

The Politics of Regional Language: Dialect Literature in Italian Periodicals During Fascism

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Existing studies have shed much light on the language policies of Italian fascism as well as on its literary censorship and the gray areas and inconsistencies that often characterized the regime's control over printed texts. From both types of studies emerges a complex picture of what has been more broadly defined as the regime's cultural politics, which sought to establish a uniform definition of *italianità*. The question of national identity is crucial to any discussion of fascist cultural politics and also to debates concerning the use of standard and vernacular language. The 1930s saw policies prohibiting the use of regional and local dialects in education and in print, although an abundance of primary sources demonstrates that dialect continued to be used in print in periodicals as well as in books. In order to better understand the role that language plays in the cultural politics of such works, my study examines six periodical publications that regularly or primarily published in dialect: Filippo Fichera's *Rivista italiana di Letteratura dialettale* and its supplement *La Sampogna*, Aldo Spallicci's *La Piê*, the Genoese weekly *Il Successo*, the monthly *A Compagna*, and the tri-weekly *Il Rugantino in dialetto romanesco*.

Though the regime opposed publication in dialect on the grounds that it was divisive and anti-unitary, dialect texts do not necessarily show a strict adherence to regionalism in opposition to fascist nationalism. Rather, they constantly negotiate the role of dialect in the discourse on culture through their choice of texts, their politics, and often through articles that directly and explicitly justify their linguistic choices. Fichera's publications and *Il Rugantino* show differing ways of using the rhetoric of *popolarità* and prestige to reconcile dialect with fascist ideologies. *La Piê*, *Il Successo*, and *A Compagna* demonstrate the political implications of refusing to justify dialect works in terms of fascist nationalism. The content in and about dialect in these newspapers and magazines reveals the complex role that language plays in their construction of political, national and regional identity, and the fascist regime's complex and often contradictory relationship with dialects.

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