


Biblioteca
di Studi
di Filologia
Moderna

edited by

Samuele Grassi

Brian Zuccala



Rewriting and Rereading
the XIX and XX-
Century Canons

Offerings for
Annamaria
Pagliaro


FIRENZE
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

BIBLIOTECA DI STUDI DI FILOLOGIA MODERNA

ISSN 2420-8361 (ONLINE)

– 66 –

DIPARTIMENTO DI FORMAZIONE, LINGUE, INTERCULTURA,
LETTERATURE E PSICOLOGIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, LANGUAGES, INTERCULTURES,
LITERATURES AND PSYCHOLOGY (FORLILPSI)
Università degli Studi di Firenze / University of Florence

BIBLIOTECA DI STUDI DI FILOLOGIA MODERNA (BSFM)

Collana Open Access "diamante" fondata a e diretta da Beatrice Tottosy dal 2004 al 2020
"Diamond" Open Access Series founded and directed by Beatrice Tottosy from 2004 to 2020

Direttori / Editors-in-Chief

Giovanna Siedina, Teresa Spignoli, Rita Svandrlík

Coordinatore tecnico-editoriale / Managing Editor

Arianna Antonielli

Comitato scientifico internazionale / International Scientific Board

(<http://www.fupress.com/comitatoscientifico/biblioteca-di-studi-di-filologia-moderna/23>)

Enza Biagini (Professore Emerito), Nicholas Brownlees, Martha Canfield, Richard Allen Cave (Emeritus Professor, Royal Holloway, University of London), Massimo Ciaravolo (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia), Anna Dolfi (Professore Emerito), Mario Domenichelli (Professore Emerito), Maria Teresa Fancelli (Professore Emerito), Massimo Fanfani, Paul Geyer (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn), Sergej Akimovich Kibal'nik (Institute of Russian Literature [the Pushkin House], Russian Academy of Sciences; Saint-Petersburg State University), Ferenc Kiefer (Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; Academia Europaea), Michela Landi, Anna Menyhért (University of Jewish Studies in Budapest, University of Amsterdam), Murathan Mungan (scrittore), Ladislav Nagy (University of South Bohemia), Paola Pugliatti, Giampaolo Salvi (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest; Academia Europaea), Ayşe Saraçgil, Robert Sawyer (East Tennessee State University, ETSU), Rita Svandrlík, Angela Tarantino (Università degli Studi di Roma 'La Sapienza'), Letizia Vezzosi, Vincent Vives (Université Polytechnique Hauts-de-France), Marina Warner (Birkbeck College, University of London; Academia Europaea; scrittrice), Laura Wright (University of Cambridge), Levent Yilmaz (Bilgi Üniversitesi, Istanbul), Manuel Rivas Zancarrón (Universidad de Cádiz), Clas Zilliacus (Emeritus Professor, Åbo Akademi of Turku). *Laddove non è indicato l'Ateneo d'appartenenza è da intendersi l'Università di Firenze.*

Comitato editoriale / Editorial Board

Stefania Acciaioli, Alberto Baldi, Fulvio Bertuccelli, Sara Culeddu, John Denton, Alessia Gentile, Samuele Grassi, Giovanna Lo Monaco, Sara Lo Piano, Francesca Salvadori

Laboratorio editoriale Open Access / The Open Access Publishing Workshop

(<https://www.forlilpsi.unifi.it/vp-289-laboratorio-editoriale-open-access-ricerca-formazione-e-produzione.html>)

Direttore/Director: Marco Meli

Referente e Coordinatore tecnico-editoriale/Managing editor: Arianna Antonielli

Università degli Studi di Firenze / University of Florence

Dip. Formazione, Lingue, Intercultura, Letterature e Psicologia

Dept. of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literatures and Psychology

Via Santa Reparata 93, 50129 Firenze / Santa Reparata 93, 50129 Florence, Italy

Contatti / Contacts

BSFM: giovanna.siedina@unifi.it; teresa.spignoli@unifi.it; rita.svandrlík@unifi.it

LabOA: marco.meli@unifi.it; arianna.antonielli@unifi.it

Rewriting and Rereading
the XIX and XX-Century Canons

Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro

edited by
Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala

FIRENZE UNIVERSITY PRESS

2022

Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons : offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro / edited by Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala. – Firenze : Firenze University Press, 2022.

(Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna ; 66)

<https://books.fupress.com/isbn/9788855185974>

ISSN 2420-8361 (online)

ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4 (PDF)

ISBN 978-88-5518-598-1 (XML)

DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

The editorial products of BSFM are promoted and published with financial support from the Department of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literatures and Psychology of the University of Florence, and in accordance with the agreement, dated February 10th 2009 (updated February 19th 2015 and January 20th 2021), between the Department, the Open Access Publishing Workshop and Firenze University Press. The Workshop (<<https://www.forlilpsi.unifi.it/vp-289-laboratorio-editoriale-open-access-ricerca-formazione-e-produzione.html>>, <laboa@lilsi.unifi.it>) supports the double-blind peer review process, develops and manages the editorial workflows and the relationships with FUP. It promotes the development of OA publishing and its application in teaching and career advice for undergraduates, graduates, and PhD students, as well as in interdisciplinary research.

Editing and layout by LabOA: Arianna Antonielli (managing editor), with Lucia Aveta, Sara Bacci Bonotti, Miriam Di Martino, Miriam Marini (interns), and with the collaboration of Arianna Amodio, Francesca Salvadori.

Graphic design: Alberto Pizarro Fernández, Lettera Meccanica SRLs

Front cover: © Alberto Pizarro Fernández, Lettera Meccanica SRLs

Peer Review Policy

Peer-review is the cornerstone of the scientific evaluation of a book. All FUP's publications undergo a peer-review process by external experts under the responsibility of the Editorial Board and the Scientific Boards of each series (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice.3).

Referee List

In order to strengthen the network of researchers supporting FUP's evaluation process, and to recognise the valuable contribution of referees, a Referee List is published and constantly updated on FUP's website (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list).

Firenze University Press Editorial Board

M. Garzaniti (Editor-in-Chief), M.E. Alberti, F. Vittorio Arrigoni, E. Castellani, F. Ciampi, D. D'Andrea, A. Dolfi, R. Ferrise, A. Lambertini, R. Lanfredini, D. Lippi, G. Mari, A. Mariani, P.M. Mariano, S. Marini, R. Minuti, P. Nanni, A. Orlandi, I. Palchetti, A. Perulli, G. Pratesi, S. Scaramuzzi, I. Stolzi.

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

 The online digital edition is published in Open Access on www.fupress.com.

Content license: except where otherwise noted, the present work is released under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC BY 4.0: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>). This license allows you to share any part of the work by any means and format, modify it for any purpose, including commercial, as long as appropriate credit is given to the author, any changes made to the work are indicated and a URL link is provided to the license.

Metadata license: all the metadata are released under the Public Domain Dedication license (CC0 1.0 Universal: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/legalcode>).

© 2022 Author(s)

Published by Firenze University Press

Firenze University Press

Università degli Studi di Firenze

via Cittadella, 7, 50144 Firenze, Italy

www.fupress.com

Contents

Acknowledgments	7
Preface <i>Carolyn James</i>	9
Introduction <i>Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala</i>	13
Risorgimento e identità italiana nel giallo contemporaneo <i>Barbara Pezzotti</i>	17
Cambiare opinione (o quasi) su Camilleri <i>Giuseppe Traina</i>	29
Absent Fathers and Italian Nation-building in Carlo Collodi's Books for School <i>Andrea Pagani</i>	39
In Dialogue with Neera <i>Catherine Ramsey-Portolano</i>	57
Il secondo Ottocento italiano visto dalla Francia <i>Edwige Comoy Fusaro</i>	69
Violence and rape in the Italian <i>fin-de-siècle</i> : Gabriele D'Annunzio's "La Vergine Orsola" <i>Michela Barisonzi</i>	89
Italy and George Gissing: A Geocritical Approach <i>Luigi Gussago</i>	113

Australians' Literatures and Cultures in Tuscany <i>Roberta Trapè</i>	129
Postcolonial Italian Studies: Rhizomatic Notes from the South <i>Anita Virga, Brian Zuccala</i>	145
Silvio Pellico's <i>Le mie prigionie</i> : Autobiography versus Religion <i>Antonio Pagliaro</i>	163
Q&A with Annamaria Pagliaro: From Italy to Australia and Back <i>Annamaria Pagliaro, Samuele Grassi</i>	173
Contributors	181
Index of names	185

Acknowledgments

Our gratitude goes to the editors of the “Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna” series, Giovanna Siedina, Teresa Spignoli, and Rita Svandrlik. We are also grateful to Marco Meli and Arianna Antonielli, Director and Coordinator of the Open Access Publishing Lab, who literally made it possible for this volume to see the light. Their support and dedication to this project was beyond measure, as was the work of the Open Access Publishing Lab, in particular, Francesca Salvadori. This book also benefited from the work of the anonymous reviewers, who generously dedicated their time to the essays collected here. Last but not least, we would like to thank the Department of Education, Languages, Intercultures, Literatures and Psychology (FORLILPSI), University of Florence, for supporting the project financially, and Fiorenzo Fantaccini – for always beginning again.

Preface

Carolyn James

The literary achievements of the Sicilian writer, Federico De Roberto (1861-1927), were long overshadowed by those of his contemporary compatriots, Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana. Annamaria Pagliaro is among a distinguished group of scholars who have shown that De Roberto was a significant and original literary figure, whose works deserve far greater appreciation than they had hitherto received. Pagliaro's monograph, *The Novels of Federico De Roberto. From Naturalism to Modernism*, published in 2011 by Troubadour Press, was the first book-length study of the novelist in English and did much to bring a writer previously little known outside Italy to a broader readership. While not denying that *I Viceré* (1894) is De Roberto's most accomplished novel, Pagliaro convincingly demonstrates both in her book and in several essays that the novelist's other works also repay close analysis. She argues that De Roberto's six novels all form part of a consistent and coherent literary project that took the genre beyond the *verista* approach associated with the School of Naturalism, first embraced by French novelists such as Émile Zola and Honoré de Balzac.

To demonstrate the sophistication and complexity of De Roberto's relationship with Naturalism and the *veristi*, Pagliaro begins her monograph on the author by closely analysing the author's novels in the light of his journalistic output. The latter writings had previously received only limited attention because the newspaper articles and essays were dispersed and often difficult to access. They show that from the 1880s De Roberto displayed increasing detachment from Naturalism. He began to question the very possibility of reproducing an objective

reality through literary means and wrestled with the problematic relationship between external observation and the introspective perceptions of the individual.

Pagliari concedes that there are vestiges of a scientific and rational approach to reality in De Roberto's novels. However, she argues that rather than failing to reconcile contradictory impulses in his work, the author consciously experimented with representing the deeper workings of the human mind within a narrative framework that remained faithful to rational exposition and the requirements of verisimilitude. Pagliaro concludes in her analysis that De Roberto's major literary innovation arose from the stark juxtaposition in his novels between a convincing portrayal of the interiority of characters, whose thoughts and emotions are laid bare for the reader, and representations of an external reality that has little relationship with the perceptions of his protagonists. Moreover, she demonstrates how De Roberto's experiments in this vein constituted an important moment of transition from the belief of many 19th-century writers that mimesis was achievable in a novel to a more skeptical position which assumed that reality and truth were entirely subjective notions.

De Roberto's accomplishments as a writer were constrained by his conviction that women were inherently inferior to men, a conservative notion that had deep roots in European culture and one that was endorsed in his own time by a soon-to-be discredited scientific discourse. De Roberto regarded individual experience as shaped by genetics as well as environment. Thus, the author's belief in women's physical, intellectual, and moral weakness shaped his representations of the interiority of his female characters and rendered them unconvincing. Indeed, Pagliaro shows that the women in De Roberto's novels are mere ciphers of male desire.

In several essays devoted to the novels and other writings of Luigi Capuana, Pagliaro argues that, like De Roberto, Capuana was concerned to chronicle the tumultuous times in which he lived. Both authors explored traditional feudal societies subject to the powerful forces of modernism and created characters afflicted by an imbalance between the world of their thoughts and emotions and the society in which they existed. In the case of Capuana, however, Pagliaro sees a greater readiness to be critical of a prescriptive social order that aimed to keep women in subjection. Capuana questioned the normative conception that male sexual violence and female subjection were an intrinsic and inevitable consequence of human sexuality and psychology. By creating a convincing subjectivity for his female characters, the traumatic consequences of rape on victims are shown in raw detail, exposing a social paradigm in crisis.

The recently published collection of essays, *Luigi Capuana: Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Risorgimento Italy*, edited by Pagliaro and her former doctoral student, Brian Zuccala (published in 2019 by Firenze University Press), makes an important contribution to our understanding of this significant literary figure. The seamless way in which the two editors have collaborated testifies to the strong collegial relationships Pagliaro built with Zuccala, and with other former students such as Andrea Pagani and Michela Barisonzi, who have

contributed to the present volume in her honour. So too have internationally based scholars who share Pagliaro's interest in 19th- and early 20th-century literature. As her long-time colleague at Monash University, I join with the community of academics represented in this volume to express admiration for her scholarship and gratitude for many years of friendship.

Introduction

Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala

The book takes its lead from academic Annamaria Pagliaro's experience straddling Australia and Italy over a thirty-year period. As both former colleagues and collaborators of Pagliaro, we editors intend to open a kaleidoscope of perspectives on the international research landscape in the field of Italian and Anglophone studies, starting from Pagliaro's own contribution to the creation of relations between the two cultures in the period that saw her work transnationally as Director of the Monash University Prato Centre (2005-2008). The idea for this volume of "offerings" stems from a desire to share an academic space for discussion and reflection involving international scholars and those with different positions in the academy who have studied, collaborated and worked with Italianist Annamaria Pagliaro, currently Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Italian Studies, Monash University (Melbourne, Australia).

For volumes of this nature, one often witnesses varying (un)successful attempts to heavily "frame" the materials for reasons that have more to do with the imperatives of the academic publishing market than the intrinsic cohesive needs of the work. We, on the contrary, believed that, for this particular collection, the best way to celebrate the dedicatee's lifetime of scholarship was to let her work not only inspire but also somewhat shape the collection. If one is allowed a translation studies-based metaphor, ours here is the (in)visibility of two "translators" (Venuti 1995): we have attempted to render/capture/*translate* into book-form a range of rigorously scholarly, yet also (trans)cultural and emotional responses (Breeze, Taylor 2020) to the work of Pagliaro.

Along these lines, the collection can be understood as a series of critical (re)readings, characterised by a varyingly emphasised metacritical and self-reflexive element. Barbara Pezzotti's article, which opens the collection, explores Soria's, Siviero's and Fois's contemporary rereadings of the Risorgimento, through the prism of crime fiction. Giuseppe Traina steers the collection in a metacritical and self-reflexive direction, by offering his own rereading of some of his previous work on Camilleri, which is presented in a significantly revised and refined critical light. Andrea Pagani tackles Collodi's schoolbooks, focusing on the narrative rendition of paternal figures and its nation-building implications. The collection takes another metacritical turn with Catherine Ramsey-Portolano's piece. Portolano retraces her own steps as a Neera scholar, whilst reflecting on the evolution of *italianistica* through the lens of Neera's matrilinear influence on authors who followed. Transnationality is at the basis of Comoy Fusaro's contribution. Much like Portolano's, Fusaro's piece proves valuable not only to *Ottocentisti* but also to those more broadly interested in a transnational and transcultural, diachronic mapping of the field of Italian Studies itself. An effective blend of close-reading and cultural studies is at the foundation of Barisonzi's analysis of D'Annunzio's *La Vergine Orsola*. Barisonzi convincingly argues that – in the 1884 short story – the idea of rape is used as a narrative escamotage to bring to the fore the question of female entitlement to sexual desire as part of a wider social critique. Along similar transnational lines, Gussago offers a geo-critical reading of George Gissing's transtextual fascination with Italy. Far from being a trite, othered stereotype, Italy becomes, for Gissing, a site of and a model for (trans)cultural experience. Transnationality and transculturality arguably culminate with Roberta Trapè's exploration of "Australians' Literatures and Cultures in Tuscany". A transnational notion of "place" occupies a prominent space in Trapè's discussion, in which Prato becomes the site of productive scholarly, literary and cultural intersections. A disciplinary "distant reading" (Moretti 2013) of sorts forms the basis of Virga and Zuccala's contribution. This fundamentally theoretical piece represents an attempt to reflect on some conceptual and terminological nodes of the (comparatively) recently institutionalised field of Postcolonial Italian Studies. Antonio Pagliaro's offering to Annamaria distillates decades of professional and personal ties into an erudite discussion of Pellico's literary reception. In the interview piece, which ends of the collection, Annamaria Pagliaro recollects her experience across cultures and educational contexts, between Australia and Italy.

We are greatly indebted to the people who have contributed to this volume, many of whom are precious colleagues, some of whom are close friends, for bearing with us in spite of the many delays this project had to go through (including a pandemic ...). Special thanks to Carolyn James, who contributed the Preface, and to Tony Pagliaro – this would not have been possible without your generous support throughout the different stages leading up to the publication of this book.

References

- Breeze Maddie, Taylor Yvette, eds (2020), *Feminist Repetitions in Higher Education: Interrupting Career Categories*, Cham, Palgrave.
- Moretti Franco (2013), *Distant Reading*, London, Verso.
- Venuti Lawrence (1995), *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, London-New York, Routledge.

Risorgimento e identità italiana nel giallo contemporaneo*

Barbara Pezzotti

Abstract:

By analysing three Italian crime novels – Piero Soria's *Cuore di lupo* (1999), Massimo Siviero's *Il terno di San Gennaro* (1999) and Marcello Fois's *Dura madre* (2001), – this essay investigates how Italian crime fiction set in present times reflects on the Risorgimento and its legacy. It argues that by referring to a crucial period of Italian history, the crime stories analysed in this chapter address an unsolved relationship between the North and the South of Italy brought to light in the 1990s by the success of controversial political parties such as the Lega Nord. In particular, I show how with *Dura madre*, Fois indicates a way of uniting Italy through a mutual understanding that preserves regional identities and cultures.

Keywords: Crime Fiction, Marcello Fois, Massimo Siviero, Pietro Soria, Risorgimento in Literature

La storia del Risorgimento ha costituito una parte cruciale del progetto nazionalista di educare gli Italiani all'italianità. È stato secondo solo alla storia classica romana e latina nel creare un senso di tradizione culturale e di grandezza (Von Henneberg, Ascoli 2001, 11). Al di là dell'immagine di facciata e nonostante le visioni ottimistiche dei nazionalisti del XIX secolo, “the unification of the state involved the imposition of political terms by a narrow élite on a collection of widely diverse cultures and economies” (Haddock 2000, 45). Operando in questo modo, la classe intellettuale settentrionale ha impietosamente rivelato e persino aggravato le divisioni esistenti in termini di lingua, regione, classe, genere ed eticità. Anche perché, come spiega Nelson Moe (2001, 119-153), l'incorporazione dei territori del Regno delle due Sicilie nella nuova nazione portò le élites del Nord a produrre studi elaborati su un'Italia dove molti di loro, incluso Camillo Cavour, l'architetto dell'Italia unita, non avevano mai messo piede. Tali rappresentazioni, caratterizzate da un approccio denigratorio e semi-colonialistico, hanno allargato invece che ridotto il divario tra Nord e Sud, producendo stereotipi che continuano a influenzare la società italiana. Di conseguenza, come spiega Bagnoli:

* Una versione precedente di questo intervento è stata pubblicata come “Risorgimento e identità italiana nel giallo contemporaneo”, *Spunti e Ricerche*, 23, 2008, 57-70.

Barbara Pezzotti, Monash University, Australia, Barbara.Pezzotti@monash.edu, 0000-0002-9152-8702

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Barbara Pezzotti, *Risorgimento e identità italiana nel giallo contemporaneo*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.04, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 17-28, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

[...] la nascita del Regno d'Italia, vale a dire l'unità politica del territorio che propriamente si chiama Italia, non ha risolto la questione dell'*identità italiana* intendendo, con tale espressione, una piena condivisione di valori, mentalità e destino da parte di tutti coloro che, per il fatto di essere abitanti di territori facenti parte del Regno d'Italia, vengono poi appellati 'italiani' (2007, 17).

Questa situazione ha prodotto quella che Rumi definisce un'"identità meliflua" (2004, 37).

Il tema del Risorgimento è stato ampiamente utilizzato in letteratura, dapprima come reazione alla versione ufficiale della storia (si pensi per esempio a capolavori quali *Il Gattopardo*, il cui *pensum*, "cambiare tutto per non cambiare nulla", ha influenzato profondamente il dibattito successivo sul valore del Risorgimento e *L'Imperio* di Federico De Roberto), quindi come una sorta di cartina di tornasole per l'Italia contemporanea. Attraverso storie ambientate in periodo importante della storia italiana, infatti, molti scrittori hanno affrontato temi cruciali del loro tempo. Indubbiamente, uno dei temi dibattuti negli anni '90 è stato il successo elettorale della Lega Nord che ha rivelato l'emergere di nuove sub-culture politiche e ha svelato il perdurante stato di debolezza del concetto di Stato unificato creato dal Risorgimento (Cento Bull 2000, 11). Questo clima politico ha sfidato la letteratura a interrogarsi sull'identità nazionale. Una sfida, questa, che il giallo italiano non poteva non raccogliere, per tre motivi di cui due di ordine generale e l'altro inerente alla specificità italiana¹. Il primo è spiegato da Carlo Ginzburg (1979, 57-106) che compie un parallelo proprio tra l'attività dello storico e quello del detective. Secondo Ginzburg entrambi arrivano alla conoscenza attraverso l'analisi di elementi frammentari – in un caso fonti storiche, nell'altro indizi – ed entrambi ricostruiscono il quadro di una verità singola attraverso l'analisi di tale documentazione lacunosa. Il romanzo poliziesco è quindi particolarmente adatto a raccontare la storia con una prospettiva che Luther Blissett/Wu Ming definirebbe come ipocalittica, ovvero come microstoria che illustra la storia. Inoltre, la storia, piena di crimini e misteri irrisolti, diventa un terreno fertile per l'ambientazione di storie gialle (Browne, Kreiser 2000; Milanese 2006, 9-19). Infine, il forte realismo e la lunga tradizione di impegno politico e civile che caratterizzano in particolare il giallo italiano (Pezzotti 2014) portano il poliziesco a scavare incessantemente il presente. Numerosi sono i gialli italiani ambientati nel passato, molti sono quelli che vedono le loro storie svolgersi in epoca risorgimentale o post-risorgimentale². L'intento del mio intervento è esaminare un terreno inesplorato, ovvero i numerosi riferimenti al Risorgimento in polizieschi ambientati nell'Italia contemporanea. Se, infatti, i gialli storici hanno generalmente un forte legame con il presente e nelle

¹ In questo articolo uso i termini "giallo" e "poliziesco" nell'accezione più ampia del termine, ovvero una storia che prevede un crimine e un'indagine, seguendo cioè l'interpretazione data da Giuseppe Petronio (2000). La questione terminologica intorno al giallo è molto complessa e ha generato ampi dibattiti, ma non costituisce il tema del mio intervento.

² Per approfondire questo argomento si veda Pezzotti (2016, 63-168).

loro pagine, il passato rinvia sovente a temi scottanti dell'attualità in un incrocio passato-presente-passato (Milanesi 2006, 13), il giallo italiano contemporaneo a volte rinvia al passato per cercare l'origine dei mali contemporanei in una dinamica presente-passato-presente. In entrambi i casi, il poliziesco si rende protagonista di un'operazione simile a quella svolta dal romanzo storico e dalla letteratura cosiddetta alta. In questo saggio, in particolare, vorrei investigare *Cuore di Lupo* (1999) di Piero Soria, *Il terno di San Gennaro* (1999) di Massimo Siviero e *Dura madre* (2001) di Marcello Fois per vedere in che modo il giallo di ambientazione contemporanea, facendo riferimenti al Risorgimento, riflette, con esiti diversi, su problematiche relative al rapporto tra il Nord e il Sud d'Italia, innescate dal proliferare di alcuni fenomeni politici come la Lega Nord. Non è un caso, infatti, che questi tre romanzi siano stati pubblicati in un periodo in cui la Lega Nord, fondata nel 1991, dopo il successo ottenuto dalle elezioni politiche del 1996, aveva annunciato il progetto di secessione del Nord dal Sud d'Italia.

1. *Cuore di Lupo* e la storia ufficiale

Il primo romanzo che analizzerò è *Cuore di lupo*. Questo giallo fa parte di una serie, con protagonista l'ispettore Lupo, ambientata nella Torino contemporanea. In particolare, *Cuore di Lupo* è il secondo libro della serie ed è preceduto da *La Procuratora* (1997) e seguito da *La donna cattiva* (2001), *La ragazza francese* (2005), *Rosa Demonio* (2007) e *A proposito di Ute* (2009). L'autore, Piero Soria, è nato nel 1944 a Torino dove lavora come giornalista del quotidiano *La Stampa*. Il capoluogo piemontese, come descritto dall'autore, diventa una specie di monumento vivente alla superiorità e all'orgoglio piemontesi. Nella serie di Soria, il delitto non è inerente al territorio, come accade, per esempio, nella Milano descritta da Giorgio Scerbanenco, ma ne è un corpo estraneo, prodotto da menti malate che agiscono individualmente. L'ambientazione, pur in un contesto per natura inquietante come quello del racconto giallo, è quindi rassicurante e non angosciante: Torino è una città avvolgente che tutto sembra accogliere e cambiare a sua immagine. È una città della quale l'autore non registra trasformazioni sociali traumatiche – diversamente da quanto accade in altri giallisti degli anni '90 come Andrea G. Pinketts o il duo Piero Colaprico e Pietro Valpreda. È una città, quella descritta da Soria, che definirei "statica", quasi da cartolina. L'unico movimento che si vede è verso il passato, attraverso riferimenti continui alla Torino risorgimentale che servono a esaltare l'unicità e la bellezza della città contemporanea. Bellezza e unicità che, a loro volta, contribuiscono a fornire un'immagine positiva dei Savoia e della storia risorgimentale. Questo atteggiamento, presente in tutta la serie di Soria, è esemplificato da un brano di *Cuore di lupo* dove si descrive una corsa in macchina che il commissario Lupo ha con monsignor Ricciardi, nel corso di un'indagine sulla morte di alcuni passanti in Piazza Vittorio ad opera di un cecchino. Il giro in macchina diventa un'esplicita occasione per il narratore di esaltare Torino e l'identità torinese:

Era come se non si fosse mai accorto dei suoi grandi viali infiniti. Della sua razionale perpendicolarità. Del senso lineare che offriva alla vita ed alle cose. Della rassicurante certezza di quel suo sterminato tetto di portici. Quello che accadeva all'interno delle sue mura erano storie singole, intime, a loro modo universali. Ma, in sottofondo, appariva sempre quella sorta di carattere impresso dal suo respiro. I falsi cortesi dello stereotipo, i provinciali, i bogia nen, i riservati, i mentalmente e orgogliosamente sudditi di un istinto che fa amare il principe a tal punto da sostituire una monarchia con una stirpe. I Savoia con gli Agnelli. E da considerarla l'illuminata superiorità da esibire senza clamore, ma in modo profondo, divaricante, nei confronti di quell'Italia degli altri stereotipi: vociante, disordinata, lagnosa, sbruffona, furbastra, menefreghista. Quell'altra Italia così troppo italiana. (Soria 1999 160-161)

Questo passaggio ben illustra un tema costante nei romanzi di Soria: l'orgoglio mostrato verso una città regale si lega a un senso di estraneità con il resto dell'Italia, in una costante dialettica tra "noi" e "gli altri" che può essere riscontrata anche negli altri due autori analizzati in questo articolo, sebbene con intenti differenti. Riferimenti al glorioso passato della città e a vari personaggi storici risorgimentali, come Cavour o Giulia Colbert, citati come simboli di una Torino diversa e dignitosa, sono presenti in tutta la serie. Così come sono presenti il contrasto con altre parti d'Italia, come Milano, liquidata in un altro libro della serie come "una provincia sottomessa, ai confini dell'unico mondo libero dell'antica patria romana" di contro a "una piccola capitale di re cacciatori e montanari. Magari di poca etichetta. E di semplici costumi. Ma capace di offrire alla gente l'orgoglio di sentirsi piemontese" (Soria 2001, 241). Nei suoi gialli, Soria sembra abbracciare la versione ufficiale della Storia risorgimentale, pur messa in discussione da generazioni di scrittori. L'amore per una città industriale; che ha inventato il telefono, la radio, la tv, il computer, il cioccolatino e il caffè espresso e, non ultimi, l'Italia e gli italiani (ivi, 112), si intreccia con una visione negativa del resto dell'Italia, e soprattutto, altro elemento interessante – che si è da sempre accompagnato a una visione idealizzata del Risorgimento (Moe 2001, 119-153) – con il Sud. Questo contrasto è particolarmente evidente nella descrizione dei personaggi in *Cuore di Lupo*. L'autore, infatti, fa un ampio uso della figura retorica della sineddoche per trasmettere un'immagine della città attraverso i suoi personaggi. Quelli torinesi sono tutti dipinti sotto una luce positiva, come Marina Salomone, maestra di musica e anarchica, che veste foulard di Hermès, una giacchetta blu e collana di perle, identificati come la divisa della beneducazione torinese o Luisa Malan, amante di un magistrato ucciso in *Cuore di Lupo* che mantiene la sua dignità, a dispetto della pena che prova per la morte dell'amante:

Ogni tanto si spostava dagli occhi una ciocca di quei suoi capelli scuri di tinta. Però ordinati, impeccabili. Come quel suo vestitino nero ed il giro di pelle intorno al collo. Quel suo essere profondamente torinese anche nel lutto. Rimanere elegante per lui. Dentro e fuori. Sempre. (213-214)

In *Cuore di Lupo* non c'è spazio per la descrizione di personaggi torinesi vacui, come per esempio, Anna Carla Dosio, una dei protagonisti de *La Donna della domenica* di Fruttero e Lucentini, in quanto tutti i piemontesi sono ritratti sotto una luce molto favorevole, con pochissime eccezioni. Stridente è quindi il contrasto, quando si passa alla descrizione delle figure che vengono dal Sud d'Italia. Da un'analisi di *Cuore di Lupo*, infatti, si può vedere come gli aggettivi assegnati all'"altra" Italia "vociante, disordinata, lagnosa, sbruffona, furbastra, menefreghista" (ivi, 161) nel passaggio citato precedentemente, ben si attagliano ai personaggi negativi presenti nel giallo, tutti provenienti dal Sud. Innanzi tutto il commissario Modica, rivale di Lupo. Tanto Lupo è intelligente, sicuro di sé e per niente intimidito di fronte all'autorità, quanto Modica è ridicolo, impacciato e asservito al potere. Modica è un "calabrese permaloso" (ivi, 14), sempre pronto ad "adattarsi come un camaleonte" (*ibidem*) alle situazioni in modo da trarne vantaggio. Si configura quindi come un "furbaastro", per di più "sbruffone", in quanto ama uscire dalla questura "con gran stridio di pantere e sirene" (ivi, 141) e "disordinato" per via dei suoi abiti spiegazzati e di cattivo taglio. Ugualmente negativa è la moglie di un altro collega di Lupo, De Mattia, donna del Sud, descritta come "immensa, malmostosa e petulante" (ivi, 18). La donna, che ha il vizio di urlare dal pianerottolo che suo marito è un porco (ivi, 248), è vista quindi come "vociante" e per di più "lagnosa" in quanto insopportabile e assillante (*ibidem*), e perché affligge il marito, paziente e affettuoso, con un'orda di parenti invadenti. Ma il personaggio che maggiormente incarna ciò che il narratore considera essere i principali difetti delle persone che vengono dal Sud d'Italia è Incoronata De Napoli, la moglie del magistrato ucciso in *Cuore di Lupo*. Incoronata, siciliana, è descritta come una donna meschina che cerca di giustificare una vita fatta di ipocrisie (sa che il marito ha un'amante, ma fa finta di nulla) con la scusa della protezione della famiglia:

Sempre più prigioniera dell'accento. Sempre più straripante di parole. Come se dovesse essere la quantità a garantire comprensione. Da vittima indifesa del mondo e degli uomini. Sempre pronta a maledire il fato ed a scaricare la colpa sugli altri. Senza mai sentire l'orgoglio di rizzare la schiena e combattere. Sapeva di essere in qualche modo ingiusto. Ma quella donna evocava in lui lo stesso sentimento di rabbia che gli provocavano quei telegiornali pieni di lamentevoli interviste dal Sud. Di gente che, alla prima nevicata, incominciava a stracciarsi le vesti invece di afferrare una pala, accusando lo Stato di averli dimenticati ancora una volta. (Ivi, 222)

Il contrasto tra la "lagnosa" Incoronata e la pudica e dignitosa torinese Luisa Malan, è esemplificativo della dicotomia Nord-Sud presente nel romanzo. È interessante notare come il riferimento all'accento sfoggiato dal personaggio, considerato una sorta di carcere per la "straripante" dialettica di Incoronata, è visto in termini di negatività e di estraneità. Questo riferimento, accennato e non riprodotto graficamente e foneticamente, rappresenta un contraltare a un uso più sofisticato degli accenti portato avanti da un altro autore di gialli, il siciliano Andrea Camilleri: lo scrittore di Porto Empedocle coinvolge il lettore in

un tour de force linguistico, facendo un intelligente uso di vari dialetti e accenti, per mostrare come l'Unificazione sia stata un tentativo dell'Italia del Nord di imporre cultura, lingua e valori all'Italia meridionale (Prunster 2008, 60).

Un contrasto manicheo tra Nord e Sud nei termini esposti da *Cuore di Lupo*, di impeccabile-disordinato, riservato-vociante e, in ultima analisi, di dignitoso-meschino, non è riscontrabile in altri gialli né del passato né del presente ambientati a Torino o in altre città. La Lega Nord viene citata una volta in *Cuore di Lupo*, ancora una volta per dare contro ai meridionali, in questo caso, gli immigrati della prima generazione, definiti dal commissario Lupo come "mutanti meridionali" ormai diventati "solidi borghesi leghisti" (ivi, 62). Nonostante il riferimento al negativo, questo giallo riflette un clima di scontro esacerbato negli anni '90, proprio a causa dell'insorgere di fenomeni separatisti, quali quello rappresentato dalla Lega Nord.

2. L'istanza etica ne *Il terno di San Gennaro*

Il terno di San Gennaro è invece un giallo che fa parte della serie scritta dal napoletano Massimo Siviero e ambientata nel capoluogo campano, che vede come protagonista il commissario Gabriele Abruzzese. Questo romanzo è il secondo volume della serie che comprende *Il diavolo giallo* (1992), *Un mistero occitano per il commissario Abruzzese* (2001), *Vendesi Napoli* (2005), *Mater Munnezza* (2011), e *La baia di Cagliostro* (2021). Massimo Siviero è nato nel 1942 a Roma da genitori napoletani. Ha vissuto tutta la vita a Napoli, lavorando come giornalista per i quotidiani *Il Mattino* e *Il Messaggero*. Il romanzo, che può essere classificato come un classico giallo a enigma, ha come protagonista un investigatore istituzionale che non è nativo di Napoli (viene da un paesino dell'Abruzzo), ma che ha a lungo vissuto nel capoluogo campano. Collerico e geniale, il commissario Abruzzese ha una visione negativa della città e dei suoi abitanti. Attraverso i suoi occhi e i commenti del narratore, Napoli è descritta come una città spietata, infestata da corruzione e illegalità, dove un pugno di persone oneste combatte una battaglia senza quartiere contro la disonestà. È una città dove vecchi aristocratici vivono nelle loro torri d'avorio, ricordando con nostalgia i tempi della dominazione borbonica; dove i camorristi sfoggiano impunemente le loro ricchezze e politici corrotti curano i propri interessi personali a danno della collettività; dove, infine, la gente comune, priva di solidarietà, cerca di sopravvivere in ogni modo, partecipando a un festino generalizzato di corruzione e illegalità. In una città dove "con la connivenza di un infermiere ben pagato, si poteva diventare re di Napoli" (Siviero 1999, 55), Siviero descrive infatti numerosi personaggi corrotti, come il vigile urbano soprannominato Cornetto per la sua abitudine a spendere ore al bar o il portinaio Orfeo che affitta posti auto sulla pubblica via. Inoltre, attraverso l'uso di metafore tipiche del giallo, come quella del labirinto o del corpo malato e quella, tutta mediterranea, della casbah, *Il terno di San Gennaro* trasmette un'immagine di una Napoli-Babilonia, ovvero di una città che non è mai stata innocente, privando il romanzo persino di quel senso di nostalgia verso un passato migliore, caratteristico di molta produzione giallistica

italiana, inclusi i romanzi di Soria. Il periodo d'innocenza della città, secondo il commissario Abruzzese, non appartiene alla storia di Napoli, ma alla preistoria, come si può vedere in questo passaggio:

“Qua si blocca tutto se una cagna partorisce, ma non si ferma nessuno se c'è bisogno di aiuto. Curiosità, solo curiosità.”

“E l'altruismo di Napoli?”

“Preistoria.” (Ivi, 57)

Tale contesto negativo è frutto di una duplice influenza: quella della tradizione *hardboiled* americana, che vede la città come una giungla ostile, in cui è difficile distinguere il bene dal male, e quella dell'orientalismo applicato al Sud d'Italia (Schneider 1998), da cui neanche il giallo italiano, scritto da autori nati nel Sud Italia, è esente. Tuttavia, all'immagine di una città del Sud corrotta e immobile, nel romanzo di Siviero non corrisponde una visione positiva del Nord d'Italia, come invece avviene per la Torino di Soria. *Il terno di San Gennaro*, in cui il commissario Abruzzese indaga sulla scomparsa delle reliquie di San Gennaro e sulla successiva morte del marchese di Villanova, vicepresidente della deputazione di San Gennaro, infatti, veicola una visione ugualmente problematica del Nord d'Italia e in particolare del fenomeno secessionista della Lega Nord, come si può vedere in questo dialogo tra il boss della Camorra Tolino e il commissario Abruzzese:

“Sì, Garibaldi e l'Unità. La vera causa di tutti i nostri guai è stato lui.” “Eh, sì,... Piove, governo ladro!...” “No, se i signorini del Nord si facessero i cazzi loro, noi ci faremmo i nostri e staremmo tutti in pace.” “Ho capito, ognuno per proprio conto e con i propri guai. Loro con Bossi e l'atraxina, noi con voi e i colibatteri.” [...] “Siamo un popolo geloso delle nostre cose e nessuno può venire a romperci le scatole.” [...] “Gheddafi... un bel soprannome, un'altra riproduzione napoletana che ti calza a pennello. Capolavori borbonici.” “Sempre meglio noi che loro.” “Tutto fa brodo nell'era delle leghe. Le repubbliche a nord, le monarchie a sud.” (Ivi, 62-63)

Anche in questo caso, nel dialogo serrato tra Abruzzese e don Tolino il discorso sul Risorgimento si intreccia con una dicotomia tra Nord e Sud, ancora molto sentita da alcuni personaggi di Siviero, ma, in questo caso, diversamente che da *Cuore di Lupo*, contrastata dal commissario Abruzzese. È interessante notare come Abruzzese respinga un uso strumentale della storia risorgimentale per assolvere i napoletani da ogni colpa (“Eh, sì,... Piove, governo ladro!...”), come si vede anche dallo scontro che l'investigatore ha con il marchese di Villanova che si professa borbonico in quanto “i piemontesi [...] con Garibaldi e Cavour distrussero la dignità di un popolo” (ivi, 19). Questa posizione del commissario, tuttavia, non esprime un'adesione incondizionata alla storia ufficiale, né un atteggiamento di disprezzo verso il Sud di contro a un'esaltazione del Nord d'Italia. Abruzzese lega l'aggettivo “borbonico” a “napoletano”, facendo un'operazione simile a quella identificata da Moe (2002, 126-155) in molta letteratura risorgimentale che ha contribuito a dare un'immagine del Sud – identificato con

il regime spagnolo – come terra di arretratezza. Tuttavia, il giudizio negativo sull'utilizzo della storia ottocentesca italiana come giustificazione di ogni male contemporaneo – che non a caso è messa in bocca a un personaggio ambiguo come quello del camorrista – si somma a un giudizio altrettanto negativo verso fenomeni come la Lega Nord che a loro volta strumentalizzano luoghi comuni per giustificare una separazione tra Nord e Sud vista come inutile e anacronistica. Quella di Abruzzese, in ultima analisi, è una lotta contro il luogo comune e i pregiudizi, da qualsiasi parte vengano, che impediscono un vero sviluppo dell'identità italiana e, con questa, di un'istanza etica comune. Viene quindi superata la pur fondata critica alla versione ufficiale della storia risorgimentale per evidenziare una corruzione sistematica che non ha confini regionali, ma che probabilmente non ha neanche un'origine, in quanto vista così vecchia quanto la storia dell'umanità. Nel romanzo di Siviero non si assiste ad alcun incontro o scontro diretto tra personaggi del Nord e del Sud d'Italia: i due mondi vivono separati, senza alcuna possibilità di contatto, contribuendo all'atmosfera pessimistica che permea *Il terno di San Gennaro*. Un pessimismo che non lascia spazio alla speranza: le piccole vittorie del commissario Abruzzese non riescono a scalfire una società corrotta fino al midollo né a fornire possibili alternative, se non quella di un'onestà tutta individuale, che si configura come una sorta di libertà protestante, tutta interiore.

3. Autocritica e dialogo costruttivo in *Dura madre*

Dura madre è l'ultimo libro di una trilogia gialla che lo scrittore Marcello Fois, nato nel 1960 a Nuoro, ma residente a Bologna, ha ambientato nella sua città, la Nuoro contemporanea. La trilogia, che include *Ferro recente* (1999) e *Meglio morti* (2000), presenta caratteristiche interessanti, in quanto i romanzi di Fois si strutturano come gialli aperti, in cui la verità non viene a volte ufficialmente stabilita, e, in qualche caso, è lasciata solo intuire allo stesso lettore. Il caso impera, di contro agli sforzi degli investigatori di trovare nessi logici che si rivelano inesistenti, secondo la lezione impartita da Friedrich Dürrenmatt e accolta ampiamente nel giallo italiano. Inoltre, altro elemento di nota, se due personaggi, il maresciallo Pili e il giudice Corona, sono presenti in tutte e tre le storie, le indagini ufficiali vengono condotte di libro in libro da personaggi differenti. Questo elemento contrasta con un'altra trilogia gialla che Fois ha scritto, questa volta ambientata nella Sardegna post-unitaria e che vede come protagonista e investigatore il poeta Sebastiano "Bastianu" Satta. Come Margherita Marras mette in evidenza, c'è un filo rosso che lega la trilogia ambientata in epoca post-risorgimentale e quella contemporanea (2007, 81). Attraverso il giallo, Fois sembra infatti scrivere una sorta di storia dell'anima sarda, investigando dapprima la natura coloniale delle relazioni tra la Sardegna e il Regno d'Italia e dando conto poi di nuove forme di dipendenza, causate dall'attiva partecipazione a un sistema politico ed economico corrotti. La trilogia contemporanea non descrive tanto una città, ma dà conto di una Sardegna afflitta da una metastasi che ha già divorato il resto dell'Italia: opportunismo, corruzione e frode sono comuni in

un'isola definita in un altro libro della serie come “una terra di vittime, [...], una terra senza costituzione, senza Stato. [...] Il confine di un impero” (Fois 1999, 25). Torna quindi l'immagine del corpo malato, come detto una delle metafore più diffuse della detective fiction. L'origine della corruzione è fatta risalire al periodo pre-risorgimentale. Seguendo la tradizione orale sarda, Foïs sceglie spesso di raccontare una storia o una parabola per trasmettere una morale. In *Dura madre*, commentando un'indagine su una frode ai danni dell'Unione europea, il maresciallo Pili, sardo, chiede al commissario Sanuti, proveniente da Rimini, se conosce la storia di Carlo Alberto che, nel lontano 1829, in qualità di principe ereditario, compì la prima visita ufficiale di un principe Savoia in Sardegna. L'evento, narrato poi in un capitolo a parte sotto forma di racconto a sé stante, descrive il viaggio del giovane Alberto in una terra brulla, rovente, popolata da uomini “in parte civilizzati”, dall'abbigliamento, dal portamento e dall'eloquio che Carlo Alberto giudica grossolani. È un approccio coloniale, quello del Carlo Alberto di *Dura madre*, che evoca gli studi delle élites settentrionali del periodo analizzati da Moe. I mali della Sardegna, quindi, per Foïs, cominciano qui, con un'interpretazione dell'isola come “altro”, come terra da sfruttare e non da capire. Ancora una volta, quindi, il tema risorgimentale si lega alla rappresentazione di un'Italia divisa in due, dilaniata al suo interno. L'analisi dello scrittore sardo va tuttavia oltre quando, proseguendo con la storia, Foïs inventa un episodio secondo cui il popolo sardo avrebbe fatto al principe ereditario un regalo: Gaspare Cubeddu, un nano, con tanto di carretto e domestica al seguito. Il capitolo successivo è costituito da un commento del narratore che torna sulla storia di questo immaginario regalo:

Ecco: un nano gli abbiamo regalato, e ci siamo fatti uno sberleffo peggiore di quello che ci avrebbe fatto il nostro peggior nemico. E da nani ci hanno trattato sempre. E noi da nani ci siamo lasciati trattare. E quando volevano trattarci da uomini ci siamo ribellati. Ché le lotte le abbiamo fatte solo per mantenere il nostro status di nani. A elemosinare contributi, a fingere greggi per pensioni, a costruire obbrobri con proventi regionali. Nani con l'animo nano. Con l'orgoglio attaccato a sputo e l'invidia per chi nano non è. [...] Questo è il morbo: vederci nani anche quando siamo giganti. (Fois 2001, 191)

Questo bel passaggio è esemplificativo di una tematica che attraversa la serie: i Savoia gestirono la Sardegna come una colonia, gettando i semi di un cumulo di problemi, aggravatesi durante il Fascismo. Ciò nondimeno, le responsabilità di un mancato sviluppo non sono solo imputabili a fattori esterni. Il male, secondo Foïs, è stato ingerito e assimilato dalla società sarda, da esterno è diventato interno: “Noi il nemico ce l'abbiamo dentro” (ivi, 186) commenta infatti un altro personaggio, il giudice Corona, anch'egli sardo. In una severa auto-analisi, oltre che dalla gestione colonialista dei Savoia, questo autore vede i mali della Sardegna contemporanea originare dalle viscere contaminate dell'isola stessa. Come già visto nel romanzo di Siviero, quindi, l'Italia di Foïs ha realizzato sì un'unità, ma solo nel nome della corruzione e della sopraffazione, assimilando in negativo popoli e culture diverse. Tuttavia, individuando l'origine della corruzione

in un preciso momento storico Fois realizza pienamente quel rinvio incrociato, in questo caso presente-passato-presente, che Milanese vede come centrale nel romanzo storico fin dalla sua creazione (2006, 13). Altro elemento di nota è che, a dispetto di questa omogeneità maligna, uno dei temi costitutivi della serie è il perdurante scontro culturale tra sardi e continentali. In questo caso la dicotomia non è tra Nord e Sud, ma tra isola e continente, secondo una tradizione tipica della letteratura insulare. La scelta del tema dell'identità è particolarmente cruciale per la letteratura prodotta in Sardegna e coerente con l'ambiente culturale locale, che ha spesso sentito la necessità di difendere le proprie peculiarità, in rapporto o in contrasto con popolazioni che, in diversi periodi della storia dell'isola, hanno dominato la Sardegna, cercando per lo più di imporre nuove forme di cultura e linguaggio. Se Siviero vede un'incoltabile divisione tra Nord e Sud, il discorso di Fois è più ottimista. Attraverso la nascita dell'amore tra il giudice Corona e il pubblico ministero Danila Comastri in *Meglio morti* e di un'amici-zia tra lo stesso Corona e il commissario Sanuti in *Dura madre*, lo scrittore sardo indica anche una via che conduce al dialogo di due diverse culture le quali, conservando le loro caratteristiche, arrivano a incontrarsi senza sopraffarsi. In particolare, in *Dura madre* il sardo Corona e il riminese Sanuti – figura che, per il suo desiderio di comprendere la Sardegna nonostante le barriere culturali che gli rendono difficile realizzare tale intento, evoca il personaggio sciasciano del tenente Bellodi – risolvono insieme, per quanto possibile, il caso dell'omicidio di Michele Marongiu e svelano una rete di corruzione e frode ai danni dell'Unione europea. Le forze e le intelligenze dell'isola e del Continente unite, pur nelle differenze, vincono un'importante battaglia – anche se non la guerra – contro la corruzione e il male. Con la risoluzione, anche solo parziale, del mistero si arriva pure, in ultima analisi, a un "riconoscimento" dell'altro, del diverso che non porta a un annichilimento, ma a un mutuo arricchimento, in nome, anche in questo caso di un'eticità comune ancora da conquistare, ma comunque possibile. Come ha affermato Marcello Fois in un'intervista, bisogna trovare una terza via che superi il vittimismo e l'istinto di gruppo e vivere un territorio abitabile in cui ci sia una posizione di dialogo costante (Pezzotti 2012, 187-188). Si tratta di una negoziazione continua in un territorio comune che consente lo sviluppo di una composita identità italiana, pur nel rispetto delle differenze. Differenze che, secondo Fois vanno preservate, cercando di evitare il pericolo dell'omologazione culturale che Bianciardi aveva individuato ne *La battaglia soda* (1964).

4. Conclusione

In conclusione tutti e tre gli autori fanno riferimento al Risorgimento, affrontando la tematica dei rapporti tra Nord e Sud Italia. Tuttavia, mentre il giallo di Soria semplicemente riflette un clima di scontro alimentato dall'insorgere di fenomeni separatistici, i romanzi di Siviero e Fois riflettono su questa problematica, cercando di trovare le origini e di mettere in evidenza le conseguenze della mancanza di un'identità italiana. È interessante notare che Siviero e Fois, due scrittori provenienti da regioni che hanno subito piuttosto che cercato l'Unità

d'Italia, pur abbracciando una visione problematica dell'unificazione, compiono anche una spietata autocritica, individuando precise responsabilità rispettivamente del popolo napoletano e sardo e vedono entrambi il territorio come un corpo malato, contaminato di una corruzione che invade tutta l'Italia, al Nord come al Sud. Fois, da parte sua, si spinge ancora oltre, proponendo un dialogo proficuo tra culture ancora distanti, ma che possono convivere e persino integrarsi, conservando tuttavia caratteristiche peculiari. Al contrario, il torinese Soria non si smuove da un'antica dicotomia tra Nord e Sud e abbraccia una visione idealizzata del Risorgimento, così come è stata a lungo tramandata dal potere politico, da tempo screditata, ma riportata in auge dal dilaniato e dilaniante clima politico italiano degli anni '90.

Riferimenti bibliografici

- Amendola A.M. (2006), *L'isola che sorprende. La narrativa sarda in italiano (1974-2006)*, Cagliari, CUEC.
- Bagnoli Paolo (2007), *L'idea dell'Italia. 1815-1861*, Reggio Emilia, Diabasis.
- Blissett Luther (1999), *Q*, Torino, Einaudi.
- Bouchard Norma, ed. (2005), *Risorgimento in Modern Italian Culture: Revisiting the Nineteenth-Century Past in History, Narrative, and Cinema*, Madison-Teaneck, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- (2005), "Reopening the Risorgimento Archive: Spectrality and Utopia in Antonio Tabucchi's *Piazza d'Italia*", in Ead. (ed.), *Risorgimento in Modern Italian Culture: Revisiting the Nineteenth-Century Past in History, Narrative, and Cinema*, 174-191.
- Browne R.B., Kreiser L.A. Jr. (2000), *The Detective as Historian: History and Art in Historical Crime Fiction*, Bowling Green, Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Cento Bull Anna (2000), "Challenging the Nation State: The Northern League between Localism and Globalism", in Gino Bedani, Bruce Haddock (eds), *The Politics of Italian National Identity*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 259-276.
- Chu Mark (1998), "Sciascia and Sicily: Discourse and Actuality", *Italica*, 75, 1, 78-92.
- Fois Marcello (1999), *Ferro recente*, Torino, Einaudi.
- (2001), *Dura madre*, Torino, Einaudi.
- Fruttero Carlo, Lucentini Franco (1972), *La donna della domenica*, Milano, Mondadori.
- Ginzburg Carlo (1979), "Spie. Radici di un paradigma indiziario", in Aldo Gargani (a cura di), *Crisi della ragione*, Torino, Einaudi, 57-106.
- Haddock Bruce (2000), "State, Nation and the Risorgimento", in Gino Bedani, Bruce Haddock (eds), *The Politics of Italian National Identity: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 11-49.
- Marras Margherita (2007), "Connessioni e rilettura delle dinamiche politiche nazionali e regionali nell'opera di Marcello Fois", *Narrativa*, 29, 81-94.
- Milanesi Claudio (2006), "Le roman criminel et l'histoire. Introduction", *Cahiers d'études romanes*, 15, 1, 9-19.
- Moe Nelson (2001), "'This is Africa': Ruling and Representing Southern Italy, 1860-1861", in A.R. Ascoli, Krystyna von Henneberg (eds), *Making and Remaking Italy. The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, Oxford-New York, Berg, 119-153.

- (2002), *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press.
- Petronio Giuseppe (2000), *Sulle tracce del giallo*, Roma, Gamberetti.
- Pezzotti Barbara (2012), *The Importance of Place in Contemporary Italian Crime Fiction: A Bloody Journey*, Madison-Teaneck, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- (2014), *Politics and Society in Italian Crime Fiction: An Historical Overview*, Jefferson, McFarland & Co.
- (2016), *Investigating Italy's Past through Historical Crime Fiction, Films, and TV series: Murder in the Age of Chaos*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Prunster Nicole (2008 [2007]), "Poliphony in Andrea Camilleri's *Il birraio di Preston*", *Spunti e ricerche*, 21, 51-61.
- Rumi Giorgio (2004), "Ma lo storico non è buonista né giustiziere", *Il Corriere della Sera*, 6 ottobre.
- Schneider Jane, ed. (1998) *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country*, Oxford, Berg.
- Siviero Massimo (1999), *Il terno di San Gennaro. Un giallo tutto napoletano*, Napoli, Lo stagno incantato.
- Soria Piero (1999), *Cuore di Lupo*, Milano, Mondadori.
- (2001), *La donna cattiva*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Von Hennegberg Krystyna, Ascoli A.R. (2001), "Nationalism and the Uses of Risorgimento Culture", in Idd. (eds), *Making and Remaking Italy. The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, Oxford-New York, Berg, 1-23.

Cambiare opinione (o quasi) su Camilleri

Giuseppe Traina

Abstract:

The author takes the opportunity of the celebrations in honor of Annamaria Pagliaro to return to the works of Andrea Camilleri, confirming some perplexities already expressed in an article from 1998, especially regarding his detective novels. On other aspects of Camilleri's works, however, the author's opinions have changed. In this new critical work, the author took into account the works subsequently published by Camilleri, especially the narrative masterpiece *Il re di Girgenti*, but also his public role and the relationship he was able to establish with his faithful readers.

Keywords: Author-reader Relationship, Camilleri, Detective Novel, Historical Novel, Public Role of the Writer

Nel 1998 Andrea Camilleri era già diventato lo scrittore di best seller che si confermò essere, in sostanza, fino alla morte (2019): in particolare, i primi quattro romanzi della serie poliziesca di cui è protagonista il commissario Montalbano avevano già avuto uno straordinario successo di pubblico e, tra i suoi romanzi "storici", almeno *Il birraio di Preston* (1995) e *La concessione del telefono* (1998) avevano ampiamente riscattato l'indifferenza con cui erano state accolte le sue prime opere, a partire da *Un filo di fumo* (1980). Già nell'anno successivo, il '99, la serie televisiva *Il commissario Montalbano* moltiplicò esponenzialmente, in Italia e all'estero, la fortuna dello scrittore e del suo più amato protagonista.

Ho fatto riferimento al '98 perché in quell'anno pubblicai sul mensile *Linea d'ombra*, fondato da Goffredo Fofi ma in quel momento (e fino alla chiusura) diretto da Bruno Pischetta, un articolo (Traina 1998) nel quale tentavo una succinta analisi dei due citati romanzi "storici" e di due della serie "poliziesca": *Il ladro di merendine* (1996) e *La voce del violino* (1997). A quell'altezza cronologica la critica letteraria italiana tendeva a snobbare i romanzi di Camilleri, con rare eccezioni che, fino al '98, si potevano contare sulle dita di una mano, fino alla prima, e pionieristica, monografia critica (Capecchi 2000). Negli anni successivi, naturalmente, la situazione è cambiata: i volumi monografici o miscel-

Giuseppe Traina, University of Catania, Italy, gtraina@unict.it, 0000-0002-4653-1988

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Giuseppe Traina, *Cambiare opinione (o quasi) su Camilleri*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.05, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 29-38, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

lanei sono aumentati notevolmente, sono stati pubblicati atti di convegni, è nata una rivista interamente dedicata alla sua opera¹.

In quell'articolo attribuisco a Camilleri notevoli capacità di scrittura comica (più che umoristica) e di strutturazione dell'intreccio poliziesco; lodavo la costruzione del personaggio seriale Montalbano ma ne stigmatizzavo le stereotipie un po' ovvie e non sempre narrativamente giustificate se non dal puro gusto nella costruzione di una "maschera"; concentravo la maggior parte delle perplessità sul linguaggio coniato dall'autore, il "camillerese", e in particolare sulla scelta di adoperarlo non solo nei dialoghi riportati (dove avrebbe potuto avere piena giustificazione), ma di estenderne l'uso anche al narratore esterno; riflettevo su come gli effetti plurilinguistici del "camillerese" potessero facilmente sconfinare nel macchietismo un po' fine a sé stesso. Per quanto riguarda, poi, i romanzi "storici", rilevavo una stridente discrasia tra le ambizioni metaletterarie e i risultati in atto, ma osservavo, altresì, che ne *La concessione del telefono* Camilleri scioglieva l'ambiguità linguistica creatasi nei "gialli" distinguendo, con esilarante effetto sarcastico, tra l'uso del "camillerese" da parte dei personaggi nelle parti interamente dialogate, denominate "cose dette", e l'uso dell'Italiano arciburocratico o giornalistico nelle parti documentarie, denominate "cose scritte".

Insomma, in quell'articolo, con una certa giovanile baldanza, provavo a distribuire plausi e botte: ma non posso nascondere che, in fondo, risentivo di una diffidenza generalizzata verso il "fenomeno" Camilleri, autore che si proponeva "come un caso per l'eccezionale fortuna di vendite non di un'opera, ma dell'intera produzione *in progress*" (Madrignani 2020, 440). Tanto più perché la sua appartenenza alla tradizione letteraria siciliana si configurava, sul piano dei valori letterari, in termini abbastanza nuovi e sostanzialmente estranei alla sostanza più pura di essa: si consideri che nel '98, pur essendo morto da due anni Gesualdo Bufalino, era ancora in vita e in attività l'ultimo grande rappresentante di questa tradizione otto-novecentesca, ovvero Vincenzo Consolo², la poetica del quale non poteva non imporsi all'attenzione di chi coltivava, ancora in quegli anni, un'idea "alta" di letteratura e di ruolo civile del letterato. Mentre l'opera di Camilleri appariva poco più che un *divertissement* tutt'altro che civilmente "impegnato".

Col passare del tempo, però, e col mutare della nozione di "impegno" civile, mi sono trovato a ripensare in termini diversi il mio giudizio sull'opera di Camilleri: sulle ragioni di tale ripensamento proverò qui a soffermarmi³.

¹ Mi riferisco a *Quaderni camilleriani*, rivista semestrale diretta da Giovanni Caprara e Giuseppe Marci, pubblicata a partire dal 2016.

² Per alcune considerazioni sulla fine della tradizione letteraria siciliana coincidente col finire del XX secolo, e su come gli scrittori siciliani degli anni Novanta-Duemila si collochino in gran parte su posizioni di discontinuità rispetto a essa, mi permetto di rinviare a Traina 2014.

³ Ho già provato a farlo, con una diversa e non soggettiva articolazione del discorso, in Traina 2020.

Il primo punto su cui ho dovuto rivedere in parte le mie posizioni è dovuto proprio al nesso tra Camilleri e la tradizione letteraria siciliana: quello che, a livello del contenuto testuale, allora mi pareva contribuì alla riduzione a stereotipo comico dell'amarissima realtà siciliana e quello che, a livello linguistico e stilistico, mi pareva un ridimensionamento un po' triviale di ben altre sperimentazioni strutturali, linguistiche e stilistiche tipiche, appunto, della tradizione letteraria siciliana "alta" (da Verga a Vittorini, da D'Arrigo a Pizzuto e Ripellino, da Sciascia a Bufalino e Consolo) adesso mi pare che vada rivista criticamente in relazione a un panorama letterario italiano caratterizzato da un adeguamento massiccio a talune tendenze internazionali che vengono facilmente catalogate come *mainstream* ma che andrebbero un po' più sottilmente analizzate, per esempio, in ordine, da un lato, all'estrema traducibilità linguistica e, dall'altro, a una specializzazione finzionale che si attesta principalmente nei due filoni, apparentemente inconciliabili, del *memoir* e della narrazione seriale (o ciclica, o pseudo-storica, o familiare ...).

Rispetto a questo quadro, ho la sensazione che lo scrittore siciliano abbia saputo ritagliarsi uno spazio per certi versi di stampo tradizionale, ma per altri versi profondamente innovativo: egli mi pare abbia saputo sfruttare un'autentica e sorgiva vocazione affabulativa, che non temeva né limiti di tipo quantitativo né argini relativi ai generi letterari o alle sedi di pubblicazione⁴, per rinverdire nella società letteraria italiana la figura di quello che vorrei chiamare "lo scrittore in sintonia col lettore". Uno scrittore, cioè, che non mette al primo posto nella sua scala di valori l'apprezzamento da parte della critica o la conquista di "rendite di posizione" all'interno della società letteraria, bensì il rapporto diretto con il lettore, con l'unica (o predominante) mediazione dell'editore (in questo caso un editore di solida tradizione artigianale come Elvira Sellerio⁵); un autore, insomma, che – al di là delle apparenze – non solletica i gusti deteriori del suo lettore ideale, ma negozia con lui un compromesso al rialzo tra reciproco godimento dell'affabulazione e caute innovazioni strutturali e linguistiche, così caute da non compromettere la leggibilità del testo ma capaci, tuttavia, di porre problemi al lettore, di far sì che si interroghi (mediante espedienti metaletterari sorridenti e mai superciliosi) sulla natura stessa del libro che sta leggendo o su non secondari aspetti della realtà indagati da un commissario di polizia onesto e dalla forte sensibilità "civile": questo compromesso al rialzo è il risultato più alto, e a suo modo innovativo, a cui arriva la scrittura di Camilleri nel quadro della letteratura italiana degli ultimi vent'anni, un risultato raggiunto da un "artista lontano dai tormenti intellettualistici [ma] anche propenso a meditare sui

⁴ Mi riferisco, per essere più esplicito, alla capacità di esprimere tale vena affabulativa nelle forme del *cunto* di origine folclorica, del racconto breve, del romanzo *tout court* e dei suoi sottogeneri storico, poliziesco, documentario – oltre che della scrittura teatrale e della sceneggiatura televisiva; e alla capacità di distribuire i suoi testi fra case editrici grandi e piccole, giornali di diffusione nazionale ma anche locale, riviste di impegno civile, ecc.

⁵ Per una testimonianza sui rapporti con Elvira Sellerio cfr. Camilleri 2015.

nodì estetici della scrittura narrativa, senza tuttavia cedere all'imperativo di razionalizzare a tutti i costi" (Madriagnani 2020, 441)⁶.

Un secondo punto su cui, invece, trovo ancora valide le mie antiche osservazioni, ma ritengo sia utile sottolinearle con più forza, dato che viviamo in un momento storico-culturale nel quale sembra si sia smarrita la consapevolezza della forza eversiva e demistificante del riso, riguarda la caratura comica della scrittura di Camilleri, da ascrivere innanzitutto a una conoscenza particolarmente vasta della letteratura teatrale non soltanto italiana. Quella di Camilleri – e di quanti altri scrittori italiani? – è una comicità felicemente amorale, priva di senso dell'opportunità, nutrita dei grandi temi boccacciani dell'eros gioioso e della beffa, capace di irridere i tabù più profondi del corpo sociale, comprese la morte e la religione, volta a dimostrare che di *tutto* si possa ridere perché di *tutti* si può ridere. È, insomma, il riso relativizzante e felice della tradizione illustrata da Bachtin ma ben nota a qualsiasi autore popolare di *vastasate* o di *mimi*, entrambe forme molto antiche dell'espressività siciliana e presenti, certamente, nei romanzi di Camilleri (in alcuni in particolar modo) e in certi suoi straordinari racconti di misura breve, leggibili, per esempio in *Gran Circo Taddei e altre storie di Vigàta* (2011) o in *La regina di Pomerania e altre storie di Vigàta* (2012).

Un altro ambito della produzione camilleriana a mio parere meritevole di grande attenzione, e non ancora conosciuto quando scrissi quell'antico articolo, è il racconto lungo di specie "magico-fantastica", dispiegatosi nella trilogia formata da *Maruzza Musumeci* (2007), *Il casellante* (2008) e *Il sonaglio* (2009)⁷, pubblicati tutti da Sellerio. Si tratta di testi un po' fuori dal tempo, ma non per questo sospettabili di leziosità arcadicheggiante, e caratterizzati da una *brevitas* più asciutta del consueto, nella quale riecheggia più da vicino la semplicità della narrazione orale popolare. Anche questi tre libri, come quelli nei quali il comico trionfa, finiscono per apparire, nel panorama letterario contemporaneo come delle eccezioni, dei risultati di levità pari all'inattualità del loro "contenuto": basterebbe confrontare la reinvenzione del mito della sirena che riemerge, nello stesso anno 2007, in due testi abissalmente diversi come *Maruzza Musumeci* e *Sirene* di Laura Pugno. È quest'ultimo, infatti, ad apparire più in sintonia con un immaginario collettivo che ha imparato a metabolizzare certi motivi fino a non troppo tempo fa tabuizzati, mentre la levità "greca" del racconto di Camilleri sembra trasportarlo in un "passato assoluto" assai più remoto di quello in cui si colloca quel capolavoro del racconto novecentesco, sempre giocato sul mito delle sirene, che è *Lighea* (1961) di Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, scritto cinquant'anni prima del racconto camilleriano.

Una questione che mi pare rimanga ancora controversa è quella dei "romanzi storici". Si sa bene che Camilleri un buon numero di fortunatissimi romanzi attingendo, come fonte più o meno diretta, a una serie di vicende di ambienta-

⁶ Rinvio a queste lucidissime pagine di Madriagnani anche per un'analisi più approfondita della dinamica autore-lettore che Camilleri ha saputo creare.

⁷ Su questa trilogia cfr. *Quaderni camilleriani* 2019 e Demontis 2020.

zione siciliana ricavate dall'inchiesta parlamentare *La Sicilia nel 1876* (1877) di Franchetti e Sonnino. Ma sarebbe davvero difficile inscrivere questi romanzi (quelli che avevo analizzato e altri fortunati testi successivi, come *La mossa del cavallo*, 1999, o *La scomparsa di Patò*, 2000) nella tradizione del romanzo storico di matrice manzoniana, caratterizzati, come sono, da una dilagante vena comica e dalla presenza di sperimentazioni strutturali che guardano al grande romanzo *High Modern*. D'altra parte, Camilleri ha dimostrato di essere ben capace di misurarsi con la tradizione manzoniana proprio quando ha scritto quello che, per opinione di molti studiosi, è il suo romanzo più importante e riuscito, proprio il romanzo di ambientazione sei-settecentesca *Il re di Girgenti* (2001). Peraltro, la nobile nozione di "inattualità", che ho già richiamato, si potrebbe applicare anche a quest'ultimo testo, se lo confrontassimo con le caratteristiche prevalenti di quel romanzo "neo-storico" italiano⁸ affermatosi tra XX e XXI secolo. Camilleri, insomma, credo abbia saputo, nei suoi esiti migliori, superare la prova del romanzo storico mediante la capacità di mettere in discussione il modello manzoniano, celandosi dietro l'apparente fedeltà a esso: ne *Il re di Girgenti* tramite felici espedienti di stampo ancora una volta favolistico, o mediante documenti apocrifi in appendice⁹; in *Inseguendo un'ombra* (2014) mediante l'inserimento continuo della voce dell'autore che commenta le difficoltà incontrate nell'inseguire, appunto, la parvenza d'un ebreo errante, forse sfuggente quanto l'identità del romanzo storico come genere letterario. Se ho segnalato questi due romanzi, e non altri, è perché si avverte in essi un più sensibile impegno di scrittura, quasi il tentativo di sperimentare un modo di scrivere che, occasionalmente, allontani Camilleri da Camilleri, ovvero dal Camilleri che il lettore fedelissimo si aspetta di ritrovare: non sarà un caso che, proprio in questi due romanzi, il tasso di comicità (che è cifra della scrittura camilleriana) sia decisamente basso, se non addirittura assente.

Per quanto riguarda la scrittura poliziesca, la mia sensazione – nutrita non solo dalla lettura dei romanzi e racconti che hanno per protagonista il commissario Montalbano, ma anche di quelli che ruotano intorno ad altri personaggi, per esempio il commissario Collura – è che la sovrabbondanza quantitativa non abbia giovato alla qualità dei testi, bassa soprattutto nei racconti brevi e nei casi in cui l'intreccio poliziesco viene risolto con espedienti abbastanza convenzionali, facilmente riscontrabili nell'ormai lunga tradizione di questo genere letterario, teatrale e cinematografico.

Per funzionare nel modo migliore, d'altronde, il poliziesco di Camilleri non ha tanto bisogno di fondarsi sull'intreccio, quanto sull'integrazione tra una più o meno accurata rappresentazione sociale e ambientale e la lezione della goldoniana "commedia di caratteri", ingrediente assolutamente fondamentale nell'orchestrazione della squadra di personaggi che ruota intorno a Montalbano, e che Camilleri riprende, in fondo, dal modello simenoniano dei romanzi sul commis-

⁸ Cfr. Benvenuti 2012.

⁹ Cfr. Maiolani 2020.

sario Maigret ma accentuando in maniera significativa la componente comica che è diventata uno stilema irrinunciabile¹⁰. D'altra parte, va detto che la costruzione camilleriana del "sistema dei personaggi" ha sicuramente influenzato almeno uno tra i più bravi e fortunati autori di romanzi italiani "gialli" e seriali degli ultimi vent'anni: mi riferisco ad Antonio Manzini, che più e più volte ha pagato un affettuoso debito di riconoscenza verso il suo antico maestro presso l'Accademia Nazionale d'Arte Drammatica Silvio D'Amico, ma che mi pare sia riuscito a superare il maestro nella costruzione a più livelli di una vera e propria saga, quella del vicequestore Rocco Schiavone, nella quale l'elemento poliziesco travalica felicemente nel *noir* (ma a tal proposito l'influenza più evidente mi pare quella del *polar* francese piuttosto che dell'*hard boiled* americano) e dove l'elemento comico si sposta agevolmente nei cieli del grottesco.

Ma torniamo a Camilleri, e al suo rapporto con i lettori che, in gran parte, è stato proprio mediato dal personaggio di Salvo Montalbano. Il commissario siciliano ha rappresentato per i lettori italiani uno di quei rarissimi eroi di cui *non* è affatto piena la storia d'Italia e della letteratura italiana¹¹, caratterizzata, quest'ultima, da una sequela di antieroi e personaggi moralmente riprovevoli o quanto meno problematici: Montalbano, invece, rappresenta un modello positivo di onestà, etica del lavoro, serietà, capacità di capire le debolezze dell'animo umano perché egli stesso non ne va esente (pensiamo alla golosità, alle scappatelle erotiche, al rifiuto di un rapporto stabile con la fidanzata). Certo, alcune vicende nel quale l'autore lo mette a confronto con aspetti cruciali della cronaca italiana degli ultimi vent'anni – l'immigrazione clandestina soprattutto – e la sua inclinazione a capire le ragioni degli "ultimi" ne fanno un personaggio che finisce per schierarsi eticamente, e in fondo politicamente, senza timore di sfiorare nel *politically correct*. Il che ne farebbe, oggi, un personaggio inviso a buona parte dell'opinione pubblica italiana. Ma sono convinto che, tutto sommato, anche i tanti critici del *politically correct* abbiano poco da eccepire di fronte alla prospettiva che, una volta tanto, grazie a Montalbano e alla sua squadra, la giustizia trionfi per merito della polizia statale anziché di personaggi che casualmente si ritrovano nel ruolo di *detectives* oppure di altri personaggi dalla moralità ambivalente, come il citato Rocco Schiavone o, ancor più, il Marco Buratti, detto l'Alligatore, creato da Massimo Carlotto.

I casi criminosi risolti positivamente da Montalbano si inanellano, insomma, lungo un percorso che sancisce il ritorno rassicurante del già noto, strumento antico e collaudato della serialità¹², occasionalmente caratterizzato da innovazioni prudenti, ancora una volta riportabili a quella dimensione metaletteraria che abbiamo visto essere ben presente al gusto di Camilleri, ma che egli si guarda

¹⁰ A pensarci bene, lo stesso Montalbano non va esente da aspetti leggermente ridicoli – per esempio, l'ossessione del mangiare in silenzio o le nuotate e passeggiate solitarie – sia pur sempre controbilanciati da una vena melanconica che cresce di romanzo in romanzo.

¹¹ Cfr. Jossa 2013.

¹² Cfr. Novelli 2017.

bene dal presentare al lettore in modo intellettualistico o troppo sperimentale. Rientra in questa casistica, per esempio, il postumo romanzo *Riccardino* (2020), con l'espedito del dialogo telefonico ed epistolare fra Montalbano e l'Autore: un dialogo ben bilanciato da inevitabili risvolti pirandelliani, ma anche dal più vicino, e non meno caro, esempio del Simenon di *Les Mémoires de Maigret* (1950); con in più, probabilmente, un'eco palazzeschiana nella conclusione del non pacificato rapporto tra i due.

Per concludere: trovo ancora, in quel mio vecchio articolo, qualche considerazione che mi pare sia stata confermata dal successivo svolgersi della produzione camilleriana, soprattutto là dove è rimasta più simile a sé stessa (grosso modo, nei romanzi polizieschi di Montalbano); molto meno attuali, o senz'altro sbagliate, le cose che scrivevo a proposito dei romanzi "storici", che hanno fatto registrare un'evoluzione più complessa e densa di innovazioni importanti. Non voglio qui entrare nel merito delle valutazioni di tipo linguistico: molti linguisti, certamente più competenti di me in materia, hanno analizzato le fondamenta del "camillerese" e a loro dovrei senz'altro umilmente rinviare, se non mi riuscisse impossibile nascondere una non ritrattabile impressione di artificiosità, rafforzata dalla circostanza che, in quei pochi testi, o porzioni di testo, in cui Camilleri si esprime in Italiano, dimostra di saperne fare un uso semplicemente elegante, sorvegliatissimo.

Mi rimane da svolgere un'ultima considerazione, per la quale riprendo il concetto, poc'anzi esposto, di "scrittore in sintonia col lettore". Sugli ingredienti di questa sintonia occorrerebbe soffermarsi ancora. Uno è sicuramente il divertimento che la lettura procura: quale lettore non potrà essere grato a uno scrittore che lo fa ridere? Un altro riguarda il buon gusto: non esiste quasi argomento che Camilleri non abbia deciso di affrontare e, anche quando i temi erano particolarmente scottanti¹³, è riuscito ad affrontarli con un senso della misura, un non reticente buon gusto, che ha sicuramente dei precedenti, e non pochi, nella storia della letteratura italiana (penso soprattutto a Boccaccio) ma non so quanto sia praticato da altri scrittori del nostro attuale contesto letterario. Un terzo elemento è, quanto meno per una consistente parte di lettori italiani, quella capacità di andare "incontro ai gusti del pubblico e alle attenzioni del momento, prendendo posizione – una posizione sempre di buon senso civico progressista e di sinistra, aperta e nitida, ma senza contraddizioni, su temi di interesse sociale ed etico" (Lo Castro 2018, 187)¹⁴: al suo lettore, dunque, Camilleri si presenta come un intellettuale ancora civilmente impegnato e sicuramente più intran-

¹³ Penso, per esempio, al tema dell'incesto, affrontato da Camilleri (e da Montalbano) nei due romanzi *La luna di carta* (2004) e *Un covo di vipere* (2013): per un'analisi contrastiva cfr. Lo Castro 2018.

¹⁴ Può essere utile qui ricordare che negli anni della vecchiaia Camilleri ha gravitato, dal punto di vista politico, all'interno di una piccola ma tenace galassia di intellettuali e scrittori provenienti dalla cultura comunista ma non del tutto, o niente affatto, allineati sulle posizioni del Partito Democratico, semmai su quelle di movimenti come "Libertà e Giustizia" o di riviste come *Micromega*.

sigente, dal punto di vista etico-politico, rispetto ai suoi personaggi. Un intellettuale, insomma, nelle cui posizioni il lettore fedele molto probabilmente può rispecchiarsi, quasi con la certezza di non riceverne delusioni per incoerenza, ambiguità o reticenza.

A questa “costruzione del personaggio Camilleri” hanno contribuito elementi talvolta tenacemente ostentati, come il voluttuoso consumo di sigarette durante le occasioni pubbliche, che lo avrà accreditato presso le frange più accanite dei lettori tabagisti, talaltra non certo prevedibili e auspicabili, ma non per questo censurati o rimossi, come la progressiva cecità, che è possibile abbia incrementato il fascino della sua figura presso un pubblico colto che può aver fatto scattare un’associazione d’idee con il profilo pubblico di Jorge Luis Borges. Tali elementi, o altri che posso aver trascurato (come gli interventi televisivi, prima sul palcoscenico del “Maurizio Costanzo Show”, poi nelle “introduzioni con voce d’autore” ai telefilm prodotti dalla Palomar, infine nelle tante interviste registrate a casa sua), sono sicuramente elementi estrinseci rispetto alla considerazione letteraria dei testi di Camilleri, ma riguardano – eccome! – la sua figura di personaggio pubblico e, dunque, anche la costruzione del suo rapporto di fidelizzazione con il lettore.

E, a tal proposito, mi pare che Camilleri abbia compiuto un autentico, indimenticabile exploit quando, pochi mesi prima di morire, ha recitato al Teatro Greco di Siracusa il suo *Conversazioni su Tiresia* (2019a). Un evento pubblico nato come spettacolo teatrale e assieme come produzione televisiva, prima affacciata nei cinema e poi approdata in televisione, arricchito dalla regia di Roberto Andò e recitato da Camilleri, che era sempre stato regista e solo in rarissime occasioni era stato attore: un evento che va in scena in uno dei luoghi più sacri dell’immaginario teatrale italiano, ovvero il Teatro Greco di Siracusa, e che vede Camilleri *esporre* il proprio corpo, la propria stanca pronuncia di vecchio e soprattutto la propria cecità in una suggestiva, apparente identificazione col personaggio dell’indovino cieco ma, di fatto, con una presa di distanza straniante dal personaggio che era data proprio dalla precisa riconoscibilità del suo corpo e della sua pronuncia.

È, infine, questa serena esposizione del corpo consunto che mi pare renda solenne al massimo grado quel rapporto di piena sintonia tra autore e lettore sul quale ho insistito in questa sede: nello spazio solenne e sacrale d’un antichissimo teatro, il lettore si riconferma nell’idea che può contare sul suo scrittore preferito anche contro le offese della vecchiaia e oltre le fragilità del corpo, anzi riceve da questa ostensione del corpo sofferente la rassicurante sensazione che Camilleri non sia un essere superiore, ma un uomo che soffre ed è fragile come tutti gli esseri umani normali: come lui, lettore normalissimo. E che, semmai, Camilleri abbia, come dono specifico di letterato, una lucidità inusitata per un novantatreenne, una lucidità resistente che potrebbe, per influsso del ruolo di Tiresia, trasformarsi perfino in qualità divinatoria. Ma su questa soglia il laicissimo Camilleri si arresta e piuttosto scrive, per replicare l’exploit recitativo, un’*Autodifesa di Caino* (2019b) che da lui forse il lettore non si aspetterebbe: potrebbe essere questa una delusione dell’orizzonte di attesa? Il lettore potrà saperlo soltanto se leggerà il libro,

pubblicato postumo, perché la morte impedirà ad Andrea Camilleri di andare ancora una volta in scena, nei panni del nuovo (ma antichissimo) personaggio.

Riferimenti bibliografici

- Benvenuti Giuliana (2012), *Il romanzo neostorico italiano. Storia, memoria, narrazione*, Roma, Carocci.
- Camilleri Andrea (1980), *Un filo di fumo*, Milano, Garzanti.
- (1995), *Il birraio di Preston*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (1996), *Il ladro di merendine*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (1997), *La voce del violino*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (1998), *La concessione del telefono*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (1999), *La mossa del cavallo*, Milano, Rizzoli.
- (2000), *La scomparsa di Patò*, Milano, Mondadori.
- (2001), *Il re di Girgenti*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2004), *La luna di carta*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2007), *Maruzza Musumeci*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2008), *Il casellante*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2009), *Il sonaglio*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2011), *Gran Circo Taddei e altre storie di Vigàta*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2012), *La regina di Pomerania e altre storie di Vigàta*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2013), *Un covò di vipere*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2014), *Inseguendo un'ombra*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2015), *Elvira e io*, in *La memoria di Elvira*, Palermo, Sellerio, 9-18.
- (2019a), *Conversazioni su Tiresia*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2019b), *Autodifesa di Caino*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- (2020), *Riccardino*, Palermo, Sellerio.
- Capecchi Giovanni (2000), *Andrea Camilleri*, Fiesole, Cadmo.
- Demontis Simona (2020), “La Sirena, l'albero e la capra: fantastico Camilleri”, *Quaderni camilleriani*, “La seduzione del mito”, 11, 60-85, <<https://www.camillerindex.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Quaderni-camilleriani-11.pdf#page=62>> (03/2022).
- Jossa Stefano (2013), *Un paese senza eroi. L'Italia da Jacopo Ortis a Montalbano*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Lo Castro Giuseppe (2018), “Le corna o la mafia. Un topos letterario fra Sciascia e Camilleri”, in Id., *Costellazioni siciliane. Undici visioni da Verga a Camilleri*, Pisa, ETS, 173-190.
- Madrignani C.A. (2020), “Camilleri o del ‘bisogno di piacere’”, in Id., *Verità e narrazioni. Per una storia materiale del romanzo in Italia*, a cura di Alessio Giannanti, Giuseppe Lo Castro, Antonio Resta, Pisa, ETS, 439-443.
- Maiolani Michele (2020), “Io non so scrivere queste cose come le sai scrivere tu’: le narrazioni documentarie di Andrea Camilleri e Leonardo Sciascia”, *Diacritica*, 6, 34, <<https://diacritica.it/letture-critiche/io-non-so-scrivere-queste-cose-come-le-sai-scrivere-tu-le-narrazioni-documentarie-di-andrea-camilleri-e-leonardo-sciascia.html>> (03/2022).
- Novelli Mauro (2017), “La gabbia di Montalbano”, in Vittorio Spinazzola (a cura di), *Tirature '17. Da una serie all'altra*, Milano, il Saggiatore – Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 39-45.
- Pugno Laura (2007), *Sirene*, Torino, Einaudi.

- Quaderni camilleriani* (2019), “Fantastiche e metamorfiche isolitudini”, 8, <<https://www.camillerindex.it/quaderni-camilleriani/quaderni-camilleriani-8/>> (03/2022).
- Simenon Georges (1950), *Les Mémoires de Maigret*, Paris, Les Presses de la Cité.
- Tomasi di Lampedusa Giuseppe (1961), *Lighea*, in Id., *Racconti*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 39-76.
- Traina Giuseppe (1998), “Le pagine gialle di Camilleri”, *Linea d’ombra*, 16, 136, 22-24.
- (2014), *Siciliani ultimi? Tre studi su Sciascia, Bufalino, Consolo. E oltre*, Modena, Mucchi.
- (2020), “Proposte per un bilancio dell’opera di Andrea Camilleri”, *Diacritica*, 6, 34, <<https://diacritica.it/letture-critiche/proposte-per-un-bilancio-dellopera-di-andrea-camilleri.html>> (03/2022).

Absent Fathers and Italian Nation-building in Carlo Collodi's Books for School

Andrea Pagani

Abstract:

In this contribution, I analyse the schoolbooks of Carlo Collodi (born Carlo Lorenzini, 1826-1890), written between 1877 and 1890. In those years, the recently formed Italian State – declared in 1861 and completed in 1871 with the annexation of Rome – faced the necessity of constructing a shared national identity for a heterogeneous community. I examine how the representation of paternal figures is informed by Collodi's pedagogical approach in his schoolbooks. Within the Italian nation-building, which had cultural and ideological nuances, the family was considered essential, and the *padre* played an undisputed authoritarian role. However, my analysis demonstrates how Collodi's schoolbooks subvert that ideology through representing the dysfunctional paternal figure.

Keywords: Collodi, Italian Identity, Nation-building, 19th Century, Pinocchio

Carlo Lorenzini, widely known as Collodi (1826-1890), is well-known in classic European children's literature for his classic *Le avventure di Pinocchio*, whose first episode was published in 1883 in the magazine *Il giornale per i bambini*. But he also wrote many schoolbooks, mostly centred around the young middle-class child Giannettino and his path towards a conservative education led by his mentor Dottor Boccadoro. The first text, *Giannettino*, published in 1877, was named after Parravicini's *Giannetto*, the most popular schoolbook at the time. *Giannettino* was followed by *La grammatica di Giannettino* (1883), *L'abbaco di Giannettino* (1884), *La geografia di Giannettino* (1886), and *Il viaggio per l'Italia di Giannettino* (1880, 1883, 1886), a volume made up of three books dedicated to tales of Giannettino's travels throughout Italy's North, Centre, and South. *La lanterna magica di Giannettino*, in 1890, concluded the collection. Furthermore, Collodi wrote other texts for school use, such as *Minuzzolo* (1878) or *Libro di lezioni per la seconda classe elementare, secondo gli ultimi programmi* (1885).

This article analyses Collodi's schoolbooks, examining how the representation of paternal figures is informed by the author's pedagogical approach in these works published 1877-1890. In those years, the recently formed Italian State – declared in 1861 and completed in 1871 with the annexation of Rome – faced the necessity of constructing a shared national identity for a heterogeneous community. Within that cultural-ideological process, the family was considered

Andrea Pagani, Monash University, Australia, andrea.pagani1@monash.edu, 0000-0002-5021-1143

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Andrea Pagani, *Absent Fathers and Italian Nation-building in Carlo Collodi's Books for School*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.06, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 39-56, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

essential, and the *padre* played an undisputed authoritarian role. However, my analysis demonstrates how Collodi's schoolbooks subvert that ideology through representing the dysfunctional paternal figure.

Before reaching even wider popularity with his books for children, Collodi was also considered to be one of the most authoritative journalists and was certainly amongst the most caustic ones, as argued by Vincenzo Cappelletti, Cosimo Ceccuti and Daniela Marcheschi, who claim that “La Firenze dei giornali e dei giornalisti è per tanta parte la Firenze di Collodi” (2011, 33). In addition, the King of Italy Umberto I granted Collodi a Knighthood in 1878. This title, apparently, was conferred because of the success he had with *Giannettino*, published the year before (Prada 2018, 313). Thus, by the beginning of the 1880s, Collodi was, without doubt, an authority amongst the Italian cultural élite. Moreover, his reputation as a journalist led him to be a celebrity before beginning his career as a writer for children.

This article contributes to a recent scholarly re-assessment of Collodi's work and its participation in the Italian nation-building process. The schoolbooks have historically earned Collodi a reputation as a conservative writer, but I investigate the extent to which Collodi's schoolbooks subvert the strategies propounded by the Italian State. Most of the 20th century critical debate – and part of more recent criticism – viewed the wooden puppet Pinocchio, who defeated poverty thanks to hard work and commitment, as an archetype for the Italian bourgeoisie (Spadolini 1989 [1972], 243). In recent years, Daniela Marcheschi (2016) – head of the commission for Collodi's *Edizione Nazionale* – re-examined Collodi's masterpiece *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (1883) and questioned its limited reputation as the Italian-bourgeois *Bildungsroman*. Marcheschi, instead, discovered in the novel elements that dissent from the values promoted by the Italian State in its attempt to construct a shared national identity. Marcheschi demonstrated how values prized by the Italian State – loyalty, respect for, and identification with the official authority, the promotion of a stable middle-class – seemed to be subverted in *Pinocchio*. Marcheschi affirms the claimed influence of Collodi-as-journalist on Collodi-as-children's-writer and believes irony to be as prominent a feature in the work of the children's writer as it was for the journalist (2016, 30). As a result, *Pinocchio* and its author are now linked with progressive and anti-establishment positions. Marcheschi argues:

Pinocchio non sarà mai conformista, come molti vorrebbero invece che fosse, per annullarne la carica esplosiva. [...] Ed è questo che Collodi vuol dire ai bambini e ai grandi: rimanete sempre Pinocchio, non diventate conformisti! (Ivi, 19)

However, this reconfigured, politicized analysis of *Pinocchio* has not yet been expanded to consideration of Collodi's schoolbooks. These texts are still perceived as books written to facilitate the Italian State's cultural and political strategies. Pino Boero and Carmine De Luca did note how *Giannettino* represented “il primo caso di scardinamento del sistema ideologico che sacrifica l'infanzia all'altare della morale borghese” (2010, 23). The critics cited scholars such as Luigi Santucci, who already in 1950 highlighted Collodi's innovative contribution

to destabilizing the “solidissimo edificio” (77) of the Italian bourgeoisie. Santucci argued that *Giannettino* displayed preference for the “morale taumaturgica della fantasia” (*ibidem*) over the pedagogical seriousness that characterized other contemporaneous schoolbooks. Boero and De Luca, however, did not investigate the potential political and social nuances in these educational texts and confined their claims about *Giannettino*'s innovation to its stylistic features. In recent years, scholars such as Anna Ascenzi and Roberto Sani have still claimed these texts to be supportive of the cultural and political strategy promoted by the Italian State; they identify in *Giannettino* an “ideale educativo chiaramente ispirato al sistema di valori, ai modelli di comportamento e ai costumi civili della borghesia urbana” (2018, 126).

1. Fatherhood and Italian identity

Historians such as Ilaria Porciani (2006) and Alberto Mario Banti (2000, 2011) argue that, in the years of Collodi's publication, the first decades that followed the Italian State's unification emphasized the concept of *Risorgimento* and the claimed pivotal role of the family in Italian society. The conflict between the two authorities of the time (the secular Italian State and the Holy See) was a political-cultural debate known as the *Questione Romana*, and both institutions clamoured to become the supreme authority, so it is no surprise that they tried to link the family to their propaganda. For example, Pope Leo XIII inaugurated his pontificate in 1878 by promoting Catholic familial education for a Catholic society with the encyclical *Inscrutabili Dei Consilio*. At the same time, the Italian government propagandized a familial image of the Italian nation, in which the *patrioti* and their relatives loved their motherland as if it were their natural family. Regardless of the perspective, the family was an accepted authority within Italian society, the fulcrum around which the institutions aimed to bond their loyal community. As cultural scholars like Marzio Barbagli (1984) and Piero Melograni (1988) argued, authoritarian social constructs of the family had been modelled in Italian society since at least the 15th century. The familial construct was well-rooted in the Italian community, which explains the substantial use of family-related semantics in secular and religious propaganda.

Back to the post-unification years, the paternal figure was an acknowledged familial authority in post-unification Italian society. The *padre* was the firm educator, the ultimate figure who demanded obedience, and the one who had to provide for the whole family's financial needs. He was the role model to be followed, the herald of wisdom and justice: “il capo della famiglia e rappresenta Iddio” as Giulio Tarra (1864, 194-196) defined him. Unlike the mother, the father's strength resided in his being a person with no sentimentalism. Scholars such as Pietro Costa went as far as defining the paternal figure as the nucleus of the family; according to Costa, the family is a “luogo dove una molteplicità di figure soggettive esistono in rapporto con la dominante figura del pater” (2001 [1999], 364).

The *padre* was publicly and legally acknowledged as the titleholder of the familial community. His relevance within the family – exemplified by the family name, which still applies today – was the logical consequence of a paternalistic society based on ideals that were considered “masculine” at that time: detachment, vigour, objectivity, and pragmatism. Italian society was still a predominantly masculinist community after unification; while the evidence is abundant, suffice to say that in those years – and until 1946 – men politically controlled Italian society, as women could not vote or participate in political life. Moreover, as in many other countries, Italian women’s salaries were generally lower than their male counterparts; for example, a *maestra* (primary school teacher), earned considerably less than her male colleague *maestro* (Ghizzoni 2003, 35).

The cold war between the secular State and Catholic Church was instantiated in their conflicting emphasis on the two terms in the man-father and woman-mother dichotomy. The post-unification Italian State promoted the *padre*’s authoritative presence and solidity for its political propaganda, superimposing a paternal figure over the maternal image of *Madre Patria*, or *Donna Italia*; the fundamental archetype that the secular propaganda promoted as the highest patriotic symbol was the one of the *padre della patria* (De Fort 1996, 33). Conversely, the Catholic Church promoted itself as a maternal, reassuring, and uninterested authority, the “nutrice, maestra e madre”, Pope Leo XIII puts it in *Inscrutabili Dei Consilio*. Such a distinction does not intend to oversimplify a rivalry spanning the first decades following Italian unification. However, the Italian State created a propagandistic narrative through which it predominantly promoted itself as a decisive and masculine authority, and the Catholic Church adopted a reassuring approach by a substantial use of the Marian iconography.

While the Holy See focused on a maternal and private relationship with the faithful, the Italian State aimed to superimpose a masculine and authoritarian public image. Cesare Correnti’s speech for King Vittorio Emanuele II’s funeral in 1878 stresses the Italian State’s aim to be perceived as a familial community under the *pater*’s command. The Italian nation, simultaneously described as mother and daughter, was under the paternal command of the King: “Italia / con orgoglio di madre / con dolore di figlia / implora / al re liberatore / che fu cittadino fedele e capitano vittorioso / l’immortalità / dei giusti e degli eroi” (in Tobia 1998, 22). The shift from private to public is here clearly expressed: the King (and hence the State) was the father of the whole community and needed to be respected, obeyed, and somewhat feared by his subjects.

The newborn Italian State championed a masculine image of itself and identified the *padre* figure as the supreme authority. In those years, Minister of Education Guido Baccelli was on the frontline in promoting the image of a secular paternal State in which masculinity was encouraged and endorsed through the introduction of military gymnastics in schools. In a speech he made at Parliament on 17 November 1881, Baccelli aimed at a society comprised of “cittadini utili a sé e difensori disciplinati, coraggiosi e robusti al paese” (in “Istituzione della scuola popolare di complemento all’istruzione obbligatoria”, n.240). He believed that the emotional instability and the lack of determination of the citi-

zenry facilitated the success of Catholic propaganda in the rivalry between State and Church, demonstrating how the conflict was understood as a gendered issue. State propaganda considered emotional stability a masculine strength, so the Italian government discouraged frivolousness and any sign of feminine weakness in primary school books including *Giannettino*, which for this reason was not approved by the school commission in 1883: “han pregi molti di sostanza e di dettato, ma sono concepiti in modo così romanzesco, da dar soverchio luogo al dolce, distraendo dall’utile; e sono scritti in stile così gaio, e non di rado così umoristicamente frivolo, da togliere ogni serietà all’insegnamento” (Boero, De Luca 2010, 22).

However, scholars such as Marco Cavina (2007) have argued that, in the second half of the *Ottocento* (1800s), the supreme authority of the father figure began to falter in Italy and in the wider Western world. According to Cavina, the dissolution of the *patria potestà* was the result of a historical process ignited by the French Revolution, and which was completed by the end of the 1970s. Cavina argues that factors such as “individualismo borghese, industrializzazione, statalismo, trasformazione del mercato del lavoro e della costruzione del genere” (vii) contributed to terminate what had been a dogmatic authority up until then. Cavina also argues that the promulgation of the *Codice civile unitario* in 1865 de facto divested the *pater familias* of his supreme power, that of disinheriting his offspring: “Col venir meno del potere di diseredare si offuscava definitivamente la configurazione ‘regale’ del padre di famiglia, privo ormai della possibilità d’investitura del proprio successore. Il re della casa stava per essere definitivamente spodestato” (ivi, 244). Hence, the Italian State was dismissing the *pater*’s private authority through laws such as the *Codice civile unitario*, while promoting a public paternal image of authority.

Responding to this public discourse, Collodi presents to Italian children a depleted paternal figure, whose weak authority is sometimes ridiculed. Almost all of Collodi’s mostly-upper-class fictional fathers seem to lack authority and never be role models to their children. *Giannettino*’s father is the most obvious example, because he is the only male character in all Collodi’s schoolbooks whose name is unknown. His anonymity creates a narrative uniqueness, a kind of linguistic scarcity that I argue could represent one of the social problems Collodi’s criticised strongly in his journalism: the scarce sense of responsibility for public duties. *Giannettino*’s father is the blend of the two images of father and State in one negative and anonymous character who embodies his society’s greatest evils. The only positive paternal models in such otherwise negative representations are Minuzzolo’s father Quintiliano and *Giannettino*’s uncle Ferrante. Their authority is based on concrete education and not on natural law: Collodi critiques the mainstream assertion of the paternal figure.

2. The *padre* in schoolbooks

In Collodi’s schoolbooks, most paternal characters epitomise the problematic aspects of Italian society that Collodi depicted in many of his journalistic

texts, such as insufficient attention to children's education, carelessness of the public community, and financial parasitism. What stands out is Collodi's choice of Giannettino's father as the archetype of the politicians' absenteeism. In his journalistic works, Collodi often harshly criticised such moral failure as one of the worst perils of organised modern society. Short stories such as "L'onorevole Cenè Tanti" (in *Occhi e nasi* [1881]), "Funerali e danze" (in *Opere* 2006), "Il trovarobe ministeriale", or "Una seduta notturna" (in *Note gaie* 1893) are just some of the numerous occasions in which Collodi condemned the absenteeism of politicians. Giannettino's father is represented as a wrong educational model. His absenteeism from parliamentary duties highlights his failing as a citizen and as a role model to his son. The education of Giannettino is not under the direction of his father – as happens, for example, with Minuzzolo's father Quintiliano – but in the hands of uncle Ferrante and Dottor Boccadoro, who are not part of the primary family nucleus. Ferrante is the uncle, but his being a sailor allows him to visit Giannettino only sporadically, while Boccadoro is Giannettino's father's old friend who becomes the child's mentor.

In De Amicis' *Cuore*, he used the terms *padre* 425 times and *babbo* 18 times: I argue that he was constructing a kind of linguistic sacredness to the paternal characters. And in *Cuore*, Enrico's father and mother are active characters. Conversely, in all Collodi's schoolbooks, *padre* is used 80 times, and *babbo* 92 times. The prevalence of the word *babbo* needs to be understood through Collodi's Tuscan background. Unlike in De Amicis' *Cuore*, Collodi's books have no fictional mother or father as a main character, which diminishes the importance of those direct familial figures. By not creating any relevant parental character, Collodi makes the extensive absence of the familial authority even more explicit. Such a hiatus highlights a criticism directed against the lack of role models in the society at the time, both in social and professional contexts.

While Collodi's society was promoting the father as its idealised image, Collodi seems to invite the reader to reflect on how distant the actual society is from the propagandised one, critiquing the paternal role's propagandised interpretation. In his schoolbooks, lower-class fathers teach positive values to their children of productiveness and honesty, although their lack of education is depicted as causing their submission to strict social hierarchy. As for bourgeois and aristocratic fathers, Giannettino's and Giocondo's fathers are portrayed negatively, and only the bourgeois father of Giannettino's friend Minuzzolo, Quintiliano is described wholly positively, which I argue is a further critique of upper-class masculinity and their lack of cultural depth.

3. Giannettino's father: the story of an absentee

In the Giannettino schoolbooks, Giannettino's father went to university with his son's mentor, Dottor Boccadoro, and has friends in other parts of Italy, such as Sardinia and Piedmont, most likely due to his job as a parliamentary deputy. In the whole collection, there is no clear information regarding the father's occupation. He is described as an upper-class man, most likely a bourgeois,

through the fictional voice of Giannettino, and it is said that his father owns a marble portrait of himself. Although it is not explicitly stated, it might be supposed that he holds a ministry or is at least a very highly-rated person, as marble busts denoted a high social class.

Regarding his relationship with his son, Collodi only states “il suo babbo gli voleva un ben dell’anima” (1877, 9). Despite such proclaimed affection, Giannettino’s father puts his son’s education in the hands of a friend, Dottor Boccadoro. The father interacts with his son only twice in the whole collection, both times in the first volume, *Giannettino*. In the first instance, he questions Giannettino about his watch. Later in the story, Giannettino is leaving with Dottor Boccadoro for the *viaggio* through Italy: Giannettino’s father commands his son to obey his mentor. In these episodes, the significance of the paternal character is low, however, his authority is never explicitly ridiculed, as Collodi did with his more strident journalism.

Collodi elides any physical description for this character, and even the name. These devices contribute to the father being characterized by his absence, right down to his failure to attend parliamentary sessions. Collodi decides to use Dottor Boccadoro to reprove Giannettino’s father in front of the child:

[...] io vedo il babbo che ogni volta che c’è da fare il deputato, piglia le sue brave carabattole e va sul Monte Amiata, com’egli dice, a cercar radiche medicinali. -Tuo padre, che in tutto il resto vale oro quanto pesa, in questo caso non è punto lodevole: perché oltre a dare il cattivo esempio al figliuolo, non solo danneggia i suoi propri interessi, ma pregiudica in certo modo anche quelli di tutto il paese. (Ivi, 123-124)

The unappealing parental profiles Collodi presents in his writings speak to a critique of the élites and their contradictions: portraying upper-class men as consistently unconstructive characters, Collodi reveals how the new society is based on propagandistic ideals that are not reflected in the reality. The protagonist of his schoolbooks – hence the model for children to follow – receives no attention from parents who embody no positive attributes, neither in the privacy of the family nor in society. Ultimately, the élites’ hypocrisies are unveiled for recognition by Collodi’s readers.

4. The selected community

Irony is a distinctive feature of Collodi’s writings. But irony is one of the most elusive concepts to define in literary studies. Wayne Booth addresses this problem when he ironically thanks eleven contributors for their 748 interpretations of irony in the introduction to *The Rhetoric of Irony*. Scholars such as Booth and Sue Walsh have approached the notion of irony through its relationship with community, dynamism and authority.

Booth’s argument is that irony creates intimacy between the actors of communication. Booth described a “selected community” made up of those who share a common understanding by “getting” (1974, 10-12) the irony. Accord-

ing to Booth, this type of community is formed by a dynamic process of reconstruction involves four steps that allow the audience to understand the ironist. Firstly, the audience needs to reject the surface-level meaning, then look for alternative interpretations. Then the audience needs to determine the author's beliefs; and identify the underlying meaning. Booth argues that what Wolfgang Iser named the implied author creates a path for the audience to follow. This process allows the two actors to depart from the first shaky platform of superficial and ambiguous meaning "toward an obscured point that is intended as wiser, wittier, more compassionate, subtler, truer, more moral, or at least less [...] vulnerable to further irony" (ivi, 36).

Sue Walsh accepts such dynamism and claims that the semantic process could not be initiated if the "selected community" did not possess the proper tools to distinguish irony from a mere statement, and that is how irony is linked to authority. Walsh sees in authority the medium that guides the audience through the process of reconstruction and states "what exactly '*the*' point is" (2016, 97). She argues that authority allows the reader to "privilege a particular reading, [...] the reading of the 'meant' " (ivi, 97-98). Paraphrasing Booth and Walsh, we might link the author's system of beliefs to an established idea of authority, which will guide the "selected community" towards the intended meaning.

As Collodi was known for his witty use of irony, I will examine irony in the representation of these two strategic characters Boccadoro and Ferrante to discern Collodi's attitude towards education.

5. Two non-biological paternal figures: Ferrante and Boccadoro

Booth, in his theorization of irony, argues that the device functions by creating two levels of address: the superficial meaning addressed to the naïve reader, and the more sophisticated meaning addressed to the knowing reader, what Booth calls the "selected community". In *Giannettino*, Collodi fills the educational and parental gap left by Giannettino's father with Doctor Boccadoro and Giannettino's uncle Ferrante, and these two characters Boccadoro and Ferrante represent the two audiences of the device of irony. Boccadoro (meaning "mouth of gold") personifies superficial understanding and the uncontested acceptance of the middle-class behavioural code and its mainstream societal values. On the other hand, uncle Ferrante (recalling *ferro*, iron) personifies Booth's "selected community", through which the author conveys his ironized critique. These two characters epitomise the distinction between private and public authority; while Ferrante belongs to the family, being the brother of Giannettino's mother, Boccadoro is not related to the child, though he acts as a counterpart of the father and the teacher. Moreover, whereas Ferrante embodies the satisfaction of the self, and lectures his nephew on personal achievement with a hint of the "self-made man" principle, Boccadoro personifies the impositions of middle-class society with its vetoes and rigid etiquette. At the same time, he represents the ambiguity and hypocrisy of the ruling class, as some of his conduct contradicts the values he often imposes on Giannettino.

There is historical evidence that Collodi had probably read English positivist books such as Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, a manifesto of mid-Victorian liberalism. Recognizing this influence might allow us to identify in Ferrante a symbol of the positivist refusal of unchallenged truths. Irony has been described as "the condition of language [that] refuses the petrification of meaning" (Walsh 2016, 107): Ferrante shares the positivist refusal of any given truth, and his lectures focus on deep understanding and the individual's experience, which populates his ironic and positivist attitude.

6. Boccadoro, the "mouth-of-gold"

The following analysis on the character of Boccadoro shows that Giannettino's mentor, unlike Ferrante, seems to focus on superficial meaning, and his dogmatic approach distances him from Positivism. Collodi ironically constructs Dottor Boccadoro and through him criticizes the bourgeois dogmatic approach to education. Boccadoro, as a pledge of friendship, offers to take charge of the child's education and become his mentor. Collodi describes Boccadoro as extremely thin and sincere, in opposition to Ferrante's solidity: "un bel vecchietto asciutto e nervoso, lindo negli abiti e nella persona, il quale era conosciutissimo per la sua bella virtù di parlar chiaro e di dire a tutti la verità, anche a costo di passare qualche volta per un po' troppo lesto di lingua" (1877, 4). Boccadoro aims to purge the immature habits from Giannettino through many prohibitions imposed like a sort of oracle. For the implied author, this is the path towards meeting the social requirements for bourgeois society. Boccadoro promotes a code of behaviour based on a – vague – sense of hierarchy: "Quando ti trovi in compagnia con gente da più di te cerca di parlar poco: di non interrompere i discorsi degli altri, e di non metter bocca nelle cose, delle quali non t'intendi" (ivi, 13).

Applying Booth's theorization of irony as a dynamic process of constructing meaning, I argue that Boccadoro epitomizes the unquestioning audience of superficial meaning. Boccadoro constantly lectures Giannettino with unchallenged truths. His educational method is based on a long list of vetoes grouped in the section titled "Non mangiarti le unghie: non grattarti il capo" (ivi, 10). As a sample of his teaching method, the title is only a part of the long list of injunctions.

The upright Boccadoro, however, does not always abide by his own moral values. This fact is demonstrated, for instance, in the episode where Giannettino is arrested for stealing in a restaurant. Boccadoro and Giannettino's mother appear on the scene when the police are taking the child into custody. Boccadoro intervenes by misusing his authoritative position, intimidating the police by informing them of the family's high-ranking social standing. Giannettino's mother pulls her son into the carriage, which quickly departs. Collodi ironically highlights the gap between Boccadoro's professed maxims and his behaviour, and depicts him and Giannettino as above the law: "La signora Sofia strappò il ragazzo dalle mani del carabiniere e lo portò quasi di peso in carrozza. Il carabiniere voleva protestare; ma il dottor Boccadoro, affacciandosi allo sportello gli dette il suo nome: e la carrozza, voltando indietro, ripartì a rotta di collo" (ivi, 189).

Collodi's decision to give Giannettino's mentor the nickname of *Boccadoro* is also a device of irony. If we assume that the name *Boccadoro* (mouth-of-gold) refers to someone whose words are always true and fair such a choice would be an anomaly in Collodi's nicknames. The nickname of *Boccadoro* was the epithet used for Giovanni Crisostomo, patriarch of Constantinople in the 4th century. His name Crisostomo, derived from Greek words *chrysós* (gold) and *stóma* (mouth), highlighted his outstanding eloquence. According to Garzanti Italian dictionary, the nickname *Boccadoro* can ironically be used to identify someone pedantic. The latter seems to be a more coherent reading of Collodi's choice.

Collodi used nicknames in many of his works, often accompanied by the real name, enhancing a character's disadvantage or negative features. For instance, in *Pinocchio*, with *Mastro Ciliegia* (Antonio), Collodi highlights his alcoholic's red nose, while *Polendina* (Geppetto) implies the vanity of wearing a wig. This is ironic again; he is so poor that he paints the fireplace on the wall but manages to wear a wig. In *Giannettino's* chapter "I soprannomi, Giannettino" cruelly uses nicknames to embellish his classmates' weaknesses. For instance, he calls a student with a hunchback *Gobbino*, a child who limps *Zoppo Vulcano*, and a child who wears skimpy clothes because of his poverty *Maestro Miseria*, and a child who suffers from a disease that makes him extremely weak and pale, *Riccotta* (1877, 45-46).

Ellen Winner argues that "in a text that is ironic throughout, the clues must be [...] [in] the conflict between what is said and what we know about the speaker's beliefs" (1997, 25). We might be tempted to suppose that Collodi ironically identifies *Boccadoro* as the "mouth of gold" because his golden lectures are polished, shiny, and civilised, but he is hypocritically the orthodox standard-bearer of conformist education who prevents Giannettino from being sentenced by the national law, putting personal advantage before the community's rules. Calling such a character *Boccadoro* hence seems ironic, a device through which Collodi underscores the hypocrisy of society by having a character affirm respectability and values but not practise them. As a popular proverb says – and most likely Collodi knew – "non è tutto oro quel che luccica" (All that glitters is not gold).

7. Ferrante, or the gratification of the self

Giannettino's uncle Ferrante has arguably the most positive representation of an adult male character in Collodi's schoolbooks. Collodi describes all of Ferrante's actions with positively connotated verbs; there is never a moment in which Ferrante yells or loses his patience, unlike Doctor *Boccadoro*. Even when Ferrante raises his voice, Collodi uses descriptors connoting positivity.

The educational model embodied by Ferrante seems to dissent from the dominant models of the time. Although his system of beliefs conforms to some extent to the bourgeois/Samuel Smiles-inspired positivist pragmatism – based on a solid faith in self-determination and willing obedience to community laws – he seems to distance himself from Positivism by accepting the impossibility of men to have absolute control over their lives, admitting the impact of *fortu-*

na. Also, he seems to promote a life comprising diverse experiences worldwide, which contravenes the dominant national propaganda based on unconditional love for the *patria*. Ferrante is the only character who encourages Giannettino to pursue individual self-realization, disregarding what the private (family) or public authorities (State) wanted for the child.

Giannettino perceives Ferrante as a role-model authority to imitate. The uncle is an experienced and famous sailor who travels the world and speaks many languages and is described as a vigorous man, with a burst of loud laughter and vast shoulders. Giannettino immensely admires and respects his uncle; throughout the whole Giannettino series, the young child always praises Ferrante in public, and Collodi's description seems to imply Giannettino's esteem for his uncle:

Immaginatevi un bell'uomo sulla cinquantina, alto come un cipresso, con due spalle larghe quanto un pianerottolo di scale e uno stomaco che pareva un armadio aperto. Quando il Capitano rideva (e rideva spesso), le sue risate facevano un tal fracasso assordante, che somigliavano a quelle saette che si sentono sul palcoscenico nei balli e nelle opere in musica, allo scoppio del temporale. (1877, 33)

Ferrante's first appearance in the text shows his opposition to Boccadoro. Boccadoro had earlier in the story rewarded the child with a collection of marionettes, which he rapidly began to confiscate one by one because of Giannettino's inappropriate behaviour. Giannettino has to deal with a reduced number of marionettes, which puts his first marionette performance in front of family friends at risk of being cancelled. The child decides to transform the tyrant marionette into the primadonna Rosaura, but he does not modify the marionette's voice mechanism, which was pre-set as a deep, dark sound. During the show's emotive climax, the female marionette emits a deep, tyrant-like shout, which ignites the audience's hilarity. The noisiest laughter is Ferrante's, who then appears in the scene for the first time. Giannettino closes the curtains, interrupts the show, and reveals to Ferrante that his fiasco was caused by the sight of a white horse in the morning. This confession allows Ferrante to lecture the child against prejudices and superstitions such as salt dropped on the table, the number thirteen and the devil.

Ferrante's speech comes straight after Boccadoro's punishments. Such a strategy is very productive in showing the clear opposition between the two characters/educators; while Boccadoro uses prohibitions and punishments, Ferrante challenges stereotypes and superstitions. Boccadoro functions as the *pars destruens*, while the *pars construens*, Ferrante, encourages Giannettino to gain knowledge for self-determination in society and learn from direct experiences.

Ferrante is the only character who discusses Giannettino's future with him. He encourages him to learn other languages and the art of industry and trade and does not undermine career outcomes other than the ones that the child's family has already planned for him. Unlike Boccadoro, Ferrante embodies a positive (and *positivist*) message of self-determination and pragmatism. However, Collodi did not construct a character who is a mere reciter of positivist

mottos. Ferrante seems to have a more relaxed approach to life and admits that individual motivation cannot be the only factor, as luck and fortuity can also impact on one's choices. As a consequence, Collodi seems to deliver through Ferrante a message of self-satisfaction that differs from those focused on social or familial impositions:

[...] convergo anch'io che tutte le arti e tutte le professioni possono essere eccellenti, massime se esercitate con amore e con coscienza, e anco con un tantino di fortuna: perché nelle cose di questo mondo un po' di fortuna non guasta mai! Per conseguenza fa' pure, se così ti piace, o l'impiegato, o l'avvocato, il medico, o il pittore [...]. (1877, 35)

Ferrante, for example, disagrees with Giannettino's mother, who wants her son to work in the public administration. In this volume, Ferrante challenges the bourgeois dogma of blindly following parents' wishes. Moreover, he warns Giannettino of the loss of personal freedom if he pursues a life as a public servant. Collodi uses his most positive character to critique working for the Italian State:

Tutte a un modo queste benedette mamme – disse il Capitano ridendo, e guardando la sorella. – Basta che abbiano un figliuolo, non sono contente fino a tanto che non lo vedono appollaiato in qualche Ufficio o Azienda dello Stato. Non ti dirò che la strada degl'impieghi non possa condurre un galantuomo a guadagnarsi onestamente un pezzo di pane. Ma non credere, amico mio, che questa strada sia seminata di rose e di viole a ciocche! Il giorno che sarai impiegato, comincerai subito dal perdere i due più grandi beni della vita, cioè l'indipendenza e la libertà, e tutti i giorni avrai un orario fisso, come i treni delle strade ferrate. (*Ibidem*)

I argue that such promotion of an independent life is informed by Collodi's personal experiences and beliefs as well as a common mindset of the time: the triumph of the individual in the form of the "self-made-man". Collodi's nephew, known as Collodi Nipote, witnessed an argument between Collodi and his brother Paolo which he represented, incorporating that ideology of the self-made man. In this episode, Paolo was late for breakfast because of his work at the china manufactory owned by the aristocratic Ginori family. In the excerpt, Collodi emphasizes Paolo's skills, and how his brother Carlo should acknowledge that Ginori's profits rely on Paolo's hard work:

Caro mio, dici bene tu, ma loro sono i miei padroni e mi tocca a fare il loro comodo." Carlo scattò: "Padroni un corno! Vuoi farti loro servitore umilissimo? E dov'è la tua dignità di uomo?" "Ma, Carlo, pensa a cosa hanno fatto i Ginori per noi." Lui battè stizzito il pugno sulla tavola, poi contenendosi: "Per noi?! Di me volevano fare un prete. Bel servizio, perdinci! [...]" "Ne hanno il diritto [...] sono dei nobili, e..." "E tu sei plebeo, non è vero? Tu, che sai fare tutto quello che loro non sanno, tu che con la tua intelligenza e il tuo lavoro dai loro i mezzi di fare [...] Che se ne vadano al diavolo i tuoi padroni e tutta la nobiltà! (Lorenzini 1981, 52-53)

In Collodi's schoolbooks, I argue that Ferrante embodies the ironic approach of refusing unexamined truths. His lectures are always functional and pragmatic, while acknowledging life's unpredictability; his physical strength and gigantic appearance also contribute to a solidity and a stability connected neither with the State nor with the family. Ferrante found his happiness far from his family and his country, and he is the character that Collodi selects to be Giannettino's favourite – and potentially his readers'.

Overall, Collodi represented a dysfunctional family scenario that does not reflect the family's authoritarian portrayal as a foundation for the new Italian society. Collodi's families are corrupted, superficial, and uninterested in the life of the Italian community. The presence of lively characters such as Ferrante, however, proves that Collodi did not univocally criticize the bourgeoisie or other social classes. Collodi seems to offer, as his ideal paternal profile, a determined man who rejects ignorance and praises pragmatism but still gives great importance to culture and knowledge.

I now turn to another of these lively characters, Quintiliano, who is portrayed dramatically differently to Giannettino's father.

8. Quintiliano: the positive paternal model

Quintiliano is the father of Giannettino's friend, Minuzzolo. He is the only named upper-class father. Although the book *Minuzzolo* was not primarily intended as a schoolbook, Quintiliano stands out as the most positive paternal authority. Quintiliano is described as inflexible but fair, a positive role model for his four children: "un brav'uomo, che stando in commercio aveva fatto onestamente fior di quattrini" (Collodi 1878, 9). He is an idealized enlightened bourgeois destined to be part of the upper class that replaced the nobility as he buys a villa from a bankrupted aristocratic family at the beginning of the story. Quintiliano is not a man driven only to seek wealth or political power; instead, he seems to have a deep sense of tradition and culture. He is a classicist who admires Homer, Virgil, Catullus, and such modern classical poets as Ariosto, Mascheroni and Metastasio. Quintiliano seems to have a psychological sensibility that adds to his knowledge and erudition. For example, quizzing his children on history, he notices early that Adolfo, the laziest of his sons, could not answer his question. Hence, the father sends his children to bed and postpones the examination, preventing Adolfo's humiliation in front of his brothers.

Unlike the previous fathers I have described, Quintiliano spends much time with his children and ensures that they receive an education in respect, honesty, and culture. For example, he organises a weekly opening of his villa for the village farmworkers. During this event, his children and friends – all sons of farmers or servants – are taught Roman history through the explanation of the frescos on the villa's walls. This initiative allows farmworkers to finally understand those paintings they had been seeing for decades without comprehending them. Furthermore, Quintiliano publicly praises his servants' son, Sandrino for his clear historical exposition. His compliment was positively received by San-

drino's mother, who weeps as her son is praised in public by the master: "[...] la mamma di Sandrino, che era lì nella sala, sentendosi lodare in pubblico il figliuolo, e lodare da un uomo tanto stimato come il padrone, ebbe una specie di freddolino giù per le spalle, e presa una cocca del fazzoletto che portava in capo, si asciugò tutti e due gli occhi" (ivi, 54).

In line with the naming in Collodi's schoolbooks, the name Quintiliano reflects the character's qualities, in this case positive ones. Quintilian was a Roman educator of the 1st century who wrote the *Institutio oratoria*, a twelve-volume textbook on oratory and pedagogy. In this treatise, he aimed to re-institute the honest oratory of Cicero's times. He criticized the dishonest and corrupted oratory of his time (Piras, Luceri 2012, 211-323). In the character of Quintiliano, Collodi presents his ideal of the paternal role model, who values the education of future generations and a society in which different social classes can peacefully live together. He embodies Collodi's concept of the perfect father by balancing pragmatism, a business mind, a sense of family and a sincere love for culture and knowledge.

Collodi chose Giocondo's father in *La lanterna magica di Giannettino* to criticize the aristocratic class's arrogance and parasitism. I argue that the education of Giocondo by his parents is the sum of what Collodi believed to be toxic for the new Italian society: façade culture, parasitism, arrogance, and lack of interest in the national community. Giocondo admits that his family worships the noble Cairoli family, "la famiglia più gloriosa che abbia avuto l'Italia nel Risorgimento" (Collodi 1899 [1890], 182), demonstrating Collodi's scorn for pompous propaganda. Giocondo believes that his father's wealth exonerates him from social duties, as he states at the beginning of the book: "Che crede che abbia bisogno della grammatica e della geografia per essere un signore? La si figuri che il mi' babbo ha un bel palazzo con tanti poderi, e una stalla con due majalini, che ci fanno i salami e il prosciutto per tutto l'anno" (*ibidem*).

Giocondo's father is described as an aristocrat who does not want to contribute to the national community – although he uses free public schooling to educate his child. In this case, the father is a harmful member of the society, who also inculcates in his child values that conflict with those of the national community. Giocondo admits that this disrespect for working people and the new Italian society stems from his father: "l'arte di fare il signore oggi non è più permessa...una delle solite prepotenze del Ministero, come dice il mio babbo quando legge i giornali: ma essendo io nato di buona famiglia, come son nato, non mi rassegnerò mai e poi mai a fare il sarto o il calzolaio, o un altro mestiero purchessia, [...] perché me ne vergognerai" (ivi, 82).

The respected authority attributed to the father figures in Collodi's schoolbooks hides many problematic aspects that, in Collodi's eyes, contributed to the formation of a dysfunctional society. Some upper-class father characters convey socially toxic messages such as indifference to the public community and financial parasitism. Collodi's choice of Giannettino's father as being an irresponsible parliamentary deputy denounces the bourgeoisie's defective familial and social educational approach. On the other hand, lower-class fathers are portrayed as

a social class whose only concern is hard work, with no time for their children's education and no hope of social mobility.

The character of a father who at least interacts with his children appears only in "I Nostri bambini". In this short story, a wealthy middle-class father wants to reprimand his vivacious son Beppino, who completely disrespects him. Beppino behaves like an undisciplined parliamentary deputy. He uses typical political expressions such as "All'ordine!" and imitates the Parliament's president when he calls the chamber to order by ringing the servant bell (Collodi 2006, 295-307). Beppino scorns his father by stealing his nightcap; ultimately, the father's humiliation reaches its climax in a scene reminiscent of the slapstick style of the *commedia dell'arte*. The mother, the sisters-in-law, the servant and even the dog attend the humiliation of the father: "i quali, appena udito il racconto dell'insolentissima scena, sono presi tutti da tale indignazione, che si mettono a ridere come tanti matti" (ivi, 299).

In the light of the Italian State's propagandistic aim to be perceived as the *padre* of its citizens, this short story "I Nostri bambini" can be interpreted as an allegory of the Italian nation, in which the deputies (the children) completely ignore the rules imparted by the father (the State) whose authority is insignificant. In this allegoric interpretation, Collodi undermines the paternal figure's authority and offers another satirical dysfunctional representation of the Italian family, which also symbolizes the national community. Collodi's fictional world does not celebrate any patriarchal figure; Collodi's families are fragmented and uneducated communities that are not organised by any familial structure.

As we have seen, Collodi's schoolbooks offer a dissenting portrayal of the family, which calls in question the dominant scholarly interpretation of his schoolbooks as supporting the élites. Collodi draws the young readers' attention to the values that their society propagandised as the backbone of the new nation, but refuses to imbue the figures of authority uncritically with those propagandistic values. Although Collodi does not deny the intrinsic value of the familial institution, the fictional families in his schoolbooks are majority dysfunctional communities. While contemporaneous authors tended to convey an idealized version of social and political realities such as family and State, Collodi created a narrative that was far from idealised or heroic. My analysis show that Collodi's ideological dissent is present in this satirical denunciation that he delivered to the new generation.

References

- Ascenzi Anna, Sani Roberto (2018), *Storia e antologia della letteratura per l'infanzia nell'Italia dell'Ottocento*, vol. II, Milano, Franco Angeli.
- Banti M.A. (2000), *La nazione del Risorgimento: parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita*, Torino, Einaudi.
- (2011), *Sublime madre nostra: la nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.

- Barbagli Marzio (1984), *Sotto lo stesso tetto: mutamenti della famiglia in Italia dal XV al XX secolo*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Boero Pino, De Luca Carmine (2010 [2008]), *La letteratura per l'infanzia*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Booth W.C. (1974), *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- Cappelletti Vincenzo, Ceccuti Cosimo, Marcheschi Daniela (2011), *Carlo Lorenzini protagonista dell'unità d'Italia*, Collodi, Fondazione nazionale Carlo Collodi.
- Cavina Marco (2007), *Il padre spodestato: l'autorità paterna dall'antichità a oggi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Collodi Carlo (1877), *Giannettino: libro per i ragazzi*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1878), *Minuzzolo: secondo libro di lettura: (seguito al Giannettino)*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1880), *Il viaggio per l'Italia di Giannettino. Parte prima (L'Italia superiore)*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1881), *Occhi e nasi: (ricordi dal vero)*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1883), *Il viaggio per l'Italia di Giannettino. Parte seconda (L'Italia centrale)*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1885), *L'abbaco di Giannettino per le scuole elementari*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1886), *La geografia di Giannettino: adottata nelle scuole comunali di Firenze*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1886), *Il viaggio per l'Italia di Giannettino. Parte terza (L'Italia meridionale)*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1889), *Libro di Lezioni per la seconda classe elementare, secondo gli ultimi programmi*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1893 [1883]), *La grammatica di Giannettino*, Firenze, R. Bemporad e figlio.
- (2014), *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, trans. by P.M.D. Panton, Pescia, Fondazione nazionale Carlo Collodi. Original edition Collodi Carlo (1883), *Le Avventure di Pinocchio*, Firenze, Felice Paggi.
- (1893), *Note gaie*, Firenze, R. Bemporad e figlio.
- (1899 [1890]), *La lanterna magica di Giannettino: libro per i giovanetti*, Firenze, R. Bemporad e figlio.
- (2006), *Opere*, a cura di Daniela Marcheschi, Milano, Mondadori.
- Costa Pietro (2001 [1999]), *Civitas. Storia della cittadinanza in Europa*, vol. 3, *La civiltà liberale*, Roma, Laterza.
- De Amicis Edmondo (1886), *Cuore. Libro per i ragazzi*, Milano, Fratelli Treves.
- De Fort Ester (1996), *La scuola elementare dall'unità alla caduta del fascismo*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Ghizzoni Carla (2003), "Il Maestro nella scuola elementare italiana, dall'Unità alla Grande Guerra", in Roberto Sani, Angelino Tedde (a cura di), *Maestri e istruzione popolare in Italia tra Otto e Novecento. Interpretazioni, prospettive di ricerca, esperienze in Sardegna*, Milano, Vita e pensiero, 19-79.
- "Istituzione della scuola popolare di complemento all'istruzione obbligatoria" (17 novembre 1881), in Camera dei Deputati, *Atti Parlamentari, Documenti*, Leg. XIV, sess. 1881-1882, vol. III, n. 240.
- Lorenzini Paolo (Collodi Nipote) (1981), *Collodi e Pinocchio*, Firenze, Salani Editore.
- Marcheschi Daniela (2016), *Il naso corto: una rilettura delle Avventure di Pinocchio*, Bologna, EDB.
- Melograni Piero, a cura di (1988), *La famiglia italiana dall'Ottocento a oggi*, Bari, Laterza.

- Piras Giorgio, Luceri Angelo (2012), "L'Oratoria e La Retorica" in Alessandro Fusi, Angelo Luceri, Pergiorgio Parroni, *et al.*, *Lo spazio letterario di Roma antica*, vol. VII, *I testi: 2. La prosa*, Roma, Salerno Editrice, 211-323.
- Porciani Ilaria (a cura di) (2006), *Famiglia e nazione nel lungo Ottocento italiano. Modelli, strategie, reti di relazioni*, Roma, Viella.
- Prada Massimo (2018), "‘Giannettino’ tra sillabario e grammatica: un’analisi linguistica della tradizione dei manuali collodiani", *Italiano LinguaDue*, 10, 1, 310-356, doi: 10.13130/2037-3597/10405.
- Santucci Luigi (1950), *Letteratura infantile*, Firenze, Barbèra.
- Smiles Samuel (1859), *Self help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct*, London, John Murray.
- Spadolini Giovanni (1989 [1972]), *Gli uomini che fecero l'Italia. La storia dell'Italia moderna attraverso i protagonisti*, Milano, Longanesi & C.
- Tarra Giulio (1864), *Primo libro di letture graduate allo sviluppo progressivo del linguaggio, delle idee e della morale ed all'avviamento al comporre ad uso delle scuole elementari pel popolo*, Milano, Giocondo Messaggi.
- Tobia Bruno (1998), *L'altare della Patria*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Valisa Silvia (2014), *Gender, Narrative, and Dissonance in the Modern Italian Novel*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Walsh Sue (2016), "Gender and Irony: Children's Literature and Its Criticism", *Research Institute of Asian Women*, 32, 2, 91-110, doi: 10.14431/aw.2016.06.32.2.91.
- Winner Ellen (1997), *The Point of Words: Children's Understanding of Metaphor and Irony*, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press.

In Dialogue with Neera

Catherine Ramsey-Portolano

Abstract:

This essay examines the evolution of my twenty-year interest in the work of Italian 19th-century woman writer Neera (pseudonym for Anna Radius Zuccari), an interest that has culminated with the recent publication *Nineteenth-Century Italian Women Writers and the Woman Question: The Case of Neera* (2021). My attention to this writer has shifted from an initial exploration of the various characteristics of her production to what I now view as the principal lens for interpreting Neera's role and work: positioning her inside a matrilineal family tree within the Italian literary landscape, one that recognizes the importance of her legacy as literary mother to the numerous Italian women writers that followed. My essay considers Neera's significance today from this perspective while also reflecting upon evolving critical trends within *Italianistica*.

Keywords: Female Condition, Female Role-modelling, *Fin de siècle*, Letter Writing, Women Writers

1. My Dialogues with Neera

My relationship with the work of the 19th-century Italian writer Neera (pseudonym for Anna Radius Zuccari 1846-1918) began in the mid-1990's when I was introduced to her novel *Teresa* (1886) as a graduate student at The University of Wisconsin at Madison. The novel featured as part of a seminar dedicated to a selection of 19th-century texts, ranging from Pellegrino Artusi's cookbook *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene* to Igino Ugo Tarchetti's novel *Fosca*, united by the common thread of exemplifying the variety of the Italian *fin-de-siècle* literary and cultural production. The novelty of *Teresa* lies in its conscious portrayal of the oppressed female condition and its harsh condemnation of the system which condoned such oppression. Before women had full access to education and professions and lacked the right to vote, Neera's novel brought to the public's attention the limited options for female fulfilment outside of the family. Hers was one of few voices at the time calling out such injustices. Neera's portrayal of the female condition spoke to women of all ages and social levels while her status as one of the most prolific female writers of the period made her a point of reference for emerging women writers striving, like her, for literary success. She also dialogued with male writers, expressing objection in her essays and letter-writing to the benefits they enjoyed as privileged members of a

Catherine Ramsey-Portolano, The American University of Rome, Italy, cramsey_portolano@hotmail.com

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Catherine Ramsey-Portolano, *In Dialogue with Neera*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.07, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 57-68, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

patriarchal society. Throughout the decades Neera has continued to “dialogue” with readers and writers, male and female alike. Her work has been recognized as an early voice for women’s rights by exponents of 19th and 20th-century Italian feminism¹. The importance of her figure and production continues to have relevance in today’s society, both within the Italian context and internationally. 135 years after *Teresa*, and other novels, short stories, articles and essays by Neera on the female condition within *fin-de-siècle* society, debates continue today regarding many of the same issues she raised, albeit in broader terms. The internationally-resonating MeToo movement has brought, through the sharing of experiences of sexual harassment and violence, increased attention in recent years to the difficulties that many women have faced in obtaining the same recognition as men for the value of their intellectual labor. Annual reports of women’s representation within the business sector testify to the fact that women are underrepresented and often undercompensated with respect to men, especially in positions of leadership². Neera’s attention to matters regarding women’s position within society, the difficulty she portrayed for women in achieving objectives outside the domestic sphere and the discrimination she faced as a woman writer make her a noteworthy example of a woman’s voice that aimed to engage with her time but one that continues to hold meaning today, for women who continue to face discrimination and obstacles.

After my introduction to Neera in the graduate seminar at Madison, my interest in her work led to the dissertation *The Woman Writer’s Experience in Late-Nineteenth-Century Italy: From the Literary Dimension to the Epistolary Reality in Neera*, submitted upon completion of the PhD program in Italian Literature at The University of Chicago in 2001. My research continued with the publication of the article “Neera the *Verist* Woman Writer” in the journal *Italica* in 2004 and the 2010 special issue of the journal *The Italianist* dedicated entirely to Neera, titled *Rethinking Neera* and co-edited with Katharine Mitchell. The publication of my volume *Nineteenth-Century Italian Women Writers and the Woman Question: The Case of Neera* by Routledge in 2021 represents the culmination of an almost thirty-year relationship with this writer and her work. My research focus has shifted from an initial exploration of the various facets and characteristics of her production (from literary to epistolary) to what I now view as the main focus for interpreting and appreciating Neera’s role and work: understanding her relevance within the society of her time as well as her struggle to overcome the obstacles facing women striving to succeed, thereby providing an example for others who followed in her footsteps. *Nineteenth-Century Italian Women Writers and the Woman Question: The Case of Neera* represents the first monographic

¹ See Baldacci 1976, v-xii; Sanvitale 1977, v-xvi; Aleramo 1978, 63 and 68; Sanguineti 1979, 293-295; Arslan 1998, 140.

² See for example the 2021 Women in Business report by Grant Thornton international consultancy network, <<https://www.bgt-grantthornton.it/en/insights/articles/2021/2021-women-in-business-report/>> (03/2022).

volume in English dedicated exclusively to Neera, repositioning her within the Italian literary landscape and canon. It aims to bring this woman writer out of the shadows of literary marginality, to which she has long been confined, by analyzing her contribution to literary and cultural debates and by demonstrating the pivotal role she played in the creation of a female literary voice within the *fin-de-siècle* Italian context. The comprehensive analysis of Neera's vast and varied production serves to locate her within the context of Italian literature as a writer who strove constantly for literary innovation, reacting and responding to the literary and social issues and trends of her time.

My continued dialogue with Neera throughout the years has led me to question whether she was as original and exceptional as I had previously believed her to be in her attention to women's issues. The continued struggle even today by women for recognition indicates that Neera was most likely not one of the first to recognize the issue but rather one of the first to write about it. Perhaps Neera is best located inside a matrilineal family tree within the Italian literary landscape, one that recognizes the importance of her legacy as literary mother to the numerous Italian women writers that followed her. Neera's work is one point along a long line of Italian women writers, one that begins with the moment when women were "allowed" to write and ends in the present, a moment when women's works are increasingly gaining acceptance and appreciation within the literary canon³.

Today it is still necessary to call attention to the many contributions by women to all fields of intellectual, artistic and cultural production. My current project, titled *Female Cultural Production in Modern Italy: Literature, Art and Intellectual History* (under contract at the time of publication with Palgrave Macmillan), co-edited with art historian Sharon Hecker, reveals the more recent evolution of my research focus. Bringing together essays by scholars from around the world, this volume is the first critical interdisciplinary examination in English of Italian women's contributions to intellectual, artistic and cultural production in modern Italy (1860-present).

2. Rereading *Teresa*: A *Fin-de-Siècle* Product or Not?

Teresa, the story of one of a multitude of young unmarried women buried inside the homes of provincial Italy, is the social analysis of the unmarried woman in *fin-de-siècle*. Neera denounces familial customs which place the daughter's right to fulfillment second to that of the son and condemns the social structures which locate women's only possibility for fulfillment in marriage, observing: "Quale infame ingiustizia pesa dunque ancora sulla nostra società, che si chiama inciviltà, se una fanciulla deve scegliere tra il ridicolo della verginità e la

³ I credit Nina Siegal's article "Art That Looks at What Women See" (2021) with the idea of one artist's contribution within a continuum of women's work, from past to present.

vergogna del matrimonio di convenienza?” (1976, 180). Neera places the blame for Teresa’s fate on the “fathers” of patriarchal society:

[Teresa] [c]apiva le ragioni del padre: aveva troppo vissuto in quell’ambiente e in quello solo, per non essere persuasa che la sua condizione di donna le imponeva anzitutto la rassegnazione al suo destino, – un destino ch’ella non era libera di dirigere – che doveva accettare così come le giungeva, mozzato dalle esigenze della famiglia, sottoposto ai bisogni e ai desideri degli altri. (Ivi, 170)

Teresa’s desire to hurt someone derives from the frustration of an unjust situation, a desire to make someone pay for what is happening to her, when there is only society and its treatment of women to blame. Referring to *Teresa’s* significance for its female public, Neera reveals in her autobiography *Una giovinezza del secolo XIX* (1919): “Era il dramma di tante anime femminili [...] e che avessi colpito nel segno me lo dissero innumerevoli lettere di ignote, e la loro commozione e le loro lagrime e il melanconico e pur dolce conforto di sentirsi comprese” (1980, 124). In *Teresa*, Neera gives voice to a multitude of women who suffer their condition in silence, without the means to effectively express their discontent. Neera spoke for women of her time, but it is possible to note that they also spoke for her. Neera’s perspective and experiences, as a woman subjected to the same restrictions, ultimately coincided with those of Teresa, as she reveals in *Una giovinezza*:

Non altrimenti la patetica storia della donna a cui manca l’amore germinava da lunghi anni nel segreto delle mie sofferenze, nelle ingiustizie di cui ero stata vittima, nella persecuzione che aveva attossicato fin dalle sorgenti la mia ingenua giovinezza. Era il dramma di tante anime femminili che si era ripercosso attraverso la deviazione di un’anima sulla speciale sensibilità dell’anima mia. (*Ibidem*)

Neera identifies with women like Teresa whose formative years are wasted within the oppressive confines of the family home. Entrusted to the watchful eyes of her aunts, Neera’s days also revolved around the monotonous duty which came to dominate her time: sewing and mending socks, as she narrates in an episode from *Una giovinezza*:

Incominciò allora la mia esistenza casalinga, metodica come una regola di convento; alzata alle otto, rifatta la camera e la sala di ricevimento (dove non entrava mai nessuno) preso posto verso le dieci al tavolino da lavoro, dal quale non mi movevo più sino alle quattro, con una zia da una parte e una zia dall’altra; alle quattro preparavo la tavola, alle quattro e mezzo si pranzava; alla sera lavoro di nuovo, generalmente calze, una zia da una parte una zia dall’altra, sino all’ora di andare a letto. (Ivi, 90-91)

It is evident from the above description that Neera’s years as a young woman within the domestic confines still weighed upon her later years as she wrote her autobiography. Those years remained within her memory as time wasted, as an inflicted injustice and as a deception made perhaps more painful by the fact that

it was enforced by other women, victims of the same oppressive system, who became oppressors themselves in a painful cycle. It is possible to conclude that Teresa's escape from the family home at the end of the novel represents Neera's metaphorical liberation from her own childhood experiences of oppression and unhappiness and the means of affirming herself as an intellectual and a writer. Writing and an unstoppable vocation accounted for Neera's ability to overcome the oppression and isolation of those years to pursue becoming a *scrittrice*.

Character analysis, emotional involvement and psychological introspection characterize Neera's writing and her portrayal of the female reality, revealing her ability to investigate with extreme insight even the most hidden aspects of the female psychology. Neera's heightened sensibility, together with her own personal experiences of suffering, provide the foundation for the representation of female oppression in her narrative production. The novel's intimate portrayal of Teresa's plight and the passages from Neera's autobiography in which she reflects upon her own upbringing and its limitations reveal the modern sensibility of this writer who observes her surrounding reality and transmits onto the page her own personal sentiments and experiences. It is worth noting that male critics of the time failed to appreciate the modernity of such literary choices. In the 1907 essay *Letteratura femminile*, Luigi Capuana writes regarding the work of his fellow women writers: "Esse mettono nella loro opera d'arte un elemento tutto proprio, la femminilità; ma niente di più" (1988, 21-22). In "The Ferrante Effect: In Italy Women Writers are Ascendant" (2019) Anna Momigliano refers to Italy as "a country where self-referential virtuosity is often valued over storytelling, emotional resonance and issues like sexism or gender roles", offering a possible explanation for why the subject matter privileged by many 19th-century women writers failed to gain recognition. By claiming personal experiences of solitude and suffering as the source of inspiration and subject matter for their work, *fin-de-siècle* women writers affirm a new kind of authority for the figure of writer while also proposing the worth of their production based on experiences other than scholastic training.

Teresa's analysis of the female condition speaks across decades to the bigger issue of the restrictions that have faced women for centuries and that women today continue to confront in their struggle for recognition. In reference to women artists active in the same period as Neera, in "Art That Looks at What Women See" Nina Siegal credits them with taking "the first radical steps in the late 19th century, [...] daring to portray the people in their immediate circles – women, men and children, as well as themselves". The portrayal of themselves, as well as their fellow women, marked an important change within the artistic (and literary) landscapes of their time, as Siegal further notes: "They created a shift, a change in perspective, from being the model, the person a painter [writer] is looking at, to being the painter [writer] herself". Neera's work, where women are subject rather than object, participates fully in this shift in perspective.

3. Female Role-Modelling in Neera's Dialogues with Fellow Women Writers

Neera's numerous letter exchanges with leading figures from *fin-de-siècle* Italian literary, artistic and editorial circles provide a better understanding of this complex figure, and the diversified and at times contrasting positions that she adopted in her epistolary exchanges offer a more complete picture of the variegated contexts in which *fin-de-siècle* women writers lived and worked⁴. Neera's correspondences with women writers, such as journalist and novelist Matilde Serao and poets Vittoria Aganoor and Ada Negri, provide the basis for an understanding of the network of collaboration that existed between women writers of the period. Whereas budding writers such as Negri and Aganoor address Neera in their letters with admiration and respect for her production and the success she had achieved in male-dominated literary circles, the letters from affirmed writer Serao reveal the regard of one woman writer for another. Neera acknowledges in her theoretical writings the difficulty for women writers in expressing themselves publicly when she writes in *Le idee di una donna*: "A scrivere per sé ogni donna intelligente riesce a meraviglia. Scrivere per il pubblico è tutt'altra cosa ed è cosa difficilissima, che non si insegna e non si impara, ed anche quando la si sa è traditrice sirena che troppe volte trascina a naufragare fin sotto i fanali del porto" (1942 [1904], 833). It is possible to conclude that the private and intimate nature of the epistolary exchange allowed women writers the freedom to communicate a sense of solidarity amongst themselves, recognizing and encouraging their talent and literary achievements.

In a letter dated May 20, 1892, the year of publication of Neera's novel *Senio* and Negri's volume of poetry *Fatalità*, Negri writes to Neera: "Senio mi ha lasciata una impressione profonda. Non ho mai letto alcuna opera di donna che s'avvicini a tanta grandezza e lucidità d'ideali" (Arslan 1998, 203). Negri identifies Neera as a woman writer who has achieved literary greatness in the stylistic form of her production, recognizing in Neera's intuitive and spontaneous mode of expression a model for her own way of writing. She "confesses" to Neera her lack of knowledge, at least that deriving from formal studies and from experience, revealing instead how she finds inspiration for her writing in another, more intimate source, intuition. It is interesting to note that Negri exalts qualities of Neera's work, such as its direct and straightforward nature, that were often

⁴ Among the novelists with whom Neera corresponded are: Luigi Capuana, Giovanni Verga, Matilde Serao, Federico De Roberto, Roberto Bracco, Luigi Pirandello, Antonio Fogazzaro, Paolo Mantegazza, Emanuele Navarro della Miraglia and Tommaso Cannizarro. She corresponded with literary critics and representatives from editorial and journalistic spheres, such as Benedetto Croce, Vittorio Pica, Federigo Verdinois, George Héréelle, Ferdinand Brunetière, Edouard Rod, Gustavo Botta, Giuseppe Saverio Gargano, Jakša Čedomil and Leone Fortis. Letter exchanges with young, emerging writers such as Angiolo Orvieto, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Marino Moretti, Ada Negri and Vittoria Aganoor testify to Neera's interest in *letterati nuovi* (new writers). Her epistolary exchanges extended also outside literary circles to include figurative artists such as Giovanni Segantini, Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo and Vittore Grubicy de Dragon.

noted as defects of women writers' works by male literary critics because they were seen to denote a lack of formal training. Neera served as a model for other women writers not only for the success she achieved with the public and critics, but for the intimate stylistic quality of her production that provided a new kind of literary model for women writers of the time.

In her letters Aganoor praises Neera's linguistic style and reveals her admiration for Neera as one of few Italian women writers, if not the only one, who has succeeded in the literary profession. Aganoor's letter dated August 11, 1903 writes to Neera: "E tu sei l'*unica* scrittrice, vivente, di romanzi, che scriva veramente *il puro italiano*, senza leziosaggini e senza sciatterie, *squisitamente* insomma" (ivi, 62). In another passage from the same letter, Aganoor reveals how she, as woman writer, participates in Neera's success: "È inutile ch'io Le dica come io L'abbia sempre seguita nel suo cammino trionfale con ammirazione *orgogliosa*; *orgogliosa* sì, perché appunto io sentivo spesso nella mia anima vibrare fraternamente la sua voce, quella dell'anima sua, e questa affinità m'inorgoglivava" (ivi, 49). Aganoor rejoices in Neera's ability to express a female voice in which she and other women can proudly recognize their own internal voices. In a letter dated March 19, 1907, Aganoor further reveals her understanding of Neera as capable of expressing the female *anima*, in contrast to the empty male voice of patriarchal society:

Ti dirò solo che ier l'altro fui a pranzo al Quirinale e mentre si facevano quei soliti discorsi *sciapiti*, (parole, o piuttosto ombre di parole, vuote di pensiero e talora anche di *senso*, somiglianti a certe orrendissime *frutta di bambage*, che fanno le monache nei conventi, e che a premere un poco, *cedono*, e non ne resta che un cencio) pensavo con indicibile desiderio a te, cara e alta amica mia e devi aver *sentito* il mio saluto venirti dietro. (Ivi, 67-68)

Neera's work represents for Aganoor an example of a different kind of expression, in contrast to the shallowness she associates with the male voice of patriarchal discourse. Aganoor's letters to Neera reveal the sharing between two women writers of the experiences and difficulties encountered within the literary profession. Considering the negative critical reception that women writers often received from male critics⁵, it is interesting to consider Neera's epistolary exchanges with women writers as private literary reviews. Katharine Mitchell points out in *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism* that "[f]emale-authored reviews of writings by women were, more often than not, very positive" (2014, 110) and that "[i]t is quite likely that such displays of deference on behalf of female critics towards women writers contributed in no small measure to women writers' growing sense of self-confidence and self-esteem in the public eye" (*ibidem*). The encouragement that women writers of the period provided each other represents an important aspect in the construction of a family tree of Italian women writers in *fin-de-siècle* Italy.

⁵ See Borgese 1911, 360; Boine 1978, 15-23; Capuana 1988, 21-22.

Even in the letter exchange between Neera and Serao, whose shared status as two of the leading women writers of late-19th-century Italy provided a potential motive for competition, it is possible to observe the special attention reserved for the work of a fellow woman writer. In a letter dated 2 December 1881, Serao writes to Neera: “Del resto io mi occupo sempre di voi, leggendo-vi ansiosamente dove scrivete. [...] Così, tra le linee studio il vostro pensiero e la vostra vita” (Collino Pansa 1977, 73). Serao, like Negri and Aganoor, reveals the special appreciation reserved for the work of a fellow woman writer and the ability to “read between the lines” of their production.

In *Le idee di una donna* Neera addresses the struggles undertaken by women writers to assert themselves as writers, discussing the difficulties encountered in the male-dominated literary circles of the period:

Ognuno di essi [scrittori maschili] era ben disposto a festeggiare la scrittrice quando nel suo interno la considerava come un leggiadro puppazzetto del suo medesimo sogno, inoffensivo, divertente, forse utile. Ma è tutt'altra cosa se la donna diviene una rivale nella concorrenza. [...] Al punto in cui la lotta si impegna seriamente, la differenza del sesso è cagione di astio maggiore. È allora che la scrittrice si sente straniera in mezzo a quegli uomini inaspriti che hanno gettato la maschera della galanteria, ripresi dalla atavica brutalità dell'animale in guerra. (1942, 832-833)

Neera reveals the antagonism experienced by women writers in competition with their male counterparts for recognition and the strength of character needed to carry on and succeed. Her own sense of alienation as a woman writer likely influenced her to dedicate attention within her narrative and theoretical work to the theme of female alienation in society in its various manifestations, from spinsterhood and arranged marriages to female dissatisfaction within marriage.

It is important to note that Neera and contemporary women writers, members of a first generation of Italian women writers, did not possess strong female literary models in the Italian context that could serve to legitimate them as writers and their production as worthy. Patrizia Zambon notes, in fact, that although the careers of women writers had become normalized by the end of the 19th century in much of Europe and America, in Italy this was not the case: “In Italia in qualche modo vive ancora sul finir del secolo l'idea di una eccezionalità e quella di una particolarità della donna scrittrice” (1989, 293). Neera's relationship with fellow women writers, as expressed through her epistolary exchanges, testifies to her important role in creating a matrilineal family tree within the Italian literary landscape, providing a much-needed example of female role-modelling in the Italian *fin de siècle*.

4. Neera Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

In this context it is interesting to consider the evolution of the critical attention to Neera's work over time, from the appraisal of contemporary supporters such as Luigi Capuana and Benedetto Croce followed by decades of neglect

until her “rediscovery” decades later sparked by Luigi Baldacci’s 1976 reprint of *Teresa*. Neera owes her critical success during her lifetime principally to the continued attention of two prestigious and influential literary critics of the period, Capuana and Croce. Capuana was the first critic to take real interest in Neera’s work, reviewing in 1877 her second novel *Addio!* in *Corriere della Sera* in an article dedicated to young novelists⁶. His interest in Neera’s work continued with reviews of other novels in the following years⁷. Croce’s first article on Neera appeared in 1905 in *Critica*, and was later included as a chapter in *La letteratura della nuova Italia*. Croce appreciated Neera’s profound inspiration to convey life experiences, in particular those of women, as he notes in the chapter dedicated to her in *La letteratura della nuova Italia*: “Il problema della donna e quello dell’amore hanno formato l’oggetto principale e quasi unico del suo studio” (1948 [1914], vol. III, 123).

In 1919, in the preface to Neera’s posthumous autobiography *Una giovinezza del secolo XIX*, Croce reveals his disappointment for the lack of critical appreciation of Neera’s work up until that point: “Il pregio, in cui ho sempre tenuto gli scritti di Neera, non ha trovato a dir vero, generale consenso nel nostro mondo letterario, dove a questa scrittrice gentile, austera e nobilissima si assegna di solito un posto assai inferiore al merito” (xiii). With the exception of Luigi Russo’s inclusion of Neera in his 1919 volume *I Narratori*, Croce’s 1919 appeal for a reevaluation of her work fell on deaf ears among contemporary critics. Croce proposed Neera to the public again in 1942 by editing a collection of her novels, short stories and essays for publication by Garzanti as part of a series, under the direction of Pietro Pancrazi, dedicated to 19th-century writers. Croce’s attempt to repropose Neera met again with little success, with the exception of Guido Piovene’s 1943 article “Idee e personaggi di Neera”, where she is referred to as “uno dei più completi ed equilibrati ingegni della seconda metà del nostro ottocento”.

Successively, brief mentions of Neera appeared in volumes such as Francesco Flora’s 1956 *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Aldo Borlenghi’s 1966 *Narratori dell’Ottocento e del primo Novecento* and Giulio Cattaneo’s chapter on “Prosatori e critici della Scapigliatura al Verismo” in the 1968 *Storia della letteratura italiana*, edited by Emilio Cecchi and Natalio Sapegno. At the end of the 1960s, critics of Neera’s production were still proposing a Crocean interpretation of her work, which positioned Neera as essentially a moralistic writer, to the exclusion not

⁶ The article, entitled “Romanzi nuovi”, was published in three parts in the *Appendice* of *Corriere della Sera* on 25 June, 5 July and 8 July 1877. Alongside Neera, Capuana reviewed the work of Anton Giulio Barrili, Luigi Gualdo, Cordula, La Marchesa Colombi and Emma.

⁷ Neera’s fourth novel, *Un nido*, earned the writer another review by Capuana on the pages of *Corriere della Sera*, this time all to herself, marking her entrance into literary circles as *scrittrice*. See Luigi Capuana, “Neera. *Un nido*”, *Corriere della Sera* (8 March 1880). Capuana later included the article in *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea*. His 1892 review of the novel *Senio* was later included as a chapter in the 1898 volume *Gli ‘ismi’ contemporanei*.

only of the proto-feminist outlook present in her literary and theoretical production but also that of her important contribution to the *verist* movement in Italy⁸.

Interest in the feminist nature of Neera's narrative production and in the apparent contradictions between her narrative and theoretical production accounts, in part, for a rebirth of critical attention to Neera in the 1970s. In the 1976 reprint of *Teresa*, Luigi Baldacci presents the novel to the modern public as a "document[o] essenzial[e] dello spirito femminista" (7). Although Baldacci gives special attention to *Teresa*, calling it "uno dei più bei romanzi italiani dell'ultimo ventennio del secolo passato" (ivi, 5), he proposes the feminist aspect of all of Neera's narrative "nella misura in cui la donna è sentita come classe (oppressa) e non come ideale complemento dell'uomo" (ivi, 7). Baldacci's 1976 reprint of *Teresa* repropoed Neera to the attention of critics and readers alike, as Francesca Sanvitale notes in the Introduction to the 1977 reprint of Neera's *Le Idee di una donna e Confessioni letterarie*: "Chi avrebbe mai pensato di rileggere l'opera di Neera, se l'occasione non fosse venuta dalla recente riproposta di uno dei suoi primi romanzi, *Teresa*?" (5). In the decades following Baldacci's reprint of *Teresa*, several critics in both the Italian and Anglo-American contexts, such as Antonia Arslan, Anna Nozzoli, Anna Folli, Patrizia Zambon, Giuliana Morandini, Lucienne Kroha, Sharon Wood, Ann Hallamore Caesar, Katharine Mitchell, and myself, have continued to dedicate attention to Neera's production in its variety, from her novels, short stories and essays to her epistolary exchanges with leading literary and cultural figures of the time. Newfound interest in Neera's production is further documented by the republication of several of her novels and theoretical works in recent decades, such as *Una giovinezza del secolo XIX* (1975 and 1981), *Teresa* (1976, 1995 and 2009), *Le idee di una donna e Confessioni letterarie* (1977), *Crepuscoli di libertà* (1977), *L'indomani* (1981), *Dizionario d'igiene per le famiglie* (1985), *Monastero e altri racconti* (1987), *Crevalcore* (1991), *Un nido* (1994) and *Lydia* (1997), as well as the expanding digitization of Neera's writings (see, for example, the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense di Bra's "Monografie digitalizzate" online pages and The Italian Women Writers database hosted by the University of Chicago).

This essay has examined Neera's acknowledgement throughout her production of the difficulties encountered by women writers of her time and the perseverance required to prevail in the literary profession, an occupation mainly reserved for men in Neera's time. Neera's efforts and the success she obtained position her within a group of women writers whose endeavors and accomplishments in *fin-de-siècle* Italian literary circles designate them as literary mothers for later generations of women writers. Neera's pursuit of a career not easily accessible to women at that time, her active role in literary debates and letter exchanges with leading literary, artistic and journalistic figures and her criticism

⁸ I argue that Croce's categorization of Neera as an idealistic writer, accounts in part for the lack of attention given to her naturalist production. See Ramsey-Portolano 2021, 73-97, for a reevaluation of Neera's contribution to *verismo*.

of society's restrictive roles for women constitute the many and diverse ways in which this *fin-de-siècle* woman writer rejected contemporary notions of female inferiority and social structures that aimed to enforce upon women a model of female submission and passivity. Neera's example and her production continue to hold meaning for women even today, as a voice from an earlier period registering and condemning the restrictions facing women of her time. It is important to acknowledge and appreciate Neera's contribution to breaking the cycle of female oppression by creating a shift in perspective, from women as objects to women as subjects.

References

- Aleramo Sibilla (1978), *La donna e il femminismo: scritti 1897-1910*, a cura di Bruna Conti, Roma, Riuniti.
- Arslan Antonia (1986), *Dame, droga e galline. Romanzo popolare e romanzo di consumo tra '800 e '900*, Milano, Unicopli.
- (1988), "Un'amicizia tra letterate: Vittoria Aganoor e Neera", *Quaderni veneti*, 5, 8, 35-74.
- (1998), *Dame, galline e regine. La scrittura femminile italiana fra '800 e '900*, a cura di Marina Pasqui, Milano, Guerini.
- Baldacci Luigi (1976), "Introduzione", in Neera, *Teresa*, Torino, Einaudi, i-xiv.
- Boine Giovanni (1978 [1918]), *Plausi e botte*, Firenze, Vallecchi.
- Borgese G.A. (1911), *La Vita e il libro. Seconda Serie*, Torino, Fratelli Bocca.
- Borlenghi Aldo (1966), *Narratori dell'Ottocento e del primo Novecento*, vol. 4, Milano-Napoli, Ricciardi.
- Caesar Hallamore Ann (2010), "Home and Happiness in Neera's Fiction", *The Italianist*, 30, 87-100.
- Capuana Luigi (1988), *Letteratura femminile*, a cura di Giovanna Finocchiaro Chimirri, Catania, CUECM.
- (1973), *Gli "ismi" contemporanei. Verismo, Simbolismo, Idealismo, Cosmopolitismo ed altri saggi di critica letteraria ed artistica*, a cura di Giorgio Luti, Milano, Fabbri.
- (1988), *Studi sulla letteratura contemporanea*, a cura di Paola Azzolini, Napoli, Liguori.
- Cattaneo Giulio (1968), "Prosatori e critici della Scapigliatura al Verismo" in Emilio Cecchi, Natalio Sapegno (a cura di), *Storia della letteratura italiana*, vol. VIII, Milano, Garzanti, 269-488.
- Collino Pansa Raimondo (1977), "Una femminista d'altri tempi: Neera. Lettere inedite di Matilde Serao, Eleonora Duse e Giacomo Puccini a Neera", *La Martinella di Milano*, 3-4, 31, 71-76.
- Croce Benedetto (1948 [1914]), *La letteratura della nuova Italia*, Bari, Laterza, 6 voll.
- , a cura di (1942), *Neera*, Milano, Garzanti.
- Flora Francesco (1962), *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Milano, Mondadori.
- Folli Anna (2000), *Penne leggere. Neera, Ada Negri, Sibilla Aleramo. Scritture femminili italiane fra Otto e Novecento*, Milano, Guerini.
- Kroha Lucienne (1992), *The Woman Writer in Late 19th Century Italy: Gender and the Formation of Literary Identity*, Lewiston, E. Mellen Press.
- Mitchell Katharine (2014), *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism, 1870-1910*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

- Momigliano Anna (2019), “‘The Ferrante Effect’: In Italy Women Writers are Ascendant”, *The New York Times*, 9 December, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/09/books/elena-ferrante-italy-women-writers.html>> (03/2022).
- Morandini Giuliana (1980), *La voce che è in lei. Antologia della narrativa femminile italiana tra '800 e '900*, Milano, Bompiani.
- Neera (1942 [1904]), *Le idee di una donna*, in *Neera*, a cura di Benedetto Croce, Milano, Garzanti.
- (1976 [1886]), *Teresa*, a cura di Luigi Baldacci, Torino, Einaudi.
- (1980 [1919]), *Una giovinezza del secolo XIX*, Milano, Feltrinelli.
- Nozzoli Anna (1978), *Tabù e coscienza: la condizione femminile nella letteratura italiana del Novecento*, Firenze, Nuova Italia.
- Piovene Guido (1943), “Idee e personaggi di Neera”, *Corriere della sera*, 20 maggio.
- Ramsey C.A. (2002), *The Woman Writer's Experience in Late-Nineteenth-Century Italy: From the Literary Dimension to the Epistolary Reality in the Work of Neera*, Chicago, UMI.
- Ramsey-Portolano Catherine (2021), *Nineteenth-Century Italian Women Writers and The Woman Question: The Case of Neera*, New York, Routledge.
- Ramsey-Portolano Catherine, Mitchell Katharine, eds (2010), *Rethinking Neera*, special issue, *The Italianist*, 30, 1-156.
- Russo Luigi (1951 [1923]), *I Narratori*, Milano, Giuseppe Principato.
- Sanguineti Edoardo (1979), “Madre due volte”, in Id., *Giornalino secondo 1976-1977*, Torino, Einaudi, 293-295.
- Sanvitale Francesca (1977), *Neera, Le idee di una donna e le confessioni letterarie*. Invito alla lettura di Francesca Sanvitale, Firenze, Vallecchi.
- Siegal Nina (2021), “Art That Looks at What Women See”, *New York Times*, 21 September, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/21/arts/women-artists.html?referringSource=articleShare>> (03/2022).
- Wood Sharon (1995), *Italian Women's Writing 1860-1994*, London, Athlone.
- Zambon Patrizia (1989), “Leggere per scrivere. La Formazione autodidattica delle scrittrici tra Otto e Novecento: Neera, Ada Negri, Grazia Deledda, Sibilla Aleramo”, *Studi Novecenteschi*, 16, 38, 287-324.

Il secondo Ottocento italiano visto dalla Francia

Edwige Comoy Fusaro

Abstract:

This study examines the current reception of second part of the 19th century Italian literature in France. The data come from 4 sources of information: the general book market on foreign literature, the scholarly book market on Italian literature, the programs of Literature in Bachelor and Master curricula of Italian Studies, and the yearly programs of the competitive exam for teachers in Italian (Agrégation). As a result, the champion of second 19th century Italian literature's reception in French culture is Giovanni Verga, the traditional canon is mostly undiscussed but lately, both large audience publishing and academic studies show interest for relatively forgotten authors such as Grazia Deledda and movements such as Scapigliatura.

Keywords: 19th century, Agrégation, Canon, Italian studies, Reception

1. Introduzione

Negli anni Ottanta del Novecento la ricezione della cultura italiana in Francia conosce una svolta importante, che si manifesta con una riscoperta, anzi una scoperta (dopo un lungo periodo di indifferenza) della letteratura transalpina, da allora oggetto di grande entusiasmo¹. Considerando che il risorto appetito francese per la letteratura italiana riguarda soprattutto la letteratura contemporanea, che “lo studio della diffusione del libro italiano all'estero costituisce un campo di indagine che può essere definito pressoché inesplorato” (Grossi 2016, 21)² e che in tale ambito il microcampo del quarantennio postunitario è quasi

¹ “La réception de la culture italienne en France connaît un tournant majeur dans les années 1980 avec un mouvement d'engouement pour la littérature transalpine qui est l'objet d'une redécouverte voire d'une découverte après une longue période d'indifférence à son égard” (Cartal 2010, 7). Ringrazio la dott.ssa Francesca Patella per la sua minuziosa rilettura del contributo e i suoi preziosi suggerimenti di ripulitura linguistica. Ringrazio anche i due referees che hanno valutato il manoscritto nel processo di *double blind peer review*.

² Lo studioso sottolinea la responsabilità dello Stato italiano: “Ben scarso è infatti il contributo pubblico alla promozione del libro italiano all'estero. Il confronto con la vicina Francia è più che sconcertante. Nell'anno 2009, per esempio, il Ministero della Cultura e il Ministero degli Affari Esteri francesi hanno investito per il sostegno alla traduzione, all'esportazione e alla promozione del libro circa 10.000.000 di euro. Nello stesso anno i contributi del nostro

Edwige Comoy Fusaro, Université Rennes 2, France, edwige.fusaro@univ-rennes2.fr

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Edwige Comoy Fusaro, *Il secondo Ottocento italiano visto dalla Francia*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.08, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 69-88, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

vergine, poiché gli studi sulla ricezione e sull'insegnamento della letteratura italiana nella cultura francese riguardano perlopiù i secoli XX e XXI³, sembra opportuno cercare di capire quale posto venga concesso oggi al secondo Ottocento nella ricezione delle lettere italiane oltralpe. Di letteratura italiana dell'Ottocento si interessano pochi studiosi di aree anglofone⁴ e nessuno finora in Francia.

Scopo dell'indagine è fornire uno spaccato dei gusti e disgusti dei lettori e insegnanti di Francia per la letteratura italiana dal 1861 al 1900, a prescindere dagli studi specialistici⁵, sulla base dell'esiguo materiale disponibile. Dopo una breve disamina dei libri italiani tradotti e disponibili sul mercato editoriale francese oggi, prenderò in esame il "canone pedagogico"⁶, osservando anzitutto la parte riservata al secondo Ottocento in un campionario di sei libri di testo di letteratura italiana degli ultimi venticinque anni, quindi i programmi dell'accademia francese attraverso gli argomenti dell'*Agrégation*, il concorso per l'abilitazione all'insegnamento, importanti perché "orientano gli studi di italiano, a monte e a valle, poiché le modalità d'esame influiscono sulla successiva pratica professionale e sulle scelte pedagogiche" (Dubois 2019, 188), e i piani di studio delle facoltà di lettere in cui esiste un percorso didattico specialistico.

2. La letteratura italiana tradotta in francese

Non è stata stilata una rassegna esaustiva delle varie case editrici che pubblicano libri italiani tradotti in francese – lavoro che avrebbe superato i limiti del presente contributo –, ma lo studio di un campionario prescelto del mercato odierno e del catalogo della Biblioteca Nazionale di Francia dal 2011 ad oggi consentiranno di farsi un'idea ragionevolmente affidabile della situazione.

Il mercato per il pubblico colto e agiato ignora quasi del tutto l'Ottocento, eccezion fatta per la poesia. "Terra d'altri", collana dei tipi Verdier diretta da Martin Rueff, propone un catalogo ricco e originale, ma prevalentemente di poesie

Ministero degli Affari Esteri a editori stranieri per la traduzione di opere italiane in altre lingue ammontavano a 189.000 euro!" (Grossi 2016, 26).

³ Per la letteratura del Seicento, vedi Simon 2014; per quella dei secoli XX-XXI, vedi Valin 2001, Lucarelli 2012 e Milanese 2016; per il ventennio fascista, vedi Fournier-Finocchiaro 2010.

⁴ L'argomento è stato affrontato durante la tavola rotonda organizzata da Gabriella Romani e Katharine Mitchell, "Researching and teaching the Ottocento: current practices and future challenges", al convegno dell'AAIS e del CSIS (The Ohio State University, 20-22 April 2017). Sull'insegnamento della letteratura italiana in generale in Inghilterra, vedi Mike Caesar, "L'insegnamento della letteratura italiana all'Università di Birmingham", *Quaderns d'Italia*, 4-5, 1999-2000, cit. in Benvenuti 2016, 40, n. 20.

⁵ Pertanto, si esclude dall'analisi un libro come la miscellanea raccolta da Denise Alexandre.

⁶ Il canone pedagogico corrisponde "alla lista di autori trattati nei programmi di studio", spiega un articolo di fresca data sull'italianistica nelle università olandesi e belghe, riprendendo a proprio conto la terminologia della critica di lingua inglese sul canone. Si contrappone al "canone immaginario": "Mentre il canone immaginario fa riferimento a una totalità di opere, quello pedagogico si basa sul 'sillabo' (*syllabus*), cioè, nelle parole di Guillory, la lista di opere che si leggono in una data classe o sul *curriculum*, cioè la lista di opere incluse in un programma di studio" (Dupré, Jansen, Lanslots *et al.* 2016, 57).

contemporanee, dal quale l'Ottocento risulta del tutto assente⁷. Nella collana bilingue "Bibliothèque italienne" dell'elitaria casa editrice Les Belles Lettres, che dichiara di concentrarsi esclusivamente sui classici⁸, l'Ottocento è rappresentato attraverso due titoli, ambedue saggistici: il *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degl'Italiani* di Leopardi (2003) e il *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799* di Vincenzo Cuoco (2004). Nella prestigiosa collana "La Pléiade" della casa editrice parigina Gallimard, equivalente francese dei "Meridiani" Mondadori, sono ventuno i volumi monografici di scrittori italiani e vi si trovano Casanova, Dante, Goldoni, Machiavelli, Pirandello, vari autori antichi (spesso storici) e diverse sillogi, ma dell'Ottocento neanche una traccia. Merita, tuttavia, una segnalazione l'*Anthologie bilingue de la poésie italienne*, del 1994, che fuoriesce dunque dall'arco temporale privilegiato eppure è interessante non solo di per sé ma anche perché registra un numero significativo di poeti del secondo Ottocento, tra i quali sono registrati sia i classici (Pascoli, Carducci, D'Annunzio), sia nomi meno scontati come Remigio Zena o Arturo Graf. La poesia appare tuttavia una lettura d'élite, mentre le strategie editoriali delle grandi case editrici in direzione di un pubblico più largo puntano sulla narrativa.

Le collane economiche dei tascabili "Folio" della Gallimard offrono un buon prospetto della situazione. La maggior parte delle pubblicazioni dei "Folio bilingue" sono pur sempre opere del Novecento (Erri De Luca, Elsa Morante, Collodi, Baricco, Tabucchi, Pavese, Pirandello, Bassani, Malaparte, Pasolini, Svevo, Calvino, Moravia) o capisaldi del patrimonio letterario (la *Commedia* e la *Vita nuova* di Dante, il *Decameron* di Boccaccio, le *Vite* di Vasari, *Il Principe* di Machiavelli, *La bottega del caffè* e *La locandiera* di Goldoni). Ma il catalogo presenta anche un autore dell'Ottocento, con un volume miscelaneo di *Novelle siciliane* di Verga, Pirandello e Consolo, pubblicato nel 2011, e *Cavalleria rusticana ed altre novelle* di Verga⁹, pubblicato nel remoto 1996: tutti racconti brevi, forse perché ritenuti di più facile lettura. Comunque, la scelta dell'unico autore ottocentesco selezionato non sorprende perché Verga rientra nell'esiguo numero dei classici non solo del secondo Ottocento ma della letteratura italiana *tout court*. La presenza nel catalogo di Svevo e D'Annunzio non è da tenere in conto perché di essi sono stati pubblicati racconti novecenteschi (ambedue alla fine del '900): rispettivamente il *Corto viaggio sentimentale* (nel 1997) e *Il traghettatore ed altre novelle della Pescara* di D'Annunzio (nel 1998). Invece, tra i sette titoli dei "Folio classique" si reperiscono (oltre ai soliti Casanova, Machiavelli,

⁷ <<https://editions-verdier.fr/collection/litterature-etrangere/litterature-italienne/>> (03/2022).

⁸ "Qu'ils relèvent de la littérature, de la philosophie, de l'histoire ou de l'esthétique, les livres retenus ici ont quelques traits communs: ils ont marqué non seulement la culture italienne, mais diverses cultures de l'Europe; ils ont suscité des nuées de discours critiques, ou d'ouvrages de seconde main, dont il importe de les dégager" (<<https://www.lesbelleslettres.com/collections/25-bibliotheque-italienne>> [03/2022]). La collana è diretta da Yves Hersant e Nuccio Ordine.

⁹ Anche Les Belles Lettres propone una *Cavalleria rusticana ed altre novelle siciliane*, nel "Domaine étranger".

Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso) due opere ottocentesche: *I promessi sposi* di Manzoni (nel 1995) e *Le avventure di Pinocchio* di Collodi (nel 2002). Inoltre, per i “Folio 2 €” sono stati pubblicati: *L’assassinio di via Belpoggio e altre novelle* nel 2005 (oltreché, dello stesso Svevo, la novecentesca *Coscienza di Zeno* nel 2014) e di Verga *La Lupa e altri racconti siciliani* (nel 2018).

Tirando le somme di questi primi dati, del periodo che ci interessa (1861-1900) i tascabili della Gallimard propongono ai lettori francesi tre scrittori: Verga, Svevo e Collodi. Sul terzo non ci dilunghiamo perché la presenza di *Pinocchio* è scontata e benvenuta. Sui primi due, invece, può stupire a prima vista che siano proposte soltanto novelle e racconti brevi. Si può capire l’esclusione dei primi romanzi sveviani (dell’Ottocento), dato che il capolavoro dell’autore triestino è consensualmente considerato il romanzo del 1923. Si capisce anche l’esclusione dei romanzi verghiani veristi, specialmente de *I Malavoglia*, sebbene siano parte indiscussa del canone, per motivi linguistici e culturali, poiché il microcosmo di Acì Trezza, rappresentato in una lingua tutt’altro che standard, difficilmente potrebbe essere proposto a un pubblico di lettori stranieri senza un adeguato apparato critico. Spicca comunque la preferenza assegnata ai racconti, dettata da criteri probabilmente più economici ed editoriali che estetici e scientifici: si può ipotizzare che trattandosi di scrittori poco frequentati, perché stranieri, la pubblicazione di opere brevi appaia meno rischiosa. Un lettore curioso di letteratura *esotica e nuova* sarà forse tanto più propenso a comprarne un libro quanto più basso sarà il rischio di non *consumare* lo stesso: non solo perché ci vuole più tempo a leggere un romanzo che una novella, ma anche perché se il libro non piace, con il romanzo lo *spreco* è irredimibile mentre con la raccolta di vari testi brevi può anche darsi che alcuni di essi non piacciono e altri invece sì. Nel caso della *Cavalleria rusticana*, poi, è lecito sospettare che la presenza di questa novella nella silloge a cui dà anche il titolo sia dovuta forse meno alla fama di Verga che a quella di Mascagni, il cui adattamento musicale (del 1890) riscosse un successo strepitoso in tutta Europa. Se ci limitiamo agli ultimi dieci anni, la presenza italiana in queste collane si riduce ai due volumi di novelle siciliane.

Il catalogo generale della Biblioteca Nazionale di Francia recensisce 5978 titoli di opere italiane di vario genere tradotte in francese dal 2011 al 2021. Paragonato alle 430 edizioni francesi di titoli italiani apparse negli anni 1995-2000¹⁰ (cifra di cui però non è chiaro se riguardi l’insieme dei libri tradotti o solo le opere letterarie), è un numero complessivo notevole, che autorizza a pensare che l’appetito dei Francesi per la cultura italiana, risvegliatosi all’inizio degli anni Ottanta del Novecento, non sia venuto meno. La stragrande maggioranza delle opere di letteratura

¹⁰ “Sur les années 1995-2000, la production de titres italiens traduits et édités en France est de 430 éditions” (Faire, Girost, Gradel *et al.* 2002, 20). Gli studenti autori del contributo sono inoltre giunti al risultato che “un peu plus des deux tiers des auteurs publiés entre 1995 et 2000 sont contemporains. Les auteurs les plus anciens [sont] Camillo Boito, Iginio Ugo Tarchetti, Giovanni Verga, Antonio Fogazzaro ou encore Gaetano Carlo Chelli” (ivi, 21). La tabella “Annexe 3” della tesi recensisce inoltre, oltre ai nove autori nati prima del 1860, cinque autori nati tra il 1860 e il 1880: De Roberto, Svevo, D’Annunzio, Pirandello e Deledda.

sono del secolo XX e, in misura minore, del XXI¹¹. Esistono tuttavia opere del secondo Ottocento. Oltre ai titoli già citati delle collane “Folio” e “Bibliothèque italienne”, sono apparse varie edizioni delle *Avventure di Pinocchio* e altre opere dello scrittore (*Storie allegre*, *Le avventure della scimmia Pipi* e *La festa di Natale*), ma anche opere di Fogazzaro (*Malombra* presso L'Âge d'homme), Arrigo Boito (*L'alfier nero* presso le Mille et une nuits), Camillo Boito (*Senso* presso Actes Sud, *Senso e altre novelle veneziane* presso Sorbonne Université Presses), De Amicis (*Ricordi di Parigi* presso Editions Rue d'Ulm, *Amore e ginnastica* presso Editions Cent pages, *Il romanzo d'un maestro* presso le Presses universitaires de Caen, *La carrozza di tutti* presso Editions Rue d'Ulm), Luigi Capuana (*Un vampiro seguito da Un caso di sonnambulismo* presso La part commune), Matilde Serao (*Piccole anime* presso Editions Le Fanal), Garibaldi (*le Memorie* presso Mercure de France e *Cantoni il volontario* presso La Fosse aux ours) e Verga (*Per le vie* presso Alidades).

In complesso, gli autori del periodo preso in esame più tradotti e presenti sul mercato sono soprattutto Collodi, Verga e De Amicis, con la netta prevalenza del primo, che si spiega con l'altissima esportabilità di *Pinocchio*, per via dell'universalità del romanzo, e fors'anche con la pubblicità che gli assicurò la Disney con il film di animazione del 1940. La fama di un romanzo considerato come un capolavoro sembra ricoprire una funzione trainante: si ipotizza così che il successo di *Cuore*¹² e de *Le avventure di Pinocchio* abbia dato il via alla pubblicazione delle *Storie allegre*, de *Le avventure della scimmia Pipi* e de *La festa di Natale* di Collodi, dei *Ricordi di Parigi*, di *Amore e ginnastica*, de *Il romanzo d'un maestro* e de *La carrozza di tutti* di De Amicis. Tuttavia l'ipotesi non vale per Verga, i cui romanzi rimangono assenti dall'offerta editoriale degli ultimi anni. In questo caso, occorre probabilmente pensare che a stimolare la traduzione e la (ri)edizione di alcune novelle fossero stati due fattori, oltre alla pubblicità derivata dall'adattamento di Mascagni: la fama dell'autore, registrato nel pantheon

¹¹ <<https://catalogue.bnf.fr/search.do?mots0=ALL;-1;0;&mots1=ALL;0;0;&langue0=LAN;-1;ita;3&langue1=LAN;0;fre;1&langue2=&langue3=&langue4=&datepub=3;2011&pageRech=rav>> (03/2022). Del primo Ottocento sono stati pubblicati Leopardi (i *Canti*, la *Storia del genere umano* e vari testi saggistici) e Manzoni (*Storia della colonna infame* presso Zones sensibles). Dei secoli anteriori all'Ottocento sono state pubblicate opere (letterarie e non) di Leonardo, Pasquale Paoli, Paolo Pino, Cesare Ripa, Petrarca, Ruzante, Machiavelli, Dante, Casanova, Pico della Mirandola, Antonio Rocco, Goldoni, Giambattista Basile, Caterina di Siena, Alfieri, l'Aretino, Maffeo Galladei, il Tasso, Bandello, Boccaccio, Carlo Gozzi, Ortensio Lando, Cavalcanti, Vasari, Guicciardini, Alberti, Giordano Bruno, Bono Giamboni, Jacopo Passavanti, Giambattista Marino, Giovanni Botero, Cesare Beccaria, Gregorio Comanini, Lucrezia Borgia, Cennino Cennini, Luigi Manzini, Trajano Boccalini, Giambattista Gelli, Pietro Verri, il Bernini, Marco Parenti, Maria Maddalena de Pazzi, Antonio Pigafetta, Laurent Scupoli, Giuseppe Pelli Bencivenni, Artemisia Gentileschi, Paolo Pino, Pontormo, Giovanni Francesco Busenello, Antonio Rosmini, Michelangelo, Francesco Colonna, Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri, Agnolo Firenzuolo, Alfonso de Liguori, Achille Marozzo, Giambattista Cinzio Giraldi, Luigi Da Porto, Pietro Giannone, Francesco d'Assisi, Francesco Sansovino, Baldassarre Castiglione, Bramante, Antonio Serra, Benedetto Varchi, Bernardo Davanzati, Marco Polo, Amerigo Vespucci.

¹² L'ultima edizione francese del romanzo, presso Editions Rue d'Ulm, risale al 2004.

letterario in Italia, e il carattere *pittoresco* o *esotico* al quale sono state ridotte le novelle in questione. Non a caso, tra i titoli dei volumi interessati compare due volte l'aggettivo "siciliano": ne *La Lupa e altri racconti siciliani* e in *Novelle siciliane* (in cui Verga è affiancato a Pirandello e Consolo).

L'edizione delle altre opere italiane apparse sul mercato francese negli ultimi dieci anni sembra rispondere a strategie editoriali più o meno affini. Non mi soffermo sui libri di Garibaldi, che interessano verosimilmente lettori curiosi di storia. La fama dell'adattamento cinematografico di *Senso* da parte di Luchino Visconti, oltretutto l'interesse per lo sfondo storico della vicenda (fortemente risaltato nel film a scapito della dimensione psicologica del "taccuino segreto della contessa Livia"), entra forse nella motivazione dell'edizione recente per Actes Sud, ma la pubblicazione del racconto boitiano insieme ad *Altre novelle veneziane* presso Sorbonne Université Presses fa valere anche l'argomento *esotico*. La scelta di selezionare *L'alfier nero* del fratello Arrigo potrebbe esser stata motivata dall'iconicità del racconto, emblematico della narrativa scapigliata, se la scapigliatura non fosse quasi ignorata non solo in Italia ma anche oltralpe. Forse la maggior fama dell'autore come compositore e librettista di Verdi gli valse anche la curiosità dei lettori di letteratura. Comunque *L'alfier nero* è un racconto fantastico, come lo sono, almeno in parte, gli altri titoli (*Malombra*, *Un vampiro* e *Un caso di sonnambulismo*), a prescindere dalle *Piccole anime* della Serao (che godettero fors'anche della recente sete di letteratura femminile): e non sorprende, poiché il genere fantastico ha sempre attecchito molto meglio in Francia che non in Italia.

Infine, si nota che la maggior parte delle case editrici sono piuttosto di quelle che non prendono di mira il grande pubblico, eccezion fatta per *Mille et une nuits* (che appartiene alla Fayard) e Actes Sud. Il secondo Ottocento rimane quindi un piccolo gabinetto di curiosità nelle librerie. Passiamo ora a vedere in che termini il quarantennio che ci interessa venga presentato al pubblico molto più ristretto degli studenti di italianistica.

3. I libri di testo

Ho preso in considerazione sei libri di testo reperibili nelle biblioteche universitarie: la *Littérature italienne* di Christian Bec e François Livi (1998), l'*Histoire du roman italien. Des origines au Décadentisme* di Norbert Jonard (2001), la *Littérature italienne du XIXe siècle* di Raymond Abbrugiati (2007), il *Précis de littérature italienne* di Célia Filippini (2012), l'*Histoire de la littérature italienne* di Norbert Jonard (del 2001, riedita nel 2018) e il volume dedicato all'Ottocento e al Novecento dell'*Anthologie de la littérature italienne* di Gallot, Nardone e Orsino (a cura del secondo), del 2021. Si tratta di un corpus disomogeneo perché i tre volumi che passano in rassegna l'insieme della storia letteraria italiana (Bec e Livi 1998; Filippini 2012; Jonard 2018) subiscono limitazioni più strette di spazio disponibile, diversamente dai due volumi dedicati solo all'Ottocento o all'Otto-Novecento (Abbrugiati 2007; Gallot, Nardone, Orsino 2021); infine un volume si limita alla storia di un solo genere letterario, quello romanzesco (Jonard 2001). La disomogeneità di questo materiale è forse perdonabile se si tiene conto dell'esiguità di esso. Non a caso Bec scrisse nell'"Avant-propos" al

sunto scritto a quattro mani con Livi, pressoché pionieristico: “Désireux de faire le point ou d’actualiser ses connaissances en matière de littérature italienne, le public de langue française n’a qu’un livre à sa disposition (publié en 1982 et ré-édité en 1995 sous la direction de l’auteur de ces lignes)” (Bec, Livi 1998, 3).

Bec e Livi hanno selezionato “les cas exemplaires des ‘grands’ auteurs” e “les noms des écrivains les plus importants et significatifs” (Bec, Livi 1998, 3) in una prospettiva storica attenta all’evoluzione delle forme letterarie in linea con i cambiamenti contestuali. Il numero di scrittori registrati è in realtà considerevole. Il secondo Ottocento viene trattato nel capitolo IV, “De l’unité à l’époque contemporaine”, scritto dal Livi. Consta di sole 10 pagine (93-102) ma registra ben 26 autori e autrici le cui opere citate sono comprese tra l’unità e il 1900. Una netta gerarchia mette in risalto Verga, D’Annunzio, Fogazzaro, Carducci e Pascoli, ad ognuno dei quali è dedicato un paragrafo specifico. Una semplice menzione viene fatta invece agli altri, anche se Rovani si distingue per la presenza del suo nome nel sottotitolo “Rovani et les autres scapigliati”. In tale complesso sorprendono almeno tre cose: il trattamento affrettato di nomi di spicco, quali De Amicis e la Deledda (premio Nobel 1926), e l’assenza di Nievo.

Nella scia della quasi antesignana *Littérature italienne* di Bec e Livi, nella sua *Histoire du roman italien* Norbert Jonard esercita una “lecture plus idéologique qu’esthétique” e seleziona gli autori “classiques” e quelli che “ont joué un rôle essentiel dans l’histoire des formes romanesques” (Jonard 2001, 7): ad ognuno dei primi è dedicato un intero capitolo e sono Nievo, Rovani, Capuana e Verga. Solo Nievo e Verga sono affrontati isolatamente, mentre Rovani viene trattato insieme alla “Bohème [sic] milanaise” e di Capuana si ricorda perlopiù l’attività di teorico del verismo (e la *Giacinta* è registrata come il primo romanzo verista, importante dal punto di vista storico – o “idéologique”, per dirla con Jonard – piuttosto che estetico). A fine percorso, lo studioso sostiene che i “grands romanciers” (ivi, 183) di quel periodo sono tre: Nievo, Verga e De Roberto. A quest’ultimo sono infatti dedicate cinque pagine, come a D’Annunzio, mentre alla schiera degli autori menzionati sono dedicate nel migliore dei casi tre pagine (Mastriani, Fogazzaro), più spesso una sola (De Amicis, Serao, Deledda) o anche meno (Oriani, Pratesi, Percoto, ecc.).

Premesso che uno “regard panoramique” sulla letteratura italiana dell’Ottocento implica “des choix drastiques” che “ne sauraient rendre compte de la totalité de la production du siècle”, Raymond Abbrugiati spiega che le opere selezionate sono “significatifs”. Gli autori rappresentativi sono Foscolo, Leopardi, Manzoni, Mazzini, Nievo, Verga e Collodi. Spicca in questo panorama la presenza originale di uno scrittore politico: Mazzini. In campo strettamente letterario, gli autori del secondo Ottocento sono dunque tre, le cui opere considerate “significatifs” sono: *Le confessioni d’un italiano*, *Vita dei campi*, *I Malavoglia* e *Le avventure di Pinocchio*. Collodi e Verga confermano il primato osservato sul mercato editoriale degli ultimi dieci anni. Si nota però che di Verga, oltre alle novelle, viene presentato anche il primo romanzo verista: gli studenti sono futuri addetti ai lavori e come tali capaci di affrontare la complessità del romanzo.

La Filippini, dal canto suo, dedica quattro capitoli alla letteratura dell’Ottocento (“Foscolo et Leopardi”, “Le romantisme italien”, “La littérature italienne après l’unité” e “Le décadentisme”) e un quinto capitolo a due autori a cavallo

tra Otto e Novecento (“Svevo et Pirandello”). Le pagine dedicate al secondo Ottocento sono dunque articolate soprattutto intorno a un periodo della vita politica del paese e a un movimento letterario, anziché intorno a determinate figure autoriali. Tale scelta consente di prendere in esame un certo numero di autori, ma implica anche un approccio funzionale e non specifico alle loro opere. Il capitolo quindicesimo (“La littérature italienne après l’unité”) include cinque sezioni: “Carducci”, “La Scapigliatura”, “Le naturalisme et le vérisme”, “Verga” e “La littérature d’enfance et de jeunesse”. Se dunque Carducci e Verga ricevono un trattamento isolato, gli altri autori convocati sono affrontati a partire da una prospettiva storico-culturale e/o generica. Di Collodi e di De Amicis sono brevemente descritti i libri di maggior successo, *Pinocchio* e *Cuore* (nell’ultima sezione). Le sezioni dedicate alla Scapigliatura, al verismo e al decadentismo (rispettivamente con una ‘S’ maiuscola, una ‘v’ e una ‘d’ minuscole, per motivi non esplicitati) presentano i movimenti italiani in correlazione ai movimenti europei, soprattutto quelli francesi della Bohème, del naturalismo (si legge che “*I Malavoglia* le premier roman de cette série [le cycle des vaincus] conçue sur le modèle du réalisme et du naturalisme français”, Filippini 2012, 194) e dei *poètes maudits*. L’autrice osserva le influenze esercitate sulla Scapigliatura da Manzoni, Poe e Baudelaire, e i rapporti del movimento con la musica (Puccini, Verdi). Gli autori scapigliati citati sono Cletto Arrighi, Emilio Praga, Arrigo Boito e Tarchetti. La sezione dedicata a “Le naturalisme et le vérisme” introduce l’argomento con riferimenti al positivismo comtiano, all’evoluzionismo darwiniano e alla sociologia spenseriana, nonché al realismo letterario di Balzac e Flaubert, per soffermarsi poi sulla figura di Luigi Capuana, trattata (molto brevemente) come teorico del verismo e sotto il segno dei suoi legami con gli ambienti culturali contemporanei e con Verga. Di Verga appunto, nella sezione successiva, è fatto qualche cenno alla stagione scapigliata della sua produzione narrativa, dopodiché la studiosa si sofferma sulla “révolution du vérisme” (Filippini 2012, 193) operata a partire da *Vita di campi* e prende in esame i romanzi *I Malavoglia* e *Mastro-don Gesualdo* (ma il trattino tra “Mastro” e “don” viene omissso) per accennare infine allo stile dell’autore. Il decadentismo italiano è introdotto da qualche considerazione sulle fonti europee delle quali sono segnalati Huysmans e Wilde, oltre ai già ricordati *maudits*. Per quanto riguarda il movimento italiano, viene citato *Il piacere* di D’Annunzio mentre è dedicata al “Symbolisme de Pascoli” una sottosezione autonoma, nella quale la Filippini espone sommariamente la poetica del fanciullino e le raccolte poetiche dell’autore. La sezione si conclude con un punto su “L’esthétisme de D’Annunzio”; vi si trovano cenni all’influenza esercitata sia dal verismo sia dal pensiero di Nietzsche e considerazioni più approfondite sulla produzione teatrale e soprattutto poetica, sulla tematica del superuomo e sull’adesione dell’autore al fascismo nell’ultima stagione della sua vita. *In toto* e da un punto di vista puramente quantitativo, gli autori del secondo Ottocento maggiormente rappresentati in questo libro sono dunque, in ordine decrescente: D’Annunzio, Verga, Carducci e Pascoli.

Nella sua *Histoire de la littérature italienne*, Norbert Jonard si sofferma sul secondo Ottocento nel capitolo intitolato “Du romantisme au décadentisme”, articolato in sette punti: “Du roman historique au roman vériste”, “Le second romantisme et

la Bohème milanaise” (con la ‘B’ maiuscola, privilegio negato sia al romanticismo che al verismo e al decadentismo, sebbene lo studioso la presenti come “degenerazione” del romanticismo¹³), “L’anti-romantisme de Carducci”, “Un théoricien du vérisme: Capuana”, “Du romantisme au vérisme: Verga”, “Le régionalisme vériste” e “Le décadentisme”. Come si vede, l’organizzazione delle materie segue tendenze collettive (scuole, poetiche, movimenti, generi) e dedica particolare attenzione alle evoluzioni, operando raffronti e stabilendo contrapposizioni tra i vari movimenti. A parte gli autori citati nei sottotitoli (Carducci, Capuana e Verga), vengono menzionati Mastriani (per il romanzo d’appendice), Nievo (per il quale si parla di “une sorte de vérisme provincial avant la lettre” (Jonard 2018, 96) e, a proposito de *Le Confessioni*, di “une épopée comique en prose” (*ibidem*) vicina al romanzo di formazione), Cletto Arrighi, Praga, Giovanni Camerana, Tarchetti, Dossi e Rovani (per la “génération des vaincus” [ivi, 97] della scapigliatura – pardon: “la Bohème milanaise” –), Serao, Deledda, Di Roberto, Pratesi, Fucini, De Marchi e Giacosa (per il “régionalisme vériste”), Pascoli, Fogazzaro e infine D’Annunzio.

Anche Jonard predilige una prospettiva comparatistica, soprattutto con riferimento alla letteratura francese, evidentemente perché si rivolge a lettori francesi. Tale prospettiva lo porta però a pronunciare dei giudizi molto discutibili. Il verismo è definito “un phénomène européen mais qui a pris en Italie un caractère particulier, régionaliste et dialectal, au lendemain des déceptions apportées par le Risorgimento” (ivi, 99). Asserisce inoltre che il decadentismo “est un mouvement littéraire apparu en France dans les années 1880-1884 et qui s’est développé dans l’Europe entière en prenant des formes diverses selon les pays” (ivi, 101), a ritroso (mi si conceda il facile *jeu de mots*) della sistemazione operata da Enrico Ghidetti, che situa la nascita del decadentismo italiano nel 1881, con la pubblicazione del romanzo *Malombra*, tre anni prima della pubblicazione di *A rebours*¹⁴. Lo sguardo squalificante posto sui movimenti italiani non risparmia i singoli autori. Il giudizio su Verga è molto severo:

L’univers décrit par Verga est un univers d’encre, fermé sur lui-même. Son angoisse du mouvement auquel ses personnages essaient vainement d’opposer la stabilité de la maison et de la famille, se traduit par une peur de l’histoire et une absence de confiance dans l’avenir qui font de la Sicile un monde privé d’espérance et des Siciliens les victimes de cette *marea* du progrès qui ne dépose sur ses rives que des vaincus. (Ivi, 100)

Né agli altri autori è concessa maggiore benevolenza: “La plupart des véristes non méridionaux restèrent prisonniers du particularisme provincial” (ivi, 101), il moralismo di De Marchi “gâte ses meilleurs romans” (*ibidem*), *I vicerè* sono una “chronique familiale” (*ibidem*) – e Jonard lascia trapelare addirittura della condiscendenza quando scrive di De Roberto che la sua “volonté d’objectivité” è “louable” (*ibidem*). Pascoli è visto essenzialmente come l’autore della poetica del

¹³ “La réalisation de l’unité nationale porta un coup sérieux au romantisme qui, passé 1860, s’étiole et dégénère pour tomber dans les déliquescentes de la Bohème milanaise” (Jonard 2018, 97).

¹⁴ *Malombra* segna “l’alba dello spiritualismo decadente in Italia” (Ghidetti 1993, 21).

fanciullino, tradotta con qualche successo nelle *Myrica*, mentre le idee politiche sviluppate nelle raccolte più tardive sono considerate ideologicamente sbagliate¹⁵.

La prospettiva “culturelle et historique” (Gallot, Nardone, Orsino 2021, 7) adottata da Gallot, Nardone e Orsino assegna a Pascoli un ruolo preminente, poiché il poeta è l'unico ad avere un capitolo riservato. Gli altri autori del secondo Ottocento – dal quale è escluso Nievo, registrato nel capitolo “Il Risorgimento” [sic] insieme a Pellico, su basi dunque biografiche anziché editoriali – non sono trattati indipendentemente. La “littérature post-unitaire” raggruppa brani delle opere più famose di Carducci (*Rime nuove* e *Odi barbare*), Fogazzaro (*Piccolo mondo antico*), Collodi (*Le avventure di Pinocchio*) e De Amicis (*Cuore*). Va segnalata una certa originalità nella scelta dei campioni (di *Cuore*, ad esempio, è proposta la lettura della “Madre di Franti”), la quale però non si esercita a scapito delle pagine più canoniche (troviamo *Rosso Malpelo* di Verga, *X Agosto* di Pascoli, ad esempio). L'originalità riguarda anche la scelta degli autori: nel capitolo “Verga et le vérisme” troviamo puntualmente De Roberto, oltre a Verga, ma la Deledda si sostituisce al solito Capuana, forse per via del premio Nobel, forse sotto l'effetto della nuova ondata femminista successiva allo scandalo del caso Harvey Weinstein e al movimento #MeToo (2007): si notano del resto Matilde Serao e Grazia Deledda anche nel recente Jonard 2018 mentre non ci sono né nell'Abbrugiati 2007 né nel Filippini 2012. Insomma, questa silloge dà spazio soprattutto a Pascoli e, in misura minore, Verga, Carducci e Nievo (che noi rubrichiamo nel periodo preso in esame).

Il trattamento riservato al secondo Ottocento risulta alquanto affrettato nei libri del secolo XXI. Quello di Jonard risulta arditamente di parte (soprattutto gallofila), nel suo libro più recente, sebbene venga riconosciuto allo studioso lo sforzo di convocare scrittori (e scrittrici) non menzionati dagli altri libri di testo. Anche la prospettiva europea privilegiata dalla Filippini non rende conto della ricchezza e della specificità di questa stagione della storia letteraria italiana (e mette da parte Nievo, come già Bec e Livi). Invece il libro di Abbrugiati e Gallot, Nardone e Orsino offrono dei prospetti più precisi, benché molto selettivi.

Questi libri panoramici o sintetici ben si prestano comunque a fungere da introduzione alla letteratura italiana per i non addetti ai lavori, mentre gli studenti che si specializzano nella materia sono portati ad approfondirne lo studio. Osserviamo ora quali sono i piani di studio dell'italianistica francese, a cominciare dai programmi dell'*Agrégation*, la quale costituisce un ottimo “observatoire” perché, dei due concorsi francesi per l'abilitazione all'insegnamento, è quello tuttora imperniato sulla letteratura:

La construction de la culture nationale est largement dépendante de l'institution scolaire, de la culture de ses enseignants. Concours de recrutement et formation des professeurs jouent à cet égard un rôle fondamental. Statut et place de la littérature [...], définition de la littérature, hiérarchie des genres, canon des auteurs: les concours de recrutement sont un observatoire privilégié de l'évolution de ces questions. (Jey 2014, 144)

¹⁵ “il se fourvoie sur les chemins de la poésie politique, exaltant l'héroïsme du guerrier, les vertus du nationalisme et les entreprises coloniales” (Jonard 2018, 103).

Per quanto riguarda le lingue straniere, specialmente quelle meno insegnate rispetto all'inglese, allo spagnolo e al tedesco, fra le quali si annovera purtroppo l'italiano in Francia, alla virtù di "baromètre du panthéon de la littérature transalpine en France" (Lucarelli 2012, 243) si aggiunge un'altra funzione del concorso, come giustamente ricorda Lucarelli: un "un rôle propulsif à l'égard des enseignants-chercheurs d'italien même dans le domaine de la recherche" (ivi, 245); dato aprioristicamente rilevante se si considera che in teoria le materie insegnate all'università e gli oggetti di ricerca coincidono.

4. L'*Agrégation* e i piani di studio

Secondo la recente disamina degli argomenti (le *questions au programme*) dell'*Agrégation* d'italiano dal 1900 al 2010 effettuata da Massimo Lucarelli, gli autori dell'Ottocento regolarmente presenti furono Leopardi, Foscolo e Manzoni. Dal 1900 al 1955 fu puntualmente iscritto al programma D'Annunzio ma il Vate fu molto meno presente nel periodo successivo (dal 1956 al 2010). Allo stesso modo, Monti e Giusti, anch'essi rappresentati nel primo periodo, furono in seguito trascurati. Il secondo Novecento vide invece Verga comparire tra gli autori dell'Ottocento più rappresentati. Altro dato significativo dell'evoluzione del programma nel corso del secolo scorso è la quasi scomparsa di Carducci dal 1956 al 2010, autore che era stato rilevante nel primo Novecento, e secondo solo a Dante. Nella classifica dei venti autori più presenti nei programmi, quelli dell'Ottocento sono stati, in ordine decrescente: nel primo Novecento Carducci (secondo), Manzoni (terzo), Leopardi (ottavo), Monti (dodicesimo), Foscolo (tredicesimo), D'Annunzio (sedicesimo) e Giusti (ventesimo); nel secondo Novecento Manzoni (settimo), Leopardi (ottavo), Foscolo (undicesimo) e Verga (quindicesimo).

Si passa insomma da sette autori ottocenteschi a quattro, e da due secondo ottocenteschi a uno solo (Carducci e D'Annunzio poi Verga). Si verifica, dunque, nel corso del Novecento una progressiva disaffezione all'Ottocento, in particolare alla seconda parte del secolo. Ma occorre tener presenti tre dati fondamentali: anzitutto "le nombre d'auteurs par programme est bien plus grand dans les cinquante-six premières années de l'Agrégation que dans les cinquante-cinq dernières années" (Lucarelli 2012, 249); inoltre, dal 2004, delle quattro *questions* (di cui due cosiddette "antiche", che vertono in maniera specifica su Medioevo, Rinascimento e Barocco, e due "moderne", che concernono un periodo che va dal Sette-Ottocento ai giorni nostri) assegnate ogni anno, due (una *antica* e una *moderna*) sono mantenute nelle prove concorsuali successive, ad anni alterni; infine, le *questions* sul programma non riguardano esclusivamente la letteratura ma anche, e in pari misura, la *civilisation* (storia, arti, storia culturale). Quest'ultimo dato è particolarmente rilevante perché nel 1994, una *question* su "la société et la culture italienne entre 1876 et 1900" riuniva Collodi, De Amicis, De Roberto e Fogazzaro (Lucarelli 2012, 252). Si tenga presente anche il novero degli autori secondo ottocenteschi non contemplati nello studio di Lucarelli, ovvero Nievo, Pascoli, Svevo e Rovani.

Per conto mio, ho potuto rilevare che nei programmi dal 2011 a oggi gli autori del secondo Ottocento sono stati Pascoli (nel 2011) e De Roberto (nel biennio 2012-2013), affrontati ogni volta con una *question* monografica. Invece, la terza

question delle sessioni 2022-2023, “Nouvelles de l’Ottocento”, che predilige le forme brevi della narrativa (come il mercato editoriale), è di tipo generico. Tale *question* presenta una novità perché fa entrare Tarchetti e Capuana, né l’uno né l’altro registrati prima, e recupera Verga dopo un’assenza di ventitré anni. Deprecando il conservatorismo passatista e *highbrow* dei programmi del concorso, i quali “non registrano alcuna neppur lontana sensibilità alla cultura ‘pop’” per la *question* dedicata all’epoca contemporanea, Claudio Milanese ipotizza che “i ricercatori preposti all’elaborazione dei programmi non abbiano sentito nemmeno da lontano l’impetuosa trasformazione del postmoderno” (2016, 137)¹⁶. Vari criteri entrano in gioco nella selezione degli argomenti, non ultimi la disponibilità delle opere sul mercato editoriale e la loro accessibilità in termini finanziari, come ricorda bene Lucarelli (Lucarelli 2012, 245). *Sic antica licet* e correndo il rischio dell’anacronismo, con il programma del 2022 si può comunque osservare una modifica del canone ottocentesco nella formazione dei futuri insegnanti delle scuole superiori. Se, negli ultimi anni, il gusto per il verismo si conferma, l’apertura a un movimento spesso considerato marginale come quello della scapigliatura e la presenza di De Roberto e Capuana, a fianco di Verga, dimostrano che anche autori giudicati relativamente minori o meno rappresentativi di un determinato movimento possano entrare a far parte del canone pedagogico per eccellenza, come quello dell’*Agrégation*. Si nota infine il recupero recente della poesia, con Pascoli, nonostante la netta preminenza della narrativa.

L’*Agrégation* costituisce spesso il traguardo della formazione accademica degli studenti iscritti nei percorsi umanistici. Facciamo adesso un passo indietro per considerare i contenuti della loro formazione di *Licence* (equivalente della laurea triennale).

Nell’università francese, la letteratura italiana viene insegnata soprattutto nei percorsi formativi di *Langues et littératures étrangères et régionales* (LLCER). In questa sede, ho preso in esame solo l’offerta didattica delle LLCER nell’anno accademico 2020-2021, escludendo tutte le *Licences* in cui vengono studiate due discipline (ad esempio italianistica e francesistica). Per un motivo analogo ho escluso dalla presente disamina gli insegnamenti di Master (vale a dire laurea specialistica), essendo i Master di sola italianistica diventati molto rari nell’accademia francese¹⁷. I percorsi LLCER, che risentono delle esigenze specifiche del sistema scolastico e accademico francese, della scarsa preparazione linguistica e culturale degli studenti, della necessità di dedicare molte ore della formazione alla lingua, alla traduzione, alla *civilisation* e alla metodologia, non consentono di studiare approfonditamente la letteratura. Per questa serie di motivi, numerosi dipartimenti didattici hanno scelto dei corsi panoramici. I piani di studio delle *Licences* LLCER d’italianistica prevedono sempre diversi corsi di lettera-

¹⁶ Chi decide gli argomenti programma sono in realtà i membri della commissione.

¹⁷ Lo stesso vale in campo scientifico: “solo un numero ristretto di unità di ricerca [francesi] si focalizza esclusivamente su studi italiani, alcune unità si allargano all’area romanza, e molte unità, di cui fanno parte anche italianisti, vertono su tematiche di scienze umane” (Milanese 2016, 134).

tura, ma non tutte le università rendono pubbliche *online* il prospetto dei corsi. Tra i siti internet delle quindici università interessate, numerosi sono quelli che non forniscono dati dettagliati sui contenuti delle varie unità didattiche, i cui nomi sono spesso molto vaghi (troviamo per esempio “Letteratura”, “Letteratura moderna”, “Letteratura italiana”, “Letteratura moderna e contemporanea”): in questi casi è ovviamente impossibile sapere come l’Ottocento venga presentato agli studenti. Laddove invece sono esplicitate le questioni affrontate, ecco qui di seguito i dati che riguardano l’Ottocento.

Siccome le unità didattiche di letteratura prevedono perlopiù delle periodizzazioni abbastanza ampie (come “Letteratura dei secoli XVII, XVIII e XIX” all’università di Lorena, “Letteratura dei secoli XIX, XX e XXI” alla Sorbona o “Letteratura, arte e cultura del secolo XIX” a Lione), accade che la letteratura ottocentesca risulti assente perché l’insegnante incaricato, per esempio, della “Letteratura dei secoli XVII, XVIII e XIX” prediliga un corso monografico su Goldoni (come a Paris Nanterre), o quello incaricato di “Letteratura e civiltà dei secoli XVIII e XIX” scelga di improntare il proprio corso sulla storia anziché sulla letteratura (come a Nantes). In totale, si sono rilevati sette corsi con un programma vertente sull’Ottocento: Leopardi (“Letteratura del secolo XIX”, Paris Sorbonne nouvelle); Manzoni, Tarchetti e Verga (“Il romanzo del Risorgimento”, Rennes); Verga (“Letteratura”, Toulouse); Foscolo, Leopardi e Manzoni (“Letteratura dei secoli XVIII-XIX”, Clermont-Ferrand); Leopardi, Manzoni, Mazzini, Carducci, Collodi, Verga, Pascoli e D’Annunzio (“Storia della letteratura italiana dei secoli XIX-XX”, Chambéry); Manzoni (“Letteratura moderna e contemporanea”, Nice Côte d’Azur); Foscolo, Manzoni, Nievo e Verga (“Panorama della letteratura moderna dei secoli XVIII-XIX”, Aix-Marseille); Nievo, De Amicis e Verga (“Panorama della letteratura italiana dei secoli XVIII-XIX”, Montpellier).

Emerge dunque come siano soltanto tre i corsi monografici (quelli della Sorbonne nouvelle su Leopardi, di Tolosa su Verga e di Nizza su Manzoni), tra cui uno solo su un autore del secondo Ottocento. Complessivamente, gli autori del secondo Ottocento studiati in classe sono dunque: Verga (in cinque università), Nievo (in due università), Tarchetti, Carducci, Collodi, Pascoli, D’Annunzio e De Amicis (ognuno in una sola università), sempre sulla base dei pochi dati accessibili via internet. Occorre pur sempre ribadire il fatto che i dati raccolti sono approssimativi, con valore soltanto indicativo. Infine, i semestri del *curriculum* scelti per questi corsi dipendono dalle varie università. Per il primo anno di laurea, nel secondo semestre, sono previsti due corsi (più uno, al primo semestre, non registrato sopra perché il contenuto non è dettagliato: “Arti e letteratura dei secoli XIX, XX e XXI”, a Parigi Sorbonne nouvelle); per il secondo anno tre corsi al primo semestre, due corsi al secondo semestre; per il terzo anno due corsi al primo semestre (più uno, al primo semestre, non registrato sopra perché non specificato: “Storia letteraria dei secoli XVIII e XIX”, a Tolosa) e quattro corsi al secondo semestre. L’Ottocento si studia dunque prevalentemente in terzo anno (sette), in misura minore in secondo anno (cinque), più raramente in primo anno (tre).

5. Conclusione

I limiti di questo studio sono tanti e i risultati purtroppo frammentari e provvisori. Occorrerebbe senz'altro estendere l'indagine ai piani di studio delle lauree specialistiche, ovviare all'oscurità sostanziale di quelli delle triennali su scala nazionale (pochi pubblicati, molti generici, dubbiamente aggiornati) procedendo a un'inchiesta presso i vari colleghi interessati, come è stato fatto in Belgio e nei Paesi Bassi (Dupré, Jansen, Lanslots *et al.* 2016), e abbracciare un periodo più lungo, capace di evidenziare le evoluzioni dell'insegnamento del secondo Ottocento in Francia negli ultimi dieci anni. Occorrerebbe anche osservare i piani di studio di letterature comparate e prendere in considerazione gli argomenti delle tesi di laurea e di dottorato. Insomma, ci vorrebbe "una raccolta sistematica, per la quale occorrerebbero un lavoro di squadra e fondi dedicati" (Benvenuti 2016, 36) e il mio auspicio volge in tal senso. Sarebbe certamente opportuna anche un'indagine sulle scelte editoriali della letteratura italiana tradotta in francese. Per quanto riguarda i programmi universitari, i criteri di selezione delle opere e degli autori selezionati sono sicuramente di natura linguistica o "pratica"¹⁸ (è difficile proporre lo studio di poeti dialettali, ad esempio, a studenti stranieri che spesso stentano a capire la lingua italiana standard¹⁹), ideologica²⁰ e istituzionale (le direttive ministeriali francesi impongono sempre più un approccio tematico, multimediale, trans-secolare e nello stesso tempo *civilisationnel* ai cosiddetti *documenti* impiegati in classe, per cui la letteratura risulta spesso ridotta a un campionario di *testi* – anziché opere – decontestualizzati, *utilizzati* per *illustrare* una determinata *nozione* o un determinato fatto storico²¹). Ci sono certamente anche

¹⁸ L'aggettivo è della Benvenuti, la quale adduce l'esempio di una "selezione di testi che meglio si prestino all'educazione linguistica" (2016, 33).

¹⁹ Negli ultimi anni, la parte dedicata all'insegnamento della seconda e della terza lingua nelle scuole medie e superiori è andata restringendosi drasticamente. Il fenomeno è ulteriormente aggravato dalla recente riforma ministeriale che mette a repentaglio l'insegnamento della terza lingua. Vedi <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/04/26/le-ministre-de-l-education-nationale-prepare-l-asphyxie-de-l-enseignement-de-l-italien_5455483_3232.html> (03/2022).

²⁰ Si leggano per esempio le considerazioni di Mario Isnenghi sulla contrapposizione tra Manzoni e Nievo: "Che *I promessi sposi* si siano imposti come il romanzo per antonomasia e il romanzo italiano per eccellenza sin dalla sua comparsa in vita dell'autore a scapito de *Le confessioni di un Italiano* e mentre il romanzo nieviano veniva regolarmente ignorato la dice lunga sul sentimento dell'identità nazionale, sui valori condivisi, sulla visione della storia, sull'ideologia comune". In particolare, i *Promessi sposi*, soggiunge lo studioso, insegnano che "Ribellarsi – impariamo subito – è intrinsecamente male" (2011, 21 e 24).

²¹ Un fenomeno analogo avviene nella scuola italiana, in cui "l'approccio sociologico e strutturalistico mettono ai margini non solo i classici, ma la letterarietà in quanto tale, trasformando la letteratura studiata a scuola in un fenomeno della conoscenza più vasta della società" e "la nuova parola d'ordine 'competenze' – su cui si fondano le valutazioni e le certificazioni internazionali degli apprendimenti – sottolinea, è chiaro, l'importanza del saper fare autonomamente sul ripetere, dell'apprendere sull'insegnare" (Blazina 2010, 17 e 21).

criteri materiali (quali la disponibilità di edizioni, traduzioni, ecc.) e occasionali (come, per esempio, la menzione di un'opera a un convegno) [...]. Nella selezione messa in atto nel contesto scolastico, inoltre [...], intervengono fattori squisitamente didattici, quali l'utilità tematica di un'opera, il suo valore esemplare per un periodo o movimento culturale, la sua intrinseca natura che lo rende di per sé (in)adatto alla circolazione in ambiti scolastici o comunque ne preclude l'uso generalizzato. (Dupré, Jansen, Lanslots *et al.* 2016, 58)

Possiamo comunque affermare due cose: che sia nelle librerie, sia nelle università, in Francia la letteratura del secondo Ottocento italiano occupa tutto sommato un posto esiguo; e che l'autore di quel periodo di maggior successo è indubbiamente e di gran lunga Giovanni Verga (si veda la tabella allegata).

È stato asserito che la (ri)scoperta della letteratura italiana da parte del pubblico francese, all'inizio degli anni Ottanta, fosse dovuta alla vittoria dell'Italia contro la Germania al *Mundial* del 1982, alla traduzione del *Nome della rosa* e alla partecipazione militare del Paese nel Medio Oriente²². La risonanza in Francia delle varie celebrazioni del cinquecentesimo anniversario della morte di Leonardo nel 2019 e del settecentesimo anniversario della morte di Dante nel 2021, la vittoria dei Måneskin all'Eurovision 2021, le quaranta medaglie italiane alle Olimpiadi di Tokyo 2020 (di cui dieci medaglie d'oro), le iniziative di Palazzo Farnese per celebrare l'amicizia italo-francese²³, e infine la firma del trattato del Quirinale il 26 novembre dello stesso 2021 fanno intravedere oggi una riscossa dell'italofilia della cultura francese, nonostante le politiche ministeriali sfavorevoli allo studio delle lingue terze. Speriamo che la riscossa si confermi e che interessi anche il disamato Ottocento e, chissà, anche le sue scrittrici.

Tabella

Si elencano in questa tabella gli autori del quarantennio postunitario riscontrati nelle varie fonti prese in esame, senza tener conto della loro presenza qualitativa (unica o ricorrente, consistente o superficiale) in ogni categoria. Non si sono considerate le menzioni alle opere novecentesche degli autori elencati (*La coscienza di Zeno* ad esempio).

²² “[L’Italie est] admis[e] au rang des grandes puissances, dans l’imaginaire collectif [français], seulement à partir du début des années 1980 du siècle dernier; [...] nous aimons à suggérer la date de 1982, *Mundial* de football et traduction du *Nom de la rose* en français” (Tosatti, Vegliante 2012, 11 e 16). Anche In Italia la pubblicazione del *Nome della rosa*, “considerato il primo romanzo postmoderno uscito in Italia”, costituisce uno spartiacque (Benvenuti 2016, 33).

²³ Penso, ad esempio, alla performance di Olivier Grossetête commissionata da Palazzo Farnese, con l’opera collettiva del *Ponte Farnese* di cartapesta sospeso al di sopra del Tevere per qualche giorno nel luglio de 2021: “Ponte Farnese, il progetto di Michelangelo a Grossetête”, <https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cultura/arte/2021/07/01/ponte-farnese-il-progetto-di-michelangelo-a-grossetete_4702fa0f-58cc-4c74-8296-0118d29a0f2e.html> (03/2022).

	Presenza complessiva	Agrégation 1956-2010	Agrégation 2011-2022	Offerta didattica 2020-2021	Libro di testo Bec, Livi 1998	Libro di testo (romano) 2022
Verga	10	x	x	x	x	
Pascoli	8	x	x	x	x	
Carducci	7	x		x	x	
D'Annunzio	7			x	x	
De Amicis	7	x		x	x	
Collodi	6	x		x	x	
Nievo	6	x		x		
Tarchetti	6		x	x	x	
Capuana	6		x		x	
Fogazzaro	6	x			x	
De Roberto	6	x	x		x	
Praga	5				x	
Svevo	4	x			x	
Rovani	4	x			x	
Serao	4				x	
C. Arrighi	4				x	
Deledda	4				x	
A. Boito	4				x	
Pratesi	3				x	
Fucini	3				x	
De Marchi	3				x	
Dossi	3				x	
Camerana	3				x	
Di Giacomo	2				x	
C. Boito	2					
Mastriani	2					
Giacosa	2				x	
Mazzini	1					
Garibaldi	1					
Percoto	1					
Codemo	1					
Ranieri	1					
Oriani	1					
Faldella	1				x	
Tommaseo	1					
Zena	1					
Graf	1					

IL SECONDO OTTOCENTO ITALIANO VISTO DALLA FRANCIA

bro di o Jonard manzo) 2001	Libro di testo Abbrugiati (‘800) 2007	Libro di testo Filippini 2012	Libro di testo Jonard 2018	Libro di testo Nardone 2021	Mercato editoriale (poesie) 1994	Mercato editoriale 2011-2021
X	X	X	X	X		X
		X	X	X	X	
		X	X	X	X	
X		X	X	X	X	
X		X		X		X
	X	X		X		
X	X		X	X		
X		X	X			
X			X			X
X			X	X		X
X			X	X		
X		X	X		X	
X						X
X			X			
X			X			X
X		X	X			
X			X	X		
		X			X	X
X			X			
X			X			
X			X			
X			X			
					X	
					X	
X			X			X
	X		X			
						X
X						
X						
X						
X						
					X	
					X	
					X	

Riferimenti bibliografici

Fonti a stampa

- Abbrugiati Raymond (2007), *La littérature italienne du XIXe siècle*, Aix-en-Provence, Presses de l'Université de Provence.
- Alexandre Denise, dir. (2000), *Aspects du roman italien aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Saint-Etienne, Publications de l'université de Saint-Etienne.
- Bec Christian, Livi François (1998), *La littérature italienne*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France.
- Benvenuti Giuliana (2016), "L'Italia in Italia (e fuori d'Italia): processi di canonizzazione nell'insegnamento universitario", *Narrativa*, 38, 31-42, doi: 10.4000/narrativa.788.
- Blazina Sergio (2010), "I classici nella scuola superiore italiana: canoni, testi, interpretazioni", in Pérette-Cécile Buffaria, Paolo Grossi (dir.), *Réinventer les classiques*, Actes des journées d'études de Poitiers et Paris des 12-14 mars et 5 avril 2008, Paris, Edizioni dell'Istituto Italiano di Cultura, 11-25.
- Boillet Danielle, dir. (1994), *Anthologie bilingue de la poésie italienne*, Paris, Gallimard.
- Cartal Élodie (2010), *La réception de la littérature italienne en France des années 1980 à 2002*, tesi di laurea specialistica, <<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-00537149/document>> (03/2022).
- Di Nicola Laura (2016), "Classici italiani nel mondo. Quali canone per il nuovo millennio?", *Narrativa*, 38, 43-54, doi: 10.4000/narrativa.793.
- Dubois Jérémie (2019), *Italianistica e italo-filia. L'insegnamento dell'italiano in Francia: una disciplina al cuore delle relazioni franco-italiane*, trad. di M.P. Casalena, Bologna, Clueb.
- Dupré Natalie, Jansen Monica, Lanslots Inge, et al. (2016), "Il canone e l'insegnamento della letteratura italiana oltre frontiera. Risultati di un'inchiesta empirica negli atenei belgi e olandesi", *Narrativa*, 38, 55-76, doi: 10.4000/narrativa.803.
- Faire Héroïse, Girost Geoffrey, Gradel Alice, et al. (2002), *La littérature italienne publiée par l'édition française: paysages et perspectives*, tesi laurea specialistica, <<https://www.enssib.fr/bibliotheque-numerique/documents/828-la-litterature-italienne-publiee-par-l-edition-francaise.pdf>> (03/2022).
- Filippini Célia (2012), *Précis de littérature italienne*, Levallois-Perret, Studyrama.
- Fournier-Finocchiaro Laura (2019), "Traduction et interprétation des lettres italiennes en France sous le fascisme, entre culture et propagande", *Cahiers d'études italiennes*, 28, doi: 10.4000/cei.5271.
- Gallot Muriel, Nardone Jean-Luc, Orsino Margherita, dir. (2021 [2005]), *Anthologie de la littérature italienne*, 3: *XIXe et XXe siècles*, Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Midi.
- Ghidetti Enrico (1993), *Malattia, coscienza e destino. Per una mitografia del Decadentismo*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia Editrice.
- Grossi Paolo (2016), "Il libro italiano all'estero. Diffusione e promozione", *Narrativa*, 38, 21-30, doi: 10.4000/narrativa.778.
- Isnenghi Mario (2011 [2001]), *Storia d'Italia. I fatti e le percezioni dal Risorgimento alla società dello spettacolo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Jey Martine (2014), "Le canon aux agrégations du XIXe siècle", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 114, 1, 143-156.
- Jonard Norbert (2001), *Histoire du roman italien. Des origines au Décadentisme*, Paris, Honoré Champion.
- (2018), *Histoire de la littérature italienne*, Paris, Ellipses.

- Lucarelli Massimo (2012), “Le panthéon de la littérature italienne dans les programmes de l’Agrégation d’italien”, in Ada Tosatti, Jean-Charles Vegliante (dir.), *L’Italie vue d’ici. La traduction-migration*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 243-260.
- Milanesi Claudio (2016), “La cultura popolare italiana dell’italianismo francese. L’Agrégation e tre riviste”, *Narrativa*, 38, 129-142, doi: 10.4000/narrativa.850.
- Simon Philippe (2014), “Littérature nationale et littératures étrangères dans les manuels scolaires: le XVIIe siècle français et italien dans le ‘Lagarde et Michard’”, in Sandro Baffi, Davide Luglio (dir.), *Enseignement et identités culturelles dans les pays d’Europe du Sud. Espagne, France, Italie, Portugal, XXe et XXIe siècles*, Actes du VI colloque international SPICAE, Université Paris-Sorbonne 5-7 juin 2013, *La Rivista*, 2, 161-168, <<http://etudesitaliennes.hypotheses.org/4982>> (03/2022).
- Tosatti Ada, Vegliante Jean-Charles (2012), “Avant-propos”, in Idd. (dir.), *L’Italie vue d’ici. La traduction-migration*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 9-16.
- Valin Danièle (2001), “Bibliographie des traductions françaises de la littérature italienne des XXe et XXIe siècles (1900-2014) (Romans, essais, poésie, théâtre)”, *Chroniques italiennes*, 66-67, <<http://chroniquesitaliennes.univ-paris3.fr/PDF/66-67/TRAD2000ed.pdf>> (03/2022).

Sitografia dei piani di studio di Licence

- Université de Lorraine, <https://formulconnect.univ-lorraine.fr/files/15e65ecf-5035-48e1-a616-06ce545fc603-all_programme_italien_18_19.pdf> (03/2022).
- Université Paris Sorbonne, <<https://lettres.sorbonne-universite.fr/faculte-des-lettres/ufr/langues/etudes-italiennes>> (03/2022).
- Université Paris Sorbonne nouvelle, <<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/licence-llcer-italien-247671.kjsp?RH=1179926084097>> (03/2022).
- Université Paris Nanterre, <https://formations.parisnanterre.fr/_contents/ametys%253Aplugins/odf/ametys%253Acontents/subprogram-italien-2/_attribute/educational-booklets%5B1%5D/pdf/Livret%20p%C3%A9dagogique%20Italien%20-%202020-11-09.pdf?objectId=subProgramContent://a403ff19-168c-4110-8fee-2cff51eea15d> (03/2022).
- Université de Lille, <<https://www.univ-lille.fr/formations/fr-00002622.html>> (03/2022).
- Université de Caen, <<https://uniform.unicaen.fr/catalogue/formation/licences/5543-licence-langues-litteratures-et-civilisations-etrangeres-et-regionales-parcours-italien?s=ufrlve&r=1416929075972#collection-active-desktop>> (03/2022).
- Université de Rennes, <https://intranet.univ-rennes2.fr/system/files/UHB/DEPARTEMENT-ITALIEN/livret_licence_italien_2020-2021.pdf> (03/2022).
- Université de Nantes, <<https://flce.univ-nantes.fr/offre-de-formation/licences-llcer/licence-langues-litteratures-et-civilisations-etrangeres-et-regionales-llcer-italien>> (03/2022).
- Université de Toulouse, <<https://italien.univ-tlse2.fr/accueil/programmes/llce>> (03/2022).
- Université de Clermont-Ferrand, <<https://lcc.uca.fr/formation/licence/licence-langues-litteratures-civilisations-etrangeres-et-regionales/licence-llcer-parcours-italien>> (03/2022).
- Université de Lyon, <<https://fadeslangues.univ-lyon3.fr/licence-langues-litteratures-civilisations-etrangeres-et-regionales-italien-1>> (03/2022).

- Université de Chambéry, <<https://formations.univ-smb.fr/fr/catalogue/licence-XA/arts-lettres-langues-ALL/licence-langues-litteratures-et-civilisations-etrangeres-et-regionales-KGXWXWYW/italien-KGYOFBWZ/uam402-italien-connaissances-culturelles-KO8BAP95/litterature-italienne-KO8BAPBX.html>> (03/2022).
- Université Côte d'Azur, <<https://univ-cotedazur.fr/portails/portail-lettres-langues-art-communication/formations>> (03/2022).
- Aix-Marseille Université, <<https://allsh.univ-amu.fr/sfad/licence-italien>> (03/2022).
- Université de Montpellier, <<http://italien-roumain.upv.univ-montp3.fr/files/2020/07/Livret-Licence-LLCER-Italien-2020-21.pdf>> (03/2022).

Autre fonti

- Catalogue de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, <<https://catalogue.bnf.fr/search.do?mots0=ALL;-1;0;&mots1=ALL;0;0;&langue0=LAN;-1;ita;3&langue1=LAN;0;fr;e;1&langue2=&langue3=&langue4=&datepub=3;2011&pageRech=rav>> (03/2022).
- “L'évolution de l'enseignement des langues vivantes en France: massification et uniformisation (2)”, *The Conversation*, 16 February 2016, <<https://theconversation.com/levolution-de-lenseignement-des-langues-vivantes-en-france-massification-et-uniformisation-2-54083>> (03/2022).
- “Le ministre de l'éducation nationale prépare l'asphyxie de l'enseignement de l'italien”, *Le Monde*, 26 avril 2019, <https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/04/26/le-ministre-de-l-education-nationale-prepare-l-asphyxie-de-l-enseignement-de-l-italien_5455483_3232.html> (03/2022).
- “Ponte Farnese, il progetto di Michelangelo a Grossetête”, *Ansa*, 1 luglio 2021, <https://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cultura/arte/2021/07/01/ponte-farnese-il-progetto-di-michelangelo-a-grossetete_4702fa0f-58cc-4c74-8296-0118d29a0f2e.html> (03/2022).

Violence and rape in the Italian *fin-de-siècle*: Gabriele D'Annunzio's "La Vergine Orsola"

Michela Barisonzi

Abstract:

This contribution discusses the representation of rape and violence against women in late 19th century Italian literature. In doing so, I focus on a short story, *La Vergine Orsola*, initially written by Gabriele D'Annunzio in 1884 as part of a short story collection titled *Il Libro delle Vergini*, later re-published in 1902 in *Le Novelle della Pescara*. This contribution looks at how the idea of rape is used in this short story as a narrative escamotage to bring to the attention of the reader the question of female entitlement to sexual desire as part of a social critique that D'Annunzio brings forward in his *fin-de-siècle* novels and short stories.

Keywords: D'Annunzio, Female Representation, Rape, Violence

At the turn of the 20th century, we see an increase in the production of fictional writings and *galatei* dedicated to a female audience and characterized by a strong pedagogic focus¹. At the same time, we find novels and medical treatises, such as those of Cesare Lombroso and Paolo Mantegazza, where women are still presented in a position of biological and moral inferiority². The rather contrasting female images that emerge from this literature reflect a divided society, marked by the crisis of bourgeois values, the birth of the nationalist movement and the rise of feminism³.

This chapter analyses the representation of female sexual desire and violence against women in the selected short story, looking at how rape is presented either as a brutal crime, possibly the act of a regression to an animal state, or as an almost normalized consequence, and even a deserved punishment for female sexual agency. In the latter case, female sexuality can be considered then as the symbol of women's emancipation and a threat to bourgeois traditional social standards that require repression through rape. As Higgins and Silver

¹ See Helena Sanson and Francesco Lucioli (2016) for a detailed excursus on the rise of these prescriptive and pedagogical works destined to female readers.

² I will discuss in detail the work of Mantegazza (1893) and Lombroso, Ferrero (1903 [1893]) on the female condition in the 19th century.

³ For a detailed analysis of some of these female images see Barisonzi (2019), and Arslan, Romani (2006).

Michela Barisonzi, Monash University, Australia, Michela.Barisonzi@monash.edu

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Michela Barisonzi, *Violence and rape in the Italian fin-de-siècle: Gabriele D'Annunzio's "La Vergine Orsola"*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.09, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 89-112, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

point out, rape and sexual violence in general “have been so ingrained and so rationalised” (1991, 2) to be perceived as part of society, “inevitable to women as to men” (*ibidem*)⁴. As I will show, in the case of this short story, rape may be then seen as a natural consequence of deviant female behaviour, compared to the accepted idea of female sexuality⁵. As Foucault points out, two of the three aspects that he identifies as constituting the morality of behaviours have a social denotation, and they refer to the “rule of conduct” (1978, vol. 2, 26), and the “conduct measured through the rule” (*ibidem*). Therefore, I will look at how the active sexuality of the protagonist Orsola, arising outside marriage, breaks the social rule of conduct that recognises female sexuality only within the marriage and in terms of procreation. Then, as this *aberrant* sexuality is measured and condemned through the comparison to the rule, rape emerges as a countermeasure to re-establish the rule while defying it, as it implies sex outside the wedlock. Nevertheless, rape is acceptable within the rule, as an exception that proves the rule, and because it is carried out by a man for whom this rule does not apply⁶.

This double interpretation of rape, as a crime or a punishment, reflects then the constant tension between what is socially acceptable and unacceptable in a period of historical transition characterized by the beginning of a new political, economic, and social era in Italy after the Unification. *La Vergine Orsola*, as I will show, then highlights and critiques this dichotomy throughout the events narrated, its setting, the use of female stereotypical characters as well as emerging social types, and its language choices.

1. Primordial instincts, deviancy, and social critique

The choice of setting for this short story, as suggested by the title of the collection *Le novelle della Pescara*, is the Abruzzo region, D’Annunzio’s native land. The meaning afforded to the location in which *La Vergine Orsola* takes place, as well as D’Annunzio’s description and use of Abruzzo folklore and peasant traditions, has been the object of several scholarly studies. According to Bàrberi Squarotti the short story collections of both *Le Novelle della Pescara*, to which *La Vergine Orsola* belongs, and *Terra Vergine*, are an obsessive and visionary cumulation of representations of the degeneration of the human being. Humanity, Bàrberi Squarotti highlights, under the rule of disease, sex and violence is portrayed as a descending into an animalesque state (1982, 41). Bàrberi Squarotti points especially to the “accumularsi ossessivo e visionario dell’imbestialimen-

⁴ See Higgins and Silver’s introduction on re-reading rape (1991).

⁵ I refer in particular to Mantegazza (1893); Lombroso, Ferrero (1903 [1893]), and Von Krafft-Ebing, Chaddock (1893)’s definitions of female deviant sexuality as I will explain in detail in the second section of this chapter.

⁶ On the different treatments reserved for example to male and female adultery see *Codice Zanardelli* (1889), articles 353-358. The code stipulates that while the adulterous woman is punishable with up to 30 months of imprisonment, a man can be condemned only in the case of keeping a concubine in the marital home.

to dell'uomo sotto il dominio della malattia, del sesso, della violenza" (*ibidem*). Sex, disease, and violence are then the preconditions to enter the animalesque regressive status that characterises the protagonists of these short stories, and that becomes a consequence of these degenerative factors. Far from being a *veristic* representation of the human condition, as we find in turns in Verga's *Ciclo dei vinti*, the bestiality depicted by D'Annunzio, as suggested by Bärberi Squarotti's reference to the visionary element, seems therefore to be a consequence of moral and physical decay rather than a form of primordial status from which society develops. Conversely, according to Romagnoli, Gunzber, the return to nature and the "inesorabile sottomissione alla natura, più potente di qualunque individuo" becomes a means to "trascendere se stessi" (1984, 567-568). The triumph of natural instincts becomes a means to establish a "processo di rinnovamento" (ivi, 568) through which D'Annunzio tries to "sfuggire ai limiti dell'estetica borghese" (ivi, 567). A similar idea is brought forward also by Härmänmaa, who suggests that the primitive status of wilderness in D'Annunzio's Abruzzo novels is the result of the author's social critique of his times, a return to mythical origins, and the result of economic concerns (2013, 698). Härmänmaa points to the importance afforded to Abruzzo by ethnographers such as Antonio De Nino, Giovanni Pansa, and Gennaro Finamore at the turn of the century, in line with and as product of the "nationalistic ethos of Romanticism" of the period (ivi, 700). In these works, emerges the idea of a return to the origins, where Abruzzo appears as a "wild and magical 'terra vergine' (virgin land), a myth that had persisted since antiquity" (*ibidem*). According to Härmänmaa then, the return to the author's native land in his works, and especially in *Il trionfo della morte*, is the result of D'Annunzio's rejection of a decaying bourgeois society, and the research for the true soul of the country which can be found only by going "to the roots of the nation, back in time, back to its geographical origins" (ivi, 699)⁷. Consequently, we face a first dichotomy regarding the primitivism depicted in these short stories, a primitivism dominated by natural human impulses. These primordial instincts can be seen either as a loss of morality, or a celebration of human vitality, to which female sexual desire belongs. Therefore, the rape of the protagonist can be read as a way of punishing an animalesque and degenerated female sensuality, or as I suggest, a means to critique such a punishment.

Starting from Foucault's studies (1978) on the rise of the medicalization of the female body, my analysis reflects on how *La Vergine Orsola* depicts and critiques the attempt by the patriarchal society to regulate female sexuality and constrain female desire. 19th century scientific works on female love and deviancy, such as the treaties of Paolo Mantegazza (1893) and Cesare Lombroso (1903 [1893]), as well as 19th century *Galatei*, such as Marchesa Colombi's⁸ *La*

⁷ On the asynchronous recuperation and re-elaboration of the past glories of the country as a strategy to create a new sense of belonging and rebirth of the country see Barisonzi (forthcoming).

⁸ Pseudonym of Maria Antonietta Torriani.

gente per bene (1877), discuss and show the social codification of female roles through a normal-deviant dichotomy. I suggest that this dichotomy influenced the depiction of violence and rape in *La Vergine Orsola* and in proving so, I focus on the way in which this short story presents, and at the same time refutes, the idea of the protagonist as a negative model of conduct who deserves her destiny. In suggesting that female sexuality, deviancy, and rape are used in the text to covertly critique post-unified Italian society and the bourgeois ethics of the time, I also look at Cavalli's definition of the function of literature. According to Cavalli, literature's function is to introduce the reader to an identification without guilt, based on the power of suggestion (2015, 59). Through Cavalli's narrative device of "immedesimazione [...] senza scotto" (*ibidem*) then, *La Vergine Orsola* can create a "confronting situation to problematise and question bourgeois morality" (Barisonzi 2019, 50)⁹. By offering a model (either positive or negative), this short story brings to the reader's attention the ambiguity of female condition in the Italian society of the time, or in Mitchell's words, it highlights the existence of a *woman question* in post-unified Italy. According to Mitchell, the last two decades of the 19th century represent a period of "ambiguity and paradox for many women: legally, economically, and socially, women were subordinate to men and had limited autonomy" (2014, 10), as underlined in the 1865 Pisanelli's Civil Code. Nevertheless, "the climate favoured the emergence of professional, financially independent women, such as La Marchesa Colombi, Neera, and Serao" (*ibidem*). These authors, continues Mitchell, while sometimes openly declaring their ideological opposition to the emerging Italian feminist movement, embedded in their fictional and non-fictional works, more or less consciously, these emerging contradictions around the position of women in society. The works of these female writers, as well as some works of D'Annunzio¹⁰, including *La Vergine Orsola*, can be then considered the product

⁹ This narrative device characterises for example also the depiction of the theme of infanticide in D'Annunzio's *L'Innocente*. While the focus here is on rape, abortion and infanticide are still an important part of the discourse on female sexuality and agency, as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter. For this reason, it is interesting to notice how in the 1884 version of *La Vergine Orsola*, simply titled *Le Vergini*, the name of the protagonist was Giuliana like the protagonist of the 1892 novel *L'Innocente*. Both "Giulianas", like Orsola in the 1902 edition, carry unwanted children that undermine their pre-established roles in society as well as embodying an "otherness" that precludes them from being in control of their own bodies and for these reasons act to interrupt the pregnancy or dispose of the newborn. On the theme of the pregnant body and the foetus as an intruder see Barisonzi (2019).

¹⁰ I refer here in particular to the novels that D'Annunzio wrote between the 1880 and 1900 and that I discuss in the book *Adultery and Hysteria in the Nineteenth Century Novel. The Case of Gabriele d'Annunzio* (2019). As pointed out in this work, the female protagonists of the novels *Il Piacere*, *L'Innocente*, *Il Trionfo Della Morte*, *Le Vergini Delle Rocce* and *Il Fuoco* are "fictional magnifications" through which "the texts expose a reality of social crisis, corruption, and uncertainty" (Barisonzi 2019, 14). They are "the result of both a mimetic reproduction of Post-unified Italian society, as well as an ideological criticism through which the texts" through a chronological and thematic progression "explore and deconstruct common female stereotypes in order to progress towards the definition of a new female model" (ivi,

of a "social discomfort of women that arises with the awareness of the anachronism of female stereotypes and the desire not to renounce femininity" (Barisonzi 2019, 152) as well as an attempt at "regendering female entitlement to sexual pleasure" (*ibidem*) in a society characterised by a "fin-de-siècle bourgeois oppression within a male order that forbids women from fulfilling their desire for both a spiritual and a sexual love" (Ramsey-Portolano 2010, 52). For these reasons, I suggest that *La Vergine Orsola*, in depicting the ideas and traditions of its époque (Cavalli 2015, 71), can be read as a manual of conduct in disguise, which simultaneously critiques the very notions of the female roles it codifies. As gender is conceived as "a product of the social relations of sexuality" (Mitchell 2014, 8) and it is the result of "a politically enforced performativity [...] open to [...] self-parody, self-criticism" (Butler in Mitchell 2014, 8)¹¹, then I suggest that the gender and sexual roles portrayed in *La Vergine Orsola* in terms of what is a socially acceptable sexual behaviour, are indeed open to and the object of criticism in this short-story, as they are the result of a socio-political construct that relegates women to a position of physical and social inferiority. Consequently then, rape emerges in its true function, as an enabler of male control over female sexual desire.

2. La Vergine Orsola and conduct literature: saint or doomed?

As Sanson and Lucioli discuss in their work on *Conduct Literature for and about Women in Italy from 1470 to 1900* (2016), female behavior has been codified for centuries through different typologies of texts and paratexts, such as ecclesiastics, cooking books, and even embroidery patterns. However, it is in the 19th century and especially after Italy's unification that it is possible to identify a substantial corpus of texts in which female conduct more regularly becomes the center of fictional narratives. As pointed out by Hosker, as well as primary education for women, "unification brought with it a heightened awareness of women's socially significant role, as the wives of Italy's rulers, and the mothers of the nation's future citizens" (2016, 160). For this reason, as women "acquired a new dignity, by virtue of their glorified maternal role and its perceived impact on society at large" (*ibidem*), it becomes even more important to codify their behaviours to avoid any threat to the male-dominated patriarchal system¹². Therefore, as Sanson and Lucioli underline, the main characteristics of these post-unification conduct texts rest in their descriptive as well as prescriptive functions. At the same time, they present ideological models, a practical guidance for their female readership, and a cross section of the Italian society at the

15), who is no longer a "static, archaic, mythical obstacle to male development" (Davies 2010, 218) but a positive active member within a new nation building discourse.

¹¹ Mitchell (2014) refers to Judith Butler's definition of gender to underline the ambiguity that arises at the turn of the century around the social role of women.

¹² For a detailed discussion on motherhood and nationalism in post-unified Italy see Barisonzi (2019) and Banti (2011).

turn of the century, with its habits, traditions, and social roles (2016, 12-13), which are all elements that can be identified also in *La Vergine Orsola*. When considering 19th century social roles, for example, it is important to note how Orsola is both an unmarried mature woman¹³ and a teacher, two of the new female types that, according to Hosker (2016), emerge in the conduct literature of post-unified Italy¹⁴. These typologies replace the figure of the Renaissance widow as a threat to the patriarchal order because they are free from the marriage ties and the sexual and social roles that these ties implied for women. As Hosker points out then, on the one hand, these new female types underline the rise of new social realities. On the other hand, they bring attention to the role of women, beyond the traditional images of mother and wife. As Hosker points out, “if the inclusion of ideologically unorthodox figures [serva, zitella and maestra] points, to some extent, to the emergence of new demographic realities, it is also a sign that women writers [and in my reading D’Annunzio too] were challenging the longstanding tradition, according to which women were defined by marital status alone” (2016, 161). Therefore, it is no coincidence that in its representation and, as I aim to prove, covert social critique of post-unified Italy, *La Vergine Orsola* introduces a protagonist that is both a spinster and a teacher (the new female social types), as well as presenting traits of the traditional stereotypes of the angelic woman and the lay nun, which will be analysed in the following section.

In addition to presenting these new social figures, conduct texts often use exemplars constructed upon the images of the Virgin, the Martyrs, and the Saints¹⁵, to further reinforce the traditions and customs of the society in which they are produced. As Paternoster points out, conduct books “tend to be particularly moralising. They use values to justify conventions as compulsory” and “this happens in two ways: values contribute to the conventionalisation process of specific norms, and they also help to maintain the moral order generally by

¹³ Her description seems in line with the description of what Marchesa Colombi in her work of conduct *La gente per bene: leggi di convenienza sociale* defines as “signorina matura” (1877, 57), as she is 27 years old and therefore fits in this category for which the age bracket is 25 to 34 years.

¹⁴ According to Hosker, “female writers cast their nets beyond the canonical trio of virgins, wives, and widows, making space in conduct literature for non-conformist women such as the *serva* (the domestic servant), the *zitella* (the spinster) and the *maestra* (the primary school teacher, a working woman who was usually husbandless)” (2016, 161). Interestingly, as Botteri notices, before the turning of the 19th century “oltre alle cortigiane, forse solo i mestieri della comare o della balia [sono] stati oggetto di rilevanza sociale e di conseguenza di alcuni trattati sulla figura professionale e sulla loro arte, in quanto legata ad una funzione indispensabile e di primaria utilità in quella società: la procreazione” (2016, 347-348).

¹⁵ On the importance afforded to martyrdom and the use of religious exemplars during the Risorgimento and in post-unified Italy, see Riall (2010). Moreover, it is important to remember that it is in 1854 that Pope Pious IX promulgates the dogma of the Immaculate Conception further reinforcing the symbolism attributed to the figure of the Virgin Mary. Finally, according to Sanson, Luciola several scholars have linked the origins of conduct literature to the “rules and orders that governed monastic life and which encouraged discipline of the body and of the mind” (2016, 17).

raising moral awareness" (2019, 434)¹⁶. Significant then, is the title of our short story¹⁷, which, through the word *Virgin*, implies the idea of a pure, virtuous and angelic woman, referring to her chaste condition, as well as suggesting an initial assimilation of the protagonist Orsola to Saint Ursula and the Virgin Mary¹⁸. Notably, the term *vergine* is present not only in the title of this short story, but it is used to refer to Orsola ten times during the narration, including at the very beginning of the narration when the female protagonist is introduced as "La vergine Orsola" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 2). Two significant further examples that set the tone in this sense are:

Orsola ricadeva stesa, con il capo abbandonato, scoperta la gola e il petto, mostrando degli occhi solo il bianco nel gran pallore, sorridente a qualche cosa invisibile, in un atteggiamento di vergine martire. (Ivi, 12)

and

Ma la vergine sorrideva, sotto un turbamento improvviso di tutto il suo sangue; li chiamava a sé, confondeva i loro nomi che le si affollavano alle labbra, tendeva loro le mani. A uno, a due, a tre, i bimbi si avanzavano, volevano prenderle le mani per metterci la bocca sopra, ridicevano le parole di augurio imparate a casa, ingoiando per la furia le sillabe. (Ivi, 22)

Both scenes have a religious undertone, the first resembling an ecstatic vision, the second, evoking Jesus' words "Let the children come to me" (Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16).

This first impression of devotion and sanctitude of the protagonist is reinforced even further by the reference to the priest with which the story begins¹⁹, and the description of Orsola's room covered by images of saints where the insistence on the accumulation of sacred imaginary underlines the devotion of the protagonist:

Nell' interno, su le pareti, pendevano grandi medaglie sacre d'ottone, immagini di santi. Sotto un vetro una Madonna di Loreto tutta nera il volto il seno le braccia, come un idolo barbarico, luceva nella sua veste adorna di mezze lune d'oro. In un angolo, un piccolo altare candido portava un vecchio crocifisso di madreperla. (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 3)

¹⁶ On the conventionalising function of conduct texts see also Paternoster (2019).

¹⁷ In the original version of 1884, the title of this short story, *Le Vergini*, was already including the reference to the virginity and sanctitude of the protagonist.

¹⁸ Significantly, in the official hagiography of Saint Ursula, not only the saint is a virgin that has devoted herself to God and is killed because of her refusal to break this promise and get married, but she is also accompanied in her travels by a group of virgins (11.000) that are killed too. Further, Saint Ursula is the protector of educators and Orsola in this short story is a teacher.

¹⁹ The narration opens in *medias res* with the description of the village priest exiting the church to visit the house of the protagonist and bring her the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. There is an insistence on the description of the priest, the solemnity of the atmosphere, the contrast between his purple vestments and the white of the snow, which symbolise the imminent death and the purity of Orsola.

The audience could then expect that Orsola will be used as a positive model of conduct²⁰ and this expectation is supported by two additional elements. Firstly, in the same short story collection there is a second story called *La Vergine Anna*, which effectively presents the life of a saintly woman blessed by a miracle²¹. Secondly, at the very start of the narration, Orsola, who was dying from typhus, miraculously recovers after receiving the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, a proof of her blessed status, openly stated in the text through the comparison of Orsola and her sister Camilla to martyrs and saints:

Come le martiri gloriose della leggenda, come Santa Tecla di Licaonia e Santa Eufemia di Calcedonia, le due sorelle avevano consacrata la loro verginità allo Sposo Celeste, al talamo di Gesù. (Ivi, 15)

and

Avevano mortificata la carne a furia di privazioni e di preghiere, respirando l'aria della chiesa, l'incenso e l'odore delle candele ardenti, cibandosi di legumi. Avevano stupefatto lo spirito in quell'esercizio arido e lungo di sillabazione, in quel freddo distillio di parole, in quell'opra macchinale dell'ago e del filo su le eterne tele bianche odoranti di spigo e di santità. (*Ibidem*)

Nevertheless, in the description of Orsola's bedroom we can find a first covert sign of criticism. By defining the statue of Mary as a barbaric idol, the text raises the idea of faith based on a form of "cristianesimo ispirato da un sottostante filone pagano" (Romagnoli, Gunzberg 1984, 566), that resembles more an irrational fervor. In doing so, not only the text already undermines the idea of Orsola being a positive model of conduct, but also challenges the chastity-sexual awakening dichotomy that I will discuss in the following section, as said dichotomy, based on the social unacceptability of sexual awakening, is constructed on a distorted idea of religion. This type of devotion, which is embodied by Orsola's sister Camilla, reveals a more medieval focus on the condemnation and punishment of the flesh, to save the soul rather than salvation through faith in God's forgiveness and redemption. Consequently, this idea of religion coincides more with a form of superstition that dominates people's entire existence, an irrational religious fervor, that according to Spackman (1989) is depicted and condemned at the same time through the association of illness and Christianity, and that not only characterises *La vergine Orsola*, but is present throughout D'Annunzio's works including *Il piacere*, *Il trionfo della morte* and *La figlia di Iorio*²².

²⁰ Sanson in her Introduction to Sanson and Luciola, clearly underlines the "clear religious undertones" (2016, 30) that characterise women's conduct literature in defining female role in society.

²¹ As pointed out by Gunzberg, *La Vergine Anna* is an example of religious fervour where devotion "pervade totalmente e in un certo modo regola la vita dei personaggi" (1984, 565).

²² According to Romagnoli, Gunzberg "è significativo a questo proposito notare la progressiva assimilazione dell'irrazionale da parte di D'Annunzio fin nel tessuto della sua scrittura, soprattutto nel *Trionfo della morte* e nella *Figlia di Iorio*, pubblicati a distanza di dieci anni [...]"

Orsola's sanctitude, however, is immediately undermined by the same miraculous recovery that could have been considered proof of her blessed status, with her recovery being accompanied by the insurgence of a voracious appetite. Orsola's appetite is initially depicted as a common consequence of recovering from typhus: "era la fame canina nella convalescenza del tifo, quella terribile avidità di nutrimento vitale in tutte le cellule del corpo impoverite dal lungo malore" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 9)²³. However, this hunger soon becomes an evident metaphor for her desire to feel alive and leads to her subsequent awakening to a yet unknown sexual desire, in open contrast with the traditional idea of chastity associated to sanctitude. The definition of her appetite then, while seemingly used to offer a medical explanation for Orsola's bodily reactions, can also be seen as an attempt to medicalise her body to re-establish a control over it²⁴. As Diasio points out, the female body is the "luogo per eccellenza dell'identità collettiva" (2000, 24) on which society must exercise a coercive power. Therefore, the body of Orsola, which through the illness has escaped social control to the point that not medicine, but only a miracle has been able to save her life, can be now controlled again through the medical labeling of its reactions during convalescence²⁵. At the same time, however, Orsola's appetite is defined almost as a primordial instinct belonging to the animal world. Significant is the use of adjectives such as "canina", "bestiale", "prensili" and the direct simile with a glutton monkey:

Ella aveva fame, aveva fame. Una bramosia bestiale di cibo le torturava le viscere vuote, le dava alla bocca quel movimento vago delle mandibole chiedenti qualche cosa da masticare, le dava talvolta alle povere ossa delle mani quelle contrazioni prensili che hanno le dita delle scimmie golose alla vista del pomo. (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 8-9)

The reference to an animalesque behaviour acquires here a double meaning that reflects the dichotomy underlying in the study of this short story. On the

il fanatismo religioso è vividamente ritratto [...] è il tessuto stesso del drama" (1984, 566). Similarly, Spackman discussing the pilgrimage to Casalbordino in *Il trionfo della morte* underlines how "D'Annunzio employs a rhetoric of sickness in order to critique Christianity" through the association of "Christianity with illness, idiocy, and ignorance" in which "'naturalistic' mode is adopted not to give an accurate, scientific description of peasant society but to degrade and critique an ideology" (1989, 115).

²³ According to Cavalli the detailed description of sickness in D'Annunzio's short stories is "uno dei rari casi italiani, per non dire l'unico, di adesione piena al Naturalismo, sia per quanto attiene alla visione dell'uomo come essere precario e animalizzato, sia per quanto riguarda le modalità di rappresentazione, ovvero un'attenzione addirittura di tipo scientifico nella descrizione di malattie, piaghe, atteggiamenti brutali di un'umanità tanto vicina alle bestie da confondersi con loro" (2015, 40).

²⁴ On the use of medicine as a form of societal control and the female body see also Foucault (1988)'s *Madness and Civilization. A history of Insanity in the Age of Reason*.

²⁵ For a similar use of medicalisation of the female body in relation to sickness and recovery see Barisonzi (2019) and in particular the chapter on *L'Innocente*.

one hand, the reference to animals is in line with the description of an Abruzzo of the origins. In this mythical and archaic land, the primitive and animalesque compulsions are used to create a contrast with a degenerated bourgeois morality of façade. Therefore, Orsola's "bramosia bestiale" (ivi, 8) (in terms of food or later in terms of sexual desire) is legitimised as natural and genuine²⁶. On the other hand, there is a direct reference to the 19th-century idea of female inferiority that positions women closer to animals in the evolution ladder²⁷. The diffusion of Darwin's anthropological theory sees the arising in the 19th century of both a recognition of man's animal origins, as well as the need to distancing from them by exalting the superiority of the human race. Men tend then to attribute traits of bestiality to social outcasts like the "degenerato" and "selvaggio" types (Roda 1984, 37), justifying this connection to animality in terms of flawed or missing evolutionary steps. Consequently, the use of an animal-oriented lexis to describe Orsola's appetite, together with her gender's genetic inferiority, and her arising sexual desire, becomes a means to establish her deviancy. Her appetite acquires a negative attribution, hinting at her imminent degeneration, and prefiguring the need for Orsola to be reconducted within social norms.

If Orsola is initially presented as a saint-like figure and her illness and death will return her to God, it is then the recovery that soon becomes the turning point in her status of grace. According to Fusaro sickness is a means to neutralise the "carica pericolosa e sovversiva del corpo femminile: scarno il corpo femminile non è più seducente" and "debole e vulnerabile, infine, il corpo è più facilmente sottomesso" (2007, 201). Similarly, Curreri points out how "la malattia rende il corpo trasparente, lo sgravia della sua materialità e della sua specificità sessuale" becoming a "metafora che [...] interviene per esorcizzare la paura del corpo femminile" (2008, 35-36). Therefore sickness, and the quasi-death that characterises the initial description of Orsola, serves to put the woman into the otherworldly dimension where the Angels, Saints, and the Virgin reside, confirming and reinforcing the initial attribution of sanctitude and the angelic status of the character²⁸. Nevertheless, the unexpected healing signals the beginning of Orsola's fall from being an angelic woman to the status of *femme fragile* first, and doomed sinner after. Spackman defines convalescence "a space in-between", a "third term in the rhetoric of sickness and health" which becomes "the vehicle

²⁶ Merlino highlights how, in the short stories collection of *Terra Vergine*, sexuality is presented as a natural and physiological element with no negative attribution. Although Merlino concentrates his analysis on the portrayal of men rather than women, pointing out the use of the semantic spheres of the animal kingdom and plants to exalt "sessualità mediante la messa in rilievo della naturalità delle pulsioni" (2015, 34), I claim that a similar approach can be found in the representation of some female characters of these short stories, as well as in those of *Le Novelle della Pescara* and especially Orsola.

²⁷ See Mantegazza (1893) and Lombroso, Ferrero (1903 [1893]) on women's evolutionarily inferiority compared to men.

²⁸ On the function of death in the neutralization of female sensuality and her re-positioning under the male control see Curreri (2008). See also Spackman (1989) on the idea of sickness and repulsing deformations, to castrate the erotic discourse.

for a series of in-between states" (1989, 42). This in-between state coincides in terms of female stereotypes with the *femme fragile* because, as pointed out by Wieber "the *femme fragile* operated as a construct of femininity that mediated the two opposing qualities of innocence (saintly angel) and fearsomeness (*femme fatale*)" (2011, 70) in a continuous articulation and renegotiation of the *fin-de-siècle* cultural and historical values. Finally, as suggested by Lombroso, Ferrero in *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (1903 [1893]), women's delicate health supports the theory of a moveable boundary between the "normal" woman and the "deviant", "criminal" woman. Therefore, Orsola's passages from health to sickness and then from illness to recovery enable her conversion into a deviant woman.

The juxtaposition in the narration of the characters of Orsola and her sister Camilla²⁹, also seems to validate the idea of Orsola's fall. Camilla is a virtuous and devoted woman that dedicated her life to serve God through prayer, assisting the sick and teaching catechesis to children. She condenses in her fictional character all the traditional catholic views and socially accepted roles for an unmarried woman. Therefore, the awakening to sexual desire that Orsola undergoes during her recovery appears at first unnatural and deviant by contrast with Camilla's modest behaviour. Further, Camilla's judgment of Orsola's behaviour during her convalescence:

Camilla vedeva tutte queste strane predilezioni della sorella, con una specie di diffidenza ed anche di rammarico sordo, ma taceva. (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 21)

Camilla trovò la sorella ancora addormentata con accanto lo specchio, con ne' capelli le spie. — Oh, Signore Gesù! oh Signore Gesù! [...] Tu ti perderai, sciagurata, tu ti perderai — irruppe la devota, additando lo specchio sul letto. — Tu hai tra le mani lo strumento del demonio... Ed eccitata dalla prima invettiva, ella seguitava, sollevava la voce, gittava le frasi ardenti della predica con grandi gesti nell' aria, incalzava nelle minacce dei castighi eterni [...]. (Ivi, 28-29)

and

Sotto lo sguardo freddo e scrutatore di Camilla. (Ivi, 47)

convey the scientific beliefs of the time about unnatural female sexual desire as a form of deviancy. Renowned scientists of the period, such as Mantegazza

²⁹ The name Camilla returns in literature both in Virgilio's *Aeneid* and in Boccaccio's work *De mulieribus claris*. In both these works, she is presented as a virgin and a model of virtues. Further, Boccaccio specifically uses Camilla as a model for her strong will in refusing physical pleasures (being it food or sex), calling for young women to follow her example: "A questa io vorrei, che guardassino le fanciulle del nostro tempo: e considerando quella vergine già in compiuta età [...] premendo cacciare con la fatica i piaceri del disordinato appetito, e gli dilette e le delicatezze, e rifiutando le artificiose bevande, con costantissimo animo rifiutò non solamente il toccare degli uomini, ma eziandio de' giovani di sua etade" (1836, 96-97).

and Lombroso in Italy, and Von Krafft-Ebing, Chaddock in Europe, described normal female desire as a form of courtship, weak and passive, lacking any sexual component. According to these studies therefore, women should focus on sentiment rather than the sexual gratification, which characterised male desire, and in women is a sign of deviancy³⁰.

According to Foucault, the description of female sensual desire (here hinted through Orsola's discovery of her own body by means of the mirror) as a diabolic product reflects the Catholic precepts, which "laid down the principle of exclusively procreative ends within that conjugal relationship" (1978, vol. 2, 14). Therefore, Camilla would embody the Catholic teachings of "strict abstinence, lifelong chastity, and virginity" (*ibidem*) while in contrast, Orsola represents the sinner to be doomed. Further, the insistence on the semantic sphere of vision through the terms "vedeva", "sguardo" and "scrutatore" in the passages above, can then be considered a way to create a parallel between Camilla, the public opinion of the period, and the reader, all judging spectators of Orsola's story. In this way, such correspondence would reinforce the idea of this short story as a manual of conduct in disguise, where Camilla represents the positive model for unmarried women and Orsola a model of immoral conduct to be avoided.

3. Rape and relationships of power

In line with the conduct manual, rape, which is committed towards the end of the narration and only alluded to but not described, could be seen as a punishment for Orsola's deviant behaviour. Orsola is punished for her immoral sexual desire for a soldier, Marcello, for whom her rapist, Lindoro, works as a messenger. The divine nature of such punishment seems to be suggested by several elements. Firstly, the expression "costui fu il galeotto" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 44) talking about Lindoro's role in the relationship between Orsola and Marcello, is a clear reference to Dante's *Inferno* verse "galeotto fu il libro" (*Inf. V, l. 137*). Lindoro, like the book and Galehaut, is the intermediary in a doomed relationship³¹. At the same time, the word *galeotto* in Italian is also used to refer to prisoners and more in general scoundrels, implying a negative connotation attributed to the rapist, and therefore a covert condemnation of the act. Second and most importantly, Orsola sees Marcello for the first time while spying on the prostitutes of the brothel, and then she seeks his physical contact when attending church during religious celebrations. The brothel-church binary that

³⁰ Mantegazza points out how female love and desire focuses on feelings rather than the sexual pleasure as "l'uomo nell'amore cerca prima di ogni cosa la voluttà, la donna prima d'ogni cosa vuol la conquista del cuore" (1893, vol. 2, 9). Similarly, according to Fusaro, Von Krafft-Ebing, Chaddock in *Psychopathia sexualis* considers female desire as "un appetito debole" as the woman is "naturalmente passiva" (2007, 216).

³¹ In Dante's *Inferno*, Paolo and Francesca, condemned for their adulterous love are placed in Hell among the lustful sinners. Significantly, the reference to the Galehaut book is present also in D'Annunzio's novel *Il Piacere*, see Barisonzi (2019) and Borelli (2017).

is put forward would then allude to the sinful nature of Orsola's desire and her deviancy. It is no coincidence that in Lombroso, Ferrero's work *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (1903 [1893]), criminal women and prostitutes are often assimilated through their sexual deviancy³². Orsola would then not only be culpable for her sexual desire but also for transposing the function of the brothel to the sacred space of the church. She is a sinner beyond redemption and for this reason she is firstly punished with rape and then, as her deviancy descends into the crime of abortion, she is punished with a horrific death, as a consequence of her provoked miscarriage.

Nevertheless, rape is not a mere divine punishment for an immoral behavior. As D'Cruze points out "sexuality is a crucial arena for the expression and contest of patriarchal power relations by gender and age, and violence is one means of appropriating and consolidating power within those relations" (1992, 378). Orsola condenses in herself the two emerging social types of *zitella* and teacher, that by existing outside marriage and motherhood, represent a threat to the established patriarchal order. These two types defy the traditional roles of women as they exist outside of the male control. The teacher acquires a certain level of economic independence and through work exists outside the house. The spinster, as Marchesa Colombi points out, gains a greater level of social independence:

A trentacinque anni, una signorina deve [...] uscir sola, ricevere e far le sue visite e le sue commissioni, viaggiare sola se ne ha la necessità, avere le sue carte da visita. (1877, 59)

Consequently, they are no longer the "pillar of the house". Further, and more importantly especially in the Italian *fin-de-siècle*, imbued with nationalism ideology, where mothers have the solemn task to procreate soldiers for the greater glory of the Mother Land (Banti 2011; Barisonzi 2019), both these new female types become the antithesis to motherhood. As Mantegazza states in *Fisiologia della donna* "la donna è imbevuta tutta quanta, dai capelli alle unghie dei piedi, di maternità, ed è tanto più perfetta quanto più è madre" (1893, vol. I, 123), therefore the teacher and the spinster also defy the very idea of womanhood. In *La Vergine Orsola*, rape can then be seen as a means to socially re-affirm male power over the teacher-spinster Orsola, by regaining control of her body and sexuality. Rape is no longer a divine punishment. Conversely, it is an instrument of social critique as through the narration of Orsola's rape, the text covertly exposes the fallacy of a social system that forbids female sexual desire outside procreation, and it does so by constantly undermining those aspects that at first reading could be considered proof of Orsola's damnation for her sexual desire.

First, the convalescence, which represents the line between life and death, and which was supposed to signal the fall of Orsola into sin and eternal dam-

³² According to Lombroso, Ferrero "Come già ci indicava la precocità mestruale e della deflorazione [...] una sensibilità maggiore sessuale in confronto alle normali esiste in alcune ree ed in alcune prostitute" (1903 [1893], 396).

nation, is also a means through which the character comes back to life and becomes a narrative agent within the story. Orsola's quasi-death experience and convalescence can then be read as a process of rebirth. The idea of rebirth is suggested in the text through the references to Orsola's life before the sickness as a "vita anteriore" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 9) and also through the detailed description of her body's recovery in terms of regeneration of tissues and organs as underlined by the verbs recompose, renovate and regeminate: "un sangue novello si produceva: [...] i tessuti irrigati dall'onda tiepida e rapida si colorivano ricomponendosi, si rinnovellavano [...] e sul cranio i bulbi capilliferi rigermogliavano [...] da quel riordinamento delle leggi meccaniche della vita" (ivi, 13). As a new woman, Orsola is free from social and gender role obligations, which are developed/acquired, not innate. As Bàrberi Squarotti (1982) and Cavalli (2015) point out, while physiology and attention to physical details are typical of Italian Realism, in D'Annunzio's works the description of a physical disease is never the mere observation of a natural phenomenon. It becomes a means to investigate the psychological traits of the characters, introducing and discussing more poignant themes, as is the case in Orsola's awakening to sexual desire. Orsola, through her recovery emerges as the center of attention, an agent of her actions and ultimately as a heroine, whose positivity or negativity is left to the judgment of the reader. The insistence on Orsola's plagued body first, and blossomed body and sexual desire later, are used then to give depth and primacy to this female character³³. It is possible here to see similarities between Orsola and Ippolita, the female protagonist of *Il trionfo della morte*, and Orsola and Giuliana, the female protagonists of *L'Innocente*. The three women are all convalescent and follow a process of sexual awakening after falling ill and recovering. Through their convalescence these heroines regain ownership of their own bodies. This brings them to an awakening to sensual desire³⁴, moving them away from their initial stereotypical roles of mother, wife, and devoted virgin, crystallised by the disease as a metaphor for male control (Curreri 2008). This awareness and awakening, in the case of *L'Innocente* and *Il trionfo della morte* leads to adultery, which is used as a means to debunk the imposed social roles of mother and wife, where female sexuality is not recognised outside procreation. Significantly, in both novels, the female characters are depicted as agents in their adultery, rather than passive receivers of their lovers' will. In the case of *La Vergine Orsola*, both in the 1884 and 1902 versions, this awakening sees the protagonist breaking

³³ Examples of the decaying body are "le labbra nerastre e i denti incrostati dell'inferma" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 3), "due piedi gialli, squamosi, lividi nelle unghie, che al tatto davano un ribrezzo di membra morte" (ivi, 7) and "Quasi tutti i capelli le erano caduti nella malattia; [...] il teschio ne traspariva, e da tutta la restante aridezza della pelle lo scheletro traspariva" (ivi, 10), while following her convalescence Orsola regenerates: "i tessuti irrigati dall'onda tiepida e rapida si colorivano ricomponendosi, [...] sul cranio i bulbi capilliferi rigermogliavano densi" (ivi, 13) and "Il pallore trasparente e il sorriso davano una grazia nuova, una nuova giovinezza ai suoi ventisette anni" (ivi, 26).

³⁴ On disease and sexual awakening see also Barisonzi (2019).

her vow of chastity through which she had devoted her life to God. The consequence of the awakening in both novels and the short story, however, coincides with the disruption of the patriarchal order that places women in a position of dependence, highlighting the "unfeasibility in a *fin-de-siècle* Italy that aspires to modernity" of "the traditional idea of the devoted mother", and "Madonna-like figures with no sensual desire" (Barisonzi 2019, 175).

Further, if the disease is not used as a degenerating but a regenerating factor, a similar interpretation can be afforded to the zoomorphic traits that are used referring to Orsola's appetite. While for Bärberi Squarotti (1982) the animal-like traits used in D'Annunzio's short stories aim to signal the regression to a state of bestiality, according to Cavalli, in these short stories, such terms are used as a metaphor for celebrating the primitive and exciting impetuosity of life (2015, 41)³⁵, in this case Orsola's rebirth. The protagonist's "bramosia bestiale" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 8) for food first and later her curiosity towards her own body and the sexual practices of the nearby brothel, are to be seen then, according to Cavalli's interpretation of primitivism, as a representation of the individual in a stage in which external factors, such as social and religious codifications of what is morally acceptable, have not yet conditioned the character's perception of the self³⁶. In this sense, the short story recognizes the female natural entitlement to sexuality, critiquing its denial by society, and its conversion into a degenerative trait when arising outside the procreative milieu of marriage.

In this instance, even the mirror that Camilla discovers near a sleeping Orsola, and which prompts her condemnation and predictions of eternal damnation, could then be a metaphor for the way in which the text reflects on its contemporary society. The bourgeois values of façade, where patriarchalism and religion impose sexual taboos and moral conventions to keep women under control, are reflected in the negative connotation of the mirror, which is used as a means to show this distorted ethics to the reader, creating a contrast between imposed views and female natural entitlement to pleasure³⁷. While according to Camilla the mirror is a "strumento del demonio" (ivi, 29) alluding to the deadly sin of lust, the mirror can also be seen both as a mirror of society's decadence and prejudices, as well as a way inwards into Orsola's psyche when she awakes to vitality and sensual pulsion. The mirror is the tool through which Orsola gets

³⁵ Cavalli talks of a "primitiva e esaltante irruenza vitale" (2015, 41).

³⁶ I refer here to the idea, put forward by Spackman, of convalescence functioning as a "tabula rasa" (1989, 38) that creates a rupture with the past as "[t]he child and the convalescent have nothing to remember" (*ibidem*).

³⁷ As Barilli points out, in D'Annunzio's works the reader can see a demystification of the negative connotation attributed to his female protagonists. Conversely, there is the recurrent idea of female entitlement to pleasure with no moral constrictions as it is the case for their male counterparts. Further, according to this scholar it is possible to see, through the construction of his female characters, how "D'Annunzio proverà sempre sentimenti altissimi per le donne, facendosi promotore della causa della loro emancipazione" (1993, 76) by establishing a "nuova etica, di cui gli eroi dannunziani sono portavoce, prevede un rapporto di parità tra i sessi, tra uomo e donna" (ivi, 75).

to know her new self. This is indicated by her curiosity towards her own body: “Ella aveva ora una curiosità grande di guardarsi nello specchio” (ivi, 26), and the recurrent comparison of the mirror to a mass of water, which can be seen as symbolic of the amniotic fluid from which Orsola is reborn:

[...] si piaceva di allontanare lentamente lo specchio e di veder sparire l’immagine in quella luce un po’ glauca come in un velo d’acqua marina e quindi riemergere. (*Ibidem*)

and

Orsola saliva fin là, attratta da una irresistibile curiosità di vedersi nuda. La sua persona tutta ancora fresca di goccioline sorgeva nell’offuscamento dello specchio come in un verdazzurro fondo marino. Ella si guardava sorridendo. Il sorriso, ogni movimento dei muscoli pareva far tremolare tutte le linee della nudità nello specchio come quelle di una immagine dentro le acque. (Ivi, 50)

If female sexual desire is natural, then rape is not a punishment, but an overt display of gender power, and the text further exposes and critiques it both through the character of the rapist, Lindoro, Orsola’s response to the rape, her abortion, and her death. Initially, Lindoro resists the “tentazione di cogliere quel fiore ch’egli apprestava al piacere di un altro” (ivi, 46), due to fear and cowardice, as he is aware of his social subordinate position compared to Marcello, Orsola’s lover. Nevertheless, he overcomes his fears when Orsola suddenly shows modesty through the gesture of buttoning up the open neck of her camisole. This gesture in Lindoro’s eyes becomes an admission of frailty and defenselessness through which the woman indirectly re-affirms her position of inferiority and Lindoro’s male superiority as underlined by the passage:

Quell’atto, col quale Orsola così riconosceva nel mezzano l’uomo, quell’improvviso atto fece scattare dall’abbiezione di Lindoro un impeto di orgoglio maschile. — Ah, egli dunque aveva potuto per sé stesso turbare una donna! — E si fece più da presso; e, come il coraggio del vino lo animava, quella volta nessun ritegno di viltà trattenne il bruto. (Ivi, 52)

In this passage the recognition of rape as a means to establish a gendered relation of power is then symbolized by the expression “riconosceva nel mezzano l’uomo” with which the text refers to a position of superiority of the man, reinforced by the expression “orgoglio maschile”. A similar use of rape is present in other Italian short stories of the period and in particular in Capuana’s *Tortura*. In *Tortura*, as Pagliaro points out, the “cultural mentality [...] expressed in Teresa’s interior monologue” shows a naturalization of rape through a culture of acceptance that sees rape as “a sexual instinct exploding as a consequence of the rapist’s repressed desire” and depicts male “force and aggression” as “natural and that acceptance is her [the female victim] duty” (2021, 317). In this way, as D’Cruze (1992) and Jackson (1978) underline, sexual violence is not simply a subversive or deviant act perpetrated by a social outcast, as suggested by Roy

Porter (1986) in his studies on the historical meaning of rape³⁸, but the ultimate expression of culturally accepted power schemes between men and women, where female evolutionary inferiority is widely accepted³⁹.

While rape is not described, what follows in the narration is the representation of the post-rape trauma that alters Orsola's subjectivity and agency⁴⁰, relegating her to a form of temporary mental illness: "una specie di ebetudine le teneva ancora la memoria" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 53) and:

Orsola passò in mezzo a tutti quei romori e quegli odori forti, stordita. Cominciava alfine uno sbigottimento vago a sommuoversi dal fondo, a torcerle la bocca nel riso, nelle parole, a impedirle la lingua. (Ivi, 55)

Orsola's reaction, the mental blank on the event as an unconscious attempt to block the painful memories and the slow realisation of what had happened, triggered by the crowd and noises surrounding her, reproduce in detail the rape victim's response to such a trauma. Nevertheless, her growing sense of Catholic guilt:

Ella non sapeva più sfuggire a sè stessa: le moriva la voce fra i denti, l'angoscia le serrava la gola, il fantasma del peccato enorme e irrimediabile le si drizzava dinanzi. (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 56)

and her "ebetudine" and "stordimento" can be considered once again as a form of control and constraint of the female character and her entitlement to her own sexuality. On the one hand, the status of temporary mental confusion can be seen as a form of medicalisation of her body that does not belong to her, and therefore she is denied the ownership of what happens to it. On the other hand, the religious reference to the deadly sin "peccato enorme e irrimediabile" represents a form of social control, being the Church one of "the systems of power that regulate" the notion of sexuality (Foucault 1978, vol. 2, 4). Therefore, presenting both Orsola's hebetude and her sense of guilt, the text overtly exposes these forms of control. Further, as Pagliaro points out in analysing rape in Capuana's works *Tortura* and *Giacinta*, "the very fact that rape provokes a mental illness is a form of denunciation, calling attention to the gravity of the crime" (2021, 315).

³⁸ According to Porter, rape is an attempted rebellion against class hierarchy, and it can be explained in terms of a socially disruptive action of marginal men who have not found a position in the patriarchal traditional structure through the roles of husband and father (1986, 235). Lindoro's description could then be initially consistent with this theory as he is presented as an outsider: "uno di quegli uomini che paion cresciuti su, come funghi, dall'umidità della strada immonda [...]; di quelli uomini bigi, che s'insinuano per tutto" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 42).

³⁹ See Schopenhauer's *On women in Essays and Aphorisms* (2004 [1851]) and Möbius's *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* (2000 [1903]) as further examples of intellectuals' works influencing the theory on women's inferiority in this period.

⁴⁰ On sexual trauma and subjectivity see Brison (2002) and Martín Alcoff (2018).

Finally, the idea of power relationships is underlined through Orsola's decision to have an abortion and her subsequent death. Orsola's choice to have an abortion is not a sign of her degeneration, but rather comes as a rebellion to the idea of committing suicide as "in fondo a lei una sorda ribellione di vitalità cominciava a levitare" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 70). Suicide is initially presented as the only possible solution for unmarried pregnant women, as underlined by the fate of the other women in the village:

Non c'era più scampo. La figlia di Maria Camastra aveva bevuto il vetriolo ed era morta così, con un bimbo di tre mesi nel ventre. La figlia di Clemenza Iorio s'era precipitata dal ponte, ed era morta così, nella fanga della Pescarina. (Ivi, 69)

However, death as the only option for pregnant single women becomes yet another form of violence against women and a means to control their sexuality. Suicide, although self-imposed, underlines women's relegation to a passive social role. If they cannot serve their purpose of devoted wives because no longer pure before marriage⁴¹, they are removed. Ghiazza (1983), in her studies on female adultery in the Italian Ottocento short stories, highlights how suicide is the only viable narrative solution for the adulteress character once the adultery is over⁴². As the woman is a passive character both in the marriage and the adulterous relationship⁴³, given the impossibility of reintegration in the social standard of marriage after being abandoned by her lover, the female character needs to disappear. Rape (and pre-marital sex) contains a similar element of social rupture, as it represents a transgression of the social norm that recognises female sexuality only within the marriage and for procreative purposes. As Wanrooij points out in his work on 19th-century sexuality, "as the 'value' of a woman was based on the 'possession' of honour, it did not matter very much whether the sexual acts had been extorted or consensual. Sex itself was seen as a form of perversion and its effects could be compared to contagion" (2001, 139). Therefore, suicide should be the only viable solution in these cases too, as suggested by the fate of the girls mentioned by Orsola. According to Scarpi, death is a rite of passage, the "condizione posta per la ricostruzione dell'ordine, di contro alla trasgressione" (1980, 86). While in this case Scarpi refers to the themes of adultery and incest, present in various of D'Annunzio's works, it is possible to apply his definition and model of *Family-Incest-Death-Order* also to rape, as incest like rape can be reconducted to the idea of transgression of the social norm. In line with the works of Scarpi (1980) and Ghiazza (1983) then, as Orsola dies from the concoction used to provoke the abortion, the death of the female protagonist enables the re-establishment of the order broken by her

⁴¹ On physical virginity as a primary component of women's social role and "ethical self" in the Italian *fin-de-siècle*, see Pagliaro (2019) and Mantegazza (1875, 102-116).

⁴² See Ghiazza (1983).

⁴³ "L'adulterio non cambia sostanzialmente le cose: le sposta soltanto ad un altro livello [...] riproducendo significativamente, nella nuova situazione, gli stessi meccanismi del suo [della donna] stato precedente" (ivi, 158).

awakening to desire. The sinner is punished, and the conduct text has achieved its function. Nevertheless, Orsola's attempted rebellion to this fate, through the abortion and the rejection of the idea of suicide, shows the text's implicit condemnation of this social practice.

Finally, abortion too, comes as a form of violence against the woman's body as it is the only alternative to death for Orsola, in order to regain control of her body after the rape. As Loconsole points out with reference to Mellusi's theories of degeneration and atavism based on the idea of "falsa civiltà", abortion becomes "the only possibility to escape" a "masculine conception of honor" imposed on women whose only way to escape dishonour and social judgement is "by destroying the proof of guilt [...] through abortion or infanticide" (2019, 368). On the one hand, abortion is presented as a conscious choice of the protagonist that defies the idea of motherhood as women's defining essence and primary social duty. According to Loconsole, "[v]oluntary termination of pregnancy, conscious birth limitation and infanticide became the main tools through which women tried to emancipate their own condition of female mammary socially recognized as mother only" (ivi, 362). On the other hand, however, abortion is another way of controlling the female body and the social threat that illegitimate children represent to the patriarchal society⁴⁴.

4. Conclusion

This text engages in a discourse that places emphasis on female emancipation and the need to go beyond a narrow morality typical of the Italian patriarchal society of the 19th century. In *La Vergine Orsola*, rape, abortion and death have a dual function. At a first reading, and in line with the fictional conduct works of the period, they aim to captivate a primarily female audience, presenting an example of unacceptable conduct, punished with the rape and death of the female protagonist. At a deeper level, however, this short story aims to covertly engender a shift in society's understanding of these themes. Abortion is used to undermine the idea of a female sexuality entirely dependent on a reproductive function, while rape brings attention to the insurgence of an independent female desire. As such desire is considered a threat to the patriarchal society and its male dominance, then rape and death both become means of control over women in a similar way that diseases such as hysteria and the medicalisation of the female body are used to counteract such sexuality in the works of other writers of the period as well as in other works of D'Annunzio.

This short story then contributes to the Italian *fin-de-siècle* discourse on femininity, challenging the idea of female sexual confinement to the marriage and

⁴⁴ The illegitimate child embodies the rupture of the social order as well as representing a possible threat in terms of lineage when it comes to subdivision of land and inheritance among heirs. See also Barisonzi (2019) on the way in which uterine surgery is depicted in *L'Innocente* and the effects that should have and has on Giuliana's body.

the procreative functions. By condensing traditional female stereotypes, such as the angelic woman, the *femme fragile* and doomed sinner in the female protagonist, the text inevitably reflects on the qualities and functions commonly attributed to women in society. Contemporary scientific theories and religious beliefs on female sexuality, motherhood and deviancy are questioned through Orsola's awakened desire. The text undermines the traditional idea of the unmarried woman as a Madonna-like figure with no sensual desire, as sexuality should be entirely oriented to the reproductive function, and therefore inconceivable for a virgin/*zitella*. Finally, Orsola's fundamental innocence, and her recuperation as a martyr model in line with the manuals of conducts explored at the beginning of this chapter, is ultimately affirmed through the persistent use of the term virgin to refer to Orsola even after the rape: "avvolse la vergine violata" (D'Annunzio 1908b [1902], 67) and "la sposa violata del Signore" (ivi, 85). This underlines how her purity is not contingent to her physical virginity and that she is not responsible or deserving of the rape as a punishment. By removing the idea of rape as a consequence of her awoken sexuality, then the text affirms the woman's entitlement to sexual pleasure and its naturality.

References

- Alighieri Dante (1988), *La Divina commedia*, a cura di Emilio Pasquini, A.E. Quaglio, Milano, Garzanti.
- Arslan Antonia, Romani Gabriella, eds (2006), *Writing to Delight: Italian Short Stories by Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*, Toronto-Buffalo, University of Toronto Press.
- Banti A.M. (2011), *Sublime Madre Nostra: la nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al Fascismo*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- Bärberi Squarotti Giorgio (1982), *Invito alla lettura di Gabriele D'Annunzio*, Milano, Mursia Editore.
- Barilli Renato (1993), *D'Annunzio in prosa*, Milano, Mursia Editore.
- Barisonzi Michela (2019), *Adultery and Hysteria in the Nineteenth Century Novel: The Case of Gabriele d'Annunzio*, Leicester, Troubador Publishing Ltd.
- (forthcoming), "Notturmo and the war: D'Annunzio's intimate reflection on heroism" in Luigi Gussago, Pina Palma (eds), *A Century of Italian War Narratives: Voices from the Sidelines*, Amsterdam, Rodopi.
- Boccaccio Giovanni (1836), *Volgarizzamento di Maestro Donato da Casentino dell'opera di Messer Boccaccio De claris mulieribus, rinvenuto in un codice del XIV secolo dell'Archivio cassinese. Pubblicato per cura e studio di D. Luigi Tosti monaco della badia di Montecassino*, Napoli, Tipografia dello stabilimento dell'Ateneo.
- Borelli Elena (2017), "Dante in Gabriele D'Annunzio's Poetry and Prose: From Mystical Lover to *Poeta Vate*", *Mediaevalia*, 38, 1, 111-127, doi: 10.1353/mdi.2017.0004.
- Botteri Inge (2016), "Un altro saper vivere. Donna, lavoro, buon comportamento tra Otto e Novecento" in Helena Sanson, Francesco Luciola (eds), *Conduct Literature for and about Women in Italy from 1470 to 1900. Prescribing and Describing Life*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 347-364.
- Brison S.J. (2002), *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

- Cavalli Annamaria (2015), *Letteratura e Scienza. Scontri e incontri tra immaginario letterario e sapere scientifico: I casi di D'Annunzio e Capuana*, Rimini, GuaraldiLAB.
- Codice Zanardelli (2012 [1889]), Napoli, Edizioni Giuridiche Simone.
- Curreri Luciano (2008), *Metamorfosi della seduzione. La donna, il corpo malato, la statua in d'Annunzio e dintorni*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS.
- D'Annunzio Gabriele (1908a [1884]), *Il libro delle Vergini*, Milano, Casa editrice Moroni.
- (1908b [1902]), *Le novelle della Pescara*, Milano, Fratelli Treves.
- (1892), *L'Innocente*, Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore.
- Davies Peter (2010), *Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity. Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture. 1860-1945*, Berlin, De Gruyter.
- D'Cruze Shani (1992), "Approaching the history of rape and sexual violence: notes towards research", *Women's History Review*, 1, 3, 377-397, doi: 10.1080/09612029300200016.
- Diasio Nicoletta (2000), "Il vaso di Pandora, ovvero della chiusura del corpo femminile. Aspetti storico-antropologici", in Marco Mazzetti (a cura di), *Senza le ali. Le mutilazioni genitali femminili*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 23-53.
- Foucault Michel (1978), *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley, New York, Pantheon Books.
- (1978), *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. by Robert Hurley, New York, Pantheon Books.
- (1988), *Madness and Civilization. A history of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Robert Hurley, New York, Vintage Books.
- Fusaro Comoy Edwige (2007), *La nevrosi tra medicina e letteratura. Approccio epistemologico alle malattie nervose nella narrativa italiana (1865-1922)*, Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa.
- Ghiazza Silvana (1983), "La donna nella novella sentimentale", in Gigliola De Donato, Silvana Ghiazza, Maria Pagliara Giacobuzzo et al. (a cura di), *La parabola della donna nella letteratura italiana dell'Ottocento*, Bari, Adriatica Editrice, 97-170.
- Härmänmaa Marja (2013), "Celebrating Decadence: The Image of Abruzzo in D'Annunzio's *Trionfo della morte*", *The European Legacy*, 18, 6, 698-714.
- Higgins L.A., Silver B.R. (1991), "Introduction: Rereading Rape", in Eadd. (eds), *Rape and Representation*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1-11.
- Hosker Lucy (2016), "The Structures of Conduct Literature in Post-Unification Italy. La Marchesa Colombi's *La gente per bene*, Anna Vertua Gentile's *Come devo comportarmi?*, and Matilde Serao's *Saper Vivere*", in Helena Sanson, Francesco Luciola (eds), *Conduct Literature for and about Women in Italy from 1470 to 1900: Prescribing and Describing Life*, 159-183.
- Jackson Stevi (1978), "The social context of rape: Sexual scripts and motivation", *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 1, 1, 27-38.
- Loconsole Matteo (2019), "Laws and sexual prejudices in the Italian positivist culture: murderous mothers and the education to infanticide", *Studi sulla Formazione*, 22, 2, 355-374, doi: 10.13128/ssf-10809.
- Lombroso Cesare, Ferrero Guglielmo (1903 [1893]), *La donna delinquente: la prostituta e la donna normale*, Torino, Fratelli Bocca Editore.
- Mantegazza Paolo (1875), *Fisiologia dell'amore*, Milano, Brigola.
- (1893), *Fisiologia della donna*, Milano, Fratelli Treves Editore, 2 voll.
- Marchesa Colombi (1877), *La gente per bene. Leggi di convenienza sociale*, Torino, Il giornale delle donne.
- Martin Alcoff Linda (2018), *Rape and Resistance: Understanding the Complexities of Sexual Violence*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

- Merlino Alessandro (2015), *L'evoluzionismo nella letteratura italiana. L'influenza darwiniana in D'Annunzio, Verga, Fogazzaro, Svevo, Tricase*, Youcanprint Self-Publishing.
- Mitchell Katharine (2014), *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism, 1870-1910*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Möbius P.J. (1900), *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes*, Halle, Marhold.
- Pagliari Annamaria (2019), "Forging Italian Readers: Capuana's Aesthetics for the Modern Novel", in Annamaria Pagliaro, Brian Zuccala (eds), *Luigi Capuana: Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Risorgimento Italy*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 65-94.
- (2021), "The Silent Victim: Rape and Sexuality in *Giacinta* and 'Tortura' by Luigi Capuana", *Italian studies*, 76, 3, 307-319.
- Paternoster Annick (2019), "Emotive Figures as 'Shown' Emotion in Italian Post-Unification Conduct Books (1860-1900)", *Informal logic*, 39, 4, 433-463, doi: 10.22329/il.v39i4.6033.
- Porter Roy (1986), "Rape: does it have a historical meaning?", in Sylvana Tomaselli, Roy Porter (eds), *Rape*, 216-236.
- Ramsey-Portolano Catherine (2010), "A modern feminist reading of the maternal instinct in *Neera*", *The Italianist*, 30, 2, 50-68.
- Riall Lucy (2010), "Martyr Cults in Nineteenth-Century Italy", *The Journal of Modern History*, 82, 2, 255-287.
- Roda Vittorio (1984), *Il soggetto centrifugo. Studi sulla letteratura italiana fra Otto e Novecento*, Bologna, Pàtron Editore.
- Romagnoli Maria, Gunzberg L.M. (1984), "D'Annunzio naïf: primitivismo e arcaismo nella 'Figlia di Iorio'", *Lettere italiane*, 36, 4, 545-570.
- Sanson Helena, Lucioli Francesco, eds (2016), *Conduct Literature for and about Women in Italy, 1470-1900. Prescribing and Describing Life*, Paris, Classiques Garnier.
- Scarpi Paolo (1980), "L'edipo negato e la trasformazione del mito. Considerazioni storico-comparative su 'La città morta'", *Quaderni del Vittoriale*, 4, 23, 73-99.
- Schopenhauer Arthur (2004), *Essays and Aphorisms*, selected and translated, with and introduction by R.J. Hollingdale, London, Penguin.
- Spackman Barbara (1989), *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- The Holy Bible Containing the Old and the New Testaments. Translated out of the Originals Toungues and with the former Translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special command, A.D. 1611. Appointed to be Read in Churches* (1911), ed. by The British and Foreign Bible Society, London, Cambridge University Press.
- Tomaselli Sylvana, Porter Roy, eds (1986), *Rape: An Historical and Cultural Inquiry*, Oxford-New York, Blackwell.
- Von Krafft-Ebing Richard, Chaddock C.G. (1893), *Psychopathia Sexualis: with Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: a Medico-Legal Study*, By Dr. R. Von Krafft-Ebing, Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology, University of Vienna. Authorized Translation of the Seventh Enlarged and Revised German Edition, by Charles Gilbert Chaddock, M. D., Professor of Nervous and Mental Diseases, Marion-Sims College of Medicine, St. Louis; Fellow of the Chicago Academy of Medicine; Corresponding Member of the Detroit Academy of Medicine; Associate Member of the American Medico-Psychological Association, etc., Philadelphia-London, The F. A. Davis Company.

- Wanrooij B.P.F. (2001), "The Thorns of Love: Sexuality, Syphilis and Social Control in Modern Italy", in Roger Davidson, L.A. Hall (eds), *Sex, Sin and Suffering: Venereal Disease and European Society since 1870*, New York, Routledge, 137-159.
- Wieber Sabine (2011), "Sculpting the Sanatorium: Nervous Bodies and Femmes Fragiles in Vienna 1900", *Women in German Yearbook*, 27, 58-86.

Italy and George Gissing: A Geocritical Approach

Luigi Gussago

Abstract:

Victorian novelist George Gissing (1857-1903) was a devotee of ancient Roman culture and visited Italy three times between 1888 and 1897. In spite of this admiration, his relationship with Italy was problematic, largely due to personal mishaps. In light of these conflicting views, my essay considers Gissing's portrayals of mostly Southern Italian locations through his fiction, letters, and travelogues. The focus lies here not so much on the narrator but on the narrated space, with Bertrand Westphal's notion of "geocriticism" at its theoretical core. Far from being a utopian haven, Gissing's Italy emerges as a trans-cultural meeting point where the perception of an "interiorised place" can reshape reality, alter horizons, and redefine established values.

Keywords: Geocriticism, Gissing, Place, Spatiotemporality, Westphal

... as I looked my last towards the Ionian Sea, I wished it were mine to wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, to-day and all its sounds forgotten. (Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea*)

1. Introduction: Geocriticism and George Gissing

Readers and commentators are often tempted to pry into the works of their revered authors in search of hints that may disclose their intimate lives. George Gissing is no exception, to the point that his personal misfortunes have often overshadowed his undeniable literary talent. As a matter of fact, he produced remarkable works that cast new light on urgent social issues such as the pitfalls of both industrialism and social reforms (*Demos*, 1886), the advent of a literary body corporate that crushes artistic talent (*New Grub Street*, 1891), or the condition of single women painfully aspiring to obtain emancipation (*The Odd Women*, 1893). Still, Gissing's fate as the "spokesman of despair" (Findlater 1904, 733) accompanied him throughout his life and beyond. At times dismissed by

Luigi Gussago, La Trobe University, Australia, l.gussago@latrobe.edu.au, 0000-0002-2448-3743

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Luigi Gussago, *Italy and George Gissing: A Geocritical Approach*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.10, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 113-127, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

his contemporaries as “drab and dreary and depressing”¹, his novels were partly rediscovered half a century later thanks to George Orwell’s short but memorable sketches devoted to the author in 1943 and 1948².

Following these assumptions, the present chapter intends to contrast Gissing the man and novelist with his fictional world. In fact, although autobiography features largely in his narratives, fiction succeeds in taking new directions, almost beyond the author’s own expectations. It even provides an existential added value through the characters’ experiences. In other words, Gissing’s works, even his non-fiction, are far from simple autobiographical *mises-en-scène*. Rather, they evidence how narrative places – especially Italian ones – are much more than paratexts, or sketches taken from real locations. Quite the opposite: the textual depiction of recognisable locations even adds new elements to the appraisal of place itself. To this purpose, the analysis will focus on the representation of Italy as a geocritical entity in both Gissing’s life and writings. First of all, the adjective “geocritical” needs to be clarified.

Westphal coins the term “geocriticism” to explore the multiple connections which texts establish with the physical surroundings they describe, and how the human gaze constantly recreates and reshapes the “real” through texts. Robert T. Tally Jr, the English translator of Westphal’s *La Géocritique*, defines geocriticism as a discipline that “attempts to understand the real and fictional spaces that we inhabit, cross through, imagine, survey, modify, celebrate, disparage, and on and on in an infinite variety” (Tally 2011, x)³. The object of geocriticism is then to investigate how even the supposedly referential world, the “real”, is an object of representation: in line with Vattimo’s “pensiero debole”, Westphal affirms that, since the second half of the 1900s, “sembra che si sia accorciata la distanza fra reale e finzione” (ivi, 266). In contrast with the structuralists’ view of a self-contained text, geocriticism aspires to trespass this limitation, starting from the assumption that even the real world around us is often fictionalised, as much as the fictional world is “made real” through symbols, simulacra, intertextuality, and so forth. The consequence of this requalification of the real is that literature is allowed to draw closer to the real itself. Westphal maintains that “[...] il n’est plus dit en pleine ère postmoderne, que le monde de ciment, de béton ou d’acier soit plus ‘vrai’ que le monde de papier” (2007, 13).

Keeping in mind the fluid separation between real and fictional spaces, what kind of connection subtends the literary representation of a place and its “referent” in reality? Westphal identifies three kinds of relationships: a literary space can transpose the real in a sort of “contrat toponymique” (2000, 20); transfig-

¹ Unsigned Review, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 8 June 1906, 208-209, in Coustillas, Partridge (1995, 505).

² Orwell himself is not immune from associating Gissing’s own literary gift with his miserable fate, undermined by poverty. Nevertheless, he sees poverty as a literary *topos*, rather than a simple autobiographical dead end.

³ Westphal originally championed a wide-ranging discipline that could make literary criticism more accessible to the general public (Westphal 2008, 263).

ure it; create an “alien” place that denies any real one. He specifies that the links between texts and places are variable and fluctuating like sandbanks around the islands that form an archipelago. What is more, defining the basis of the geocritical discipline, he points out that “une nouvelle lecture de l’espace devra avoir pour condition l’abandon du singulier; elle orientera le lecteur vers une perception plurielle de l’espace, ou vers la perception d’espaces pluriels” (ivi, 18). He argues that the object of geocriticism is therefore the trinomial “espace-littérature-espace”, in which “l’espace se transforme à son tour en fonction du texte qui, antérieurement, l’avait assimilé” (ivi, 21). In other words, even the referent of place, the “real” object, never stays the same, and is never what we expect it to be. A similar point can be made about the rendering of Italy in Gissing’s works, not only in terms of space covered, but also in terms of time and narrative structure. In many passages of his travelogue, Gissing clearly expects to see real historical sites as a faithful materialisation of their ancient foundation myths. He searches for an identity between imagined and referential spaces which cannot happen. At times, he realises the vanity of his efforts and confesses a sense of unjustified superiority, of “tourist vulgarity” (Gissing 1996, 82). He seems to be unaware that, through his texts, he has contributed to define a new point of reference in reality⁴. In other words, this sets the theoretical foundation for a discussion on the relationship between Italy as a physical, referential place and its fictionalisation in George Gissing.

The notion of “geocriticism” is also centred on the dualism between “space” and “place”, two concepts that emerge substantially both in the writer’s novels set in Italy, or mentioning Italy, and in his non-fiction, including diaries, letters, and his well-known travelogue, *By the Ionian Sea* (1901)⁵. We will consider how variable observation points and the changing definitions of the horizon play a crucial role in the portrayal of place, especially with reference to the most “Italian” of Gissing’s novels, *The Emancipated* (1890).

In the outset of *By the Ionian Sea*, George Gissing clearly expresses his intent of revisiting Southern Italy in the spirit of a classicist, disclosing the marvels of that crossroads of Greek and Roman cultures which was former Magna Grecia. Nothing seems to come in the way of his purpose, which also joins ancient culture with happy youthful memories: “Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood” (Gissing 1996, 4-5). Visiting Italy is to give lifeblood to his inextinguishable fascination with the ancients, a feeling not deprived of sorrow and concern. Indeed, Gissing’s biography is heavily

⁴ Interestingly, Gissing features today as one of the “testimonials” of Catanzaro for his contribution to giving literary stature and substance to the city. See Anonymous 2021, 40-41.

⁵ The novelist’s earliest biography, written by Gissing’s friend Morley Roberts and entitled *The Private Life of Henry Maitland. A Record Dictated by J. H.* (1912), also offers interesting clues about Gissing’s life and love of Italy. The biography was strongly opposed by Gissing’s family as too revealing and tendentious. Interestingly, some subsequent editions of this book have supplanted fictional names and toponyms with real ones.

marked by this talent for the classics: at sixteen, he obtained a scholarship to Owens College in Manchester, one of the most prominent tertiary institutions in a provincial town. He was aiming to become a well-respected scholar, with the prestige and monetary reward the role was expected to bring. Still, life choices came in the way: at the age of eighteen, young George was compelled to escape to the United States after a permanent expulsion from the academia for immoral behaviour and theft. Gissing's desperate love for a young prostitute, "Nell" Harrison, whom he intended to redeem, and would later marry, lead him to commit a series of thefts in the college. Recalling the episode of Gissing's expulsion without revealing the backstory, H.G. Wells observes how "the penalty came not in a palpable, definable illness, but in an abrupt, incongruous reaction and collapse. He truncated his career at Owens, with his degree incomplete [...] and from that time his is a broken and abnormal career" (1904, 581)⁶.

It is clear from this first instance how the classics represented, to Gissing's mind, not only the perfection and suavity of ancient language and culture, but also the forlorn middle-class peace of mind and serenity of a scholarly role. This is a condition that echoes in the rather uneventful, though reassuring life of the protagonist of his late diary-idyll *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903): a life its author never enjoyed⁷. Clearly, a voyage to Italy and Greece would represent the crowning of a lifelong passion for the classics that did not fade in spite of the adverse circumstances. However, Gissing was suffering an inner conflict fraught with contradictions. In a diary entry dated 17 October 1888, he compared himself with Goethe who, in his *Italienische Reise* (1816), confesses his initial aversion to Italy and antiquity. He writes: "I remark that Goethe had got exactly into my own state with regard to Italy before his visit there; he says he could not bear to read a Latin book, or to look at a picture of Italian scenery" (Gissing 1931, 228). Goethe talks about a horrible, almost physical pain, caused perhaps by a terrifying sense of reverence towards the ancients.

⁶ It was meant to be the preface to Gissing's incomplete novel *Veranilda*, published posthumously. It was instead rejected by Gissing's family members for its scathing criticism of the author and of his "ill-advised ambition to write a series of novels" (Wells 1904, 581-582); it was published separately in the *Monthly Review* in 1904. Quoted in Swinnerton (1912, 18). Wells' preface betrays a personal rancour, instigated perhaps by Gabrielle Fleury – Gissing's last partner – who even deemed Wells responsible for his death.

⁷ Schank Daley briefly delineates some stylistic marks in Gissing's prose that recall Latin and, especially, Greek literature: "His style is formal, scholarly, and ornate: the sentences are balanced and constructed with painstaking care; he seldom uses an Anglo-Saxon word when a longer, Latin derivative is available; he will often employ words transliterated from Latin and Greek to express fine shades of meaning; he loves strange compounds and words of his own coining. He uses classical references in simile and metaphor for the most unlikely subjects; it adds strength and color to the impression for the reader who understands the reference. An old hat is a *petasus*, shouting girls are 'maenads', the 'slaves of industrialism don the *pileus*'. His style is cold, clear, even pellucid, but it never sparkles; wit, humor, and dramatic force are lacking. It has a subdued rhythm, the result of much Latin and more Greek, a rhythm that is slow and almost sad" (1942, 27).

2. Italy: Space and Place

Gissing's first journey to Italy occurred from September 1888 to March 1889, mostly thanks to the £150 proceeds the author had gained for the upcoming publication of his novel *The Nether World* (1889)⁸. His personal life was at another major turning point: his first wife Nell died only a few months before his departure for the continent⁹. After his return from Italy, the novelist ended his unrewarding private tutoring job to devote himself to literature, and declared in a letter to Eduard Bertz: "I hope never to spend a winter in England. My real life is beginning" (Gissing 1992, 258)¹⁰. Even his artistic leanings took a different direction: as Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas point out, after his first Italian trip Gissing "was not again to write a novel of the working class" (Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas in Gissing 1992, xxxiv). A second, short trip to Italy via Greece occurred in February 1890, the same year that saw the publication of *The Emancipated*, "a strange, uncomfortable book" (Gissing 1993, 135)¹¹. His third, longer journey began in September 1897, only five days after parting with his second wife Edith – not a properly sanctioned divorce, since she suffered from a severe mental condition, and was hospitalised in a mental asylum in 1902¹². Gissing's first destination in Italy was Siena, where he attended to the writing of the acclaimed *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898). This third trip marked an unexpected return to his land of election – none of Gissing's letters from 1891 to 1896, and only occasionally his novels, mentioned southern Europe. Significantly, to Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas, Gissing seemed to have become "as attentive to the life of the present as to the vestiges of the past" (Mattheisen, Young, Coustillas in Gissing 1995, xviii). Upon his return to England in April 1898, Gissing found himself homeless and in dire financial conditions – this might have even intensified the contrast with the relatively comfortable life in Calabria and Rome. Not long since, his life faced a new change: the encounter and passionate love for the French translator of *New Grub Street*, Gabrielle Fleury, this time an intellectual middle-class lady with "all sorts of semi-aristocratic relatives"¹³ (Gissing, 282). It was a relationship sealed by Gabrielle's trip to Dorking and her commitment to Gissing upon her return to Paris, by 5 August 1898. Gissing was still married with Edith at the time: in a letter to his friend Morley Roberts, he

⁸ This new, conspicuous royalty seems to have bolstered Gissing's decision to leave France for Italy: see his letter "To Algernon", 3 October 1888, in Gissing 1992, 254.

⁹ In another letter to his brother Algernon, Gissing writes about Nell's death: "No need to pain you by describing the wretched place to which I was summoned; I have seen so much poverty & wretchedness, but never anything that so assailed me. Of course there was no excuse for her being in such a place; she had money enough, but I hear it was all spent the day she received it, week after week", ("To Algernon", 1 March 1888, in *ivi*, 187).

¹⁰ "To Eduard Bertz", 7 October 1888.

¹¹ "To Ellen", 3 November 1889.

¹² Gissing's son Walter is entrusted to his mother and sisters. The other son, Alfred, lives with his mother in London.

¹³ "To Morley Roberts", 3 February 1899.

expressed his concern that a “sham marriage” in France would easily become known in England¹⁴ (*ibidem*). In spite of all difficulties, Gissing moved in with Gabrielle, and ended his days at forty-six in Ispoure, in the South-West of France.

Although published more than three years after his *tour*, *By the Ionian Sea* is a vivid account of a section of this third Italian journey, featuring the five weeks spent in Calabria. The initial pages set the tone of the whole book. In fact, when describing his departure from a Naples that seems to have discoloured, battered as it is by an early-autumn sirocco, Gissing highlights a motive that branches off in unexpected directions, both in his fiction and non-fiction. In fact, when describing the shore of Torre Annunziata from his boat he finds himself looking up to the mountains to avoid facing the “abomination” produced by a “cluster of factory chimneys which rolled black fumes above the many-coloured houses” (Gissing 1996, 5). The observer is not ready to embrace the whole landscape, but only the dream-like image he has produced in his mind. Here, we start to perceive the author’s distinction between “space” and “place”.

Bertrand Westphal distinguishes the two concepts, only partially synonymous, by referring to Yi-Fu Tuan’s distinction. Space is “[...] une aire de liberté, où la mobilité s’exprime” (Westphal 2007, 15), as opposed to place meaning “[...] un espace clos et humanisé” (*ibidem*). “Pour Tuan”, Westphal explains, “l’espace ne se transforme en lieu lorsqu’il entre dans une définition et prend un sens” (*ibidem*). This is when space becomes “géographie articulée” (*ibidem*)¹⁵. The interplay of space and place is essential in understanding the role of Italy as the driving force behind the narrative and the value system that it upholds. In fact, one expects that Gissing’s idea of Italy may have shifted from that of a space where the unknown myth of classical beauty materialises to a “[...] centre [...] de valeurs établies” (*ibidem*) as the traveller is made to interact with the “real” surroundings. Instead, his concept of “place” is still frequently contaminated by the amorphous “space” represented by ancient Greek and Latin literature. A close reading of *By the Ionian Sea* highlights how the “invisible” overwhelms, at times, the tangible, as in the case of his visit to the alleged site of Alaric’s tomb. The legend has it that the king of the Goths, who died during his transfer from Rome to Sicily, was buried under the river Busento, with many precious spoils from the sack of Rome (410 AD). A feeling of absence pervades Gissing’s account of the visit at the riverbank:

It is not easy to conjecture what “spoils and trophies” the Goths buried with their king; if they sacrificed masses of precious metal, then perchance there still lies in the river-bed some portion of that golden statue of *Virtus*, which the Romans melted down to eke out the ransom claimed by Alaric. The year 410 A.D. was no unfitting moment to break into bullion the figure personifying Manly Worth. “After that”, says an old historian, “all bravery and honour perished out of Rome”. (1996, 22)

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Westphal quotes Tuan (2002, 83).

Gissing, and several of his characters, are particularly fascinated by those fateful final years of the Western Roman empire, where the ancient virtues were trampled upon, and a new “modern era” was looming. No doubt the nostalgic classicist finds similarities between the crumbling Roman empire and his own time, his “destroying age” (ivi, 10). “Space”, therefore, does not morph into “place”.

On a different plane, characters in some of Gissing’s novels that are set in, or are reminiscent of Italy, react in different ways to Italy as “space”. In *The Emancipated*, Italy is initially appraised by all characters as a land of discovery, an unexplored territory, a locus of mobility and unpredictable change. Still, some of the characters are able to appropriate those spaces and perceive them as “places”; others do not succeed, they remain “tourists” who perceive their departure from the South as a return to the “land of civilization” (Gissing 1985, 207). The novel’s setting shifts from Italy and back, following three main storylines. First of all, the love story of Mallard, a rebellious but talented middle-class landscape painter, and the aristocratic, puritanical Mrs Miriam Baske. Their relationship develops through the appreciation of pure Italian art. The second storyline follows the passionate but doomed love affair between two young aristocrats, Cecily Doran and Mrs Baske’s brother, Edgar. In this case their marriage fails for the exact opposite reason the Mallard-Baske liaison succeeds: Cecily and Elgar are unable to appreciate the life-changing influence of Italy. The last main storyline presents the Denyer family, a mother and three daughters, who discover that their substances have vanished, and are forced to leave their luxurious lifestyle in Italy and resettle in a modest house in the outskirts of London. There, the eldest daughter of the family, Madeleine, bed-ridden after a fateful injury and abandoned by her frivolous lover Clifford Marsh, can only recall with bitter nostalgia her long-lost Napoli shores.

The first scene of the novel unfolds in the room of the young widow Miriam Baske. She is sitting at her desk trying to write a letter to her sister-in-law, who is the instant manager of her property in England. Miriam firmly assures her addressee that, although “Naples is beautiful,” it does not interest her (ivi, 5); she even compares her stay to a bitter kind of exile. “A Puritan at Naples” (ivi, 10), comments Mallard, who will become the ideal antagonist and, later, inspirer, of Miriam. In truth, the widow is caught in a tug of war. On the one hand she has to confront the “interminati spazi,” as Leopardi would put them, of the Italian landscape hidden behind “the branches of a pine-tree” which stands “in strong relief against cloudless blue” (ivi, 5). On the other hand, she is surrounded by the drafts and blueprints of a new chapel that she has committed to build in her Dissenters’ community in Bartles. At the parishioners’ request for a larger place of worship, Miriam is ready to knock down her own house to make room for the new construction. Later on in the story, she still embraces the idea that “the chapel project would enhance her importance” (ivi, 204), distracting her from moving forward with her life, and making her look in the only direction that matters, that of Heaven. The widow is under the illusion that she can transform an abstract space into a place by building a “géographie articulée” (Westphal 2007, 15) around it. This emerges, for instance, in the bird-eye view of the

plan for a new worship site. In her mind, the chapel is meant to become a meaningful, humanised, God-blessed place.. However, as in Dante's *Inferno*, which Miriam starts reading eagerly, human nature, the humanised space, hinders the path upwards. With its horizontal places populated by human beings of the past and present, instead, Italy leads Mrs Baske to consider other perspectives. The focus of attention becomes then the world outside herself: firstly, the mirror in her room, showing Miriam's reflection as a self-discovery; secondly, a reproduction of the *Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia* by Raphael, where the distance between divine inspiration and worldly matters is narrowed. Miriam gradually learns to "[...] think of the world beyond her horizon" (Gissing 1985, 202) and removes the plans of the chapel from her sight (ivi, 204). She finally goes through a process of familiarisation with Italy by replacing the glum, austere English mental landscape, still reflected in her grey attire "[...] of subdued mourning [...]", a colour which "[...] would well have harmonized with an English sky in this month of November [...]" but "[...] looked alien in the southern sunlight" (ivi, 3). She gradually comes to grips with the seductive Italian scenery. The narrator reveals how

The name of Italy signified perilous enticement, and she was beginning to feel it. [...] Yes, she was beginning to feel the allurements of Italy. Instead of sitting turned away from her windows when musing, she often passed an hour with her eyes on the picture they framed, content to be idle, satisfied with form and colour, not thinking at all. (Ivi, 204-205)

What intimidates her about the Italian landscape is its gratuitous beauty, deprived of that sense of virtuous usefulness that, to her stern religious upbringing, gives meaning to beauty itself. In the light of her beliefs, Miriam opposes this process of re-placement – for instance, when she refuses to visit the “Blue Grotto”, while a cheerful English family seems to have entirely embraced the new place. Finally, though, by a process of free choice, contrary to the stern logic of predestination that her religious faith has superimposed on her since childhood, and under the spiritual and sensuous direction of Mallard, the outsider artist who builds his art on hard labour, Miriam elects Italy as the “place” par excellence. In brief, Miriam's perception of place shifts from a vertical perspective, dictated by religious constraints and personal pride, to a horizontal one, susceptible to change and in constant dialogue between texts and the “real”.

To other characters, like the unfortunate couple Elgar and Cecily, Italy remains a space, an amorphous land where values have been suspended and subverted – Italy offers the background for the two lover's elopement, and in some way, facilitates it. Yet, Italy never becomes for them a “place”, a “calm centre of established values” (Tuan 2002, 54), but, rather, a pure intellectual oddity.

3. Space-Time in *The Emancipated*

How, and where, do space and place intersect? Discussing the significance of context as the missing link between space and place, Westphal recalls Jauss' no-

tions of *Umwelt* and *Mitwelt*: “Si l’*Umwelt* relève du constat, la *Mitwelt* suppose une action, ou plus exactement une interaction, qui donne son sens à l’existence de l’individu” (2007, 16). In Miriam’s eyes Italy morphs into a *Mitwelt*, a place in which to play an active role, whereas to Cecily and Elgar it remains an *Umwelt*, confined in their romantic reverie. The idea of place as an interactive *Mitwelt* is closely related to the concept of time, of a “variabilité spatio-temporelle”, as Westphal defines it. He observes how “l’expression du temps qui passe prend souvent un tour spatial” (ivi, 19), implying, especially during the age of positivism, that time was a movement forward, towards progress and improvement. Space used to be a simple backdrop in the evolution of time; this has changed, he observes, in the aftermath of WWII, when time could not be conceived as a linear progression, and humanity had to acknowledge that “[l]a ligne droite avait vécu” (ivi, 24). If we transfer the concept of spatiotemporality to Gissing’s fiction, we would expect the “straight line” to be the only option adopted by a realistic writer who, in his early years, had even used the positivist calendar. Yet, Gissing takes a bitterly critical approach to the optimistic Victorian age and its faith in the “straight line”. The progression of time in *The Emancipated*, for instance, follows two directions: the first one is the advancement of time, which only leads to failure – for example, Cecily’s disastrous marriage, or Madeline Denyer’s deteriorating health. The second direction, instead, is represented by the suspended time, embraced by those characters who still linger in Italy. Significantly, the two places continue along two distinct timelines – the Italian place of indulging time, and England, the inexorable place of consuming time. *The Emancipated* confronts the reader with a rediscovery of space, not seen as a background to the regular course of events, but as a lived present. Thus, to Miriam or Mrs Travis, the fugitive wife who later re-joins her husband, space-time takes the form of unpleasant memories. For example, the puritanical house setting where Miriam and Elgar spent their childhood, or the upper-class household Mrs Travis forced herself to share with her unfaithful husband for the sake of social decorum. Any other space for them is either a-historical or transcendental, like the idea of the chapel to Miriam, which turns out to be a bi-dimensional place: a blueprint. It is only when Miriam begins to contextualise her present through the sensuous experience of a lived place, that the latter acquires its real importance.

In this space-place dichotomy, Italy emerges at the same time as fiction and factual reality to both Gissing the author and the narrator. To the former, Italy is the reward for literary “success” in the form of royalties for his published novels – a rather short-lived income. At the same time, though, Italy evokes a sense of dismay for an unaccomplished academic career. In the narrator’s eyes, Italy is an antidote to puritanism – as in the case of Miriam’s disavowal of the Dissenter faith. It is also a place of challenge for artistic ambitions – Marsh and Elgar succumb to their lack of talent and determination to achieve their goals. Ironically, only purely talented, bohemian artists like Mallard, whose artistic value is unknown even to himself, are meant to find in Italy their place of elevation. Moreover, still in Gissing’s own view, Italy becomes the ideal setting for a peaceful life, made even more idyllic in comparison with the “dreary harass-

ment" (1996, 146) of life back in England. A point of friction, then, between reality and textuality is expressed by the imaginative use of classical antiquity, the world of past heroes, which, to one of Gissing's characters from the novel *The Unclassed* (1884), is "[...] a glow of poetical colour which found little appreciation [...]" (1968, 30) in the audience. It is a heroic philosophy of life at odds with contemporary society.

As explained earlier, the fictional aspect of Italy in a novel like *The Emancipated* affects the characters' behaviour in two distinct ways: on the one hand, those who stay in Italy, and on the other those who decide to leave it. Some of them depart abruptly – the Denyers, who have lost the financial stability that helped them to keep up their appearances as well-to-do socialites. Likewise, Clifford Marsh is called to task by his stepfather who wants him to settle down as a middle-class businessman – a choice that makes his decision to marry Madeline Denyer impracticable. In addition, Elgar and Cecily escape from Capri to Sorrento on a boat, heading to Paris and civilised modernity in order to get married against their guardians' will. During their escape, Capri does not appear as a lived, interiorised place, but as a space shrouded in myth:

Against the flushed sky, those limestone heights of Capri caught the golden radiance [of the sunrise] and shone wondrously. The green water, gently swelling but unbroken, was like some rarer element, too limpid for this world's shores. [...] And the gods sent a fair breeze from the west [...] and on they sped over the back of the barren sea. (Gissing 1985, 221)

As if under a spell from the gods, the joy of the newly wedded couple vanishes as soon as they touch the northern shores.

4. Horizons

Italy, as any other places, can be portrayed from different vantage points: we might think of visualising an Italian landscape from above, from below, or from ground level. Westphal discusses these different variables of place representation when emphasising the physical and metaphorical significance of the horizon in Dante. The horizon represents the passage from the finished to the unfinished: to the ancient Greeks and Romans, the horizon is a limit not to be trespassed. The observer's eye is essential in defining the horizon: distance from it is the result of the formula $3,57 \cdot \sqrt{h}$, where h is the height of the observer's eyes above the ground level (Westphal 2011b, 3). Therefore, the higher is the vantage point of the onlooker, the farthest becomes the horizon. This has a metaphorical repercussion: the higher the human gaze can aspire, the greater its power to imagine what is beyond the line. Dante would like to ascend the hill to be able to discern the surrounding landscape, but he is impeded by the three wild beasts – partly symbols of his own moral weaknesses.

Referring to *The Emancipated*, the point of observation chosen by the narrator to describe landscapes in various episodes of the novel is quite significant of the characters' own attitude to life. Cecily and Elgar have a clear view of the

horizon, nothing precludes their sight, but they dwell on the same level with the sea. The same happens with the second unsuccessful couple in the novel, Madeline Denyer and Clifford Marsh. They can enjoy all the clarity of the “[...] moonlit glory of the bay before them”, but they are already elsewhere: “It will be long before we see it again”, is Madeline’s desolate remark (Gissing 1985, 233).

Miriam’s perspective is more nuanced. In the abovementioned scene of the letter writing, she can contemplate the landscape unfolding below her, but she chooses, initially, to let the obstacles – the tree – obstruct her view; once again, a curious similarity with Leopardi’s “sieve” that precludes a full view of the place beyond. Later, she draws closer to the window of her room and manages to enclose the landscape within the window frame, in an attempt to somehow “control” the horizon. Quite different is her later encounter with the Sistine Chapel and the Loggia of Raphael through the eyes of Mallard. Miriam is attracted by a face depicted in the *Last Judgment* section of the Chapel: the scene strikes her as profoundly artistic, even in its grotesque ugliness. She seems to accept Mallard’s comment that a “great work of art may be painful at all times, and sometimes unendurable” (ivi, 318). Instead, she replies that the apocalyptic scene comes across to her as “a reality” (ivi, 319) and, as such, deprived of artistic value. Mallard then invites her to observe Raphael’s frescos in the Loggia, in particular those panels recalling the Old Testament. If art is to Miriam only an imitation of reality, and a reality of punishment, how can she reconcile her views with those frescos where the Old Testament is deprived of that sense of grief and guilt that has been instilled in her since childhood? She slowly seems to embrace the possibility of an outer world, and the option of immersing herself into place, rather than being simply overwhelmed by it, becomes a life-changing experience. Finally, another scene in the novel highlights how the observer’s gaze not only explores a further horizon, but even interiorises it, makes it its own. Mallard wanders away from the unearthed streets of Pompeii, until he reaches the ruins of the amphitheatre:

[...] [He] stood looking down into the dark hollow so often thronged with citizens of Latin speech. [...] it needed but to stand for a few minutes in the dead stillness, and the air grew alive with mysterious presences, murmurous with awful whisperings. Mallard enjoyed it for a while, but at length turned away abruptly, feeling as if a cold hand had touched him. (Ivi, 105)

Darkness conceals the horizon, but murmurs and whispers floating in the air create an all-enveloping, menacing tridimensional, ever-present place. Mallard’s horizon is typical of the modern painter: it is wide-reaching and exhorts the viewer to look farther. Still, it ultimately blurs the contours of the background making the visual effect “[...] significant enough for the few who see with the imagination” (ivi, 274). Mallard’s acute perception of light in the landscape manifests itself in his ability to depict the point of flight as impenetrable, in the style of Leonardo’s aerial perspective. Therefore, a point of flight represents, in Westphal’s own words, a “[...] ligne proliférante [...]” that “tend à être ramenée à une série de points qui ne demandent qu’à fuir” (2007, 31, 32). The line of flight

“aboutira à une déterritorialisation” (ivi, 89), they transform clearly defined lines into a constellation of points. The point of flight is an appropriation of place – we follow the horizon until we become part of it – but it is, at the same time, a point of escape, a new beginning: we become “un altro” (Westphal 2011b, 10)¹⁶. This “deterritorialization” materialises into a narrative motive. Three years after his first arrival in Italy, Mallard returns to the same places where he had grieved for the unrequited love of Cecily, not only for his attraction for Southern Italy, but also to prove to himself that these places no longer remind him of the past but are actually in tune with his regained freedom from the fear that “Italy was for ever closed against him” (Gissing 1985, 308).

In brief, these passages from *The Emancipated* highlight how Gissing’s narrative evolves not only for the sake of the storyline, but by virtue of the conception and inner experience of a fluid horizon.

Some of the fictional characters live their life surrounded by the past, but they are not erased by it. The past is to them not simply an antiquarian pleasure, but a way to reflect on their present and future decisions. To Gissing, instead, most of his beloved spaces in Southern Italy are part of an “abstraktnomu chuzhomu miru”, that somehow reminds of the immutable rhythm of the ancient Greek romance of “avantyrnovo vremeni” (Bakhtin 2012, 364)¹⁷, as Bakhtin’s defines it – eventful, but still static, immobile narratives. In Rebecca Hutcheon’s words, these are “spaces of exile [...] places that are defined in terms of absence” (2021, 28). Clearly, Italy is Gissing’s emotional “space of exile” because it represents a forlorn, idyllic past, a missed chance to become a Latin scholar. It is also a space of cultural exile: in his journey to Calabria, Gissing visits predominantly those monuments of Roman glory that have been mostly devastated and ransacked by the Barbarians, the Ottomans or, even a few centuries later, by the so-called civilised Italians. He particularly blames the modern urbanists who have, in his time and age, initiated the *sventramento* of the city of Naples, with the destruction of large portions of its picturesque neighbourhoods and the dismantling of historical monuments for the sake of a new road or railway.

Conversely, some of Gissing’s characters reject the logic of the “space of exile”: they move in newly recreated, newly interiorised places. Protagonists like Miriam and Mallard live in what Bakhtin refers to as a “rablezyanski khronotop” (2012, 418-455)¹⁸, perhaps less folkloric in spirit and more in line with a Victo-

¹⁶ Citing the novel *La media distancia* by the Spanish writer Alejandro Gándara, Westphal provides a tentative definition of “punto di fuga”: “‘Laggiù c’è, lontano, un punto al di là del quale tu non puoi continuare. La terra continua, la pianura, anche gli alberi, ma né tu né io li vediamo’. Quando Charro gli chiede perché quel punto si chiama un ‘punto di fuga’, Vidal risponde: ‘Perché se io potessi sorpassarlo, allora non sarebbe quello che vedo ciò che mi importerebbe, ma quello che si trova più lontano. Fuggirei da qui, partirei, diventerei un altro’”. Quoted in Westphal 2011b, 9-10.

¹⁷ “abstract-alien world”, “adventure-time” (Bakhtin 1981, 108, trans. by Emerson, Holquist).

¹⁸ “Rabelaisian chronotope” (Bakhtin 1981, 206-224, trans. by Emerson, Holquist).

rian sensibility but characterised by a “vremya produktivnovo rosta” (ivi, 456)¹⁹, “gluboko prostranstvenno i konkretno” (*ibidem*)²⁰, based on an almost physical fruition of place that somehow alters its attributes. It is an attitude aiming to the future rather than to the past.

5. Conclusions

In consideration of the profound impact of Italy on Gissing’s sensitivity and aesthetic attitude, we are led to a final question: how does Italy as an interiorised place manifest or influence the novelist’s conception of art? We saw how Gissing the estimator of antiquity has a very dismissive opinion of modern artforms and their presumed lack of creativity. He recoils when he realises, for example, that what appears to be one of the most prominent public buildings in Reggio Calabria is nothing but an imposing porticoed “slaughter-house of tasteful architecture” (1996, 144), invoking the question of the purpose of art in contemporary society. When referring to writing as a creative, artistic process, Gissing’s fiction highlights the consequentiality existing between personal suffering and art. For instance, in *The Unclassed*, another novel that, to a lesser degree, appeals to Italy, Waymark, the aspiring novelist, summarises the role of art in a quite poignant reflection:

[...] the artist *ought* to be able to make material of his own sufferings, even while the suffering is at its height. To what other end does he suffer? In very deed, he is the only man whose misery finds justification in apparent result. (Gissing 1968, 212)

This philosophy finds its epitome in Mallard, the tormented painter of *The Emancipated*, himself a struggling and sympathetic artist, as opposed to the egocentric ever aspiring writer Elgar. But, life’s hardships do not always sharpen creativity. In fact, the other protagonist of *The Unclassed*, Julian Casti, has Italian blood, but represents a kind of renegade, since his father, an adventurer and opera singer, abandons his son to a maternal uncle and disappears. Julian’s admiration for Italy is nourished by Plutarch’s histories and the myth of the Roman empire and its final days, as described so powerfully by Edward Gibbon. Italy represents the imagined place where Julian’s intellectual aspirations can find their way of expression in epic poetry. Yet, his disastrous marriage with Harriet, arranged to keep a promise Julian had made to his late uncle, not only alienates him from Italy as his place of election, but also from his literary ambitions as a “classic” poet. Unlike his father, who made a living through his musical talent, Julian never succeeds in living from his art – the only recognition, in his eyes – and Gissing’s – of a true artist’s worth. The identity of life and art becomes so close-knit that Casti’s thwarted ambitions and induced aversion to

¹⁹ “time of productive growth” (trans. ivi, 207).

²⁰ “profoundly spatial and concrete” (trans. ivi, 208).

poetry – somewhat remindful of Goethe’s pain at the sight of Italian art – lead the protagonist to a slow death.

To Gissing the artist, Italy is a land of contrasts. The beauty of the scenery and the centuries of artistic treasures that accumulate in the landscape offer an even more striking contrast to the existential qualms and afflictions of humanity described in its core essence. In *By the Ionian Sea*, he witnesses a heated argument between the owner of a hotel in Cotrone and a servant – he calls her a “domestic serf” (Gissing 1996, 77). The servant, perhaps for the first time in her life, stands up for herself against her employer. The scene leads Gissing to observe “[h]ow interesting, and how sordidly picturesque” (*ibidem*) that woman’s life must be. He is fascinated by the contrast between the maid’s hopeless existence and the “romantic landscape”, the “scenic history” all around (*ibidem*). Here Gissing seems to be delighted by the dissonance between the “modern”, lacklustre perception of Italy and its glorious past, as if humans contributed to amplify the beauty of their surrounding by dint of their own shabby presence. It is what some improvised tourists like the Bradshaws in *The Emancipated* think of Italy – a land where every labourer is in for begging and, possibly, deceiving foreigners for some pocket money. Indeed, at a later stage in his journey, Gissing appears to have become more alert to the indivisible link between people and place, even the historical and the picturesque. Only “place” allows a deeper insight into the individual confronted with a hostile environment. It may look like a typical naturalistic view of place as the hotbed of a character’s fate. Rather, there is a more complex, underlying principle: place and the environment do not determine behaviour, but they highlight, or even better, expose this behaviour. In his travelogue and letters, Gissing gradually acknowledges that it is the full picture of Italy he is seeking to grasp, not its most refined details. He finally reconciles with the idea of Italy as a meaningful, approachable “place” rather than a boundless, idealised “space” anchored in the past. The writer concludes his musings on the episode of the rebellious servant with a self-reproach: “Why had I come hither, if it was not that I loved land and people? And had I not richly known the recompense of my love?” (ivi, 82).

References

- Anonymous (2021), “Notes and News”, *The Gissing Journal*, 55, 4, 40-41.
- Bakhtin Mikhail Mikhailovich (1981), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Carly Emerson, Michael Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press.
- (2012), *Sobranie sočinenij, T. 3, Teorija romana (1930-1961)*, edited by S.G. Bocharov, V.V. Kozhinov, Moskva, Yazyki Slavyanskikh Kultur.
- Coustillas Pierre, Partridge Colin, eds (1995), *George Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, London-New York, Routledge.
- Findlater J.H. (1904), “The Spokesman of Despair”, *The Living Age*, vol. 243, Boston, The Living Age Company, 733-741. Reprinted in Coustillas, Partridge, eds (1995), 456-466.

- Gissing George (1931 [1927]), *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family*, compiled by Algernon Gissing, Ellen Gissing, London, Constable & Company Ltd.
- (1968 [1884]), *The Unclassed*, New York, AMS Press.
- (1985 [1890]), *The Emancipated*, London, The Hogarth Press.
- (1992), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, 3 (1886-1888), edited by P.F. Mattheisen, A.C. Young, Pierre Coustillas, Athens, Ohio University Press.
- (1993), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, 4 (1889-1891), edited by P.F. Mattheisen, A.C. Young, Pierre Coustillas, Athens, Ohio University Press.
- (1995), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, 7 (1897-1899), edited by P.F. Mattheisen, A.C. Young, Pierre Coustillas, Athens, Ohio University Press.
- (1996 [1901]), *By the Ionian Sea*, Marlboro, The Marlboro Press.
- Hutcheon Rebecca (2021), “Mapping Gissing’s Chronotopes from Text to Code to Graph”, *The Gissing Journal*, 55, 4, 22-40.
- Orwell George (1943), “‘Not Enough Money’. A Sketch of George Gissing”, *Tribune*, 2 April.
- (1960), “George Gissing”, *London Magazine*, 7, 6, 36-43.
- Roberts Morley (1912), *The Private Life of Henry Maitland. A Record Dictated by J.H.*, London, Eveleigh Nash.
- Schank Daley N.L. (1942), “Some reflections on the Scholarship of George Gissing”, *The Classical Journal*, 38, 1, 21-30.
- Swinerton Frank (1912), *George Gissing: A Critical Study*, London, Martin Secker.
- Tally R.T. Jr (2011), “Translator’s Preface. The Timely Emergence of Geocriticism”, in Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, translated by R.T. Tally Jr, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, ix-xiii.
- Tuan Yi-Fu (2002 [1977]), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis-London, University of Minnesota Press.
- Wells H.G. (1904), “George Gissing: An Impression”, *Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art*, 143, 5, 580-587; first appeared in *Monthly Review*, 16, 47, 160-172, 1904.
- Westphal Bertrand (2000), “Pour une approche géocritique des textes”, in Id. (dir.), *La Géocritique mode d’emploi*, Limoges, PULIM, 9-40, <<https://sflgc.org/bibliotheque/westphal-bertrand-pour-une-approche-geocritique-des-textes/>> (03/2022).
- (2007), *La Géocritique: réel, fiction, espace*, Paris, Minuit.
- (2008), “Oltre la torre d’avorio. Genesi della geocritica”, in Roberto Baronti Marchiò (a cura di), *Lezioni di dottorato 2007*, Santa Maria Capua Vetere, Edizioni Spartaco, 257-271.
- (2011a), *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, translated by R.T. Tally Jr., New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- (2011b), “Spazio, luogo, frontiera. Dante e l’orizzonte”, *Between*, 1, 1, 1-13.

Australians' Literatures and Cultures in Tuscany

Roberta Trapè

Abstract:

Italy has been the destination of a lifetime for an endless stream of travellers and since the start of Australian travel to Italy, Tuscany has always had a special and persistent attraction for Australian writers and artists. The connection between Italy and Australia will be explored here highlighting two periods in which Tuscany, and particularly Florence and Prato, became active and lively hubs for the reflection and study of the relationship between Australia and Italy. I will refer to a conference organised by Gaetano Prampolini and Marie Christine Hubert in 1989 at the University of Florence, "An Antipodean Connection: Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany", and to the first decade of the 21st century when Annamaria Pagliaro was Director of the Monash Prato Centre (2005-2008).

Keywords: Australia and Italy, Australians in Tuscany, Australian Travel to Italy

1. Introduction

This paper draws heavily from a previous study of mine on Australian travel to Italy, a book that focussed on the experience of contemporary Australian intellectuals who travelled to Italy in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century¹. It explored an aspect as of yet scarcely stud-

¹ A detailed analysis of the Australian Travel to Italy is found in Trapè 2011. In retracing Australian travel to Italy, I am largely indebted to Roslyn Pesman, the author of a number of well-documented and insightful contributions to the study of this subject. The book concentrates on two decades (1990-2010) in order to identify possible new trends in Australian travellers' attitude towards Italy and in their way of approaching and responding to this country. In the 19th century, affluent travellers from the "New Worlds", first from the United States and later from Australia, added to the flow of visitors that for centuries had journeyed to Italy since the golden age of the Grand Tour in the 17th century. Three different phases may be distinguished of Australian travel to Italy. The criteria by which I distinguish the different phases are sociology of the traveller and typology of visit (destinations, interests). The first, from the first settlement from 1778 to the 1890s, when Britain was the longed-for goal of the trip and the continental tour was a popular addiction; a second phase, from the 1890s up to the 1950s, when the number of Australians going "overseas" increased due to the rapid demographic and economic expansion of Australia and the rise of a prosperous middle class. During these two phases the vast majority of the travellers came from the same social

Roberta Trapè, University of Melbourne, Australia, rtrape@gmail.com, 0000-0001-5258-2258

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Roberta Trapè, *Australians' Literatures and Cultures in Tuscany*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.11, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 129-143, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

ied within the global phenomenon of travel to Italy. Looking into what it is that continues to attract Australian writers and artists to the country, I concentrated on writings of these twenty years in order to identify possible new trends in Australian intellectuals' attitudes towards Italy and in their way of approaching and responding to this country. My purpose was mainly achieved through the juxtaposition of works of four authors; my study highlighted the differences between Jeffrey Smart and Shirley Hazzard on the one side, and two writers of a younger generation, Robert Dessaix and Peter Robb, on the other. I analysed the four writers' views of Italy by focussing on the ways their narrators describe the country, and discovered an image of Italy starkly different from the one that had prevailed in previous writings. The image of Italy that emerges from the most recent works is, no doubt, a superb picture – not flattering but certainly not false – of its contemporary times. By building up this thought-provoking image of contemporary Italy, my study was intended to give a contribution to the history of the unexhausted (because inexhaustible?) fascination this country exerts on travellers from all over the world.

This paper does not aim to add a further development within the scholarly tradition of travel writing about Italy. It was conceived as a reflection on the special and persistent attraction for Australian writers and artists that Tuscany has always had since the beginning of Australian travel to Italy, and in particular on the role that Tuscany has had in the development of the studies on the Australia-Italian connections. Most importantly, what triggered the essay certainly was the desire to highlight the seminal contribution Annamaria Pagliaro made to the Monash Centre in Prato, and her pivotal role in the development of the studies of the relationship between Italy and Australia.

The connection between Tuscany and Australia will be explored here by highlighting two periods in which Tuscany, and particularly Florence and Prato, became active and lively hubs for the reflection and study of the relationship between Italy and Australia. I will refer to a conference organised by Gaetano Prampolini and Marie Christine Hubert in 1989 at the University of Florence, "An Antipodean Connection: Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany", and to the first decade of the 21st century when Annamaria Pagliaro was the Director of the Monash Prato Centre (2005-2008), and contributed to the organization of an international workshop "Australians in Italy".

class and background: a provincial, Protestant British-Australian bourgeoisie. "Their images of Italy derived from English literature and travel guides as did the widely, but not universally held assumption that Italians were a people inferior to the British race" (Pesman, in Kent, Pesman, Troup eds 2008, 3). At the beginning of the 1950s a new stage began in Australian travel to Italy: "Australia entered a period of unprecedented prosperity at the end of the Second World War, and cheap berths on the returning migrant ships opened the possibility of travel abroad to a wider group of Australians" (ivi, 9). The 1950s saw a considerable increase in the number of travellers; among them was quite a large number of writers, painters and intellectuals, who rejected and fled, at least for a while, an overwhelmingly Anglophile and conservative Australia.

2. Annamaria Pagliaro at Monash University Prato Centre

The Emeritus Professor Bill Kent, a world authority on the Italian Renaissance, was the Founding Director of Monash University Prato Centre (2000-2004) which was officially opened on 17 September in 2001 at Palazzo Vaj, in the heart of Prato's historical centre. On 3 and 4 October 2005 an international workshop was held at Monash Prato Centre, "Australians in Italy". The project leaders were Ros Pesman, University of Sydney and Bill Kent, Monash University. Camilla Russell, Monash University, and Tony Pagliaro, LaTrobe University, completed the organising committee. The organisers highlighted the fact that while "Italians in Australia" has been, for very good reason, a much studied theme in Australian history, "Australians in Italy, on the other hand – the hold Italy has long had on the Australian creative, learned and popular imaginations – is a shining thread in our national story that deserves to be teased out and put under the microscope"². This workshop undertook the study and analysis of the on-going Australian engagement with Italy fifteen years after the above mentioned conference organised by Gaetano Prampolini and Christine Huber in Florence. Once again Tuscany was the place where this phenomenon is explored. Speakers included Rory Steele, Chris Wood, Peter Porter, Peter Howard, Silvana Tuccio, Lorenzo Perrona, Judith Blackall, and Bruce Bennett. Other participants presented vignettes on their experiences as Australians in Italy³.

On 3 October the workshop was introduced by the new Director of the Monash University Centre in Prato after Bill Kent, Annamaria Pagliaro, who, together with the Australian Ambassador in Italy, Peter Woolcott, welcomed all the participants and opened the workshop. Dr. Annamaria Pagliaro, former Convenor of Italian Studies at Monash, was the Centre's Director from 2005 to 2008. A specialist in 19th and early 20th century Italian literature, she had had a long association with the Centre and was involved in its establishment, being a member of its first working party. After her direction, she continued her association with the Prato Centre as a member of its Advisory Group.

Roslyn Pesman, one of the main experts on this theme⁴, opened the conference with her paper "Australians in Italy 1788-1988: Themes and Perspectives", an introduction to the following presentations. Peter Porter and Judith Blackall, who had also attended the conference "An Antipodean Connection: Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany" held at the University of Florence in 1989, presented respectively their papers "A Great Tradition Revisited" and "Australian Artists and Italy". Bruce Bennett analysed the presence of "Australian Writers and Italy", and Bill Kent gave his personal view on Australians and the Italian Renaissance ("Australians and the Italian Renaissance – A Personal View"). In her paper "The Gente Nuova: Young Australian Scholars

² From the programme of the workshop.

³ The information about the conference were taken from Monash University Prato Centre archive.

⁴ Roslyn Pesman is Professor Emeritus at the University of Sydney. See Pesman in Prampolini, Hubert 1993, 135.

of the Renaissance in Italy, 1990-2000” Camilla Russell traced the scholarly interests, activities, and experiences of the “new breed” of Australian scholars of Renaissance Italy, who travelled to Italy and Tuscany in particular for research in the last decade of the 20th century. She explored the heritage of the Australian School of Renaissance historians, with a view to understanding their influence on the scholarship of the new generation: the similarities, the differences, and the shape of things to come. She also briefly outlined some of her personal experiences and memories of the *gente nuova*, as they, she included, negotiated their own way through the adventure, and allure of being a young scholar in Italy.

In the years in which Annamaria Pagliaro directed the Centre, it became a very active hub for the reflection and study of the phenomenon of Australians in Italy, a space to explore and study this connection, and to reflect on the special role Tuscany had in this relationship. This activity is documented in a valuable publication *Australians in Italy. Contemporary Lives and Impressions*, a collection of essays in which Bill Kent, Ros Pesman and Cynthia Troup map the past and present of the Australian “love affair with Italy” (2008, back cover), exploring its causes, motivations and transformations in depth. The authors spent time in Prato to develop their research and study.

Symbolically, Annamaria Pagliaro’s direction of the centre neared its end with the event held on 26 June 2008 “Melting moments”, moments of encounter between Australia and Italy, and Australia and Tuscany. An evening built on the idea of the power of the intercultural encounter between the two countries, where arts and literatures, sounds, images, words from Australia were brought into the local community in Prato and shared with its people. Words from David Malouf’s collections of stories set in Tuscany, “Towards Midnight” in *Every Move You Make*, from Robert Dessaix’s *Night Letters* and from Melina Marchetta’s *Terza generazione*, the occasion to reflect upon the most recent generations in the history of Italian migration to Australia. During this event a passage from the yet unpublished Italian translation of the novel *Carpentaria* by Alexis Wright, from the Waanji people from the highlands of the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, was read, an event which opened possible directions for future encounters and investigations. In the first months of 2012, the artist-in-residence at Monash Prato Centre was Maree Clarke, an independent, multi-disciplinary artist of the Mutti Mutti, Yorta Yorta and Boonerwung people of North West Victoria. She spent three months at the Monash University Prato Centre for its #VisualResidency programme. In Prato, she ran a series of workshops with the local community to produce a unique cloak, similar to those worn by her ancestors for ceremonial purposes, but featuring textiles woven in Prato instead of possum skins. She also gave public lectures on her artistic practice, intertwined with her cultural heritage.

I will conclude this section by recalling the vividness of my personal memories of the fervent and stimulating activity on the theme of the encounter between Australia and Italy at that time in Prato, having had the luck, thanks to Annamaria Pagliaro, of having been part of most of those events. With her initiative, passion and energy she greatly contributed to develop this “antipodean connection” and to make it stronger.

3. An Antipodean Connection: Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany

The stimulating workshop “Australians in Italy” held at Monash Prato Centre in 2005 was preceded by an international conference organised by Gaetano Prampolini and Marie-Christine Hubert in Florence in 1989, “An Antipodean Connection: Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany”. It emphasised the literary and artistic connections between Australia and Italy, specifically with Tuscany. As Pesman suggested (in Kent, Pesman, Troup 2008, x), it certainly was a pioneering treatment of the theme of Australians in Italy, but it also highlighted, I believe, a peak in the cultural relations between these two countries. This conference gathered some of the most valuable writers, artists and scholars from Australia whose work and life were influenced by Italian culture: Shirley Hazzard, David Malouf, Richard White, Peter Porter, Roslyn Pesman, Janine Burke, Judith Blackall, Peter Quartermaine, Laurie Hergenhan, Desmond O’Grady, William Grono.

Prampolini and Hubert felt that it was high time to draw attention to the role played by Florence and Tuscany, particularly in the 60s, 70s and 80s, “in that major phenomenon of Australian culture which is known as expatriation- a ‘going overseas’, temporary or permanent, which appears to have been one of the primary aspirations of, and at times, almost an obsession for, so many artists, writers and scholars” (Prampolini, Hubert 1993, 13). The aim of the conference was also to provide an inventory of Australians in Tuscany. But it was mainly to find out what it was that attracted Australian intellectuals, travellers and tourists to this region, to understand what this “antipodean connection” meant in their lives and work, to see whether there was such a thing as a distinctively Australian way of approaching and responding to Florence and Tuscany. The answers provided by the speakers at the conference were varied although an area of convergence emerges quite clearly. Australians chose Florence and Tuscany because of the essential contribution which this city and this region have made to the development of Western civilisation – in history, art and culture generally. Another very interesting recurring aspect is that they were struck by the similarities between the Tuscan landscapes and some of their Australian landscapes. Many felt a sense of belonging to Tuscany; they claimed that living in Tuscany had helped them both to know their country and themselves better, by making them familiar with a land which had been for centuries more densely populated than Australia.

Hazzard reflects: “[t]hose of us who, when young, chose ‘to live’ in the Italy of the post-war decades felt we were doing just that: living more completely among the scenes and sentiments of a humanism the New World could not provide” (Hazzard, Steegmuller 2008, 2). In Tuscany, in Florence, Shirley Hazzard, in her paper “The Tuscan in Each of Us”, said at the conference:

[w]e celebrate an environment that is both a revelation and a repose to us, a consolation and a home. Like all love, this love of foreigners for Tuscany is easy to mock. [...]. We are told that it is not original, it is not realistic. It is true that there may be illusion in it, and a lack of what is currently defined as realism. [...].

Illusion is part of civilised power. Wherever there is civilisation, there is to some degree illusion. (Hazzard in Prampolini, Hubert 1993, 77)⁵

She continued:

We embrace this culture as our own, in the beautiful phrase of Burckhardt, ‘by a kind of hereditary right of admiration’ – not so much undergoing a transformation as acknowledging at last the Tuscan in each of us. That sense of rightfulness has its definable source in humanism. Outsiders have been drawn to Tuscany and to Florence as to the centre and capital of their own civilised values. (AC, 78)

I have seen Florence under many conditions, and I have known this city in dark as well golden days. I remember a beautiful June morning, just after daybreak, when, arriving overnight by train from Genoa, I crossed from the station to have my coffee at Caffè Italia, [...]. And I sat there lacking nothing, in a state of perfect happiness I’ve never forgotten, realising I was again in Tuscany. I remember too, years later, another arrival by train – this time on a December evening in 1966, when for a last freezing hour, the train laboured through the mud-laden track of the city’s outskirts, surrounded by detritus of the flood. In those drastic weeks Florence lay as if stranded along the Arno; one looked upstream through the skeleton of Ponte Vecchio; the familiar streets were befouled water-courses; [...]. I remember, in streets and shops, the tears and courage, and the Florentine durability – the Florentine toughness. (Ivi, 80-81)

And I remember the hippies in their hundreds, digging out mud and sewage, sleeping on damp floors, [...]. I recall the experts and museum curators, the art historians who converged on the city from Europe and America and raised funds abroad for restoration – funds that came from all around the globe; for the world was moved, and so was the Tuscan in each of us. [...]. This lovely place, in its endless richness and hospitality, [...] has touched the Antipodes, and Australians who have never visited Tuscany have known it by influence and in imagination. It has moved us to do our best. (*Ibidem*)

At the conference, in his paper “Listening to the Voice of Tuscany”, David Malouf started by saying:

I should begin by confessing a minor disloyalty. Like all Australians of my generation I first came to Europe by ship – a six weeks voyage along a route that had been laid down in my memory on long hot afternoons in primary school, so that actually travelling it at last from port to port was more like a re-enactment than a first experience. I had been over it so often in my

⁵ Henceforth, the pagination of quotations taken from the conference papers *An Antipodean Connection. Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany*, preceded by the abbreviation of AC, will be given at the end of each quotation.

imagination that at my first sight of Singapore, Colombo, Bombay, Aden, Port Said, I was filled with nostalgia but at the same time overwhelmed with sights and smells and fears and small surprises that my imagination had not quite allowed for. (Ivi, 85)

He went on to explain the “quite explosive effect” on him of [his] first land-fall in Europe, in Naples: “it is still, in my imagination, the quintessential Italy to which in my imagination, and my affections, I remain loyal. My idea of Italy was based almost entirely on my reading. Italy was a classical place, a place of pagan joys and freedom” (ivi, 85-86).

When at the end of the year (this was 1959) I came to [...] Tuscany, I felt badly put off. Florence was altogether too serious, too austere. Its life seemed to me too sober and restrained, [...]. It wasn't exuberant and musical and outgoing as Naples was and as I thought Italy ought to be. I missed the noise and disorder, the colour too, and found Florentine art too intellectually rigorous, too geometrical and demanding”. However, Malouf affirms “my progress in getting to see and know Italy has largely been a move from the literary world to the real, [...] to a recognition of daily reality. It has been largely a matter of learning the language – not so much Italian itself as the language in which daily life can be apprehended from inside rather than out, and in my case, through a particular Italian voice, that of my old friend Agatina, who was seventy-six when I first got to know her, is now eighty-six, and has been for these ten years or so my real guide to things. Tuscany is where I have learned to see Italy as it is. (Ivi, 86-87)

Malouf bought a house in a small village in the Maremma, a wild area of Tuscany, a harsh and wild landscape: “There are times when it reminds me of Australia” he said at the conference, “you get the same sense of being in a place that has barely been touched” (ivi, 87) “by the hand of man, as history were still to happen; but then (and in this way is *not* like Australia at all) you turn a corner and are in a village as old as anything you could find, in a bit of landscape that has the mark of centuries on it” (ivi, 88). He continued:

One other aspect of culture has been particularly important to me in the discoveries I have made by living somewhere other than where I belong. It has to do with history. [...]. History is for most of us an impersonal thing, a series of important events and turning points in time from which most of us – most men and women at all times – are excluded [...]. History for an Australian is what happened at other times and elsewhere. [...]. Living in Campagnatico and listening to Agatina [...] I have become aware of *another sort of history, the history that never gets recorded [...] a history to which ordinary life is central and which is made up of all the ordinary lives of all those who have ever lived* – just the kind of history, in fact, that fiction pays reverence to by taking insignificant ordinary lives and giving them weight that pays reverence, for their own sake, to objects and happenings that are intended, in the ordinary course of things, to get lost. (Ivi, 89-90; my emphasis).

In Tuscany he felt:

a sense of permanence: of having a life in the place they live in that goes back to time beyond memory and a history in which their own history can be subsumed. [...]. In belonging so securely to the past, and to the progress of time through them, they also have a grasp of the future. [...]. Perhaps you can only fully believe in the future, and feel passionately about it, if you know what it is like to be in time and to feel the full weight of the past. [...]. To grasp things in space is the conqueror's way. The settler's, the artist's, is to grasp things also in time, in the spirit as well in the act. Something of what that might mean I had to leave Australia to understand. I have learned it here in Tuscany. (Ivi, 90-91)

Jeffrey Smart did not take part in the conference but his presence in Tuscany in that period was all the same very perceivable, and images of his ground-breaking paintings are included in the publication of the conference papers. At the conference, in his paper "The Cypresses of Erewhyna: Jeffrey Smart in Italy" Peter Quartermaine defined him as "a great interpreter of the postwar Italian scene – especially of the urban environment" (ivi, 127). "There is little that is specifically Tuscan in Smart's paintings [...] yet Smart's documentation of Tuscany is impressive. Smart's Tuscany reflects an ongoing interrelation between mankind and a landscape transformed over the centuries" (ivi, 128). All the ordinary elements which catch Smart's attention in the Italian, often Tuscan, scene become iconic and symbolic in his paintings; he ingeniously shapes this scene into images of order, harmony and purity, a world of stillness freed from the disorder and randomness of the places from which his images and motifs have been extracted. The means of creating order will be mainly compositional, but a fundamental prerequisite is the artist's detached, impersonal perspective, in which it does not seem arbitrary to see Smart's debt to the Italian art of the *Quattrocento*. Smart's admiration for the high Renaissance art of Piero della Francesca is well-known. It explains the bright, dispassionate lighting whose primary function is to define and sculpt form. Most critics agree in saying that the strength of Smart's work lies in applying the technical and compositional techniques of Renaissance Italian painters to an Italy largely created by the *miracolo economico*, the economic boom that produced its phenomenal growth and change in the second half of the 20th century. In Italy Smart found that spiritual nourishment he took from Italian high Renaissance, which he seemed to see lingering, if dimly, in the geometry of urban life.

Peter Porter closed the conference in Florence with his paper "In a trance to Paradise" saying:

Somehow one has to disentangle the real Tuscany from the products of the travel book industry and the coffee-table compilations. But we all exoticise [...]. Settling in Tuscany may not be the best way to possess the mystery of the country. Too many expatriates live in what John Mortimer has christened Chiantishire. I admit to selfishness of motive. I came to Tuscany for what I can get out of it, an exploitation fortunately which does the environment no harm.

Chiefly I remind myself that the past is not dead, that the present is made up of siftings from the past, and that all manifestations of the spirit, from whatever era, are contemporary in the mind. (Ivi, 193-194)

At the conference the Australian writers and artists stressed, in different ways, the perception in Tuscany of a powerful sense of continuity between the past and the present.

4. Australian travels to Italy and Tuscany

From the 1950s on, a growing number of Australian writers and artists chose to live in Italy in search of a place where they could express themselves more freely: “[t]he two conditions were the weakening of the Anglocentric world view and the growth of an Australian intelligentsia” (Pesman 1991, 63). To artists and writers, travel to Italy meant a reclaiming of a European heritage which did not necessarily coincide with that of Great Britain. Most of them returned home, some remained abroad for years, others never came back.

A great number of scholars, artists and writers came to Italy in the 1950s, 1960s and in the 1970s. Martin Boyd (1893-1972) settled in Rome in 1957 and spent a large part of his mature life there; A. D. Hope (1907-2000), Morris West (1916-1999), Shirley Hazzard (1931-2016) and David Malouf (b. 1934) travelled to or resided in Italy in the 1950s and in later decades as well. In 1958 Patrick White was staying in Italy. Peter Porter (1929-2010) travelled to Italy in the 1960s. Art critic Robert Hughes (1938-2012) left Australia for Europe in 1964, and lived for a time in Porto Ercole, Tuscany, travelling extensively to study the painting and architecture of Europe; he settled in London and then moved to New York where he lived until his death.

Shirley Hazzard spent the 1950s working in New York, and in 1956, while working at the UN Secretariat, she was sent on a year’s mission to Naples; thereafter she continued to spend her time between Manhattan and Italy until her death. Hazzard arrived in Italy in 1956 to practically never leave it, since she has kept coming back almost every year; her published work offers plenty of images of the Italy she has known best, Naples, Capri and Tuscany.

At the end of 1964 Jeffrey Smart (1921-2013) moved to Italy, and in 1971 bought the house where he lived until his death, in Posticcia Nuova, near Arezzo. Like many other Australian writers and artists Smart felt trammelled in Australia as an artist and as a person, and like many of them he was attracted by Europe. In 1948 Smart left Adelaide for a journey to England via the USA and Canada which lasted over three months. Travelling by ship, the *Kaipara*, he worked his way as pantry boy, cleaning toilets, floors and walls. When in Europe he travelled through Europe by bus and by hitching rides, from London moved to Paris and then Italy. When in Florence, Smart “indulged in an orgy of paintings”; he wanted to see the works of art he had only seen in books; at the monastery of San Marco he saw Fra Angelico’s “great Deposition, of which [he] had been dreaming for years”. “I gradually began to think that I should live

in Italy – a financially preposterous idea, an impossible dream” (Smart 2000 [1996], 218-219). He visited Rome, returned to London and moved back to Italy to live in Ischia. He moved to Sydney in 1951, but in late December 1963 he left Australia for Europe again. He moved to Rome. When living in Trastevere became fashionable, the owners of the apartment Smart was renting decided to reoccupy their property. So it was that Smart left Rome for the country. In 1970 he was shown an old farmhouse not far from Arezzo, in October paid a deposit and in January 1971 he completed the purchase of *Posticcia Nuova*. “Because we were isolated, I had felt apprehensive about living in the country, but there was much more society than I dared hope for” (ivi, 416) since that was the time when expatriate communities (including not a few Australians) were proliferating all over Tuscany. Being near Arezzo, Smart was also close to Piero della Francesca’s frescoes, which he had always fervently admired. Arezzo had been an obligatory stop when he first travelled to Italy, and in the 1960s he did not fail to go to Borgo San Sepolcro and Monterchi.

David Malouf, one of Australia’s leading contemporary writers, moved to England in 1959, disembarking in Naples, and returned to Australia in 1968. In 1978 he moved to Italy and settled in Tuscany, in Campagnatico, where he bought a house. He lived there for some years and divided his time between Italy and Australia, going back to Sydney in 1985. Malouf describes his house in “A Village in Tuscany” included in his collection of four autobiographical essays, *12 Edmonstone Street*, uses Italian settings in his poems, in the novella *Child’s Play* (1982), and also in the short story “Around Midnight” collected in his latest book *Every Move You Make* (2007).

In 1961 Roslyn Pesman, Professor Emeritus at the University of Sydney, boarded an Italian ship and “embarked upon that Australian middle-class rite-of-passage, the overseas trip” (AC, 135). A regular visitor to Italy since 1961, Pesman lived in Florence in 1976 working on Florentine history in the Archivio di Stato. She is the author of a number of well-documented and insightful contributions to the study of the phenomenon of Australian travel to Italy. Pesman’s studies cover the period from the 1850s up to 1990, focussing in particular on the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th. However, in the first decade of the 21st century Pesman had a fundamental role in the studies which were carried on at Monash Prato Center on the developments of this phenomenon. Desmond O’Grady (b. 1929) literary editor of *The Bulletin* in Australia, moved to Rome in 1962, where he still lives.

In the 1970s Australian academics became a significant presence in Italy as a result of generous scholarship schemes and the expansion of Australian universities. In the early 1970s there was in fact a sense of a new vigour in Australian culture, due also to the disappearance of literary censorship in 1970 and the foundation of the Literature Board of the Australia Council in 1973, whose main purpose was to support artists and writers in developing their work. For the young Australian writers in the 70s this meant easier working conditions, more outlets for their publications, means for overseas travel and an increased critical interest in their work on an international level. Some of them sought out

forms to challenge the work of earlier generations and many also resisted any colonial dominance of Britain or North America. Some of these writers decided to go to Europe, and to Italy, to develop their art.

In December 1972 Gough Whitlam was elected Prime Minister of Australia, reinstating Labor Party rule after twenty-three years of Liberal party dominance. This political change created a new confidence and a new hope among Australian artists and writers; they believed that arts and culture in Australia would at last have genuine government support under Whitlam. Whitlam himself has felt a life-long fascination with the history of Italy; he went there first in 1962 and continued to visit regularly⁶.

In 1972 Germaine Greer (b. 1938) acquired a property in a valley in Tuscany; her mother was of part-Italian extraction and Greer spent three months in a Calabrian village in 1967. Tom Shapcott (b.1935), poet, novelist, playwright, librettist and editor, visited Italy for the first time in 1975, staying in Florence. Judith Rodriguez (b.1936) travelled to Italy in the early 1960s as a student, and went back in 1977. The author of *Second Sight* (1986), Janine Burke (b. 1952) travelled to Venice and Florence in 1976, went back to Florence and Rome in 1978, and again to Tuscany at the end of 1983, where she returned in 1988 and in 1989. In 1982 Judith Blackall, who lived and worked in Italy for fifteen years, set up the Australia Council's Arthur Boyd Studio, *Il Paretaio*, in Boyd's villa near Palaia in the province of Pisa, and coordinated the visiting artists' program there until 1990.

The 1980s saw other writers significantly affected by their journeys in Italy, and in Tuscany: Leon Trainor (b.1945), the author of the novel *Livio* (1988), travelled from Western Australia to Abruzzo and Naples in 1975, and visited again in the 1980s and in 1992; Kate Grenville (b. 1950) resided in a Tuscan farmhouse where she set her novel *Dreamhouse* (1986), the antithesis of the idyllically idealised experience of Italy. David Foster (1944) was inspired by his first visit to Venice, in 1986, when writing the comic novel *Testostero* (1987). Poet Diane Fahey (b. 1945) travelled to Italy in 1987 and 1989, moving from Venice through Florence to Rome. Peter Robb (b. 1946) travelled to Italy in 1974; he returned in 1978 and lived there for almost fifteen years. Two Australian poets, Chris Wallace-Crabbe and Andrew Taylor were inspired by Italy while living in Florence (O'Grady 2012, 66-67).

The stream of Australian travellers to Italy did not at all abate in the 1990s and in the 21st century, also thanks to the revolution in transport which has certainly made distance less of a problem. Australian writers and artists, until the Covid-19 pandemic stopped travel from Australia to Italy, have continued to visit this country. However, they no longer represent the major component of the flow of visitors from Australia. They usually stay for a while, and go back to their own country. Their Italianate writings certainly continue to testify their interest for

⁶ *My Italian Notebook* (2002) covering art, architecture and politics, is the record of his profound interest in this country.

and attraction to Italy. Italian experiences continue to have vital repercussions on the work of contemporary Australian writers such as Robert Dessaix, Peter Robb, Paul Carter, Simon West and Michelle de Kretser.

Robert Dessaix visited Italy a number of times, he travelled to Italy in 2009; at the end of April, I organised a conversation between him and the Australian students at Monash Prato Centre on his novels *Arabesques* and *Night Letters*⁷.

Scholar Paul Carter, born in the U.K., lived in Spain and Italy before migrating to Australia in 1980. He has a considerable knowledge of Italy, where he lived for four years. His enquiry into Italian urbanism, art, history, literature and languages has remained motile, continuing to shift and find expression in different media. Many of his contributions to Australian studies, to radiophonic art and public art involve an imaginary dialogue (historical, poetic and aesthetic) between Australia and Italy⁸. Carter stayed at Monash Prato Centre as visiting scholar from 25 to 30 August 2010.

Poet Simon West has been profoundly impressed by the millennial history of Italy and enchanted by the language, he felt he had to engage with classical tradition in his creative practice, and so he does in his three books (*First Names*, 2006; *The Yellow Gum's Conversion*, 2011; *The Ladder*, 2015). In 1996, while an undergraduate at the University of Melbourne, he decided to take a year off to travel around Europe. Before leaving Australia, from a list of organisations that facilitated voluntary work around the world, he found work in Northern Italy, outside Turin, in one of the *valli valdesi*, the valleys in the Cottian Alps where Waldensians settled in the 13th century. Italy became his first destination for the year overseas. Back to Australia, West re-enrolled at the University of Melbourne, attending courses in Italian language and literature for two years, before getting a Bachelor of Letters degree in English. Later, he obtained a PhD in Italian Literature. Entitled “*È tant'e dritta e simigliante cosa*: Translating the Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti”, which developed into *The Selected Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti* (2009), a critical edition as well as a translation of the poems included in the selection⁹.

In contemporary Australian literature inspired by Italy, Michelle de Kretser's novel *Questions of Travel* (2012) stands out for its depth and originality, also in the author's treatment of this country. Short sections of the novel are set in Naples; I analysed which views of Italy the writer presents in *Questions of Travel* in order to define her way of approaching and responding to this country¹⁰. De Kretser first visited Italy in 1981, and returned in the 1990s, always visiting the north and the centre, specifically Florence and Tuscany. In September 2008, she

⁷ Dessaix arrived in Rome on 24 April and stayed in Montefiascone (VT) for four days, gave the talk at Monash Prato Centre in Prato on 28 April, went to Torino, and on 3 May took a train to Paris.

⁸ I explored Paul Carter's connection with Italy in two articles: Trapè 2018, 155-173 and Carter, Trapè 2018, 227-238.

⁹ I studied West's connection with Italy in Trapè 2017, 193-211 and Trapè 2019, 285-295.

¹⁰ See Trapè 2016, 95-117.

travelled to the South of Italy for the first time. De Kretser has always travelled in Italy for short periods only, but this notwithstanding, her experience has been of great use to her in writing part of her truly valuable novel.

Contemporary Australian literature clearly suggests that travel to Italy remains a phenomenon of great significance¹¹. In the same period there has been a spate of best sellers, mainly by Australian journalists who have spent time in Italy. Basically meant to serve as guidebooks for tourists, these works focus on the pleasures of living in Italy, whether they are describing Italian life, mainly in a Tuscan village or in one of the main Italian cities; their favourite topics are food and wine, and the Italians' reputation as great lovers¹². They correspond to a sort of global genre, a new kind of travel book that is fast proliferating and to which Australia is contributing in a surprisingly large measure. Suffice to mention here, as regards the United States, the extremely popular *Under the Tuscan Sun* (1996) by Frances Mayes and the most recent *Eat, Pray and Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert (2006). It can be said that it was *Under the Tuscan Sun* that triggered the

¹¹ From the beginning of the 1990s onwards there has been a sizeable output of books set in or having to do with Italy, which add to a considerable corpus of texts by Australian writers based on their travel experiences in this country: novels by scholar Paul Carter (*Baroque Memories*, 1994) and writer and translator Robert Dessaix (*Night Letters*, 1996); David Malouf's short story "Around Midnight" (in *Every Move you Make*, 2007), but also Jeffrey Smart's autobiography (*Not Quite Straight*, 1996); Peter Robb's *Midnight in Sicily* (1996), *M* (1998) and *Street Fight in Naples* (2010); Desmond O'Grady's *The Victory of the Cross: a History of the Early Church in Rome* (1991) and *Rome Reshaped: Jubilees 1300-2000* (1999); Shirley Hazzard's *Greene on Capri, A Memoir* (2000) and *The Ancient Shore: Dispatches from Naples* (2008); Gough Whitlam's *My Italian Notebook* (2002); historian Richard Bosworth's essays *Mussolini* (2002) and *Mussolini's Italy* (2005); art critic Robert Hughes's *The Seven Ages of Rome: a Cultural History* (2009), Michelle De Kretser's *Questions of Travel* (2012); Australian poet Simon West's *First Names* (2006); *The Yellow Gum's Conversion* (2011) and *The Ladder* (2015).

¹² I refer to such works as David Dale's *The 100 Things Everyone Needs to Know about Italy* (1998) and *A Delicious Ligurian Memoir* (2007); Geoffrey Luck's *Villa Fortuna: An Italian Interlude* (2000); Virginia Ryan's *Where the Cypress Rises: An Australian Artist in Umbria* (2000); George Negus's *The World from Italy. Football, Food and Politics* (2001); Ann Rickard's *Not Another Book About Italy* (2004) and *The Last Book About Italy* (2005); Carla Coulson's *Italian Joy* (2005); Sue Howard's *Leaning Towards Pisa* (2005); Brian Johnston's *Sicilian Summer. A Story of Honour, Religion and the Perfect Cassata* (2005); Judith Armstrong's *The Maestro's Table* (2006); Sara Benjamin's *A Castle in Tuscany* (2006); Sally Hammond's *Just a Little Italian. Exploring the South of Italy* (2006); Penelope Green's *When in Rome: Chasing La Dolce Vita* (2006), *See Naples and Die* (2007) and *Girl by Sea: Life, Love and Food on an Italian Island* (2009); Peter Moore's *Vroom with a View. In Search of Italy's Dolce Vita on a '61 Vespa* (2003) and *Vroom by the Sea. The Sunny Parts of Italy on a Bright Orange Vespa* (2007); Chris Harrison's *Head over Heel* (2008); Simon Capp's *Italy, It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time* (2008); Dianne Hales' *La Bella Lingua: my Love Affair with Italy and the Most Enchanting Language in the World* (2010) and Victoria Cosford's *Amore and Amaretti: a Tale of Love and Food in Tuscany* (2010); Shamus Sillar's *Sicily, It's Not Quite Tuscany* (2012); Amanda Tabberer's *My Amalfi Coast* (2012); Lisa Clifford's *Death in the Mountains* (2008) and *Naples. A Way of Love* (2013). Virginia Duigan, a journalist, broadcaster, editor and TV scriptwriter, and a freelance contributor to various newspapers, wrote a novel set in Tuscany *The Biographer* (2008).

phenomenon of the fatal attraction of foreign travellers to Tuscany. There have been numerous publications of this kind in other English-speaking countries as well. From this phenomenon originates as a consequence a huge amount of popular fiction and non-fiction published in Australia mainly intended as travel guides for Australian visitors to Italy.

However, all these works “do reveal a perennial attraction to Italy and Italians. The literary evidence suggests that the idea and actuality of Italy have long haunted Australian writers, and will continue to do so” (Bennett in Kent, Pesman, Troup 2008).

In the second decade of the 21st century, before the block imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Australians continued to travel to Europe in great numbers with Italy as their favourite destination, second only to the United Kingdom. In the first two decades of the 21st century, more Australians than ever travelled to Italy and more of them lingered for longer periods; but they mainly came to carry out business in the global market, to learn about food and wine as integral parts of the currently prevailing idea of a country’s culture, to participate in cookery classes, to experience some form of rural life in Tuscan or Umbrian villages. The available sources reveal that more recently until the Covid-19 pandemic there appears to have been a growing ‘variety’ of Australians living and working in Italy. As a group they are becoming increasingly demographically diverse in terms of age, background, the range of professions in which they work, and the reasons for which they find themselves in Italy. This “variety” is what mainly distinguishes the state of Australian travel to Italy before the pandemic; it not only means discovering art and antiquity, but Italian fashion and design, style, the art of “posh” living.

Young Australians in Italy are said to be growing as a group; this category includes people between twenty and thirty years of age, who are in Italy to study or to work. The Covid-19 pandemic stopped all travel from Australia to Italy, with severe consequences for the development of Study Abroad programmes between the universities and institutions of the two countries, and of research projects.

5. Future development

In 2012 Desmond O’Grady and Stephen Tobin published a book *Australians and New Zealanders in Tuscany*, which added to the previous studies on the subject of Australians in Italy, with a focus on Tuscany. The purpose of the authors is to evidence the presence of the Antipodean community, alongside those of Britain and North America, which helped forge “the deep pact of friendship that binds Tuscany to the English-speaking world” (VII). The book also aims to be a guide for the many Australians and New Zealanders who decide to visit or live in Tuscany, by showing them the lives and experiences of their forebears.

O’Grady wrote the first section of the book, “Tuscany, Antipodean-Style” where he traced the Antipodean relationship with Florence and Tuscany, which lasted over 150 years and has taken various forms. O’Grady lists and briefly talks about Australians who lived in Tuscany from the second half of the 19th cen-

tury to the present time, highlighting the significant contribution Australians have given to the region's life with their professional work in various fields (arts, education, law, design and architecture, medicine, sociology, tourism). He also refers to "the illustrious figures, the thinkers and men and women of letters, art and culture, but also to the many young men who gave their lives during World War II" (O'Grady, Tobin 2012, vii). This survey stops with the year 2012 and my own study ends in 2010 (Trapè 2011), but they could both be catalysts for further critical thinking. At the end of the second decade of the 21st century the pandemic has stopped the Australian journeys to Italy and to Tuscany, but hopefully before too long there will be many more stories to investigate.

References

- Carter Paul, Trapè Roberta (2018), "Archaeologies of Diving: Paul Carter's engagement with Italy", *Le Simplegadi*, 16, 18, 227-238, doi: 10.17456/SIMPLE-110.
- Hazzard Shirley, Steegmuller Francis (2008 [1976]), *The Ancient Shore. Dispatches from Naples*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Kent Bill, Pesman Ros, Troup Cynthia, eds (2008), *Australians in Italy: Contemporary Lives and Impressions*, Clayton, Monash University ePress.
- O'Grady Desmond, Tobin Stephen (2012), *Australians and New Zealanders in Tuscany*, Firenze, Edizioni Polistampa.
- Pesman Roslyn (1991), "Australian Images of Rome", *Bollettino del Centro interuniversitario di ricerche sul "Viaggio in Italia"*, 23, 46-68.
- Prampolini Gaetano, Hubert Marie-Christine eds (1993), *An Antipodean Connection. Australian Writers, Artists and Travellers in Tuscany*, Geneve, Slatkine.
- Smart Jeffrey (2000 [1996]), *Not Quite Straight. A Memoir*, Milsons Point, Random House Australia.
- Trapè Roberta (2011), *Imaging Italy Through the Eyes of Australian Travellers (1990-2010)*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- (2016), "A Sacred Journey to Naples: Michelle de Kretser's *Questions of Travel*", *Le Simplegadi*, 14, 16, 95-117, doi: 10.17456/SIMPLE-47.
- (2017) "Simon West's *The Ladder*: Space and Its Historical Dimension in Italy and in Australia", *LEA Lingue e letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, 6, 193-211.
- (2018) "Paul Carter's 'Translation' of Italy in *Baroque Memories* (1994). Layering and Multiplicity in the Construction of the Migrant", *Il Confronto Letterario*, Quaderni di Letterature Straniere Moderne e Compareate dell'Università di Pavia, 69, 155-173.
- (2019) " 'There was never any gift outright': Australian Poet Simon West Discusses Poetry and Place in His Fourth Collection *Carol and Ahoy* (2018)", *Il Tolomeo*, 21, 285-295.
- Whitlam Gough (2002), *My Italian Notebook*, Crows Nest, Allen & Unwin.

Postcolonial Italian Studies: Rhizomatic Notes from the South

Anita Virga, Brian Zuccala

Abstract:

This essay draws on the first (of two) edited volumes of ISSA dedicated to “Postcolonialismi Italiani ieri e oggi appunti (sudafricani) per una (ri)concettualizzazione ‘rizomatica’ dei postcolonial Italian studies” (Virga, Zuccala 2018) and on some of the new concepts introduced therein. The essay tackles in a more thorough fashion and from a broader perspective some of the methodological and terminological issues raised – albeit in a necessarily cursory manner (and in Italian) – in Virga and Zuccala 2018. The essay starts by geographically positioning writers in the context of global academia and claiming an epistemological consequence of their geographical position. It then gives an overview of the field of postcolonial Italian studies in order to explain how the concept of rhizome, when applied meta-critically to the whole field, might provide a useful starting point for a paradigmatic reconceptualization of postcolonial Italian studies.

Keywords: Italian Postcolonial Studies, Hypertext and Italian Postcolonialism, Postcolonial Italian Studies, Post-colonial Metacriticism, Post-colonial Rhizome

1. A “Positional” Introduction

Albeit with a certain belatedness (Oboe 2016, 9) when compared, for instance, to academic developments in the Anglosphere, “Italian (post)colonialism” has been the subject and object of scholarly discussion in the fields of *italianistica*/ Italian studies and European studies for a long time. More and more scholars operating either in Italy or – like us – across the globe, have found, within this theoretical framework, useful and diverse perspectives from which they attempt to (re)read not only the artistic and cultural phenomena of contemporary Italy, but also those linked to the history of the Italian Unification and the post-Unification periods, as well as the cultural formations of the fascist era.

Anita Virga, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, anita.virga@wits.ac.za, 0000-0002-7600-4919
Brian Zuccala, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, brianzuccala@gmail.com

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Anita Virga, Brian Zuccala, *Postcolonial Italian Studies: Rhizomatic Notes from the South*, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.12, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 145-161, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

Since Italy has begun to confront, with all the delays and hesitations that are also characteristic of other European nations¹, its own colonial past² – thanks to the work of historians such as Giorgio del Boca (1976, 1979, 1982, 1984, 1986a, 1986b) and Nicola Labanca (2002) – literary and cultural studies have also started to interrogate the cultural actors and phenomena of the present and of the past in light of the critical tools made available by (post)colonial studies and postcolonial theories.

Judging purely on the basis of the geographical distribution of the above mentioned studies, one is likely to think that the positionality of these researchers has been highly relevant to the ways in which these theoretical frameworks have been negotiated in the field of *italianistica*/Italian Studies. It is well-known³, in fact, that on the one hand the first Italian academics to be exposed to postcolonial theory were the Italianists operating in the Anglo-American circuit. On the other hand, postcolonial theory and (academic) practice have been influencing the Italian academy through departments such as English and American studies, anthropology, and sociology more than through *italianistica*/Italian studies per se⁴.

Likewise, our own positionality as researchers – we both trained in the West and now work in the Global South (the South African academy, to be precise) – is one of the starting points of this reflection. As said by Chambers (2016) – our southern(most) location turns “from geography” into “epistemology” (31): it has progressively become the theoretical presupposition for a different approach to the field. More specifically, operating from “the margins” of the “central” Euro-North American circuit of Italy-related postcolonial scholarship has become one of the reasons for us to be drawn to a more “distant” and comprehensive assessment of the field. By the same token, the racially nuanced postcolonial discourse that permeates the South African academy perpetually and entirely, has arguably

¹ It is opportune to refer here to the case of France, which is possibly the closest example to the Italian scenario in the context of Mediterranean Europe. One may refer to Jean-François Bayart’s provocative essay published in 2011, which is particularly relevant here, as will become evident through the numerous times we invoke Sandra Ponzanesi’s scholarly response to Bayart.

² A past that is full of atrocities and aberrations. One can just think of the use of chemical weapons, which were prohibited by the Geneva Convention but used by Italians in Ethiopia, nonetheless. On this and some of the other ignominious and unacknowledged acts committed by Italian colonialists, see Del Boca (2005). Without having to compile a long list, and exploiting the intrinsic link between (post)colonial matters and “spaces”, see Karen Pinkus (2003) for a thorough exploration of Italy’s amnesia of its colonial past as evident in topography.

³ As well as easily verifiable through departments’ and courses’ websites (hence no reason to reproduce them here).

⁴ The point about positionality and/in epistemology is made both implicitly and explicitly by postcolonial thinkers such as de Sousa Santos (2016) and collective initiatives such as *Postcolonialitalia* and clusters of postcolonial critical thought such as Franco Cassano (2001).

made us more prone to try and capture the nuances of such a multifaceted field as postcolonial Italian studies. Our “decentred” reading of the field will unfold in three sections: after reviewing in a necessarily passing manner the main critical (sec. 2) and metacritical (sec. 3) contributions in the field, we will formulate a proposal as to how the concepts of rhizome (sec. 4) – while applied metacritically – could provide useful theoretical tools for the field.

2. Postcolonial Criticism and/in Italian Studies

An exhaustive review of the field is beyond the scope and reach of this piece, and of arguably any article-length contribution that aims to go beyond a literary review. Yet, to the end of the argument that this essay aims to develop, it is important to point out that within the overall disciplinary framework of postcolonial Italian studies, one can distinguish an initial, and primarily “exploratory” period of, one may say, “applied criticism”, and another and more recent phase that can appropriately be termed “metacritical” (Henderson, Brown 1997). The beginning/early stages of what we now have come to refer to as postcolonial Italian studies (the late 1990s), as often happens⁵, were characterized by years of more or less “pioneering” research, which foreran those works that could be framed as postcolonial proper. This research, drawing upon fundamental (mostly Anglo-American) theoretical works and following the “diverse temporalities and locations” (Chambers 2017, 18) of the postcolonial, has ramificated in various directions of artistic and textual analysis⁶. This was done firstly with the aim of problematising the paradigm of cultural and national “homogeneity” (Lombardi-Diop, Romeo 2012) associated with Italy, and subsequently with the objective of drawing theoretical conclusions that were alternative to that very paradigm. Moreover, within any given sub-area/sub-sector, the objective was to enrich the definition of what Mezzadra referred to as “la condizione postcoloniale [italiana]” (2008). These were the trajectories followed not only by those early scholarly pieces, which engaged most explicitly with cultural features of the former Italian colonies (from Tomasello 1984 to Re 2003), but also by the studies on Italian diasporas (Verdicchio 1997; Gabaccia 1988, 2000; Gabaccia, Ottanelli 2001) and on migrant writing (possibly the largest corpus which begins with Parati 1997, 1999; Picarazzi 2001). These were also the paths pursued by studies on the Southern Question, (Teti 1993; Moe 1992, 1998, 2002)⁷ which should be remembered in relation to the pluri-centennial orientalisation of the South, and by those – heavily intertwined with these – on the racialisation of the political and cultural discourse both pre- and post-Unification. All these critical streams started before an explicit academic postcolonial consciousness was formed (at

⁵ But some make the case for an epochal and postmodernist driven macro-shift toward metacriticism, which occurred in the last third of the 20th century. See Leitch (1981).

⁶ For which it may be useful to refer to the “Inizi” section in Derobertis (2014).

⁷ Pivoting on rethinking Gramsci, regarding which see Bhattacharya and Srivastava (2012).

least as far as the terminology goes), but they continued afterwards with reinvigorated theoretical energy within, and overlapping with, the “metacritical” phase this piece is particularly focused on. This is as true for Diasporas/Immigration/Emigration studies, continued for example by Fiore (2012, 2017) as it is for the Southern Question (Wong 2006; Dickie 1997) and self-orientalization (Re 2009; Coburn 2013; Sorrentino 2014; Virga 2017, but also Sneider 1998; Lombardi-Diop, Giuliani 2013). It is particularly true for migrant writing studies, with Parati (2005), Di Maio (2001, 2008), Mauceri and Negro (2009), Quaquarelli (2010), Portelli (1999, 2006), Comberiati (2009, 2010), Brioni (2015), Burns (2003, 2013), Lori (2013), Ponzanesi (2004, 2017) to mention but a few book-length studies⁸.

3. Postcolonial Metacriticism

Recently and with increasing frequency, contributions of equal scholarly insightfulness, but of a more marked meta-critical nature have begun to appear. These are contributions aimed at summarising not only the whole Italian cultural and artistic production ascribable to the postcolonial, but also crucially the whole exegetic landscape that has formed in the past two decades. This exegetic landscape, one may be tempted to say, has formed “structuralistically” at the intersection of two (variously understood) conceptual matrixes, which are the “Italian” and the “Postcolonial”. These contributions have endeavoured to establish and illustrate the areas of greatest productivity and effectiveness within that landscape, and indicated, on the contrary, those areas that remain seemingly less explored. These meta-exegetic contributions have therefore reflected upon the potential already expressed, and upon that which is still to be expressed of this critical (set of) tool(s), with specific reference to the Italian context.

What happened at this metacritical level can be understood as a relative distancing from the “close reading” of each of these artefacts, be it a text or an audio-visual piece. The gesture toward what can be described – perhaps with some indulgence of scholarly fashion – as “distant reading” of the field⁹ is also a movement toward “conceptual modelling”, an abstract spatialisation and geom-

⁸ Progress study of the postcolonial audio-visual (De Franceschi 2013; Virga, Zuccala 2018; preceded by Parati 2001).

⁹ It has become customary and obvious for quite a while at this point to refer to Moretti’s monograph *Distant Reading* (2013). But a short and poignant account of Moretti’s relationship with distance itself and hence abstract, quasi-geometrical modelling is in “Franco Moretti: A response” (2017), which in turn has to be understood in the context of the whole *PMLA* 2017 issue dedicated to “Distant Reading: the book.” The point to be made drawing on both *Distant Reading* (the book) and the long-lasting debate on the validity and even appropriateness of “distant reading” (the concept), is that the operation of “distancing” oneself from the micro-analysis of the object, precedes and works somewhat independently from the computational method, which nonetheless becomes an integral part of it at some point. A captivating discussion of these concepts – in the form of an interview – is also in Ruben Hackler and Guido Kirsten (2016).

eticisation of one's understanding of the field as a whole. According to such a move, these abstract conceptualisations themselves become the object of study in the field. It is this very conceptual move – which the remainder of this essay will endeavour to unveil further – that grounds the perspective from which this article proceeds.

Before any attempts are made, however, to try and formulate new readings and introduce new concepts – either at the micro-level of individual cultural actors or at the macro-level of the whole field –, the above-described metacritical turn in postcolonial Italian studies should be illustrated further. This can be effectively done by briefly discussing and comparing the content of the main pieces addressing such a turn. At this meta-level, Ponzanesi's works (2012, 2016) and Lombardi-Diop and Romeo's contributions – both as authors (2014, 2016), and as editors (*Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* 2012 and 2014 in an expanded Italian edition) as well as Bouchard (2018) are particularly central and exemplary of the aforementioned trends¹⁰.

In her essay “Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial interruptions”¹¹ Norma Bouchard – drawing on Chambers' monograph (2017) – recounts in a necessarily cursory fashion the main streams of both Italian postcolonial cultural production and postcolonial scholarly investigation, regarding them as manifestations of a multi-faceted “postcolonial consciousness” (2018, 34) that arose in the 1970s. Yet, Bouchard continues, the discipline became academically “institutionalised” only in the past two decades, and in a way that leaves it still somewhat imper-

¹⁰ A metacritical aim is also at the basis of (at least) the first issue of *From the European South* by the title of “Archives of the future Italy, the postcolonial and the time to come” as clearly stated by Annalisa Oboe in her editorial “Archiviare Altrimenti: Riflessioni ‘Postcolonialitaliane’”: “Questo primo numero [...] propone una ricognizione critica sulla presenza e le potenzialità del pensiero e delle pratiche del paradigma postcoloniale nel contesto italiano” (2016, 3). Coincidentally, this reflection draws on the public debate that took place in 1998 in Cape Town between Derrida and Mbembe on the occasion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). One should not forget, however, earlier contributions such as Mellino's “Italy and Postcolonial Studies: A Difficult Encounter” (2007), and De Donno's and Srivastava's introductory essay, “Colonial and Postcolonial Italy” (2006), to the special issue of the same title, as well as the mentioned essay by Derobertis (2014). Nor should one forget subsequent contributions such as “Italian Postcolonial Literature” by Romeo (2017). In particular, the opening pages of his essay (1-5) provide a more accurate overview of the meta-critical reflections we refer to than we would be able to provide under the constraints of this paper.

¹¹ Bouchard's piece was generated by the intrinsically “metacritical” need to deliver a keynote speech at the 2017 A.P.I. conference in Johannesburg, which was also the occasion that led to the production of our piece. The programme of the conference can be accessed through this link: <http://www.cons johannesburg.esteri.it/consolato_johannesburg/resource/doc/2017/08/programma__locandina.pdf> (03/2022). Film director Fred Kuwornu brought an artist's perspective to the conference, contributing a paper titled “Black-Italiano: Imagining the Black Body in Contemporary Italy”. For a critical perspective on Kuwornu's South African tour one can refer to Virga, Zuccala (2019).

meable – and regrettably so – to the socio-cultural challenges concretely posed by acknowledging the contemporary “postcoloniality” of/in Italian society.

The discipline is so impermeable that Sandra Ponzanesi – in a somewhat more provocative fashion – has gone as far as asking: “Does Italy Need Postcolonial Theory?” (2016). This suggests that hitherto, the trend of postcolonial Italian studies might just have been a way of giving in to Anglo-American academic trends. After analysing the ramifications along which the specificities¹² of the Italian Postcolonial is articulated, the critic has shown how, on the one hand, it is true that some of the notions grounding postcolonial studies were already present in the Italian academic discourse well before they were gathered around/under the umbrella term of “postcolonial studies”. On the other hand, the postcolonial framework has allowed scholars to group within a coherent conceptual structure/architecture those theoretical and interpretative hints otherwise isolated, to connect them better to one another and to blend them more harmoniously within a trans- and post-national perspective. It might be appropriate to re-propose the excerpt in full:

The postcolonial turn in Italian studies is [...] not just a novelty or a new academic fashion but the confirmation and consolidation of a genealogy in Italian studies that has a long tradition and roots in different discourses connected to the history of Italian migration, racial formations and intellectual thought based on the specificity of the Italian nation formation. This relates to Italy’s denied but pervasive colonial legacy and the fragmentation of its identitarian politics based on ethnic, racial and religious complexities. These are not imported or emerging concepts because of the increasing success and academic establishment of postcolonial critique but pressing issues that find an articulation and connection thanks to a new language and methodological tools that stem from a new global understanding of patterns of domination and resistance that have historical and geopolitical specificities that need to be accounted for. [...] [T]his demonstrates that, if Italy has been postcolonial all along, critical awareness and critique of its postcolonial condition have been lacking or scarcely brought to light. [...] [T] herefore [...] Italy not only needs postcolonial theory but [...] within a wider European and international scholarly landscape its belatedness and specific critical apparatus can yield new, important insights into the origin and future of postcolonial thought. (Ponzanesi 2016, 159)¹³

¹² On specificities intended as “variations” rather than “exceptions”, see Labanca 2002: “Un approccio [...] ‘eccezzionalistico’, aleggiato assai spesso fra i sostenitori del colonialismo italiano [...] e persino fra i suoi contestatori. Quello italiano fu una variante, piuttosto che un’eccezione, dell’imperialismo coloniale Europeo” (473), and Bouchard (2018, 27).

¹³ Lombardi-Diop and Romeo had articulated their position in a similar manner in the same year (but it is possible to find the passage in English in 2014, 427): “[G]li studi postcoloniali applicati al contesto italiano riposizionano la storia coloniale e la sua eredità al centro del dibattito sulla contemporaneità e la collegano alle migrazioni transnazionali, sottolineando anche come i rapporti di potere creati dal colonialismo vengano riprodotti e rinforzati nelle società postcoloniali contemporanee. Diversamente da altri Paesi europei, l’analisi

The scholar had already, a few years earlier (2012 in English, 2014 in the Italian translation), summed up the progresses made by the sub-discipline of postcolonial Italian studies by identifying and describing three streams or areas. The first stream is one that “reassess[es] and evaluate[s] the colonial past from new critical perspectives, accounting for subaltern positions, but also offering new insights into the colonial encounter” (Ponzanesi 2012, 59). The second stream “acknowledge[s] texts, voices, and images by migrants (either from former colonies or not) and other minorities; revise[s] the literary canon and redefine[s] the notions of cultural value and aesthetics” (*ibidem*). A third stream, which “rethink[s] theory and epistemology in accordance with perspectives of alterity and dissonance” (*ibidem*), is identified.

Already in that meta-critical piece, the researcher underlined how the advances in those three areas – two of which can be understood as being more strictly content-focused (colonies, migration), while the third is more self-reflexive and meta-exegetic (postcolonial Italian theory) – there was a visible discrepancy. On the one hand, Ponzanesi writes that regarding the first and the second areas, “[w]e could argue that Italian Studies are truly flourishing” (*ibidem*)¹⁴. On the other hand,

The last field – developing a home-grown postcolonial theorizing – is where most of the work still needs to be done. This should not only account for the adaptations of existing critical tools to the specificity of Italy and its culture but also make sure that new postcolonial tools are developed from the reality and materiality of Italian culture itself to then travel further. (Ivi, 60)

This is certainly, and quite proverbially, easier said than done, not lastly because – as follows from the aforementioned articulation – a lot seems to depend on the definition of “homegrown (postcolonial theorising)”: should Ponzanesi’s formulation be understood as geographically “homegrown”, in the sense of Italianists operating in Italian, or rather “homegrown” in a broader sense, referring to Italian studies specialists (whatever that may mean) who operate in Europe and beyond, or who only operate in the Global South, or some (which?) combination thereof?

storica del passato italiano include però anche l’emigrazione di massa (e gli emigranti come ‘soggetti colonizzati’) e la Questione Meridionale (come forma di ‘colonialismo interno’). Inoltre, le questioni sulla storicità e sulla temporalità sono cruciali per il dibattito italiano, visto che l’era postcoloniale è cominciata decenni dopo la perdita delle colonie e il processo di decolonizzazione non è iniziato simultaneamente in tutte le colonie italiane” (2016, 54).

¹⁴ As for the Italian colonial enterprises: “[N]umerous scholars – ranging from historians to anthropologists and cultural theorists – [...] have carried out pioneering work in recent decades, opening up not only an obscure chapter of Italian history but also transforming the way of dealing with the colonial archive and reinterpreting knowledge production from a postcolonial perspective” (Ponzanesi 2012, 59). Likewise, in relation to the second scholarly area: “[t]he second aspect is also extremely buoyant at the moment with scholars operating not only in Anglo-Saxon academia but also in Italian departments in Italy on appraising, acknowledging, and interpreting new literary voices and artistic productions by migrants in Italy” (ivi, 59-60).

A tenable way of qualifying the word “homegrown” in this context would be to consider it metacritically, and to draw on Ponzanesi herself: in “Does Italy Need Postcolonial Theory?”, Ponzanesi has effectively rearticulated the critical and conceptual landscape of the Italian Postcolonial into five areas, which she refers to as “intersections”:

1. The precedent in supposedly ‘postcolonial thinkers’ or those who have instigated and influenced the development of postcolonial theorising (Vico, Gramsci, Levi).
2. The internal subaltern question in Italy, namely the Southern Question and its relations to *Pensiero Meridiano*/Mediterranean studies.
3. Italy’s history of double colonisation (paradigms of emigration as immigration or what is usually referred to as external and internal colonialism) with very specific consequences for the Italian notion of national identity but also geographical reach and scope.
4. Race theories and eugenics. How the discourse on race has followed a specific track in Italian studies and merges and diverges with studies on colonialism and postcolonialism (from Lombroso to Sergi to Burgio, Sorgoni, Barrera, Poidimani, Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop).
5. Contemporary thinkers are readdressing the operation of nation state, empire and globalisation vis-à-vis patterns of migration, capitalism and sovereignty (Negri, Agamben, Dainotto, Passerini, Verdicchio, Mezzadra, Mellino, Passerini [sic] and so forth). (2016, 149)

What Ponzanesi does here – in what can well be regarded as one result of the pervasive influence of the recent “spatial turn” in critical theory and cultural studies (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2016; Warf, Arias 2009) – is to spatialise the field of postcolonial Italian studies in such a way as to create subfields that intersect the peculiarities of the Italian Postcolonial. If that is the case, the “domestic” landscape of postcolonial scholarly practice can therefore be understood as the critical space wherein one attempts to move away from the constraints of “foreign” critical tools. Indeed, the latter are somewhat imposed or forcefully assimilated into the Italian field.

Viewing this peculiarly shaped field as being the “domestic” terrain from which to grow “domestic” critical and metacritical theory – however arbitrary it may appear – becomes more plausible when one looks comprehensively and retrospectively at the bulk of contributions illustrated above. By juxtaposing and comparing these contributions, one gets the impression that postcolonial Italian studies either are, or should be, according to recent scholarship, on the verge of a leap. These essays envision a substantial advancement of a primarily theoretical nature, which might well consist of, they argue, framing new categories and/or epistemological paradigms specifically suited for the Italian context, and yet organically linked to the European as well as global dynamics to which that context is increasingly and inextricably connected. More specifically, Ponzanesi’s series of essays, being the most “deliberately” theoretical, is arguably the most useful at this metacritical level: if one cross-checks the latest mapping by Ponzanesi (2016) and her previous reflections on the need and possibility to

elaborate new paradigms within this critical horizon, it is tenable to assume that this foreseeable theoretical leap might come from new ways of (re)combining or (re)elaborating the existing relationships amongst the aforementioned “intersections”. More precisely, it seems to us – as we will try to make apparent in the next part of this essay – that an interesting point of departure for expressing such a reformulation might be represented by Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the rhizome.

4. The Postcolonial Rhizome

The well-known yet very complex image of the rhizome is visually reproduced and then descriptively conceptualised in the first chapter of *Mille Plateaux* (1980) by Deleuze & Guattari¹⁵. Beginning with an analysis of the concept and object as complex cultural “*agencement*” (ivi, 10), the image of the rhizome is deployed to illustrate a non-binary system of conceptualizing the real. A rhizomatic system, in Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualisation, is rhizomatic because it escapes the hierarchical notion of unified root and tree-like architecture, which characterises the largest portion of modern Western thought from metaphysics to Chomsky’s linguistics, to Freud’s psychoanalysis.

What characterises – although, as the two philosophers themselves concede, with approximation (*ibidem*) – the rhizomatic quality of a system are several abstract principles: those “de connexion et d’hétérogénéité” (ivi, 13), according to which “n’importe quel point d’un rhizome peut être connecté avec n’importe quel autre, et doit l’être” (*ibidem*); the “[p]rincipe de multiplicité” (ivi, 14); the “[p]rincipe de rupture” (ivi, 16), which is in opposition to “les coupures trop significatives qui séparent les structures, ou en traversent une” (*ibidem*), and which implies the possibility of accessing a rhizomatic structure from any point; the principles of “cartography” and “decalcomania”, according to which “le rhizome [est] *carte et non pas calque*” [...] Si la carte s’oppose au calque, c’est qu’elle est tout entière tournée vers une expérimentation en prise sur le réel” (ivi, 20).

These guiding principles concur to form a figure of open relationships, and whose nature is multiradical, non-hierarchical, infinitely and unpredictably expandible. A figure that has been immediately and intuitively associated with the postcolonial condition.

Within the context of postcolonial studies, the image of the rhizome has been famously reread and reinterpreted – in a language and manner that were less botanical and experimental and more literary and cultural – by Édouard Glissant in *Poetics of Relation* (1997). Glissant used it as a metaphor for indicating, to begin with, the plurimus root of subjective identity – both individual and collective – of the Caribbean populations.

¹⁵ In English *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) and in Italian *Millepiani* (1997), *Mille Plateaux* is the second volume, after *L’Anti-Œdipe*, of *Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, dated 1980 in its original French.

By virtue not so much of the absence of roots, but of the repositioning of those roots in a multidimensional and complex structure, this identity, explains Glissant, is a “nomadic” one. For Glissant, “rhizomatic”, multiradical and multi-layered are the relationships of the Caribbean people with their land, with their languages, with written and spoken words, and with themselves. This metaphor of the “postcolonial rhizome” is also found in Ashcroft’s fundamental monograph as metaphorising the essence of postcolonial power relationships. (Post) coloniality, according to Ashcroft, is characterised by a rhizomatic propagation of power and an equally rhizomatic opposition to it:

The metaphor is useful firstly because the concept of a root system, of a trunk spreading out and colonizing areas of space in a clearly hierarchical way, is, both as an *idea* and a *policy* (or lack of a coherent policy), fundamental to the project of imperialism. But this notion is just as constructed as that of centre and margin, just as much in the interests of perpetuating power as the Manichaeic binaries of self and other, colonizer and colonized. The operation of power, like the operation of social relations themselves, is both perpetual and discontinuous and propagates laterally and spatially like the rhizome. (2001, 50)¹⁶

It is useful to point out that here, Ashcroft is – to remain within the terminological rails from whence we departed – primarily “critical” rather than “meta-critical”, that is, he uses the rhizome to define, in line with the scope of his monograph, the postcolonial condition and the postcolonial dynamics, rather than postcolonial studies in their entirety. Even in the more specific context of the studies on/of the Italian postcolonial, the rhizome is not completely absent. Traces of it can be found – in its original formation and with the full reproduction of the image used by Deleuze and Guattari, in Barbara De Vivo (2011), with reference to Ali Farah’s *Madre Piccola* (2007), where it is used as a model for (re)reading the structure of the novel¹⁷. The term had already been employed by Sonia Sabelli (2005) in relation to three other migrant writers – Geneviève Makaping, Christiana De Caldas Brito and Jarmila Očkayová. In her essay, Sabelli contends that writing and language become a way not only to reinstate multiple and “other” roots (2005, 442) within a culture that continues to consider itself as largely monolithic and monochrome, but to also use them strategically as tools of resistance. Importantly, these tools enable the one who yields them to emancipate themselves (ivi, 443) from a condition of intersectional subalternity. The rhizome appears again in *The Somali Within* (2015), by Simone Brio-

¹⁶ The same argument is also found in the key concepts section of the *Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*, third edition (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2013, 232-233).

¹⁷ De Vivo writes: “Ho cercato a lungo una figura che potesse rendere l’immagine mentale che le ripetute letture di questo romanzo mi hanno dato della sua struttura e del molteplice e simultaneo infittirsi e districarsi di fili narrativi. Ho disegnato tante figure stimolata dalle [sic] parole stesse di Ali Farah sul suo romanzo e nel suo romanzo [...]. È stato solo nel momento in cui ho iniziato la lettura di [...] *Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*. È il rizoma la figura che cercavo” (2011, 160).

ni, in its Glissantian acceptance of “identity-rhizome” (Brioni 2015, 138), with reference to the embodiment of multiple identities, which becomes polyphonic writing by male and female Italian-Somali writers. Lastly, one finds traces of it in Sarnelli (2018), in relation to the work of another writer of afro-italianness – Igiaba Scego – in such a way as to combine Glissant’s rhizomatic identity and the sixth principle of Deleuze and Guattari’s map. In “Affective Routes in Postcolonial Italy: Igiaba Scego’s Imaginary Mappings” (2018), Laura Sarnelli analyses, through the image of the rhizome, the operation of mapping diasporic identities performed in three works by Igiaba Scego (*La mia casa è dove sono* [2010]; *Adua* [2015]; *Roma negata. Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* [2014], the latter co-authored with Rino Bianchi)¹⁸.

On the basis of the parallels drawn by the aforementioned scholars, it is clear that the interpretative value of the rhizome can be extended further. The critical deployment of the image of the rhizome might slide/shift from being an exegetic paradigm for these texts or groups of texts, to becoming a meta-critical framework of the current form/condition of postcolonial Italian studies. As arbitrary as this leap toward a “meta-critical” use of the rhizome might first appear, in reality it is intrinsic, theoretically necessary, and in some sense already implicit in the mentioned *A Thousand Plateaus*. The text that should in effect introduce the figure of the rhizome, to some extent does not do so, if not elliptically or, indeed, “rhizomatically”. Reading *A Thousand Plateaus* therefore leads one to think that a matter as rhizomatic as “the postcolonial” cannot be approached in any way that is not rhizomatic, that, if postcolonial conditions – and the Italian postcolonial condition in particular – are rhizome-like, then to an extent, postcolonial Italian studies must also be rhizomatic.

It is not our goal to suggest – along the lines of Ashcroft – that the rhizomatic structure could also be used as a macro-model for all texts, cultural products, and discourses related to Italian postcoloniality, or for the condition of Italian postcoloniality itself¹⁹. What we are arguing is something epistemologically more limited and at the same time more exquisitely metacritical: we maintain that it is useful to approach the present state of postcolonial Italian studies as described by Ponzanesi in her five intersections (1- foundational theory, 2 - Southern Question, 3 - double colonization, 4 - race theory, and 5- Italian contemporary thought) in a “rhizomatic” fashion.

In line with the scholar’s provocation (“Does Italy Need Postcolonial Theory?”), we contend that it is not inappropriate to ask, in an equally provocative manner, whether it would be feasible to understand Ponzanesi’s intersections rather as *plateaux*, that is, as Deleuzo-Guattarian “layers”. If the theoretical and

¹⁸ A passing mention in relation to Scego and Bianchi’s text can also be found in Carotenuto (2016, 216).

¹⁹ For example, that individual and collective Italian contemporary postcolonial conscience might be understood as part of a rhizomatic system. This is certainly a feasible and possible hypothesis – in line with Glissant and Ashcroft –, but not practicable in the limited space of this essay.

conceptual necessity of Italian Postcolonial – which is also its specificity – is to be found somewhere comprised and/or implied within these intersections in a way that is not fully unveiled, conferring on these intersections the characteristics of rhizomatic *mille plateaux* should by default increase the exegetic potential related to the mapping of those necessities and specificities.

The geometrical abstractedness along which our argument has so far unfolded might be brought to the concreteness of literary criticism and cultural investigation by restarting from the originary definition by Deleuze and Guattari, according to whom:

[L]e rhizome connecte un point quelconque avec [L]un autre point quelconque, et chacun de ses traits ne renvoie pas nécessairement à des traits de même nature [...] Le rhizome ne se laisse ramener ni à l'Un ni au multiple. [...] Il n'est pas fait d'unités, mais de dimensions, ou plutôt de directions mouvantes. [...] [L]e rhizome se rapporte à une carte qui doit être produite, construite, toujours démontable, connectable, renversable, modifiable, à entrées et sorties multiples [...] [L]e rhizome est un système acentré, non hiérarchique et non signifiant [...]. (1980, 31-32)

This succinct definition of rhizome, we believe, can be applied to the five-point scheme elaborated by Ponzanesi in order to confer further dimensions and possibilities on the latter. It is thus useful to understand the five streams as linked to one another through rhizomatic connections. None of these connections can be considered the core matrix from which the Italian Postcolonial has come: not the studies on the colonial enterprises, which are grounded in the studies on the pre-existing European notion of race and the connected practices of self-orientalisation; not those very self-orientalising practices, the understanding of which is grounded in the understanding of the orientalising patterns traversing Europe before they traverse Italy, and not the study on contemporary migration, which cannot prescind from those of the Italian diasporas in the last couple of centuries. The Italian Postcolonial proceeds neither chronologically nor hierarchically from the stated rhizomatic connections; because each connects to all the others.

It does not seem possible, nor does it feel appropriate to postulate the existence of a centre around which all the other connections revolve in an ancillary fashion. Thus, a binary (or tree-like) hierarchical genealogy, which could allow the tracing of the complete map of those relationships, does not exist. The links between them are not univocal or unilateral, but rather heterogeneous and multifaceted. Also the chronological aspect, as the aforementioned scholars point out, seems to characterise and distinguish postcolonial Italian studies in a way that might well be thought of as “rhizomatic”. If, in the case of other colonial powers, (the beginning of) decolonisation and the beginning of migratory fluxes coincide, in the Italian case the end of the direct colonial domination “did not coincide with the beginning of the postcolonial era” (Lombardi-Diop, Romeo 2012, 1). With Deleuze and Guattari, this becomes one of those “ruptures” that yet reveal themselves as being productive of further segments of criticism, pecu-

liar to the paradigm of postcolonial Italian studies. Along these lines, the Italian context appears less “binary” and more rhizomatic than the French and the British ones, for example. This is also true from a spatial perspective: while (im)migration in the French and British contexts meant bilateral exchange exclusively or especially from/to the colonies, in the Italian case the migratory routes are characterised by a larger variety and more variously linked to colonial history.

Due to the specificities hitherto illustrated, it is proficuous to try and decipher the commonalities between different “streams” of Italian postcolonial critique along these rhizomatic connections, so as to determine where and how the streams overlap. These are connections that escape too-rigid hierarchies and that, at the same time, allow one not only to highlight the interruptions that characterize all postcolonialisms, but to also underline how, in the Italian case, those discontinuities are particularly marked and significant knowledge-producing features. The point is therefore not so much that of trying to uncover, at all costs, “strong links”. It is also not an endeavour to offer a final and definitive mapping. Instead, it is an attempt to acknowledge the fact that we are facing a “broken archive” (Chambers 2017, 6) of postcolonial fragments whose *reductio ad unum*²⁰ is as unfeasible as it is anachronistic. Acknowledging the rhizomatic nature of the Italian Postcolonial might be a way to highlight the awareness and the wish that, even though the unified archive of a “unified story” is broken and forever compromised, these cracks and fractures will feed postcolonial Italian studies for decades to come.

References

- Ashcroft Bill (2001), *Post-colonial Transformation*, London, Routledge.
- Ashcroft Bill, Griffiths Gareth, Tiffin Helen (1989), *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, London, Routledge.
- (2013), *Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*, London-New York, Routledge.
- Bachmann-Medick Doris (2016), *Cultural Turns: New Orientation in the Study of Culture*, Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Bayart Jean-François (2011), “Postcolonial Studies: A Political Invention of Tradition?”, *Public Culture*, 23, 1, 55-84.
- Barrera Giulia (2005), “Patrilinearity, Race, and Identity: The Upbringing of Italo-Eritreans during Italian Colonialism”, in Ruth Ben-Ghiat, Mia Fuller (eds), *Italian Colonialism*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 97-108.
- Bhattacharya Baidik, Srivastava Neelam, eds (2012), *The Postcolonial Gramsci*, New York, Routledge.
- Bianchi Rino, Scego Igiaba (2014), *Roma negata. Percorsi postcoloniali nella città*, Roma, Ediesse.
- Bouchard Norma (2018), “Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Interruptions”, *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, 31, 1, 25-59.

²⁰ We use a Latin formula that is philological in nature quite deliberately here, with the aim of suggesting the impossibility of reconstructing in a close fashion.

- Brioni Simone (2015), *The Somali Within: Language, Race and Belonging in 'Minor' Italian Literature*, New York-Oxford-Cambridge, Legenda.
- Burns Jennifer (2003), "Borders Within the Text: Authorship, Collaboration and Mediation in Writing in Italian by Immigrants", in Jennifer Burns, Loredana Polezzi (eds), *Borderlines: Migrant Writing and Italian Identities (1870-2000)*, Isernia, Iannone, 387-394.
- (2013), *Migrant Imaginaries: Figures in Italian Migration Literature*, Oxford-Bern-New York, Peter Lang.
- Carotenuto Carla (2016), "Percorsi transculturali e postcoloniali in *Roma negata* di Rino Bianchi e Igiaba Scego", *From the European South: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 1, 211-217.
- Cassano Franco (2001), "Southern Thought", *Thesis Eleven*, 67, 1, 1-10.
- Chambers Iain (2016), "The South: from geography to epistemology", *From the European South: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 1, 31-34.
- (2017), *Postcolonial Interruptions, Unauthorised Modernities*, London-New York, Rowman & Littlefield.
- Coburn Melissa (2013), *Race and Narrative in Italian Women's Writing Since Unification*, Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Comberiat Daniele (2009), *La quarta sponda. Scrittrici in viaggio dall'Africa coloniale all'Italia di oggi*, Roma, Caravan edizioni.
- (2010), " 'Missioni': Double Identity and Plurilingualism in the Works of Three Female Migrant Writers in Italy", in Mirjam Gebauer, Pia Schwarz Lausten (eds), *Migration and Literature in Contemporary Europe*, München, Martin Meidenbauer, 205-218.
- De Donno Fabrizio, Srivastava Neelam (2006), "Colonial and Postcolonial Italy", *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8, 3, 371-379.
- De Franceschi Leonardo (2013), *L'Africa in Italia. Per una contro storia postcoloniale del cinema italiano*, Roma, Aracne editrice.
- Del Boca Angelo (1976), *Gli italiani in Africa orientale*, vol. 1, *Dall'unità alla marcia su Roma*, Bari, Laterza.
- (1979), *Gli italiani in Africa orientale*, vol. 2, *La conquista dell'Impero*, Bari, Laterza.
- (1982), *Gli italiani in Africa orientale*, vol. 3, *La caduta dell'Impero*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- (1984), *Gli italiani in Africa orientale*, vol. 4, *Nostalgia delle colonie*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- (1986a), *Gli italiani in Libia*, vol. 1, *Tripoli bel suol d'Amore*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- (1986b), *Gli italiani in Libia*, vol. 2, *Dal fascismo a Gheddafi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza.
- (2005), *Italiani brava gente?*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza.
- Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix (1980), *Mille Plateaux*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit. Engl. edition, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi, London-Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Derobertis Roberto (2014), "Da dove facciamo il postcoloniale? Appunti per una genealogia della ricezione degli studi postcoloniali nell'italianistica italiana", *Postcolonial Studies from the European South*, 17.
- de Sousa Santos Boaventura (2016), "Epistemologies of the South and the future", *From the European South: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 1, 17-29.
- De Vivo Barbara (2011), "La letteratura postcoloniale italiana: Strategie di auto-rappresentazione in tre scrittrici africane-Italiane". PhD Dissertation, Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza".

- Dickie John (1997), "Stereotypes of the Italian South 1860-1900", in Robert Lumley, Jonathan Morris (eds), *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 114-147.
- Di Maio Alessandra (2001), "Immigration and National Literature: Italian Voices from Africa and the Diaspora", in Richard King (ed.), *The Mediterranean Passage. Migrations and New Cultural Encounters in Southern Europe*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 146-162.
- (2008), *Wor(l)ds in Progress: A Study of Contemporary Migrant Writings*, Milano-Udine, Mimesis.
- Fiore Teresa (2012), "The Emigrant Post-'Colonia' in Contemporary Immigrant Italy", in Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Caterina Romeo, (eds), *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 71-82.
- (2017), *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*, New York, Fordham University Press.
- Gabaccia D.R. (1988), *Militants and Migrants: Rural Sicilians Become American Workers*, New Brunswick-London, Rutgers University Press.
- (2000), *Italy's Many Diasporas*, Seattle, University of Washington Press.
- Gabaccia D.R., Ottanelli F.M., eds (2001), *Italian Workers of the World. Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States*, Urbana-Chicago, University of Illinois Press.
- Glissant Édouard (1997), *Poetics of Relation*, translated by Betsy Wing, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press. Original edition Édouard Glissant (1990), *Poétique de la Relation*, Paris, Gallimard.
- Giuliani Gaia, Lombardi-Diop Cristina (2013), *Bianco e nero. Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani*, Firenze-Milano, Mondadori Education.
- Hackler Ruben, Kirsten Guido (2016) "Distant Reading, Computational Criticism, and Social Critique. An Interview with Franco Moretti", *Le foucauldien*, 2, 1, 1-17, doi: 10.16995/lefou.22.
- Henderson G.E., Brown Christopher (1997), *Glossary of Literary Theory*, Toronto, University of Toronto.
- Labanca Nicola (2002), *Oltremare. Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Leitch Vincent (1981), *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Lombardi-Diop Cristina, Romeo Caterina (2012), "Introduction: Paradigms of Postcoloniality in Contemporary Italy", in Eadd. (eds), *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 1-29.
- (2014), "The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto", *Italian Studies*, 69, 3, 425-433.
- (2016), "Oltre l'Italia: Riflessioni sul presente e il futuro del postcoloniale", *From The European South: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 1, 51-60.
- Lori Laura (2013), *Inchiostro d'Africa: La letteratura postcoloniale somala fra diaspora e identità*, Verona, Ombre corte.
- Mauceri M.C., Negro M.G. (2009), *Nuovo immaginario italiano: italiani e stranieri a confronto nella letteratura italiana contemporanea*, Roma, Sinnos.
- Mellino Miguel (2007), "Italy and Postcolonial Studies: A Difficult Encounter", *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8, 3, 461-471.
- Mezzadra Sandro (2008), *La condizione postcoloniale: storia e politica nel presente globale*, Verona, Ombre corte.
- Moe Nelson (1992), " 'Altro che Italia': Il Sud dei piemontesi (1860-61)", *Meridiana*, 15, 53-89.

- (1998), “The Emergence of the Southern Question in Villari, Franchetti, and Sonnino”, in Jane Schneider (ed.), *Italy’s “Southern Question”: Orientalism in One Country*, Oxford, Berg, 51-76.
- (2002), *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Moretti Franco (2013), *Distant Reading*, London-New York, Verso.
- (2017), “Franco Moretti: A Response”, *PMLA*, 132, 3, 686-689.
- Oboe Annalisa (2016), “Archiviare altrimenti: riflessioni ‘postcolonialitaliane’”, *From the European South: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 1, 3-14, <<http://europeansouth.postcolonialitalia.it/journal/2016-1/2.2016-1.Oboe.pdf>> (03/2022).
- Parati Graziella (1997), “Strangers in Paradise: Foreigners and Shadows in Italian Literature”, in Beverly Allen, Mary Russo (eds), *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 169-190.
- (1999), *Mediterranean Crossroads: Migration Literature in Italy*, Madison-Teaneck, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- (2001), “Shooting a Changing Culture: Cinema and Immigration in Contemporary Italy”, in Matteo Sante (ed.), *ItaliAfrica: Bridging Continents and Cultures*, Stony Brook, Forum Italicum Publishing, 261-280.
- (2005), *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Picarazzi Teresa (2001), “Italian African Meticcio Artistic”, in Matteo Sante (ed.), *ItaliAfrica: Bridging Continents and Cultures*, Stony Brook, Forum Italicum Publishing, 205-235.
- Pinkus Karen (2003), “Empty Spaces. Decolonization in Italy”, in Patrizia Palumbo (ed.), *A Place in the Sun. Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 299-320.
- Ponzanesi Sandra (2004), *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*, Albany, State University of New York Press.
- (2012), “The Postcolonial Turn in Italian Studies: European Perspectives”, in Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Caterina Romeo (eds), *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 51-69.
- (2014), “La ‘svolta’ postcoloniale negli Studi italiani. Prospettive europee” in Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Caterina Romeo (eds), *L’Italia postcoloniale*, Milano-Firenze, Mondadori-Le Monnier, 46-60.
- (2016), “Does Italy Need Postcolonial Theory? Intersections in Italian Postcolonial Studies”, *English Literature*, 3, 145-161.
- (2017), *Migrant Writers and Urban Space in Italy*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.
- Portelli Alessandro (1999), “Mediterranean Passage: The Beginning of an African Italian Literature and the African American Example”, in Maria Dietrich, H.L. Gates, Carl Pedersen (eds), *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 282-304.
- (2006), “Fingertips Stained with Ink: Notes on New Migrant Writing in Italy”, *Interventions*, 8, 3, 472-483.
- Quaquarelli Lucia, ed. (2010), *Certi confini. Sulla letteratura italiana dell’immigrazione*, Milano, Morellini.
- Re Lucia (2003) “Alexandria Revisited. Colonialism and Egyptian Works of Enrico Pea and Giuseppe Ungaretti”, in Patrizia Palumbo (ed.), *A Place in the Sun: Italian*

- Colonial Culture and the Crisis of National Identity*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 163-196.
- (2009), “Nazione e Narrazione: scrittori, politica, sessualità e la ‘formazione’ degli italiani, 1870-1900”, *Carte Italiane*, 2, 5, 1-38, <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7rj8r3c6>> (03/2022).
- Romeo Caterina (2017), “Italian Postcolonial Literature”, *California Italian Studies*, 7, 2, 1-43.
- Sabelli Sonia (2005), “Transnational Identities and the Subversion of the Italian Language in Geneviève Makaping, Christiana de Caldas Brito, and Jarmila Očkayová”, *Dialectical Anthropology*, 29, 3-4, 439-451.
- Sarnelli Laura (2018), “Affective Routes in Postcolonial Italy Igiaba Scego’s Imaginary Mappings”, *Roots and Routes, Research on Visual Cultures*, special issue, *Italianità*, 6, 23, <<http://www.roots-routes.org/affective-routes-postcolonial-italy-igiaba-scegos-imaginary-mappings-laura-sarnelli/>> (03/2022).
- Scego Igiaba (2010), *La mia casa è dove sono*, Milano, Rizzoli.
- (2015), *Adua*, Firenze, Giunti.
- Schneider Jane (1998), “Introduction: The Dynamics of neoOrientalism in Italy (1848-1995)”, in Ead. (ed.), *Italy’s “Southern Question”: Orientalism in One Country*, Oxford, Berg, 1-23.
- Sorrentino Alessandra (2014 [2013]), *Luigi Pirandello e l’altro. Una lettura critica postcoloniale*, Roma, Carocci Editore.
- Tomasello Giovanna (1984), *La letteratura coloniale dalle avanguardie al fascismo*, Milano, Sellerio.
- Verdicchio Pasquale (1997), *Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism through the Italian Diaspora*, Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Virga Anita (2017), *Subalternità siciliana nella scrittura di Luigi Capuana e Giovanni Verga*, Firenze, Firenze University Press.
- Virga Anita, Zuccala Brian (2018), “Postcolonialismi Italiani: Ieri e Oggi. Appunti (sudafricani) per una (ri)concettualizzazione ‘rizomatica’ dei Postcolonial Italian Studies”, *Studi d’Italianistica nell’Africa Australe*, 31, 1, 1-24.
- (2019), “From *Blaxploitation* to *Black-Italiano*: A South African Exploration of Afroitalianess with Fred Kuwornu”, *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies*, 7, 1, 107-116, doi:10.1386/jicms.7.1.107_7.
- Warf Barney, Arias Santa (2009), “Introduction: The Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences”, in Idd. (eds), *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, New York, Routledge, 1-10.
- Wong A.S. (2006), *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy 1861-1911. Meridionalism, Empire, and the Diaspora*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.

Silvio Pellico's *Le mie prigionie*: Autobiography versus Religion

Antonio Pagliaro

Abstract:

The popularity of Pellico's account among some categories of his contemporaries depends on the nature of his self depiction which nevertheless alienated both Italian patriots and supporters of the status quo. This was a necessary result of the narrator's representation of a religious conversion. The author's literary ambitions remain evident even within this context.

Keywords: Autobiography, Narrator, Pellico, Prison, Religion

Discussion of Silvio Pellico's memoirs *Le mie prigionie*¹, has focused principally on its religious and, for some at least, political mission. After publication in 1832 it certainly became a politically unwelcome work for the Austrian government and for reactionaries on the Italian peninsula. As the work was also rejected by the patriotic press, the fact of its public acceptance reflected the profound division in Italian society at that time and foreshadows the two principal and enduring divisions which would fracture *la Nuova Italia* between Church and State and between State and the popular classes.

The publication in 1832 of Silvio Pellico's *Le mie prigionie*, met with immediate success. More than fifty editions had been printed in Italian by the end of 1842. The popularity of the work spread through Europe and the Americas. Parenti's 1952 bibliography identifies forty-eight editions in French for the years 1833-1851 and fourteen English language editions in the same period.

The success may not have been a surprise to the Turin publisher Botta who paid Pellico the considerable sum of nine hundred Piedmontese new lire for the rights². However, Pellico claims the publisher's contract denied him the right to

¹ The volume was subtitled "Memorie di Silvio Pellico da Saluzzo" in the first edition. A reproduction of the cover is published in Parenti (1952).

² In the contract dated 1 September 1832 transcribed in Parenti, Pellico acknowledges receiving "[...] la somma di Lire nuove di Piemonte Nove Cento, e questo per il prezzo convenuto della cessione del mio manoscritto delle *Memorie mie intitolate Le mie prigionie*" (1952, 39).

free copies for the harm this would do to sales. In fact, Botta had good reasons to be confident. Pellico's imprisonment at Spielberg had only served to enhance the fame gained previously from his tragedy *Francesca da Rimini*. First performed in 1815, the tragedy was reprinted fifteen times during the years Pellico spent in jail (1820-1830)³. Contemporary observers suggested that Pellico's success owed much to the appeal of his work to a female audience. Di Breme's prefatory "Avvertenza" to the 1818 edition of the play confirms the success which the sentimental aspects of *Francesca da Rimini* had among the female spectators⁴:

[...] gli uditori , e meglio ancora le amabili uditrici di Milano, di Torino e di Firenze, che cogli occhi lagrimosi chiesero la ripetizione della Francesca [...] penseranno coll'Editore della medesima, che l'Amore manterrà i diritti suoi sul teatro, finché non verrà in disuso nel gran dramma della vita; finché palpiteranno dei cuori [...]. (Pellico 1968, 350)

In brief, the imprisonment of Pellico, the sentimental interpreter of tragic love, only served to bring together Life and Art and to make his destiny no less worthy of tears of compassion than the fate of Paolo and Francesca. The image of Pellico as a romantic hero, sensitive and suffering in solitude clearly preceded the publication of *Le mie prigioni* but was confirmed by it. The existence of these elements, so particularly consonant with the tastes of Romanticism and the fact that Pellico's imprisonment could arouse people of different classes and political beliefs, ensured extensive public interest and literary success. Massano observes that the fortune of Pellico's "Memorie" was enhanced to varying degrees by "correnti laiche e liberali come dai cattolici neogouelfi" (1986, 403).

On the other hand, the criticism of *Le mie prigioni* by contemporary writers is not surprising. Their judgements particularly regard the accuracy of Pellico's account and the light it throws on his character. *Le mie prigioni* was seen by revolutionaries and by Catholic conservatives alternatively as political sell-out and religious hypocrisy, or calumnies disguised as religion.

The accusation of dishonesty, for example, is to be found in the meticulous refutations of 1833 attributed to Metternich and published by Narciso Nada (1973, 110-114). They go from the terminology (the term "state prisoners" did not exist), to the materials of the prisoners' clothes, their rations, the location and size of their cells, their permitted outdoor promenades, the availability of medical care, the existence of certain characters and the particular competencies of officials (*ibidem*). One would need to be naïve to believe that regulations and their practice coincide in any prison system. Nevertheless, the description

³ The calculation is based on Parenti's catalogue. For information about two surviving manuscripts and an unauthorised edition, see Chiattonne (1901), Rinieri (1898-1901, vol. 1, 268-273).

⁴ The "Avvertenza" is reproduced in Pellico (1968, 349-350) Curto notes "Dell'edizione anteriore voluta dal conte Porro, colla falsa data di Londra. Non è da tener conto perché stampata senza consenso del Pellico" (ivi, 347).

of imprisonment at the Spielberg by Gabriele Rosa has suggested to one critic at least that there was some exaggeration on the part of Pellico⁵.

Pellico's fear of seeming a *bacchettone* is evident at various stages of *Le mie prigioni*. The issue clearly continued to disturb him: even four years after publication he writes to his friend Confalonieri, "Gli uomini m'han detto [...] che sono bigotto; ma tu non potrai mente alle loro derisioni. Cerco di esser vero cristiano, e se m'è difficile averne le virtù, ho pur già la grazia della fede"⁶ (Pellico 1864, 568).

In more recent times, hostility to Pellico's embrace of religion has certainly not faded. Consider for example the judgement of Attilio Marinari for whom the Bible becomes in Pellico's account: "strumento dichiarato di repressione ideologica e politica, vangelo di accettazione passiva e di gesuitica giustificazione di ogni forma d'oppressione" (1977, 364).

The criticism of reactionaries also pursued Pellico from the time of the earliest editions. In his correspondence he makes repeated reference to the attacks from the press, notably the *Voce della verità* from Modena and the *Voce della ragione* of Pesaro. The latter, which belonged to Monaldo Leopardi, alleged he was a "jacobin masqué, et que les Autrichiens auraient mieux fait de me pendre"⁷ (Pellico 1864, 565).

Whatever the personal reasons for his change of heart, Pellico, who had already rejected the revolution in 1819⁸, clearly regarded his prior link with the Carbonari as a mistake and absolutely abhorred the rising current of revolutionary patriotism which was to have Mazzini as its greatest exponent:

La crisi in cui ci siamo perduti era sì straordinaria, che tutti i cuori generosi ci compatiscono; nessuno di questi ci confonderà mai colla genia de' democratici sanguinari. Genia davvero esecrabile!⁹ (Pellico 1864, 591)

Le mie prigioni, memorie di Silvio Pellico, as it was titled in its original edition has been considered as the prototype of Risorgimento *memorialistica* and a work of religious edification. Riccardo Massano objects to this categorisation, which appears to him to denote marginality:

⁵ See Grimaldi (1971, 21).

⁶ Letter of 17 January 1836. Silvio Pellico writes to Count Cesare Balbo on the subject on 19 November 1832, "Curiosa gente che fanno [*sic*] consistere la lor [*sic*] religione nell'odiare irrimediabilmente chi è meno perfetto di loro! Quanto agli altri liberali gli uni sono arrabbiati d'avermi voluto bene sino all'altro dì, e si stimano obbligati in coscienza d'espriare questo peccato; gli altri mi fanno la grazia di riputarmi solamente un uomo meno eroico di loro, un uomo che i patimenti hanno degradato" (Pellico 1864, 565).

⁷ Letter dated 30 April 1834 and addressed to Madame la Comtesse de Benevello. Silvia Spellanzi identifies *La voce della ragione of Pesaro* as the "giornaleto di Monaldo Leopardi" (Pellico 1953, 217).

⁸ See for example Pellico's review on 7 February 1819 of *Théâtre de Marie-Joseph Chénier*, Paris, Baudouin fils, 1818: "[Chénier] mostrò inopinatamente quanto la vera filosofia sia lungi dall'approvare i delitti che si commettono in nome di lei: *Des lois et non du sang!*" (Pellico 1968, 282).

⁹ Letter to Federico Confalonieri, 17 May 1838 (ivi, 199).

Il pericolo di etichettare e chiudere il libro nello scaffale letterario delle “Memorie” liquidandolo sbrigativamente come “opera di edificazione religiosa” continua più che mai a sussistere (si può dire che una vera rilettura a fondo, al di fuori delle linee imposte dalla critica romantico-risorgimentale perdurata fino a tutta l’età del metodo storico, non si è più avuta) e costituisce, a nostro parere, un pericolo da evitarsi. (1986, 403-404)

The implication is that the classification *memorie* is a negation of literary worth. Massano opposes it by emphasising how many elements of Pellico’s work are characteristic of the Milanese literary world in which the author was particularly active before his imprisonment.

Milani Milani sees a similar starting point, arguing that the work has been “strappato alla Letteratura cui per primo appartiene” (1984, 31) and is “idealmente conteso dalla Fede e dalla Patria” (*ibidem*). Milani emphasises the “bookish” nature of the work, specifically as regards characters such as Schiller, Zanze, the Duke of Normandy and Giuliano, (perhaps Giuliano represents “Pellico che si guarda in uno specchio scuro” (ivi, 39) or otherwise “rappresenta il male, o addirittura il demoniaco” (*ibidem*), but beyond any interpretation “esso è un personaggio realmente da libro, da romanzo” (*ibidem*).

However, in Milani’s opinion, the work is political. Whatever Pellico says in his preface about wanting to write a work of religious and philosophical edification, the effect of this book on its readers is *sdegno* for the treatment of prisoners by the Austrian government.

Milani suggests that the author is making an instrumental use of mercy, pardon, and Christian acceptance of suffering, of the mass, prayer, and the sacraments, although he denies that this affects the sincerity of the prisoner’s conversion. A conclusion which merges identity between the author and the character and justifies a moral rather than literary assessment of Pellico. For Milani, Pellico’s imprisonment is both a conclusion and a prologue “il Pellico non approda del tutto alla fede in carcere: si avvicina faticosamente ad essa, e nemmeno è detto che la raggiunga scrivendo le mie prigionie” (Milani 1984, 36). He doesn’t speak of his battle, he chooses to write a book not a pamphlet (ivi, 34 and 37) and it is the eloquent silence which mocks the censor. For this reason *Le mie prigionie* would be as patriotic as it is religious. While Pellico may have made use of *bigottismo* he still dreams of a national government (ivi, 36).

The suggestion is that “la politica che lo ha motivato, e che ne ha suggerito il titolo, dovrà essere cercata tra le righe ed anche, o soprattutto, nel silenzio” (ivi, 35). This is taken to another level by Charles Klopp, who gives instances of messages which are not explicit, messages which remain as unarticulated desires in the narrator’s imagination: “One of the most important hidden or unreadable texts in *Le mie prigionie* is the text of politics” (1991, 196). Klopp notes that even the literary genre, autobiography, is, according to Pellico at least, missing:

Of all the occluded texts described in *Le mie prigionie*, the writing that Pellico inscribes on his table in the Piombi is the one that can best serve as a master-text exemplifying his writing practice in general: in this work, not only Pellico’s

politics, but also his position on what kind of work he is composing and thus how it should be read [...] If Pellico, the poet and former political conspirator, sometimes manages to uncover complete, or decode the many hidden, cryptic, or partial messages that he encounters – and produces – in his prison journey, he does not share the messages he finds with his reader. (Ivi, 201-202)

For Alejandro Patat, Pellico's text represents a definite break from the sensibilities of Illuminismo and the influence of Rousseau. As Klopp had done previously, Patat notes that, "essenziale nell'economia del testo è il punto di vista del carcerato, che occlude la narrazione, la limita a ciò che è [...] pensabile" (2015, 33). As a consequence

si tratta di una narrazione a posteriori che ricostruisce un percorso interiore, presentificandolo, rendendolo vivo attraverso i dialoghi e la costruzione dell'intreccio secondo un ordine cronologico e logico uguale a quello del carcerato. (*Ibidem*)

For Patat, Pellico has a primary objective which is to "[...] narrare la conversione e la trasformazione di un intellettuale ai fini politici educativi e morali" (ivi, 36). Patat dwells in particular on the new and old *io*, as presented in chapter 25 of *Le mie prigioni*, when Pellico writes of the effect which reading the Bible, and effectively rediscovering it, had upon him: "quell'io che sì difficilmente piango, proruppe in lagrime" (ivi, 34).

Geoffrey Harpham suggests that autobiography, is a discourse of conversion. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, he defines conversion as consisting of two stages.

The first conversion is marked by an epistemological certainty that heralds a sense of true self-knowledge; the second confirms or actualizes this certainty in a narrative of the self. (Harpham 1988, 42)

In contrast with the just-quoted identification by Pellico of the moment of his conversion, Harpham, referring to St Augustine, denies that

conversion can be pinpointed in time. On the contrary, conversion is a ceaseless process which cannot be assigned to a definite temporal moment and the subject can never "achieve a "post-conversional" condition. (Ivi, 48)

The selective and restrictive elements of *Le mie prigioni*, seem particularly to fit in with the following:

the writing of autobiography is an act of imitation in which the writer confirms and enacts his own conversion, away from a sense of his or her being, and to a knowledge of its tropological and imitative – and imitable – nature. (Ivi, 45)

Pellico's autobiographical illustrations his choice of episodes and the shaping of their form reveal an almost obsessive concern with the reader's reception of the text and his/her assessment of the narrator and of future imitation.

As far as *fini educativi e morali* are concerned, *Le mie prigioni* owes a large part of its sales, in France at least, to its being embraced by the Church. Jean-Claude

Vimont indicates that between 70,000 and 100,000 copies were published in France between 1831 and 1845, largely thanks to the Church's being involved in publishing and distributing the work "dans son entreprise d'édification morale de la jeunesse" (1997, 138). Beyond this there was a price to be paid: Vimont illustrates another form of censorship, the removal by translators of amorous references. Even the well-known metaphor of chapter 1 ("Simile ad un amante maltrattato dalla sua bella, e dignitosamente risoluto di tenerle broncio, lascio la politica ov'ella sta, e parlo d'altro", Pellico 1953, 37) was interpreted as a threat to the chasteness of adolescents.

To what extent was he aware of political effects. In a cautious letter to his brother, Pellico writes that he certainly did not intend to make *Le mie prigioni* a political work but we can read between the lines a degree of satisfaction that it had become one.

Pellico's "Capitoli aggiunti", first published in the 1843 French edition¹⁰ are a continuation of the self-defence evident both within the original *Prigioni* and in the correspondence which followed the publication. Here, he describes at length the doubts that assailed him before writing the work and the polarised reactions of those whose advice he had sought. This plea that he had not undertaken the task lightly, constitutes a defence of the historical Pellico against accusations made against both the writer and the protagonist of *Le mie prigioni*. Beyond this, the successful outcome of *Le mie prigioni*, in the sense that it had led to at least one religious conversion, demonstrated for the writer the correctness of his decision to write an account which was "salutare per il prossimo" (Pellico 1968, 610). Pellico claims that the engraver Karl Woigt was stimulated by *Le mie prigioni* to embrace Catholicism. He dedicates an entire chapter to the conversion of the engraver Karl Woigt which had derived from his reading of *Le mie prigioni* (Pellico 1953, 224-225).

Mi era invece serbata una viva gioia per la conversione del signor Woigt, uno di più abili artisti della Baviera: ed ebbi la sorte che il mio libro non fosse senza influenza in quella conversione. (Ivi, 224)

Ultimately, Patat concludes that the new Pellico, in his role as the *io nuovo*, the narrator converted by the Bible, is a

¹⁰ See Parenti 1952, 340. The first transcription of the original Italian version sent to the French translator Latour on 7 November 1837 was published by Henri Bédarida in *Convivium* (1932). Pellico's accompanying note indicates that the chapters were part of the separate autobiography of which otherwise few pages survive. He describes them as "Quoique très peu significants, quelques chapitres de ma Vie pourraient avoir une espèce d'intérêt dans une nouvelle édition de *Mie Prigioni*" (Pellico 1864, 584). The self-referentiality of the final sentence of the chapters takes on a certain irony: "Talora prendo la penna, e non sentendomi voglia di fare altro, scrivo la mia propria Vita" (Bédarida 1932, 739). The "additional chapters" did not appear in Italian until the Le Monnier edition, nine years later. The version printed was a re-translation into Italian from the printed French translation. It would appear that Pellico had no wish to print them in his own country.

[...] patriota sacrificatosi per la patria, non più sulla base dei principi rivoluzionari filo-francesi, bensì aderente alla nuova ideologia romantica di stampo cristiano che in Europa sta gettando radici ben solide: nell'esilio e nel dolore cristiano si trova l'essenza dolce e malinconica del romanticismo. (2015, 37)

As Fausto Montanari notes, Pellico's correspondence, both from jail and after his release,

Ci fa vedere come il mite Pellico delle *Mie prigioni*, che evita ogni parola forte, si sia formato specialmente dopo la scarcerazione, quando si accorse che al suo giusto sdegno si sarebbe dato un significato diverso da quello che gli dava lui, e per impedire travisamenti, sopresse ogni espressione che vi potesse dare appiglio. (1935, 147)

This preoccupation to suppress information, certainly understandable where dangers or inconvenience might result to others, extends to Pellico's correspondence with others. Preoccupied about the potential indiscretions of his former cell mate Maroncelli, Pellico writes on 9 May 1831: "Inoltre bada che non tutto della vita Spielbergica può dirsi; se trasparissero certe passate clandestinità, il male potrebbe essere grande" (Pellico 1964, 222).

An aspect of autobiography to be borne in mind is the aspect of the author's perception of self. It has been described as existing on two non-synchronous planes: that of simple blind perception and that of comprehension. The first evidently belongs to the character in the past, the second is the sense which the biographer now makes of that past. The sense that Pellico makes is primarily religious and moral. Religious autobiography implies a very close awareness of the reader on the part of the writer and indeed the structuring of the autobiography to create a "moral" effect upon the reader. The reader's convictions need to be formed or strengthened. The reader becomes a sort of shadow image of the autobiographical subject. The subject's temptations are the reader's. The *personaggio* Pellico must have a certain degree of success in his struggle because the reader needs to achieve the same result. Certainly, the character is not represented as perfect, but is, one could say, morally enhanced. He yields only temporarily to temptation and manages to draw a moral from contrary fortune. Beyond this, there is a clear sensitivity to the potential harm his work could have on the lives of others. From this there stems a considerable willingness to suppress or alter events in accordance with the very narrow parameters which the author has set himself. Whereas the subject's life (as he believes he lived it) needs to be told truthfully, on the other hand his experience needs to be restricted, indeed expurgated, so that the work is endowed with the specific qualities by which the subject's life also becomes an *exemplum*, and the reader's life is the target of a conversion attempt by the narrator.

The narrative is to some extent compromised by Pellico's attempts to forestall anticipated accusations of *bigottismo*. His clear attempt to address a second category of readers as well as those who "need" his instruction, could be interpreted as aiming to meet this concern. But as a devotee of literature, Pellico is also

well aware of the Italian literary context and via intertextual references makes very evident attempts to ensure *Le mie prigioni* has the *addentellati* to fit within it. The numerical structure and the beginning *in medias res*, which recall Dante, the quotations of Pellico's fame as writer of the by now famous play *Francesca da Rimini*, the evident contrast with Alfieri's *Vita* are all indications that, in taking up religion, Pellico has not relinquished literary ambition¹¹.

As Aldo Mola observes, *Le mie prigioni* is an *itinerarium mentis in Deum* (2005, 14). Inevitably one must look to the *Divina Commedia* as the prime model. Just as the *personaggio* of the *Divina Commedia*, by acquiring knowledge of sin and sinners, is tried in the struggle between *ragione* and *talento*, so too the subject Pellico is depicted in the struggle between *ragione* and *immaginazione*. He resists the temptation to see evil in others, he is tempted to lie ("ogni perdita è più onorevole del mentire", Pellico 1953, 71), he ceases to pray and doubts in God's justice. He reads the Bible and repents: "Oh come un ritorno sincero alla religione consola ed eleva lo spirito!" (Pellico 1864, 20). In this tale the protagonist oppressed by confinement, psychological torment and temptations, who witnesses and learns of the nature of good and evil, is assisted in his conversion by recourse to philosophy, as Dante was by Virgil. The *Divina Commedia* was read in those years in "chiave iniziatica e profetica" (Mola 2005, 148) and *Le mie prigioni* responds to these desiderata: Pellico like Carlo Alberto of Sardinia, perceives "segnî arcani" in the experience imposed on him by Divine Providence (*ibidem*) and proceeds to underline them in the text with its ninety nine chapters and what Mola sees as a persistent recourse to ternary structure to be seen, for example, in the three places of imprisonment: Milan, Venice and Brün and the narration of many episodes. Most significant perhaps is his perception of an effective structural division of *Le mie prigioni* into three *cantiche*, the first one terminating at the 33rd chapter, the second at the 66th. These features, beyond their roots at the dawn of Italian literature, also accommodate freemasonry's interest in numerological explorations with which, as an initiated carbonaro Pellico was familiar (ivi, 148-150)¹².

In terms of form Mola considers that

[...] quelle Memorie non sarebbero né diario, né autobiografia, bensì "un libro" – vale a dire sapiente dosaggio di verità storica irrefutabile e di creazione letteraria, come poi dichiarò a Cesare Cantù nell'aprile 1843. (Ivi, 148)

¹¹ While Pellico expresses reservations about some of Alfieri's works, his theatre clearly holds a high place in Pellico's estimation. As he writes in chapter 12 of the "capitoli aggiunti" to *Le mie prigioni* "Nella mia gioventù m'era follemente lusingato di poter un giorno occupare un seggio non molto lungi dall'Alfieri; ma coll'andar del tempo mi sono ricreduto di questa illusione, nonostante gli applausi che talvolta mi toccarono in sorte" (Pellico Pellico 1953, 226).

¹² Mola suggests that an intentional attempt may have been made to hide the symbolic total of 99 chapters: Pellico's copy of the manuscript consigned to the Regia Commissione di revisione, erroneously titled the 57th chapter as the 50th and as a consequence the final number of chapters in this copy is 92 instead of 99 (2005, 154), certainly a number which would not attract a censor's attention.

I would draw attention to the opening of the letter in question:

[...] ebbi di mira di raccontare, raccontar semplicemente, non tutto al certo, ma tutto vero. Mentirei a me stesso, se negassi di aver anche avuto intenzione di fare un libro; ma lasciatemi ripeterlo, non ho voluto far una vendetta. (Pellico 1864, 629)

In the emphasis on truth, Pellico is denying an intent to creation of events and facts within the text, but acknowledging selectivity. For Mola this implies literary creation, but he also rejects the terms diary or autobiography as if these were incompatible with literary value. The rejection of the term is inevitably problematic: “what is autobiography to one observer is history or philosophy, psychology or lyric poetry, sociology or metaphysics to another” (Olney 1980, 5).

This could be seen as of little moment in the presentation of the narrator who in such self writing, whatever we call it, proposes an autobiographical subject. In any case, the author's intentions are not the final word on the completed work. As the the German scholar George Gusdorf writes:

Every autobiography is a work of art and at the same time a work of enlightenment; it does not show us the individual seen from outside in his visible actions but the person in his inner privacy, not as he was, not as he is, but as he believes and wishes himself to be and to have been. (1980, 45)

The story of Pellico, the political prisoner, written in a tumultuous period of nationalistic struggles, inevitably raised political passions and encountered enormous public interest, leading to a major publishing success. An intentional political presence, when critics have seen it in the narrative, appears to have offered literary merit and compensation for the religious content. Nevertheless it is the latter and the narrative of conversion, based upon Dante's unattainable model, which ultimately predominate.

References

- Bédarida Henri (1932), “Nel centenario delle ‘Mie prigioni’. Il testo autentico dei ‘capitoli aggiunti’ (dall’autografo del Pellico)”, *Convivium*, 4, 5, 717-739.
- Chiattonne Domenico (1901), “I due codici manoscritti della *Francesca da Rimini* di Silvio Pellico, esistenti in casa Cavazza a Saluzzo e i loro Annotatori”, in *Piccolo Archivio Storico dell’Antico Marchesato di Saluzzo*, Saluzzo, Tipografia S. Vincenzo di Bovo e Baccolo, 71-112.
- Grimaldi Ugoberto (1971), “Prefazione”, in Gabriele Rosa, Silvio Pellico, *Due patrioti allo Spielberg*, Milano, Palazzi, 7-23.
- Gusdorf George (1980), “Conditions and Limits of Autobiography”, in James Olney (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 28-48.
- Harpam G.G. (1988), “Conversion and the Language of Autobiography”, in James Olney (ed.), *Studies in Autobiography*, New York, Oxford University Press, 42-50.
- Klopp Charles (1991), “Inklings and Effacements in Silvio Pellico's *Le mie prigioni*”, *Italica*, 68, 2, 195-203, doi: 10.2307/479852.

- Marinari Attilio (1977), "Classicismo, romanticismo e liberalismo nell'età della Restaurazione", in Carlo Muscetta (a cura di), *La letteratura italiana: storia e testi, Il primo Ottocento*, vol. 7, t. 1, Bari, Laterza, 370-430.
- Massano Riccardo (1986), "Pellico, Silvio", in Vittore Branca (a cura di), *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana*, vol. 3, Torino, UTET, 403-410.
- Milani Mino (1984) "Una lettura de *Le mie prigioni*, oggi", in A.A. Mola (a cura di), *Saluzzo e Silvio Pellico nel 150° de Le mie prigioni*, Atti del convegno di studio, Saluzzo 30 ottobre 1983, 31-41.
- Mola A.A., a cura di (1984), *Saluzzo e Silvio Pellico nel 150° de Le mie prigioni*, Atti del convegno di studio, Saluzzo 30 ottobre 1983, Torino, Centro studi piemontesi.
- (2005), *Silvio Pellico: carbonaro, cristiano e profeta della nuova Europa*, Milano, Bompiani.
- Montanari Fausto (1935), *Silvio Pellico della mediocrità*, Genova, Emiliano degli Orfini.
- Nada Narciso (1973), "Noterelle di storia piemontese: (1814-1848). Un commento austriaco alle 'Mie Prigioni' - C. Alberto e C. Balbo dopo il 1821", *Studi piemontesi*, 2, 1, 110-117.
- Olney James (1980), "Autobiography and the Critical Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographic Introduction", in Id. (ed.), *Studies in Autobiography*, New York, Oxford University Press, 3-26.
- Parenti Marino (1952), *Bibliografia delle opere di Silvio Pellico*, Firenze, Sansoni Antiquariato.
- Patat Alejandro (2015), "Dall'autobiografia settecentesca alla memorialistica risorgimentale", *Il capitale culturale: Supplementi*, 02, 19-38, <<https://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult/article/view/1165>> (03/2022).
- Pellico Silvio (1864), *Opere Complete di Silvio Pellico con le addizioni di Piero Maroncelli alle Mie Prigioni*, a cura di Piero Maroncelli, Milano, Libreria Dante.
- (1953), *Le mie prigioni con le Addizioni di Piero Maroncelli*, a cura di Silvia Spellanzon, Milano, Rizzoli.
- (1968), *Opere scelte*, a cura di Carlo Curto, terza edizione riveduta e accresciuta, Torino, UTET.
- Rinieri Ilario (1898-1901), *Silvio Pellico Della vita e delle opere*, Torino, Streglio, 3 vol.
- Vimont Jean-Claude (1997), "Silvio Pellico, *Mes prisons*: un 'best seller' de l'édification", *Trames*, 2, 137-149.

Q&A with Annamaria Pagliaro: From Italy to Australia and Back

Annamaria Pagliaro, Samuele Grassi

Abstract: This essay-interview traces Annamaria Pagliaro's contribution to cultural relationships, cultural and educational exchanges between Australia and Italy, particularly based on her work as Director of the Monash University Prato Centre (2005-2008).

Keywords: Australia, Educational Exchanges, Italy, Research Trajectories, University

In her 30-year career, Annamaria Pagliaro has worked on 19th and early 20th century Italian literature and theatre. She is the author of *The Novels of Federico De Roberto: From Naturalism to Modernism* (2011) and has edited, among others, special issues on naturalism (2007) and theatre (2011 and 2016) for the journal *Spunti e Ricerche*, which she edits.

I first met Annamaria as a Doctoral student, in the early 2010s. While I was waiting for the viva discussion of my PhD thesis a mutual friend – who also contributed to this volume – put us in touch for sessional classes to deliver within the Italian language and culture program Annamaria was then coordinating. As our initial working relationship developed into a friendship, my increasing involvement with Monash University Prato Centre also came to hold the promise of revitalising inter-institutional and international collaboration between the University of Florence and Monash University, where the relations between the two institutions had come to a standstill – paying homage to the presence of Australian studies within the Department of Languages, Literature and Intercultural Studies of the University.

With the following questions, I tried to capture the complexities of undertaking intercultural and international work, as well as the radical potential of building relationships across institutional barriers, mandates, and disciplinary boundaries.

Annamaria Pagliaro, Monash University, Australia, annamaria.pagliaro@monash.edu, 0000-0002-6513-5921

Samuele Grassi, Monash University Prato Centre; University of Florence, Italy, samuele.grassi@monash.edu; samuele.grassi@unifi.it, 0000-0001-6316-3681

Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Annamaria Pagliaro, Samuele Grassi, Q&A with Annamaria Pagliaro: From Italy to Australia and Back, © Author(s), CC BY 4.0, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4.14, in Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, pp. 173-179, 2022, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

SG: I would like to start this conversation by recounting your experience as Academic Director of the Monash University Prato Centre (2005-2008). But before then, you had also been involved in the Centre's establishment as a member of the founding committee. Can you tell us more about how the idea of starting up an Australian university Centre in Prato came about?

AP: Yes, it is true. I was a founding member of the Monash University Prato Centre. Now the background to this is really rather complicated and it goes beyond the establishment or the actual founding of the Monash University Prato Centre. I think it goes back, perhaps, around 1993-1995 when we had as Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Chubb. Professor Chubb was very interested in creating for Australian students something like what Europe had done; a sort of Erasmus program. He assigned very generous scholarships for students of languages to go and travel overseas to the country of the language they were studying.

And so really, my input starts from there because I worked to establish study abroad memorandums of understanding with the University of Florence, the University of Bologna, and the University for Foreigners of Perugia. The one that was, in fact, the most successful, was the University of Florence: the initial MOU with the University of Florence. I was able to get the thing going reasonably easily because of two very important people I knew from the University of Florence who also wanted this. One of them was our mutual colleague, Christine Hubert, who unfortunately has passed away. The other, very influential, was Prof. Margherita Ciacci from the Faculty of Economics, and in effect, I think Monash has been remiss in recognising the essential input of Margherita Ciacci towards the establishment of the Centre. Without the support of Margherita there would have been no Prato Centre. She was a close friend and I introduced her to Bill Kent. Margherita, as delegate in charge for international relations for the University of Florence, was able to connect us with the Tuscan Region and help me in much of the background work while I was in Italy during my OSP and also once back in Melbourne. We worked very closely and eventually located what is now the Prato Centre. Bill Kent liaised with the Vice Chancellor's team at Monash and passed on these negotiations. Bill Kent did an enormous amount of work in Melbourne to network with the Vice Chancellor at the time and with Monash University, to try to convince them of the desirability and prestige of such a Centre for the university. Actually, a centre in Italy was very much a very special wish of Bill Kent's. In fact, he had tried a few years earlier to establish such a Centre with the sponsorship of the Boyd Foundation, but it hadn't gone anywhere. This project had remained dormant for a few years until by chance I saw this piece of paper that was passed on to me by a colleague of Italian and I immediately saw the great potential of such a venture. I contacted Bill and asked if he was still interested in trying. This is when he showed me boxes of files from his previous attempt. It was right at the moment when I was involved with Margherita Ciacci and Christine to create cultural exchanges, between Florence and Monash University. With Margherita we had done this fantastic project, called PRUA, which, through the Italian Chamber of Commerce

and the Tuscan Region, organised for small groups of students from Florence to come and study at Monash and do an internship in industries in Victoria while our Monash students did the same at Florence. The project ran for a couple of years and then it petered out.

Contemporaneously with Christine Hubert, particularly for the Arts Faculty, we had students coming from the University of Florence to come and study Australian Literature at Monash and our students instead would go over to Florence to do Italian Studies.

This was what was going on at Monash, and out of these connections, I felt we had enough contacts to try to develop the Centre that Bill had tried to establish previously. An initial working group was established and Bill and I worked assiduously together to get it going. Cecilia Hewlett found herself in Florence at the time, or actually rather near Siena, and once Palazzo Vaj was rented, she started working very closely with Bill, paid by the hour initially, to set up all the infrastructure, a fantastic infrastructure and program that then I inherited when I came for my 4 years term as Director.

The other crucial fact, of course, which needs to be remembered, is that Monash University agreed, because of the enormously generous contribution of Rino and Diana Grollo's Foundation. This Foundation gave generously for the establishment of the Centre, which in fact constituted the initial funding for it to open up and get going.

SG: Was there ever a stated intention to exploit the presence of Monash University to commit to the promotion of the literatures and the languages of/in Australia?

AP: Well, the initial plan was to actually involve as many Faculties of Monash University as possible into Prato project so that the Monash community would feel connected to it. Prato was going to be like a showcase in Europe for Monash University and also a research meeting place for connecting more easily Monash academics with Europe and the US.

Obviously, each Faculty had in mind how to represent itself and each participating Faculty took a while to get people on board. As far as Australian literature, there was an initial interest to connect with various centres of Australian Studies in Italian universities, like the one in Florence with Christine Hubert, of course. During my mandate, we even went to Copenhagen to connect with Australian Studies there and do something in Prato. Yes, the idea was a cultural and research exchange, basically. It was not an enterprise to prioritise Australian culture as such, but rather to allow Australian culture to meet and to exchange with other educational and cultural backgrounds, via a series of conferences, research groups, cohort programs, that sort of thing.

SG: Which is always really interesting, because even from within the field of Anglophone Studies here in Italy, somehow Australia is always the 'far' place, as opposed to English culture (as spoken) and referring to the UK. And also, in comparison with the US, Australia, even within Anglophone Literary Studies, is always the furthest place away.

AP: And I think that sense of “the tyranny of distance”, a concept coined long ago by the historian Geoffrey Blainey, was exactly a driving force behind what we wanted to do at the Centre, to actually connect and create strong synergies with Europe. Europe and the US and, of course, the UK. Now in a Brexit climate, we have to place it separately on the list.

SG: At the time, you also coordinated and taught the Italian Studies Programme for the Faculty of Arts. Have you reflected on whether the field of study abroad has progressed since then? If so, how?

AP: Well yes, that’s a very delicate question, and I don’t think it is because of the Centre. I’m not suggesting that at all. It is not because we’ve got this protected niche where our students come. But, I think that what has happened in Italian Studies programs, not only at Monash, but in an Anglophone context more broadly, is that students progressively did less and less contact hours and as a consequence less content. Italian Studies as a discipline focused more and more on contemporary literature, popular culture, film, while many of the other classical areas barely survived. I think economic rationality has impacted on the sort of language and cultural proficiency that our students have today.

There is an enormous difference in the cultural knowledge and language proficiency between our students who first went as exchange students to the University of Florence, to the ones that graduate now in Italian Studies. I don’t think we can talk of a progression, I think it’s a regrettable regression.

SG: Your experience as Academic Director of the Centre provided the ground to establish long-lasting collaborations and networks with scholars based in the Florence area and across the EU more broadly. Here, I am thinking of, among others, Christine Hubert and Gaetano Prampolini, who worked on Australian literatures and cultures at the University of Florence. How did you get in touch with them? How did you attempt to create bridges between Italy and Australia?

AP: Well, in fact, my job as Director did take me in a different direction. I tried a few conferences and certainly Professor Prampolini helped in the teaching of what we established for Italian Studies at the Centre, but in order to make sure that the Prato Centre was going to survive into posterity, and it properly represented the university, we had to involve other Faculties, all the other Faculties, and make them feel that they owned the place as much as the Arts Faculty.

In fact, my attention went towards conferences we had with Medicine, for instance, where the University of Florence participated very strongly. We had nursing practitioners, working with people in Physiology from the University of Florence. We did a lot with the Faculty of Medicine at Florence, and we did a lot also with the Faculty of Law. Judd Epstein had set up an incredible program, whereby he got together professors from the University of Florence to create courses within our law program, as well as many other universities. I think in the end there were about eleven participating universities. And each year the type of

course changed according to what was being offered, and each individual unit offered was an area of specialisation by the person who delivered the unit. It also contained a very global cohort of students because students from the participating universities could choose and pick what they wanted to do. It was really an excellent exchange for Law, and in fact, a very well-received educational model.

A very similar program was put in place by Art and Design. Engineering also had very complex research groups that organised conferences with many other European universities. We tried to establish a base for MUARC in order to collaborate with Florence and other European universities.

So, basically by the end of my Directorship, in one form or another, whether it was through teaching programs or research groups, all of the ten Faculties of the university were participating and that was a great achievement. In addition to that, we also had created very good networks within the Tuscan region, who frequented our centre, used our centre, and so on.

SG: It's interesting also to note that, for example, the Law program is still improving and developing links with other foreign universities. There's at least a couple of partnerships that are still running, I'm thinking about La Sorbonne ...

AP: It was there then, La Sorbonne. What was absolutely fantastic was to see the different educational contexts and modes of learning that were brought together, how our own Australian students were challenged and stimulated by the different international backgrounds with which they came in contact. It wasn't just a matter of exchanging principles of law, it was actually also a way of exchanging ways of learning.

SG: I suspect that something like this, along the lines of language learning, could also potentially be very interesting and bring to light a series of peculiar differences.

AP: I tried (and failed!) to encourage the establishment of compulsory short courses in Italian for students and staff who came to study at the Centre. The idea was to ensure a deeper understanding of the place where they were coming to work. By not knowing the language or knowing not much more than how to ask for an Aperol spritz, you ran the risk of surfacing on the top, of having a sort of voyeuristic approach rather than a real experience. Many of our participants came in as anglophone speakers and left as anglophone speakers. Of course, there were also those who made quite an effort.

SG: Can you tell us more about how your experience in Italy shaped your research during and after your stay?

AP: Well, I was in the midst of my research career when I came to Prato. I had already established research fields, and they continued to be those, even when I left.

I don't know if you are familiar with the novel by Pirandello *Il fu Mattia Pascal* where he talks about the mythological figure Tantalus and the Tantalean punishment, I felt very much like that. There were national libraries, archives, professors nearby, but I was so swamped by administrative work and so involved in aiding in the research connections of others that mine were very much put into the drawer. At one stage, it became clear that it was best for me to get back into the Faculty and back to my research. Having said that, there was Enrico Ghidetti in Florence and Carlo Madrignani in Pisa who very sadly passed away while I was in Prato. He was a scholar who worked precisely in my field of studies; Italian 19th century Naturalism, wrote seminal texts on Federico de Roberto, Luigi Capuana and so on. I managed a couple of trips to the archives in Catania, but not much more.

So yes, I was in the midst of my research field, but I did not have the time to perform research as I would have liked. I was engaged in a whole lot of other activities. I was able to get back to my work when I got back to the Faculty, and fortunately, I was granted a one-year sabbatical which set me back in action.

There were major bureaucratic obstacles to setting up a model like the law or the art and design programs for Italian studies students. I remember speaking about it with Professor Ann Caesar on a visit of hers to Monash. The problem was that students from other European universities would have had to pay their own expenses and that is not how Erasmus worked for them.

SG: Having researched and worked across countries, what are the challenges of doing cross-national work at leadership and at educator/scholar's level? In your view, how does this fit in with broader debates on the neoliberal university and the marketisation of education?

AP: Hmm, yes, a very tricky question! And I can only speak from an Arts Faculty perspective. I think universities, and particularly Anglophone universities have changed dramatically in the last couple of decades. They talk about corporate culture, they talk about education as an industry, and in fact, this is what it has become. I am afraid that I don't see it as a positive step forward. Research is now very much controlled from the top, in many ways. It is not a liberal, open, public intellectual type of approach. You follow the guidelines that your university and Faculty set and you have to operate within those limits. I think this happens much more in an anglophone context (at least in the Australian context) than it does in the Italian, French or German contexts with which I am a little familiar. We talk of inclusion and multicultural platforms, but in fact we are guided and even mandated, also in disciplines such as Italian studies, French studies and so on, to publish in so called "quality lists" which are very Anglo centric and almost completely exclude non-English speaking publishing venues.

SG: You have carried out research and supervised in a number of areas within Italian Studies, encompassing 19th and early 20th century literature, literary theory,

gender studies and theatre. How has this scholarship evolved, from the perspective of an Italian scholar working and living outside of Italy?

AP: Let us say that the theoretical Italian background that I initially had was philological, Marxist and then post-Marxist. What I found on the other side was a different set of theoretical approaches which privileged the theory more than the documentary evidence being analysed. I always tried to marry the two approaches. I found that my background helped me to enrich my approach through theoreticians coming from the anglophone world. Areas like gender studies theories, for instance, in Italian critical discourse were a sort of novelty, it happened later.

[...] I think that my interest in Italian naturalism and modernism really was a product of my Australian experience. Most of Italian migration to Australia came from the south and the distinction between the “cultured north” and the “uncultured south” was a prejudice often encountered. It was in Australia that, actually, I abandoned my interest in Tuscan writers and focussed on Sicilian writers. I established literature subjects for my students on Sicilian writers and focused my research in that area. I found a very rich European culture through these writers’ participation in newspaper writing, to key literary debates during post Italian unification, through their philosophical contribution to thought. They captured my imagination and I stayed there ... and I’m still there!

SG: What directions do you envisage for Italian Studies within a cross-country perspective? What are the key directions you see the discipline as heading towards?

AP: I think that what is happening to Italian Studies is that the focus has gone more prominently to various forms of contemporary cultural production. I think that there is a shift away from what, not long ago, were considered classical periods of Italian culture, for instance Medieval and Renaissance literature, and integral parts of an Italian Studies program in Australia or the US. I think that for some time now we have been going towards a demolition and reconstruction of the canon, rediscovering women writer of the past, cultural products such as newspapers, magazines, exhibitions and so on, re-reading the construction of national identities. As I said earlier, particularly contemporary popular culture, film studies are and will continue to constitute the areas of studies for the next decade.

The 19th century is being examined through new perspectives on nation-building, through a reopening of the archives, looking at magazines, looking at paraliterature, looking at the medicalisation of culture, all those areas that have been excluded from the canon. These new approaches will actually make research on the 19th century thrive, and I’m very excited that it will be so.

Contributors

Michela Barisonzi (<Michela.Barisonzi@monash.edu>) holds a PhD in Italian Studies, and her current research is centred on gender discourse and violence against women. Other areas of research include 19th Italian literature, contemporary cinema, the juridical language of migration, and the political discourse in South America.

Edwige Comoy Fusaro (<edwige.fusaro@univ-rennes2.fr>) is a professor of Italian Studies at Rennes 2 University, France. She has been studying the culture of post-unity Italy, especially regarding the interconnections between literature, history of ideas, and medical/human sciences.

Samuele Grassi (<samuele.grassi@monash.edu>; <samuele.grassi@unifi.it>) is part-time Lecturer at Monash University Prato Centre and Adjunct Lecturer at University of Florence. His research interests focus on the connections of queer gender theories and postanarchism, interdisciplinary critical pedagogies, sexualities and citizenship education, including cultural, and educational exchanges.

Luigi Gussago (<l.gussago@latrobe.edu.au>) holds a PhD in Italian and Comparative Literature from La Trobe University, Melbourne. His research interests include comic-picaresque fiction, Environmental Humanities and Translation Studies. He teaches Italian and German.

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Samuele Grassi, Brian Zuccala (edited by), *Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons: Offerings for Annamaria Pagliaro*, © 2022 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 978-88-5518-597-4, DOI 10.36253/978-88-5518-597-4

Carolyn James (<Carolyn.James@monash.edu>) is Cassamarca Professor of History at Monash University, Australia. She has edited the letters of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti and analysed his literary works (Olschki, 1996 and 2002). Her latest monograph, *A Renaissance Marriage: The Political and Personal Alliance of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga 1490-1519*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2020.

Andrea Pagani (<andrea.pagani1@monash.edu>) is a Teaching Associate at Monash University. In 2021 he completed a PhD at Monash University with a thesis titled *Beyond Pinocchio: Italian National Identity in Carlo Collodi's Books for Primary School (1877–1890)*, under the supervision of Annamaria Pagliaro.

Antonio Pagliaro (<A.Pagliaro@latrobe.edu.au>) studied at Melbourne and Rome Universities. He was founding Head of the Italian Program at La Trobe University in 1975. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Spunti e Ricerche*. He has published on 19th century literature and emigration and co-translated Margherita Datini's letters.

Barbara Pezzotti (<Barbara.Pezzotti@monash.edu>) is a Lecturer in European Languages at Monash University, Melbourne, AU. She is the author of *Politics and Society in Italian Crime Fiction: An Historical Overview* (2014); and *Investigating Italy's Past through Crime Fiction, Films and TV Series: Murder in the Age of Chaos* (2016).

Catherine Ramsey-Portolano (<cramsey_portolano@hotmail.com>) holds a PhD from University of Chicago. She is Director and Associate Professor of Italian Studies at The American University of Rome. Her research interests are Gender Studies, 19th and 20th century Italian women writers and Italian film. Recent publications include *Nineteenth-Century Italian Women Writers and the Woman Question* (2020) and *Performing Bodies* (2018).

Giuseppe Traina (<gtraina@unict.it>) teaches Italian Literature at the University of Catania. He has studied various authors of the Italian literary tradition, publishing monographs, editions of texts and critical studies. He recently edited an edition of the novel *Eros* by Giovanni Verga (BUR, 2022).

Roberta Trapè (<rtrape@gmail.com>) is an Honorary Fellow of the School of Languages and Linguistics at The University of Melbourne. She has worked extensively on the theme of Australian travel to Italy in contemporary Australian fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Her research includes migration and post-colonial studies.

Anita Virga (<anita.virga@wits.ac.za>) is Senior Lecturer in the Italian Department and Head of Modern Languages Department at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. She completed her PhD at the University of

Connecticut in 2015. She has published various book chapters and articles on Italian cinema and literature in academic journals such as *Italian Studies*, *Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, *Spunti e ricerche*, *LEA – Lingue e Letterature d’Oriente e d’Occidente*, *Tydskrif vir letterkunde*, *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies*, *English Studies in Africa* and *Italica*, a monograph titled *Subalternità siciliana nella scrittura di Luigi Capuana e Giovanni Verga* (Firenze UP, 2017) and she co-edited a book on Dante (*A South African Convivio with Dante. Born Frees’ Interpretations of the Commedia*, 2021). She was the President of Association of Professional Italianists (API in South Africa) from 2015 to 2017 and she has been the Editor of the journal *Italian Studies in Southern Africa* since 2018. Her research interests are postcolonialism, migration, black identity, blended learning, Dante in Africa, Sicilian literature and cinema, Luigi Capuana and Giovanni Verga.

Brian Zuccala (<brian.zuccala@wits.ac.za>) holds a PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies from Monash University (Melbourne AU) and has held Postdoctoral research and teaching fellowships in South Africa (Wits) and Mexico (Enah). His publications range from postcolonial theory to Second Language Acquisition. He is currently completing TFA Leadership Development Program with the Department of Education of Western Australia.

Index of names

- Abbrugiati Raymond 74-75, 78, 85-86
Abruzzese Gabriele (*Il terno di San Gennaro*) 22-24
Adolfo 39, 44, 51, 54
Agamben Giorgio 152
Aganoor Vittoria 62n., 62-64, 67
Alaric I 118
Alberti Leon B. 73
Aleramo Sibilla 58n., 67-68
Alexandre Denise 70n., 86
Alfieri Vittorio 73n., 170, 170n.
Alighieri Dante 71, 73, 79, 83, 100, 100n., 108, 120, 122, 127, 170-172, 183
Allen Beverly 160
Alligatore [Buratti Marco] 34
Amendola Amalia M. 27
Andò Roberto 36
Aretino Pietro 73n.
Arias Santa 152, 161
Ariosto Ludovico 51, 72
Armstrong Judith 141n.
Arrighi Cletto 76-77, 84
Arslan Antonia 58n., 62, 66-67, 89n., 108
Artusi Pellegrino 57
Ascenzi Anna 41, 53
Ascoli Albert Russell 17, 27-28
Ashcroft Bill 154-155, 154n.-155n., 157
Azzolini Paola 67
Baccelli Guido 42
Bachmann-Medick Doris 152, 157
Bachtin Michail Michailovič 32
Baffi Sandro 87
Bagnoli Paolo 17, 27
Bakhtin Mikhail Mikhailovich 124, 124n., 126
Baldacci Luigi 58n., 66-68
Balzac Honoré 9, 76
Bandello Matteo 73n.
Banti Alberto M. 41, 53, 93n., 101, 108
Barbagli Marzio 41, 54
Bàrberi Squarotti Giorgio 90-91, 102-103, 108
Baricco Alessandro 71
Barilli Anton G. 65
Barilli Renato 103n., 108
Barisonzi Michela 10, 14, 89, 89n., 91n.-93n., 92-93, 97n., 100n., 101, 102n., 103, 107n., 108, 181
Baronti Marchiò Roberto 127

- Barrera Giulia 152, 157
 Basile Gianbattista 73n.
 Baske Edgar (*The Emancipated*) 119
 Baske Miriam (*The Emancipated*) 119-120
 Bassani Giorgio 71
 Bayart Jean-François 146n., 157
 Beccaria Cesare 73n.
 Bec Christian 74-75, 78, 84, 86
 Bedani Gino 27
 Bédarida Henri 168n., 171
 Ben-Ghiat Ruth 157
 Benjamin Sara 141n.
 Bennett Bruce 131, 142
 Benvenuti Giuliana 33n., 37, 70n., 82, 82n.-83n.
 Beppino (“I Nostri bambini”) 53
 Bernini Gian L. 73n.
 Bertz Eduard 117, 117n.
 Bhattacharya Baidik 147n., 157
 Bianchi Rino 155, 155n., 157-158
 Bianciardi Luciano 26
 Blackall Judith 131, 133, 139
 Blainey Geoffrey 176
 Blazina Sergio 82n., 86
 Blissett Luther 18
 Boccaccio Giovanni 35, 71-72, 23n., 99n., 108
 Boccalini Trajano 73n.
 Boero Pino 40-41, 43, 54
 Boillet Danielle 86
 Boine Giovanni 63n., 67
 Boito Arrigo 73, 76, 84
 Boito Camillo 72n., 73, 84
 Booth Wayne C. 45-46, 54
 Borelli Elena 100n., 108
 Borgese Giuseppe A. 63n., 67
 Borges Jorge L. 36
 Borgia Lucrezia 73
 Borlenghi Aldo 67
 Bosworth Richard 141
 Botero Giovanni 73n.
 Botta Gustavo 62n.
 Botteri Inge 94n., 108
 Bouchard Norma 27, 149, 150n., 157
 Boyd Arthur 139
 Boyd Martin 137
 Bracco Roberto 62n.
 Bramante [di Angelo di Pascuccio Donato] 73n.
 Branca Vittore 172
 Breeze Maddie 14-15
 Brioni Simone 148, 155, 158
 Brison Susan J. 105n., 108
 Brown Christopher 147, 159
 Browne Ray B. 18, 27
 Brunetière Ferdinand 62n.
 Bruno Giordano 73n.
 Bufalino Gesualdo 30-31, 38
 Buffaria Pérette-Cécile 86
 Buonarroti Michelangelo 73n., 83n., 88
 Burckhardt Jacob 134
 Burke Janine 133, 139
 Burns Jennifer 148, 158
 Busenello Giovanni F. 73n.
 Butler Judith 93, 93n.
 Caesar Ann Hallamore 66-67, 178
 Calvino Italo 71
 Camerana Giovanni 77, 84
 Camilla (*La Vergine Orsola*) 96, 99-100, 103
 Camilleri Andrea 14, 21, 29-38, 31n.-32n., 35n.
 Cannizarro Tommaso 62n.
 Capecchi Giovanni 29, 37
 Cappelletti Vincenzo 40, 54
 Capp Simon 141
 Caprara Giovanni 30
 Capuana Luigi 9-10, 61, 62n.-63n., 64-65, 65n., 67, 73, 75-78, 80, 84, 109-110, 161, 178, 183
 Carducci Giosuè 71, 75-79, 81, 84
 Carlotto Massimo 34
 Carotenuto Carla 155, 158
 Cartal Élodie 69, 86
 Carter Paul 140, 140n.-141n., 143
 Casanova Giacomo G. 71, 73n.
 Cassano Franco 146, 158
 Castiglione Baldassarre 73n.
 Casti Julian (*The Unclassed*) 125
 Cattaneo Giulio 65, 67
 Catullus [Catullus Gaius V.] 51
 Cavalcanti Guido 73n., 140
 Cavalli Annamaria 92-93, 97n., 102-103, 103n., 109
 Cavina Marco 43, 54
 Cavour Camillo [Benso Camillo P.F.G., conte di Cavour] 17, 20, 23

- Cecchi Emilio 65, 67
 Ceccuti Cosimo 40, 54
 Čedomil Jakša 62
 Cennini Cennino 73n.
 Cento Bull Anna 18, 27
 Chaddock Charles G. 90, 100, 100n., 110
 Chambers Iain 146-147, 149, 157-158
 Chelli Carlo 72
 Chénier Marie-Joseph 165n.
 Chiattonne Domenico 164n., 171
 Chomsky Noam 153
 Chu Mark 27
 Chubb Ian 174
 Ciacci Margherita 174
 Cicero [Cicero Marcus T.] 52
 Clarke Maree 132
 Clemenza Iorio (*La Vergine Orsola*) 106
 Clifford Lisa 119, 122-123
 Coburn Melissa 148, 158
 Codemo Luigia 84
 Colaprico Piero 19
 Colbert Giulia 20
 Collino Pansa Raimondo 64, 67
 Collodi Carlo [Lorenzini Carlo] 5, 14, 39-41, 43-54, 71-73, 75-76, 78-79, 81, 84, 182
 Collodi Nipote [Lorenzini Paolo] 50, 54
 Colonna Francesco 73n.
 Comanini Gregorio 73n.
 Comastri Danila (*Meglio morti*) 26
 Comberciati Daniele 148, 158
 commissario Collura (*Le inchieste del commissario Collura*) 33
 commissario Modica (*Cuore di lupo*) 21
 commissario Salvo Montalbano 29, 33
 commissario Sanuti (*Dura madre*) 25-26
 Comoy Fusaro Edwige 5, 14, 69, 181
 Confalonieri Federico 165, 165n.
 Consolo Vincenzo 31, 38, 71, 74
 Contessa Livia (*Senso*) 74
 Conti Bruna 67
 Cordula [Poletti Lina] 65n.
 Cornetto (*Il terno di San Gennaro*) 22
 Correnti Cesare 42
 Cosford Victoria 141n.
 Costa Pietro 41, 54
 Coulson Carla 141n.
 Coustillas Pierre 114n., 117, 126-127
 Crisostomo Giovanni 48
 Croce Benedetto 62n., 64-65, 66n., 67-68
 Cubeddu Gaspare (*Dura madre*) 25
 Cuoco Vincenzo 71
 Curreri Luciano 98, 98n., 102, 109
 Curto Carlo 164n.
 Dainotto Roberto 152
 Dale David 141n.
 D'Amico Silvio 34
 D'Annunzio Gabriele 14, 71, 72n., 75-77, 79, 81, 84, 89-92, 92n., 94-97, 96n.-97n., 99-100, 102-103, 102n.-103n., 105-110, 105n.
 Da Porto Luigi 73n.
 D'Arrigo Stefano F. 31
 d'Assisi Francesco 73n.
 Davanzati Bernardo 73n.
 Davidson Roger 111
 Davies Peter 93n., 109
 da Vinci Leonardo 73n., 123
 Darwin Charles 98
 D'Cruze Shani 101, 104, 109
 De Amicis Edmondo 44, 54, 73, 75-76, 78-79, 81, 84
 de Balzac Honoré 9
 de Caldas Brito Christiana 154, 161
 De Donato Gigliola 109
 De Donno Fabrizio 149, 158
 De Fort Ester 42, 54
 De Franceschi Leonardo 148n., 158
 de Kretser Michelle 140-141, 141n., 143
 Del Boca Angelo 146, 146n., 158
 Deledda Grazia 68-69, 72n., 75, 77-78, 84
 Deleuze Gilles 153-156, 158
 De Liguori Alfonso 73n.
 della Francesca Piero 136
 Della Mirandola Pico 73n.
 De Luca Carmine 40-41, 43, 54
 De Luca Erri 71
 De Marchi Emilio 77, 84
 De Mattia (*Cuore di lupo*) 21
 Demontis Simona 32n., 37
 De Napoli Incoronata (*Cuore di lupo; Meglio morti*) 21
 De Nino Antonio 91
 Denyer Madeleine (*The Emancipated*) 122-123
 De Pazzi Maria M. 73n.
 Derobertis Roberto 147n., 149n., 158

- De Roberto Federico 9-10, 18, 62n., 72n., 75, 77-80, 84, 173, 178
- Derrida Jacques 149
- de Sousa Santos Boaventura 146n., 158
- Dessaix Robert 130, 140, 140n.-141n.
- De Vivo Barbara 154, 154n., 158
- Diasio Nicoletta 97, 109
- Di Breme Ludovico 164
- Dickie John 148, 159
- Di Giacomo Salvator 84
- Di Maio Alessandra 148, 159
- Di Nicola Laura 86
- di Savoia Carlo A. 25, 170
- di Savoia Umberto I King 40
- di Savoia Vittorio Emanuele II 42
- Di Siena Caterina 73n.
- Doran Cecily (*The Emancipated*) 119
- Dosio Anna C. (*Cuore di lupo*) 21
- Dossi Carlo 77, 84
- Dotto Boccadoro (*Giannettino*) 39, 44-49
- Dubois Jérémie 70, 86
- Duigan Virginia 141n.
- Duke of Normandy (*Le mie prigioni*) 166
- Dupré Natalie 70, 82-83, 86
- Dürrenmatt Friedrich 24
- Emerson Carly 124n., 126
- Emma [Ferretti Viola Emilia] 65
- Enrico (*Cuore*) 44
- Epstein Judd 176
- Fahey Diane 139
- Faivre Héloïse 72, 86
- Faldella Giovanni 84
- Farah Ali 154, 154n.
- Ferrante (*Giannettino*) 43-44, 46-51
- Ferrero Guglielmo 89n.-90n., 98n., 99, 101n., 109
- Filippini Célia 74-76, 78, 85-86
- Finamore Gennaro 91
- Findlater Jane H. 113, 126
- Finocchiaro Chimirri Giovanna 67
- Fiore Teresa 148, 159
- Firenzuola Agnolo 73n.
- Flaubert Gustave 76
- Fleury Gabrielle 116n., 117
- Flora Francesco 67
- Fofi Goffredo 29
- Fogazzaro Antonio 62n., 72n., 73, 75, 77-79, 84, 110
- Fois Marcello 14, 18-19, 24-27
- Folli Anna 66-67
- Fortis Leone 62n.
- Foscolo Ugo 75, 79, 81
- Foster David 139
- Foucault Michel 90, 97n., 100, 105, 109
- Fournier-Finocchiaro Laura 70n., 86
- Francesca (*Divina Commedia; Francesca da Rimini*) 100n., 164, 170-171
- Franchetti Leopoldo 33, 170
- Freud Sigmund 153
- Fruttero Carlo 21, 27
- Fucini Renato 77, 84
- Fuller Mia 157
- Fusi Alessandro 55
- Gabaccia Donna R. 147, 159
- Galehaut (Gallehaut) 100, 100n.
- Galladei Maffeo 73n.
- Gallot Muriel 74, 78, 86
- Gargani Aldo 27
- Gargano Giuseppe S. 62n.
- Garibaldi Giuseppe 23, 73-74, 84
- Gebauer Mirjam 158
- Gelli Giambattista 73n.
- Gemelli Careri Giovanni F. 73n.
- Gentileschi Artemisia 73n.
- Gheddafi Mu'amar 23
- Ghiazza Silvana 106, 106n., 109
- Ghidetti Enrico 77, 77n., 86, 178
- Ghizzoni Carla 42, 54
- Giacosa Giuseppe 77, 84
- Giamboni Bono 73n.
- Giannanti Alessio 37
- Giannettino (*Giannettino; La grammatica di Giannettino; L'abbaco di Giannettino; La geografia di Giannettino; Il viaggio per l'Italia di Giannettino; La lanterna magica di Giannettino*) 39-41, 43-50, 52, 54
- Giannone Pietro 73n.
- Gibbon Edward 125
- Giocondo (*Giannettino*) 44, 52
- Ginzburg Carlo 18, 27
- Giraldi Giambattista C. 73n.
- Girost Geoffrey 72n.
- Gissing Alfred 117n.

- Gissing Algernon 117n., 127
 Gissing Ellen 117n., 127
 Gissing George 14, 113-127, 114n.-117n.
 Gissing Walter 117n.
 giudice Corona (*Dura madre*) 24-26
 Giuliana (*Le Vergini; L'Innocente*) 92n.,
 102, 107n.
 Giuliani Gaia 148, 152, 159
 Giuliano (*Le mie prigionie*) 166
 Giusti Giuseppe 79
 Glissant Édouard 153-155, 155n., 159
 Gobbino (*Giannettino*) 48
 Goldoni Carlo 71, 73n., 81
 Gozzi Carlo 73n.
 Gradel Alice 72n., 86
 Graf Arturo 71, 84
 Gramsci Antonio 147n., 152
 Grassi Samuele 13, 173-179
 Green Penelope 141n.
 Greer Germaine 139
 Grenville Kate 139
 Griffiths Gareth 154n., 157
 Grimaldi Ugoberto 165n., 171
 Grono William 133
 Grossetête Olivier 83n., 88
 Grossi Paolo 69, 70n., 86
 Grubicy de Dragon Vittore 62n.
 Guattari Félix 153-156, 158
 Guicciardini Francesco 73n.
 Guillory John 70n.
 Gunzberg Lynn M. 96, 96n., 110
 Gusdorf George 171
 Gussago Luigi 14, 108

 Hackler Ruben 148n., 159
 Haddock Bruce 17, 27
 Hales Dianne 141n.
 Hall Lesley A. 111
 Hammond Sally 141n.
 Härmanmaa Marja 91, 109
 Harpham Geoffrey 167, 171
 Harrison Chris 141n.
 Harrison Nell 116
 Hazzard Shirley 130, 133-134, 137, 141n.,
 143
 Hecker Sharon 59
 Henderson Greig E. 147, 159
 Hérelle George 62n.
 Hergenhan Laurie 133

 Hewlett Cecilia 175
 Higgins Lynn A. 89, 90n., 109
 Holquis Michael 126
 Homer 51
 Hope Alec D. 137
 Hosker Lucy 93-94, 94n., 109
 Howard Peter 131
 Howard Sue 141n.
 Hubert Marie-Christine 129-130, 131n.,
 133-134, 143, 174-176
 Hughes Robert 137, 141n.
 Hutcheon Rebecca 124, 127
 Huysmans Joris-Karl 76

 Ippolita (*Il trionfo della morte*) 102
 Isnenghi Mario 82n., 86
 ispettore Lupo (commissario Lupo)
 (*Cuore di lupo*) 19, 21-22

 Jackson Stevi 104, 109
 James Carolyn 14
 Jansen Monica 70, 82, 83, 86
 Jauss Hans R. 120
 Jey Martine 78, 86
 Johnston Brian 141
 Jonard Norbert 74-78, 77n.-78n., 85-86
 Jossa Stefano 34n., 37

 Kent Bill 130-133, 142, 143
 King Richard 159
 Kirsten Guido 148n., 159
 Klopp Charles 166-167, 171
 Kreiser Lawrence A. Jr 18, 27
 Kroha Lucienne 66-67
 Kuwornu Fred 149n.

 Labanca Nicola 146, 150n., 159
 Lando Ortensio 73
 Lanslots Inge 70, 82-83, 86
 Leitch Vincent 147n., 159
 Leopardi Giacomo 71, 73n., 75, 79, 81, 119,
 123,
 Leopardi Monaldo 165, 165n.
 Levi Primo 152
 Lindoro (*La Vergine Orsola*) 100, 104,
 105n.
 Livi François 74-75, 78, 86
 Lo Castro Giuseppe 35, 35n., 37
 Loconsole Matteo 107, 109

- Lombardi-Diop Cristina 147-149, 150n.,
 152, 156, 159-160
 Lombroso Cesare 109
 Lorenzini Paolo 50, 54
 Lori Laura 159
 Lucarelli Massimo 70, 79-80
 Lucentini Franco 21, 27
 Luceri Angelo 52, 55
 Lucioli Francesco 89n., 93, 94n., 96n.,
 108-110
 Luck Geoffrey 141
 Luglio Davide 87
 Luke 95
 Lumley Robert 159
 Luti Giorgio 67
- Machiavelli Niccolò 71, 73
 Madame la Comtesse de Benvello 165
 Madrignani Carlo A. 30, 32, 37, 178
 Maiolani Michele 33, 37
 Makaping Geneviève 154, 161
 Malan Luisa (*Cuore di lupo*) 20, 21
 Malaparte Curzio [Suckert Curt E.] 71
 Mallard (*The Emancipated*) 119-121,
 123-124
 Malouf David 132-135, 137-138, 141n.
 Mantegazza Paolo 62, 89-91, 98-101,
 106, 109
 Manzini Antonio 34
 Manzini Luigi 73
 Manzoni Alessandro 72-73, 75-76, 79,
 81-82
 Marcello (*La Vergine Orsola*) 17, 19, 24,
 26-27, 100, 104
 Marchesa Colombi [Torriani Maria A.]
 65n., 91-92, 94n., 101, 109
 Marcheschi Daniela 40, 54
 Marchese di Villanova (*Il terno di San
 Gennaro*) 23
 Marchetta Melina 132
 Marci Giuseppe 30n.
 maresciallo Pili (*Dura madre*) 24-25
 Maria Camastra (*La Vergine Orsola*) 106
 Marinari Attilio 165, 172
 Marinetti Filippo T. 62n.
 Marino Giambattista 73n.
 Mark 95
 Maroncelli Piero 169, 172
 Marongiu Michele (*Dura madre*) 26
- Marozzo Achille 73
 Marras Margherita 24, 27
 Marsh Clifford (*The Emancipated*) 119,
 121-123
 Martín Alcoff Linda 40n., 109
 Mascagni Pietro 72-73
 Mascheroni Lorenzo 51
 Massano Riccardo 164-166, 172
 Mastriani Francesco 75, 77, 84
 Mastro Ciliegia [Antonio] (*Le avventure
 di Pinocchio*) 48
 Mastro Miseria (*Giannettino*) 48
 Mattheisen Paul F. 117, 127
 Matthew 95
 Mauceri Maria C. 148, 159
 Mayes Frances 141
 Mazzetti Marco 109
 Mazzini Giuseppe 75, 81-85, 165
 Mbembe Achille 149n.
 Mellino Miguel 149, 152, 159
 Mellusi Vincenzo 107
 Melograni Piero 41, 54
 Merlini Alessandro 98n., 110
 Metastasio Pietro [Trapassi Pietro A.D.B.]
 51
 Mezzadra Sandro 147, 152, 159
 Mike Caesar 70
 Milanese Claudio 87, 18-19, 26-27, 70n.,
 80, 80n.
 Milani Mino 166, 172
 Ming Wu 18
 Minuzzolo (*Giannettino; Minuzzolo*) 39,
 43-44, 51, 54
 Mitchell Katharine 58, 63, 66-68, 70n.,
 92-93, 93n., 110
 Möbius Paul J. 105, 110
 Moe Nelson 20, 23, 25, 27, 147, 159
 Mola Aldo A. 170-172, 170n.
 Momigliano Anna 61, 68
 Monsignor Ricciardi (*Cuore di lupo*) 19
 Montanari Fausto 169-172
 Monti Vincenzo 79
 Moore Peter 141
 Morandini Giuliana 66, 68
 Morante Elsa 71
 Moravia Alberto 71
 Moretti Franco 15, 159-160
 Moretti Marino 62
 Morris Jonathan 137, 159

- Mortimer John 136
 Mrs Travis (*The Emancipated*) 121
 Muscetta Carlo 172
- Nada Narciso 164, 172
 Nardone Jean-Luc 74, 78, 84
 Navarro della Mitraglia Emanuele 57, 68
 Neera [Zuccari Anna M.] 14, 57-68, 62n.,
 65n.-66n., 92
 Negri Ada 62, 62n., 64, 68, 152
 Negro Maria G. 148, 159
 Negus George 141
 Nietzsche Friedrich W. 76
 Nievo Ippolito 75, 77-79, 81-82, 84-85
 Novelli Mauro 34, 37
 Nozzoli Anna 66, 68
- Oboe Annalisa 145, 149n., 160
 Očkayová Jarmila 154, 161
 O'Grady Desmond 133, 138-139, 141n.,
 142-143
 Olney James 171-172, 181
 Orfeo (*Il terno di San Gennaro*) 22
 Oriani Alfredo 75, 84-85
 Orsino Margherita 74, 78, 86
 Orsola (*La Vergine Orsola*) 90, 92n., 93-
 108, 95n., 98n., 102n.
 Orvieto Angiolo 62
 Orwell George 114, 114n., 127
 Ottanelli Fraser M. 147, 159
- Pagani Andrea 10, 14
 Pagliara Giacobuzzo Maria 109
 Pagliaro Annamaria 9-11, 13-14, 29, 104-
 105, 106n., 110, 129-132, 173-179
 Pagliaro Antonio 14, 131
 Palma Pina 108
 Pancrazi Pietro 65
 Pansa Giovanni 91
 Paoli Pasquale 73n.
 Paolo (*Divina Commedia*) 100n., 164
 Parati Graziella 147-148, 148n., 160
 Parenti Marco 73n.
 Parenti Marino 163, 163n.-164n., 168n.,
 172
 Parravicini Luigi A. 39
 Parroni Piergiorgio 55
 Partridge Colin 114n., 126
 Pascoli Giovanni 71, 75-81, 84
- Pasolini Pier P. 71
 Pasqui Marina 67
 Pasquini Emilio 108
 Passavanti Jacopo 73n.
 Passerini Luisa 152
 Patat Alejandro 167-168, 172
 Patella Francesca 69n.
 Paternoster Annick 94, 95n., 110
 Pavese Cesare 71
 Pelli Bencivenni Giuseppe 73n.
 Pellico Silvio 78, 163-170, 163n.-165n.,
 168n., 170n., 172
 Pellizza da Volpedo Giuseppe 62n.
 Percoto Caterina 75, 84
 Perrona Lorenzo 131
 Pesman Ros 131
 Petrarca Francesco 73n.
 Petronio Giuseppe 18n., 28
 Pezzotti Barbara 14, 18, 18n., 26, 28
 Picarazzi Teresa 147, 160
 Pica Vittorio 62n.
 Pigafetta Antonio 73n.
 Pinketts Andrea G. 19
 Pinkus Karen 146n.
 Pinocchio (*Le avventure di Pinocchio*) 39-
 40, 48, 54, 72-73, 75-76, 78, 182
 Pino Paolo 73
 Piovene Guido 65, 68
 Pirandello Luigi 62, 71-72, 74, 76, 161, 178
 Piras Giorgio 52, 55
 Pischedda Bruno 29
 Pizzuto Antonio 31
 Plutarch 125
 Poe Edgar A. 76
 Poidimani Nicoletta 152
 Polendina [Geppetto] (*Le avventure di
 Pinocchio*) 48
 Polezzi Loredana 158
 Polo Marco 73
 Pontormo [Carucci Jacopo] 73
 Ponzanesi Sandra 146n., 148-152, 151n.,
 155-156, 160
 Pope Leo XIII 41-42
 Pope Pius IX 94
 Porciani Ilaria 41, 55
 Porro [Lambertenghi Luigi] 164
 Porter Peter 131, 133, 136-137
 Porter Roy 104-105, 105n., 110
 Prada Massimo 40, 55

- Praga Emilio 76-77, 84-85
 Prampolini Gaetano 129-131, 131n., 133-134, 143, 176
 Pratesi Mario 75, 77, 84-85
 Prunster Nicole 22, 28
 Puccini Giacomo 76
 Pugno Laura 32, 37
- Quaglio Antonio E. 108
 Quaquarelli Lucia 148, 160
 Quartermaine Peter 133, 136
 Quintiliano (*Giannettino*; *Minuzzolo*) 43-44, 51-52
 Quintilian [Quintilianus Marcus F.] 52
- Ramsey-Portolano Catherine 14, 57n., 66n., 68, 93, 110
 Ranieri Antonio 84
 Re Lucia 147-148, 160-161
 Resta Antonio 37
 Riall Lucy 94n., 110
 Rickard Ann 141
 Ricotta (*Giannettino*) 48
 Rinieri Ilario 164, 172
 Ripa Cesare 73n.
 Ripellino Angelo M. 31
 Robb Peter 130, 139-140, 141n.
 Roberts Morley 115, 117, 117n., 127
 Rocco Antonio 73n.
 Roda Vittorio 98, 110
 Rod Edouard 62n.
 Rodriguez Judith 139
 Romagnoli Maria 91, 96, 96n., 110
 Romani Gabriella 70n., 89n., 108
 Romeo Caterina 147, 149-150, 149n., 156, 159-161
 Rosa Gabriele 165, 171
 Rosmini Antonio 73n.
 Rousseau Jean-Jacques 167
 Rovani Giuseppe 75, 77, 79, 84
 Rueff Martin 70
 Rumi Giorgio 18, 28
 Russell Camilla 131-132
 Russo Luigi 65, 68
 Russo Mary 160
 Ruzante [Beolco Angelo] 73n.
 Ryan Virginia 141n.
- Sabelli Sonia 154, 161
 Saint Eufemia di Calcedonia 96
 Saint Gennaro 17, 19, 22-24, 28
 Saint Tecla di Licaonia 96
 Saint Ursula 95, 95n.
 Salomone Marina (*Cuore di lupo*) 20
 Sandrino (*Minuzzolo*) 51-52
 Sanguineti Edoardo 58n., 68
 Sani Roberto 41, 53-54
 Sanson Helena 89n., 93, 94n., 96n., 108-110
 Sansovino Francesco 73n.
 Sante Matteo 160
 Santucci Luigi 40-41, 55
 Sanvitale Francesca 58n., 66, 68
 Sanzio Raphael 120, 123
 Sapegno Natalio 65, 67
 Sarnelli Laura 155, 161
 Satta Sebastiano (*Sempre caro*) 24
 Scarpi Paolo 106, 110
 Scego Igiaba 155, 155n., 157-158, 161
 Scerbanenco Giorgio 19
 Schank Daley Norma L. 116n., 127
 Schiller (*Le mie prigioni*) 166
 Schneider Jane 23, 28, 160-161
 Schopenhauer Arthur 105n., 110
 Schwarz Lausten Pia 158
 Sciascia Leonardo 31
 Scupoli Laurent 73n.
 Segantini Giovanni 62n.
 Sellerio Elvira 31, 31n.
 Serao Matilde 62, 62n., 64, 67, 73-75, 77-78, 84, 92
 Sergi Giuseppe 152
 Serra Antonio 73n.
 Shapcot Tom 139
 Siegal Nina 59n., 61, 68
 Sillar Shamus 141n.
 Silver Brenda R. 89, 90n., 109
 Simenon Georges 35, 38
 Simon Philippe 70n., 87
 Siviero Massimo 17, 19, 22-26, 28
 Smales Harriet 125
 Smart Jeffrey 130, 136-138, 141n., 143
 Smiles Samuel 47, 48, 55
 Sofia (*Giannettino*) 47
 Sonnino Sidney 33
 Soria Piero 17, 19-20, 23, 26-28
 Sorrentino Alessandra 148, 161

- Spackman Barbara 96-98, 98n., 103n., 110
 Spadolini Giovanni 40, 55
 Spellanzon Silvia 165n., 172
 Spinazzola Vittorio 37
 Srivastava Neelam 147n., 149n., 157-158
 Steegmuller Francis 133, 143
 Steele Rory 131
 Svevo Italo [Schmitz Aron H.] 71-72, 72n.,
 76, 79, 84
 Swinnerton Frank 116n., 127

 Tabberer Amanda 141n.
 Tabucchi Antonio 27, 71
 Tally Robert T. Jr 114, 127
 Tantalus 178
 Tarchetti Iginio U. 57, 72n., 76-77, 80-
 81, 84
 Tarra Giulio 41, 55
 Tasso Torquato 72, 73n.
 Taylor Andrew 139
 Taylor Yvette 15
 Tedde Angelino 54
 tenente Bellodi (*Il giorno della civetta*) 26
 Teresa (*Teresa*) 57-61, 65-68
 Teresa (*Tortura*) 104
 Thornton Grant 58n.
 Tiffin Helen 154, 157
 Tiresia (*Conversazioni su Tiresia*) 36
 Tobin Stephen 142-143
 Tolino (*Il terno di San Gennaro*) 23
 Tomaselli Sylvana 110
 Tomasi di Lampedusa Giuseppe 32, 38
 Tommaseo Niccolò 84
 Tosatti Ada 83, 87
 Traina Giuseppe 14, 29, 30n., 38
 Trainor Leon 139
 Trapè Roberta 129n., 140n., 143
 Troup Cynthia 130, 132-133, 142-143
 Tuan Yi-Fu 118, 118n., 120, 127
 Tuccio Silvana 131

 Underwood Edith 117

 Valin Danièle 70n., 87
 Valisa Silvia 55
 Valpreda Pietro 19
 Varchi Benedetto 73n.
 Vasari Giorgio 71, 73n.
 Vattimo Gianni 114

 Vegliante Jean-Charles 83n., 87
 Venuti Lawrence 13, 15
 Verdicchio Pasquale 147, 152, 161
 Verdi Giuseppe 74, 76
 Verdinois Federigo 62n.
 Verga Giovanni 9, 31, 62n., 69, 71-81, 72n.,
 83-84, 91
 Verri Pietro 73n.
 Vespucci Amerigo 73n.
 vicequestore Rocco Schiavone (“Le
 indagini di Rocco Schiavone”) 34
 Vico Giambattista 152
 Vimont Jean-Claude 168, 172
 Virga Anita 145, 148, 148n.-149n., 161
 Virgil [Maro Publius V.] 51, 99n., 170
 Visconti Luchino 74
 Vittorini Elio 31
 von Goethe Johann W. 116, 126
 von Henneberg Krystyna 17, 27
 Von Krafft-Ebing Richard 90n., 100,
 100n., 110
 von Metternich-Winneburg-Beilstein
 Klemens W.N.L. 164

 Wallace-Crabbe Chris 139
 Walsh Sue 45-47, 55
 Wanrooij Bruno 106, 111
 Warf Barney 152, 161
 Waymark Osmond 125
 Weinstein Harvey 78
 Wells Herbert G. 116, 116n., 127
 West Morris 137, 140
 Westphal Bertrand 113-114, 114n., 118-
 124, 118n., 124n., 127
 West Simon 140, 143
 White Patrick 137
 White Richard 133
 Whitlam Gough 139
 Wieber Sabine 99, 111
 Wilde Oscar 76
 Winner Ellen 48, 55
 Woigt Karl 168
 Wolfgang Iser 46
 Wong Aliza S. 148, 161
 Wood Chris 131
 Wood Sharon 66, 68
 Woolcott Peter 131
 Wright Alexis 132

Young Arthur C. 117, 127

Zambon Patrizia 64, 66, 68

Zanze (*Le mie prigioni*) 166

Zena Remigio 71, 84

Zola Émile 9

Zoppo Vulcano (*Giannettino*) 48

Zuccala Brian 10, 14, 110, 145, 148n.-
149n., 161

Opere pubblicate

*I titoli qui elencati sono stati finanziati dal
Dipartimento di Formazione, Lingue, Intercultura, Letterature e Psicologia
(e dai precedenti Dipartimenti in esso confluiti),
prodotti dal Laboratorio editoriale Open Access e
pubblicati dalla Firenze University Press*

Volumi ad accesso aperto

(<[http://www.fupress.com/comitatoscientifico/
biblioteca-di-studi-di-filologia-moderna/23](http://www.fupress.com/comitatoscientifico/biblioteca-di-studi-di-filologia-moderna/23)>)

- Stefania Pavan, *Lezioni di poesia. Iosif Brodskij e la cultura classica: il mito, la letteratura, la filosofia*, 2006 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 1)
- Rita Svandrlík (a cura di), *Elfriede Jelinek. Una prosa altra, un altro teatro*, 2008 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 2)
- Ornella De Zordo (a cura di), *Saggi di anglistica e americanistica. Temi e prospettive di ricerca*, 2008 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 66)
- Fiorenzo Fantaccini, *W.B. Yeats e la cultura italiana*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 3)
- Arianna Antonielli, *William Blake e William Butler Yeats. Sistemi simbolici e costruzioni poetiche*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 4)
- Marco Di Manno, *Tra sensi e spirito. La concezione della musica e la rappresentazione del musicista nella letteratura tedesca alle soglie del Romanticismo*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 5)
- Maria Chiara Mocali, *Testo. Dialogo. Traduzione. Per una analisi del tedesco tra codici e varietà*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 6)
- Ornella De Zordo (a cura di), *Saggi di anglistica e americanistica. Ricerche in corso*, 2009 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 95)
- Stefania Pavan (a cura di), *Gli anni Sessanta a Leningrado. Luci e ombre di una Belle Époque*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 7)
- Roberta Carnevale, *Il corpo nell'opera di Georg Büchner. Büchner e i filosofi materialisti dell'Illuminismo francese*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 8)
- Mario Materassi, *Go Southwest, Old Man. Note di un viaggio letterario, e non*, 2009 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 9)
- Ornella De Zordo, Fiorenzo Fantaccini, *altri canoni / canoni altri. pluralismo e studi letterari*, 2011 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 10)
- Claudia Vitale, *Das literarische Gesicht im Werk Heinrich von Kleists und Franz Kafkas*, 2011 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 11)
- Mattia Di Taranto, *L'arte del libro in Germania fra Otto e Novecento: Editoria bibliofila, arti figurative e avanguardia letteraria negli anni della Jahrhundertwende*, 2011 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 12)
- Vania Fattorini (a cura di), *Caroline Schlegel-Schelling: «Ero seduta qui a scrivere». Lettere*, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 13)
- Anne Tamm, *Scalar Verb Classes. Scalarity, Thematic Roles, and Arguments in the Estonian Aspectual Lexicon*, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 14)
- Beatrice Töttösy (a cura di), *Fonti di Weltliteratur. Ungheria*, 2012 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 143)

- Beatrice Töttössy, *Ungheria 1945-2002. La dimensione letteraria*, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 15)
- Diana Battisti, *Estetica della dissonanza e filosofia del doppio: Carlo Dossi e Jean Paul*, 2012 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 16)
- Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Ornella De Zordo (a cura), *Saggi di anglistica e americanistica. Percorsi di ricerca*, 2012 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 144)
- Martha L. Canfield (a cura di), *Perù frontiera del mondo. Eielson e Vargas Llosa: dalle radici all'impegno cosmopolita = Perù frontera del mundo. Eielson y Vargas Llosa: de las raíces al compromiso cosmopolita*, 2013 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 17)
- Gaetano Prampolini, Annamaria Pinazzi (eds), *The Shade of the Saguaro / La sombra del saguaro: essays on the Literary Cultures of the American Southwest / Ensayos sobre las culturas literarias del suroeste norteamericano*, 2013 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 18)
- Ioana Both, Ayşe Saraçgil, Angela Tarantino (a cura di), *Storia, identità e canoni letterari*, 2013 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 152)
- Valentina Vannucci, *Lectures anti-canoniche della biofiction, dentro e fuori la metafictione. Il mondo 'possibile' di Mab's Daughters*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 19)
- Serena Alcione, *Wackenroder e Reichardt: musica e letteratura nel primo Romanticismo tedesco*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 20)
- Lorenzo Orlandini, *The relentless body. L'impossibile elisione del corpo in Samuel Beckett e la noluntas schopenhaueriana*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 21)
- Carolina Gepponi (a cura di), *Un carteggio di Margherita Guidacci. Lettere a Tiziano Minarelli*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 22)
- Valentina Milli, «*Truth is an odd number*». *La narrativa di Flann O'Brien e il fantastico*, 2014 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 23)
- Diego Salvadori, *Il giardino riflesso. L'erbario di Luigi Meneghello*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 24)
- Sabrina Ballestracci, Serena Grazzini (a cura di), *Punti di vista - Punti di contatto. Studi di letteratura e linguistica tedesca*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 25)
- Massimo Ciaravolo, Sara Culeddu, Andrea Meregalli, Camilla Storskog (a cura di), *Forme di narrazione autobiografica nelle letterature scandinave. Forms of Autobiographical Narration in Scandinavian Literature*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 26)
- Lena Dal Pozzo (ed.), *New Information Subjects in L2 Acquisition: Evidence from Italian and Finnish*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 27)
- Sara Lombardi (a cura di), *Lettere di Margherita Guidacci a Mladen Machiedo*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 28)
- Giuliano Lozzi, *Margarete Susman e i saggi sul femminile*, 2015 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 29)
- Ilaria Natali, «*Remov'd from Human Eyes*»: *Madness and Poetry. 1676-1774*, 2016 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 30)
- Antonio Civardi, *Linguistic Variation Issues: Case and Agreement in Northern Russian Participial Constructions*, 2016 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 31)
- Tesfay Tewolde, *DPs, Phi-features and Tense in the Context of Abyssinian (Eritrean and Ethiopian) Semitic Languages* (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 32)
- Arianna Antonielli, Mark Nixon (eds), *Edwin John Ellis's and William Butler Yeats's The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic and Critical. A Manuscript Edition, with Critical Analysis*, 2016 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 33)
- Augusta Brettoni, Ernestina Pellegrini, Sandro Piazzesi, Diego Salvadori (a cura di), *Per Enza Biagini*, 2016 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 34)

- Silvano Boscherini, *Parole e cose: raccolta di scritti minori*, a cura di Innocenzo Mazzini, Antonella Ciabatti, Giovanni Volante, 2016 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 35)
- Ayşe Saraççil, Letizia Vezzosi (a cura di), *Lingue, letterature e culture migranti*, 2016 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 183)
- Michela Graziani (a cura di), *Trasparenze ed epifanie. Quando la luce diventa letteratura, arte, storia, scienza*, 2016 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 36)
- Caterina Toschi, *Dalla pagina alla parete. Tipografia futurista e fotomontaggio dada*, 2017 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 37)
- Diego Salvadori, *Luigi Meneghello. La biosfera e il racconto*, 2017 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 38)
- Sabrina Ballestracci, *Teoria e ricerca sull'apprendimento del tedesco L2*, 2017 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 194)
- Michela Landi, *La double séance. La musique sur la scène théâtrale et littéraire / La musica sulla scena teatrale e letteraria*, 2017 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 39)
- Fulvio Bertuccelli (a cura di), *Soggettività, identità nazionale, memorie. Biografie e autobiografie nella Turchia contemporanea*, 2017 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 40)
- Susanne Stockle, *Mare, fiume, ruscello. Acqua e musica nella cultura romantica*, 2018 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 41)
- Gian Luca Caprili, *Inquietudine spettrale. Gli uccelli nella concezione poetica di Jacob Grimm*, 2018 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 42)
- Dario Collini (a cura di), *Lettere a Oreste Macrì. Schedatura e regesto di un fondo, con un'appendice di testi epistolari inediti*, 2018 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 43)
- Simone Rebora, *History/Histoire e Digital Humanities. La nascita della storiografia letteraria italiana fuori d'Italia*, 2018 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 44)
- Marco Meli (a cura di), *Le norme stabilite e infrante. Saggi italo-tedeschi in prospettiva linguistica, letteraria e interculturale*, 2018 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 203)
- Francesca Di Meglio, *Una muchedumbre o nada: Coordinadas temáticas en la obra poética de Josefina Plá*, 2018 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 45)
- Barbara Innocenti, *Il piccolo Pantheon. I grandi autori in scena sul teatro francese tra Settecento e Ottocento*, 2018 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 46)
- Oreste Macrì, Giacinto Spagnoletti, «Si risponde lavorando». *Lettere 1941-1992*, a cura di Andrea Giusti, 2019 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 47)
- Michela Landi, *Baudelaire et Wagner*, 2019 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 48)
- Sabrina Ballestracci, *Connettivi tedeschi e poeticità: l'attivazione dell'interprete tra forma e funzione. Studio teorico e analisi di un caso esemplare*, 2019 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 49)
- Ioana Both, Angela Tarantino (a cura di / realizată de), *Cronologia della letteratura rumena moderna (1780-1914) / Cronologia literaturii române moderne (1780-1914)*, 2019 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 213)
- Fiorenzo Fantaccini, Raffaella Lepрони (a cura di), *"Still Blundering into Sense". Maria Edgeworth, her context, her legacy*, 2019 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 50)
- Arianna Antonielli, Donatella Pallotti (a cura di), *"Granito e arcobaleno". Forme e modi della scrittura auto/biografica*, 2019 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 51)
- Francesca Valdinoci, *Scarti, tracce e frammenti: controarchivio e memoria dell'umano*, 2019 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 52)
- Sara Congregati (a cura di), *La Götterlehre di Karl Philipp Moritz. Nell'officina del linguaggio mitopoietico degli antichi*, traduzione integrale, introduzione e note di Sara Congregati, 2020 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 53)

- Gabriele Bacherini, *Frammenti di massificazione: le neoavanguardie anglo-germanofone, il cut-up di Burroughs e la pop art negli anni Sessanta e Settanta*, 2020 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 54)
- Inmaculada Solís García y Francisco Matte Bon, *Introducción a la gramática metaoperacional*, 2020 (Strumenti per la didattica e la ricerca; 216)
- Barbara Innocenti, Marco Lombardi, Josiane Tourres (a cura di), *In viaggio per il Congresso di Vienna: lettere di Daniello Berlinghieri a Anna Martini, con un percorso tra le fonti archivistiche in appendice*, 2020 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 55)
- Elisabetta Bacchereti, Federico Fastelli, Diego Salvadori (a cura di), *Il graphic novel. Un crossover per la modernità*, 2020 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 56)
- Tina Maraucci, *Leggere Istanbul: Memoria e lingua nella narrativa turca contemporanea*, 2020 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 57)
- Valentina Fiume, *Codici dell'anima: Itinerari tra mistica, filosofia e poesia*, 2021 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 58)
- Ernestina Pellegrini, Federico Fastelli, Diego Salvadori (a cura di), *Firenze per Claudio Magris*, 2021 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 59)
- Emma Margaret Linford, *"Texte des Versuchs": un'analisi della raccolta di collages Und. Überhaupt. Stop. di Marlene Streeruwitz*, 2021 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 60)
- Adelia Noferi, *Attraversamento di luoghi simbolici. Petrarca, il bosco e la poesia: con testimonianze sull'autrice*, a cura di Enza Biagini, Anna Dolfi, 2021 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 61)
- Annalisa Martelli, *«The good comic novel»: la narrativa comica di Henry Fielding e l'importanza dell'esempio cervantino*, 2021 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 62)
- Sara Svolacchia, *Jacqueline Risset. Scritture dell'istante*, 2021 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 63)
- Benno Geiger, *Poesie scelte: introduzione e traduzione con testo a fronte*, a cura di Diana Battisti, Marco Meli, 2021 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 64)
- Gavilli Ruben, *Ljósvetninga saga / Saga degli abitanti di Ljósavatn*, 2022 (Biblioteca di Studi di Filologia Moderna; 65)

Riviste ad accesso aperto
(<http://www.fupress.com/riviste>)

- «Journal of Early Modern Studies», ISSN: 2279-7149
- «LEA – Lingue e Letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente», ISSN: 1824-484x
- «Quaderni di Linguistica e Studi Orientali / Working Papers in Linguistics and Oriental Studies», ISSN: 2421-7220
- «Studi Irlandesi. A Journal of Irish Studies», ISSN: 2239-3978

Rewriting and Rereading the XIX and XX-Century Canons.

The book takes its lead from academic Annamaria Pagliaro's experience straddling Australia and Italy over a thirty-year period. As both former colleagues and collaborators of Pagliaro, we editors intend to open a kaleidoscope of perspectives on the international research landscape in the fields of Italian and Anglophone studies, starting from Pagliaro's own contribution to the creation of relations between the two cultures in the period that saw her work transnationally as Director of the Monash University Prato Centre (2005-2008).

SAMUELE GRASSI is part-time Lecturer at Monash University Prato Centre and Adjunct Lecturer at University of Florence. His research interests focus on the connections of queer gender theories and postanarchism, interdisciplinary critical pedagogies, sexualities and citizenship education, including cultural, and educational exchanges.

BRIAN ZUCCALA holds a PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies from Monash University (Melbourne AU) and has held postdoctoral research and teaching fellowships in South Africa (Wits) and Mexico (Enah). His publications range from postcolonial theory to second language acquisition. He is currently completing the TFA Leadership Development Program with the Department of Education of Western Australia.