

Books. DI RABBIA E DI VENTO by Alessandro Robecchi

Traci Andrighetti (April 04, 2016)



Carlo Monterossi Returns in This Milanese Metropolitan Noir



[Di rabbia e di vento](#) [2](Of Rage and Wind) (Sellerio, 2016), the third novel in Alessandro Robecchi's Carlo Monterossi mystery series, opens with the brutal murder of a luxury auto dealer in a wet and unusually windy Milan. Hours later, trash TV writer Carlo Monterossi crosses paths with Anna Galinda, an escort who is tortured and shot within hours, possibly minutes, of their meeting. After Monterossi is called to the police station for questioning, he's haunted by the brief time he spent with Anna and the **clac** (click) of her door as it closed behind him. Out of a sense of responsibility and the **rabbia** (rage) referenced in the title, Monterossi teams up with an old friend and spy, an officer on leave, and an Ethiopian handyman to hunt for the ruthless killer and a rumored treasure.

The language of [Di rabbia e di vento](#) [2] is rich and at times humorous, despite the bluesy, Bob Dylany melancholy that pervades this metropolitan noir. In general, Robecchi writes in a neo-standard Italian colored with the occasional regional influence. But he also includes other linguistic varieties, such as jargonistic, scientific, and bureaucratic Italian, which add substance and authenticity to the story. Some of the more intriguing and entertaining passages, particularly from the non-native speaker perspective, involve the bureaucratic Italian and an "insider speak" specific to the Milanese context.

MILANESE DIALECT

capànùn (Ital. **capannone**; Eng. **warehouse**)

È tutto un lungo paesone: campi e case e fabbrichette, la ditta, l'azienda, il capànùn.

(It's all one big, long town: fields and houses and small factories, the firm, the business, the warehouse.)

sciura (Ital. **signora**; Eng. **woman**, but with an implication of wealth)

Ne esce una sciura milanese che sembra presa da un documentario sulle sciure milanesi.

(A Milanese signora comes out who seems straight out of a documentary about Milanese signore.)

BORROWINGS

pulloverino (Eng. **a small pullover**; comprised of **pullover** + **-ino**, a suffix meaning **little**)

Serena si toglie il cappotto e sotto ha un pulloverino leggero sul tono del viola, con la maglietta girocollo che spunta.

(Serena takes off her coat, and underneath she has a small, light pullover in a shade of violet with a crewneck T-shirt sticking out.)

briffatelo (Eng. **you** [plural] **brief him**; from **brief**, pronounced **briff** + **-are** = **briffare**, or **to brief**)

"Ci starà di sicuro," dice Flora, e aggiunge, "Briffatelo bene."

("He'll be in for sure," Flora says. And she adds, "Brief him well.")

COMPOUND WORDS

beccamorto (Eng. **gravedigger**; literally **he pecks dead**; derived from the medieval practice of certifying the death of an individual by biting the big toe)

Il tipo del negozio [di pompe funebri], il beccamorto, ha smesso di fare la faccia contrita quando ha capito che non c'era un lutto di mezzo, ma solo una questione tecnica.

(The guy from the funeral home, the gravedigger, dropped the contrite face when he learned that there was no grief involved, but just a technical question.)



tirapiedi (Eng. **lackey** or **hangman's assistant**; literally, **he pulls feet**; derived from the practice of having the hangman's assistant pull the feet of a hanged individual to induce a faster death)

Serena era in uno di quei buchi, il frigo pieno, divieto di uscire, guardata a vista da un uomo di mezza età risultato poi essere il tirapiedi del Serperi, che la teneva lì, curava che non scappasse e la dava una ripassata ogni tanto, così, per gradire.

(Serena was in one of those holes, the full fridge, no exit, watched by a middle-aged man who turned out to be the lackey of Serperi, who was keeping her there, making sure she didn't escape and giving her a going over every once in a while, just because, for fun.)

IDIOMS

fare il nababbo (Eng. literally, **to do the nabob**, as in **to lead a life of luxury**; derived from the Anglo-Indian term **nabob**, which is from the Hindi **nabab**, to refer to a person of conspicuous wealth)

Insomma si parla di lui, Giuseppe Serperi, la bestia della BMW bianca, che risulta guardia giurata e fa il nababbo.

(In short, they're talking about him, Giuseppe Serperi, the animal with the white BMW who, as it turns out, is a security guard and leads a life of luxury.)

andarsene all'inglese (Eng. literally, **to go away English style**, as in **to slip out** [without saying goodbye to the host]; but, ironically, often translated in the English context as **to take French leave**)

Oscar sa come fare, quando si sveglierà se ne andrà all'inglese come fa sempre lui.

(Oscar knows how to behave. When he wakes up he'll slip out like he always does.)

SCIENTIFIC ITALIAN

gamma-idrossibutirrato (Eng. **gamma-hydroxybutyric acid**)

Dentro c'era del gamma-idrossibutirrato, che sarebbe un anestetico, più o meno, o se di mestiere fate i titoli nei giornali, "la droga dello stupro."

(Inside there was some gamma-hydroxybutyric acid, which is an anesthetic, more or less, or, if you write newspaper headlines by trade, "the date rape drug.")

JARGONISTIC ITALIAN

caramba (Eng. the nickname of the **Carabinieri**; borrowed from the Spanish exclamation of surprise, **¡Ay, caramba!**)

"I caramba sono carini ma non ci dicono tutto."

("The caramba are nice, but they're not telling us everything.")

fidejussione (or **fideiussione**; Eng. a contract of **guaranty** or suretyship under Roman civil law)

La signorina aveva fatto senza battere ciglio una fidejussione per i primi due anni d'affitto, un bell'ottantamila, roba che non cresce sugli alberi.

(Without batting an eye, the young woman had signed a guaranty for the first two years of rent, a nice eighty thousand, stuff that doesn't grow on trees.)

ecomostro (Eng. **ecomonster**, i.e., a journalistic term for building or a complex of buildings considered grossly incompatible with the surrounding environment)



Ora, dire che le facce di quei tre crollano come un ecomostro puntellato con la dinamite sarebbe troppo, è vero, ma qualche crepa si vede, e anche dei calcinacci che cadono sul tappeto.

(Now, to say that the faces of those three collapsed like an ecomonster shored up with dynamite would be too much, it's true. But you could see a few cracks, and also some pieces of plaster falling on the carpet.)

BUREAUCRATIC ITALIAN

“Scusi, sovrintendente, posso conoscere il motivo della convocazione?”

Voleva dire: “Mi dica perché sono qui,” ma all'improvviso gli è sembrato un po' troppo da film.

“Excuse me, superintendent, can I know the reason for the summons?”

He'd wanted to say, “Tell me why I'm here,” but all of the sudden it seemed too much like something from a film.)

INSIDER SPEAK

“Dove è più semplice,” ha detto Carlo.

Che a Milano vuol dire: non si preoccupi del prezzo.

“Wherever is easiest,” Carlo said.

Which in Milan means: Don't worry about the cost.)

“Nessun problema.”

Che a Milano vuol dire: costerà un po' caro.

“No problem.”

Which in Milan means: It'll be pretty expensive.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alessandro Robecchi (b. 1960, Milan) is a journalist by profession, but he also writes for the theater, radio, and TV. For more information about Robecchi and his work, visit his [website](#) [3]. And be sure to like his [Facebook page](#) [4].

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