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BENVENUTO ARON TERRACINI AS A PRECURSOR OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS THROUGH HIS STUDIES ON ANCIENT AND MODERN JUDEO-ITALIAN

Aron Iona Benvenuto Terracini (1886-1968) was one of the most eminent Italian linguists who dealt with Latin and Romance dialects. Due to his Jewish origin, he was also interested in Judeo-Italian, though it was not the main focus of his research. After graduation, he specialized at the *École des Hautes Études*, under the guidance of two leading scholars: the Swiss dialectologist Jules Gilliéron and the French linguist Antoine Meillet. From 1911 to 1913 Terracini held the position of lecturer of Italian language and literature at the Faculty of Modern Philology of the *Akademie der Sozial- und Handelwissenschaften* at Frankfurt, nowadays *Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität*. During his stay in Germany, Terracini met his future wife, the German Jew, Lore Klonower.¹ Successively, Terracini served as the chair of linguistics of classical and Romance languages at various Italian universities.²

Because of the promulgation of the racial laws in Italy, he expatriated to Argentina, where he taught Romance languages and General Linguistics at the National University of Tucumán from 1941 to 1946. In Argentina he wrote one of his most influential works, *Conflictos de lenguas y de cultura*,³ that was re-elaborated in Italian with the title *Conflitti di lingue e di cultura*⁴ and published in 1957. After the fall of Fascism, he

returned to Italy and taught Linguistics and History of the Italian Language at the University of Turin until his retirement. At that time, he also directed the Italian Linguistic Atlas.

On the occasion of the centenary of his birth, Alberto A. Sobrero, Gian Luigi Beccaria and other scholars⁵ examined the contributions that Benvenuto Terracini made as a dialectologist, glottologist, philologist, literary critic, stylistic scholar, and translation theorist. Furthermore, Domenico Santamaria⁶ recently wrote an essay about Terracini's interest in Graziadio Isaia Ascoli.

However, the sociolinguistic issues present in Terracini's writings about Judeo-Italian have not been studied systematically. Cesare Segre⁷ and Marco Moriggi⁸ examined Terracini's contribution to the study of Judeo-Italian, but they dealt with the sociolinguistic perspective in passing. Conversely, Sobrero⁹ examined the sociolinguistic issues raised by Terracini thoroughly, but, regretfully, he neglected the sociolinguistic observations present in Terracini's studies on Judeo-Italian. It is plausible that the dearth of critical studies on Terracini's contribution to sociolinguistics is a consequence of the fact that only few scholars are aware of his sociolinguistic insights, as Sobrero¹⁰ supposed.

¹ L. TERRACINI, *Bibliografia Terracini Benvenuto*, in «Archivio Glottologico Italiano» 53 (1968), p. 9.

² A. CARDONE, *Benvenuto Terracini*, in D. GIOVANNARDI - H. STAMMERJOHANN (curr.), *I lettori d'Italiano in Germania: Convegno di Weimar, 27-29 aprile 1995*. Atti della sezione storica, Tübingen 1996, pp. 81-90.

³ B. TERRACINI, *Conflictos de lenguas y de cultura*, Buenos Aires 1951.

⁴ ID., *Conflitti di lingue e di cultura*, Venezia 1957.

⁵ E. SOLETTI (cur.), *Benvenuto Terracini nel centenario della nascita: Atti del Convegno - Torino*,

5-6 Dicembre 1986, Alessandria 1989.

⁶ D. SANTAMARIA, *Benvenuto Aron Terracini esegista di Graziadio Isaia Ascoli. Storiografia e teoria linguistica*, Alessandria 2014.

⁷ C. Segre, *Benvenuto Terracini, linguista, e le parlate giudeo-italiane*, in «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel» 34 (1968), pp. 327-333.

⁸ M. MORIGGI, *Panorama sul giudeo-italiano*, in A. MONTI (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Fabrizio Penacchietti*, Alessandria 2008, pp. 55-57.

⁹ A.A. SOBRERO, *I saggi dialettologici*, in SOLETTI (cur.), *Benvenuto Terracini*, cit., pp. 89-100.

¹⁰ SOBRERO, *I saggi dialettologici*, cit., p. 97.

In spite of the paucity of Terracini's writing on Judeo-Italian, his sociolinguistic remarks are both valuable and remarkable. His only study devoted to Ancient Judeo-Italian is a long and thorough review of *A comparative study of Judaeo-Italian Translations of Isaiah* by Max Berenblut.¹¹ On Modern Judeo-Italian, Terracini wrote three articles: 'Due composizioni in versi giudeo-piemontesi del secolo XIX';¹² 'Residui di parlate giudeo-italiane raccolti a Pitigliano, Roma e Ferrara';¹³ 'Le parlate giudaico-italiane negli appunti di Raffaele Giacomelli';¹⁴ and the introduction to the Judeo-Roman sonnets by Crescenzo del Monte.¹⁵ Hence, the sociolinguistic analysis present herein includes Terracini's study of (a) the review on the Judeo-Italian Translations of Isaiah; (b) two 19th century Judeo-Piedmontese poems; (c) three lists of idiomatic expressions from Pitigliano, Rome, Ferrara, culled in 1929 by Tobia Lattes, Salmoni, and Circle of Jewish Culture, respectively; (d) sentences, anecdotes, short stories, answers to a standardised questionnaire from Turin, Cuneo, Casale, Moncalvo, Asti, Venezia, Rovigo, Mantova, Modena, Ferrara, Lugo, Sinigallia, Ancona, Siena, Livorno, Florence, Pisa, and Pitigliano, culled by Raffaele Giacomelli, from 1934 to 1950; (e) the Manuscript Centre of the University of Pavia (*Centro Manoscritti dell'Università di Pavia*); (f) and the Jewish Terracini Archive

(*Archivio Ebraico Terracini*). Because it does not include sociolinguistic remarks, the preface to the Judeo-Roman sonnets by Del Monte is not relevant for the purposes of the present article.

Dialectologist with sociolinguistic sensibility

Terracini graduated from the University of Turin, under the guidance of Matteo Bartoli, with a thesis in dialectology, which was the result of his field research at Usseglio, an alpine village in the province of Turin. His interest in dialectology grew, subsequently, while he was in France thanks to his *maestro* Gilliéron. However, Terracini did not conceive the dialectology exclusively as the sampling of the isoglosses of the linguistic points,¹⁶ but rather as a combination of dialectology and *ante litteram* sociolinguistics,¹⁷ based on historical linguistics and structuralism. It is very likely that Terracini's sensibility to the sociolinguistic perspective was sparked by his *maestro* Meillet, who was the precursor of French sociolinguistics. In 1921, Meillet wrote:

J'aborde immédiatement l'objet de ce cours [...] les causes sociales des faits linguistiques.¹⁸

Onward,

¹¹ B. TERRACINI, *Rec. Berenblut, Max, A comparative study of Judaeo-Italian Translations of Isaiah*, in «Romance Philology» 10 (1956-1957), pp. 243-259.

¹² *Id.*, *Due composizioni in versi giudeo-piemontesi del secolo XIX*, in «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel», fasc. speciale in onore di D. Lattes 12 (1938), pp. 164-183.

¹³ *Id.*, *Residui di parlate giudeo-italiane raccolti a Pitigliano, Roma, Ferrara*, in «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel» 17 (1951), pp. 3-11; 63-72; 113-121. Review of TERRACINI, *Residui di parlate giudeo-italiane raccolti a Pitigliano, Roma, Ferrara*, in «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel» 17 (1951), pp. 3-11; 63-72; 113-121, G. VIDOSSÌ, «Archivio Glottologico Italiano» 36 (1951), pp. 176-177.

¹⁴ TERRACINI, *Le parlate giudaico-italiane negli appunti di Raffaele Giacomelli*, in «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel» 28 (1962), pp. 260-295.

¹⁵ TERRACINI, *Prefazione a Crescenzo Del Monte, Sonetti postumi giudaico-romaneschi*, [Reprinted

as *La poesia giudeo-romanesca di C. Del Monte*, in «La Rassegna Mensile di Israel» 21 (1955), pp. 499-506], Roma 1955, pp. VII-XVIII.

¹⁶ SOBRERO, *I saggi dialettologici*, cit., 1989, pp. 90-91.

¹⁷ At the time in which Terracini wrote about Judeo-Italian, sociolinguistics was still at its dawn. There is broad consensus among scholars in considering the year 1964 – when the first congress of sociolinguistics was held at The Linguistic Institute of the University of Indiana at Bloomington – as the birth date of the American school sociolinguistics. However, to the best of my knowledge, the French school sociolinguistics has not identified its founding year. J. FISHMAN, *Bloomington, Summer 1964: The Birth of American Sociolinguistics*, in CH. BRATT PAULSTON and G.R. TUCKER (eds.), *The early days of Sociolinguistics: Memories and reflections*, Dallas 1997, pp. 87-96.

¹⁸ A. MEILLET, *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale*, Paris 1921, pp. 2-3.

[...] le langage est éminemment un fait social.¹⁹

The hypothesis that Meillet influenced Terracini's interest in sociolinguistics seems to be corroborated by the fact that also Marcel Cohen, another outstanding disciple of Meillet, also correlated linguistic variables to extra-linguistic factors. Even the titles of their following works are illustrative: *Langage et transfusions de civilisation*²⁰ by Marcel Cohen, and *Conflictos de lenguas y de cultura*, by Terracini.

A mixture of the dialectological investigation techniques and the sociolinguistic variables can also be found in Terracini's works on Judeo-Italian. However, the results of the analysis on Judeo-Italian, regrettably, are limited, compared to those of the surveys conducted on the Italian dialects, due to the scarcity of Judeo-Italian sources.

Bipolar prestige

Terracini's remarks suggest that a bipolar prestige system, in Jonathan Owens²¹ terms, developed in Judeo-Piedmontese. Bipolar prestige is an additional extra-linguistic factor that makes the sociolinguistic situation of Judeo-Piedmontese more complex. The prestige is either the real or supposed value that a community attributes to a variety of a language. When the prestige is bipolar, the prestigious varieties are two. The 19th century Judeo-Piedmontese poem, *Maja' tra magna e nvouda*, provides an illustrative example. The aunt speaks Judeo-Turinese, whereas the niece answers using the Turinese variety.

The old generation persists in the use of the communal variety as opposed to the new generation that switches to the gentile variety. Members of the old generation, who are more conservative, recognise the prestige of the variety mastered from the in-group, for the sake of traditional Jewish values. Conversely, the new generation is open to the influence of the prestigious out-group variety, as a consequence of the fact that its members reject the communal vari-

ety, which is stigmatised as low, uneducated and old-fashioned.

The Jewish variety is prestigious at the communal level, as it represents a collective ethnic identity. Outside the community, however, the Jewish variety is stigmatised as a result of its preservation of morphological features that exhibit the provincial origin of the Jews who settled in Turin. These morphological traits are belittled by non-Judeo Turinese who deem them archaic and rustic. The vocabulary is marked by colloquialisms and lexemes related to the Jewish field. Moreover, idiomatic expressions and vernacularisation of technical Jewish terms and of Biblical verses are plentiful. By contrast, Turinese is prestigious because it is the urban variety. Unlike Judeo-Turinese, Turinese welcomes innovations and is not characterised by expressions linked to the traditional Jewish heritage.

Linguistic point

One of the cornerstones of Terracini's study on Neo-Romance languages is the linguistic point. Terracini conceives the linguistic point as a dynamic centre crossed by a tangle of variables: unifying and differentiating.²² By means of a perusal of his studies on the Judeo-Piedmontese, it may be inferred that Terracini foresaw that immigration, age and education were the extra-linguistic factors that trigger linguistic innovation, whereas social class and religious affiliation were the extra-linguistic elements that maintained linguistic conservativeness. Furthermore, drawing on the example of the Judeo-Piedmontese it is possible to deduce that the most vital and prestigious linguistic point exerts an irradiating action on the other areas, even on a linguistic island, i.e. the Jewish community.

Community Membership and Immigration

It appears that Terracini was the first to relate linguistic variation to membership in a Jewish community and to migratory flows. In

¹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 16.

²⁰ M. COHEN *Langage et transfusions de civilisation*, in «Annales sociologiques» 3/4 (1942), pp. 1-15.

²¹ J. OWENS, *Arabic Sociolinguistics*, in «Arabi-ca» 48/4 (2001), p. 436.

²² SOBRERO, *I saggi dialettologici*, cit., pp. 90-92.

the two Judeo-Piedmontese compositions of the 19th century, in fact, Terracini observes that linguistic conservatism and archaism depend on two related extra-linguistic factors crucial for Jewish communities: belonging to a Jewish community and migration.

Communal variation indicates the way in which religious affiliation affects language variation. This sociolinguistic dimension is crucial for three of the Semitic languages: Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic. The paradigm of communal variation was defined in 1964 by Israeli linguist Haim Blanc in his pioneering research on the Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities in Baghdad, namely the Mesopotamian variety of neo-Arabic.²³ However, Terracini had already noticed structural differences between Judeo-Italian and non-Judeo Italian varieties in 1938, twenty-six years before Blanc, e.g., Judeo-Turinese: *mi j ò*, Turinese: *j aj*, I have got; Judeo-Turinese: *at aj*, Turinese: *t'as*, you have got.²⁴ The Judeo variables are more archaic than the non-Judeo ones. Moreover, Terracini draws the inference that Jewish hallmarks show their provincial and rural origin in comparison with the non-Judeo traits that emerged later and that are urban. Analogously, in Baghdad, Judeo-Arabic exhibits archaic traits belonging to the first phase of the Arabisation of the country, e.g., *qaltu*, I said; whereas Muslim-Arabic has later features which were introduced with the second phase of Arabisation, i.e., *gilit*, I said.

Regretfully, linguistic variation due to migration flows has not yet been thoroughly studied by Judeo-Italian scholars until now. By contrast, back in 1938 Terracini suggested that migration operated alongside communal variation in Judeo-Piedmontese not only on the lexical level, as other linguists had noticed, but also on phonological and morphological levels.

The combination of the urbanisation of significant masses, within a limited period of time, and the shared religious affiliation of these immigrants is a peculiarity of Jewish varieties, which determines the persistence of conservative traits.

Unlike non-Jewish varieties, Jewish varieties are less influenced by the dominant urban variety with which they enter into contact after immigration. In contact with a dominant urban variety, the provincial and rural Jewish varieties are either preserved or they dissolve, leaving little or no trace. When they are preserved, there are no innovations from the non-Jewish urban variety. Therefore, the Jewish varieties become more conservative and archaic in comparison with non-Jewish ones.

Is Modern Judeo-Italian an argot or a vernacular?

In what follows, I will use the label Modern Judeo-Italian as an umbrella glottonym for a range of Jewish Italian varieties that combine Hebrew and non-Jewish Italian co-territorial variety.

Through the examination of the Hebrew lexical component present in Modern Judeo-Italian, Terracini endeavours to define this communal variety sociolinguistically. He underlines that the Hebrew lexicon enters Modern Judeo-Italian as both an *argot* and a vernacular.

Like an *argot*, Modern Judeo-Italian gives the impression of being an antilanguage whose lexicon is unintelligible to outsiders. However, differently from an *argot*, which is limited to criminal groups, Modern Judeo-Italian is spoken by communities separated from co-territorial groups because of their ethnicity and religion. Terracini noticed that in Modern Judeo-Italian phonetic distortion operates like it does in a 'thieves' cant. One of the illustrative examples he provides of this lexical device comes from Judeo-Ferrarese: *arorai* instead of *adonai*,²⁵ my Lord. However, cryptolalia is not equally widespread throughout Judeo-Italian varieties – as a result of their belonging to the *argot* type –, in fact, Terracini warns that cryptolalic phenomena are exiguous in Judeo-Piedmontese as compared to the other Judeo varieties.²⁶

²³ H. BLANC, *Communal Dialects in Baghdad*, Cambridge 1964.

²⁴ TERRACINI, *Due composizioni*, cit., 1938, pp. 172.

²⁵ ID., *Residui di parlate giudeo-italiane*, cit., p. 7, footnote 2.

²⁶ ID., *Due composizioni*, cit., p. 179.

In addition, like vernaculars, Judeo-Italian varieties are native and non-standard languages. However, unlike vernaculars, Judeo-Italian varieties are used only by the members of the community for in-group communication. Moreover, Judeo-Italian varieties display a cryptical function in order to make communication obscure to outsiders and to mark the membership in the group. Similarly to vernaculars, in Modern Judeo-Italian there are plenty of proverbs, idioms, wishes, insults and epithets.²⁷ Terracini is aware that Modern Judeo-Italian varieties share a number of morphological and semantic features as compared to the corresponding non-Judeo Italian varieties. The following is a description of the most commonly invoked hallmarks. 1) Trivialisation of technical lexemes or phrases quoted from the Bible, e.g., Judeo-Pitiglianese ‘*passuchím de gola*’, little morsel;²⁸ *passuchím* comes from Hebrew פסוק meaning biblical verse. 2) Hebrew loans with the suffix of the co-territorial vernacular, e.g., Judeo-Turinese: *hhahhamëssa*, wise woman, which is composed by the Hebrew lexeme חכמ and the Judeo-Turinese feminine suffix –*ës-sa*.²⁹ 3) Blends, e.g., all Judeo-Italian varieties: *malmazal*, bad luck, which is composed by the Italian lexeme *mal*, bad, and the Hebrew one מזל, luck. 4) Loans or calques from other Jewish varieties, among which the most famous is *negro*, which means sad, melancholy, unlucky, bad, black, ugly, unintelligent, and incapable; and it is found in all Modern Judeo-Italian varieties. It is a loan from the Spanish *negro*, e.g., Judeo-Pitiglianese: *un negro halom*, bad dream.³⁰ According to Terracini the Hebrew שחור ‘black’, may have widened the semantics of the Spanish adjective *negro*,³¹ e.g., Judeo-Ferrarese *schoród*, ‘uglies’ – feminine plural. 5) Calques from non-Judeo co-territorial vernaculars, e.g., both Judeo-Turinese: *coun pu d’chen*, and Turinese: [...] *cun pi d deuit*, mean ‘with more kindness’. *Chen* stems from the Hebrew חן, but has the semantics of the Turinese *deuit*.

²⁷ Terracini does not take into account incantations, prohibitions and curses, which are also numerous in Modern Judeo-Italian varieties.

²⁸ TERRACINI, *Le parlate giudaico-italiane*, cit., p. 292.

²⁹ ID., *Due composizioni*, cit., p. 180.

Briefly put, Terracini regarded Modern Judeo-Italian as a communal variety fluctuating between an *argot* and a vernacular.

From language loyalty to language death

A language is one of the symbols of national ethnic identity and, for this reason, a feeling of loyalty develops towards it. Terracini anticipates the concept of language loyalty elaborated in 1953 by the American linguist Uriel Weinreich in his pioneering research *Language in Contact*:³²

A language, like a nationality, may be thought of as a set of behavior norms; language loyalty, like nationalism, would designate the state of mind in which the language (like nationality), as an intact entity, and in contrast to other languages, assumes a high position in a scale of values, a position in need of being «defended». [...] In response to an impending language shift, it produces an attempt at preserving the threatened language; as a reaction to interference, it makes the standardized version of the language a symbol and a cause. Language loyalty might be defined, then, as a principle – its specific content varies from case to case – in the name of which people will rally themselves and their fellow speakers consciously and explicitly to resist changes in either the functions of their language (as a result of a language shift) or in the structure or vocabulary (as a consequence of interference). Thus in the field of sociolinguistics purism, standardization, language loyalty, and related defensive mechanisms are phenomena of major importance requiring systematic treatment, even if, for understandable reasons, they are considered irrelevant in descriptive structural linguistics.

What are the roots of language loyalty? One would suspect that a rudiment of this feeling is natural in every user of language, because the inescapable emotional involvement with one’s mother-tongue as one learned it in childhood makes any deviation seem repugnant. Differences in temperament may cause people to respond differently to this natural

³⁰ ID., *Le parlate giudaico-italiane*, cit., p. 292.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² U. WEINREICH, *Languages in contact: Findings and Problems*, The Hague 1968 [First edition: *Languages in contact: Findings and Problems*, The Hague/Paris/New York 1953].

inertia. Beyond that, however, the extent of loyalty that is displayed varies with other socio-cultural factors from one contact situation to the next.

While the fact that languages can function as symbols of groups has been repeatedly noted in the literature, little of social-science nature has been done to analyze the symbolic association of a language as a standardized system with the group's integrity. [...] It is in a situation of language contact that people most easily become aware of the peculiarities of their language as against others, and it is there that the pure or standardized language most easily becomes the symbol of group integrity. Language loyalty breeds in contact situations just as nationalism breeds on ethnic borders. [...] Thus language loyalty, like a nativistic movement, is unlikely to arise in situations where both societies are satisfied with their current relationships. It is rather frustrated superiority feelings that cause language loyalty to develop.³³

Hence, on the one hand that language loyalty is strengthened when socio-political conditions threaten ethnic-linguistic identity. If, on the other hand, there is a condition of freedom, linguistic loyalty is weakened and, consequently, the survival of a language depends exclusively on its prestige and the opportunities for socio-economic growth that derive from it. This may explain why the emancipation of Italian Jews in 1800 led to the gradual abandonment of the Jewish-Italian varieties in favour of the non-Judaic variety of the co-territorial dialect or of the standard Italian.

Terracini notes that, with the advent of emancipation, even those who continued to speak a Jewish variety modified some expressions, e.g., *Andé a Scola* versus *Andé al Tempio*, to go to the synagogue. Both of these expressions belong to the Jewish varieties, but before emancipation Jewish Italians used *Andé a Scola*, and after *Andé al Tempio*.³⁴

The gradual linguistic change is also exemplified by the aforementioned poem, *Maja' tra magna e nvouda*. The bickering concerns the

traditional Jewish values defended by the aunt, a seamstress, in Judeo-Turinese, versus the modern non-Jewish customs of the niece, teacher, expressed in Turinese. The loss of linguistic fidelity depends, therefore, on social variables. In this poem the diastatic variables of age and education are evident. Among the less educated elderly, language fidelity is constant, while among the young who have received a lay education, it is not.

Moreover, Terracini pointed out that Judeo-Ferrarese was threatened by two varieties.³⁵ In the high social class Judeo-Ferrarese was in competition with Italian; in contrast, in the lower social class, it was in competition with the non-Judeo Ferrarese. As a result, Terracini had already identified the diastatic variable of the social class to which a speaker belongs.

Restriction in contexts of use

The restriction in contexts of use is incontrovertibly a further aspect of the obsolescence of a language observed by Terracini.³⁶ In *Confitti di lingue e di cultura*, Terracini writes:

Per il ridursi all'uso familiare di un idioma morente citerò un solo caso tipico del quale ho personale esperienza [...] la sparizione del giudeo-piemontese, ed in genere delle varietà dialettali giudeo-italiane.³⁷

Moreover, Terracini notes that the abandonment of the Judeo-Turinese variety and, therefore of any language, can be determined not only by geographical variables or age, but also by the deliberate choice by individuals or entire families to abandon the Jewish variety. In the 1938 contribution, Terracini writes:

[...] In queste oscillazioni non sono soltanto in gioco ragioni di provenienza e di età; ma anche varietà di atteggiamento culturale e sentimentale, spesso addirittura coscienti: in qualche famiglia si

³³ *Ivi*, pp. 99-101.

³⁴ TERRACINI, *Due composizioni*, cit., p. 179.

³⁵ *Id.*, *Residui di parlate giudeo-italiane*, cit., 1951, p. 70, footnote 1.

³⁶ Cfr. *Id.*, *Come muore una lingua*, in «Criterio» I/1 (1957), pp. 47-54; I/3 (1957), pp. 184-197.

³⁷ To reduce the familiar use of a dying idiom I will mention only one typical case of which I have personal experience [...] the disappearance of the Judeo-Piedmontese, and in general of the dialectal Jewish-Italian varieties.

potrebbe infatti attestare, da quasi un secolo, la volontà di staccarsi dalla parlata del ghetto.³⁸

By way of concluding, Terracini's assumption on the reasons for the demise of Modern Judeo-Italian is not limited to the commonly-accepted cause, or the Shoah. Terracini's analysis reveals two subsequent reasons: the Emancipation of the Jews marks the beginning of the gradual decline of the Modern Judeo-Italian, and the Shoah marks the tragic acceleration of its demise.

Ancient Judeo-Italian

Regretfully, Terracini's only contribution to ancient Judeo-Italian is the review of Max Berenblut's essay, *A comparative study of the Judaeo-Italian Translations of Isaiah*. However, its sixteen pages provide plenty of sociolinguistic considerations.

Unlike Berenblut, Terracini observes that in the 1500s the non-Jewish *élite* wrote literary works in Italian, while the Jews translated or glossed the book of Isaiah in the variety that they mastered; that is, one of the Judeo-Italian varieties. Therefore, in these translations there are hypercorrections and vernacular variations, due to the influence of the spoken language, not 'errors', as Berenblut defines them.

The linguistic phenomena that seem contradictory to Berenblut are explained by Terracini with the use of the sociolinguistic perspective as reflections of linguistically heterogeneous material, merged in the 1500 manuscripts. Unlike what the dialectology of the 1800s suggested, Terracini notes that it is not always possible to identify the geographical origin of a manuscript based exclusively on the linguistic data in our possession.

Albeit in a laconic way, Terracini casts doubt on the hypothesis of the *koinè* advanced by David S. Blondheim³⁹ and Umberto Cassuto.⁴⁰ The varieties of Judeo-Italian would have

become differentiated from an original *koinè*. The watchful eye of the sociolinguist highlights that the distinctive traits of the *koinè* are homogeneity and regularity. Consequently, it is difficult to identify the *koinè* in ancient and modern Judaeo-Italian, which are instead characterised by fluidity, heterogeneity, archaisms and hybridisms. Therefore, it would be more prudent to bring back the linguistic affinities, sometimes present in the Judeo-Italian documentation, to the common Jewish cultural, literary and linguistic *milieu*, which are studied today by Jewish interlinguistics.

Finally, comparing the documents in ancient and modern Judeo-Italian, Terracini notes that Modern Judeo-Italian is characterised by a lower number of Judaisms, the vulgarisation of biblical expressions and the narrowing of contexts of use. In these linguistic phenomena Terracini recognises the start of the process of extinction of the Modern Judeo-Italian that traces back to the Counter-Reformation era prohibition of the use of books of oration in Judeo-Italian.

Conclusion

Studying the writings of Terracini on Judeo-Italian, it is regrettable that the 'Italian Marcel Cohen', as Riccardo Contini defined Benvenuto Terracini during a conversation about the linguist, made a contribution to the study of Judeo-Italian that was quantitatively inferior to that which Marcel Cohen made to the study of Judeo-Arabic. In fact, Terracini and Cohen mastered Biblical Hebrew and were native speakers of Judeo-Piedmontese and Judeo-Arabic, respectively.

It is even more regrettable when one considers that the disappearance of Judeo-Italian came to the attention of two of the greatest Italian linguists of Jewish origin, moreover both native speakers of Judeo-Italian, Graziadio Isaia Ascoli

³⁸ [...] In these oscillations, reasons of origin and age are not just at stake; but also a variety of cultural and sentimental attitudes, often even conscious: in some families it could be attested, for almost a century, the desire to break away from the ghetto's speech.

³⁹ D.S. BLONDHEIM, *Éssai d'un vocabulaire com-*

peratif des parlars Romans des juifs au moyen âge, in «Romania» 49 (1923), pp. 1-43, 344-388, 527-569. BLONDHEIM, *Les parlars Judéo-Romance et la Vetus latina*, in «Romania» 50 (1924), pp. 541-590.

⁴⁰ U. CASSUTO, *Un'antichissima elegia in dialetto giudeo-italiano*, in «Archivio Glottologico Italiano» 22-23 (1929), pp. 349-408.

and Benvenuto Aron Terracini. Although Terracini had repeatedly expressed concern over the disappearance of the Judeo-Italian, he did not elaborate a wide-ranging project that embraced all the varieties of Judeo-Italian. However, in two of his contributions on Modern Judeo-Italian, Terracini mentions *La Rassegna Mensile d'Israel's* never realized project of putting all of the Judeo-Italian varieties into writing.⁴¹

In the light of his personal experiences – a long stay in Germany, his knowledge of German, his marriage to a German Jew – and his writings – reviews of works in German,⁴² the preface of the first Italian translation of Dibbuk,⁴³ the German manual for non-native speakers⁴⁴ – it is even more difficult to find the motivation for Terracini's complete indifference towards Yiddish. Furthermore, as I verified at the Terracini Jewish Archives in Turin and at the Manuscripts Centre of the University of Pavia, Terracini disregarded not only Yiddish, but also Judezmo, despite his long stay in Tucumán, Argentina, and his knowledge of Spanish, as evidenced by his teaching at the University of Tucumán and the publication of the first version of *Conflitti di lingue e di cultura* in Spanish, i.e., *Conflictos de lenguas y de cultura*.

In addition, an examination of Terracini documents, kept at the Terracini Jewish Archives in Turin and the Manuscripts Centre of the University of Pavia, regrettably, confirms that Terracini did not take advantage of his multilingualism to realize the full implications of Jewish interlinguistics, which could have derived from comparing the three Judeo-languages he was familiar with, i.e., Judeo-Italian, Yiddish, and Judezmo. The precursor of modern sociolinguistics and of languages in contact, as he was defined by one of the last of his students, Gian

Luigi Beccaria,⁴⁵ unfortunately, did not address Jewish interlinguistics, which has its roots in the pioneering studies of his contemporaries Yiddishists Max (1894-1069) and Uriel Weinreich (1926-1967).⁴⁶ Notwithstanding, we are aware that he had read and appreciated Uriel Weinreich's seminal book, *Languages in contact*,⁴⁷ as demonstrated by a reference to the issue of bilingualism in his work *Conflitti di lingue e di cultura*.⁴⁸

Briefly put, the reason why Terracini did not devote his efforts to the elaboration of an inter-linguistic study of the Jewish varieties in which he was competent escapes my understanding, especially if one considers his strong sociolinguistic sensibility and his lucid awareness of the imminent disappearance of his mother tongue as well as the other varieties of Judeo-Italian. It is probable that the reason was simply that his primary scientific interest was Romance linguistics, as Segre⁴⁹ stated.

However, although Terracini's interest in Judeo-Italian was secondary to his interest in Romance languages, he gave a valuable contribution that deserves to be studied thoroughly in order to develop new research trials and, accordingly, cast new light on some of the disputed questions on Judeo-Italian.

Surprisingly, Terracini's contributions on Judeo-Italian offer insights that predate the major sociolinguistic issues well before the paradigmatic studies on these matters. i.e., the act of bipolar prestige; the linguistic reflexes of the combination of community membership and immigration flows; and the concept of language loyalty and its connection with diastatic variables. Furthermore, Terracini casts doubts on the existence of the *koinè* from the point of view of structural linguistics; he thoroughly examined

⁴¹ TERRACINI, *Due composizioni*, cit., p. 164; ID., *Residui di parlate giudeo-italiane*, cit., pp. 3-4.

⁴² TERRACINI, *Bibliografia Terracini Benvenuto*, cit.

⁴³ B. TERRACINI, *Prologo a: An Sky, Il Djbuch: Tra i due mondi. Leggenda drammatica in 4 atti* (Translation by L. GOLDFISCHER and M. DE BENEDETTI), Torino 1927, pp. 5-8.

⁴⁴ G. REICHENBERGER and TERRACINI, *Il tedesco per l'italiano autodidatta*, Milano 1941.

⁴⁵ G.L. BECCARIA, *Terracini storico della lingua*, in SOLETTI (cur.), *Benvenuto Terracini*, cit., p. 3.

⁴⁶ R. CONTINI, *Introduzione*, in G. LACERENZA (cur.), *Il Dibbuk fra tre mondi: Saggi* (Archivio di Studi Ebraici III/4), Napoli 2012, p. 9.

⁴⁷ WEINREICH, *Languages in contact*, cit.

⁴⁸ TERRACINI, *Come muore una lingua*, cit., p. 23. Cfr. C. SEGRE, *Benvenuto Terracini e la linguistica del Novecento*, in «Historiographia Linguistica» 9/3 (1982), pp. 463. Segre disregarded Terracini's reference to Uriel Weinreich's work.

⁴⁹ SEGRE, *Benvenuto Terracini, linguista*, cit., p. 328.

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the restriction in contexts of use and the causes of the demise of Modern Judeo-Italian; and he proposed a multi-varied analysis of Ancient Judeo-Italian. Finally, to the best of my knowledge, Terracini is the only linguist who tried to define Modern Judeo-Italian sociolinguistically, dividing the Hebrew lexical component into two categories: lexical devices peculiar to *argots*; and morphological, lexical, and semantic features that mark vernaculars. In conclusion, it is strongly recommended that Terracini's anal-

yses on Judeo-Italian be examined from a sociolinguistic perspective, given their impressive implications for micro – and macro – variation not only for ancient and modern Judeo-Italian studied separately, but also for an interpretation of Modern Judeo-Italian features based on the corresponding ancient varieties.

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SUMMARY

This paper deals with the sociolinguistic insights of Benvenuto Terracini – one of the most renowned Italian linguists who primarily dealt with Latin and Romance dialects – that I culled from his works on ancient and modern Judeo-Italian.

Terracini's analyses are impressive because they offered a modern and varied sociolinguistic interpretation of Judeo-Italian. Terracini unveiled the variationist parameters crucial for Jewish interlinguistics and general sociolinguistics that were established after him by a number of eminent sociolinguists, e.g., Jonathan Owens, Haim Blanc, and Uriel Weinreich. The variationist parameters that Terracini employed are the act of bipolar prestige, the linguistic reflexes of the combination of community membership and immigration flows, and language loyalty. Furthermore, Terracini made an invaluable contribution to three issues: the classification of Modern Judeo-Italian into an *argot* and a vernacular; the restriction in contexts of use and the consequent language demise; and the alleged existence of the *koinè* in ancient Judeo-Italian.

However, since Terracini's interest in Judeo-Italian was, regrettably, secondary and scanty, he did not take advantage of his exceptional sociolinguistic sensibility and multilingualism to elaborate a wide-ranging project of all the varieties of Judeo-Italian; to deal with Yiddish and Judezmo; and, consequently, to be among the first linguists to explore Jewish interlinguistics.

KEYWORDS: Benvenuto Terracini; Sociolinguistics; Judeo-Italian; Bipolar prestige; Language loyalty; Communal language; Language death; *Koinè*; *Argot*; Vernacular.

