The New Paths of Italian Song. A Sociological and Lexicometric Analysis

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Italian music in the last decade is characterized mainly by the rise of rap, previously relegated to a niche of listeners, and an archipelago of musicians from the many talent shows on Italian television. The essay presents the results of a survey of a representative sample of 653 songs, 478 of which come from the repertoire of rappers and 175 from musicians of various genres who have graced the stages of talent shows. The goal of the analysis is to penetrate, through text mining, the content that is most disseminated by rap and songs offered in talent shows, trying to suggest interpretive perspectives with respect to potential effects on listeners. It is in that form and content that can be read some kind of social distinction that passes through the transformation of audience tastes in music.

Keywords: sociology of music, text mining, rap, talent show, sociolinguistics

Metamorphosis of Musical Taste

The panorama of the light or pop song of the 2000s differs from that of previous decades, above all because of a redefinition of the modes of use and diffusion of sound supports (Kusek & Leonard, 2005; Castaldo, 2008; Razzini, 2022). In the Noughties, with a record market clearly in crisis, television became more and more complicit of the latter, becoming a promoter—not only in Italy—of transmissions that aimed to look for phenomena with which to feed the need for continuous news of generations of young people disaffected by the concept of an album and artistic continuity and unable to handle a wait, consumers now bulimic of (pseudo) cultural stimuli ever closer in time (Tomatis, 2019). In the same period, but with a considerable increase in the following decade, also in Italy the phenomenon of hip-hop was affirmed until its consecration. The latter is linked to the many song products that emerged from talent shows for the fact of being the expression of increasingly globalized musical forms, which have preserved little or very little—if not, as regards rap, in the use of the vernacular—of the song tradition of their origins.

Yet, despite the openly mediatic origin of the two genres (rap and the melodic song of outright pop imprint), in some ways the music that has emerged from talent shows[1] and hip hop seems to be the offspring of opposite tendencies, almost a case of schizophrenia. What in fact clearly differentiates the two genres are two

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[1] Strictly speaking, talent shows cannot be considered a musical genre, but a reservoir of different genres or, at most, a *media* genre. However, the artists coming from these television singing competitions that can grab the top positions in the sales charts are, without exception, connotable as a rib of the melodic genre, here already shared between great performers of the melodic tradition and stars. Moreover, the question of the definition of musical genres is very complex and, although of great methodological relevance, exceeds the limits imposed on this paper. Therefore, the interested reader can find a part of the debate on the subject rebuilt in Fabbri (1981), Di Franco & Nobile (1995), Santoro (2000) and Nobile (2012).

crucial elements: the song performance of the piece and the writing of the texts. On the one hand, indeed, rap expresses almost a negation of the need to know how to sing; it is declamatory and has consecrated artists with improbable singing skills to success. In this respect and adding to it the fact that it was born with oppositional intent, as the music of social centres, the resemblance to the trajectory of punk music is striking. Both genres, in fact, are characterized by the absence of technical skills and both were initially reported as counterculture vectors, to end later regressed in the canons of mass culture[2].

Talent shows, conversely, seem to return to value, at least in the ambitions declared by the promoter of these TV shows, the quality of singing performance, proposing however—as we shall see on the following pages—often trivial texts, with basic language, aligned to canons of the major international artists: the exact opposite of the vocation manifested by rappers.

Although very different, both genres have—as we have mentioned—a common element: indeed, in both cases the yielding to models that do not retain almost anything of the Italian tradition, surrendering to international styles, is clearly visible. While on the one hand Italian rappers refer mainly to the *gangsta* declination of American hip hop, the singers coming from talent shows seem immediately projected onto the dimension of internationalization: this is the globalization of music! There are numerous artists who emerged from TV talent shows that offer songs, if not entire albums, entirely in English: Marco Mengoni (*Rock Bottom*), Alessandra Amoroso (*Hell or High Water*), Francesca Michielin (*Amazing*, *Sons and Daughters*, *Nice to Meet You*), Il Volo (*Painfully Beautiful*, *This Time*), Lorenzo Fragola (for the Catanese singer released by *X-Factor* there are *Weird*, *Gravity*, *Land*, *The Rest*, *Close My Eyes*, and many others). The Neapolitans The Kolors, who reached the top of the sales charts after their success at *Amici*, sing entirely in English—a feature that unites them with Elisa, whose success is due to a victory obtained at the Sanremo festival.

On the one hand, therefore, we have the Italian language of the song that either surrenders to English or borders on the zero degree of writing, imposing an impressive lexical poverty. On the other hand, the consecration of the word, which occurred through the massive injection of rappers in the sales charts, however, de-emphasizes the subversive force and anchors it to the mainstream (Coletti & Coveri, 2017, p. 102). An irrefutable indication of the fact is that—beyond beat or dance, in short, the purely musical aspect that, in the opinion of the writer, borders on the mortification of musical composition—the word exerts considerable magnetism, especially on the youngest. In fact, hip hop mixes and centrifuges the suggestions borrowed from other genres in a colossal sound pastiche, plays on the musical reshuffle through *cutting* and *scratching*, makes the lines on the border between the original production and the material get sucked into the interior of the compositions. Nevertheless, hip hop culture has recovered, at least in part, that utopian instance that was in rock in the sixties and seventies. We owe to Jovanotti—the first author to have contributed to the diffusion of rap in Italy (Colombati, 2011, p. 2417)—the claim of a line of continuity with that tradition. In a song called *Il rap* he states, programmatically, that this last genre is "music that comes from the ashes of rock".

Conversely, as we have just said, talent shows scramble the Italian language, not showing any originality and at the same time expressing an elementary vocabulary. Affirmations that may appear apodictic, but which will be reasoned—data in hand—shortly.

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[2] In this sense, there are countless cases of rappers accused of having betrayed the cause of hip-hop counterculture: from Jovanotti to Fabri Fibra, whose third album, not surprisingly, is titled *Tradimento*, passing through Jake La Furia who provocatively titled his 2013 album *Musica commerciale*.

As a result of the two phenomena emerging from the musical consumption scene of the new millennium, rap and talent shows deserve an analysis that allows one to read in watermark the contents transmitted especially to young consumers, with an eye also focused on the linguistic form.

The following pages are based on an original work of empirical research with which 5,940 passages of 150 different artists have been sifted through a textual analysis. Of these songs, 478 came from the repertoire of the rappers and 175 from the artists of talent shows[3].

The goal is to penetrate, through text mining[4], the contents that are more diffused by the two genres considered here, with all the corollaries of the case in terms of potential effects on the audience that listens. It is in that form and in those contents that—to put it like Bourdieu (1979)—some kind of social distinction, that passes through the transformation of the public's tastes in the musical field, can be read.

Rap Between Tachylia and Coarse Language

Beyond some episodic elements, attributable from the compositional point of view to it (as *Prisencolinensinainciusol* by Celentano[5]), rap appears in the local music scene in a visible way only in the Nineties. At the beginning it was characterized above all using dialect, a language used as an expression of opposition to the institutionalized one, of power: Italian. Not surprisingly, in those years groups such as the Salentinian Sud Sound System, the Turinese Mau Mau, the Neapolitan 99 Posse and Almamegretta, and the Roman Piotta were established. Over the course of nearly three decades, the vocabulary of rap has changed considerably: words that refer to a sentimental semantic field have disappeared (more than any other, just the word *amore*, but also *innamorarsi* and *pazzia* with its variants always used in a figurative way), to let the self-referential and raw aspect of language emerge more strongly. The selfness reference and to one's own sector is in fact a typical trait of rap, characterized more than any other genre "to talk about oneself and one's own music" (Petrocchi, Pizzoli, Poggiogalli, & Telve, 1996, p. 338). The self-referentiality becomes narcissistic paroxysm when it records, as in the case of Fabri Fibra and Mondo Marcio, the obsessive return of certain words: among the typical words that characterize the lexicon of the first, *Fibra* is the most significant immediately after *cazzata*; for the second, *marcio* is the first. If it is true that a certain amount of self-referentiality is also found in other authors, then it should be noted that it seems to acquire in other authors a completely different value[6]. The linguist Massimo Depaoli (1996, p. 87) hypothesized that self-reference can be the expression of a

> need to identify with the audience by repeatedly repeating his name, a choice in which different motivations converge: the need to attract attention, an affirmation of one's own identity that also passes through the sound and physical perception of one's own denomination and the taste for provocation towards hypothetical rivals.

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[3] The sample comes from a reference population composed of all the artists who, singing songs in Italian, had a record in the first 60 places of the sales charts in the years between 1964 and 2016. From the reference population thus obtained, equal to 1,438 albums (the unit of context), 572 records were extracted (and, consequently, the 5,940 songs contained in them), equal to 39% of the population, with selection criteria proportional to the different artists. Among the latter, the rappers put in the sample are Articolo 31, Caparezza, Clementino, Club Dogo, Sfera Ebbasta, Emis Killa, Fabri Fibra, Fedez, Gemelli Diversi, Gemitaiz, Rocco Hunt, Jake La Furia, J-Ax, Jovanotti, Marracash, Mondo Marcio, Moreno, Nitro, Guè Pequeno, Salmo and Sottotono, while those from the talent shows are Amoroso, Annalisa, Bernabei, Briga, Carone, Carta, Chiara, Emma, Ferreri, Michielin and Noemi.

[4] The empirical material was treated with the T-Lab software (Lancia, 2004).

[5] It is not news that in Italy someone claims the birthright of some form of art. In the case of rap, Celentano has repeatedly claimed paternity (Assante, 2009). However, Colombati (2011, p. 2416), while maintaining a certain skepticism on the issue, seemed to attribute to Antonello Fassari, the comedian of *Avanzi*, the first Italian rap: *Romadinotte*, 1984.

[6] Think of the attempt to create a sort of family lexicon to be shared with the fans: this is the case of the Renato Zero's *sorcini* and of Claudio Baglioni's *Cucaio*, a distortion with which the same singer-songwriter pronounced his own name as a child.

It is far from improbable that Depaoli's remarks of two decades can be crowned by an increase in the phenomenon, due to an increasingly widespread narcissism, enhanced by the social network's role (Codeluppi, 2009) and widely anticipated by Lasch (1979).

The confirmation of the self-referentiality of rap is also ratified by empirical data: in the corpus analyzed, *rap* and *rapper* are the comparatively most over-represented words; at the same time, in this musical genre the allocutives typical of hip hop language are intensified, especially in its *gangsta* declination, like *fra'* or *bro'*, calques from American slang that stand for *brother*. Other allocutives also appear like *marcio*—a distinctive figure, as we have seen, precisely of Mondo Marcio, which identifies the young in this condition of drop outs—and even *zio*, used compulsively by rapper Jake La Furia, but not his exclusive prerogative: if in the rap it is used as a wedge for everyone (Club Dogo, Guè Pequeno, Marracash, J-Ax), some will remember the use that Zucchero made of it in his famous *Overdose d'amore* ("c'è bisogno d'amore sai *zio* / per tutto quanto il giorno").

These words are accompanied by words like *morire*, *brutto*, *spaccare*, *odiare*, which seem to exacerbate the nihilistic tendency imprinted in most hip hop texts, which trace a return "to the corrosive step of total negation, of the extreme tale of discomfort" (Castaldo, 2006, p. 53).

Despite being subjected to the dictatorship of the rhyme, rap, with its metric freedom, also allows linguistic games otherwise much more complicated to achieve, incorporated in a verbal flow often fluvial (especially in the case of Caparezza) and tachilalic. It expresses its intolerance of the massified language of advertising catchphrases ("Silenzio: parla Agnesi", Fratelli di Soledad, *Brescia Bologna Ustica*) and common places ("La legge non è uguale per tutti", Assalti Frontali, *Dobbiamo esserci*; "La lingua batte se la mente vuole", Frankie Hi-NRG MC, *Potere alla parola*), readjusting it in a sarcastic and ironic sense. In addition, the rap adventures in reckless and sometimes funny calembour. Some emblematic examples can be *Mors mea tacci tua* (Caparezza), *Nel male e nel bere* (Briga) or the roundup of titles of a Fedez album, titled *Pop-Hoolista: Bella addormentata nel Bronx*, *Veleno per topic*, *Voglio averti account*, *Non c'è due senza trash*, *Love Cost*, *Cardinal chic*, *L'amore eternit*, *Vorrei ma non posto*.

Resting entirely on the rhythm and freeing itself from any melodic necessity, rap allows a much more extensive use of the lexicon, without having to resort to tricks such as inversion, the wedge or monosyllables in the final verse. Precisely for this reason, on the one hand it draws heavily from a now trivialized repertoire, intent on brazenly reproducing the clichés of juvenile jargon, abusing foul language and colloquialisms. On the other hand, the expressive freedom offered by the melodiousness of the melody has led some rappers to dare both on the lexical choice and on the articulation of the verse.

On the side of the deadly combination of corrective linguistic choices, coprolalia and juvenile jargon, it is not difficult to find examples. In *Tocca qui*, Articolo 31 manage to centrifuge all three elements:

> la guardo con sospetto ero fuori
> di brutto: "che cazzo hai detto?!"
> le rispondo con un rutto
> […]
> ho voglia di pene pene pene
> penetrare all'interno del tuo ego
> per poterne ricavare l'essenza

The rapper Nitro puts the same three lines into *Suicidol*:

La sfiga vi tiene assieme come il cast di Sister Act
La fortuna sorride finché c'ha i denti
è una troia insicura che sfrutta i padri dei fallimenti

The empirical data consolidate what has just been said: the first 10 specificities typical of the lexicon of rappers are, in order: *rap*, *cazzo*, *odiare*, *perdere*, *lingua*, *fottere*, *merda*, *disco*, *spaccare*, *brutto*. When the same word *rap* is used within the texts, it is combined with terms like those of the list just seen, as can be seen in Figure 1.
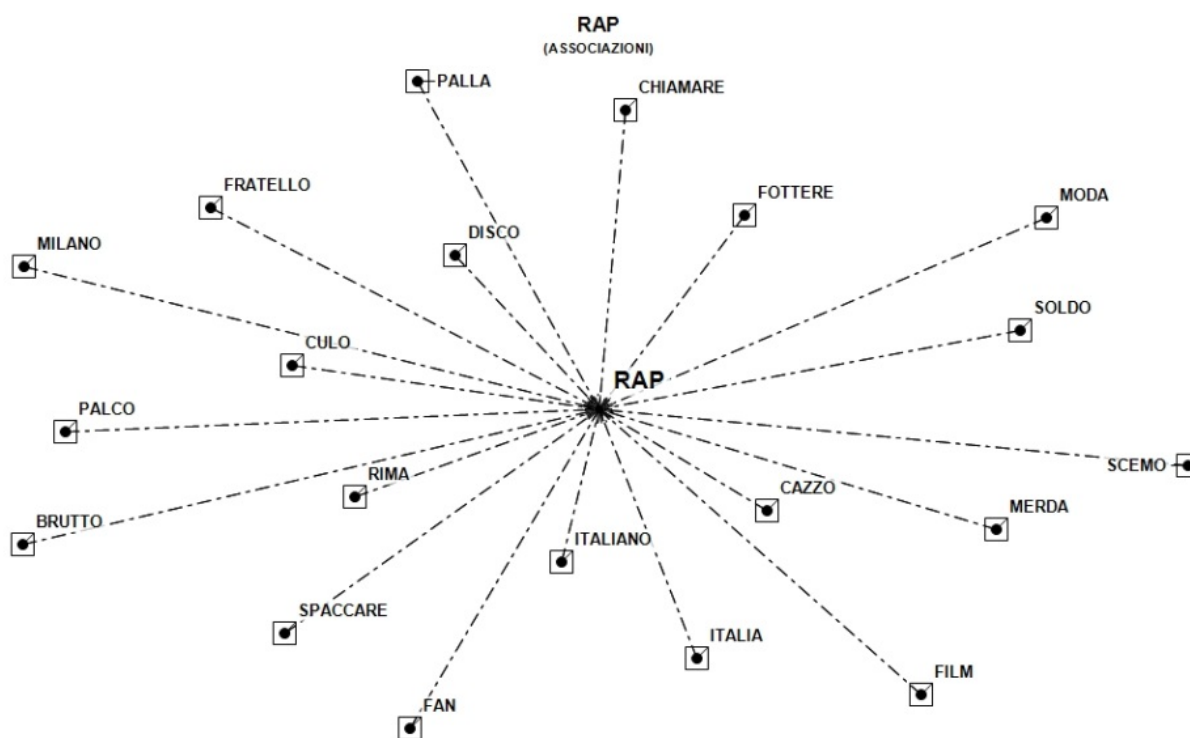

Figure 1. Radar of the word rap, with the words most associated with it.

The goliardic emphasis of Squallor's *Cornutone* and Benigni's *L'inno del corpo sciolto* or the angry and impatient tirade of Guccini's *L'avvelenata* over time have given way to an inflated form of coprolalia, weakened in its charge of breaking the rules and of the etiquette of the song. The foul language becomes the distinctive figure that no longer has, as in the past, an antagonistic and provocative value, but is offered to the public listeners as present currency, as a clear-cut lexicon, very close and superimposed on the common youthful language, childlike as the child who rejoices having said the word *cacca*. In this sense, as Antonelli (2010, p. 221) wrote, "also the livid verbal violence of a text like *Dentro alla scatola* of the rapper Mondo Marcio ('Fanculo te, fanculo questo posto […] insieme a tutti questi stronzi che non conosco') remains far from the impact of Francesco Guccini's *L'avvelenata* at the time":

Io tutto, io niente, io stronzo e io ubriacone,
io poeta, io buffone, io anarchico, io fascista,
io ricco, io senza soldi, io radicale,
io diverso ed io uguale, negro, ebreo, comunista!
Io frocio, io perché canto so imbarcare,

io falso, io vero, io genio, io cretino,
io solo qui alle quattro del mattino,
l'angoscia e un po' di vino, voglia di bestemmiare.

At the same time, some rappers propose their texts as retroguardist vehicles, concept containers and inadmissible points of view. One of the bearers of this abrupt turn towards the most sinister "machismo", combined with massive doses of homophobia is Fabri Fibra. In his lyrics, which guarantee him the highest value in terms of swearing rate per song[7], women are treated with a stinging contempt that collapses decades of struggle for gender equality: "la mia ex fidanzata adesso sta a Capo Verde / perché è una vita che sogna il negro dentro il suo imbuto" (*Coccole*); "io non voglio una ragazza che mi rappa in bikini / la mia donna più che rap deve farmi i bocchini" (*Vaffanculo scemo*); or, again: "le ragazze sono così sono tutte molto strane / si dividono in due gruppi: le mignotte e le puttane […] ma se scopi con il culo brutto pezzo di un recchione / ti chiamiamo un esorcista che ti mette in punizione" (*Gonfio così*). From the texts of the rapper of Marchigian origins come "good doses of annoying masculinism and generic rebellion" (Colombati, 2011, p. 2455), worrying about the potential implications that they may have in their reception by a younger audience. If, more than forty years before Fabri Fibra, De André gave proper dignity even to prostitutes (*Bocca di rosa*), today some rappers are the emblem of a worrisome return to the past ("lei gli controlla l'iPhone ma flirta col capoufficio / e in casa sta con le ciabatte e la maschera / al lavoro va coi tacchi e collant contenitivo / Lei sogna Fabio Volo col dildo di plastica / che le dà 50 sfumature di grigio / ma poi s'arrabbia come un'ecclesiastica / se suo marito osa chiedere un pompano", J-Ax, *Il bello d'esser brutti*).

At the same time, and following a trend that in Italian song became rooted above all with 883 (Berselli, 1999), rap makes extensive use of neologisms and expressions typical of juvenile jargon: *bimbominkia* (J-Ax concentrates several: "Come lo chiami un bimbominkia? È invecchiato e rinco rincominkia? Sempre tamarro per la scena fighetta / Sempre la zecca per quelli di destra", BimbiMinkia4Life), *gaggio* ("Mi comporto come un vero gaggio infatti io sto all'abbordaggio come il baseball a Joe Di Maggio", Sottotono, *Ianglediz*; "Fra', non sei vecchio e saggio, tu sei vecchio e basta, gaggio", Jake La Furia, *Vivo o morto*).

On the other hand, rap is the occasion for verbal pyrotechnic games, veritable tongue twisters, as in Caparezza: "Scivoli per un flacone di sapone / finché non ti si propone un sermone", *House credibility*; "Succhi brandy e ti stendi, dandy, non mi comprendi, senti, tu non ti offendi se ti dico che sei trendy" (*Fuori dal tunnel*). The game also becomes semantic in *La guerra del sale*, sung together with Daniele Silvestri:

Vota il sale
vote for sale
non è un venduto
not for sale
nella vita c'è chi sale
chi carbonato

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[7] Out of 100 words used in his texts, on 5 occasions the rapper of Milanese adoption chooses one from obscenity. Following Fabri Fibra in this game of triviality, we find almost all rappers, with the only exceptions of 883, a goliardic group like Elio & le Storie Tese and the equally talented Olmo, alter-ego of the comedian Fabio De Luigi, who had great success at the beginning of the Noughties in terms of sales. Here, in order, this special ranking, which brackets the artists not referable to rap: Nitro, (Olmo), Sottotono, Gemitaiz, (883), J-Ax, Jake La Furia, Gué Pequeno, Caparezza, Mondo Marcio, Salmo, Club Dogo, Marracash, Rocco Hunt, Sfera Ebbasta, (Elio & le Storie Tese), Fedez, Emis Killa, Clementino, Articolo 31. The 22nd place achieved by Marco Masini, one who stood out for his language, almost tenderly, from an authentic baronet as far as titles like *Vaffanculo* and *Bella stronza* are concerned.

siamo sale della terra
sempre sia iodato

Rap, therefore, as a turnaround of the song, as a crossroads between the author's requests, rock reminiscences and nods to juvenile jargon: a composite phenomenon compared to which, like it or not, the figure of Jovanotti—however transversal to genres and anything but strict observance of hip hop—it is eccentric to most of the remaining landscape. This is shown in Figure 2, which depicts a correspondence analysis which, starting from the lexicon used by the rappers considered, projects them on a Cartesian plane.
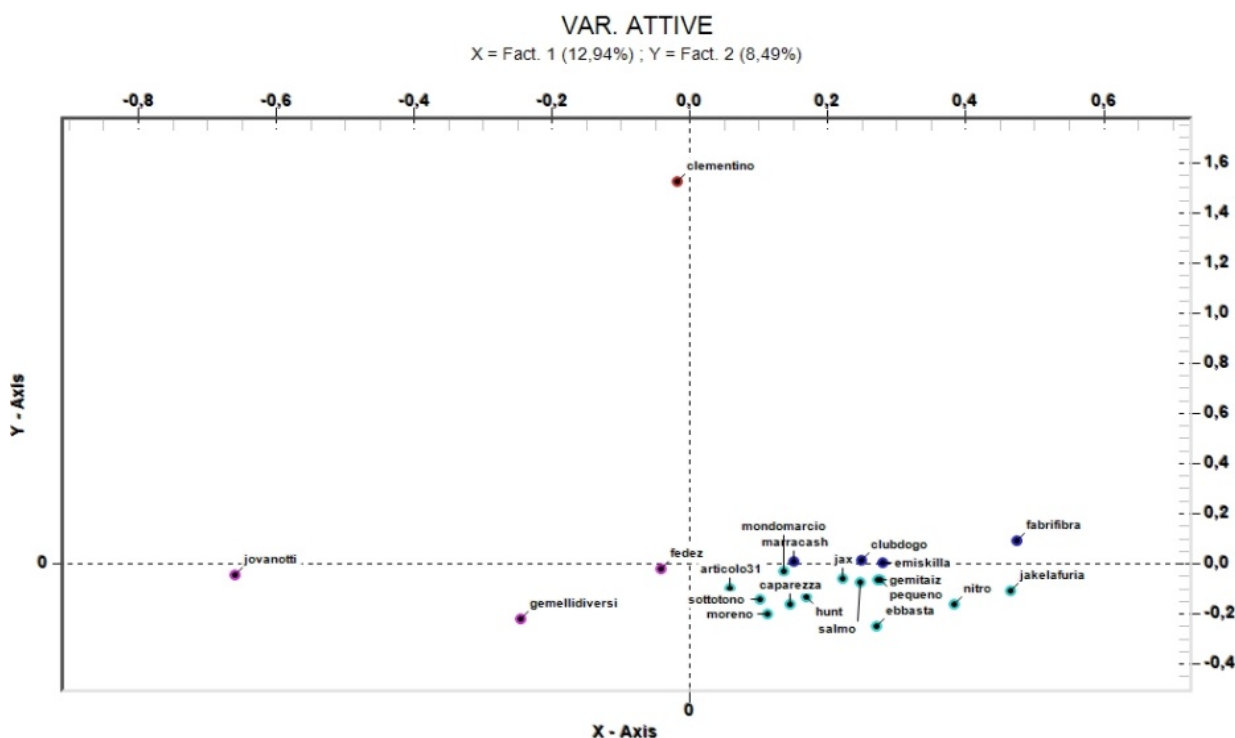

Figure 2. Italian rappers. Correspondence analysis.

In the case of Clementino, who reached the top of the sales charts in 2013 with *Mea culpa*[8], the peripheral position occupied in the graph is attributable to the wide use that he made of dialectal expressions. In the case of Jovanotti we are instead facing a figure that, although starting from rap, is not placeable *tout court* within this genre. Lorenzo Cherubini, which is his real name, in fact ranges between pop, nods to singer-songwriting, intimate moments and frantic rock with large electronic injections. The texts and lexical choices are in support of all this. In them we find the disarming banality of the debut album ("La puzza di benzina mi fa girar la testa / quando sto su di lei / è proprio la mia festa", *La mia moto*), and the pyrotechnic inventions in songs like *Date al diavolo un bimbo per cena* ("luce stroboscopica / lampada di Wood / verbi irregolari / understand understood / danze figurate / marce militari / uno per la polvere / due per gli altari […] io sono Schumacher / dentro l'abitacolo / dammi un po' di ritmo / che ti do spettacolo / il mondo è una jungla / io sono il dottor Livingston / il mondo è un computer / io sono Negroponte / se il mondo è da ballare / io sono Fred Astaire / e io sono Keith Jarrett / se il mondo è un pianoforte"). The lexical choices of the former disc jockey point out, unlike what—as

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[8] The mixture of Italian and Neapolitan is often indistinguishable in Clementino, in whose repertoire are found, however, numerous songs written and sung entirely in dialect (*O'vient*, *Dalle palazzine*, *Alto livello*, *Giungla*, *Messaggeri del Vesuvio*).

we have seen—happens for many rappers with nihilistic tendencies, an undoubted positivity. Comparatively, in the corpus of Jovanotti we find an overuse of words with a particularly positive sentiment: *massimo*, *ritmo*, *danzare*, *giocatore*, *basso*, *positivo*.

In the style of Celentano, who passed from an imitation of Jerry Lewis to sermons on television and a commitment to ecology, Jovanotti is the leading exponent of the most domesticated pop, the one who has managed to bring rap out of the ghettos, where it has never been, and make it edible for families. To the reassuring *Penso positivo*, *È qui la festa* and *Bella*, the Roman artist of Tuscan origins adds unusual lexical choices: terms of unusual length (*medicamentose*, *parasimopatico*, *sovrappopolazione*, *statisticamente*), polysyllabic crasis (*protocosmico*), words of scientific heritage (*aspartame*, *fotone*).

In short, therefore, if on the level of its form Italian rap, in spite of all the possibilities offered by being freed from the necessities of melody, has proposed very few cases of linguistic renewal, on that of the contents things have not gone much better. To a young audience less and less attentive to the roots of the music that they listen to and more and more inclined to a fragmentary way of listening, the majority of the most popular rappers propose—in addition to the already seen, very dubious forms of misogyny and an insistent self-reference—disengagement, nihilism, narcissism, poverty of contents. Just listen to songs like *Stavo pensando a te*, by Fabri Fibra ("Che figata andare al mare quando gli altri lavorano / Che figata fumare in spiaggia con i draghi che volano / Che figata non avere orari né doveri o pensieri / Che figata tornare tardi con nessuno che chiede 'dov'eri?'"), *Hai rotto il catso* by J-Ax ("Nessuno si fa più canne / Puntano a farsi neomamme / Con tette piene di latte / Ed i bambini mi asciugano / Con domande tipo: lei è quel signore che dice le parolacce?") or *Zombie*, by Jake The Fury ("Mamma, per una canna 3 mesi e 3 botte in testa / l'erba la può fumare soltanto chi la sequestra") to understand how much these texts convey disengagement and buzz culture, as they transmit a sense of continuous malaise, almost always bringing the texts to umbilical issues. When it is not the latter, at best the repertoire of most of these rappers ranges between instant-songs, portraits of the contemporary and pseudo-existentialist gripes.

If, therefore, with few exceptions (Jovanotti and Caparezza above all), rap offers a panorama that is incapable of giving its audience a broad, critically penetrating and perhaps not very permeable vision of disengagement, let's see what happened on the other side of the most incisive phenomenon of Italian music of the Noughties and of the following decade: that of the talent show.

Restoration of Talent Shows

The interaction between song and television has never been lacking since the very beginning (in 1954) of the latter: from *Cantagiro* to *Canzonissima*, up to the recent talent shows like *Amici* and *X-Factor*, without forgetting the most important singing contest of all, the Sanremo Festival, television has often been a solid springboard for many artists. Since 2001, the year in which the transmission conducted by Maria De Filippi *Amici* (*Saranno famosi*) was born, something has changed: television has had the ambition to present itself as a forge with which to recruit talent. To the transmission of Ms De Filippi, aired on Mediaset networks, after a few years, RAI replicated transmitting *X-Factor*, which later passed to Sky. This is a talent show "that already in the name clearly indicates its purpose, namely the search for a singer or a group in possession of the 'factor x', that particular characteristic that transforms an artist into a popstar" (Tabasso & Bracci, 2010, p. 151). There was no shortage of discussion about the interference that these TV shows have had on other singing events and many people have raised heartfelt voices shouting about the hegemony of the Mediaset networks over those of

RAI in the aftermath of the victory of Marco Carta, back from victory at *Amici*, at the Sanremo festival (*La forza mia*, 2009). The expression "talent show" presupposes that if words are not used in total ignorance, they should have something to do with the concept of talent. Whether it is undoubted managerial talent, which has led many artists to occupy the top positions of the Italian sales charts, or singing talent or, even, writing skills, what is certain is that the singers coming from the talent shows who are reported to the attention of the general public are increasingly numerous. Marco Carta, Alessandra Amoroso, Pierdavide Carone, Briga, Emma Marrone and Annalisa Scarrone come from the *Amici* stage; Giusy Ferreri, Chiara Galiazzo, Francesca Michielin and Noemi have all arrived at commercial success thanks to *X-Factor*; to these must be added Alessio Bernabei, who—with his Dear Jack—established himself in the same TV programme. For her part, Dolcenera began to climb to notoriety thanks to *Music Farm*.

But can we really say that, apart from music, the texts proposed by these singers are the expression of some talent (they or the authors who write for them)? From the analysis of the data the answer leaves no way out: definitely yes! The artists just mentioned, in fact, stand out as real King Midas in reverse, a real guarantee of poor quality.

Table 1

Lexical Extension and Refinement by Genre

Category	ROOT TTR (lexical extension)	ROOT H/T (lexical sophistication)
Classical songwriters	58.440	77.098
Modern songwriters	46.176	56.910
Great interpreters of melodic music	37.385	48.672
Meteors	33.402	37.362
Rappers	59.527	72.147
Classic rockers	32.022	31.210
Modern rockers	40.106	47.151
Singers from talent shows	28.252	28.073

Let us leave some observations based on the two correct indices (Guiraud, 1960) reported in Table 1. They are normally used in lexicometry to evaluate the "quality" of a corpus and its subsets: they are that of lexical extension and that of sophistication. The first relates the graphic forms with the occurrences of a corpus, while the second is given by the quotient between hapax and graphic forms[9]. Well, it is clear that the talent shows are in last place compared to the values of both indices. On the other hand, it is enough just one verse of a song like *Per colpa tua*, sung by Noemi Scopelliti:

> Brutto bastardo... baby... brutto bastardo cosa vuoi da me?? Gira alla larga...
> Cuore di pietra... amore... cuore di pietra... pensi solo a te... vattene via...

to realize that *cuore* and *amore* continue to go hand in hand and that through talent shows the Italian song has taken steps backwards. Yet another sign of a decided turnaround of the Italian song.

The phenomenon is even more relevant if we consider the dictatorship that talent shows have been imposing, for some time, on the tastes of listeners, above all the younger ones. The fortune collected by the singers passing through talent shows the emphasis placed on singing skills rather than on the construction of the

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[9] The average value of the lexical extension index is 41.914; that of the refinement is 49.828.

texts. The affirmation of the many young people coming from television musical competitions seems to be the expression of the restoration of technique and virtuosity placed on the furrow of an increasingly globalized standard, aimed at breaking down the peculiarities of the "bel canto all'italiana" to subject it to the stylistic features of the most popular international successes. The popularity credited to the artists who emerge from singing competitions seems to represent, indeed, a real act of restoration, a coup that brings the song under the dictates of television, in spite of the new media horizons (now not so new) like the net. At the same time, as we have seen, talent returns to propose corrective linguistic formulas, re-proposing that tyranny of the proposed text within a linguistic register that has long been the distinguishing mark of the singing *status quo*, epitomized in the Sanremo festival (Arcangeli, 1999; Giuliano & La Rocca, 2010).

Conclusions

In conclusion, therefore, the data reported by the research and transferred from a sociolinguistic dimension to that of its repercussions in sociological terms, show that the emerging phenomena in Italian song are harbingers of poor, banal contents, devoted to disengagement, to (type approval), in some cases to the buzz culture (in rap) or focused on corrective love themes (in talent shows). These aspects, as a whole, seem to confirm the vocation of the consumer song to amplify the trends that meander in society and to confirm Pasolini's idea of a general aesthetic bending (in the broad sense) under the blows of the approval force of a prolonged hegemony of television in our country.

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