

Effects of word-formation processes in Italian.
Reflections on Maria Grossmann and Franz Rainer (eds.)
2004. *La formazione delle parole in italiano*. Tübingen:
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1. Introduction

While there exist authoritative and thorough descriptions of modern Italian inflectional morphology and syntax, our understanding of the processes by which new words are formed from existing lexical elements has not been so well served. There are numerous studies on different aspects of the question, and Dardano (1978) is now a classic point of reference for Italian word-formation in general, but Grossmann and Rainer's encyclopaedic work (henceforth *FPI*), offered by the editors as a 'systematic exploration of the mechanisms of word formation in contemporary Italian', represents a major new contribution to the description of the Italian language. One suspects that the relative neglect of this domain, at the level of major synoptic treatments, owes at least something not only to the notorious structural and semantic idiosyncrasies of derivational and compounding processes (see Rainer's discussion on p. 7), but also to the fact that, in contrast to inflectional morphology and largely unlike syntax, word-formation is an area of Italian grammar which has witnessed some remarkable innovations even over the last century.

There can be no doubt that Grossmann and Rainer have given to the field an invaluable descriptive compendium of Italian word-formation. *FPI* is a collective work (dedicated to the memory of one of its collaborators, Andreas Blank), to which nineteen experts¹ on Italian lexicon and morphology have contributed. Although in some cases whole chapters are written by one contributor, many of the eleven chapters are divided into sections written by different authors, according to area of speciality. In fact the editors have done their best to deploy their authors' expertise to the best effect, while ensuring a degree of homogeneity by having all of them draw on a common corpus of sources comprising the major modern dictionaries of the Italian language. The volume is expressly aimed (p. 5) not only at theoretical linguists but also at the wider interested public, including compilers

of dictionaries and writers of grammars. To this end it is probably enhanced by the deliberate avoidance of any particular theoretical stance, and a sustained commitment to description. Terminology is clearly explained (notably in Rainer's introductory chapter, which constitutes a handy overview of the major issues), and most chapters have an introduction setting out – with varying degrees of clarity – the basic concepts at issue.

The very wide range of word-formation processes in Italian is well covered, not only including affixal derivation, compounding, conversion and truncation, but also examining such relatively novel phenomena as *sigle* and *parole macedonia* (about which more below). In some cases the volume breaks entirely new ground in the range of phenomena it addresses. For example, the typology of the formation of Italian personal names presented by Thornton in chapter 11 appears never to have been essayed before. Now and then, one feels that thoroughness of coverage gives way to excess of information, with more lexical data being given than are really necessary for any understanding of word-formation. A case in point may be chapter 10, on word formation in technical and scientific terminologies, which seems in places to be more a survey of lexical neologisms than of the word formation processes involved in them².

The utility of *FPI* as a reference and research tool is severely blunted by one major flaw: the lack of anything resembling a properly detailed index. In fact, all that is offered is a relatively brief list of affixes and formatives used in word formation. Lexicographers and grammarians in particular will want to be able to look up individual *words*, and see how they are treated in the volume. In truth, the lack of a proper index blights many a modern academic publication, perhaps for reasons of space (in other words, for reasons of money) but as I have already suggested, there is some fat that could have been trimmed from the text, and a rather leaner text would have been a fair price to pay for a decent index.

FPI is intended by the editors as a basis for deeper exploration and theoretical elaboration. The remarks that I make in the rest of this study are to be taken as just one response to the stimulus of reading it. The reflections which this work provokes in me are perhaps rather out of the mainstream, and in a sense complementary to the preoccupations of most linguists dealing with word-formation processes. The perennial problem concerns the often idiosyncratic nature of the semantic relation between the outputs of these processes and the input (see, for example, Rainer pp. 13-15). It is well known that any conception of word-formation in Romance (and many other) languages

as incremental and semantically compositional is gravely inadequate. While it is true that in Italian most³ word-formation involves the *addition* of formatives to some base (either by prefixation or suffixation), or conflation of whole word-forms, in cases of compounding, it is not true that the meaning of the resultant derived form can simply be read off from the meanings of the component parts, and linguists have mainly focused on working out what derived and compounded words mean, how they mean it⁴, and how the component parts of such words relate semantically to the whole. Yet there is another related, widespread, consequence of word-formation which is not so often considered: throughout the history of Italian, and with some striking innovations in the twentieth century, word-formation processes have been a major generator of empty morphological structure within words. A familiar example of the tendency for word-formation processes to leave in their wake empty syntagmatic structure within word-forms, and one which has long passed into the realm of inflectional morphology rather than word-formation, comes from Italian fourth conjugation verbs (in *-ire*), the great majority of which insert in certain parts of their inflectional paradigm an element spelled *-isc-* between the lexical root and the desinences (e.g. *finisci* 'youSG finish' but *finite* 'youPL finish'). This extraneous element, or 'augment', is partly a remnant of a Latin derivational affix *-sc-* originally indicating ingressive Aktionsart. It has been devoid of any coherently identifiable lexical or grammatical meaning for many centuries, yet can still be shown to display a range of characteristics (see especially Maiden 2004 for an analysis) that force us to recognize it as a morphological formative distinct both from root and desinences. *FPI* spotlights a number of results of Italian word-formation which have tended to have also had the effect of leaving empty structure within words and which, in turn, have had consequences for the subsequent evolution of Italian morphology. It is on these (and particularly the treatments of compounding, reduction, *parole macedonia*, technical and scientific word-formation, and word-formation in proper names treated in chapters 2, 8, 9, 10 and 11) that I shall focus below⁵. The scope of my remarks will be rather wider than modern Italian, taking into account also some dialectal and historical data.

2. Sources of empty structure, ancient and modern

The characteristically incremental nature of both derivational affixation and compounding necessarily results in the production of words that are *longer* than the forms on which they are based. If we

consider Italian nouns and adjectives⁶ then we find that non-derived word forms are typically disyllabic⁷ (e.g., *cane* ‘dog’), or trisyllabic (e.g., *pettine* ‘comb’), with, respectively, monosyllabic (*can-*), or disyllabic (*pettin-*), stems followed by a monosyllabic inflectional ending. In fact there is a very high probability that any noun or adjective in Italian longer than three syllables is the result of some kind of word-formation process (cf. Thornton, et al. 1997:96f.; also Hockett 1958:285 for English). From a survey just of dictionary entries beginning with *ba-* in Devoto & Oli (1995), I find some⁸ 600 with four or more syllables, and of these fewer than 10% are not the product of derivational processes or compounding. While most arise as a result of various kinds of affixal derivation, roughly 25% are compounds. In rough and ready terms, this means that, in Italian, long words are likely to comprise a lexical root plus derivational affix, or more than one word form. We shall see later that this apparently banal statement of the obvious creates a circumstance which at least favours, and in some cases actually causes, some significant developments in word formation.

It is also the case that within items derived by affixation or compounding, major semantic discrepancies may emerge in relation to the lexical and/or grammatical meanings usually associated with the component formatives. Bisetto (p. 40f.) discusses some examples of this kind, such as *capocollo*, a type of pork sausage, which transparently comprises the words for ‘head’ and ‘neck’ yet lacks any obvious⁹ semantic link with either. An extreme, and revealing, case is that of the compound noun *coprifuoco* ‘curfew’. This word is the kind of entity which Anderson (1992:294-299) would describe as a “structurally analyzed composite”. It is clearly analysable as comprising elements, including lexical roots, which occur elsewhere in the lexicon and the grammar, but the meanings and functions associated with those structural elements are absent. *Copri-* is clearly a form (actually a second person singular imperative form, see below) of the verb *coprire* ‘to cover’, and *fuoco* is identical to the singular form of the masculine noun meaning ‘fire’. The word is, then, transparently a compound containing elements meaning ‘cover’ and ‘fire’. Yet its meaning is ‘order banning the population from going out during the evening and night-time, imposed for reasons of security by military or civil authorities in time of war or in situations of emergency’ (Devoto & Oli 1995), i.e., a ‘curfew’. This definition makes no allusion to ‘covering’ or ‘fires’, and the word no longer has any particular connection with these meanings, while its real meaning¹⁰ could never be deduced from its component parts. It also seems to me doubtful whether the time of

day is particularly relevant to modern curfews. Modern *coprifuoco* is as semantically opaque as its English cognate *curfew*. The disparity between structure and meaning is here interpretable as the result of a diachronic process involving changes in the referent (presumably a metonymic change whereby the medieval meaning 'regulation forbidding people to be out of doors within certain hours' wholly supersedes any association with covering fires). In fact, the word is also listed in dictionaries with some other senses. In "ancient practice whereby, at a certain time of the evening, the inhabitants of a city were obliged to cover their fires under ash in order to avoid outbreaks of fire; also the signal which announced the start of this period" (Devoto & Oli 1995) the meaning is more transparent, but these are certainly not the senses generally associated with this word nowadays, and one wonders how many speakers even know these. This *coprifuoco* stands in contrast to another, and semantically transparent, *coprifuoco* meaning 'fire screen' (i.e., 'device for covering a fire'), which is reported in the *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, but not in other dictionaries I have consulted.

The paradox of *coprifuoco* 'curfew' is that it at once comprises word-forms of the lexemes meaning 'cover' and 'fire', and it does not. We have discussed the semantic mismatch already. But in other respects *copri-*, in particular, is the same word as *copri* meaning 'cover'. First of all, it is in every possible¹¹ regard phonologically identical to the independent word-form of the verb. Most importantly, like *copri*, *copri-* is a phonological word, sharing the same vowel in the root (/ɔ/): in other words, this is evidence that *coprifuoco* comprises phonological word + phonological word, rather than being part of a structurally unanalysable word-form¹². The identity with *copri* is reinforced by the membership of *coprifuoco* in a large paradigmatic series of compounds beginning with *copri-*. Devoto & Oli (1995) list 35 such examples, in 34 of which the meaning 'cover', and that of the second element, are relatively transparent (e.g., *copriteiera* lit. 'cover teapot', 'tea cosy', *copritastiera* 'keyboard cover'). It is perhaps worth insisting, by the way, that the *copri-* of *coprifuoco* cannot be accounted for in terms of homophony or polysemy: it is not a different lexeme which is fortuitously identical in form to (the second person singular imperative of!) the word meaning 'cover', nor is it the result of accretion of an additional sense to the word for 'cover' – and one has to say the same for *-fuoco*. The meaning of *coprifuoco* resides in the whole word, and not in any of its parts.

What we have in a word like *coprifuoco* is an example – admittedly a rather extreme one – of how word-formation processes can

give rise to polysyllables endowed with a clearly discernible complex internal morphological structure, in the absence of the meanings conventionally associated with those structures¹³.

I mentioned above that *copri-* in *coprifuoco* is formally the second person singular imperative of the verb 'to cover'. Given that *coprifuoco* denotes a type of command, the presence of an imperative form in this noun might appear to be (at least diachronically) motivated. But the same form recurs in the 34 other compounds with an initial element *copri-*, and in those cases any imperative meaning would be much harder to discern (a *copritastiera*, for example, is an object whose function is to cover a keyboard, not an order to do so). In fact we are in the presence of yet another major dislocation between meaning and form which emerges in compounds. This time, what is involved is a matter of *grammatical* form and meaning, and it is a phenomenon widespread among Italian compounds. Italian (and other Romance) compound nouns¹⁴ containing verbs overwhelmingly comprise verb forms which correspond exactly to the morphological second person singular imperative (e.g., *cavatappi* lit. 'dig out corks', 'corkscrew', *perdigiorno* lit. 'lose day', 'loafer, idler', *pulisciorecchi* lit. 'clean ears', 'ear cleaner', *fuggi fuggi* lit. 'flee flee', 'general rush', *dormiveglia* lit. 'sleep wake', 'doze', *saliscendi* lit. 'go up go down', 'ups and downs', also 'latch'), and this despite the obvious absence of any imperative meaning, indeed despite the actual absurdity of imperative meaning in some cases, such as *perdigiorno*, where the activity expressed by the verb form is precisely not what one would tell someone to do.

In *FPI Bisetto* (p. 46)¹⁵ rightly recognizes the morphologically imperative nature of these forms, and in so doing follows a tradition dating back at least as far as Darmesteter (1875)¹⁶. Other linguists, however, seem incapable of crediting that such compounds could contain a complete dislocation between meaning and grammatical form, arguing that if the form is imperative so, in some way, must be the meaning. Bonfante (1954:41-47)¹⁷, having established that we are dealing with imperative forms, discusses the phenomenon in the context of 'animism in Indo-European languages', but comes nowhere near satisfactorily explaining how a specifically imperative meaning could be associated with the verb forms found in compounds, even if one accepts his general premises. Prati (1958:101;105)¹⁸ argues that if imperative forms appear in compounds denoting inanimates (e.g., *portafiori*), this reflects original "confusion" of animate and inanimate objects on the part of "primitive peoples", as well as the general human habit of addressing inanimate objects, and believes that if imperatives appear in compounds expressing undesirable charac-

teristics, this must reflect original ironic or jocular usage. Yet one has to observe that compounds are not address forms, while the appeal to irony might carry more weight if one also found compounds (so far as I know, one does not find them) in which the imperative element expressed a desirable property, but the meaning of the compound was the opposite: imagine *portafortuna* (actually ‘bring good luck’, ‘good luck charm’), meaning instead ‘bringer of bad luck’. A more common approach is to deny that the form found in compounds can be imperative, on the grounds that there is no imperative meaning (cf. Tollemache 1945:176;181; Hall 1948:22f.; also Scalise 1992:192; Nielsen 2002:93f.). The notion (as invoked by Pagliaro 1930:161; Hall 1948), that the verb form that appears must be some kind of verb stem, is difficult to reconcile with the fact that while Italian verb stems show three different thematic vowels (*parla-*, *vende-*, *dormi-*), there is never any sign of the *-e* stems in compounds. Tollemache (1945) and Merlo (1949:17) discern in the verbal element of such compounds a third person singular present form. This has a measure of semantic plausibility, in that we would then be in the presence of exocentric compounds whose head was ‘something/someone that (extracts corks, [etc.])’. This account is problematic, however, from a morphological perspective, since while it holds (apparently) for first conjugation verbs (cf. 3SG *cava*, *porta*), it breaks down for the other conjugations, whose third person singular present indicative ends in *-e*. According to Tollemache (1945:182f.), in these cases the desinence *-e* changes to *-i* (as in *perdigiorno*) due to the analogical influence of the linking element *-i-* encountered in such non-verb compounds as *capinero* or *codibianco* (both types of bird, whose names comprise the words *capo* ‘head’, *coda* ‘tail’, *nero* ‘black’ and *bianco* ‘white’) ¹⁹. There is however some compelling ²⁰ comparative evidence from Sardinian – where third person singular present and second person singular imperative are always morphologically distinct – that the forms found in compounds are not third person singular presents (see Wagner 1946/7).

There is, moreover, other internal and comparative data confirming the distinctively imperative identity of the verb-form found in compounds. Tollemache (1945:194) cites the example of *falegname* lit. ‘make woodwork’, ‘carpenter’, together with *facocchio* ‘cart maker’ and *facoglione* (comprising *coglione* ‘testicle’), laconically observing that there is no *raddoppiamento fonosintattico*, without exploring the significance of this fact. The point is that it is a property of the second person singular imperative of the verb *fare*, namely *fa*, that it does not necessarily trigger *raddoppiamento* ²¹. In this respect it is distinct

from the third person singular *fa*, which always does so. Now almost²² everywhere where *falegname* occurs in central Italian dialects, it has a single /l/, rather than the /ll/ that would be expected if *fa-* were a third person form (we should have **fallegname*). That we are dealing with imperative forms is further confirmed by the fact that (at least in some dialects) compounds also incorporate a reflexive second person singular clitic: Taranto [nu 'mantʃa e 'kɔrkətə] lit. 'an eat and put yourself to bed', 'an idler'(Rohlf's 1969:346), and *fattibello* lit. 'make yourself beautiful' (cf. also Prati 1958:112). In dialects where second person singular forms show morphologized metaphonic raising of the stressed vowel in second person singular imperatives, originally triggered by the 2sg inflection -i, we duly find a metaphonized vowel in compounds. For example San Leucio del Sannio (Iannace 1983) *sagliscinni* 'latch' (also Ruvo di Puglia, AIS map 884, /salə'ʃinnə/) ²³, *mittipalo* (apparently meaning 'person who puts in stakes', a compound comprising *mitti* 'put' and *palo* 'stake') and, from a dialect (Grottamare AIS point 569) where the first conjugation imperative also regularly shows metaphony, /purtamu'nata/ (AIS map 281 *portamonete* lit. 'carry coins', 'purse'). These facts are incompatible with deriving the verb-form from stems in -a or -e, or from 3sg forms, neither of which would display metaphony.

In fact, compounds comprising verb-forms clearly exemplify the potential for the products of word-formation to be the locus of mismatches between form and meaning (whether lexical or grammatical). The question *why* imperative singular forms should appear so consistently in compounds is more problematic²⁴. The phenomenon is apparently pan-Romance and probably very ancient, so that we should not necessarily expect to encounter any kind of motivation just by examining standard Italian. But perhaps linguists who fought so hard against recognizing the patently obvious (that the forms in compounds are imperatives), would have been less inclined to do so given a clearer sense of the dislocations between form and meaning which can occur in compound formation.

While the nature of the verb element in verb-initial compounds is a *locus classicus* of studies of Italian (and Romance) word-formation, the morphological properties of the final nouns in nominal compounds seem to have received less consideration. Like the 'imperative' verb element in the former, the final nouns of the latter are also systematically identical to word-forms of the inflectional paradigm of the corresponding lexemes, despite semantic discrepancies. I believe that it is in this light that we should review Bisetto's rather inconclusive discussion (p. 40) of plural formation in masculine compounds of the type *pesce-*

cane 'dogfish' (literally, 'fish-dog') and *pescespada* 'swordfish' (literally, 'fish-sword'). It is important to note first that Italian (unlike, say, English) does not easily admit plural forms of singular distributives (where the meaning is 'each'). Where English allows 'They touched their noses^{PL}', Italian has *Si toccarono il naso*^{SG}. In *pescecani* each fish in some sense resembles a dog, but no one fish resembles more than one dog, and each *pescespada* has a part of its anatomy which resembles a sword, but not one which resembles more than one sword. The general expectation in Italian, then, is that any plural marking on such compounds (if they are analysed in the way I have described above) ought to be on the head and not on the modifier (e.g., *pescecani*, *pescespade*)²⁵. However, plural formation by selection of the plural form of the final element of a compound is also possible, either instead of pluralization of the head, or in addition to it (e.g., *pescecani* or *pescecani*); cf. also the verb-noun compounds *il baciamano* 'act of hand-kissing' - *i baciamano* or *i baciamani* with plural *mani* (cf. *la mano* - *le mani* 'hands') even though on each event of hand-kissing only one hand is normally kissed. The semantic oddness of pluralizing the final element is, by the way, even more salient if we consider (cf. Bisetto p. 46) the effect of its application in verb-noun compounds such as *il portacenere* - *i portaceneri* 'ashtray' (literally 'carry ash'), or *il salvagente* - *i salvagenti* 'lifejacket' (literally 'save people'). The plural of the feminine mass noun *la cenere* 'ash' has semantic peculiarities not morphologically marked in the singular: *le ceneri* generally means 'ashes, mortal remains' or 'ashes placed on the head in penitence'. The plural *le genti* actually excludes the sense of 'people' as a mass nouns, and means specifically 'peoples, races'. It is quite clear that in the compound plurals *portaceneri* and *salvagenti*, no such special sense is present: *salvagenti* do not prevent genocide. In cases such as *pescecani*/*pescecani* and *portaceneri* what one wants to say is that the second element is not, semantically, the plural of *cane* or *cenere*. Rather, these forms are plurals of the entire word *pescecani* and *portaceneri*, and are symptomatic of (perhaps incipient) reanalysis of the compound as a semantically unanalysable whole. It is presumably something of this kind that Bisetto has in mind when she invokes "degree of lexicalization" in accounting for the availability of both *pescecani* / *pescecani* etc.

What has been said so far leads one to the expectation that any suitably lexicalized compound could be inflected for number word-finally. There is, however, a major class of exceptions, exemplified in Bisetto's account by *pescespada*, but in fact true of all masculine noun-noun, noun-adjective, or verb-noun compounds whose second element is a feminine noun (or adjective) in *-a*. Bisetto (p. 40) rather

gives the impression that the invariance of the final element of *pescespada* is a result of low frequency or low degree of 'lexicalization', rather than a general structural principle. But in fact such compounds never allow plural marking through the desinence of the final element: thus also *i barbanera* lit. 'black beard', 'almanac', *i battiscopa* lit. 'beat broom', 'skirting board', *i portafortuna* lit. 'bring luck', 'good luck charm', *i pellerossa* 'redskins, native Americans', etc. (not **i barbanere*, **i battiscopa*, **i portafortuna*, **i pellerosse*). The reasons lie in general principles of Italian inflectional morphology.

Leaving aside the special case of morphological invariants, it is a general property of Italian nouns and adjectives that they form their plurals in *-i*: *il gatto* 'cat' – *i gatti*; *il cane* 'dog' – *i cani*; *il suicida* '[person who commits] suicide' – *i suicidi*; *la voce* 'voice' – *le voci*; *la vite* 'screw' – *le viti*, etc. The major systematic exception is feminine nouns ending in *-a* in the singular, which form their plurals in *-e* (and virtually²⁶ never in *-i*): *la gatta* 'she-cat' – *le gatte*; *la spada* 'sword' – *le spade*, etc. This makes it immediately clear why one cannot have a plural of the kind **i pescespade*, for it is the case that no Italian masculine noun ever forms its plural in *-e*. But what would be wrong with *il pescespada* – **i pescespadi* (cf. *il suicida* – *i suicidi*)? The answer is on one level obvious: it is because **spadi* is not a word-form belonging to the inflectional paradigm of *spada*²⁷. Yet this leads us to a paradox: the pluralized second elements of 'lexicalized' compounds may, as we have seen, be semantically anomalous, in that they lack senses characteristically associated with those plurals, or simply that they cannot have plural meaning, but they must not be inflectionally anomalous. The same principle helps explain why some compounds whose final element ends in *-e* cannot form plurals in final *-i*, despite the acceptability of the type *cacciavite* 'screwdriver' – *cacciaviti*. An example is *guastafeste* lit. 'spoil festivities', 'spoilsport', 'wet blanket', where a plural **guastafesti* is impossible. This is because *-feste* is a (plural) word-form of the lexeme *festa*, whilst **festi* is not a word-form of this lexeme. In contrast, *viti* is a word-form of the lexeme *vite* 'screw'. Finally, in this connection, there is the interesting case of the compounds *portauovo* and *portauova*. Most dictionaries list these as separate, and morphologically invariable, words with distinct meanings: respectively 'egg cup' (literally 'carry egg') and 'egg rack' (literally 'carry eggs'). This type of compound reveals interesting properties which deserve more rigorous enquiry than I am able to carry out for this study, but an informal survey of six native speakers²⁸ points in the following direction: **i portauovi* is generally rejected as a possible plural of either word, but all the speakers consulted said that they did

say, or could imagine themselves saying, *i portauova* as a plural of *il portauovo*, ‘egg cup’. Now *uovo* ‘egg’ belongs to a small, closed, class of Italian nouns which has the property of being masculine in the singular, and having a plural which is feminine, and carries a special ending *-a* (see Acquaviva 2008:123-61 for an illuminating interpretation of such forms). Indeed, it belongs to a very small subset of this class for which no alternative (masculine) plural form in *-i* is available at all, a fact which immediately explains (given the claims I make above), why there can be no plural **i portauovi*, there being no word-form **uovi*. But *uova* is a real plural word-form corresponding to singular *uovo*, and accordingly (however marginally) it seems to be available in the plural of the compound meaning ‘egg cup’²⁹.

In sum, compounds contain word-forms which must be members of the inflectional paradigm of the corresponding lexeme³⁰, yet need not match either the grammatical or the semantic properties associated with those forms.

One might assume that the kind of divorce between structure and meaning sketched above could only emerge over long periods of time, and that the output of recent word-formation processes should instead tend to have a maximally semantically transparent structure. In fact *FPI* also provides plenty of evidence for the surprising fact that even novel word-formation processes may contribute to the stock of structured but empty lexemes in Italian – and can even result in the direct creation of wholly opaque new words.

The twentieth century history of Italian saw the proliferation of types of word-formation process which at their most extreme have directly yielded what is, in effect, empty structure. Many of these are covered in chapters 8, 9 and 11, by Anna M. Thornton. So-called *parole macedonia* (chapter 9) offer a compact lexicalization of the underlying syntagm, by combining parts (usually comprising at least the initial syllable) of the component words: e.g., *Polstrada* for *polizia stradale*, *lanital* for *lana italiana*. The result frequently serves not to identify the underlying syntagm, but rather to conceal it, and the suspicion arises that in many such cases there is an element of deliberate obscurantism at work, an attempt to mystify by concealing the true (and possibly banal) meaning of the underlying expression. This effect may be enhanced by the fact that many *parole macedonia* generate an effect of phonological strangeness, with a predilection for distinctively un-Italian consonant clusters and word-final consonants (which Thornton plausibly ascribes to imitation of English or Latin phonological structure). It may be etymologically true to say, as Thornton does (p. 609) à propos of *parole macedonia* forming names of commer-

cial products (so-called *marchionimi*), that they are made up of elements that represent such things as producer, place of production and the material contained in the product, yet the relation between (say) *Calzificio Carabelli di Solbiate Arno* and the corresponding 'marchionimo' *Carsol* is quite opaque, and no doubt deliberately so. The result in such a *parola macedonia* does not represent its source components: the manufacturers presumably want a memorable and distinctive name for their product, not to inform us that their stockings are produced by Carabelli in Solbiate. The procedures for forming *parole macedonia* tend to favour, precisely, opacity and lexical arbitrariness – witness Thornton's own puzzlement (p. 569 n. 3) at the meaning of the obscure *Cogefag* (which is in fact the *Commissariato generale per le fabbricazioni di guerra*, set up in 1935), cited but not explained in a work by Migliorini. Such words none the less tend to produce an effect of composite structure, despite the absence of any clear indication of what that structure might be.

Semantic opacity is even greater in the case of *sigle* or acronyms³¹: these too permit the lexicalization of whole syntagms (usually the names of organizations), which may comprise several independent words. Thornton rightly observes that these are diaphasically conditioned, in that for their coining and interpretation they often depend crucially on knowledge of the written form. It is presumably no accident that the *sigla* is a largely twentieth century phenomenon, emerging *pari passu* with the generalization of literacy. But in reality identification of the component words is often virtually impossible, and this opacity is increased by the convention that, where possible, the resultant *sigla* is pronounced according to the principles of Italian graphotactics (see p. 558f.). In the most extreme cases what is produced is simply a new, and both semantically and structurally opaque, lexeme. A particularly striking, but by no means unrepresentative, example cited by Thornton is *AGESCI Associazione guide e scouts cattolici italiani*, pronounced [a'dʒɛʃʃi]. In this word we see the effects of the convention that the letters 'g' and 'c' (and the combination 'sc') have various kinds of palatal pronunciation when followed by an orthographic front vowel: the [g] of underlying 'guide' is pronounced [dʒ], while the [s] of 'scouts' and the [k] of *cattolici* combine as [ʃʃ]. General prosodic principles mean that the stress in *AGESCI* must fall on that vowel which, in the underlying syntagm, is an inherently atonic conjunction (*e*). Moreover, while the underlying conjunction is pronounced [e], the convention that stressed mid vowels in neologisms tend to be pronounced as open means that for many speakers the letter 'e' in this *sigla* is pronounced [ɛ], not [e]. *AGESCI* is, in fact, a

nice example of a recent, productive, word-formation process whose immediately output is an almost wholly opaque, unmotivated and arbitrary new sign.

A common effect of *sigle* is the generation of what are, in fact, novel and almost wholly opaque compound words. This generally arises when the *sigla* is a sequence of initial letters lacking, or almost lacking, vowels and therefore unpronounceable³² as an Italian word, so that the strategy adopted is to form a compound whose components are simply the conventional names of the letters of the alphabet involved (Thornton also discusses some other strategies employed in such cases). Thus *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* becomes *CNR* ['tʃi'enne'erre]. As Thornton shows, the first example has all the characteristics of an entity comprising at least two phonological words, in that the open mid vowel [ɛ] can only occur in the stressed syllable of a phonological word, never when unstressed in word-internal position³³ (cf. also Lepschy 1992). *Sigle* of this kind clearly have an internal constituent structure, but they are semantically opaque to the extent that, at the very best, they only indicate the letter of the alphabet with which the elements of the underlying syntagms commence.

Another relatively modern source of opaque compound structure (even though some examples may date at least from the Renaissance) is of a quite different kind. It involves the formation of what are intended by their coiners as transparent compound words, but whose opacity arises – for some and perhaps the majority of speakers – through ignorance of the meanings of the component parts. The scientific and technological discoveries and inventions of the past two centuries in particular have demanded names, and these have generally been provided by lexical borrowing (principally from Greek and Latin, sometimes from other languages, such as English), and by extensive use of affixation and compounding processes, with a resultantly massive expansion of Italian vocabulary. These are listed in considerable detail in chapter 10, which contains, after an introduction by Maurizio Dardano, sections on chemistry (Claudio Giovanardi), medicine (Luca Serianni) and botany and zoology (Francesco Bianco). While much of this terminology probably only ever circulates among specialists in the relevant fields, medicine in particular is likely to impinge on the lives, and vocabulary, of Italian speakers at large, and it is worth considering the likely effects of such novel word-forms on speakers³⁴. It is a fair assumption that what lay speakers hear and acquire can be characterized in many cases as morphological structure with semantic opacity. Without a knowledge of classical languages and/or medical science, terms such as *gastroenterologia* 'gastroenterology' still seem

to have a clear internal morphological structure, but they have little if any semantic transparency. A layperson may well know the meaning of the word overall, and can probably segment *-logia* as an element meaning something like 'study of'. Moreover, he or she can probably identify two other major lexical formatives in the word, *gastro-* and *-entero-*, and is likely to be helped in this by the fact that there are very large numbers of words in Italian scientific vocabulary which are classical compounds whose formatives are conjoined by the formative *-o-*: *vitamino-terapia*, *addomino-toracico*, etc. The same element also appears, for example, in *italofrancese*, *indoeuropeo*, *sadomasochista*, etc. But the meanings (etymologically) associated, respectively, with *gastr-* and *enter-* may remain quite opaque. In a perhaps even more recondite word such as *leucocito* 'leucocyte', it may be perfectly possible for speakers to detect in it two lexical roots, without their having any clear idea of the meanings of these component parts. It is probably true to say that a very great deal of modern Italian scientific vocabulary presents itself to lay speakers of Italian as containing more or less clearly detectable internal structure, often contrasting with very low degrees of semantic transparency.

3. *Some effects of empty structure in word-formation, ancient and modern*

So far we have seen how word-formation processes, some very old, others principally twentieth century phenomena, have contributed to the large stock of compound words in Italian which display empty inner morphological structure. It is likely that it is the existence of such words which has further facilitated the rise of the kind of highly opaque but internally structured forms such as those produced by *sigle* (see the example of *CNR* discussed above). But there are other developments which seem to presuppose such empty structure for their very existence. One of these is extremely ancient, and seems to have existed throughout the history of Italian and the dialects of Italy. Another seems to be very recent and is, on the available evidence, restricted to the standard language.

The first of these is, by its very nature, more commonly observed in substandard varieties or dialects than in standard Italian: it is what is usually known as *folk etymology*. That folk etymology (henceforth *FE*) should deserve a place among discussions of word-formation (or even serious discussion at all) may occasion surprise. The phenomenon has often been relegated to the margins of linguistic description, being

commonly dismissed as a matter of idiosyncratic linguistic deviation on the part of the uneducated: for example Saussure, at least as his views are presented in early editions of the *Cours de linguistique générale*, regarded it as pathological. Standard Italian is not particularly rich in folk etymological formations, but one suspects that this is not because such developments are inherently rare, but rather because they tend to be winnowed out by the guardians of linguistic correctness. Before discussing their relation to word-formation, I present some examples (see in particular Bertolotti 1958 and Alessio 1937/38), taken both from the standard language and from certain dialects:

battisuocera ‘cornflower’ < Latin BAPTISECULA (+ *batti* ‘beat’ + *suocera* ‘mother in law’); *Campidoglio* < Latin CAPITOLIUM (+ *campi* ‘fields’ + *d’* ‘of’ + *oglio* ‘oil’); *gelsomino* ‘jasmine’ < Persian *yāsamīn* (+ *gelso* ‘mulberry’); *bergamotto* ‘bergamot’ < Turkish *beg armudı* (+ *bergamotto* ‘from Bergamo’); *bompresso* ‘bowsprit’ < French *beau-pré* (+ *b(u)on* ‘good’ + *presso* ‘near, at’); regional Italian (Calabrese) *rotamobbuli* ‘car’ < Italian *automobile* (+ *rota* ‘wheel’ + *mobbuli* ‘mobile’); Abruzzese /kampo'mɔjllə/ ‘camomile’ < *camomilla* (+*campo* ‘field’); Arpinate *taumaturco* ‘silly’ < *taumaturga* ‘miracle worker’ (+ *turco* ‘Turk’); Catanzarese *bekkamortu* ‘bergamot’ < Italian *bergamotto* (+ *bekkamortu* ‘gravedigger’); ('krapa) /animahju'rita/ ‘hermaphrodite (goat)’ < ('krapa) */armahju'rita/ < Greek HERMAPHRODITES (+ 'arma ‘soul’, influenced by Italian *anima* ‘soul’, + *hju'rita* ‘floral, flowery’); Cosentino /para'gustə/ ‘gate to choir stall in a church’ < It. *balaustra* (+ 'para ‘stop, ward off’ and 'gustə ‘taste’).

What is immediately apparent from these examples is that polysyllabic words which would have been largely or wholly opaque to speakers have acquired the outward appearance of compound words: we can identify in each of them at least one independently occurring lexeme, sometimes more than one. The words affected by folk etymology tend to be at least tetrasyllables, often with rather complex, exotic or otherwise recondite meanings, which may lie at the margins of speakers’ vocabulary, being infrequently used and sometimes imperfectly learned. It might be tempting to think that speakers are actually conferring semantic motivation on such words, by replacing portions of them with more familiar elements that help to ‘make sense’ of them. Indeed, this is broadly the line taken by scholars such as Pisani (1960:643); Kilani-Schoch (1988:91); Bolinger (1992:29); Pöckl et al. (2003:41). The difficulty with such a view is that *FE* rarely ‘makes sense’ at all: its effect is very often, in fact, to make nonsense. Alessio

(1937/38:359) is closer to the mark when he comments on “the people’s need to associate words which are partly homophonous, even if they mean something quite different”. Where previously there existed simply an arbitrary relation between signans and signatum, folk-etymologized words are liable to suggest meanings that are irrelevant, misleading, or downright contrary to sense (cf. Baldinger 1973, who shows that folk etymologies can induce subsequent semantic reanalyses, sometimes to downright comical effect). From the examples cited above, we might cite particularly Italian *battisuocera* ‘cornflower’ (literally ‘beat mother-in-law’) or dialectal *para'gustə* ‘gate to choir stall’ (literally ‘stop taste’)³⁵. The fact that many folk etymologies seem to involve the introduction of other lexemes from the same semantic sphere as the input word is not evidence of semantic motivation. In Italian *gelsomino* ‘jasmine’, for example, we find replacement of part of the original form by the word *gelso* ‘mulberry’. A mulberry is of course also a plant, but it is a plant quite unlike a ‘jasmine’, from just about every conceivable point of view (appearance, purposes for which it is used, scent, and so forth). If the nature of *FE* is to motivate semantically, then *gelsomino* is a pretty spectacular failure, since the result suggests a type of plant which a jasmine is not, whereas the historically underlying form suggested nothing whatever: it was simply an opaque, arbitrary sign. The frequent semantic resemblances between input and output in *FE* are, I submit, no more than an accidental by-product of a strategy adopted by speakers when they seek to replace elements of unfamiliar words with more familiar ones (cf. also Alinei 1997:21): they search first in the same general semantic area – just as they also tend to search for replacement forms that are phonologically similar (on this, see Olschansky 1996:130; also Ronneberger-Sibold 1992). One should add that there is another respect in which *FE* can yield nonsense: *gelsomino* now has the outward appearance of a compound word, comprising a noun plus some modifier (along the lines of, say, *terracotta* literally ‘baked earth’), except that the second element, *mino*, corresponds to nothing in the Italian lexicon. The same holds of Abruzzese /kampo'mɔ̃llə/, only the first element of which is analysable as an independent word. In effect what has happened is that there has arisen within the folk-etymologized word a kind of secondary, residual form – indeed a kind of ‘word’ – to which no meaning at all can be ascribed.

Many linguists have, indeed, observed that most of *FE* is not a matter of conventional semantic (re-)motivation of opaque words (see Ducháček 1964; Coates 1987:324; Olschansky 1996:131-35). The essence of *FE* was captured by Paul (1890:232; 236), who wrote that

“Nothing is in fact operative but the natural expectation of finding, in a word which looks like a compound, familiar elements”, and that “we expect [...] in a word which gives the impression of a compound, that its single elements should admit of connection with simple words”. For similar insights see Saussure (1968:238;240); Wartburg (1925:17); Hockett (1958:287); Matthews (1991:83); Hamp (1992:427); Hock (2003:442). Others have also emphasized that what is at work is not the search for semantic intelligibility, but rather for structural intelligibility, that is to say for the presence, within a long and relatively unfamiliar polysyllabic word, of recognizable, familiar, structural components. Thus Bloomfield (1935:450) observes that “popular etymology may render the form structurally or lexically more intelligible”, while Blank (1997:306) writes that the “aim of folk etymological processes is generally not the semantic reinterpretation of the changed word, but formal transparency, even if what is involved is only a semantically quite deviant pseudo-transparency” [my translation]. In similar vein, Ronneberger-Sibold develops the notion (2002:116) of “transparent but unmotivated” words.

Folk etymology actually deserves to be seriously considered as a variety of word-formation, with the difference that what is involved is not the typical scenario of word-formation by apparent synthesis (either addition of affixes to some base form, or combination of existing lexemes) as in the great majority of compound or derived lexemes, but by analysis, through the assignment of a composite structure to originally structurally opaque entities. This structure is furnished, in Italian and in many other languages, by the deployment of existing word-forms³⁶, effectively regardless of the meanings associated with them. Finally we may observe that the kind of divorce of form from meaning that we observe in folk etymology is strongly reminiscent of what Alinei (1996;1997) has termed “sign-recycling”. Alinei distinguishes between a sign’s ‘meaning’ and its ‘motivation’. A sign is ‘motivated’ (an iconym in Alinei’s terminology) by virtue simply of being a familiar member of the existing stock of signs in a language, which makes it available as an element in the creation of new lexemes. Folk etymology involves a kind of abductive reasoning which starts from the premise that polysyllables are characteristically the output of word-formation processes and therefore tend to have internal morphological structure. Confronted with unfamiliar polysyllabic words from other sources, speakers therefore tend to assume that those words too should have such internal structure, and actually seek to confer such structure on them by exploiting existing, familiar, iconyms, quite independently of the meanings associated with them.

This is the essence of folk etymology.

If folk etymology is an ancient phenomenon, and one only sporadically attested in standard Italian, the phenomenon of *accorciamento*, or truncation, seems to have been rare before the twentieth century (see De Mauro 1976:225) – although Thornton in her discussion rightly warns against assuming that absence of earlier evidence is evidence of earlier absence. It is also, to the best of my knowledge, and in contrast to folk etymology, unknown outside the standard language. A typical example is *frigo* for *frigorifero* ‘refrigerator’, in which the first two (or three) syllables of some polysyllable are used to represent the entire word. Thornton states (p. 561) that what are produced in this variety of word-formation are not really new words, but diaphasic (broadly, register-related) variants of existing words. This is true just as long as one’s understanding of lexical element necessarily involves the classic signans-signatum relationship. Certainly there is no semantic difference between *frigorifero* and *frigo*, *foto* and *fotografia* ‘photo(graph)’, *dattilo* and *dattilografia* ‘typewriting’, *bici* and *bicicletta* ‘bicycle’, *dia* and *diapo* for *diapositiva* ‘slide, transparency’ (all forms which have become part of everyday vocabulary), or more socially restricted creations such *mate* for *matematica* ‘mathematics’, *geo* for *geografia* ‘geography’, *ragio* for *ragioneria* ‘accountancy’, in student parlance. What speakers actually appear to be doing is analysing polysyllables as compounds comprising more than one word, the first of which can be used to stand for the whole word. The correctness of this impression is suggested by the fact that the resultant truncated forms may then be available to recombine with other words so as to form novel compounds, as in *democristiano* ‘Christian democrat’ < *demo* (< *democratico*) + *cristiano*, or *frigobar* ‘refrigerator bar’ < *frigo* (< *frigorifero*) + *bar*. In cases such as *geo* or *dattilo* it may be true that the new form is the first element of an historical compound, but one wonders how many speakers have sufficient etymological knowledge to realize this³⁷. An *accorciamento* such as *otorino*, for *otorinolaringoiatra* ‘ear, nose and throat specialist’ may indeed have a right edge coinciding with that of a Greek form meaning ‘nose’, but the shortened form betrays, if anything, complete unawareness of the meanings of the component parts, since such specialists do not limit themselves to the ‘ears and nose’. For this reason I am rather hesitant to make too sharp a conceptual division (see Thornton p. 564) between disyllabic *accorciamenti*, allegedly prosodic in nature, and *accorciamenti* resulting in trisyllables (such as *dattilo*) or even tetrasyllables (such as *otorino*, or *rotocalco* for *rotocalcografia* ‘rotogravure, illus-

trated) magazine') in which the cut allegedly coincides systematically with a morphological boundary – especially if we understand 'morphological boundary' in the traditional sense of a boundary between minimal meaning-bearing units. The results look strikingly like what we might describe as canonical Italian words: overwhelmingly they are disyllables or trisyllables, with paroxytonic (or sometimes proparoxytonic) stress, and an unstressed final vowel³⁸. In many cases these results have never had any independent lexical status, and their right edge does not correspond to any pre-existing word boundary (e.g., *bici*, *frigo*, *ragio*). To take the specific case of *bici* from *bicicletta*, the *accorciamento* presupposes a prior analysis of the word into two components *bici* and *cletta*. What motivates such an analysis is not the independent existence of word-forms *bici* and *cletta*³⁹, but the model provided by more or less transparent compounds which do comprise identifiable lexemes.

It appears that *accorciamenti* in general arise from the same tendency to discern compound structure in polysyllables that we observe in folk etymology. This structure arises independently of any semantic analysis, for the polysyllable may be internally opaque from a semantic point of view, or opaque to the majority of speakers, even if more educated speakers (including morphologists!) may be able to see transparent structure in them.

4. Conclusion

La formazione delle parole in italiano has stimulated in me some reflections on the issue of the autonomously morphological nature of many of the results of word-formation, and of the structures which word-formation processes presuppose. But the mass of material presented in the volume has the potential to provoke research and speculation in multiple directions. The blurb on the back cover states that the authors (and the editors) have sought to offer a descriptive account of Italian word-formation in terms comprehensible to the general reader while observing the highest scholarly standards, in order to provide a useful reference tool not only for linguists but for the wider public. With the reservation that I expressed earlier regarding the lack of an acceptable index, it is my impression that they have largely succeeded. There is no doubt that the analyses presented in this volume will provide an indispensable point of reference for future research, both descriptive and theoretical, on word-formation not only in Italian but in other Romance languages and beyond.

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Note

¹ These are, in addition to the editors: Pier Marco Bertinetto, Francesco Bianco, Antonietta Bisetto, Andreas Blank, Maurizio Dardano, Livio Gaeta, Claudio Giovanardi, Claudio Iacobini, Maria G. Lo Duca, Lavinia Merlini Barbaresi, Davide Ricca, Christian Seidl, Luca Serianni, Heidi Siller-Runggaldier, Anna M. Thornton, Miriam Voghera and Ulrich Wandruszka.

² As I shall explain later, many of the data listed in this chapter do, however, have interesting structural properties.

³ Exceptions are ‘conversion’, involving change in meaning without change in form, and discussed in chapter 7, and various forms of shortening, some of which I shall discuss later.

⁴ To cite just one example for Italian which has appeared since the publication of *FPI*, consider Scalise, et al. (2005) (and, for the general issues, a number of other studies in the volume in which that appears: Dressler et al. 2005).

⁵ See also Maiden (2008) for the links between such phenomena and Aronoff’s notion (e.g. 1994) of “morphology by itself”.

⁶ Most of the phenomena I shall discuss below involve nouns. Matters are slightly different with verbs, whose inflectional endings are usually polysyllabic.

⁷ Needless to say, syllable boundaries do not always perfectly coincide with morphological boundaries (e.g., [‘ka-ne], morphologically *can-e*). It might be more accurate to count vocalic nuclei.

⁸ The approximate nature of the figures reflects some indeterminacies regarding syllabification, or the independent lexical status of some of the items listed in the dictionary. The choice of *ba-*, which is not the initial syllable of any major derivational prefix, may actually depress the true figures for internally structured polysyllables.

⁹ In fact it is so-called because the meat is taken from the head and neck of the pig, but clearly, to judge from Bisetto’s comments, this is not realized by all native speakers.

¹⁰ Of course, given prior knowledge of the real meaning, it may then be very easy for speakers to reconstruct the semantic history of the word, but that is another matter.

¹¹ A point also discussed by Bisetto (p. 34). The verb element of such verb-noun compounds also has the general property of stress-identity with the corresponding verb-form. Thus, while the position of so-called “secondary stress” in Italian pretonic syllables is, within certain constraints, mobile (*riproducévano* or *ripròducévano* ‘they reproduced’), in compounds the position of stress is identical to the primary stress of the independent word-form: thus always *còpřitastiéra*, never **copřitastiéra*). For further treatment of these issues (using slightly different terminology), see Lepschy (1992; 1993).

¹² Compare this with *copřri* [‘kɔpřri] ‘you cover’ vs. [ko‘přivi] ‘you were covering’.

¹³ For a broader exploration of such structures in other languages, and of the surprising possibility that lexical identity without identity of referential meaning could exist even in non-derived word forms, see Maiden (2008).

¹⁴ We might add here the formation of adverbial or gerundival reduplicative compounds using (reduplicated) imperatives, such as *Corri corri è giunta a casa* ‘By running hard she got home’, *Scava scava ha trovato la pepita d’oro* ‘By digging away he found the golden nugget’. See especially Spitzer (1918); also Huber-Sauter (1951:76-80).

¹⁵ See also Rainer (p. 19), and Thornton (pp. 521, 524). Floricic (ms) brings fresh arguments, and reviews the history of the problem.

¹⁶ See also Rainer (2001:389f.), and for Spanish, Lloyd (1968:1-10).

¹⁷ Similarly Ageno (1955).

¹⁸ From a different theoretical perspective, cf. Di Sciullo and Ralli (1994:61-75), who believe that what is involved is an imperative which is “not actualized”.

¹⁹ See De Dardel & Zamboni (1999).

²⁰ It may be fairly objected (as an anonymous referee for this paper does) that comparative (and diachronic) evidence does not necessarily tell us anything about the analysis made by speakers of modern Italian. But the existence of closely cognate, and similarly structured, varieties where the imperative analysis is indisputable, at the very least indicates that a similar analysis simply cannot be dismissed for the standard language as well.

²¹ Flechia (1877-78) gives large numbers of anthroponyms of this compound type, including such names as *Falaguerra* (lit. ‘make the war’), *Falorso* (lit. ‘make the bear’) all of which lack any sign of *raddoppiamento* on the definite article (see also Floricic ms).

²² This is apparent from the AIS map 219. There is one example of the type *fallename* at Putignano in Tuscany, revealed by map 1441 of ALEIC. Recall, however, that the presence of *raddoppiamento* does not invalidate the thesis that the first element is the imperative; rather the absence of *raddoppiamento* everywhere else confirms it.

²³ In both dialects the unmetaphonized stressed root of this verb is [jenn].

²⁴ See Maiden (2007) for some suggestions on this point, within the context of a wider tendency (observable in Italo-Romance and elsewhere) for imperatives to constitute a ‘basic’, representative, form for verb lexemes. It might even provide the basis for the formation of verbal nouns: one wonders, for example, whether Thornton is necessarily correct (pp. 518-520) in accounting for the feminine derived nouns such as *qualifica* ‘qualification’, *verifica* ‘ascertainment’, *dèlega* ‘delegation’, *pèrmuta* ‘contract of exchange’, *pròroga* ‘prorogation’, *procùra*, etc., (particularly common in legal and bureaucratic usage) as ‘truncations’ of *qualificazione*, *verificazione*, *delegazione*, *permutazione*, *prorogazione*, *procurazione*, etc. Each of these forms is exactly identical to the second person singular imperative form of the corresponding verbs, even in respects such as stress, and quality of the stressed mid vowel, which could not be predicted from the noun in *-zione*.

²⁵ Other mismatches between form and meaning can be observed in compounds such as *i sottaceti* ‘pickles’ (cf. *aceto* ‘vinegar’, a mass noun), *i tergicristalli* ‘windscreen wipers’ (cf. *cristallo* ‘windscreen’ – a set of windscreen wipers only operates on one windscreen), *i fabbisogni* ‘necessities’ (literally ‘make need’; cf. *bisogno* ‘need’).

²⁶ There are just two lexicalized (and probably semantically motivated) exceptions to this, *arma* – *armi* ‘weapon’, and *ala* – *ali* ‘wing’.

²⁷ This brings us to the problem of the much rarer feminine compounds. Masculine *il capocuoco* ‘head chef’ (< *capo* ‘head’ + *cuoco* ‘(male) cook’) has plural *i capicuochi* or the – presumably more ‘lexicalized’ – *capocuochi*. Its feminine counterpart is *la capocuoca* – *le capocuoche*, but never **le capicuoche*. Of course there are abundant Italian feminine plurals in *-i*, but (with exception of the unique and highly lexicalized *la mano* – *le mani* ‘hand’), there is no grammatically

feminine lexeme with a singular word-form *-o* and plural word-form in *-i*. This type requires further exploration, but some general notion of ‘plausible membership of an Italian inflectional paradigm’ seems to be needed to account for such behaviour in compounds.

²⁸ And an anonymous referee for this paper, to whom I am grateful for drawing my attention to the phenomenon, and who cites ‘un portauovo’ – ‘due portauova’. I am also grateful to Paolo Acquaviva for discussing this case with me.

²⁹ With regard to the inflectional ending *-a* in this word, note that while there are few (if any?) Italian masculine nouns that display *-e* in the plural (whence the impossibility of **i pescespade*), there are a good many (invariant) masculine nouns which have *-a* (e.g., *il puma – i puma*). Moreover, if we follow Acquaviva (2008:160f.), then the *-a* of *uova* (and words like it) is not really an inflectional ending at all, but an invariant ‘word-marker’ of a lexicalized plural.

³⁰ A difficulty with this account, however, is that it predicts the acceptability of a plural **barbaneri*, since *neri* really is a word-form (the masculine plural) of the lexeme *nero* ‘black’. Unfortunately, there are rather few examples of this kind (masculine compounds comprising a feminine noun + adjectival modifier), so that it is difficult to generalize. What it may reveal, however, is that the constraint is that the pluralized final element of the compound must be a possible plural of the word form appearing in the singular so that, for example, a feminine singular word-form cannot alternate with a masculine plural one.

³¹ As Thornton observes, however (p. 560f.), *sigle* have the structural advantage of providing a base for the formation of nouns and adjectives indicating membership of the groups or associations indicated by the *sigla*, of the type *ciellenista* (< *CLN* < *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale* – the Second World War resistance organization).

³² In some cases, the phonological unnaturalness is actually tolerated in pronunciation (e.g., *CISL* [tʃizl] for *Confederazione Italiana Sindacati dei Lavoratori*) possibly, again, from a deliberate desire to create an effect of foreignness, or strangeness.

³³ Thornton transcribes the first two syllables as each bearing primary stress. It seems to me more accurate to indicate them as bearing a secondary stress (in the sense of Lepschy 1992) with regard to the penultimate syllables. The sequence [tʃie] is also revealing, in that the presence of an unstressed vowel [i] in this phonological context is highly unusual.

³⁴ In this regard it is a shame, as Serianni (p. 585) observes, that there is at present no adequate study of the oral use of medical terminology in Italian, especially with regard to the interaction between patients and doctors.

³⁵ Usually the result is a completely new compound, but Catanzarese *bekkamortu* for Italian *bergamotto* deploys an existing compound meaning ‘gravedigger’ (lit. ‘catch dead person’).

³⁶ Italian folk etymology characteristically involves full word-forms, rather than lexical roots. This is consistent with the structure of Italian compounds, which typically comprise root + inflectional ending. Thus in *gelsomino* it is the whole word-form *gelsa*, not the root *gels-*, which provides the first element of the pseudocompound. In principle, it might be possible for opaque words to be analysed as containing derivational affixes, but this is something for which I find little direct evidence in Italian. For some data suggesting the emergence of derivational pseudo-suffixes in Romanian and Spanish, see Maiden (1999; 2001).

³⁷ For those ignorant of Greek, we might also question in what respects the second element of *geografia* and *dattilografia*, *-grafia*, is the “same” element in the two words. It is certainly a recurrent same of form, which turns up in a large number of historical compounds (*pornografia*, *fotografia*, *biografia*, etc.), but the

meaning “writing”, or indeed any common meaning, is far from evident in, say, “pornography”, “geography”, or “photography”.

³⁸ Although Thornton points out (565f.) that occasional occurrences of phonologically un-Italian consonant-final monosyllables (such as *sub* for *subacqueo*), may represent a tendency towards phonological pseudo-anglicism.

³⁹ The word is probably a loan from French *bicyclette*, and is relatively opaque. It does contain what looks like the Italian (feminine) diminutive suffix [’etta], but the only Italian noun from which it could possibly be derived by suffixation is *biciclo*, which is very rare, probably itself borrowed from French, masculine not feminine, and phonologically highly marked, in that it ends in [-klo].

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