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LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF [NINNA-NANNA DI MADONNA]
PART OF THE CALABRIAN DIALECT POEM LA NOTTE DI NATALE
BY FR. VINCENZO PADULA (1819-1893)

Abstract

The aim of this article is to present a language analysis of one of the most beautiful dialectal poems of Fr. V. Padula. The dialect used by Fr. V. Padula is called the Acrian dialect (spoken in the city of Acri, Cosenza Province) and it belongs to a group of northern Calabrian dialects. The lullaby [*Ninna-nanna di Madonna*], sung by Holy Mary, is the second part of the poem *La Notte di Natale*. Fr. V. Padula was the first artist in history to bring the Acrian dialect to such a level of lyricism and piety. The Acrian dialect served him as a testimony to the Calabrian society and culture. [*Ninna-nanna di Madonna*] includes some biblical references to the main truths of the Christian faith.

Keywords: Southern Italy, Fr. Vincenzo Padula, Calabrian dialects, Italian literature, poetry

JĘZYKOWE ASPEKTY [KOŁYSANKI MADONNY] CZĘŚCI POEMATU W DIALEKCIE KALABRYJSKIM „NOC BOŻONARODZENIOWA” KS. VINCENZO PADULA (1819-1893)

Abstrakt

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza lingwistyczna jednego z najpiękniejszych dialektalnych wierszy ks. V. Padula. Dialekt, którym posługiwał się ks. V. Padula, nazywany jest „dialektem akryjskim” (używany w mieście Acri, Prowincja Cosenza) i zaliczany jest do grupy dialektów północno-kalabryjskich. Kołysanka [*Kołysanka Madonny*], śpiewana przez Najświętszą Maryję Pannę, stanowi drugą część poematu *La Notte di Natale* [*Noc Bożonarodzeniowa*]. Nikt wcześniej przed ks. Padulą nie był w stanie wynieść dialektu akryjskiego na szczyty liryzmu i poezji. Wzmiankowany dialekt

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posłużył poecie jako świadectwo o społeczności i kulturze kalabryjskiej. [*Kołysanka Madonny*] zawiera w sobie niektóre biblijne odniesienia do głównych prawd wiary chrześcijańskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Włochy Południowe, ks. Vincenzo Padula, dialekty kalabryjskie, literatura włoska, poezja

1. STATUS QUAESTIONIS

Fr. Vincenzo Padula (Acri, 25th March 1819 - Acri, 8th January 1893) was a priest, literary and poet. His compositions in verse have been published on various occasions (magazines, ephemeris, occasional printings for weddings or religious festivals, etc.) and have been collected in *Vincenzo Padula - Poesie Varie e Dialettali* (1930) after his death (cfr. Liguori 2020).

The poem *La Notte di Natale* is rhythmic and colourful in popularity, but only at a certain moment. In the second part, that of the [*Ninna-nanna di Madonna*] sung by Holy Mary to her Child, according to De Giorgi: “the true poetry erupts sudden and high, and the tone becomes dramatic for a long. The presentiment of torture and Calvary, which are in the future of that little Child, breaks the ecstasy and sweetness to give way to emotion. Of course, there is some rhetoric in all this, also the artifice, but it is undeniable, that the effect is never lacking. However it is certain, that no one ever was capable, as the Fr. V. Padula, to carry the Calabrian dialect a such high summits of lyricism and piety, mixed with universal sentiment” (De Giorgi 2014, 93-94).

The poem *La Notte di Natale* consists of 27 sextines *ottonari*, 19 sapphic strophes and 7 octaves. The poem is not a composition, in which the only expressive form has been taken by the people - the Acrian dialect of XIX century. *La Notte di Natale*, and especially [*Ninna-nanna di Madonna*], is the transposition into narrative verses, which the grandmothers used to do, in the approach of the Christmas (cfr. Abbruzzo 1993, 37). It is to be said, that the poem is a peculiar theological treatise, written in figurative language in the Acrian dialect.

The Acrian dialect served Fr. V. Padula to know and testify the Calabrian society and culture until today, and not only in his own town, Acri, for the various religious manifestations around Christmas, but also in Italy, as the example of the poetic value of the dialectal poetry too. He recorded not only the dialect of the more educated classes, but he focused more attention to the dialect of the subaltern classes, whose rich inventory of dialectal voices designated the mentality, customs, culture, beliefs and moments of life of ordinary people.

2. [NINNA-NANNA DI MADONNA] – TEXT IN ACRIAN DIALECT AND TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH

Duormi, bellezza mia, duormi e riposa, / Chiudi 'a vuccuzza chi pari 'na rosa, / Duormi scuitàtu, cà ti guardu iu, / Zuccaru miu.

Sleep, my beauty, sleep and rest, / Close the little mouth, which looks like a rose, / Sleep peacefully, I'll wake you, / My sugar.

Duormi, e chiudi l'occhiuzzu tunnu tunnu; / Cà quannu duormi tu, dormi lu munnu; / Cà lu munnu è de tia lu serbituri, / Tu sì 'u Signuri.

Sleep, and close the little eye round round; / When you sleep, sleep the world; / That the world is yours servant, / You are the Lord.

Dormi lu mari, e dormi la timpesta, / Dormi lu vientu e dormi la furesta, / E puru 'intra lu 'nfiernu lu dannatu / Sta riposatu.

The sea sleeps, and the storm sleeps, / The wind sleeps, and the forest sleeps, / And even in hell the damned / Is resting.

Ti tiegnu 'mbrazza, e sientu 'na paura; / Cà Tu si Diu, ed iu sugnu criatura, / E mi sguilla allu sinu, e vò 'nfassatu / Chi mà cnatu.

I hold You in my arms, and I feel a fear, / You are God, and I am a creature, / And my breast wanders, and wants to be bandaged / I was created by You.

Occhiuzzi scippa-cori, jativinni! / 'U' mi guardati, cà fazzu li pinni'. / Na vuci 'nterna, chi la sientu iu sula, / Mi dici: Vula!

Eyes tears-hearts, go away! / Do not look at me, I'll put the pens on. / An intimate voice, that I feel alone, / It tells me - Go!

'A ninna 'è ss'uocchj tua m'ardi e m'abbaglia; / Tutta l'anima mia trema e ti squaglia; / Canta cum' 'u cardillu, e asciri fori / Mi vò lu cori.

The sleep of yours little eyes burns and dazzles me; / My whole soul trembles and melts; / Sing like the candlestick, and get out / My heart desires.

Ti viju dintra l'uocchi 'n autru munnu, / Ci viju 'n autru Paravisu 'n funnu: / Sientu 'na cosa, chi mi fa morire, / Nè si pò diri.

I see another world in your eyes, / I see another Heaven at the bottom: / I feel something that makes me die, / It can't be described.

Chiudili, biellu, pe' pietà, e riposa; / Chiudi 'a vuccuzza chi pari 'na rosa: / Duormi scuitàtu, cà ti guardu iu, / Zuccaru miu.

Close them, beautiful, for mercy, and rest; / Close the small mouth that looks like a rose: / Sleep peacefully, I'll wake you, / My sugar.

U suannu è ghiuutu a cògliari jurilli, / Pe' fari 'na curuna a 'ssi capilli; / E 'ssa vuccuzza 'è milu cannameli / T'unta cu' meli.

Sleep has gone to collect little flowers, / To weave a crown for Yours hair; / And this little mouth of sugar cane / Will be greased with honey.

Ccu' 'n acu 'mmanu è ghiuutu supr' 'a luna / A cùsari li stilli ad una, ad una; / Pu' ti li mindi 'n canna pe ghiannacca, / E ci l'attacca.

With a needle in hand he went to the Moon / To sew the stars one-to-one; / Then he puts them around Yours neck as necklace, / And he attacks them to You.

Chi s'iti mo venuti a fari llucocu, / Angiuli 'è Diu, cu' chilli scilli 'è fuocu? / Mi voliti arrobbari 'u figliu miu, / Angiuli 'è Diu?

What have you come here to do, / Angels of God, with those wings of fire? / Do you want to kidnap my Son, / Angels of God?

Cantati, sì; ma 'n cielu 'u' b' 'u chiamati: / Aduratu, sì; ma 'u' b' 'u pigliati: / E Tu, bellezza, 'un fùjari cu' loru; / Si no, mi muoru.

Sing, yes; but in heaven you do not call Him: / Adore, yes; but do not take Him: / And You, Beauty, do not run away with them; / If not, I'll die.

Statti, trisuoru mia, cu mamma tua; / Mo chi ti tiegnu, nenti vuogliu cchiù; / Cu' Tia vuogliu lu munnu caminari / Sempri, e cantàri;

Stay, my Dear, with Your Mother; / Now having You, I want nothing more; / I want to fly the world with You / Singing forever;

E diri a tutti: Chissu è Figliu miu; / 'A mamma è povarella, 'u Figliu è Diu: / D'u cielu m'è shcoppatu 'ssu Bomminu / 'Intra lu sinu.

And to say to everyone: - This is my Son; / The Mother is poor, the Son is God; / From the heaven this Child fell / Into my womb.

Ma ch'aju dittu? E nun sacciu iu lu riestu? / T'ammucciu 'mpiettu, o Figliu mia, cchiu priestu: / U munnu è malandrinu!, e si t'appura, / Oh, chi sbentura!

What have I said? And do not I know the rest? / I hide you in the breast my Child: / The world is so perfidious!, and if it finds You, / Oh what a misfortune!

Pe' 'ssi capilli tua criscinu spini, / E pe' 'nchiovàri 'ssi jidita fini, / Piensu c' 'a forgia² mo vatti, e nun sa / Chillu chi fa.

For thorns Yours hair grow, / And these fine fingers to nail, / I hear the forge beats, and nobody does not know / Who does it.

'A senti dintr' 'u vuoshcu Tu 'ssa vuci? / Nun è lu vientu no chi si ci 'nfuci: / È la cerza chi grida «'U lignu miu / Cruci è de Diu!»

Do you hear this voice in the woods? / It is not the wind that penetrates by force: / And the oak cries «From my wood / Cross will be for God!»

Ah, nun chiàngiari, no! Pecchè o Bomminu, / Mi triemi cumu 'na rinnina 'n sinu? / Pe' mo, duormi scuitàtu: tannu, pua / C'è mamma tua.

Ah, do not cry, no! Why o Child, / Are you trembling like a swallow at the breast? / For now, sleep peacefully: then, / There's Your Mother.

Supra li vrazza mia, supr' 'i jinuocchi / Zumpa, âza 'a capu, de apirelli l'uocchi. / Quantu sì biellu! Chi ghiurillu spasu! / Dammi 'nu vasu! (Padula 1993, 64-68).

In my arms, on my knees / Skip, raise Your head, and open Your eyes. / How beautiful You are! Like a flourish flower! / Give me a kiss!

3. CALABRIAN DIALECTS AND THEIR ORIGINS

The expression “Calabrian dialects” defines the Romance language varieties spoken in the Italian region of Calabria. They belong to two different groups: the northern (Cosentino dialect - *u cusindinu*), a diasystem of the Neapolitan language [*e parràte calabbrise*]; the southern, a diasystem of the Sicilian language, and also identified as a “*tricalabrum*” [*i parrati calabbrisi*]. This linguistic division corresponds very roughly to the historical administrative division of Calabria: *Calabria Citeriore* - Latin Calabria, and *Calabria Ulteriore* - Greek Calabria (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 3-5).

² *Forgia* (French - *forge*) by extension indicates the blacksmith's workshop, called, therefore, *forgiatu* (cfr. Abbruzzo 1993, 68 - note 69).

If we would like to compare the dialects of southern Calabria with those spoken in northern Calabria, we can notice the strong contrasts. An example is the form of *perfetto indicativo*, which has two forms in the two different zones: in North-Calabria is similar to the Italian *passato prossimo*; in the South-Calabria remembers the Italian *passato remoto*, hence the great mistake to call this “*passato remoto*” also in Calabria (in reality it is exactly equivalent of the Latin *perfectum*, from which derives). In fact, even a non-remote action is expressed with *perfetto* (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 25-27).

The Calabrian dialects are rich of linguistic influences, due to colonization, domination and incursions of different peoples: Greeks, Romans, Arabs, French. The primary roots of dialects are the Latin and the Greek, but they have also a rich and various influences from the French (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 5-7).

The Latin represents the fundamental linguistic *substratum*. It should be noted, that the most ancient Latin terms appear mostly in northern Calabria, due to the fact, that in southern Calabria the latinization occurred more recently (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 39-54). Some examples of latinisms in Calabrian dialects: *crai* (northern Calabrian) - tomorrow - in Latin *cras*; *interimme* (northern Calabrian), *frammènti* / *'ntramenti* (southern Calabrian) - meanwhile - in Latin *interim*; *capistru* (northern Calabrian), *capizza* / *capu* (southern Calabrian) - halter - in Latin *capistrum*; *alare* (northern Calabrian), *farnijàri* / *casmiari* (southern Calabrian) - to yawn - in Latin *hio*, *oscito*.

The Greek is the other element strongly characterizing the Calabrian dialects. It is extraordinarily represented by the language spoken in the southern part. For a long time in most of the area the Grecanico - in some centers such as Bova, Roghudi, a few other towns in the Amendolea area and some districts of Reggio Calabria - was the most spoken language (cfr. Paternostro 2012, VI-VII).

The Greek language is abundantly represented in the dialect of southern Calabria. The findings are in many facts: the oppositions of voices to indicate the same object or animal or plant; the verbal construction has a precise Greek imprint in the southern Calabrian dialect; the Greek impression is easily traceable in many toponyms and surnames (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 27-39). Some examples: *batràci* / *agrofàcu* / *gianneja* (southern Calabrian), *ranùnchiulu* (northern Calabrian) - frog - in Greek *botrakòs*; *'bampuriddha* / *lampuridda* / *vampuriddha* (southern Calabrian), *culilùcida* (northern Calabrian) - firefly - in Greek *lampurida*; *'geramida* (southern Calabrian) - tile - in Greek *keràmìdion*; *ciràsa* / *'geràsa* / *i cires* (southern Calabrian) - cherries - in Greek *keràsa*.

The *arabismi*. The Saracens never exercised dominion in the current Calabria, limiting themselves to frequent raids on the coasts between the 10th and 11th centuries. Being the masters of Sicily, the Arabs exploited their privileged position to subject the coastal cities of Calabria to tributes and, in any case, to entertain trade and exchange relations (cfr. Paternostro 2012, IX-X). All this involved an acquisition of certain *arabismi*. For example: *zirra* / *zirru* / *giarra* (Calabrian dialect) - container for oil - in Arabic *zir*; *sciàbaca* / *sciàbachèju* (Calabrian dialect)

- fishing network - in Arabic *sabaka*; *limbiccu* / *muccu* (Calabrian dialect) - snout - in Arabic *al-ambiq*.

The *francesimi*. Calabria was under the Norman domination from 1060 up to almost the whole 12th century. In this period the words of Francophone derivation have penetrated the Calabrian vocabulary. It must be also remembered, that French is a neo-Latin language, and between 1266 and 1442 the house of Anjou held the Kingdom of Naples under its crown (cfr. Paternostro 2012, X). Some examples of *francesimi*: *abaciurra* / *abbaciurra* / *abbasciù* (Calabrian dialect) - lamp, lampshade - in French *abat-jour*; *accia* (Calabrian dialect) - celery - in French *ache*; *buàtta* (Calabrian dialect) - can - in French *boîte*; *perciàri* (Calabrian dialect) - to pierce, to penetrate - in French *percer*.

4. CHARACTERISTIC ISSUES OF THE CALABRIAN DIALECTS

It is interesting to present the conjugations of verbs „to be” [*Èssiri*] and „to have” [*Airi*] in the simple present tense. Be aware, that there is no neuter in both: Italian language and Calabrian dialects. The verb *Èssiri* [to be]: (*J*)èu *sugnu* - I am; *Tu(ni) si* - You are; *Iddhu, Iddha èsti* - He, She, It is; *Nu(i) simu* - We are; *Vu(i) sítu* - You are; *Iddhi sunnu* - They are. The verb *Airi* [to have]: (*J*)èu *haju* - I have; *Tu(ni) hai* - You have; *Iddhu, Iddha havi* - He, She, It has; *Nui aimu* - We have; *Vui aítu* - You have; *Iddhi hannu* - They have (cfr. Cattaneo 2009, 51-61).

Regarding the accent in Calabrian dialect, as Dorsa states, it follows the Latin accent, which takes place only in the penultimate and the antepenultimate syllable, rejecting any bony voice. There is also a freedom of accentuation in the words, often given to the Latin or Greek archaic forms; the pronunciation was left of the people will (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 20).

The dialect used by Fr. V. Padula to compose *La Notte di Natale* is to be called the Acrian dialect (spoken in the city of Acri, Cosenza Province), which belongs to the group of northern Calabrian dialects. The voices are identical to the Italian correspondents, less a strong nasal accentuation in the vowels, especially before *m* and *n* (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 7).

As Abbruzzo states in his commentary on *La Notte di Natale*, the preposition *in* connected with words beginning with *b*, transforms into a *double m* (*'m*) (cfr. Abbruzzo 1993, 65 - note 63). So we have for example: *mmrazza*, *mmucca*. This phenomenon is observed in the sentence: „*Ti tiegnu 'mbrazza, e sientu 'na paura*” - [*Ti tengo in braccio, e sento una paura*].

As Dorsa and De Rose state, the softening of the *b* in its corresponding labial *v* is another fact which indicates the ancient influence of the Greek language (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 8; De Rose 2012, 20): *vucuzza* - *bocca* [mouth]; *vasu* - *bacio* [kiss]; *spasu* - *sbocciato* [blossomed]. This phenomenon is observed in the sentence: “*Chiudi 'a vucuzza chi pari 'na rosa, / (...) Chi ghiurillu spasu! / Dammi 'nu vasu!*”.

The prevalence of *u* on *o* is to be observed (cfr. De Rose 2012, 21): *uocchj* - *occhi* [eyes]; *cardillu* - *cardello* [goldfinch]; *fazzu* - *faccio* [I do]; *viju* - *vedo* [I see].

This phenomenon is observed in the sentence: “*Ti viju dintra l’uocchi ‘n autru munnu, / Ci viju ‘n autru Paravisu ‘n funnu: / Sientu ‘na cosa, chi mi fa moriri*”.

Another linguistic phenomenon is predomination of *i* on *e* in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end of the words (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 9): *fimmina* - *femmina* [woman]; *sira* - *sera* [evening]; *siminare* - *seminare* [to sow]; *ishca* - *esca* [bait]; *asciri* - *uscire* [go out]. This phenomenon is observed in the sentence: “*Statti, trisuoru mia, cu mamma tua; / Mo chi ti tiegnu, nenti vuogliu cchiù; / Cu’ Tia vuogliu lu munnu caminari*”.

In the discussed dialectal poem, we have also the consonant *j* at the beginning of the words: “*Occhiuzzi scippa-cori, jativinni! / (...) U suannu è ghhiutu a cògliari jurilli, / (...) E pe’ ‘nchiovàri ‘ssi jidita fini, / (...) Supra li vrazza mia, supr’ ‘i jinuocchi*”. Where: *jativinni* - *andatevene* [go away]; *jurilli* - *fiorellini* [flowers]; *jidita* - *dita* [fingers]; *jinuocchi* - *ginocchia* [knees]. According to V. Dorsa, there are three sounds of the spirants (*j*, *v*, *s*), which Greek lost. Those sounds survived even more places of Calabria, especially in the regions bordering with the Basilicata region; sometimes the soft *j* passes into the structural or palatine sour *gh* (cfr. Dorsa 1876, 16).

As De Rose states, the *nd* group becomes *nnu* (cfr. De Rose 2012, 21). For example: „*Cà quannu duormi tu, dormi lu munnu*” - [che **quando** dormi tu, dorme il **mondo**]; „*Ti viju dintra l’uocchi ‘n autru munnu, / Ci viju ‘n autru Paravisu ‘n funnu*” - [Ti vedo negli occhi un altro **mondo**, / Vi vedo un altro **Paradiso in fondo**].

There are apheresis, elisions and syncope. It happens, that these phonetic phenomena occur in the same sentence. For example: “*Chiudi ‘a vuccuzza chi pari ‘na rosa*” - [chiudi **la** boccuccia, che sembra **una** rosa]; “*Tu sì ‘u Signuri*” - [Tu **sei** il Signore]; “*E puru ‘intra lu ‘nfiernu lu dannatu*” - [e perfino **nell’inferno** il dannato]; “*Chi m’è cnatu*” - [chi **m’ha** creato]; “*A ninna ‘e ss’uocchj tua m’ardi e m’abbaglia*” - [il sonno **di quest’occhietti** tuoi **m’arde** e **m’abbaglia**]; “*Ccu’ ‘n acu ‘mmanu è ghiutu supr’ ‘a luna*” - [con un ago in mano è andato **sulla** luna]; “*A sienti dintr’ ‘u vuoshcu Tu ‘ssa vuci?*” - [**la** senti **nel bosco** questa voce?] ecc.

The question of definite and indefinite articles in Calabrian dialect. The definite articles *il* turns into *u* or *lu*; *la* - *a*; *lo* - *u*; *gli* - *i*; *le* - *i* (cfr. De Rose 2012, 19). The example from the [Ninna di Madonna]: „*U suannu è ghhiutu a cògliari jurilli*” - [**il** sonno è andato a raccogliere **fiorellini**]; „*Mi vô lu cori*” - [mi vuole **il** cuore]; „*U’ mi guardati, cà fazzu li pinni*” - [non mi guardate, che metto **le** penne].

The indefinite articles: *un* turns into *nu* or *n*; *uno* - *nu*; *una* - *na* (cfr. De Rose 2012, 19-20). For example: „*Ti tiegnu ‘mbrazza, e sientu ‘na paura*” - [Ti tengo in braccio, e sento **una** paura]; „*Ti viju dintra l’uocchi ‘n autru munnu*” - [Ti vedo negli occhi **un** altro mondo].

The prepositions: *in* turns into ‘*n*; *con* - *ccu*; *per* - *ppe*’ or *pe*’. As for example: „*Ci viju ‘n autru Paravisu ‘n funnu*” - [vi vedo un altro **Paradiso in** fondo]; „*Ccu’ ‘n acu ‘mmanu è ghiutu supr’ ‘a luna*” - [**con** un ago in mano è andato a raccogliere **fiorellini**]; “*Chiudili, biellu, pe’ pietà, e riposa*” - [chiudili bello, **per** pietà, e riposa].

The pronouns: *che* turns into *chi*; [*per*]*ché* - *cà*; *questi* - '*ssi*'; *queste* - '*ssi*'; *questa* - '*ssa*'; *questo* - '*ssu*'. For example: „*Chiudi 'a vuccuzza chi pari 'na rosa*”; „*Cà quannu duormi tu, dormi lu munnu*”; „*Cà Tu si Diu, ed iu sugnu criatura*”; „*Pe' fari 'na curuna a 'ssi capilli*”; „*D'u cielu m'è shcoppatu 'ssu Bomminu*”.

The adverb *più* [more] turns into *chiù*: „*Mo chi ti tiegnu, nenti vuogliu cchiù*” - [*ora che ti ho, niente voglio più*]. As Abbruzzo states, *cchiù* is one of the many paragogues frequent in the old Acrian dialect (cfr. Abbruzzo 1993, 67 - note 68).

Because it is a lullaby for a small child, then there are diminutives and affectionate expressions: *occhiuzzu* - *occhiello* [little eye]; *vuccuzza* - *boccuccia* [little mouth]; *bellizza* - *bellezza* [beauty]; *zuccaru* - *zucchero* [sugar]; *locchiuzzu tunnu tunnu* - *locchietto tondo tondo* [the round little eye]; *'a vuccuzza chi pari 'na rosa* - *la boccuccia che sembra una rosa* [the little mouth that looks like a rose]; *trisuoru mia* - *tesoro mio* [sweetheart]; *mo chi ti tiegnu, nenti vuogliu cchiù* - *ora che ti ho, niente voglio più* [now that I have you, nothing I want more]; *chi ghiurillu spasu* - *che fiorellino sbocciato* [like a flourish flower]. In this way Fr. V. Padula expressed mother's love of Holy Mary to her Child.

5. BIBLICAL REFERENCES OF [NINNA DI MADONNA] AND THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

The term “theological figure” indicates an historical concrete fact, which announces another; the first event is interpreted as a prefiguration of the second, and the second - as fulfilment of the first. The figural interpretation (figurative language) interprets the stories narrated in the *Old Testament* as figures (or real prophecies) of the *New Testament*. This is the fourfold meaning of the Bible: an anagogical sense, a literal-historical sense, a figurative sense and an allegorical-moral sense. The theological figure can be considered as “halfway” between the symbol and the allegory, as it places something that represents and signifies another. It can be part of the allegory considered in its broadest sense, but differs from the other allegorical forms, as the signifying thing is as concrete as the meaningful thing. Even in the case of religious poetry one can speak of the figurative language, as the proper and characteristic language, taking into account its references to the biblical stories (cfr. Auerbach 1991, 190-212).

[*Ninna-nanna di Madonna*] includes in itself some biblical references to the main truths of the faith of Christianity. And this fact allows to consider the language of the poem as a figurative language - the biblical texts (even from *New Testament*) prefigure the words of Fr. V. Padula.

Figure of the Lord (eternal *Logos*), eternally existing with God-Father. In lullaby Holy Mary recognizes herself as His creation: “*Cà lu munnu è de tia lu serbituri, / Tu si 'u Signuri. / (...) Cà Tu si Diu, ed iu sugnu criatura, / (...) Chi mà cnatu. / (...) A mamma è povarella, 'u Figliu è Diu*” - [“That the world is yours servant, / You are the Lord. / (...) You are God, and I am a creature, / (...) I was created by You. / (...) The Mother is poor, the Son is God”].

These sentences were inspired by the following biblical passages: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3); “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17).

Figure of the Immaculate Conception³. Holy Mary says: “*D’u cielu mè shcoppatu ‘ssu Bomminu / ‘Intra lu sinu*” - [“From the heaven this Child fell / Into my womb”].

These words were inspired by the following biblical passages: “And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:30-35); “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

Figure of the announcement of the Lord’s Passion: “*Pe’ ‘ssi capilli tua criscinu spini, / E pe’ ‘nchiovàri ‘ssi jidita fini, / Piensu c’ ‘a forgia mo vatti, e nun sa / Chillu chi fa. / ‘A sienti dintr’ ‘u vuoshcu Tu ‘ssa vuci? / Nun è lu vientu no chi si ci ‘nfuci: / È la cerza chi grida «’U lignu miu / Cruci è de Diu!»*” - [“For thorns Your hair grow, / And these fine fingers to nail, / I hear the forge beats, and nobody does not know / Who does it. / Do you hear this voice in the woods? / It is not the wind that penetrates by force: / The oak cries «From my wood / Cross will be for God»].

For these words, biblical passages can be assigned, as for example: “And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! (...) And they crucified him (Matthew 27:29.35); “And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head (...). And when they had crucified him [...]” (Mark 15:17.24); “And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe (...). Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! (...) Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (John 19:2.5.16-18).

³ The catholic dogma about the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed in 1854, by the pope Pius IX, of whom the pontificate started in 1846. This Pope in the history is called and often remembered as the “Pope of the Immaculate Conception”. Fr. V. Padula wrote his poem in 1846, during his teaching experience at the Seminar, the Immaculate Conception belief was on the agenda of the theological discussion at that time.

Figure of the life after death: “*E puru ‘intra lu ‘nfiernu lu dannatu / Sta riposatu*” - [“And even in hell the damned / Is resting”]. Christmas, according to Fr. V. Padula, brings relief in suffering, also condemned in hell⁴.

Figure of the appearance of Angels at the birth of Jesus. V. Padula describes it as follows: “*Chi sîti mo venuti a fari lluocu, / Angiuli è Diu, cu’ chilli scilli ‘è fuocu? / Mi voliti arrobbari ‘u figliu miu, / Angiuli è Diu? / Cantati, sî; ma ‘n cielu ‘u’ b’ ‘u chiamati: / Aduratilu, sî; ma ‘u’ b’ ‘u pigliati: / E Tu, bellezza, ‘un fujari cu’ loru; / Si no, mi muoru*” - [“What have you come here to do, / Angels of God, with those wings of fire? / Do you want to kidnap my Son, / Angels of God? / Sing, yes; but in heaven you do not call Him: / Adore, yes; but do not take Him: / And You, Beauty, do not run away with them; / If not, I’ll die”]. In the *Bible* we can find: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:13-14).

The poem, written by rather young Fr. V. Padula, further well-known journalist, essayist and socially involved writer, could be placed between the expressions of the popular religiosity (the *Ninna-nanna di Madonna*) and high-literary culture of the poet. Fr. V. Padula was an intellectual, well-trained priest, proud of his language/dialect, in-rooted in so many languages from the past of Calabria, his own homeland.

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⁴ About suffering in hell, for example cf.: Matthew 10:28; 18:9; 23:33; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6.