A MEDITERRANEAN OF REMNANTS: JEWISH AND ARABO-ISLAMIC SICILY IN VINCENZO CONSOLO

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Abstract:

In his novels, writer and intellectual Vincenzo Consolo (1933-2012) intricately maps the intersecting histories of Sicily's Mediterranean civilizations. This article discusses what I call Consolo's "Mediterranean of remnants," highlighting the author's approach to Sicily's historical narratives as he seeks to recover and emphasize the often neglected Jewish and Arabo-Islamic legacies embedded in the island's cultural fabric. Through his narrative archeology, Consolo unearths and reinterprets layers of Sicilian history, reimagining his own lineage in the process and challenging traditional views of Sicilian identity. The exploration begins with an analysis of Jewish Sicilian history as depicted in Consolo's novels *Nottetempo, casa per casa* and *La ferita dell'aprile*, linking these stories to his personal reflections on his suspected Jewish ancestry. The study then shifts to examining his representation of Sicily's Arabo-Islamic heritage, particularly through his aesthetics of grafting, which he uses to explain the cultural hybridity of Sicilians. Consolo's works challenge the erasure of Sicilian Jewish and Muslim histories, advocating for a richer, more inclusive understanding of Sicilian identity that acknowledges its profound connections to the broader Mediterranean basin. By weaving these complex narratives together, Consolo not only enriches our understanding of Sicilian history and literature but also contributes to a more nuanced appreciation of the Mediterranean's multifaceted cultural legacy. This study reaffirms his literary and philosophical significance, positioning his works as essential readings for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the Mediterranean's intercultural dynamics.

Keywords: Sicily, Jewish Sicilian history, Arabo-Islamic heritage, cultural hybridity, Mediterranean Studies

The Sicilian novelist and intellectual Vincenzo Consolo (1933-2012) is renowned for intricately mapping Sicily onto the cultural and historical geography of the island's myriad Mediterranean civilizations. This article

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argues that a critical dimension of what might be called Consolo's "Mediterranean of remnants" has often been overlooked, i.e., his efforts to unearth from Sicily's palimpsestic archive two foundational yet marginalized and nearly erased cultural-historical traces: the chronicles of Jewish and Arabo-Islamic Sicily. The author's textual archeology delves deeply into Sicily's layered past, unearthing forgotten narratives from its Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Jewish, Arabo-Islamic, Norman, and Spanish histories. In the crevices of these ruins, Consolo discovers what he identifies as personal ties to a *marrano* heritage, through which Consolo reimagines his origins as born from "the carob tree and the rock, from a Jewish mother and a Saracen father."[2] For Consolo, the interconnected legacies of Sicily's Jewish and Arabo-Islamic past challenge historical erasures, assume a preeminent role in defining Sicily's identity, and ultimately surpass the significance of the island's classical heritage. This narrative reorientation positions Sicily not as a peripheral European outpost but suggests an alternative cultural geography that restores the island's position to the center of a Mediterranean crossroads of aesthetic and political mediations. This article will examine Consolo's "Mediterranean of remnants" through a two-part analysis. Initially, it will focus on the recovery of Jewish Sicilian history in the autobiographical novels *Nottetempo, casa per casa* and *La ferita dell'aprile*, in the context of the author's statements about his own suspected Jewish heritage. Subsequently, the discussion will shift to Consolo's aesthetics of grafting and the legacy of Sicily's Arabo-Islamic period, as portrayed in *L'olivo e l'olivastro* and *Retablo*. In these texts, the horticultural technique of grafting serves Consolo as a powerful metaphor with which he articulates the transcultural hybridity that has shaped and continues to shape Sicilian identity.

Consolo writes against the grain of prevailing narratives that have promoted a monolithic, ethnically, and racially homogeneous Italian nationhood.[3] With his literary recovery of fragmentary historical remnants, Consolo challenges what Francesca Maria Corrao has called "the memory of

2 "Sei nato dal carrubo / e dalla pietra / da madre ebrea / e da padre saraceno." Vincenzo Consolo, *Accordi. Poesie inedite di Vincenzo Consolo* (Gaetano Zuccarello Editore, 2015), 18.

3 Among the scholarly contributions that have placed Sicily and Italy within a Mediterranean dimension, see Claudia Karagoz and Giovanna Summerfield (eds.), *Sicily and the Mediterranean: Migration, Exchange, Reinvention* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Norma Bouchard and Valerio Ferme, *Italy and the Mediterranean: Words, Sounds, and Images of the Post Cold War Era* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); as well as Claudio Fogu, *The Fishing Net and the Spider Web: Mediterranean Imaginaries and the Making of Italians* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

oblivion," by which Italian historiography has traditionally ignored Sicily's Mediterranean networks. Corrao contends that as a result of this *damnatio memoriae*, in many history books "we do not find traces of constructive memories of the Islamic and Jewish presence in Europe."[4] This ongoing neglect is reminiscent of Fernand Braudel's earlier criticisms concerning the severed ties between Sicily and its North African neighbors. The consequence of this cultivated amnesia was a vocabulary that remained inadequate for describing Sicily's role within the broader archipelago of a Jewish and Arabo-Islamic Mediterranean.[5] Consolo's aesthetics of grafting, as we will see, also operates on a linguistic level, thus offering a lexicon that not only describes but also revitalizes Sicily's connections to larger Mediterranean networks. Instead of focusing solely on influences from Rome and Greece to the north and east, Consolo's literary re-orientation of Sicily directs attention to the island's south and west, towards the Maghreb and Andalusian Iberia.

Consolo's exploration of Jewish history and his identification with descendants of forcibly converted Jews remain largely unrecognized or underestimated, even by scholars of his Mediterranean paradigm. For instance, Nicolò Messina contends that Consolo "toyed with his last name of Jewish ancestry," suggesting a negligible engagement, although it appears that Consolo considered his alleged Jewish genealogy with profound seriousness, regardless of its historical distance. Conversely, Giuliana Adamo, in her eulogy of the Sicilian author, urges caution, reminding readers that while Consolo frequently speculated about his Jewish origins, these claims were never definitively proven. Yet, the very impossibility of providing concrete evidence for this genealogical suspicion might be precisely Consolo's point, reflecting the broader issue of a historical and cultural legacy that is irretrievably lost.[6] The lack of conclusive evidence regarding Conso-

4 Francesca Maria Corrao, "The Memory of Oblivion. Italian History and the Lost Memory of Arab Influence on Medieval Sicily," in *Claiming History in Religious Conflicts*, edited by Adrian Brändli and Katharina Heyden (Schwabe Verlag, 2021): 289.

5 "It is customary when discussing Sicily to keep looking to the North, towards Naples, and to regard their two histories as fundamentally opposed, the rise of Naples leading to the decline of Palermo, and vice versa. It is even more important to emphasize its links with North Africa, that is the value of this maritime world which our imperfect knowledge or lack of attention has left without a name." Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II.* 2nd Edition. Vol. 1. 2 vol (University of California Press, 1995), 117.

6 "Giocherellava con il suo cognome di ascendenza ebraica." Nicolò Messina, "Cartografia delle migrazioni in Consolo" in Gianni Turchetta, ed., *"Questo luogo d'in-*

lo's Jewishness should therefore not be viewed as a deficiency in his identity politics but as a central argument of his cultural criticism. Consolo's deep identification should not be seen as cultural appropriation; instead, it represents a form of Mediterranean transculturalism that embraces the hidden interconnectedness between self and Other, integral to one's personal and familial story. Consolo's "Mediterranean of remnants," therefore, carries significant disciplinary implications. By weaving Jewish history into his novels, he reveals layers of Sicilian – and by extension, Italian – history and culture that have been largely overlooked by dominant national narratives. Highlighting the importance of this perspective, Saskia Ziolkowski argues that acknowledging the role of Jewishness in modern Italian literary history is crucial, as it "offers a path for discussing the historical diversity of Italian culture and identity."[7] Read in this context, the works of Consolo, while also operating in contiguous spheres, contribute significantly to a Jewish Italian literary history.

Consolo's Jewish Sicily

Set in the early 1920s, in the coastal town of Cefalù in Sicily, Consolo's 1992 historical-metaphoric novel, opens with an unsettling scene.[8] The father of the young protagonist, Petro Marano, is barking and howling under the full moon, rolling amidst bramble thorns and limestone rocks, darting erratically as if haunted by beasts or demons. He is afflicted by the family's sinister and ancestral curse, the *male catubbo*, which local folk traditions interpret as lycanthropy, the grim metamorphosis into a werewolf. This alleged therianthropy renders Petro's family social pari-

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crocio d'ogni vento e assalto." Vincenzo Consolo e la cultura del Mediterraneo fra conflitto e integrazione." (Mimesis, 2021), 109. The Italian term *giocherellare*, "to fiddle" or "play around," trivializes Consolo's identification with what he perceives to be a long-lost Jewish heritage. Adamo reminisces: "Amava dire .... che il suo cognome aveva, probabilmente, una origine ebraica, rimasta tuttavia indimostrata. Di molto ebraico, però, aldilà del fatto onomastico, c'è di sicuro in lui l'enorme rispetto, culto anzi, della memoria a cui si accompagna il miglior umanesimo per quel che riguarda il senso della storia." Giuliana Adamo, "Ricordo di Vincenzo Consolo (1933-2012)." *Italica* 89.4 (Winter 2012): vii.

7 Saskia Elizabeth Ziolkowski, "For a Jewish Italian Literary History: from Italo Svevo to Igiaba Scego." *Italian Culture* 40.2 (2022): 132.

8 For Consolo's notion of the historical-metaphoric novel, see Joseph Francese, *Vincenzo Consolo. Gli anni de «l'Unità» (1992-2012), ovvero la poetica della colpa-espiazione* (Firenze University Press, 2015), 77-80.

ahs in the eyes of the superstitious townspeople. His condition thrusts the Maranos into a liminal state: they dwell on the threshold of a hybrid human-animal form, inhabiting the space of the monstrous that defies clear divisions in socially accepted taxonomical categories.[9] Consolo explores a broader range of mental health issues through the family's struggles. The Arabic etymology of the *male catubbo* suggests a "canine disease," hinting at the father's clinical lycanthropy, a condition that makes him believe to temporarily assume wolfish traits. His afflictions are compounded by "unbearable depression" and manic episodes that also affect Petro's two sisters, manifesting as schizophrenia.[10] The family's marginalization is exacerbated by their unexpected ascent to wealth after receiving an inheritance from a local aristocrat. This unexpected upward mobility is regarded with deep suspicion in the community, where Petro's father is seen as a bastard, a slur that underscores the family's mixed legacy and social illegitimacy.

For Petro, the enigmatic affliction that besets the family initially defies clear identification. While the cause and name of this condition remain veiled in obscurity, the nightly silhouette of the coast illuminated by the lighthouse evokes an eerie sense of wanderlust – an exile's yearning for distant shores. It is only later that Petro begins to articulate this longing, formulating questions that lead him toward a tentative understanding of their predicament.

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9 For a discussion of the relationship of human and animal in the novel, see Rossend Arqués, "Teriomorfismo e malinconia. Una storia notturna della Sicilia: Nottetempo, casa per casa di Consolo." *Quaderns d'Italià* 10 (2005): 79-94.

10 Vincenzo Consolo, *L'opera completa.* A cura e con un saggio introduttivo di Gianni Turchetta e uno scritto di Cesare Segre (Arnoldo Mondadori, 2015), 653. Via phonetic similarity, in the Arabic *catubbo* Consolo hears the Greek katabasis, the descent into a hellish state of irrationality. He explained: "Il lupo mannaro era l'incubo, lo spavento notturno, nella vecchia cultura contadina, carico di male e malefizio, contro il quale si opponevano crudeli gesti esorcistici. Lupunariu si chiamava in Sicilia l'uomo soggetto a quella notturna metamorfosi, e il male da cui era affetto, mali catubbu, nel cui suono arabo si sente un precipitare in basso dove solo si può trovare la via d'uscita. Melanconia chiamò questa condizione la medicina: un morbo di nervi e dello spirito, una depressione insopportabile ..." Vincenzo Consolo, "Paesaggio metafisico di una folla pietrificata." *Corriere della Sera*, 19 October 1977. Lycanthropy in Sicilian folklore had been described by the ethno-anthropology of Giuseppe Pitré, who described the phenomenon as "una sorta di pazzia, lupina o canina, detta dagli Arabi Catrab o Cutubut; onde i nostri presero occasione di chiamarla corrottamente mali catubbu e altresì dalle strida Lupuminaru." Giuseppe Pitré, *Usi e costumi, credenze e pregiudizi del popolo siciliano* (Lauriel, 1889), 230.

> "From what offense, sacrilege does this atrocious verdict, this misfortune come from?" Petro wondered. Perhaps, he thought, from an ancient, immemorial fault. From his last name, perhaps that of a renegade, of a Marrano from Spain or Sicily, which meant a legacy of anxieties, melancholies, regrets in his veins. Or perhaps from the mixing of this with Judea or Samaria, with wandering seeds for winds of invasions earthquakes famines, of Arabia Byzantium Andalusia: Saliba the great-grandmother, Panassidi the grandmother, Granata his mother Salvatrice; and there was in the mix, in the ferment, Fazio Lombardo Valenza Provenzale.[11]

Struck by this epiphany, Petro notices in his surname a clue that hints at the Marano family's concealed Jewish heritage: they are descendants of Jews forcibly converted to Catholicism, pejoratively termed *marranos* by the Spanish Inquisition. This realization brings the sense of melancholy and inexplicable guilt into focus, revealing them as manifestations of the intergenerational trauma wrought by centuries of antisemitism, forced conversions, violence, and discrimination. Tracing his matrilineal genealogy in keeping with Jewish tradition, Petro locates his family's roots in historical regions such as Judea and Samaria, acknowledging diverse influences from the Arabian Peninsula, Byzantium, and Andalusia. Notably, his great-grandmother Saliba's surname points to a Christian family of Arab origin, while his father's lineage seems to suggest Lombard, Spanish, and Provençal origins. The recognition of his crypto-Jewish ancestry deepens his understanding of his own identity and his connections to Mediterranean migrations but leaves him, in the context of fascist Italy, even more isolated and marginalized.

Revelatory in this context is the protagonist's journey to reconstruct his origins as a Spanish or Sicilian *marrano*, which places a significant chapter of his family's diasporic wanderings in Sepharad, among the Jewish communities that flourished in the Iberian Peninsula under Islamic dominion. In the logic of the novel, then, the *male catubbo* transcends mere popular superstition; it signifies the remnant of a vernacular epistemology embedded within the dialect, mirroring a medical diagnosis

11 "'Da quale offesa, sacrilegio viene questa sentenza atroce, questa malasorte?" si chiedeva Petro. Forse, pensava, da una colpa antica, immemorabile. Da quel cognome suo forse di rinnegato, di marrano di Spagna o di Sicilia, che significava eredità di ànsime, malinconie, rimorsi dentro nelle vene. O dall'incrocio di questo di Giudea o Samaria, con semi erranti per venti d'invasioni terremoti carestie, d'Arabia Bisanzio Andalusia: Saliba la catanonna, la nonna Panissidi, Granata la madre Salvatrice; e c'era nell'impasto, nel fermento, ancora Fazio Lombardo Valenza Provenzale.'" Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 672.

deeply rooted in a tradition where Arabic is the language of scholarly discourse. Crucially, this Jewish sense of alienation is articulated through an Arabic expression, revealing Consolo's exploration of an Arabized Judaism that was a hallmark of both Al-Andalus and of Jewish Sicily under Arabo-Islamic rule.[12]

The novel subtly reveals the Marano family's Jewish history, with the presence of the Jewish quarter in Cefalù serving as a critical backdrop. In an early scene, the father, in a frenzied state, rushes along the road leading to Porta Giudecca, the arched gateway to the Jewish quarter.[13] As the novel accurately describes, this neighborhood was located in the northeastern section between the coast and the hills and was home to a small but active Jewish community. First documented in 1348, this community was notably involved in the tuna fishing industry. Pertinent to the historical and the extradiegetic background of the protagonist Petro is the fact that records indicate that a member of this Jewish community was once condemned for rebellion, and that their property was confiscated on at least two occasions.[14] Petro's family resides in a solitary house within this ghetto, a setting steeped in their extensive ancestral history, which suggests a deep, albeit unspoken, connection to their Jewish heritage. Throughout the novel, this setting not only anchors the narrative but also signals the family's continuing presence and isolation in the town, as they are haunted by the shadows of an almost unspeakable past.

The family's misfortunes tragically mirror the broader history of Jewish persecution. When fascist squad members violently break into their home and destroy traditional terracotta jars filled with olive oil, the act transcends mere vandalism – it becomes a desecration: "The jars were all shattered,

12 Under Islamic rule, Jewish medieval communities in the larger Mediterranean area used Arabic as their daily spoken language. An important source for the lives of Jewish merchants in Sicily (among other groups) is the Cairo Geniza archive, the largest extant collection of medieval manuscripts. Letters in Judeo-Arabic attest to the vital role that Jewish merchants played in connecting Sicily with Ifriqiya and Cairo between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. Sarah Davis-Secord, *Where Three Worlds Met: Sicily in the Early Medieval Mediterranean* (Cornell University Press, 2017), 206-212.

13 The father runs "lungo la strada di porta Giudecca" at the beginning of the novel. Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 630. Also: "Petro fumava nel letto della Piluchera con cui s'era intrezzato fortemente da poco tempo. Era la prima donna sua, dopo le altre che giungevano di fora alla casa solitaria alla Giudecca." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 731.

14 Schlomo Simonsohn, *Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Jews in Sicily* (Brill, 2011), 237-238.

the barrels overturned, the wineskins pierced, all in a slimy heap, the qafiz, jugs, bags scattered around, plunged in the lake of oil on the ground."[15] The spilled olive oil, sacred to the goddess Athena, symbolizes a profound offense against reason and sanctity. In an earlier article, first published in 1986, the author likened these traditional Sicilian terracotta jars to both the uterus and the tomb, evoking the burial customs of the Sicels, Sicily's ancient inhabitants, who interred their dead in fetal positions within large jars.[16] The episode of violence serves a dual narrative function. It reflects past atrocities against Jews and ominously anticipates future ones, adding a layer of historical resonance that underscores the novel's thematic depth. The brutal home invasion not only recalls the historical massacres of Jewish families in Sicily but also foreshadows the pogroms that would devastate Europe in the subsequent decades. The scene, central to the plot, therefore, finally clarifies the initially somewhat obscure title of the novel, which refers to the nightly rounds of fascist patrols, roaming in their destructive fury, from house to house.

The title of *Nottetempo, casa per casa* evokes a double historical context, the fascist *squadrismo* of recent memory and, more subtly, the suppressed narratives of the island's historical pogroms, with which Consolo revitalizes the nearly forgotten memories of Sicilian Judaism. Jewish communities were an integral part of Sicily's demographic composition since the first century C.E. During the Byzantine period, they faced sporadic social and political challenges but were generally able to practice their rites and maintain their synagogues in towns with a sufficiently sizable population. Their golden age came under Arabo-Islamic rule between the ninth and eleventh centuries when Sicily was a vital hub of commerce and scholarship, with Jews playing crucial roles in public administration and academia, trade and

15 "Le giare tutte eran frantumate, i fusti rovesciati, gli otri trafitti, in un ammasso viscido, e cafisi boccali imbusti sparsi, immersi nel lago d'olio del terreno." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 744. Notable here the term "cafiso," from the Arabic *qafiz*, a traditional unit of measurement for volume and weight. In Sicily, the term and unit of measure is still used for olive oil and corresponds to a quantity that varies locally and that ranges from about 11.5 to 17 liters.

16 As Giuseppe Traina has pointed out, this abuse operates on a number of levels. See his *Vincenzo Consolo* (Cadmo: 2001), 91. Traina connects this scene to Consolo's reading of Pirandello contained in the article "L'ulivo e la giara," collected in *Di qua dal faro*, where Consolo argues that the terracotta jar is "l'involucro della nascita, l'utero, ed insieme la tomba (i Siculi seppellivano i loro morti, in posizione fetale, dentro giaroni) ... E quell'olio che la giara avrebbe dovuto contenere viene sì dall'ulivo saraceno, ma anche dall'albero sacro ad Atena, dea della sapienza." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 1138.

medicine.[17] This period of relative harmony continued under the Normans, in what is often called the Arab-Norman period of Sicily, and under the Hohenstaufen dynasty, but began to decline in the fourteenth century as discrimination and persecution intensified.

A surge in antisemitic violence swept across Sicily during the years of the Black Death, the bubonic plague that devastated much of Europe and peaked in Sicily around 1350. During this crisis, Jews were wrongfully scapegoated and accused of spreading the plague. By the mid-fifteenth century, Jewish communities had established a significant presence throughout Sicily, with 57 communities spread across different cities.[18] The largest communities were in Palermo, Syracuse, and Agrigento, followed by Catania, Messina, Sciacca, and Trapani. Smaller centers included Agira, Paternò, and Savoca. At this point, the Jewish population in Sicily is conservatively estimated at over 25,000 individuals, constituting just over half of all Jews on the Italian peninsula and representing one of the highest Jewish densities in any European population at the time.[19] However, their social and political conditions steadily deteriorated, leading to increased vulnerability and extreme violence. Notable incidents include the massacres in the county of Modica in 1474, especially in the town of Modica itself and nearby Noto. The larger Modica shire was home to the island's largest Jewish community. On August 15th, following an incendiary sermon by a Dominican priest, an incited mob killed approximately 360 people and burned the synagogue to the ground.[20] Soon afterwards, the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478 by Catholic monarchs Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon marked a drastic turning point in official attitudes towards religious minorities. The Alhambra Decree of 1492 mandated the expulsion of Jews from all Spanish territories, including Sicily.[21]

17 As *dhimmi*, people of the covenant, Jews enjoyed protection and freedom of religion under Islamic law in exchange of the jizya tax.

18 Isidoro La Lumia, *Gli Ebrei siciliani* (Sellerio, 1992), 18.

19 Simonsohn, *Between Scylla and Charybdis*, 285.

20 Dario Burgaretta, "Un'elegia in giudeo-arabo di Sicilia per il massacro di Noto e Modica nel 1474." *Sefer yuhasin* 4 (2016): 7-191.

21 Although Arabo-Islamic Sicily and Iberian Al-Andalus were governed by distinct Islamic caliphates and emirates, Consolo sees these regions as having followed parallel paths in their multicultural developments. A pivotal moment of contact between the two was the end of *convivencia*, marked by the expulsion of the Jews, which he poignantly laments as the Catholic kings expelling the Jews – "quando prendono il potere i Re cattolici e cacciano via gli ebrei." Vincenzo Consolo, *Autobiografia della lingua. Conversazione con Irene Romera Pintor* (Ogni uomo è tutti gli uomini Edizioni, 2016), 42.

Sicilian Jews were forced into exile or faced violent impositions such as forced baptisms during this period. For those who remained, additional restrictions included property confiscations, prohibitions of Judeo-Christian intermarriages and of the construction or repair of synagogues. Suspected clandestine practitioners of Judaism faced brutal persecutions, part of a broader campaign of ethnic cleansing that significantly reduced the Jewish presence in Sicily.

While wandering the streets of Palermo, overwhelmed by despair and concern for his sisters' mental health, Petro collapses from exhaustion in the public park of Piazza Marina, right in front of the Palazzo Chiaramonte-Steri. He finds refuge in a hollow tree, whose long branches "snake monstrously into the ground," a metaphor suggestive of his family's interred memories.[22] The ominous location of Petro's nocturnal collapse is steeped in historical significance: the Palazzo served as the dreaded headquarters of the Inquisition from 1600 to 1782, while the piazza was used for the public executions. Operating in Sicily since 1487, the Inquisition made the cohabitation with other religions impossible, relegating converted Jews and Muslims – derogatively called *marranos* and *moriscos*, respectively – to marginalized categories in societal taxonomies. Petro's return to the sites of his family's intergenerational trauma leaves him physically debilitated. In his bodily response resounds an echo of Sicilian Jewish history. Within the prison walls of the Palazzo Steri, the inmates – Jews, Muslims, Lutherans, political dissidents, and those accused of heresy, witchcraft, and necromancy – faced harsh imprisonment, torture, and execution. With its arbitrary administration of ecclesiastical justice, the Inquisition represented for Consolo the most abhorrent abuse of unchecked power. Behind a façade of utter hypocrisy stood an institution of sanctimonious fanaticism that managed an efficient apparatus of psychological terrorism and brutal repression, supported by a diffused network of social informants in Sicily. When Viceroy Domenico Caracciolo ordered the closure of the Holy Office in 1782, all related documents and instruments of torture were destroyed, contributing in this way to an erasure of Sicily's Jewish history. In 1906, anthropologist Giuseppe Pitrè made a chilling discovery beneath the

22 "Girò le spalle e corse, corse per il giardino, oltre il cancello, per la strada, per tutte le strade, da Mezzomonreale a piazza Marina. Nella villa, a nascondersi dentro il grande albero, in faccia allo Steri, dentro la foresta, l'intrico di rami che cadevano dall'alto, s'interravano, mostruosamente serpeggiando andavano lontani. S'accasciò sfinito. Appoggiò la testa sui ginocchi, pianse." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 670.

plaster of the prison cells: extensive drawings that included hundreds of graffiti – maps, poems, prayers, and professions of innocence in Sicilian, Latin, English, and Judeo-Arabic. The most iconic illustration among these artefacts shows the Inquisition as a monster whose gaping mouth is poised to devour sixteen Jewish prisoners, transfigured as Old Testament characters, with their names inscribed above their bowed bodies. Petro's prostrate posture, his exhausted collapse outside of the building, mirrors the body language of these figures.

Consolo elucidated the Jewish heritage depicted in the novel on numerous occasions, revealing a deeply personal connection to the story of Petro.[23] Most significantly, in a 2004 interview the author disclosed the autobiographical elements of the story, as he identifies with the history of the *marranos*, believing himself to be a descendant. Through the lens of this personal stake, the novel extends beyond mere historical fiction, serving as a conduit for Consolo to explore and articulate his own complex heritage, which resonates with the experiences of forced conversion and hidden identity faced by Sicilian Jews.

> You should know that I, with my last name, believe I am a Marrano, that is, a converted Jew. Here in the north, all the Consolos are Jews. In Milan, Segre and Fortini used to ask me if I was Jewish. The fact is that my surname comes from "console," an elective office in the guild of arts and crafts. Three consuls were elected, and then the office became a name. Now, the guild of arts and crafts was controlled by Jews, and it happened that while those who were expelled maintained their culture and their religion, those who remained were forced to convert. The moral of the story, here, is that I believe I am a Marrano. I tried to represent this in my book *Nottetempo, casa per casa*, whose protagonist is named Marano, which comes from Marrano, a very common surname.[24]

23 "Ho voluto rappresentare la follia dolorosa e innocente che questa famiglia ha pagato forse per una ragione atavica, esistenziale, di razza, e per ragioni storiche ... Li ho chiamati Marano, da Marrano, rinnegato. Si portano dietro un coagulo di razze. Oltre a essere ebrei il narratore dice che dentro, attraverso la madre, filtra una memoria di nomi greco-bizantini, spagnoli, insomma il crogiuolo della civiltà mediterranea. Ed è come se assommassero nel loro destino il peso di tanti esili diversi." Vincenzo Consolo, "La follia, l'indignazione, la scrittura." Intervista a cura di Roberto Andò. *Nuove Effemeridi* 8.29 (1995): 9.

24 My translation. "Devi sapere che io, con il mio cognome, credo di essere un marrano, cioè un ebreo convertito. Qui al Nord tutti i Consolo sono ebrei. A Milano, Segre, Fortini, mi chiedevano se ero ebreo. Il fatto è che il mio cognome viene da "console," la carica elettiva della corporazione di arti e mestieri. Si eleggevano tre consoli e poi la carica diventava nome. Ora, la corporazione arti e mestieri l'avevano in mano gli ebrei, ed è successo che, mentre quelli cacciati hanno mantenuto la loro cultura, la loro religione, quelli rimasti sono stati costretti a convertirsi;

In Consolo's novels, a subtle yet powerful thread of nearly forgotten Jewish memory weaves through, capturing echoes of enduring antisemitism. His first novel, *La ferita dell'aprile*, published in 1963, already employs his signature method of textual and linguistic archaeology. The story centers around the repressive Catholic education of the young protagonist, Scavone, in the aftermath of the Second World War. The central character is placed in a religious school in a neighboring village, loosely based on Consolo's own Sant'Agata di Militello, where the youngster is taunted because he speaks the Gallo-Italic dialect of San Fratello, part of a linguistic minority introduced in the eleventh century by northern Italian colonists, who settled in central Sicily encouraged by the policies of the Norman king Roger I. In the small town on the Nebrodi mountains, antisemitism is depicted as so culturally and socially ingrained that it has become a part of the annual Easter rituals in San Fratello.[25] During the public festivities, Scavone's schoolmates are taken aback by their observation of a *sarabanda di giudei* ("a gaggle of Jews") dressed in ornate yellow and red fringed costumes, a sinister hood and a Roman helmet, in a grotesque reenactment of alleged Jewish participation in the crucifixion of Christ.[26] This carnivalesque performance, characteristic in the town of San Fratello, includes a cacophony of noisy and disruptive songs, rattling chains, and piercing trumpets, with which the *giudei* disturb the solemn and somber tone of the occasion. The antisemitic portrayal extends to the racialization of the Jewish characters in the procession; their costumes' color, referred to as *giallo giudeo*, ("Jewish yellow") perpetuates the stereotype of Jews having yellow skin.[27] In the complex social dynamics of marginalization, Scavone, a Sicilian who is also an outsider due to his barely comprehensible "Lombard" dialect, becomes associated with a group of Jewish actors who are encountered, silenced, and displaced on the outskirts of town. One disgusted schoolmate taunts him: "Go, look

morale della favola, credo di essere un marrano. Questa storia ho cercato di rappresentarla nel mio libro *Nottetempo, casa per casa* il cui protagonista si chiama Marano, che viene da Marrano, un cognome molto comune." Vincenzo Consolo, "Intervista di Maria Jatosti." *Il gabellino. Periodico della Fondazione Luciano Bianciardi* (May 2004): 6. Consolo emphasizes the negative connotation that the term *marrano* (from the Spanish for "swine") came to assume in its meaning of "vile marrano, traditore, uno che cambia religione" (Ibid).

25 What adds to this scenario is the suspicion that San Fratello itself may have been home to a Jewish community, although no documentary evidence has been found to prove such a settlement. Simonsohn, *Between Scylla and Charybdis*, 222.

26 "sarabanda di giudei." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 79.

27 Ibid., 65.

at *your* Jews, they have lost their inspiration. Is there air or flesh under those hoods?"[28] Surprisingly, Scavone finds his fellow townspeople less engaged in their usual antics and derisively calls them *zarabuini*, a dialect term without a direct Italian equivalent, used derogatorily to mean "Arab" and by extension, "uncivilized person."[29] Despite facing constant discrimination from his peers and Catholic teachers, Scavone rebels against this prejudice but has, to some extent, internalized his subaltern status. Thus, his character is shaped by both antisemitic and Islamophobic slurs, encapsulating the general rhetoric of demonization towards cultural, linguistic, and religious Others in rural Sicily. When the local priest questions the origins of Scavone's unfamiliar dialect, the young man explains that he is a *zanglé*, presumably a corruption of the French *les anglais*, referring to the Normans, a term used locally to describe the inhabitants of San Fratello. However, Don Sergio authoritatively corrects him, insisting that Scavone cannot be a *zarabuino* since he is definitely not Arab but certainly Norman, categories that for the priest are separate and incompatible with one another. In this categorical yet naïve denial of intermingling during the Arab-Norman period, Consolo highlights a historiographic revisionism motivated by questions of ethnic, cultural, and religious purity. In the end, for the rural community, Scavone's otherness is irredeemable. Neither the violence of the Inquisition nor the later impositions of Mussolini's fascism could alter the fundamentally distinct nature of a local community that arrived in Sicily during the Middle Ages.

The failure of religious redemption and cultural assimilation within a hegemonic power structure is driven by a key rhetorical strategy of othering, namely the demonization of the interconnected legacies of Jewish and Arabo-Islamic lore. The disheartened youth laments that "in this town, and all the towns around here, when people hear *zanglé* or *zarabuino*, they hear the devil. We are accused of having all the vices, and if Mussolini couldn't do it, no one could succeed to turn us into *cristiani*."[30] Consolo here cleverly plays on the dual meanings of the Sicilian term *cristiani*, which, in common parlance, rather than indicating a religious affiliation, primarily means "human beings." This pun underscores the ironic twist of seeking to transform the outsiders from an animalistic status into Christians, the only

28 "Vah," fa, "guarda i *tuoi* giudei, han perso l'estro: c'è aria o carne sotto quei cappucci?" (emphasis added). Ibid., 80.

29 Ibid.

30 "in questo paese, e per tutti i paesi in giro, quando sentivano zanglé, zarabuino, sentivano diavolo: tutti i mali vizii l'avevamo noi, se non ci ha potuto Mussolini, non ci poté più nessuno a farci diventare cristiani." Ibid., 25.

group endowed with the dignity and privileges of humanity. In Consolo's 1985 novel *Retablo*, the demonization of Judaism is once again a pervasive antisemitic trope. As the protagonists travel across Sicily, they encounter the city of Salemi, whose name, derived from the Hebrew word *shalom*, meaning "peace," signals its Jewish heritage. However, local lore, steeped in antisemitism, cautions travelers to shun the city, maligning its Jewish residents as "enemies of the Cross, friends of Satan." The discrimination against Jews is culturally encoded in a rhyming tune, sung to the unsuspecting travelers.[31]

At the end of *Nottetempo, casa per casa*, the protagonist Petro embarks on a ship destined for Tunis, the Maghrebi city that shares deep historical and cultural ties with Sicily. This self-imposed exile represents liberation from the stifling environment of his hometown and an escape from the violence of fascism. In Tunis, a haven of safety, Petro finds the solitude necessary to commit himself to a new beginning as a writer. This choice of exile is profoundly influenced by the city's Mediterranean past: Tunis is built upon the ancient ruins of Carthage, the Phoenician colony that once rivaled Rome and whose sphere of influence extended across the sea to include Western Sicily, in particular Motya and Lilybaeum, centers of Phoenician Sicily that fascinated Consolo. Carthage, the city of Dido, provided refuge to Aeneas before he set out to fulfill his divine mission to found a new civilization. Reflecting this historical echo, the epigraph to the novel's final chapter is drawn from Vergil's *Aeneid*, featuring the prophetic words of Creusa's ghost to her husband, predicting his prolonged exile and sea journey. In the medieval period, Tunis evolved into a significant port city of Ifriqiya, the Maghrebi region under Islamic rule so closely linked with Sicily between the ninth and twelfth centuries. The enduring connections between the Tunisian coast and Sicily's western provinces are central to Consolo's conceptualization of an Arab-Italian Mediterranean, the space within which the destiny of Petro unfolds.

Consolo's aesthetics of grafting and Arabo-Islamic Sicily

The medieval Jewish communities in Sicily and Al-Andalus, integral to Petro's family history, flourished under the rule of Muslim caliphates and emirates. This Arabo-Islamic influence in Sicily spins a pervasive thread

31 The rhyme in Sicilian dialect reads: *Unni viditi muntagni di issu / Chissa è Salemi, passàtici arrasu: / Sunnu nimici di lu Crucifissu / Amici di lu Satanassu!* Ibid., 425.

that is intricately woven throughout Consolo's fictional and critical works. Space constraints do not allow for a more thorough analysis of Arabo-Islamic lore in this context. Giuseppe Traina's categorization of the Arab presence in Consolo's narratives offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the author's reception of Arabo-Islamic influences on Sicilian culture and literature and a solid foundation from which to explore broader questions about Sicily's complex societal fabric.[32] Yet, the enduring question remains: how did Consolo envision Sicily's syncretic identity and its role as a microcosm of the Mediterranean? Complex intercultural dynamics certainly play a crucial role in the coexistence of diverse languages, cultures, and the three Abrahamic religions throughout Sicily's history. These dynamics manifest as periods of open conflict or as mutual influences across both historical and contemporary contexts. While Consolo frequently employed the metaphor of archaeological work to describe the excavation of Sicily's multilayered past, he also deployed a horticultural metaphor to capture the island's cultural hybridity with the concept of *innesto*, or grafting. This tradition of grafting, which represents a deliberate and creative fusion of diverse elements, was an important agricultural practice that shaped Sicily's landscape. The techniques of transplantation and hybridization in horticulture serve as potent metaphors for Sicily's cultural hybridity. Consolo's works frequently explore grafting in various forms – literal, symbolic, and linguistic – with one of the most prominent examples being the olive tree.

For the author, the cultivation of the *olivo saraceno*, the Saracen olive tree represents a testament to the cohabitation of Greek and Arabo-Islamic traditions, simultaneously a symbol of Athena and Hellenic wisdom but also as a manifestation of Arab influences symbolically grafted onto this quintessentially Athenian motif. In *La ferita dell'aprile*, the Easter processional features the figure of a "dark-skinned and nervous Jesus," who looks like he was taken out of the "trunk of a Saracen olive."[33] This Greco-Arab synthesis is further explored in Consolo's analysis of Pirandello's "La giara," where the terracotta jar, emblematic of Sicilian craftsmanship, holds

32 Traina has systematically categorized the exploration of what he calls "the Arab presence" in Consolo's narratives into four distinct categories: memorial, historical-sociological, literary, and geopolitical. See «Da paesi di mala sorte e mala storia» *Esilio, erranza e potere nel Mediterraneo di Vincenzo Consolo (e di Sciascia)* (Mimesis, 2023), 77-102.

33 "Gesù dentro il tabuto a vetri, i capelli i denti veri, così scuro e nervoso, sembra tirato fuori dal tronco d'un olivo saraceno; somiglia ad un uomo di qua, di queste rive, nutrito di sarde e di cicorie ed asciugato al sole." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 80.

oil from the Saracen olive, associated with a supposedly different variety of olive tree introduced by the Arabo-Islamic domination in Sicily.[34]

Leonardo Sciascia had described the Saracen olive, which Pirandello wished to feature at the conclusion of his play *I giganti della montagna*, as a "symbol of a place, a symbol of Memory," emphasizing its role in Sicilian historical consciousness.[35] The Saracen olive is, according to Sciascia, a hardier variety introduced during the Islamic period of Sicily, planted to rejuvenate and repopulate the stretch of arid land between Sciascia's landlocked hometown and the Mediterranean coast. The Saracen olive tree is notable for its distinct appearance. Instead of growing vertically, its knotty and twisted trunk often extends sideways, staying closer to the ground. This growth pattern suggests that the variety has adapted to the unique soil and atmospheric conditions rather than indicating an entirely different subspecies. Paradoxically, though, despite Sciascia's insistence on the veracity of popular lore, Sicilian oil production under the Arabs declined significantly. Historical and botanical inaccuracies notwithstanding, the Saracen olive tree emerges as a powerful trope in Sicilian literature, from Pirandello and Sciascia to Consolo and Camilleri, representing the island as a crucible of cultural fusion where disparate traditions transplant and adapt. With its suggestion of cultural hybridity, the tree specifically symbolizes Sicily's enduring memory that persists despite attempts of erasure, bridging Greek legacies with Arab influences. This metaphor also becomes the vehicle of historiographic judgement, based on the perceived isomorphism of the Greek and Arabo-Islamic presences on the island, which, differently from other dominations, inhabited Sicily not as a colony to exploit, but as a home to cultivate.

In Vincenzo Consolo's 1994 novel *L'olivo e l'olivastro*, the Saracen olive tree symbolizes the complex interplay of barbarism and civilization, central to understanding Sicilian identity and history. Drawing parallels with Homer's *Odyssey*, the narrative follows a modern-day Odysseus navigating the fear of a failed nostos. In the Homeric text, Odysseus, stranded on Scheria after a shipwreck, hides between twin bushes of wild and cultivated olives, reflecting the novel's focus on the blurred lines between nature and culture. Consolo's protagonist, unlike the traditional Odysseus who returns to a familiar olive tree, encounters a Saracen olive, infusing the narrative with Arabo-Islamic influences and redefining the concept of home.

34 Ibid., 1138.

35 "L'olivo saraceno," argues Sciascia, is the "simbolo di un luogo ... simbolo della Memoria." Leonardo Sciascia, *Opere 1984-1989* (Bompiani, 2004), 489).

For Consolo, grafting is not just a horticultural technique but a metaphor that epitomizes Sicilian civilization. It symbolizes nurturing love and patient production, sustaining life and hope even amidst ongoing cycles of destruction. For Consolo, cultivation is the foundation of culture, fostering the growth of civil society and the rule of law.[36] This life-giving art flourished under Islamic rule, which revitalized Sicily with enhanced agricultural practices like irrigation and improved farming, along with the introduction of grafting techniques. Initially, Islamic rulers promoted grafting primarily for ornamental purposes to beautify their luxuriant gardens. Over time, however, the significance of grafting agricultural products grew. The Arabs introduced along with hydraulic engineering new varieties of fruits and vegetables. Their contributions also extended to launching a thriving silk industry and reviving wheat cultivation, fundamentally transforming Sicilian agriculture.

Building on the theme of grafting as a metaphor for cultural fusion and revitalization, the depiction of the wild olive in Consolo's novel serves as a stark contrast. Representing the absence of civilization, the wild olive remains untamed because it has never been grafted. This ungrafted state symbolizes a surrender to barbarism, eloquently captured in the narrator's reflections on the mythic punishments of Poseidon. The wrathful god turned the Phaeacian ship, which safely carried Odysseus to Ithaca, into stone, an image transfigured into the Provvidenza in Verga's *Malavoglia*: "Here, the wild olive was never grafted, never refined with the blooming of the scion; nor did the zaytuna olive ripen in the humid November, nor did the sterile and deciduous drupe yield oil for light or sustenance." [37] The narrator employs technical botanical terms to deepen this allegory. The "scion" refers to the new shoot that springs from the grafted stock, while "zaytuna," deriving from the Arabic word for olive, underscores the historical influence of Arab grafting techniques on Sicilian agriculture.

For Consolo, grafting techniques also apply to the linguistic realm. He claimed to write neither in standard Italian, as defined by official dictionaries, nor in traditional dialect, but rather in a rebellious language that employed a vocabulary that had been expelled or forgotten. He describes his effort to unearth forgotten idioms as "archaeological work." Once rediscovered, he likens the integration of these elements – the incorporation of dialects, local vernaculars, technical terminologies, and spe-

36 Francese, *Gli anni de «l'Unità»*, 182.

37 "Qui l'olivastro non fu innestato, mai s'ingentilì col fiorir della marza, né zaituna maturò nel novembre umoroso, né olio di lume, alimento, donò la sterile drupa, caduca." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 790.

cialized languages into his experimental literary style – to "the grafting of terms expelled and forgotten."[38] In this way, Consolo endeavors to document and confer literary dignity upon local vernaculars, preserving them before they are consigned to oblivion. In *L'olivo e l'olivastro*, the narrator characterizes the literary language of the poet Nino as a pure, classical language: "In that kitchen of couscous and fish, in that garden of children's voices, Nino writes poems in a high vernacular, in a pure, classical language akin to Arabic, Greek, and Hebrew."[39] Nino's Sicilian poetic idiom, a Dantean *volgare illustre*, transcends mere linguistic influence from Arabic, Greek, and Hebrew, resembling them in its fully developed range of registers and expressive possibilities. This "high vernacular" is not just a medium for expression; it embodies the versatility and vitality of Consolo's own linguistic repertoire, drawing from a rich archive of historical languages in Sicily. It is a language suited for the arts and sciences, for philosophical discourse, and for religious reflection, imbued with nuances and a richness of technical terms absent from standardized Italian. In many ways, Nino's language serves as a proxy for Consolo's own dynamic and multifaceted literary language.

In *Retablo*, grafting is portrayed as a creative principle that imbues life in the Mediterranean basin. A key scene involves a chance encounter with Don Carmelo, who extols the virtues of Mazzarrà, a small town founded by an Arab emir and renowned for its long-standing tradition of citrus flower nurseries. Mazzarrà, nestled in a warm, humid basin shielded from the Mediterranean Sea breezes, is where Arab botanists first introduced oranges to Sicily and honed the grafting techniques of citrus fruits and where many varieties of Sicilian oranges – *moro*, *biondo*, *sanguinello*,

38 "Fin dal mio primo libro ho cominciato a non scrivere in italiano ... Ho voluto creare una lingua che esprimesse una ribellione totale alla storia e ai suoi esiti. Ma non è dialetto. E' l'immissione nel codice linguistico nazionale di un materiale che non era registrato, è l'innesto di vocaboli che sono stati espulsi e dimenticati ... La terra da cui vengo è contrassegnata storicamente e quindi anche linguisticamente da stratificazioni linguistiche molto profonde: ci sono stati gli arabi e gli spagnoli, i bizantini e i piemontesi. Il mio è un lavoro archeologico." Vincenzo Consolo, "La lingua ritrovata: A cura di Marino Sinibaldi. *Leggere* 2 (1988): 12.

39 "In quella cucina del cuscùs e del pesce, in quel giardino di voci infantili Nino scrive poemi in vernacolo alto, in una pura, classica lingua simile all'arabo, al greco, all'ebraico." Consolo, *L'opera completa*, 862. In the same novel, the narrator echoes a theme Consolo often reiterated: Sicily's multicultural past has been erased not only by human actions but also by the ruthless forces of nature. The massive earthquake of 1693 devastated the city of Noto, destroying Sicel necropoleis, Byzantine hypogea, and Jewish catacombs. Ibid., 845.

and *tarocco* – are conceived. Don Carmelo describes Mazzarrà as the nurturing mother of all citrus plants, from lemons to oranges, citrons, lumia, bergamots, mandarins and chinotto, expressing the hope that the mystical grafts in the town's soil will continue to yield a plethora of unparalleled flavors.[40] In addition, for the narrator, the Arab tradition of orange grafting also encapsulates ancient Greek associations. Oranges, once used ornamentally in ancient Greece, symbolized love and fertility, reminiscent of the myth of the garden of the Hesperides. The narrator weaves an extended sexual metaphor to describe the work in the orange nurseries, highlighting a theme of general fecundity. The Greco-Arab genealogy of oranges represents a narrative of life and hope prevailing amidst despair and destruction, which dominate Consolo's more bitterly pessimistic views about Sicilian history. In his old age, Don Carmelo recalls exporting the art of grafting and pruning oranges to gardens across the Mediterranean. In his memory, these gardens – from Lentini and the Conca d'Oro in Sicily to the Greek Peloponnese, from Sevilla and Granada in Spain to Bizerte, Oran, Rabat, and Marrakech in the Maghreb – merge into a single cultural and geographical entity, a vast garden where life resists the encroachment of desertification.[41]

Conclusion

Consolo's literary historiography and ethics of remembrance diligently work to recover Sicily's Jewish and Arabo-Islamic past from the obscurity of discarded local and unofficial chronicles. His "Mediterranean of remnants" is informed not only by archaeological layers of historical remains but also by living cultural practices that continue to thrive, ingeniously grafted onto earlier cultural and religious infrastructures. This approach reveals a different Sicily; in many ways, Consolo rewrites and rescues, and in rescuing, he revitalizes. Unlike the cultural pessimism often echoed by his Sicilian contemporaries like Sciascia and Bufalino – a pessimism that he, to be sure, frequently shared – Consolo portrays Sicily as a dynamic crossroads of evolution and interaction, where ancient

40 "Spero che gli innesti arcani compiuti nel grembo tuo di nardo fruttino la fantasia di spere multicolori, di scrigni di sapori impareggiabili." Ibid., 426. See also "grembo, nutrice, madre di ogni pianta d'agrume, limone o arancio, cedro o lumia, bergamotto, mandarino o chinotto che si trovi in questa terra di Sicilia e oltre." Ibid., 427.

41 Ibid., 428.

roots foster new growths. He views the island's history of oppression alongside its narratives of solidarity and resistance as pivotal for reevaluating our perceptions of history and identity, urging a more inclusive approach to cultural memory.

His reevaluation of how regional histories and global diasporas are interwoven into broader cultural narratives are an invitation to reconsider the role of Mediterranean migrations in our understanding of current geopolitical landscapes. In the article "Porta Venezia," the personal becomes deeply political. Consolo described his own racial identity as white to be merely a historical accident: "I, of many races, belonging to none, the result of Byzantine weariness, of Jewish dispersal, of Arab withdrawal, of Ethiopian internment: I, born from a varied mixture, by chance white, carrying inside mutilations and nostalgia relished and I freed myself within this humanity as if on a beach warmed by the first rays of the morning sun."[42] Consolo's racial identity – his "accidental whiteness" – arises from historical contingencies that have established Sicily as a contact zone among Europe, Africa, and Asia. In this way, Consolo ultimately redefines the syntax of Sicilian cultural history. He rejects the hierarchical structure that subordinates local narratives to national chronicles, preferring a paratactic structure that places Mediterranean remnants alongside mainstream histories. His collaboration with philosopher Franco Cassano further underscores this view, advocating for the Mediterranean and the global South's philosophical autonomy. Read together, Consolo and Cassano promote a transcultural Mediterranean identity, asserting its significance as a vibrant and autonomous cultural sphere. Their texts invite us, a global audience, to reevaluate the interconnectedness of cultural identities within a rapidly changing world.

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