# Twentieth-Century Sardinia in
## *The National Geographic Magazine*:
## A Lexical Analysis of a Biased Representation

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In January 1923, *The National Geographic Magazine* (henceforth *NGM*) published an article about Sardinia by Guido Costa (1871-1951), an English language teacher and Enrico Costa's son (Costa 1923). In August 1916 and April 1926 the American magazine published two further articles about Sardinia (Wright 1916; Grosvenor 1926), and nearly eighty years later a fourth contribution on the Mediterranean island (Buettner 2005).[1] The four texts are the only articles about Sardinia printed by the American magazine to date (see nationalgeographic.com). Despite the gap of almost eighty years between Grosvenor's text and Buettner's, Guido Costa and the other three authors of the articles moved to and through Sardinia in order to achieve a common goal, that is to say, to offer their American readers a representation of the island and its inhabitants from a (privileged?) external perspective. Therefore, from a textual standpoint, such a common goal triggers considering similar topics and using lexemes from the same semantic fields; for instance, all of the four writers describe the Sardinia of the 1910s, 1920s and 2000s respectively as a postcolonial country which has finally broken free from what Sardinians themselves have always regarded as the age-old rule of Phoenicians and Carthaginians, Romans and Byzantines, Spaniards and Piedmontese.

Furthermore, although they wrote in different periods, Guido Costa and his fellow authors provided representations of Sardinia and of

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[1] Wright's and Costa's articles have recently been reprinted together as Costa-Wright 2005.

Sardinians which, at closer linguistic scrutiny, have proved to be equal-
ly clichéd. In fact, the writers' depiction consists not only of objec-
tive historical and geographical information, but also, if not mainly,
of biased stereotypes about a land and a people considered backward
and picturesque. Such stereotypes are clear indicators of the authors'
viewpoint, which is implicitly regarded by the authors themselves as
socially and culturally commanding. The *NGM* itself is well-known for
its Orientalist (in Said's sense) gaze on and approach to non-American
societies, namely, its texts usually thrive on an allegedly unbiased iden-
tification of foreign cultures and an actual exploitation of conventional
interpretations of those cultures, and represent them as distant from
the US, less geographically than ideologically (see Ashcroft-Griffiths-
Tiffin 1995; Ashcroft-Griffiths-Tiffin 2002; Bhabha 2004; Maas-Arcuri
1996; Macrae-Stangor-Hewstone 1996; Mills 2005; Said 1994; Said
2003).

In a recent paper (Virdis 2007), I studied Guido Costa's article
employing a stylistic and pragmatic methodological framework, and
dealt with the author's biased representation of Sardinian working-
class women, his support of white American middle-class male can-
ons of life and lifestyle, and his implications that they are superior to
Sardinian working-class canons and that the islanders should comply
with them. In this paper, I will inquire further into the matter and
analyse the four articles about Sardinia mostly through the linguistic
tools of lexicology (Crystal 2006; Geeraerts 2006; Jackson-Ze Amvela
1999; Katamba 2004; Singleton 2000), corpus stylistics (Louw 2004;
Semino-Short 2004; Stubbs 1996; Stubbs 2005; Wynne 2006) and the
relevant software (Fletcher 2002-2007; Scott 1996). Since the keywords
and the semantic fields included in any text are indicative of its au-
thor's ideology and viewpoint on the topic dealt with in the text itself,
I will examine the keywords and the semantic fields in the four articles,
and I will also refer to the usual collocations of the keywords and to
the strings they are comprised in. My objective will be to identify the
authors' worldview and their perspective on the island and its inhabit-

ants, together with the main conventions and clichés which are used to misrepresent twentieth-century Sardinia.

The four articles make up a textual corpus of 17,271 tokens and 3,939 types.[2] Unsurprisingly in a corpus about the Mediterranean island, the most frequent lexeme is the lemma SARDINIA <freq 184> <vars 8> (*Sardinia* <98>, *Sardinian* <53>, *Sardinians* <16>, *Sards* <9>, *Sard* <3>, *Sardinia's* <3>, *Sards'* <1>, *Sardinians'* <1>),[3] which constitutes 1.0653696949% of the total word count and 0.2030972328% of the whole vocabulary. All articles, more or less in brief, depict the history of the island from prehistoric times to the unification of Italy (1861): they refer to the various occupations and nationalities which, over the centuries, colonised it politically and exploited it economically, and sympathetically denounce those occupations and praise Sardinians for maintaining their sociocultural identity despite such adversities.

In fact, the corpus includes an extensive range of nouns and adjectives belonging to the semantic field of nationalities and mentioning the several geographical origins of those who colonised the island:

> *Italy* <freq 14>, *Italian* <13>, *Spanish* <13>, *Romans* <11>, *Roman* <10>, *Pisans* <8>, *Rome* <7>, *Phoenician* <5>, *Spain* <5>, *Genoese* <4>, *Pisan* <4>, *Africa* <3>, *Aragon* <3>, *Genoa* <3>, *Italians* <3>, *Pisa* <3>, *Spaniards* <3>, *Austria* <2>, *Caesars* <2>, *Carthaginians* <2>, *Catalonia* <2>, *Corsican* <2>, *German* <2>, *Phoenicians* <2>, *Saracens* <2>, *Savoy* <2>, *Tuscan* <2>, *Vandals* <2>, *Africans* <1>, *Aragons* <1>, *Byzantines* <1>, *Carthage* <1>, *Catalan* <1>, *Catalonian* <1>, *French* <1>, *Germans* <1>, *Greek* <1>, *Greeks* <1>, *Lebanon* <1>, *Moors* <1>, *Piedmont* <1>, *Pied-*

[2] Wright's article consists of 3,668 tokens (21.24% of the total word count), Costa's of 11,090 (64.21%), Grosvenor's of 1,444 (8.36%), Buettner's of 1,069 (6.19%). Only the introductory sequence and the sequence about Sardinia from Buettner's article have been included in the corpus; those about Okinawa, Japan and Loma Linda, California have not. Neither have picture captions from all articles been comprised.

[3] I adapt and apply the presentation conventions described in Stubbs 2005: 7: lemmata are given in upper-case, the total frequency of all variants and the number of variants in diamond brackets, word-forms and orthographic variants in lower-case italics.

montese <1>, *Saracenic* <1>, *Vandal* <1>
150 tokens (0.8685079034% of the total word count), 44 types
(1.1170347804% of the whole vocabulary)

When the figures about this range are compared with those about the lemma SARDINIA, the nationality lexemes (<freq 150>) recur only slightly less than the words referring directly or indirectly to the island and its inhabitants (<freq 184>); more exactly, there is a word expressing the nationalities of the occupiers for nearly every word referring to Sardinia and conveying the topic of the corpus. Furthermore, while the 8 word-forms under the lemma SARDINIA compose a small percentage (0.2030972328%) of the entire vocabulary, the 44 types included in the semantic field of nationalities represent a substantially higher rate (1.1170347804%) of the corpus lexicon.

Therefore, these linguistic data communicate quantitative and qualitative information about the colonisation of the island. Firstly, the number of occupiers historically was and, as a result, textually is so considerable that their identities compete with and almost overlaps that of Sardinians. Secondly, not only did the occupiers come in large numbers, but also from a variety of areas, both Mediterranean and continental; consequently, Sardinia is portrayed as a country whose human and natural resources were utilised and exploited to excess for the colonisers' own ends, and which was, along with different political authorities, under different socioeconomic and cultural influences that, nevertheless, may have enriched and not impoverished its particular identity.

The sympathetic representation of the island and its history is amplified by some word-forms belonging to the semantic field of colonialism and military occupation:

*influence* <freq 6>, *colony* <5>, *overrun* <4>, *impress* <3>, *influences* <3>, *occupation* <3>, *prey* <3>, *rule* <3>, *captured* <2>, *slavery* <2>, *destruction* <1>, *domination* <1>, *downtrodden* <1>, *enslaved* <1>, *impose* <1>, *imposed* <1>, *invaders* <1>, *invasions* <1>,

> *oppression* <1>, *pillage* <1>, *pirates* <1>, *ruled* <1>, *ruler* <1>,
> *rulers* <1>, *servitude* <1>, *slave* <1>, *slaves* <1>, *sovereignty* <1>,
> *subjugating* <1>
> 53 tokens (0.3068727925% of the total word count), 29 types
> (0.7362274689% of the whole vocabulary)

Since all of these words have a negative connotation, or acquire it in their cotexts and contexts, they provide a value-laden sketch of colonisation and, accordingly, are linguistic indicators of what is likely to be the viewpoint of Sardinians, subject to that colonisation, a viewpoint which is, seemingly, shared and approved by the authors of the four articles.

These negatively value-laden lemmata reproduce the various stages of the process of military colonisation. Firstly, Sardinia was attacked, traversed with an armed force (*overrun* <freq 4>, *invaders* <1>, *invasions* <1>), plundered (*prey* <3>, *pillage* <1>, *pirates* <1>) and devastated (*destruction* <1>). Secondly, as the island was seized (*occupation* <3>, *captured* <2>), colonial rule was enforced (RULE <freq 6> <vars 4>, *colony* <5>, IMPOSE <freq 2> <vars 2>) with its tyrannical government and despotic features (*domination* <1>, *downtrodden* <1>, *oppression* <1>, *sovereignty* <1>, *subjugating* <1>). Thirdly, Sardinians were turned into subjects completely without freedom and rights (SLAVE <freq 5> <vars 4>, *servitude* <1>), and were brought under the occupiers' mostly evil ascendancy (INFLUENCE <freq 9> <vars 2>, *impress* <3>), which was political, moral and over customs and traditions. When the addressee of the four articles takes it into account that the island was subjected to such a process not only once and by one country, but several times over and by all the nationalities listed above, the authors apparently reach their goal of condemning those colonisations and of stirring the addressee to compassion.

Apart from those of nationalities and of occupation, Sardinia is described from a seemingly compassionate perspective through a third semantic field, that of the early history of the island and its distinctive civilisation:

*ancient* <freq 17>, *nuraghi* <11>, *prehistoric* <6>, *bronze age* <4>, *Nuragic* <1>
40 tokens (0.2316021076% of the total word count), 5 types (0.1269357705% of the whole vocabulary)

This third semantic field signals that in prehistoric times (*ancient* <freq 17>, *prehistoric* <6>, *bronze age* <4>), therefore before its various occupations, there existed a Nuraghic civilisation in Sardinia (*Nuragic* <1>), a highly developed society characterised by the building of massive stone towers (*nuraghi* <11>), there being nothing else like it in the Mediterranean area. In the articles, highlighting the island's idiosyncratic civilisation corresponds to foregrounding and extolling its particular identity and aspects, and to contrasting them with the deprivation of identity brought about by colonisation.

However, the reading of the semantic fields of Sardinian early history and of nationalities may be reversed from positive to negative, and the authors' standpoint from sympathetic to unfavourable. In fact, from the latter viewpoint, emphasising the island's *ancient*, *prehistoric* and *bronze age* history and its *Nuragic* civilisation may evoke that the only distinctive Sardinian society developed no less than 40 centuries ago, and that the islanders have not been able to establish another since, because they have not had either the potential strength or the initiative, enterprise and self-motivation necessary to acquire independence from their colonisers.

With regard to the different occupiers, their broad range may suggest, as it has suggested to some islanders, that Sardinians were and still are so powerless and weak, both physically and mentally, as to be easily dominated by people from any country, in the Mediterranean and beyond, all of whom possess better qualities and abilities than they do. Moreover, the close succession of distinct nationalities on the island may also indicate that the Sardinian people and their identity have been altered and corrupted, again physically and mentally, and may now be perverted and with even worse features and talents than before

colonisation. It is this racist standpoint which is also supported and expanded in the four articles in the corpus.

When the corpus is further analysed through a concordancer and a word list, other semantic fields can be identified which appear to be relevant to a perspective adverse to Sardinia and its inhabitants. These semantic fields are more numerous than those pertinent to a sympathetic standpoint, but include fewer items; as a result, they should be less distinguishable and liable to go unnoticed. Yet, contrary to expectations, they are equally considered, or even more so, in the addressee's reading of the four articles, given that the items constituting them are so negatively value-laden and partial as to be foregrounded and, consequently, especially noticeable by definition.

Distance between self and other is conveyed through the semantic field of travel and tourism, which comprises the following word-forms:

> *visitor* <freq 9>, *traveler* <8>, *tourist* <6>, *visit* <6>, *journey* <4>, *travel* <4>, *visiting* <4>, *visitors* <4>, *tourists* <3>, *travelers* <3>, *foreigner* <2>, *foreigners* <2>, *stranger* <2>, *strangers* <2>, *traveling* <2>, *visited* <2>, *visits* <2>, *traveled* <1>, *travels* <1>
> 67 tokens (0.3879335302% of the total word count), 19 types (0.4823559279% of the whole vocabulary)

The authors' standing aloof from Sardinia, and their underlining their distant attitude — which are also common to Costa, although he was born in Sassari and lived in Cagliari — are indicative of their external gaze on the island. On the one hand, the temporariness of their stay and their quick and cursory passing from one place to another are communicated by the lemmata VISIT <freq 27> <vars 6>, TRAVEL <freq 19> <vars 6>, TOURIST <freq 9> <vars 2>, JOURNEY <freq 4> <vars 1> in such strings as

> Cagliari . . . is often visited for a few hours by tourists (Wright 1916: 99);

the traveler is well repaid for such discomforts (Costa 1923: 1);
the tourist unaccustomed to such sights becomes terrified (Costa 1923: 54);
The first couple of hours' journey down the island is over a rough, rolling country (Wright 1916: 97).

On the other hand, their will to depict themselves as extraneous to and widely different from the island they are free to move to, judge and misrepresent is picked out by the lemmata FOREIGNER <freq 4> <vars 2> and STRANGER <freq 4> <vars 2>:

A foreigner who is unaccustomed to such treatment is reluctant to accept an invitation so freely offered (Costa 1923: 69);
to the amazement of foreigners (Costa 1923: 71);
In such places a stranger is sometimes overcharged (Costa 1923: 70);
the curious glances of strangers (Costa 1923: 47).

Combined as it is with the recurring use of negatively value-laden semantic fields, the authors' consistently calling themselves *visitors*, *travelers*, *foreigners* — not, among other options in a paradigm, *guests* — triggers the implicature that they are likely to perceive and evaluate Sardinia in accordance with their own schemata and value systems, and will make no effort to see it through the islanders' eyes.

Furthermore, whereas the self — the authors — is defined as a *visitor*, a *traveler*, a *foreigner*, the other — Sardinians — is called with the value-neutral nationality lemma SARDINIAN <freq 30> <vars 5> (*Sardinians* <16>, *Sards* <9>, *Sard* <3>, *Sards'* <1>, *Sardinians'* <1>), and the similarly value-neutral lemmata INHABITANT <freq 14> <vars 2> (*inhabitant* <1>, *inhabitants* <13>) and ISLANDER <freq 4> <vars 2> (*islander* <1>, *islanders* <3>). Yet, less frequently but more markedly, Sardinians and their belongings are also termed with the negatively value-laden noun and adjective NATIVE <freq 11> <vars 2> (*native* <8>, *natives* <3>):

no woman or man wearing a distinctive native costume is to be

seen (Costa 1923: 71);
This bitter experience has served to accentuate and develop their native qualities (Grosvenor 1926: 473);
In their isolation native Sardinians became genetic incubators (Buettner 2005: 13).

According to the OED, the lemma has been derogatorily and offensively used since the early seventeenth century to refer to one of the original inhabitants of a country where European colonisers or their descendants hold or held power, and to distinguish her or him from them. As a result, not only does the lemma sum up and confirm the distance between self and other, but it also discloses the authors' domineering worldview and attitude, since, from their biased standpoint, they take the freedom to view and sketch Sardinia and its inhabitants as if having political, economical, social and cultural control over them, and assume the right to inspect the occupied site and its people as if the islanders were powerless subjects without such freedom and right.

Among a few others which are not statistically and ideologically significant, and aside from the open-class words in the semantic field of nationalities referring to Sardinia's occupiers, the corpus includes the following nationality word-forms:

*continental* <freq 5>, *Europe* <5>, *continent* <4>, *American* <3>, *Americans* <3>, *European* <3>, *America's* <1>, *continents* <1>
25 tokens (0.1447513172% of the total word count), 8 types (0.2030972328% of the whole vocabulary)

Contrary to such content words as *Italy*, *Spanish* and *Romans*, the lemmata CONTINENT <freq 10> <vars 3>, EUROPE <freq 8> <vars 2> and AMERICA <freq 7> <vars 3>, in such strings as

erroneously believed by the people of continental Italy, and often by the islanders themselves (Costa 1923: 27);
the general European type of dress is being adopted by the younger generation (Wright 1916: 117);

> This great organization [the American Red Cross] has taught us
> to train our young people as Americans train their own (Costa
> 1923: 27),

are usually employed to express the island's alleged otherness both from
the continent it geographically and culturally belongs to and from the
country where the target addressee of the four articles lives. In addi-
tion, they evoke the authors' geographical origins as well as their sup-
posedly superior social, economic and cultural backgrounds, in order
to give prominence to their extraneousness and difference from Sar-
dinians and — to quote the title of Costa's article — from "the speech,
customs, and costumes of this picturesque land".

The authors also hint at the island's otherness through the semantic
field of biological diversity:

> *genetic* <freq 3>, *races* <3>, *race* <2>, *racial* <2>, *genes* <1>
> 11 tokens (0.0636905796% of the total word count), 5 types
> (0.1269357705% of the whole vocabulary)

Since the lemmata GENE <freq 4> <vars 2> and especially RACE
<freq 7> <vars 3> have always had racist connotations, which can also
be detected in the corpus:

> These Sardinians also benefit from their genetic history (Buettner
> 2005: 13);
> Somewhere in this genetic mix, he says, may lie a combination that
> favors longevity (Buettner 2005: 13);
> the ability of their race to endure hardships and privations (Gros-
> venor 1926: 473);
> Sardinia is as surprising in its physical as in its racial contrasts
> (Costa 1923: 27),

they signal the 'fact' that the reason behind Sardinians' cultural dissim-
ilarity from continental Europeans does not lie in their characteristic
history, but in their heredity and ethnicity. This stereotypical and bi-

ased belief presupposes that all members of each ethnic group possess aspects and abilities specific to that group, which distinguish it from others — a stereotype verging on racism. Given the authors' viewpoint as it emerges from the examination of the texts, should an ideal hierarchy of *genetic codes* and *races* be drawn, the addressee would be persuaded to put Americans and mainland Europeans at the top and Sardinians at the bottom.

The authors have accordingly sketched the island as distinct from the other Mediterranean and European countries, but what are the idiosyncratic traits of this distinction? Some positively value-laden nouns and adjectives apart (e.g., *lovely*, *incredible*, *beautiful*), Sardinian natural and human-made landscape is described through other value-laden lexical items which, nevertheless, are noticeable for their negativity. These are the most unfavourable:

> *barren* <freq 5>, *solitude* <5>, *desolate* <3>, *isolation* <3>, *miserable* <3>, *monotonous* <3>, *dusty* <2>, *isolated* <2>, *neglect* <2>, *remote* <2>, *remoteness* <2>, *unhealthy* <2>, *desolation* <1>, *gloomy* <1>, *solitary* <1>, *solitudes* <1>
> 46 tokens (0.2200220022% of the total word count), 16 types (0.4061944656% of the whole vocabulary)

These word-forms are mainly utilised to allude to the landscape in general (*the remoteness and comparative isolation of places*; *spots remote from the main roads*) and to its features and elements in particular, i.e.

> • its relief (*overhanging hills, barren and white*; *barren hills*; *the rocky, barren flanks of the hills*; *barren slopes*; *these heights . . . are now in the main barren and desolate*; *craggy isolated rocks of Golfo degli Aranci*; *the plain extends monotonous and uninterrupted for miles*; *some of its mountain solitudes*);
> • buildings (*a few miserable huts, inhabited by poor shepherds*; *other castles . . . are in a state of utter neglect and desolation*; *the neglect of ancient monuments*);
> • transport links (*the country roads, incredibly dusty*; *long, dusty,*

*sunburnt roads*; *which makes the street look solitary and gloomy*);
• vegetation (*the plain, covered as it is with a yellow, monotonous mantle of dried herbs, takes on a desolate appearance*; *the sad village lost in the solitude of woods*);
• waters (*a large pool, rich in fisheries, but unhealthy*; *the delta of the [river] Tirso is very unhealthy*).

In even more noticeable strings, some of them also collocate with the nouns referring to the island and its inhabitants in the phrases *remote Sardinia* (Buettner 2005: 14), *this isolated island* (Wright 1916: 115) and *their [Sardinians'] isolation* (Buettner 2005: 13).

Among these negatively value-laden lexemes, two main semantic fields can be picked out, that of desolation and neglect (which includes the word-forms *barren*, *desolate*, *miserable*, *monotonous*, *dusty*, *neglect*, *unhealthy*, *desolation*, *gloomy*) and that of isolation (composed of the word-forms *solitude*, *isolation*, *isolated*, *remote*, *remoteness*, *solitary*, *solitudes*). The former semantic field depicts Sardinia and its landscape as waste and uninhabitable, left unattended and uncared for, while the latter semantic field portrays it as separate from and unconnected with any other land or country. The presupposition which the authors assume to be the case by using those word-forms reveals their ideology and the subjective perspective they regard the island from: in their sociocultural and world-deixis (Short 1996: 277), together with their target American addressee, they reckon that they live in the deictic centre of the world and that Sardinians, isolated on their desolate and neglected island, are situated away from the global centre of population, politics, economy, society and culture.

The negative effect which the semantic field of desolation and neglect has on the readers is reinforced by the three nouns *relics* <freq 6>, *remains* <freq 5>, RUIN <freq 2> <vars 2> (*ruin* <3>, *ruins* <1>). They are employed as negatively value-laden synonyms of the value-neutral lemma MONUMENT <freq 11> <vars 2> (*monument* <4>, *monuments* <7>), also in those cotexts and contexts where MONU-

MENT may more readily have been utilised. For instance, the coordinated noun phrase "its nuraghi, domus de gianas, and other relics of a hazy past" (Costa 1923: 74) could easily have been reworded as "its nuraghi, domus de gianas, and other *monuments from* a hazy past",[4] while the noun phrases "the 'nuraghi,' the famous prehistoric remains in Sardinia" (Wright 1916: 105) and "such other ancient ruins, dating from the bronze age" (Costa 1923: 17) could have been "the 'nuraghi,' the famous prehistoric *monuments* in Sardinia" and "such other ancient *monuments*, dating from the bronze age" respectively.

However, even the value-neutral noun MONUMENT acquires a negative connotation through its collocation with such negatively value-laden adjectives as *medieval*, *modest*, *old*, *quaint*, all of which pre- or postmodify the noun MONUMENT twice in the corpus. These linguistic data suggest and disapprove the decayed condition of Sardinian ancient buildings and cultural heritage and, by extension, of the whole island itself.

Three of these four adjectives belong to the important semantic field of backwardness/picturesqueness which, in the four articles, consists of the following word-forms:

> *old* <freq 21>, *picturesque* <8>, *medieval* <7>, *quaint* <5>, *strange* <5>, *grotesque* <2>, *odd* <1>, *older* <1>, *old-fashioned* <1>, *old-time* <1>, *oriental* <1>, *picturesqueness* <1>, *queer* <1>
> 55 tokens (0.3184528979% of the total word count), 13 types (0.3300330033% of the whole vocabulary)

Monuments aside, this semantic field is used mostly when mentioning

- buildings and infrastructures (*old Spanish port*; *the old fortifica-*

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[4] It should be noted that the lemma HAZY <freq 1> also constitutes negative modalisation, flouting as it does the Gricean maxim of Manner (submaxim 1, "avoid obscurity"), for it is not exactly clear what the author intends by the use of this adjective. Nevertheless, that the word has a derogatory function cannot be denied.

*tions*; *such old Roman towns*; *medieval towers*; *strange relics of the bronze age*; *odd balconied houses*);

• handicrafts (*the old Sardinian handmade wooden plow*; *carpets and saddlebags are picturesque*; *a quaint Sardinian saddle*; *idols [and] images . . . all most crude in workmanship and grotesque in form*; *the old-time cart*; *the old Sardinian cart*);

• the colonial past (*an old civilization*; *old Spain*; *the old Roman days*; *the medieval history of Sardinia*; *medieval times*);

• the island's mood (*that picturesque remoteness*; *many traces of medieval life*; *a truly medieval atmosphere*; *a strange impression*; *strange contrast*);

• the islanders (*old men*; *the old villagers*; *women whose parchment skin, sunken eyes, and protuberant cheek-bones suggest a grotesque mask*; *the older Sard*);

• traditional clothing (*the old fashions unaltered*; *picturesque costumes of Sards*; *quaint old Spanish costumes*; *old costumes*; *old patterns*);

• the natural landscape (*many picturesque peaks*; *a very picturesque position*; *those strange birds*; *the picturesqueness of its [the river Flumendosa's] banks*);

• customary practices (*some old religious festivals*; *a queer custom*),

in a word, when alluding to the island itself (*this picturesque land*). In fact, every characteristic which typifies Sardinia — from its past and present history to its natural scenery and architecture, from its inhabitants and their customs to their dress and everyday and work objects, viz. the island's identity — is represented as so primitive and quaint, so unusual and distorted as to excite wonder, astonishment and even repulsion in the authors, and consequently in the readers.

Seemingly, these linguistic data may contrast with the recurrence of the adjective *modern* <freq 19> which, as a standard stop list is applied to the corpus word list,[5] is the 22nd most frequent word-form in the

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[5] The application of a stop list to a word list permits filtering out sequences containing any word-form in the stop list, which usually comprises the most frequent closed-class words in the language.

four articles (0.1100110011% of the total word count, 0.0253871541% of the whole vocabulary). As noted above, some word-forms which refer to the aspects characterising Sardinia (e.g., *Roman towns*, *cart*, *history*, *atmosphere*, *costumes*) collocate with the open-class words in the semantic field of backwardness/picturesqueness. Unpredictably, also the adjective *modern* collocates with some of the word-forms alluding to aspects of the island, namely *life*, *buildings*, *city*, *civilization*, *dress*, *hats*, *style*, *times*, *vehicles*. This apparent contradiction is resolved when the cotexts and contexts of the adjective are also taken into account. In fact, as if to counterbalance its positive connotation, *modern* is sometimes utilised along with and in contrast to its antonyms or near antonyms *old*, *old-time*, *hazy* (*past*), *uncultured*, *medieval* in such strings as

> The sense of art in these uncultured people makes a modern painter wonder . . . (Costa 1923: 56);
> Castello . . . retains even in modern times many traces of medieval life (Costa 1923: 25);
> the main roads are traversed by a great number of modern vehicles, and in this district the old Sardinian cart is seldom seen (Costa 1923: 72),

and is mainly employed to indicate the authors' great surprise and amazement at the existence of anything up-to-date on the picturesque island.

Therefore, the employment both of the semantic field of backwardness/picturesqueness and of the opposing adjective *modern* has the same objective, i.e. conveying the authors' biased value system where their American culture and society is the norm, the recognised example to which others should conform and by which the technologic progress and industrial development of others is judged, whilst Sardinian identity, with its peculiar traits, is described as awfully far from that norm and in great need of following that example.

One final semantic field contributes to communicating the authors'

ideology and the alleged difference between the civilised US and barbarous Sardinia, viz. the semantic field of unlawfulness:

> *banditry* <freq 2>, *bandits* <1>, *banditti* <1>, *brigands* <1>, *kidnapping* <1>, *lesoria* <1>, *rivalry* <1>, *vendettas* <1>
> 9 tokens (0.0521104742% of the total word count), 8 types (0.2030972328% of the whole vocabulary)

Mention is made of the island's social question of outlaws:

> the general impression outside of Sardinia, even in Italy, is that the island is more or less overrun by bandits (Wright 1916: 98–99);
> A legend too strongly rooted still persists about Sardinia as a land which cannot be conceived without . . . banditti at every house corner (Costa 1923: 72);
> a mountainous district, the Barbagia, which was at one time said to be the home of the famous Sardinian brigands (Wright 1916: 98).

Mention is also made of their practices (*banditry*, *kidnapping*), blood feuds (*rivalry*, *vendettas*) and traditional knives (*lesoria*):

> they developed a wariness of foreigners and a reputation for banditry, kidnapping, and settling vendettas with the lesoria, the traditional Sardinian shepherd's knife (Buettner 2005: 13);
> The banditry of the open road has become a mere tradition (Costa 1923: 1);
> religion is more the occasion than the cause for releasing the flood of music, pageantry, and rivalry (Costa 1923: 56),

while the cotexts of these hints usually clarify that the problem of banditry is a thing of the past. Nevertheless, in accordance with Sperber and Wilson's Relevance theory (Sperber-Wilson 1986), when the addresser of a message selects the information to include in that message — even more so the author of a written text, who is free to rephrase it at will — s/he only chooses details which are relevant to the context and to the effect s/he wants to produce on the addressee.

Consequently, when the authors of the articles write about banditry in Sardinia, their aim (direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious) is to add another negative trait to their depiction of the islanders, and to convince their addressee that, besides being biologically dissimilar, isolated and picturesque, they are also, all indiscriminately, criminals.

Linguistic and lexical scrutiny of the corpus constituted by the four *NGM* articles about Sardinia has uncovered the authors' subjective worldview and viewpoint on the island and its inhabitants. Not only are they free to move to Sardinia and to misrepresent it, but they also form and pronounce an unfavourable and unsympathetic opinion on it, presupposing it is correct and presenting it as such to their addressee. However, such an allegedly informed and considered opinion turns out to be realised by a wide variety of negative stereotypes about the islanders' backward civilisation, biological diversity, barren and remote land, picturesque costumes and traditions, criminal nature, namely stereotypes about any feature which typifies Sardinian identity.

These biased stereotypes reveal the partial and even racist ideology of the authors, which is founded on the implicit assumption that some political, economical, social and cultural systems are more advanced and modern than others, and that all are hierarchically organised in an ideal ladder with the US at the top. Therefore, it is according to natural law that the authors — Americans or writing from an American perspective — presuppose they have, among others, the natural right to move to and visit the countries with systems distinct from that in the US, to criticise those countries and their inhabitants, and to misrepresent them as inferior and as an economic, social and cultural, if not political, colony. Although an unbiased and objective representation of what is considered as the other may not be achievable, Guido Costa and the other three authors demonstrate, by writing their articles, that they are not aware of Sardinia's identity, and that they ignore Sardinians' just right to be described by trying to avoid hackneyed stereotypes and tired clichés.

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