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## THE VERIST VERGA IN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC\*\*

Between the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the new millennium, while the critical debate on Giovanni Verga seemed to weaken and at the same time his influence on contemporary literature diminished, numerous artists in the musical world drew from the experimentalism inherent to the Catanian writer's verist oeuvre. Through performances that combined theatre, dance, and music, often involving contaminations among different styles, the works of verist Verga transcended the geographical boundaries of Sicily to reach the 'Big Apple' and even reverberated in expressive pop-culture forms, including pop music, combining more traditional pieces in Sicilian dialect with rap sounds. Although the choice of musical works presented in this paper is limited to those based on the novel *I Malavoglia* and a few short stories, within this corpus containing various reinterpretations by contemporary artists one can find stylistic and thematic inspirations that reflect the cornerstones of Verga's expressive innovation. This is, therefore, a tangible sign that the Etnean author, through the experimentation of his verist workshop, remains relevant in contemporary times.

*Keywords:* Verismo, Verga, adaptation, contemporary music, transposition, transcoding, actualization.

### 1. METHODOLOGICAL PREMISE

Interpretive perspectives based on the aesthetics of reception—beginning in the 1960s and 1970s with Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, pioneers of the so-called 'Constance School'— have gradually recognized that not only does the classical tradition represent a heritage transmitted from the past to the present, but the implementation of these theories during the twentieth century has contributed

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in a broader sense to the concept of a dynamic text (Cadioli, 1998: 5–6), increasing the importance of the user: the reader, the audience, the context, and also the artists who transpose and recreate (Ibid.: 10–13, 24–31) take an active role in the perception and semantic redefinition of the original text, through the mediation of their knowledge and experience (Ibid.: 37–39, 44–46).

A perspective analysis aimed at reconstructing the alternating events that marked the adaptation of Verga's production allows us to integrate the interpretative horizon (mainly oriented toward the philosophical, philological-linguistic, stylistic, and comparative components) widely established in the critical reading of Giovanni Verga: first of all, it can help to value the intellectual complexity of an author who personally experiments and innovates genres, rewriting his works with different forms and expression codes<sup>2</sup>; it also enhances his fruitful presence in the cultural dimension of contemporary society.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Verga, who, as a writer of “*manicaretti* that delight the public”<sup>3</sup> (Verga, 1984: 111–112) had received wide acclaim, as a verist author—though initially encouraged by the reception of the novella collection *Vita dei campi*<sup>4</sup>—experienced with *I Malavoglia*, his first novel belonging to the series *I vinti*, a “fiasco, full and complete fiasco” (Ibid.) among his contemporaries, describing his flop with these incisive words in a letter sent on April 11, 1881 to his friend Luigi Capuana, considered the theorist of Verismo.

The history of public reception and the critical parabola of Verga's literary works imprinted with the new poetics, after their initial failure and misunderstanding, have oscillated between revaluation, instrumentalization,

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<sup>2</sup>Verga, with his experimentalism, promotes an intense work of transposing his own literary works into different expression codes: narrative, theatrical, operatic, and cinematographic. Among numerous examples: *Storia di una capinera*, novel, theatrical sketch, film script; *Cavalleria rusticana*, novella, drama, libretto; *La Lupa*, novella, drama, opera libretto (with the contribution of Federico De Roberto).

<sup>3</sup>Unless otherwise stated, all translations are the author's.

<sup>4</sup>The original 1880 edition was favorably received by the public and critics, probably conditioned by Luigi Capuana's enthusiastic review that appeared in the September 20-21 edition of the paper “*Corriere della Sera*”, so the publisher reprinted it in 1881. This was followed by: the 1892 edition with the title changed to *Cavalleria rusticana ed altre novelle* perhaps following the success of the drama *Cavalleria rusticana*; and the 1897 edition, retitled *Vita dei campi*, revised by the author and illustrated by Arnaldo Ferraguti (Riccardi, 1984: XII–XIII).

philological revival, and revisitation. These steps have not exactly occurred in linear succession, but often the different forms of reception, especially in the critical sphere, almost overlap.

Analyzing the complex interpretative vicissitudes of the Catanian writer, critic Romano Luperini argues that “Verga’s fortunes are always linked to moments of strong theoretical and even ideological and political tension, and are in fact concentrated in the years 1918–22, 1945–56, 1965–75” (Luperini, 2005: XIII). His statement is basically true if one thinks of a “theoretical debate” oriented to nurture “new cultural and ethical-civil perspectives” (Ibid.) directly, as had happened in the case of Verga (Asor Rosa, 1972) in the years 1965–75.

Gino Tellini, however, expresses an opinion partly in agreement with Luperini when, in relation to Verga’s literary echoes in later fiction, he also finds in the phase of critical eclipse starting from the 1970s and 1980s a contextual diminution in the literary influence of the Etnean writer; he attributes this to a preponderant disengagement and recognizes Verga’s residual influences only in authors such as Ermanno Rea or Roberto Saviano (Tellini, 2022: 288).

Delineating the horizon related to the adaptations of verist Verga in contemporary music, we do not intend to dwell on the critical misadventures (Alfieri, 2016: 207–240), or deepen the question regarding Verga’s literary reverberations (Tellini, 2022): for developments related to these issues, we refer to the recent bibliography that has dealt with them in a careful and circumstantial manner. As regards the phenomena of adaptation on which, instead, we want to focus our intervention, starting precisely from the phase in which that intense “theoretical debate” to which Luperini refers is attenuated, there seems to emerge a progressive broadening of cultural interest in the Sicilian writer: this is attested by the presence, between the last two decades of the twentieth century and the new millennium, of performances and reinterpretations catering to a more elite audience, as well as the proliferation of Verga’s motif in pop-music.

### 3. PHENOMENA OF VERGA’S MUSICAL RECEPTION

#### *3.1. Musical performances in theatre*

Music, songs and sometimes dance choreography are constituent elements of an original form of rewriting Verga’s works, constituted by “reviviscence theatre”, a genre of theatre that collapses the distances between performers and audience by mixing the public with professional actors. This was initiated by Alfredo Mazzone in 1972 with *Verghiane*, an event of performances set in Vizzini,

near Catania, in the places that inspired the action of the Vergian narrative. Mazzone's texts are taken almost exclusively from the novellas of Verga's two major collections, *Vita dei campi* and *Novelle rusticane* (Mazzone, 2004). However, the theatrical rewrites proposed by Mazzone as director sometimes tended to take on an excessively folkloric connotation, including in both philological and musicological aspects, such as the use of dialect, which the Catanian writer firmly rejected<sup>5</sup>; even the melodies that accompanied these performances often emphasized the local setting.

A resonance with a more national (and less regional) scope than the *Verghiane* must be ascribed to the many performances, touring major Italian theatres since the 1990s, that recall *La Lupa* (She-Wolf), written by Verga in the form of novella, drama, film script and libretto by Federico de Roberto in Verga's lifetime. In 1990 the premiere of the opera with the same title, *La Lupa*, featuring a libretto by Giuseppe Di Leva and music by Marco Tutino, made its debut at Livorno's La Gran Guardia Theatre. Structured in one act and two scenes and set in a generic metropolis of Northern Italy, the opera was presented within the festival *Melodrammi ambientati in Sicilia* with two other operas of the same title: the first with libretto by Federico De Roberto and music by Pierantonio Tasca<sup>6</sup>, and the second with words by Vincenzo De Simone and score by Santo Santonocito<sup>7</sup>.

In 1998 a dance performance with choreography by Susanna Beltrami and interpretation by the *etoile* Luciana Savignano derived from the same novella was staged at the Franco Parenti Theatre in Milan. The performance was accompanied by a text written in modern language, recited by a stage actor in a period dress, who tells the personal story (partially invented compared to the original by Verga) of the male protagonist Nanni; the inner dimension of the character is accentuated

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<sup>5</sup>The verist writer, in fact, had manifested his own anti-dialectality in a letter of June 10, 1920 to the poet Alessio Di Giovanni, rejecting a possible transposition of *I Malavoglia* into Sicilian and that "felibrism that shrinks, whether one wants it or not" (Verga, 1979: 429). Moreover, in his letter of January 29, 1908, sent to Édouard Rod, criticizing some caricatural excesses in the acting of his own plays attributed to the Catanian actor Giovanni Grasso, Verga's comment was: "If I have to be booed, I want to be booed in my own way, not by the standards of those actors. Ah, dear Rod, what misery and what a foul thing the theatre has become!" (Verga, 2004: 497). Grasso accentuated the dramatic elements and overemphasized local characterization so much that the veristic writer revoked his permission to represent his works (Ibid.).

<sup>6</sup>The opera in two acts was performed for the first time in 1932, while the libretto was first published in 1919 (Quaresima, 1988: 123)

<sup>7</sup>An opera in three acts staged for the first time at the "Massimo Bellini" Theatre in Catania on December 9, 1948 (De Simone, 1948:1).

by choreography for four dancer–interpreters, ranging from classical to jazz, and expressing as many psychological aspects.

In 1999 yet another performance entitled *La Lupa*, brought to the stage by director Turi Giordano with choreography by Salvo Di Mauro, used a mixture of dance, music and acting, as well as one novel addition: the inclusion of Verga as a character in the adaptation’s script. Despite numerous performances, however, the experience remained confined to Sicilian theatres.

As a fusion of musical and *opera popolare*<sup>8</sup>, *La lupa. Suspiri d’amuri* (2014) directed by Salvatore Guglielmino eschewed the canons of the folkloric, insisting on contemporary elements in its representation: the inclusion of a hip-hop dance troupe, a simple set design with few objects, inventive light design, and the use of video-mapping to represent temporal spaces. The narrative focus is shifted to the character of Nanni, the lover of Gnà Pina, nicknamed La Lupa, and a possible sequel of the verist novella.

In 2015 *La Lupa*, adapted by Micaela Miano, directed by Guglielmo Ferro, and starring Lina Sastri, took up the tragedy of the same name, written by Verga and Federico De Roberto, and enriched it with musical arrangements by Franco Battiato. The director found in the figure of Verga’s protagonist Gnà Pina “an archetypal character of literature, [...] with a charm and strength that emerge with great ease from the text, allowing a stimulating and creative rewriting work” (Ferro & Miano, 2015). This opinion would also partly explain the large number of adaptations *La Lupa* has undergone. The set design reflected the essentiality sought by Verga in his theatrical transpositions (Oliva, 2007: 33-34, 35), in accordance with his “faith toward a theatre that mirrors truth” (Oliva, 2007: 38): a few chairs, the sun and the moon to mark the rhythms of the day and differentiate day from night.

Even *I Malavoglia*, the first work in Verga’s planned pentalogy *I Vinti*, which for the Umbertine public at the time turned out to be a “fiasco”, has not escaped this wave of revisitations, despite the objectively greater difficulty presented by the novel compared to a shorter text such as the novella. This is probably among the explanations for the considerable time lapse between 1948, the year of the first film adaptation with the neorealist film *La terra trema* by Luchino Visconti, and 1982, the year of the theatrical adaptation written by and starring Turi Ferro. In 2016 Guglielmo Ferro also produced his own theatrical

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<sup>8</sup>This is a new genre of performance with music, based on the Italian and European musical and stage tradition, between romantic melodrama and tragedy, opera and musical (Oliva, 2013: 215).

reduction of *I Malavoglia* (staged first at the Catanian Theatre, then at the Quirino Theatre in Rome, and finally at the Elfo Puccini Theatre in Milan): influenced by Visconti's film, he largely employed black and white in the stage design. Similar usage of the chiaroscuro contrast typical of the neorealist film had already characterized the choices of director Turi Giordano in 2013 when bringing to the stage *Mena*, a musical opera crossover between pop melody and opera, with music by Plinio Maggi and a libretto by Carlo Majorana Gravina. This performance centred the story on a single episode of the novel, the unrealized love between Mena Toscano and Alfio Mosca. The director explicitly declared that he drew inspiration from Visconti's film: "I preferred to use black and white colors typical of neorealism [...]. I tried to actualize some scenes such as that of the protest of the commoners (the chorus) against the bad administrators who increase taxes" (Battiatto, 2013). Once again, therefore, chiaroscuro contrast and transposition into a current dimension are configured as signs of the reference to the 1948 neorealist film.

An innovative reinterpretation of Verga's first verist novel found its place in La MaMa, one of the most established Off-Off-Broadway, which emerged in the 1960s alongside the birth of the Off-Broadway movement. In 2006, this New York temple of the avant-garde staged *Mediterranean Voices*, a piece inspired by *I Malavoglia* that weaves together dance, music, and acting. The performance features a series of scenes where the "chorality" of perspectives, a cornerstone of verist poetics, is translated by the "choral" presence of characters: they collectively move in the small square that serves as the stage, each telling their own story. This actualization of Verga's text has an interesting source. In the archives of the RAI programs there is an interview with choreographer Nicola Iervasi, who reconstructs the genesis of this show created in collaboration with an American playwright, Kevin Albert. The idea allegedly originated from reading an English translation of Verga's novel *I Malavoglia*, *The House by the Medlar Tree* by Raymond Rosenthal, purchased at a used book stall, "to understand how Italian culture moves to the United States" (Venturini, 2006). In fact, the author of the translation, a scholar of philology within a research group active in the 1960s at the University of California Los Angeles, had the merit of reintegrating the cuts in Verga's novel, present in the earlier English-language translations by Mary A. Craig and Eric Mosbacher<sup>9</sup>, further restoring Verga's originality and

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<sup>9</sup>The first English translation of the novel *I Malavoglia*, by Craig, published in the United States in 1890, contained cuts of over fifty pages, dictated by Victorian moral censorship and precautions of a political nature: references to sensuality, ironic tones, and passages

expressiveness in his personal translation. On this aspect Albert, together with Iervasi, focused his theatrical piece creating a language—obviously not only verbal, given the composite nature of the play—that would allow farm laborers and fishermen to express themselves in a manner similar to that conveyed by Verga. Dialogues in different Mediterranean languages, including Italian, Spanish, Greek, are interwoven on stage: it is the authors' way of reproducing that universal and interchangeable condition of the lowest classes for every geocultural reality that Guido Ceronetti had highlighted in Verga's representation of the of the underprivileged people: "Other than Sicily, in this visionary Catanian! [...] everything, within that stylistic crucible [...] takes on the sign of the infinite, the entire crowd runs toward a gesture that will transform it into symbols, into ineffable witnesses of the pain of the world" (Ceronetti, 1982: 194).

### 3.2. Pop music

In 1983, the year following Turi Ferro's first theatrical transposition of Verga's novel, the dialectal song *I Malavoglia*, written by Fredy Garozzo and performed by Rosario Todaro, won the *Sicilian Song Festival*. The author, who has composed lyrics and music for well-known Italian and foreign artists (such as Marcella Bella and the Mexican Sonia Rivas), would see his own single relaunched in 2016 by the singer Giovanna, who comes from the Milanese artistic culture, with an evocative video that reproduces the iconic black-and-white images of Visconti's film, dwelling on the shipwreck sequences on which the song's lyrics are centered (Nocetti, 2016).

The famous neorealist film of 1948 also influenced a song from 2002 composed by musician Kaballà<sup>10</sup> and bearing the same title as Visconti's film, *La terra trema*, and was included in the album *Avvicinamento* by Giampiero Mazzone, son of the initiator of *Verghiane*. The words of the song, however, also on the theme of a shipwreck, are in Italian (Mazzone, 2015), as opposed to the Sicilian of Fredy Garozzo (Garozzo, 2010), who, preferring the usage of dialect, was more faithful to the film transposition. Kaballà, therefore, shows a greater deference to Verga's poetic dictates: the verist writer, in fact, expressed his own

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that were anti-clerical or anti-governmental. Even Mosbacher's second translation in the 1950s uses, as a source, a 'mutilated' Italian version of Verga's novel curated by Nardi in 1940 for the Mondadori School Edition (Caturegli, 1982: 37–41).

<sup>10</sup>Author of songs for well-known Italian pop interpreters (Raf, Eros Ramazzotti, Ron). In 1990 he writes, with music by Nino Rota, the lyrics in Sicilian for the famous serenade sung in the film *The Godfather Part III*, directed by Francis F. Coppola (Farinotti, 2023: 742).

anti-dialectality, rejecting a possible transposition of *I Malavoglia* into Sicilian proposed by the poet Di Giovanni, as noted above<sup>11</sup>.

The novella *La roba*, taken from the collection *Novelle rusticane*, inspired the song *Ninna Nanna di Mazzarò* (Lullaby of Mazzarò), written and performed in 2006 by Caparezza<sup>12</sup>. The song takes up the protagonist Mazzarò and turns him into a symbol of unyielding accumulators produced by capitalist society, offering an interesting example of the transposition of Verga's literary production and his underlying themes into popular culture and the collective imagination. In the refrain, the questions posed in Verga's novella to the farmers working the fields are revisited and adapted to contemporary times; for example: "Whose are these lands? [...] - Mazzarò's [...] And here? Mazzarò's" (Verga, 1883: 108), referring to the property of the protagonist in Verga's text, becomes in Caparezza's song "Whose pensions are they? Mazzarò's [...] The utilities? Mazzarò's" (Caparezza, 2006). Additionally, Verga himself is mentioned (line 10) as a writer who demystifies the false myth of *roba* (that is, the greed for wealth) and denounces the accumulators. The text expresses a reversal of the lullaby that traditionally should induce sleep, while the song explicitly urges the child, symbolizing the younger generations, not to sleep but to remain vigilant, to maintain a strong critical sense to safeguard against men like Mazzarò, who spend their lives accumulating wealth with insatiable greed. Caparezza proposes a kind of antiphrastic reading, in line with Verga's stylistic choices that intentionally disorient the readers through regression and estrangement, prompting them to question and overturn the perspective of the popular narrator (Luperini, 1976). The famous opening of the novella *Rosso Malpelo* is emblematic in this sense: "He was called Malpelo because he had red hair; and he had red hair because he was a mean and bad boy, who promised to turn into a first-rate scoundrel" (Verga, 1982: 65).

More contemporary sounds prevail in the rap by Anastasio<sup>13</sup> titled *Rosso Malpelo*. The track is taken from his first EP, *Disciplina Sperimentale*, released in 2015 under the pseudonym Nasta MC. The author reproduces the novella almost verbatim within the lyrics (Anastasio, 2015), appropriating the expressive realism characteristic of Verga's language (such as *rena traditora*, a Sicilian expression that can be literally translated as "untrustworthy red sand" and refers to the red

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<sup>11</sup> See note 4.

<sup>12</sup> Singer-songwriter from Puglia, winner of the Best Italian Album award at the 2021 *Rockol Awards*.

<sup>13</sup> He began his career releasing tracks on YouTube and in 2018 won the talent show *X-Factor*. Drawing inspiration from hip-hop and freestyle, in his lyrics he reflects on social issues, contaminating literature and pop culture.



sand falling down suddenly and sweeping over miners), and mixing it with modern slang (for example he uses *vecchio* [old man] to refer to his father). In the outro of the musical piece, he also completely takes up the conclusion of the original novella (Verga, 1881: 123) and recites it:

*Così si persero persino le ossa di Malpelo  
E i ragazzi della miniera abbassano la voce  
Quando parlano di lui nei sotterranei  
Che hanno paura di vederselo comparire dinnanzi  
Coi capelli rossi e gli occhiacci grigi*<sup>14</sup>(Anastasio, 2015).

#### 4. FINAL REFLECTIONS

Examining the diverse forms of adaptation identified in the field of contemporary music related to Verga's works, some objective themes of reflection emerge.

First of all, it can be observed that the artistic manifestations discussed favor a selection of texts: not all of Verga's oeuvre is subject to modern reinterpretation; rather, the various performances are mainly oriented towards certain verist works. Among these, in addition to the novel *I Malavoglia*, often revisited through the mediation of Visconti's film, only a few novellas from *Vita dei campi* (such as *La Lupa* and *Rosso Malpelo*), and less frequently from *Novelle rusticane* (*La roba*) are included. The late-Romantic literary production of Verga is practically nonexistent, but it was more appreciated by the Umbertine public contemporaneous with the Catanian writer. This artists' choice in their reinterpretations is influenced by the impact of Verga's literary canonization and the consequent inclusion of his works in school programs: curricular studies focus on the Sicilian writer's knowledge, emphasizing his veristic works (De Blasi, 2016: 403, 409), but neglecting his earlier and later narrative production.

Another aspect that emerges from a review of musical revisitations is that the international echo of Verga's production seems to be limited: the *Mediterranean Voices* performance appears to be an exception. Verga might not be pleased to learn that the opera *Cavalleria rusticana* by Pietro Mascagni is better

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<sup>14</sup>“And so even the bones of Malpelo were lost, and the lads of the pit lower their voices when they speak of him in the workings, terrified lest he should appear before them, with his red hair and his wicked grey eyes” (Verga, 1984: 85).

known worldwide than his narrative production<sup>15</sup>: the *Intermezzo* of the opera was even inserted into the soundtrack of the famous film *The Godfather Part III*, where a performance of Mascagni's work is part of the final sequence.

The main characteristic that unites the different musical performances can be traced back to the reflection of the stylistic and thematic experimentalism of Verga's verist writing. Modern artists take up some particular aspects of Verga's linguistic innovation, such as the skillful utilization of diamesic variations<sup>16</sup>: expressive differentiation, according to the expressive medium used, in fact, was adopted by Verga as a primary stylistic canon, alongside diatopia, "to be functional to his inexhaustible literary experimentation" (Alfieri & Riccardi, 2020: 20). Moreover, Verga's themes surface in the modern musical rewritings examined, often without betraying, but rather enhancing the veristic writer's lesson. One of these is represented by the struggle for life, fueled by social Darwinism present in naturalism and strongly felt at the end of the nineteenth century in the archaic Sicilian world (De Vito, 1941); it is revealed to be highly relevant even today in the globalized world founded on a battle for economic dominance of man over man. Transpositions of novellas such as *La Lupa* and *Rosso Malpelo* seem to draw on the recovery of the archetypal dimension of emotions, including the most extreme ones like violence and jealousy, which Verga proposed by rejecting any accentuation of pathetic or morbid elements<sup>17</sup>; they also demonstrate an attraction to the ability, characteristic of Verga's literature, to give voice to the complex relationship between victims and executioners, not in a Manichean or stereotypical manner<sup>18</sup>, but by eliminating any moralistic intent and thus urging the audience to engage a hermeneutic effort through the verist method<sup>19</sup> based on regression and estrangement<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>Verga, disappointed by the limited recognition of his qualities as a writer, would have said: "For whom should I write? Of what I have written, only *Cavalleria rusticana* survives, and not by my virtue, but by Mascagni's. I carry those pages around like a noose around my neck!" (Parenti, 2022: 143)

<sup>16</sup>See, for example, § 3.1, about *Mediterranean Voices*.

<sup>17</sup> See note 4.

<sup>18</sup>As in the adaptations of *La Lupa*, especially in the performance by Susanna Beltrami, where the characters represent all complexity of human behavior, not decoded as simple opposition of good and evil, without emphasizing poignant elements.

<sup>19</sup>Baldi characterizes regression as a "consciously, critically used technical process to achieve certain cognitive and expressive goals, in obedience to a precise definition of reality" (Baldi, 1980: 75–77). Luperini emphasizes the value of Verga's estrangement as a refined cognitive tool, "a way to grasp the essence of reality, its objective absurdity and unlivability, and at the same time its relentless and inevitable necessity" (Luperini, 1976: 27, 70)

The best musical performances, therefore, combine, in an effective syncretism, the concept of realism as a method<sup>21</sup> and Verga's experimentation, which is evident not only in the correction and rewriting of his own texts, but also in the transcoding into different genres and new expressive forms. It is essential to remember that this experimentation, far from being an end in itself, is dictated by the need for communication and cultural mediation towards the audience, more evident in Verga—as noted by Gabriella Alfieri—than in “certain contemporary authors who, despite talking so much about the sociability of art, flaunt linguistic alchemies useful only for showing off their verbal opulence” (Alfieri, 1980: 294).

Certainly, in that phase of attenuation in the critical debate referred to by Luperini, re-readings of Verga's works in contemporary music, not only limited to the Sicilian regional context but more broadly, show that Verga's realism, which urges us to “replace our minds with our eyes” to be “frankly and effectively true” (Verga, 1984: 80), helps us interpret current affairs and also flows into new forms of communication.

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## THE VERIST VERGA IN CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

### Summary

Our work aims to integrate the interpretative horizon, widely consolidated in the reading of Verga's literary production —focused on capturing the philosophical, philological-linguistic, stylistic, and comparative components—through a new perspective that analyzes the adaptations and rewritings of the Catanian author's verist works with a dual purpose: to implement a critical methodology aimed at enhancing the interdisciplinarity of the human sciences and to highlight the verist Verga's innovative experimentalism through the transpositions of his work into contemporary culture. In the intricate landscape of interpretative misadventures related to the most prominent representative of Verismo, there is an attenuation of critical debate on the Catanian writer with ethical-civic implications, along with a decline of his influence on contemporary literature, starting from the late 1970s. However, that phase seems to correspond to a progressive widening of cultural interest in Verga's verist narrative, with transpositions of his works into different expressive forms between the late twentieth century and the new millennium. In relation to

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<sup>20</sup>As, for example, in the anti-lullaby by Caparezza, a lullaby used in an antiphastic manner, with an estrangement effect.

<sup>21</sup>On the concept of Verismo (which Verga defines as ‘naturalism’) as a method, Verga expressed himself in a famous interview given to Ugo Ojetti: “Naturalism [...] is not a thought, but a way of expressing thought [...] Naturalism is a method [...] naturalism is form” (Ojetti, 1895: 66–68).

the aforementioned period, therefore, some reinterpretations of the writer's production are examined, without claiming to be exhaustive, in the musical domain. These re-readings, with their plurality of forms, attest to a substantial valorization not only of Verga's verist works but also of their underlying experimentalism, emphasized especially by recent critical insights and captured through the most effective transpositions. Alongside performances of theatre, music and dance, which often propose contaminations between different music genres, the songs inspired by Verga's verist narrative range from the novel *I Malavoglia* to novellas. Revisitation of Verga's works in contemporary music reveals selective attention to specific texts and a still-limited diffusion mainly within national boundaries, with the exception of *Mediterranean Voices*. The best musical performances reflect the verist writer's expressive innovation, capable of exploring ever-relevant themes and giving voice to complex human relationships. But above all, by skillfully integrating the concept of realism with Verga's experimental approach, they stimulate the audience to critical reflection, to that interpretative effort that the Etruscan writer intended to provoke through the verist method.

*Keywords:* Verismo, Verga, adaptation, contemporary music, transposition, transcoding, actualization.

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