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Censorship and Hunger: The Role of Names

Abstract

This paper is devoted to the analysis the of personal names contained in *Die Umschreibungen des Begriffes „Hunger" im Italienischen: stilistisch-onomasiologische Studie auf Grund von unveröffentlichtem Zensurmaterial*. This text was published in 1920 by Leo Spitzer, an Austrian romance philologist who worked, during the First World War, as a censor at the Central Office of the Postal Censorship of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In his account, Spitzer reports the different linguistic strategies that Italian prisoners in Austria used in their letters to express the concept of hunger to their relatives in Italy. Among the many linguistic substitutes, a particular place is occupied by the personal names that prisoners used to name hunger. In this article I describe the different types of names that Italian prisoners used as euphemisms for the concepts of HUNGER and FASTING in their letters. I will also show that these anthroponyms are connected to the aforementioned concepts by means of metaphorical or metonymic shifts or thanks to the encyclopedic knowledge of the soldiers. After a brief introduction to Spitzer's work and to the types of euphemisms (linguistic or extra-linguistic), the analysis focuses on a few types of names: names that recall the physical conditions of prisoners, names related to music, names of saints and names of animals.

1. Introduction

Leo Spitzer is a romance linguist and philologist who, in 1915, coordinated one of the five censorship offices belonging to the Central Information Office on Prisoners of War in Vienna. His task was to uncover the "exaggerated" complaints about hunger that the Italian prisoners addressed to their families in the letters they sent home. In these letters the prisoners asked for food packages in order to survive in labor camps. The Austrian Ministry of Defense authorized the Italian prisoners to ask for food, but these requests could not be accompanied by excessive complaints, since the honor and reputation of the host country was at stake. Austria was not to violate the international conventions on the treatment of those who had been imprisoned.

Therefore, the Office of Censorship had to "mitigate" these requests, covering the complaint with black ink, or returning the letters to the concentration camp, with the request that the prisoners modified them, under penalty of not delivering them home.

By faithfully reproducing spelling and punctuation, Leo Spitzer collected a huge number of the periphrases expressing the concept of hunger, used by the Italian prisoners who had been captured during the First World War, between September 1915 and November 1918 (Spitzer, 2019). The volume was published in 1920 under the title "Die Umschreibungen des Begriffes "Hunger" im Italienischen: Stilistisch-onomasiologische Studie auf Grund von unveröffentlichtem Zensurmaterial" [The periphrasis of the term "hunger" in Italian: a stylistic-onomasiological study based on unpublished censored material]. Spitzer organized the huge amount of linguistic material by dividing it into types, using thematic criteria. All the linguistic substitutes were therefore divided into 21 different groups:

(1) The word *hunger* and its concealments;
(2) *Appetite* as a euphemism for hunger;
(3) Personified attributes;
(4) Health, hygiene, care;
(5) Air – wind;
(6) Diseases;
(7) Physical conditions;
(8) Religious practices;

(9) Saints;
(10) Music;
(11) Dance – game;
(12) Reading – study;
(13) Hunting – animals;
(14) Technical equipment – consumer goods;
(15) Geographical designations;
(16) Prophecies and auspices;
(17) Descriptions of food – effects of packages;
(18) Allusions to particular places;
(19) Local dialects;
(20) Syntax and spelling as a means of concealment;
(21) Isolated or uncertain categories.

Prisoners used different linguistic tricks in their letters to let their relatives know they were hungry and therefore that they needed food. The basic mechanism of euphemism is a replacement, i.e. linguistic element B replaces the taboo term A. Usually, there can be a linguistic or extra-linguistic link between the two signs. In the first case, we can distinguish between formal replacement mechanisms and mechanisms that replace the content (Cardona, 2016, p. 125). The former are mechanisms that transform the linguistic form of the starting element (abbreviations or modifications of the phonemes: *God* and *gosh*), the latter are mechanisms, mostly of cognitive type – such as metaphor and metonymy – which act on the meaning of the taboo term (compare *he's big-boned* and *he's fat*).[1]

In the second case (i.e. mechanisms replace the content), two linguistic signs can be related in a nonlinguistic way, that is, not only in language and

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[1] The scholarly literature on the conceptual theory of metaphor and metonymy is abundants. Here I point out only the manifesto of the theory, *Metaphors We Live By*, by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). About metaphors you can see the exhaustive works of Kövecses (2010, 2015), and Littlemore (2015) for the metonymy. Here I limit myself to reminding the reader that in the paradigm of cognitive linguistics, metaphor and metonymy are not "rhetorical" figures of language, but rather they are cognitive processes. In a metaphor, one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another conceptual domain. This understanding is achieved by seeing a set of systematic correspondences, or mappings, between two domains. The conceptual metonymy is instead a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity provides the mental access to another conceptual entity within the same conceptual domain.

thought but also in socio-physical practice and reality or, with other words, in culture (Lakoff, 1993). This is called conventional or encyclopedic knowledge. When we talk about conventional knowledge as a cognitive mechanism, we mean that general knowledge about a precise concept that a given linguistic community shares within its own culture. This knowledge can be the source of additional meaning for a concept. For example, if we try to define the LION concept as it is understood in our Western culture or in the Near East, we would immediately think not only about a specific animal possessing certain physical and behavioral characteristics, since we have much more knowledge than what is necessary to build this concept. We know, in fact, that the lion is used in heraldry and religion, it was identified with Saint Mark and then it became the symbol of the city of Venice; or that the lion encodes strength, courage and daring.

Encyclopedic knowledge can also be evoked by personal names. In many Italian newspapers, the former British Prime Minister Liz Truss was repeatedly defined with a periphrasis containing a personal name which is better known by the Italian people and more linked to conservative politics: Margaret Thatcher. See this excerpt from an article that appeared in the newspaper *La Repubblica* in September 2022:

> (1) "(...) l'aspirante Margaret Thatcher del XXI secolo era una ragazza attivista, indottrinata dai genitori di sinistra e contraria a nucleare e monarchia."[2]
> '(...) the would-be Margaret Thatcher of the 21st century was an activist girl, indoctrinated by leftist parents and opposed to nuclear power and the monarchy.'

Obviously, even a personal name, if connected to particularly unpleasant facts or events, can be disliked or even tabooed (and forbidden) and therefore replaced with other personal names or with certain periphrases. In Italy, for example, Benito is particularly out of favor as a name for a baby boy, as it recalls the figure and story of Benito Mussolini.[3]

A famous example of a literary character's taboo name is that of Lord Voldemort. In the Harry Potter saga, Voldemort is the greatest and most feared

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[2] Guerrera (2022).

[3] In 2020, only 5 babies had this name in Italy. See the internet page of the Italian Institute for Statistics: https://www.istat.it/it/dati-analisi-e-prodotti/contenuti-interattivi/contanomi

dark wizard ever. The fear he causes is so great that most people are afraid to even pronounce his name. For this reason, the various protagonists employ some periphrases to refer to this powerful wizard, such as "You-Know-Who", "He Who Must Not Be Named", or "the Dark Lord".

Among the many substitutes listed in the *Perifrasi*, a particular place is occupied by the personal names that prisoners used to name hunger:[4] Spitzer points out that, in his corpus, the personifications of hunger are quite numerous, and the prisoners sometimes seem to have fun inventing names and surnames for their new cellmates.

Personification, in linguistics, is considered a conceptual metaphor that allows the human mind to understand non-human entities or objects such as human beings (Kövecses, 2010, pp. 38–39, 80–86).

The reasons why the soldiers in captivity tended to personify hunger can be many. They tried to make a feeling real and, therefore, to metaphorize an "abstract" entity through a "concrete" person. Another reason might be the need to hide a "significant" information – an allusion to their state of hungry people – through names of people, names of literary characters, song titles and comedies, usually regarded as meaningless or in any case, for them, not interpretable from an etymological point of view.

The aim of this paper is therefore to describe what types of names the Italian prisoners gave to hunger in their letters and also to investigate the cultural reasons that connect these names to the concepts of HUNGER (It. *fame*) *and* FASTING (It. *digiuno*).

It is necessary to remember here that the purpose of Spitzer was to collect the greatest number of periphrases used by the prisoners and to order them according to a purely semantic criterion (names related to music, names related to diseases, names referring to dance and so on). Not so much importance has been given to the morphological structure of the euphemisms for the concept of hunger (except for the elements described in Section 2). For this reason, the elements that replace the censored concept can be very different: short phrases, dialect phrasal expressions, a range of personal names (e.g., surnames, nicknames, first names) or structures based on specific anthroponyms and proper names of objects.

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[4] About the use of personal names in the creation of euphemisms, see for example Cardona (1982, 1989), Azavêdo (1987), Caprini (1992), Lötscher (1996).

Since the goal of this work is purely semantic in nature, I decided to use Spitzer's classification for semantic fields, without describing in detail the morphological structure of the euphemism.

2. Modifications of the linguistic form: examples

Within the first chapter of Spitzer's work titled "The word hunger and its concealments" we find the Italian feminine word *fame* 'hunger' personified many times. He/she is sometimes a comrade, sometimes a young lady wandering around the concentration camp and sometimes *fame* is a friend of the prisoner during the childhood. In this chapter there are many linguistic tricks that modify the phonic form of the Italian word, and the results are all names or surnames of the personified hunger. Abbreviations of the word *fame* are numerous: in (2) there is an example of a name for hunger, seen as a young lady, which is created with the first syllable of the Italian word.

> (2) *Castiglione Olona, Como*:[5] ...se mi a abbonato a qualche croce rosa... perche ora che si lavora la signorina Fà si sente assai assai
> '...if he signed me up to red cross, because now that we are working, Miss Fa is making herself very, very noticeable.'

The Italian prisoners can also play with the word *fame* 'hunger' to create anagrams, which are then used as surnames for the personifications. In example (3) we find *La signora Emaf* 'Mrs Emaf', a woman who lives in the work camp.

> (3) *S. Michele, Venezia*: La signora Emaf non cessa di circondarmi del suo affetto e pure tu sai bene che non provo per essa la minima simpatia.

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[5] This writing indicates that the letter is directed to the town of Castiglione Olona, near Como (Lombardy). All the examples that appear in this paper are reported as they were collected and classified by Spitzer: the destination of the message is transcribed in italics, after the colon begins the transcription of the censored periphrasis with the faithful reproduction of spelling and punctuation (including mistakes).

'Mrs. Emaf does not cease to surround me with her affection, and yet you know
well that I haven't sympathy for her.'

The most common anagram used by soldiers from Northern Italy, however,
is *mefa*, attributed to the personification of hunger as a mature woman who
walks around the labor camp or as a relative of the prisoners. In examples
(4) and (5) *mefa* is the surname of a cousin and of a friend. In example (5) we
find instead the anagram of the phrase *gran fame* (literally 'great hunger')
which allows to create the surname *Mefangra* for Nino, a fictional friend that
is another personification of hunger:

(4) *Katzenau – Udine*:[6] Carissimo cugino «Mefa»!
'Dear cousin Mefa!'

(5) *Collesano, Palermo*: L'amico Nino Mefangra si fa vedere assai volte e non ci
abbandona mai. Lui sta allegro al solito suo specialmente che arrivano i pacchi
daccasa.
'My friend Nino Mefangra shows up very frequently and he never leaves us. He
is cheerful as usual, especially when the packages arrive from home.'

In other cases, the Italian word *fame* 'hunger' is not disguised, but it is used
as it is, or it can be modified with affixes, syllables or simply letters to create
new surnames and thus disguise hunger as a real person. Therefore, we can
find personal names and surnames of invented peoples (friends, parents, rel-
atives at home or comrades) who, in fact, represent hunger:
(1) *Luigi Fame* (name + surname);
(2) *Umberto Moltafame* (name + surname, the last is created from the noun
    phrase *molta fame* 'very hungry');
(3) *Signora Famel* (appellation 'Mrs.' + surname with the ending *-l* like other
    Italian surnames: *Budel, Ostanel, Vettorel, Provadel, Bottarel*);
(4) *Tenente Defame* (the rank of 'lieutenant' + surname *Defame* like other Ital-
    ian surnames with the ancient Latin preposition *de*, used to mean vari-
    ous semantic functions and mainly derivation, belonging, possession or

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[6] The letter was written by a prisoner in Katzenau and is directed to Udine.

ownership. It has therefore replaced the Latin genitive case. See *De Felice*, *Dealessandri*, *Debarbieri*).

(5) *Amico Famego* (appellation 'friend' + surname *Fame* + syllable *-go*);

(6) *Luigi Fammini* (name + surname *Fame* + derivational morpheme with diminutive meaning *-in-*).[7]

There are also some anthroponyms created using Italian dialectal material. Consider the following example:

(6) *Treviso*: Qui come prigioniero c'è l'amico Sepatislafam che m'incarica salutarvi. (...)
'Here as a prisoner there is my friend Sepatislafam who instructs me to greet you.'

Sepatislafam is the surname of a fictional man, and it is created from the impersonal sentence in Venetian dialect *se patis la fam* 'you suffer from hunger'.

Exclamations can also be transformed into a surname; in the example (7) the dialectal sentence *Uh che fem!* 'what hunger!' becomes the surname of a young lady:

(7) *Cagli, Pesaro*: Salutatemi Zia Anna e famiglia, la Signorina Uchefem, quanti vi chiedono di me.
'Greet Aunt Anna and the family, Miss Uchefem, and all who ask about me.'

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[7] In the Italian surname system, diminutives usually have a patronymic function. However, the motivation of diminutives is more morpho-pragmatic than semantic (see Dressler & Merlini Barbaresi, 1994), as already suggested by De Felice (1980), who always speaks of a diminutive-endearment value, and by Kremer (1996, p. 1273) who underlines the importance of the loving relationship between parents and children in the genesis of these linguistic forms in Latin and in the Romance languages.

3. Modification of the meaning using metaphors and metonymies: euphemistic formulas for *fame* as personal names

3.1. Physical conditions

A frequent type of euphemistic personal name falls into the semantic field of the physical conditions that prolonged fasting can cause. Thinness (It. *magrezza* and the adjective *magro* 'thin') is one of the most obvious physical conditions of a prisoner during war. Many names and surnames of the personifications of hunger are built with this word (and other words which are related to *magrezza*) as a consequence of a metonymical semantic shift (EFFECT FOR CAUSE). Consider the following three cases, where soldiers personify hunger and call it with different surnames composed of the Italian adjective *magro* 'thin' or the Italian noun *stanga* 'pole', a word which is used here in a metaphorical way, because in Italian *stanga* can denote a very tall and thin person.

(1) *Tenente Magr-in-i* [lieutenant + surname thin-DIM-PL.M];
(2) *Signora Magher-in-a* [Mrs. + surname thin-DIM-SG.F];
(3) *Armando Stangh-ett-i* [name + surname pole-DIM-SG.M].

Furthermore, in another letter, an imaginary lady with the surname *Magni* shows up. *Magni* is a euphemistic surname created by antiphrasis: *magnà* is, in fact, the form of the verb *mangiare* 'to eat' in the dialects of central Italy (see, e.g., the dialect of Rome and the dialects of Marche and Abruzzo regions). Resorting once again to antiphrasis and irony, another prisoner writes to his family that a Mr. *Guglielmo Grassi* is not with him in the camp and that he actually does not even remember who he is. *Grassi* is a surname that appears with high frequency throughout Italy and is the plural masculine form of the adjective *grasso* 'fat'. Consequently, the soldier is saying that he does not remember when he last ate enough, having the chance to become fat:

(8) *Ariano di Puglia, Avellino*: Di quel certo Guglielmo Grassi che mi domandi esso si trova proprio qui (...) il signor Grassi non rammento chi sia.
'Of that certain Guglielmo Grassi, you ask me if it is right here (...) Mr. Grassi, I don't remember who he is.'

3.2. Music

Within the section dedicated to the music Spitzer reports some euphemistic personal names for hunger that are created based on the names of famous Italian operas or operettas. *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini is the most frequently used. Its name may also undergo graphic distortion (*Boeme – Bocheme – labue me – boemia – boem – Bhoeme* etc.) but it is always used as the personal name of a woman, on the account of the feminine gender of the opera's name:

> (9) *Napoli*: [pacchi] che mi fa visita di spesso la Signorina Boheme, è che questa vi fa preghiera di non dimenticarsi di me.
> '[packages] because Miss Boheme often visits me, she begs you not to forget me.'

Bohème is employed so frequently as a personal name for hunger probably because the *bohémiens* were considered people who lived like tramps and suffered from hunger.

Another opera that is used as a moniker for hunger or that is linked with hunger is Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*. See the letter collected in (10), where irony is also used as a means of expression:

> (10) *Ponte Valleceppi, Perugia*: di salute mi trovo bene, specialmente la notte cè la cavalleria rusticana che mi da noia.
> 'I am in good health, especially at night, when there is the cavalleria rusticana that bothers me.'

Although apparently not used as a personification, this name for hunger is well suited to suggesting the unpleasant feeling of prolonged fasting, as the prisoner refers to the noise of an empty and hungry stomach, which is so deafening as to be compared to a cavalry charge (*Cavalleria Rusticana* means, literally, 'rural cavalry charge').

3.3. Saints

Frequently prisoners represent hunger through one of the many saints worshipped by Italians. Spitzer calls them "saints of hunger". These figures became protectors against hunger or against the diseases caused by it only during

wartime: the choice of a saint's name for the personification of hunger is usually motivated by the encyclopedic knowledge about these saints in a Catholic country like Italy in the years of the First World War. There may be three cultural reasons that link these saints to hunger:

(1) The Catholic liturgy of that time ordered the total abstinence from food during the festivity or during the Eve of the saint's day.
(2) The saint protects people against a physical condition that can be linked to hunger.
(3) A detail of the biography or folk iconography establishes a connection between the saint and hunger/food.

One of these saints is Sant'Anna (Saint Anne), whose connection with hunger does not seem to be apparent if one looks merely at the hagiographies. Today the saint is invoked by mothers and women during childbirth, since she gave birth to the Virgin Mary at a very advanced age without difficulties. Anne is also the patroness of farmers and their agricultural activities; in this context, the prohibition of threshing during her feast day is strongly rooted in the popular traditions of Italy. The penalty for transgressors is a misfortune affecting cultivated land and all related activities. This narrative motif is very widespread in the oral and written folk tradition of the Italian Apennine area (Abruzzo, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Molise, Tuscany, Umbria).

The following excerpt reports a legend relating to the territory of the town Rapolano Terme (Lecchini & Mazzini, 1992, p. 43):

> *Per Sant'Anna, tanti e tanti anni fa, alcuni contadini trebbiavano. Passò per il luogo della trebbiatura una donna e disse: «Perchè trebbiate? non sapete che è peccato lavorare il giorno della festa?» I contadini per tutta risposta ribatterono: "A noi Sant'Anna non ci tribbia". Allora il terreno si aprì, i contadini furono inghiottiti dall'apertura e da quel giorno nacque la Puzzola del Bagno Marii.*

> 'During Saint Anne's Day, many and many years ago, some farmers were threshing. A woman passed by the threshing place and said: "Why are you threshing? don't you know that it is a sin to work on the feast day?" In response, the farmers replied: "Saint Anne does not get sick of us." Then the land opened, the farmers were swallowed and from that day the Puzzola del Bagno Marii [a small lake] was born.'

The saint is therefore connected with the threshing of wheat, an operation which is necessary to produce flour and therefore to bake bread.

Comparatively, Sant'Alessio (Saint Alexius of Rome), in his biography, has elements that clearly connect him to the concepts of HUNGER and FASTING. His life is known through three traditions, one Syriac, one Greek and one Roman. These traditions have in common the fact that Alexius was a beggar who, in the evening, shared whatever he could collect during the day with the poor people. This could be the reason for choosing this particular saint in this example:

(11) *Bari*: [pacco] che alesio e forte.
'[pack] so that Alexius is strong'.

San Rocco (Saint Roch) is also found very frequently. The cultural connection of this man with hunger can be easily reconstructed. Although it is known that he is, above all, the saint protector from the plague and from diseases in general, his biography emphasizes that he assiduously assisted and fed the hungry and sick people of Montpellier (France). Rocco fell ill with the plague in Piacenza and took refuge in a cave so as not to infect other people; hunger and thirst seemed to be the cause of his death. The ancient hagiographies narrate that a dog, during Rocco's hospitalization, brought him a piece of bread stolen from the table of his master every day. This anecdote became the distinctive feature of his iconography. In the examples collected by Spitzer, the name of San Rocco occurs as a synonym for hunger, while, on other occasions, it replaces the term 'bread':

(12) *Corleone*, *Palermo*: [pane] che S. Rocco ce
'[bread] so that S. Roch is there.'

(13) *Montemaggiore*, *Palermo*: Il mio bisogno è Santo Rocco.
'My need is Saint Roch.'

3.4. Animals

In the excerpts collected by Leo Spitzer there are also many animals that personify hunger. This happens because some animals are able to evoke in the speaker's mind concepts that are different from those they physically express, thanks to an aspect that characterizes them as such or due to a convention established by the cultural environment in which the speaker is situated (encyclopedic knowledge). Some animals therefore symbolize hunger, and, within the corpus collected by Spitzer, their names become the surname of a friend or of an inmate in the prison camp. This happens because some animals are often associated with appetite, or because many of them are considered predators while others are usually prey on a hunt.

One of the animals that appears frequently is the wolf, or rather, the she-wolf. The she-wolf is one of the beasts that Dante Alighieri encounters in the dark forest in *Canto I* of *Inferno* (Hell) and is often associated with the sin of greed, the gravest sin, preventing Dante from climbing the hill.

> (14) Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, *Inferno*, Canto I, vv. 49–51 (Alighieri 1977, p. 9):
>> *Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame*
>> *sembiava carca ne la sua magrezza*
>> *e molte genti fe' già viver grame...*
>> 'And a she-wolf, that with all hungerings
>> Seemed to be laden in her meagreness,
>> And many folk has caused to live forlorn!'[8]

Spitzer is of the opinion that female animal names (like It. *lupa*) are used more often than male names (It. *lupo*) because females are more selfish in sharing food, since they have to save it for the puppies (Spitzer, 2019, p. 346). See the following two excerpts, where *Lopa* (graphic variant for *Lupa*) and its diminutive *Lupina* are used as the surname and the nickname of people who represent a persistent hunger, which never abandons the prisoners:

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[8] Wadsworth Longfellow (1897).

(15) *Grosseto*: Ho trovato il mio carissimo amico Giuseppe Z. detto Lo Lupina molto malato e insecchito per gli strapazzi. Questo giovane sta sempre con me e non mi lascia mai.

'I found my dear friend Giuseppe Z. known as Lo Lupina very sick and withered by the hardships. This young man is always with me and he never leaves me.'

(16) *Milano*: Da che son prigioniero ho sempre vicino il mio amico Lopa che non mi abbandona un istante.

'Since I have been a prisoner, I always have nearby my friend Lopa who does not abandon me for a moment.'

In my opinion, however, the wolf is chosen in these letters because it is the predator *par excellence*, the unique animal that organizes itself in groups to hunt (Zimen, 1981, p. 68). In this sense, the wolf is the perfect symbol for hunger which, like a predator, is hunting for prisoners without enough food in the labor camps.

The most popular animal, especially among prisoners from Northern Italy, is the camel. It is an animal which is famous for its ability to feed on a wide range of foods which allows them to live in areas with sparse vegetation. Furthermore, the camel tolerates well and for several days the lack of food and water and its ability to preserve water in its stomach for weeks must have greatly influenced the imagination of the inmates. Therefore, the camel is used as a euphemism for hunger because it can be subjected to prolonged and forced fasts when making strenuous journeys in the desert. In this case, the camel resembles the prisoners who must work in the labor camps and are allowed to eat only small rations of food, exclusively in the evening.

(17) *Laglio, Como*: Come già sapete, c'è qui con me il mio amico Cammello, il quale dal giorno che venni qui non m'ha mai abbandonato.

'As you already know, my friend Camel is here with me, who has never abandoned me since the day I came here.'

(18) *Milano*: io sono sempre col mio amico Cammello, e si facciamo molto compagnia tutti i giorni.

'I am always with my friend Camel, and we keep each other a lot of company every day.'

(19) *Livorno*: baci ai bimbi dilli al mio buon Camello che stia contento e si faccia coraggio e speriamo che prima del 20 ritorniamo tutti a casa.

'Kisses to the children, tell my good Camel to be happy and take courage and we hope that before the 20th we all will return home.'

4. Concluding remarks

The examples analyzed in this work show that, at times, human beings are forced to create another language, almost secret, which can facilitate communication, in addition to the everyday language which is common to the whole society to which he belongs. This fact can lead to important conclusions on the process of the formation of languages by the human spirit. When there is no possibility to express oneself because censorship is in force, then a secret language is born, a jargon that can only be understood by the writer and his reader or (as it has happened for many periphrases and euphemisms for hunger in the prison camps) by the members of a particular "community", who have in common a conventional way of expressing themselves in certain times and circumstances.

The need to avoid censorship, to be understood by family members and, therefore, to receive food from home, forces even semi-illiterate people to create new linguistic forms and new meanings for a concept (hunger) that cannot be expressed openly. In this sense, censorship acts as a factor in the evolution of language (Spitzer, 2000, p. 70).

Personification, as mentioned in the introduction, is one of the most evident results of the tendency of the human being to make human what is non-human. If, on the one hand, hunger is an abstract concept, the sensations experienced by the prisoners and connected to hunger are, on the other hand, very concrete: stomach noises, fatigue, debilitation, dizziness, and fainting. This is why Freud (1919, p. 298) considers hunger as a truly concrete motivation for the creation of euphemisms, such an elementary fear of the human being that he called it *primitive Angst* 'primeval fear'. Therefore, hunger is subjected to a process of materialization: hunger is represented as a human being, becoming so concrete and real that it must have a name, a surname, or a nickname.

These *hunger-names* ("nomi della fame" in Spitzer, 2019, p. 120) are the best way to single out and identify these new prisoners, friends and classmates.

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