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Edited by: **Peter Vassallo**

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Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies
Edited by Peter Vassallo

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Editorial correspondence to be addressed to Professor Peter Vassallo, Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies, University of Malta, Malta.

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in memory of Rev. Professor Alphonse Sammut

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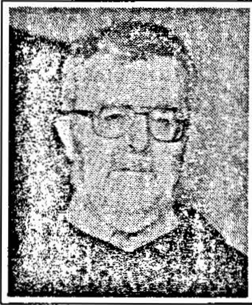
PROFESSOR ALPHONSE SAMMUT: AN APPRECIATION



All who knew him will be deeply saddened to hear of the death at 61 years of Father Alfons Sammut. No 'appreciation' can do justice to this dear, kind man, with his twinkling humour and his down-to-earth good sense. He combined in his person an altruistic devotion to his fellows and a love of truth, which manifested themselves in his daily life and work. Apart from an unstinting dedication to the University of Malta and to the Department which he headed, Professor Sammut was also well-known internationally, a familiar figure on the the campuses of several Italian and English Universities, and regularly to be seen at work in the reading rooms of the Vatican, the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, the British Museum and the Bodleian. In his professional career as an Italianist, Professor Sammut was as unassuming as he was in other areas. Yet he was an authority in several fields of learning, his expertise ranging from a profound familiarity with the works of Dante to an appreciation of the exoticism of the Romantics (where, in particular, he showed a rare knowledge of and deep empathy for the work of Alessandro Manzoni). But in these areas he limited himself to public lectures and undergraduate tuition; he was a fine teacher, regarded with evident respect and affection by his pupils. By pure chance he met two of those pupils on the aircaraft taking him away from his beloved Malta for what turned out to be the last time; there, typically, he was overheard politely and gently answering quesions concerning the courses they were to follow during the next academic year.

His main academic specialization lay in two related spheres: he was a comparativist scholar and a literary historian. his best work in the former field examined relationships between English and Italian literature, and his published papers on the subject, original and stimulating, provided the material for many an Italian tesi di laurea; *in particular his articles on Shakespeare and Pirandello, and on the reception of Manzoni in Britain were punctiliously researched and written up with great care and elegance. As a comparativist, it was, above all, his 1971 volume on Ariosto (*La fortuna dell'Ariosto nell'Inghilterra elisabettiana, *Milan,* Vita e pensiero*) which had great vogue in an Italy thirsty for such studies. Professor Sammut showed a profound knowledge of the texts examined, and at the same time a wonderful sympathy for the atmosphere and history of the late sixteenth century. He also had an unrivalled awarenesss of secondary critical*

sources and of previous attempts this century to achieve sporadically what in the Ariosto volume he did single-mindedly and at greater length. The results of all that research were expressed in very dense but beautifully written Italian. The volume will remain a standard reference work for years to come, a fundamental tool for such comparativist research, and a permanent record of what Professor Sammut did for generations of his pupils in Malta, as well as for the many Italian students whom he taught during long spells as visiting professor at the Universities of Milan, Viterbo and Palermo.

Professor Sammut's major contribution to scholarship was his Unfredo Duca di Gloucester e gli umanisti italiani *(Padua, Antenore, 1980), which began as an investigation into the original library of Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester (1391-1447) and developed into a discussion of the spread of Renaissance humanism. On this topic the Reverend Professor was a world authority. Duke Humfrey's library, later dispersed, had been the basis for Oxford's Bodleian, and so for the reading matter of England's then leading University. What books did the library contain? What texts most influenced the Duke and his contemporaries? How had writers and bibliophiles reacted to those questions over the past four hundred years? Professor Sammut raised these and other difficult issues, and, after painstaking searches to trace the original volumes, which had been sold or pillaged for other collections, examined the constitution of that first library, considered the Duke's correspondence with contemporary men of letters, and investigated the transmission in subsequent published editions of some of the important texts and manuscripts which Humfrey had collected. Professor Sammut's volume unravelled a veritable skein of academic relationships in the late Renaissance. He brought to light previously rare and unpublished texts to illustrate the descriptive part of his researches, opened up other academic associations, including connections with the humanist tradition in the cultures of France, Italy and England, and assembled, for the first time in a single volume, previous critical assessments of the question. The book was and is a triumph of tenacious, meticulous, and often lonely research.*

On the day before departing for his last sad journey, Professor Sammut left on his desk at the University the typescript of his final vast bibliographical enterprise, containing nearly four thousand entries (some with sixteen or more subsections) listing books and articles which reflected the appearance of Italian authors in Anglo-Italian criticism. The fruit of a litetime's reading, it will constitute a further altruistic legacy of this most courteous gentleman, this fine scholar, and will serve as an additional, reminder, when it is published during the coming years, of the great loss his death means to us all.

J.R. Woodhouse

IN GENTIL HERTES AY REDY TO REPAIRE: GUINIZZELLI, FRANCESCA E TROILO

PIERO BOITANI

Il presente saggio, basato sulla conferenza da me tenuta durante il Congresso su 'England and Italy: Literary and Cultural Relations', Malta 1993, riprende l'argomentazione più articolata e complessa sviluppata in un intervento in lingua inglese di prossima pubblicazione (1994) in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture* ,ed. by D. and S. Maddox (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer).

John Keats, il quale, com'è noto, era affascinato sia dalla storia di Troilo e Cressida che da quella di Paolo e Francesca, ha scritto:

> Just so may love, although 'tis understood
> The mere commingling of passionate breath,
> Produce more than our searching witnesseth.

L'amore, 'an orbèd drop of light', non è solo passione sensuale, ma qualcosa che 'genders a novel sense,/At which we start and fret, till in the end,/Melting into its radiance, we blend,/Mingle, and so become a part of it'.

Credo che sia Dante che Chaucer sarebbero stati d'accordo, e quello che tento di fare in questo saggio è spiegare perché e in che modo lo sono stati all'interno del loro mondo culturale. In questa spiegazione ha un ruolo fondamentale il verso 5 del Libro III del *Troilus* di Chaucer, 'In gentil hertes ay redy to repaire'. Per la curiosità che ha sempre suscitato in me, questo verso costituisce la prima parte del titolo di questo lavoro. Perché Chaucer lo ha scritto? I fatti sono noti. Nel *Filostrato* di Boccaccio, dopo aver consumato il rapporto con Criseida, alla fine del Libro III, Troiolo canta un inno a Venere alla maniera di Boezio:

> O Luce etterna, il cui lieto splendore
> fa bello il terzo ciel dal qual ne piove
> piacer, vaghezza, pietate ed amore,
> del sole amica, e figliuola di Giove,
> benigna donna d'ogni gentil core,
> certa cagion del valor che mi move
> a' sospir dolci della mia salute,
> sempre lodata sia la tua virtute.

Chaucer, riconoscendo chiaramente che la fonte di questo canto è nel *De Consolatione Philosophiae* II, m.8, ne sdoppia l'uso. Egli si rifà direttamente a Boezio per l'inno di Troilo, che verrà alla fine del III libro di *Troilus and Criseyde*, ma sposta il canto del Troiolo di Boccaccio al 'Proemium', o prologo del III Libro, dove esso è pronunciato non da un personaggio della storia, ma dalla voce stessa dell'autore o del narratore.

Al verso 5 della prima stanza del canto di Troiolo, Chaucer trova come attributo di Venere la seguente espressione: 'benigna donna d'ogni gentil core'. Invece di tradurre quel verso, Chaucer – all'apparenza in modo del tutto inaspettato – inserisce la propria versione dell'*incipit* della canzone di Guido Guinizzelli, 'Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore': *in gentil hertes ay redy to repaire*. E siccome il verso si inserisce perfettamente nella stanza, noi continuiamo a leggere senza prestarvi altra attenzione.

Ma una cosa è dire che Venere è la 'domina' di ogni cuore nobile e un'altra è vederla sempre pronta a 'repaire', cioè a tornare al cuore nobile come alla propria casa. La stanza chauceriana ha inizio, per così dire, nel terzo cielo e termina nel cuore umano. Entrambi sono i 'luoghi naturali' della luce d'Amore: uno nel cosmo, l'altro nell'essere umano. Il mutamento può sembrare di scarsa importanza, ma penso che nel contesto del *Troilus* sia in realtà fondamentale.

Per capire il perché, la prima cosa da fare è tornare alla canzone di Guinizzelli. In essa il poeta bolognese si propone di illustrare la relazione tra amore e cuore nobile, ma si spinge più lontano di chiunque altro prima di lui ed enuncia una legge universale dell'amore, valida ovunque e sempre (Chaucer renderà 'sempre' con 'ay'). La sua è in realtà una 'metafisica' dell'amore e l'argomentazione che la illustra si basa opportunamente sull'analogia:

> Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore
> come l'ausello in selva a la verdura

Per cinque stanze Guinizzelli propone un'analogia dopo l'altra, ripetendo e variando ogni volta uno o più elementi del paragone precedente. Così, per citare due versi che saranno utili più avanti:

> Foco d'amore in gentil cor s'aprende
> come vertute in pietra preziosa...

Malgrado l'apparente staticità, la poesia è in realtà uno straordinario tour de force. Per esempio, nella stanza 6 il poeta salta, per così dire, da un cielo al Cielo. Dio Creatore – egli scrive – splende dinanzi alle intelligenze angeliche del cielo più di quanto il sole splenda dinanzi ai nostri occhi. All'inizio della poesia, Natura crea il sole, l'amore e il cuore nobile. Qui vediamo Dio splendere nell'intelligenza angelica – movendo, come direbbe Aristotele, per il fatto di essere amato. Siamo, per così dire, *prima* del Big Bang, e la metafisica acquista i colori della religione. E infatti dal principio delle cose veniamo poi immediatamente trasportati alla loro fine, al di là della morte, al giorno del Giudizio. Nell'ultima stanza l'anima del poeta sta davanti a Dio per l'ultimo Giudizio e Dio la rimprovera:

> 'Donna', Deo mi dirà, 'che presomisti?'
> siando l'alma mia a Lui davanti.
> 'Lo ciel passasti e 'nfin a Me venisti
> e desti in vano amor Me per semblanti:
> ch'a Me conven la laude
> e alla reina del regname degno,
> per cui cessa onne fraude'.

L'accusa di Dio non è semplicemente rivolta contro l'idolatria, ma contro il suo stesso fondamento, cioè quella analogia che ha fino ad ora dominato la poesia e che, spinta all'estremo, porta il poeta a prendere Dio stesso come un semplice 'semblanti',un termine di paragone del 'vano amor'. In altre parole, il poeta mette in scena qui la fondamentale condanna cristiana dell'amore e della *letteratura* cortese. 'Tenne d'angel sembianza/che fosse del tuo regno', il poeta ingenuamente risponde al Creatore, 'non è stata colpa mia ('non me fu fallo') riporre il lei il mio amore'. L'errore è consistito, sembra dire lo scrittore, non nel prendere il 'semblanti' di Dio per 'vano amor', ma in un abbaglio analogico assai minore, quello di innamorarsi della 'sembianza' *angelica* della donna.

In breve, 'Al cor gentil' ci presenta l'affascinante drammatizzazione di tutta una cultura. Non c'è quindi da meravigliarsi che Dante considerasse questa canzone un manifesto della nuova poesia e che vi ritornasse costantemente nei suoi scritti. Ed è alla versione dantesca della poesia di Guinizzelli che dobbiamo rivolgerci per arrivare a Chaucer. Gli incipit anaforici con 'Amor' formano una serie di liriche paraguinizzelliane che si snoda lungo

tutta la carriera di Dante; l'immagine dell'uccello di 'come l'ausello in selva a la verdura' è portata avanti a partire da *Inferno* V fino a *Purgatorio* XXVI; e la quinta stanza della poesia di Guinizzelli è chiaramente alla base di due canzoni dantesche, 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore' nella *Vita Nuova*, e 'Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete' nel *Convivio*.

Non posso qui entrare nei particolari di ciascuna di queste composizioni, ma vorrei almeno fare due osservazioni. In primo luogo, esse segnalano punti chiave nell'evoluzione di Dante come persona utilizzando sostanzialmente lo stesso genere o 'stile' di poesia, ma interpretandola in maniera alquanto diversa. Per esempio, 'Amor che nella mente mi ragiona' fa uso dello stesso 'stile della loda' con cui Dante aveva cantato la bellezza di Beatrice nella *Vita Nuova* in 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore', ma la donna celebrata qui, come spiega *Convivio* III, è la Filosofia. Quattro versi di questa splendida poesia mostreranno il modo di operare di Dante. Egli sta descrivendo l'aspetto della donna:

> Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto
> che mostran de' piacer di Paradiso,
> dico ne li occhi e nel süo dolce riso,
> che le vi reca Amor com'a suo loco.

Quando inizia a commentare questa canzone in *Convivio* III, Dante scrive che il suo 'secondo amore prese cominciamento da la misericordiosa sembianza d'una donna'. In altre parole, stiamo assistendo alla cruciale trasformazione dell'analogia guinizzelliana nell'allegoria dantesca. La *poesia* è ancora analogica, come mostrano i versi che ho appena citato. Ma l'interpretazione della poesia – la lettera, per così dire, della 'sembianza' – è allegorica. Nella *Commedia* l'antica poesia d'amore torna di nuovo. In realtà, essa è deliberatamente riorganizzata in una sequenza che spazia dal primo girone dell'Inferno, passando per il Purgatorio, fino al terzo cielo: *Inferno* V: 'Amor ch'al cor gentil'; *Purgatorio* II: 'Amor che nella mente mi ragiona'; *Purgatorio* XXIV: 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore'; *Paradiso* VIII: 'Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete'.

Questa sequenza deve pure avere un significato. E credo che il significato possa essere sintetizzato nella grandiosa metamorfosi ed apoteosi che l'amore cortese subisce nelle mani di Dante tramite

la progressiva sublimazione narrativa e contestuale di una precedente fase lirica attraverso la morte. Tale movimento completa e cristianizza pienamente la via ascendente delle analogie guinizzelliane. Esso salva la letteratura cortese vedendola come una modalità del discorso nel *langage* dell'eros – del desiderio, dell'*amore*: dell'amore tra gli esseri umani, dell'amore per la conoscenza e la sapienza, dell'amore per Dio.

Solo nel contesto dell'unità e della diversità dell'amore, credo, possiamo capire Francesca.

Francesca è stata intesa come *exemplum* per eccellenza del peccato carnale, come paradigma di quelli 'che la ragion sommetton al talento', e anche come paladina e al tempo stesso vittima dell'amore cortese e della letteratura che lo riguarda. Facendo raccontare a Francesca la sua tragica fine e mettendola nell'Inferno – dicono i critici – Dante stesso compie l'espiazione del peccato di lei e condanna definitivamente quel genere d'amore e quel tipo di letteratura. Se così fosse, non riuscirei a capire perché Dante continui a citare la poesia dello Stil Nuovo fino al *Paradiso* e perché abbia dato vita alla grande scena del riconoscimento con Beatrice nel Paradiso Terrestre. Io credo che Francesca ci mostri in primo luogo come nasce l'amore tra due esseri umani di sesso diverso.

> Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
> con l'ali alzate e ferme al dolce nido
> vengon per l'aere dal voler portate...

Le colombe con cui ha inizio l'episodio di Paolo e Francesca sono chiamate dal desiderio e sono portate per l'aria al loro *dolce nido*. Esse 'reimparano' alla loro casa. E il luogo designato verso il quale sono attratte dall'*eros* è il nido d'*amore*. Le due anime – i due 'gentil hertes' – sono restituite al sentimento primordiale: *disio, amor*. Quando una di loro, la voce di una donna nella pausa del vento, inizia a parlare, è a quel sentimento che quasi immediatamente si rivolge. Francesca riprende l'eco guinizzelliana della similitudine precedente e racconta come l'amore di due esseri umani esploda in improvvisa conflagrazione, in *coup de foudre*:

> Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende...
> Amor, che a nullo amato amar perdona...
> Amor condusse noi ad una morte.

Osserviamo come Francesca muti sottilmente Guinizzelli riferendosi non al primo verso della canzone, ma al verso 11, 'Foco d'amor in gentil cor s'aprende'. Non l'amore che torna in patria

presso il cuore nobile, ma un fuoco che vi viene acceso con violenza e rapidità – *ratto.* Francesca porta Guinizzelli alle estreme conseguenze. Lo 'dislegge', trasformando le sue analogie in relazioni di causa – effetto e la sua metafisica in una fenomenologia.

Ella inoltre dà un'interpretazione tendenziosa di Guinizzelli aggiungendo all'improvviso 'aprendere' di un cuore l'immediato e inevitabile 'rispondere' dell'altro, seguendo forse in questo Andrea Cappellano. È questa 'attraction fatale' che Francesca abbozza con tanta forza nella tripla anafora. È la sua inevitabilità che uccide il libero arbitrio, e che ha portato entrambi alla morte. Non al processo dell'anima di Guinizzelli davanti a Dio, ma ad essere assassinati, giudicati da Minosse e condannati all'Inferno.

Ora, per quanto mi piacerebbe farlo, non sto difendendo l'innocenza di Francesca. Per Dante, lei e Paolo *sono* colpevoli, lo so. Hanno subordinato la ragione al desiderio, hanno commesso adulterio, sono all'Inferno. Quello che sto difendendo è l' *amore* umano, la forza del quale era ben nota a Dante come lo è a ciascuno di noi. Vedo l''attraction' come vitale, la sua esplosione improvvisa come pericolosa, la sua inevitabilità come errata e, appunto, fatale.

Giustificando l'amore – il sentimento che unisce due esseri umani – salvo la 'courtoisie'e la letteratura cortese allo stesso modo in cui li ha salvati Dante. Ho detto che Francesca 'dislegge' Guinizzelli. Non è l'unica 'dislettura' nella sua storia. Quando ella abbandona i principi generali e si volge ai fatti, al modo in cui l'amore assicurò loro una effettiva *conoscenza* dei 'dubbiosi disiri', ella cita Boezio e poi prosegue raccontando la famosa storia della lettura insieme a Paolo. Un punto, ella dice, li vinse, quello in cui lessero come il 'disiato riso', le desiderate labbra sorridenti di Ginevra, vennero baciate da Lancillotto. In quel momento Paolo, tremante, baciò la bocca di Francesca.

Il fatto è, tuttavia, che nel *Lancelot du Lac* in prosa a cui Francesca si riferisce è Ginevra che, convinta da Galehault, bacia Lancillotto, e non il contrario. Ancora una volta, dunque, Francesca 'dislegge' un testo – questa volta, proprio mentre lo sta leggendo. Francesca non è solo, secondo la memorabile espressione di Contini, un' 'intellettuale di provincia', ma anche un'interprete disinvolta che stravolge la letteratura cortese in modo pericoloso. Dante stesso lo ha sottilmente messo in luce. Perché il 'disiato riso' di *Inferno* V *egli* lo ha visto sulle labbra della Filosofia in 'Amor che nella mente mi ragiona' e nel *Convivio*, e lo vedrà sulle labbra di Beatrice in *Purgatorio* XXXII:

Tant'eran li occhi miei fissi ed attenti
a disbramarsi la decenne sete,
che li altri sensi m'edran tutti spenti.
Ed essi quinci e quindi avian parete
di non caler--così lo santo riso
a sè traeli con l'antica rete !

Inoltre, sia nella canzone che in *Paradiso* XVIII ('Vincendo me col lume d'un sorriso,/ella mi disse: 'Volgiti ed ascolta;/ché non pur ne'miei occhi è paradiso'), gli occhi e il sorriso della donna sono presentati come 'figure' del Paradiso. Ma dipende da noi vederle in questo modo. Se non leggiamo male, ma interpretiamo il sorriso analogicamente, allegoricamente e poeticamente, riusciremo a capire la continuità e la trasformazione indicate dal 'disiato' di *Inferno* V, il 'dolce' di *Convivio* III, e il 'santo' di *Purgatorio* XXXII, tutti collegati dal supremo sorriso dell'amata. Se non facciamo questo, se non guardiamo all'amore, per così dire, da oltre la terra e la morte, diventiamo vittime della lussuria, del fatalismo. Leggiamo i libri in modo errato e finiamo a letto e all'Inferno. E tuttavia seguire questa sublimazione è penoso e lacerante. Dante sa quanto sia difficile cogliere la continuità, creare in se stessi la metamorfosi. La sua 'pietà' domina il canto. Nel canto II egli aveva chiamato la sua visita all'Inferno la 'guerra della pietà'. Questo conflitto esplode negli ultimi tre versi di *Inferno* V al punto da far sì che Dante lo spettatore, il quale cade 'come corpo morto', sperimenti una 'chiusura' della mente e una forma di morte. Forse egli suggerisce che mentre siamo sopraffatti dalla pietà umana nell'udire racconti di così teso conflitto, dovremmo soccombere e morire per 'traportarli' in una sfera più alta.

Ritengo che una delle poche persone che ha compreso l'interpretazione dantesca del messaggio di Guinizzelli e lo ha interpretato con originalità sia stato Geoffrey Chaucer. In *Troilus and Criseyde* le storie di Paolo e Francesca e di Dante e Beatrice sono costantemente evocate e contrapposte. Consideriamo, prima di tutto, l'amore di Troilo per Criseida. È possibile trovare una descrizione migliore del suo inizio dei versi di Francesca, 'Amor, ch'al cor gentil *ratto* s'apprende, prese *costui*'? L'amore 'renneth soone' come una freccia al cuore di Troilo. La parola 'sodeynly' è ripetuta due volte proprio all'inizio del Libro I, e le leggi di Amore e di Natura sono solennemente enunciate subito dopo dal Narratore (I,236 – 238):

For evere it was, and evere it shal byfalle
That Love is he that alle thinge may binde,
For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde.

Più avanti nel I Libro Troilo, come il Troiolo di Boccaccio, richiamerà egli stesso la seconda terzina di Francesca, 'Amor ch'a nullo amato amar perdona':

Love, ayeins the which whoso defendeth
Himselven most, hym alderlest avaylleth...(603 – 4).

Avremo nel frattempo notato che se, in termini danteschi, Troilo all'inizio assomiglia a Paolo, nel corso del poema egli diviene sempre più simile a Francesca – un'inversione di ruoli che è significativa sia nella prospettiva della generale 'femminilizzazione' dell'eroe cortese che nella particolare 'femminilizzazione' di questo eroe. Quindi, è Criseida che bacia Troilo per prima, tornando così ad una lettura fedele del *Lancelot*.

Si può in qualche modo inquadrare Criseida in questo schema dantesco? Se Dante Alighieri leggesse il *Troilus*, sarebbe certamente sorpreso di vedere il consiglio che Pandaro dà alla nipote per ricambiare l'amore di Troilo formulato a un terzo circa del Libro II come segue:

Certein, best is
That ye hym love ayeyn for his lovynge,
As love for love is skilful guerdonynge.

Ecco, penserebbe Dante, ci siamo ! Questo è l' 'Amor ch'a nullo amato amar perdona' della mia Francesca. Certo, il fatalismo romantico della frase originaria è stato sostituito dal buon senso inglese, dalla ragionevolezza. Ma i versi hanno l'atmosfera inequivocabile dell'amore cortese, il marchio per così dire di Andrea Cappellano. Sì, per quanto la inevitabilità del 'perdona' sia diventata una ragionevole ricompensa ('guerdonynge'), la regola è quella di Francesca: 'That ye hym love ayeyn for his lovynge'. Bene, direbbe Dante, abbastanza ne rimane, abbastanza è cambiato. Questa promette di essere una storia tipo Francesca, bella e tragica.

Tuttavia, Dante dovrebbe solo leggere altri duecento versi per accorgersi che il poeta inglese la pensa piuttosto diversamente. Pandaro sembra dare per scontato che si avvicina il momento in cui Criseida apparterrà a Troilo. Ma ella lo interrompe: 'Nay, therof

spak I nought, ha, ha !'. A questo punto Chaucer ci offre la visione di fondo che il poeta e il personaggio stesso hanno del carattere di Criseida (i versi non hanno corrispondente nel *Filostrato*):

> For man may love, of possibilite,
> A woman so, his herte may tobreste,
> And she naught love ayein, but if hire leste.
>
> (II, 607 – 9)

Criseida non ha nulla da temere perché non può essere *costretta* a ricambiare l'amore di Troilo. In realtà, questa è anche la risposta di Criseida e quella di Chaucer alla Francesca di Dante – se posso formularla nella mia imitazione dell'italiano di Dante: 'Amore all'amato *puote* perdonare'. L'ombra di Francesca sembra in tal modo scomparsa. Come a conferma di ciò, sessanta versi più avanti Chaucer sente la necessità di dire da autore o da narratore che se le persone invidiose cominciassero ora ad accusare Criseida di amare Troilo 'con leggerezza', 'all'improvviso', 'a prima vista', egli sarebbe costretto a rispondere che ella *non* gli ha dato il suo amore 'so sodeynly', ma che 'she gan enclyne/To like hym first', e 'after that' la sua 'manhod' e il suo tormento hanno fatto sì che amore facesse breccia nel suo cuore. La Criseida di Boccaccio, al contrario, 'sì subitamente presa fue,/che sopra ogni altro bene lui disia' (II,83,5 – 6). In altre parole, per quanto riguarda Criseida, non si tratta di amore a prima vista, di *coup-de-foudre*. 'Amor al cor gentil ratto *non* s'apprende'. E così scompare anche la prima legge di Francesca, la sua 'dislettura' di Guinizzelli. Questo è uno dei motivi per cui Chaucer non ha usato 'Amor ch'al cor gentil ratto s'aprende', ma 'Al cor gentil rempaira sempre Amore' di Guinizzelli. Egli voleva prendere in considerazione *due* cuori – quello dell'uomo e quello della donna – e quindi, 'in gentil herte*s* ay redy to repaire'. Al plurale, si poteva dire sia di Troilo che di Criseida.

Tuttavia, questa è solo una parte trascurabile della risposta alla mia domanda iniziale. Nel *Troilus* di Chaucer, Criseida ha un'autonomia femminile fortemente innovativa, ma è ancora l'oggetto dell'amore di Troilo e della scrittura del narratore. E, per cominciare con questo, ai suoi occhi Criseida è più simile ad una Beatrice che ad una Francesca. L'autore ci offre due ritratti della sua eroina, uno all'inizio e uno alla fine del poema. Entrambi ne esaltano la bellezza. Nel primo, Chaucer sembra tornare sia all'analogia proposta da Guinizzelli nell'ultima stanza di 'Al cor gentil', che ai frequenti paragoni danteschi tra Beatrice e un angelo (I,99 – 105):

Criseyde was this lady name al right,
As to my doom, in al Troies cite
Nas non so fair, forpassyng every wight,
So aungelik was hir natif beaute,
That lik a thing immortal semed she,
As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,
That down were sent in scornynge of nature.

Si potrebbe naturalmente obiettare che questi erano concetti comuni a tutta la poesia d'amore cortese e non vi sarebbe bisogno di cercare una fonte per questi versi in Guinizzelli o in Dante. Ma quando viene presentato il ritratto finale, che rispecchia il primo in modo da far da cornice all'intero poema, non si può più negare che Chaucer abbia fatto ricorso a Dante. Questa volta, infatti, egli si concentra sugli occhi di Criseida e, come Dante in 'Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona' e nel *Convivio*, come Dante in *Paradiso* XVIII, li vede come uno specchio del Paradiso (v,815 – 17):

But for to speken of hire eyen cleere,
Lo, trewely, they writen that hire syen
That Paradis stood formed in hire yen.

L'autore, quindi, sembra intendere il linguaggio della sublimazione di cui si serve Dante, ma significativamente evita l'interpretazione allegorica, rinviando il peso dell'analogia su quegli scrittori che hanno 'visto' Criseyde (qualunque cosa ciò voglia dire !). Per Chaucer, Criseida è una donna in carne e ossa, e anche, per la verità, di animo e intendimento straordinariamente femminile *quindi* è un angelo, i cui occhi riflettono il Paradiso. Ella è il paradigma della volubilità umana, e tuttavia la sua bellezza celestiale splende, intoccabile, anche oltre il suo 'mutamento'.

Una trasformazione fondamentale si verifica anche in Troilo. L'amore che all'inizio egli sperimenta come un insopportabile conflitto di opposti sentimenti, alla maniera del Petrarca, e di sensazioni fisiche, come nel 'Mere commingling of passsionate breath' di Keats, quando il reciproco cedimento e l'unione con l'amata si sono compiuti, viene percepito come un aspetto dell'eros cosmico. Il processo ha inizio nel famoso inno di Troilo a Amore – Carità a metà del III Libro, e culmina nel suo Cantico alla fine di questo. È un processo radicato nel piacere fisico – il 'cielo' in cui Troilo si inebria prima di pronunciare 'O Love, O Charite' è il corpo di Criseida , che egli accarezza e bacia – ma è anche capace

di innalzarsi alle sfere più alte di Venere e di Imene, di vedere l'amore come *caritas* e di rendergli lode come 'holy bond of thynges' con le parole che San Bernardo in Dante aveva usato a proposito della Vergine nella preghiera che le rivolge in *Paradiso* XXXIII:

> che qual vuoi grazia e a te non ricorre
> sua disianza vuol volar sanz'ali.

> Whoso wol grace and list the nought honouren,
> Lo, his desir wol fle withouten wynges.

Ancora una volta, il Cantico boeziano alla fine del III Libro è ispirato dalla 'womanhede' e dalla bellezza di Criseida. Ma ancora una volta Troilo sa unire l'aspetto terreno e quello cosmico dell'eros. Nel canto riorganizza il metro VIII di *Consolatio* II, in modo da farlo cominciare con la tripla anafora di 'Love':

> Love, that of erthe and se hath governaunce,
> Love, that his hestes hath in hevene hye,
> Love, that with an holsom alliaunce...

La voce di Francesca è qui solo un sussurro, ma un sussurro che sembra sul punto di divenire la gloriosa esaltazione dantesca de 'l'amor che move il sole e l'altra stelle'. Troilo non compie questo salto finale esplicitamente, tuttavia vede Dio (assente in Boezio, la fonte) come Colui il quale dà inizio al movimento dell'Amore che tiene insieme l'universo. La visione più esaltata e semi-paradisiaca di Troilo nasce da un sentimento pan-erotico ispirato dall'amore per un essere umano, dalla felicità dell'eros ricambiato in terra. Francesca può ancora divenire Beatrice.

Il narratore aveva anticipato questo movimento nel Prologo al Libro III. Lì Venere appare come la lucreziana 'voluptas' di uomini e dei, la luce benedetta del terzo cielo, e la 'plesance of love' 'in gentil hetes ay redy to repaire'. È questo doppio aspetto di eros, cosmico e terreno, che la scelta del verso di Gunizzelli da parte di Chaucer sottolinea.

E ora viene l'aggiunta fondamentale di Chaucer alle fonti boccacciana e beoziana! 'God loveth, and to love wol nought werne'. Alla fine del Libro III, Troilo vedrà Dio come origine dell'amore. Qui l'autore anticipa e complementa quella visione guardando all'amore come alla caratteristica dominante di Dio. 'Deus amat', 'Deus est Amor': Dio è soggetto, oggetto e luogo ultimo dell'eros umano e cosmico.

In sostanza, Chaucer sembra comprendere le analogie della canzone di Guinizzelli e interpretarla in una sequenza che delinea un doppio movimento – verso l'alto e verso il basso – in una prospettiva dantesca. Ciò che ancora manca alla visione di Chaucer è quella che ho chiamato la considerazione dell'amore al di là della morte. Questa emerge, splendidamente anche se in maniera obliqua, alla fine del poema, nel cosiddetto Epilogo. Qui Chaucer coglie al volo l'occasione offertagli dalla morte di Troilo per andare, contrariamente al Boccaccio del *Filostrato*, ben al di là di essa.

Questo viaggio nel mondo ultraterreno è triplo. In primo luogo, l'anima di Troilo ascende all'ottava sfera, contempla la 'pleyn felicite' del cielo e disprezza questo mondo infelice, condannando la 'blynde lust, the which thay may nat laste'. Poi, Troilo comprende che Dio deve essere amato dagli esseri umani. Infine, la visione di Troilo dopo la morte offre all'*autore* l'occasione di completare il proprio discorso sull'amore. Egli lo fa usando l'esperienza di Troilo nell'aldilà, ma andando oltre questa per tornare sulla terra e ristabilire il doppio movimento cielo-terra, terra-cielo. 'God loveth', aveva proclamato nel Prologo al III Libro. Lo ripete ora, vedendo Cristo come colui che 'right for *love*/ Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,/First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above' – in altre parole ponendo al centro dell'amore divino quell'incarnazione che ha fatto patire a Dio una morte *umana* per redimere l'umanità, e poi quella resurrezione che ha fatto finalmente tornare la divinità alla sua abitazione in cielo. Ma egli amplia anche la prospettiva tornando a Dio creatore. Quando si rivolge agli 'yonge, fresshe folkes', sta bene attento ad aggiungere che in loro l'amore cresce con l'età, e poi li esorta a rivolgere gli occhi del loro cuore a quel Dio che li ha creati a sua immagine e somiglianza. Dio ama e il Suo amore è riflesso, crescendo con l'età nel cuore delle creature che Gli assomigliano. L'amore umano e quello divino, per quanto indirettamente, si incontrano. L'uno è l'immagine dell'altro.

Chaucer ha afferrato il significato della grande metamorfosi dantesca seguendo il movimento della canzone di Guinizzelli oltre la morte e interpretandolo, in modo originale e complesso, alla luce della *Divina Commedia*. È significativo che la preghiera finale nel *Troilus* sia rivolta alla Trinità. I primi tre versi di questa preghiera provengono direttamente dal canto di lode pronunciato dagli spiriti dei *sapientes* nel dantesco Cielo del Sole:

Quell'uno e due e tre che sempre vive
e regna sempre in tre e 'n due e 'n uno,
non circunscritto, e tutto circunscrive.

Thow oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve,
That regnest ay in thre, and two, and oon,
Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscrive.

Nel passo del *Paradiso* da cui Chaucer trae questi versi, il fervente discorso di Salomone sulla resurrezione provoca un 'Amen' talmente pronto da parte degli altri spiriti che Dante comprende quanto grande deve essere il desiderio che essi hanno del loro corpo morto. L'amore divino e quello umano sono celebrati assieme. Quando Dante, con un tocco straordinario, aggiunge che i sapienti anelano al loro corpo 'forse non pur per lor, ma per le mamme,/per i padri e per li altri che fuor cari/anzi che fosser sempiterne fiamme', *noi* capiamo perché Chaucer abbia scelto quei tre versi per concludere *Troilus and Criseyde.* Ora, da oltre la morte, egli era in grado di vedere interamente perché questa vita è così importante. Ora, oltre il Cielo di Venere, egli poteva proporre la sua visione – una visione che chiamerei non l'Allegoria, ma l'Analogia dell'Amore.

L'amore che sulla terra sentiamo per un altro essere umano – l'amore fisico e cortese di Troilo per Criseida – ci fa percepire l'amore da cui è governato il cosmo. In apparenza, non possiamo andar oltre questa analogia. Tuttavia, come indica il Prologo del III Libro e come Troilo stesso sente alla fine di quel libro, l'eros universale è proprio di Dio e da Lui ha inizio. E l'amore divino a sua volta, come suggerisce l'Epilogo, si rispecchia nell'uomo. Questa analogia finale possiamo percepirla soltanto se guardiamo alle cose con occhi che hanno conosciuto la morte, quando la nostra anima – come nella canzone di Guinizzelli – si trova di fronte all'Assoluto. Da lì possiamo vedere la poesia d'amore medievale come un gradino nella complessa catena analogica che costituisce il discorso umano sull'eros: per dirla con Keats, come i fiori non sboccerebbero, i frutti non maturerebbero, i pesci non avrebbero scaglie lucenti, e la terra la sua ricchezza di fiumi, boschi e valli, se le anime degli esseri umani non si baciassero né salutassero. Da lì, per concludere, possiamo interamente comprendere perché la luce benedetta che adorna tutto il terzo cielo è 'in *our* gentil hertes ay redy to repaire'.

THE 'DOOM OF MYNOS' AND THE CHRISTIAN CONNECTION IN THE *TROILUS*

A M SCHEMBRI

One of the most seemingly innocent changes that Chaucer makes in the *Troilus*, is when he 'translates':

> (Troilo) disposto di prendere la morte — Fil 4.120
> Acciochè il suo spirito seguitasse
> Quel della donna con si triste sorte
> E nell'inferno con lei abitasse...[1]

into

> Hymself to slen, how sore that hym smerte, — TC 4.1186
> So that his soule hire soule folwe myghte
> Ther as the doom of Mynos wolde it dighte...

However, on closer study, it becomes evident that this change[2] from *inferno* to the *doom of Mynos* consolidates the Christain element which clearly emerges with Criseyde's swoon. Troilus believing Criseyde dead,

> pitously gan for the soule preye, — TC 4.1176
> And seyde, 'O Lord, that set art in trone,
> Rewe eke on me, for I shal folwe hire sone!

This unprecedented concern for Criseyde's soul[3] coupled with a spontaneous switch from a historically appropriate deity, Jove, to a non-commital 'Lord' is the first real indication of a re-direction of the Amour Courtois romance admittedly with its fair share of Christian undertones, to an essentially Christian poem.

Not that the continuous interchanging of pagan gods with the Christian God on its own would have meant much, when Dante calls on Christ:[4]

> O sommo Giove, — Purg vi 118
> Che fosti in terra per noi crucifisso.

But what is extraordinary is the fact that once Troilus acknowledges the *doom of Mynos,* Troilus is shaken out of his pagan acquiescence, and confronts both Jove and his minion Fortune (4.1192f). From this point onward Troilus will invariably call on 'Lord' and 'God' and never again on Jove except to curse him.

Pandarus scoffs at Troilus's propensity for suicide at the very early stages of the Romance:

> forto slen hymself he nat wynne — TC 1.823
> But bothe don unmanhood and a synne.

Troilus's whole attitude is nothing more than a romantic cliché. Criseyde can even contemplate suicide by starving herself to death (4.775) and still happily hope for 'Elisyos' (4.792). All this craving for death did not unruffle orthodox Christian sentiment[5] in any way. However, Troilus's daring resolve to commit suicide at the crisis of the poem is a different matter altogether.

Chaucer was very familiar with the Canto dei Suicidi. He quotes Pier delle Vigne in the *Legend of Good Women.*[6] Pier further complains:

> L'animo mio per disdegnoso gusto — Inf xiii 70
> Credendo col morir fuggir disdegno
> Ingiusto fece me contra me giusto.

Troilus is 'fulfilled of heigh disdayn' (4.1191), which is closer to Pier's repeated 'disdegno' than to Troilo's 'con animo forte' in the immediate source (Fil 4.120). In spite of Dante's sympathy, Pier is damned perpetually. Pier condemns himself by being unjust to his just self. Justice is the emanation of Reason (Convivio I xii 9). Troilus is an unbending follower of Reason, the 'deitade' (Con III ii 19) which is God Himself in man. Even in his disproportionate love for Criseyde, Troilus's 'resoun bridlede...(his) delit' (4.1678) that is his lust is 'cavalcato de la ragione' (Con IV xxvi 6); and he does not form part of those who 'la ragion sommettono al talento' (Inf v 39). His rational love,[7] his 'amor d'animo' (Purg xvii 91), cannot conceive, let alone tolerate, the irrational cruelty and falsity of Jove. Thinking Criseyde dead and the consequent loss of his 'beatitudine'[8] (Con III xv 2), Troilus seeks life in death, because only in death would he be free of the tyranny of Jove. By trusting in the *doom of Mynos* he turns to a New Order. And by challenging Jove, that is the Old Order, Troilus asserts "free chois",[9] rejects

pagan determinism (4.1059), and rises even higher than another just pagan, Cato (Purg i 31), who sought moral freedom in suicide, and whom Dante counted among the blessed.

Conversely, the Italian Troilo is prepared to pursue 'alto piacere' (Fil 2.19)[10] to the very confines of Hell. He even muses whether he could actually make love in Hell:

> Se di là s'ama, si come udito aggio — Fil 4.122
> Alcuna volta dir che vi si face.

He prays that when he dies Amor would leave him naked so that he would descend directly

> in quelle braccia — Fil 5.66
> Donde ha fortuna rea 'l corpo gittato...;

and contemplating suicide once more, which Troilus never does again after the Minos scene, Troilo would again seek

> la nostra fraudulente — Fil 7.35
> Donna, la quale ancora andrò seguendo
> Tra l'ombre nere del regno dolente.

If Troilus would 'folwe hire spirit low or hye' (4.1199) which, it is true, does not outright exclude the possibility of Troilus's having to search for Criseyde even in Hell,[11] surely, unlike his Italian counterpart, Troilus never entertains any serious fears regarding Criseyde's after-life. In the *Troilus*, Hell is mentioned eighteen times, four of which by Troilus himself by way of comparison. Nobody willingly opts for Hell; and the enormity of Hell is brought out by Criseyde, our 'anima mal nata' (Inf v 7),[12] who rashly and unequivocally swears[13] Troilus eternal fidelity on pain that 'with body and soule synke in helle' (4.1504).[14] For Chaucer's hero to elect to go to Hell, even to cohabit with Criseyde, was out of character with his perseverance in Truth and Reason.

Chaucer, perhaps prompted by Pier's 'ingiusto/giusto' correlation and certainly by the god's injustice towards Troilus, turns to Virgil, Claudian, and Dante, whom Chaucer had already recognised as the experts on Hell (House of Fame 1.445f), and who all feature Minos as the dispenser of justice in the underworld.

In Virgil, Minos is the 'quaestor' in Hades hearing the accounts of the lives lived and the charges made (Aeneid vi 432 – 3). In the *Second Book Against Ruffinus* (II v) Minos judges the saved and

the damned. With the advent of Christ and the consequent discrediting of Jove's divinity, Dante's Minos forfeits 'his beaute and...his chyvalrie' (LGW 1912). It must be remembered that Minos was the issue of Europa and Jove who had taken 'forme of bolle' (3.723). In Dante, therefore, Minos assumes a terrifying family likeness to the Minotaur, 'l'infamia di Creta' (Inf xii 12), who was fathered on Pasaphae by another sacred bull.[15] The Minos who comes down to Dante is in reality a hybrid of two Minoses which Dante, following medieval practice, skilfully turns into one anomalous devil,[16] retaining the orignal severity and equity of the one and the vindictiveness of the other.

However anachronistic this might seem to us today, it seems pretty obvious considering the manifold echoes of the fifth Canto of the *Inferno* that prevail throughout the *Troilus*[17] that Chaucer must have had Dante's Minos uppermost in his mind. More so, when one considers that the most spectacular element of this Canto is Minos. Chaucer with medieval unconcern disregards the time-scale.[18] This is, after all, exactly what Dante does. Dante's Minos did not whip his tail round his body only for Dante's near-contemporaries Paolo and Francesca, but also for Troilus's very relatives and aquaintances – Helen, Paris, Achilles – besides other famous lovers of pre-Christian times.

One could argue that in Chaucer there is no sign of the monstrous tail, Minos's newly acquired appendage, that more than anything else physically distinguishes Dante's Minos from his predecessors. But the tail was too inappropriately post-pagan. Also, it seems that Dante's Minos is planted squarely in the mouth of Hell which is not exactly what Chaucer had in mind. But the souls of the First Circle that is of 'Elisyos', theoretically at least, fall under his jurisdication. He shows little concern for these as 'ei non peccaro' (Inf iv 34).[19] Again, Dante's Minos enjoys very limited judicial responsibility in that he only allocates the damned to their respective circles. But he is surely the 'lord and juge of soules' (Boece III m12) by the way he receives Virgil and Dante. As C. Lévi Strauss insists, every myth is the sum total of all existing versions.[20] But it is also well to remember that Dante adds a most important dimension when he makes Minos the instrument of Divine Justice.

In Dante's Minos Chaucer found three important, I would say indispensable, elements – the historicity of the name, a horrendous presence which would adaquately substitute Boccaccio's *inferno*, and above all a Christian connection. Having submitted to the New Order, the *doom* of the son of the false god becomes ancillary to the returning justice (Purg xxii 71). Minos becomes antithetical to his reprobate and much fabled father, Jove. By trusting the one and repudiating the other, Troilus, like Rifeo Troiano, is precociously initiated into the New Order of love and justice (Par xx 103f) which will henceforth inspire all his future actions.

When Troilus realises that Jove is false, 'that falsely have ye slayn Criseyde' (4.1193), Troilus echoes Dante's Virgil when he describes the gods as 'falsi e bugiardi' (Inf i 72), rather than Boccaccio's 'con altro ingegno' (Fil 4.121) which Chaucer had at hand. While Virgil's judgement is the fruit of bitter hindsight, Troilus sees through the god's falsity in good time. However, it is obvious that any patent conversion to Christianity was out of the question. What Chaucer could have done and in fact does, was to qualify Troilus's paganism through an intuition of justice and love, and consequently like the Christian God, Troilus would 'fortheren trouthe' (5.1707) and will 'falsen no wight' (5.1854).

So, Troilus purges himself of the 'puzza del paganesimo' (Par xx 125)[21] to the very limits of historical consistency. After recognising Minos and appropriately and resolutely abjuring Jove, Troilus hardly ever calls on the gods by name except, when he asks the 'blisful lord Cupid...What nede is the to seke on me victorie?' (5.582f), and again 'so cruel thow ne be/Unto the blood of Troie' (5.599, 600), which are certainly more in the nature of accusations than actual prayers. On the other hand, Troilus readily recognises the gods as the authors of his prophetic dreams (5.1250) which are quite in character with Jove's persistent machinations. Also, Troilus makes provision, as a good pagan should, for his funeral with the customary propitiations (5.295),[22] but prays to Mercury (5.321) with Christian resignation.

Surprisingly, Troilus never imprecated Fortune again. We only get a running commentary on her activity by Chaucer the Narrator (5.469, 1134, 1754, 1763). Also, being a Christian, the Narrator is more suited than Troilus to remind us of Fortune's divine function:

Fortune, which that permutacioun
Of thynges hath, as it is hire comitted
Thorugh purveyaunce and disposicioun
Of heigh Jove...[23] TC 5.1541

Jove and God are here interchangeable, since Fortune does not only do Jove's dirty work, but also does service to the divine plan of purging, sublimation, and justification.

The Christian God responds no sooner than Troilus acknowledges the *doom of Mynos,* and recognises the gods for what they are. Boccaccio tells us that Criseida comes round from her swoon in time to stop Troilo from killing himself. But in Chaucer there is more:

But, as *God wolde,* of swough therwith sh'abreyde TC 5.1212
And gan to sike.

Also, although Troilus's despitious death (5.1806) is the doing of the pagan god, yet, we are immediately made aware of the divine plan – 'Save only goddes wille' (5.1805). Troilus's abject death is his premise to glory, and we can say what Dante says of the glorification of Rifeo Troiano who dies unappreciated by his gods (Aeneid ii 426f):

Ora conosce assai di quel che il mondo Par xx 67
Veder non puo della divina grazia.

Aquinas says that the object of Divine Law is to lead man to the goal of eternal happiness (St. II, 1, q98, art 1 resp), which Dante adopts as the aim of the *Commedia* in his letter to Can Grande. Similarly, Chaucer's plea in the *Troilus* is

That Love hem brynge in hevene to solas. TC i.31

At the height of his happiness, Troilus apostrophises Venus: 'O Love, O Charite!' (3.1254). Human love under the strict regime of Reason characterises Troilus's rapport in the first phase, and desire is never allowed to degenerate into 'lust voluptuous' (4.1573). And surely, Troilus's love for Criseyde 'pitous, pale, and grene' (5.243) and in her absence, cannot be other than Caritas. Conversely, Dante's Virgil would have certainly seconded Pandarus's changed feelings for his niece, when he says:

I hate, ywys, Criseyde. TC 5.1725
And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!

This is natural, reasonable, but un-Christian. Christ-like, Troilus loves his betrayer. He still loves her more than any other person[24] in the world (5.1701). He cannot unloven her even for a quarter of a day; and even though he cannot understand her treachery, yet there is no end to his loving concern:

> Allas, youre name of trouthe TC 5. 1686
> Is now fordon, and that is all my routhe.

It is only with his translation to the eighth sphere that Troilus loses interest in all things sublunary (5.1816) including Criseyde, just like Cato for his beloved Marcia (Purg i 88f).

Troilus's realisation of the iniquity of the gods is further borne out by his sweeping curse of heaven and earth, which had all somehow conspired against his love. The Italian Troilo 'bestemmiava' (Fil 5.17). Not so our Troilus, because

> La bestemmia oggettivamente è peccato mortale che non ammette parvità di materia opponendosi direttamente alla carità verso Dio (ST. 2a, 2ae, q 13, a, 2. Quoted by the *Enciclopedia Cattolica*).[25]

It is the damned in Dante who:

> Bestemmiavano Iddio e i lor parenti, Inf iii 103
> L'umana specie, il luogo, il tempo e il seme
> Di lor semenza e di lor nascimenti.

For Troilus even to imply charity as owing to the gods would have been a blatant contradiction in terms. So

> He corseth Jove, Appollo, and ek Cupide, TC 5.20
> He corseth Ceres, Bacus, and Cipride,
> His burthe, hymself, his fate, and ek nature,
> And save his lady, every creature.

In his wrath, Troilus curses the gods severally and collectively as the Old Order, which is readily supported by the Narrator who anathemizes 'the payens corsed rites' (5.1849),[26] and abjures the arbitrary gods,

> Jove, Appollo, ... Mars, (and) ... swich rerascaille, TC 5.1853

who repay service with death, to make way for the New Order. This is the Order of the true mercy (5.1867) ironically brought out by Troilus's effusive 'mercy passeth right' (3.1282) to describe Criseyde's ephemeral love, and implicitly by Chaucer's final invocation to the Holy Trinity[27] and his prayer to the Virgin Mary (5.1867, 8).

Therefore, to conclude, the juxtaposing of the *doom of Mynos* with Jove's falsity is certainly neither fortuitous nor a dramatic ploy. Not only is Troilus justified in disdainfully exposing the gods, but he is contemporaneously illumined by a lightening perception of an alternative Order to which Minos is harnassed. Even though Minos is the fartherest removed from the Godhead, yet he, too, subserves Providence,[28] that love which binds all God's creation (3.1261), 'moves the sun and the other stars' (Para xxxiii 145), and finds its fullest expression in justice and order.[29] By tacitly accepting the *doom of Mynos* Troilus implicity recognises Divine Justice of which Minos is the ultimate and terrible manifestation. If Minos's vindictiveness is not dissimilar to Jove's, it is controlled and sanctioned by Divine Canon, and Minos can with justice vent his 'ringhia' (Inf v 4) only on those who are guilty of warping their Reason or refusing Divine Grace, and are consequently discarded by God. Troilus turns the just cry of retribution[30] into inexplicable love. If, in loving his betrayer, Troilus is unjust to his just self (Inf xiii 73), it is because he intuits and embraces the far greater commandment of Charity, incomprehensible to the rational pagan, but the very beacon which lights the way to the true God. The fusion of pagan virtue[31] with Christian Charity sustained by a loving and just God, transcends temporal and rigid denominational division, and justifies Troilus's glorification[32] like Cato's, Trajan's, and Ripheus' in Dante. Troilus's terrible death which crowns the iniquity of the false and pagan gods is his passage to glory and spells their ruin. With Troilus pagan determinism surrenders to personal merit and Divine Grace.

Notes

1. All quotations and line references are from: F.N. Robinson (ed), *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, London, OUP, 2nd Edition, 1957.
Dante, *La Divina Commedia*, a.c. Eugenio Camerini, Milano 1878.
Dante Alighieri, *Il Convivio* a.c. G. Busnelli e G. Vandelli, Florence 1964.
N.E. Griffin and A.B. Myrick (eds.,) *The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio*, New York 1967.
2. 'Troilo disperato, nel Filostrato (V, st 17);
...bestemmiava il giorno che fù nato,
E gli dei e le dee e la natura.

Ma il Troilo di Chaucer ama mostrarci la sua erudizione mitologica nel passo corrispondente (V, 207 ss):

He corseth Jove, Appollo, and ek Cupide,
He corseth Ceres, Bacus, and Cipride,
His burthe, hymself, his fate and ek nature...

Ora qui il Chaucer fa sul serio: lo sfoggio d'erudizione non è per burla. Ogni volta che puọ integrare una fonte che tiene dinanzi al momento con informazione attinte ad altri fonti, non si lascia sfuggire l'occasione. Questo punto fondamentale va tenuto presente nello studio di Chaucer...'
G. Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales a.c. M. Praz, Adriatico, Bari 1961, p. 29.
Although Praz's assertion needs qualifying, one should assume that the switch from *inferno* to the *doom of Mynos* would have been similarly interpreted by the *Maestro*. However, the fact that he does not include this particular instance among the examples that follow the above, makes one wonder whether he might not after all have considered Chaucer's change motivated by other reasons.

3. In these lines Chaucer is not following his source for Jove is invoked by Troilus as late as TC 4.1079:

Almighty Jove in trone...

4. 'L'identificazione che Dante fa della somma divinità pagana e della cristiana denota un altissimo concetto di morale e di religione, che lo fa spaziare nelle eccelse regioni dello spirito, dove cessano anche le barriere dei singoli dogmi'. *Dizionario della Divina Commedia,* a.c. di Michele Messina, Firenze, MCMLIV, p.246.
Chaucer does not altogether share these ideas with Dante. As a matter of fact, Chaucer seems to distinguish between pagan and Christian after the 'suicide' episode.

5. See Joseph E. Gallacher, 'Theology and Intention in Chaucer's *Troilus*', *The Chaucer Review,* vol 7, No. 1, London, p. 63.

6. Chaucer uses part of Pier delle Vigne's speech (Inf XIII 64 – 67) in the *Legend of Good Women:*

Envye is lavender of the court alwey; LGW 358
For she ne parteth neither night ne day,
Out of the hous of Caesar; thus seith Dante.

7. See A M Schembri, 'Love, Pity, and Reason in the *Troilus:* Chaucer's Debt to Dante', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies,* vol. ii, 1992, p. 5ff.

8. In Dante, 'beatitudine' generally means 'felicità': '...e in queste due cose (the eyes and the mouth of the beloved) si sente quel piacere altissimo di beatitudine, lo quale è massimo bene in Paradiso' (Convivio III xv 2).
The Narrator tells us:

Felicite, which that thise clerkes wise TC 3.1691
Comenden so, ne may nought here suffice...

9. Troilus had just concluded that free choice does not exist (4.1049). Now, barely two hundred lines later, by taking his fate into his own hands he implicitly disavows 'predestyne' (4.966) and asserts free-will.

10. See Robert P apRoberts, 'Love in the *Filostrato*', *The Chaucer Review,* vol 7, no. 1, pp. 1 – 26.

11. Chaucer never states categorically that Troilus would or would not seek his Criseyde in Hell. Dante preoccupied with the prospects of a journey in Hell and beyond, hedges:

Io non Enea, io non Paolo sono... Inf 2.32

Surely Chaucer did not wish us to understand Troilus to be less than Aeneas. Aeneas is mentioned in Book Two (2.1471) and not altogether favourably.
12. One cannot ignore the undertones of Orpheus's search for Eurydice in Chaucer's *Boece*. Criseyde makes a direct reference to the two lovers in Bk 4, line 791. Boethius states that he who

ficche his eien into the put of helle...al that he drawen of the good celestial he lesith it (Boece III m12 60).

13. Criseyde moans that she was an

infortuned wight TC 4.744
And born in corsed constellacioun.

which is very close to Boccaccio's 'che 'n malora fui nato'. 'Ora', that is hour, had a distinct astrological connotation. Our Doctor of Physic was grounded in 'astronomye'. So:

He kept his pacient a ful greet del Prologue 414
In hours, by his magic naturel.

On the other hand Troilus avoids the astrological connection:

In corsed tyme (I) born was...

14. Pandarus also swears rather flippantly:

Or elles were hym leure soule and bones, TC 3.592
With Pluto kyng as depe ben in helle
As Tantalus.

15. For the affinity between Minos and the Minotaur see J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Macmillan Company, 1922, pp. 274–5.
16. 'Filippo Villani in the *Liber de Civitatis Florentinae Famosis Civibus* counts it amongst the greatest achievements of Dante that 'first of all united the fanciful creations of the ancient poets with the belief of the Christian religion and showed that the ancients not less than we were filled with the Holy Spirit'.' Kimo Franche, 'Modern Ideas in the Middle Ages', *PMLA*, vol V, 1890.
17. See A.M. Schembri, *op. cit.* p. 8
18. Chaucer even makes Criseyde swear 'by that God that bought us bothe two' (3.1106).
19. All the *Inferno* is under the jurisdiction of Minos. However, 'Minos sta all'entrata del 2° cerchio, perchè nel 1°, il limbo, le anime non hanno peccati da confessare e restano quindi escluse della sua giurisdizione'. *Dante Alighieri: La Divina Commedia* a.c. Umberto Bosco e Giovanni Reggio, Florence 1979, p. 71.
20. For a discussion on this issue see Peter Munz: *When the Golden Bough Breaks*, London 1973, p. 22f.
21. This is said of Trajan, another pagan, who like Ripheus: 'Beati entrambi per il loro amor di giustizia, per la nobiltà, e la santità della vita'. Turri, *Dante*, p. 194.

22. This is particularly true of Troilus's instructions to Pandarus regarding his funeral and his offerings to Mars and Pallas (5.295). However, there is no mention of funeral rites when Troilus is killed except for a possible hint in:

> And in hymself he lough right at the wo — TC 5.1812
> Of hem that wepen for his deth so faste.

Chaucer sought to bring out Troilus's *pietas* also, by making him turn to Mercury so that

> The soule gyde, and whan the liste, it fecche! — TC 5.321

Mercury seems to be exempt from the Narrator's final abjuration (5.1849f). Mercury exerted his planetary influence on the clerics who 'loveth wysdam and science' (WB'sT 700) and were as a consequence 'ful contrarius' (WB'sT 698) to the 'children of Venus (who) loveth ryot and dispence' (WB'sT 701). In Boethius Mercury is a metaphor for divine enlightenment (Boece IV m3). John Campbell discussing the 'supernatural helper' says:

> The higher mythologies develop the role of the great figure of the guide, the teacher, the ferryman, the conductor of souls to the afterworld. In classical myth this is Hermes-Mercury; ... in Christian the Holy Ghost.

John Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* London, 1949, p.68. Mercury answers Troilus's prayer (5.1825) for it is he who is to 'sort(ed) hyme to dwelle' (5.1827) possibly in the Empyrean, the true Paradise of the redeemed after 'his lighte goost' (5.1809) had found its own way to the 'holughnesse of the eighthe spere' (5.1809), that is Dante's Heaven of faith, hope, and love. For 'as moche as to every wyght his owene propre bounte (virtue, goodness) yevwth hym his mede (reward, glory)'. *Boece* IV, p.4, 35.

23. See *Filostrato* (5.1); and for a closer and more Christian source *Inferno* vii 73f.

24. 'Yet love I best of any creature!' (5.1701). This is the second time that Troilus refers directly to Criseyde as 'creature'. Early in Book V, Troilus wonders:

> How shal she don ek, sorwful creature? — TC 5.241
> For tendernesse, how shal she ek sustene
> Swich wo for me? O pitous, pale, and grene
> Shal ben youre fresshe, wommanliche face
> For langour, er ye torne unto this place.

This is a far cry from Troilus's initial prayer to the God of Love:

> O Lord, now youres is — TC 1.422
> My spirit, which that oughte youres be.
> You thanke I, lord, that han me brought to this.
> But weither *goddesse* or womann, iwis,
> Shal be, I not, which that ye do me serve...

Gone is Criseyde's beauty, and with 'creature' rather than 'goddesse' gone also is Troilus's *Dulia* of the stilnovisti. What we have now is Caritas. Troilus somewhat exonerates Criseyde and lays the blame squarely on Diomede. It is Diomede whom he wants to punish. He eventually meets Diomede on the battlefield, and wounds him badly. Diomede's state provokes Criseyde's pity which

leads to her betrayal to 'helen (Diomede) of his sorwes smerte' (5.1049). Troilus's recriminations should be seen in the light of Troilo's more vehement reaction against Criseida (Fil 8.17f).
25. 'Blaspheme' (or derivatives) is to be found in Pard's T 593, 898, Scog 15, Summs'T 2183, Pars'T 790 – 5.
26. See James A. Work, 'Echoes of the Anathema in Chaucer', *PMLA*, vol 47, p. 419 ff.
27. It is significant that Chaucer starts off the Dream in *The House of Fame*, the first long poem in the cycle mostly indebted to the Italian Tre-centistiti, with an invocation to the Image of the Holy Trinity in Man. see A.M. Schembri, 'Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Saint Augustine' *Augustinian Panorama*, Valletta-Malta, Nos 5, 6, 7 (one volume), 1990, p. 27f.

For Chaucer's direct indebtedness to Dante regarding this same passage see Howard H. Schless, *Chaucer and Dante. A Revaluation.* Oklahoma, 1924, p. 50f. Chaucer seems to want to frame the whole cycle with Dante's invocation to the Holy Trinity (Par xiv 28 – 32).
28. Boethius says that when the plan of God is thought of in the purity of God's understanding, it is called Providence, and when it is thought of with reference to all things, whose motion and order it controls, it is called by the name the ancients gave it 'destyne ... wheither that destyne be exercised outhir by some devyne spiritz, servantz to the devyne purveaunce, or elles by some soule, or elles by vertù of aungelis, or elles by divers subtilite of *develis,* or elles by any of hem, or elles by hem all...(Boece, Bk IV, p vi, 92f).

In *The City of God,* St Augustine speaking about prophesies about Christ says, '... there is nothing far – fetched in the belief that among other peoples besides the Jews there existed men to whom this mystery was revealed... It may be that they shared in the same gracious gift of God; or perhaps they did not, but were taught by evil angels; for those spirits, as we know, acknowledged Christ in his presence, when the Jews did not recognise him...
I have no doubt that it was the design of God's providence that... we should know that there could also be those among other nations who lived by God's standards and were pleasing to God, as belonging to the spiritual Jerusalem.' (Book xviii, Ch. 47, p 829. Penguin Classics 1987)
29. See Sissorr op. cit. p. 14.
30. Although Chaucer's Troilus does not use Boccaccio's lines:

Ma spero pur la divina giustizia — Fil 8.17
Rispetto avrà al mio dolore amaro
E similmente alla tua gran nequizia...,

that Troilus is concerned about justice is beyond dispute. He even reprimands Criseyde, 'What wratthe of juste cause have ye to me?' (5.1256). However it is Truth which Chaucer emphasises most in the character of Troilus. Antigone's song refers to the lover and obliquely to Troilus:

Of trouthe grownd, mirour of goodlihed. — TC 2.842

While Criseida might call her lover 'speglio mio' (Fil 3.31), that is mirror of herself, Antigone calls the lover who is ground in truth, the mirror of all goodness that is God.

Pandarus tells Troilus:

> Thow shalt be saved by thi feyth, in trouthe, TC 2.1503

echoing Christ's very words in Luke (8.48 and 18.4), truth meaning faith in human relations and, also, Truth in its philosophical and religious sense, God Himself whose justice is the theme of Dante's *Commedia.*

But Justice is more the concern of the older person, because

> 'prudenza...e giustizia: le quali virtudi anzi a questa etade

(third age) avere perfette per via naturale è impossibile'. (Con IV xxvii 13).

For the perfect youth

> 'la nobile natura...ne la gioventute si fa temperata, forte, amorosa, cortese, e leale: le quali cinque cose paiono, e sono necessarie a la nostra perfezione...'(Con IV xxvi 2).

Troilus amply exemplifies all five virtues. With the accent on loyalty, Troilo's plea to

> divina giustizia... Fil 8.17
> Son li occhi tuoi (Jove's) rivolti altrove
> Che fanno le tue folgori fermenti...?

becomes

> 'O God,' quod he, that oughtest taken heede TC 5.1706
> To fortheren trouthe, and wronges to punyce,
> Whi nyltow don a vengeaunce of this vice?

Divine Justice becomes a corollary of Truth which is in itself Divine.

31. Chaucer shows his familiarity with 'Tullyus of the drem of Scipion' which is the expression of enlightened pagan virtue as early as the *Parliament.*

32. Chaucer (5.1807 – 27) departs from his immediate source to hitch on the ending of the *Teseide* (xi 1 – 3) which he had previously suppressed in the *Knight's Tale.* This shows a definite change of heart and a theological boldness never before and never again encountered in Chaucer. Chaucer must have surely been aware of Boccaccio's indebtedness to Dante's 22nd Canto of the *Paradiso* (see F.N. Robinson, op. cit. p 387) which together with Ripheus the pagan in the Heaven of Jupiter (Par xx 68f) might have helped Chaucer decide in favour of Troilus's glorification.

L'EVOLUZIONE DEL PERSONAGGIO DI TRISTANO DAL MITO AL RACCONTO D'AVVENTURA: LA VERSIONE INGLESE E LA VERSIONE ITALIANA

CECILIA PIETROPOLI

L'evoluzione del mito di Tristano nelle letterature tardo medievali inglese e italiana verrà colta in due opere: *Tavola Ritonda,* compendio di vicende cavalleresche incentrate prevalentemente sulle figure di Lancillotto e dello stesso Tristano, composto in Toscana nel secondo quarto del XIV secolo e conservato in forma più o meno frammentaria in otto manoscritti, e *Le Morte D'Arthur*, opera della seconda metà del '400 composta da Thomas Malory, della quale possediamo come è noto l'edizione curata da William Caxton per la stampa alla fine del XV secolo e il manoscritto, non originale maloriano, cosiddetto di Winchester. Le due opere costituiscono due momenti all'interno di una vasta tradizione, dalla quale appaiono inscindibili: la loro funzione è ricostruibile esclusivamente se se ne tiene presente il rapporto di intertestualità con altre appartenenti allo stesso genere; d'altro canto è proprio l'apertura alla contaminazione, all'interpolazione del vecchio col nuovo che le rende testimonianze di un'epoca e di un contesto. Nonostante lo scarto temporale, le due opere sono a mio parere accostabili in quanto rappresentano simili stadi dell'evoluzione della storia tristaniana nelle due letterature: in entrambe il personaggio di Tristano viene 'arturizzato', per usare l'espressione di Robert Blanch,[1] e diviene uno dei tanti cavalieri che appartengono alla società della Tavola Rotonda e che operano per la gloria di re Artù; entrambe costituiscono una popolarizzazione e un volgarizzamento del mito, tant'è che anche al romanzo maloriano può essere applicabile quanto Daniela Branca scrive a proposito della sola Tavola Ritonda: 'Si avverte la... personalità unificante e caratterizzante di un narratore che osserva, giudica, descrive e altera la materia secondo i gusti del proprio tempo e del proprio ambiente'.[2] Di *Tavola Ritonda* esiste una edizione completa

curata da Filippo Luigi Polidori nel 1864;[3] parti del racconto sono poi state inserite in una antologia di scritti tristaniani curata nel 1950 da Felice Arese, il quale tuttavia presenta *Tavola Ritonda* come l'opera di 'un pedante... un moralista triviale', priva della 'bella semplicità' delle versioni precedenti.[4] Sorte simile era toccata al romanzo di Malory, che fino a tempi molto recenti era considerato opera prolissa e priva di un principio di organizzazione logicamente ricostruibile. Recentemente la critica ha tuttavia operato un cambiamento di tendenza, riconoscendo che la tecnica maloriana, che costituisce uno scarto rispetto alla tradizione narrativa del romanzo d'avventura a più trame, corrisponde a un preciso progetto unitario la cui finalità è di illustrare l'ascesa e la caduta di una corte dell'importanza di quella di Artù, argomento che allo sfortunato cavaliere Thomas Malory e al suo pubblico, al tempo dei conflitti dinastici legati alla guerra delle Due Rose, doveva stare parecchio a cuore. L'opera è stata quindi rivalutata alla luce di una lettura intesa come 'ricostruzione dell'orizzonte d'attesa dei destinatari per i quali il testo originariamente fu composto'.[5] Si è quindi operata la sintesi tra un apprezzamento estetico, che può avvertire come aliena al gusto contemporaneo una certa forma del narrare, e la considerazione storicista per le finalità originarie che certe apparenti debolezze narrative può farci rivalutare.

Da questa prospettiva l'evoluzione della figura di Tristano è di particolare interesse poiché Tristano non è personaggio di un unico romanzo o di un'unica letteratura, ma appartiene all'immaginario collettivo ed è parte di una tradizione che supera i confini di uno specifico genere letterario. È per questo che la sua vicenda, tra quante compongono le avventure della società della Tavola Rotonda, subisce più modifiche: la sua storia ha un carattere paradigmatico, mitico, ma si è aperta a molteplici letture. Il racconto è quindi 'da un lato... abbastanza aperto, abbastanza permeabile alle circostanze di tempo e luogo, ... si presta alle metamorfosi senza perdere l'identità primaria; dall'altro un bene in comune di cui tutti si appropriano senza mai esaurirlo'.[6] A livello mitico Tristano incarna il desiderio perturbante dell'adulterio, sentimento che è avvertito come attraente, ma socialmente pericoloso. Per via dell'amore adultero Tristano è un personaggio solitario, il cui destino è quello di venire continuamente bandito, ma di tornare ripetutamente alla corte in cui l'amata risiede, noncurante dei

pericoli che una simile azione implica. Nella vicenda paradigmatica di Tristano vi è un senso di fatalità, predestinazione, rassegnazione al volere stesso della sorte e il personaggio è associabile all'accidia, alla passività. Le versioni medievali a noi note ripropongono tutte, alcune in versione cortese, altre in versione popolare, la stessa funzione tradizionale del personaggio. Ma l'oggetto del desiderio assume facce diverse nelle diverse epoche storiche e anche il giudizio morale nei confronti dell'adulterio cambia. Quando nel XII secolo il mito viene iscritto nella storia assume una versione cortese e si fa *romance.* La successiva adesione di Tristano a una società cavalleresca comporta la perdita da parte del personaggio della caratteristica dell'isolamento, il che immediatamente fa sì che la sua funzione come campione dell'amore adultero venga notevolmente ad affievolirsi e che Tristano debba assumere un ruolo diverso, maggiormente eroico e quindi più consono al gusto popolare, all'interno della compagnia della Tavola Rotonda. Il processo di popolarizzazione coincide con il sopravvento delle versioni in prosa. Già la versione francese denominata *Tristan en prose,* che costituisce la fonte primaria di entrambe le opere oggetto di questo studio, propone un Tristano non più solo amante cortese, ma anche cavaliere, il che comporta un'attenzione molto maggiore al contesto in cui i due amanti operano e una radicalizzazione dei caratteri dei personaggi di contorno. È in alcune trascrizioni tarde del *Tristan en prose* che inizia ad esempio la trasformazione in senso peggiorativo del carattere di re Marco che verrà poi portata alle estreme conseguenze da Malory. Il processo di arturizzazione ha visto critiche diverse, ma questa evoluzione è inerente al mutare dei tempi e deve essere letta alla luce dello scontro tra la resistenza dei motivi, delle funzioni e delle strutture tradizionali e l'impulso innovativo che viene dai nuovi gusti del pubblico. La tendenza a vedere la vicenda amorosa inserita in storie di eroismo e d'avventura segnala il momento in cui tale materia diviene di dominio quasi esclusivo di un pubblico borghese che la piega e la trasforma ai propri gusti e la investe delle proprie finalità, sottraendola in parte al mondo oscuro e impenetrabile del *romance,* per farne una metaforica rappresentazione della propria realtà e trasformarla in materia di *gest,* se con *gest* dobbiamo intendere 'romances written for the lower classes, or for non-courtly audiences'.[7]

Una simile trasformazione non trova ostacoli in Italia, dove la vicenda di Tristano e Isotta la Bella era pervenuta sia tramite le copie dei romanzi cortesi sia attraverso le versioni orali dei giullari, tant'è che nel XII secolo la vicenda dei due amanti era materia poetica popolare, come testimoniano i numerosi cantari a essa dedicati. In Italia infatti Tristano è personaggio di grande fama, probabilmente il più noto e il più amato tra i cavalieri arturiani. La vicenda tristaniana è quindi in Italia il filone più vitale della materia di Bretagna, fino alla metà del XIV secolo facente parte tanto della narrativa popolare quanto delle letture dell'aristocrazia. Da questo momento in poi diventa argomento apprezzato solo da un pubblico borghese di limitata cultura: in questa fase nasce *Tavola Ritonda*. Seguirà poi anche in Italia una ulteriore evoluzione in senso nuovamente aristocratico e i romanzi arturiani diverrano letture tenute in grande considerazione nelle biblioteche delle corti, come quella estense. Un nuovo periodo di ampia diffusione popolare di questi testi in tutta Europa si avrà con la diffusione a stampa: il *Tristan en prose,* fonte della trasmissione popolare della vicenda, viene ristampato più volte nel periodo dal 1489 al 1533, il che indica che in questo periodo è la versione più diffusa. Ma dello stesso *Tristan en prose* viene data anche una nuova versione, contenuta nel manoscritto 112 della Biblioteca Nazionale di Parigi risalente al secondo quarto del XV secolo, versione rivolta a giovani uomini e donne di nobile nascita. E lo stesso William Caxton, nel diffondere la redazione maloriana a stampa, la dedica nella sua prefazione ai 'many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England'[8] che a lui si sono rivolti in cerca di edificanti letture.

Tavola Ritonda è quindi un documento della sensibilità dei lettori italiani della classe media nella Toscana del '300. Le fonti usate dall'anonimo autore sono molteplici: certamente la sua versione non è di natura cortese e la tradizione cui egli si rifà è quella che sottolinea soprattutto il lato avventuroso e fantastico della storia. Ciò che caratterizza l'arturizzazione italiana di Tristano è il fatto che egli immediatamente diventa il migliore e il più valoroso di tutti i cavalieri, tanto che la distruzione della Tavola Rotonda viene qui fatta coincidere con la sua morte. In versioni maggiormente diffuse invece, come in quella di Malory stesso, la caduta della società coincide con la mortale faida tra Artù e Lancillotto e con la morte di Artù stesso. In quella fase Tristano

aveva già abbandonato la scena, nella versione prosastica più popolare eliminato da una lancia avvelenata scagliata a tradimento da re Marco. La sua morte è quindi solamente uno dei tanti gradini che conducono alla distruzione finale. In *Tavola Ritonda* Tristano è invece protagonista della storia e gli altri personaggi, Lancillotto incluso, contribuiscono a creare il contesto e fanno da contrappunto alla sua figura. Questo ruolo accentratore del personaggio, oltre che testimoniare della fama diffusissima di cui si è già detto, rende ragione del secondo elemento caratterizzante il volgarizzamento italiano: nonostante che la crescente importanza della borghesia nella società comunale comporti l'assunzione da parte di Tristano di un ruolo ben preciso nel mondo delle avventure cavalleresche, nella versione italiana la vicenda d'amore ha ancora una parte preponderante. La lettura della vicenda amorosa è tuttavia indice del moralismo borghese e viene sottoposta a una interpretazione che Arese definisce più ecclesiastica che religiosa: 'L'atmosfera magica – scrive Arese – si è cambiata nell'aria realistica e positiva della Toscana trecentesca'.[9]

La nuova funzione assunta dalla storia verrà qui esemplificata in due soli motivi, a mio parere tra i più significativi a testimoniare della cultura dei lettori cui essa era indirizzata. Il primo è l'episodio del filtro magico, che i due personaggi inconsapevolmente bevono e che è responsabile della loro fatale passione. Nelle versioni più cortesi (come quella dell'anglonormanno Thomas) il filtro ha un potere eterno, e dà vita a un amore appassionato che è avvertito come sentimento nobile, grande e meritevole. L'amore giustifica tutto, anche l'adulterio. In alcune delle versioni più popolari l'effetto del filtro viene ridotto a un numero limitato di anni: ciò consente ai due amanti, qui considerati come peccatori involontari che sembrano meritare più pietà che ammirazione, di prendere improvvisamente coscienza della propria situazione e di abbandonare volontariamente la foresta da loro scelta come luogo d'esilio dopo il bando di re Marco, e di tornare a corte. La foresta difatti rappresenta il trionfo della facoltà dell'individuo rispetto alla collettività, in quanto sfugge all'azione normativa e correttiva della corte, tant'è che il tradizionale episodio cosiddetto della spada e dell'anello (re Marco sorprende nella foresta i due amanti mentre dormono separati da una spada, legge questo come segno della loro onestà e lascia a testimonianza dell'avvenuta riconciliazione il

proprio anello: incidentalmente, in *Tavola Ritonda* l'anello viene sostituito da un guanto) rappresenta un tentativo da parte del re di riaffermare la propria autorità anche nella foresta. Nella materialistica versione di Béroul i due, emarginati nella foresta dal bando regale, sembrano rimpiangere più gli onori perduti e gli agi abbandonati, piuttosto che lamentare la situazione colpevole in cui si trovano, tant'è che quando sono di nuovo a corte rimangono intimamente fedeli al tipo di esperienza fatta nella foresta. Nonostante ciò si avverte solidarietà e non stigmatizzazione morale da parte del narratore. In *Tavola Ritonda* la scena dell'assunzione del filtro ha particolare spazio e assume primaria importanza perché il filtro è considerato come l'unico colpevole e responsabile della tragedia che ne consegue. I due giovani innocenti stanno giocando a scacchi quando inavvertitamente bevono la magica pozione e restano immediatamente colpiti fino allo stordimento, tanto che dimenticano completamente il loro gioco. Questo improvviso e alquanto innaturale innamoramento, che è di per sé piuttosto tradizionale, è qui usato per liberare completamente i due innamorati da ogni responsabilità: l'amore adultero non deve essere cortesemente esaltato ma moralisticamente compatito e l'etica borghese dei lettori è fatta salva. Questa forma di popolarizzazione del motivo del filtro sottopone il tema dell'amore adultero a un giudizio morale che contrasta con la funzione mitica originaria di esprimere una passione che è considerata, anche se socialmente pericolosa, attraente e appagante.

Il secondo motivo degno di considerazione è il comportamento di re Marco nel rapporto di amore-odio che si crea tra lui e il nipote. La lettura moralistica piuttosto che eroica della figura di Tristano comporta che non siano necessari cambiamenti nei personaggi che lo circondano. Marco è ancora un buon re, anche se a volte un po' ingenuo e sempliciotto, che ha piena fiduca nel nipote e nella moglie, ma che è continuamente esortato dai suoi cortigiani a tenerli sotto controllo. Le scene in cui Marco è costretto a mettere alla prova la fedeltà di Isotta sono narrate in diverse sezioni del romanzo, una per ogni prova; tutte iniziano con una formula narrativa convenzionale come 'Ora dice lo conto, li mastri delle storie pongono, manifesta la vera storia che' e così via; tutte vedono la pacifica vita della corte improvvisamente scossa da uno dei cortigiani che informa il re del presunto tradimento. Ogni tanto

Marco decide che l'unico modo per essere lasciato tranquillo è quello di liberarsi di Tristano e o ne decreta il bando o lo spedisce all'estero con la scusa che la Cornovaglia necessita di qualche particolare impresa da parte sua. Fino alla fine comunque, nonostante tutte le prove, niente sembra scuotere la fiducia in Marco di Tristano, che mostra sempre di credere alle sue motivazioni. Tristano è quindi molto spesso lontano dalla corte e in queste fasi è protagonista di altri episodi quali quello della sua follia o il matrimonio con Isotta dalle Bianche Mani. Ma inevitabilmente prima o poi l'attrazione della corte, come luogo in cui vive Isotta, si fa sentire così imperiosa che Tristano è costretto a tornare. Questo moto ripetuto di attrazione e repulsione attribuisce alla narrazione un movimento a raggiera che deriva direttamente dalla versione mitica della storia, in cui il continuo movimento di richiamo e allontanamento coincide con l'eterno gioco dell'accendere la passione e posporne il soddisfacimento, creando una dialettica che sembra contrastare con una storia in cui i due amanti non si peritano di mettere in gioco tutta la propria astuzia e spirito pratico per farla in barba all'ingenuo marito. La contaminazione di fonti diverse fa sì che un nuovo motivo venga veicolato da una forma tradizionale.

Se la vicenda amorosa è tratta principalmente dal *Tristan en prose,* la caratterizzazione di Tristano come cavaliere deriva anche dalle novelle e dai cantari; a ciò si deve il fatto che la parte cavalleresca della storia è più comica e fantastica. Il personaggio del compagno di Tristano in tante avventure, Dinadano, deriva dai *fabliaux* e ha una funzione eminentemente comica più che critica, tant'è che in questo testo, nonostante le diffuse manifestazioni di senso pratico, sono ancora richiesti interventi magici e incantesimi che Malory provvederà a eliminare quasi completamente. In questa sezione del racconto l'autore deve combinare le avventure di Tristano con quelle degli altri componenti la Tavola Rotonda. Qui la tecnica narrativa, che abbiamo visto nella vicenda amorosa essere ancora molto tradizionale, evolve rispetto a quella della tradizione prosastica francese, dove le avventure di un eroe erano improvvisamente e inopinatamente interrotte per inserire quelle di un altro personaggio. L'autore di *Tavola Ritonda* tende a selezionare le avventure nelle quali Tristano ha una qualche parte: la tecnica dell'*entrelacement* non è quindi atta a mescolare fili narrativi diversi, ma, osserva Branca, è un modo per coprire i punti

di sutura tra tradizione e innovazione.[10] In realtà quindi, rispetto al romanzo a tappezzeria tradizionale, il modello narrativo è molto più semplice e lineare. Alcuni episodi che tradizionalmente appartenevano ad altri personaggi vengono qui riferiti a Tristano: ad esempio lo scudo che avrebbe dovuto rivelare l'infedeltà di Lancillotto e Ginevra viene usato per mettere alla prova Tristano e Isotta. Dato che Tristano è presentato come molto superiore a Lancillotto in forza e valore, la virtù di Galasso non viene qui messa a confronto con quella di Lancillotto, nel tradizionale confronto tra cavalleria celeste e cavalleria terrena, ma con quella di Tristano. Questo Tristano, così insuperabilmente superiore a tutti gli altri cavalieri, sia nella dimensione amorosa sia in quella cavalleresca, incarna quindi l'aspirazione verso un'età migliore, verso una idealizzazione della società comunale.[11] Proprio in quanto proiezione di un ideale la vicenda di Tristano in *Tavola Ritonda,* piuttosto che farsi specchio della conflittualità dell'Italia dei comuni, preferisce proporre un mondo romanzesco, nostalgico e affascinante, atto a soddisfare bisogni elementari. La struttura stessa del romanzo, che può a volte con la staticità dei caratteri, con la sua ripetitività e con i lunghi commenti autoriali, risultare ostica al moderno gusto per la diversificazione e la concisione, ci dice che il romanzo privilegia il piacere estetico immediato del racconto piuttosto che quello dell'interpretazione sociologica di fatti della vita e della storia contemporanee. Accanto al mondo del *romance* appare il mondo dell'erudizione medievale (si vedano le lunghe dissertazioni di carattere scientifico o filosofico), nonché il contrappunto comico, finalizzato al mero intrattenimento, e quello eroico-avventuroso, atto a suscitare un senso di ammirazione e identificazione. Unifica il tutto la lettura moralistica degli eventi. L'apprezzamento di questo testo può quindi passare solo attraverso il riconoscimento della molteplicità degli interessi e delle numerose funzioni dell'opera che si intersecano in un gioco di interpolazione e combinazione di versioni che tagliano sia sincronicamente sia diacronicamente le diverse tradizioni.

Nell'opera di Thomas Malory la sezione tristaniana, che è a mio parere parte inscindibile del disegno complessivo poiché ne conferma la tematica di fondo,[12] occupa soltanto un terzo del testo complessivo. Tristano nasce come controparte di Lancillotto e la sua storia può essere interpretata esclusivamente in relazione

e in maniera contrastiva rispetto a quella di Lancillotto stesso. Tuttavia, anche se qui non è più protagonista, è in questa versione che Tristano si trasforma in personaggio, secondo una moderna accezione del termine. Il Tristano maloriano è dotato di spessore psicologico, addirittura di una problematica umana. Nel *romance* tradizionale infatti predomina lo svolgimento della trama e la caratterizzazione dei personaggi si adegua all'azione stessa.[13] Ma l'opera di Malory non è *romance* con funzione escapista e tranquillizzante: la vicenda del regno arturiano nelle fasi di ascesa e affermazione e di caduta finale si fa cronaca metaforica della storia dell'Inghilterra all'autore contemporanea. La crisi di una nazione e di una società viene metaforizzata nel declino di quella che una volta era una tradizione potente, l'istituzione della cavalleria. Aspetti della civiltà tardo medievale sono riscontrabili in implicite sfumature, per esempio la disgregazione dei valori e dei codici cavallereschi, o il senso di instabilità e insicurezza tipico di un'epoca di trapasso che influenza l'atmosfera generale dell'opera. Insieme all'influsso del tempo traspare anche la voce dell'autore, in certi casi attraverso diretti interventi autoriali, in altri attraverso più impliciti ritocchi al carattere dei personaggi.[14]

La crisi della cavalleria comporta di conseguenza anche la messa in discussione del romanzo cavalleresco come forma di arte narrativa. La figura di Tristano si proietta con tutte le proprie forze fuori dalla cornice del *romance* che tende ad imprigionarlo in un ruolo fisso. Anche se a volte deve assoggettarsi ai voleri del destino – il suo nome appare già scritto nel seggio a lui dedicato – sembra poi sempre prendere in mano le redini della propria vita, come se fuggire alla cornice del *romance* sia anche fuggire al destino che il genere implica.

Se in *Tavola Ritonda* la vicenda tristaniana conservava il senso di fatalità, di predestinazione, di rassegnazione al volere della sorte che era propria del paradigma mitico, e la sua mentalità era ancora influenzata da una concezione medievale del destino, in Malory invece l'amore di Tristano nasce come atto di volontà e matura poi col tempo, messo alla prova dalla lontananza. La scena dell'assunzione del filtro perde di importanza, in quanto l'amore tra i due era già nato precedentemente, e assume solo la funzione di un intermezzo ironico durante il viaggio di avvicinamento alla Cornovaglia. Tristano perde l'aria sognante di chi è 'ipnotizzato

da un meraviglioso oggetto'.[15] C'è un senso dello sviluppo progressivo dei sentimenti nel tempo che non è nelle fonti. Nelle fonti il filtro è simbolo della sessualità e prelude all'atto sessuale. L'Isotta di Malory non si lascia sopraffare dalla passione. Infatti si concede a Tristano solo più avanti, una volta giunta a corte. La sua è una scelta personale, non fatale. Malory elimina poi buona parte della serie dei tranelli e degli espedienti di Tristano per andare dalla regina e dei baroni per sorprenderlo, come lo stratagemma di fior di farina. Infatti i cambiamenti sociali ed economici della fine del '400 comportano anche mutamenti nella morale, per cui il Tristano maloriano non è più condannabile, e i cortigiani non sono più così impegnati a salvaguardare l'onore del re. Nel periodo dell'amore cortese il codice letterario si scontrava con quello morale, e un'opera borghese come *Tavola Ritonda* questi due codici tentava di riconciliare. Alla fine del '400 questo non è più necessario. Isotta stessa tesse la trama dell'adulterio: la sua evoluzione segue quella di Tristano. Entrambi pagano a caro prezzo la loro umanità: rinunciano alla eternità e alla immortalità proprie del mito. Ma è questo sacrificio che li avvicina al lettore moderno, superando quell'alterità che risulterebbe altrimenti invalicabile.

Anche se sarà solo Lancillotto verso la fine del libro a rendersi conto della nuova preminenza del 'free will' sul senso del destino,[16] anche Tristano, la cui sezione occupa il centro del romanzo, subisce già le conseguenze della nuova concezione umanistica del ruolo dell'individuo. Il fatto che la passione per Isotta non sia l'unica vicenda amorosa che vede Tristano come protagonista toglie al loro amore l'aura dell'esemplarità, dell'eccezionalità. Non solo, ma è proprio per via di una precedente rivalità per una donna che nasce il conflitto tra Tristano e Marco, conflitto che, basandosi su motivazioni psicologiche precise e credibili, aumenta progressivamente da entrambe le parti e progredisce tramite una serie di confronti successivi fino all'assassinio finale. Malory, seguendo le premesse di alcune trascrizioni tarde del *Tristan en prose,* macchia ulteriormente il carattere di Marco, che diviene cavaliere fellone e traditore nonché pessimo reggitore del proprio regno, in quanto antepone la propria sete di vendetta personale agli interessi della Cornovaglia. Marco non ha quindi più soltanto la funzione pietibile del marito e dello zio ingannato negli affetti più cari, ma agisce come controparte di

Artù come esempio di pessimo governante e pessimo cavaliere. Il carattere di Marco fa anche sì che gli amanti siano giustificabili non solo moralmente ma anche di fronte alla società: tanto Artù quanto Lancillotto giustificano Tristano fino a invitarlo a sottrarre Isotta all'indegno marito.

La giustificazione morale e sociale dell'adulterio rende ragione della contaminazione più significativa da parte di Malory: la rinuncia a inserire le vicende incluse nel terzo libro del *Tristan en prose* (terzo evidentemente nella trascrizione che Malory sta usando). La storia di Tristano e Isotta viene abbandonata nel momento in cui i due vivono insieme nel castello di Joyous Garde, castello peraltro messo a loro disposizione da Lancillotto stesso, all'interno del quale formano una piccola cellula sociale a sé stante, ma senza perdere i contatti con il resto del mondo. Nella realizzazione della dialettica passione-ostacolo nella tranquillizzante vita 'borghese' in un castello, che è certamente luogo meno romanzesco della foresta, che Malory esclude completamente, l'adulterio perde l'impronta di fatalità ed essi perdono la delicata malinconia delle loro caratterizzazioni primarie. La maniera anticonvenzionale in cui la vita degli adulteri è descritta riflette una analoga trasformazione nella storia del costume e nella vita sociale. Infatti nel tardo medio evo la necessità del consenso femminile[17] muta la funzione del matrimonio come patto famigliare e sociale. In questo senso la vicenda di Artù, Ginevra e Lancillotto è molto più tradizionale: il matrimonio tra Artù e Ginevra è un contratto nello stilare il quale il padre di Ginevra ha grande parte e l'adulterio è causa di dissoluzione della società cui questo matrimonio ha dato vita.

Se l'esilio nelle versioni precedenti era vissuto in una sorta di estatico abbandono, dimentichi del resto del mondo, in *Le Morte d'Arthur* esso non è associato all'isolamento e allo struggimento interiore, ma è animato da un susseguirsi ininterrotto di avventure, tornei, sfide. La dialettica portante non è più quella della passione amorosa e del soddisfacimento di essa, ma è la acquisizione-perdita dell'identità cavalleresca, che coincide con la perdita di funzione della cavalleria. Cosa che fa dire a Felicity Riddy che la *quest* dei cavalieri maloriani, mascherata sotto forme d'avventura disparate, è in realtà sempre una *quest* di se stessi.[18] In Malory la soluzione delle avversità è comunque affidata a facoltà umane, non magiche o sovrannaturali; i personaggi rifiutano l'utopia, l'idealizzazione

astratta, optano per la realtà umana in tutti i suoi aspetti, positivi e negativi, ispirandosi a una lettura razionalista, o 'laica', come preferisce definirla Riddy, della vita umana.[19] Il carattere di praticità dei personaggi è mercantile, la loro abilità artigianale. Non c'è dramma perché l'ideale amoroso della felicità terrena non ha niente a che vedere con il dramma della passione. Basta essere buoni e onesti per essere felici.

Di Tristano Malory ci narra solo l'ascesa, mentre la caduta viene appena accennata nell'ultimo libro, in maniera paradossalmente marginale. La caduta di Tristano riguarda solo lui stesso e non troverebbero spazio il senso di crisi interiore e rimorso che caratterizza l'ultimo libro dedicato a Lancillotto o la consapevolezza di avere tradito il proprio re e la cavalleria che è nell'ultimo incontro di Lancillotto e Artù. Quindi l'amore di Tristano e Isotta non può essere letto, come fa Rumble, come ulteriore prova della disgregazione della società arturiana:[20] Malory è al contrario il primo che sembra rendersi conto che da un certo punto in poi le storie di Tristano e Isotta e Lancillotto e Ginevra divergono e non possono più essere trattate in parallelo.

Il romanzo di Tristano assume tratti avventurosi in relazione al mutare dei tempi. Un Tristano cavaliere sarebbe stato inadeguato nel XII secolo, mentre è figlio del suo tempo in un'età di lotte e instabilità politica quale quella della fine del '400, poiché il suo comportamento si basa su un sistema di valori ancora valido nonostante tutto, condiviso da pubblico e autori. Nel suo caso tutti i valori ruotano, secondo Beverly Kennedy, soprattutto intorno al concetto medievale di onore, di 'Worshipful Knighthood',[21] concetto che legittima anche il tradimento, perché il codice cavalleresco pretende l'integrità da entrambe le parti, e che fa sì che per Tristano l'amore sia più uno stimolo a compiere imprese cavalleresche che uno stimolo in sé. Anche in questo senso l'opera può essere letta come vero prodotto del suo tempo, tant'è che Kennedy stabilisce un parallelo tra i comportamenti di Tristano e la teorizzazione di Baldassar Castiglione circa le regole di vita del perfetto cortigiano.[22] Sono regole che si basano sulla prassi e sulla forma molto più che sulla morale o l'ideale, il che testimonia che il gusto dei lettori è notevolmente cambiato. Questo aspetto del romanzo sembra voler sollecitare soprattutto l'apprezzamento del *gentleman*, così come il lettore privilegiato della vicenda d'amore

pare voler essere il pubblico borghese; questo mi porta a concludere che, mentre *Tavola Ritonda* privilegiava l'interpolazione tra generi e tradizioni diverse, *Le Morte d'Arthur* consente piuttosto l'interazione tra fruitori appartenenti a classi sociali diverse. Anche da questa prospettiva *Le Morte d'Arthur* si propone come la tappa finale dell'evoluzione del romanzo del XII e XIII secolo, ma anche la prima tappa dell'arturiade dei tempi moderni.[23]

Notes

1. R. Blanch, 'The History and Progress of the Tristan Legend', in *Revue des langues vivantes,* XXXV, 1969, p. 135.
2. D. Branca, *I Romanzi Italiani di Tristano e la Tavola Ritonda,* Firenze, Olschki, 1968, p. 66.
3. L.F. Polidori (a cura di), *La Tavola Ritonda,* voll. 2, Bologna 1864 – 66.
4. F. Arese (a cura di), *Prose di romanzi: il romanzo cortese in Italia nei secoli XIII e XIV,* Torino, Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1950, p. 24.
5. H.R. Jauss, *Alterità e modernità della letteratura medievale,* Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 1989, p. 4.
6. J. Rousset, *Il mito di Don Giovanni,* Parma, Pratiche, 1980, p. 6.
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15. D. Rougemont, *L'amore e l'occidente,* Milano, Rizzoli, 1987, p. 265.
16. T. Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur,* cit., vol. II, p. 406.
17. J. Le Goff, *L'uomo medievale,* Bari, La Terza, 1987, p. 330.
18. F. Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory,* Leiden, Brill, 1987, p. 47.
19. *Ibid.,* p. 123.
20. T.C. Rumble, 'Malory's Originality' cit. in D. Schueler, 'The Tristan Section of Malory's *Morte Darthur*' in *Studies in Philology,* Lxv, 1969, p. 53.
21. B. Kennedy, *Knighthood in the Morte Darthur,* Cambridge, Brewer, 1985, p. 154.
22. *Ibid.,* pp. 148 – 149.
23. E. Vinaver, *Le Roman de Tristan et Iseut dans l'oeuvre de Thomas Malory,* cit., p. 10.

ITALIAN ROMANCE AND ELIZABETHAN COMEDY: ARIOSTO, ROBERT GREENE AND SHAKESPEARE

PETER BRAND

It is surprising how little attention has been paid to the relationship between Ariosto and Shakespeare given their prominence in their respective cultures and the acknowledged derivation of elements in at least two of Shakespeare's plays from Ariosto. For Croce, in a study published in 1920, *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille*, the differences between the two poets were more remarkable than the resemblances. 'Quali poeti sembrano, e sono anche, più diversi tra loro che lo Shakespeare e l'Ariosto ?'.[1] What they did have in common, in Croce's view, was their ability to look beyond 'i particolari affetti' and achieve a harmonious vision of the human condition, Ariosto thanks to an all-pervasive irony, Shakespeare by means of a balanced tension between different emotional states, so that the two writers can both be called 'poeti cosmici'. Apart from these brief and rather vague statements however, Croce has almost nothing to say about the relationship between the two poets or their cultural achievements – his book consists of self-contained essays on the individual writers. And his brief comparison of the two men is flawed by his persistent misjudgement of the *Furioso* which he thought sacrificed everthing in a search for 'armonia' : Croce thus fails to do justice to the seriousness of the poem and its commitment to attitudes and values which could, and I believe did, appeal to Shakespeare; and he ends up with a stark distinction between an Italian poet morally indifferent to the troubled world around him and an English dramatist who provokes a deep concern for the fundamental problems of existence.

The significance of Ariosto for Shakespeare's theatre has I think been underestimated also in this country thanks to a degree of insularity dating back at least to the Romantic myth of a natural Shakespeare singing his native wood-notes wild, and even now,

when the extent of Shakespeare's classical and Renaissance culture is better understood, by a reluctance to look beyond his more immediate sources, particularly the *novellieri*, Italian, French and English, who plundered Ariosto's poem for romantic stories. Croce's misguided judgement has thus been repeated too often and survives still among Shakespearean critics who are generally more concerned to stress the differences between the two writers than to recognise the similarities of interest and method.[2] What I have tried therefore to do in this paper is first to comment briefly on the acknowledged derivations of *Much Ado* and *The Taming of the Shrew*; then to examine one of the intermediaries, Robert Greene's *Orlando Furioso*; and finally to refine and elaborate on Croce's broad comparison of the two writers.

While there does not seem to be any fully convincing evidence, it is now generally accepted that Shakespeare must have been able to read Italian and that he probably read the *Furioso* in the original, although we do not know how well he knew the language or how much of the poem he read, or how closely. Harington's translation was available from 1591, but scholars have been able to point to reminiscences of the poem where Shakespeare seems to use Ariosto's words in preference to Harington's.[3] The acknowledged derivations from Ariosto are in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the sub-plot of which is indebted to the Ginevra-Ariodante episode in Cantos IV to VI of the *Furioso*, and the sub-plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*, which is close to one of Ariosto's comedies, *I Suppositi*, of which an English translation by George Gascoigne was available. It is significant of course that there *were* English translations of such works which bear witness to the extraordinary popularity of Ariosto in 16th century Europe, where versions of tales from the poem proliferated, particularly in French and then in translations from the French and in plays based on translations, so that the origin of some of them was quite obscured.

The sources and genesis of *Much Ado* have been the subject of extensive criticism and I have only time here to comment on certain aspects.[4] The Claudio-Hero action, which is a free version of Ariosto's Ginevra and Ariodante episode, is set alongside Shakespeare's own invented action of Beatrice and Benedick, who really outbid Claudio and Hero in interest, so that it is not clear what is sub- and what main plot. Like so many of Shakespeare's

borrowings the integration of an Italian source into a native or invented one transforms the source into a highly original work – and in fact Ariosto had already transformed *his* source (the Spanish romance of *Tirante el Blanco*, by Johanot Martorell) in much the same way as Shakespeare would his.

In the *Furioso* the paladin Rinaldo rescues a lady screaming for help from some assassins; she turns out to be Dalinda, the serving-maid of the King of Scotland's daughter, Ginevra, who, Dalinda explains, has been framed by the wicked Polinesso. Ginevra is betrothed to Ariodante but Ariodante's rival Polinesso has tricked him and the court into believing she is unfaithful by persuading the maid to dress in her mistress's clothes and receive him on Ginevra's balcony at night. Now under the 'harsh Scots law' punishing unchaste females Ginevra is awaiting execution, while Polinesso has arranged to get rid of Dalinda, and Ariodante has thrown himself off a cliff in despair. Hearing all this Rinaldo hurries to the court, challenges Polinesso, thus forestalling an unknown knight who had appeared to defend her in the judicial duel preceding her execution. He turns out to be Ariodante who thought better of committing suicide and has returned to defend the lady he thinks has betrayed him. The villain dies, the loving couple are re-united and the maid retires to a nunnery. Shakespeare in *Much Ado* has the villainous Don John deceive Claudio in much the same way into thinking that Hero has been unfaithful to him, but he follows a later version of the story by Bandello in having the lady swoon, taken to be dead and later restored to her lover in a dramatic climax.[5]

The Italian poet has thus been credited with the loan of a rather stagey intrigue and the deeper significance of his episode has been overlooked. Charles Prouty, in what is still accepted as the definitive study of the subject, suggests that 'the Ginevra episode is like many another extraneous tale which Ariosto introduced to adorn his romantic epic. It has no hidden meaning nor any relation to the characters or main events of the *Orlando*: it is a narrative which pleases by its recital of events'.[6] He contrasts this with Shakespeare's thoughful study of love between the sexes in which the interplay of illusion and reality is cleverly depicted. Other critics have recognised the significance of *Much Ado*'s series of 'misapprehensions, misprisions, misunderstandings,

misinterpretations and misapplications' – leading to self-recognition, 'the journey from confusion to clarity, knowledge of one's own truth'.[7] Those familiar with the *Furioso* will recognise in these words a favorite theme of Ariosto's poem and one which is spelt out in the episode we are examining. The Ginevra story is one of a sequence of tales which show precisely the vulnerability of the senses under the influence of the emotions and the power of illusions which so interested Shakespeare. Ariodante is so blinded by his love for Ginevra that his reason is obscured: he lets the evidence of his eyes deceive him and dashes off impetuously (the lover in Ariosto's Spanish source sensibly asks his lady for an explanation – and gets one). Ariosto's stress on appearances, on the 'eyes' and 'seeing' reappears elsewhere in Shakespeare – in Othello's demand for 'ocular proof' and equally his succumbing to the deception of the handkerchief and the loss of his reason with its tragic consequences.[8]

We should also note that Ariosto's double plot, like Shakespeare's, is very cleverly constructed to reinforce the point: Dalinda, like Ariodante, is quite carried away by her infatuation with Polinesso, who seems to be a faithful lover but is false through and through, the reverse of Ginevra who appears to be false but is devoted to Ariodante. *Trust* is crucial to true love and the balance between trust and credulity is a recurrent motif in both Ariosto and Shakespeare.[9] Ariodante's gut reaction in returning and challenging Ginevra's accuser in spite of the evidence of her adultery, is paralleled in *Much Ado* by Benedick's challenge to his friend in response to Beatrice's demand that he 'kill Claudio' : 'Think you in your soul the Count Claudio hath wronged Hero ? ' (IV,i)

Contrary also to Prouty's assertion, Ariosto's episode *is* indeed related to the wider context of the poem in that the functioning of illusion is crucial to the stories that precede and follow it – Sacripante's encounter with Angelica (Canto I), Ruggiero's with Alcina (Canto VI – VII), Olimpia's with Bireno (Canto IX), leading up to the great climax of Orlando's madness, when his faith in Angelica's love for him is revealed as a delusion. And the Ginevra episode is indeed related to other principal characters in the poem, not only Orlando, but Rinaldo who witnesses the whole scene and later takes the wise decision *not* to test his wife's fidelity with the

magic truth-revealing goblet which has caused such misery to others (Cantos XLII – XLIII). The episode is also interestingly related to another of Ariosto's recurrent interests, the male-female debate, in that it provokes a sustained attack by Rinaldo on the 'aspra legge di Scozia' which punished a woman for sexual offences condoned in a man: compare Shakespeare's linking of the Claudio story with the lively exchanges between Beatrice and Benedick.

There was therefore a great deal in Ariosto's story to set Shakespeare thinking and the reverberations are discernible throughout *Much Ado* and probably elsewhere too. What I have tried to stress is the instinctive sympathy with which Shakespeare must have reacted to his reading of the *Furioso*, and his sensitivity to its underlying seriousness – which most of his contemporaries seemed unable to appreciate, so that they, like Prouty, treated it merely as a source of romantic tales and failed very often to see the significance of Ariosto's poem or to appreciate his serious message. Alternately they fastened on the allegorical readings of late Cinquecento Italian commentators of the *Furioso* and exploited it for moral lessons – as did Spenser who turned the Ginevra episode into a tale of intemperance (*Faerie Queene* II,4).

The Taming of the Shrew teaches us another lesson about Shakespeare's relationship to Ariosto in that it concerns the wider issue of Elisabethan comedy's debt not to Italian romance but to *commedia erudita*, of which Ariosto could be considered the founding father.[10] The wooing of Bianca by Lucentio which accompanies the taming of Katherine by Petruchio is clearly derived from Ariosto's early comedy *I Suppositi* (1509), of which George Gascoigne had published a faithful English translation in 1566. The ingredients of *I Suppositi*, taken straight from Roman comedy, are familiar enough: a girl pursued against her father's wishes; a poor lover disguised as his own servant; a stranger waylaid and disguised as the lover's father, and then confronted with the man he is impersonating; a wealthy elderly rival whom everybody deceives but who withdraws when he discovers that the wily servant is his long-lost son. Shakespeare's creative genius is apparent in his masterly combination of his foreign material with the native tradition of the shrew in a clever elaboration of the 'supposes' of his source. The Italian 'suppositi' are characters *subsituted* one for the other, interpreted by Gascoigne in his English version as 'a

mistaking or imagination for one thing for another...the master for the servant, the servant for the master', and with Kate and Petruchio the 'supposition' extends to the feigned assumption of traits of character in the lady which she has never hitherto revealed and which are now imposed on her by her play-acting husband – perhaps they were there lying dormant all the time.[11]

This superimposition on an Italian source of a native or invented plot[12] in a new and subtly contrived whole is characteristic of Shakespeare and is reminiscent of the process by which the Italians introduced Roman comedy into Europe. Ariosto's 'Suppositi' are, on his own confession in his Prologue, conscious imitations of characters in Plautus and Terence (the *Captivi* and the *Eunuch*) and their progressive development from Roman to Italian and finally English settings reflects quite closely the processes by which Italian culture mediated Roman precedents to the Elisabethan stage: the modernising and localising of the setting; the 'contamination' of different sources; the complication and sophistication of the action; the reduction of certain stereotyped dramatic devices such as recognition; the extension of the range of characters; the romanticising of the love interest; the welding together of double plots and the provision of greater thematic coherence. The process is apparent in Shakespeare from the early years, in *The Comedy of Errors* particularly where the treatment of the classical sources (*Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*) is strongly reminiscent of Ariosto and the early 16th century Italian playwrights in the respects I have listed. There is a clear, continous line of development from Roman comedy through *commedia erudita* to the comedy of the Elisabethan age.

This process had of course been initiated by Shakespeare's predecessors, by Robert Greene, John Lyly and others, as scholars have long recognised, and the wealth of narrative material in French and English deriving from Italian romance and *novella* meant that writers did not need to travel to Italy or learn Italian to benefit from the work of 16th century Italian writers. But many of them did of course, like Robert Greene whose play *The History of Orlando Furioso* was performed at the Rose theatre in 1592, the year following the publication of Sir John Harington's translation. Greene knew enough Italian to quote, in fact to redraft a couple of Ariosto's octaves – with scant regard for the Italian

endecasillabo, and his treatment of Ariosto's narrative is equally disrespectful.[13] Professor Bradbrook thought the play 'less a gallimaufrey than a farrago'.[14] In Greene's *Orlando Furioso* Angelica is transformed into a model of virtue and fidelity and the inscriptions on the trees with which Medoro trumpeted their love and drove Ariosto's Orlando mad here become counterfeit verses inscribed by Orlando's rival, Sacripante,in order to deceive him. Greene has Melissa cure Orlando and the paladin return incognito to punish Sacripante, proclaim Angelica's innocence and marry her. The effect is to turn the whole poem into a version of the Ariodante-Ginevra story, with Orlando and Angelica substituted for the Scottish princess and her lover, Greene accentuates the farcical elements in the *Furioso* and makes no concessions to the serious implications of the poem: in his mad state Orlando mistakes the shepherd dressed in women's clothes (without shaving his beard) for his lady, and chases her off-stage as a strumpet, with murderous intent, reappearing shortly after with a leg round his neck. Greene's transformation of Ariosto's Angelica seems motivated by his liking for the suffering female lover, of which there are some prominent examples in Ariosto (Ginevra, Olimpia, Isabella, Bradamante etc.). The misogynist outbursts of his menfolk have seemed strange to some critics in this context, but are not perhaps so ambiguous as has been suggested:[15] they parallel a number of similar passages in Ariosto which expose the illogical misogyny of disappointed male lovers. Angelica's fidelity is paralleled by the 'wondrous constancy' of Dorothea in another play by Greene, *James IV*, the source of which is an Italian *novella* of Cinthio, similar in plot if not in treatment to several other of Ariosto's inset episodes of romantic love.

It was in fact a more fundamental lesson that English writers, were to learn from Ariosto's example, and that was the possibility of exploiting romance as a paradigm of human behaviour. Spenser, who tried in *The Faerie Queene* to 'overgo Ariosto', saw the effectiveness of the Italian poet's combination of fantasy and realism: the legendary and magical material of the Italian romances is accompanied in the *Furioso* by a running commentary on the contemporary Italian scene, while Spenser's 'Faerye land' embraces a moral and political allegory of Elisabethan England. It is a pity that we do not possess the nine comedies which Spenser wrote and which Gabriel Harvey thought came closer to Ariosto's comedies than his *Faerie Queene* did to the *Furioso*.[16]

Shakespeare followed Ariosto's example, in the more general sense of putting 'real people in unreal situations'.[17] The settings of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* contribute significantly of course to the poetic texture of those plays and there are those who feel that *Much Ado* lacks enchantment without the forest of Arden – one might add without Ariosto's Caledonian forest. But the deliberate departures from reality of the settings and events of most of Shakespeare's comedies serve paradoxically to bring out the truthfulness of the human reactions in much the same way as the enchanted forests do in the *Furioso*.

The similarity of approach between Ariosto's poem and Shakespeare's romantic comedies is striking in this respect. The *Orlando Furioso*, against the backcloth of the traditional war between Charlemagne and the pagans, provides us in effect with an anthology of love-stories, some twenty or more, which chart the diverse patterns of love between the sexes and explore the nature of romantic love with great perspicuity and humour. The course of true love rarely runs smooth, not just because of the extraordinary happenings to which the lovers are exposed but mostly because of the instability of their emotions and the limitations of their understanding: Angelica, with the top knights of Christendom at her feet, falls for a wounded unknown soldier (XIX, 20); the romantic courtship of Bireno and Olimpia ends with the bridegroom sailing off with an attractive child they have befriended (X, 10); Rodomonte is deflected from a storm of jealous fury by the next pretty face that passes him by (XXVII,98). Ariosto is standing beside us as we hear these stories and he warns us amusedly of the perils of romantic love: beware of youthful lovers he tells the ladies – their passions are like straw-fires; don't believe the fine words men use to deceive you and deceive themselves (X,7).

It is Shakespeare's warning in *Much Ado*, *Twelfth Night, As You Like It* and *Love's Labour's Lost*, where the ladies question their posturing lovers and explore their own feelings before plunging into life-long unions. It is the men generally who are found wanting by both writers: Shakespeare delights in showing us romantic heroes who fail to withstand the strains put on their passion, while the ladies stand firm – as in *Much Ado, All's Well, Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale.*[18] Ariosto's Bireno, Sacripante, Ruggiero,

Ariodante, even Orlando all anticipate this in their different ways, although Ariosto gives us a more varied gallery of female lovers than romantic comedy, including Shakespeare's, came to rely on. The same teasing, ironical approach characterises both writers who are able to combine an element of romantic idealism with a hard-headed look at human fragility. In fact the basic pattern of romantic comedy, a love affair thwarted, subjected to testing and re-emerging in a festive marriage is of course anticipated in the *Furioso*, with comedy's misrule, confusion and loss of identity represented by the madness of Orlando and the restoration of social order by the establishment of the House of Este in the union of the lovers – and indeed critics complained that the neglected heroine, Bradamante, who spends much of the poem chasing after her errant fiancé, is more like a nagging wife from comedy than an epic heroine.

This cool look at romantic love is of course as much a comment on the world of art, on romance and romantic comedy, as it is on the real world of men and women in love. Both writers look back on the literary tradition which they adapt, tongue in cheek very often, to their new vision. Modern critics stress the self-conscious artistry of the two writers, their frequent dialogue with their audience about the task they are engaged in, highlighting the parallel between fiction and reality: Shakespeare resorts repeatedly to the metaphor of the world as a stage, Ariosto to his poem as a tapestry of human experience, and both writers present themselves like divine manipulators of their human puppets: Shakespeare's 'Now we bear the King/Toward Calais'(*Henry V*, V, Chorus) parallels Ariosto's 'Ma quivi stiano intanto ch'io conduca/insieme Astolfo, il glorioso duca' (XLIV, 18); and both deliberately confuse the fiction with the real world as for example in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (IV (v)) where the real-life post-horses of a German Duke intrude on the fantastic Herne the Hunter scenes, and in Ariosto's account of Orlando hurling a modern arquebus into the sea (IX,91). [19]

Another characteristic feature of the *Furioso*, which provoked considerable opposition from literary purists, was his tendency to make abrupt shifts of tone in his narrative – as for example when Ariodante thinks better of his suicide leap and swims ashore (VI,5); or when Olimpia in the moment of her tragic abandonment feels across the bed for Bireno, with her legs (X,21) ! Conversely light-

hearted scenes acquire suddenly tragic or macabre notes as in the death of Orrilo, the farcical monster who replaces his own head as soon as it lopped off but is dispatched with a grim picture of his features finally convulsed (XV,87). Shakespeare of course was a master of this juxtaposition of fantastic and realistic and of comic and tragic, both in the insertion of down-to-earth and comic scenes in grave and tragic situations, and also in the inclusion of harsh and distressing material in his comedies: the so-called 'problem' or 'dark' comedies notably, which have sometimes been cited as evidence of an older and more disillusioned dramatist – perhaps reminiscent of some of the later rather cynical episodes of the final edition of the *Furioso*. Cynicism however is a word one hesitates to apply to either author, and the disclaimer which has been advanced for the bitter notes in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well* – that 'we are made to feel the pain of the distressing, disintegrating possibilities of human mean-ness' is certainly true of the bitter tales of say Melissa and Adonio in Canto XLIII of the *Furioso*.[20] But the basic similarity is in the two writers' ability to face both ways, to show us that life is tragedy and comedy at the same time, not merely because of the perverse turning of Fortune's wheel, but as a result of the ambivalent conduct of men and women who are capable simultaneously of nobility and ignominy.

This variety of material and of tone is of course partially a consequence of the two writers' sensitivity to their public, of their desire to appeal on a broad front to groundlings as well as courtiers, to *piazza* as well as *sala* – and it is remarkable how successful they were in this respect with educated and unlettered, old and young, men and women. Their breadth of vision is what Croce admired and led him to bracket them as 'poeti cosmici' . But this in its turn may be a factor of their historical circumstances: it is a vision from particular moments in time which have much in common, late Renaissance moments when the idealism and enthusiasm of an earlier age give way to cool recognition of harsh realities: both writers of course reap the fruits of the revived classical culture which disciplines and deepens a rich native and popular inheritance, but both also witness the decline in their lifetime from the high achievements and hopes of earlier years. The Italian invasions and the sack of Rome, and the failure of the Italians to defend their country and their culture from the 'barbarians' signalled an end

to the glorious optimism of the humanists. Historians of the late Elisabethan era speak of a similar sense of decline a hundred years later in England: the turn of the century produces:

> 'a pronounced darkening in the temper of the age. The Essex plot, the ageing of the Queen and the uncertainties of the succession, a general sense that society was corrupt and life itself running down and losing its energy and freshness; all of these things contributed to a new atmosphere of pessimism, a loss of faith in the world and in human abilities'.[21]

It is understandable that Shakespeare, reading the *Furioso* against this background, and with a similarly mixed audience of popular and cultured customers in mind, should have responded sympathetically to the mood of Ariosto's poem. It seems clear that he understood and appreciated the Italian poet's serious purpose as well as his ironical presentation of material, and that he could find pointers in the *Furioso* for some of the most characteristic features of his comedies, perhaps even hints for his tragedies.[22] I am surprised that Croce should have found the two men so different – for me they are brothers.

Notes

1 B.Croce, *Ariosto, Shakespeare e Corneille,* Bari 1920, pp.93-4.

2 See for example Karen Newman's comment that 'Shakespeareans continue to claim that he contributed emotional depth to what was merely intrigue comedy and complicated farce', *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character,* New York 1985, p.59.

3 See K. Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources: I: Comedies and Tragedies,* 1957, p.7; J.S. Smart, *Shakespeare: Truth and Tradition,* 1928 p.183

4 See G. Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare,* Vol.II (1958) pp.61-142; Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources* (cit); A.R. Humphreys, Introduction to the Arden edition of *Much Ado,* 1981; Charles T. Prouty *The Sources of Much Ado about Nothing,* New Haven 1950; Mariella Cavalchini, 'A re-evaluation of the Italian sources of *Much Ado*', *English Miscellany* XIV, 1963, 45-56. I have commented on the evolution of the Ginevra story in *Essays in Honour of J.H. Whitfield,* Birmingham 1975, pp.120-34.

5 See Bandello, *Tutte le Opere*, ed F. Flora, Milan 1934, Part I, Novella 22 (translated by Bullough).

6 Prouty, p. 20; see also Muir, p. 52

7 A.P. Rossiter, *Angel with Horns,* 1966, p. 77.

8 See Andrew S. Cairncross, 'Shakespeare and Ariosto: *Much Ado, King Lear* and *Othello,' Renaissance Quarterly,* XXIX, 1976, 178-82.

9 Cf. for example *Cymbeline* V,5,62-6 and Ariosto's episode of Zerbino and Isabella with the connected story of Gabrina and Filandro (XXIII-XXIV). See J.R. Mulryne, *Much Ado about Nothing*, 1965,p.40.
10 See, apart from the standard works on Shakespeare's sources by Bullough, Muir cited above, Brian Morris's Introduction to the Arden edition of the play, (1981); Richard Hosley, 'Sources and Analogues of *The Taming of the Shrew*', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly,* XXVII, 1964, 289-308
11 See C.C. Seronsy, ' "Supposes" as the unifying theme in *The Taming of the Shrew*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* XIV, 1963. 15-30.
12 See J.H. Brunvand, 'The folk-tale origin of *The Taming of the Shrew*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* , 17, 1966, 345-59
13 Cf. Greene, *Orlando Furioso* II, (i) and Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* XXVII, 117, 121.
14 M.C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy,* 1973, p. 67.
15 See Norman Gelber, 'Robert Greene's *Orlando Furioso*: A Study of thematic ambiguity,' *Modern Language Review* LXIV, 1969, 264-6; cf. the Marganorre episode in the *Furioso*, XXXVI.
16 E. Spenser, *Prose Works*, ed. E. Greenlaw, Baltimore 1949, pp. 471-2.
17 L.Salingar, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy*, Cambridge 1974, p. 7.
18 See R.G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness,* New York 1965, p. 67.
19 See Anne Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play,* Harmondsworth, 1962; Robert M. Durling, *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic,* Cambridge, Mass., 1965.
20 Rossiter, pp. 126-7.
21 Righter, p. 154.
22 See Cairncross's article cited above.

BEN JONSON AND THE ITALIAN NEO-CLASSICAL THEORISTS

DAVID FARLEY-HILLS

In the Prologue to *Volpone* published in 1607 Jonson claims to be following the precepts of the 'best critics' and goes on to explain what kind of critical precepts he has in mind:

> (He) so presents quick comedy, refined
> As best critics have designed,
> The laws of time, place, persons, he observeth,
> From no needful rule he swerveth...

In a recent article for *Review of English Studies* I have argued that, by naming the unities of time and place as two of the rules he is obeying, he makes it probable that one of the critics he has in mind is Lodovico Castelvetro, in whose *Poetica d'Aristotele* (1570) the unities of time and place were first fully promulgated. The crucial reference is to a unity of place, which Jonson had first mentioned briefly in his play *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599) and which is not to be found in Aristotle, nor any of the earlier commentators. Castelvetro argues that the time and space depicted on stage should be as close as possible to the actual time and space the actors need to depict it:

> ...la tragedia...conviene havere per soggetto un'attione avenuta in picciolo spatio di luogo, e in picciolo spatio di tempo, cio è in quel luogo, e in quel tempo, dove e quando i rappresentatori dimorano occupati in operatione...[1]

In this article, however, I want to investigate further one aspect of the influence of Castelvetro and other Italian theorists on Jonson's practice as a playwright. It will have been noticed that in mentioning the unities, Jonson does not name the one unity that was unquestionably derived from Aristotle, the unity of action, but substitutes instead a 'law of persons'. Castelvetro in fact challenges Aristotle's demand for unitary plots, and makes it clear that his preference is for multiple actions:

> ...ma ci dobbiamo ricordare che habbiamo mostrato che non si puo far tragedia o comedia, che sia lodevole, laquale non abbia due attioni, cio è, due favole, quantunque l'una sia pricipale, e l'altra accessoria.[2]

Jonson certainly follows Castelvetro rather than Aristotle in introducing a subsidiary plot, (that concerning the Would-bes), in *Volpone*. On the other hand Castelvetro and the other neo-Aristotelian theorists have a good deal to say about laws governing characterisation and my task is to ask whether we can relate these to Jonson's practice in *Volpone* in an attempt to explain what 'laws of persons' Jonson has in mind.

Some months before *Volpone* was first performed (probably late in 1605 or early in 1606) Jonson had been busy on a radical revision of an earlier play, *Every Man in His Humour*, which he'd probably completed for Court performance by February 1605.[3] The nature of this revision can help to throw light on Jonson's attitude to characterisation around this time. The first version of *Every Man in His Humour*, dating from 1598, has no prologue, but in the revision Jonson includes a prologue, which makes a direct comment on the kind of characterisation suitable for comedy, as well as an indirect allusion to the unities of time and place. For the opening lines attack those plays of his contemporaries that cover the whole span of a man's lifetime as well as range over space, and without actually mentioning Shakespeare make it probable that Jonson is thinking of Shakespeare's history plays as an example of such malpractice. He then goes on to outline, in contrast, 'one such today as other plays should be' (Jonson was never one to parade his modesty). His play, he goes on, will exhibit:

> ...deeds and language such as men do use,
> And persons such as comedy would choose
> When she would show an image of the times,
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes...
> I mean, such errors as you'll all confess
> By laughing at them, they deserve no less;
> Which, when you heartily do, there's hope left then
> You that have so grac'd monsters, may like men.[4]

The appeal is essentially to a kind of realism, in which characters are men, not monsters, their language and behaviour a reflection of the contemporary audience, 'of the times'. Another of the changes he effects in this revision, also a gesture towards realism, is to substitute London for the original Italian setting. A further important and related change is to suppress a long speech in defence of poetry he had given to the play's hero, Lorenzo Junior, in the

original version. The importance given to this speech at the end of the play and the fact that it is the sympathetic hero who speaks it, make it reasonable to assume that the attitude towards poetry expressed in it is endorsed by the playwright, quite apart from the fact that it is consistent with similar views Jonson expresses on poetry around this time. It is suppressed in the revised version, however, because the view of poetry it upholds is in strong contrast to the mimetic views of the new prologue and is clearly inconsistent with them. For Lorenzo Junior poetry is a sacred mystery:

> That hates to have her dignity profaned
> With any relish of an earthly thought:
> Oh, then how proud a presence doth she bear !
> Then she is like herself, fit to be seen
> Of none but grave and consecrated eyes.
>
> (Quarto,V,iii,311-315)

This is the language of the Platonists that can be found in Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, where he quotes Plato's *Ion* in describing poetry as 'a verie inspiring of a divine force',[5] and in such poets as Spenser[6] and Chapman. Sometime, then, between the writing of the first version of *Every Man in His Humour* in 1598 and the second version of around 1605 Jonson had radically revised his theoretical allegiancies from a neo-Platonic to a neo-Aristotelian poetic. We can narrow these dates down a little further because this vatic view of the poet is still strongly represented in *Poetaster* of 1601 in Ovid's address to 'sacred poetry' (I,ii,231f.). The change had been brought about, I believe, by his reading of the Italian Aristotelian commentators.

Castelvetro, for instance, explicitly contrasts these two attitudes to poetry in the *Poetica* in commenting on Aristotle's theory of imitation as expounded in section 4 of the *Poetics*:

> Aristotele non haveva opinione che la poesia fosse dono spetiale di dio conceduto ad uno huomo più tosto che ad un altro, come è il dono della profetia e altri simili privilegi non naturali e non communi a tutti. Et senza dubbio intende anchora che nol faccia apertamente di riprovare quella opinione che alcuni attribuiscono a Platone, che la poesia sia infusa negli huomini per furore divino. La quale opinione ha avuta origine, e nascimento dall'ignoranza del vulgo e è stata accresciuta, e favorata dalla vanagloria de poeti per queste ragioni e in questa guisa.[7]

So much for vatic poetry ! Notice that Castelvetro finds the vatic view of poetry 'unnatural' (un privilegio non naturale) with the implication that the Aristotelian theory of imitation assumes that art gives us an image of the natural world.

In the article I mentioned earlier I argued that there was a strong similarity between the view of tragedy outlined in the 'Address to the Reader' prefacing Jonson's *Sejanus*, published in 1605, and that found in Giraldi Cinthio's *Discorso sulle comedie e tragedie* (1554). In both Giraldi's *Discorso* and Castelvetro's *Poetica*, and also in another neo-Aristotelian text Jonson may have read (as Sidney certainly had), Minturno's *Della poetica thoscana* of 1564, he would have found a view of characterisation similar to the one he is promulgating in the revised version of *Every Man in His Humour* and also, I believe, in *Volpone*. The prologue to *Every Man* clearly owes something to Aristotle, for the assertion that comedy should deal with follies and not crimes, found in most, if not all, neo-Aristotelian texts, derives from the statement in section 5 of the *Poetics*:

> As for Comedy, it is (as has been observed) an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly.[8]

The plot of *Every Man in His Humour* fits this definition rather more obviously than that of *Volpone* where the judgmental ending emphasises the crimes of both Volpone and Mosca. Jonson, however, aplogises for transgressing 'the strict rigour of the comic law' in his ending to *Volpone*[9] and in doing so acknowledges his departure from the Aristotelian norm. But while Castelvetro interprets this statement of Aristotle as privileging aesthetic decorum over moral decorum, other commentators, like Giraldi, interpret the importance of ridicule as assuming a primarily moral role for literature. Jonson would seem to be assuming Castelvetro's position in his use of the phrase 'comic law' here. His prologue to *Volpone* makes it clear that (like all the Aristotelian commentators) he is accepting that the ridiculous is the proper basis of comedy:

> All gall, and copperas, from his ink he draineth,
> Only, a little salt remaineth;
> Wherewith he'll rub your cheeks, till (red with laughter)
> They shall look fresh, a week after.

Laughter at the ridiculous is to be the guiding spirit of Comedy, as it is for Castelvetro:

> Adunque poiche si cerca la materia ridevole per la comedia ci converrà prendere persone sciocche o contrafatte o sformate da contrafare...[10]

This is essentially a satiric view of comedy, which might be usefully contrasted with the romantic comedy of Jonson's friend and rival, William Shakespeare.

All the neo-Aristotelian commentators agree that one of the key distinctions between tragedy and comedy is that, while tragedy imitates the world of kings and queens, comedy mirrors the world of humbler citizens. But because the world of comedy has to show the ugly and the ridiculous. the characters it represents are less admirable than the ordinary man or woman, such as fools, the affected, or the deformed. Both *Every Man in His Humour* and *Volpone* are clearly satirical in tone and the comedy in both cases centres on the ridiculous. Indeed Castelvetro's categories fit *Volpone* particularly well, where fools are represented both by the Wouldbes and Volpone's dupes, while Volpone and Mosca are excellent examples of the counterfeit, including the deformed deception of Volpone's sickness – one could hardly have a better illustration of Castelvetro's 'laws of persons' in action. Yet, while *Every Man* can legitimately be said to show an image of the times and depict men rather than monsters, this view of *Volpone* is harder to sustain. The very use of animal names for the characters in *Volpone* suggests a departure from character realism, for Volpone, Mosca and the carrion birds Corbaccio, Corvino and Voltore are manifestly monstrous. The convincing London realism of the second version of *Every Man in His Humour* is seemingly being violated in the characterisation of *Volpone*.

This apparent contradiction, however, can be explained if we look at the theories of characterisation in Giraldi, Minturno and Castelvetro. Minturno, in his *Della poetica thoscana*, for instance, specifically argues for the legitimacy of using both abstract and animal personifications in comedy, quoting examples both from the old comdy of Aristophanes and of the new comedy in Plautus.[11] Yet Minturno's view of comedy is as both a mirror of the times (specchio della consuetudine), quoting Cicero as his authority, and as satire (da ridere di cose civile, o domestiche e

private), for which he claims the support of Aristotle.[12] Minturno's realism is seen clearly in his response to his interlocutor, who asks him why unmarried girls (donzelle) appear more often in tragedy than in comedy. Minturno's answer is directly related to actual social conditions:

> ...le fancuille nelle case delle private persone, quali sono le comiche, non hanno in costume di venire nel cospetto degli huomini prima, che togliano marito; ne di parlare con altrui. Allo 'ncontro quelle, che nate sono, o pur allevate ne'reali palazzi, ove huomini di qualità diversi si veggono costumare, non fuggono la presenza della gente: anzi costumano ragionano con ogni maniera di persone. Conciosiacosa, che quelle tenga ristrette, e chiuse la bassezza e humilità loro, la qual non le diffenderebbe dalla infamia, che del costumare, e parlare con altrui nascer loro potrebbe: queste la grandezza, e l'eccellenza loro, come di persone illustri renda ardite a poter liberamente farsi vedere, e con altrui ragionare senza temere, che infamia alcuna loro venirne possa.[13]

Here Minturno is clearly assuming that the stage directly imitates the actual society of the audience. Giraldi also argues that comedy should not allow decent young women on stage,[14] because it would not be right to see them with the base characters characteristic of comedy.

Giraldi's views are illuminating in explaining how Jonson can see his characters as both realistic and stereotypical. Giraldi argues that characterisation, like speech, must be governed by the priciple of decorum and this means that a playwright must bear in mind what is appropriate to the kind of person he is presenting, thus a soldier must be presented as brave because not to be brave would be unnatural in soldiers, similarly women should be presented as timid and unassuming:

> Conviene ad un capitano esercitato all'arme, essere ardito e valoroso, ad una donna, timida e demessa. Se tali s'introdurranno e questa e quello nella scena, sarà espresso buono costume; ma se il capitano s'introdurrà codardo e timido, e la donna ardita e feroce, sarà cio fuori del convenevole, ed esempio di mal costume: perché sarà fuori della natura dell'uno e dell'altro...[15]

That this 'bad custom' refers to the playwright and not the character becomes clear when Giraldi goes on to blame Euripides in allowing Alcestis to be braver than her husband:

(Euripide) non e anco senza biasimo nella *Alceste*, facendo una femmina men paurosa della morte che non son gli uomini...

Giraldi's defence of this type – casting (as we can see) is in terms of what is 'natural', by which he means not what one actually finds in nature, but what is of the essence of that kind of person. Here the ambiguity of the word 'natura', which is carried over into the English word 'nature', leads to the tendency to equate the stereotypical with the realistic, which we can clearly see in Jonson's handling of his characters in the revised version of *Every Man in His Humour*. For, although there is a good deal more naturalism in this play than in *Volpone*, none-the-less such characters as the braggart Bobadil, the jealous Kitely and the poetaster Matthew, even the heavy father, Kno'ell, are essentially stereo-types, not rounded characters, as indeed the theory of 'humours' on which the original play was based would lead us to expect.

The 'law of persons' is seen to be a law of decorum (or rather laws, for both moral and aesthetic decorum is involved), but these laws are to some extent undercut by an interpretation of the Aristotelean concept of 'imitation' as verisimilitude. Decorum of persons, as Giraldi explains, requires both that stage representation should be morally decorous – for instance that decent women ought not to be represented on stage in comedy because comedy deals with low-life – and also aesthetically decorous, in that characters ought to be typical of the category to which they belong – 'natural' in the sense that they depict the essential quality of the class to which they belong. Returning to the subject of character decorum (al decoro delle persone), Giraldi admits that there are classical examples (as in Plautus' *Captives*) where innocent women are introduced on to the stage in comedy, but that is only when they are compelled to do so by force:

Vero e che per quanto io ho osservato negli scrittori comici, vengono talora le virgini cittadine in iscena, ma non vi vengono come libere, ma come esposte, sicche non si sappia di che siano figliuole, ovvero come siano state prese e vendute, o per altro fiero accidente andate in mano di persona poco onesta, come sono meretrici e ruffiani...[16]

Here the argument is essentially one of realism, there are occasions when the verisimilitude of the action requires the appearance of virgins on stage, even though moral decorum demands otherwise. But in the next paragraph Giraldi goes on to assert the propriety of representing characters in terms of the type to which they belong:

E passando dalle virgini alle altre donne della comedia e della tragedia, le donne delle scene tragiche possono essere, quanto alla real qualità conviene, gravi, prudente e accorte...perché tuttavia elle stanno nelle grandezze, e tra persone gravi, e possono elle dalla continua conversazione apparar quello che le altre donne non possono, essendo elle sempre occupate nel governo delle case e de'figliuoli, e non conversando se non con genti umili, e popolaresche. Non è pero...che anco queste nei lor ragionamenti non possino dar segno di quella prudenza che conviene alle domestiche azioni, a lor appartenenti: perché sono le donne de popolo coi cittadini nelle comedie a quella proporzione che son quelle delle corti coi re, e coi gran personaggi nelle tragedie.[17]

This is particularly interesting because here we see Giraldi wavering somewhat between an argument based on verisimilitude (there *can* be prudent women in private life) and the aesthetic decorum that demands prudence as a characteristic of women in tragedy but not in comedy.

Jonson's practice in *Volpone* is similarly caught between a demand that his characters should be exemplary of their type on the one hand, but should also have sufficient verisimilitude to reflect the realities of real people: 'such as comedy would choose/When she would show an image of the times'. The most obvious example of this is in Volpone himself, who as exemplary 'fox' must represent the cunning and greed that is central to the play's argument, but as trickster hero has to be presented as the dynamic centre of the play. For this purpose Jonson makes him a more complex and realistic figure than his symbolic function requires. When, for instance, Volpone decides to play dead to experiment with people's reactions, he does it, not out of cunning or greed, but out of an attractive naivety and mischievousness:

To make a snare for mine own neck and run
My head into it, wilfully ! with laughter !
When I had newly 'scaped, was free, and clear !
Out of mere wantonness ! (V,xi,1-4)

The rule of persons Jonson tries to obey in *Volpone* and which he largely does succeed in obeying – as for instance in excluding decent women from the stage except for Celia's appearance under duress – is none-the-less essentially contradictory, both in incompatibly demanding verisimilitude and stereo-typing *and* in its conflicting demands between moral and aesthetic decorum. Fortunately Jonson's pragmatic instincts for the popular theatre

for which *Volpone* was written, prevent these theoretical considerations from undermining the play's effectiveness. Indeed it can, I think, be argued that the incongruities to which the theories lead are one source of the play's comic vitality. For by making Volpone both a symbol of greed and cunning and at the same time attract the audience with his rounded vitality as trickster hero, Jonson is able to exploit the ambiguity at the heart of our view of human acquisitiveness. The laughter is generated from the incongruity of our both admiring a successful rogue and at the same time condemning the disorder and insecurity such admiration engenders.

Notes

1. Lodovico Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele*, 1570, facsimile edition, Munich 1967, p.60v.
2. *Poetica* pp.381r-v.
3. E.K. Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, III,360; IV,172.
4. *Every Man in His Humour*, A Parallel-Text Edition by J.W. Lever, London 1971, p.7.
5. See my short article 'Sidney and poetic Madness' in *Notes and Queries* 236, XXV, March 1991.
6. *Shepheardes Calendar*, headnote to the 'October Eclogue'.
7. *Poetica*, 35v-36r.
8. *Aristotle's Poetics*, translated by I. Bowater, Oxford 1920, p.33.
9. 'Epistle to the Universities' prefacing *Volpone*, 1, 128. Quotations are from *Selected Plays of Ben Jonson*, vol.1 edited by J. Procter, C.U.P. 1989.
10. *Poetica*, p.51r.
11. Antonio Minturno, *L'arte poetica (delle poetica thoscana)* 1564, facsimile edition, Munich 1971, p.118.
12. ibid.116.
13. ibid.119.
14. *Discorso ovvero lettera intorno al comporre delle comedie e delle tragedie*, edited in *Scritti estetici di G.B. Giraldi Cintio*, Milan 1864, p.103.
15. *Discorso* p.91.
16. *Discorso* p.104.
17. *Discorso* pp.104-5.

THE PERILS OF INTER-CULTURAL RELATIONS: THE *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE* AND THE RESTORATION STAGE

KENNETH RICHARDS

While the activities and influence of *Commedia dell'Arte* performers on the Continent, and more particularly in Paris, are fairly well documented, in England, from the late 1570's through to the closure of the theatres in 1642, there are few traces of their presence, and we see them only through a glass very darkly.[1] From the time of the Restoration of Charles II and the reopening of the English theatres in 1660, however, the picture appears to be somewhat clearer, for conditions then became more propitious for Italian acting itinerants: actresses were now permitted on the English stage, there was a new interest in stage decoration and spectacle, and theatre was more closely tied to the court than it had been hitherto. The influence of foreign drama and stages, too, became strongly felt in London, in part because Royalist exiles had acquired experience of theatre on the Continent during the interregnum, particularly through increased contact with the French court and its culture; in part because Louis XIV's patronage of the arts and sciences provided something of a model for Charles II to emulate after his return.[2] The reputation of the French theatre among the English educated élite in the second half of the 17th century stood high, as witness not only the many translations and adaptations of dramatists like Corneille, Quinault and Molière, but the ready plundering by Restoration dramatists of the French drama for plots, characters and stage strategies, the frequency with which English courtiers visited French theatres, and the readiness with which French drama and dramatic criticism is cited by English writers of the period.

Given the high prestige in which French theatre was held in Restoration London, it is scarcely surprising that we find more evidence of the presence and influence of Italian players in Restoration London than we do before 1642, for Italian players

had been a significant feature of the Paris theatrical scene from at least the mid-1640's, while from the early 1660's a company of Italians was based permanently in Paris, and its performances are known to have been attended by English visitors.[3] In the 1670's several Italian companies came to London: the greatest Italian player of the age, Tiberio Fiorilli, better known under his stage name, Scramouche, brought companies on at least three occasions to perform at court and in public (one of the companies including the great Domenico Biancolelli in the Arlecchino mask), and the troupe of the Duke of Modena visited in November, 1678, led by Antonio Riccoboni (Pantalone) and Costantino Costantini (Arlecchino), including in its complement such experienced performers as Giuseppe Tortoriti (Pasquariello), Giovan Antonio Lolli (Dottor Brentano), and three other members of the Costantini family.[4]

We certainly know far more about these companies than we know of the few troupes which appeared in Elizabethan England: extant records report their arrivals and departures, we can identify many of the company personnel, and English writers comment on their presence and playing. Further, when we consider the activities and influence of the *Commedia dell'Arte* in the Restoration we are on somewhat surer ground than is the case in the Elizabethan period. The term, the *Commedia dell'Arte,* is a convenient umbrella phrase for many different kinds of Italian professional theatre activity, from that of the great troupes, accounts of whose achievements as court entertainers both in Italy and far beyond the peninsula make up the bulk of the extant literature, through troupes of middling importance, like that of Zan Bragetta to a wide diversity of kinds of acting groups from trestle stage players to the performers who trod charlatan street stages.[5] While there are many references in the Elizabethan literature to the masked types of the *Commedia dell'Arte* and some of the types actually figure as characters in a few Elizabethan masques, there is no sure evidence that the Elizabethan writers knew much, or indeed anything, about the quality and skills of the leading Italian companies and players. Their knowledge may well have been largely based on awareness of, or encounters with, not the major troupes, but itinerant street and *piazza* players.[6] But in the Restoration period we are on surer ground, and although nothing is known of the performance

repertories of the Italian companies, we can with more confidence assess what contemporary commentators made of the troupes, and the sort of influence they may have exercised. Their visits to London tell us something of the problems and perils, as well as of the rewards, involved for Italian acting companies in travelling abroad, and cast light on some reasons why, not only in this period, but throughout the century, the Italian *commedia all'improvviso* made little impression on the English theatre, and seemingly even less on the English public imagination, relative to the impact it made elsewhere.

The major Italian acting companies – those we know most about, and whose work was welcomed at foreign courts – often travelled not only for the financial rewards, but as a condition of their service. Invariably operating under the patronage of a Prince or a Duke, court-based companies or individual players could be despatched abroad at a ruler's whim, and sometimes an Italian prince, at the request of a foreign ruler, would himself assemble a troupe expressly to perform in another country.[7] In either case, the company or player dispatched would serve as an instrument of the patron's political and cultural relations with a foreign court, for they were, in a sense, cultural ambassadors, and were a means by which rulers complimented each other or displayed their good will to foreign powers. This mode of diplomatic cultural interaction between courts was quite firmly established on the Continent by the 1590s, although it was not a significant English practice, primarily perhaps because the English players of the time were less closely tied to a patron and were more independently commercial.[8] For the Italian players it was generally flattering to be so employed, for they obliged their local patron, improved their own status, explored the potential of other markets and were, in the main, well rewarded for their labours.

Whether the very few Italian acting companies which visited England during the Elizabethan period did so as a consequence of royal or aristocratic arrangement with their Italian or French patrons, and in connection with some diplomatic strategy, is not known. But the Italian companies in Restoration London were clearly of the privileged kind, for their visits were all officially organised. Exactly what occasioned Fiorilli's first visit to London is not known, and although Louis XIV's agreement to it may have

had a general political purpose, it was probably determined as much if not more by Charles's whim and the actor's reputation: Fiorilli's quality as a performer may well have been known to English residents in Paris during the interregnum, to English visitors to Paris in 1660s, and even to some in and about the English court who had seen him perform in Italy, as the diarist John Evelyn certainly had in the 1640s.[9] The visit of the Modena troupe in the autumn of 1678, however, in all likelihood had a particular diplomatic purpose. It is often assumed the visit was arranged by Duke Francesco II of Modena merely for the entertainment of his sister, Maria d'Este, the second wife of King Charles's brother James, Duke of York. But it was probably not quite so politically disinterested. Engaged locally in the peninsula in a territorial dispute with Mantua, Duke Francesco had earlier in the same year sought his sister's help to engage the support of Charles II on his behalf, and this attempt was still on-going when the troupe's visit was being planned.[10]

When foreign companies came to London under royal auspices, their arrival was invariably preceeded by extensive court preparations, and these are well documented. Thus when Fiorilli brought a company in the summer of 1674, St George's Hall at Windsor was specially arranged, on Charles II's instruction, with a new, green baize covering for the stage, and a great 'Canvas Sayle' was strung the length of the hall, probably as a 'temporary ceiling designed to lower the height of the room and improve the acoustics'. Again, when Fiorilli was expected in the summer of 1683, the armoury in the White Tower was adapted into a performance place, under King Charles's own supervision.[11] Not only were halls so modified, but artists resident at the English court were put to the service of the visitors, props were prepared for them and music was specially written for their shows. Financial agreements were made in advance of their arrival, travelling expenses were remitted by post, passage through customs was facilitated by royal command, the players' goods were imported free of duty, and unopened, and royal yachts were invariably put at their disposal.[12] When companies travelled, they sometimes even did so in the train or company of an ambassador or other court emissary.[13] On the players' departure, following a successful visit, additional *largesse* was invariably distributed: in 1673 Fiorilli received a chain and gold medal weighing six and a half ounces,

as too did the troupe's Arlecchino, while comparable rewards went to four others in the company, and twenty ounces of white plate was delivered to Scaramouche 'as a gift from his Ma(te) vnto one of his Company'.[14]

But although the rewards bestowed on invited companies were many, even for privileged troupes they could be matched, and sometime even outweighed, by the problems and perils involved in undertaking such visits. The Italian scholar, Cesare Molinari, has likened the exchange of players between courts to the movement of modern football players, but the comparison is not wholly apt, for none but the most distinguished actors were in a position to refuse or evade despatch.[15] Notwithstanding the favours and prestige accruing from such touring, for some of the players foreign travel may not always have been welcome. For a start, lengthy journeys abroad were not to be undertaken lightly. The travel of the Fiorilli troupe from Paris was probably not arduous, but the Modena troupe made the long journey from Italy overland to London, probably via Lyon and Paris, and it almost certainly returned by much the same route.[16] The discomforts endured by itinerant actors on the Continent, moving by roads and rivers, on horses, carts and boats, living in inns *en route* or at times sleeping under the sky, a prey to bandits, unscrupulous inn-keepers, disease and variable weather, have been graphically described by the actor, Domenico Bruni, in his *prologhi,* and we cannot assume the ills he recounts applied only to the lesser itinerant troupes.[17] A visit to England was peculiarly arduous, for it entailed crossing the Channel, which in the 17th century was no casual matter: not only was it costly, but rough weather or the unavailability of transport could cause expensive delays of a week or more at a Channel port, and storms could bedevil sea-faring.[18] The business of organising a lengthy journey was demanding, not least because the size of the troupes on the road was considerable: when Fiorilli arrived in England in 1673, he and his company brought with them 'clothes, vestments, scenes, ornaments, necessaries and materials'; the Modena troupe in 1678 carted with it costumes, properties and sets, amounting to '6 portmanteaux, 2 great basquets, [and] 22 trunks'.[19] Including the twelve Modena actors we can identify, there were thirty-six people in its caravan, a number that compares favourably with the forty in the royal train of the Duchess of

Modena when she accompanied her daughter to England in September 1673, after Maria's marriage by proxy to the Duke of York.[20] Companies invited by royalty, as were these troupes, at least had their expenses covered. Probably very few, if any, fully-fledged acting companies in the 17th century could have afforded to hazard a tour to England under their own financial auspices, even had they obtained entry permission. Not only the difficulties of travel, but the sheer cost, particularly of the Channel crossing, must in large measure account for the fact that few foreign troupes appeared in Elizabethan or Restoration England, compared to the numbers which travelled then quite regularly on the Continent.[21]

Nor should the favours accorded invited troupes conceal the nature and extent of their dependence after their arrival on the receiving patron. Some early 17th century players, like Tristano Martinelli, appear to have enjoyed extraordinarily easy relations with royalty (as evidenced by his correspondence with Maria de Medici), but the degree of familiarity patricians permitted players has probably been much embellished by gossip and hearsay.[22] Certainly as far as most travelling players were concerned, royal patrons exercised firm control over their comings and goings, and even at the level of the highest the fortunes of the Italian players in Restoration London indicate that acting was a precarious profession. For when players travelled abroad they became, in a sense, hostages to fortune. Inevitably, some distress experienced was the result of sheer accident, as when in April 1673 Elisabetta Giulia della Chiesa, the actress wife of the *Dottore* mask, Marco Antonio Romagnesi died, while she and her husband were in London with Fiorilli's company.[23] But many problems sprang directly from the players' relations with their patrons, for royalty could be distinctly casual or indifferent to those in its employ. For example, when the Duke of Modena dispatched his troupe to London, not all the families of the players travelled with them: the wife of Antonio Riccoboni, a leader of the troupe, was one who stayed behind in Italy, probably because she was not herself a player; the length of Riccoboni's absence seems not to have been anticipated and, left destitute, she was forced to write to the Duke and beg financial assistance for herself and their five children while her husband was away on the Duke's service.[24]

No less problematic were the degree and kind of performance freedom accorded visiting troupes. Italian companies put a high premium on having permission to give public performances, for box-office takings could significantly augment the rewards they received from a royal patron. In 1675, Fiorilli was given permission by Charles to charge on the door at the court theatre in Whitehall for the admission of commoners and, as the poet Andrew Marvell informs us, 'even a twelve-penny Gallery is builded for the convenience of his Majesty's poorer Subjects'; this royal favour was greeted with astonishment and some anger, many in and about the court taking it to be a deplorable breach of decorum.[25] When in April, 1683, Charles instructed his envoy at Paris to arrange for the return of Fiorilli's company, Scaramouche was willing to come, but looked to the monarch to compensate the company for having no paying public to play before at Windsor. Nor was royalty always prompt to settle its accounts, and on this same occasion Fiorilli took the opportunity to remind Charles 'that there was an hundred pounds of an old arrear due to them which he hoped his Majesty would order to be paid'. Players were alert to the vagaries to which settlement of royal accounts were subject, and took what measures they could to protect themselves. Fiorilli requested that the players in Paris 'might have (as they had the last time) some money advanced to them here, otherwise some of their company could not get away'[26] The comings and goings of companies, too, were firmly controlled. In 1683, Louis XIV's permission had to be obtained for the Fiorilli troupe to visit London, and presumably it had been similarly sought for the earlier London visits. Permission to leave likewise had to be obtained from the inviting monarch. The Modena company wanted desperately to return home, but was long prevented from doing so by King Charles, and only after many refusals did they obtained the 'much desired permission' and departed in February 1679, some three months after their arrival.[27]

The keenness of the Modena troupe to leave England, points to another ever present peril for foreign acting companies in England: the extent to which political and religious conditions constituted a potential hazard. Italian travelling companies seem, in the main, judging from their known itineraries, to have preferred to perform in Catholic countries. Companies visiting England always ran the

danger of incurring religious or nationalistic animosity, particularly in the popular domain, for a strain of anti-Catholic prejudice was always just below the surface in Restoration England; it is evident in popular literature and drama, and perhaps can be detected too in the letter Richard Bulstrode wrote to Lady Harvey, in April 1673, about the Italian comedians performing to a paying public at Whitehall: 'and all people are allowed to come there and see them, paying as they doe at other houses, so yet now a Papist may come to Court for halfe a crowne'.[28] As is well known, the Modena troupe encountered this prejudice at its most virulent, for it entered England on 11 November, 1678, just as the Popish Plot broke. Anti-Catholic feeling escalated in the ensuing weeks: in November Charles felt obliged to order parishes to draw up lists of papists and suspected papists and submit them to local Justices of the Peace, Catholics were barred from coming within ten miles of London and, as the Duchess of York informed her brother in a letter, many suffered acute poverty and some even died.[29] Whig political opinion exploited the Titus Oates charges to whip up fear of a Catholic coup, and suspicion very quickly fell on the possible malign intentions of the Duke of York – to the embarrassment of the Duchess, and to the acute discomfort of the Italian players. At first Charles was keen for the Modena troupe to perform but, according to Maria, who wrote regularly to her brother at this time, even by 24 November, 1678, he was still reluctant to settle on a start date, aware of the inappositeness of Italians acting then, whether at court or in public. On 16 December Maria reported she herself had still not seen the company act, no one at court was interested in comedy, and the poor players could not have come at a worse time and were earning nothing.[30] That the players were acutely distressed is clear from a letter of 17 February, 1679, written by one of the actors, Giovan Antonio Lolli, to the Duke of Modena, complaining of their miserable plight and noting the company had given only six plays 'to very little applause'.[31] Although in the course of the visit they may well have given rather more than this number, all were probably court performances, for public playing would almost certainly have been remarked, yet even their court confinement appears to have passed without notice, suggesting they kept a very low profile indeed. The loss of public box-office income adversely affected the troupe, and the Duchess, their ostensible benefactress at court, had to give them money twice, before finally obtaining their permission to leave.[32]

The Modena troupe was, of course, peculiarly unfortunate in the timing of its visit, but the political and religious hostility of which it ran foul was but one of many potential perils which might afflict the fortunes of an Italian acting company in London. For example, some English Restoration dramatists and players, and some spectators, were distinctly antipathetic to the kind of drama Italian companies purveyed. In France, both in Paris and elsewhere, largely improvising farceurs had contributed to the development of the building-based theatre companies, French actors had absorbed many of the performance styles and techniques of the Italian players, and the Italians, in their turn, and particularly after the establishment of the permanent company in Paris in 1661, had accomodated their playing to French needs.[33] The Italians were thus a familiar feature of the French theatrical scene in a way they were not in England. Many of the changes wrought in the *Commedia dell'Arte* in France, like increased spectacle, music and dance, and a greater emphasis on mimic 'business', inevitably carried Italian performance in the direction of spectacle and sheer farce. But while spectacle early became popular on the English Restoration stage, farce, at least in the first decades or so of the Restoration, was still, as in the Elizabethan period, viewed by many writers and spectators with considerable suspicion. In both the Elizabethan and Restoration periods Italian improvised drama is firmly associated by many contemporary commentators with the slick but easy buffooneries of farce, a genre considered to appeal only to vulgar tastes, and consisting in little but the crude mimicry, grimacing and low comedy antics of clowns.[34] Ben Jonson characterised the Italian improvised drama as 'the old *pantomimi*', and placed it in the vulgar meridian, and the Restoration critic, John Dennis, likewise linking it by implication with Roman mime, described the latter as 'low Farces, compos'd on purpose only to make people laugh'.[35] John Dryden, the first English critic to treat at length of farce, wrote disparagingly of it in the preface to *An Evening's Love*, insisting that farce 'consists principally of grimaces...of forced humours, and unnatural events', as opposed to comedy, which consists in 'natural actions and characters...such humours, adventurers and designs, as are to be found and met with in the world'. Of course, the quality of Fiorilli's or Biancolelli's playing could scarcely be gainsaid, and for a short period, primarily in the

late 1670s and the 1680s, it encouraged some popular playwrights to take up Franco-Italian plays and materials, as did Edward Ravenscroft in *Scaramouch a Philosopher* (1677), William Mountfort in *The Life and Death of Dr Faustus* (1685) and Aphra Behn in *The Emperor of the Moon* (1687).[36] Such plays made much of elements like farcial night scenes, knock-about *lazzi* and the exploitation of the clownish antics of the lead masks, Harlequin and Scaramouche, and were put on with elaborate scenery and stage machinery, which constituted no small part of their appeal. But these are not so much *Commedia dell'Arte* pieces proper, as workaday English farces built around partly anglicised treatments of the Italian stage figures. Earlier in the century the dramatist Thomas St Serfe, in the prologue to his *Tarugo's Wiles* (1667), has a Gentleman ask why modern wit is so easily acquired, to which the Poet's Man responds, 'Because a Trivolino, or a Skaramuchio that's dextrous at making of mouths will sooner raise a Clap then a high flown Fancy'. His disparaging view of low comic business, and his association of it with Italian improvising players, was not uncommon among the educated throughout much of the century. English plays imitative of the *Commedia* helped to further among Restoration audiences an increasing vogue for stage farce, and perhaps contributed something to the emergence of the English pantomime in the next century.But among many English Restoration dramatists and players, hostility to the kinds of material characteristic of the *commedia all'improvviso* remained widespread, and an indirect peril of contact with Italian players and their improvised drama was that it helped to cement a long and widely held negative English view of the *Commedia dell'Arte* as essentially a theatre of rough buffoonery.

Clearly, however, some English Restoration dramatists were not reluctant to borrow from the Italians, nor were some Restoration comic actors, like Haynes and Jevon, who occasionally played the masked types in Restoration plays. What cannot be discounted, then, is the possibility, in the Restoration as much as in the Elizabethan period, that the suspicion with which the *commedia all'improvviso* was often viewed sprang from more than antipathy to the genre of farce. It was certainly in part-rooted in economic protectionism. Visiting foreign players invariably encountered in London throughout the period a marked degree of professional

hostility, and this was of a kind to which the Italian players were probably little accustomed, even in Paris, for while there is indication they met with occasional hostility from French players, in the main the Italians were assimilated, and disputes when they arose often turned more on personal, than on political, religious and professional differences.[37] Further, although by the 1660s theatre in Paris was well established, Paris was something of a special case, for court patronage had been early extended there to the Italians. Elsewhere Italian itinerants in their touring seem to have favoured countries where theatre was either little or under developed, and it is perhaps no accident that as building-based theatre companies became ever more firmly a feature of the larger Western European cities in the 18th century, the Italian itinerants travelled even further abroad, to Poland and Russia, where professional theatre was still in its infancy.[38]

The London theatre market of the Restoration period, however, was far from being in its infancy; on the contrary, it was highly developed, commercially sophisticated and, in its way, as tightly knit and intensely competitive as the Elizabethan had been.[39] It offered neither an open, nor a welcoming market for visiting troupes. Like Elizabethan dramatists and players, those of the Restoration tended to see all foreign theatre as a threat to their own financial and artistic security. Foreign players in London, including those there under royal auspices, were not seen by native dramatists and players as providing opportunity for fruitful inter-cultural contact and possible collaboration and exchange, but as rivals for royal patronage and the favour of the play-going public. Prologues and epilogues of the period are witness to an English dramatists' strategy of disparagement, like Dryden's 'Epilogue to the University of Oxford', written for a revival of Jonson's *The Silent Woman* in July, 1673, which claims the 'Italian Merry-Andrews':

> quite Debauch'd the Stage with lewd Grimace;
> Instead of Wit and Humours, your Delight
> Was there to see two Hobby-horses Fight,
> Stout *Scaramoucha* with Rush Lance rode in,
> And ran a Tilt at Centaure, *Arlequin*.

or the prologue to a Drury Lane revival of Jonson's *Everyman out of His Humour*, in July 1675, which jeers at those who attend the performances of the Italian players without understanding a

word of the language. Richard Bulstrode, in the letter already cited above, remarks that the appearance of the Italians is 'not much lik'd by our other players, for it will half break both our houses'. There seem to have been very few contacts between members of visiting Italian or French troupes and the resident English players, there is no indication English players displayed any concern for the welfare of foreign actors and actresses, and no sign they made any attempt to facilitate their visits, nor to champion the cause of players, like those of the Modena troupe, when they became the victims of religious and political prejudice and dispute. What this hostility to foreign players reflects, of course, is the peculiarly commercial nature of much inter-cultural theatrical activity. Most literary and artistic inter-cultural relations consisted in exploitation of, or opposition to, the influence of ideas and ways of seeing; they did not usually operate in areas of direct commercial challenge and threat. But theatre encounters of the kind brought about by visiting companies entering an established market carried competitive and commercial implications. This was the case even when the foreign companies performed only at court, for their presence there tended to exclude the native commercial troupes from a patronage they valued.

But professionally, the English opposition to Italian players ran perhaps even deeper. In both the Elizabethan and early Restoration periods there was a suspicion of non-literary theatre, and more particularly of actor-devised theatre and for the making of plays from *scenarii* by improvising techniques. In Italy and France, the case was quite different. In France, impetus had been given to the development of the regular theatre in the 1620's and 1630's as trestle-stage improvising farceurs like Turlupin and Gros-Guillaume had passed over into the Company at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.[40] In Italy, for professional convenience the Italian comedians had from the start composed most of their own pieces by the techniques of improvisation. Further, as a prologue to Flaminio Scala's *Il finto marito* (1619) shows, they defended their way of making plays by arguing for the primacy of the actor: it was the actor, says Scala's improvising comedian, who taught the dramatist how to compose plays, not the other way about; it was the actor who made the rules and, on the basis not of literary considerations, but on that of his direct practical knowledge of performance and audiences. Such

a view seems to have been quite widespread among Italian players and constituted one of the defences they advanced on behalf of their art.[41] It was scarcely a view to commend itself to Elizabethan or Restoration dramatists, nor to actors accustomed to interpreting scripted plays. Ben Jonson was but one Elizabethan who looked askance at the improvising methods of the Italian professional theatre, and Shakespeare's complaint that some clowns spoke more than was set down for them is well known. In the early Restoration period that complaint persisted, and for the most part throughout the Elizabethan period, and well into the Restoration, English actors rarely sought to challenge the authority of the dramatist as the chief 'maker' of plays.[42]

Of course, English Elizabethan and Restoration dramatists drew on the work of foreign playwrights – Italian, French and Spanish in particular – but with the exception of dramatic opera, perhaps the most successful and fuitful forms of Anglo-Italian inter-cultural relations in the early English theatre, of a theatrical rather than a literary kind, occurred only at the beginning of the 18th century with the development of comic opera and the pantomime, forms which successfully accomodated native and foreign elements. It is no coincidence that these, like dramatic opera, were new forms, and that for much of the 17th century there was no established English professional musical or quasi-variety theatre with which they were in competition. Nor is it an accident that many actors and dramatists were at first hostile even to these forms, seeing them as threatening to the proper business of acting, and deflecting potential box-office business from the 'regular' stage. Until the emergence of pantomime, and nowithstanding the several English plays were written in the manner of the improvised drama, or used stage figures from that drama, the masks and styles of the *Commedia dell'Arte* never really took in England. If the surviving literary evidence suggests that was the case, it is an impression all the more strengthened by the striking dearth of English iconographic materials. On the Continent, the late 16th and 17th century iconography of the *commedia all'improvviso* is rich. In the Elizabethan period, the only extent English illustration of *Commedia dell'Arte* figures known to have been published in England before the closure of the theatres in 1642, is that of a Zany and a Pantalone in *The Divels Legend,* published in London by

Thomas Gosson in 1595, and translated, according to its title-page, from the French of one jovenal Borget. The English provenance of the illustration is far from certain. Inigo Jones's costume sketches, made for private court theatricals in the 1630's, included several *Commedia dell'Arte* figures, but they were apparently drawn from Continental materials, were not of course published, and cannot be assumed to have been in wide circulation.[43] The Restoration period is even more wanting in English illustration of *Commedia dell'Arte* figures, and where it is found, it is of the trestle-stage popular theatre ambience, like the 1680's Bartholomew Fair engraving of an Arlecchino'.[44]

From the late 1570s through to the closure of the theatres in 1642, there is little concrete evidence of the presence of Italian professional acting companies in England, and for all the many changes which came to the English theatre with the reopening in 1660 – the introduction of actresses, close royal patronage and court involvement, a more sympathetic licensing climate, a new interest in stage decoration and machinery, and a court and literary establishment much in tune with Continental, and particularly French, culture – many powerful barriers continued to impede free interaction between English and Italian professional theatre: these included, the difficulties of land and sea travel, the possibility of troupes meeting with hostility on religious and political grounds, the highly developed and intensely competitive theatre market in London, a certain dislike of farce, and radically different conceptions of what constituted the nature and bounds of the art of the actor. Touring to England throughout the 17th century remained a highly problematic undertaking for *Commedia dell'Arte* troupes. For professional mercenary companies, whose itinerancy was driven by the search for audiences, even royal patronage could rarely make the rewards outweigh the potential perils – physical, ideological, financial and artistic – of travel to England.

Notes

1. K.M.Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy,* Oxford 1934, vol II; K. and L. Richards. *The Commedia dell'arte: A Documentary History,* Oxford 1990. See also for visiting companies Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900, Vol. I, Restoration Drama 1660-1700,* Cambridge 1965, p. 249 ff.; S. Rosenfeld, *Foreign Thearical Companies in Great Britain in the 17th and 18th Centuries,* London 1955.
2. Michael Foss, *The Age of Patronage: the Arts in Society 1660-1750,* London 1975, and Judith Hook, *The Baroque Age in England,* London 1976.
3. Richards op. cit., p. 273. For Italian players in France from the 1640's see particularly Virginia Scott, *The Commedia dell'Arte in Paris 1644-97,* Charlottesvill 1990.
4. Eleanore Boswell, *The Restoration Court Stage 1660-1702,* Cambridge, Mass., 1932, particularly p. 114 ff.; Nicoll, op. cit., p. 250 ff.; A.L. Bader, 'The Modena Troupe in England', *Modern Language Notes,* 1935; A. Obertello, 'Su una compagnia di comici italiani a Londra nel 1678-9', *Rivista di studi teatrali,* No. 9-10, 1954, p. 138.
5. Richards, op. cit., p. 270. Alternatively, the sheer diversity of activity may warrant confining use of the term to court companies only.
6. Kenneth Richards, 'Elizabethan Perceptions of the Commedia dell'Arte', in *Cultural Exchange between European Nations during the Renaissance,* ed. M. Shrigley and G. Sorelius, Uppsala, 1994.
7. See Cesare Molinari, *La Commedia dell'Arte,* Milan 1985, p. 70ff.
8. Gerald E. Bentley, *The Professions of Dramatist and Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642,* Princeton 1986.
9. John Evelyn, *Diary,* London 1857, vol 2, p. 102.
10. Marquise Campana de Cavelli, *Les derniers Stuarts a Saint-Germaine en Laye,* Paris, 1871, 2 vols., letter of 6 October 1678 cited in vol 1, p. 228-9, See also Martin Haile, *Queen Mary of Modena. Her Life and Letters,* London 1905, p. 65 ff.
11. These arrangements are well described in Boswell op. cit., pp. 60-61.
12. This is nicely indicated in an order of 20 June, 1675: 'to deliver to Monsieur Brunetts, Custom free, and without opening, several vestments, habits, scenes and other necessaries belonging to the Italian comedians and lately brought from France in the *Portsmouth* and *Ann* yachts' ; Boswell, op. cit., p. 121, and Nicoll, op. cit., p. 250. The practice of giving performers medals was widespread: the Arch-Duke Leopold William of Austria gave the singers Balbi and Anseloni gifts and the composer Giuseppe Zamponi a gold chain when they left Brussels in Feb 1650.
13. As is indicated, for example, in a warrant of 1 May, 167, requiring the Customs Commissioners to inspect a seal luggage belonging to Sir Leoline Jenkins and Sir Joseph Williamson, ambassadors despatched for the conclusion of the Aix la Chapelle treaty, and also 'the goods belonging to the Company of French comedians at York House, whom the said Ambassadors are directed by the King to receive into their train'; Boswell op. cit., p. 118.
14. Boswell, op. cit., p. 119.

15. Cesare Molinari, op. cit., p. 70 ff.
16. For the travels of the major companies see Richards op. cit., p. 59 ff. and 256 ff. For company travel between Italy and Paris see particularly *Viaggi teatrali dall'Italia a Parigi fra Cinque e Seicento,* Genoa, 1989.
17. Domenico Bruni, *Prologhi*, 1621, and *Fatiche comiche*, 1623. One example of the problems involved in crossing the channel is provided by the journey made in December 1677 by the Prince and Princess of Orange, whose Dover boat was driven back to Sherness, forcing them to travel to Canterbury and await fairer weather; Marquise Campana de Cavelli, op. cit., letters cited in vol. I, p. 204. According to *Viaggi per Europa*, a packet boat crossing from Calais in 1686 could cost 5/-.
18. As is seen in the misfortune of a French acting troupe under Henri Pitel which, sailing to Neimegen along the French coast in December, 1677, was driven out to sea by contrary winds and blown across the Channel into an English port: W.J. Lawrence, 'Early French Players in England', *The Elizabethan Playhouse and Other Studies*, Stratford, 1912, p. 148.
19. A.L. Bader, op. cit.
20. See Marquise Campana de Cavelli, op. cit., letters cited in vol. I, p. 86.
21. For an intersting account of English players travelling on the Continent, see J. Lemon, *Gentlemen of a Company,* Cambridge, 1985.
22. See Rasi, op. cit., Vol III, and Richards, op. cit., p. 210 ff.
23. I.K. Fletcher, 'Italian comedians in England in the 17th century', *Theatre Notebook,* Vol. 8, 1954.
24. Obertello, op. cit., See also Richards, op. cit., p. 82 ff., and letters cited in Luigi Rasi, *I comici italiani,* Florence, 1897-1905, 3 vols.
25. Andrew Marvell, *Works,* Oxford 1927, Vl. II, p. 320.
26. Boswell, op. cit., pp. 124 – 5.
27. A.L. Bader, op. cit.
28. Richard Bulstrode, *The Bulstrode Papers,* London 1879, 1, p. 302. For popular nationalist feeling in London see Peter Burke, 'Popular culture in seventeenth century London' in *Popular Culture in Seventeenth Century England,* ed. Barry Reay, London 1988, pp. 31 – 58.
29. Marquise Campana de Cavelli, op. cit., letters cited in vol. I, p. 227 and 229 – 30. On 16 December 1678 she reports that she had been obliged to send away all her Catholic servants, pp. 236 – 7. For the Plot see particularly John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot,* London, 1972, who refers to Charles ordering lists of papists to be drawn up: p. 106. See also the views of the Florentine envoy cited in John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660 – 1688,* Cambridge 1973, p. 154 ff. Relevant also is information in Anna Maria Crinò, *Il Popish Plot nelle relazioni inedite dei residenti granducali alla corte di Londra (1678 – 81),* Rome 1954, p. 30 ff.
30. Marquise Campana de Cavelli, op. cit., letters cited in vol. I, and Martin Haile, *Mary of Modena,* London, 1904. A little later the Duchess reports she had seen them play occasionally, but they had still not acted before the King.
31. Obertello, op. cit.
32. A.L. Bader, op. cit.,

33. Scott, op. cit. p 15 ff.
34. For Restoration attitudes to farce see Leo Hughes, *A Century of English Farce*, Oxford 1956, particularly p. 130 ff.
35. For Ben Jonson's comment on the *'old pantomini'* see K. Richards, 'The Commedia dell'Arte and the Caroline Stage', *Italy and the English Renaissance*, ed. S. Rossi and D. Savoia, Milan 1987, p. 241 ff.
36. Other pieces included a scene in Aphra Behn's *The Rover II* (16891) in which an Italian *Arlecchino* appeared, Nahum Tate's adaptation of a Caroline play by Aston Cockain, *A Duke and No Duke* (1684) and the last act farce of Peter Motteaux's multi-genre piece *The Novelty*, 1697; see Hughes op. cit., passim. By the end of the century farce had become so popular that the actor-dramatist William Mountfort, in the Dedicatory Epistle to *Greenwich Park* 1691, lamented that the town will throng to a farce and '*Hamelet not bring Charges*'. The actors were probably right to fear competition, for the visits by Italian and French companies may in part account for the fact that in the 1670's court appearances by the London companies fell drastically. See *The London Stage, 1600 – 1800*, Part 1 1660 – 1700, ed. W. Van Lennep, Carbondale, 1965, Nicoll op. cit., p. 345 ff., and D. Roberts, *The Ladies: Female Patronage of Restoration Drama 1660 – 1700*, Oxford 1989, p. 96.
37. See Virginia Scott, op. cit., and W.L. Wiley, *The Early Public Theatre in France*, Cambridge, Mass., 1960.
38. In Spain, for example, although the Italian companies were very successful in the 1570s and 1580s, and provided models for the emerging Spanish professional theatre, in the mid 17th century they are not greatly in evidence, but instead become rather more conspicious in Portugal, where theatre was less well established. See also M. Brahmer 'La commedia dell'arte in Polonia', *Ricerche slavistiche*, vol. 3, 1954, pp. 184 – 95; E. Lo Gatto, 'La commedia dell'arte in Russia', *Rivista di studi teatrali*, No. 9/10, 1954, p. 176 ff.
39. See Bentley, op. cit., passim, and the introduction to *The London Stage*, op. cit., Part 1. Perhaps at no time was rivalry more fierce than in the 1670s, following the contraction of audience numbers consequent on the Third Dutch War and the opening of the new King's Company Theatre in Drury Lane in 1675; indeed, competition for audiences became so intense that within a few years the two companies, the King's and the Duke's, were obliged to amalgamate.
40. Wiley, op. cit., p. 20 ff.
41. Flaminio Scala, *Il finto marito*, 1619; for an English translation see Richards, op. cit., p. 197 ff.
42. Cf. English professional theatre attitudes to changeable scenery at court in the 1630's.
43. See Kenneth Richards, 'Inigo Jones and the Commedia dell'Arte', *The Commedia dell'Arte from the Renaissance to Dario Fo*, ed. C. Cairns, Lampeter 1989, p. 209 ff.
44. See the illustration included in Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair*, London 1892.

MRS APHRA BEHN AND THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

VICKI ANN CREMONA

The history of England in the seventeenth century is characterized by sharp shifts from one extreme to the other, both on the political and social levels. These changes are also reflected in the history of the London theatres during the period, to the extent that all theatres were closed during the Commonwealth, and again for a year after the death of Charles II. The same extremism appears in people's actions and attitudes. People from all walks of life were wholeheartedly devoted to one cause or the other, and in many cases paid for their efforts with their lives.

Aphra Behn was no different to the people of her time. An ardent royalist, she proved her loyalty to her king by going on a spy mission to Antwerp. She paid dearly for her pains by returning to England impoverished, only to be thrown into a debtor's prison. This experience taught her to depend only on herself and her talents, which she defended tooth and nail, becoming the first professional female playwright in England, and one of the rare women whose literary capabilities were recognized and acknowledged by the predominantly male literary circles of the time. Her plays cover a wide range of styles and interests – pseudo-heroism, romance, farce. Her writings show her to be receptive to the different trends influencing her society.

Court society at the time of Charles II was very open to French influence. The king had spent many years of his exile at the court of his cousin, Louis XIV. His sister, Henriette, was married to the Sun King's brother. At the time, France was swiftly growing to be one of the most important nations of Europe. Its court was definitely the most magnificent and extravagant on the continent, its pomp and pageantry taking on theatrical proportions. Much of its sumptuousness relied heavily on Italian art and skill. Italian painters and craftsmen helped shape Versailles. Giovanni Battista – better known as Jean Baptiste – Lulli dominated the

French musical scene until his death, especially opera and ballet. The best stage machinists in Europe. Torelli and Vigarani, were in the king's pay. Italian actors, whose fame as 'maschere' in the Commedia dell'Arte had spread across Europe, settled in Paris. They were first placed under the patronage of Monsieur, and dedicated most of their plays to his wife, Henriette. Later, they became Les Comediens Italiens du Roi and the best paid and most successful actors in Paris.

Charles II, a great lover of the theatre, certainly heard of the Italian actors through his sister, and probably watched them at the French court or in their theatre, the Palais Royal. During his reign, members of the Italian troupe from Paris, as well as actors from Italy, came to England on several occasions. Some of the most renowned actors in the Commedia dell'Arte entertained the king at Court. His protection towards them reveals his liking and appreciation for their theatre.[1]

Like all those who frequented court circles, Mrs. Aphra Behn must have watched the Italians perform. Besides, Mrs. Behn was very familiar with what went on in Paris. Maureen Duffy confirms her knowledge of the French language, which can also be attested by her translations of French works, and affirms:

> 'I believe she did go to France from time to time'.[2]

Unfortunately, she does not specify on what grounds she bases this belief.

Whether in Paris or in London, Mrs. Behn most certainly watched the greatest Italian actors of the time, and was able to appreciate their qualities. In fact it is possible that in 1678 – 79 she started working with the Italian troupe from Modena.

The Italian actors had been sent to England by the Duke of Modena for the benefit of his sister, Maria D'Este, who was married to the future James II. Unfortunately, the troupe arrived at a very wrong moment, when the Court was taken up by the Popish Plot, and the denunciations by Titus Oates. Maria writes to her brother on the 19th December 1678:

> ...Li poveri commedianti Italiani non potevano venire nel peggior tempo perchè nessuno non ha voglia di comedie e così non guadagno niente . . .[3]

Aphra Behn had just triumphed with her play *The Rover,* the year before, in 1677. The sequel to this, *The Rover (Part Two) or The*

Banished Cavaliers, which included the characters Harlequin and Scaramouche, was presented at the Dorset Gardents in 1681. Ms Duffy states that the events of the time:

> ...affected her choice of a new play for the winter and its prologue. The epilogue was written by 'a person of quality' who claimed that Aphra Behn had written the play in five days.'[4]

I believe that though the play was presented to the general public in 1681, it may have been shown at Court in 1678. The epilogue, as well as the prologue contain specific references to events in 1681,[5] but they do not constitute the core of the play and may have been written afterwards. In fact, a particular reference to the events of the Popish Plot, which admittedly, was still being discussed in 1681 because of the Jury's positive verdict could, however, place the actual play much earlier. In Act III scene I, just after Harlequin ushers in Hunt as a giant, we find the following comments:

> Fetherstone: Good Lord! I wonder what religion he's of.
> Blunt: Some Heathen Papist, by his notable plots and Contrivances.[6]

A more important detail lies in the fact that it would be more logical to write a sequel to *The Rover* the next year, in the wake of its success, rather than four years later. Besides, the play is dedicated to the Duke of York, whose wife was responsible for bringing the Italian actors to England. This could be an indirect tribute to Maria d'Este, as nobody, including Mrs Behn, would have dared mention her name at the time, because of her catholic religion.

Another important indication is given in the Dramatis Personae, which includes the names Harlequin and Scaramouche. We must not forget that the Duke of Modena's actors had no work, and therefore no money. This would have made them very eager to collaborate with anyone who offered them a part in an English play.

The name Scaramouche appears only once in the play itself. He is mentioned in a didascaly in Act II Scene I,[7] when he appears in a typical Commedia dell'Arte setting: a little stage with a pavilion is mounted on one side of the stage, and Scaramouche enters, following Wilmore who is dressed as a 'mountebank' selling fake remedies. No mention is made either of him speaking or moving, in fact we do not know exactly what he does on stage, nor when or how he leaves it. His silence could be explained by the fact that

the actor could not speak any English, and therefore would have resorted to a gestual act, even though we are not supplied with any information regarding this matter.

Harlequin is announced as 'Wilmore's man' and appears five times in the play. In Act II scene I, he comes on stage with Scaramouche, yet unlike the latter, he participates directly in the action and manifests the technical abilities the Commedia dell'Arte actors were so famous for, thus providing entertainment through movement. In this scene, he gives proof of the healing powers of Wilmore's quack potions by means of a 'lazzi': Harlequin stabs himself and 'falls as dead' and rises only when the potion is poured into the wound.[8] Later, he leads a horse from between Don Carlo's legs, causing the latter to fall down.[9] In Act V Scene III, he swallows a pearl from a necklace, goes into a clock case and shows Fetherstone how to stand in it, and plays tricks with Shift.[10] In keeping with the Commedia tradition, Harlequin sings and plays the guitar.[11] Harlequin does speak in the play, but his lines are always preceeded by the words 'in Italian', or 'in Italian still speaks'.[12] This is a clear indication of the actor's origin. The only other lines he utters are in French.[13]

The names of the actors playing Harlequin and Scaramouche are not mentioned, so if we are to take it that the two 'masks' belong to the Modena troupe, we must try and guess at their identity. This is all the more difficult because in the list, provided by A.L. Bader, of the actors constituting the Modena Troupe in England[14] there is no Harlequin or Scaramouche. Yet we know that two of the actors mentioned in the list went on to join the Troupe des Comediens Italiens du Roi in Paris, where one of them took up the part. Giuseppe Tortoriti, entered the Paris troupe in the role of Pasquariel, (the same type he acted in England) but took on the role of Scaramouche after Fiorilli retired in 1694 and became known as 'Scaramouche le Jeune'. Things are less straightforward as far as Harlequin is concerned. Two 'zanni' appear on the list of the Modena company: Andrea Cimadori (Finocchio) and Costantino Costantini (Gradellino). The latter played the same role in Paris as from 1687 but was expelled from the country probably after 1696. D'Origny states in his *Annales:*

> On reconnoit qu'il ne manquait ni d'intelligence, ni de chaleur. Probablement ces qualités lui auraient valu les suffrages du Public, mais il eut la maladresse de l'indisposer par une chanson dans laquelle la nation Francaise etoit fort mal traitée.[15]

In France, Costantini was in charge of all the musical parts of the plays. In Behn's play, Harlequin plays and sings on stage but perhaps behind the scenes, the actor gave a helping hand with the music scores and the dancing.

Unfortunately, there are no records to show who acted the two parts in 1681 at the Dorset Gardents, and no trace of Italian presence at the time has yet been found.

Aphra Behn's next connection with the Commedia dell'Arte is in her last play, *The Emperor of the Moon,* produced in 1687. The title resembles that of *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune,* published in Gherardi's *Recueil,* which had been acted by the Italians in Paris three years before.[16] Mrs Behn's play, which was the author's first try at comic opera, was so successful that it was acted well into the eighteenth century. Fidelis Morgan speaks about its success in these terms:

> [It] was regularly performed for foreign dignitaries visiting London, among them the Moroccan ambassador, an African prince, and his Excellency Hodgha Bawhoom, envoy from the Great king of Persia, who could enjoy jokes which were primarily visual rather than verbal; it was also popular with the English royal family. It was often chosen for performances which fell on Friday 13th because it never failed. This was the last of her plays that Mrs Behn was to see performed.[17]

It is interesting to note that Mr Underhill, who in the *Banished Cavaliers* plays the comic role of Ned Blunt, is the Dr Baluardo in *The Emperor of the Moon.* The actor had definitely met Giovanni Antonio Lolli in 1678. In Bader's list the Italian actor's stage name is Dr Brentano,[18] and he is the Dr Balouardo of the play shown in Paris. The Harlequin in Mrs Behn's play is Thomas Jevon, credited in the satire of the time with 'heels of cork and brains of lead'.[19] I.K. Fletcher maintains that the actor must have watched the Italian Harlequin in the *Banished Cavaliers* and affirms:

> The two actors, Hayns and Jevon, came together at the Dorset Theatre in 1687 in the production of Mrs Behn's *The Emperor of the Moon* based on Biancolleli's great success . . . Jevon played Harlequin and Hayns had the distinction of appearing as himself . . .

Jo Haynes is not mentioned in the Dramatis Personae of the edition by Montague Summers, but if what Fletcher affirms is true, there would be an even stronger link with the Italian comedians. The English actor had met and actually worked with the Italians at the

court of Louis XIV in 1670 and 1672. He most certainly saw the great Domenico Biancollelli and Tiberio Fiorilli at work, and observed their legendary skill and technique. However, in a Commedia dell'Arte play, it was impossible for an actor to appear as 'himself'. In Gherardi's *Recueil,* there is no mention of Biancolleli ever having done so, even though Gherardi admits to having done this in his preface to the play *Le Divorce:*

> Si j'etois homme a tirer vanité des talents que la nature m'a donnés pour le théâtre, soit à visage decouvert, ou à visage masqué, dans les principaux rôles serieux ou comiques, ou l'on m'a vu briller avec applaudissement . . . j'aurois ici un fort beau champ à satisfaire mon amour-propre.[20]

Gherardi appeared on the French stage two years after Mrs Behn's play was produced. Perhaps Jo Haynes took the liberty of appearing as himself becuase English audiences were not as familiar with the codes of the Commedia dell'Arte as the Italians or even the French. It would be interesting to know exactly what the actor did in the play, but the fact that he is not mentioned in the text would lead one to believe that his role was based on his physical abilities.

The part of 'Scaramouche' is played by 'Mr Lee', or rather, Anthony Leigh, 'one of the king's favourite actors' who, according to Colley Cibber, could make even the most boring characters appear funny on stage.[21]

There are four female roles both in the Franco-Italian play and in the English one. The names in Mrs Behn's work are reminiscent of the play shown in 1684. The female lover, Elaria, would correspond to the part Eularia played by Ursula Cortezzi. Cortezzi relinquished her role of Prima Amorosa to her daughter, Francoise Biancolleli, known on stage as Isabella, in 1691. The latter had been playing the roles of second lover since 1683. Her other daughter, Catherine, played Colombine the servant, the Mopsophil of Mrs Behn's play. The fourth female, Florinda in the English version, woud correspond to the Parisian Olivette. Even though Eularia is the Doctor's niece in the 1684 version and his daughter in Mrs Behn's, the relationship of daughter and niece are maintained.

The date of presentation of Mrs Behn's play is given as March 1687, that is three years after the Italians had put up their play in Paris, in March 1684. However, M. Willson Disher states that it may have previously been performed in England as is suggested by the lines in the last part of *Hudibras* published in 1678, the year of the Modena troupe's presence in the country:

But what, alas! is it to us,
Whether i'th' moon men thus or thus
Do eat their porridge, cut their corns
Or whether they have tails or horns? . . .
Can they make plays there that shall fit
The public humour, with less wit?
Write witty dances, quainter shows,
Or fight with more ingenious blows?[22]

Since there is no trace of an Italian troupe in England after 1678, we could perhaps wonder if a version of the play was shown in England by the Modena troupe, yet there is no historical proof of this.

Whatever the case, it is certain that Aphra Behn must have been familiar with the play performed by the Italians. She cannot have read the printed version, because there is no known printed edition before 1694 (which only contains four scenes) and Mrs Behn was already dead at the time of its appearance. The final version by Gherardi, published in 1700, contains only eight unconnected scenes. Working copies of plays did travel around Europe, but we cannot know if such a one existed for *Arlequin Empereur dans la Lune,* and if it did, whether Mrs Behn had read it, and whether it gave an exhaustive description of visual elements. In fact, the details contained in Aphra Behn's play give us better insight as to what the Italians' play must have looked like, because except for the ending, Gherardi's scenes are all more or less included in her play. This is a strong indication of the fact that the English author had probably seen the Italians' version of the play, either in London or in Paris.

There are of course important variations. In the Parisian play, it is Harlequin who is the emperor of the moon and he is unmasked by the Chevaliers du Soleil. In the English play, the emperor is Cinthio, the lover. However, the name Cinthio was the stage name used by Marco Antonio Romagnesi who played the first lover in the Italians' theatre in Paris. The role of the second lover, Aurelio, was played by Ranieri who left the troupe in 1689 to join the priesthood. In Mrs Behn's play, the second lover bears a French name: Charmante, the Prince of Thunderland. The role of Scaramouche in the English play covers parts of Pierrot's and Harlequin's roles in the Parisian version.

When we compare the two plays, we can see that Aphra Behn has retained the gist of the Italians' story, as well as the funniest and most spectacular bits. The humour in her play is based upon more or less the same physical actions and transformations as that of the Italians. They are the parts anybody watching the play would remember after leaving the theatre. One such scene is that where Harlequin tries to commit suicide by tickling himself to death which is common to the two plays. In fact, in his edition, Gherardi states that:

> Ceux qui on vu cette scene conviendront que c'est l'une des plus plaisantes qu'on ait jamais joué sur le theatre italien.[24]

In both plays Harlequin appears in female dress as a 'Fille de Chambre' and has the same jokes. The 'changements a vue' in the Parisian version are also included in Mrs. Behn's play, such as the scene where Harlequin changes back and forth from a baker driving his cart to a gentleman in his calash, or that when a sedan chair transforms itself into an apothecary's shop. In fact, Mrs Behn provides more information as to how this change occurs. Harlequin in Gherardi's version, and Scaramouche in Mrs Behn's who play the role of apothecary, both use the same type of pompous, high-flown language. The illustration which preceeds the play as a frontispiece in Gherardi's final edition of 1700 seems to have no connection to the play itself. Yet, it can be understood to depict a scene of the play through Mrs Behn's description of the setting for the final scene of her play, written thirteen years before. In fact, she provides us with a better picture of the spectacle provided by the theatre machines, which the Italian theatre in Paris was renowned for.

Why is Aphra Behn so attracted to the Commedia dell'Arte? This is certainly due to the popularity of this theatre; but I feel there is a more valid reason for the link between her theatre and that of the Italian 'maschere', which has to do with the very essence of comedy. Although the enseign outside the theatre of the Comediens Italiens du Roi bore the motto: 'Castigat ridendo mores', the Italians had taught Moliere that 'L'art de la comedie est celui de plaire'. Aphra Behn strongly shares this view. In her preface to *The Dutch Lover* she affirms:

> ...I take it Comedie was never meant either for a converting or a confirming ordinance. In short I think a play is the best divertisement that wise men have...I studied only to make this as entertaining as I could.[25]

Aphra Behn's aim, like that of the Italian actors, is primarily to entertain. Moreover, because of her sex, Mrs Behn, had to struggle to defend her status as a writer during the whole of her artistic career. This may have disposed her favourably to a theatre which had had to fight for its existence because it had been the first to go against social convention and dare put women on the stage.

The Commedia dell'Arte's versatility is attested by the fact that it plied itself to suit the tastes of the people of each country it was exported to. Aphra Behn, herself a versatile author, recognized this trait, and adapted it to her style, and her London public. She 'englishized' the Italians' theatre, by starting out from its characteristics: its character types, their physical expressivity, and the spectacular elements which captured so many different audiences across the continent. These ingredients proved to be successful, to the extent that her play *The Emperor of the Moon,* is still today considered her masterpiece. Thus, the Commedia dell'Arte helped pave the way to Mrs Behn's lasting fame.

Notes

1. There are several examples of this, of which the most remarkable is the fact that the king had even agreed to make his courtiers pay for court performances, in order to watch Tiberio Fiorilli, the famous Scaramouche, who had asked for an exorbitant fee. Cf. I.K. Fletcher, 'Italian Comedians in England in the Seventeenth Century', *Rivista di Studi Teatrali,* no. 9/10, 1954, p. 127.
2. Cf. Maureen Duffy, *The Passionate Shepherdess,* London 1977, pp. 120, 157.
3. A. Obertello, 'Su una compagnia di comici italiani a Londra nel 1678 – 79', *Rivista di Studi Teatrali,* no. 9/10, 1954, p. 140.
4. Cf. M. Duffy, op. cit., p. 203.
5. As pointed out by M. Duffy, op. cit., p. 204, the prologue is written after November 23rd [1681] since it refers to Shaftesbury's release.
6. M. Summers, *The Works of Aphra Behn,* New York 1967, Vol. i, p. 159.
7. M. Summers, op. cit., p. 142.
8. M. Summers, op. cit., pp. 142 – 3.
9. M. Summers, op. cit., p. 145.
10. M. Summers, op. cit., pp. 201 – 203.
11. M. Summers, op. cit., p. 188.
12. M. Summers, op. cit., p. 189, p. 200.
13. M. Summers, op. cit., Act V Scene III, p. 200, Harlequin says: 'Qui est la?'
14. A.L. Bader, 'The Modena Troupe in England', *Modern Language Notes,* June 1935, p. 368.

15. D'Origny, *Annales du Theatre Italien depuis son origine jusqu'a ce jour,* Paris 1788, p. 23.
16. Evaristo Gherardi, *Theatre Italien, ou le receueil général de toutes les comedies et scenes francaises jouées par les Comediens Italiens du Roi*, Génève 1969.
17. Fidelis Morgan, *The Female Wits: Women playwrights on the London Stage 1660 - 1720,* London 1981, p. 19.
18. A.L. Bader, op. cit., p. 368.
19. *Oxford Companion to the Theatre, 1967* entry: Thomas Jevon, p. 515.
20. I.K. Fletcher, op. cit., p. 134.
21. *Oxford Companion to the Theatre, 1967* entry: A. Leigh, p. 522.
22. M. Willson Disher, *Clowns and Pantomines,* London 1968, p. 77.
23. E. Gherardi, op. cit., Vol II, p. 182. There are in fact three plays where Gherardi specifies that 'Arlequin apparait a visage découvert': *Les Filles Errantes, La Fille Scavante, Les Deux Arlequins.*
24. E. Gherardi, op. cit., p. 131.
25. M. Summers, op. cit., p.223

SHELLEY 'TRANSLATED' BY THE ITALIAN DECADENT MOVEMENT: THE CASE OF ADOLFO DE BOSIS

LILLA MARIA CRISAFULLI JONES

Giovanni Pascoli, while trying to collect some English and American poems to include in his anthology *Sul Limitare,* on the 17th of August 1898, wrote to his friend Valgimigli saying: '. . . Se intanto hai trovato qualche cosa di bello o in versi o in prosa comunicamelo. Dì la stessa cosa al gentil Gabriele. Al quale dì pure, che mi prepari allo stesso modo qualche poesia *breve* dello Shelley. Quella l'ho tradotta, e ritmicamente è venuta bene. Solo qua e là strozzata. Ma tradurre veramente non si può. Il meglio è cercare di rendere, anche più che il senso, la *suggestione* del testo'.[1]

Pascoli, who had been persuaded to join this literary adventure by another friend, quoted in the letter, Gabriele Briganti, had just translated one of Shelley's lyric, 'Time Long Past'. A short poem written in 1819 and published in the *Complete Poetical Work of P.B. Shelley* by Rossetti in 1870. Characteristically Pascoli chose a poem which suited him best in terms of subject and structure. 'Time Long Past' is, in fact, rather regular and simple in its pattern. It consists of three stanzas of the same length (six lines) and rhyme scheme (ABABBB). Each stanza has the same formal pattern, divided in tetrameters and dimeters; the shorter line, which is the second and final B, is also the refrain of the poem: 'Time long past'; a refrain which stresses the deep melancholic strain which the whole peom conveys to the reader. The theme is the sadness which the poetic 'I' experiences in the face of the decline of life and beauty, tormented by a memory haunted by the past and by the dead, by regret and a keen sense of remorse.

In his letter, however, the Italian poet seems to be struggling somewhat with his translation not only because he had evident problems with English but also because he felt a sort of threat as if his own imagination was under pressure or couldn't be kept silent beneath the Shelleyan lines. Difficulties which, if they stopped

Pascoli from translating Shelley ever again, did not stop him from looking towards Shelley's poetical theory and aesthetics, as his poetry and poetical manifesto, *Il Fanciullino,* largely demonstrate.

To read and translate Shelley had, therefore, become a fascinating task for many Italian intellectuals and artists at the turn of the century: for the Italian Decadent movement in particular Shelley's *A Defence of Poetry* became a sort of permanent reference,[2] and his poetry was seen as a successful example of pure music and symbolic sounds. Numerous Shelleyan echoes are evident in Pascoli, D'Annunzio and De Bosis; later, amongst others, in the poet Rina Faccio (known as Sibilla Aleramo) whose work is strikingly close to Shelley in its tension towards freedom and love; in the critic Mario Praz, in 1925, in his early appreciation of Shelley's poetry in which he sees the birth of a new religion where the primordial elements of the earth become myths once again, while nature herself turns into a human being or, better, into a freer and more spiritual sort of mankind: 'il canto shelleyano si lancia innalzandosi a spirale, per volute d'immagini, si dilata in cerchi sempre più vasti, vanisce in uno splendore abbacinante'.[3]

The Decadent movement, then, felt it a necessity to come to terms with the English Romantic poet since he was perceived as an endless source of inspiration, an ideal model to look at. To the artists of 'Decadentismo' his lines meant the triumph of lyricism and of music, his imagery was seen as an aerial symbolism which lit up the natural elements with vital sparks and gave life to extraordinary characters, women and men, who embodied the aesthetic ideals which they believed most sacred: beauty, social transgression, freedom and sensuality.

One of Pascoli's closest friends, Adolfo De Bosis, was one of the best scholars and translators of Shelley among the Decadents. De Bosis, editor of the prestigious and elegant literary magazine *Convito,* the mouthpiece of the movement in which D'Annunzio, Scarfoglio and Pascoli wrote, had developed in his youth a truly European culture and had a very open attitude towards translation considering it a unique way to renew one's own linguistic code and to experiment in imagery and sounds. Experiments and innovations which, however, De Bosis succeeded in achieving more in his translations than in his creative writings.

As an enthusiastic reader he approached French poetry, and as an expert translator he worked on Shelley and Whitman's poems with great dedication. Himself a poet of a some value, De Bosis believed in the predominant role of art and of the poetical word, without, however, the 'maladie' increasingly shown by D'Annunzio or the melancholic strain of Pascoli's verses.

De Bosis believed in beauty as the supreme Muse which was not to be separated from an optimistic faith in humanity. And it is precisely within the terms of this belief that Shelley and Whitman were elected as De Bosis' favourite poets. For, as has been pointed out by Giorgio Cusatelli:

> 'Da Shelley De Bosis trae l'ispirazione ad una poesia che risulti espressione di superiore verità metafisiche, imprigionate nel giro di una forma aerea e melodiosa; da Whitman, la pratica della poesia come piena realizzazione dell'uomo, sviluppo coerente e definitivo della sua carica etica'.[4]

It was De Bosis himself who explained poetically how the two great figures had exercised an influence on him. In *Amori ac Silentio* he writes:

> 'E ammirami per il mio calore e per la mia fede: / mentre io ti parlerò di Percy l'arcangelo e di / Walt Whitman, un uomo . . . / Così, meco salendo, non mi accuserai ch'io delusi la tua aspettazione; / Imparerai, tu meco salendo, cui rivolgerti, chi interrogare. / Non me, non me, o figlio! Ma giunto sopra la cima / Udrai, o giovane, in chiare parole risponderti, non un poeta/ Ma l'adulto cuore tuo d'uomo'.

While translating Shelley, De Bosis underwent a sort of metamorphosis, entered into an emotional and intellectual symbiosis which made it possible for the translator to become one with the translated, reaching artistic and musical effects which had seemed unattainable in his own poetry. De Bosis succeeded in bringing Shelley and his work back to life before an audience and within a literary tradition which, while still considered very close to French culture, had for a long time been seen as alien to the English tradition. De Bosis devoted so much of his work to Shelley's poetry that the *Convito,* running from 1895 to 1907, literally overflowed with his translations. Translations which also appeared in other major magazines of the time, such as *Nuova Antologia* and *Il Marzocco.* De Bosis translated, amongst other works, *The Cenci, Prometheus Unbound,* 'Ode to the West Wind', 'Aziola', 'The Sensitive Plant', 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty', 'Arethusa',

most of them between 1892 and 1899. In 'Nota su Percy Bysshe Shelley e su i Cenci', published in his magazine, he describes how Shelley appeared to his imagination, how he seemed to him a Utopian figure, a fighting spirit that no custom nor law could bend:

> 'In lotta aperta con la società, con la religione e con la famiglia, e nero dei più foschi delitti contro questa triplice maestà per un suo scapestrato amore delle più pericolose utopie, come la giustizia, la benevolenza, la tolleranza per tutti li uomini e il desiderio di vederli franchi da ogni servitù, da ogni abuso, da ogni abbrutimento, da ogni superstizione, la sua sola pazzia poteva scusare o far peggio pericolosa l'immoralità ostinata delle sue azione'.[5]

'Uno spirito di Titano entro viginee forme'', to quote the famous definition given by Carducci, which must have sounded to De Bosis more and more appropriate at a time when Italy was committed to difficult and distant colonial wars, and Italian society was split between a growing class consciousness and an aristocratic and intellectual élite.

In 1898, with *I Cenci*, De Bosis made his best attempt as a translator, and it may be of some interest to remember that his translation was used when, in Rome, at the Teatro Argentina, on 24th November 1923, the play was staged for the first time in Italy. De Bosis' critical intuition is displayed in the long footnote that he published in *Convito* together with the translation of the play. First of all he dismissed the criticism which had exiled Shelley's tragedy from the stage. It is untrue and unfair towards the author of *The Cenci,* he says, to accuse him of immorality and to condemn the play for 'la terribilità troppo fosca'; whoever rejected Shelley's play has done so for lack of understanding. His critics built castles of sand, he adds, in order to be able to destroy them with ease.[6] To De Bosis, on the contrary, *The Cenci* is a rare example of classic tragedy in modern times. It has the symmetry and economy of the ancient Latin and Greek writers which were almost unknown to the playwrights of the Nineteenth Century:

> '(...) uno studio di economia e di simmetria scenica che rivelano quel suo ingegno classico maturatosi allo studio ardente de' sommi tragici greci. Più che a completare un tipo, ogni scena, quasi ogni verso concorre a far progredire l'azione per giusti gradi. E questa si svolge per quei cinque atti verso la catastrofe, così mirabile d'euritmia, che pare (cosi ella fosse!) l'opera d'un ingegno latino.
> Altrettanto può dirsi, in certa misura, dé caratteri e delle persone (...) fierissime di passione e di verità'.[7]

Opinions which show how deeply the Italian translator had seen into Shelley's method and technique. For the Romantic poet in fact choosing to write a play such as *The Cenci* meant coming to terms with a reality which he had so far rejected since it was opposed to his ideal and Utopian world as *Prometheus Unbound* demonstrates; he had accepted dealing with it as a last attempt to redeem an audience from the debasing scenes and from the void that according to him had infected the theatre of his time.

In Beatrice he created a dramatic character pure and stubborn enough to win people's sympathy and able, therefore, to reach the audience's mind and emotions; on the other hand, the social system he displays abuses her in such an obvious and odious way as to create in each of his readers/spectators strong feelings of rebellion and, therefore, a desire to change 'things as they are'. What emerges from the play is the aim to reform and to instruct that traditionally underlay the classic tragedy, and which was purposefully sought by the playwrights of Greece and of Ancient Rome, as Shelley well knew and openly admitted in the preface to his own tragedy.

In 1922, De Bosis turns his ability as a translator to *Prometheus Unbound;* once more, in his notes to the lyrical drama, he proves his identity of his views with that of the English poet. Shelley, he says, has modified the myth, and the way in which Aeschylus has dealt with it in his trilogy in order to give to contemporary consciousness a mirror of its conflicts and its anxiety. According to the Italian critic, in fact, Prometheus symbolically represents modern man struggling between truth and falsehood, unable to distinguish one from the other unless first of all he revises the principles which guide his own life. It is from here, De Bosis concludes, that the real meaning of the whole poem resides; it deals with the questioning of the self as a necessary and painful task of the human intellect, a human intellect which, after all, is the real protagonist of *Prometheus Unbound* and which, imprisoned but not enslaved by customs and prejudices, has to continue to struggle and to wonder about the very sources of life:

> '(...) perchè si viva e si muoia; quale potere governi l'universo visibile e l'invisibile; e perchè il male e il dolore; e perchè la nostra servitù millenaria a questa duplice tirrania; e se mai il genere umano possa un giorno affrancarsene, e per quali vie, a quale prezzo (...)[8]

Benedetto Croce, in *La letteratura della Nuova Italia* in 1929, admits this keen interest of De Bosis in man's destiny and pays his homage to his 'humanism' praising his being 'different' from the other decadent poets:

> 'l'ideale estetizzante, in questo animo buono e affettuoso, e perfino ingenuo (ingenuo non già per imperizia ma per innata nobilità), si cangiava in qualcosa di più sostanziale, e certamente di diverso da quel che era presso altri spiriti, tutti ripieni di figurazioni sensibili e vuoti sentimenti morali: si cangiava in una aspirazione indeterminata al Bene.'[9]

Croce singles out this *general* aspiration towards 'good' and this idealism made of beauty and moral perfection as being one of the finer characteristics of the editor of the *Convito*, characteristics which distanced him from what D'Annunzio called 'le tre divine sorelle', 'la Musica, la Voluttà e la Morte.' Croce, like another critic, Giuseppe Marussig, at the time often present in De Bosis' praises, believed that it was this idealistic attitude of mind that had favoured the meeting between De Bosis and the English Romantic poet. An influence which, according to Croce, worked ambivalently: positively to the extent that placed him in a distant position from, for instance, D'Annunzio, keeping him far away from the 'aspirazioni sanguinarie' and 'la lussuria' of the latter; negatively as far as his own poetics was concerned since he ended up exhibiting the same faults and weaknesses which Shelley had: vagueness, redundancy and prolixity:

> 'Sono inni alla Terra, al Mare, alla Notte, alla Pace, alla Poesia, sempre decorosi e alti nell'intonazione, ma che non ben rinserrano il sentimento che vogliono esprimere e lo lasciano sfuggir via come acqua '.[10]

Giuseppe Marussig, on the other hand, on the occasion of De Bosis's death, wrote admiringly in several articles, celebrating a man and a poet who was able to express an uncommon love for freedom and a sense of wonder beyond naivety at the mystery and beauty of life and creation. According to Marussig, De Bosis resisted the creed of pure, sensual pleasure and of the ideology of the superman, professing instead a spirituality that combined an absolute devotion to poetry with the perception of a harmony in the Universe and a deep understanding of the divinity in man. In this he became brother to Shelley:

'un fratellò dello Shelley: un poeta che ha sempre voluto dire una parola di bontà che potesse essere viatico all'infermità dé suoi fratelli che camminano nel mondo; che ha posto sempre il piccolo uomo davanti all'infinito; che si è liberato, non senza dolore della sua carne per offrire sempre la più parte di sé; che ha sempre considerato la poesia come il proprio Dio.'[11]

Two years later Marussig came back to De Bosis, to his 'difference', but this time he seemed preoccupied with a closer analysis of his relationship with Shelley. To stress the sort of admiration that De Bosis nourished towards the English Romantic poet, Marussig maintains that De Bosis was captured by his poetry because he perceived in it a thirst for justice and hope but also a singular knowledge of sorrow and solitude. Therefore, while all around him, people debated about 'arte' and 'artefici', proclaiming the indefensible right to absolute freedom, poetry became to him, much as it was to Shelley, 'giustizia, amore, speranza, fede, bontà'.[12]

Both believed in poetry as a means of salvation of the soul, in the song of the poets they saw the only possible redemption from decline and corruption. According to Marussig, whose opinion differs greatly from that of Croce, De Bosis also admired in Shelley his 'lyrical objectivity', the extraordinary ability to undergo a process of change and transformation to the point of becoming the object of the poem, of the song itself; this is exactly what takes place, for instance, in 'The Cloud' and in 'To a Skylark'. But the Italian poet was also sensitive to the tone of Shelleyan poetry, to that poetical voice that in poems such as *Prometheus Unbound* and *Epipsychidion* stands out high and luminous, expression of the very idea of beauty and love. As a translator, De Bosis showed a fine knowledge of the language, continually enlarging and enriching his vocabulary and making anew that which sounded obsolete. De Bosis' translations always had more to do with poetical creation than with transference from one linguistic code to another. A creation, however, which was always produced by that sort of identification with the poet translated, an identification that happened every-time he approached Shelley's poetry as if he was recreating in himself the original voice of the English poet, and trying tò listen to it, obeying it but, at the same time, feeling free to interpret it, singing as he may have sung.[13]

A process which was well known to many poets of the late Nineteenth Century who used translations as a source of inspiration, unbound from the restrictions of the classic Italian syntax and

stimulated by the suggestions that the new order of the sentences offered them, excited by the variety of possibilities opened to them by a different lexicon. In De Bosis this way of translating was successful to the point of becoming a true art. De Bosis attempted with his translations to offer to his generation a happy island, where one could find refuge from ugliness and from Positivism denied; in a society where mechanical and technological progress was seen as an increasing threat, and where modern civilization, chaotic and alien as it appeared, estranged artists and intellectuals, as the 'Scapigliati' had claimed not long before; man had to bring himself, his individuality, his own identity up against the impersonality of the crowded cities and against the cold reasoning of a growing economy. In this light De Bosis remains, despite the many objections or should one say the 'distinguo' listed by Croce and Marussig, a decadent artist, giving as Claudio Varese has pointed out, a voice, a magazine to Italian aestheticism, perceiving the gap between human and superhuman, between the sublime, the heroic myths and an inner reality.[14]

Drawing on Romaticism, and on Shelley in particular, was, after all, typical of the whole Decadent movement which recognized as familiar the Romantic resort to a mystic or mysterious language, to sensual images, to the suggestive and symbolic use of nature.

If Beauty and Love were conjugated as values and as artistic tasks in Shelley as much as in De Bosis, it was also evident that in Shelley's verses the Italian translator perceived the literary achievement he had been trying to reach all his life: a harmony, almost a symbiosis, between inner and outer reality, the voice of the natural world being spoken through an emotional and lyrical 'I', the latter becoming an echo and a reflexive presence of the former. In Shelley's poetical words, according to De Bosis, matter turns into music and vision undergoing a process of purification and spirituality; the very process which he felt he was himself experiencing while translating the Shelleyan lines. Therefore to him, to translate meant to recreate, to go through an almost Wordsworthian process of memory and recollection, of sensual and emotional tension combined with an extraordinary intellectual force.

In this respect it is hardly surprising that the best criticism, or, it should be said, the sharpest and most intense criticism of De Bosis' interpretation and translations of Shelley's poetry should

have come from Gabriele D'Annunzio. This opportunity was furnished by a re-edition of 'La Sensitiva' which De Bosis had translated on the occasion of the first Centenary of the English poet. The poem came out again in *La Nuova Antologia* in May 1926 together with a long discussion by D'Annunzio. No other poem could have been more emotionally stirring than 'La Sensitiva' to a poet who, as Mario Praz observed, was bound to Shelley by a Medusa-like fascination, by the sensuality and the languid tone of many lines, and, above all 'by those decadent gardens whose incense is so intense as to poison the senses'

What concerns us here, however, is D'Annunzio's own discussion. He opens the passage recalling his own words on the occasion of the first centenary, when he sustained with great emphasis that the English poet was more like a God than a man; and because of this, his use of language, the images which he created become so aetherial, so high and sublime that it is almost impossible to bridle them within an ordinary translation. Like a Shakesperian Ariel, Shelley flows away from every restraint and framework, except when the ear of the translator is so sensitive and his voice so powerful that he is able to reproduce the music of Shelley's lines, the cadence, and the rhythm; and this, he adds, is exactly what De Bosis succeeds in doing. After passing this judgement, however, D'Annunzio, leaves De Bosis and his ability as a translator, to sail off with his own imagination offering a very interesting reading of the poem. In Shelley, he says, two different ways of approaching nature and representing natural scenes can be found: he either departs and journeys far away from his own identity in order to give life to a natural element, as in 'La Nuvola', to the point that the natural element triumphs over the poet and becomes the only lyrical 'I' admitted in the poem; which is to say, in other words, that, while the poet turns into a pure means of communication, the element assumes an identity turning into a tangible 'dramatis personae' who enjoys an autonomy of speech and controls the dramatic discourse of the poem. Or, Shelley instills his own sensibility and ideas into the natural world so that it becomes one with the element, making of nature a reflection of his own 'I', and it is difficult to distinguish the external world, the voices of fear and desire inscribed in the manifold aspects of nature, from the poet's world, from his personal sadness or joy: this is the case in

Alastor. This happens, one can add, when the poet, unable to restrain his feelings and thoughts, projects them outside giving shape to his emotions.

But, D'Annunzio says, there is a further case: when the poetical processes come together and combine to become the same effect. This is what happens in 'La Sensitiva', where although the flowers live an independent life, 'the sensitive plant' feels and thinks as the poet does.

But the value of the poem is in the 'conclusion' where it is the essence of life which comes under discussion. A life which appears but is not, where men are but shadows of dreams, where even death is but 'a mockery'. Although we pass away, we decline, this is not the case for the highest ideals of this world: happiness, beauty and love for which neither death or change can exist:

> 'Così nella divina terra di Adonais egli grida: *The One remains, the many change and pass.* – L'Uno resta, il multiplo cambia e passa; la luce del Cielo splende per sempre, le Ombre della terra s'involano – E qui, come in molti altri passaggi della sua opera, Percy Shelley sembra aver penetrato col suo occhio di veggente il segreto della vita, averne letta la parola profonda, quasi sfuggendo al giro vertiginoso della Grande Ruota.'[15]

Notes

1. Cfr. Carla Chiumo, *Shelley nella bottega di Pascoli,* Schena, Fasano 1992, p. 21. Carla Chiummo carries on a very convincing discussion on Shelley's influence on Pascoli's poetry.

2. Gabriele D'Annunzio's enthusiasm for the English Romantic poet is evident in his 'Commemorazione di Percy Bysshe Shelley' delivered in Naples in August in 1892, as well as in his ode 'Anniversario Orfico P.B. Shelley VIII Luglio MDCCCXXII', in *Alcyone,* dedicated to Shelley's tragic death. For Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* see also the interesting article by Emilio Cecchi 'La 'Difesa della Poesia' di P.B. Shelley', published in *Nuova Antologia,* Novembre-Dicembre 1909, vol. CXLIV, della raccolta CCXXVIII, pp. 57 – 65. For the reception of Shelley's work in Italy over the two centuries cfr. the third chapter, 'Fortuna critica in Italia', in my book, *Fortuna critica-P.B. Shelley fra Ottocento e Novecento,* Clueb, Bologna, 1990. See also my article 'Shelley's impact on Italian Literature' presented in New York, in May 20 – 23 1992, in occasion of the Shelley Bicentenary Conference 'Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World', in press, edited by Stuart Curran and Betty Bennett. Finally, see Laura Bandiera, 'Shelley tradotto dall'Ottocento italiano' in press in *Shelley e l'Italia* a cura di Lilla Maria Crisafulli Jones, Liguori, Napoli, and Lucia Strappini, 'Shelley allo fine dell'Ottocento in Italia', in *Romanticismo europeo e Traduzione,* a cura di L.M. Crisafulli Jones A., Goldoni, R. Runcini, Istituto Italiano per gli studi filosofici, Napoli, In press.

3. Mario Praz, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley' in *Poeti Inglesi dell'Ottocento*, Firenze, R. Bemporad e F., 1925, pp. 190 - 191.

4. Giorgio Cusatelli 'La poesia dagli scapigliati ai decadenti', in *Dall'ottocento al novecento-Storia della Letteratura italiana,* (1969), Garzanti, Milano, 1988, p. 791.

5. A. De Bosis, 'Nota su Percy Bysshe Shelley e su i 'Cenci'', in *Il Convito,* X - XI, p. 832.

6. Cfr. Ibidem., p. 859.

7. Ibidem, p. 860.

8. Adolfo De Bosis, 'Commento del Traduttore' a *Il Prometeo liberato,* Dramma lirico di P.B. Shelley tradotto da A. De Bosis. A. Stock Editore, Roma 1922, p. 231.

9. Benedetto Croce, *La letteratura Della Nuova Antologia,* vol. IV., Laterza, Bari, 1929, p. 148.

10. Cfr. *Ibidem,* p. 149.

11. Giuseppe Marussig, 'Per la morte di Adolfo De Bosis, in *Scrittori d'oggi,* Libreria di Scienze e Lettere, Roma, 1926, pp. 347.

12. Giuseppe Marussig, 'Shelley e De Bosis', in *Nuova Antologia, 1928, vol. 339, p. 133.*

13. Cfr. *Ibidem,* p. 135.

14. Cfr. Claudio Varese, 'Adolfo De Bosis', in *La Rassegna della letteratura italiana,* 1965, pp. 13 - 14.

15. Commento di Gabriele D'Annunzio a *'La Sensitiva* di Percy Bysshe Shelley', in *Nuova Antologia*, Maggio 1926, p. 128.

BEHIND THE BLACK VEIL

Italian Terror and English Imagination

RODERICK CAVALIERO

Everyone will recognise this snatch of coversation recorded in Bath.

Isabella Thorpe: 'Have you gone on with Udolpho ?'

Catherine Morland: 'Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the Black Veil.'

Isabella: 'Are you indeed ? How delightful; Oh ! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world. Are you not wild to know ?'

Catherine: 'Oh ! yes, quite; what can it be ? – But do not tell me – I would not be told on any account. I know it must be a skeleton.'

In fact, what lay behind the black veil is one of the great disappointments in literature. The revelation that what Emily had thought was the embalmed corpse of the murdered Lady Laurentini was only a wax-work memento mori adds little or nothing to the unravelling of one of the more bizarre and operatic plots of its time. Yet publishers were mad to have a good mystery and paid the author the unprecedented sum of £500 for the rights to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. And 'Tout Bath', according to a novel that earned Jane Austen £10 was talking about it as one might today the latest episode of Inspector Morse.

Ann Radcliffe in her life-time was compared to Shakespeare, her tales for poetry and passion to Lear and Macbeth. Coleridge in 1794 thought that *The Mysteries of Udolpho* was 'the most interesting novel in the English language' ! (The Critical, August, 1794). And Catherine Morland was a typical reader, a lively, well brought up young woman of both sense and sensibility (the heroines of that novel too probably read Radcliffe but we are not told). Julia Mazzini,

Emily St Aubert and Ellena Rosalba, heroines repectively of *A Sicilian Romance, Udolpho* and *The Italian,* (the novel Catherine was going next to read when she had finished *Udolpho*) were, in character, little different from Catherine, bred to parental love and loyalty, sensible, biddable young women, fond of novels and poetry, gardens, kind to inferiors, comfortable with equals, and above all 'tremblingly jealous of propriety'.[1] Where they differed from Catherine Morland was that they lived in a country where they could be exposed to threatening mystery, to chilling danger, to threats against their moral and physical welfare, and to apparently supernatural happenings. Catherine may have tingled with delicious excitement at the prospect of similar adventures at Northanger Abbey but she was distinctly glad that she did not have them, and pretty certain, in early 19th century England, not to have them.

Jane Austen wrote *Northanger Abbey* in 1798, only four years after *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and one year after *The Italian*. It was not published until 1818, but Mrs Radcliffe's reputation was still high when it appeared. Though Jane remarked 'that it was not in her novels that human nature, at least in the midland counties of England, was to be looked for,' she had a devoted readership still. Mrs Radcliffe's heroines had the most terrifying experiences but none of them was driven to compromise her virginal reputation. Each one was able to display the moral rigour and good sense that well brought up young women should. Emily might faint somewhat excessively in the face of shock but she was not violated. All of them were to survive the 18th century equivalent of the Perils of Pauline with honour. It was to be the greatness of Miss Austen to show that the qualities Julia, Emily and Ellena were expected to show in the face of these perils could just as adequately be tested in the furnace of family life.

Mrs Morland and Mrs Thorpe would never have allowed their daughters to read about Julia, Emily and Ellena if they had behaved with anything but perfect propriety, despite having to flee their persecutors, scramble round dungeons, cross mountain passes on rough mules, plunge through secret thickets, tantalised by spectral music in moonlit ruins or surrounded by banditti. Of course none of them was English. One was French, the other two Italian.

It was the fashion of the day to set novels of terror or mystery in terrifying and mysterious 'abroad'. Isabella Thorpe had a list of them ready for Catherine, all set in Germany: *The Castle of Wolfenbach* and *Mysterious Warnings*, both German Tales by Mrs Parsons; *The Necromancer of the Black Forest* by Peter Teuthold; *The Orphan of the Rhine* by Eleanor Sleath; *Horrid Mysteries*, a story from the German by the Marquis of Grosse, 'translated' by Peter Will. Mrs Radcliffe who never travelled further south than Holland set three of her shockers in Italy, but they were no more 'Italian' novels than *Little Women*. The principal influence on her was Charlotte Smith, whose castles were English. Like all well-educated women of her day Ann Radcliffe knew enough Italian to read Tasso but only one book has been identified as providing some colour for Udolpho and that was a travel book, *New Observations of Italy and its Inhabitants* by Grosley.[2] For all their spurious Italian authenticity, the action of *A Sicilian Romance, Udolpho,* and *The Italian* could have been set in Castle Mowbray from Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline*. Notwithstanding the bogus nature of her expertise, Ann Radcliffe for many brought them the authentic whiff of Italy, the Italy of cloaks and gondolas – 'there are two nice Radcliffe words for you.' Byron told Augusta Leigh in 1816 – of stilettos, banditti, intrigue and inquisition.[3]

For what stays in the memory of the readers of her Italian novels are not her castles but her villains: the Marquis Mazzini (*A Sicilian Romance*), the Abbate Schedoni (*The Italian*) and Signor Montoni (*Udolpho*), the first an intemperate and inconsiderate father obsessed by family pride, the second a priest with wickedness of almost antinomian dimensions, an amalgam of passion and will, ready to defy the most sacred prohibitions to achieve his purposes, and the third a ruined and attainted Venetian voluptuary seeking by murder, marriage and blackmail to revenge his wrongs and re-enter society.

Italian villains were no strangers to English literature. Shakespeare and the 17th century dramatists were very familiar with a certain Elizabethan stereotype, part Giordano Bruno, part Machiavelli and part Pope Pius V, the excommunicator of Queen Elizabeth. Christopher Marlowe even invited Machiavel to introduce *The Jew of Malta*, in which the faithful Florentine secretary and historian 'counted religion but a childish toy, / And held there is no sin but ignorance.' And at the end of the 18th century there was a sudden revival of Italian villains.

A real horror had appeared in 1786, when Dr John Moore, the author of a popular and sympathetic *View of Society and Manners in Italy*, suddenly produced *Zeluco*. A Sicilian brat, brought up without restraint, starting a career of villainy by squeezing the life out of a pet sparrow, goes on to torment his wife, mother and mistresses, shamefully abuse his slaves and servants, strangle his baby son and die in a duel with the lover of his mistress. The egregious Doctor Moore with an eye to publicity warned the readers not to peruse the story 'which traced the windings of vice and delineated the disgusting features of villainy'. It was a great hit. Byron in 1813, perhaps tongue in cheek, was pleased to suggest that had he continued with Childe Harold he might have created 'perhaps, a poetical Zeluco.'[4]

Zeluco, moreover, was a surprise, for John Moore's *View of Italy* had been admiring of the Italian character, of the Italian ability to enjoy life and create happiness. Yet he was to produce a novel so removed from reality as to be perverse. It was to spawn a host of others, some of greater literary worth and some of less, all equally false to the country in which they purported to be set. Among them were Mrs Radcliffe's. She did not, thankfully, take *Zeluco* for her model but the Elizabethan dramatists. In that sense the contemporary comparison with Macbeth is revealing, for what makes her no rival to the Elizabethans is precisely her inability to make wickedness comprehensible rather than just wicked. She fails to do with the hellish cleric, Schedoni, what Shakespeare does with the Scottish tyrant. Schedoni and Macbeth are both interested in power. But with Schedoni this lust for domination appears to have no point. He cannot be Pope, or Prince, or Potentate, or Poet. He might have been born in the court of *The Duchess of Malfi* but all he can do is terrify young ladies – which is the terrorism of the prep school. Ann Radcliffe excels in weaving a tapestry of scenic splendour round the gratuitous unpleasantness her villains generate, surrounding them with an almost sympathetic natural environment in which to work wickedness.

Forests and caves and mountains loom terrifyingly dark and menacing round their matching castle, with its ivie'd turrets, crumbling ramparts, ruined keeps, suspected ghosts and labyrinth of deserted subterranean passages as illogical as the London underground. It was enough to raise Henry Tilney's hair on end

throughout the two days in which he read *Udolpho* but not enough to cause Julia or Emily or Ellena even to wet their knickers. All the supernatural events turned out to have material causes, and virtue and innocence were fated to truimph. For all that, Ann Radcliffe remains, as Scott calls her, the first poetess of romantic fiction, and Italy was in an almost accidental way an inspiration

What had the poor Italians done to re-enter English literature in this way ? Shakespeare for his part had never pretended that Italian Renaissance villains were any different from English Renaissance villains, but a readership steeped in the literature of Greece and Rome found that it was not burdened with a sense of sin or villainy, so that any writer looking for a model villain outside the Bible would have to turn to the Elizabethans. Italy, moreover, was the home of the Papacy which, with Machiavelli and the Society of Jesus, made up a Trinity of evil in the Protestant consciousness of the time. That repository of virtue, in the words of Kenneth Churchill, had from Elizabethan times 'habitually associated sensation and horror with an Italian setting and had created a most potent image of a country of incest and intrigue, violence and hypocrisy, whose Church was anti-Christ, whose Jews pursued the evil trade of usury and whose intellectuals were typified by the fiendish Machiavelli.'[5]

However kind, noble or brave individual monks, nuns or priests might be in the succour they give to frightened innocence, whatever solemnity and beauty there might be in the services of religion, whatever feelings might have been comforted by religious art or music, readers of Radcliffe's novels were never to forget that the Roman Catholic Church was not only in error, but intrinsically and fatally WICKED. Julia in *A Sicilian Story* finds timely sanctuary in the Abbey of St Augustin, ' a large magnificent mass of Gothic architecture whose gloomy battlements and majestic towers arose in proud sublimity from amid the darkness of the surrounding shades.' Yet, as the author warns us in a long, and unnecessary, aside: 'Here prejudice, not reason, suspended the influence of the passions: and scholastic learning, mysterious philosophy, and crafty sanctity, supplied the place of wisdom, simplicity and pure devotion.'

Such professions of immunity from ideological contamination was almost mandatory at the time, as in the USA at the height of the McCarthyite purge. Sydney Morgan, a young Irish author whose

object was to try to present her country, Roman Catholic Ireland, in as favourable a light as possible to the Wellingtonian establishment nerving itself for Catholic Emancipation, felt obliged to take a side-swipe in her only considerable work, *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*, at the Society of Jesus, 'those once sovereign lords of the will and intellect of the human race, who did but follow the vocation that man has ever acknowledged, to rule and dupe his fellow man.' Robert Southey, rather earlier, nose down in Lisbon writing an immense History of Brazil, found himself unexpectedly engaged in an epic tribute to the Jesuits. No one else had attempted to protect the wretched autochthons from rapacious and murderous white settlers. Yet Southey felt obliged to stop from time to time to remind himself that the Society was, despite its heroic efforts in Brazil, a corrupt and dangerous assembly, using 'the same persuasion (on those for whom it was responsible) as that wherewith the enemy overcame man:...ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.'[6] Coleridge visiting Sicily from Malta was convinced that the 'immorality, ignorance and vacancy, and utter absence of moral sense,' he perceived in the island, 'derived from the Roman Catholic religion.'[7] He was even to hold that 'the passion of the Maltese (and of Catholics in general) for Noise...is the sum of the indifferent part of the Religion.'[8] The fact that in hot climates you live out of doors with windows wide open had nothing to do with it !

There had been plenty of naughty nun stories to titillate the heroic prurien ce of Protestant Christians, the most notorious being *Santa Maria, or the Mysterious Pregnancy,* by Joseph Fox, 1797, in which a priest drugs and violates nuns and then suffers them to be buried in a state of trance, a curious seedbed for Matthew 'Monk' Lewis, who preferred to claim his inspiration from Mrs Radcliffe. So widely held among English readers was this fixation with the general wickedness of Italian Roman Catholics that one of the relatively small number of writers for tourists, John Chetwynde Eustace, a Roman Catholic priest from Maynooth who quietly assimilated himself to the Protestant ascendancy and wrote a two-volume *Classical Tour through Italy* which appeared in 1813, was led to protest. 'Is a scene of lewdness or debauchery to be introduced into Romance ? It is placed in an Italian convent. Is an assassin wanted to frighten ladies in the country or to terrify

a London mob on the stage ? An Italian appears; a monk or friar probably, with a dose of poison in one hand and a dagger in the other. Is a crime too great for utterance to be presented dimly to the imagination ? It is half disclosed in an Italian confessional. In short is some inhuman plot to be executed, or is religion to be employed as the means or the instruments of lust or revenge ? The scene is laid in Italy; the contrivers and perpetrators are Italians; and to give it a more diabolical effect, a convent or a church is the stage, and clergymen of some description or other are the actors of the tragedy.'[9]

Mrs Radcliffe's attitude to Italy and the Roman Catholic religon did not derive from the enlightened perspectives of a seasoned traveller, a fact which disgusted Byron. None of the writers of English terror novels had any real knowledge of Italy. That other great Gothic Terrorist, 'Monk' Lewis, who placed his monkish villains and villainies (modelled on Schedoni, then almost white-hot from the press) in Spain – a country he knew no more than Ann Radcliffe knew Italy – did have a brief diplomatic career, never a vantage point for the proper understanding of a people, after which he became a society lion and a Member of Parliament. His 'Italian' novel, *The Bravo of Venice* was written before he had ever set foot in Italy and was actually an adaptation from the German and not Italian at all. Most tourists went to Italy not to study the Italian character but to collect marbles, fill a book of watercolours and dip a little into the Pierian spring. Coleridge, to be different, went from Malta to Italy in pursuit of landscape and volcanoes.

Landscape and volcanoes ! And who in the popular imagination of the day. were the principal inhabitants of mountains and volcanoes if not hermits with mysterious powers and a dark history, villainous and despotic members of the local aristocracy in crumbling fortresses, complete with oubliettes, secret passage-ways, dungeons, corpses, skeletons, chains and spectres, or banditti on the look-out for disoriented travellers deceived by treacherous guides and sheltering from perpetual thunder storms of tropical intensity ? Coleridge on his visit to Sicily met none of them, but he had not yet become a master spirit of the age. For the landscapes so lovingly described by Ann Radcliffe when not slightly dramatised versions of the Chilterns or Weald of Kent owed everything to the immensely popular etchings of the work of Salvator Rosa.

Horace Walpole started it all, as he crossed the Alps on muleback in 1739. It was all 'precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings – Salvatore Rosa !.' It was not necessary to say more. Salvatore Rosa – , as we might say pure Turner or pure Fellini.

Salvatore Rosa was probably as misunderstood an artist as it was possible to be. He was widely known for the famous self-portrait, showing him unshaven, furtive, his black locks matted for lack of a comb, a sneer on his lips, his half face shadowed, and dark cloak clutched round him. Nearly everyone believed that it portrayed him as the banditto he was popularly supposed to be, kidnapped as a child and brought up by banditti to be cruel, violent, merciless an treacherous. A complete travesty ! The sardonic self-portrait is intended to represent the scorn of a contemporary intellectual for the follies of the 17th century !

The son of a prosperous Neapolitan builder, Rosa had a good education, and at one point thought of taking Holy Orders. But as he also aspired to be a satirical poet, and as such a profession was precarious in monetary terms, he entered his brother-in-law's studio and trained to be a painter. He was schooled in the prevailing style of Neapolitan painting wallowing in its legacy from the Spanish Caravaggisti, so that his work had 'the dark, poisoned, morbid character' of that school to perfection.[10] His *figurine* look forward to Goya. While his great contemporary in Rome, Claude of Lorraine, filled his arcadian landscapes with dancing peasants and Grecian nymphs and shepherds, Rosa filled his with banditti, beggars and mendicant priests. His pupil, Alessandro Magnasco, bowing to the demand from Grand Tourists, took the fashion a few stages forward, so that the Italian landscape began to demonstrate a violence which 'created a mood of psychological intensity – witches, magic, quack doctors, saints and monks in ecstasy.'[11] The legend of Rosa's rearing by bandits added to the seduction of his works. That same Sydney Morgan in 1824 produced a life which reproduced every false legend she could discover about Salvator Rosa, before she went on to try to do for Ireland what Walter Scott had just done so successfully for Scotland. Her book on Italy was informed by the same tainted source.

For many more years, until well into the 19th century, Rosa continued to be one of the paradigm images of Italy. In Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Zanoni*, a mishmash of Rosicrucianism and Art

for Art's Sake at the time of the French Revolution, the English artist, Clarence Glyndon, regularly goes to view the paintings of Rosa in a Naples gallery in order to delight in 'the majesty...of the savage...a sorcery, not of the starry magian but of the gloomy wizard.'[12] Four years later, Rosa is tumbled into the dustbin of taste by the magisterial judgment of Ruskin, who in the last volume of Modern Painters, condemned Rosa for only seeing what was gross and terrible, or possessing a temper confirmed in evil. *Ce damné Salvator*, of all the men whose work he had ever studied, gave Ruskin 'most distinctly the idea of a lost spirit.' In the novels of Italian terror, lost spirits are all the rage.

There was, fortunately, an altogether more healthy popular infuence from Italy upon the visual imagination of the British – the mass-produced engravings of Piranesi which travellers brought with great gusto, the *Capricci di Carceri* of 1745 and *Le Antichitate Romane* of 1756. The landscapes of Horace Walpole's first trip to Italy may have reminded him of Rosa but the gigantic helmet that descended to crush the unhappy son of Duke Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto* fell straight out of the eighth plate of the Carceri. And in doing so it started the cult of Gothic Italy.

Walpole and Thomas Gray on their 1734 visit had not gone south of Rome. Few travellers in the 18th century did. Pozzuoli and Paestum were just too far off the beaten track and mosquito-ridden to be comfortably reached. So to take the locale of his novel out of the world of temples and amphitheatres, Walpole pretended that it was a translation from a medieval tale and set it in Otranto, a place about which he knew absolutely nothing. Naming his characters from the Guelf period of Italian history which he had plucked from Dante he then wrote not only the first Gothic tale (set indeterminately in the Gothic age of the 13th century), but the first tale of Terror, which so frightened Gray and his Cambridge friends that they could not go to bed at night unaccompanied. It was also the first novel in English with a medieval setting of any length and popularity and thus claims direct ancestry of the work of Sir Walter Scott, who rescued the medieval world from phantoms and populated it with real people.

The plot cannot in fact bear the weight of such a series of firsts, as Walpole teeters so often on the verge of farce that sometimes he writes like Max Beerbohm or Ronald Firbank. Then suddenly

he falls into passages worthy of *The Cenci*. The apparitions are neither frightening nor remotely plausible but both Emily and Ellena have an ancestress in Walpole's Isabella who also escapes the malignant attentions of Manfred by penetrating the secret entrails of the Castle of Otranto.

Otranto appeared in the magic year in which Ann Radcliffe was born and Gibbon heard the 'barefooted fryers singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter' – 1764. That date is very significant for in their turn Gibbon, Walpole and Radcliffe were to fix Italy in the centre of the great Romantic renaissance in English letters. Their influence on Scott was acknowledged by the great man himself. Radcliffe worked on him like a drug, 'of most blessed power in those moments of pain and of languor, when the whole head is sore and the whole heart sick.' But he chose to use the imaginative release she gave him in his own way. When James Ballantyne accused him of imitation over the supposed haunting of Woodstock Manor, Scott replied that his aim was not to scare the reader but to show the effects of supernatural terror upon the characters in his story.[13]

John Keats too was a Radcliffe fan. 'I am going into scenery,' he wrote to Reynolds on 14 March 1818, 'whence I inted to tip you a damosel Radcliffe – I'll coven you and grotto you and waterfall you and wood you and immense-rock you, and tremendous sound you and solitude you.' At that time he was drunk on her landscapes. But eleven months later he was writing to George and Georgina Keats promising in his next packet 'the Pot of Basil, St Agnes Eve and the Eve of St Mark. You see what fine Mother Radcliffe names I have – it is not my fault – I do not search for them.'[14] His return to an Italy of visual and verbal splendour was a debt he paid to Walpole as well. His final residence in Rome at the same time as Byron and Shelley, though he wrote nothing there, gave respectability to his Shakespearianisms and Radcliffisms. But Byron who probably knew the Italians better than anybody, despised the 'Terrorists', and his lines on Mat Lewis are worth repeating:

> 'Wonder-working Lewis, Monk or Bard,
> Who fain would make Parnassus a churchyard;...
> ...Even Satan's self with thee might dread to dwell,
> And in thy skull discern a deeper hell.[15]

Even so it was popularly supposed that he had modelled his scowl on Schedoni, while Lara and the Giaour stepped straight from the portraits of that powerful monastic villain. The true inheritance of Italy, however, is to be found in the rich tapestry of Browning's verse, where we trace a direct line from Shakespeare, Ann Radcliffe and John Keats, enriched by a sound and proper sense of the locale.

Shelley, too, had tried his hand at a terror drama (*Zastrozzi*, a cloak and dagger, literally, romance of Venice) when he was 18 and his passion for weird and wonderful tales worked so fiercely upon his imagination that he would wake screaming. Their fruit was probably ripest in the first and only readable novel of Mary, but his villains, Cenci and Castlereagh, have the sombre features of Montoni and Mazzini. And, moving on into the 19th century, can we not discern in that first night meeting with Edward Rochester the dark features of a hero of Terror, while Count Fosco and his hint of stilettos steps straight from the penumbra of those midnight children, the Carbonari. But by 1847, the date of *Jane Eyre*, in the decade that saw *Zanoni* and *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St Praxed's*, Italy had entered the blood-stream of English literature from the pens of people who either visited or lived there, and had become a central part of the English literary imagination. We have come a long way from Bath, that most Vitruvian of English cities.

Notes

1. JMS Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England*, 1770-1818, London 1932.
2. Tompkins, 377
3. Byron's *Letters & Journals*, Ed. LA Marchand, 5, 145, 19 December 1816
4. Byron, Preface to *Childe Harold*
5. Kenneth Churchill, *Italy & English Literature, 1764 – 1930,* L.1980, 6
6. Robert Southey: *History of Brazil,* 1, 256, chap VIII
7. Coleridge's *Notebooks*, ed. Coburn, N 2261
8. *Notebooks*, N 2547
9. JC Eustace, *A Classical Tour,* iv, 293-4, London 1815
10. Michael Kitson, *Salvator Rosa*, London 1973
11. Kitson, loc cit.
12. Book 4, chapter 1, 1842
13. Edgar Johnson: *Sir Walter Scott*. London 1970, ii 972; *Journal*, 87-8, 1826.
14. John Keats to JH Reynolds, 14 March 1818, and George & Georgina Keats, February, 1819, *Letters of John Keats*, ed R Gittings, 75, 214.
15. Byron, *English Bards & Scotch Reviewers*

ANGLO-ITALIAN LOVE IN THE NOVELS OF GIOVANNI RUFFINI

ALLAN C. CHRISTENSEN

Amidst the patriotic movements of nineteenth-century Europe, the most far-sighted protoganists were able to transcend narrowly nationalistic loyalties in favour of a broadly European vision. Emblematic in this regard is the appealing figure of Giovanni Ruffini. After intense activity in the 1830's as one of the most passionately Italian of revolutionaries, he went on to become one of the most serenely cosmopolitan of European novelists of the 1850s and 1860s.

In Paris, his home for most of his adult life, he composed in English seven novels that are set in Italy, France, Switzerland and England. The fictional characters include natives not only of those countries but of Germany, Poland and Russia as well. Besides their other intellectual and aesthetic virtues, these international narratives thus possess a value as allegories of cultural confrontations. They portray the unhappiness of the many national and regional egotisms that threaten the aspirations of Europeans like the older Ruffini for a peacefully integrated community of nations. I wish particularly to focus, though, on the fictional treatment of Italian-English confrontations, and it will accordingly be useful to begin with biographical information relating to Ruffini's experiences in those two countries.

Of Ruffini's initially burning commitment to the cause of Italian liberty and unity there can be no doubt. Born in Genoa in 1807, he grew up in a subjugated Liguria that he came to consider the worst example in Europe of the police state. At university he and his brothers readily fell under the charismatic spell of Giuseppe Mazzini and joined with him to organise the conspiratorial *Giovine Italia*. Ruffini's romantic, revolutionary ardour began suddenly to cool, however, in 1833 with the arrest of his favourite brother, Jacopo, whose friendship also seems to have constituted the most intimate human relationship of Mazzini's entire life. When Jacopo

committed suicide in prison, apparently to avoid giving evidence under torture against his friends, the event had upon Giovanni the same devastating effect that Arthur Hallam's death, in the same year, had upon Alfred Tennyson. Meanwhile Giovanni and another brother, Agostino, escaped into exile in France, where they met up with Mazzini and thereafter shared his unhappy wanderings for nearly eight unproductive years. In this bleak period of poverty and insecurity Ruffini lost faith in his youthful ideals while wondering if he was thereby betraying the cause for which his brother had died. His growing recognition of the wrong-headed folly of an intransigent commitment to political revolution would necessarily lead, in any case, to an irreparable break with Mazzini. It was a sad process that was being repeated by many of the original members of the *Giovine Italia*.

Early in 1837, in the very midst of this period of gradual disillusionment with Italian patriotic ideals, the two Ruffini brothers accompanied Mazzini to England, where Giovanni would live for more than four years. The encounter with English culture constituted another disturbing revelation and would later prompt him to embark upon a politically unengaged career as a literary artist. He would decide indeed to compose and publish his novels in English even though his command of that language never equalled his command of Italian or French. Since his responses to England also involved such intensely negative as well as positive elements, the reasons for the choice of a literary language remain a subject for speculation.

On the positive side of Ruffini's impressions of England, there was the sensation of liberty, typified on the night of his arrival in London by the strange absence of policemen. Whereas the omnipresent police had dogged the steps of the Italian exiles in France and Switzerland, England appeared as a land of immense freedom and opportunity. It was, as Ruffini even thought at first, nearly a utopia in which each man could live and work as he wished and be evaluated for his own real merits.

The impression of a genuine meritocracy applied most notably to English letters, which Ruffini found to be in a very flourishing condition. Talented writers of fiction, for example, could make a living by their trade, since publishers paid them generously and the reading public exemplified great maturity of taste. Among Ruffini's heroes came to figure Thackeray and, more especially, Dickens, whose work struck him as a supreme artistic achievement.

As his years in London passed, however, Ruffini became increasingly aware of the possibly negative features of the English mentality. English utilitarianism caused him to feel at a disadvantage. The English seemed to wish to cut through immediately to the facts of any situation and to be impatient with Italianate sensibilities, passions and tendencies to theorise. He quickly understood then that his own literary style was 'troppo spiritualista, cioè troppo pensato. Il gusto inglese si pasce di fatti, e non andategli a dire delle tendenze in questo o quel paese, ne gli parlate di filosofia.'[1] Somehow the English had even established their right to make foreigners conform, in this respect, to *their* tastes and expectations: 'Finchè non si rassegna a trattare gli Inglesi da Inglesi, ed a smorzare quella sua concitazione d'idée e di stile, che urta i loro nervi, non ne faremo niente.'[2]

More seriously, Ruffini began to detect an arrogance and superficiality in the English that bordered on treachery. Despite their hospitality and protestations of friendship for foreign refugees like himself, they would never fully accept him on his own merits. Believing that they could do without the rest of the world, the English exemplified the insularity that Dickens would later caricaturize in its crudest form as Podsnappery. 'Vulgarity, narrow-mindedness, and exclusiveness', as Ruffini would observe to an English acquaintance many years later, 'seem to be the besetting sins of your country .... [It] disdains all fellow feeling, all solidarité (a very expressive word) with mankind at large.'[3] Recognizing therefore the implausibility of his own initial dream of achieving acceptance and success on English terms, Ruffini felt ever more betrayed and embittered. It seemed to him when he left England, as he hoped for good, in 1841 that he had formed only one genuine friendship there. This was with Jane Welsh Carlyle, 'l'unica persona che in quattro anni di soggiorno in questo paese m'abbia dimostrato simpatia vera e fattomi risovvenire ch'io son uomo, e che posso esser trattato con riguardo e delicatezza.'[4]

Many years later business concerns forced him to return to England. As he explained in an unhappy letter written in London in November of 1860, 'lo straniero che stampa in Inghilterra non acquista e non può trasmettere altrui il diritto di proprietà letteraria, se non bodily present'. So to be 'bodily present', he found himself suffering in the thickest of fogs 'nel mese del suicidio per eccellenza': 'vi purgo', he added, 'il peccato di scrivere in inglese e per gli Inglesi.'[5]

Although he never provided an adequate explanation for his sin of writing for the English, one of the reasons was surely the sheer strength of his involvement, both positively and negatively, with English culture. He had fallen in love especially with the Victorian novel and felt the challenge of proving his own ability in that field. The success of his works later on then offered compensation for his hurt about not having been properly appreciated during his actual residence in England. In the works in which he introduced English characters, he was also able to prove to the English the degree to which he was potentially one of themselves after all. Portraying both the charms and the follies of the English, these works mingle a comprehensive sympathy and an ironic detachment that indeed resemble those of Dickens and Thackeray. Significant in this regard are the Pickwickian comedy of his third novel, *The Paragreens on a Visit to the Paris Universal Exhibition,* and the treatment of English snobbery and hypocrisy in such characters as Sir John Davenne in *Doctor Antonio* and the crass capitalist Mr Jones in *Lavinia.*

More fully than in the handling of such characters, though, the intensity and anguish of Ruffini's response to English culture comes out in the delineation of Anglo-Italian love affairs. Of course these tormented love affairs also involve more than merely cultural confrontations. Before returning to that particular aspect of them, we should therefore observe something of Ruffini's general tendency to make a demanding religion of love.

Partially because the Ruffini brothers – and Mazzini too – perceived in their mother, Donna Eleonora dei marchesi Curlo, a sublime and saintly presence, they always sought from the beloved woman a sort of salvation. The religious quest underlay all of Ruffini's romantic relationships with women and culminated in the rapport that began in 1846 with Cornelia Turner, who had once figured importantly in P.B. Shelley's life too. For twenty-eight years Ruffini and Mrs Turner who was thirteen years his senior, lived together in Paris, and according to his frequent private pronouncements, their mutual devotion remained peacefully uncomplicated and total.

Curiously enough, though, Ruffini's novels portray few successful love affairs, and the male protagonists face challenges to their ideals of romantic love that are at least as damaging as the threats to their

patriotic idealism. Often the stories even convey an anti-feminist bias in their emphasis upon a perverse streak in the heroine. Such is the case, for example, with a particular type of young woman that evidently fascinated Ruffini and that appears, always with a name beginning with *L*, in three of his novels. In the first novel, *Lorenzo Benoni* (of 1853), she is a young widow, the marchesa Lilla, who is based in part on a sweetheart of Giovanni's brother Agostino, the marchesa Laura di Negro Spinola. Sometimes compared to Thackeray's Becky Sharp and to Murger's Mimi in *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, she has seemed to many Italians, in an oft-cited description, 'la più bella immagine di donna 1830 che abbia la letteratura italiana.'[6] In the second novel, *Doctor Antonio*, set in the 1840s, the earliest manuscripts refer to her as Kate, but Ruffini later chose for her another name beginning with *L*, Lucy. Then in his fourth novel, *Lavinia*, which deals with events of the 1850, she appears as the title character, who is again an Englishwoman despite the Italian sound of her name.

More than to Laura di Negro Spinola, Becky Sharp or Mimi, Ruffini's heroine owes her being, I believe, to Henrietta Jenkin, an Englishwoman separated from her husband, with whom both Agostino and Giovanni had long and stormy affairs. One of Ruffini's pet-names for Henrietta was indeed Lilla, and Henrietta Jenkin herself used names beginning with *L* – Lill and Louisa – for the heroines of her own semi-autobiographical novels. In these novels the perversity of this type of woman is also conveyed quite explicitly. 'She adored him', we read, for example, of the affection of the heroine Lill Tufton for her English husband: 'Yet she wished with all her heart to pain him; she did not care at what cost to herself'. And later the same heroine confesses to the Italian patriot whose life she has devastated: 'I am so unhappy; I cannot help trying to hurt others.'[7]

In narrating his own love stories, however, Ruffini seems to treat the unhappy perversity of his heroines less as an irrational psychological drive than as a culural factor. In Lucy and Lavinia, at least, the two most complete treatments of this type of heroine, the destructive tendency is clearly related to the Englishness of their personalities. Ruffini is evidently drawing not only on his actual experiences with Mrs Jenkin and other particular women but on his deeply ambiguous emotional response to the English character in more general terms.

The two fictional representations of Anglo-Italian love thus develop in rough accord with the stages of Ruffini's experience in England. The first phase offers immense promise: the English heroine suddenly enters the hero's life as a vision of beauty and goodness to which he will dedicate his best energies. Their love also flourishes in terms of a didactic relationship in which she humbly appreciates his lessons about Italian culture and encourages him, as it were, to be loyal to himself. In the second phase, however, the hero comes to realize that she cannot respect him on his own Italian terms. She and her family seem virtually to demand his capitulation, involving renunciation of his own patriotic or artistic ideals, and her growing coldness forces him to break with her. With overtones of wish-fulfillment, there is finally a third phase in which the heroine repents. But it is too late, and she must suffer as a just punishment for her former pride.

In the first portions of *Doctor Antonio*, set in the year 1840, this pattern is conveyed in terms of a pastoral idyll that subtly conceals the growing tensions and the underlying resentments. When the beautiful, intelligent, and charmingly headstrong Lucy Davenne breaks her ankle in a road accident near Bordighera in Liguria, the dazzled young doctor is delighted to take her under his care. She suffers, in fact, both from the broken bone and from incipient consumption. As she slowly convalesces, he visits her daily, both as her physician and, increasingly, as her tutor. A man of many interests and talents, Antonio has an infinity of wisdom to impart to her – in particular concerning Italian history and the peasant arts and customs of Liguria. Under his tutelage, she improves as a musician too and learns to draw and to botanize.[8]

The idyl ends, though, when Antonio realizes that Lucy wishes him to become a fashionable physician in London while her aristocratic family would strenuously oppose in any case her marriage to an Italian. As a committed patriot, determined to fight at the appropriate moment for the national cause, he therefore resolves during a night of painful self-communication on the beach to renounce Lucy:

> He walked...for a considerable time, then lay down at full length, his face upturned to the heavens. The grey light of breaking day found him in the same posture. He then rose, and, as if summing up the result of his long reverie said aloud, 'What matters it, after all, whether a man is happy or unhappy, so that he sees his duty and abides by it ? So now *Viva l'Italia !* my first and my last love !' and he bent his way homewards.[9]

The last stage of the romance occurs eight years later amidst the events of 1848. Humbled by an unhappy English marriage and wasted again by consumption, Lucy returns to Italy as the widowed Viscountess Cleverton in order to seek out her Italian physician. She catches up with him in Naples where he admits indeed that he has continued to love her, and he will love her to his grave. But she must now face in her turn the irrevocability of their separation for, he continues,

> 'my country has claims on me prior to yours. These claims I vowed more solemnly than ever to respect on that day, when [your family's] prejudice...stood between you and me. On that day, I pledged myself anew to my country. Let me redeem that pledge – let me do my duty – help me to do it, Lucy !...In the name of all that is holy, let me depart without a painful struggle !'[10]

Although the narrator notes that 'she [then] loosened her hold of him', she does not quite give him up yet, and further suffering awaits her. When Antonio is arrested, tried for treason and imprisoned on Ischia, she acquires a yacht and plots to use if for an improbable rescue. In fact the plot almost succeeds and is thwarted only because Antonio refuses to escape without his equally deserving companions in prison. Convinced now that his rejection of her is definitive, Lucy succumbs to the ravages of her disease and dies.

In *Lavinia*, set in the 1850s, the conflictual aspect of the romance is more obvious from the very start, as if the author now fully recognizes and ventilates his resentment against the Englishwoman. Having just arrived in Rome on a continental tour with her aunt and uncle, the arrogant and frivolous Lavinia thus resolves to meet Paolo Mancini, the reclusive young painter that everyone considers very promising. So that she can later boast of the feat, she also plots to reduce this important artist to her drawing master. Paolo fails, however, to detect the plot, and from his viewpoint the first stage of the romance is again one of great promise and excitement. He has never seen a woman of such ideal beauty and intuits in her a spiritual and moral radiance to match that of her physical appearance. For a time, then, the relationship develops happily. He gives her drawing lessons (as well as lessons in Italian culture) and persuades her to sit for her own portrait. Convinced that she will inspire him to even higher artistic achievements, he ignores the repeated warnings of a perceptive friend and asks her one day to marry him. And to her own surprise, Lavinia impulsively accepts him.

Of course Lavinia soon repents her engagement to an Italian that knows so little about the ways of her fashionable world, and the next stage is one of tremendous torment for Paolo. She makes him attend fashionable functions that disgust him and at which he must observe her flirtations with other men. At one ball she also shocks him by the immodesty of her *décolleté* and even more by her outrageous flirtation with another woman. The story includes indeed a Lesbian episode as she goes to live in the Campagna for several weeks with the separated Cuban wife of a Spanish nobleman.[11] Shortly afterwards she departs for France without a satisfactory farewell. When Paolo then follows her to Paris some months later, she apparently prefers to attend an imperial ball at the Hôtel de Ville rather than to welcome her fiancé on the evening of his arrival. Nearly insane with rage and despair, Paolo feels like a betrayed Samson as he rushes after his Delilah to the Hôtel de Ville: 'a new-born power', we read,'swells his heart, hardens his muscles, a power boundless for mischief. Oh ! that this world were built on pillars, that he might drag them down and bury all mankind under the ruins.'[12] But the catastrophe falls only upon himself, for he collapses on the street with a critical brain fever, which incidentally entails the shaving of his hair. When he recovers, he is no longer able to paint and falls into a life of joyless sexual debauchery. Unlike Antonio, who had preserved his integrity as a patriot, Paolo apparently loses along with his chastity the best part of himself, his artistic soul.

In the third phase Lavinia must naturally undergo an appropriate punishment, and the plotting treats her almost sadistically. Staggered to learn that she is really the illegitimate daughter of a low-class prostitute, she is deprived at once of her fortune, her name and her respectability. She must take poor lodgings in London where practically the only way in which a friendless woman can support herself is through prostitution. The physical beauty that she had so unconscionably flaunted at balls may actually constitute her *only* asset. When she undertakes a penitential pilgrimage to the Crimea, however, as a nursing volunteer, cholera strikes her, and she loses her physical beauty as well. The novel then finishes with an episode in which the lovers sadly meet again. The despairing Paolo has also gone to the Crimea to fight with the Piedmontese forces and, wounded in battle, has lost an arm. The two lovers muse on all that has been ruined for them and cling together as the wrecks of their former selves.

In connection with Ruffini's interpretation of the Crimean War, the novel nevertheless manages to conclude on a note of subdued hopefulness. Although the metaphorical warfare between the English heroine and Italian hero has ended disastrously, the literal war has strengthened the alliance between England and Italy and fostered a mutual respect. The war has, that is, served to humble the proud English nation and to exalt the hitherto undervalued Italian (or Piedmontese) identity. The phoniness of English pretentions to greatness has become apparent as the incompetence, inefficiency and selfishness of the arrogant rulers of the country have caused the English forces to suffer terrible reverses. At the same time, Piedmont has emerged as an unexpectedly valiant nation ready to take its place, as Camillo Cavour had calculated, among the great powers of Europe. In thus tending to equalize the English and Italian allies, the war serves as a corrective to the unhappy love affair and encourages Paolo and Lavinia to make peace and even to marry. Certainly they must take up their lives on a lower level of expectation that that of their former immature dreams, but the conclusion is meant to be promising.

The promise does not, to be sure, carry entire emotional conviction, for the vulnerable Ruffini evidently remained suspicious of the exquisitely English female. On the allegorical level, however, he was able to express in *Lavinia* as in most of his works his hopes for a transcendence of individual national patriotisms in favour of a united European vision. In terms of his own strong, if ambiguous cultural loyalties, such a generalised European unity should begin with a far-from-easy accommodation between representatives of the English and Italian nations.

Notes

1. Carlo Cagnacci, ed.,*Giuseppe Mazzini e i fratelli Ruffini: Lettere raccolte e annotate,* Porto Maurizio 1893, p.180.
2. *Ibid.*, p.192.
3. Letter to Eugene Lee-Hamilton, quoted by Beatrice Corrigan, 'Giovanni Ruffini's Letters to Vernon Lee, 1875-1879', *English Miscellany,* xiii, 1962, 218n.
4. Cagnacci, *op. cit.,* p.255.
5. Letter of 19 November 1860 to Federico Rosazza, MS in Archivio Ruffini, Istituto Mazziniano, Genoa.

6. Attilio Momigliano, ' "Il Dottor Antonio" ', in ***Studi di Poesia,*** Bari 1938, p.165.
7. [Henrietta Jenkin], ***'Who Breaks – Pays',*** London 1861, ii, 242, 265.
8. The character of Doctor Antonio may be based on Jacopo Ruffini, who had taken an excellent degree in medicine, and thus represent an imaginative conception of the patriotic physician that Jacopo had not lived to become. Many of the physical characteristics, intellectual interests and artistic talents of Antonio lead to this identification. See Alfonso Lazzari, 'Una biografia inedita di Iacopo Ruffini scritta dal fratello Ottavio', ***Rivista d'Italia,*** xii, no.9, 1909, 480-81; and Alfonso Lazzari, 'La giovinezza di Iacopo Ruffini', ***Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento,*** vii, no.4, 1920, 644-45.
9. John Ruffini, *Doctor Antonio,* Leipzig 1861, p.264.
10. *Ibid.*, p.329.
11. Ruffini has evidently taken many of the characteristics of the Marchioness Juanita with whom Lavinia has her affair from the notorious Russian Countess Julia Samoyloff, a former mistress of the Czar that resided in this period in Milan. Like the Countess Samoyloff, Juanita is madly devoted to her dogs, for one of which she arranges, as the Countess had done, a preposterously elaborate funeral attended by the dogs of all her friends, and she delights in making appearances on-stage, sometimes in masculine roles. See Raffaello Barbiera, *Il salotto della contessa Maffei,* Piacenza 1914, pp.73-76.
12. John Ruffini, *Lavinia,* Leipzig 1861, i, 322.

VIAGGATORI A TEATRO
APPUNTI SUL TEATRO ITALIANO NELLE RELAZIONI INGLESI DEL GRAND TOUR

MARIA GRAZIA BELLORINI

All'inizio del diciottesimo secolo l'istituzione del *Grand Tour* è consuetudine ben consolidata presso le classi aristocratiche inglesi, che identificano in essa una funzione educativa irrinunciabile per i giovani destinati, per nascita e per casta, a occupare posti di rilievo nella vita politica della nazione. È ormai un rito sociale, le cui sequenze sono rigidamente fissate, le cui modalità e funzioni sono ancora le stesse di quell'esemplare codificazione che di esso aveva dato Francis Bacon nel celebre saggio *Of travel* (1635). Il viaggio di cultura comporta di conseguenza uno studio in loco dell'antichità, sulla falsariga degli autori classici; la frequentazione della miglior società in vista degli impegni pubblici futuri; lo studio delle diverse forme di governo, attuali o passate, che l'Italia esprime nei diversi stati in cui è divisa. Nei confronti degli abitanti attuali di quella Italia, che idealmente costituisce la meta delle mete del *Grand Tour*, è diffuso un atteggiamento critico di superiorità, per le immagini di decadenza morale e politica che essi sembrano offrire a contrasto con la bellezza del mondo classico e rinascimentale nel quale il viaggiatore si rifugia, consapevolmente compiaciuto, nel contempo, di appartenere ad un paese prospero e libero.[1] Avviene anche che difronte a tutto ciò i giovani nobili viaggiatori, succubi passivi della erudizione di tutori e mentori, possano mostrare una aristocratica indifferenza, giustificando il severo giudizio di una viaggiatrice d'eccezione come Lady Mary Montague che sul finire degli anni cinquanta li vede sperperare denari e tempo tanto da meritare la riduzione comica che ne fa il Goldoni nel suo teatro.[2] Samuel Sharp, autore di un testo di viaggio sul quale torneremo, scopre sorpreso come questi giovani non traggano particolare piacere del Grand Tour: lo considerino come un dovere e non desiderino che un sollecito ritorno a casa.[3] E Smollett, dopo averli incontrati in Italia, li ritrae stupidamente impegnati ad arricchire astuti falsari e corruttori, anzichè la loro cultura.[4]

Nel secondo '700, tuttavia, si manifestano dei mutamenti: il viaggio diventa una esperienza aperta a chiunque abbia i denari sufficienti per affrontarlo: dalla fine della guerra dei Sette anni nel 1763, fino ai moti rivoluzionari francesi degli anni novanta, migliaia di inglesi attraversano la Manica e nella maggior parte dei casi arrivano in Italia.[5] Le motivazioni del viaggio all'estero si vanno diversificando e, accanto ad una concezione museale dell'Italia, ad una concettualizzazione del paese come unità metaforica, si va sviluppando in parallelo, l'interesse verso il paese reale. Sembra istituirsi presso i viaggiatori inglesi in particolare, il rifiuto del dommatismo, degli stereotipi superficiali, per ricercare la verità tramite l'esperienza. Ai giovani aristocratici con il loro seguito, si affiancano uno Sterne, uno Smollett, uno Sharp che viaggiano per motivi di salute; c'è chi viaggia inseguendo i suoi interessi artistici, musicali o scientifici; si affiancheranno sempre più numerosi studiosi o intellettuali borghesi che si avventurano sulle stesse vie.[6] Fascino della cultura, ma anche pragmatico e scientifico interesse verso l'uomo e le sue istituzioni, frutto del pensiero illuminista e del sentimentalismo roussoniano, incideranno sulla esperienza di viaggio nella seconda metà del '700, portando infine ad un rovesciamento nella lettura dei dati caratterizzanti della società italiana, con la contemporanea apertura verso la natura e il paesaggio percepiti con una nuova sensibilità.[7]

Gli anni sessanta del secolo sono ricchi di proposte dove vecchio e nuovo si incontrano e sovrappongono, nelle forme stesse che la letteratura odeporica assume: mentre i nobili affidano come sempre le memorie del viaggio a diari o a corrispondenze reali che spesso raggiungono il pubblico ad anni, quando non a secoli di distanza, il nuovo tipo di viaggiatore pubblica il resoconto del viaggio subito dopo il ritorno in patria, facendone forse un investimento editoriale, ma volendo soprattutto diversificare la sua opera dalle tante guide di viaggio, cui si erano uniformate le relazioni del principio di secolo: spesso lo fa scegliendo la forma epistolare, per conservare verosimiglianza ed immediatezza, alla elaborazione della nuova realtà umana da sosituire alla osservazione descrittiva della guida. Lo schema espositivo mimetico si articola sulle tappe nelle città, e dunque la città rimane il fulcro dell'attenzione e degli interessi di tutti i viaggiatori, a qualsiasi ceto sociale essi appartengano. Essa si identifica con il momento di sosta, di ricerca e di riflessione,

ma anche di svago e di divertimento. Vi ci si dedica ai trattenimenti serali: la conversazione, i balli, il giuoco, il teatro. Quest'ultimo è certo il più attraente, ricercato con curiosità per la novità della struttura: è infatti il teatro all'italiana, a palchetti, famoso anche perchè si diceva che esso permettesse di svolgervi vita sociale, come concentrata simulazione della vita cittadina.

Teatro è innanzitutto opera, l'opera italiana che gode di grande fama all'estero a partire da metà seicento.[8] Teatro è anche la commedia dell'arte o comunque le rappresentazioni che diremo di prosa, cui sono riservati in genere teatri minori, – linguisticamente la distinzione che i viaggiatori pongono è tra *Opera* e *playhouse* – , e che potrebbero risultare altrettanto interessanti per l'originalità di concezione.

Lo stesso Bacon, compilando l'elenco delle cose da vedere nel corso del viaggio aveva raccomandato 'Comedies, such whereunto the better sort of persons do resort'.[9] Non c'è di che soprendersi quindi per le tante volte che il giovane *grandtourist* e il suo emulo borghese chiudono la loro giornata a teatro. Brevi appunti che appaiono con frequenza e le cui modalità delineano con chiarezza non solo convenzioni e *clichés* culturali e sociali, ma anche quella sottile discriminante, – nella tipologia di viaggiatore cui si accennava – , tra quanto di tradizionale e quanto di innovativo investe il concetto del viaggio e della letteratura ad esso relativa. Possiamo verificarlo mettendo a confronto alcuni viaggiatori e i loro resoconti, scelti negli anni tra il 1760 e il '70, gli anni in cui meglio si avverte il rapido processo di diversificazione in atto.

Fra quei giovani nobili inglesi nei cui confronti si andava affinando una letteratura satirica, potremmo certo includere James Boswell, che ventiquattrenne giunge in Italia nel gennaio 1765 e che percorrerà parte del viaggio in compagnia del coetaneo conte Mountstuart, nipote di Mary Montague. Di Boswell è stato scritto a buona ragione che egli si vede, nel giungere in Italia, 'as a leading tenor in the land of opera, Don Giovanni among the great ladies and their cicisbei'.[10] La metafora teatrale ben si addice al nostro argomento: il diario di Boswell è difatto ricco di riferimenti al teatro, ma al teatro come luogo di convegno sociale, ai palchi come recessi per segreti accordi a preludio di erotici incontri con le dame torinesi, milanesi, veneziane. Arrivato a Torino (genn.'65) in serata,

senza indugio si precipita a teatro: 'I went dirty to the opera. The superb theatre struck me much, and the boxes full of ladies and gallants talking to each other, quite Italy'.[11] Sarà accolto come cicisbeo nel palco di Mme St Gilles e nel palco tenterà di dar avvio alla sua carriera di libertino. È ovvio che ciò che avviene in scena vada completamente disatteso: la recita è anzi tutta sviluppata nel palco stesso, con Boswell protagonista di un banale e comico recitativo guidato dalla dama, fonte di divertimento per i vicini di palco che seguono la conversazione fra i due. Situazione che si ripeterà con nobildonne diverse; solo sul finire del soggiorno torinese egli noterà rapidamente il titolo dell'opera, *The Conquest of Mexico,* e un breve commento comparativo con l'opera della sera precedente, del Sassone.[12] A Milano (genn. '65) sembra momentaneamente guarito dal cicisbeismo e più attento spettatore 'I went to the opera: The house was large; the audience so-so. Rough dogs often roared out 'Brava'. The singers seemed slovenly. Blackguard boys held the sweeping female trains and often let them go to scratch their head or blow their nose with their fingers'.[13] Assorbito completamente da questi dettagli realistici Boswell dimentica di annotare di quale opera si tratti, e lascia Milano con questa deludente presentazione dell'allora Teatro Ducale. Se a Piacenza riporta una buona impressione di una burletta, a Verona (luglio '65) dovrà assistere ad una profanazione dell'Arena, al cui interno è stato costruito un piccolo palcoscenico per la rappresentazione di un'Opera Buffa: tristi riflessioni sul confronto fra la razza forte, eroica degli spettatori e dei gladiatori dell'antichità e i 'degenerate Italians... Blackguards and effeminate Signori', che ora siedono in questo sacro luogo ad assistere alle capriole e ai lazzi di un miserabile Arlecchino. Al Teatro di Corte di Mantova assiste quasi commosso ad una Pastorale italiana (luglio '65); A Siena e a Lucca, sul finire del suo viaggio (sett. – ott. '65), frequenta abitualmente l'Opera, traendone conforto alle sue malinconie.[14]

Sorprende la mancanza di interesse più approfondito e articolato per il teatro sia d'opera che di recitazione in Italia, da parte di un giovane che si è già distinto in patria per un' intensa partecipazione alla vita teatrale; e che sarà autore di odi, prologhi, saggi sul dramma, sulla tragedia, sulla professione di attore. Stupisce inoltre, e non solo noi ma anche il suo biografo più autorevole,[15] che egli non cerchi di conoscere direttamente l'opera di Goldoni o del

Metatasio a Venezia (i due autori sono all'estero in quel 1765), nè Carlo Gozzi che pure è grande amico di Giuseppe Baretti da Boswell più volte incontrato a Venezia e del quale avremo ancora occasione di parlare. Sembra dunque che egli limiti il significato di teatro all'opera, e che questa faccia parte della *routine* quotidiana, secondo le convenzioni della classe sociale cui appartiene; in questo del tutto simile ai tanti che lo hanno preceduto, a quella stessa Lady Mary Montague, che non lascia nel suo brillante epistolario traccia di interessi più ampi di quelli di Boswell nei riguardi dell'opera o della commedia, pur dimostrando ella di conoscere il Goldoni e l'importanza innovatrice della sua opera.[16] Boswell avrà un ripensamento a posteriori, sulla via del ritorno: a Marsiglia, assiste ad una commedia seguita da un breve trattenimento musicale che egli subisce come una tortura. Si abbandona pertanto ad una esaltazione del teatro italiano, in un enfatico crescendo: 'The French squeaking and grimaces were insufferable to a man just come from the operas of Italy! O Italy! Land of felicity! True seat of all elegant delight!... Thy divine music has harmonized my soul: That nature, that sweet simplicity, that easy grace which has pleased me so often in thy theatres, shall never fade from my memory.'[17]

Edward Gibbon nel 1764 concludeva in Italia il suo *Grand Tour*, del quale è rimasto un diario parziale, redatto in francese.[18] Con estrema meticolosità egli registra e descrive visite a musei, chiese, monumenti, biblioteche e personaggi eminenti, soddisfacendo i suoi interessi storico-eruditi ed artistici. Non dimentica tuttavia di annotare le serate passate a teatro, con l'amico William Guise,[19] appassionato di musica. Frequenta l'opera a Torino e a Milano (maggio 1764). A Parma il teatro farnese lo attrae come realizzazione architettonica. Assiste a noiose tragedie, o alla commedia a Reggio, a Firenze, a Livorno.[20] Con l'accuratezza e il sereno distacco dello studioso ammira gli edifici teatrali, antichi e moderni, registra il comportamento degli spettatori nei palchi. Piacevolmente sorpreso, apprezza il modo tutto italiano di trasformare questi ultimi in salotti dove di tutto ci si interessa men che di ciò che avviene in scena; citerà il titolo, solo quello, di due opere cui ha assistito per altro senza alcun interesse, *Ezio* a Reggio, *Siroe* a Firenze.[21]

Esponenti ambedue, Gibbon e Boswell, di una stessa classe aristocratica, vedono del paese soprattutto lo spazio del passato, nel quale contestualizzare, per amore o per dovere, la loro cultura

classica, concedendosi poi alla frequentazione della miglior società, che, come nei consigli di Francis Bacon, essi trovano raccolta nel teatro d'opera, o nelle recite in case private, presso conventi o conservatorii. Il teatro pubblico di recitazione, espresso più comunemente nella commedia dell'arte, non sembra essere considerato fra i trattenimenti aristocratici, non lascia traccia di sè in diari e memorie. È passatempo per il popolo, per i piccoli borghesi, e troverà qualche attenzione e qualche apprezzamento sulla qualità, non solo del pubblico e del suo comportamento, ma del che cosa e del come si recita, presso i viaggiatori borghesi, parimenti curiosi verso la commedia che verso l'opera.

Passiamo a questa seconda categoria cui appartengono indubbiamente *Smellfungus* e *Mundungus*, rispettivamente il famoso Tobias Smollett e il meno noto Samuel Sharp, che meritarono il curioso appellativo, come si sa, da Sterne proprio nella loro veste di viaggiatori.[22] Essi sono attratti dell'Italia per ragioni culturali certo, quelle stesse che avevano indotto il dottor Johnson a confessare, forse un po' pateticamente, e comunque per la soddisfazione di tutti i viaggiatori contemporanei: 'A man who has never been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority from his not having seen what is expected a man should see. The grand object of travel is to see the shores of the Mediterranean'.[23] Essi sono ben decisi peraltro a non cadere vittima di luoghi comuni, di giudizi precostituiti, cercano di staccarsi dalla contemplazione del passato per guardare anche alla situazione reale del paese.
Smollet non contribuisce granché alla nostra indagine: nelle lettere che registrano le sue impressioni del viaggio in Italia nell'autunno 1764, non v'è traccia di una frequentazione di teatri, forse perchè la stagione non è ancora iniziata. Eppure conosce bene Goldoni e la sua opera. Ne cita una battuta in dialetto originale e lo indica come 'the celebrated reformer of the Italian comedy'. Dichiara ancora di dedurre dalle commedie goldoniane il carattere delle donne italiane: cappricciose, insolenti, vendicative, permalose, perfide e crudeli al punto che egli le ritiene 'very unfit subjects for comedy whose province is rather to ridicule folly than to stigmatize such atrocious vice.'[24]

Ben più attento alla realtà teatrale è *Mundungus,* il chirurgo Samuel Sharp che compie il suo viaggio in Italia dal sett. 1765 al maggio 1766. Ha circa sessantacinque anni e ciò che lo attira in

Italia è il clima, per ragioni di salute. Nel dare forma epistolare alla sue memorie di viaggio (*Letters from Italy* 1766),[25] egli asserisce di non voler ripetere la pedissequa descrizione dei monumenti dell'Italia antica e moderna, ma di voler piuttosto presentare gli usi e i costumi dell'Italia contemporanea. Nelle cinquantaquattro lettere di questo suo lavoro, egli sembra confermare l' immagine del decàdimento sociale del paese, e in questo senso il Baretti reagirà allo scritto dello Sharp. Eppure egli evita il confronto con il passato e si impegna di fatto a registrare gli aspetti salienti della situazione politca, economica oltre che sociale e culturale degli stati italiani nella cui realtà storica egli vede vanificata una virtuale identità nazionale. Coglie, sia pur confusamente, il divario economico fra stati del sud e del nord, la rilevanza della carestia che proprio in quegli anni affligge la popolazione; nota, per la loro significanza economica, le differenze nel paesaggio naturale. Siamo difronte ad una innovazione nella letteratura di viaggio settecentesca, novità cui Johnson riservò grande attenzione: 'I read Sharp's *Letters* over and over again . . . There is a great deal of matter in them'.[26] Meno pacata e generosa fu la lettura che ne fece Giuseppe Baretti, tanto che ne scaturì, tra questi e Sharp, una *querelle* celebre tra contemporanei, una vera e propria *book war* (la definizione è di Fanny Burney).

Fra usí e costumi degli italiani hanno un posto di rilievo la musica, il teatro e quella felice combinazione d'entrambe che è l'opera. Sharp ci offre una immagine speculare e complementare di quel mondo di incontri ed intrighi sociali, politici, amorosi cui si riduce l'esperienza teatrale per i giovani viaggiatori aristocratici. Questo medico chirurgo ha chiaramente una formazione classica, e un forte interesse personale per il teatro. Quasi alla fine del suo viaggio, giunto a Firenze nel maggio del '66 confesserà: 'Whilst I am in Italy, I seldom fail to be present every evening at the Theatre, as being the place where, next to good company, a traveller is best enabled to catch the manners of a people' (XLVIII, 248). Bacon aveva suggerito un uso elitario della *Comedy,* come luogo ove incontrare i migliori; per Sharp il teatro è luogo di pragmatica verifica del comportamento umano in culture diverse. La sistematica attenzione ai dettagli con cui egli indaga in questo ambito è perciò da ricollegarsi ad un principio metodologico: a volte sono osservazioni

non molto brillanti od intuitive, 'insipid and tiresome' (I, 2) come quelle guide cui egli non vuole assomigliare, e però sorprendono per la frequenza, e per l'impegno di interpretazione che Sharp riserva loro.

Sembra emblematico che Sharp parli di teatro già nella prima lettera relativa al suo incontro con Voltaire, che egli aveva avuto modo di frequentare sia a Londra che a Parigi. Le note che egli trascrive su questo incontro sono esclusivamente dedicate al rapporto di Voltaire con il teatro, fino a ribadire l'antico cruccio dello Sharp per il grosso errore di valutazione dell'opera shakespeariana da parte dell'amico filosofo.[27] Non varrà questo, comunque, ad ingraziargli le simpatie del Baretti, che avrà da rinfacciare al Voltaire anche una valutazione positiva dell'opera del Goldoni.

A Venezia, dove arriva nel settembre 1765, Sharp trova i teatri ancora chiusi, ma annota come essi siano frequentabili da tutti, specie durante il Carnevale, e come siano i Gondolieri a determinare con il loro applauso o la loro censura la fortuna di un'opera o di una commedia (IV. 15). Annota anche le informazioni raccolte sul comportamento a teatro di dame e cicisbei, un istituto di cui egli si meraviglia e si andrà indignando sempra più (V,18). Padova, frequentata dai Veneziani nei mese estivi, offre ai ricchi villeggienti 'a fine opera', il che sembra indicare insieme l'edificio e lo spettacolo. Volutamente evita ogni descrizione di teatri-munumento sia a Verona che a Vicenza (X. 37). Sarà dunque Napoli la città che gli appare come il centro più vivace e ricco di attività drammatiche. Egli esordisce affermando:'A stranger upon his arrival in so large and celebrated a city as Naples, generally makes the public spectacles his first pursuit' (XIX, 77). La ricerca inizia dal teatro del Re, più noto come *San Carlo*. riservato all'opera seria. Sharp non trattiene la sua meravigliata ammirazione definendolo uno degli spettacoli più belli che si possano incontrare viaggiando, come già avevano annotato Lady Mary Montague, o David Garrick, e come faranno tutti gli stranieri.[28] Sharp è affascinato dalla struttura architettonica: 'The amazing extent of the stage, with the prodigious circumference of the boxes, and height of the ceiling, produce a marvellous effect on the mind, for a few moments' (XIX, 78). È meno soddisfatto della funzionalità acustica: le voci e la musica si perdono in quell'immenso spazio, tanto da concludere che

l'edificio 'is better contrived to see than to hear the Opera'. Fa così sua una preoccupazione ricorrente dell'autore drammatico, a partire da Ben Jonson che già aveva dovuto difendere il primato di '*to hear*' rispetto a '*to see*', nell'allestimento delle opere teatrali.[29] Sharp trova conferma di questo dannoso ribaltamento di valori nell'improvviso silenzio degli spettatori al momento del balletto, 'the Neapolitans go to see not to hear an Opera' (XX, 82). Il balletto può essere noioso, con avvenimenti e personaggi banali o buffoneschi, ma in compenso la messinscena, i costumi, la musica sono ricercati e ben armonizzati e 'Above all the stage is so large and noble as to set off the performance to an inexpressible advantage' (XX, 85).

La difficoltà del sentire, peraltro, viene a suo avviso aggravata dal chiasso che si fa in sala, per via della abitudine di considerare l'opera come luogo di 'Rendevous and visiting'. Sharp deduce che questo sia l'unico luogo dove i napoletani, (ma vedremo non solo loro), si scambiano visite, passando di palco in palco per sere successive, anche quando si replichi per settimane la stessa opera. Si offrono rinfreschi, ma non pasti completi come gli era stato detto. Ha potuto vedere invece alcuni degli occupanti dei palchi dedicarsi al gioco delle carte. Non vi è pertanto alcuna attenzione per l'opera, si ride e si parla per tutta la rappresentazione. Egli era stato informato già in Inghilterra di questa abitudine italiana; e vi aveva accennato presentando la vita teatrale di Venezia; ma non credeva si potesse arrivare a tanto. Non si fa eccezione nemmeno per i cantanti preferiti o per la presenza del re. Notiamo la grande differenza di reazione di fronte allo stesso fenomeno: Boswell può esclamare, al suo esordio mondano nei palchi del teatro torinese, 'Quite Italy': e Gibbon concludere che lo spettacolo è solo un punto di riunione e distrazione per una società che lo rende più vivo e più libero; mentre Sharp rimane perplesso, se non indignato, da simile comportamento e partecipe dell'umiliazione inflitta a attori e cantanti.[30] Con insistenza egli ritorna sulla struttura del *S. Carlo:* il numero dei palchi, la configurazione della platea dove i sedili hanno il piano ribaltabile, fissato da un lucchetto che ne rende l'uso riservato. Si addentra poi nelle modalità di assegnazione dei posti all'opera, sulle possibilità che hanno gli stranieri di accedere agli spettacoli (XXI, 85 – 88). Non dimentica i problemi di illuminazione con riserve sull'uso di fumosi ceri nelle serate di gala; sulla

concentrazione di luce sul palcoscenico, il che rende gli spettacoli 'dark and melancholy' (XXII, 88). La mancanza di illuminazione in sala durante la rappresentazione, e l'angustia dei palchetti dove siedono le dame, impedisce agli spettatori di contribuire all'abbellimento dello spettacolo come avviene invece a Londra. La riflessione sul rapporto tra la struttura dell'edificio e gli spettatori, suggerisce una visione di classica armonia: se il teatro avesse solo frequentatori di rango, una struttura come quella del teatro palladiano darebbe loro il giusto risalto, in quanto gli spettatori stessi entrerebbero a far parte dello spettacolo, disposti elegantemente fra i colonnati e sui gradoni. La vasta platea del teatro napoletano, al contrario, è frequentata dalla promiscua compagnia dei servi, e dei loro poco raccomandabili amici; solo a Firenze egli osserverà la presenza delle dame in platea, come è abitudine anche a Londra. Fornisce una serie di informazioni sulle difficoltà degli impresari napoletani nei rapporti con la corte e con gli attori, e sui compensi pecuniari di quest'ultimi.

Non si può dire che Sharp non proceda con sistematicità a riferire le sue esperienze, con una minuta elencazione di dettagli; riuscirà peraltro a darci un quadro organico della vita reale del teatro italiano contemporaneo.

Dopo aver dedicato ben quattro lettere alle riflessioni sul *S. Carlo* egli passa all'esame degli altri teatri napoletani, fra i quali si impone, con segno negativo, 'a little dirty kind of playhouse', dove si recita la commedia ogni sera (XXIII, 95). Si chiama *La Cantina,* e tale è di fatto. Una piccola sala per settanta, ottanta persone in platea e un solo giro di dieci, dodici palchi. Gli spettacoli sono mediocri, ma ciò che più colpisce è la volgarità degli spettatori: e Sharp si dilunga nel descrivere la deprecabile abitudine degli italiani di qualsiasi ceto sociale di sputare ovunque e in qualsiasi circostanza: è un malvezzo particolarmente evidente in questo teatro mal frequentato, ridotto pertanto in condizioni igieniche precarie, dove è impossibile evitare di insudiciarsi gli abiti.[31] Il Baretti tenterà a questo riguardo una difesa d'ufficio dello spettatore italiano, costantemente smentita dalla testimonianza di tanti altri viaggiatori che fanno eco alla indignazione dello Sharp.[32]

Ritroviamo lo stesso atteggiamento di minuziosa osservazione e di interpretazione dei dati a Firenze, dove Sharp si trova nel maggio '66. Abbondano le informazioni sulla situazione dei tre teatri

della città, nelle loro strutture e nella loro destinazione, nonchè sulla qualità delle rappresentazioni (XLVII, 240). Egli segue lo schema espositivo già sperimentato per Napoli anche a Torino, ultima tappa del suo viaggio, e fornisce un esame degli edifici, degli orari di apertura, dei problemi economici di gestione dei diversi teatri e spettacoli (L, 270 – 271).

Lo Sharp sembra accumulare nel tempo una sistematica esperienza sul teatro italiano, soprattutto come frequentatore degli spettacoli di prosa più che dell'opera: dirà esplicitamente a Torino di recarsi alla commedia ogni sera, e di esserne soddisfatto. Seguendo poi gli intendimenti programmatici di un viaggio non solo di *entertainment*, ma di *enlightenment* e possibilmente di *improvement*,[33] cerca di elaborare l'esperienza attraverso opportune riflessioni sulla situazione del dramma in Italia. Riflessioni che si ampliano e si approfondiscono con il procedere del viaggio stesso. *La Cantina* napoletana gli suggerisce le prime considerazioni generiche: in Italia non vengono se non raramente rappresentate tragedie, nè gli riesce di vedere per il momento commedie di più di tre atti. Le rappresentazioni di queste ultime sono rozze, incolte quali dovevano essere alle origini. Egli ritiene che manchi ogni incentivo a migliorare in quanto le commedie sono raramente frequentate dai nobili e costituiscono un divertimento solo per le classi inferiori. Lo spettacolo è basato principalmente su doppi sensi, su equivoci banali, 'even from dirty actions, such as spitting or blowing the nose in each other faces' (XXIII, 96), proprio come in Inghilterra avviene sui palcoscenici di *Mountbanks* o a *Bartholomew-Fair*. Da Firenze ribadirà come la commedia italiana non sia superiore al *droll* inglese, tutta affidata ad estemporanee e spesso volgari improvvisazioni dei *characters* fissi, Arlecchino, Pulcinella, Don Fastidio, Pantalone. Sono gli stessi amati dai napoletani, tanto che alcuni di questi personaggi vengono introdotti anche nelle opere buffe e, ipotizza con ironia lo Sharp, se il popolo frequentasse di più il teatro d'opera, certo verrebbero introdotti anche nell'opera seria (XXIII, 97).

Riconosce peraltro, nonostante le critiche sfavorevoli sugli spettacoli cui ha assistito, che gli Italiani hanno un genio naturale per la commedia, ricordando in particolare un comico di merito, nel personaggio di Don Fastidio, che ben potrebbe affrontare il pubblico di Londra e di Parigi.[34] Prova quindi ad elaborare dei

rimedi pragmatici a cominciare dagli attori che egli vorrebbe professionisti e non dilettanti (XLVII, 242). Potrebbero di conseguenza avere un pubblico più rispettabile ed esigente e coltivare il loro gran talento, studiare le loro parti con decoro, e non affidarsi al caso o alla continua e fastidiosa presenza del suggeritore. Con lo sguardo rivolto al passato vagheggia la protezione di qualche gran signore; parla di un novello mecenate a Napoli; a Torino pensa alla presenza in sala del sovrano: in entrambi i casi si riporterebbe in vita ora, come nel passato, lo spirito poetico del paese e insieme si restituirebbe rigore e dignità agli attori e agli spettatori. Trova conforto a queste sue proposte, nel successo che durante il carnevale hanno le recite, tre o quattro commedie per sera, presso le abitazioni private o nei conventi, dove si offrono allo spettacolo condizioni migliori: come egli ha potuto vedere presso i frati Celestini di Napoli, cosa che farà lo stesso Sterne, a Napoli nel febb. '66.[35]

A Firenze la situazione sembra meno negativa: non solo le burlette sono decorose, pur non avendo cantanti o attori di particolare bravura (XLVII, 243); ma egli riesce finalmente ad assistere ad una commedia in cinque atti e perfino ad una tragedia, cosa che ormai riteneva impossibile su un palcoscenico italiano. Si tratta di una traduzione del *Mahomet* di Voltaire, e trova gli spettatori eccezionalmente attenti. Merito della forza drammatica dell'autore francese, ma anche della declamazione tragica degli attori italiani: 'it appears to me much more sweet and pathetic, I might also venture to say natural, than the declamation of the French tragedians' (XLVIII, 248 – 49). Questo non fa che aumentare il rammarico per la disastrosa situazione attuale ed egli è sempre più convinto che l'assenza di un interesse qualificato e per tanto esigente nei confronti del dramma, neghi al teatro la possibilità di rinnovamento, che pure le capacità degli attori potrebbe garantire. Si ritrova quindi di fronte ad un circolo vizioso: non si potranno avere migliori attori, se non si avranno migliori testi e un pubblico più esigente espresso attraverso la presenza di un signore illuminato; si potrebbe ricorrere a paghe migliori che non al presente, e perfino a prezzi di ingresso selettivi (LI, 281 – 82).

A questo punto è sorprendente che un uomo tanto interessato alle attività drammatiche, che si professa assiduo frequentatore dei teatri di prosa, più che non dell'opera; che si dichiara convinto

della necessità di una riforma del teatro italiano, della necessità di buoni testi per aver buoni attori, non faccia mai il nome di Goldoni, Gozzi, Metastasio. Del primo in special modo già noto anche in Inghilterra, come testimonierà il Baretti stesso, e che altri viaggiatori collegano variamente alla loro esperienza, come Smollett o, ancor prima, Lady Montague. Tanto più stupisce, se ricordiamo la lusihghiera approvazione che Voltaire, tanto stimato da Sharp, aveva espresso nei confronti del commediografo veneziano.

Dobbiamo ciò nonostante, riconoscere allo Sharp che, nella ricerca delle soluzioni possibili per il miglioramento del teatro, egli non limita la sua attenzione all'ambito strettamente letterario del testo e dell'autore, ma manifesti una percezione organica del fenomeno drammatico, comprensivo dell'attore, dello spettatore, dello stesso spazio teatrale. Attentissimo ai più minuti particolari del teatro italiano nella sua realtà architettonica, sociale, economica, rimane certo legato alla cultura classica che gli fa chiedere *decorum* comico e tragico, *decorum* degli attori, *decorum* degli spettatori; che gli fa credere nell'intervento risolutore di un mecenatismo illuminato; ma sembra peraltro dotato di un maggior senso del teatro come complessa realtà vitale, e non prevalentemente letteraria, quale sembra invece la difesa del Baretti. E più generoso del Baretti è lo Sharp nel giudicare gli attori italiani superiori ai francesi, e i teatri di Parigi inferiori agli italiani nonchè agli inglesi, laddove il Baretti nella *Frusta Letteraria* giudicava gli italiani nani e francesi giganti sia nella commedia che nella tragedia.

L'opera del Baretti, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy* (1768) fu la subitanea e vivacissima reazione alle *Letters* dello Sharp;[36] e risultò alla fine un manuale di preparazione per i viaggiatori inglesi che meglio potessero affrontare la complessità della vita italiana contemporanea. La battaglia libresca fra Sharp e Baretti, che nelle fasi successive vide riprodursi con enfasi mutevole gli assunti iniziali, fino a ridurli ad una stizzosa polemica personale,offrì peraltro ai lettori inglesi l'occasione di leggere nei primi capitoli dell'*Account* un breve profilo storico del teatro italiano; una valida discussione sulla commedia dell'arte, ove si giustifica la recitazione a 'scenario', ritenendola una forma di teatro tutta italiana, da migliorare certo, ma da non abolire. C'è forse a volte una forzatura ottimistica, o un facile contraddirsi, tanto da rischiare un sospetto di apologia, come sembra intuire il Johnson

che riflette sull'opera del Baretti, dandone un giudizio pacato e arguto: un libro molto piacevole il cui autore 'has not indeed many hooks; but with what hooks he has, he grapples very forcibly'.[37] Si può dire allora che, nel parlare di teatro, il Baretti non raccolga l'aggancio che il Goldoni, come forza rinnovatrice del dramma italiano, poteva fornirgli per controbattere le denigrazioni e le perplessità dello Sharp; anzi egli riprende ed amplia la requisitoria contro il drammaturgo veneziano, il cui nome è per lui sinonimo di dilettantismo e volgarità, arrivando ad affermare, con acredine ostinata, che due recenti produzioni dello stesso a *Haymarket*, 'two stupendous burlettas', hanno avuto successo perchè gli inglesi sono rimasti affascinati dalla musica e dal canto e certamente non per la qualità del libretto goldoniano che, per loro fortuna, non sono stati in grado di capire.[38] Raccomanda piuttosto ai lettori e agli spettatori inglesi i testi poetici di Zeno e Metastasio, e quelli drammatici di Carlo Gozzi – paradossalmente da lui definito il più sorprendente genio che, dopo Shakespeare, sia comparso in alcun secolo o paese.[39] Ciò non toglie che poi il Baretti, con tipica passionalità, rimproveri lo Sharp per l'assoluto silenzio sul Goldoni, un *playmonger* certo, ma pur sempre un fenomeno italiano al centro di una *paper-war* nata a Venezia in seguito all'elogio fattone dal Voltaire, e che lo Sharp non avrebbe dovuto ignorare. A noi non rimane che chiederci se il silenzio del nostro viaggiatore inglese sul Goldoni sia l'esito di una imperdonabile disinformazione o di una fatale incomprensione.

Notes

1. La bibliografia sull'argomento è vastissima. Fra gli studi più recenti si vedano: Geoffrey Trease, *The Grand Tour*, London, Heinemann 1967; Cesare De Seta, *L'Italia nello specchio del Grand Tour*, in *Storia d'Italia*, Annali 5, Torino, Einaudi, 1982, pp. 127 – 263; Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour*, London, Croom Helm, 1985; Attilio Brilli, *Il viaggio in Italia: storia di una grande tradizione culturale dal XVI al XIX secolo*, Milano, Banca Popolare di Milano, 1987; AA.VV., *Viaggiatori del Grand Tour in Italia*, Milano, T.C.I., 1987. Rimane fondamentale il repertorio bibliografico di Richard Sidney Pine-Coffin, *Bibliography of British and American Travel in Italy to 1860*, Firenze, Olschki, 1974. Si veda anche: Fiammetta Olschki, a cura di, *Viaggi in Europa, sc. XVI – XIX*, Firenze, Olschki, 1990.
2. cfr. Mary Wortley Montague, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague*, 3 voll., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1965 – 67, III, p. 159.

3. cfr. Samuel Sharp, *Letters from Italy, describing the Customs and Manners of that Country in the Years 1765 and 1766. To which is annexed an Admonition to Gentlemen who pass the Alps in their Tour through Italy,* London 1766, p. 171. L'opera ebbe un immediato successo con tre edizioni nel giro di un anno

4. cfr. Tobias Smollett, *Travels through France and Italy,* (1766), Oxford 1981, p. 241.

5. Sia Horace Walpole che Edward Gibbon parlano, rispettivamente nel '63 e nell'85 di circa quarantamila inglesi (tra padroni e servi) in viaggio sul continente; ma già Lady Montague nel giugno del '40 esprimeva un fastidio tutto aristocratico per i troppi connazionali presenti a Venezia, 'petit-maitres and fine ladies...who torment me as the frogs and lice did the palace of Pharaoh', cfr. Montague, *Letters,* I. p. 196.

6. cfr. Pine-Coffin, *Bibliography* cit., e F. Olschki, *Viaggi* cit.

7. cfr. Andrew M. Canepa, 'From degenerate Scoundrel to Noble Savage: The Italian Stereotype in 18th Century British Travel Literature', *'English Miscellany'* 22, 1971, pp. 107 – 146 e le introduzioni ai repertori citati n. 6.

8. Ricordiamo The Italian Opera House in Haymarket a Londra, alla cui direzione partecipò Giuseppe Baretti, negli anni successivi al suo arrivo a Londra nel 1751. cfr. W.J. Lawrence, 'The Drama and the Theatre', in *Johnson's England,* ed. by A.S. Turberville, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1952, pp. 160 – 189. Si veda anche Luciano Alberti, 'Teatro', in *La Musica* a cura di Alberto Basso, UTET, Torino, 1966, vol. IV, pp. 585 – 618, dove viene tra l'altro sottolineata l'importanza assunta dal libretto nel settecento, come intensificata espressione drammatica.

9. cfr. Francis Bacon, 'Of Travel', in *The Essays of Wisdom,* London 1635, p. 71.

10. cfr. Frank Brandy and Federick Pottle, a cura di, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica and France,* 1765 – 1766, London 1955, Introd, p. xiii.

11. cfr. *Boswell on the Grand Tour* cit., p. 24.

12. cfr. *Boswell on the Grand Tour* cit., p. 40; Si tratta dell'opera *Montezuma* da lui registrata con il sottotitolato *The Conquest of Mexico* di Francesco di Majo: per l'opera precedente potrebbe trattarsi della *Olimpiade* di Johann Adolph Hasse, detto il Sassone.

13. cfr. *Boswell on the Grand Tour* cit., p. 47.

14. cfr. Tinker Ch. Brewster, a cura di, *Letters of James Boswell,* Oxford 1924, pp. 177; 184; 189.

15. cfr. Frederick A. Pottle, *James Boswell, The Earlier Years 1740 – 1769,* London 1966, pp. 229 – 230.

16. Riferendosi al comportamento dei giovani connazionali, Lady Montague ritiene che giustamente 'since the birth of the Italian drama, Goldoni has adorned his scenes with gli Milordi Inglesi (*sic*), in the same manner as Molière represented his Parisian Marquises' (Montague, *Letters,* III, 159).

17. *Boswell on the Grand Tour* cit., p. 254.

18. Pubblicato integralmente solo nel 1961, cfr. Georges A. Bonnard, a cura di, *Gibbon's Journey from Geneva to Rome,* London 1961.

19. William Guise figlio di Sir John Guise di Elmore Court, Gloucestershire, coetano di Gibbon; i due giovani si conobbero e divennero amici a Losanna nell'ottobre 1762. Anche Guise tenne un diario conservato negli archivi di Elmore Court.

20. cfr. *Gibbon's Journey*, pp. 16; 18; 32; 59; 96 – 97; 104; 223.
21. cfr. *Gibbon's Journey*, pp. 161 – 162; 223. Le descrizioni sono relative al teatro di Firenze; le opere sono *Il mercato di Malmantile*, musica di Giuseppe Scarlatti; *Siroé*, testo di Metastasio.
22. cfr. Lawrence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through Italy and France*, (1768), Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 50 – 52. A Roma presso il Pantheon, e a Torino egli incontra Smollett: 'The learned Smellfungus travelled from Boulogne to Paris, from Paris to Rome – and so on – but he set out with the spleen and jaundice, and every object he passed by was discoloured or distorted'. Per Sharp leggiamo: 'Mundungus with an immense fortune made the whole tour...without any generous connection or pleasurable anedocte to tell of; but he had travelled straight on looking neither to his right hand or his left, lest Love or pity should seduce him out of his road'.
23. cfr. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, (1791), Oxford 1969, p. 742.
24. Smollett, *Travels* cit., p. 33, la citazione del Goldoni è dalla commedia *La Buona Moglie* 1749, I, iii; per il giudizio sulle donne cfr, p. 222.
25. Samuel Sharp nacque intorno all'anno 1700 in Giamaica. Diventò famoso chirurgo, con molte pubblicazioni scientifiche. Nell'aprile del 1749 divenne membro della Royal Society. Ritiratosi dalla professione per motivi di salute – soffriva di asma – partì nel 1765 per un viaggio sul continente che lo portò in Italia. Al suo ritorno pubblicò le *Letters from Italy* cit., cui seguì, dopo la reazione del Baretti, un opuscolo difensivo di una ottantina di pagine, *A view of the Customs, Manners, Drama etc., of Italy, as they are described in the 'Frusta Letteraria'*, London, W. Nicoll, 1768. Le citazioni dal testo dello Sharp in questo studio sono dalla terza edizione, Londra 1767; vengono indicati progressivamente il numero della lettera e la pagina del testo. Le *Letters* ebbero anche una parziale traduzione italiana, limitata al soggiorno napoletano; cfr. S. Sharp, *Lettere dell'Italia* (1765 – 1766), a cura di Salvatore di Giacomo, Lanciano Carabba editore, 1911.
26. cfr. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* cit., p. 755.
27. Sharp riferisce che Voltaire ha arricchito la sua casa a Vevey con un teatro troppo piccolo, solo 50 persone, che è perciò in corso di ampliamento. Presso Voltaire si trova al momento Mlle de Clairon, della cui recitazione egli si mostra entusiasta: solitamente si deve accontentare di compagnie ambulanti di passaggio. Sharp si rammarica di non essere giunto la sera precedente per poter assistere alla recitazione. Passa quindi alla riflessione sui rapporti poco felici tra Voltaire e Shakespeare, accusando velatamente il primo di aver commesso una imprudenza nel pubblicare le sue traduzioni del drammaturgo inglese (i, 3 – 5).
28. Il teatro *San Carlo* di Napoli fu aperto nel novembre 1738, suscitò l'ammirazione di tutti i viaggiatori stranieri, per la sua grandiosità. Fra gli inglesi si vedano Gibbon, Garrick, Sterne, Beckford, Lady Mary Montague e molti altri.
29. cfr. Ben Jonson, *The Staple News*, (1626), *The Prologue;* e Peter Holland, *The Eyes have it, Shakespeare's Audience and attendant Lords*, TLS, May 7, 1993, pp. 3 – 4.
30. Per notizie più esaurienti su questo ed altri teatri napoletani, nonchè su attori e compagnie si veda Vittorio Viviani, *Storia del teatro napoletano*, Napoli Guida,

1969; lo studioso cita dal testo dello Sharp la testimonianza sulla *Cantina* (pp. 401 - 402), a conferma delle reali condizioni del teatro napoletano in quegli anni.
31. Per analoghe rimostranze si veda Pine-Coffin, *Bibliography* cit., Introduction, pp. 40 - 42.
32. Lo stesso Baretti deve ammettere che a Venezia (e secondo lui solo in questa città), l'ordine pubblico a teatro non è rispettato: i nobili hanno l'usanza di sputare dai palchetti nella platea, in segno di disprezzo verso il popolo, che peraltro tollera con molta pazienza questo insulto (*An Account,* p. 60 - 61). Una conferma indiretta dunque delle pessime maniere degli italiani di qualsiasi ceto in pubblico, e quindi giustificazione della insofferenza del viaggiatore inglese medio, che non usufruisce della posizione privilegiata nel palco.
33. cfr. Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: desire and trangression in European travel writings,* Princeton 1991, pp. 25 - 68.
34. Si trattava dell'attore comico Francesco Massaro, che creò la maschera di Don Fastidio per le commedie di Francesco Cerlone, cfr. Vittorio Viviani, *Storia.*, pp. 393; 399; 400; 402; 416. È probabilmente la stessa maschera citata da Garrick, cfr. *The Letters of David Garrick,* ed. D.M. Little and G.M. Kahrl, Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press, 1963, vol. I, p. 395. Garrick fu a Napoli dal dicembre 1763 al febbraio 1764.
35. cfr. Lawrence Sterne, *Letters of L. Sterne,* ed. L.P. Curtis, Oxford, 1935, pp. 269 - 270. Sterne fu a Napoli nel febbraio 1766.
36. cfr. Giuseppe Baretti, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy; with Observations on the Mistakes of some Travellers, with Regards to that Country with Notes and an Appendix added in Answer to Samuel Sharp,* London T. Davies, Covent Garden, the Second Edition, 1769. Alla prima ed. 1768, il Baretti aggiunse l'*Appendix*, nella quale controbatte punto per punto la risposta che lo Sharp aveva elaborato alla prima edizione del Baretti; Sharp citava i passi della *Frusta Letteraria* che potevano giustificare certe sue accuse agli italiani o critiche all'Italia, vedi n. 25. L'opera del Baretti ebbe un immediato successo anche fuori dall'Inghilterra con una trad. francese nel 1773, e tedesca nel 1781. La traduzione italiana imperfetta e lacunosa è del 1818 a cura di Girolamo Pozzoli.
37. Boswell, *The Life of Johnson,* cit., p. 394.
38. cfr. Baretti, *An Account* cit., p. 160, riferendosi al Goldoni scrive: 'He is the author of these stupendous burlettas, The Two Buona Figliola's'. Si tratta di *La Buona Figliuola* (1766), e *La Buona Figliuola Maritata* (1767). Si veda anche A. Nicoll, *A History of English Drama,* 1660 - 1900, Cambridge University Press, 1955, vol. III 1750 - 1800, pp. 351 - 352.
39. cfr. Baretti, *An Account* cit., capitoli X, XI, XII, pp. 145 - 190.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows*, Arthur Hugh Clough's *Amours de Voyage*, and the Italian National Uprisings of 1847-9

JOE PHELAN

Throughout the 1840s, the Italians were a people in search of a myth of national liberation. There was no shortage of candidates for this role; this decade was, in the words of Derek Beales, 'the great age of Risorgimento writing',[1] with thinkers and propagandists as diverse as Mazzini, D'Azeglio and Gioberti outlining their respective visions of the shape which any future Italian nation state ought to assume. The election of Pio Nono to the Papal throne in June 1846 led, however, to the clear ascendancy of one of these myths; namely, the Neo-Guelphism of Tommaseo and Gioberti, which saw in the Pope the potential saviour and liberator of Italy. This was the period of what the historian Ghisalberti calls the *'idillio italico-papale'*;[2] the Italian people, encouraged by the liberal acts with which Pio Nono inaugurated his reign, projected onto him their desires for a free and united country. This 'idyll' was, however, brought to an abrupt end by the Pope's actions during the conflicts of 1848-9, beginning with the famous 'Allocution', by means of which he distanced himself from the conflict with Austria, and culminating in the restoration of his temporal power with the aid of foreign arms. Faced with such incontrovertible evidence, the Italian people abandoned Neo-Guelphism and resumed its search for a myth of national liberation in other directions; as Ghisalberti, again, puts it, 'il popolo, costretto a rinunciare alla troppo seducente identificazione di Pio Nono con il Papa della Lega Lombarda...cominciò a abbandonare il suo idolo, in cerca di nuovi illusioni e di nuovi miti'.[3]

It is in the context of this search for new myths and new illusions that I want to look at Barrett Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows* and Clough's *Amours de Voyage*. In her poem, which reflects on events in Florence during the years in question, Barrett Browning

stresses the crucial part played by such myths in prompting and guiding the struggle for liberty. She expresses considerable scepticism towards Neo-Guelphism, which she sees as an inherently self-contradictory ideology, and enthusiastically participates in the attempt to replace it with a new and more durable myth of national liberation. *Casa Guidi Windows* is, in this sense, both an accurate reflection of the ideological transformation wrought by the events of 1847-9, and a testimony to the depth of the poet's identification with the Italian cause. Clough's poem, in contrast, is altogether more complex and oblique in its treatment of the subject. It is a fictional love story set against the backdrop of the defence of the Roman Republic, an event of crucial significance in the transformation of Mazzinianism from an obscure and mystical minority faith into one of the central stands in the national ideology. Claude, the poem's hero, does not, however, participate in or endorse the creation of this new national myth. What he gives us instead is a lucid and detached account of its formation. His letters of reportage enable us to see the way in which the untidy events of real life are assumed into the resonant language of Mazzinian martyrology, in a way which forces us to question both the value and the morality of this gesture. Both poets, that is to say, are profoundly aware of the power of myths and images to influence human behaviour; but while Barrett Browning promotes the replacement of one myth with another, Clough exposes the process of myth-formation, and its consequences, to view.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her husband Robert went to live in Italy immediately after their clandestine marriage in 1846, an event that has itself been the subject of a good deal of mythologising, not least by the poets themselves.[4] After a brief spell in Pisa the couple settled at the Casa Guidi in Florence; and it was from here that Elizabeth, still a semi-invalid after years of confinement in England, watched the events commemorated in *Casa Guidi Windows*. Florence was at this time capital of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, an Austrian dependency ruled by the Hapsburg Archduke Leopold II and something of a liberal oasis in the largely repressive Italian peninsula. Leopold seems at first to have been fairly responsive to the wave of reform agitation which followed the election of Pio Nono, granting a free press in May 1847, and in September of the same year – 'not quite of course', as the poet

nudgingly puts it (I 458)[5] – allowing the formation of that indispensable revolutionary appendage, a civic guard. The parade held to celebrate this latter concession is commemorated in the first part of *Casa Guidi Windows*.

Before going on to look at the poem itself in more detail, it is necessary at this point to outline the circumstances of its composition. The first part, originally entitled 'A Meditation in Tuscany', was completed in the winter of 1847-8; that is to say, at the high-water mark of the Neo-Guelphist fervour, when peaceful progress towards Italian unity seemed possible. This was sent to Blackwood's Magazine in England for publication, but had been overtaken by events before it could reach the presses.[6] The second part, in contrast, was written nearly three years later than the first, when the failure of the nationalist uprisings, and the apostasy of those, especially Archduke Leopold, in whom the poet had placed her faith, had become apparent. The poem published in 1851 as *Casa Guidi Windows* is, then, made up of two distinct parts, almost two separate poems, divided from one another by a considerable length of time; and it is this fact which makes it such a valuable record of the transformation wrought in the nationalist consciousness by the events of 1847-9.[7]

Barrett Browning's awareness of and interest in the power of myths and images to influence events is apparent from the very start of the poem. She begins the first part by reviewing the images of Italy inherited from the literary tradition and lodged in the national psyche. Italy has, she argues, been consistently represented as a woman betrayed and destroyed by her own beauty:

> I thought how Filicaja led on others,
> Bewailers for their Italy enchained,
> And how they called her childless among mothers,
> Widow of empires, ay, and scarce refrained
> Cursing her beauty to her face, as brothers
> Might a shamed sister's, – 'Had she been less fair
> She were less wretched'(.) (I 20 – 26)[8]

This representation of Italy as a beautiful but wronged victim of history is, in the poet's opinion, damaging in a number of ways. It signifies (within the cultural context of the time) the country's view of itself as passive and dependent, doomed to remain at the mercy of 'the earth's male-lands';[9] it encourages a national fixation

on the glories of the past which precludes the possibility of emulating them in the present; and it prevents the Italian people from perceiving the reality of their situation by enclosing misery and poverty in a 'personating Image' of beauty. The spurious 'tomb' of Juliet exhibited to credulous tourists at Verona is, for the poet, an emblem of all that is wrong with Italy's image of itself:

> (Behold)...
> Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough:
> As void as that is, are all images
> Men set between themselves and actual wrong,
> To catch the weight of pity, meet the stress
> Of conscience, – since' tis easier to gaze long
> On mournful masks and sad effigies
> Than on real, live, weak creatures crushed by strong.
>
> (I 41 – 48)[10]

The first step in the regeneration of Italy is, then, the destruction of these images: 'Of such songs enough', the poet exclaims, 'Too many of such complaints!' (I 40 – 41) Only by clearing away the 'mournful masks and sad effigies' can the Italian people by roused from its torpor and brought face to face with the reality of its predicament. But such iconoclasm is not, in itself, enough. It must, the poet argues, be followed by the construction of a new set of images and beliefs capable of bringing the Italian people into fruitful connection with the glories of their past and inspiring them to purposeful action.

It is this search for a new set of images and beliefs – for a new myth to replace the harmful lament *'Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!'* (I 168) – which Barrett Browning undertakes in the main body of the poem. The principal candidate for this role in the first part of the poem is, of course, Neo-Guelphism. In the Preface to her poem Barrett Browning claims to have escaped what she calls 'the epidemic 'falling sickness' of enthusiasm for Pio Nono' which afflicted Italy during 1847 and the early part of 1848; and her scepticism towards the idea of the Pope-liberator is obvious to any attentive reader of the first part of the poem. This scepticism is, at first sight, somewhat surprising. Barrett Browning is instinctively drawn to the Carlylean idea of a great man or 'sovran teacher' (I 766) who will mould the Italian people into a nation – it is this which leads her to place her trust in the Archduke Leopold, and,

a decade later, to idolise Napoleon III as the liberator of Italy – but in the first part of *Casa Guidi Windows* she quite clearly argues that Pio Nono cannot be this man. Her argument serves as a useful reminder of the prism, or perhaps I should say the distorting mirror, of religious antipathy by means of which most nineteenth-century English observers regarded Italy. The Roman Catholic Church is, in Barrett Browning's eyes, an organisation which must resent 'each man's particular conscience' as a challenge to its authority, and therefore 'repress/Inquiry, meditation, argument,/As tyrants faction' (I 996 – 8). But individual conscience and the right of private judgment are, for the poet, necessary preconditions of political freedom: 'A bondman shivering at a Jesuit's foot', as she puts it, is 'not like to stand/A freedman at a despot's, and dispute/His titles by the balance in his hand,/Weighing them 'suo jure'' (I 788 – 92). The spiritual emancipation of the individual must precede the achievement of political freedom. What Italy needs, then, is a Reformation; or, to take the word from her own dissenting tradition which Barrett Browning uses in the poem, a 'covenant', to protect liberties of thought and conscience from ecclesiastical encroachment:

> Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
> Not popular passion, to arise and crush,
> But popular conscience, which may covenant
> For what it knows. (I 741 – 4)[11]

It is self-evidently absurd to expect the Pope to lead such a movement, and Barrett Browning says as much in the poem; a Pope who worked for the destruction of his own authority in this way 'were a Pope in jeopardy,/Or no Pope rather' (I 1024 – 5). Drawing on the traditional Protestant charge of idolatry, the poet asks:

> Were it good
> For any pope on earth to be a flinger
> Of stones against these high-niched counterfeits?
> Apostates only are iconoclasts.
> He dares not say, while this false thing abets
> That true thing, 'This is false'. (I 1014 – 19)

Were the Pope to take the first step towards emancipation by liberating the Italian people from the superstition and error of the Catholic system – by 'flinging stones' against the 'high-niched

counterfeits' or idols which help to maintain his authority – he would, by this very act, transform himself into an 'apostate', a heretic, and so cease to be Pope. The 'Pope-liberator' of Neo-Guelphist mythology is a contradiction in terms.

Given these crucial reservations about the plausibility of Neo-Guelphism as a doctrine, it is not surprising to find that Barrett Browning should have viewed its demise in the wake of the events of 1848-9 with comparative equanimity. In the second part of the poem she does not, indeed, always resist the temptation to gloat – in spite of her disclaimer that her words are 'guiltless of the bigot's sense' (I 942) – and indulges in some fairly hair-raising anti-Catholic rhetoric. But her task in the second part of the poem is not simply that of emphasising the justice of her original misgivings about Neo-Guelphism, nor indeed that of expiating the folly of her misplaced faith in Archduke Leopold. It is also to continue the search for a new national myth, one which can, unlike Neo-Guelphism, serve as a realistic basis for practical action. Barrett Browning's fear is that the defeats of 1848-9 might tempt the Italian people to retreat to the sterile and self-defeating images of Italy criticised at the start of the poem; and the temptation to do so can be seen in the work of patriotic artists like Francesco Hayez, whose picture 'La Meditazione', produced in the wake of these defeats, depicts Italy as a woman stunned and traumatised by a dreadful but unseen ordeal.[12] A retreat to such images would, the poet suggests, postpone indefinitely the day of national liberation, which requires for its accomplishment a clear, positive, and above all forward-looking mythology. 'Men who might/Do greatly in a universe that breaks/And burns,' she writes, 'must ever *know* before they do'; their sacrifice must be 'offered for and to/Something conceived of' (II 194...8). It was the absence of such a clearly-defined aim which caused the failure of the uprisings of 1847-9. The destruction of Neo-Guelphism is, then, one phase in the necessary process of disillusionment, the elimination of harmful and illusory forms of national consciousness; but it must be succeeded by renewed efforts to find a truer and more productive form of belief.

It is, I think, true in very general terms to say that two main candidates for the role of myth of national liberation emerged from the defeats of 1848-9: Mazzinianism on the one hand, and the idea that Victor Emmanuel, the new King of Piedmont, might become

the champion of the national cause on the other. The first of these had gained enormous prestige from the heroic defence of the Roman Republic, about which I will say more below when I move on to the discussion of Clough's poem; the second was a transformation almost as remarkable as that of Pio Nono into Pope-liberator. Before 1848 Piedmont had been among the most reactionary of Italian regimes, and it is quite possible that it entered the lists during the year of revolutions with little thought other than that of dynastic expansion.[13] But when Charles Albert found himself the vehicle for national aspirations, as an Italian king fighting the occupying Austrians, he seems to have begun to play up to the role. Mazzini called him 'Hamletish';[14] and there was certainly something theatrical about his repeated and unsuccessful attempts to get himself killed at the battle of Novara.

Barrett Browning considers both these candidates in the second part of *Casa Guidi Windows*. It might, at first glance, be thought that she would incline towards Mazzinianism. Her husband Robert was personally acquainted with the revolutionary leader, and strongly sympathised with his ideas;[15] and there are obvious points of contact between Barrett Browning's insistence on the need for an Italian Reformation and Mazzini's idea of a 'terza Roma', a new faith emanating from a regenerated Rome. Indeed, Mazzini's language, with its talk of redeeming Italy through the sacrifice of its children, often looks like a direct translation of the central Protestant doctrine of the atonement into the political sphere; and it is not surprising to find that his ideas elicited a good deal of sympathy in Dissenting circles in England.[16] In spite of this similarity of outlook, however, Barrett Browning makes it clear in the second part of the poem that she cannot endorse the Mazzinian programme. She praises his work in helping to destroy the 'clay idol' of Pio Nono – 'record that gain, Mazzini!' (II 526) – but goes on to remind him of his people's 'faults':

> ...the want
> Of soul-conviction...aims dispersed,
> And incoherent means, and valour scant
> Because of scanty faith, and schisms accursed
> That wrench these brother-hearts from covenant
> With freedom and each other.
>
> (II 527 – 532)

The historical accuracy or otherwise of these remarks – and it might, in passing, be noted that it seems harsh to accuse the defenders of the Roman Republic of 'valour scant' – is less important than the language in which they are expressed. The underlying metaphor, as so often with Barrett Browning, is ecclesiastical; she sees Mazzinianism as a divisive ideology, one which causes 'schism' in the national movement and, most importantly, wrenches 'brother-hearts' from 'covenant' with one another. Mazzini holds out for doctrinal purity when he should, like the Scottish Covenanters, be willing to bury individual differences in the all-important pursuit of liberty.

These strictures on Mazzini are motivated by Barrett Browning's desire to see a broadly-based national movement, free of ideological differences and devoted to the one aim of liberating Italy from foreign domination. Mazzini, with his insistence that the future Italian state must be unitary and republican, is an 'extreme theorist', and so likely to 'stand apart' from this movement (II 573, 568). Victor Emmanuel, on the other hand, has the advantage (from the poet's point of view) of being unencumbered with ideological baggage; and it is this, as much as any considerations of *realpolitik*, which leads the poet to place her faith in him. The King of Piedmont becomes, in the second part of the poem, the principal beneficiary of the demise of Neo-Guelphism, and the focus of the poet's continuing aspirations towards national unity.

The promotion of this broadly-based national movement allows the poet to present herself as the true friend of Italy, soaring disinterestedly above parties and factions. It also helps her to recuperate the apparently pointless deaths of those engaged in the struggles of 1848-9 as 'sacrifices' to the national cause. Most of the uprisings of these years were concerned with local matters, with reform and with 'concessions' from autocratic governments; the dream of a united Italy seemed, to all but a few, a remote possibility. This was especially true in Florence, where, to Barrett Browning's disgust, the people seemed bereft of all consistency and purpose.[17] But the very nebulousness of the aims of these uprisings helped, in the poet's opinion, to sow the seeds of future victory. Had the participants in them been fighting in a particular cause, then their deaths would have been inalienably linked to that cause; but the victims of such a disparate and diversely-motivated

set of struggles could not be appropriated in this way; and so their 'sacrifice' could legitimately be offered to the highest common denominator, 'Italia':

> In the name of Italy,
> Meantime, her patriot Dead have benison...
> These Dead be seeds of life, and shall encumber
> The sad heart of the land until it loose
> The clammy clods and let out the Spring-growth
> In beatific green through every bruise.
>
> (II 656..66)

The deaths of those killed during the failed national uprisings will, the poet assures us, be retrospectively transformed into martyrdom by the eventual triumph of the cause to which they, largely unwittingly, gave their lives.

Arthur Hugh Clough was a young English poet and university lecturer who happened to find himself in Rome during the entire period of the defence of the Roman Republic. Perhaps 'happened to find himself' is not quite the right phrase; Clough had visited revolutionary Paris the previous year, in company with Ralph Waldo Emerson, to behold the 'New Jerusalem' at first hand, and was intensely interested in the fall-out from the events of 1848.[18] In fact, one of his first actions on arriving in Rome was to arrange an interview with Giuseppe Mazzini, officially one of the three 'Triumvirs' in charge of the Republic but universally acknowledged as its leader and guiding light. Clough's record of this interview is, I think, a remarkable historical document, and one which provides us with an important insight into the significance of the representation of the defence of the Roman Republic in *Amours de Voyage.*[19] He reports that he had to 'acknowledge the truimviral dignity' by waiting an hour in the ante-chamber while Mazzini received 'a French envoy or agent'. This envoy, Mazzini later revealed to Clough, had invited the Roman Republic to apply to France for 'protection' from its enemies, an invitation which he politely declined. It was Mazzini's refusal of this offer which led, just three days later, to the arrival of an expeditionary force under General Oudinot at Civita Vecchia, and thence to the whole drama of the defence of the Roman Republic; so Clough could scarcely have chosen a more crucial moment for his visit. He nevertheless found Mazzini 'in excellent spirits, and generally confident and at ease':

He asked me if I had seen anything of the pillaging, which the English papers were acquainted with; he said that any of the English residents would bear witness to the perfect tranquillity, even greater than before, which prevailed in the city (and certainly I see nothing to the contrary).

The 'Times', he said, *must* be dishonest, for the things it spoke of as facts were simply not facts! émeutes where émeutes had never been thought of; the only outbreak had been at Ascoli, near the Neapolitan frontier, where a sort of brigandage had been headed by two or three priests, but easily suppressed. In Rome there were plots going on amongst some of the nobles and priests, but they were known to the government. The temper of the people and the Assembly alike was clearly against the restoration of the temporal power; on that point he believed the Right would go heartily with the Left in the Assembly, and the people be unanimous. The object at present was rather to repress violence against the priest-party, or Neri, to which some sections of the populace were inclined; but this the government was careful to do. The feeling everywhere is, he says, simply political or national. Communism and Socialism are things undreamt of. Social changes are not needed; there are no manufacturing masses, and in the lands there is a metayer system. You have heard perhaps that they are going to divide church lands among peasants; this is true, but only for a portion, a surplus he called it, after provision is made for the carrying on of the services of each establishment. They have got about 22000 troops, and mean to have 50000, so as to be able to take the field, at any rate not in mere desperation. But he expects foreign intervention in the end, and of course thinks it likely enough that the Romana Reppublica (sic) will fall. Still he is convinced that the separation of the temporal and spiritual power is a thing to be, and that to restore the Pope as before will merely breed perpetual disquiet, conspiracies, assassinations, &c; and he thinks it possible the Great Powers may perceive this in time.

The most important section of this for my present purposes deals with the arrangements for the defence of the Republic. After outlining the forces available for this enterprise, Mazzini admits that he 'expects foreign intervention', and 'thinks it likely enough' that the Roman Republic will fall to its enemies. This is a startling admission, coming as it does just a few minutes after the refusal of an offer of help from the very foreign power which eventually invaded and defeated the Republic. Mazzini seems willing to embark on the defence of the Republic without any genuine expectation of success.

Thanks to his conversation with Mazzini Clough was, then, aware from the outset that the apparently heroic struggle for Rome was almost certainly doomed to failure; and this awareness must, I think, have played a part in determining the strikingly sceptical point of

view adopted towards the events in question in *Amours de Voyage*, the fictional and poetic product of his experiences in Rome. Mazzini's aim in defending Rome was, as he later admitted, largely rhetorical; he wanted to offer a '*morituri te salutant*' from Rome to the rest of Italy as a way of giving substance to his claim that the city could recover something of its antique virtue.[20] Claude, the hero of Clough's poem, recognises this strategy, but refuses to endorse it. Instead, he provides a meticulous analysis of the way in which the events he witnesses are subsumed into the language of sacrifice, redemption and victory, an analysis which calls into question both the value and the morality of this process.

Amours de Voyage consists of a series of letters written by various correspondents, interspersed with quasi-editorial 'elegiacs' which shift the poem into a more recognisably lyrical register. The overwhelming majority of the letters are written by Claude; but some are written by two of the other characters, and the existence of these letters helps to throw Claude's characteristics into sharper relief. Throughout the poem, Claude demonstrates a keen awareness of the power of rumour and myth, and a determination not to be responsible for the promulgation of rumours and myths as historical facts. These traits are particularly apparent in II vii, a letter dealing with the question of the Roman 'Terror'. In his conversation with Clough, Mazzini, as we have seen, expressed concerns about the misrepresentations of the English press; and such misrepresentations were, he felt, particularly prevalent in the case of the 'Terror', the supposed victimisation of the clerical party by the revolutionary government. Claude's letter deals with one of the incidents which generated this myth of a 'Terror'. Returning home from his sightseeing one evening, he sees an angry mob, 'swords in the air', and the legs of a body, and is informed by a 'mercantile-seeming bystander' that the victim is a priest caught attempting to flee to the Neapolitans (II 181, 189).[21] The obvious inference to be drawn from all this is that Claude has seen the murder of a priest; but he refuses to supplement his own personal experience with mere hearsay, and limits himself to the bald and unimpeachably factual statement: 'A man was killed, I am told, and I saw something' (II 166). This scrupulous determination to resist the power of rumour is highlighted by contrast with the uncritical willingness to believe apparent in the letters of one of the other

characters, Georgina Trevellyn. 'Only think, dearest Louisa, what terrible scenes we have witnessed', she begins, before going on to retail some lavishly embroidered rumours which she has 'heard...from an Italian' (II 217,225). Claude's stance also contrasts with the lurid accounts of the 'Terror' given in some of the histories of this period.[22] His letter, then, signals a determination to resist the rumours and myths which threaten to take the place of, or give spurious coherence to, historical facts.

This resistance works (as it were) in Mazzini's favour as far as the question of the 'Terror' is concerned; but Claude demonstrates a similar reluctance to subscribe to the officially sanctioned myths of Roman heroism and self-sacrifice. His account of the battle of the thirtieth of April, the first engagement between the invading French troops and Garibaldi's irregulars, exhibits a scrupulous, even obsessive fidelity to the minutiae of personal experience. The conflict reduces itself for him to puffs of smoke glimpsed in the distance, small-arms fire, and conflicting rumours sweeping through the small foreign community (II v). This style of reporting emphasises the discrepancy between the small-scale, untidy and ambiguous events which Claude witnesses, and the hyperbolical language of victory into which these events are subsequently assumed:

> Victory! Victory! – Yes! ah, yes, thou republican Zion,
> Truly the kings of the earth are gathered and gone by together;
> Doubtless they marvelled to witness such things, were astonished, and so forth.
> Victory! Victory! Victory! – Ah, but it is, believe me,
> Easier, easier far, to intone the chant of the martyr
> Than to indite any paean of any victory. Death may
> Sometimes be noble; but life, at the best, will appear an illusion.
> While the great pain is upon us, it is great; when it is over,
> Why, it is over. The smoke of the sacrifice rises to heaven,
> Of a sweet savour, no doubt, to Somebody; but on the altar,
> Lo,there is nothing remaining but ashes and dirt and ill odour.
>
> (II 145 – 55)

The victory has, Claude suggests, been exaggerated for propaganda purposes – hence the quotation from the Psalms about 'the kings of the earth' being astonished by the feats of the 'republican Zion'[23] – and he goes on to question the value of the sacrifice exacted. The deity to whom the sacrifice has been offered

might perceive the benefit of it, but to mere mortal observers all that is visible is 'ashes and dirt and ill odour'. The deity in question is, of course, the future Italian nation, the advent of which these oblations are supposed to help bring about.[24] But Claude's point is that this idea of an Italian nation might be a false deity, an illusion; and this perception leads him to question the legitimacy or otherwise of offering sacrifices to 'the mere possible shadow of Deity' (II 92).

The trope of martyrdom is subjected to similar scrutiny. In his writings Mazzini repeatedly compares himself and his followers to the Christians of the early church, suffering martyrdom and persecution for the true faith: 'Noi siamo...non trionfatori ma combattenti, esercito tendente a conquista, Chiesa militante per una impresa da compiersi'.[25] This would, of course, have been a peculiarly resonant image in Rome, the site of several centuries of Christian martyrdom. In one of his bitterest outbursts, Claude ironically embraces the analogy:

> ...pray let 'em fight, and be killed. I delight in devotion.
> So that I 'list not, hurrah for the glorious army of martyrs!
> *Sanguis martyrum semen Ecclesiae* ; though it would seem this
> Church is indeed of the purely Invisible, Kingdom – Come kind:
> Militant here on earth! Triumphant, of course, then, elsewhere!
>
> (III 73 – 77)

Tertullian's maxim '*sanguis martyrum semen ecclesiae*' is one which both Mazzini and Barrett Browning take literally; at the end of her poem Barrett Browning, as we have seen, argues that Italy's dead are 'seeds of life' who will be justified in the eventual flowering of the Italian nation. Claude, in contrast, does not have the same degree of faith; the 'purely Invisible, Kingdom – Come' church of these martyrs might, he suggests, be a mirage.

Just as Claude's account of the 'murder' of the priest resists the mythology of the 'Terror', then, so his first-hand reports from the besieged city militate against the possibility of mythologising the defence of the Republic. On the one hand, they highlight the awkwardness of the conjunction between the battle itself, with all its ambiguity and untidiness, and the glamorous language of the Mazzinian project; on the other, they undermine that language itself by suggesting that it might be both fraudulent and immoral. Claude's misgivings are articulated once again, this time in a more elegiac

mode, towards the end of the poem when he asks: 'Whither depart the souls of the brave that die in the battle,/Die in the lost, lost fight, *for the cause that perishes with them* ?' (V 118 – 9; my italics) This last phrase is, I think, the key to the attitude adopted by Claude towards the defence of the Roman Republic. For him, the inevitable defeat of the Republic signifies the death of the dreams of a redeemed Rome and a revived Italy, confirmation that these ideals were simply illusions. Far from being the founding moment of a new and eventually triumphant myth of Italian nationhood – as Mazzini hoped – the battles fought on behalf of the doomed Republic are a tragic, and perhaps even immoral, waste of human life in a futile cause. Mazzini's '*morituri te salutant*' is a gesture which costs the lives of a number of his fellow citizens, who go to their deaths believing in the reality of a cause their masters know to be hopeless. In *Amours*, in short, the defeat of the Roman Republic is treated as the final stage in the disillusionment of the Italian people; instead of running off in search of 'new myths and new illusions', they should, it is suggested, learn to accept the present order of things as natural and inevitable.

It would, of course, be over-simplistic to identify Claude's opinions with the poet's. Clough is a notoriously difficult poet to pin down to specific opinions; he is always ready to see both sides of any given question; and there are plenty of indications in *Amours* that we are, at least in part, supposed to regard Claude's attitude to the defence of the Republic as an expression of his own temperamental weaknesses rather than as a definitive verdict. The most we can say about Claude, then, is that he summarises one aspect of the poet's response to the events of 1848-9. Nevertheless, Clough's ability to adopt this highly sceptical point of view, and, to a certain extent, to identify with it, is, I think, highly significant. I have already suggested that this ability might derive from his prior knowledge of the hopelessness of the struggle; but it also, I would argue, has something to do with his greater involvement in and knowledge of the Europe-wide events of 1848-9. Barrett Browning's was a purely Italian perspective; it was, therefore, possible for her to view the defeats of these years as temporary setbacks in a process with its own internal dynamic. Clough, on the other hand, could see the defeat of the Roman Republic as final confirmation of the apostasy of the revolutionaries of 1848. Having

rushed to Paris just one year earlier to witness the dawn of the Millennium, he now found himself compelled to watch the revolutionaries of the previous year crush the infant Roman Republic and restore the temporal power of the Pope. Under these circumstances it is easy to imagine how he might have been tempted to see the entire revolutionary interlude as a pointless and childish attempt to interrupt a social and political order as fixed and immutable, to borrow the metaphor with which Claude closes the poem, as the revolution of the earth upon its axis.[26]

Notes

1. Derek Beales, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy,* London and New York: Longman, 1971; rpt. 1981, p 54.
2. Alberto M. Ghisalberti, *Roma da Mazzini a Pio IX* Milano: Dott. A. Giuffre, 1958, p 13.
3. Ghisalberti, op. cit., p 16.
4. See esp. Daniel Karlin, *The Courtship of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett* OUP, 1985.
5. All quotations from *Casa Guidi Windows* are taken from Julia Markus ed., *Casa Guidi Windows* New York: The Browning Institute, 1977.
6. Blackwood also seems to have had doubts about the intelligibility of the poem, calling it, according to the poet in a letter to Arabella Moulton-Barrett, 'a 'Grand poem' but past all human understanding', and asking her to add explicatory footnotes to some of the more obscure passages; see Markus, *Casa Guidi Windows*, p xxxvi.
7. Although the text sent by Barrett Browning to Blackwood has not been located, there is good evidence that the poet made very few changes in converting her 'Meditation in Tuscany' into Part I of *Casa Guidi Windows* ; see Markus,*Casa Guidi Windows*, p 117.
8. Filicaia's sonnet 'Italia, Italia, O tu coi feo la sorte' was adapted by Byron in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, stanzas 42 – 43; and most of Barrett Browning's other examples of the representation of Italy – Niobe, Cybele – are in fact drawn from *Childe Harold*. This highlights the extent to which the poet's image of Italy is mediated through the English literary tradition.
9. This phrase comes from Robert Browning's 'By the Fire-Side': 'Oh woman-counry, wooed not wed,/Loved all the more by the earth's male-lands,/Laid to their hearts instead!' (28 – 30)
10. Barrett Browning had not, in fact, visited Verona at this time; she is probably drawing on Dicken's description of 'La tomba di Giulietta la sfortunata' as 'a little tank, or water trough,' in his *Pictures from Italy* 1846, p 129.

11. The first formal 'Convenant' to protect Presbyterian freedom of worship was signed in Scotland in 1557, and periodically renewed thereafter, most importantly in the period immediately preceding the English Civil War.
12. This picture is kept at the Galleria Communale d'Arte moderna e contemporanea in Verona; it is reproduced in G. Cantoni ed., *Risorgimento: Mito e Realta* Milano: Electa, 1992
13. See eg. Jean Sigmann, *1848: The Romantic and Democratic Revolutions in Europe*, trans. Lovett F. Edwards, London, George Allen and Unwin 1973, p 249.
14. Beales, op. cit., p 53.
15. They became acquainted with one another after Browning sent Mazzini a copy of his poem 'The Italian in England' in November 1845.
16. Beales, op. cit., p 55.
17. See, for example, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's letter to Mary Russell Mitford of 30 April 49: 'My faith in every species of Italian is however nearly tired out. I don't believe they are men at all, much less heroes and patriots.'
18. He was facetiously addressed as 'Citoyen Clough' by Matthew Arnold in recognition of his radical sympathies; see Paul Veyriras, *Arthur Hugh Clough* Paris: Didier, 1964, p 233. A selection of Clough's letters from Paris is reproduced in F.L. Mulhauser ed., *The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough* OUP 1957, pp 204 – 215.
19. The record takes the form of a letter to F.T. Palgrave; see Mrs. Clough ed., *Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, London, Macmillan 1888.
20. See G.M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic*, London, Longman 1919, pp 112 – 113.
21. All quotations from *Amours de Voyage* are taken from Patrick Scott ed., *Amours de Voyage* St. Lucia, Univ. of Queensland Press 1974.
22. See eg Luigi Carlo Farini, *The Roman State from 1815 to 1850*, tr. W.E. Gladstone London, John Murray 1851-2, vol iv, pp 55 – 56.
23. Cp Psalm 48:2-4: 'The hill of Sion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth... For lo, the kings of the earth: are gathered, and gone by together. They marvelled to see such things: they were astonished, and suddenly cast down.' As Scott points out, this is taken from the Prayer Book version of the Psalms.
24. Mazzini said that he wanted to restore the ancient '*Religion* of Rome' through the defence of the Republic; Trevelyan, op. cit., p 112.
25. From the essay 'La Santa Alleanza dei Popoli' in *Scritti di Giuseppe Mazzini* Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, undated, pp131-2.
26. It is interesting to note that Clough himself used this metaphor as a way of describing the return to normality after the French revolution of 1848; see Mulhauser, *Correspondence*, p 210.

THE ENGLISHING OF D'ANNUNZIO OR THOMAS BOWDLER RITES AGAIN

JOHN WOODHOUSE

It was a mixed blessing for D'Annunzio to have his works translated into English. To begin with, the plots and language of his novels, bowdlerized and censored, provided a Victorian and then an Edwardian reading public with fiction of the same type and nature as that produced by Mary Braddon, Marie Corelli, Ouida, and other purveyors of similar innocuous and romantic fiction. Indeed, one of D'Annunzio's few supportive early critics, Orlo Williams, congratulated the author on his depiction of Andrea Sperelli's character in *Il piacere*, and opined that it would have done honour to the imagination of Ouida.[1] Williams, naturally, intended his remark as a compliment to D'Annunzio, but it does indicate the value at which the translations were rated by contemporaries. Ouida herself declared that she felt D'Annunzio to be a soul-mate, and translated certain tracts of *Il piacere* which, she said, she could have written herself.[2]

On the one hand, then, D'Annunzio was able to sell many copies of his works in Britain, though his financial return was not as great as he might have hoped.[3] And that temporary popularity came about in large part because his most prolific translator, Miss Georgina Harding, constrained by contemporary censorship regulations, made her work harmonize with the literary fashions favoured by the majority at the time.

On the other hand, critics and littérateurs in Britain had to judge D'Annunzio's merits as a creative writer from what they read of him in translation, though a few, it is true, were able to read him in Italian. A more discerning body of critical judges of that kind would inevitably be alienated from the banality of what translators had reduced to popular sentimentality. As I hope to show, his novels, in particular, had been stripped not only of their vitality, egocentricity and frank sexuality, but also of all philosophical, intellectual and psychological subtlety. Other obstacles in the path

of translators were not lacking but the main impediment was the puritanical attitude of translator and reading public, and any consideration of D'Annunzio's works in translation has to concentrate on that aspect of Victorian censorship. I wish to discuss, in particular, his two novels, *Il piacere* and *Il trionfo della morte,* though a general account of other works will be given.

To the censorship of the time, the researcher has to add the question of D'Annunzio's personal immorality, real or apparent, immorality which, for critics and translators alike, created other difficulties. For instance, even before the translations, Richard Garnett, in his *History of Italian Literature* issued a prophetic warning against judging a writer for his morality rather than his artistic ability. He there acknowledged the importance of the three novels, *Il piacere, Il trionfo della morte* and *Le vergini delle rocce,* which he considered major literary events, impossible to ignore in any critical appreciation of European literature. Nevertheless, even Garnett himself in that chapter had reservations about the unsavoury nature of D'Annunzio's subject-matter.[4]

In 1902 Edward Hutton, an assiduous reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, and an acknowledged expert on Italy, wrote an important pioneering essay on D'Annunzio in *The Monthly Review.* Hutton was not over-enthusiastic about D'Annunzio's work, but he did warn his readers against inspecting an author's work and judging it by the moral standards of a particular age and time, or with the mental approach of a seventeen-year – old virgin or schoolboy. Nevertheless Hutton, too, still accused D'Annunzio of cruelty, lack of compassion, and madness in the writing of *Il piacere*, and he doubted, given the human habit of blushing, whether a full and honest English translation could ever be produced.[5] (Hutton himself had a particular critical style of his own). A further obstacle to promoting translations of D'Annunzio's work was connected with Hutton's objections: contemporary critics were quick to note the difference in character between Italians and English. 'Our national temperament', wrote W.L. Courtney in 1904, 'is out of sympathy with the form in which his genius finds expression'.[6] And Courtney goes further to relate character difference to D'Annunzio's œuvre:

> But when in this country we are confronted not only with the problem of an author who writes in Italian, and Italian of a very special type, but also with the great and radical divergence which exists between the Latin spirit and that of Teutonic peoples, the task of a not inadequate criticism becomes greater.[7]

A similar opinion was expressed by F.H. Picton, a correspondent in the letters column of *Academy*, on 12 February 1898, who added, not only that D'Annunzio was untranslatable, not only should he be read in Italian, but, in order properly to appreciate his art, the reader should also think like an Italian and forget for a while that he was an inhabitant of our small fog-enshrouded island. Picton was responding to a very competent review of *Trionfo della morte* which criticized the English text as being *too* anglicized, too 'safe' (having sacrificed poetry along with voluptuousness).[8]

Let me conclude this section by mentioning Osbert Sitwell's appreciative comments on D'Annunzio. Sitwell criticizes the barbarity of the English middle classes vis-à-vis poets and poetry, and in his autobiography waxes ironic about bourgeois values and middle-class judgements on such as Byron, Shelley, or Swinburne. He concludes that 'A poet, then, of D'Annunzio's type, with his intensely Latin approach to life will be necessarily more unpopular in Anglo-Saxon countries than even Shelley or Swinburne'.[9]

But if the novels were emasculated in translation by the moral atmosphere of the times in which they were published, it would have been inept to level against D'Annunzio's poetry critical opinions which dismissed him as a mediocrity interested in the seamier, more sensual side of life. Yet before 1990, out of his vast output of verse, only thirteen short poems had been systematically anthologized in England and that in 1893.[10] And D'Annunzio's dramas were even more difficult to translate than his novels, the most artistically successful translation being a privately printed version of *La figlia di Iorio.* That was done into elegantly biblical English, heavily redolent of the King James's Authorized Version of 1611, and was issued in just 100 copies.[11] The English translations of the other plays were not guaranteed to increase D'Annunzio's reputation, but this is not the place (and time is lacking) to consider this aspect of his work.

Until the slight revival of interest which came about when the collection *Alcyone* was translated for the first time in 1990, only one work of D'Annunzio's written after 1900 had been published in English in Britain. That was the unreadable play *Le Chèvrefeuille,* which had been written and performed in Paris in 1914.[12] With these two exceptions, nothing D'Annunzio wrote after the age of

35 has been translated and published in Britain. Yet his writings in the Edizione Nazionale of the *opera omnia* run to some 50 large volumes, and the number increases as rare and unpublished writings are put together from time to time. The vast majority of British readers, reliant on translations, were debarred from judging or appreciating, even at one remove, 38 years of further creative writing after 1900.

It was true that D'Annunzio's work had to contend with England's puritanical censors and her chauvinistic intellectuals, but there was a more fundamental problem for anyone ambitious to make a worthy translation of his writings. Several critics, less unfavourably inclined towards him, made the point that his work was so inimitable that it had to be judged in its original Italian for a true appreciation to be forthcoming. Orlo Williams noted this aspect:

> It is unfair to read D'Annunzio in translation, for the Italian language is a vital element of his art. He has created a new prose for modern Italy – a vivid, abundant, flexible medium, invariably beautiful and infinitely harmonious.[13]

In the light of such statements and before moving on to discuss detailed particulars of some of the translations I find it profitable to consider this unique aspect of D'Annunzio's creative output – his deliberate attempt to make his writing inimitable.

In the preface to the *Trionfo della Morte,* in fact an open letter to his great friend, the artist Francesco Paolo Michetti, he mentions their discussion of creating an ideal of modern prose 'which in sound and rhythm would have all the variety of an epic poem, and in its style combine the most diverse qualities of the written word'. His criteria were exacting. His language had to combine the 'precision of science with the seductive character of a dream'; the artist's duty was not simply to imitate nature; his work had to be 'a continuation of nature'.[14] At several points in his career D'Annunzio launched into a eulogy of language and of his own creative use of words; typically, towards the end of his epic *Maia,* there is a hymn to words which blends creativity and patriotism:

> O parole, mitica forza
> della stirpe fertile in opre
> e accerrima in armi, per entro
> alle fortune degli evi

fermata in sillabe eterne (...)
Io vi trassi con mano
casta e robusta dal gorgo
della prima origine, fresche
come le corolle del mare
contrattili che il nuovo lume
indicibilmente colora (...).[15]

And in that prefatory letter to *Trionfo della morte* he considers his own attitude to language, a stance which again shades into patriotic pride:

> The greater part of our narrators and descriptive writers use for their needs only a few hundred or so common words, completely ignoring the liveliest, purest and most rich aspects of our language, which some have accused of poverty and almost of clumsiness. The language used by the majority consists of a vocabulary which is uncertain, inexact, impure in origin, colourless, deformed by a popular usage which has altered or taken away the original meaning of the words and forced them to express different, contradictory concepts. And those words are linked together in almost ever-equal, badly coordinated periods, which lack rhythm or correspondence with the ideal movement of the things whose image they attempt to project.[16]

By contrast D'Annunzio argues that the careful and industrious wordsmith can understand plurisecular nuances and note the profundity of meaning of some words which inebriate the verbal explorer because of their miraculous depths of meaning. In the particular case of Italian, the language had sprung from the dense Latin trunk which had flourished and put out countless flexible growths over the centuries. The writer, by his dexterity and vigour, could bend the language unresistingly to his will, and from it weave all kinds of sinuously agile garlands and festoons.[17] For five years, in the case of the *Trionfo della morte,* D'Annunzio states that he had worked to make his language fit those rigorous linguistic criteria. The problem with which his translators were faced is obvious: how could anyone expect to render this unique and uniquely crafted language with the precision, richness and dignity which D'Annunzio demanded of himself?

It was a problem never entirely resolved, and typically, much later, in 1935, when censorship fears had been lessened, Putnam and Company were equally preoccupied with the difficulty of translating D'Annunzio's inimitable language. When Mondadori

forwarded to Putnam's the suggestion that they commission and publish a translation of *Il libro segreto*, Putnam's responded cautiously:

> As you will have gathered from the report of our reader, it is very difficult to tell what will be the English attitude to this book. In talking with our advisors, we are very conscious that Signor D'Annunzio's style is so unusual and, in some cases, so archaic, that it is often very difficult to understand.

And, in an aside which the Victorian censors might have heeded, Putnam's representative notes, 'We are sure you will agree with us that the work of a great literary artist cannot be dealt with as if it were a popular best-seller'.[18] A few days later, after securing 'more detailed opinion', another letter to Mondadori suggests that the book is 'almost impossible of translation' and that 'an English d'Annunzio is really required' for an adequate version to be made.[19]

William Heinemann had to contend with a whole battery of puritanical organizations whose efforts had culminated in some of the fiercest censorship laws.[20] He had before him the tragic example of his rival and colleague Henry Vizetelly who had published, and tried to publish, Emile Zola's realistic fiction. Vizetelly had ended in gaol, even after paying £300 penalties, and, when he was finally released, following a three month sentence, he was a broken man whose publishing house failed immediately afterwards. That was in 1889, but as late as 1914, William Heinemann was scared of censorship: 'J'aurais bien voulu aussi traduire en anglais *Forse che sì* mais j'avais peur de la censure'. He continues in the same letter with a request for an authorized translation of the *Contemplazione della morte,* adding 'je ne demanderais mieux que de rester pour toujours votre éditeur pour toute œuvre qui ne dépasse pas les limites des préjugés 'puritains' de ce pays'.[21] So even leaving aside Heinemann's translator's natural feminine modesty, it was commercially essential for him to publish an expurgated text of any work translated.

In the specific case of *Il piacere,* translated into English by Georgina Harding as *The Child of Pleasure,* the novel was restructured to conform to the revised format of the French translation *L'enfant de volupté*. Miss Harding had been advised to do this by the doyen of English Dannunzians, Arthur Symons, who confirmed, in his introduction to the translation, that even

D'Annunzio preferred the structure of the French version as revised with his translator Georges Hérelle:

> When I was in Rome at the beginning of 1897, d'Annunzio told me that this re-arrangement had been done under his own direction, and he was sorry, he said, that I had read it in Italian rather than in French. That is why I have suggested to Miss Harding that she should run the risk of being told that she has translated an Italian novel from the French, by using both the French title and the French sequence of chapters.[22]

D'Annunzio had allowed many excisions to be made in the French version in order to avoid charges of plagiarism in France. He had copied so much material from French sources that his average French reader might easily have recognized the original and might have rejected his work as plagiaristic. Many of his borrowings from the French, as Guy Tosi has shown,[23] were sado-masochistic in nature, taken particularly from Joséphin Péladan's *Initiation sentimentale.*[24] According to Tosi, some forty pages were cut in the novel's transition from *Il piacere* to *L'enfant de volupté* in 1894. Those cuts proved a slice of luck for Miss Harding; they removed spontaneously, so to speak, many unsavoury passages. To the French excisions she added a further ten pages of expurgation on her own account.

D'Annunzio's great accomplishment in *Il piacere* lay in his ability to evoke the decadent atmosphere of upper class Rome during the final quarter of the nineteenth century. He was also able to depict an artistic genius, Andrea Sperelli, his autobiographical hero, as a prey to insatiable sensual appetites and, largely because of those urges, doomed to artistic and social sterility. Unfortunately D'Annunzio lacked discretion in depicting Sperelli and the society he frequented. There are certainly instances of 'decadence' guaranteed to shock a Victorian audience, but, too often, instead of grand gestures such as we might expect from a Swinburne, D'Annunzio's hero turns out to be a prurient schoolboy exchanging dirty stories with even more puerile members of Rome's high society. His heroic sexual appetite too often turns out to be adolescent salacity, not surprising when we are reminded by Mario Praz that some of the episodes were taken, at second hand, from popular newspaper items on London's vice scene.[25] One of the more 'sensual' episodes excised must be considered the charity sale in Palazzo Roccagiovine, when a Havana cigar is bought for a large

sum because the beautiful Countess Lucoli had kept it, prior to the sale, under her armpit! Other débutantes had sold apples, from which they had already taken a bite, or cigarettes, lit and soggy, 'molto inumidite', sold for a louis.[26] Or take the climax of an episode between Andrea and one of his great conquests, Maria Ferres, who has just made him a cup of tea. Sperelli insists that she take a gulp of tea and transfuse it from her mouth to his.[27] Unfortunately as far as dramatic and sensual effect are concerned, she is forced (with unintentional hilarity) to wait for the tea to cool sufficiently for her to hold it in her mouth. Nevertheless this 'sexy' interval reduces both of them to a state of trembling abandonment, and comes just before the final emotional break-up which shows Sperelli the emptiness of his life. How are we to believe in the great artist's brilliance, sensitivity, and essential good taste if he is privy to, not to say enthusiastic for, these and other prurient trivialities? Miss Harding's autocensorship at least takes out many, though not all, of those unlikely incidents and would have rendered Andrea, in the English version, a more credible protagonist, if only she had not also removed his intellect, as I shall show.

One area in which the translator did use the blue pencil concerned the sadistic English aristocrat the Marquis of Mount Edgcumbe who shows Andrea his collection of pornographic books and prints.[28] The effect of these obscene drawings is to increase Sperelli's horror at the thought that he has lost his lover Elena Muti to such a grotesque decadent. The interesting angle from the translator's viewpoint is that something of the episode has to be kept to maintain the emotional revulsion of Sperelli. One drawing is of copulating skeletons and priapuses. This was, naturally, excised in the English version, but when the Marquis comments that no one has equalled the artist in his studies of the phallus, Miss Harding bowdlerizes, 'what a profound knowledge of the potentialities of the human figure for expression', and D'Annunzio's 'phallic symbols' (*simboli fallici*) become her 'symbolic decorations'.[29]

From the text disappear adjectives which might have suggestive qualities – tactile, olfactory adjectives and images in particular are avoided by Miss Harding. Ellipses are also filled in, so as to avoid leaving a possible sexual innuendo in the reader's imagination. Comparisons between inanimate objects, particularly of flowers, which might have sensual associations are toned down – voluptuous

roses, for instance, which remind Andrea of the voluptuous flesh of women, become simply a bunch of pretty flowers.[30] And Miss Harding undoubtedly had religious scruples, too, which caused her, in the same description, to suppress a comparison between a nuance of the colour white in the rose petals and the sacramental host. The same sensitivity caused her to remove from the description of Elena Muti's bedroom a crucifix of Guido Reni's, which gave a religious aura to the curtains surrounding the bed where the couple are to make love.[31]

Il piacere also contains intelligent remarks on art and the creative power of the artist and Sperelli's meditation on poetry as the supreme art.[32] With the exception of one brief paragraph, these intellectual dimensions are abolished from Miss Harding's pages – no doubt because they detracted from the novel's qualities as a sentimentally romantic piece, which by now it had become. But in omitting these meditative passages Miss Harding weakened whatever authenticity she might have lent to Andrea Sperelli's character by eliminating the prurience we have noted. Intellectual debate did not form part of the repertoire of Mrs Braddon or Ouida or Marie Corelli and these were apparently the models for Miss Harding's translation.

We may now examine the text of another novel in greater detail. As a preliminary to Miss Harding's treatment of *Il trionfo della morte* and as a general reflection on the moral attitudes of the time I would mention here Robert Buchanan's *Fleshly School of Poetry,* his savage attack on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnet sequence, *The House of Life*.[33] (Dante Gabriel, perhaps because of his Abruzzese roots, as well as his decadent writings, was one of D'Annunzio's favourite poets). Let me reduce Buchanan's polemic to the main areas: 'bed' and 'leg', and their associations. Buchanan had noted that among the sugared sweetmeats which filled Victorian confectioner's windows, 'may be seen this year models of the female Leg, the whole definite and elegant article as far as the thigh, with a fringe of paper cut in imitation of the female drawers and embroidered in the female fashion' (p.3). I'd like to dwell on that leg for just a while, because it does become relevant to most censorship questions thereafter. Buchanan elaborates, for the next page or so, on his fears at the presence of legs in society as the instruments of immorality: 'The Leg, as a disease, is subtle, secret,

diabolical. It relies not merely on its own intrinsic attractions, but on its atrocious suggestions. It becomes a spectre, a portent, a mania'. This critique might strike us nowadays as being fatuous, some have disbelieved its seriousness and considered it a satire on the morals of the times, but Buchanan, the puritanical Scot, was anything but ironical, and his polemical words added to Rossetti's medically diagnosed melancholia.

Another preoccupation of Buchanan's was the word 'bed', for which he substituted 'couch'. He finds Rossetti's language, for instance, animalistic, and the fact that he is married to the woman who features in his poems is no mitigation of such 'animalism'; in Buchanan's view, animalism was animalism, licensed or not by Church and State, and he felt nauseated by the way Rossetti virtually wheeled his 'nuptial couch' into the public streets (p.ix). There can be no direct influence from Buchanan's essay upon Georgina Harding's translations but, as may be seen, her attitude is conditioned by similar considerations.

In the case of the *Trionfo della morte,* Miss Harding's version was not so obviously influenced by its French predecessor, but physical details of the kind excised from *Il piacere* continued to be cut, heavily affecting the English translation. In particular those words 'leg' and 'bed' were strenously avoided in *The Triumph of Death,* and all philosophical statements associated with Nietzschean thought were also excised.[34] As an example of censorship of things physical, we may take, for instance, among the crowds at the pilgrimage site at Casalbordino 'le donne del Trigno (...) camminavano stracche, curve, con le gambe aperte' (p. 268), translated by Miss Harding as 'their feet wide apart' (p. 197). And when Ippolita's sensuality is underlined, the Victorian censorship is even more evident:

> E sotto gli occhi di lui tendendo l'una e l'altra gamba, perfette nelle loro lucide guaine, chiuse le giarrettiere su l'uno e l'altro ginocchio. (p. 130)

That sentence is translated 'offered her feet, one after the other, perfect in their glistening sheath, to his gaze' (p. 137). But even in descriptions guaranteed to chill the most ardent sensuality, the despair, for instance, of a peasant woman whose son has been drowned: after her 'scoppii disperati del dolore (...). Ella taceva; si toccava un piede, una gamba con un gesto macchinale' (p. 353).

Since there is already a *piede* in the original, the translator draws the attention of her reader not this time to the feet but to the hand: 'She only touched a foot or a hand' (p. 269). And the peasant women again, sitting down for their rough *merenda* (gulping down lumps of bread and cheese), 'con le gambe allargate sul terreno' (p. 269), are given the decorum of a Victorian girls' school out for a picnic, 'seated on the ground with their legs crossed under them' (p. 198). It is ironic that foot-fetishism ('prawning' in American jargon) has in some modern contexts replaced the Victorian preoccupation with legs – no doubt because legs are more readily available now than Buchanan suggested they were a century ago. Other words implying physicality, such as *coscia, inguini, ascelle, pori,* (even *i pori del legno*), *sudore* – all change in their translation into English, or are simply omitted.

When Miss Harding has to mention bed she tries to make it clear that Giorgio lay down on 'his' bed and Ippolita on 'her' bed, even though it is definitely the couple's more than king-sized bed which is referred to in, for instance, 'Egli andò a distendersi sul letto' (p. 121). Here is part of D'Annunzio's description of that bed:

> Oh se tu fossi già qui!... – Stasero dormirò per la seconda volta nell'Eremo; dormirò solo. Se tu vedessi il letto. È un letto rustico, un monumentale altare d'Imeneo, largo quanto un'aia, profondo come il sonno del giusto. È il Talamo dei Talami. Le materasse contengono la lana d'un intero gregge e il paglericcio contiene le foglie d'un intero campo di granoturco. Possono avere tutte queste cose caste il presentimento della tua nudità? (p. 188)

That whole passage is translated simply, 'Oh would that you were here with me' (p. 129). And later Miss Harding translates 'Ippolita era rientrata, s'era distesa sul letto' as 'thrown herself on her bed'. There is only one bed and it is decisively shared by both of them.

There are over a thousand changes from the original to the translation. All ellipses, for instance, which may imply sensuality are avoided: 'Le mormorò nell'orecchio qualche parola. "No, no. Bisogna che siamo savi, fino a stasera, bisogna che aspettiamo. Sarà poi tanto dolce ..."' (p. 88), which Miss Harding translates: 'You must be good, patient and think of the charming evening that is before us' (p. 35). The two are on their way to an orgy of sex at Albano. Elsewhere the implications are simply omitted, as are references to olfactory images, leaving other striking lacunae.

There are many examples of greater sensuality and greater grotesqueries in D'Annunzio's novel, an old hag kissing a lascivious monkey, 'Una di queste bagasce disfatte, che pareva un essere generato da un uomo nano e da una scrofa, imboccava con la sua bocca viscida una scimmia lasciva' (p. 268). In the translation this and other improperties are simply omitted. The only contemporary critic to notice the bowdlerizing was Arthur Symons, who produced a casual but devastating review.[35]

Perhaps more serious than the omission of passages reflecting sensuality or sordid reality is the deliberate excision of all references to the philosophy of Nietzsche. D'Annunzio had recently discovered the work of the German thinker and it informs many of his writings during the 1880s and 1890s. The motive power behind his hero, Giorgio Aurispa, is pure Nietzsche. So entire passages of the following flavour are omitted from the Harding translation:

> Dominatore forte e tirannico, franco dal giogo di ogni falsa moralità, sicuro nel sentimento della sua potenza (...) determinato ad elevarsi sopra il Bene e sopra il Male per la pura energia del suo volere, capace pur di costringere la vita a mantenergli le sue promesse. (p. 319)

The importance of Nietzsche's influence on the novel cannot be stressed too strongly. The prefatory letter to Michetti ends with the assertion 'Noi tendiamo l'orecchio alla voce del magnanimo Zarathustra, o Cenobiarca; e prepariamo nell'arte con sicura fede l'avvento dell'*Uebermensch,* del Superuomo' (p. 54). The rigorous excision of such material will have profound implications for the interpretation of the novel in Britain. Take out that aspect and the plot is reduced to the triviality of Mills and Boon. Consider the following:

> Di sotto alla tenda piantata su la ghiaia, ancora seminudo dopo il bagno egli guardava Ippolita ch'era rimasta al sole presso le acque avvolta nell'accappatoio bianco (...). Ella aveva disciolti i suoi capelli perché si asciugassero; e le ciocche ammassate dall'umidità le cadevano su gli ómeri cosí cupe che sembravano quasi di viola (...) Perché tu non prendi sole? chiese Ippolita d'un tratto, volgendosi verso di lui. (p. 306)

Ippolita is barren after an illness; she has mild epilepsy. Neither factor is touched upon in Miss Harding's translation which is limited in the present case to the few lines above. In *her* version, from the excerpt is omitted a long paragraph in which Giorgio Aurispa (or D'Annunzio) meditates on the futility of his love for this woman:

> L'inutilità del suo amore gli apparve come una trasgressione mostruosa alla suprema legge. – Ma perché dunque il suo amore, non essendo se non una lussuria inquieta, aveva quel carattere di fatalità ineluttabile? Non era l'istinto di perpetuazione il motivo unico e vero d'ogni amore sessuale? Non era questo istinto cieco ed eterno l'origine del desiderio e non doveva il desiderio avere, occulto o palese, lo scopo generativo imposto dalla Natura? Perché dunque egli era legato alla donna sterile da un vincolo così forte? Perché dunque la terrible 'volontà' della Specie si ostinava in lui con tanto accanimento a richiedere a strappare il tributo vitale da quella matrice devastata già dal morbo, incapace di concepire? – Mancava al suo amore la ragion prima: l'affermazione e lo sviluppo della vita di là dai limiti dell'esistenza individua. Mancava alla donna amata il più alto mistero del sesso: 'la sofferenza di colei che partorisce'. La miseria di entrambi proveniva appunto da questa mostruosità persistente. (p. 309)

Those sentiments could have come from the most recent Vatican pronouncement (I refer to John Paul II's encyclical on the resplendence of truth, with its significant reference to artificial contraception, released in October 1993).

Il trionfo della morte is distinguished by three main themes: the sensual love of Giorgio Aurispa for Ippolita Sanzio; the alienation which Aurispa feels at a return to his native Abruzzi and his attempts to integrate with his native environment after the sophistication of Rome; and finally the Nietzschean theme, visible in the long interior monologues which reinforce the conflict in the protagonist between his will and his periodic abandonment to instinctive sexuality. The three themes are bound together in the figure of Ippolita in various complex ways; she becomes at the end the symbol for sterility and carnal obsession, created, and trained by Giorgio, and finally dominating his life to such a degree that his only way of self-assertion is a suicidal plunge over the cliff which has dominated their idyllic stay in the Abruzzi. Periodically we glimpse the influence of Wagner's then fashionable *Tristan und Isolde,* blending romantic love with Nietzschean heroics. The Nietzschean theme is ignored, as I've shown, and all the passages referring to Nietzsche are expunged from the translation, seven whole pages of the Oscar Mondadori edition, and sundry smaller references elsewhere. Any reflective passage, showing the mental conflict in Giorgio is shortened almost to non-existence, presumably in order to heighten the romantic interest. The complex and often brilliant study of the rancour felt by Aurispa for his father on his return to the Abruzzi, the guilty resentment he feels, as he

sees the same fleshy germ present in his own genes, is similarly played down, and all references to his father's carnality are excised. Without these details the novel becomes something out of Barbara Cartland's repertoire. Thus, to take the most dramatic example of the consequence of their omission (the final triumph of death), without the philosophical meditation on the impossibility of dominating one's instincts, one's flesh and one's fortune as one would wish, the final triumph of death is nothing more than a melodramatic joint suicide, or suicide-cum-murder.

The same kind of statements may be made concerning the other novels translated, except that *Il fuoco* was put into such unreadable English by Heinemann's Italian wife Magda Sindici,[36] that it probably had little critical effect. But those popularizing efforts by Heinemann ultimately betrayed rather than translated D'Annunzio's work. Few people were capable of reading the novels in Italian and for many years critical judgements were based on those bowdlerized texts – a major disservice to D'Annunzio's reputation. Imagine the astonishment of some British Italianists to find, at the convenient expiration of copyright in 1988, a fledgling publishing house, Daedalus Books,[37] republishing the Harding translations in their original expurgated Victorian versions with no word of explanation, though, with an eye to wider sales, they had carefully removed from their title pages the original dates of publication. D'Annunzio continues to provide publishers with revenue and they continue to do him a disservice, even a century after the process began.

Notes

1. Orlo Williams, 'The novels of D'Annunzio', *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 218, Oct. 1913, p. 337.

2. Ouida, pseudonym of Marie Louise De La Ramée, 'The Genius of D'Annunzio', *Fortnightly Review*, no. 67, March 1897, p. 373; earlier she had regretted that D'Annunzio was so guilty of writing 'mere nastiness, mere filth' (p. 351).

3. In 1926 Heinemann's secretary wrote, enclosing a cheque for £18-1-6, '(...) being the royalties on four of your books for which we are accountable. These royalties are on sales which have been made for the past ten years or so'. Letter dated 1 October 1926 in the library of the Vittoriale, *Archivio generale*, XIV, 1.

4. Richard Garnett, *A History of Italian Literature*, London 1898, p. 409.

5. Edward Hutton, 'The Novels and Plays of Gabriele D'Annunzio', *The Monthly Review*, no. 9, 1902, p. 148.
6. W.L. Courtney, 'Gabriele D'Annunzio' in *The Development of Maurice Maeterlinck and Other Sketches of Foreign Writers*, London 1904, p. 86.
7. *Ibid.*,
8. Picton's letter responded to an anonymous reviewer in *Academy*, no. 1344, dated 5 February 1898, p. 141.
9. Osbert Sitwell, *Left Hand, Right Hand*, London 1950, p. 113.
10. In *Italian Lyrists of Today*, edited by G.A. Greene, London 1893. Seven poems were included in Carlo Dionisotti's edition of *The Oxford Book of Italian Verse*, Oxford, 1968.
11. *La figlia di Iorio*, translated by W.H. Woodward, London, 1926.
12. The Italian version, *Il ferro*, was published only in 1935. The English translation by Cecile Sartoris and Gabrielle Enthoven was published in London in 1915.
13. Williams (see note 1), p. 337.
14. Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il trionfo della morte*, edited by Giansiro Ferrata, Milan 1980, p. 49.
15. Oh, words, mythical force of the race prolific in deeds and keenest in arms locked in eternal syllables within the fortunes of aeons (...). I brought you forth with chaste and robust hand from the chasm of your first origins, fresh as the contractile corollas of the sea which the new light infuses with ineffable colour (...). *Maia (Laus Vitae)*, vv. 7970 – 7973 and 7981 – 7989, available in *Laudi del cielo del mare della terra e degli eroi, libro primo*, Milano 1907, here p. 297.
16. *Trionfo* (see note 14), p. 49.
17. *Ibid.* My paraphrase attempts to retain the flowery quality of D'Annunzio's original imagery.
18. Letter dated 12 July 1935, Library of the Vittoriale, *Archivio generale*, XLIX, 2.
19. *Ibid*, Letter of 24 July 1935.
20. For a general discussion of the censorious atmosphere, see S.L. Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind*, Princeton 1968.
21. Letter, dated 2 March 1914, Library of the Vittoriale, *Archivio generale*, IX, 3.
22. *The Child of Pleasure*, translated by Georgina Harding, London, 1898, Introduction by Arthur Symons, p. v.
23. *D'Annunzio à Georges Hérelle: Correspondance*, edited by Guy Tosi, Paris, 1946, pp. 215 – 217 (Hérelle was consistently D'Annunzio's French translator).
24. *Ibid*, Péladan's *Initiation sentimentale* was published in Paris, 1887.
25. Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, London 1962, p. 467.
26. *Il piacere*, edited by Giansiro Ferrata, Milan 1969, pp. 122 – 3.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 401.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 388 and following.
29. *Child of pleasure* (see note 22), p. 277, and cfr. *Il piacere*, p. 388.
30. *Child of pleasure*, p. 109 and cfr. *Il piacere*, p. 223.
31. *Child of pleasure*, p. 113 and cfr. *Il piacere*, p. 227; for the Reni see *Il piacere*, p. 156.

32. *Il piacere,* p. 212.
33. Robert Buchanan, *The Fleshly School of Poetry,* London 1872; page references follow quotations.
34. *Il trionfo della morte,* edited by Giansiro Ferrata, Milan 1980; *The Triumph of Death,* translated by Georgina Harding, London 1898. For ease and concision of reference page numbers will be placed immediately following the relevant quotation.
35. In the *Saturday Review,* 29 January 1898, pp. 145 – 6.
36. Under the pseudonym Kassandra Vivaria, *The Flame of Life,* London, 1900.
37. Even this house seems so far to have had serious doubts about publishing 'Vivaria's' bizarre translation of *Il fuoco.*

DANTE, GARIBALDI, MAZZINI: SOME ENGLISH INTERPRETATIONS OF ITALIAN HISTORICAL FIGURES

VALERIA TINKLER-VILLANI

When, in 1819, Byron wrote his poem *The Prophecy of Dante,* he made Dante speak as an Englishman of the early 1800s. The myths that shape Dante's verses in Byron's poem proceed directly from English romanticism, and the prophecy Dante utters about a future Italian unification all point to the hopes and views of Byron himself. Byron acts as a ventriloquist, and Dante is his mouthpiece.[1] The points which make of Dante a suitable Byronic hero, and which Byron highlights in his poem, seem to be the following: he is a political figure, indeed a warrior who has been engaged in his life in direct action; on the other hand, he is also, at the present time, an exile, spurned by society. Also, he is a voyager, in fact, the complete traveller since his travels in Italy and in the realms of the afterlife are both seen as having actually taken place. So Byron uses certain facts of Dante's own life and art to give shape to his Byronic Dante. That the views of Byron himself are central, however, is made clear when, for example, Dante is made to say

> Who toils for nations may be poor indeed,
> But free; who sweats for monarchs is no more
> Than the gilt chamberlain who, cloth'd and fee'd,
> Stands, sleek and slavish, bowing at the door.[2]

expressing a republicanism wholly alien to Dante, but which has been the central belief of radical English artists from Blake to Swinburne, to remain within my period. But equally important to the figure of the Byronic hero are other features, very different from those just mentioned, and which Byron highlights in his poem: first, in the present tense of the poem, Dante is only engaged in meditation and thought; also, he is made to speak at a moment of absolute stillness after a life of intense political, social and poetic activity, and after a life of continuous physical movement; further,

he can present no danger, for he is now an old man, near death. This is actually quite similar to Byron's use of another historical figure. In his poems on Bonaparte, Byron's views turn from rejection and scorn for the man who betrayed republicanism and made himself an emperor, to sympathy when the general is in exile, in absolute stillness, prisoner within the narrow limits of the island of Elba. Thus, in both the case of Dante and Napoleon, exile, old age, and the contrast between past activity and present stillness strongly contribute to the elements of the figure. I'll return to this point at the end of my paper.

Italian figures have also attracted the interest of late nineteenth-century English writers; so, Byron's Dante is transformed into the pre-Raphaelites' Dante. But there are two other Italian figures who have been very central to English thought in the nineteenth century: Garibaldi and Mazzini. The purpose of this paper is to look as closely as possible to the use Swinburne, Tennyson and briefly Landor made of the figures of Garibaldi and/or Mazzini, and what this can tell us about English literature.

It is easy to account for the historical reasons for such an interest: Mazzini went into exile in England and was very active there; it was Mazzini who started collecting funds to finance Garibaldi's army. George Eliot was only one of many members of the society of the time interested in both cultural and political issues who attended one of Mazzini's Conversazioni at a meeting of the Society of the Friends of Italy. Eliot remembers in a letter that Mazzini spoke of the Pope as the curse of Italy, and remarks in the same letter that it is better to read his words than to listen to him.[3] Mazzini's remarkable impact on English thought is further shown, for example, in a book published in London in 1891, Henry Rose's *The New Political Economy: The Social Teaching of Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin and Henry George, with an observation on Joseph Mazzini*. A whole chapter, entitled 'A teacher of the teachers', is dedicated to Mazzini's views and discusses Carlyle's debt to these views.

As for Garibaldi, his visit to London in 1864 is recorded as a huge popular success, a pageant for the working classes; Queen Victoria was shocked at all this, but her scorn did not prevent the aristocracy from taking up Garibaldi and lionizing him – even the Prince of Wales talked to him.[4] But the effect of this development was not what Garibaldi himself would have wished; he had to cut his visit short, and go back to Italy.

A comparison of the impact and influence of these two figures would shed light on the social and cultural make up of English public opinion not just in high places, but also of the working class, but any such detailed comparison goes beyond my scope here. Yet I must briefly mention that I do realize that I am bringing together two figures of very different natures: Mazzini with his pale complexion, delicate facial features, always dressed in black, extremely composed, author of various essays such as 'Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe', first published in the *People's Journal* (1847), and The Duties of Man (both translated by Emilie Ashurst Ventury) seems to have little in common with Garibaldi, with his South American poncho and embroidered beret, an impassioned man, a man of action, hardly speaking English. These differences were clearly perceived at the time. In some of his *Imaginary Conversations,* Walter Savage Landor creates two different characters: Mazzini – a reasoning, subtle, well-spoken man, distrustful and aware of dangers; Garibaldi – an impetuous, somewhat rough man of the people:

> Mazzini: It was in vain that I represented to you, Garibaldi, the imprudence of letting the French army debark unopposed at Civita Vecchia.
>
> Garibaldi: I now acknowledge the imprudence of it: but I believed at the time that the French soldiers were animated by a love of freedom, the French officers by a sentiment of honour and veracity; and I doubted not that they came for our support. Do you laugh at me, Mazzini? Can there be a laugh or a smile in any Italian at the present hour?...
>
> Mazzini: Believe me, brave and generous Garibaldi, I did not laugh at anything but what all Europe laughs at: French honour, French veracity. Is it the first time they have deceived us? Is it the first time our youth have paid the price of their blood for their credulity?...
>
> Garibaldi: The ambition of one man is the fountain head of our calamity. Fallen we may be, but never so fallen as the French themselves: we resisted, they succumbed. Can anyone doubt the ulterior views of this impostor?
>
> Mazzini: He will not rest here: he will claim the kingdom of Rome and the empire of France. He has proved his legitimacy by his contempt of law; in this alone he bears a resemblance to Napoleon. Napoleon, upon several occasions, showed the obtuser part of his triangular hat, but never until he had shown the pointed...
>
> Garibaldi: Presently, I repeat, he will assume the title. The Dutch are more likely than the French to hold it in derision. They know that his mother did not cohabit with her husband...
>
> Mazzini: Garibaldi! We have other occupations than reference to paternities...[5]

Yet, much stronger than the differences are the similarities between the two figures, also as perceived, for example, by Landor: the passage quoted portrays both men as examples of integrity, honour and truth. They are shown facing a similar situation: monarchy in France and Italy as opposed to their own belief in republicanism; and both share a concern for issues such as treason and honour, and the relative importance of thought and action (in fact, even Garibaldi is given some share of thought in Landor: in another 'Conversation',[6] Garibaldi, after conquering Sicily and before continuing in his march, is made to discuss the system of education to be introduced in Sicily).

There is little evidence of Tennyson's response to Mazzini; neither would one expect to find that the poet laureate had any sympathy for radical, republican movements. However, Tennyson was politically involved in Garibaldi's visit to England. It appears that he was asked to probe Garibaldi as to the reasons why he had come to England – the government feared he had come to initiate some active participation in the problems of Denmark. Garibaldi, accordingly, visited Tennyson on the Isle of Wight. In answer to an enquiry from the Duke of Argyle, Tennyson wrote: 'What a noble human being! I expected to see a hero and I was not disappointed'.[7] There is one reference to this visit in the poem by Tennyson which I intend to analyse shortly.

Tennyson's poetry is often an exploration of the ethical choices being faced at a particular time and place; poetry deals with reflection on action, and therefore it is a guide to conduct. In some of his shorter poems dealing with recent historical events, such as 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', or a similar, minor poem entitled 'Riflemen Form', written at the time of the volunteer movement and reflecting the battles in Italy, the respective moral values of reflection and action are shifting and ambiguous. This is true even of some poems set in the past, such as 'Ulysses'. You remember how an old Ulysses – warrior and traveller – looks forward to future adventures in the wide world and by facing the sea faces the need to move forward and face life with all its battles – but, within the poem, remains dreaming at the shores of his native island. This famous poem has, in my view, a largely unknown companion piece – a very late poem entitled 'To Ulysses', dedicated to W.G. Palgrave.[8] This latter poem reflects the clearer

stance of the older Tennyson respecting direct action. The poem can be divided into two parts – the first eight stanzas, which focus on Tennyson himself, who was then, in 1888, almost 79, and his life of contemplation and thought within the shores of the Isle of Wight; and the last four stanzas, centred around Palgrave, and all his various voyages in exotic parts of the world. The poem concludes on the idea of the literature produced by the two figures with their different experiences.

The dual structure reflects the two experiences: there are contrasts such as the winter ('frost', 'paler heavens') of Tennyson's world and the 'tropical summer-winter' of Palgrave. But there are also similarities: both worlds are partly described in terms of the great variety of trees which grow there, and in fact some exotic ones thrive on the Isle of Wight. Similar is also the reaction of the two spectators to their very different worlds: Tennyson's 'marvel' is echoed by Palgrave's 'wonder'. The effect this creates is not so much to suggest that it is not necessary to move to faraway places to enrich one's experience as to indicate that whereas innocent youth, who smiles just like nature (stanza X), strives to go forward, the experienced older man has chosen a different world: he now narrows his horizon to what he knows and can see clearly. This effect is also partly due to the structure of the poem, in which less space is dedicated to Palgrave's world than to Tennyson's trees. Also, there is a contrast between the scientific observation of Tennyson's trees and the vague list of places in Palgrave's journey which concludes with the dismissive 'and all the rest'. The vagueness of Palgrave's world and the extreme specificity of Tennyson's suggest that the latter sees and observes the features of his world with clarity ('see', 'trace', 'watch').

The central point of the poem is stanza VII, where Tennyson turns to 'the pine . . ./the warrior of Caprera set', referring to the pine-tree which Tennyson had asked Garibaldi to plant in his garden. The presence of the figure of Garibaldi in such a personal poem appears surprising, but in fact Garibaldi allows the writer to enrich and complicate his poem. For Garibaldi seems to unite the two kinds of experience – the centrifugal impulse followed by Palgrave (with his continuous forward and outward movement), and the centripetal impulse represented by Tennyson and his retirement on the Isle of Wight. Garibaldi combines expansion and

retreat. In the poem, Tennyson's retreat is not presented as a matter of mere personal preference but of deliberate, though difficult, choice: 'I *chain* my fancy now at home' (my italics). And that it goes beyond the personal is made clear by the poem's use of the ideas of expansion and retreat in terms of place and time.

There are three characters in the poem: Tennyson, Palgrave, and Garibaldi. There are also three places: the first is Tennyson's fertile Isle of Wight, which is contrasted with the second, the general largeness of Palgrave's world, 'this globe of ours'; the third, the barren island of Caprera, combines distance from and closeness to Tennyson's world. The use of time is complex too: the specific mention of the present (winter 1888) looks further to the near future in summer, when Tennyson was to be 79, and further again to the large view of 'the century' and of Garibaldi's eternal fame. Thus, it is the figure of Garibaldi that allows the poet to enrich the significance of time and place in the poem, and the position of man within these dimensions. But in Tennyson's choice of words, Garibaldi, who was known as 'l'eroe dei due mondi' – the hero of two continents – has become narrowed within the limits of a tiny island: 'the warrior of Caprera'. He too has chosen stability, the narrow confines of a small island, and the cultivation of his garden. Self-limitation and isolationism are therefore Tennyson's choice and Tennyson's belief about the right way to live. In this the poet laureate well reflects the state of mind of the establishment at a time when although many pleaded for intervention in the case of Italy or even Hungary and Denmark, the majority – as newspapers well reflect – wanted no intervention, warlike activity being limited to the formation of the Volunteer movement which was formed to defend the shores of England from foreign invasion.[9] This also partly explains why Mazzini, who had penetrated into the island, was mistrusted even by some who in general strongly sympathized with Italy, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning,[10] and why Garibaldi was quickly despatched from England, but then greatly helped with boats, plants, seeds, a cultivator and even gardeners when back on his own island.

Swinburne was a convinced and heated republican, anticlerical, a radical singer of Freedom, and he regarded Mazzini very highly. His *Song of Italy* is 'inscribed with all devotion and reverence to Joseph Mazzini'. This poem is shaped in terms of a vision in the

Joseph Mazzini'. This poem is shaped in terms of a vision in the tradition of eighteenth-century Miltonic poetry such as Edward Young's *Night Thoughts.* The names of Mazzini and Garibaldi are actually mentioned in it, and the characterization is similar to Landor's: Mazzini is called 'Soul without fear of Guile/Mazzini, – O our prophet, O our priest'; Garibaldi is 'Italia's sword and flagbearer/and staff and shield to her, O Garibaldi'.

The poem opens with a wildly centripetal movement which celebrates the expansion of the mind beyond earthly limits:

> Upon a windy night of stars that fell
>   At the wind's broken spell,
> Swept with sharp strokes of agonizing light
>   From the clear gulf of night,
> Between the fixed and fallen glories one
>   Against my vision shone,
> More fair and fearful and divine than they
>   That measure night and day,
> And worthier worship; and within mine eyes
>   The formless folded skies
> Took shape and were unfolded like as flowers.
>   And I beheld the hours
> As maidens, and the days as labouring men,
>   And the soft nights again
> As wearied women to their own souls wed
>   And ages as the dead.[11]

The last part of the poem focuses more narrowly on earth, since it contains a list of numerous Italian cities (which are all to praise Mazzini). So just as in the *Night Thoughts*, here too from the stars the sight is turned downwards to earth; then, finally the skies contract and the universe and our world are subsumed into one spot on earth – here, Rome:

> Lady of earth, whose large equality
>   Bends but to her and thee;
> Equal with heaven, and infinite of years,
>   And splendid from quenched tears;
> Strong with old strength of great things fallen and fled,
>   Diviner for her dead;
> Chaste of all stains and perfect from all scars,
>   Above all storms and stars,
> All winds that blow though time, all waves that foam,
>   Our Capitolian Rome. (66)

Thus, far from celebrating historical progress at a particular place and time, Swinburne moves to an abstract idea of infinity and of some global unity. This movement is even more striking in another poem dealing with the Italian question, from *Songs Before Sunrise:* 'The Halt Before Rome, September 1867'. This title suggests a very specific historical event, and both place and date are mentioned. But the poem itself is in total opposition to the specificity and engagement of the title. In the first stanzas, the poem continuously looks forward from that September to a vague future: 'when the winter is over and done', 'May', 'March', 'April', 'May'; at the close it looks forward even to the proclamation of 'republican Rome'. In between, there is mention of Rome, the Pope is made to speak treacherously, and there is a long section containing a call to action. But the poem is difficult to read because had it not been for the title, the reader would have no clues for many stanzas as to the specific topic. The poem starts with:

> Is it so, that the sword is broken,
> Our sword, that was halfway drawn?

In *A Song of Italy* Garibaldi had been called 'the sword', and the historical facts behind the title confirm this identification; in the second stanza, the place of 'the sword' seems replaced by the image of 'the lion', so that when later we read (stanza 19) that 'The lioness.../Roars to the lion in vain' we understand that the lioness is Rome, and the lion is indeed Garibaldi. But only as far into the poem as stanza twenty-nine, where there is a reference to Aspromonte (where Garibaldi refused to fire against the troops of the king, and was in fact seriously wounded), can the reader be sure that his tentative identification was correct. Now, I realize that this would seem to be no way to read a Swinburne poem; getting to the core of Swinburne's poetry, Gerome McGann has said that 'the truth of this writing does not involve meaning as that idea is ordinarily understood', and that it is impossible 'to distil from it categorical generalizations'; it is rather a question of 'perpetual shifts among the relations of the different parts'. Indeed, Swinburne's poetry 'does not move in a direction, like a path, but accumulates additions, like coral'.[13] This is all very true, and my brief analysis exemplifies well the process McGann describes. Yet there is a fictive path, certainly in this poem, and it is one of

contraction in terms of place, from the heavens to Rome, and expansion in terms of time, from the date of the title to the eternity of the ending. And I think the critic is allowed to contrast the fictive path of the poem with the historical context around it – in this case, Garibaldi and the Italian battles for Rome – in order to understand better the particular form the fictive path and the accumulations have taken: the way the mind of the poet and his art has worked in this case.

Two points stand out: first, the involvement of the speaker and the public in the action he represents from the very start, through the repetitive use of 'we' and 'our'. So, from 'our sword' at the opening we move to 'We are here in the world's bower-garden,/We that have watched out the snow'; then, the first stanzas include 'We have in our hands the shining . . . of a star', 'Woe is ours if we doubt or dissemble' – and it continues in this vein.

The second point occurs in the final movement of the poem, and it is the series of imperatives urging participation and action:

> That our eyes may be fastened upon her,
> That our hands may encompass her knees.
>
> In this day is the sign of her shown to you
> Choose ye, to live or to die

This is followed by

> Fear not for any man's terrors;
> Wait not for any man's word;
> Gird up your loins to the race;
> ...March to the tune ye have heard.

And the next stanza begins again with 'March to the tune of the voice of her'. The imperatives and the words are warlike; the rhythm is very strong and compelling. Yet the effect is as static as the effect of Tennyson's island poem. This is partly due to the tell-tale shift in personal pronoun: for just as the collective 'we' of the poet/speaker/soldier approaches his aim – just as 'our eyes' and 'our hands' at last reach and very physically indeed 'are fastened' on Rome, the text moves to the distanced 'you' of 'Choose ye to live or to die' in the next stanza where the real action begins. 'We' and 'our', ever present to this point, disappear completely, and the rest of the poem is addressed to 'you'. So, I believe it is proper for a critic to analyze even a Swinburne poem in this way, and in fact the Italian question is a very suitable tool for doing so,

considering the involvement of so many English writers in it. For in the process of such an analysis the truth of the poetry itself comes to light.

When Byron used Dante to utter his vision, he had found in Dante the means to practise writing poetry of politics, and to practise a different way of writing. Bryon tried terza rima, and the result, as I have said elsewhere,[14] is in fact a variation of the Miltonic paragraph, and – interestingly in the case of Byron's poetry – a poetry of expansion, of long breath. This is true neither of Tennyson nor of Swinburne. Garibaldi does not offer Tennyson an entry into a poetry of engagement, but a confirmation of stasis and of poetry of self-reflection. Tennyson's poem mirrors itself backwards and forwards in the two parts in which it can be divided, and that central point, the image of 'the warrior of Caprera', well illustrates the paradox of its posture. The fact that the whole utterance is mainly one sentence further contributes to the sense of enclosure and self-completion, and gives to the poem an almost claustrophobic effect. Swinburne's poem also is hardly political – it simply presents a different set of perceptions for the self to explore. In both '*A Song of Italy*' and 'The Halt Before Rome' the only movement is a kind of continuous swinging within various abstract perceptions, and yet both poems are dressed up in the clothes of action. There is no real progress in them, and the future the poems envisage is purely prophetic in the manner of the late eighteenth-century poetry of vision.

Thus, both establishment poets and radical poets seem to have been thoroughly permeated by the isolationist defensive stance of late nineteenth-century England: by celebrating some of Italy's heroic events, English poets delude themselves into participation, while in actual fact they 'chain their fancy now at home'.

Notes

1. See my 'Byron's Vision of Dante', in *Centennial Hauntings: Pope, Byron and Eliot,* eds C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen, Leiden 1989.
2. 'Prophecy of Dante' in *CPW,* 213 – 239, canto 4, lines 91 – 94.
3. *The George Eliot Letters,* ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols., New Haven and London 1978, II, 15.
4. See Dennis Mack Smith, *Garibaldi: A Great Life in Brief,* Westpoint: Conn. 1982, and *Italy: a Modern History,* Michigan 1959. Also, Derek Beales, *England and Italy 1859 – 1860,* London 1961.

5. Walter Savage Landor,'XXIV. Garibaldi and Mazzini' (1853), *Imaginary Conversations: Italian,* in *The Complete Works of Walter Savage Landor* (1927 - 1936), London 1969, III, 293 - 294.
6. 'XXIX. Garibaldi and the President of the Sicilian Senate' (*Atheneum,* 1860), *Ibid.,* 318 - 319.
7. *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson,* eds Cecil Y. Edgar and F. Shannon Jr., Oxford 1987, II, 364 - 365.
8. 'To Ulysses', in *The Poems of Tennyson,* ed. Christopher Ricks, 3 vols., London 1987, III, 186 - 189. The Ulysses referred to in the title is W.G. Palgrave, brother of F.T. Palgrave and author of travel books, as well as the title of a volume of travel essays Palgrave had sent to Tennyson.
9. See my 'The Risorgimento and English literature', in *Tropes of Revolution,* eds C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen, Leiden 1991, esp. 352 - 355.
10. See, for example, letter 53 (Sept 6, 1860) in *Letters of the Brownings to George Barrett,* Urbana: I11, 1958, 236 and 242.
11. Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Song of Italy* (1867), first edition, n.d., n.p., 7 - 8.
12. Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'The Halt before Rome' (1867), *Songs Before Sunrise* (1871), in *CPWS,* 6 vols., London 1919 - 1920, I, 43.
13. Jerome MacGann, *Swinburne: an Experiment in Criticism,* Chicago, 1972, 20, 40.
14. See note 1.

COGNITIVE RELATIVISM AND THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE OF MULTIPLE POINTS OF VIEW IN LUIGI PIRANDELLO AND FORD MADOX FORD.

VITA FORTUNATI

Luigi Pirandello (1876 – 1936) and Ford Madox Ford (1873 – 1939) were two writers coming from very different historical and political environments: the former lived in Giolittian Italy, whereas the latter's milieu was Edwardian England. Both started their literary activity in a late-Romantic cultural environment. In Pirandello's opinion the predecessors to be surpassed were the writers of the 'Verismo' movement (Verga and Capuana), whereas in Ford's opinion the 'horrible monsters' were represented by Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian poets. Although they lived in the same historical period, these two writers never met, the only trace of Ford's possible knowledge of Pirandello's work being in the chronological table of the former's history of world literature, entitled *The March of Literature* (1938), where the works of the Sicilian author are mentioned.

For this reason, the comparison between these two writers may at first sound unusual but, at a second glance, I believe that the intricate planimetry characterising the European novel of the beginning of the XX century not only provides a meeting point between Pirandello and Musil, but also between Pirandello and Ford Madox Ford. In fact, both Pirandello and Ford anticipate those narrative techniques which were to characterise the modernist novel and show surprising epistemological similarities in their adoption of the struggle between reality and appearance as a central theme and in their working out of the technique of 'multiple points of view'.

On the one hand, recent criticism on Pirandello[1] has clearly underlined that this Sicilian writer was involved in the European avant-garde debate on the 'romanzo da fare' (the 'work in progress'), as Pirandello defined it, and that he was influenced by

Sterne both in the meta-narrative aspects of his novels and in the 'nose' theme which is so recurrent in his literary production. On the other hand, recent criticism on Modernism has highlighted Ford's role as forerunner and theorist of important innovations in narrative techniques. In this respect, his work represents a junction between Edwardian writers and Modernist writers.

Nowadays, Pirandello and Ford appear as two writers who were deeply aware of the epistemological crisis characterising their time, a crisis that led them to a deep revision of the Naturalistic novel and to the development of that new narrative genre which, I repeat, Pirandello defined as 'romanzo da fare' and which Ford programmatically called the 'New Novel'.

After these preliminary statements, in order to strengthen my hypothesis I will make a comparison between one of Pirandello's early novels, *Si gira*, which was first published in 1915 and reprinted in 1924 with the title changed into *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio Operatore*, and *The Good Soldier* (1915) by Ford Madox Ford, a novel that, as the author himself maintained, represents the best example of the new narrative techniques that Ford theorised together with Joseph Conrad during their collaboration. The narrative material of both these two novels appears to resist 'tellability', being, as it is, arranged in successive layers, continuous flashes forwards and flashbacks, as well as tales-within-the-tale. Serafino Gubbio and John Dowell are the two narrating voices of an 'affair', a plot, an 'arruffata matassa', as Pirandello defined it, of passions, betrayals and deaths; two narrating voices which dramatically express the awareness of the extreme relativity of their own points of view, since any one character acts on the basis of personal reasons which do not coincide with those of the other characters.

At the beginning of Chapter 1 (Part IV), Dowell clearly explains how he relates facts: 'At any rate, I think, I have brought my story up to the date of Maisie Maidan's death. I mean that I have explained everything that went before it from the several points of view that were necessary – from Leonora's, from Edward's and, to some extent, from my own. You have the facts for the trouble of finding them; you have the points of view as far as I could ascertain or put them'.[2] Similarly, Serafino Gubbio's narration is continously interrupted by sentences like 'Questa è la versione che Aldo

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These two novels are both structured on a fragmented time scheme which follows the flow of recollections that passes through the narrator's mind. By abandoning linear plots, Pirandello's and Ford's narrative writing mirrors existential disorder and chaos, moving forward and backward in time and space, thus following the flow of thoughts, meditations and reasoning upon the writing itself. Like A. Gide's *Les Faux – Monnayeurs,* both *Quaderni* and *The Good Soldier* record the efforts of the author who tries to build up a novel. It is precisely in the course of his search that the narrating self realises that the novel escapes him and continously reproduces itself as work in progress, that it might settle again in one, a hundred thousand or even no ways – to paraphrase the title of Pirandello's play.

At the beginning of Chapter II (Part I), Dowell wonders about the best way to tell a story: 'I don't know how it is best to put this thing down – whether it would be better to try and tell the story from the beginning, as it were a story; or whether to tell it from this distance of time, as it reached me from the lips of Leonora or from those of Edward himself'.[4] Thus, both novels show all the symptoms of a tension which was to be at the core of modernist writing: the tension deriving from the author's awareness that the creation of a novel is a problematic act. The dilemma of how to build up a novel gives origin to a 'romanzo da fare', to a work in progress that expresses the struggle between the search for a form and the awareness that life is, to define it with Ford's words, 'so extraordinary, so hazy, so tenuous [...] that it has become almost impossible to see any pattern in the carpet'.[5] Similarly, Pirandello,

at the end of his essay *L'Umorismo*, stresses again his gnoseologic relativism, frustating the cognitive ambitions of the mind. 'La vita è un flusso continuo che noi cherchiamo d'arrestare, di fissare in forme stabili e determinate, dentro e fuori di noi [...]. Le forme, in cui cerchiamo d'arrestare, di fissare in noi questo flusso continuo, sono i concetti, sono gli ideali a cui vorremmo serbarci coerenti, tutte le finzioni che ci creiamo, le condizioni, lo stato in cui tendiamo a stabilirci. [...] In certi momenti tempestosi, investite dal flusso, tutte quelle nostre forme fittizie crollano miseramente [...][6]

I think it is useful to analyse the features of the two narrators, Serafino Gubbio and John Dowell, because this enables me to talk about the cognitive relativism characterising the two writers' poetics and to underline both analogies and differences between them. The names of the two characters are intentionally meaningful but the reader is given neither a description of their physical features nor pieces of information on their affective background. Serafino Gubbio and John Dowell are symbols of that *malaise* that struck so many protagonists of the novel of the beginning of the XX century, a disease whose symptoms are loneliness, neurosis, inactivity and incommunicability – in a word, alienation.

This alienation derives from the inability to know one's own identity. They are passive characters who do not act and are thus acted by others; they are witnesses, or better 'voyeurs' of the story they tell. Both Dowell and Serafino Gubbio show a dissociated and divided inner-self. On the one hand, they are passive witnesses (in this respect, Serafino Gubbio's job is emblematic, since he is a cameraman, the one who shoots and must be impassive). 'Studio la gente nelle sue più ordinarie occupazioni, se mi riesca di scoprire negli altri quello che manca a me per ogni cosa che io faccio: la certezza che capiscono ciò che fanno. In prima, sì, mi sembra che molti l'abbiano dal modo come tra loro si guardano e si salutano correndo di qua, di là, dietro le loro faccende o i loro capricci. Ma poi, se mi fermo a guardarli un pò addentro negli occhi, con questi miei occhi intenti e silenziosi, ecco che subito s'adombrano'.[7] On the other hand, they play the philosopher: they judge and criticise their society and the other characters, thus underlining the contradictory and many-faceted meaning of events. The creation of characters who are so contradictory that they can

no longer be considered as such in the traditional sense of the word (that is, coherent and predictable) implies a clear witnessing of that historical crisis of the European middle-class which would inevitably lead to World War I. In this respect, one detects an almost imperceptible biographical identification between Serafino Gubbio and John Dowell and their respective authors, a discussion of which, however, would take me beyond the confines of this paper.[8]

The story told by Serafino and Dowell is not only their own story but also that of the other characters, a story that is recorded by eyes which are only apparently impassive, an analytic point of view that takes reality to pieces and, by fragmenting it, demystifies its false shapes and appearances. This aspect is clearly evident in the opening lines of the two novels. Serafino Gubbio says: 'C'è un *oltre* in tutto. Voi non volete o non sapete vederlo. Ma appena quest'oltre baleni negli occhi d'un ozioso come me, che si mette a osservarvi, ecco, vi smarrite, vi turbate o irritate'.[9] And Dowell wonders: 'If for nine years I have possessed a goodly apple that is rotten at the core and discover rottenness only in nine years and six months less four days, isn't it true to say that for nine years I possessed a goodly apple ?'.[10]

The two novels are based on a uncanny search for the essence of reality, which is conveyed through narrative expressionism. In fact, in both authors, subjectivity is never pure and cold vision but a distortion and exaggeration, a deformation of reality. Pirandello's naturalistic need and Ford's impressionist need for objective representation turns into a violent desire to unmask the false 'values' and hypocritical behaviours of middle-class society. As G. De Benedetti has underlined,[11] Pirandello's tragic, grotesque expressionism becomes evident in the caricature style he adopts to portray certain characters who appear terribly ugly, revolting and disgusting: 'Cacciava via una grossa boccata di fumo e restava un pezzo, ascoltandomi, con l'enorme bocca tumida aperta come quella di un'antica maschera comica. Gli occhi sorcini, furbi, vivi vivi, gli guizzavano intanto qua e là come presi in trappola nella faccia larga, rude, massiccia da villano feroce e ingenuo'.[12] The same deforming, grotesque point of view is used by Ford in certain descriptions: 'She (Leonora) had not cared to look round Maisie's rooms at first. Now, as soon as she came in, she perceived, sticking

out beyond the bed, a small pair of feet in high-heeled shoes. Maisie had died in the effort to strap up a great port-manteau. She had died so grotesquely that her little body had fallen forward into the trunk, and it had closed upon her, like the jaws of a gigantic alligator. Leonora lifted her up – she was the merest featherweight – and laid her on the bed with her hair about her. She was smiling, as if she had scored a goal in a hockey match.'[13]

Reality, in these two writers' universe, is never taken for granted as something whose essence can be naturally and easily seen, but is instead the result of a painful and difficult search. The cognitive path followed by the two narrating voices goes through the awareness of the inevitable relativism of knowledge. At the end of their painful voyage in search of an inward understanding of the world, Serafino Gubbio and John Dowell must acknowledge and record the inevitable failure of knowledge itself to provide any univocal and reassuring certainty of what it is that regulates individual life, of what 'causes' can be said to lead unto predictable and logical 'effects'.

As we have seen, cognitive relativism is expressed in both novels by means of multiplication, or better, through the technique of multiple points of view. Reality is thus refracted into a mosaic of subjective visions; it is no longer what it appears to be, but it is, instead, the result of juxtaposition of many points of view that clash and shed light on one another. It is precisely this technique of multiple points of view that produces an 'open' novel. The novel has only an apparent ending, since questions remain unanswered for the reader who finds himself inevitably involved in the disconcerting dilemmas of the various characters. The story does not come to an end precisely because Ford's and Pirandello's characters escape enclosure into rigid, stable and determined forms. The reader can never give a definite, categorical answer to a character's questions or respond to a character's desire for the final closure of meaning into a precise statement of motives, since Ford's and Pirandello's characters 'live' through this very multiplicity of questions, of motives.

I have talked about the tight connections between Pirandello and Ford; I would now like to underline the differences between them. If a negative ending is common to both novels (Edward Ashburnham's suicide and Nancy's madness in *The Good Soldier*

and the death of Vazia Nestoroff and Aldo Nuti in *Quaderni*), Serafino, unlike Dowell, has a natural understanding of himself, based on intelligence and human sympathy. Serafino expresses his need for understanding of the other characters by expressing intelligence and sympathy which however, is constantly misunderstood and frustated. As he says: 'Sempre nel giudicare gli altri, mi sono sforzato di superare il cerchio dei miei affetti, di cogliere nel frastuono della vita, fatto più di pianti che di risa, quante più note mi sia stato possibile fuori dall'accordo de' miei sentimenti'.[14] Serafino is the humorist-philosopher who, as Pirandello says: 'per il suo intimo, preciso, essenziale processo, inevitabilmente *scompone*, disordina, discorda';[15] he discomposes reality to unveil the polyvalence and contradiction of facts.

However, the humorist-philosopher is also one that has the 'sentimento del contrario'', that is a sense of personal and direct involvement, of understanding, of empathy. Serafino's eyes are thus the piteous filter of this ''buffa fantasmagoria della vita'. As he says: 'Vorrei non parlar mai; accoglier tutto e tutti in questo mio silenzio, ogni pianto, ogni sorriso; non per fare, io, eco al sorriso; non potrei; non per consolare, io, il pianto; non saprei; ma perché tutti dentro di me trovassero, non solo dei loro dolori, ma anche e più delle loro gioie, una tenera pietà che li affratellasse almeno per un momento.'[16]

Dowell, instead, lacks this empathic understanding of the absurd destiny of the other characters, because he is completely concentrated on and absorbed by the paradoxical aspect of his story. *The Good Soldier* is permeated by a self-ironic approach to a tragic condition. In the end, this absurd character of an 'American millionaire' becomes aware of the fact that it is impossible to get to know things, or better, that the world is incomprehensible. The behaviour of 'good people' hides an unintelligible reality made of ruins and mourning, whose origin and meaning escape their understanding. What remains is loneliness and an absurd and precarious fear: 'We are all so afraid, we are all so alone, we all need from the outside the assurance for our own worthiness to exist'.[17]

Finally, I would like to talk about what seems to me the basic difference between the two novels. The theatrical quality of Pirandello's narrative work is completely absent in Ford's novel

where, as we shall see, the oral aspect of the story prevails.[18] In fact, it is not by chance that the artistic fiction, clearly established and expressed by Dowell at the beginning of *The Good Soldier*, consists of imagining a narrator who tells the story to a friend (the 'silent reader')[19] in a natural way, as it comes to his mind, without following a chronological order, but following instead the (logical) – associative order of the mind caught in the act of remembering. 'So I shall just imagine myself a fortnight or so at one side of the fire place of a country cottage with a sympathetic soul opposite me. And I shall go on talking in a low voice while the sea sounds in the distance and overhead the great black flood of wind polishes the bright stars'.[20]

As Simona Costa[21] has recently noted in her introduction to *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, the work is deeply linked to the comedy *Ciascuno a suo modo*, published in 1924. From the pages of *Quaderni* one can pass on to the stage of *Ciascuno a suo modo* that, together with *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (1921) and *Questa sera si recita a soggetto* (1929), makes up the trilogy of the 'Teatro nel teatro' ('play within the play'). The connection between Pirandello's theatrical and narrative work is not only thematic (a story of passion, betrayals and death), but also philosophical. Both works focus on the theme of the subjectivity of reality, the statement of motives of which cannot be known since they are subject to the most various interpretations, that is, 'to each his own' again to paraphrase Pirandello.

However, the aspect that most tightly links these two works is the deep need for structure renovation. If, in fact, *Quaderni* demystifies and denies the naturalistic *romanzo fatto*, *Ciascuno a suo modo* containes an even more pointed provocation: the story's declared impossibility to tell any further produces scenic non-ending and incompleteness in the dramatic composition of the text which closes with the second Act. The *romanzo da fare*, the work in progress has thus turned into drama-in-progress: what matters, here, is neither the actors' performance nor the reasons of the real life, but the unmasking of the mechanism, the device and the destruction of the illusions of the scene and of the audience. The theatrical quality of the novel *Quaderni* is not only recognizable in the dramatic language of the dialogues, but also and above all in Serafino's soliloquies. In fact, as Edoardo Ferrario

has noted,[22] these are full of vocative and deictic elements, like, for example 'i signori' addressed by Serafino in his diaries, and the 'ecco qua'. Both these elements imply the involvement of a reader-audience who is continously addressed.

This intense theatrical quality is completely absent in *The Good Soldier*: its itensely aural disposition and meta-narrative quality turn Ford's novel into an artificial and sophisticated product. The continuous involvement of the reader inside Ford's narrative work implies, like in Pirandello's work, the narrator's precise will to involve the reader in the search for the truth of the characters' sad story. However, in Ford's novel this game is subtler because between Ford – Dowell and the reader there is an empathic complicity based on an implied agreement between the two: on the one hand, there is the reader's awareness that what he is reading is fiction, on the other hand, there is the author's task to hide this fiction by means of a series of circumspect rhetorical devices capable of giving the reader 'the illusion of reality'. It is a game based on tricks, ambiguous announcements, concealments and unveilings that lead the reader to allow himself to be led by the author, still preserving, however, his ability to re-order the events of the story.

In conclusion, beyond the differences that I have tried to delineate, these two novels represent the parabola of the end of the naturalistic novel in the European literature of the beginning of the XX century. In both Pirandello and Ford, the function of the narrator or of the playwright-interpreter becomes problematic, not only because life has become too complex and relentless in its inner pulsions to be translated into form, that is into art, but also because the principle of the narrator's authority has begun to decline.

Notes

1. In particular, see the interesting book by G. Mazzacurati, *Pirandello nel romanzo europeo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1987.
2. F.M. Ford, *The Good Soldier*, London, The Bodley Head, Vol. I, p.22.
3. L. Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, a cura di S. Costa, Milano, Mondadori, 1992, p.126.
4. F.M. Ford, *The Good Soldier*, cit., p.22.

5. Cfr. F.M. Hueffer, *Henry James. A Critical Study*, London, Martin Secker, 1914, p.150.
6. L. Pirandello, *L'Umorismo,* Milano, Mondadori, 1986, p.159. 160.
7. L. Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio*, cit., p.4.
8. With regard to the connections between Pirandello and Serafino, see G. De Benedetti, *cit.*, p.275 ff. Regarding those between Ford and Dowell, see A. Juidd, *F.M. Ford*, London, Collins, 1990.
9. L. Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*. cit., p.3.
10. F.M. Ford, *The Good Soldier*, cit., p.18.
11. See G. De Benedetti, *Il romanzo del Novecento*, Garzanti, Milano, 1971.
12. L. Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio*, cit., pp.9-10.
13. F.M. Ford, *The Good Soldier*, cit., p.73.
14. L. Pirandello,*Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, cit., p.65.
15. L. Pirandello, *L'Umorismo*, cit., p.57.
16. L. Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, cit., p.91
17. F.M. Ford, *The Good Soldier*, cit., p.106.
18. See the essay by G.J. Stang and C. Smith 'Music for a While': Ford's Compositions for Voice and Piano' in *Contemporary Literature*, Vol.30, n.2, Summer 1989, pp.183-224.
19. On the figure of the 'silent reader', see V. Fortunati, *Ford Madox Ford. Teoria e tecnica narrativa*, Bologna, Patron, 1975.
20. F.M. Ford, *The Good Soldier*, cit., p.22.
21. S. Costa, 'Introduzione' a Luigi Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, cit.
22. E. Ferrario, qtd. in S. Costa, 'Introduzione', cit., p.XXVIII.

THE MYTH OF THE ORIENT PASSES THROUGH RAVENNA: ENGLISH AND ITALIAN ARTISTS OF THE *FIN DE SIÈCLE*.

GIOVANNA FRANCI

The East like the West – Edward Said states in his book *Orientalism*[1] – is not a clear, defined entity, or something which merely exists; nor is it only an idea, a product of culture, that is, an 'orientalized' Orient. Although fundamentally I may agree with this perspective, it is not the main concern of this paper: the usual typology adopted by so many Europeans of an Orient, real or imagined, attractive or perverse, the source of an endless and perhaps still unresolvable debate.

I will deal, instead, with the Orient as myth and fashion in Europe during the Romantic period; I will briefly analyze how it developed during the *fin de siècle*, intertwined with 'the sense of an ending' underlying the Decadent movement, and with the *loci* which years after years have taken on a symbolic value, as a true door to the East not only for the English and the Italian artists, but for the whole European culture: I mean Ravenna and Venice.

In other words, I will try to lead you along the road to Byzantium, following the marvellous, morbid, even terrifying atmosphere of oriental phantasmagorias, with which Thomas De Quincey captivated his readers in the *Confessions of an Opium Eater*; or cherishing the dreams and illusions, the longing for the Orient manifested by Gerard de Nerval in his *Voyage en Orient*.

This is, of course, the dream-like evocation of an imaginary Orient, conventionally designated as a place for intellectual and literary escape, which originated as *turqueries* after the French and English translations of the *Thousand and One Nights*, of which Beckford's romance on the caliph Vathek was a prominent example during the vogue of the Gothic novel.

It is a poetry of the far-away and the exotic which was widespread in the 18th century *rococo* and picturesque in France and England, projecting western *coquetry* onto the shores of a

Bosphorous reconstructed for the entertainment of the sophisticated upper-classes. These are oriental rêveries of the same gossamer grace as the most refined lace *rocaille*. They have the same appeal for that domestic idleness which the seraglio's seclusion rendered highly seductive.

So, we can evoke secret gardens glistening with fountains and flowers; peacocks' feathers, trappings, dyed fabrics, janissaries as colourful as 'a tapestry of tulips'. I am here quoting from Lady Mary Wortely Montagu's travel diary, that noble *grand-touriste* of the routes along 18th century Bosphorous.

In this way, we are gliding, little by little, towards a vision of an Orient – be it souk, turkish bath, harem or bazar – which will be exploited and spoiled as a hunting preserve for academic realism in painting, in the 19th century. But it is also an attempt to re-establish an encounter, full of fascination, which can no longer be experienced except under the spell of art.

'All artists are lovers of the exotic', Mario Praz asserts in *Romantic Agony,*[2] in the wake of W.G. Wackenroder who had proclaimed: 'The Orient is a land of wonder'. While V. Hugo wrote in 1829, in his Preface to *Les Orientales*: 'Under the reign of Louis XIV we were Hellenists, now we are Orientalists'; and he continues by saying that Oriental colours have been imprinted upon all his thoughts and fantasies out of their own sheer energy.

'Orient', etymologically, means 'to rise'; the journey to the Orient is often a metaphor and a symbol of the origin of life and poetry, the *topos* which underlies that quest which, for the Romantics, became mainly a descent into the soul. The greatest poems of the Romantic age look to the Orient in search of the lost *arké*. The same sense of loss can be found in Keats', or in Leopardi's poetry, if we recall to our mind, for example, the poem 'Alla primavera o delle favole antiche'. As Leopardi emphasizes in his 'Discorso di un italiano intorno alla poesia romantica': 'Che bel tempo era quello nel quale ogni cosa era viva secondo l'immaginazione umana, e viva umanamente cioè abitata o formata di esseri uguali a noi ! (...) in cui la fantasia nostra libera e senza freno impetuosa e instancabile spaziava. (...) Quanta materia di poesia, quanta ricchezza quanto vigore quant'efficacia quanta commozione quanto diletto'.

In a poet like Byron, the two attitudes I have just described coexist. On the one hand, he disdainfully dismisses the fashion of *turqueries* and oriental *tours* (today we would use the expression 'mass-tourism'), with the irony that characterizes him; he also parodies Orientalism in literary fashion. I quote from *Beppo*, 51:

> 'Oh, that I had the art of easy writing,...
> How quickly would I print (the world delighting)
> A Grecian, Syrian, or Assyrian tale;
> And sell you, mixed with western sentimentalism,
> Some samples of the finest Orientalism'.

On the other hand, Byron sets out on a real and metaphorical journey to the East, in search of a kind of beauty whose relics or gems only poetry can attempt to restore, though in fragments or sparks. Thus, in Byron, the oriental *masquerade*, the disguise in grand-bazar style, is coupled with his pilgrimage in search of the abode of eternal beauty in Italy and later in Greece, the cradle of all myths that the devastation of time and the even more violent devastation brought about by Turkish domination had reduced to a mere relic of a lost treasure, both splendid and terrible. In Byron there is already that sense of an ending and of decadence which was to characterize exoticism in Europe at the end of last century. As he writes in *Childe Harold* (II,10), where he shows the inconsistency of dreams, the useless and illusive contructions of the mind:

> '...nor even can Fancy's eye
> Restore what Time hath laboured to deface'.

It seems that the same fate is shared by Greek myth and oriental fable. In the second half of the 19th century, up to the end of the century, when *fin de siècle* assumes a truly *epoké* meaning, the fashion of the Orient and the decadent sense of an ending are inextricably bound.

Whether the Orient be seen as a place of escape *par excellence*, of surrender to lascivious pleasures; or as a land of adventure, of the discovery of *otherness* – the mania for the Orient spread throughout Europe, from England to France, from the Netherlands to Austria and Italy. Once again, it is the *Voyage en Orient* that will characterize the great itineraries of the Decadent artists at the end of the last century in Europe, to destinations such as Egypt,

Persia or Turkey, but mainly to Istanbul (Constantinople or Byzantium, however you want to call it), and to the Italian ports and gates to the East, like Ravenna or Venice, 'la Venus de l'Adriatique' in T. Gautier's words.

In all these places, the glitter of gold and gems merges with a sense of death, in the search for something undefined which vanishes just as it is about to be grasped.

'Désespoir d'une beauté qui s'en va vers la mort', Maurice Barrès writes in *La mort de Venise*. Venice, like Aigues Mortes, like Byzantium, are nostalgic places, in which beauty wastes away under the incumbent shadow of death.

As Mario Praz puts it in the chapter entitled 'Byzantium' : 'The period of antiquity with which these artists of the *fin de siècle* liked the best to compare their own, was the long Byzantine twilight, that gloomy apse gleaming with dull gold and gory purple, from which peer enigmatic faces, barbaric yet refined, with dilated neurasthenic pupils'.

So, Sardanapalus or Nero, Semiramis or Cleopatra, Theodora or Salomè reigned in paintings, novels and dramas for a few decades, while buildings in Oriental style rose everywhere, on both shores of the Ocean. Oscar Wilde, who hallows the myth of Salomè in his famous play, following in Byron's footsteps, had also written a poem entitled 'Ravenna' in his youth, 'musing on Ravenna's ancient name', and glorifying 'its turquoise sky which turned to burnished gold'. Later on, in *The Decay of Lying,* [3] one of his most important essays, he detects in Byzantine art the model of art as artifice:

> 'The whole history of the arts in Europe is the record of the struggle between Orientalism, with its frank rejection of imitation, its love of artistic convention, its dislike of the actual representation of any object in nature, and our own imitative spirit. Wherever the former has been paramount, as in Byzantium, Sicily or Spain, we have had beautiful and imaginative works in which the visible things of life are trasmuted into artistic conventions, and the things that has not, are invented and fashioned for her delight'.

Arthur Symons chooses Ravenna for his *Cities of Italy*, which for him epitomizes the quintéssence of Italian towns, and Costantinople as the quintéssence of his *Cities, tout court.* [4]

Like the Italian writer E.De Amicis, who I will deal with later, Symons loses his way in a journey which is both real and imaginary:

> 'At the end of my first day in Costantinople, I find myself bewildered, as if I have lost my way in my own brain. I seem to have been blown through a whirlwind, out of which I can clutch nothing tangible. (...) To walk in Costantinople is like a fierce and active struggle. One should look at once before, behind, and underneath one's feet; before, behind and underneath one's feet some danger or disgust is always threatening'.

But, he also adds:

> 'Somewhat hidden, under the dust of this city, under the earth itself, or crumbling, a broken wall, a burnt column, the arch of an aqueduct, there is another older Costantinople, not quite at rest, which looks out on this secret, tragic, spectacular city, the one real thing there'.

Edmond De Amicis, on the other hand, anticipating a taste for postmodern mixage in the artistic process, has no doubts about Costantinople, and writes:

> 'A ogni cento passi tutto muta. Qui siete in una strada d'un sobborgo di Marsiglia; svoltate: è un villaggio asiatico; tornate a svoltare: è un quartiere greco; svoltate ancora:è un sobborgo di Trebisonda. (...) È un disordine, una confusione d'aspetti disparati, un succedersi continuo di vedute imprevedibili e strane, che dà il capogiro'.[5]

For W.B. Yeats, 'Byzantium represented a civilization in which all forms of thought, art and life interpenetrated one another, and where the artist 'spoke to multitude and a few alike'.[6]

In this way, 'Sailing to the holy city of Byzantium',[7] Yeats wrote pages which came to embody the general mood of an age. Byzantium, Venice and Ravenna, are cities of myth, beacons of civilization and beauty; and, at the same time, cities of silence and death (D'Annunzio's 'Città morte'), where the gold and blue of the mosaics is mingled with the decaying of malarial marshes, at once splendor and ruin. Hoffmansthal's or Thomas Mann's Venice, Shelley's or Pound's Ravenna are described in the same way. In his turn, Henry James, when visiting Italy, observed the deathly atmosphere lurking beneath the apparent splendour, 'the mortal sunny sadness of the stagnant Ravenna'. Quoting his Words in *Italian Hours*[8]: 'the total aspect of the place, its sepulchral stillness, its absorbing perfume of evanescence and decay and mortality, confounds the distinctions and blurs the details'.

Gabriele D'Annunzio, who more than once celebrates Ravenna in his poems and dramatic pieces, shares with James the interpretation of the city as a sinister and mysterious place, but adds to the picture echoes of past glories and power.

> 'Gravida di potenze è la tua sera
> tragica d'ombre, accesa dal fermento
> dei fieni, taciturna e balenante.
>
> Aspra ti torce il cor la primavera;
> e, sopra te che sai, passa nel vento
> come polline il cenere di Dante'.[9]

But it is above all in the building of his Villa, 'il Vittoriale', that D'Annunzio raises a monument of great imagination and total whimsicality to a taste of mixage and forgery which we can even define as 'Orientalism', in the sense I have tried to describe up to now.

And it will be the Ravenna of T.S. Eliot who, in 'Lune de miel' (a poem written in French), sharply contrasts the realistic description of the honeymoon couple scratching their legs swollen by mosquito bites and defending themselves from the heat and the bed bugs, with a surréal portrait of the city of decaying beauty and art:

> '...une nuit d'eté, les voici à Ravenne,
> a l'aise entre deux draps, chez deux centaines de punaises;
> la sueur estivale, et une forte odeur de chienne.
> Ils restent sur le dos écartant les genoux
> de quatre jambes molles tout gonflées de morsures.(...)
> On relève le drap pour mieux égratigner.
> Moins d'une lieue d'ici est Saint Apollinaire
> en Classe, basilique connue des amateurs
> de chapitaux d'acanthe que tournoie le vent'

In its inexorable decay, Ravenna's ruins and marshes emanate a 'bad smell mixed with glory, the smell of the death of a city which has lost all of its beauty'. This is the Ravenna described by Louis Mc Niece, a city which prefigures the corruption and degradation of our century, doomed to fade without beauty or memory. It is also the Ravenna of *Deserto rosso,* the movie by M. Antonioni, which has almost become a filmic archetype. And many other examples could be added to this list.

When the end (of a century, of life, of the world) is near at hand, the sense of time undergoes unforeseeable metamorphoses, and history – as Jean Baudrillard points out in his recent *L'illusion de la fin*[10] – drastically reverses its course. It dilates beyond measure, and so minutes turn into hours, and hours turn into days, in the vain attempt to postpone the end. Or, time may contract as if flirting with the impending disaster accelerating the end, in order to escape a condition in which it would be useless to survive.

> 'It is the end, the end, a dying love's dance;
> no more pretence, sweet friend; it is the end, the end.'

Arthur Symons languidly writes. And W.B. Yeats apocalyptically proclaims: 'After us, the Savage God !'.

Oscar Wilde, 'divine Oscar' in Harold Bloom's words, my favorite dandy of the *fin de siècle,* tried to play a game with time, though unsuccessfully, by idealizing youth. However, the inexorable movement forward of life, progress and the future destroyed his illusions.

> 'Suddenly, Time stopped for him. Yes: that blind, slow-breathing thing crawled no more, and horrible thoughts – Time being dead – raced numbly on in front, and dragged a hideous future from its grave, and showed it to him' (*Dorian Gray,* chapt, XIV).[11]

It is a future which appears to emerge from the past, thus completing a temporal circle which, far from being enchanted *kairos,* evokes *kronos*, the dreadful father who devours his children.

* * *

Fin de siècle can be taken in its literal meaning, as the longing for the end of a limited, human concept of time (a century, for example) as opposed to the eternity of art; or, the term can be taken in a historical sense to indicate the end of the 19th century, a century like other centuries. But, if we are to trust Dorian Gray's words, it could mean the end of the world, both as an existential and historical concept: 'Fin de siècle, Fin du globe. I wish it were Fin du globe – said Dorian with a sigh – Life is a great disappointement'.

A final word on the idea of apocalypse, seen not merely as an end, but as a new beginning, as a renewal of poetic energy and hope, can be derived once more from D'Annunzio, and again is

Ravenna which represents a splendid fount of Ecumenism, an eternal city of beauty. Just as the vision described by J.L. Borges in his *Story of the Warrior and the Captive*, where the city is evocated like a fairytale castle:

> 'The wars bring him to Ravenna and there he sees something he has never seen, or has not seen in such a plenitude. He sees the day and cypresses and marble. He sees a whole that is complex and yet without disorder; he sees a city, an organism composed of statues, temples, gardens, dwellings, stairways, urns, capitals, of regular and open spaces. None of these artifacts impresses him as beautiful; they move him as we might be moved today by a complex machine of intelligence. Perhaps it is enough for him to see a single arch, with an incomprehensible inscription in eternal Roman letters. Abruptly, that revelation, the City, blinds him and renews him'. [12]

And now from D'Annunzio:

> 'Ravenna, glauca notte rutilante d'oro,
> sepolcro di violenti custodito
> da terribili sguardi,
> cupa caverna grave d'un incarco
> imperiale, ferrea, construtta
> di quel ferro onde il Fato
> è invincibile, spinta dal naufragio
> ai confini del mondo,
> sopra la riva estrema !
> Ti loderò pel funebre tesoro
> ove ogni orgoglio lascia un diadema.
> Ti loderò pel mistico presagio
> che è nella tua selva quando trema,
> che è nella selvaggia febbre in che tu ardi.
> O prisca, un altro eroe tenderà l'arco,
> dal tuo deserto verso l'infinito.
> O testimone, un altro eroe farà di tutta
> la tua sapienza il suo poema'. (da *Le Laudi*) [13]

Notes

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4. A. Symons, *Cities*, London, Dent, 1903.
5. E. De Amicis, *Costantinopoli*, Treves, Milano 1877.

6. D.J. Gordon and J. Fletcher, 'Byzantium' in J. Unterecker (ed. by), *Yeats. A Collection of Critical Essays,* Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs 1982.
7. W.B. Yeats, *Collected Poems,* McMillan, London 1985.
8. H. James, *Italian Hours,* New York, The Ecco Press, (1909) - 1987.
9. G. D'Annunzio, *Laudi, Elettra,* Mondadori, Milano 1964.
10. J. Baudrillard, *L'illusion de la fin,* Galileé, Paris 1992.
11. O. Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* in op. cit. In these very pages, Wilde praises Venice's romantic atmosphere, through the lines of T. Gautier's *Emaux et Camées.*
12. J.L. Borges, *A Personal Anthology*, Grove Press, New York 1967.
13. G. D'Annunzio, *op. cit.*.

UNGARETTI E BLAKE

AGOSTINO LOMBARDO

Come mi è accaduto anni fa, commentando a Urbino la sua memorabile traduzione dei *40 Sonetti di Shakespeare* (pubblicata nel 1946, Milano, Mondadori), anche ora alla lettura, allo studio, all'analisi, sempre si sovrappone e s'intreccia il ricordo delle lezioni leopardiane da lui tenute nelle aule romane, negli anni poveri eppure splendidi e tersi dell'immediato dopoguerra – i suoi grandi gesti, i suoi gridi, i suoi punti alla lavagna, quel suo rapporto anche fisico con la poesia, quel suo essere tutt'uno con essa, che certo vivono in ciascuno di noi allievi. Lezione incalcolabile per il nostro lavoro di critici come la sua poesia lo è stata ed è per quello dei poeti.

E tuttavia non sono il peso, e la gratitudine, di quel ricordo ma più oggettive ragioni a farmi dire, preliminarmente, che l'esperienza del 'traduttore' Ungaretti – traduttore di Shakespeare e Blake, come di Gongora, Racine, Mallarmé – non è solo uno strumento prezioso per penetrare nella sua poesia ma costituisce di per sè un *valore* autonomo. Col che non intendo suggerire che Ungaretti si valga di questi testi come di un'occasione per costruire, partendo da essi, una propria composizione, trasformando la traduzione in 'imitazione'. L'atteggiamento dell'Ungaretti traduttore è di assoluta umiltà: protagonista non è il traduttore-poeta ma il testo da tradurre. Sono versioni, le sue, fedelissime, di cui si potranno discutere certe soluzioni ma sempre muovendo dalla consapavolezza che nessuna di esse nasce dall'aspirazione a sovrapporsi o a 'rifare' Shakespeare o appunto Blake bensì dall'intento di individuare ed evocare ogni particolare – di tono, di ritmo, di suono, di significato – del testo tradotto. Il *valore,* in effetti, nasce proprio dall'umiltà di Ungaretti e dalla centralità che assume il testo – nasce dalla ricerca di fedeltà che qui si compie, dal processo stesso del tradurre che qui si attua.

Processo che è in parte simile a quello che sottende il lavoro del traduttore che non sia poeta. Se mi è lecito riferirmi alla mia personale esperienza di traduttore-artigiano, non v'è dubbio che

alcune motivazioni siano comuni: così la necessità, che è sempre alla base del tradurre, di operare una mediazione, la nostalgia di un linguaggio (quello dell'originale) di cui evocare almeno l'eco – una 'ombra di grandezza', come scrive Keats; la coscienza dei complessi e sottili rapporti che si debbono istituire nel momento stesso in cui la lingua originale viene sostituita da un'altra lingua e la traduzione si innesta in un'altra cultura letteraria, si rivolge ad un altro pubblico (che è poi *sempre* contemporaneo). Da tutto questo anche il traduttore-artigiano è motivato, così come dal senso del compromesso inevitabile in cui una traduzione consiste (scrive lo stesso Ungaretti a proposito delle sue versioni shakespeariane: 'una traduzione è sempre il risultato d'un compromesso tra due spiriti'), della vera e propria impossibilità di trasferire totalmente in un'altra lingua l'originale (e invero sono sempre valide le parole del *Convivio*: 'E però sappia ciascuno che nulla cosa per legame musaico armonizzato si può de la sua loquela in altra trasmutare senza rompere tutta sua dolcezza e armonia').

Ma poi ha luogo, io credo, una divaricazione. E non nel senso ripeto, che Ungaretti faccia del testo da tradurre un pretesto. Ma nel senso che alcune delle sue motivazioni sono strettamente connesse al suo mestiere di poeta e che il suo tradurre, perciò, si identifica con la ricerca di alcuni elementi costitutivi di quel testo in quanto elementi costitutivi del generale linguaggio della poesia. Così, per quel che riguarda Shakespeare, tra le molte ragioni che rendono quella traduzione importante, v'è certo la ricerca compiuta sul verso, e che da un lato consente a Ungaretti di strappare il sonetto shakespeariano dal clima in cui le precedenti traduzioni italiane lo avevano immerso, e imbalsamato, dall'altro di collocarlo in una zona espressiva che, pur nei limiti invalicabili di una traduzione, è assai più vicina, in tutti i sensi, anche quello della qualità poetica, all'originale. Per far ciò Ungaretti rifiuta l'endecasillabo (e la rima) – rifiuto che troviamo anche nelle versioni di Blake – e sceglie 'regolarissimi settenari e novenari, o novenari e settenari, oppure endecasillabi e quinari e endecasillabi'. Un verso dunque ('corrispondente a circa sedici sillabe italiane') che mentre lascia all'italiano la propria libertà e autenticità si presta però assai più dell'endecasillabo sia all'esigenza di suggerire il ritmo del *blank verse* inglese (il pentametro giambico non rimato) sia a quella di non caricarlo di troppo ovvie, e costrittive, assonanze letterarie italiane. Si veda il sonetto 7:

Quel tempo in me vedere puoi dell'anno
Quando o già niuna foglia, o rara gialla in sospeso, rimane
Ai rami che affrontando il freddo tremano,
Cori spogliati rovinati dove gli uccelli cantarono, dolci ...

E mi par chiaro che la ricerca del verso, e *sul* verso, ha condotto sia a una traduzione tanto suggestiva quanto fedele sia all'enucleazione di certi aspetti del discorso poetico (le 'pause', per esempio, i 'silenzi' propri di Ungaretti) che danno alla traduzione il valore 'autonomo' di cui si diceva. E lo stesso può dirsi del sonetto 19, dove la ricerca sul verso porta allo studio del tessuto sonoro della poesia. Si legga l'inglese:

Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood...

E l'italiano:

O famelico Tempo, la zampa del leone corrodi
E fa' che la terra divori la propria genitura,
I denti aguzzi strappa dalla mascella delle tigri
E ardi la fenice longeva e consumale il sangue.

Una poesia come questa si lega per vari aspetti a una delle più grandi liriche di William Blake 'The Tiger' la cui versione è inclusa nel volume mondadoriano *Visioni di William Blake,* comparso nel 1965. Ecco le strofe iniziali:

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

Tigre! Tigre! divampante fulgore
Nelle foreste della notte,
Quale fu l'immortale mano o l'occhio
Ch'ebbe la forza di formare
La tua agghiacciante simmetria?

In quali abissi o in quali cieli
Accese il fuoco dei tuoi occhi?
Sopra quali ali osa slanciarsi?
E quale mano afferra il fuoco?

(pp. 66 – 69)

Non sto a illustrare la straordinaria bellezza di questa poesia con cui, intorno al 1794, si apre la stagione del romanticismo inglese. Quel che vorrei far notare, oltre a certi rapporti sonori col sonetto appena citato, è l'importanza che nella traduzione assume la parola. Se l'oggetto della ricerca shakespeariana di Ungaretti è sopratutto il verso, qui è appunto la parola. Così leggiamo, del resto, nel 'Discorsetto del traduttore': 'È nel miracolo della parola che non è facile trovare il rivale di Blake. È quel miracolo che m'indusse verso il '30 a tradurre Blake. M'accinsi alla traduzione non a caso, come non m'accingo mai a simili lavori a caso. William Blake è l''ispirato', se mai ce ne fu uno...e l'affrontai per reagire a me stesso in un periodo nel quale mi pareva d'essermi ingolfato troppo in problemi di tecnica. Era un fare male i calcoli, e anche il tradurre canti di Blake fu per me fonte di nuove difficoltà tecniche da superare' (p. 12). Sulla difficoltà di Blake di fatto scrive fin dal principio del 'Discorsetto': 'Lavoro alle traduzioni di Blake da più di sette lustri. È un poeta difficile, sempre anche quando è semplice come l'acqua. Ma c'è poeta o un qualsiasi uomo che parli, che sia nel suo dire interamente decifrabile?' (p. 11). Ma se ogni poeta è difficile, Blake lo è in particolar modo (nella sua apparente semplicità) perchè il suo sforzo, il suo 'miracolo', sta nel recupero 'dell'originale innocenza espressiva'. Leggiamo ancora: 'Il miracolo, come facevo a dimenticarmene, è frutto, me l'aveva insegnato Mallarmé, di memoria. A furia di memoria si torna, o ci si può illudere di tornare, innocenti. ... E il miracolo è parola: per essa il poeta si può arretrare nel tempo sino dove lo spirito umano risiedeva nella sua unità e nella sua verità, non ancora caduto in frantumi, preda del Male, esule per vanità, sbriciolato nelle catene e nel tormento delle infinite fattezze materiali del tempo' (pp. 13 – 14). Che sono affermazioni non solo suggestive ma di grande

interesse critico, nel loro individuare il senso profondo non solo dell'esperienza di Blake ma della poesia romantica inglese – senso che la rende una svolta decisiva nella storia della poesia. E invero la sua essenza (e grandezza) non sta soltanto, io credo, nella riscoperta della vita individuale e sentimentale ma, assai di più, nella creazione di un linguaggio poetico – quello del 'visionario' Blake, appunto, del *Preludio* di Wordsworth, della *Ballata* di Coleridge, delle *Odi* di Shelley e Keats – che non è più uno strumento ma un fine, non un modo per raggiungere gli assoluti cui sempre la poesia tende ma esso stesso un assoluto (scrive Blake: 'Vedere un mondo in un granello di sabbia. E un cielo in un fiore selvatico. Tenere l'infinito nel palmo della mano. E l'Eternità in un'ora'. La poesia romantica non descrive, o afferma, o compiace. La poesia romantica *è*. Forzando al massimo (come Blake, come Mallarmé, come Ungaretti) le possibilità della parola, non cerca di narrare, cantare o essere una metafora dell'universo ma di *essere* l'universo. Non cerca di condurre all'assoluto, a ciò che possiamo chiamare il sacro, ma di *essere* il sacro. Ed è per questo che fa paura (Eliot, citato da Ungaretti, parla della 'sgradevolezza della grande poesia'): la paura che scorgiamo nelle parole conclusive del 'Discorsetto':

> Breve, in Blake – Laocoonte, mago blasfemo per amore di sacro, creatura sgomenta nel baratro d'una prova abortita d'iniziazione – la bellezza d'anima di uomini che speravano giustizia schiacciati dalla passione, proietta nel nostro intimo la visione d'infanzia pura che si diffondeva dalla loro ira, palese, scatenata o soffocata.

Tradurre Blake, cercare la parola italiana che lo esprima, significa dunque per Ungaretti tentare di rinnovare quel 'miracolo', andare a propria volta (con la memoria) verso l'unità, l'innocenza originaria, l''infanzia pura' che Blake con la parola ricercava. Ed è fin superfluo suggerire quanto questa ricerca sia sostanza dell'arte stessa di Ungaretti, della *sua* ricerca poetica – in questo senso Blake gli è poeta più vicino di Shakespeare, e l'esperienza di cui ci occupiamo va immessa, più di come non sia stato fatto, nella *storia* di Ungaretti.

A dimostrarlo, sta l'eccezionale tensione di ogni pagina tradotta; la presenza, nelle versioni delle poesie, di una struttura compositiva che non tende tanto a tradurre, a riecheggiare il verso blakiano, quanto a creare uno spazio intorno alle singole parole, sì che esse,

pur 'tradotte', rivelino il loro peso, la loro pregnanza, la loro aspirazione a quell'origine. Si pensi appunto a 'The Tiger'; oppure ad una poesia apparentemente così semplice come 'Non cercare mai' (Never seek to tell thy Love) (pp. 74 – 77):

> Non cercare mai di dire il tuo amore,
> Amore che non può essere mai detto;
> Il gentile soffio si muove
> In silenzio, invisibile.
>
> Dissi il mio amore, già dissi il mio amore,
> Il cuore le apersi;
> Tremando, gelando, in orrenda tema,
> Ah! lei, lei se ne andò.
>
> Appena mi lasciò
> Un viandante passò,
> In silenzio, invisibile,
> Gli bastò un sospiro, la prese.

dove ad esempio l'aggiunta di 'già' nel quinto verso ottiene l'effetto, allentando e quasi estenuando il ritmo, di dare straordinaria estensione al 'cuore' del sesto verso, che sopperisce per via di silenzio, si vorrebbe dire, a un 'tutto il mio cuore' ('all my heart') che Ungaretti non traduce. O si legga 'Non sono più dolci le gioie del mattino' ('Are not the joys of morning sweeter') (pp. 118 – 119), dove basta l'ungarettiano 'predino' (per 'rob') a restituire in italiano la violenza blakiana:

> Non sono più dolci le gioie del mattino
> Di quelle della notte?
> Hanno forse vergogna della luce
> Le gioie gagliarde della gioventù?
>
> L'età e le malattie silenziose predino
> Le vigne nella notte;
> Ma chi di gioventù gagliarda brucia
> Ne colga i frutti davanti alla luce.

O ancora l''Argomento' del 'Matrimonio del Cielo e dell'Inferno' ('The Marriage of Heaven and Hell') (pp. 196 – 201) dove la sostituzione di quattro versi ai due versi blakiani crea intorno alle singole parole quel vuoto che 'traduce' lo sgomento che Blake ottiene soprattutto col suono:

Rintrah roars and shakes his fires in the burden'd air;
Hungry clouds swag on the deep.

Rugge Rintrah e i suoi fuochi sommuove
Nell'appesantirsi dell'aria;
Fameliche pendono
Nuvole sull'abisso.

E prosegue, Ungaretti, con versi fedelissimi che sono peraltro davvero anche suoi:

Mite una volta per pericoloso sentiero
Compiva l'uomo giusto il suo tragitto
Nella valle di morte.
Dove crescono spini hanno gambo le rose
E sopra landa brulla
L'ape canta.

Né gli effetti sono diversi nella traduzione delle prose. Ungaretti traduce anche brani delle 'visioni' (così del resto s'intitola il volume) mitologiche e cosmologiche di Blake, il quale crea, come si sa, e come farà Yeats, una propria mitologia che si alimenta di ogni possibile fonte sacra e profana. Di essa però Ungaretti coglie il significato più profondo e duraturo, che va trovato sul piano della visionarietà, della capacità della parola di creare (come fa il segno grafico dell'incisore Blake, di cui giustamente il volume riproduce molti esempi) un mondo 'altro':

> Per gradi si svelò ai nostri occhi l'Abisso infinito, rosseggiante come il fumo d'una città incendiata; sotto di noi, a una distanza immensa, c'era il sole, nero e tuttavia splendente, intorno ad esso solchi di fuoco dove s'aggiravano enormi ragni, rampando dietro le loro prede, che volavano, o meglio nuotavano, nell'infinita profondità, sotto le più terribili forme di animali scaturiti dalla corruzione...(p. 239).

Forte della nuova, 'romantica' concezione della poesia, di una inaudita fiducia nei poteri dell'immaginazione (che per Blake è 'il mondo reale ed eterno di cui questo universo vegetale non è che una debole ombra'), Blake, e il poeta romantico, trasforma la pagina – come Shakespeare la sua O di legno – nell'universo, e incessantemente muove, con la parola (e con il disegno), verso altri mondi da lui stesso creati. E se altri poeti viaggiano verso luoghi reali che diventano luoghi dell'immaginazione, il gran viaggio di

Blake è quello del 'viaggatore mentale' di una sua poesia ('The Mental Traveller', pp. 182 – 191), un viaggio in un universo verbale e figurativo che aspira ad essere l'universo reale: quello dell'origine, dell'innocenza originaria.

Tradurre Blake, e tradurlo con tanta strenua attenzione alla singola parola, al suo significato, al suo suono, alla sua capacità evocativa, significa allora, per Ungaretti, calarsi tutto nella visione di Blake, nell'universo linguistico che il poeta crea come se la poesia non fosse esistita prima, come se fosse il Verbo emerso dal Caos. Tradurre significa riprodurre, rievocare, rivivere (e qui di nuovo ha luogo la divaricazione tra il traduttore-poeta e il traduttore-artigiano) questo sforzo disperato, luciferino dell'artista che rimette in discussione l'intero linguaggio della poesia (e dell'uomo). E certo si comprende perchè Ungaretti (che pure non è vicino alla cultura inglese quanto lo è, ad esempio, Montale) fosse così attratto da Blake (anche filtrato da Mallarmé). Quella messa in discussione era stata anche la sua. Suo quel costruire non una cosmologia, certo, ma un universo linguistico 'nuovo'. Suo quel fare il deserto intorno alla parola perchè tornasse a *essere* .Tradurre Blake significava insomma anche rifare il proprio percorso. Non solo, ma rifare quello dell'artista, del poeta in assoluto, e ciò perchè il senso ultimo dell'esperienza di Blake era appunto questo; rinnovare sulla pagina il rapporto del poeta con la parola, mettere in scena il dramma da cui sempre la poesia nasce, ricrearlo in tutta la sua purezza, essenzialità e tragicità.

È questo dramma, questa tragedia, che a sua volta Ungaretti mette in scena, con una traduzione che come si diceva trova la sua autonomia (e il suo legame con la poesia stessa di Ungaretti) nella sua fedeltà non solo al testo ma al processo creativo che lo sottende e determina, di esso individuando, e rappresentando, la motivazione più profonda. E in esso innestando, poi, la messa in scena di un altro dramma, che è quello che ha a protagonisti il traduttore-poeta e la parola con cui tradurre. Un tradurre che sembra animato dall'utopia del compito vertiginoso che Walter Benjamin, nel suo saggio famoso, affida al traduttore: quello di mostrare nella traduzione il rapporto più intimo delle lingue tra loro, di far maturare nella traduzione 'il *seme,* la *luce* della pura lingua'.

THE VALUE OF LITERARY CURIOSITY: GIUSEPPE TOMASI DI LAMPEDUSA'S *LETTERATURA INGLESE*

IAIN HALLIDAY

Letteratura inglese was published in two volumes by Mondadori in 1990 and 1991, but, as is often the way with books received as presents, some considerable time passed by before I actually read it; and, as is always the way with books that one owns but has never read, I began mysteriously to formulate ideas about the work in the interim. This paper arises directly from the discrepancies between what I knew and felt about *Letteratura inglese* before that reading and what I knew and felt after it. On the one hand, for example, I knew from David Gilmour's biography, *The Last Leopard,* that the thousand-page manuscript of the lessons on English literature given by the author of *Il gattopardo* between 1953 and 1954 constituted '... the most important document on his life that exists'.[1] While on the other hand friends and colleagues who had read the books often relegated them to the status of a mere 'literary curiosity', lacking in sufficient accurate detail to be considered a useful history for the student of English literature and written in a too-personal style that excludes any objective value.

A brief consideration of the history of the work does everything to reinforce the reductive 'literary curiosity' view. In the early 1950s Lampedusa's largely solitary life in post-war Palermo began to change with the arrival of several literary-minded young people in his limited social and family circle. This brief quotation from the second volume of the work quite straightforwardly describes the extent of that almost hermitic existence:

> Io sono una persona che sta molto sola; delle mie sedici ore di veglia quotidiane, dieci almeno sono passate in solitudine.[2]

That solitude was filled with reading and, eventually, creative writing in these the last three years of his life. Lampedusa truly was a man of letters in the original meaning of the term. His

aristocratic background afforded him an independent income, albeit a declining one, and he was in no way a professional literary pundit as most twentieth-century men of letters are and have been. In many ways Lampedusa himself, like his *somma creazione* Don Fabrizio in *Il gattopardo,* was an anachronism. In any case, it is easy to understand why this solitary, childless, literary man in his mid-fifties should have enjoyed the company of young people who shared his passion for reading. As the direct result of a suggestion from Lampedusa's wife, two of these young people in particular – the aspiring academic Francesco Orlando and Lampedusa's cousin Gioacchino Lanza, later to become his adopted son – became his principal pupils in a series of informal talks or lessons on English language and literature.

The language component, however, soon gave way to consideration of Lampedusa's first love – literature. The talks were prepared in the afternoons before the lessons, which were held, three times a week, at six in the evening in Lampedusa's home.[3] The teacher himself was only too well aware of the fact that these were informal lessons and he never regarded them as being for publication. For example, in the following extract from his self-confessedly boring consideration of the English eighteenth-century political scene, he makes the point with some considerable humour for the benefit of his pupils:

> Se questo fosse un libro vi inviterei a saltar qualche pagina. Poiché si tratta di lettura, non posso che raccomandarvi di addormentarvi per un po'. Vi avvertirò quando bisognerà che vi risvegliate.[4]

Both the humour and the relaxed conversational discourse are extremely characteristic, and some consideration will be given to these qualities in the course of the present discussion, but these amusing stylistic aspects must not be allowed to distract here from an important fact – Lampedusa never had publication in mind in preparing the work and, since it was published posthumously, he never had any opportunity of revising the manuscript for publication with the advice of a professional editor. *Letteratura inglese* has thus been published in book form almost forty years after having been written as something completely different. Few are the books that must contend with such a temporal and conceptual hiatus between origination and publication.

This brings me to make another point in mitigation against the (in my opinion) mistaken classification of *Letteratura inglese* as a mere literary curiosity. This gap of forty years has witnessed unprecedented growth and development in the profession of literary criticism and theory – we have gone through so many isms in the past four decades, all of which are a far cry from Lampedusa's subjective, reflective concerns. Understandably, contemporary readers may find his approach lacking in sophistication. But to do this is in itself to commit a sin against the very shibboleth of objectivity that has been the foundation of many – although not the most recent – contemporary literary theories.

To accuse Lampedusa of a lack of literary sophistication is to impose an anachronistic point of view on a subject that I have just defined as being anachronistic in itself. But how could this man of letters have approached the job in hand in any other way given his time, and, equally important, given his place? The first effects of the New Criticism and Phenomenology and the Geneva School were surely being felt on both sides of the Atlantic by the mid 1950s, but I doubt if much news of these new approaches to the study of literature had reached Palermo. Names such as William Empsom, I.A. Richards, John Crowe Ransom, Cleanth Brooks and Jean Starobinski are conspicuously absent from Lampedusa's discussions – even a search for the name of F.R. Leavis, whose humanist scrutiny of literature would seem to be more akin to Lampedusa's own techniques, proves to be a vain one. Thus the question of whether we are to berate Lampedusa for his lack of theoretical concern or sympathize with him for his cultural isolation in provincial Palermo must be answered. In this regard it is interesting to note that Benedetto Croce receives only one tangential mention, while Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini do not warrant even that. The problem – for the moment I am assuming that Lampedusa's lack of critical sophistication is a problem – would seem to lie with the author himself rather than with his circumstances.

Another related point is that Lampedusa's Anglophilia appears to have been stubbornly British, a great limitation if we consider what was happening in English letters in the postwar years. His gratuitous and commonplace dislike of the United States – a country he never visited and whose literature he does not seem to have

read at all, if we exclude the two naturalized Englishmen Henry James and T.S. Eliot – is expressed clearly in the lesson on Charles Dickens where *Martin Chuzzlewit* is discussed:

> *Chuzzlewit* nella sua parte americana ci dà l'impressione di un'opera di Swift; sembrano le note di viaggio di un esploratore capitato in una terra incognita abitata da pazzi. Eppure ogni dato è esatto; e a quel che ne possiamo giudicare noi, rassomiglia maledettamente anche agli Stati Uniti di oggi.[5]

How authoritative, how reassuring that 'ogni dato è esatto' is to read. Unfortunately the truth is that had Lampedusa himself been a more careful critic and a less creative writer then there would have been fewer *dati inesatti* in *Letteratura inglese*. Or, more kindly, had Lampedusa lived just a few years more – long enough to have enjoyed the phenomenal publishing success of *Il gattopardo* – *Letteratura inglese* would have had a very different fate. A professional editor working with Lampedusa would have exploited the potential of the existing manuscript, using it as a first draft and preparing it for publication with the concern for accuracy and method that is so plainly lacking in the original.

One great literary critic and theorist, however, is discussed at length in *Letteratura inglese,* undoubtedly because he also happened to be a truly great creative writer and certainly not because he also happened to be an American. The long lesson on T.S. Eliot shows that Lampedusa was not averse to consideration of literary theory where there was a direct link to literary practice.

Regarding literary practice, it has to be noted that Lampedusa's humour, sometimes self-deprecating, sometimes sardonic, occasionally bordering on the facetious, is integral to *Letteratura inglese* and does much to enliven parts of his discourse that might otherwise be dull and unreadable. (Readability, after all, is a favourite concern, almost obsessively so, throughout the work.) Take this potted sketch of Shakespeare's parents for example, which follows an introduction in which we are told that the Bard's grandfather was hanged as a robber:

> Il padre cominciò come contadino, divenne poi mercante di cuoio e di legno, ebbe un momento la carica di sindaco, dopo di che le sue condizioni economiche periclitarono. La madre, Mary Arden, era di migliore famiglia, sempre rurale, da lungo tempo stabilita sul luogo e senza impiccati in casa.[6]

Still on Shakespeare, on *Titus Andronicus* to be precise, and following a vivid – some might say overly imaginative – description of the rough nature of London's Elizabethan theatregoers, Lampedusa suggests that:

> *Tito Andronico* ha dovuto piacer molto all'eletto pubblico del quale abbiamo testé trattato. Perché non sono né un pirata, né una donna di malaffare, dico subito che è illeggibile. Sono sicuro che dai Campi Elisi Will mi approva.[7]

Following a highly and unusually critical discussion of *All's Well That Ends Well,* Lampedusa simply added, 'Ma si vede che son di cattivo umore. Dunque, basta.'

The point to be made here, however, is of course that no good writer ever uses humour simply for humour's sake – there is always a purpose in the smiles and the laughter that come with good writing, even if humour has always been an underrated commodity in Italian letters as Luigi Pirandello pointed out in his long essay on the subject:

> Nessuno di quelli che da noi si sono occupati di umorismo ... si è mai sognato di chiamare umorista il Boccaccio per quelle molte sue novelle che ridono...e anzi il primo degli umoristi è ritenuto invece in Inghilterra pe' suoi *Canterbury Tales* il Chaucer.[8]

The only quibble I have with Pirandello is that in this essay he makes it appear too easy for humorous writers in English to be taken seriously: Chaucer and Dickens have long-established reputations, but some contemporary writers, such as the American Kurt Vonnegut, still attract a lot of literary flak for their use of humour. And if it is difficult for a contemporary writer to be funny and yet be taken seriously while writing in English, it is well nigh an impossibility for contemporary Italian writers. The condescending attitude identified by Pirandello in 1908 persists. The situation is improving, however, and the names of Umberto Eco and Aldo Busi spring to mind: one a serious writer capable of making people smile usefully even when dealing with the most abstruse material, the other something of a literary clown who manages to make readers think through the laughter.

Lampedusa's own thoughts on the subject of humour in Italian literature are provided in *Letteratura inglese:*

La letteratura italiana è la più seria delle letterature. Un libro che sia nello stesso tempo ben scritto e umoristico si può quasi dire non esista. Siamo costretti a fingere di sbellicarci per l'umorismo con il quale è disegnato Don Abbondio e a trovare Ariosto divertentissimo.[9]

Which is strong, perhaps exaggerated criticism indeed.

Lampedusa, himself, however, did much to correct this situation with his single novel, for humour is one of the key qualities that keep the narrative moving in *Il gattopardo*. In chapter four, for example, we have the appearance of one of those minor characters who function as foils to the overwhelming nature of Don Fabrizio's character and, in this specific case, to the overwhelming nature of the island's character. The arrival at Donnafugata of the Piedmontese Cavaliere Aimone Chevalley di Monterzuolo on official government business immediately following unification in 1860, is full of comic potential and translates beautifully across more than a century to the present day:

A cena mangiò bene per la prima volta da quando aveva toccato le sponde sicule, e l'avvenenza delle ragazze, l'austerità di padre Pirrone e le grandi maniere di don Fabrizio lo convinsero che il palazzo di Donnafugata non era l'antro del bandito Capraro e che da esso sarebbe probabilmente uscito vivo.[10]

Without such delicate touches of humour the novel would certainly be unbearable in its pessimism.

From a critical point of view much has been written about *Il gattopardo,* but for a true appreciation of the novel's worth one can do no better than return to Giorgio Bassani – a writer then working as an editor for the Milan-based publisher Feltrinelli – who in 1958 decided that it should be published. This is a brief quotation from the original preface:

Ampiezza di visione storica unita a un'acutissima percezione della realtà sociale e politica dell'Italia contemporanea, dell'Italia di adesso; delizioso senso dell'umorismo; autentica forza lirica; perfetta sempre, a tratti incantevole, realizzazione espressiva: tutto ciò, a mio avviso, fa di questo romanza un'opera d'eccezione. Una di quelle opere, appunto, a cui si lavora o ci si prepara per tutta una vita.[11]

This must be an almost unique occasion whereby a novel has fulfilled and actually surpassed, both critically and commercially, the pre-publication 'hype' of its publisher. There is no doubt that Lampedusa's use of humour is an important ingredient in that success.

My appreciation of Lampedusa's humour in *Letteratura inglese,* however, is not totally without reserve. On occasion in his search for comic effect he is too fond of vaunting his erudition, interestingly enough a charge he levels against others, particularly critics, several times in the work. Here in the discussion of Shakespeare's sonnets for example:

> Il 56 è uno dei più espliciti, un po' troppo; vedo che vi avevo scritto come epigrafe 'dans cette pose nonchalante où t'a surprise le plaisir' di Baudelaire e avevo ragione. [12]

Am I being overly squeamish about – or even envious of – Lampedusa's taste and ability for revelling in his own learning? Not in this particular instance, I feel, for the discussion on the sonnets soon degenerates into the bathos of unintentional comedy:'Il 62 non mi piace. Il 63 ha i versi 4 e 8 adorabili'. Lampedusa may well redeem himself with a charming, 'Ma non è possibile esaminare i *Sonetti* uno per uno,' but even the reduced 'Shakespeare by Numbers' that follows touches the absurdly reductive at moments.

The sardonic humour can also be less than charitable at times. Following discussion of the minor eighteenth-cum-nineteenth-century novelists William Beckford, Maria Edgeworth, 'Monk' Lewis and Ann Radcliffe, he concludes with, 'Laviamoci le mani e proseguiamo'. [13] Shortly later he corrects himself following an excess of critical spirit and a lapse in expression in dealing with the work of the Victorian novelist and politician Edward Bulwer-Lytton, two of whose novels are classified as 'delle porcate':

> Bulwer-Lytton era un gran signore che scriveva per suo piacere, se non sempre per il nostro. [14]

As a self-correction and a form of apology this facetious remark is fine, except that it would also appear to be inaccurate: Bulwer-Lytton's professional writing career began out of financial necessity rather than recreational impulse.

But again I must return to the point I made previously regarding the fact that Lampedusa never conceived these lessons as being for publication and never had the opportunity of preparing them for print. How many lapses of style and uncalled for remarks do we all edit out, or have edited out, of our own works?

Another mitigating circumstance is the nature of the material Lampedusa was dealing with and the instruments he had available to do the job. Many of our more recent critical instruments lend themselves very effectively to detailed analysis and dissection of individual texts, or even specific sections of given texts, but most of them are painfully inadequate at best and absurdly reductive at worst if we attempt to apply them to such a demanding, comprehensive topic. The job in hand here – a survey history of English literature – is by its very nature much bigger than the available tools. But for a second let us leave these tools and instruments aside – such concepts belong, after all, to the 'scientific', postwar approach to the study of literature – and switch to a more effective metaphor from Lampedusa himself, used in his introduction to the lessons:

> Un secchiello pieno di acqua di mare non è il mare. Per conoscere il mare occorre sondarlo, navigarlo e rischiare di naufragarvi. Questo sarà compito vostro.[15]

It seems to me that Lampedusa was perfectly aware of the limitations of the exercise and the risks involved in it.

So where exactly is the value in this literary curiosity? Well, both volumes are brimming with comments and observations that come clearly from an aspiring writer, or at least from a critic with an inordinate concern for what it means to be a writer. One example of this writerly, as opposed to the critical or historical point of view comes during the section on Elizabethan theatre in which he discusses the 'explosion' of dramatic works in the period 1588 – 1633, and then proceeds to calculate the number of works of value written therein: 57 is the figure he arrives at, which includes all 37 by Shakespeare, while he decides that the total number of theatrical works written in the period must have been at least 2,000:

> Ognuna delle altre millenovecentoquarantatre rappresenta una speranza di gloria delusa. È orribile il pensarci.[16]

On further thought the fact becomes even more awesome if we consider that Lampedusa probably meant that some 2,000 works were *produced* in the English theatre – at least those authors had their moment of glory, which is more than Lampedusa himself, unpublished as a creative writer in his lifetime, would ever enjoy.

Further proof of just what a writer's writer Lampedusa was in preparing these talks is provided in the following long quotation from his discussion of the less than brilliant and somewhat verbose poet of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Michael Drayton, whose works include a patriotic poem on the battle of Agincourt, in its turn providing for a rather cruel comparison with Shakespeare's *Henry V*:

> È di grande utilità per noi: c'insegna la differenza che corre fra un grande poeta come Shakespeare e un'onesta mediocrità come Drayton e conferma (per me) la mia opinione della grande utilità che si ritrae dalla letteratura dei cattivi poeti e dei cattivi romanzi quale incitamento ad amare i buoni. Per restare a casa nostra, vi consiglierei di leggere (durante un'ora) la *Margherita Pusterla* e le odi di Monti e di passare subito dopo ai *Promessi sposi* e a Foscolo. Vi accorgerete che quelle pagine sulle quali pensiamo con benevolo compiacimento annoiato sono in realtà dei miracoli.[17]

And I think that here we have another useful point that comes directly out of Lampedusa's literary curiosity and his distance from the rarefied atmosphere of institutional learning. It is too easy and too common for teachers of literature and language to concentrate their efforts discussing good writing and it perhaps takes a writer, or at any rate a writerly mind, to remind us that good writing is a rare commodity and that a lot of bad writing was produced, is produced and always will be produced by aspiring and even, occasionally, by established authors.

Lampedusa's use of Italian examples is also a significant point here: I have heard the view expressed that Lampedusa's *esterofilia* actually went as far as an active antipathy towards his own native culture. However, while *Letteratura inglese* is full of critical (and very funny) references to Italian opera for example, on the whole, as in the example just quoted and excepting the earlier quotation on humour, his allusions to Italian literature are extremely positive and his knowledge of the field is exemplary. On the other hand, from the historical point of view it is easy to understand why the author of *The Leopard,* a novel so cogently critical of Sicily in particular and Italy in general, should be considered as some sort of cultural traitor.

My own view is that Lampedusa was perfectly well aware that Don Fabrizio's views of Sicily and Sicilian history – some, but by no means all of which, were Lampedusa's own views – would

offend. I believe Lampedusa actually enjoyed provocation, in written form, and I believe that this proclivity is an important one in a creative writer. To substantiate the point I will now call on someone who I am not sure Lampedusa would approve of, him being an eminent teacher of that most modern of literary subjects, creative writing, and an American to boot. If there is any disagreement between the two then they can quite happily sort it out between themselves, since the American writer and teacher John Gardner went to the Elysian Fields in 1982. Here, then, is a long quotation from John Gardner on the 'storyteller's intelligence':

> Like other kinds of intelligence, the storyteller's is partly natural, partly trained. It is composed of several qualities, most of which, in normal people, are signs of either immaturity or incivility: wit (a tendency to make irreverent connections); obstinacy and a tendency towards churlishness (a refusal to believe what all sensible people know is true); childishness (an apparent lack of mental focus and serious life purpose, a fondness for daydreaming and telling pointless lies, a lack of proper respect, mischievousness, an unseemly propensity for crying over nothing); a marked tendency toward oral or anal fixation or both (the oral manifested by excessive eating, drinking, smoking and chattering; the anal by nervous cleanliness and neatness coupled with a weird fascination with dirty jokes); remarkable powers of eidetic recall, or visual memory (a usual feature of early adolescence and mental retardation); a strange admixture of shameless playfulness and embarrassing earnestness, the latter often heightened by irrationally intense feelings for or against religion; patience like a cat's; a criminal streak of cunning; psychological instability; recklessness, impulsiveness, and improvidence; and finally, an inexplicable and incurable addiction to stories, written or oral, bad or good. Not all writers have exactly these same virtues, of course. Occasionally one finds one who is not abnormally improvident.[18]

John Gardner was being funny, of course, but he was also being deadly serious. If we were to sit down and try to match this description to the known facts of Lampedusa's biography, I think we would find that between seventy and eighty per cent of it fits. For me the great value in *Letteratura inglese* is what it shows of Lampedusa's own literary curiosity, which in its turn is the stuff writers are made of, the somewhat unattractive stuff John Gardner listed.

I am by no means denying the existence of problems regarding *Letteratura inglese,* but for me its main problem lies quite simply in our expectations of it. (The first person plural here is designed

to inlcude all those readers, especially we professionals, who take more than a passing interest in literature.) For us a book with the title *English Literature* suggests an attempt to produce a survey history according to our academic rules. The main problem with literary curiosity is that as both a commodity and as an approach to reading, we do not value it highly. We now prefer literary professionalism.

And if, from the strict point of view of literary history and literary criticism, Lampedusa's *Letteratura inglese* is to be considered a 'disaster' by any reader, then I would ask him or her to reflect on what George Steiner – like Lampedusa a polyglot comparatist – has written regarding the story of the Tower of Babel: he suggests that it was '...both a disaster and – this being the etymology of the word 'disaster' – a rain of stars upon man.'[19]

I am not suggesting that Lampedusa's work carries any such universal impact and importance; what I am suggesting, however, is that as literary disasters go, it is a happy one. The reasons are at least twofold. Firstly, the reading of an unconventional, humorous and anecdotal (even occasionally apocryphal) literary history, with necessary reserve regarding accuracy, is highly refreshing, particularly for those who are in the academic word trade, which I am (almost) sure most of us will agree has a tendency to take itself too seriously at times. Secondly, and most importantly, these two volumes constitute an object lesson in the basic energy and interest necessary for the making of a writer.

* * *

Introductions and conclusions to previously unpublished material by famous, dead authors do not always make the most interesting of reading, but the two volumes of *Letteratura inglese* come supported at either end by two fine pieces of writing by Lampedusa's adopted son, Gioacchino Lanza Lampedusa: the *Introduzione* is very much a personal memoir and a potted biography of Lampedusa; the *Postfazione* on the other hand is a more analytical consideration of the work itself. If I were to be *tomasiano* and extend the incipient metaphor to a simile and say that these two pieces supported *Letteratura inglese* like a pair of fine bookends, I would also be obliged to mention to you that the support offered by the *Postfazione* looks a little precarious, so that

it could quite easily bring the whole work tumbling off the shelf and on to the library floor. In dealing with Lampedusa's transition from *dilettante letterato* to *autore,* he shows us how limited parts of the lessons are actually translations from George Sampson's 1949 edition of the *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* and R.A. Scott James's *Fifty Years of English Literature* of 1953, while in other instances this same material was manipulated and even provided the basis for something that Lanza defines as 'aneddotica romanzata', which we might translate into English as 'tall tales of a literary kind'. These last provide the most damning evidence for criticism of this work on the basis of accuracy, but it has to be said that they also do much for its readability. The following quotation from Lanza's conclusion illustrates just how important these elements were in Lampedusa's progress towards becoming a creative writer:

> Concluso il suo romanzo della letteratura inglese Tomasi intraprese con pari approccio un largo frammento di quella francese, ed in questo tempo elaborava già il progetto del *Gattopardo*. Dalla fiction storico-letteraria a quella vera e propria, senza soluzione di continuità.[20]

And each time I read those two sentences I cannot help but want to add a colloquial phrase that Lampedusa himself was wont to use as a sign of approval at the end of a lesson: 'Il che, del resto, non è poco.'

And so, despite the negative criticisms that have to be levelled at this work, I have enjoyed and appreciated Lampedusa's *Letteratura inglese.* Indeed, I have come to consider the concept of literary curiosity, both in terms of an aberrant book and in terms of the interest that makes us pick up books and read them, and write them, as a *positive* element; even the very faults, the defects in this work become useful because of what they tell me about the man who created it and what they tell me about the process of becoming a writer. Put quite simply, literature is curiosity finely expressed: curiosity regarding life, curiosity regarding language. The best literature, the best stories, are sincere attempts at using that curiosity to understand something of life and language. It also seems to me that when this curiosity extends from one language and culture across to another, as it certainly does in this most Italo-English of contexts, the results are necessarily more magnificent simply because they are one small step towards mending the damage and exploiting the potential of that tremendous and miraculous event at Babel.

Notes

1. David Gilmour, *The Last Leopard: A Life of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa* (1988), Collins Harvill, London 1990, p. 114.
2. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Letteratura inglese, volume secondo: L'Ottocento e il Novecento*,Mondadori, Milan 1991, p. 93.
3. Gilmour, op. cit., pp. 108 – 109.
4. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Letteratura inglese, volume primo: dalle origini al Settecento*, Mondadori, Milan 1990, p. 256.
5. *Letteratura inglese, volume secondo,* p. 163.
6. *Letteratura inglese, volume primo,* p. 31.
7. *ibid.*, p. 54.
8. Luigi Pirandello, *L'umorismo* (1908), Oscar Mondadori, Milano 1992, p. 34.
9. *Letteratura inglese, volume secondo,* p. 306.
10. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il gattopardo* (1958), Feltrinelli 'Universale Economica', Milano 1963, p. 116.
11. *ibid.*, pp. 7 – 8.
12. *Letteratura inglese, volume primo,* p. 44.
13. *Letteratura inglese, volume secondo,* p. 122.
14. *ibid.*, p. 147.
15. *Letteratura inglese, volume primo,* p. 6.
16. *ibid.*, p. 140.
17. *ibid.*, pp. 151 – 152.
18. John Gardner, *On Becoming a Novelist,* Harper & Row, New York 1983, p. 34.
19. George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation,* second edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992, p. xviii.
20. *Letteratura inglese, volume secondo,* p. 491.

THE ROLE OF DIALECTS IN ANTHONY BURGESS'S 'ABBA ABBA'

ARNOLD CASSOLA

For Anthony Burgess, novel writing is not merely an exercise in creativity, unbridled fantasy and intellectual freedom; it can also be one of his ways of getting back at those people who made life difficult for him.[1] For him, novel writing also constitutes a practical way of displaying his fascination for languages and for the power to communicate by means of languages. Carol M. Dix states: '(...) Burgess is one of the few authors writing today in England who makes the fullest use of the raw materials of writing, that is the words themselves. His linguistic explorations or experiments make him at once one of our most adventurous writers; (...)'.[2] Burgess not only makes use of languages which are really existent; he also tends to create new linguistic systems and to make his characters speak these fictitious languages.[3]

His 1977 novel *ABBA ABBA*[4] is no exception to the Burgesian rule regarding multi-language use. Though the novel is obviously written in English, one comes across the odd Latin expression (e.g. *O ave Eva* (page 95); *Aspeeeerges meeeeee* (page 107); *Mater Dolorosa* (page 119)); French or Italian sentences (e.g. *Il faut cultiver notre jardin* (page 8); *Madame, vous ne me verrez plus, etc.* (page 270); *Parla bene il signore la nostra lingua* (page 130); *Come ti chiami ?* (page 36); *Un altro sonetto...Su un altro gatto ?* (page 48)); the Scottish dialect *(Aye, aye, ye rest yon heid the noo, yer grace* (page 36)) as well as a mixture of Franco-Italian (e.g. *Altessa, cara pricipessa, mon ami est souffrant, la sua inamorata non, ne, sa fiancee, vous comprenez, aime un altro* (page 27)). A particular feature of this novel is his creation of not just one, but *two* fictitious or semi-fictitious languages. These are what I have termed *Italish* and *Engliano*. The former is usually characterized by 'incorrectly' written Italian words, such as *Gulielmi* (It. 'Guglielmi'), *Altessa* (page 27) (It. 'Altezza') and *approssimamente* (page 36) (It. 'approssimativamente') or by Italian words with an

English grammatical feature, such as *(they) piacered each other* (page 42)< It. 'piacere' or *he coda'd* (page 51) <It. 'coda'. As for *Engliano,* of which various examples abound, this mainly consists of a more or less word by word rendering of Italian constructions, such as, e.g., *A sonnet on the penis with a tail* (page 15), where Keats is playing on the Italian word 'coda' ('penis' or 'tail'); *Is lettera, misiter* (page 36) (It. 'è una lettera, signore'); *in the Piazza of St. Peter's* (page 40) (It. 'nella Piazza di San Pietro'); *He spoke the Roman* (page 45) (It. 'parlava il romano'), and so forth.

Moreover, *Romanesco,* the dialect which is typical of the inhabitants living in the heart of Rome, in particular Trastevere and Testaccio, also makes its presence felt in *ABBA ABBA*. How is it that dialect is so high up in Burgess's linguistic hierarchy? J.J. Wilson's (alias Burgess's) translation of Belli's sonnet *The Tower* (page 102) sheds some light on the latter's (but also the former's) concept of languages:

The Tower

'We'd like to touch the stars', they cried, and after,
'We've got to touch the stars. But how?' An able-
Brained bastard told them: 'Build the Tower of Babel.
Start now, get moving. Dig holes, sink a shaft. A-
Rise, arouse, raise rafter after rafter,
Get bricks, sand, limestone, scaffolding and cable.
I'm clerk of works, fetch me a chair and table'.
God meanwhile well-nigh pissed himself with laughter.

They'd just got level with the Pope's top floor
When something in the mouths began to give:
They couldn't talk Italian any more.
The project died in this linguistic slaughter.
Thus, if a man said: 'Pass us that there sieve',
His mate would hand him up a pail of water.

Basically, the Tower of Babel had brought about 'a linguistic slaughter' whereby, status-wise, the difference between one language and another, and between language and dialect, becomes negligible. Indeed, Burgess is even clearer about his 'philosophy' on languages when, using Keats as his mouthpiece, he states: 'Dialect, dialect, dialect. What in God's name is the difference between a language and a dialect? I'll tell you. A language waves flags and is blown up by politicians. A dialect keeps to things, things, street smells and street noises, life' (page 78).

Therefore, Burgess's viewpoint is clear: real, fictitious and semi-fictitious languages and dialects are to be considered on the same footing, and deserve the same degree of dignity. Indeed, though languages are certainly a sign of 'life', dialects – which are basically languages shorn off of their status and outward elegance – are even more closely cemented to life ! Therefore, dialect is considered at a par with other linguistic systems in *ABBA ABBA*.

The reader comes across the first example of the *Romanesco* dialect at page 15, when Gulielmi comes up with 'a fine word (...) that you will not find in Dante. It is for the male organ and it is *dumpennente*'. Keats is immediately attracted to this term, which he considers to be a 'delicious' one, probably because of its strong adherence to real 'life', which consequently arouses in the English poet's mind a semantic coarseness whilst evoking a linguistic melodiousness at the same time ('*Duuuuuum* – A pendent pen, dumb and in the dumps' – page 15).

Gulielmi, who is quoting from the dialectal poet Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli, goes on to give a philological explanation on the way the Romanesque dialect operates (Gulielmi actually defines it a 'language') and an etymological one on this word in particular: 'an *n* and a *d* following become a double *n*. *Dumpendente.* The origin of course is the Latin *dum pendebat*' (page 15).

Back home in *Piazza di Spagna* John Keats, unable to find solace in the Italian works of established writers such as Torquato Tasso or Vittorio Alfieri (and this is a clear indication of the 'limited' linguistic powers of standard languages), turns his attention towards the dialectal sonnet of this unknown (to him) Roman poet: 'The poem was in the Roman dialect, not easy to understand, but two know words leered out – *cazzo* and that glorious *dumpendenne* (...)' – page 24). Of course, through the use of these coarse terms which stand for 'penis', the *Romanesco* dialect, unlike standard Italian, manages to set Keats' imagination alight. However, what particularly interests me is this case in Burgess's inconsistency *vis à vis* the spelling of *dumpendenne*. Despite the fact that at page 15 the author, through Gulielmi, had gone to pains to describe the linguistic phenomenon *nd* > *nn,* which is typical of Southern Italian dialects,[5] here Burgess (represented by Keats) is involved in a case of hypercorrectism: conscious of that phenomenon whereby the Latin nasal consonant *n* followed by the voiced dental

consonant *d* becomes a double *n* in Southern dialects, Burgess transforms into *nn* the nexus *nt* (but *t* is an unvoiced dental consonant) in the third and forth syllables rather than the nexus *nd* in the second and third syllables. This lapsus on the author's part goes to show that though Burgess is well documented on the mechanism governing the transformation of *nd* into *nn*, he is not always well conversant with the actual spoken dialect itself. Grammatical rules and theory are one thing, the spoken dialect (or language) is another.

ABBA ABBA comes to an end with the expression *Bona sera*. The fact that Burgess decides to finish off this work, which has introduced the reader to various linguistic systems (English, French, Italian, Franco-Italian, Latin, Milanese, *Romanesco*, etc.), with these two words is, in my opinion, a choice of a certain relevance. Burgess deliberately opts for *romanesco* to end his novel because this is one way of ascertaining the vitality of the dialect: standard Italian *buona sera* would have been more elegant and, maybe, repectable, but in a novel which deals with the coarseness of everyday life, including sickness (many English romantic writers suffered from various maladies) and death (Keats's), dialect is much more akin to 'real life'. Therefore, the diphthong *uo* is reduced to *o, alla romana*, and hence: *bona sera.*

In this novel, toponomastics play an important role in the retention of foreign lexes and pronunciation. It is not always easy to replace original place-names with a 'translation'. In *ABBA ABBA*, Burgess generally opts for the English version in the case of names of big towns or countries, such as Rome, Naples, Florence, Turin, Milan etc., or of nouns or adjectives deriving from them (e.g. Venetian, Milanese, Spanish, Roman, Tuscan, Umbrian, Florentine, etc.). However, when it comes to smaller or specific places, such as churches, streets, squares, etc., Burgess tends to retain the original nomenclature. Thus, he writes of 'the piazza of St. Peter', 'Pincio', the 'Barcaccia', 'San Pietro', 'the Castello', the 'trattoria', the 'Cupola of St. Peter's', the 'Stradone dei Giardini', etc. The author does not even resort to the use of italics when writing these place-names because he actually perceives the Italian language as the *natural* and *spontaneous* way of writing them.

There is just one instance in the novel when dialect is maintained, it being felt as an integral part of the Rome landscape. This is the case of 'the Porto de Ripetta ferry' which first appears at page 40. Unlike, e.g., the *Basilica of Santa Cecilia* (page 19), where Italian *di* is translated into English *of*, or the *Via di Pasquino* (page 48), where Italian *di* is maintained, here Burgess maintains Roman *de* and does not substitute it either with It. *di* or English *of*. As regards the 'Porto de Ripetta ferry', Burgess remains consistent both when this place-name appears again in a prose context (page 67) and in a poetic one (page 100 – *The Ark 1*):

The Ark 1

God said to Noah: 'Listen, er patriarch.
You and your sons, each take his little hatchet,
Lop wood enough to build yourselves an ark
To these specifications. Roof and thatch it
Like Porto de Ripetta ferry. Mark
Me well now. Chase each make of beast and catch it.
And catch a male or female that will match it.
Then with your victuals, zoo and wives, embark.

A flood is going to test your wooden walls
A world's end deluge. Tivoli waterfalls
Will seem an arc of piss in a urinal.
Ride it until you sight a rainbow. Then
Jump in the mud and make things grow again
Till the next world's end. (That one will be final.)'

In this last mentioned poem, the Romanesque element is further strengthened through the presence of the dialected article *er*, when Burgess/Wilson addresses Moses as *er patriarch*. Strangely enough, in the original sonnet written by Belli[6] there is no sign at all of the article in the first line: 'Iddio disse a Nnuovè: 'Ssenti, Patriarca:'.[7] From a semantic point of view, it does not make any sense to add *er*, which stands for English *the*, before 'patriarch' since God is actually addressing Noah in the imperative form. The English translation should therefore read 'Listen, patriarch', or even something like 'Listen, you patriarch', but never 'Listen, the patriarch'.

Therefore, why does Burgess (alias J.J. Wilson) insert the article *er* before the noun 'patriarch'? The answer is given by J.J. Wilson himself: on first reading Belli's sonnets in New York, he 'was at

once both horrified and fascinated by the strange appearance of Belli's language' (page 90). Probably, 'Listen, er patriarch', instead of the simple form 'Listen, patriarch', helps to render the English version of the sonnet more 'horrifying' and 'fascinating', at least in the sense Burgess felt these terms.

In *ABBA ABBA*, Burgess/J.J. Wilson's 'oxymorous' attitude to dialect actually reflects quite closely Belli's feeling for it. 'Horror' and 'fascination' are the terms used to describe the initial impact the Roman dialect left on J.J. Wilson; on the other hand, when Belli spoke in Romanesque for the first time, 'He spoke the Roman in a strange mixed tone of shame and defiance'(page 45). Basically, Belli's 'shame' is equivalent to Wilson's 'horror', whilst the former' 'defiance' can be more or less equated to the latter's 'fascination'. Indeed, the fascination actually stems from the tone of defiance used by Belli. When Belli shouts out (page 47): '*...Cuesti cqui sso rreliquioni -ma ar mì paese...*', he was uttering these words 'in a sort of horrified fascinated trance'. Is it Belli who speaks in a 'horrified' and 'fascinated' way? Or is it Keats who perceives the Roman dialect to be so? In my opinion, it is neither one nor the other: Belli and Keats are none other than the two complementary facets of Burgess's character, and therefore it is actually Burgess who is always 'stupefied', 'horrified' and 'fascinated' by the power of language in its dialectal Roman form.

The defiance, horror and fascination associated with the Roman dialect are not limited to the use of *romanesco*. Burgess seems to imply that these three attributes are in fact part and parcel of any dialectal form. In fact, the dichotomy between 'life/dialect' and 'artificiality/language' comes up again at page 45 when Keats recites the first three lines of Dante's *Inferno*. His Italian recitation, 'with near-Elizabethan vowels', earns him Llanos's applause. But Belli 'merely grunted'. Why is it that Belli is so unimpressed by the rendering of the *Commedia* in the original Italian tongue? The answer lies in the fact that standard language is not the *real* language of living people. It is just an artificial, bloodless and lifeless means of communication, which does not convey the real feelings of the man in the street at all.

On the contrary, dialects have the power to transmit to others all the energy and vitality typical of 'the common people'. Belli is quite a rough and coarse person not only because he is a man

of the people but also because his mother tongue is a dialect, and therefore a true expression of life. The *romanesco* dialect had had the effect of 'horror' and 'fascination' on J.J. Wilson; the following Milanese translation by Carlo Porta of Dante's initial lines is also a harbinger of 'roughness' and 'defiance':

> 'A mitaa strada de quell gran viacc
> Che femm a vun la voeulta al mondo da la
> Me sont trovata in d'on bosch scur scur affacc'
> Senza on sentee da pode seguita'. (page 45)

Belli recites these lines 'roughly and defiantly' even though he is speaking a dialect, Milanese, which is totally alien from his own. This goes to show that vitality is not typical of and exclusive to *romanesco* but is a characteristic of all dialectal forms. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that 'Belli added a growl of challenge' when explaining that the dialect of Milan was 'another kind of Italian': vis à vis standard languages, dialects do actually instil a sense of superiority and defiance, at least in Burgess's case.

The second part of *ABBA ABBA* ('TWO') is basically a reinforcement of Burgess's 'philosophy' on dialects, as drawn up in Part One. This chapter is no longer set in Rome at the beginning of the 19th century, but in Manchester and New York during the initial decades of the 20th century. The protoganist is now Joseph Joachim Wilson, a descendent of Giovanni Gulielmi. Despite being 'himself no poet', J.J. Wilson 'was to be – by a twist if not genetic, then purely coincidental, (...) – the translator into English of the great Roman poet' (page 87). The initial affinity between the two lies in their proper names: Joseph Joachim is none other than a literal translation of Belli's names, Giuseppe Gioacchino. This affinity is further strengthened through the love of both for the sonnet form and for sonnets of a scurrilous nature: despite being 'himself no poet', J.J. 'as a boy (...) showed skill in facetious or scurrilous versifying and a passion for the Petrarchan sonnet-form' (page 87).

J.J. Wilson continues following in the footsteps of Belli, even 'before becoming acquainted with the poet' (page 89). He too is attached to the 'real' life of the common people but is totally aware of the fact that standard language is an unnatural expression of this 'realism'. He therefore makes strong attempts 'to use dialectal

elements. A Catholic provincial, aware of his foreign blood, he never felt wholly at home in the patrician language of the British Establishment and would, especially in exalted company, deliberately use mystifying dialect words or adopt an exaggerated and near-unintelligible Lanchashire accent' (page 89). Italian dialects and the power to 'horrify' and 'fascinate' Belli and Keats. Similarly, the Lancashire dialect has the power to 'mystify' J.J. Wilson. On the other hand, it is Belli and Wilson who are capable of 'horrifying', 'fascinating' and 'mystifying' their listeners through their use of dialect. 'Horror' (in its Latin use of 'religious and sacred fear'),[8] 'fascination' and 'mystification' are all terms which pertain to the world of the esoteric or the divine. Is Burgess implying that through the use of dialect, Belli and Wilson (*ergo* himself !) are actually wielding a supernatural and/or divine power?

This is probably the case. Unfortunately, however, establishment and officialdom will never be able to grasp this truth. For them, it is only the standard language that can be a vehicle for power, and therefore a Wilsonian slogan of the type 'Don't pine for a pud, make do with a spud' will be rejected 'as possessing only a dialectal validity' (page 90). It will only be the simple and common people who live the 'real' life of every day who can appreciate the 'divine' powers of dialects. Such is Susanna Roberti, the, 'countergirl in the New York office of Alitalia' who offers to help Wilson to translate Belli's dialectal poems into 'English with a Manchester accent' (page 91).

The 'horror' and 'fascination' emanating from dialectal use constitute a form of enjoyment and an alternative source of 'power', which will never be understood or appreciated by people connected with the establishment and, therefore, with 'apparent' power. For Burgess, dialects are the real source of 'real' power.

Notes

1. Cf., e.g., *Earthly Powers,* where he gets at Dom Mintoff, Archbishop Michael Gonzi and the Maltese in general, who had basically forced him to leave the island of Malta, where he had established his place of residence.
2. Cf. C.M. Dix, *Anthony Burgess,* Longman, London 1971, p.21.
3. Cf., e.g., the language spoken by the violent youngsters in *A Clockwork Orange* and the 'imaginary' language of the 'imaginary' island, Castita, in *MF.* On the latter language, cf. A. Cassola, '*MF*: *a glossary of Anthony Burgess's Castitan Language,* in *English Language Notes,* Vol. XXVI, June 1989, no.4, pp. 73 – 79.
4. Cf. A. Burgess, *ABBA ABBA*, Faber, London 1977. When quoting, I shall refer to this novel by page numbers only.
5. Cf. G. Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana. Fonetica,* Einaudi, Torino 1988, pp. 356-359.
6. Cf. *Er Diluvio Univerzale.*
7. Cf. *Er Diluvio Univerzale,* in G.G. Belli, *Sonetti Romaneschi,* a cura di Luigi Morandi, vol. III, S. Lapi Tipografo-Editore, Città di Castello 1896, p.30.
8. Cf. E. e R. Bianchi, O. Lelli, *Dizionario illustrato della lingua latina,* Le Monnier, Firenze 1972, s.v. *horror.*