

## MEANINGS LOST IN TRANSLATION BETWEEN ITALY AND LATIN AMERICA: “YO NO TE PIDO LA LUNA” AND “NO ME AMES”

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper we seek to investigate the loss of emancipatory meanings undergone by the lyrics of two Italian songs upon their translation/adaptation into Castilian Spanish for Latin American and Spanish audiences. In particular, we compare [1] Fiordaliso’s “Non voglio mica la luna” (1984), with its Mexican cover “Yo no te pido la luna” by Daniela Romo (1984); and [2] Alejandro Baldi’s “Non amarmi” (1992), with Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony’s US version “No me ames” (1999). We observe that, while the former turns from a proud assertion of female sexuality and independence into a plea for pure and unconditional love in the process of translation and adaptation, the latter tackles important issues related to blindness and disability in the original, which are totally absent from the cover. After unveiling these fundamental differences, we interrogate the intricate web of market forces and power relations at stake in these processes.

**KEYWORDS:** song lyrics; adaptation; postmodernity; disability; feminism

## SIGNIFICADOS PERDIDOS EM TRADUÇÕES ENTRE A ITÁLIA E A AMÉRICA LATINA: “YO NO TE PIDO LA LUNA” E “NO ME AMES”

**RESUMO:** Neste trabalho pretendemos investigar a perda de significados emancipatórios sofrida pelas letras de duas canções italiana nas suas respectivas traduções/adaptações em espanhol para o público latino-americano e espanhol. Em particular, comparamos [1] “Non voglio mica de la luna” de Fiordaliso (1984) com a sua versão mexicana “Yo no te pido la luna” de Daniela Romo (1984) e [2] “Non amarmi” de Alejandro Baldi e Francesca Alotta (1992), com a versão de Jennifer López e Marc Anthony, “No Me Ames” (1999). Observamos que, enquanto no caso [1] passa-se de uma orgulhosa afirmação de sexualidade e independência feminina a uma súplica por amor puro e incondicional, no caso [2] a canção original aborda questões importantes relacionadas à cegueira e à deficiência, questões que são totalmente ausentes da versão em espanhol. Após desvelar essas diferenças fundamentais, interrogamos a intrincada rede de forças de mercado e relações de poder que estão em jogo neste processo.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** letras de canções; adaptações; pós-modernidade; deficiência; feminismo

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## Introduction

In this paper we seek to compare two famous Italian songs with their respective covers in Spanish, released in Latin America. In particular, we pair up:

(1) “Non voglio mica la luna” (FORNACIARI, ALBERTELLI & MALEPASSO, 1984), performed by Fiordaliso, with its Mexican cover “Yo no te pido la luna” (ROMO ET AL., 1984), by Daniela Romo; and

(2) “Non amarmi” (BALDI, BIGAZZI & FALAGIANI, 1992), performed by Aleandro Baldi and Francesca Alotta, with the associated cover recorded by Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony, by the title of “No me ames” (BALLESTEROS et al., 1999).

We want to reflect on the circumstances by which, in the two Latin American versions, the original emancipatory discourses that characterised the two Italian songs disappear, only to give way to more generic remarks about romantic love.

### “Non voglio mica la luna” and “Yo no te pido la luna”

Fiordaliso’s “Non voglio mica la luna” was released in Italy in 1984, and ranked 5th at the Sanremo Music Festival of the same year. The song sold more than 6 million copies and was covered by around 15 different artists (FIORDALISO, 2012). The most successful cover of “Non voglio mica la luna” has been Daniela Romo’s “Yo no te pido la luna”, released in Mexico in 1984, which quickly became popular in Latin America.

Eventually, the cover “Yo no te pido la luna” remained an iconic tune in the Latin American musical scene. To understand the importance of this work, one should consider the number of additional covers, most of which are in Spanish and retain the same lyrics as in Romo’s version. One of the last covers was released in 2014 by Colombian band Bip and consists of a merengue-plancha version of the song, popular in fitness classes worldwide. Other recent covers include the ones that were released in Argentina by La K’onga (2005), in Chile by Javiera Mena (2006), in Mexico by Jeans (2006), and in Spain by Sergio Dalma (2011) and Pastora Soler (2011). Romo’s cover also inspired a Colombian soap opera, *Yo no te pido la luna* (GONZÁLEZ, 2010).

Fiordaliso’s original “Non voglio mica la luna” was written by Adelmo Fornaciari (aka Zuccherò), Vincenzo Malepasso, and Luigi Albertelli, is based on proud assertions of female sexuality, calls for independence and rejections of socially imposed expectations of fidelity to one single partner. Although the singer asserts her erotic

passion for the partner, she refuses to be subjected to their exclusive ownership, and wants to spend some time by herself or with other lovers.

On the contrary, in the cover “Yo no te pido la luna”, Daniela Romo expresses her desire to unite with her partner. The singer, who also translated the lyrics into Spanish, represents herself as a pure and ethereal lover, a representation that is reinforced by her appearance in the music video (ROMO, 1984), where she looks straight into the camera, as if talking directly to her lover himself. Her eyes look watery, and the audience might feel that she is on the verge of breaking up in tears, an impression which is suggested by the frequent camera close-ups on her face. She looks tall and slender, her hair is thigh-long and sleek and she wears a shiny long sequin dress. She stares at the camera and moves in a romantic and yet resolute manner, perhaps suggesting a firm desire to annihilate her own individuality into that of her lover.

Fiordaliso performed in “Non voglio mica la luna” at the Sanremo Music Festival 1984 displaying a rock star appearance. In a live performance broadcast on the TV channel Rete 4, during the post-Festival show “Supersanremo” (FIORDALISO, 1984a), her voice is scratchy, and her moves are resolute and angry. She wears a pair of striped white and navy blue trousers along with a men’s cut blazer, which contrast with her headband and curly hair. We claim that the most interesting aspect of this performance is the way she addresses her partner. After the phrase: I’m not crying for the moon / I’m just asking you to let me go / For me to go and make love / Without waiting for you (FORNACIARI, ALBERTELLI & MALEPASSO, 1984)<sup>3</sup>.

Fiordaliso points to the camera and utters the song’s repeated vocalisation “Na-haaa” in an astonishingly derisory attitude, as if playing a trick to her lover. Romo’s very same “Na-haa”, in the discursive context of the Spanish version of the song, sounds distant from Fiordaliso’s defiant agency (Figure 1).

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<sup>3</sup> Non voglio mica la luna / Chiedo soltanto di andare / Di andare a fare l'amore / Ma senza aspettarlo da te

# TROPOS: COMUNICAÇÃO, SOCIEDADE E CULTURA



Figure 1 – A snapshot of Fiordaliso’s performance on the left-hand side, vis-à-vis a snapshot of Romo’s performance on the right-hand side. Sources: <https://dai.ly/x29abnh> and <https://dai.ly/x2hm5bg>

Romo shivers for her man, and describes herself as being “fragile as paper” (“frágil y de papel”). While Fiordaliso wants to fly away only to quietly clean her own “feathers” (“pulirmi in pace le mie piume”, “mind my own business”), Romo wants to be held extremely tightly into her lover’s arms, to the point that there be no space in between their bodies. She wants to become one with him and to stick to his body as a “living tattoo” (“tatuaje vivo”).

[Fiordaliso] I’m not crying for the moon / I just want a moment/ To heat up my skin,/ Watch the stars, / And have more time for myself (FORNACIARI, ALBERTELLI & MALEPASSO, 1984)<sup>4</sup>

[Romo] I’m not asking you for the moon / I am just asking you for a moment / For you to redeem my skin / And steal that star for me / The one that we see / When we make love (ROMO et al., 1984)<sup>5</sup>

Fiordaliso wants to have some time alone, she wants to “heat up [her own] skin”, whilst Romo needs her lover to “redeem her skin”. The reference to redemption might refer to a condition of “original sin” innate to all women as per the biblical tradition, or might derive from the “fault” of having had previous lovers, which also link to the same association of sex to sin.

[Fiordaliso] I’d like to bolt away and mind my business / I would be able to rest and you / Don’t ever call me again (FORNACIARI, ALBERTELLI & MALEPASSO, 1984)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “Non voglio mica la luna / Chiedo soltanto un momento / Per riscaldarmi la pelle / Guardare le stelle / E avere più tempo per me”.

<sup>5</sup> “Yo no te pido la luna / Solo te pido el momento / De rescatar esta piel / Y robarme esa estrella / Que vemos tu y yo / Al hacer el amor”.

<sup>6</sup> “Io vorrei defilarmi per i fatti miei / Io saprei riposarmi ma tu / Non cercarmi mai più”.

[Romo] Kiss me in my lips you'll find heat / Feel me fragile as paper / This is how I shiver for you (ROMO et al., 1984)<sup>7</sup>

Fiordaliso demands freedom from her lover, whilst Romo shivers for them. The two approaches could hardly be more different, as the original assertion of strength and independence is turned into a quasi-masochistic plea to be subdued and “conquered” by the lover, who seems so strong and valorous to the point of being able to “steal a star” for her.

These last comparisons can prompt a deeper reflection on the different politics of sexuality, desire and sexual orientation that transpire from the two versions of the song. Undoubtedly, both versions avoid to lexically project the lover as a man, and this is obtained through the extensive use of pronouns of the second person singular, that are gender-neutral both in Italian (“tu”, “te”) and in Spanish (“tú”, “te”, “ti”). However, we contend, Romo’s imagery is imbricated with the gendered assumptions on which heteronormative models of sentimental relationships are based. While the male presence is never evoked by the pronouns in “Yo no te pido la luna”, it is constantly suggested by means of an imagery that is persistently gendered. In her work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler clarifies that

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire (BUTLER, 1999, p. 30-31).

Romo’s “Yo no te pido la luna” fixes desire around the gendered terms of heterosexual desire, whereby a discursively constructed “woman” deliberately bounds herself to an exclusive dependency from her (male) lover (“I only ask to give myself to you forever”<sup>8</sup>). On the contrary, Fiordaliso’s “Non voglio mica la luna” politicises desire to the point of projecting it outside the naturalised boundary of monogamic love (“for me to go and make love / Without waiting for you”), disrupting, in this way, the regulation of desire on which compulsory heterosexuality is predicated. By arguing this, we are not proposing to reproduce the old adage that connects homosexuality and infidelity: rather, we are referring to the fact that the protocol of compulsory

<sup>7</sup> “Bésame y en mis labios hallaras calor / Sienteme frágil y de papel / Como tiemblo por ti”.

<sup>8</sup> “Sólo pido entregarme para siempre a ti”

heterosexuality imposes monogamic desires on women while offering, at the same time, a series of escapes from the very same monogamic routine to men. This double standard is completely subverted in “Non voglio mica la luna”, and it is precisely in virtue of this subversion of heteronormative gender roles that both the song and Fiordaliso herself have become icons of the LGBTQ movements in Italy.

Obviously, there are blatant commercial reasons behind the dramatic meaning shift that occurred during the adaptation of the original Italian song in Spanish: Romo draws upon common love clichés and avoids the emancipatory discourses that are so prominent in the original version, primarily as they might not attract commercial consent in a large-scale market.

## “Non amarmi” and “No me ames”

Singer-songwriter Aleandro Baldi, duetting with Francesca Alotta (Figure 2), won the *Nuove Proposte* (“emerging artists”) section of the Sanremo Music Festival 1992 with the song “Non amarmi” (BALDI, BIGAZZI & FALAGIANI, 1992), written by Baldi himself together with Giancarlo Bigazzi and Marco Falagiani.



Figure 2 – Alotta and Baldi performing “Non amarmi” in 1992. Source: <https://bit.ly/2ABPCXJ>

“Non amarmi” deals with the barriers that society puts on love relationships when blindness is involved – as a blind man, the singer wants to quit his relationship

with the partner, in order to save her from the sufferings associated to his marginalised status.

The Spanish-language cover recorded by Jennifer Lopez and Mark Anthony, “No me ames” (BALLESTEROS et al., 1999), was released in 1999 as part of Lopez’s debut album *On the 6*. The translation of the lyrics, by Ignacio Ballesteros, subtly overlooks the disability issues discussed in Baldi’s original lyrics, and consists of a dialogue between two undecided lovers, where the male singer asks the female interlocutor not to love him because he feels unworthy of her love.

In Baldi’s song, the issues related to disability are subtly implied in the text, rather than flagged explicitly. The lyrics say: “don’t love me because I live in the shadow”<sup>9</sup> (BALDI, BIGAZZI & FALAGIANI, 1992), which, as we will discuss further on, is a clear reference to both visual impairment and to the social condition of blindness/disability. The rest of the song can be interpreted in light of this central suggestion, so that, for instance, the line that says “don’t love me just for the taste of something different” (BALDI, BIGAZZI & FALAGIANI, 1992) can be read as the singer’s refusal to be loved out of mere curiosity for his diversity. Later on, when the male singer continues imploring his lover not to love him, because he “will make you suffer, / with the winters that are sometimes in my heart” (BALDI, BIGAZZI & FALAGIANI, 1992), one could imagine that the evoked sufferings and the loneliness implied by the “winters” are related to the marginalisation experienced by the singer as a disabled person. Two other statements made in the lyrics reinforce this reference to marginalisation, namely, “don’t love me to change the world / because, in the end, the world can’t be changed”<sup>10</sup> (BALDI, BIGAZZI & FALAGIANI, 1992), and “words are pouring on this city / if people want, they can hurt a lot” (BALDI, BIGAZZI & FALAGIANI, 1992). Both these passages help illustrate the level of discrimination and social exclusion experienced by the disabled subject, who feels powerless against the barriers that hinder his access to society, and is also subjected to endless hatred by the members of his own local community.

Baldi’s song relies to a conception of disability that focusses on social oppression and implicitly rejects ableist, body-normative investigations of the phenomenon based on medical labels that, in turn, revolve around on the concept of “impairment”. By appropriating the terminology that has characterised, in the last forty

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<sup>9</sup> “Non amarmi perché vivo all’ombra”

<sup>10</sup> “Non amarmi per cambiare il mondo / tanto il mondo non si cambia”

years, disability-related activism and research, we can argue that Baldi subscribes to the “social model” of disability. According to Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer,

The significance of disability theory and practice lies in its radical challenge to the medical or individual model of disability. The latter is based on the assumption that the individual is 'disabled' by their impairment, whereas the social model of disability reverses this causal chain to explore how socially constructed barriers (for example, in the design of buildings, modes of transport and communication, and discriminatory attitudes) have 'disabled' people with a perceived impairment (BARNES & MERCER, 1997, p. 1)

In this sense, the aforementioned reference to living in the “shadow” made in “Non amarmi” is not to be read solely as an allusion to the physical condition of visual impairment. Certainly, the song draws upon the common association between blindness and darkness, which is so entrenched in the discursive order that regulates our society to be also abundantly internalised by blind people themselves (RODAS, 2009, p. 127-129). In “Non amarmi” however, the shadow could be also understood as a metaphor of a condition of social marginalisation. In this sense, we read Baldi’s reference to “shadow” as being comparable to the use of the same word made by Gloria Anzaldúa in her *Borderlands/La Frontera*: “shadow” is the product of the dual conscience of the dominant social groups (the gringos in Anzaldúa’s work, but also the able-bodied society in Baldi’s song), that deliberately projects minorities in a space of negation, silencing, repression and disavowal (ANZALDÚA, 1999, p. 108).

Importantly, the social exclusion from access imposed to Baldi stretches into the intimate sphere of sentimental affection, influencing not only the experience of the disabled subject, but also that of their immediate family circle. The song, as mentioned above, is in fact a blind man’s plea to his lover – a non-blind woman – to quit her relationship with him. In this context, again, the focus is on social barriers and not on physical impairment: “Non amarmi” is not suggesting that visual impairment is, in itself, a characteristic that is incompatible with sentimental love – rather, the song suggests that the social experience of blindness produces a “shadow”, into which the blind subject is forced together with the people who are close to them.

As anticipated above, “No me ames” disavows the focus on blindness that characterises “Non amarmi”. The removal of this link to the semantic sphere of disability is mainly operated in correspondence of the aforementioned reference to living “in the shadow”, present in the original song: in “No me ames”, this passage is



translated as “don’t love me because I’m lost” (BALLESTEROS et al., 1999).<sup>11</sup> Here the reference to blindness is replaced by the evocation of a generic condition of “sin”, or of “guilt”, which the male singing character has apparently fallen into, and that identifies him as “lost”.

The avoidance of the central reference to blindness determines a dramatic shift in the meaning of the song’s imagery. Thus, in “No me ames”, when diversity is mentioned, as in the line “don’t love me because you think / that I seem different” (BALLESTEROS et al., 1999),<sup>12</sup> the reference to disability is lost, despite the line is semantically similar to the original, as illustrated above. Similarly, the song contains references to the “winters” and to people’s gossips as in the original version, but in both cases these images lose their connection to the experience of disability-related social exclusion.

Whilst the Italian original song “Non amarmi” articulates a complex discourse on disability and on the social exclusion that derives from it, the translated version “No me ames” does not provide a specific reason as to why the relationship between the two lovers is undesirable. In this way, “No me ames” became arguably easier for the wider public to identify with, as the non-specificity of the situation may include a diverse range of real-life experiences. This might possibly be one of the reasons behind the success of this version of the song, which won one Latin Grammy Awards and kick-started Lopez’s successful music career. On the contrary, as we will discuss further on, Baldi did not maintain a prominent place in the Italian mainstream scene after the 1990s, despite the enormous success of “Non amarmi”.<sup>13</sup>

## Discussion

The task of ascertaining the reasons behind the loss of emancipatory meaning in these two Spanish-language covers is not simple, and we do not aim at coming up with any empirically relevant finding on the matter. Rather, we propose to interpret these two episodes as part of the same phenomenon, which we try to signify by drawing upon literature on decoloniality and on postmodernity.

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<sup>11</sup> “No me ames, porque estoy perdido”

<sup>12</sup> “No me ames, porque pienses / Que parezco diferente”

<sup>13</sup> We will investigate the reasons for the decline Baldi’s success in Italian mainstream music in a future work. For now, our informed hypothesis is that Baldi’s decline was connected to his blindness.

Primarily, we need to identify the nature of the relationship between the place where the two original songs were written, namely Italy, and the cultural area to which the translations are directed, that is, Latin America and the Spanish-speaking world. It is important to clarify that even if “No me ames” was released in the US, it mainly targeted Spanish-speaking minorities in the country and the wider Spanish-speaking world.

An unbalanced dialectics might well be at stake when a cultural trace is transposed from Italy into Latin America, in the form of a Eurocentric discourse that identifies the former as part of a global “centre” and the latter as generic “periphery”. According to Mignolo and Schiwy, since the age of colonialism “translation contributed to the construction of hierarchical dichotomies that have imposed certain rules and directionalities of transculturation” (2003, p. 14). In the context of the adaptation of the two Italian songs for the Latin American world examined in this work, we observed a meticulous removal of emancipatory meanings in the passage from centre to periphery. Among the “rules and directionalities” mentioned by Mignolo and Schiwy (2003, p. 14), we could thus identify a general norm that “tolerates” the existence of determinate liberation narratives in certain areas, only to “ban” the very same narratives in certain other areas. White European subjects, in other words, are allowed to produce, or to be subjected to, texts that promote female emancipation or the removal of the barriers faced by disabled people; at the same time, peripheral and racialised Latin American communities are prevented from accessing these same discourses. Italy, in this sense, assumes the role of an imperial “locus of enunciation” (MIGNOLO & SCHIWY, 2003, p. 15; MIGNOLO, 2009, p. 3), from which meanings are imposed to peripheral and subaltern places. These meanings permeate only selectively through the “web of imperial knowledge” (MIGNOLO, 2009, p. 20), in a way to leave out some important liberation narratives, which can only apply to the centre, and need to be concealed to the periphery.

While this centre-periphery dichotomy proves productive when applied to Italy vs. Latin America, it is important to note that we can also unveil a diametrically opposed relationship between “Non voglio mica la luna” and “Non amarmi” on one hand, and “Yo no te pido la luna” and “No me ames” on the other hand. As a matter of fact, considering the Italian-speaking world vs. the Spanish-speaking world, we are in the presence of a huge numerical disproportion in favour of the latter, which can count

more than half a billion speakers worldwide, against only 70 million speakers of Italian. In other words, the market for songs in Italian is pretty much limited to the space demarcated by the national Italian borders, while songs in Spanish can eventually reach an enormous number of people worldwide. This in turn means that songs in Spanish, regardless of style, genre and topic, are likely to have a larger global impact than songs in Italian – that is to say, songs in Spanish tend to be more commercial than songs in Italian.

On the grounds of this last consideration, it is possible to see the disappearance of meanings from the two original Italian songs to the two translated versions examined in this work precisely as the result of the higher marketability of the Spanish-language versions. According to Baudrillard, the loss of meaning is precisely the product of the unlimited reproduction of information involved in the process of global communication: in this process, signs are emptied of their meanings and become mere simulacra (BAUDRILLARD, 1994, pp. 1-86). Importantly, in postmodern reality, this process does not spare emancipatory meanings, which, according to Jameson, are likely to be “disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it” (JAMESON, 1984, p. 87). As we have shown above with regards to the passage from “Non amarmi” to its Spanish-language version “No me ames”, a simple semantic modification in one salient passage of the lyrics triggered an inexorable and systematic emptying of all the political meaning of the original song. This emptying operates to such an extent that, as abundantly examined above, similar or even literally equivalent expressions in the two songs refer to specific blindness-related issues in “Non amarmi”, and to extremely generic circumstances in “No me ames”. In this way, both the covers examined in this work manifest themselves precisely as simulacra of the two originals.

## **Afterthoughts: “Non voglio mica la luna” and “Non amarmi” in the Italian context**

In this paper, we have focussed on the diatopic disappearing of emancipatory meanings from “Non voglio mica la luna” and “Non amarmi”, upon their translation and recontextualisation in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking world. While this is the focus of our analysis, by no means we want to suggest that these songs, and/or the public personas of their respective interpreters, have been consistently consumed in

Italy as markers of identitarian affirmation and political liberation. Nor we want to suggest that Italian society has consistently accepted and supported the ideas that the two songs put forward.

Certainly, “Non voglio mica la luna”, as mentioned above, has become an iconic LGBTQ anthem in Italy, to the point of becoming the battle chant of the Torino Pride 2012 (MIGLIARDI, 2012). The durable iconicity of the song outlives Fiordaliso’s fame at mainstream level, which has constantly declined in the last three decades, regardless of the singer’s constant production and of her distinguished LGBTQ commitment.

A detail that has not been at the forefront of our analysis of the differences between Fiordaliso’s “Non voglio mica la luna” and Daniela Romo’s “Yo no te pido la luna” is the fact that, shortly after Romo’s recording of the cover, Fiordaliso released her own Spanish-language interpretation of the song, which however retained exactly the same words as Romo’s version (FIORDALISO, 1984b). The song is complemented by a music video, so that we may fully appreciate the sharp contrast between the defiant agency of Fiordaliso’s performance and the watered-down lyrics of the translated version.

Another interesting detail that we have only briefly mentioned regarding “Non voglio mica la luna” is the fact that the piece was written by three men, namely Zucchero, Malepasso and Albertelli. If this detail, on the one hand, is symptomatic of the general androcentricity of music composition and song-writing, on the other hand it might signal a further dislocation of desires of female liberation from being centred on the “woman”, understood as a subject produced within the binary prescribed by compulsory heterosexuality (cf. BUTLER, 1999, p. 3-44).

The trajectory of Aleandro Baldi and of his song “Non amarmi” deserve a more detailed explanation. After the triumph of “Non amarmi” with Francesca Alotta in 1992, Baldi won Sanremo again in 1994, in the main *Campioni* (“established artists”) section. On that same year, blind singer Andrea Bocelli won the *Nuove Proposte* section. The fact that two blind artists had won the two top awards of the Festival sparked nationwide polemics based on the allegation that the artists had won out of pity and victimism (GIANNOTTI, 2005, p. 21). An article by Roberto Giallo (pen-name of Alessandro Robecchi), published in those days on the newspaper *L’Unità*2, is a perfect example of such allegations:

Whichever way you look at it, the 44<sup>th</sup> edition of the Sanremo Music Festival will be remembered as “the festival of the blind”, and it is better to talk about this immediately, avoiding any sacralisation, without stupid victimisms and without many frills [...]. Both the young Bocelli and the more experienced Baldi had certainly what it took to win, or at least they had what it takes in this Sanremo circus. However, it needs to be added – even just *en passant*, and without belittling anyone – that this poor country that still takes pleasure in the world’s most old-fashioned song festival has a burdensome guilty conscience towards those who are diverse and unlucky, and this must have influenced the juries in some way (GIALLO, 1994, p. 11).<sup>14</sup>

While Giallo/Robecchi is desperate to declare his detachment from the events by constantly diminishing both the Festival and its winners, what transpires from these vitriolic lines is precisely an intense resentment for the memorable result achieved by Baldi and Bocelli. Importantly, the utilisation of lexical resources that have to do with difference, bad luck, pity, etc., invisibilises the first and foremost notion that is at stake when it comes to describing disability: namely, *oppression*.

Since the 1994 Sanremo victory, Baldi’s career has constantly declined. As claimed by Baldi himself, at one point it was decided that it had to be either him or Bocelli, “as two of them together is one too many”<sup>15</sup> (BALDI apud DI CARO, 2009):

They told me about this when, strangely, some doors began to close. Well, in fact, I was gathering this indirectly, because nobody will ever tell you that you’re not getting any jobs because one blind person is enough. However, I never wanted to look into this fully. I never cared about my relationships with the elites and the music labels, and I’m not after money (BALDI apud DI CARO, 2009).<sup>16</sup>

After all, this same climate of brutal aversion against any form of positive achievement obtained by disabled people, summarised in the Italian word *pietismo* (a conjunction of “pity” and “victimism”), was ruthlessly expressed, in those same years, by comedy punk band Skiantos, in their track “Calpesta il paralitico” (“Step on the paralytic”). In the song, after a spoken statement against “the rhetoric of fake kindness

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<sup>14</sup> “In qualunque modo la si metta il festival di Sanremo edizione numero 44 passerà alla storia come «il festival dei ciechi», e conviene subito parlarne con la laicità del caso senza pietismi stupidi e troppi ricami. [...] Sia il giovane Bocelli che l’ormai navigato Baldi hanno i numeri per vincere il festival, almeno quei numeri che il circo sanremese richiede. Ma si aggiunga, anche *en passant* e senza togliere meriti a nessuno, che questo povero Paese che ancora si bea della sagra canora più demodé del mondo ha sensi di colpa pesanti come montagne nei confronti dei diversi e degli sfortunati, cosa questa che in qualche modo avrà pesato sulle giurie”

<sup>15</sup> “o Baldi o Bocelli, perché due così insieme sono troppi”

<sup>16</sup> “Me l’hanno detta questa storia mentre cominciavano stranamente a chiudersi alcune porte, o meglio mi arrivava per vie traverse perché direttamente nessuno ti dirà mai che non vieni più invitato perché di cieco ne basta uno. Ma io non ho mai voluto approfondire. Non ho mai curato i rapporti con i vertici o le case discografiche e non ambisco al denaro. Ho sempre pensato soltanto alla musica”

against the handicapped” (TESTONI & ANTONI, 1993), the band unleashed a series of incitation to commit violence against disabled people:

Step on the paralytic, / harass the paraplegic, / damage the psychotic, / hit the catatonic, / hassle the hypochondriac, / detest the microcephalus, / run over the visually impaired, / who won't even notice anything. / I bet you've never ever thought / of knocking down a handicapped (TESTONI & ANTONI, 1993)<sup>17</sup>

Generally acclaimed as a goliardic and acute piece, this horrifying song does in fact verbalise a collective cultural hatred against disabled people that, incidentally, may also suffice to explain Baldi's oblivion in the Italian showbiz as well as the total depoliticisation that was conducted upon translating “Non amarmi” into “No me ames”.

In fact, precisely this scornfulness and this depoliticisation are at the basis of present-day recollections of Baldi and his work, ranging from bad jokes about blindness to internet memes portraying or evoking his characteristic sunglasses. Among other things, a comedy cover of “Non amarmi” by singer-songwriter Caparezza was included in Checco Zalone's film *Ma che bella giornata* (NUNZIANTE, 2011). In the film, Caparezza casts “Non amarmi” as an unbearably sappy song and cruelly mocks it in his performance, which is in turn inserted in a context of stereotypical representations of Southern Italians.

## Final Remarks

Caparezza is known as a political artist, and his cruel depreciation and mockery of “Non amarmi” is clearly based on the unfair assumption that Baldi's song is just a bad sentimental song lacking any political content. In this sense, the ferocious – and undeniably ableist – disregard exerted on Baldi's work by Caparezza's performance is no less violent than the destruction of meaning exerted upon the translation from the original “Non amarmi” into the Spanish version “No me ames”. This is to say that Italian political songs about the liberation of oppressed identities are not just in danger of being translated, depoliticised and turned into global hits, as they are in fact likely to be subjected to mockery and depreciation within the same boundaries of the Italian-speaking world. At the same time, the analogous trajectories of “Non voglio mica la

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<sup>17</sup> “Calpesta il paralitico / molesta il paraplegico / danneggia lo psicotico / travolgi il catatonico / Provoca l'ipocondriaco / detesta il microcefalo / investi il non vedente / non si accorgerà di niente / Scommetto non hai mai pensato / di pestare un handicappato”

luna” and “Non amarmi” upon their cultural dislocation across the Atlantic (and then back to the Iberian peninsula) are certainly part of the same phenomenon, which has undoubtedly to do with market forces as well as with persistent webs of imperial/patriarchal/ableist knowledge. We thus conclude by acknowledging the existence of concomitant drives, that operate to selectively silence and efface narratives of resistance and emancipation along specific portions of temporal and spatial axes – “Yo no te pido la luna” and “No me ames”, as well as the scorn that Baldi had to constantly endure during his career, are certainly the product of this effacement.

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