche sobrie, "bianche" in senso barthesiano; dall'altro la miscela ben temperata con i cosiddetti [...] "mauvais genres" [...]. O anche, su un altro piano, benvenuto è il confronto con linguaggi artistici concorrenti e di massa, come fumetti, cinema, serialità "intelligente", teatro, canzone pop, mondo videoludico. (*Caccia allo strega*)

Moreover, Simonetti continues, it's better that the novel does not concentrate on a theme, but on a character, a hero, particularly if it wants to become: "a more powerful, translatable and evocative narrating force, like movies or series" (*Caccia allo strega*). So not a classical hero, but an antihero. In their essay *Empatia negativa* (2022) Stefano Ercolino and Massimo Fusillo describe the "negative empathy" like "una particolare esperienza estetica che testa i limiti della capacità di posizionamento etico del fruitore dell'opera d'arte, e le possibilità dell'arte stessa di catalizzare una riflessione morale sul destino della collettività" (10). If it's true that the presence of antiheroes is a constant of occidental culture throughout its whole history, it is incredibly prominent in nowadays transmedia imaginary. According to Ercolino and Fusillo, in the last decades TV series have become a quality product mostly thanks to the choice of identifying negative heroes as protagonists (312).

Obviously, there are a lot of academic studies on adaptation, or on books' filmic studies, but it's not so common to study novels through screenwriting's narrative rhythm. This is what we would like to do with Ammaniti's *Che la festa cominci*. It is an experimental analysis: we will use Blake Snyder's *Save the cat!*, which isn't an essay, but a handbook that gives advices on how to write, exposes the structure of the classic Hollywoodian screenplay. As we'll see, in fact this precise kind of screenplay is maybe one of the most structured kinds of writing: three acts, hero's narrative arc, midpoint, are key words that everyone that has attended a screenwriting class is used to constantly hearing. This structure does create a real narrative rhythm, shaped by the succession of different types of scenes. Notably, also in here speed is the main morphological feature.

How does this relate to a book like Jhumpa Lahiri's *In altre parole*, a linguistic autobiography where the author narrates her learning path of Italian language? One of the major characteristics of this autobiographical novel is its irrepresentability, in antithesis to Ammaniti's one. In fact, it's true that *Che la festa cominci* has not been adapted into a movie (even if most of Ammaniti's novels have been), but, as we'll see, it's literally *written like a movie*. Finally, we will study Lahiri's novel using different critical tools, focusing on how language and identity are shaped by a syncopated narrative rhythm.

The differences in narrative rhythm and speed between the two books do make us question the differences between an Italian writer that rejects Italian literary tradition, finding his models in American pulp movies of the Nineties (Quentin Tarantino's movies above all) and a writer of Bengali roots, that has won the Pulitzer Prize for her novels published in the United States, but that at a certain moment of her career has decided to abandon English language for the Italian one.

## 2. Screenwriting Structure in a Nutshell

But firstly, it's necessary to show how a Classic Hollywood screenplay is made. The two most important features that generates a quick narrative rhythm are the structuration into three acts and the hero's (protagonist) narrative arc:

The perfect hero is the one who offers the most conflict in the situation, has the longest emotional journey, and has a primal goal we can all root for. [...]. It is usually someone we can identify with primally, too, and that's why mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives make better characters than mere strangers facing the same situation and storylines. (Snyder 64)

According to Snyder, "a common mistake in a lot of rough drafts is the problem of the inactive hero [...]. The hero must be proactive"(145). The hero has a "fatal flaw", something that sticks him into the past, that prevents him to go forward. It reveals a hero's aspect that can disrupt the possibility to grow, to change and to evolve. The hero's narrative arc denotes his changes from the screenwriting's beginning, it matches with the three acts structure:

I like to think of movies into three separate worlds. Most people call these three acts, I call 'em thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The first 10 pages and the rest of Act One is the movie's thesis; it's where we see the world as it is before the adventure starts. It is a full-fledged documentation of the hero's world labeled "before". [...]. Things *must* change. (77)

The transition from the first to the second act (the thesis and the antithesis) is marked by the catalyst, that totally overturns the set-up of the movies' first minutes, the "old world": "The catalyst is not what it seems. It's the opposite of good news, and yet, by the time the adventure is over, it's what leads the hero to happiness" (77). It's followed by the debate section: "It's the last chance for the hero to say: This is crazy. And we need him or her to realize that. Should I go? Dare I go? Sure, it's dangerous out there, but what's my choice? Stay *here*?" (77). It's important that the "*debate section must ask a question of some kind*" (78). Then we have the break into two: it's "the moment where we leave the old world, the thesis statement, behind and proceed into a world that is the upside-down version of that, its antithesis" (79). The second act is split into two parts by the midpoint. The first part, "fun and games" (82) is the development of story's themes. Here also the B story (usually a love story between two secondary characters) is built. In the midpoint the hero must face his fatal flaw, in fact until this moment the script has "pulled the rope" right to the edge. The conflict was obvious, and it created various plots, but now "the chickens come home to roost": "A movie's midpoint is either an "up" where the hero seemingly peaks (though it is a false peak) or a "down" when the world collapses all around the hero (though it is a false collapse), and it can only get better from here on out" (82). The midpoint has a matching beat called "All Is Lost", which is described as "false defeat": "these two points are set. It's because the two beats are the inverse of each other. The rule is: It's never as good as it seems to be at the midpoint and it's never as bad as it seems to be at the All Is Lost point... Or vice versa!" (84). Finally, we "break into three", the third act. "The finale is Act Three. This is where we wrap it up. It's where the character ties are mastered. It's where A story and B story end in triumph for our hero. It's the turning over of the old world and the creation of a new world order – all thanks to the hero, who leads the way based on what he experienced in the upside-down, antithetical world of Act Two" (90). The movie's final image "is the opposite of the opening image. It is your proof that change has occurred and that it's real" (90).

As we've seen, in Classic Hollywood screenplay all these sections are intertwined, there is no room for pauses or introspection, the spectator must drift through the different scenes without interpretation problems or rhythmic cracks.

### 3. Cinematic Style in *Che la festa cominci*

Now we can start our analysis of *Che la festa cominci* based on Snyder's handbook. Firstly, we must point out that narrative speed, cinematographic rhythm, is firstly given by chapters' structure. The omniscient third person narrator "edits" the stories of the two heroes (protagonists) Saverio Moneta and Fabrizio Ciba, creating an alternate narrative and visual rhythm: a part of Moneta's story, a part of Ciba's story, throughout all the book. The quick concatenation is favored by chapters' shortness (almost never exceeding the three pages), by the parataxis, by the predominance of key phrases as opposed to subclauses, and finally by the overabundance of direct dialogues. The narrator seems to carry a movie camera: he describes the frame with a few items that do fix themselves into the reader's mind, creating accurate images. Like in Hollywood movies, the narrator describes the actions but utilizes also the "false Point of View Shot", giving us the perception of "seeing" with a character's eyes. In fact, in Hollywoodian screenwriting characters must be described by what they do, not by what they say (or think): all the scenes, in *Che la festa cominci*, are main scenes, there's no place for introspection.

Finally, the suspense and the exhortation of a quick, spasmodic reading are given using a seriality technique: the cliffhanger. It's a narrative device that makes narration end with a sudden interruption in correspondence of a plot twist or of another highlight (or a fake one). *Che la festa cominci* has a cliffhanger in every chapter's ending, but often in the resumption of Moneta's story (or Ciba's one, we must remember that the two do alternate themselves), we find out that the highlight was not as "high" as we thought. Finally, it's only used to give speed to the narrative rhythm:

Un motociclista su uno scooterone a tre ruote gli bussò sul finestrino. – Ma lo sai che sei una testa di cazzo?

Finalmente Saverio raccolse il cellulare, fece ripartire la macchina e riuscì ad accostare.

Che voleva da lui Kurtz Minetti?

6.

Appena Tremagli concluse il suo intervento la platea cominciò a tirarsi su dalle poltrone dove si era rannicchiata, a sgranchirsi le gambe addormentate, a darsi pacche di solidarietà avendo superato una prova così impegnativa. Per un istante Fabrizio Ciba sperò che fosse finita là, che il professore avesse esaurito tutto il tempo a disposizione per l'incontro. (Ammaniti 32-3)

Like a perfect Hollywoodian screenplay, the two heroes have their own narrative arc, their own story full of conflict, the two will intertwine in the same place: Villa Ada in Rome. But first things first: Saverio Moneta is the leader of a quite nerd satanic sect of the roman suburbs. To understand the influence of screenwriting on this narrative choice, we must remember, with Ercolino and Fusillo, the constant presence of an antihero in high quality TV series (Ercolino and Fusillo 312). The set-up, the book first scene, sees the group in the pizzeria Jerry 2 in Oriolo Romano, where the author emphasizes the ironic conflict between the metal and satanic culture of American import and the Italian setting. This is Moneta's "Old World", a comical satanic sect and a miserable marriage: the conflict lives in the opposition between an apparently mediocre employee life and the satanic sect. The fatal flaw that sticks him is exposed with a flashback in his childhood (really cinematographic):

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Saverio Moneta avrebbe voluto dirgli di sì, che era un onore, che era felice di fare il rappresentante del Centro Italia e Sardegna, eppure... Eppure non gli andava. Gli tornò in mente quando suo padre gli aveva regalato un Malaguti 50 [...].

Nei mesi successivi Saverio aveva provato a usare il Malaguti, ma ogni volta che ci montava sopra gli appariva l'immagine di suo padre che alle cinque di mattina usciva dalla loro palazzina, intabarrato nel cappotto. Gli saliva su un'ansia terribile e alla fine lo aveva lasciato in cortile e qualcuno se lo era rubato. Così si erano trovati a piedi sia lui sia il padre.

Non c'entrava niente con tutto questo eppure qualcosa di buono con le Belve lo aveva fatto. E un po' lo doveva anche a quella banda di sfigati che lo seguivano. Non poteva mollarli. (Ammaniti 42-3)

He does think too much of others' judgment, he does not believe in himself, and he thinks that the others want always only to betray and deceive him. The "What He Wants" is a satanic project to get out from his dull life, but the "What He Needs" is the others to believe in him, to show him their love. We need to spot these elements because in a well written script the major turns in narrative rhythm are always intertwined with the fatal flaw. In *Che la festa cominci* the catalyst is given by the narrow ending of the sect except if they find a new project: the chance is given to our protagonist by Kurtz Minetti, Sons of Apocalypse's boss, the most important Italian satanic sect. He offers to Moneta to become the director of the sect's Central Italy branch. Moneta would like to accept, but the offer is not valid for the other members of his sect, the Abandon beasts. So, we have the debate section, where our protagonist also "fights" with his wife: his love story in fact anchors him in his old world of passivity and mediocrity. In the end we have the decision and the break into two: the Abandon Beasts could be waiters during an incredible party in Villa Ada organized by the building speculator Sasà Chiatti. There will be, among many celebrities, Larita, a famous catholic pop singer: it's the perfect sacrifice. In this party the narrative arcs of Moneta and Ciba are intertwined. As for Moneta, we could also spot Ciba's fatal flaw, love story, etc. Ciba is a famous writer that has won the Strega Prize. He's a womanizer whose idols are more in the star system than in literature. Even this is a tool to write a book like a movie: the character of the writer is not used to give a kind of "literary counterpart", a critique to mass communication. Actually, he's more immersed than anyone in show business.

Let's quickly return to the macro-structure. We have written that a movie must be structured into three acts, with a great importance in narrative rhythm given to the major turns. *Che la festa cominci* is, also visually, well divided into three acts, three parts, each one opened by a pop epigraph: from Mash to Tiziano Ferro, from Edoardo Bennato to Radiohead:

But I'm a creep,  
I'm a weirdo.  
What the hell am I doing here?  
I don't belong here.

RADIOHEAD, *Creep*. (283)

We have already talked about the first act. From the break into second all the action is in Villa Ada, the second act is split into two by the midpoint. In the first part, by-the-book, the B-story (which is also the main love story) is built: Murder and Silvietta want to get married and to leave the satanic sect. Then the "fun and games" carries the various themes: Italian society's celebrities are described in a grotesque and parodical way; we get to know more the heroes and their difficulties. The rope is "pulled" till the limit, till the two midpoints (two narrative arcs, two midpoints). We limit ourselves to Moneta's one: he must face Murder and Silvietta's love, he decides (the hero always must take decisions) to let them leave (and live). So, it does seem that everything is going to be alright, that Moneta is fulfilling his narrative arc.

The midpoint is an “up”, but it must be followed by a “down”, the “All Is Lost”, because at the end of the day we have to remember that they are trying to kill a woman. Zombie, the other member of the sect, third between Murder and Silvietta, commits suicide while provoking the entire Villa Ada’s blackout. All seems lost for Moneta, that feels to have ruined a lot of people’s lives. And there it is, the break into three, into finale: out of nowhere (after a lot of suspense) we find out that there are real monsters in Villa Ada that are kidnapping the party’s guests.

To conclude with *Che la festa cominci*, we could affirm that Simonetti’s thesis on the speed of contemporary Italian novel are also proved by a reading of Ammaniti’s through screenwriting’s narrative structure. In *Che la festa cominci* the speed of narrative rhythm is given by succession of different acts, stories, and scenes that follow Hollywoodian screenwriting models.

#### 4. Translingualism in *In altre parole*

Now we would like to proceed towards the study of Lahiri’s *In altre parole*. As we’ve said, the comparison wants to be contrastive (and provocative), the two books are in two totally different sides of Italian fiction spectrum. They have two totally different publishers (Einaudi and Guanda) and publics (midcult and highbrow). These great differences do only make our contrastive comparison more interesting when talking about narrative rhythm.

In fact, if *Che la festa cominci* is characterized by a real quick narrative rhythm, *In altre parole* is not only characterized by a slow one, but does present a kind of syncopated rhythm. The reader is carried into the path (an obstacle course) undertaken by the protagonist and first-person narrator to apprehend Italian language. *In altre parole* is Lahiri’s first translingual autobiographical novel, she adopts Italian after having been a famous author in the United States.

It’s difficult to think about a less cinematographic novel than Lahiri’s one: it’s true, it’s a travel story, but the focus is not on action, on the plot, on the edit, but on language. We could say that there are no main scenes at all, but only digressions and introspection. This choice does really affect the narrative rhythm: that’s really the anti-screenwriting. In fact, in these moments the author talks directly to herself and with the reader at the same time, breaking up the fourth wall between fiction and reality. In one of these passages, she explains that the choice of Italian language does not arise from a will, or from a forced migration, and allows the writer to create a “vanishing point” to her “linguistic exile” in English language. English has been used with great success, but it’s not the mother tongue, that is Bengali, the parents’ tongue that Lahiri still doesn’t master very well:

Ho dovuto giostrarmi tra queste due lingue finché, a circa venticinque anni, non ho scoperto l’italiano. Non c’era alcun bisogno di imparare questa lingua. Nessuna pressione familiare, culturale, sociale. Nessuna necessità.

L’arrivo dell’italiano, il terzo punto sul mio percorso linguistico, crea un triangolo. Crea una forma anziché una linea retta. Un triangolo è una struttura complessa, una figura dinamica. Il terzo punto cambia la dinamica di questa vecchia coppia litigiosa. Io sono figlia di quei punti infelici, ma il terzo non nasce da loro. Nasce dal mio desiderio, dalla mia fatica. Nasce da me.

Credo che studiare l’italiano sia una fuga dal lungo scontro, nella mia vita, tra l’inglese il bengalese. Un rifiuto sia della madre sia della matrigna. Un percorso indipendente [...]

Pur fuggendo, mi accorgo che sia l’inglese sia il bengalese mi affiancano. Così come in un triangolo, un punto conduce inevitabilmente all’altro. (*In altre parole* 113-4)

Italian is the chosen tongue: not imposed by filiation (Bengali) or by social environment (English). The triangle sketched in the quotation symbolizes the dynamism, the relationship in movement. It’s the mirror of a subjectivity that doesn’t want to resolve her complex identity but to live it in its continuous variation. In this sense, the writer does not seek a final and

conclusive point in Italian identity, because she knows that she can't totally assimilate herself to it.

But the triangle shaped to put in relation the different poles of her identity does not have three sides with the same width. English is much stronger: "se lo disegnassi userei una penna per rendere il lato inglese, una matita per gli altri due. L'inglese rimane la base, il lato più stabile, fisso. Il bengalese e l'italiano sono entrambi più deboli, indistinti. L'uno ereditato, l'altro adottato, volute" (115). In fact, power and stability are the most common features used to define English language and identity. The writer does acknowledge to write in an Italian "bruttissimo, scorretto, imbarazzante" (51), that seems written "con la mano sinistra" (51):

Quando rinuncio all'inglese rinuncio alla mia autorevolezza. Sono traballante anziché sicura. Sono debole. [...]  
Prima di diventare un'autrice mi mancava un'identità chiara, nitida. È stato attraverso la scrittura che sono riuscita a sentirmi realizzata. Ma quando scrivo in italiano non mi sento così [...]  
Posso definirmi un'autrice, senza sentirmi autorevole?  
Com'è possibile, quando scrivo in italiano, che mi senta sia più libera sia inchiodata, costretta?  
Forse perché in italiano ho la libertà di essere imperfetta [...]  
Cosa vuol dire rinunciare a un palazzo per abitare quasi per strada, sotto un riparo così fragile?  
Forse perché dal punto di vista creativo non c'è nulla di tanto pericoloso quanto la sicurezza.  
(69-70)

As the author points out in *Translating Myself and Others* (2022), although at that height she hadn't thought about the possibility of self-translation (the book is translated in English by Ann Goldstein), it has been always present in her life: "I was raised speaking and living, simultaneously, in English and Bengali, and this meant translating between them, constantly, for myself and others" (3). She started her activity of translator in 2015, with the novel *Lacci* (2014) by Domenico Starnone, to later start self-translation only in 2017 (a short story, *Il confine, The Boundary*). From then on, Lahiri writes, "translation has transformed my relationship with writing. It shows me how to work with new words, how to experiment with new styles and forms" (7).

Translation is linked with transplantation, with the act of grafting:

A graft is an act of insertion. It introduces one element into another. In order to succeed, it presupposes an affinity between the elements at play. It requires connection, fusion, welding. It implies joining one thing to another.

Because it's a transplant, a graft necessitates a displacement, a cut. It results, ideally, in a transformation that feels magical.

This magnificent word, impregnated with psychological, political, and creative nuances, describes my experiment in Italian.

[...]. As the child of immigrants, I am myself the fruit of a risky graft that is geographical and cultural. [...] This is how I read the world. A graft explains and defines me. And now that I write in Italian, I myself have become a graft. (*Translating Myself and Others* 20)

Giving up English means to abandon the idea of stability and authority for a "fragile shelter". Here, translanguaging has a strong cultural meaning. The writer had reached a great success in her mother tongue, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 2000 for *Interpreter of Maladies*, but she refuses this stability because "scrivendo in italiano, penso di sfuggire sia i miei fallimenti nei confronti dell'inglese sia il mio successo. L'italiano mi offre un percorso letterario ben diverso. In quanto scrittrice posso smantellarmi, posso ricostruirmi" (*In altre parole* 123). Lahiri's movement in the literary field is analyzable as the neutralization of English dominance using Italian language, full of tradition but powerless in nowadays literary field. The claim for a linguistic hybridism is linked to an identity affirmation: "scrivo ai margini, così come vivo da sempre ai



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marginì dei Paesi, delle culture. Una zona periferica in cui non è possibile che io mi senta radicata, ma dove ormai mi trovo a mio agio” (75).

Using Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s famous definition, we could see Lahiri’s expression through the lens of a *littérature mineure*, a literature not written in a minor language, but “celle qu’une minorité fait dans une langue majeure” (Deleuze and Guattari 29). The two philosophers write that the three main features of a minor literature are “la déterritorialisation de la langue, le branchement de l’individuel su l’immédiat-politique, l’agencement collectif d’énonciation” (33). If it’s true that Lahiri’s literature seems more an individual than a collective expression, we could see her language like a deterritorialization of the Italian one. Deleuze and Guattari see two types of deterritorialization through the examples of Joyce and Beckett:

Usage de l’anglais et de toute langue, chez Joyce. Usage de l’anglais et du français chez Beckett. Mais l’un ne cesse de procéder par exubérance et surdétermination, et opère toutes les reterritorialisations mondiales. L’autre procède o force de sécheresse et de sobriété, de pauvreté voulue, poussant la déterritorialisation jusqu’à ce que ne subsistent plus que des intensités. (35)

Surely Lahiri is in Beckett’s line: the choice to write in Italian leads to a limited expressivity, to an estranged, foreign writing. Has we’ve seen in the book’s extracts that we’ve selected, Lahiri’s Italian is stripped to the bone (she talks about “scrivere senza stile”, *In altre parole* 132) and this really affects the narrative rhythm and style. In fact, according to Groppolardi and Sergio, *In altre parole*’s main stylistic traits are: the use of spatial metaphors to talk about writing (the wall, the fence), the use of accumulation figures (especially for the adjectives) (Groppolardi and Sergio 92). There is a predominance of key phrases and points, as in Ammaniti but in a totally different way: the writing does never expand, it does not breathe with subclauses. The narration is always syncopated, pressed, although in the last pages the assimilation of Italian language is expressed through a more wide-ranging prose. Other stylistic recurrences are the insisted repetition of terms and the variations through synonyms.

As Dagmar Reichardt points out, in *In altre parole* we can’t talk about a real code-switching, but about a “transcultural switch”: “non solo un avvicinamento all’amata cultura italiana [...] ma un impossessamento, una Conquista vera e propria [...] una ‘svolta transculturale’ ovvero un cambio di cultura intenzionale” (“‘Radicata a Roma’” 222). English language is quite totally absent and there are no traces of Bengali at all. There are only two recurrences of English words, and they are used by other characters (as Groppolardi and Sergio point out, there are some interferences, like *sporadicamente* for “sporadically”, 93). So, if in a theoretical and existential way Lahiri affirms a hybrid and transcultural identity, we don’t find a hybrid formal translation in the autobiographical novel: the other linguistic identities are ignored, deleted. In this sense the verb “to probe” (“sondare”, *In altre parole* 134) with which the writer describes her relationship with Italian, does assume the double meaning of identity scope:

Il verbo *sondare* vuol dire *esplorare, esaminare*. Vuol dire, letteralmente, *misurare la profondità* di qualcosa. Secondo il mio dizionario questo verbo significa “cercare di conoscere, di capire qualcosa, in particolare i pensieri e le intenzioni di altri”. Implica distacco, incertezza; implica uno stato di immersione. Significa ricerca, metodica e accanita, di qualcosa che resta sempre fuori portata. Un verbo azzeccato che spiega alla perfezione questo mio progetto. (134)

In conclusion, *Che la festa cominci* and *In altre parole* are closely tied to English language and American culture. Ammaniti’s novel shuns Italian literary tradition, drawing instead on Hollywood cinema and pop culture as its primary references. These influences, as we have seen, are evident not only on a cultural level but also in narratology terms: the novel’s narrative rhythm mirrors that of a classic Hollywoodian screenplay. The three-act structure, the presence of

cliffhangers, the brevity of chapters, and the use of parataxis are structural elements that Ammaniti employs to accelerate the pacing of his story to lay the reader in an engaging and immersive experience.

*In altre parole*, by contrast, takes precisely the opposite approach: it rejects both the English language and American culture (practically absent from the book) and instead relies on the Italian language, which serves as both a linguistic and an identity-defining tool. However, at a rhythmic level, the narrative does not adopt a harmonically structured, expansive form. Instead, it presents a pared-down, syncopated parataxis, which seems to retain syntactic elements typical of English language. Lahiri's narrative, unlike Ammaniti's, is untranslatable into film; it would lose its essential and characteristic focus on the connections between linguistic formation and identity.

On the one hand, there is a neo-standard Italian leaning on Anglo-Saxon frameworks; on the other, a stripped-down Italian written by a translingual author. How much do these stylistic and rhythmic differences depend on the authors' differing positions within the Italian literary field—Ammaniti, a *Premio Strega* winner, versus Lahiri, a highbrow translingual writer? This article has attempted to lay out initial narratological and stylistic pathways for a potential comparison and, more broadly, to expand the discourse in an oppositional key between authors who have won the *Premio Strega* (aligning with the characteristics highlighted in Simonetti's analysis) and translingual, multilingual and transcultural authors. These are preliminary suggestions, clearly open to further responses and possible in-depth explorations.

## 5. References

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