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CONTENTS

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Virgil's *Aeneid*: Gonzalo on Claribel and 'Widow Dido'

Robert Hollander

It was just more than fifty years ago, in the spring of 1961, that I began and then set aside this essay. I was an Instructor in English at Columbia University, teaching in the Humanities A sequence in the College, in which I had had my first encounters at the business end of a podium with each of these texts. In the intervening years I have spent considerable time with other authors, primarily Dante and Boccaccio. Indeed, it is only recently that I found myself working once more with British writers, publishing articles in 2011 on Milton's responses to Dante in *Paradise Lost* (in *Milton Quarterly*) and on Chaucer and his significant references both to Boccaccio and to Dante in the concluding stanzas of the *Troilus* (in the *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*). Last April I came upon my copy of Frank Kermode's Arden edition of *The Tempest* (Harvard, 1958) and, folded inside it, in an examination 'blue book' from Collegiate School in Manhattan, where I had taught Latin and English between September 1955 and June 1957, several pages of jottings toward this essay. As part of my dissertation at Columbia I was compiling an assemblage of materials toward a variorum edition of the poems of Edwin Muir (1887–1959). Finishing that dissertation, in 1962, obviously had higher priority than returning to my thoughts about Shakespeare. Unsurprisingly, I recently discovered that, while there were relatively few studies of the connections between *The Tempest* and Virgil's epic back then, there now are many, some of them very good and almost all worth reading. At first, I thought of folding that blue book back up and leaving those thoughts on Shakespeare's interest in

the *Aeneid* as I had found them. However, and as you can see, a perhaps overly enthusiastic amateurism prevailed. Indeed, this is not an 'academic' piece; therefore, I have not included footnotes, of which I fear I have produced all too many; however, I have appended a bibliographical listing for this fairly recent sub-field of considerations of *The Tempest* (only half a dozen of these nearly three dozen studies were produced before I began mine, half a century ago).

From *King Lear* on, many of Shakespeare's plays are deeply concerned with the difficult experiences of paternal figures. Prospero, of course, fits this pattern. However, there is another, if less studied, father in *The Tempest*: Alonso. Among his precursors are Brabantio in *Othello* (unwittingly having allowed Desdemona to 'loose' herself to a Moor [the word 'loose' occurs fifty-nine times in the course of that play, as many as one fewer than half of these, perhaps unsurprisingly, uttered by Iago]) and Polonius (preparing to 'loose' Ophelia for personal gain [*Hamlet* II.ii.162: 'At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him']). While Gonzalo's status as a father is never revealed, his age and attitudes lend him a certain paternal aspect. It may at first seem that we are to consider Gonzalo another Polonius, an ineffective prattler. However, where Polonius 'hits the mark' only abstractly, with political truisms or a sense of social requirement, Gonzalo is incapable of managing a theory that might explain events, but is nearly always (or perhaps simply always) reliable in perceiving what centrally is, or was, if his heart is a far better instrument for grasping the truth than is his brain. Iago indelicately refers to such fatherly concerns as Alonso expresses, addressing Brabantio, in the very first scene of *Othello* (I.i.110–112): 'Because we come to / do you service and you think we are ruffians, you'll / have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse.' These thematic elements are redeployed in at least two aspects of the marriage in Tunis of which we hear in the first scene of the second act of *The Tempest*, the political ambitions of a father being furthered by an inter-racial marriage. If we remember Desdemona in this context, we may be surprised to learn of the happiness of Alonso's daughter, Claribel, which she apparently shares with her Tunisian royal husband (whom Shakespeare may have considered Arabian, Moorish, or even Turkish, but certainly not European)—at least as this is conveyed by Gonzalo's remembered impressons.

Gonzalo seems an optimist from the very beginning, even in the darkened circumstances of the raging storm (Rupp [p. 300] has described his temperament as 'utopian'). However, he does not seem intelligent (in several instances his judgments seem absurd, starting with his insistent

assurances that the boatswain is more likely to die by hanging than by drowning [I.i.28–30; 46–48; 57–59]); nonetheless, even in this judgment he turns out to be correct (at least for the duration of the play) and, more significantly, his heart is eventually revealed always to be in the right. Indeed, spectators or readers eventually come to recognize that his views are meant to serve as ground for their perception of the moral issues in the play: What Gonzalo feels about a given situation indicates what we, the onlookers, should also sense about it. If, in the early going, we may be forgiven if we consider him an ineffectual old fool, by the end of the play Prospero will refer to him as 'Holy Gonzalo, honourable man' (V.1.62)—just in case we have failed to understand the weight his moral judgments have been meant to carry all along. If we have a more jaundiced view than his of the marriage of Claribel to a foreign king—and the situation almost invites us to do so, we find apparent support for our cynicism in the remarks of two of the three 'men of sin' (III.iii.53), Sebastian and Antonio (Alonso, unlike these two, will be won over to more charitable views by the play's end). In the long and nefarious dialogue between these two malfeasants that ends with their readying a plot to kill Gonzalo that Alonso's Ariel-arranged slumber enables (II.i.194–291)—their plotting is perhaps so tedious-seeming as to cancel our attention—it is worth noting that Antonio's view of the 'honest old Councellor' (as he is initially described in the playwright's list of 'Names of the Actors') is that he is an old fool (II.i.258–260), included in the group of those '[...] lords that can prate / As amply and unnecessarily / As this Gonzalo.' Indeed, so he may seem to us as well. Nonetheless, we should be aware, even in the opening moments of the play, that Gonzalo is always presented as being on the side of the angels, no matter how foolishly prating he seems. We may choose to admire the 'realistic' and cynical views of such characters as Antonio and Sebastian; Shakespeare, however, loads the dice against both of them from the outset; indeed, all their opinions, as will all their plans, turn out to be vain.

In the first brief action, limited to the first eight lines of Act I, we are aware of conflict: between men (the shipmaster, the boatswain, and the sailors) and storm; then the conflict broadens to include members of the court party (Alonso and Ferdinand [silent throughout his first presence on stage], Gonzalo, Sebastian and Antonio) inveighing against the boatswain. And thus the first human conflict to which we are witness involves authoritative figures (a king and his royal son attended by their counselor) and a brace of courtiers, possessing neither authority nor evident social graces. Alonso, a swing character, who moves from despair and

empty authoritative gestures to (eventually) genuine regal expression and actions, initiates his presence in the drama by assuming a leadership role in a situation in which he enjoys no rights whatsoever to command when he gives the boatswain an empty order (lines 9–10). Antonio shows himself similarly obtuse (line 12). And then Gonzalo makes a fool of himself, too (lines 15 and 19). The boatswain is undoubtedly meant to be seen as a man of action and good sense, one whose difficult tasks are made even more difficult by the interference of the royal retinue. On the other hand, in his third speech (lines 28–33) Gonzalo, if seeming to be the epitome of the aging retainer, nattering on in his obtuse way (and surely that is the sole first impression of him that we are meant to have), enjoys the unlikely benefit of being correct: The boatswain, he thinks, will not drown, but hang. He is surely right in his first prediction, if not (as far as we know) in the second. In the next little scene, Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo re-enter, the first two with scurrilous words for the hard-working boatswain, while Gonzalo repeats his—'warrant' of the boatswain's survival (lines 43–45), now with more vulgar locution than he had previously employed, thus winning himself no new friends among the audience. In the next moment, after the stage direction 'Enter Mariners wet', the sailors and boatswain have given up hope, earning the vituperation of Sebastian and Antonio (lines 54–57). Just before they spew their insults, Gonzalo (lines 53–54) wants to join his king and his prince in prayer at the approach of what must seem certain death. If we have been reading Gonzalo as merely an old fool, we may suddenly feel that there is something admirably human about him. His next utterance (lines 57–59) once more insists that the boatswain—despite all current appearances—will die by hanging, not drowning. And it is Gonzalo who is allowed the last words in the first scene of the play. Expecting to die as the ship breaks apart around him, he says: 'The wills above be done! But I would fain die a dry death' (I.i.66–67). His display of acceptance of a higher will accompanies his understandable desire to survive. In the first scene of *The Tempest*, only the boatswain (the 'hero' of this scene) has more speeches (ten) than Gonzalo (seven). Why does Shakespeare lavish so many lines on this apparently foolish old counselor? Perhaps in order to prepare us for his surprising remarks in the first scene of Act II.

The second scene of the first act of *The Tempest* also involves a ruler—Prospero, the rightful duke of Milan, matching the earlier presence of King Alonso of Naples. Now the stage business is lofty in tone and diction. Playing off the low-styled vernacular and honest outbursts of the boatswain and the twinned venomous guttersnipe remarks of Sebastian

and Antonio in the preceding scene (I.i), the exchanges between Miranda and Prospero reflect a much different—and loftier—view of the world. This is the longest scene of the nine that make up the play (504 lines vs. the 67 of the first scene; the nearest rival for length will be the comic interlude that immediately follows: II.i has 322 lines). Over the course of 187 lines Prospero instructs Miranda and us as to the reasons for the magically controlled shipwreck (object: matrimony and restoration of rule) that has so wrung her with pity. The text refers to the miraculous survival of a ship carrying St. Paul, which wrecked on Melita (that is, Malta—Acts 28:1). The word 'tempest' is also available in a neighbouring passage in the Vulgate: 'valide [...] nobis tempestate iactatis' (we, being mightily tossed with the tempest—Acts 27:18). That text continues: 'iam ablata erat spes omnis salutis nostrae' (all hope of our being saved was now taken away). Nonetheless, triumphant survival attends both human cargoes. The Neapolitan ship will suffer 'not so much perdition as an hair' (I.ii.30), as Prospero happily insists (his remark picked up by Ariel's 'Not a hair perish'd' [I.ii.217]). The reference is, of course, to Luke's record of Paul and his shipmates' avoidance of a watery grave. The text that Shakespeare is citing, as has long been recognized, is Acts 27:34: 'nullius vestrum capillus de capite peribit' (for there shall not an hair of the head of any of you perish). Prospero explains why he had to deploy the tempest (often associated with time, both by Miranda [I.ii.176–177: 'For still 'tis beating in my mind, your reason / For raising this sea-storm'] and by him [IV.i.162–163: 'a turn or two I'll walk / To still my beating mind']). All that he leaves out of the essential elements of the history of their calamities is its resolution: her marriage to Ferdinand and his return to Milan. A playwright has to keep *some* of his *dramatis personae* in the dark, after all.

Gonzalo returns to the action in this first scene of the second act, after receiving an honourable mention from Prospero (I.ii.159–168) that, if we were cynical about Gonzalo's mental capacities because of his dotage, has established him, a 'noble Neapolitan' (I.ii.161), as a man of honor, even to his enemies. Working through this scene with care, we will perhaps be able to make better sense of its mysteries and indirections. Many of the observations that follow match those made in the ground-breaking and mysteriously neglected study by Carnicelli (1979). In fact, a number of my unreported findings back in 1961, which made their way only to perhaps several dozens of students in the Columbia Humanities A sequence, saw the light of day in Carnicelli's neglected article.

We should study the diversity of judgment among the participants at the beginning of the second act: (1) Gonzalo speaks of 'the miracle, / I mean

our preservation' (II.i.6–7), sensing the grace that alone accounts for (in his limited but heartfelt view) their escape from what seemed certain death by drowning. (2) Alonso, typically, wants to escape from considering the situation and Gonzalo's overblown response to it, wants only not to be bothered in his suffering (the cause of which he will reveal to the party at II.i.103–109): 'Prithee, peace' (II.i.9). (3) Sebastian, in an aside to Antonio, reveals again his cynical view of all things, now of Alonso's troubled mind: 'He receives comfort like cold porridge' (punning, as Kermode notes, on 'peace/pease'). Kermode quotes Coleridge for Shakespeare's having 'shown the tendency in bad men to indulge in scorn and contemptuous expressions, as a mode of getting rid of their own uneasy feelings of inferiority to the good, and also, by making the good ridiculous, of rendering the transition of others to wickedness easy. Shakespeare never puts habitual scorn into the mouths of other than bad men.' Traversi makes a similar point (p. 213): '[...] "grace" in Shakespeare always has its enemy in the cynic, the destructive critic who belittles its intimations in terms of his own sensuality and reduces its value to worthlessness.'

In this play of masque-like scenes as well an actual masque (found in IV.i, with its three classical goddesses), led off by the storm in the first scene, Gonzalo's remarks about the marriage of Claribel, Alonso's daughter, to the king of Tunis, beginning with his report of the freshness of the court party's post-shipwreck garments, which seem to him as strangely bright as the clothing they wore at Claribel's wedding (II.i.66–69), may function in a similar manner. The other masque-like scenes may be accounted for as follows: (1) The storm occurring in the first scene is explained by Ariel as in fact having been staged by him (I.ii.195–206); (2) invisible, Ariel performs a second masque for Ferdinand (I.ii.377–410; (3) reflecting the form of a play-within-the-play, Sebastian and Antonio, once the other characters are lulled to sleep by Ariel, reveal their malign natures and destructive plans (II.i.193–300); (4) introduced by Stephano's first appearance onstage, the drunken palaver and song presented by Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban constitute a low-mimetic version of masque (II.ii.43–164); (5) once Prospero is presented as offstage and an interested observer (III.i.15), the interaction between Miranda and Ferdinand is treated as though it, too, were a masque (III.i.15–92); (6) Ariel's invisible presence as beholder (III.ii.39) makes the continuation of the besotted plotting of Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban yet another performance that is witnessed by another set of eyes (III.ii.40–150); (7) Ariel, as Harpy, makes disappear the banquet that at least Sebastian and Antonio seem eager to ingest (III.iii.52–82)—the scene is obviously

reflective, as many have noted, of the Harpy-befouled banquet of *Aeneid* III; (8) the most straight-forward adaptation of the form of the court masque, with musical accompaniment, occurs with the appearance of Iris, Juno, and Ceres (IV.i.59–117); (9) this scene is accorded a second masque when Ariel sets new clothes before the even more sinful trio of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo (IV.i.194–262); (10) the final 'masque', displayed by Prospero, reveals Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess (V.i.172–184). That Shakespeare was eager to explore, in this late work, the way in which art may comment upon art itself as well as life should surprise no one. And yet this playful turn of mind should not blind us to the moral positions the author is deftly registering as he develops his play. Gonzalo is perhaps the most surprising element in that scheme.

It is indeed Gonzalo's report of her marriage that informs us that Claribel's character is governed by her *melior natura*, besting that of her father, who has apparently 'loosed' her for political reasons. The term is used in a cynical turn of phrase by Sebastian, addressing Alonso and sounding like Iago: 'Sir, you may thank yourself for this great loss, / That would not bless our Europe with your daughter, / But rather loose her to an African' (II.i.119–121). Alonso regrets Claribel's marriage all the more fiercely since their wreck on their return voyage to Naples has cost (or so he thinks) the life of his son, Ferdinand. (This theme recurs in the masque in Act IV when we hear Ceres refer to her loss of Proserpina to Pluto as the occasion on which [IV.i.89] 'dusky Dis my daughter got'.2) Alonso, in this perspective, may be perceived as a 'man of sin' by omission—one who would permit rape by making it legal (in clear contrast to Prospero, who, in his dealings with Caliban, is protecting Miranda from the threat of rape). In short, the wedding of Claribel 'saves' her, rescuing her from the fate her own father has intrinsically allowed. Let us turn, then, to this comic scene that Shakespeare puts to the use of underlining his main thematic threads involving marriage. We are listening to the debate between Gonzalo and the group (Sebastian, Adrian, Antonio) of cynical courtiers (II.i.66–90):

GONZALO:

Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first in Afric, at the marriage of the king's fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis.

SEBASTIAN:

'Twas a sweet marriage, and we prosper well in our return.

ADRIAN:

Tunis was never graced before with such a paragon to their Queen.

GONZALO:
Not since widow Dido's time.
ANTONIO:
Widow! a pox o' that! How came that widow in? widow Dido!
SEBASTIAN:
What if he had said 'widower Æneas' too? Good Lord, how you take it!
ADRIAN:
'Widow Dido' said you? you make me study of that: she was of Carthage, not of Tunis.
GONZALO:
This Tunis, sir, was Carthage.
ADRIAN:
Carthage?
GONZALO:
I assure you, Carthage.

The clever courtiers find Gonzalo's representations of Dido as widow and of the identity of Tunis and Carthage ridiculous. Virgil does not exactly hide the fact that Dido had lost her husband, Sychaeus, and thus was a widow, but makes clear reference to their marriage and his death (he is first mentioned at *Aen.* I.343 and then referred to seven more times, the last at *Aen.* VI.474). Thus the courtiers reveal a lack of education in their supposition that Gonzalo is prettying up Dido's history with his tale of widowhood. What about his insistence on the identity of Tunis and Carthage? When we consider this tale of two cities, perhaps we conjecture that the reason for which Gonzalo confounds them, as Colin Still and others have suggested, is that this is exactly what Shakespeare wants *us* to do. 'Wait a moment', you might understandably object, pointing out that Shakespeare probably knew that Tunis does not correspond to Dido's Carthage (and we leave to one side the fact that Virgil has confounded the actual history of Dido in order to make his point, as Petrarch violently objected, thus correcting not only Virgil, but particularly his addled follower, Dante, in his *Triumph of Chastity* I.155–159: those who fall or have fallen into this error are presented as giving voice to 'il publico grido' [v. 159, the shouted opinion of the unlettered]). Gonzalo's historical geography is in fact flawed, but not seriously incorrect. Carthage and Tunis were two separate cities, built some twelve to fifteen miles from one another, the second only after the first was destroyed. What Gonzalo means (or what Shakespeare hopes we will take him to mean) is that Tunis was built as the new city to replace Carthage once the Romans had destroyed it. In that sense, 'This Tunis,

sir, was Carthage' (II.i.80), i.e., the city of destruction had become a new Carthage, a plausible reincarnation of Dido's vigorously flourishing city-in-becoming as Aeneas found it in *Aeneid* I.418–440. The most immediate effect of these references to a series of noble couples is to make the observer realize that, where the once-married Dido and her lover Aeneas were not married, Claribel and the King of Tunis are—as will be Ferdinand and Miranda. And so this Tunis both is and is not Carthage; in a sense it is *new* Carthage, as Rome has become new Troy and as, in this play, Naples will become new Milan. Carthage, the unholy city, has been rebuilt as Tunis. Destructive lust has been tamed as marriage.

We come eventually to realize that Gonzalo is meant to be listened to even when he seems most daft, as is underlined at the play's conclusion. Having never been morally wrong as the work progresses, it is to him that is given the triumphant summation of all that has been accomplished by Prospero's art. He first asks Heaven's blessing for the fortunate youthful pair (V.i.201–202: 'Look down, you gods, / And on this happy couple drop a blessed crown!'). Gonzalo celebrates Miranda and Ferdinand, the latter back from the death to which his less-than-optimistic father had continually assigned him, and then presents the joyful summary of the happiness that we sense all around the blessed isle. It surely must be significant that he also refers to Claribel, the also 'lost' daughter of Alonso. If we understandably wondered at the rightness of his optimistic sense of the wedding in Tunis in Act II, we now realize that the old man was right back then and has been right all along. Now he summarizes the happy outcomes for both Alonso's offspring: 'set it down / With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage / Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis, / And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife / Where he himself was lost, . . .' (V.i.207–211). Thus does Gonzalo become the moral center of the play in his final utterance, its sense repeated in his briefest of conclusions in response to the intellectually and morally reborn Alonso, changed from 'man of sin' to penitent and joyous father, blessing the union of his living son and Prospero's daughter (V.i.215): 'Be it so! Amen!'

This problem, how to resolve a 'tragic' Virgilian love plot woven into the fabric of *The Tempest*, which has stumped Colin Still and others, is not resolved by seeing Miranda as Venus, Aeneas's mother, but as the combination, seemingly impossible in Virgil's poem, of sensuality bound with chastity, of a Dido/Lavinia (or a Lavinia/Dido). As opposed to Alonso, his paternal sense gone badly astray until his 'redemption,' in the final scene of the play, Prospero is, despite his many flaws as man and ruler, an admirable father. As such, we tend to forgive him his abrupt commands

and his rigidity, since we come to understand that he is working against vice and against time. It was Aeneas's sense of political duty—some might say—that removes the possibility of marriage to Dido. Now it is Alonso's political expediency, paradoxically, that results in a marriage of which we are told only positive things by Gonzalo. One is aware that his opinion is countered by that shared by the two other 'men of sin', as we have observed. Marriage in Shakespeare (and in most festive comedies) is rarely or never disdained. Nonetheless, to have developed Claribel's union—more than Shakespeare chose in fact to do—would have been to undermine the importance of the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda. It is planted as a masque-like wedding scene in a reported tableau by Gonzalo in the first scene of the second act and then is brought back to our attention in the final scene of the play, one that resolves the 'African wedding' motif that has caused so much discomfort in audiences and critics.

Gonzalo's new Tunis is thus both Carthage and Tunis. The pattern surely is meant to recall what we had previously found problematic in the *Aeneid*: Aeneas leaves Troy, a destroyed city, and finds Carthage, another city that will soon be destroyed (despite its representation in Book II as a city headed toward civic success), eventually to found Rome, the future of which, in light of Aeneas's last merciless and murderous act, seems destined to be more 'Carthaginian' than an imperialist might hope. In the *Aeneid*, according to some current (and particularly American) readings, empire and civilization are both more problematic than one might have hoped they would be. Nonetheless, one imagines that Shakespeare read the *Aeneid*, in the spirit of the times, as a resolved epic, one that promises Rome civilizational success. Prospero and his child leave their city of destruction, Milan, proceed to this island, and then return to their city of resurrection, Naples (to be understood as new Milan? Gonzalo's final words would seem to indicate as much: 'Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue / Should become Kings of Naples? O rejoice [...]!' [V.i.205–206]). In this play, then, both Carthage/Tunis and Milan/Naples are redeemed though a courtly wedding.

A cynical reading of *The Tempest* is surely possible—Prospero's very concerns with the difficulty of his enterprise make that plain. All that hopefulness and celebration, as we know (and as he almost seems to acknowledge), is probably not going to be found in the real world. However, we are responding to a play, not to the real world. Why not see the playwright as imagining, in that play, what the real world might be at its best? And not, as the New Historicists' readings of the play insist, on

the necessary failure of human values when the humans displaying them are in service to imperial expansion. A close look at the centering focus of Gonzalo's role in the comic interlude that is Act II, Scene i, has served to launch this proposed positive reading of the Tunisian marriage sub-plot of *The Tempest*.

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Dante, 'The Prophet of Liberty': The Mainstream Ideological Paradigm in Romantic Britain *vis-à-vis* Isaiah Berlin's Reflections on Liberty

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British Protestantism and Liberty

It is a well-known fact that Italian literature captivated the English mind during the Romantic age. Dante, in particular, towered in the imagination of the British Romantics. This article argues that there is a core set of ideological values which unites British Romantic intellectuals of diverse backgrounds in their reception of Dante. Ideology is regarded here as a multifaceted domain comprised of two realities—religion and politics—which 'were virtually inseparable' in nineteenth-century Britain, a period 'when Christianity was considered to be part of the law of the land.'[1]

The anxiety of literary influence is so overwhelming that the scholars who have explored Dantean echoes in British poetry tend to consider ideology as an ancillary dimension to the poetic imagery.[2] This is a dubious critical position in that the reception of Dante in Britain has a distinctive ideological edge to it. In other words, the ideological agenda

1. P.M.S. Dawson, 'Poetry in an Age of Revolution', in S. Curran, (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 48–73; 55.
2. See S. Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); R. Pite (1994), *The Circle of Our Vision* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); L. Bandiera and D. Saglia, (eds) *British Romanticism and Italian Literature: Translating, Reviewing, Rewriting (*Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005).

of the British Romantics played a considerable role in creating the intellectual climate that led to an upsurge in the critical appraisal of Dante's work and consequently of his fortunes. However, although ideology may be singled out as a sound avenue of inquiry, one has to bear in mind the caveat that ideological issues and literary themes cannot be entirely disjoined, for they constantly feed into and overlap with each other in the writings of the British Romantics.[3]

Dante's popularity reached a peak during the nineteenth century also on account of the fact that Christian values, albeit sometimes in secularised or unorthodox form, fed into the moral and aesthetic thinking of British men of letters. As L. Pellicani argues, while the eighteenth-century rationalists—the apostles of the Enlightenment—welcomed the loss of the Christian faith as a liberation from what they perceived as an overbearing tradition—that is, as freedom from the legacy of Medieval superstition—, the Romantics experienced that same loss as a moral and metaphysical catastrophe. The latter believed that the world, devoid of organised religion, would lose its inherent purpose, the immanent *telos* which, in their spiritual conception, conferred meaning to human existence. This is why the non-believers sought secularised equivalents to God's spiritual presence in the world, Hegel's idealistic philosophy that celebrates the historical progress towards liberty being a case in point.[4]

Although the Romantic movement is not 'entirely religious', most of its adherents—including those who criticise the established, Christian religion—'make use of a quasi-religious terminology'.[5] The resurgence of the evangelical belief in the afterlife affected even the liberal or progressive poets, who 'could not dismiss the doctrine of eternal punishment, and were, in consequence, more disposed than their eighteenth-century predecessors, to participate in Dante's "fiction".'[6] Hence, accusations of atheism levelled against intellectuals who strayed from mainstream Christianity are often unfounded. Byron, for one, having

3. L. Bandiera and D. Saglia, 'Introduction: "Home of the Arts! Land of the Lyre": Scholarly Approaches and Fictional Myths of Italian Culture in British Romanticism', in Bandiera and Saglia, (eds), 7–24, 13; D. Saglia, '"Freedom alone is wanting": British Views of Contemporary Italian Drama, 1820–1830', in Bandiera and Saglia (eds), 237–254, 241.
4. L. Pellicani, *Dalla città sacra alla città secolare* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011), 126–27.
5. C. Brinton, *The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966), 237.
6. Pite, 49.

developed a spirituality of his own, was bewildered by the coeval, disparaging, opinion on his religious beliefs. 'I don't know why I am considered an enemy to religion, and an unbeliever. I disowned the other day that I was of Shelley's school in metaphysics, though I admired his poetry [...] I know, however, that I'm considered an infidel.'[7]

Clearly, religious or spiritual feelings take on a variety of hues: whereas Dante's overriding concern is to celebrate religious orthodoxy, the British Romantics tend to separate moral truth from established religion, thereby flaunting their modernity and veering towards secularisation. Yet there was a perceived common ground. Regardless of minute theological issues, Romantics of all persuasions shared the conviction that Dante's poetry performs an ethical function. This is one of the qualities that renders a Medieval poet intelligible to a modern readership. As Byron cogently puts it, 'the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth.'[8] Hence, despite their misreading of Dante's intentions, whereby a modern sensitivity is mapped onto a Medieval text impregnated with orthodox Christianity, even the nineteenth-century non-believers were closer to the *Comedy* than their classicist forbears.

Clearly, the believers—among whom were Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey and 'the translator of Dante' H.F. Cary—were more favourably disposed towards Dante's Christian narrative. This is not to say that they uncritically subscribed to the orthodox, Catholic theology underpinning it. In fact, they interpreted *The Comedy* in keeping with their Protestant-inspired views. The crucial point is that the British Romantics reached a quasi-unanimous consensus on Dante's contemporary significance, in spite of the fact that they belonged to different political and religious constituencies. The examination of the *Comedy*'s reception in Britain, then, lends support to the generalisation that a coherent, albeit loosely arranged, Romantic ideology did exist. Its leitmotifs were anti-Roman Catholicism and the cult of liberty. The Protestant ethos, in fact, is a pervasive political-cultural element in Romantic culture—'the English of all classes formed in the nineteenth century a strongly Protestant nation.'[9]

7. T. Medwin, *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron* (London: Henry Colburn, 1824), 93.
8. B. Taylor, 'Byron's use of Dante in *The Prophecy of Dante*', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 28 (1979), 102–119, 106.
9. G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 506.

Unsurprisingly, then, the British Romantics gave new lease of life to an interpretation that had long been popular in Protestant circles throughout Europe. John Foxe's *The Book of Martyrs* popularised the view that Dante had nurtured fierce anti-papal feelings well before the Protestant theologians appeared on the scene. Dante had the courage to say that the pope 'of a pastor is made a woolfe, to wast the church of Christ, and to procure with hys Clergy not the word of God to be preached, but his own decrees.'[10] The Popes, Foxe argued, based their claims to temporal power on the 'Donation of Constantine', which Dante 'refuteth' before it was unmasked as a forgery. In his work *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England*, Milton too brings Dante's indictment of a corrupt Papacy to the fore, by translating (and commenting on) *Inferno* XIX, 115–117, where Dante severely criticizes Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, for having 'endowed the Church with dominion over the western part of his empire',[11] an act which brought about widespread corruption and would later justify the Reformation.

> Ahi, Constantin, di quanto mal fu matre,
> Non la tua conversion, ma quella dote
> Che da te prese il primo ricco patre! *Inf.*, XIX, 115–117
>
> Ah Constantine, of how much ill was cause
> Not thy conversion, but those rich demaines
> That the first wealthy Pope receiv'd of thee.[12]

Milton's polemic against the Roman Catholic Church relies on the authority of Dante and Petrarch, authoritative poets who, despite 'professing the Romish faith', concurred in the—seemingly crypto-

10. J. Foxe, 'Dantes an Italian Writer Against the Pope', in M. Caesar (ed.), *Dante: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1989), 278–279.
11. B. Reynolds, *Dante: The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man* (Washington, DC: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006), 168.
12. J. Milton in E. Griffiths and M. Reynolds (eds.), *Dante in English* (London: Penguin Books), 32. In *Inferno* XIX Dante unleashes his boldest attack against simony, that is, the selling of Ecclesiastical preferment, a sordid practice which, centuries later, would trigger Luther's wrath. The condemnation of the Church of Rome for its lust for power and temporal dominions is the leitmotif recurring in most Protestant literature. On H.F. Cary's rendering of *Inferno* XIX see E. Crisafulli, '"Woe to Thee, Simon Magus!": H.F. Cary's Translation of *Inferno* XIX', in E.G. Haywood, (ed.) *Dante Metamorphoses: Episodes in a Literary Afterlife* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 151–184.

Protestant—view that Costantine 'marr'd all in the Church.'[13] Following in Foxe's and Milton's footsteps, nineteenth-century British men of letters went a step further, and interpreted Dante's anti-clericalism as vindicating freedom of conscience, the defining ideological principle of Protestantism.

No other poet inspired the Romantic imagination more than Milton, 'a favourite among Romantic poets and readers alike'.[14] Besides being the most exemplary English epic poet, Milton was regarded also as 'the greatest British poet of liberty'.[15] This is why some of the critical engagement with Milton during the nineteenth century 'has a distinctly political edge to it [...] Shelley stops to make the political issue clear in a brief reference to Milton in his preface to *Prometheus Unbound*: "the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a Republican, and a bold enquirer into morals and religion".'[16] Milton was a highly articulate Protestant apologist—the most authoritative figure of Britain's Protestantism, in fact. It was Milton who most eloquently formulated the paradigm whereby 'the causes of Protestantism and liberty were ultimately *the same thing*.'[17] The connection between reformed religion and progressive politics was thus firmly established. Henceforth a deep-seated conviction would lie at the very heart of British identity, namely that 'England's Protestantism was intrinsically liberal'.[18] Milton's enduring legacy, that is, his liberal vision of Christianity, underpins the ideological appropriation of Dante in the Romantic age. The ideological veneration for Milton created a cultural climate in which it was natural to regard 'Dante's rebellious and independent attitude [...] as being extremely modern and consonant with a Protestant-type conception of liberty.'[19]

The logic of things politic, then, does not bear out Pite's statement that 'in turning to Dante, Romantic poets were finding a means of escape from the weight of Milton's achievement.'[20] In actual fact, Dante was seen

13. Griffiths and Reynolds, (eds), 32–33.14. S. Curran, 'Romantic Poetry: Why and Wherefore?', in Curran, (ed.), 230.
15. C. Franklin, 'Cosmopolitanism and Catholic Culture: Byron, Italian Poetry and *The Liberal*', in Bandiera and Saglia, (eds) *British Romanticism and Italian Literature* (2005), 268.
16. Curran, 'Romantic Poetry: Why and Wherefore?', 230, quoting Shelley, *Poetry and Prose*, 134.
17. T. Hobson, *Milton's Vision: The Birth of Christian Liberty* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 54.
18. *Ibid.*, 26.
19. E. Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante: Cary's Translation of the Divine Comedy* (Market Harborough: Troubador Publishing, 2003), 265–266.
20. Pite, 5.

as a prestigious antecedent both vindicating and supporting Milton's momentous ideological legacy. Most British Romantics were so imbued with Protestant values that they sought to discover other prophets of liberty besides Milton. Dante, having developed a reputation as a heretic and one of Christianity's greatest 'troublemakers', was eminently well-suited to the role.[21] The cult of Dante was instrumental in reinforcing the Protestant tenet that the defence of liberty—the worthiest of causes—was Britain's mission.

Dante, the Prophet of Liberty

The issue of liberty was crucial to the national identity of the nineteenth-century Whigs,[22] who glorified the Protestant Revolution of 1688 'as the foundation of their liberties'.[23] Little wonder, then, that the Whigs were at the forefront in articulating and propagating the view that Dante was 'a pre-eminent apostle of freedom—both civil and religious'[24] amidst political tyranny and religious bigotry.

Nineteenth-century international politics was bound to trouble liberals. After the reinstatement of feudal monarchies in the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat, freedom was trampled over in most of Continental Europe. Italy, in particular, suffered under the yoke of foreign rule. To all liberals who took the cause of Italian independence to heart, Dante appeared as a natural source of ideological inspiration. Prominent writers of the Italian *Risorgimento*—among whom we find Ugo Foscolo, who had found refuge as an exile in Britain—endorsed the Protestant appropriation of Dante, which became ever more popular in Britain as the political situation in Italy took turns for the worse.

The Whigs' 'deeply entrenched anti-Roman Catholicism'[25] gained momentum in the light of the Italian predicament, which confirmed that the

21. There are exceptions to the mainstream interpretation of Dante in nineteenth-century Britain, though. Blake did not concur with his fellow Romantics in the view that Dante was 'the apostle of liberty'. A. Braida, *Dante and the Romantics* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 156. Braida quotes an article in the Tory *Blackwood Magazine*, where an anonymous writer makes statements to the same effect (*ibid.*). By the same token, Leigh Hunt found fault with 'Dante's absurdities and horrors', which, in his view, 'represent a historical nightmare, that of medieval Catholicism', Caesar, (ed.) 548.
22. A. Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 11.
23. F.A. Yates, 'Transformations of Dante's Ugolino', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 14 (1951), 92–117, 98.
24. Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante*, 131.
25. *Ibid.*, 130.

British people had been wise in embarking on the Reformation and severing their ties with the Catholic Church, the seat of religious absolutism and despotic government. Current Italian events afforded incontrovertible proof that 'Catholicism was politically dangerous, as it rejected the authority of the liberal state.'[26] The Popes were illiberal monarchs who did not hesitate to suppress their citizens' fundamental rights. This state of affairs stoked the ire of British Whigs and Italian patriots alike. The British Romantics, then, were bound to see Dante as the first 'modern' poet before Milton who boldly railed against the spiritual yoke of Roman Catholicism, a tyrannical religion that had the added infamy of having stifled the Medieval free communes and subsequently hindered Italy's aspirations to independence.

The Liberal streak of Protestantism traverses—and binds together—the writings of the major British Romantics. For one thing, it made them receptive to the view that Dante's *Comedy* is the most powerful offspring of a glorious period of Italy's history, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the Medieval free communes flourished and gave a new lease of life to ancient republican ideals. This view was popularised by Sismondi's *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge*, the first volume of which appeared in 1807. Not only did Sismondi harp on the notion that the Italian medieval city-states expressed an early 'desire for political freedom',[27] he also praised the Guelph states of Tuscany, which were loosely allied with the papacy, for having bequeathed 'the legacy of democratic liberty' to later times.[28] Italy, then, is seen not just as the cradle of Western civilization, but also as a cultural terrain conducive to noble political ideals. And it is Dante's birth-place, fourteenth-century Florence, which stands out both for its extraordinary artistic achievements and its political vitality. 'In all aspects of Florentine life, Sismondi finds the imprint of republican values.'[29] Sismondi praised the Guelphs, who, he believed, stood for local and self-government, whereas the Ghibellines endorsed 'the imperial, pan-European ambitions of the autocratic Holy Roman Empire.'[30] A republican Dante, which is clearly an anachronism, would have been a sworn enemy of the Emperor. Not all

26. Hobson, 103.
27. R. Cavaliero, *Italia Romantica: English Romantics and Italian Freedom* (London: Tauris Parke, 2007), 63.
28. S. Curran, 'Introduction', in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Valperga: Or the Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), xii–xxvi, xxi.
29. *Ibid.*, xxii.
30. *Ibid.*, xxi.

Romantics concurred with this interpretation of Dante's allegiances. H.F. Cary, for example, portrayed Dante as an all-out supporter of imperial power, strenuously opposing the popes' political ambitions. Cary's anti-Roman Catholicism depended upon the Ghibelline paradigm. Coleridge, too, depicted Dante as a Ghibelline. Moreover, his view of fourteenth-century Italy was more balanced than Sismondi's: the 'net-work of free little republics' in Dante's time was the breeding ground 'of the flourishing of commerce, and the protection of letters and arts,' all of which 'afforded a vast field for the intellect'.[31] On the other hand, fragmentation produced 'domestic feuds, civil wars, and party spirit', which, in Dante's lifetime, led Italy to experience 'a state of intense democratical partisanship in which an exaggerated importance was attached to individuals, [...] and in which envy, jealousy, hatred, and other malignant feelings, could and did assume the form of patriotism, even to the individual's own conscience.'[32] Sismondi's conception appealed especially to the more radical and libertarian intellectuals along the Romantic political spectrum.

But Sismondi's work was immensely influential in all quarters: by conceiving of Dante as an exemplary figure relevant to present political concerns, it justified the Romantic ideological appropriation of the *Comedy*. Nowhere does this come to the fore more cogently than in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Valperga* (1823), a novel extolling the free Medieval communes in Italy. The political message is unambiguous: republican liberty, the source of historical progress, is 'at odds with the recent restoration of autocracy on the European continent'[33] that took place in the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat. When the protagonist states that, in the fourteenth century, 'Florence, in her struggle for freedom, had awakened the noblest energies of the human mind,'[34] we clearly discern Sismondi's influence.

Perhaps the strongest of all Romantic statements connecting Dante with liberty occurs in chapter 10, entitled 'Euthanasia narrative', where Shelley links the protagonist's own 'enthusiasm for the liberties' of Italy[35] to her being a contemporary of an 'illustrious author', Dante, and to her profound love for the *Divine Comedy*. 'Florence was free, and Dante was a Florentine', who emerges as a heroic figure 'shaking off' the obnoxious 'barbaric lethargy' enveloping Italy.[36]

31. S.T. Coleridge, 'Lecture on Dante. 1818', in Caesar (ed.), 439–447, 441, 443.
32. *Ibid.*, 441, 443.
33. Curran, 'Introduction', xxi.
34. Shelley, *Valperga*, 109.
35. *Ibid.*, 109.
36. *Ibid.*

Byron, who 'passionately yearned for Italy to achieve political unity and freedom,'[37] constructs Dante as 'a Promethean figure struggling to overthrow tyranny' in Italy,[38] an oracle denouncing Italy's political ills. Byron wrote *The Prophecy of Dante* (1821)—which is a hymn to 'man's political liberty'[39]—in the hope of awaking Italians to the worthiness of the cause of political independence. Byron has no qualms in recasting Dante in a modern mould that confers 'authority on his own republican ideals'.[40]

Byron was hardly aroused by the *Comedy*'s medieval theology;[41] it was the passionate partizanship of its politics that engrossed him. Byron's political vision is steeped in the Protestant ethos of British culture. Byron's awareness that England is 'a land of liberty' is the reason why he is captivated by Dante's own 'dream of liberty, and the resurrection of Italy'.[42] Byron regards Dante as a mentor who prods him on to fulfil a quasi-sacred political-literary mission. Dante is the living embodiment of an ideal that Byron is eager to spread, and to campaign for, abroad: 'I don't wonder at the enthusiasm of the Italians about Dante. He is the poet of liberty. Persecution, exile, the dread of a foreign grave, could not shake his principles.'[43]

The British Romantics are so keen on highlighting the link between progressive politics and Protestantism that they turn Dante into a modern prophet of civil and religious liberty. Percy Bysshe Shelley is exemplary in this respect: he 'relegated even the father of Protestantism to a subordinate role in the history of religious reform when comparing his achievement with that of one great poet in particular,'[44] that is, Dante, who unambiguously appears as a proto-republican and bold reformer of Christianity:

> Dante was the first religious reformer, and surpassed him [i.e., Luther] rather in the rudeness and acrimony, than in the boldness of his censures, of papal usurpation. Dante was the first awakener of entranced Europe

37. Taylor, 105.
38. Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante*, 132.
39. Taylor, 118.
40. Franklin, 261.
41. *Ibid.*, 106.
42. *Ibid.*, 194.
43. *Ibid.*, 195.
44. R.M. Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation. Religious Politics in English Literature 1789–1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41.

> [...] He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning; the Lucifer of that starry flock which in the thirteenth century shone forth from Republican Italy, as from heaven, into the darkness of the benighted world.[45]

Shelley, despite being an atheist, was aware that from the seventeenth century onwards, political liberalism 'emerged together with reformed Christianity'.[46] He knew that Protestantism planted the seed of liberty in Britain—in a *Defence of Poetry*, Shelley 'recalled "the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty" '[47] represented by the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which, as we shall see, British Whigs venerated for being the cornerstone of British freedom.

Hazlitt, who was keen on celebrating the 'great tradition of English liberty',[48] followed in Shelley's footsteps. Like most of his coeval men of letters, Hazlitt 'saw an intimate relationship between the spirit of reformation and that which inspired great literature and was always on the alert when literature was employed for reactionary purpose.'[49] This attitude led the Romantics to enlist a gigantic figure like Dante to their cause. Clearly, Dante's vision was not politically progressive, if only because modern categories cannot satisfactorily account for the logic of Medieval politics. But the Romantic agenda required Dante to appear as a harbinger of freedom in the nineteenth-century sense of the term.

Coleridge, too, conceives of politics and religion as interconnected dimensions. Hence, he associates 'the cause of pure religion and of liberty, of national independence and of national illumination.'[50] Great literature is a well-spring, whence gigantic literary figures—Dante amongst them—rush forth as exemplary models of ideological commitment: 'In Pindar, Chaucer, Dante, Milton, and many more, we have instances of the close connexion of poetic genius with the love of liberty and of genuine reformation.'[51] Coleridge goes well beyond a banal comparison stressing Dante's and Milton's mutual 'civic concerns':[52] his statement meaningfully

45. P.B. Shelley, 'Defence of Poetry', in Caesar (ed.), 466–471, 470.
46. Hobson, x.
47. Dawson, 66, quoting Shelley, *Poetry and Prose*, 508.
48. Brinton, 145.
49. Ryan, 39.
50. S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions*, 1 (New York: Leavitt, Lord and Co., 1834), 47.
51. *Ibid.*, 123.
52. Braida, 82.

inscribes both enlightened writers within the paradigm of liberty which defines England's identity.

As we shall see, H.F. Cary is another representative intellectual of this school of thought. His translation of the *Comedy* was successful not only because of its perceived literary merits, but also because it embodied the most coherent expression of the Romantic paradigm whereby Dante is the prophet of liberty.

In conclusion: most Romantics appropriated Dante in order 'to structure and sustain the emotional and intellectual commitment to freedom'[53] that was deeply rooted in British culture. The discourse on liberty is the kernel of the Romantic ideology. And herein is the hermeneutic key which enables us fully to understand the reception of Dante in nineteenth-century Britain. This generalisation has to be explored further. But let us first deal with Dante.

Dante and Liberty

It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore the issue of Dante's religious beliefs in depth, or to establish conclusively whether or not the Romantic reading 'over-interprets' the *Comedy*.[54] Suffice to say that Dante is far from being an advocate of liberty in any modern sense of the term. The Romantic appropriation obscures the fact that Dante is, essentially, the poet of (Christian) hierarchical order: in the *Comedy*, Emperors and Popes are chastised only insofar as they betray their God-derived mission. Yet it was hermeneutic openness (that is, the eagerness to venture beyond a literal reading of the *Comedy*) that ensured the unity of the Romantic paradigm. Had the emphasis been on order rather than liberty, a rupture might have ensued between the believers and the secular-minded or progressive-democrats, among whom were Byron and Shelley. The former supported the establishment (albeit with qualifications), and could identify with the conservative spirit of Dante's vision. The latter, who advocated democracy or atheism, would have found fault with a poet who believes that human government derives its legitimacy from God—democracy, being the government of the people by the people, rests on secular foundations.

53. Bandiera and Saglia, 'Introduction', 23.
54. On the hermeneutic validity of the Romantic reading see E. Crisafulli, 'Eco's Hermeneutics and Translation Studies: Between "Manipulation" and "Overinterpretation" ', in C. Ross and R. Sibley, (eds) *Illuminating Eco: On the Boundaries of Interpretation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 89–10.

It is undeniable, however, that in the *Comedy* there are ideological themes—such as evangelicalism and invectives against Popes and clergymen—that lend support to the Protestant appropriation, provided this is not taken to extremes. This is unsurprising in view of the fact that Dante was branded as a heretic in Roman Catholic quarters, and editions of *The Comedy* continued to be censored well into the nineteenth century. Dante's fierce anti-clericalism went hand in hand with the advocacy of a spiritual reform of Christianity, which naturally appealed to Protestants. Dante argued that Church reform could only be accomplished by separating the temporal and the spiritual dominions. He promoted the belief that justice and peace depended on accepting throughout Europe 'the supreme secular authority of an Emperor'.[55] This political aim is compatible with Catholic orthodoxy. But the British Romantics went so far as to claim that Dante's works unambiguously embody the spirit which produced the Reformation.[56] Byron's awareness that Dante's 'insistence on the separation of imperial and papal power made him seem a proto-Protestant,'[57] was not peculiar to him alone, being widespread in British culture at least since Milton. British Protestants had been so eager to enlist one of the greatest poets of Western culture to their cause that they overlooked any consideration that contradicted their assumptions. They glossed over Dante's unpalatable doctrines, like his unscriptural belief in Purgatory, which could be safely ascribed to a barbarous age that was prone to superstition.

But *The Comedy*'s invectives against a corrupt Church, forceful as they are, fall short of advocating a free Church bereft of the Pope, whom Dante believed to be Christ's vicar on earth. In no way did Dante question, or cast the slightest doubt on, the Catholic tenet according to which the clergy is endowed with the sacred task of interpreting the Holy Scripture, thereby leading humanity to salvation.

Protestantism, conversely, maintains that 'all Christians have a priestly function'.[58] Hence there is no 'official version of doctrine that the believer is dissuaded from questioning.'[59] This perspective runs counter to the Catholic belief in orthodoxy, presided over by an infallible

55. Reynolds, xiii.
56. Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante*, 132.
57. Franklin, 261.
58. Hobson, 133. It was Luther who first underscored that all who are in Christ are priests, M. Luther, *Concerning Christian Liberty* (Forth Worth, TX: RDMc Publishing), 40.
59. Hobson, 130.

priesthood which is set over and above the lay Christian. Unsurprisingly, then, Dante considers heresy (which, etymologically, means 'choice') a grave sin deserving a harsh condemnation. For Protestants, instead, religious freedom renders the very concept of heresy redundant.

> If Protestants are trying to worship God on the basis of scripture, they cannot be accused of heresy. Of course they are prone to error, as we all are: such error is part of truth-seeking. The only real heresy is to try to impose a system that tramples on freedom of conscience and the authority of scripture: Roman Catholicism.[60]

Advocating freedom of conscience would have been anathema for Dante. His Medieval mindset led him to underscore a totally different concept, ethical freedom, according to which human beings are capable of discriminating between good and evil.

The basic premiss of Dante's thinking is that human beings have a dual nature, incorruptible spirit and corruptible matter. Our intellective soul, which, being a direct gift from God, is perfect, has two moral faculties: reason, the capacity to distinguish between good and evil deeds; and the will, which has the function of making the right moral choice. The will, which is unconditionally free, must prevail over the animal-like instincts distracting us from things eternal. Two strands of scholasticism converge in Dante's complex conception: on the one hand, freedom rests on moral choice (in order to be free, human beings must translate the correct choice into action—animals are not free, their behaviour being determined by their instincts); on the other hand, freedom accrues to human beings insofar as they offer no resistance to their natural inclination towards God—the most perfect form of freedom, here, lies in conforming to God's moral order. Angels and souls in paradise are a case in point: having reached a state of perfect harmony with God's grand design, they cannot exercise any kind of choice, which would alter their condition, but are nonetheless the freest entities precisely because they are at one with the will of God.[61]

Our world, being the product of God's loving act of creation, is governed by freedom, not necessity. 'Whatever the conditions into which we are born, our souls are the direct creations of God and we are

60. *Ibid.*, 161–162.

61. S. Vanni Rovighi, 'Arbitrio', *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 6 vols. (Rome: Istituto della Enciplopedia Italiana, 1970), I, 345–348.

responsible for our deeds.'[62] The doctrine of Free Will is couched by Dante in elegant words:

> Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
> fesse creando, e a sua bontate
> più conformato, e quel ch'e' più apprezza,
> fu de la volontà la libertate;
> di che le creature intelligenti,
> e tutte e sole, fuoro e son dotate. *Par.*, V. 19–24
>
> The greatest gift which God in his generosity
> Created, which to his goodness
> Most conformed, and which he most values,
> Was that of freedom of the will,
> With which intelligent creatures,
> Each and all of them, were and are endowed.

Dante's conception of liberty, then, entails both *restraint* and *submission*. Sinners are enslaved to animal instincts because they focus on material goods and endeavours in such an exclusive way that they thereby turn them into ends in themselves. Not only does the bondage of sinful behaviour divert humanity from pursuing good deeds: it is a tyranny that must be overthrown if one is to become truly free. This means that human beings are free insofar as they curb or subdue their innate impulses of a base nature, that is, their earthly desires.

Freedom is submission, too. Human beings, who partake of divinity, harbour an innate love of God. They are free to resist their inclination towards God, by deciding to violate the moral laws that are made intelligible to them through the Revelation. By doing so, however, they eventually forfeit their freedom. This means that human beings attain perfect liberty only when they totally adhere to God's moral order. This is intelligible in terms of Medieval theology: since God's will seamlessly coincides with his freedom,[63] God being all-powerful and absolutely perfect, and since the human soul is entirely dependent on God, then obedience to his will only brings one closer to freedom. We have no alternative but to obey God's will, of which our soul is but a pale reflection. As Dante clearly argues, our

62. Reynolds, 282.

63. Dante's periphrasis for Heaven, 'the seat of God's will', exemplifies this point: 'colà dove si puote/ciò che si vuole', *Inf.*, 95–96. 'there, where anything that is willed can be done'. Heaven is where power and will are one.

nature is moulded by the stars or the heavens, but our will remains totally free. But the crucial point is that authentic freedom consists in *willingly submitting* to God's moral order.

> A maggior forza e a miglior natura
> Liberi soggiacete, e quella cria
> La mente in voi, che 'l ciel non ha in sua cura. *Purgatorio*, XVI. 79–81
>
> To a greater force and to a better nature [a periphrasis meaning God]
> You are freely subject; and that creates
> In you the mind which the stars do not have in their charge.

The oxymoron 'freely subject' epitomises the paradox inherent in the Christian conception of liberty. However, it must be emphasised, yet again, that determinism has no place whatsoever in Dante's vision. God, the love of whom pervades all of nature and human history, allows human beings to be masters of their own fate. 'The notion of an eternal, objective pre-established order of creation, independent of the human will,' does not preclude—rather, it presupposes—'man's immanent ethical freedom.'For Dante, in fact, 'ethical autonomy means the possibility only of man's transgression.'[64]

It follows that any act of rebellion against God's benign order inevitably leads to eternal damnation. Ulysses, who sets out on a voyage to absolute knowledge, thereby trespassing the boundaries God has decreed, is a case in point: his decision to ignore the dictates of religion and tradition, which stress the limitations of human beings, is God-defying. The pre-condition for attaining true liberty lies in accepting the axiological truth that the universe, bearing as it does God's imprint, is unfolding as it should. Ulysses is bent on self-destruction because he refuses to acknowledge that truth.

Let us now turn to Isaiah Berlin's theory of liberty, which, if revised critically, will enable us to bring into relief all the nuances of the conception of liberty both in Dante and in British Romanticism.

Berlin's Reflections on Liberty and the Romantic Ideology

Isaiah Berlin recognises that liberty inevitably bears a multiplicity of meanings, yet he claims that there 'appears to be a kind of nuclear,

64. G. Mazzotta, *Dante's Vision and the Circle of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 203.

central, minimal meaning which is common to all the many senses of this word and which signifies absence of restraint'.[65] This core meaning of liberty also alludes to the 'elimination of obstacles to something':[66] in order to be free, I have to neutralise the activities of my fellow human beings which interfere with, or stifle, my own. Liberty, then—stemming as it does from the 'desire on the part of individuals or groups not to be interfered with,'—is 'in its primary sense a "negative" concept.'[67] Its advocates supposedly have little, if any, interest in theorising a state of affairs whereby over-arching rules and moral laws dictate our lives.

Berlin, however, at one point, somewhat qualifying his earlier generalisation, states that in Western culture there is a plethora of conceptions of liberty which cannot be reduced to a single nuclear meaning. For one thing, Christian theology is irreconcilable with any philosophy which encourages the individual to remove whatever obstacles hamper his/her pursuit of earthly happiness. The devout Christian conceives of liberty in radically different terms: s/he strives to conform to God's all-encompassing will as expressed in the laws laid down by the Revelation. This is the 'positive' conception of liberty, which underpins Dante's vision. The modern, individualistic, conception outlined by Berlin, justifies man's self-sufficiency and self-aggrandisement and therefore would have been inconceivable for a Medieval writer. Seeking to satisfy our selfish, material impulses—heedless of our in-born spiritual inclination towards God—is tantamount to forfeiting our right to being free. Sinful behaviour destroys liberty and leads to spiritual annihilation. This view is common to both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, event though the latter—as we shall see—made a distinctive contribution to the development of modern individualism. Luther was adamant that 'unrighteousness' amounts to 'slavery', whereas 'Christian righteousness' is the highest form of—liberty. In fact, 'to preach Christ is to feed the soul, to justify it, to set it free, and to save it.'[68]

Luther underscores the contradictory nature of Christian liberty: 'the truly Christian life', he claims, is the epitome of the 'freest servitude', liberty being submission to God's love. This apparent paradox—whereby 'spiritual liberty and servitude' are inextricably bound together—stems

65. I. Berlin, *Political Ideas in the Romantic age*, (Princeton. Princeton University Press, 2006), 155.
66. *Ibid.*, 205.
67. *Ibid.*, 88, 90.
68. Luther, 23.

from the fact that the Christian religion is entirely governed by the love for God; and 'love is by its own nature dutiful and obedient to the beloved object. Thus even Christ, though Lord of all things, was yet made of a woman; made under the law; at once free and a servant; at once in the form of God and in the form of a servant.'[69]

The universe, being God's creation, possesses an inherent rationality, an ethical purpose which should be heeded and respected. Liberty—in this perspective—is 'inconceivable without submission' to a higher authority.[70] The emphasis is on obeying—albeit willingly—the moral laws sanctioned by an almighty Being. Christians, in fact, eagerly seek to fulfil 'a universal (divinely enacted) law; the less resistance' one offers to this law, the happier and the freer one will be.[71] This leads Berlin to conclude that 'the notion of "positive freedom" is certainly founded upon a confusion.'[72]

This article neither endorses nor rejects Berlin's advocacy of negative liberty and his concomitant critique of positive liberty. Berlin's categories will be employed here as purely descriptive tools.

While Dante's conception is unmistakably positive, what type of liberty did the British Romantics endorse? Given their liberal outlook, it is reasonable to assume that they veered towards the negative conception. But the Romantic paradigm exhibits noticeable positive leanings too. The Romantics, being Protestant, were receptive both to liberal *and* Christian values. They saw no contradiction in this. Modern liberty came of age in the eighteenth century, as political liberalism became a fully fledged ideology. Still, liberalism in a wider sense is the offspring of the Reformation. On the other hand, the fortunes of the positive conception are tied to Christianity's continuous—albeit intermittent in scope and intensity—presence in Western culture. This state of affairs is conducive to a complex theory of liberty that can hardly be reconciled with Berlin's water-tight categories. But let us delve deeper into the question.

The fact that Christian spirituality permeated vast swathes of British culture facilitated the encounter with Dante, the greatest mind of the Middle Ages. The Christian legacy manifests itself in the philosophies which posit the separation between spirit and matter, of which Kant's metaphysics is the most influential expression in the modern era. Romantic

69. *Ibid.*, 54.
70. Berlin, 91.
71. *Ibid.*, 92.
72. *Ibid.*, 205.

thinking is deeply influenced by 'the Kantian division of the world into that of mechanical causation and the inviolably free inner self.'[73] All versions of positive liberty, be they orthodox Christian or secular, are founded upon this dualism, which eighteenth-century materialists and sceptics sought to destroy. Positive liberty takes on a spiritual quality that is not susceptible to empirical laws. Authentic liberty cannot thrive in a realm ruled by necessity. 'Transcendental religious thought has tended to place this world beyond the material universe, as the life after death, or in the Elysian fields, or in the paradise, earthly or heavenly, of the monotheistic religions.'[74] Kant, who drew inspiration from the 'Protestant doctrine of the inner light contained within each immortal soul,'[75] locates this world in 'the inner citadel of the spirit',[76] the domain of perfect liberty. This philosophical view feeds into the Romantic obsession with the inner, spiritual self, the only dimension where liberty and creativity are conjoined in harmony.

Artistic creativity, in fact, becomes the epitome of perfect liberty. This conviction is forcefully expressed by Byron. A seminal concept in *The Prophecy of Dante* is that freedom is constantly nourished by the human 'creative force' flowing from 'any activity that produces beauty, goodness or understanding'—such as poetry, sculpture, painting, architecture, exploration, and the like.[77] The artist's ethical responsibility lies in tapping into his talent in order to 'contribute to mankind's achievement of liberty, both political and spiritual.'[78]

The spiritual laws governing liberty are not to be discovered by contemplating nature—this would be tantamount to downgrading them to the same status as 'the iron laws of nature'.[79] Nor are they to be conceived as God-given. Human endeavour acquires its fullest meaning when it is set against the spiritual laws created by poets and other artists as they breathe life into sounds and colours. 'Everything that is noble, great, sublime', in fact, *is generated by the artist-poet*, a God-like figure who

> performs the most sacred of all tasks which fall to the lot of man: out of his inner soul, armed only with his own intellect and imagination, and emotional and spiritual powers and creative capacity, he fuses life into the dead material

73. Berlin, 173.
74. *Ibid.*, 170.
75. *Ibid.*, 171.
76. *Ibid*, 168.
77. Taylor, 117.
78. *Ibid.*, 119.
79. Berlin, 170.

> provided by nature, and shapes it into whatever semblance he chooses, and it is convincing, beautiful, permanent, aesthetically valid in the degree to which he succeeds in incarnating within it the ideas, feelings, values, perceptions, attitudes which are the elements of his own 'free' inner life.[80]

The secular-minded Romantics, therefore, unwittingly alter the Christian perspective. The inner self, in order to be truly free, must grapple with constraints and impediments which are human, not divine, in origin. Once the act of creation has been de-theologised in this manner, it acquires 'the form of domination of something by something else.'[81] This shift towards a secular approach—which bears nonetheless the imprint of Christian thinking—'is responsible for the theory of freedom among the romantic philosophers. The free personality is conceived by the romantic writers as one which imposes itself upon the world outside it.'[82]

This type of idealised personality, however, cannot permanently dominate the world, be this conceived as an internal (one's inner self) or an external reality (the political and historical circumstances). One always has to face overwhelming obstacles or dictates. This is why the Romantics, somewhat paradoxically, contend that liberty—for all intents and purposes—is inseparable from submission to a higher order or principle.

The Romantic ideology is shaped by the Christian legacy, which looms large, for example, in Rousseau's thinking. The *Social Contract* articulates a view that was to prove immensely influential on the British Romantics, and on Wordsworth and Coleridge in particular: freedom is 'curtailed by an impersonal, incomprehensible force, by society. Man is still free; if he does not understand why he is enslaved. Thus, if we submit ourselves to the restraints imposed by a society to which we are in that mystic relation known as faith, or loyalty, we remain essentially free.'[83] By establishing the perfect spiritual order, one may solve the 'old antithesis between liberty and authority [...] Submission to authority will be freedom, because that within us which demands freedom is Nature; and Nature will be authority.'[84] Following this line of reasoning, Coleridge contrasts Luther and Rousseau in order to alert his readers to the possibility of realising 'the ideal condition of "free and yet absolute" self-government.'[85]

80. *Ibid.*, 174, 173.
81. *Ibid.*, 181.
82. *Ibid.*, 181.
83. Brinton, 52–53.
84. *Ibid.*, 223–224.
85. Pite, 107.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Romantics believed, just like their Christian forbears, that free activity 'is necessarily rational, obedient to laws, conforming to a pattern.'[86] But how can liberty be reconciled with the view whereby human beings realise their potential insofar as they obey, or are carried along by, a powerful spiritual design? The Christians solve this dilemma by positing a perfect realm presided over by an all-powerful Being. This makes it possible for freedom and submission to meet harmoniously. The Romantics, the ideology of whom is grounded on the polar opposite view, that is, on the dynamics between mutually exclusive realities, regard this dilemma as the source of creative energy. Liberty is affirmed in the context of conflicting yet coexisting impulses. Liberty requires its opposite: clearly-defined boundaries and laws. No wonder, then, that Shelley 'in the *Triumph of Life* thought of liberty and oppression, sympathy and selfishness, as inevitably conjoined.'[87] Shelley epitomises the Romantic conundrum: 'like Rousseau, he would at once be free and submissive to authority. But that authority must be identical with his own will.'[88]

The Romantics waver between a penchant for rational order coupled with hierarchies and a fascination for the larger-than-life characters who defy prohibitions and limitations. Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* epitomises this aspect of the Romantic ideology: 'Socrates and Christ are praised for being unable to compromise.'[89] Freedom acquires its deepest significance in the midst of (often hopeless) struggles whereby one attempts to overcome overpowering forces, be they inner impulses or external circumstances curbing one's will to power.

This philosophical background goes some way towards explaining why the Romantics are torn between conflicting impulses. On the one hand, they celebrate transgression, because they conceive of life 'as a force that is weakened and eventually destroyed by any kind of constraint. Life must ever attempt the impossible; and fail [...] Law, reason, and convention try to set bounds to human activity, and make life impossible'—one of the constant themes of the Romantic movement being 'this claim

86. Berlin, 198. For the Romantics 'to desire at all is to desire to fulfil a plan, to realise a pattern, to obey a law; the absence of law or pattern destroys any possible end or purpose, and leaves the world aimless, in an uncharted sea, at the mercy of every gust of passing wind.' *Ibid.*, 185.
87. Pite, 167.
88. Brinton, 165.
89. Pite, 183.

of the individual to emancipation from outward restraint by reason of a natural grace inherent in us all.'[90] On the other hand, in order for transgression to be a source of spiritual creativity, there has to be a hierarchical, obstacle-ridden or rule-governed reality, against which the individual seeking liberty must constantly fight.

Conflict is a cherished state of affairs that stimulates the heightened consciousness of artists. According to the Romantic ideal, the struggle for liberty is life-defining and never-ending. To live heroically is to create, but creation is a permanent process whereby the gifted individual strives to achieve the unattainable. The liberty to create is the most powerful expression of the individual's will. It is the spiritual element, the natural grace mentioned above, with which poets and artists are endowed, and which enables them to reconcile the opposing forces troubling the human soul.

The Christian perspective, conversely, values the individual's inner struggles insofar as they enable him/her to achieve a final state of peace and contentment. The key concept being harmony, lack of conflict—liberty obtains if the soul is in perfect accordance with God's immutable will. Besides being a desirable condition of the soul, liberty may exist on earth as a divinely inspired political order ensuring peace in all Christendom—this, in essence, is Dante's vision.

The Romantics *vis-à-vis* Dante's Conception of Liberty

The Romantic approach clearly secularises—or, which amounts much to the same thing, modernises—the *Comedy*. This leads to a misreading of Dante, which either de-theologises a Christian poem or manipulates the views of an orthodox poet in order to bring them into line with Protestant sensitivity. This is not to say that there was no common ground facilitating the meeting of minds between the Romantics and Dante. Even when the Romantics found fault with *The Comedy*'s imagery—its graphic realism, for example—[91] they could comprehend the depth of Dante's spirituality in a way that transcended the possibility of the sceptical materialist who viewed the world in terms of mechanical-physical laws.

The believers, for one thing, had ample intellectual tools with which to grasp the *Comedy*'s core significance. True, their Protestant-inspired conception of liberty is irreconcilable with Dante's orthodoxy, but their

90. Brinton, 14, 28.

91. Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante*, 112.

Christian perspective makes it inconceivable to advocate a state of affairs whereby the individual is totally free and self-sufficient. Nineteenth-century British Protestants concurred with Dante that authentic liberty must be balanced by authority. Luther himself had firmly criticised those Christians who misinterpreted the newly-found 'liberty of faith' he was preaching by turning it 'into an occasion of license' on the fallacious assumption 'that everything is now lawful for them'.[92] According to Protestantism, in fact, 'it is only a good idea to abolish ecclesiastical power if there is a strong Christian culture that will order people "from within" '—without a strict moral order 'founded on Christian discipline', liberty 'lapses into license, and chaos'.[93]

The non-believers—who had no feeling for the niceties of Medieval Christianity—interpreted Dante's poetic universe as vindicating their aesthetic, fully secularised ideals. Hence, they de-theologized *The Comedy* to such an extent that its eschatological message becomes somewhat elusive or vanishes altogether. Their position, however, differs from that of the eighteenth-century sceptics and materialists. Shelley, despite being an atheist and a radical libertarian, shied away from crass materialism, which is why he did not dismiss Dante's inventions as the product of a fanciful and bigoted mind.

The most secular minded amongst the Romantics were naturally drawn to *The Comedy* either because they, too, were under the spell of the Protestant ethos or because they adhered to the positive notion of liberty, which, as we have seen, is a secularised version of Christian ethics. According to the Romantics of all schools, liberty unfolds as the individual obeys, or defies, the spiritual laws conjured up by great minds. Because liberty is quintessentially the human endeavour to create, poets take on the semblance of Gods. This is a misreading. In Dante's medieval perspective, the poet is a humble messenger of Christian truth. He is not a God-like figure endowed with the power to create a spiritual world ruled by arbitrary laws. *The Comedy*'s structure is mimetic in that it mirrors the reality of God's will—souls are punished or rewarded depending on their deeds as judged from an orthodox, Christian perspective. Their fate in the afterlife is entirely determined by how they exercised their own free will.

And yet the legacy of Christian liberty, no matter how secularised, was instrumental in bridging the gap between nineteenth-century British

92. M. Luther, *Concerning Christian Liberty*, 64.
93. Hobson, 112–113.

culture and Dante's medieval perspective, according to which souls achieve freedom and happiness insofar as they obey God's moral laws. Positive liberty, in fact, entails submission to unbending spiritual laws, whether laid down by God or created by poets-artists. All the Romantics—believers and non-believers alike—found Dante's imagination congenial to their taste precisely because it conjures up spiritual laws that impose order upon the chaotic vitality of human passions. Even the Romantics who did not share Coleridge's and Wordsworth's piety, and discarded any trace of unpalatable Medieval theology in their interpretation of *The Comedy*, retained its underlying schema or template whereby neither the universe nor human society can subsist without a rational pattern of some sort.

The fact is that the Romantic penchant for tragic necessity and impending doom, the source of sublime feelings, requires an orderly framework of a spiritual kind. Liberty, without which life is meaningless, thrives only if it is projected unto that kind of backdrop. It was this conviction—or general mindset—that led the Romantics to identify with the plight of the souls suffering in *Inferno*, who are subject to the iron law of *contrapasso*, that is, of moral retribution, from which all forms of punishment rationally follow. Only in a context of this kind does human liberty make sense.

The Romantic critics were enthralled by the tragic, and therefore emotionally powerful, fate of Dante's hapless sinners—Paolo and Francesca, Count Ugolino and Ulysses—, whom they perceived as God-defying characters in the grips of an overpowering force. The Romantics, having endorsed the philosophical vision whereby to be free is to overcome one's limitations, are fascinated by *the emotions arising from the predicament of the sinners in Dante's hell, who hopelessly—yet defiantly —rebel against God's order.* A poetic universe based on moral laws gives rise to spiritual struggles, the outlet of powerful emotions.

But Dante's sinners are not akin to trapped heroes who constantly attempt to break free of their predicament; rather, they are fallen and forsaken souls who deservedly face the poet's judgement for having transgressed God's moral laws in their earthly lives. The plight of Paolo and Francesca is a case in point: 'the many references to their continuing susceptibility to passion', which only increases their torment as they are forever bound together in Hell, 'led many "romantic" commentators to see the episode as a vindication of their love, and of its triumph over their damnation. Dante's the pilgrim obvious pity for them does not however preclude the judgemental perspective Dante the poet insists on throughout.'[94]

94. S. Ellis, *Hell* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), 30.

Nevertheless the Romantics, despite their hermeneutical 'errors', comprehend a fundamental aspect of Dante's imagination. They are aware that Dante's *Comedy*—Hell, in particular—evokes a sublime scenario because it masterfully foregrounds the creative, liberty-enhancing, interplay between freedom and authority, defiance and submission. In this regard Dante stands out as the most gifted and imaginative poet of Western culture. As Giuseppe Mazzotta argues, Dante creates a 'cosmological vision of order whereby all entities of creation cohere in a pattern or design of scaled values'[95]—the Universe being governed by a hierarchy of laws that is willed by God's providence. As we have pointed out, God, by endowing human beings with moral freedom, did not create a deterministic universe. Even so, there appears to be a simmering tension between man's free choice and the universe's hierarchical, and absolutely perfect, order.

Liberty is dangerous because it can distort 'the claim of constitutive order in the cosmos',[96] and therefore throws up a theological problem. Is transgression finally subsumed into a paradigm of order until it dwarfs into insignificance, which means that man's freedom is powerless (or a figment of our imagination) and therefore self-defeating; or is transgression capable of subverting God's pre-established order, which would point to the self-sufficiency of human beings? *The Comedy* provides a fascinating solution: order and transgression 'no longer appear as merely antagonistic terms within the poetic and theological universe Dante forges. Each of them—order and transgression—ceaselessly entails the other in Dante's visionary poetry.'[97]

The Romantics—who understood liberty as taking shape in the course of a spiritual struggle between forces pitted against each other—were naturally predisposed to grasp the mutuality of order and transgression, the vital force of Dante's poetic universe. But this means that they had to develop a more complex conception of liberty than Berlin's dualistic thinking would allow, or indeed can even encompass. This brings us to H.F. Cary, whose translation enables us to disclose all the ideological nuances within the Romantic appropriation of Dante.

Cary's Anglicanism and liberty

Cary's epochal translation of the *Comedy* (first published in 1814)—which was enthusiastically received in mainstream British literary circles

95. Mazzotta, 201.
96. *Ibid.*, 203.
97. *Ibid.*, 215.

—, affords a fascinating vantage point for an investigation of the ideology of British Romanticism. Cary's preface expresses political and religious concerns that resonated deeply in the British cultural milieu:[98] 'Of what he [i.e. Dante] considered the cause of civil and religious liberty, he is on all occasions the zealous and fearless advocate and of that higher freedom, which is seated in the will, he was an assertor equally strenuous and enlightened.'[99]

Cary here asserts that Dante was a religious reformer—the harbinger of the Reformation, in fact—who, besides opposing a corrupt papacy, was eager to throw off the shackles of despotism. The Roman Catholic Church is the hotbed of both religious dogmatism and political oppression. But Cary, an Anglican clergyman, also subscribes to Dante's Christian theology, according to which liberty consists in conforming to God's will. This is why he is bound to underscore the importance of free will, a crucial concern for both Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

Cary's position responds to contradictory impulses: on the one hand, Dante's concept of liberty is modernised; on the other, Christian metaphysics binds Dante, the Medieval, orthodox poet, and Cary, the Protestant translator. Hence, if we employ Berlin's hard-and-fast categories it is difficult to understand Cary's conception of liberty.

Let us consider a textual example of Cary's Anglicanism.

> E ancor questo qua sù si comporta
> Con men disdegno che quando è posposta
> la divina Scrittura o quando è *torta*. Par., XXIX. 88–90 (my emphasis)
>
> And even this incurs less anger up here
> Than when the divine scripture is neglected
> Or when it is perverted [or: twisted from its meaning] (my translation)
>
> Yet this, offensive as it is, provokes
> Heaven's anger less, than when the book of God
> *Is forced to yield to man's authority*,
> O from its straightness warp'd.[100] (my emphasis)

Dante is here denouncing those interpreters of the holy Scriptures who distort the biblical truths. The Italian 'torta' means 'wrongly interpreted',

98. Crisafulli, *The Vision of Dante*, 295.
99. H.F. Cary, *The Vision; or Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise of Dante Alighieri*, (London: William Smith), 10–11.
100. *Ibid.*, 182.

a sense captured by Cary. But 'posposta' ('put after', that is, neglected) does not mean that the Scriptures are 'forced to yield to man's authority', which is an interpolation. 'Posposta' refers to those theologians who invoke the work of Aristotle and other philosophers in order to appear educated, and by doing so end up neglecting the Scriptures.[101] Cary, who was raised believing that the Church of England has always 'defined its faith as grounded on Scripture alone',[102] turns Dante into a proto-Protestant who questions the Roman Catholic clergy's infallibility in interpreting the Scriptures. Christians, in fact, must return, and have direct access, to the 'pure word of the Gospel', unhindered by any kind of human authority.

Cary misinterprets Dante, for whom the evangelical reawakening meant something entirely different: the Church returning to its primitive simplicity, not giving up its claims to infallibility. *The crucial point is that Cary's Protestant-inspired interpolation throws into relief a negative view* whereby 'liberty consists in a condition where the fulfilment of a man's purposes is not interfered with'[103]—the purpose, in the case at hand, being the liberty to interpret the Scriptures as one sees fit.

The heart of the matter is that it would be simplistic to reduce Cary's conception of liberty to a single meaning in keeping with Berlin's crude distinction. Cary harmonises Christian metaphysics, which is grounded upon positive liberty (humans beings are free to choose between good and evil; authentic liberty, moreover, lies in conforming to God's moral laws), with Protestantism, which entails a negative attitude—all Christians must do away with any type of external interference sanctioning or upholding beliefs unwarranted by the Scriptures. Protestants require the rejection of the Roman Catholic Church's overpowering, and therefore interfering, presence.

Let us dwell on this crucial point. Christians of all denominations believe that spiritual liberty consists in cleansing 'our hearts free from all sins'.[104] But according to Protestants, the attainment of perfect liberty requires another, crucial step: Christians must break free from the 'intolerable bondage to human works and laws'[105] enforced by the erroneous teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Unscriptural teachings threaten the very foundation of Christian liberty. This happens because

101. Crisafulli, 'Eco's Hermeneutics and Translation Studies', 100–101.
102. G. Bray, 'English Protestantism to the Present day', in A. E. McGrath and Darren C. Marks, *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 96–108, 101.
103. Berlin,169.
104. Luther, 64.
105. *Ibid.*, 41.

'if works are brought forward as grounds of justification, and are done under the false persuasion that we can pretend to be justified by them, they lay on us the yoke of necessity, and extinguish liberty along with faith.'[106] The Protestant conception of liberty, then, acquires a new layer of meaning which transforms it from within and sets it apart from traditional, Medieval Christian thinking. Fighting against the bondage of sin will no longer suffice. It is only by freeing oneself from the 'bondage to works' that one may 'come to the recognition of the liberty of faith'.[107]

This means, essentially, that negative freedom is a pre-condition for the fulfilment of positive freedom. *It was especially liberal Protestantism such as Milton's and Cary's that gave birth to a new conceptual framework in Christian culture whereby negative and positive liberty are conjoined and blended, as it were, and form a coherent whole.* A clarification is in order, though. Cary's negative liberty is at odds with the Enlightenment-inspired view that demands total freedom from all impediments. This form of extreme liberalism would have opened up unpalatable avenues for a nineteenth-century Anglican: it justifies obnoxious and relativistic free-thinking, which, in its turn, feeds into atheism, an abhorred and inconceivable philosophy. Cary advocates a specific form of negative liberty, one which, by asserting the individual's right freely to interpret the Scripture, curbs or severely restricts ecclesiastical power.

The problem is that Berlin downplays the rupture produced by the Reformation within Christianity: he claims that, on the fundamentals of Christian theology, there is no 'radical disagreement' between Roman Catholics and Protestants, both of whom conceive of liberty in positive terms, namely as the 'fulfilment of a universal (divinely enacted) law',[108] the central tenet of Christianity being that everybody must conform to God's authority. But let us quote Berlin more extensively:

> There may be passionate and profound differences about how knowledge of God's purpose is to be obtained – whether through the teachings of the Church of Rome and its priesthood and its tradition and its sacred writings, or through the interpretation of the Bible alone [...] But the central principle remains inviolate: the universe is guided by God, and to understand its nature and direction is to know how to live, and to know this is to know how to be free.[109]

106. *Ibid*,, 51.
107. *Ibid*., 71.
108. Berlin, 92.
109. *Ibid*., 92–93.

These observations contain a grain of truth: nineteenth-century Anglicans and Roman Catholics uphold Christian metaphysics since they draw on the same religious sources. Luther, for example, endorsed a core belief common to all Christians when he wrote that 'the inner man, being conformed to God and created after the image of God through faith, rejoices and delights itself in Christ [...], and hence has only this task before it: to serve God with joy and for nought in love.'[110]

But does this mean that Protestants and Roman Catholics see eye to eye on political issues or that their conceptions of liberty are identical? An affirmative answer would contradict the historical evidence, of which Cary's Anglican-inspired intervention in the target text is but an example.

Berlin's line of reasoning blurs crucial differences that cannot be glossed over. The Roman Catholic Church, by claiming infallibility, asserts itself as the sole authority entitled to interpret the Scriptures. Protestantism, conversely, contends that no Church should be allowed to perform a mediating—which is another word for oppressive—role *vis-à-vis* the Revelation: believers cannot fulfil their spiritual potential and pursue an authentic Christian life as long as there is in place an authoritarian clergy holding sway over Christendom. The Pope and the clergy, by forcing their readings upon the Gospel, the sole guide for Christians, obscure its pure message and therefore block the path to its correct understanding. Luther inveighed against the Roman Catholic Church, whose 'terrible tyranny' allegedly destroys 'the knowledge of Christian grace, of faith, of liberty, and altogether of Christ.'[111]

The Reformation's guiding principle rests on Luther's motto 'the truth shall set you free'[112]—the quest for truth is a Christian duty, but is also a liberating one at that. Luther, after claiming that it is faith in Christ—not good works—that justifies human beings before God, goes on to add: 'on this principle every man may easily instruct himself in what measure, and with what distinction, he ought to chasten his own body.'[113] Christian liberty means that 'we are lords of all things, and may be confident that whatever we do in the presence of God is pleasing and acceptable to Him.'[114] If the believer is entitled, and even encouraged, to judge the morality of his/her own behaviour, the Church is bound to lose its powerful grip over the lay

110. Luther, 44.
111. Luther, 41.
112. Hobson, 3.
113. Luther, 45.
114. *Ibid.*, 42.

Christian. The individual's conscience becomes the sole source of authority with regard to the Scripture. Every Christian, having finally achieved autonomy, repossesses, as it were, piety.

The central belief of Protestantism is eloquently argued by Milton in *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*:

> the whole Protestant church allows no supreme judge or rule in matters of religion, but the Scriptures; and these to be interpreted by the Scriptures themselves, which necessarily infers liberty of conscience.[115]

This is why Protestantism cannot admit of the accusation of heresy, liberty of conscience being the foundation of Christian ethics. Obeying God's laws cannot imply subservience to human authority. The only submission which is envisaged is that to God's laws. The Reformation brought about a radical change, not so much in the attitude towards God's moral laws—positive liberty is endorsed by Christians of all denominations—, as in the attitude towards human authority: Christians must escape from the yoke of Roman Catholicism, a spiritual tyranny trampling on Christian liberty. Christianity needs a Church embodying an authoritative, not authoritarian, spiritual guide.

This vision has clear political implications. We have already remarked that Protestants, by conceiving of *civil and religious* liberty as inextricably bound up, are prone to denounce the 'affinity between royal absolutism and Roman Catholicism'.[116] Richard Hooker, the supreme Anglican apologist, makes this point in a compelling manner: after emphasising that Protestantism 'allows for a high degree of freedom of conscience', he foregrounds, in a typical Protestant fashion, the strong link between politics and religion: 'an established Church is a relatively liberal one—for religious uniformity becomes a political matter rather than a religious one.'[117]

One should not underestimate the extent to which Protestantism brought about a revolution in the West; it radically altered Christian culture from within. Henceforth an inalienable and *inherently progressive* principle—the individual's autonomy from ecclesiastical interference in

115. Milton in Hobson, 128. An Anglican apologist in Cary's reiterated this principle: the Anglican Church, unlike the Roman Catholic Church, 'disclaims infallibility' since it 'recognizes, to the utmost extent, the right of every man to worship God according to his conscience.' M. Herbert, *A Comparative View of the Churches of England and Rome* (London: Rivington, 1816), 171.

116. Hobson 2008, xii.

117. *Ibid.*, 22.

matters of faith—would entitle the individual or lay Christian to resist the encroachment of any overpowering, established institution, be it secular or religious. The Reformation, by providing moral justification for rebellion against tyrannical rule, indirectly contributed to the burgeoning of liberty.

It follows that Protestantism is a gigantic step towards modernity—by rejecting the Roman Catholic Church's supremacy in Europe, it challenged the legitimacy of absolutism, both political and religious. True, the Reformation, which preached a return to the origins of Christianity, to the 'pure' Gospel freed from unwarranted accretions, initially was thoroughly pervaded by the spirit of traditional, Medieval Christianity—'Luther's radicalism did not conceive of any compromise between Christianity and modern civilization.'[118] But Luther's advocacy of liberty of conscience, a revolutionary concept at that time, was conducive to the growth of an individualistic ethic, the cornerstone of the modern world.

If freedom is to follow no other authority than one's conscience, then a whole power system grounded on unquestionable authority—which carries with it the right to repress dissent—is bound to collapse. The Reformation planted a seed that would bear fruit in the following centuries as the modern concept of liberty gradually took shape. Protestant free inquiry created a cultural atmosphere conducive to an individualistic mindset, which in turn paved the way for the emergence of the Enlightenment and political liberalism.

After the Reformation, then, the issue of liberty becomes far more complex than Berlin's categories would allow. For one thing, liberty cannot any longer be one dimensional. *Protestantism, by asserting the primacy of untrammeled, free conscience, introduced an unmistakable negative element in a theological conception which, up until then, had been totally positive.* The positive schema is retained (God's laws require voluntary submission), but a new overtone warns the believer that liberty is an illusion while s/he remains subject to the dogmas imposed by all-too-human institutions.

Conclusion

Because the Romantics identified with Dante's 'sympathy with human imperfections' and 'recognition of the humanity of the damned', it is reasonable to claim that 'empathy represents the humanist thread running

[118] Pellicani, 114.

through art which connects writers of the religious past with present-day sceptics.'[119] Yet the cult of liberty was another—and a more powerful one at that—common denominator connecting Dante and his nineteenth-century British admirers. Intellectuals and writers of the most diverse backgrounds constructed Dante as an uncompromising prophet of liberty, both political and religious. There is no profound ideological rift between the believers and the more secular-minded, all of whom are inspired by the legacy of positive liberty and by the Protestant ethos underpinning British culture. Liberal Protestantism is the coherent ideology embraced, whether wittingly or not, by most British Romantics. To put it differently: the ideological differences between the various schools of thought or parties in mainstream, nineteenth-century, British culture are matters of degree rather than kind.

Christian liberty does not vanish; it undergoes a transformation and then resurfaces in the nineteenth century, when it takes on a new—albeit secularised—lease of life. This is where Berlin's acumen is greatest: he reminds us that the positive liberty of modern times bears the imprint of Christian metaphysics. Religion continues to play a fundamental role in Western culture, notwithstanding the historical progress towards secularism.

In the eyes of the British Romantics, the individual's behaviour is meaningless outside a rule-governed or patterned spiritual order, whether laid down by God or created by the artist. They did not, however, adopt a purely positive conception of liberty like Dante's: they grasped its significance, but they could not avoid reinventing it in their own, modern terms. In fact, Romantics partially agreed with the eighteenth-century liberals who believed that liberty consists in throwing off material shackles, overcoming obstacles, and/or doing away with any type of interference constraining the individual's potential. This is why the Romantics endorse a twofold conception of freedom harmonising its positive and negative overtones. Cary's translation of *The Comedy* throws this crucial aspect of British Romanticism into relief. Cary was praised not only for his literary accomplishments but also because his ideological representation of Dante was in keeping with the prevailing, coeval mood in British culture, thereby encompassing a wide array of positions.

Although the believers amongst the Romantics were in a particularly favourable hermeneutic position *vis-à-vis* Dante, their more secular-minded counterparts too were able to capture the core significance of the *Comedy*. The believers subscribed to Dante's basic tenet, according to which

[119] Franklin, 262.

authentic freedom is voluntary submission to God's laws; the non-believers —who were beguiled by the dynamics of submission and defiance or transgression—de-theologise this perspective, but retained its template, whereby liberty only exists in relation to its opposite, constraint and obedience. The believers would have been closer than the non-believers to Dante's *theology*, were it not for the fact that they modernise it by reading into it the Protestant refusal of an all-powerful ecclesiastical authority. It is precisely this modern—albeit still religious—attitude that brought together Romantics from different constituencies. It was the Reformation that introduced the negative line of thinking—associated, in its 'pure form', with liberalism—into Western culture. If liberalism is the secular offshoot of Protestantism, it follows that the Romantics, in secularising Christian ethics, reconcile tradition (positive liberty) with modernity (liberty of conscience).

In conclusion, Berlin's thought-provoking reflections enhance our insight into British Romanticism. Berlin picks out the distinct elements which coalesce in the Romantic ideology. Yet the dichotomy between negative and positive liberty is ill-suited to account for the British Romantics' nuanced conception of liberty. The caveat is that Berlin's categories have explanatory power provided one reinterprets them in a flexible manner, as ideal-types allowing for crossovers. If one draws sharp boundaries, one fails to detect the grey areas where apparently mutually exclusive concepts meet and overlap. And, as the present article argues, the British Romantics, in turning to Dante, preferred hermeneutic sophistication over dualistic or simplistic modes of thinking.

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The Humanist Petrarch in Medieval and Early Modern England

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In 1906 Peter Borghesi published, in Italy, *Petrarch and his Influence on English Literature*, a first attempt to offer a comprehensive survey of the topic.[1] Mentioned in Harold Bloom's volume dedicated to Chaucer as 'an esteemed Italian scholar of English medieval and Italian Renaissance Literature',[2] Borghesi in fact limited himself to an overview of the Petrarchan model present in the works of the Henrician and Elizabethan sonneteers; the few lines dedicated to the first appearance of Petrarch in English literature are, however, significant:

> To understand Petrarch it was necessary to be a poet, and this poet was not long in making himself known: it was Chaucer who was the greatest of foreign verse-makers who lived in Petrarch's time. [...] The influence that the Italian lyric writer had on Chaucer was great, although perhaps the former was known to the latter much more through his Latin works than through his sonnets.[3]

I have opened my essay with this quotation as it exemplifies an attitude that subsequent scholarship has not yet been able to change, in spite of the enormous contributions both of manuscript studies and of literary criticism. For many years Petrarch has lived in popular imagination as an Italian poet (that is, a poet writing solely in Italian), and especially as the author of the *Canzoniere*. Over the last century, very little heed has been

1. Peter Borghesi, *Petrarch and his Influence on English Literature* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1906).
2. Harold Bloom, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York: Infobase, 2008), 385.
3. Borghesi, 9–10.

paid to his *Trionfi*, and even less to his Latin works; but the former enjoyed an extraordinary vogue in sixteenth-and seventeenth-century Europe, while Petrarch's Latin works were almost his only works known in medieval Europe. In this essay I shall try to re-assess the influence of Petrarch's writing in medieval and early modern England, first by looking briefly at the *Trionfi* and then by focusing on Petrarch's Latin works, with particular reference to his *Secretum*.

The case of the British Isles is emblematic: the *Trionfi* played a major role in the wave of Petrarchism. Almost fifty years ago George Watson wrote:

> the plain fact is that in Renaissance England Petrarch was a name rather than a book. The *Canzoniere* was never printed in any language there, and a complete English version was never to be realized by anyone until the 1850's. But if it was a name, it was a name beyond all others.[4]

One may see the truth of his statement as far as the *Canzoniere* is concerned, but in so writing he appears to ignore the legacy of the *Trionfi*, appearing in the same edition by Alessandro Vellutello which may be said to have sparked Petrarchism in early modern Europe.[5] It has been authoritatively stated that the influence of the *Trionfi* is 'forse più grande sull'iconografia e sulle festività di corte che sulla letteratura',[6] but this remains a debated point: specific references to the appreciation of Petrarch's poems appear in contemporary literature, as one may see in the following quotation from Roger Ascham:

> They have in more reverence the *Triumphs* of Petrarch than the Genesis of Moses; they make more account of Tully's *Offices* than St Paul's Epistles, of a tale of Boccaccio than a story of the Bible,[7]

4. George Watson, *The English Petrarchans. A Critical Bibliography of the Canzoniere* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1967), 3.
5. *Le volgari opere del Petrarca con la espositione di Alessandro Vellutello da Lucca* (Venice: Fratelli da Sabbio, 1525). On this point see William J. Kennedy, 'Petrarchan Poetics', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, III: The Renaissance*, ed. by Glyn P. Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 119–126, 121.
6. Nicholas Mann, 'Dal moralista al poeta: appunti per la fortuna del Petrarca in Inghilterra', in *Atti dei convegni Lincei: Convegno internazionale Francesco Petrarca* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1976), 59–69, 63.
7. Roger Ascham, *A Report and Discourse [...] of the Affaires and State of Germany*, in *English Works*, ed. by William Aldis Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 161. It should be noted that here Ascham is talking of the German rather than the English readers.

though Ascham's tone reveals his irritation at the supposed levity of the Italian writers. More importantly, while the much-studied sixteenth-century English translations from the *Canzoniere* are comparatively few, and concentrated on a very limited number of sonnets,[8] translations of the *Trionfi* appear both numerous and systematic. A number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers preferred to work on parts of the text: this is the case of William Withy, who translated a fragment of the *Triumphus Cupidinis* in the 1580s; of Edward Dyer, who included twenty lines from the *Triumphus Mortis* in his *Prayse of Nothing* (1585); of Mary Sidney, who in the 1590s translated the first two chapters of *Triumphus Mortis*; of John Florio, who included in the last chapter of *Second Fruites* (1591) a translation of an extract from *Triumphus Pudicitie*; lastly, the Harington manuscript, now in Arundel Castle, includes an English translation of a fragment of *Triumphus Eternitatis* traditionally attributed to Queen Elizabeth. Besides, there are at least two translations of the whole text, one by Henry Parker, Lord Morley, originally presented and dedicated to Henry VIII, but reprinted (with a dedication to young Lord Maltravers, son and heir to the Earl of Arundel) in the reign of Mary I,[9] and the other, dated 1587, by William Fowler, who dedicated it to Jean Fleming, Lady Thirlestane.[10]

As for the English medieval world, its knowledge of Petrarch exactly mirrors the European situation: with the sole exception of Geoffrey Chaucer, translating 'S'amor non è' and incorporating it into *Troilus and Criseyde*, neither the *Rime* nor the *Trionfi* appear to have had any impact in England before the sixteenth century. Chaucer's experiment remained unique and had no imitators for well over a century, nor has it yet been adequately explained.[11] The English poet did not acknowledge his debt in *Troilus and Criseyde*, but inserted a famous allusion in the prologue of

8. See Watson, whose work includes a full list of all known translations of Petrarch's sonnets.
9. *Lord Morley's Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke*, ed. by D.D. Carnicelli (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 153.
10. William Fowler, *The Triumphs of Petrarcke*, in The *Works of William Fowler, Secretary to Queen Anne, wife of James VI. Vol. I. (Verse)*, ed. by Henry W. Meikle (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1914), 13–134. It should be noted also that in 1644 Anna Hume translated the *Triumphus Amoris, Pudicitiae* and *Mortis*.
11. But see Piero Boitani, 'Petrarch's *dilectoso male* and its European Context', in *Zusammenhange, Einflusse, Wirkungen: Kongressakten zum ersten Symposium des Mediavistenverbandes*, ed. by Joerg O. Fichte, Karl Heinz Göller and Bernhard Schimmelpfennig (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 299–314.

the Clerk's Tale, where the speaker tells his audience of a meeting with another learned clerk in Padua, and thus describes him:

> Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete,
> Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete
> Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie,
> As Lynyan dide of philosophie,
> Or lawe, or oother art particuler;
> But Deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen heer,
> But as it were a twynklyng of an ye,
> Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye. (31–38)[12]

A praise that might serve both the Latin and the Italian Petrarch, and that introduces the theme of the 'laureate poet' that will resonate throughout late medieval English literature.[13]

The medieval Petrarch, as read by his contemporaries across Europe, remained almost solely the Latin writer. Nicholas Mann's fundamental recognition of the influence of Petrarch on the medieval English-speaking world, in the monumental survey of extant manuscripts published in 1975,[14] offered scholars a first opportunity to assess the early impact of the Italian writer, and the belatedness with which his Italian works, such as the *Canzoniere* and the *Trionfi*, had reached the English reader, while his Latin treatises and dialogues had been studied, translated, and debated at a much earlier stage.

Mann identified, among the 250 manuscripts of Petrarch's works now in the British Isles, about 40 which could be said to have been composed or copied in England between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, all containing works in Latin. Inevitably, the fourteenth century offers very little: the three late-fourteenth-century manuscripts written in English hands now extant contain, respectively, *De remediis utriusque*

12. The edition used is *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). There is also a brief mention in the Monk's Tale, when the speaker, describing the fate of Zenobia, adds that curious readers should consult Petrarch: 'Lat hym unto my maister petrak go, That writ ynough of this, I undertake' (2325–2326).
13. On the theme of poetic laureation in late medieval English literature see Alessandra Petrina, '"With his penne and langage laureate": The Symbolic Significance of the Laurel Crown', *Studi Petrarcheschi*, 23 (2010), 251–275.
14. Nicholas Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica*, 18 (1975), 139–509.

fortunae (possibly, by Mann's account and according to surviving evidence, the most popular Petrarchan work in Europe in the decades following its author's death), a compendium of the same work, and *Africa*.[15] Later codices insisted on these works, on Petrarch's version of the Griselda story, and on his epistles. As noted above, this reflects a European trend: even the earliest Florentine biographies of the poet, such as the ones written by Filippo Villani (1381), Pier Paolo Vergerio (1397), Leonardo Bruni (1436) and Giannozzo Manetti (1440s), have little to say on his vernacular production.[16]

Petrarch's *Secretum*, among his most beautiful and enigmatic works, remains a somewhat unknown quantity even by Mann's own exacting standards. It appears to have enjoyed the same fame in Europe as Petrarch's other Latin works: before 1500 at least four editions appeared, a number which compares well to the three editions of the complete works and the four editions of *De remediis*.[17] This sort of estimate does not work for England, where print appeared much later and where, in consequence, incunabula are a much rarer phenomenon, yet it helps us get an idea of the reasonably successful circulation of a text which is now (perhaps unjustly) considered a minor element in Petrarch's canon. It might be noted that the first Latin work of Petrarch to be translated and printed in England was, unsurprisingly, *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, printed in 1579 by Thomas Twyne with the title *Phisicke against fortune, aswell prosperous, as aduerse*.[18]

If, on the other hand, we take manuscripts into consideration, then the *Secretum* seems to have made its first appearance in England in 1450, the year in which Theodericus Werken, a Flemish scribe working for William Gray, copied it, possibly for a colleague of Gray at Balliol, Richard Bole (the manuscript is now Oxford, Balliol College, MS 127).[19] This is the complete list of the *Secretum* manuscripts in England, as it appears in 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles':

15. See Nicholas Mann, 'La prima fortuna del Petrarca in Inghilterra', in *Il Petrarca ad Arquà. Atti del convegno di studi nel VI centenario (1370–1374)*, ed. by Giuseppe Billanovich and Giuseppe Frasso (Padua: Antenore, 1975), 279–289, 280–281.
16. Kennedy, 'Petrarchan Poetics', 119.
17. On this point (for what is merely a tentative survey) see Robert Coogan, 'Petrarch's Latin Prose and the English Renaissance', *Studies in Philology*, 68 (1971), 270–291, 272.
18. Printed in London by Thomas Dawson for Richard Watkyns; the frontispiece makes it clear that this work was originally in Latin. Robert Coogan claims this translation was offered to Queen Elizabeth, but does not support his statement (272). More than twenty years earlier, Henry Parker's translation of an Italian work, the *Trionfi*, had appeared: *The tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke, translated out of Italian into English by Henrye Parker knyght, Lorde Morley* (London: Iohn Cawood, 1555).
19. Mann, 'La prima fortuna', 284.

- Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 336A, fols 1r–104r, second half of the fifteenth century, of English or Welsh origin (lacking beginning; absence of a folio between fols 3 and 4; other contents: Ps.-Plato Latinus, *Axiochus*).[20]
- Cambridge, Peterhouse, MS 271, fols 236r–278r, early fifteenth century, French cursive hand, recorded in Peterhouse since 1640 (other contents: *De remediis*).[21]
- Glasgow, Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 480, fols 33r–64v, fourteenth-fifteenth century; written in an Italian hand, it contains books 2 and 3 of *Secretum* (other contents: Petrarch's version of the story of Griselda, the epistle *Sine nomine*, and *Itinerarium Syriacum*). It was bequeathed by William Hunter in 1783.[22]
- London, British Library, MS Harley 6348, fols 57ra–72vb, late fourteenth century, of Italian origin, with annotations in a contemporary English hand to *Secretum* and *De vita solitaria* (other contents: *Itinerarium*, *Invectiva contra medicum*, *De ignorantia*, *De otio religioso*, Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*).[23]
- London, British Library, MS Royal 8 A.xiii, fols 34r–94r, fifteenth-century, English gothic cursive script; originally given to Queen's College, Oxford, by Hugh Fraunce (other contents: Guillaume de Conches' *Moralium dogma philosophorum*, and Alanus ab Insulis' *Anticlaudianus*).[24]
- Oxford, Balliol College, MS 127, fols 5r–66r, fifteenth-century, copied on English parchment by Theodericus Werken for Richard Bole in 1450, possibly in London, with English illumination (other contents: Cicero's *De senectute*, *De amicitia*, *Paradoxa*, Poggio Bracciolini's *De vera nobilitate*, *De amicitia*). Probably donated by William Gray in 1467.[25]

20. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 3, 151–152. The manuscript is fully described in David Rundle, 'Of Republics and Tyrants: Aspects of Quattrocento Humanist Writings and their Reception in England, c. 1400–c. 1460' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1997); the relevant extract is available at http://bonaelitterae.wordpress.com/?s=peniarth (accessed July 2012).
21. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 21, 177–178.
22. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 39, 195–196.
23. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 123, 309–311.
24. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 130, 319–320.
25. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 154, 351–352. See also http://bonaelitterae.wordpress.com/?s=peniarth (accessed July 2012).

- Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 503 (*olim* Laud G.13), fols 20r–86v, third quarter of the fifteenth century, Italian hand, possibly written in Milan; it entered the Bodleian Library in 1639 (other contents: epistles by Petrarch).[26]
- Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS D.88, fols 1r–77v, late fifteenth century, English cursive hand and English illumination; it was given to the College by Richard Foxe, its founder (other contents: Poggio Bracciolini's *De vera nobilitate* and *De avaritia*).[27]

Mann also notes the existence of a fifteenth-century, possibly French manuscript of the *Secretum*, now in the Bibliothèque Municipale in Douai (MS 269), a parchment codex including the *Secretum* on fols 80r–129r, which has annotations, on fols 1v-2r and 137v-40r, in an English hand.[28] Nine manuscripts containing the *Secretum* and somehow related to England might seem a very good number; of the manuscripts listed above, however, Cambridge, Peterhouse, MS 271 may be excluded since it was written in France and arrived in England very late,[29] as did Glasgow University Library, MS Hunter 480 and Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 503, both of Italian origins. Even so, the remaining manuscripts reveal a clear interest for this text.

Having listed and described these manuscripts (and the hundreds of others, containing other works by Petrarch, he lists in his celebrated

26. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 226, 456–458.
27. Mann, 'Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles', n. 238, 472–473. In 'La prima fortuna', 286, Mann also mentions Trinity College, Dublin, MS 277, but in fact this manuscript contains a copy of *Epistolae Rerum Senilium* 10.1, and a copy of *Psalmi Septem Poenitentiales*. See Marvin L. Colker, *Trinity College Library Dublin. Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), I, 275–276.
28. Mann, 'La prima fortuna', 286. Besides, as noted by Elisabeth Pellegrin, 'le croquis du f. 2v où l'on voit un abbé étudiant dans une grotte représenterait, selon une légende plus récente, le site du monastère cistercien de Hilton ou Hulton (Angleterre), on ne saurait en conclure que le manuscrit en provient. Au f. 1r plusieurs ex-libris de possesseurs anglais du XVIe siècle: "Mary Coyncy hir. (et un mot gratté)"; "Tene ueritatem. Tho. Digbis."; "Liber Domini Johannis Hunt (un mot effacé) ex Dono cognati sui Thoma Digby de Sandon". Le manuscrit provient d'un établissement anglais de Douai' ('Manuscrits de Pétrarque dans les bibliothèques de France II', *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica*, 6 (1963), 271–364, 282).
29. Note, however, that David Rundle and Anthony John Lappin maintain that the manuscript was bequeathed to Peterhouse by Richard Poringland in 1471. See their revised edition of Roberto Weiss's *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literatures, 2010), 243.

study), Mann also noted that the only fifteenth-century English translation of a work by Petrarch to have arrived to us appeared to be an abridgment of *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, extant in a single manuscript, Cambridge University Library Ii.VI.39 (which includes also a version of *The Cloud of Unknowing*).[30] In this choice, as well as in the kind of works that were popular in England, Mann sees a pattern, as English readers appeared to value Petrarch as a moral philosopher and religious writer.[31] This evaluation might, however, be the result of oversimplification.

Important testimonies concerning the circulation of Petrarch's text in late medieval England can be not only the extant manuscripts, but also allusions to the Italian poet. One such can be found in Benedict Burgh's work, in a long list of poets and wise writers of classical and late antiquity, where 'frauncis' keeps company with Greek writers such as Homer and Aristotle, and Latin such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Virgil:

> The crafte of speche that some tyme founde was
> of the famous philosophers moste perfite
> Aristotell gorge and ormogenes
> nat have I. so I have lerid but a lite
> As for my party thowgh I repent I may go qwite
> of tullius frauncis and quintilian
> fayne wolde I lere. but I not conceyve can /
>
> The noble poete virgil the mantuan
> Omere the greke and torqwat sovereyne
> Naso also that sith this worlde first be gan
> the marvelist transformynge all best can devyne
> Terence ye mery and plesant theatryne
> porcyus lucan marcyan and orace
> stace Iuvenall and he lauriate bocase /[32]

Here, it will be noted, the only Italian poets are Petrarch and Boccaccio (unusually described as 'laureate'), who however, given the company

30. Mann, 'La prima fortuna', 287. The text is now published in F.N.M. Diekstra (ed.), *A Dialogue Between Reason and Adversity. A Late Middle English Version of Petrarch's De Remediis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968).
31. Mann, 'La prima fortuna', p. 288.
32. 'Benedict Burgh's Letter to John Lydgate', in *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey*, ed. by Eleanor Prescott Hammond (Durham: Duke University Press, 1927), 189.

they keep, are not identified with Italian vernacular literature (as happens elsewhere, when they are listed as two of the *tre corone*, the first and foremost being Dante), but with Latin writing. In this list of worthies Petrarch and Boccaccio appear to represent the continuation of classical tradition, and the setting of Petrarch between Cicero and Quintilian may be meant to underline his role as an *auctoritas* in rhetoric and Latin prose, one of the models Burgh may use to write in a good Latin style.[33]

An even more interesting allusion is offered by one of Burgh's contemporaries and some time collaborator, John Lydgate, an insatiable reader. In his *Fall of Princes*, I.257–267, Lydgate mentions Petrarch and *De remediis*, describing its contents and calling it 'wondirful delectable'.[34] There are allusions to Petrarch elsewhere (III.3859; IX.1; IX.3423), including a wonderful little scene in which Petrarch encourages the tired and ailing Boccaccio to conclude his work (VIII.61-189), but the other notable passage on which I would like to draw the reader's attention is IV.106–126, part of an extraordinary section that Lydgate's editor calls 'A Prologue on Poets and Writing.' Here the English poet mentions Petrarch, as Burgh does, as the most recent addition to the rostrum of great Roman poets, and, while giving him the same appellative of *laureate* Burgh had attributed to Boccaccio, he also shows his awareness of the specific circumstances of Petrarch's laureation by noting that he was 'in Rome laureat'. This allusion gives him the opportunity to insert a list of Petrarch's works:

> Writyng of old, with lettres aureat,
> Labour of poetis doth hihli magnefie,
> Record on Petrak, in Rome laureat,
> Which of too Fortunys wrot the remedie,
> Certeyn Ecloogis and his Cosmographie,
> And a gret conflict, which men may reede & see,
> Of his querellis withynne hymsilf secre.
>
> He wrot seuene Psalmys of gret repentaunce,
> And in his Affrik comendid Scipioun,
> And wrot a book of his ignoraunce
> Bi a maner of excusacioun,
> And sette a notable compilacioun
> Vpon the lyff[e] called solitarye,
> To which this world is froward and contrarie.

33. For this last point, see Coogan, 277.
34. *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, ed. by Henry Bergen (London: Oxford University Press, 1924–1927), I, 8.

> And thus be writyng he gat hymsilff a name
> Perpetuelli to been in remembraunce,
> Set and registred in the Hous of Fame,
> And made Epistles of ful hih substaunce
> Callid Sine Titulo; & mor hymsilff tauaunce,
> Of famous women he wrot thexcellence,
> Gresilde preferryng for hir grete pacience.[35]

As usual in this case, Lydgate's list is particularly useful since it gives us a fairly accurate overview of what was available to the erudite English readership in the fifteenth century, and offers in fact the first English bibliography of Petrarch. It is also exceptionally accurate, mentioning as it does not only works any erudite in fifteenth-century England might be acquainted with such as *De remediis*, but also the *Bucolicum Carmen*, the *Itinerarium Syriacum*, the Penitential Psalms, *Africa*, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* and *De vita solitaria*.[36] The *Secretum* deserves two lines here, of which the second half of the first ('which men may reede & see') might very simply be a line-filler of no particular significance, or might allude to the presence of this work in a library Lydgate himself had access to.

Allusions to a library in conjunction with Lydgate's name inevitably bring to mind the most celebrated private library in fifteenth-century England, that is, the library of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, of which a little over forty manuscripts survive, and which is now known mainly thanks to the list of books he donated, in various stages, to the University of Oxford. Thanks to the patient reconstruction undertaken by Alfonso Sammut, and to the addition more recently offered by David Rundle, we can now make a reasonable, if far from complete, estimate of the quality and quantity of a man who was both extremely rich and powerful and a bibliophile—a man, therefore, who could presumably satisfy his own intellectual curiosity far more easily that contemporary writers such as Lydgate himself, and who was often given books in which he might have no great personal interest, but which might reflect contemporary taste.

Among the manuscripts which originally belonged to Duke Humphrey and which have survived to the present day is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Française, MS lat. 10209, a fifteenth-century codex

35. *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, II, 476.
36. Most scholars agree in identifying what Lydgate calls 'Cosmographie' with the *Itinerarium*. See Coogan, 277.

written in an Italian hand, which contains Petrarch's *De remediis*.[37] To this we must add at least ten other works appearing in the lists of the Duke's donations to the University of Oxford: they include, apart from three unidentifiable works (two of which might be copies of *De viris illustribus*), two copies of *De vita solitaria*, two of *De remediis*, one of *Rerum memorandarum libri*, and two of *Secretum*—thus confirming the popularity of this text.[38]

In the following century, in spite of the surging interest for the Italian Petrarch, the Latin works were still read: Thomas Wyatt, who introduced Petrarch's sonnets into English by translating some of them and attempting a first adaptation of the metrical form into English, was also for a time engaged in a translation of *De remediis*, but then gave up, preferring to translate Plutarch's *De tranquillitate animi*. He thus justified himself in the preface to this translation:

> The boke of Fraunces Petrarch of the remedy of yll fortune at the commaundement of your highnesse I assayd, as my power wolde serue me, to make into our englyssh. And after I had made a prose of nyne or ten Dialogues, the labour began to seme tedious by superfluous often rehersing of one thyng, which tho parauenture in the latyn shalbe laudable, by plenteous diuersite of the spekyng of it (for I wyll nat that my iugement shal disalowe in any thing so aproued an auctour) yet forlacke of such diuersyte in our tong, it shulde want a great dele of the grace.[39]

These lines seem to mark the passage from the Latin to the Italian Petrarch in English appreciation, and it is significant that the poet should find a linguistic reason for his choice. A similar view including the Italian and the Latin Petrarch can be found in the words of Henry Parker, Lord Morley, in the preface of his translation from Boccaccio's *De Claris mulieribus*; after praising Dante, he continues:

37. See David Rundle, 'Manuscripts once Owned (or otherwise) by Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester', *Bonae Litterae*, http://bonaelitterae.wordpress.com/david-rundles-research-projects/the-library-of-humfrey-duke-of-gloucester/ (accessed September 2011).
38. See items 25, 47, 52, 220-25 and 270 of the list of donated books, as edited in Alfonso Sammut, *Unfredo duca di Gloucester e gli umanisti italiani* (Padua: Antenore, 1980), 60–84.
39. *Tho. wyatis translatyon of Plutarckes boke, of the quyete of mynde* (London: Richard Pynson, 1528), sig. a.II.

> The next vnto thys Dante was Frauncis Petrak, that not onely in the Latyne tunge, but also in swete ryme, is so estemyde that vnto thys present tyme vnnethe is ther any noble prynce in Italy, nor gentle man, withoute hauynge in hys handes hys sonnetes and hys 'Tryhumphes' or hys other rymes. And he wrote also in the Latyne tunge certeyn eglogges in versys and another booke named 'Affrica' and 'Of the Remedyes of bothe Fortunes', with dyuers epistles and other wourkes which I ouer passe.[40]

Once again, in his indifference to the Latin works ('I ouer passe') one may read the shifting of early modern taste. Yet there are still, throughout the sixteenth and even in the seventeenth century, allusions to these works among English writers. A name that is usually evoked when discussing the vogue of Petrarchan writings in Henrician England is that of Thomas More, belonging to a circle where knowledge of Petrarch's work was a shared factor.[41] Rightly or wrongly, the knowledge of Petrarch within More's circle (a circle including Erasmus, Colet, Elyot, and John Fisher) has been seen as evidence of a more 'humanist' reading. It is certain that our knowledge of reading habits at this stage, and therefore the possibility of evaluating Petrarch's influence in English writings, is more systematic. Later allusions to the *Secretum* are rarer, though there are evident echoes in George Chapman's *Monsieur d'Olive*, a play written in 1606 (see III.i.9–19, 20–35, 36–40), and in Milton's *Paradise Lost*,[42] in a reading in which the poet followed an early modern English tradition of identifying Petrarch as proto-Protestant.[43]

In 1979, however, the re-emergence of a manuscript from a private collection allowed the scholarly community to add an important element to our reconstruction of the late medieval English reading of Petrarch. The manuscript was sold on 19 June 1979 at Sotheby's in London; it had

40. *Forty-six Lives Translated from Boccaccio's De claris mulieribus by Henry Parker, Lord Morley*, ed. by Herbert G. Wright (London: Oxford University Press,. 1943), 2.
41. On this point see Coogan, 277–282.
42. Anthony M. Cinquemani, 'Milton Translating Petrarch: Paradise Lost VIII and the *Secretum*', in *Travel and Translation in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Carmine G. Di Biase (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 65-88.
43. For this reading, see the following observation: 'Tudor Petrarchism takes on a Protestant edge [...] on analogy to Petrarch's association of the Pope with the Whore of Babylon in *Bucolicum Carmen*, which led English reformers such as Bale and John Foxe to treat the Italian poet as a proto-protestant author' (John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography. Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 120.

previously been in private hands, in North Yorkshire. It was bought by the British Library (then British Museum), and it is now MS Additional 60577. It has 226 leaves of parchment and paper and it is an anthology in English and Latin, mainly of moral or religious text, though including also some love lyrics, medical recipes, a *lapidarium*, astrological notes, and short pedagogic poems, as well as Benedict Burgh's *Secreta secretorum*. The collection opens with a copy of *The ABC of Aristotle*, a rather common text meant to help children learn their alphabets,[44] and it includes among its items a verse sermon in Middle English, rather an unusual type of text.[45] From fol. 191r to the end the manuscript appears to be composed almost entirely of items copied in the sixteenth century, including some interesting pieces of early modern music.[46]

The scholar who first analysed and described the manuscript, Edmund Wilson, soon noted on fols 8r–22v a text headed 'Franciscus Petrarcha', a Middle-English translation of the Proem (fols 8r–9v) and Book 1 of the *Secretum*, in an *anglicana* hand with some secretary features, as well as some rubrication and a number of marginalia. Unlike the original, Latin prose, this translation is in verse: the Proem is in 8-line stanzas, rhyming ABABBCBC, while Book 1 is in couplets, apart from a final stanza, in the same metre as the Proem.[47] The text had been described in the otherwise excellent account included in Sotheby's catalogue as 'Dialogue between Petrarch and St Augustine, with some remarks by lady Truth, on the nature of life and manners, opening with the invocation "Assit principio

44. Edward Wilson, 'A Newly Identified Copy of The ABC of Aristotle in "The Winchester Anthology" ', *Notes and Queries*, 47 (2000), 296.
45. The sermon is printed in Edward Wilson, 'A Middle English Verse Sermon in the Winchester Anthology', *Notes and Queries*, 46 (1999), 17–20.
46. For this section of the manuscript, see Iain Fenlon, 'Instrumental Music, Songs and Verse from Sixteenth-Century Winchester: British Library Additional MS 60577', in *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources and Texts*, ed. by Iain Fenlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 93–116.
47. Edward Wilson, 'An Unrecorded Middle English Version of Petrarch's "Secretum": A Preliminary Report', *Italia Medievale e Umanistica*, 25 (1982), 389–390. As yet there are no studies on this translation, though it is mentioned in Vincent A. Gillespie, 'The Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual, with Particular Reference to the *Speculum Christiani* and some Related Texts' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1981). It is also briefly discussed in Daniel Wakelin, 'Religion, Humanism, and Humanity: Chaundler's Dialogues and the Winchester *Secretum*', in *After Arundel. Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Vincent A. Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 225–244.

Sancta maria meo".'[48] This translation, though it includes only the first of the three books of the *Secretum*, does not appear fragmentary or incomplete: the scribe very clearly indicates the end of his work by inserting a 'finis' in central position on fol. 22r, and the rest of the page is filled by a different hand, in Latin. The verso of fol. 22 is the first page of a poem addressed to William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester.

The manuscript was subsequently published in facsimile,[49] and Wilson published a number of short articles and notes dealing with various aspects of the manuscript anthology, but as yet no comprehensive study or edition of this translation has been proposed, in spite of its undoubted interest. Another text present in the collection and hitherto unknown was published in 1982, edited by W.L. Braekman.[50] It is a conversation between a lover and his lady, and occupies fols 95–107 of the manuscript. It is of particular interest to us as it includes a clear indication of its dating: '1487' is noted on the colophon of fol. 107v, in a hand that is probably the same as that which penned the Petrarch translation.[51]

As shown by the textual and codicological evidence, part of which has been mentioned above, the first part of the manuscript was put together at St Swithun's Priory, Winchester, in the late fifteenth century, even if the main scribe, according to linguistic analysis, did not come originally from the same area; indeed, the language used in the manuscript offers some interesting clues as to his provenance:

> In the earlier part of the MS, up to f. 37v, his language is strongly local, and it belongs just on the edge of the *Rosarium*-complex, in E. Leicestershire on the Rutland border. These early folios were written sometime after 1451; how soon after we do not know. Some of the later texts were written much later: one is dated 1487, another can hardly be earlier than

48. C.F.R. de Hamel, 'Lot 57', *Sotheby's Catalogue of Western Manuscripts and Miniatures for the Sale on 19 June 1979* (1979), 52–60, 54. The compiler of the catalogue might have been P.N. Poole-Wilson, who worked at Bernard Quaritch, where the manuscript was in the interval between being in the hands of the private owner and entering the then British Museum. See Toshiyuki Takamiya, 'A New Manuscript of Walter Hilton's *Eight Chapters on Perfection*: The British Library, Additional MS 60577', *Poetica: An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies*, 12 (1979), 142–149, 142.
49. *The Winchester Anthology. A Facsimile of British Library Additional Manuscript 60577*, ed. by Edward Wilson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981).
50. W. L. Braekman (ed.), *The 'Demaundes off Love'. A Middle English Prose Version (1487) of the French Game 'au roy qui ne ment'* (Brussel: Omirel Ufsal, 1982).
51. Braekman, 7.

> 1477. In the interim (which may have been no more than a few months, but which on present evidence *could* be as long as thirty-six years), the migrant from E. Leicestershire has not only learned humanistic script: he has acquired the southerner's distinction between the letters *y* and *p*, and abandoned most of the distinguishing features of his East Midland dialect. Yet his now preferred *-eth* for the present plural, southern though it looks, gives away his local origins: the syntactic rules that govern its use are the familiar northern rules. So, he writes *ye loue* but *men louethe*, *ye sey* but *some seythe*, *thei knowe* but *tho that ... knowethe*. From such apparently unlikely sources, a bit of medieval biography is recovered.[52]

The manuscript, given the rather precise information we have about its provenance and dating, thus constituted a precious document for us, allowing us to reconstruct the intellectual life of late medieval and early modern Winchester. Given the poem on fols 22v–24r, the other association that can be clearly established is with William Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester. As has been noted, 'from the text itself it seems that the bishop's immediate predecessor had died only a short time before, that a period of unrest had followed as a result of which a number had gone into exile, and that for four years there had been widespread suspicion;'[53] the poem is thus cogently topical, and closely associated with local events.

William Waynflete (c.1400–1486) was headmaster of Winchester College in the 1430s and 40s, then moved on to Eton where he eventually became Provost. Consecrated Bishop of Winchester in 1447, he maintained a keen interest in education, and in 1448 promoted the foundation of Magdalen Hall in Oxford, maintaining his authority over it when it was re-founded as Magdalen College in 1458.[54] His role in the composition of the manuscript might simply have been that of the dedicatee and possibly patron, but his presence helps us set this anthology in the context of late medieval interest for education, both in Latin and in the vernacular.

The translation of Petrarch's *Secretum* thus acquires special importance. Though Edward Wilson, with the publication of the facsimile of Additional 60577, also promised a forthcoming edition of the Middle

52. M. Benskin, 'A Linguistic Atlas for Late Medieval English', *Mediaeval English Studies Newsletter*, 4 (1981), 5–13, 12.
53. Fenlon, 95.
54. Virginia Davis, 'Waynflete, William (c.1400–1486)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28907 (accessed July 2012).

English translation of the *Secretum*, this work appears never to have been completed, and the text still awaits better recognition. A first glance at its opening stanzas, however, already offers some illuminating information on medieval English attitudes towards the Italian writer. The incipit of the translation is clearly marked by a rubricated initial (an I) and by the invocation preceding the text: 'Assi[sta]t principio Sancta maria meo' followed by the name 'Franciscus Petrarcha'. Then the first lines of the Proem (neatly written, with clearly marked stanza divisions) run thus:

> I am soore astoned · whan I remembre me
> How I entred thys lyff & how I schal oute agayne
> What ys thys world but wretchednes & aduersyte
> O ye lyff of man O vanyte & all vayne.
> Where ys felycyte where. Hytt ys not here certayn
> Woe seche yt faste. & ouer ytt slothe awælye.
> Now god y^{t} on ye crosse / for our synne suffrede peyn
> Be ye oure guyde / & brynge us in ye weye.
> Sumtyme I was a subtyle & a notable clerke
> And er I farther passe y wyll reherse myn name
> I am ye laureate poete called petrarc
> That in ytalye & Florence was of so grete Fame
> I appere to youre presence a processe to proclame
> Suffre me to saye / I beseche yow myn entente
> And yff yt happe me to wrye thorowe dred or schame
> Perdon me / for mage to stumble yt ys a moment
> The matyer y^{t} y purpose / at thys tyme to trete
> Is callyd ye secrete conflycte of my conscyence [...][55]

These lines obviously do not appear in the original *Secretum*, where, more subtly, Petrarch introduces the apparition of Truth, as a beautiful lady, without mentioning his own name but referring to *Africa*, the poem that should have brought him everlasting fame.[56] These lines are therefore an addition by the translator, who appears to be introducing the writer as well as the theme of the poem to the reader. Here Petrarch himself appears to the reader, and his words, once shorn of the conventional invocation to God, appear to highlight a paradox in the text. In the *Secretum*, in fact, Petrarch undergoes a penitential exercise of confession

55. London, British Library, Additional MS 60544, fol. 8r. I have silently expanded breviographs.

56. See Francesco Petrarca, *Secretum*, in *Opere latine di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. by Antonietta Bufano *et al.*, I (Turin: UTET, 1975).

and self-examination, attempting to uncover his baser instinct and to purge himself of his sins by declaring them. At the same time the speaker presented here is also 'ye laureate poete [...] of so grete Fame' (ll. 11–12). The translator thus must balance this portrait of Everyman with the *auctoritas* conferred by Petrarch's name.

It is evident that the reader is expected to recognize the speaker of these lines: lines 11–12, beside citing his name explicitly (the full title of the work, *De secretu conflict curarum mearum*, is fully translated in l. 18), he makes use of the conventions surrounding him, from the allusion to his laureation to the reference to Florence and Italy. Petrarch was in fact crowned on 8 April 1341, and the most probable dating for the composition of the *Secretum* appears to be 1342; yet in the original the laurel crown is mentioned only in Book 3, as a source of shame, since Augustine accuses the poet of wasting his time in the pursuit of worldly ambition. However, Chaucer's mention of Petrarch in the Clerk's Prologue, quoted above, appears to have established him in medieval English imagination as the *laureate poet*, and the poets of the following generation used this appellative either to honour Chaucer himself or to evoke a notion of literary authority. Thus writes, for instance, John Lydgate in *A Mumming for the Mercers of London*, introducing a procession of poets:

> And of þat welle drank some tyme Tulius
> And Macrobye, ful famous of prudence;
> Ovyde also, and eeke Virgilius,
> And Fraunceys Petrark, myrour of eloquence;
> Iohan Bocas also, flouring in sapyence.
> Thoroughe þat sugred bawme aureate
> þei called weren poetes laureate.[57]

Lydgate had also referred to Petrarch as 'in Rome laureat' in his *Fall of Princes* (IV.108). The reference to Florence, on the other hand, seems to contradict Chaucer's Clerk, who states he has met Petrarch in Padua, but rather accords with the description offered, once more, in Lydgate's *Fall*: 'Petrak in Florence hadde al his plesaunce' (III.3859),[58] suggesting that the translator might be well acquainted with the erudite poet of the previous generation. In short, what these lines suggest is that

57. Lines 29–35; *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, part II: Secular Poems*, ed. by H.N. MacCracken (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 695–698.
58. As Nicholas Mann rightly notes, this line might derive from a misreading of the 'poeta florentinus' of Italian manuscripts; see 'Dal moralista al poeta', 61.

the English medieval Petrarch was not merely the moralist, but Chaucer's 'worthy clerk' (Chaucer's line is echoed in this text's 'a subtyle & a notable clerke', l. 9): a scholar worthy to be compared with one of Padua's foremost academics, Giovanni da Legnano (the 'Lynyan' mentioned in line 34 of the Clerk's Prologue), professor of canon law at the University of Padua, now wholly forgotten but obviously mentioned by the English poet to raise the status of his Italian counterpart.

William Kennedy notes that 'Petrarch's texts and the pioneer critical reactions to them straddle a fault line between the Middle Ages and the early modern period,'[59] and his intuition may be successfully applied to this translation of the *Secretum*. Setting it side by side with the almost coeval Middle English translation of *De remediis* shows us the coexistence of the moralist and the humanist, the medieval and the early modern poet.

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59. William J. Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 25.

Mia Bella Italia: Mary Shelley's Italies

Timothy Webb

In June 1826 Mary Shelley went to the opera in London with one of her friends. In a letter (our only source for this event) to John Howard Payne, an American acquaintance, she recounts with some relish, and possibly a little self-congratulation, the subsequent events.

> —We were comfortably situated as far as the respectability of *nos alentours* went—behind us were some good folks from Austin Fiars—Who said they were rich ambitious and fond of displays and talked of the chief dandy ... One old lady beside me with her glass tried to follow the English of the Italian in her book. I put her right as far as I could in dumb show. But when she obstinately turned over the pages of the 2nd act of the 'Crociato' [by Meyerbeer] in search of the words of Nina I saw no hope of setting her right except by speaking and that was not in the bond—I could understand a little English but not speak a word. The personage before me offered me his book—Apparement, Madame vous êtes etrangère, voulez vous vous profitez[r] de non[mon] livre? in my character of Italian I accepted his civility, as an English person I could not.[1]

This is a suggestive comedy of manners, certainly not an international episode but a revealing conjunction of several nations. What gives it even extra spice is the fact that the the opera is itself concerned with (in the words of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*) 'international

1. B.T. Bennett (ed.), *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, I (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1980 [hereafter MWSL]), 519–520. For a recent analysis of this episode, see Maria Schoina, *Romantic 'Anglo-Italians': Configurations of Identity in Byron, the Shelleys, and the Pisan Circle* (Farnham and Burlington, Vt., 2009) 75.

confrontations'. In one sense, though, what is involved in the episode, is only a *buffa*, or practical joke, but in another, Mary Shelley is offering a portrait of herself which is richly revealing. Although she does not say so, it seems that the opera house to which she went was the Italian Opera (the King's Theatre) in the Haymarket, a recognized centre for the performance of foreign opera; if that was the case, the old lady may have been trying to follow the words with the help of a dual-language libretto which was usually supplied to the audience on such occasions.[2] As she admits elsewhere in the letter, Mary Shelley only stayed for the first act of Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto*, although she was in the theatre long enough to form an opinion of Giovanni Battista Velluti, the last castrato to perform in London, whom she had defended at length in a letter to *The Examiner* on 29 May; Velluti was also selected for defence in a poem by Leigh Hunt, who had been a founding editor of *The Examiner* and who, with his family, had shared a large house at Albaro with Mary in the closing months of 1822 and nearly seven months of the following year. The leading role in the opera had actually been written for Velluti, who had sung it at La Fenice at the first performance. On this occasion in London, he particularly attracted the attention of Mary Shelley who, as she admits in the letter to Payne, was 'agreeably disappointed': although she 'had expected pain', she received 'extreme pleasure' from the experience and noted that Velluti 'is handsome graceful & with the exception of one or two peacock notes, his tones are sweet & clear, & his expression infinitely sweet.'[3]

Although Mary Shelley's letter does not say so explicitly, the agreement or dare ('bond' is the word she chooses to employ) between the two friends was that they should speak no English and pretend to be Italian. In the circumstances, it must have been amusing and presumably the sign of some kind of success, that another member of the audience should have taken them as foreigners who were not familiar with English and addressed them in French (the French is slightly peculiar, though this might be the fault of the speaker who is perhaps symptomatically reproduced, even if the strange spelling could be attributed to the original copyist rather than to the correspondent herself). The final sentence here catches the delicious paradox exactly: 'In my character of Italian I accepted his civility, as an English person I could not.' This linguistic versatility

2. Jennifer Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780–1880* (Hanover and London: University of New Hampshire Press, 2007), 43.
3. MWSL 517–518.

must have been hard to avoid since it can be identified in both her parents (William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, who partly earned her living as a translator) and, of course, in her husband, who numbered French and especially Italian among the many languages with which he was familiar and from most of which he translated.[4] Her own particular interest in the Italian language can be traced throughout her time in Italy. As she reports in a letter to Maria Gisborne, it was she who had attempted to 'drub' into Edward Williams 'a few of the expressions which fill up an Italian visit.'[5] In another letter, she informs Leigh Hunt with some authority: 'The Romans speak better Italian & have softer voices than their country men'; writing of Professor Francesco Pacchiani, she claims: 'He speaks the most beautiful Italian tongue, completely different from today's idiom, which makes one believe that he might be hearing Boccaccio or Machiavelli speaking as he wrote'; remembering Lerici, she complains (admittedly while in a distressed state) that 'the very jargon of these Genovese was disgusting'; and, many years later, she asserts: 'There is, I believe, even at this day, greater scope for wit and airy grace in Venetian than in Tuscan',[6] a distinction which is immediately followed by a discriminating account of a contest in reciting Tasso conducted in her hearing by two gondoliers.

Most spectacularly, her linguistic prowess can be traced in her correspondence, including the letter to Leigh Hunt (surely a demonstration of some kind of linguistic superiority as well, perhaps, as an expression of solidarity with 'Italian' political aspirations), and the letters to Teresa Guiccioli (the first volume of her letters prints ten, including a cluster of three in French, and six in Italian written after she had returned to England).[7] During her time in Italy she was attentive to such matters, partly perhaps because she spent time in the company of small children: from Rome she reports that 'Our little Will is delighted with the goats and the horses and the men rotti [broken]' while, some time later, she records the linguistic progress of Percy Florence from the point where 'he begins to call things bella and buono' and to get the genders right, to his speaking loudly in the Italian mode, to his abandoning Italian (as she

4. See Timothy Webb, *The Violet in the Crucible: Shelley and Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).
5. MWSL 215.
6. MWSL 92, 165, 244; *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* (London: Pickering & Chatto,1996), VIII (ed. Jeanne Moskal), 295.
7. MWSL 332–333, 346–347, 419–420, 442–443, 457–459, 471–472, 552–553, 562–564.

writes to Teresa Guiccioli, in Italian).[8] She must also have conversed in Italian with servants such as Caterina and Maria, who are only shadowy presences in her biography, but who were expected to 'cook tolerably' (even for guests), iron but not wash, and 'market as honestly as an Italian can'.[9] Such daily familiarity with the spoken language must have provided an instructive counterpoint to the reading of Italian classics such as Petrarch, Dante, Boccaccio, Machiavelli, Tasso, Ariosto, Alfieri and others, which is so meticulously recorded in her journals.

As these examples show, Mary Shelley definitely belonged to those who took trouble with their Italian and tried to master it rather than to those like Thomas De Quincey, who enjoyed visiting the Italian Opera and listening to the beautiful but unintelligible chatter of the audience during the interval, precisely because he did not understand what they were saying.[10] She preferred to demonstrate both her superiority and her impressive familiarity with the Italian language by her capacity to pass for Italian especially among her compatriots. Her patriotism was focused not on England but on Italy and was gratifyingly alienating: although many aspects of Italy and Italian life were irritating to her and sometimes even offensive, and although she was often frustrated and saddened during her years in Italy, she acknowledged a saving and possessive pride in *mia bella Italia* or, more specifically, in 'Fiorenza mia'.[11] For many reasons, there was no question where her affections might lie or with which country she preferred to identify. On 30 December 1824 she listed to Teresa Guiccioli (in Italian) the shortcomings and disadvantages of England and declared: 'her certainty that Italy would provide better alternatives': 'But I will find these delights [questi delizie] in Italy.'[12]

Whatever her patriotic instincts, her principles and her ideology made her particularly uncomfortable with the English in Italy. In Bagni di Lucca, for instance, where she stayed for some time not long after she had arrived in the country, she recorded a distaste for the English in which linguistic incompetence was a crucial feature: 'We see none but English, we hear nothing but English spoken—The walks are filled with English Nurserymaids, a kind of aninal [*animal*] I by no means like, &

8. MWSL 93, 230, 300, 443.
9. MWSL 98.
10. Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* ed. Alethea Hayter, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971) 79.
11. MWSL 370.
12. MWSL 459, 461 (English version).

dashing staring Englishwomen, who surprise the Italians who are always carried about in Sedan Chairs, by riding on horseback—For us, we generally walk.'[13] Although even the Shelleys transferred to horseback in due course, and although they came to love the surrounding countryside, this early correspondence suggests that, in spite of its obvious charms, Bagni di Lucca was not sufficiently Italian, either culturally or linguistically, for serious travellers: 'I am sure you would be enchanted with every thing except the English', she tells her older acquaintance, Maria Gisborne, 'that are crowded here to the almost entire exclusion {of} Italians; so that I think it would be easier to have a conversazione of Italians in England than here in their native country.'[14]

As the episode at the opera demonstrates, Mary Shelley was proud of her linguistic capacity and ready to identify with her adopted country. Her letters include a number of phrases which show that she could be possessive of *mia bella Italia* and was primarily and recurrently delighted with the charms of what she called 'my beloved Italy','dear Italy', 'this divine country' and 'divine Italy' (at its moral, historical and aesthetic centre, Rome was the 'Divine City' and 'that adored Place'). This 'blessed and beautiful country' she often, and quite explicitly, compared to 'drear London' with its 'noise & streets' and, more generally, England, that 'cloud-environed isle', that 'desart country' defined by fogs and rain. In a letter to Teresa Guiccioli she catalogues the shortcomings of England which make her want 'to flee this so-called homeland of mine' and to 'pray daily for the day when I will no longer see this country': 'if only the sky were clear—if the earth were not so damp—if the climate were somewhat more agreeable I would not feel the burden of life so much.'[15] A letter of 10 October 1824 to Marianne Hunt in Italy captures her own plight in Kentish Town: 'I write to you on the most dismal of all days a rainy sunday, when dreary church-going faces look still more drearily from under dripping umbrellas.' Her own position allowed for no variety: 'The eternal rain imprisons one in one's little room & one's spirits flag without one exhiliarating [sic] circumstance.' The only relief to this grim existence is the thought of Italy: 'change of scene & the sun of Italy will restore my energy, the very thought of it smooths my brow.'[16]

13. MWSL 74.
14. *Ibid.*
15. See MWSL 153: 'there must be a fierce battle between bella Italia & smoky London'. See also MWSL 458–459, 460–461 (English version).
16. MWSL 451, 452.

Many of the letters written while she was still in Italy illustrate her delight in the riches which Italy had to offer, which often combined what she called 'divine objects' or cultural performances with striking manifestations of the natural world. Rome, for example, offered a range of experiences which were enjoyed by many tourists but which she praised extravagantly and in terms which were strongly personal:

> The other evening we visited the Pantheon by moon light and saw the lovely sight of the moon appearing through the round aperture above & lighting the columns of the Rotunda with its rays—But my letter would never be at an end if I were to try {to} tell a millionth part of the delights of Rome—it has such an effect on me that my past life before I saw it appears a blank & now I begin to live—In the churches you hear the music of heaven & the singing of Angels—[17]

Her strong attraction to Italy becomes very clear in a long and revealing letter to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, an English lawyer who had once been a close friend of Shelley and of Mary herself, in which she discusses (perhaps argues with herself) the rival claims of living in England with young Percy Florence or staying in Italy. She is reluctant to return to England but acknowledges, or anticipates, the negative forces which would be unleashed against her son and particularly against herself if she did not accept the supposedly superior claims of 'home'. In justification of a decision which she would have preferred to resolve differently, she tells Hogg:

> I wish his childhood to be prosperous. Italian skies of themselves shed prosperity—but looking towards England we cannot find that except in the mansions of the rich—& one wishes that he should be properly recognized & protected by his father's family. They will of course be much more prejudiced against me than they are, if I, unprotected, young & tireless, reside abroad—out of their English pale—the sanctuary of virtue & propriety—They will look on me indeed as a black-black sheep if I do not hasten to place myself beneath all the benefits of their clouded atmosphere & foggy virtue[...][18]

This part of the argument is concerned with the needs of her son but its emphases are personal rather than maternal: it shows very clearly how much Mary Shelley feared (or perhaps defiantly predicted) that she would

17. MWSL 89.
18. MWSL 318.

be rejected by 'polite' English society (Percy Shelley, with whom she had eloped, had once admitted that he and Mary were 'pariahs', even in Italy). Yet Mary Shelley prefers to incur this indignation and to avoid 'the sanctuary of virtue & propriety' (like her friend Byron she was not impressed by what she regarded as 'cant'). For such refugees, a satisfying choice of an alternative life-style might be offered by residence in Italy. The terms of the equation are obviously related to each other—the contest is between 'Italian skies' on the one hand and 'clouded atmosphere & foggy virtue' on the other, where the strict and inhibited morality is in some way a product of the colourless climate.

The letter to Hogg continues directly after its engagement with the Shelley family and their supporters by expressing the strength of her feelings for Italy:

> I love Italy—it[s] sky canopies the tombs of my lost treasures—its sun—its vegetation—the solitude I can here enjoy—the easy life one can lead—my habits now of five years growth—all & everything endears Italy to me beyond expression. The thought of leaving it fills me with painful tumults—tears come into my eyes—I prognosticate all evils.[19]

Her frank admission of the attractions of 'lost treasures' (her husband and two of her children were all buried in Italy) was particularly appropriate in a letter to a man who had once been Shelley's fellow-student and even collaborated on the Necessity of Atheism which had caused both the young Shelley and Hogg to lose their places at Oxford; many years later, this detail (and even the word 'treasures') feature significantly, if rather differently, in the Roman chapter of *Rambles*. In this case, personal memories and connections to the past are related to a sense of habituation ('my habits now of five years growth'), an agreeable way of life ('the easy life one can lead'), the relaxed pleasures of avoiding the crowded plurals of large cities ('the solitude I can here enjoy') and, above all, the climate and the 'vegetation', which Percy Shelley had vividly celebrated in the Preface to Prometheus Unbound (the canopying 'skies' and the 'sun'). The language, the imagery and the tone of this letter convey the sense of a profound involvement. Terms and phrases such as 'love', 'endears', 'painful tumults' and, especially, 'tears come into my eyes', suggest that, whatever the merely personal investment, Mary Shelley acknowledged a fondness for Italy which must have been

19. MWSL 318.

hard to dislodge. Her behaviour at the theatre where, however briefly, and with whatever social embarrassment, she pretended to be Italian, was much more than a jest or practical joke and gave expression to an attachment which had become deeply part of her nature.

A fondness for the natural world often features in her accounts of her husband whom she closely associated with the Italian landscape which frequently formed both the setting for his inspiration and the subject of much of his poetic writing. In her short story 'Recollections of Italy' Edmund Malville's expedition to Vico Pisano 'reproduces the Shelley's trip to the same place with Edward and Jane Williams', while Malville's description of the scenery on the return journey to Pisa is taken directly from a notebook of Percy Shelley:

> 'We gazed on the scene with rapture. "Look", cried my best, and now lost friend [that is, Shelley], "behold the mountains that sweep into the plain like waves that meet in a chasm; the olive woods are as green as a sea, and are waving in the wind; the shadows of the clouds are spotting the bosoms of the hills; a heron comes sailing over us; a butterfly flits near; at intervals the pines give forth their sweet and prolonged response to the wind, the myrtle bushes are in bud, and the soil beneath us is carpeted with odoriferous flowers."—My full heart could only sigh, he alone was eloquent enough to clothe his thoughts in language.'[20]

Or consider a letter written to Marianne Hunt from Livorno on 28 August 1819:

> We live in a little country house at the end of a green lane surrounded by a podère these podère ... are like our kitchen gardens with the difference only that th beautiful fertility of this country gives them—a large bed of cabbages is very unpicturesque in England—but here the furrows are alternated with rows of grapes festooned on their supporters—it is filled with olive, fig and peach-trees and the hedges are of myrtle which has just ceased to flower—their flower has the sweetest faint smell in the world like some delicious spice—green grassy walks lead you through the vines—the people are always busy—and it {is} pleasant to see three or four of them transform in one day a bed of indian corn to one of celery—they work this hot weather in their shirts or smock frocks (but their breasts are bare) their brown legs nearly the colour only with a rich tinge of red in it with the earth they turn up—They sing not very melodiously but very

20. *Collected Tales and Stories*, 30.

> loud—Rossini's music—Mi rivedrai, ti revedro—and they are accompanied by the *cicala* [...][21]

This can be compared to two lengthy passages; first, the long description in 'The English in Italy' which recaptures in detail the practices of harvest which she had observed near Livorno; secondly, the recollection in her editorial Note to *The Cenci*, where she records that 'Nature was bright, sunshiny, and cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror, such as we had never before witnessed.' She notes that it was at the Villa Valsovano that Percy Shelley wrote much of his play: 'This [glazed terrace or, as she puts it, "This airy cell"] Shelley made his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean; sometimes the dark lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became waterspouts that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence.' The location is also evoked in picturesque detail: 'at night the water-wheel creaked as the process of irrigation went on, and the fire-flies flashed from among the myrtle hedges.'[22]

All three passages of descriptive prose are of interest, for a variety of reasons. All three express, though perhaps in different ways, an attachment to the Italian landscape based on a set of values which challenges received notions of the visually pleasing. In the letter to Marianne Hunt, supported by its own system of descriptive impressions divided by dashes, Mary Shelley introduces a different pastoral scene to that which usually meets with approval at home: the statement that 'a large bed of cabbages is very unpicturesque in England' suggests the limitations of prevailing norms and implies that the Italian context ('the beautiful fertility of this country') necessarily gives aesthetic value even to the scenes and procedures of everyday life. Like so many engravings and watercolours, this officially 'unpicturesque' *veduta* is peopled by peasants (in practical clothes rather than the elaborate costumes favoured by art), though Mary Shelley's peasants with their red-brown legs are more than components of the scene since they are 'always busy', sometimes transforming in only a short time

21. MWSL 102–103.
22. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, II. 156–157, 284.

'a bed of indian corn to one of celery'. The description in 'The English in Italy' also provides generous detail of their practices at work, alludes to Virgil, and provides a carefully observed alternative to the familiar tropes of traditional pastoral. The accounts differ in the matter of musical accompaniment. 'The English in Italy' specifies that 'the *contadini* cheer themselves with songs, either singly, in harmony, or in response'. This version also mentions the peasant tradition which involves a man on a tree who 'will challenge another perched afar off' and includes two resulting texts.[23] In the *Cenci* note the peasants' loud singing of an air from Rossini's *Tancredi* (generalized in the note but also remembered specifically by Percy Shelley)[24] is accompanied by the song of the cicala (its 'ceaseless chirp' mentioned in 'The English in Italy' as filling 'the air with sound'); as Mary Shelley notes, the cicala or its equivalent had been addressed by Anacreon (in an ode which may have helped to shape 'To a Sky-lark'), but is as much an inescapable part of an Italian country experience as a presence in poetic tradition.

The account of Percy Shelley in his study (which, chronologically, is the last of the three impressions) is an exercise both in biography and autobiography and demonstrates Mary Shelley's attentiveness to the forming influence of the Italian scene on her husband's imagination and her own sensitivity to the Italian natural world. Like the letter, the review is not primarily concerned with Percy Shelley, so he does not appear in either, and there is no reference to waterspouts or thunderstorms or the rapidly changing scene (though the diversifying 'spectacle' of storms is celebrated in 'Recollections of Italy').This note to *The Cenci* , therefore owes much to its predecessors but is distinct and necessarily different in its focus. It can be compared to many of the other word-sketches which punctuate Mary Shelley's edition and which ground Percy Shelley's poetry not only in the evolving facts of his life but in the various and 'ever-changing' Italian settings which helped to give them focus.

This enjoyment of the Italian scene certainly did not prevent Mary Shelley from finding fault with the climate or with those who lived under its influence. She believed that Italian doctors were often suspect or unreliable ('The physician of Este is a stupid fellow'); Shelley's doctor

23. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* II. 157.

24. See Frederick L. Jones (ed.), *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), II.105. According to this letter, the singers are 'vine-dressers' and they sing in 'by no means an operatic style'. *The Triumph of Llfe*, ll. 421–422 also refers to peasants singing. Mary Shelley explains: 'The favourite song, *Stanco di pascolar le pecorelle*, is a Brescian national air.'

was 'not an Italian, they never do any good'; an English surgeon at Rome was an attraction to pregnant mothers since 'we have no faith in Italians', while the same equation soon appears in another Roman letter, which admits 'we [that is, the Shelleys] have the most rooted contempt & in any case of illness the greatest dread of Italian Medicos.' The Cancelliere at Pisa was 'a talkative buffoon of a Florentine'; the Pisan Police, who took fright at the beard of Byron's Italian servant Tita, 'could not tranquillize their mighty minds, and banished him'; the people of Lerici were 'rozzi [coarse]' and spoke 'a detestable dialect' (another trace of linguistic attentiveness coupled with an obvious expression of English/Tuscan 'superiority'); Albaro was 'desert & barbarian' and 'non *Cristiano*'; the quiet people of Pont Bon Voisin in the Savoy benefited from contrast with the Italians—'the absence of loud voices violent gesticulation & eternal clack gives even to the lower orders an air of gentleness & good breeding that even the highest Italians want.'[25] Although Milan was 'large and populous but quiet', Mary Shelley was irritated by Milanese behaviour at the opera, which she considered typical of the country as a whole: 'In Italy except the first night or two you can never hear any thing of the opera except some favourite airs—for the people make it a visiting place & play cards and sup in the boxes so you may guess that the murmur of their voices rises far above the efforts of the singers.'[26] Pisa was 'a dull town'; Venice could not be recommended because 'the want of walks and variety must render it disagreeable for a continuous residence'; Livorno and later Genoa she 'hate[d]', while Albaro was 'detestable'; Rome was delightful, she admitted, but it could produce 'colds—depression & even fever' and it suffered from 'pestilential air', and (like Bagni di Lucca) from too many visitors of the wrong sort: 'The place is full of English, rich, noble,—important and foolish.' Like English 'cant', this unfortunate presence made her 'sick' and she could not resist giving expression to the satirical perspective it generated: 'who could see the Apollo, and a Dandy spying at it, and not be of my opinion.' The Forum was also filled with 'galley slaves at work'; the sight of guarded prisoners at Pisa, 'heavily ironed in pairs' had been so upsetting that 'I could never walk in the streets except in misery' and 'you could get into no street but you heard the clanking of their chains.' At Paestum, the inhabitants were 'so savage—clothed in rough sheep-skins with wolfish hearts, and no sweet outsides.'

25. MWSL 79, 93, 67, 83, 98, 235, 235, 236, 313, 358.
26. MWSL 67.

When the Shelleys moved from Pisa to Lerici, Mary Shelley was alienated, as she recalled after Shelley's death: 'No words can tell you [Maria Gisborne]how I hated our house & the country about it.' She was equally uncompromising about her new neighbours. They were 'wild & hateful' and more like savages than any people I ever before saw. Many a night they passed on the beach, singing or rather howling, the women dancing about among the waves that broke at their feet, the men leaning against the rocks and joining in their loud wild chorus.'[27] This vivid but horrified description brings together both her own tendency to pass uncompromising judgement and an underlying sense of alienation, even of isolation. Her disgusted account of the Pisan crowd implies an infringement of social values which in some ways were basically conservative (see her reaction to 'ragged-haired shirtless' students, 'none of the genteelest of the crew'),[28] and which might seem to emerge oddly from someone who, as a teenager, had eloped to the Continent with somebody else's husband and who was to share a house at Lerici with the unmarried Jane and Edward Williams.

Her delight in the Italian weather and in the features of Italian life was regularly balanced by a tendency to pass judgment or to find fault. For instance, only a few months after arriving in Italy, she complained to Maria Gisborne that, 'although there is enough to like without liking these', there were three things in particular of which she disapproved:

> The inhabitants [of Venice] I dislike, because they are some of the worst specimens of Italians, and to you, who have lived so long in the country, and know their characteristics, this is saying every thing. The streets I dislike because they are narrow and dirty, and above all because [the Venetians] carry zucche about to sell, the sight of which always makes me sick, and I dislike the canals at low water, because they are never cleaned, and the horrid smell makes my head acke [...][29]

This catalogue of disapproval is fairly inclusive since it involves both the everyday sights and especially smells of Venice, and the Venetians themselves. Perhaps her flow of personal opinions and judgements was partly enabled by the liberating fact that in Maria Gisborne she was

27. MWSL 66, 81, 94, 295, 295, 94, 93, 130, 246, 249. The description of the 'wild savages' on the beach (249) is similar to that of the other letter but adds that 'they were screaming all the time one perpetuel air—the most detestable in the world.'
28. MWSL 136–137.
29. MWSL 81.

writing to someone she regarded as a sympathetic correspondent whom she could consider a friend (on her visit to Este and Venice, she had even been accompanied by Maria Gisborne as far as Lucca); probably, she was also driven by her evident assumption that as an Englishwoman long resident in Italy, Maria Gisborne would understand, maybe even share, the sources of her irritation. After all, the Hoppners who had lived in Venice for four or five years (Richard Hoppner had been British consul-general since 1814) were, she reported, 'heartily sick of it'.[30] In a previous letter, she had even suggested to her friend that she would be better off, not least financially, if she settled in Marlow [where the Shelleys had lived for an extended period before leaving for Italy] or some such town'; she had added: 'I am sure you would be much happier than in Italy—how all the English dislike it.'[31] It is not an accident that the verb 'dislike', which occured three times in her next extant letter to Maria Gisborne, also features in this sentence. Although Mary Shelley came to love Italy and to identify with it, and although she could not fully identify with the English or with those who disliked *mia bella Italia*, she never completely escaped from an underlying attitude of scorn or perhaps anxiety which recurrently, and surprisingly, darkened her opinions.

It is more than possible that the loss of Clara (who died in Venice on 24 September) and her serious worries about the health of her young son William (who was to die in Rome on 7 June of the following year) encouraged Mary Shelley to accept, without much investigation, the censorious views of the Hoppners, who had reacted to Clara's death with immediate and instinctive kindness but who had expressed strong reservations about Venice. Perhaps this helps to explain the difference between her letters from this time, of which there are only three, and Percy Shelley's long letter of 8 October to Peacock which begins by announcing the death of Clara but soon modulates into a detailed description, poetic and precise, of the sights of Venice. Consider in contrast the treatment of Venice in *Rambles*. In this book Venice is allocated more than four chapters, which might be expected in a travel-guide. Much more significant is Mary Shelley's testament to the strength of the feelings which had blinded her on a previous visit:

> [...] this road [she was travelling along the banks of the Brenta] was as distinct in my mind as if traversed yesterday. I will not here dwell on the

30. *Ibid.*
31. MWSL 79.

> sad circumstances that clouded my first visit to Venice. Death hovered over the scene. Gathered into myself, with my "mind's eye" I saw those before me long departed: and I was agitated again by emotions—by passions—and those the deepest a woman's heart can harbour—a dread to see her child even at that instant expire—which then occupied me.[32]

Perhaps this exercise in psycho-geography should alert us to the importance of private emotion, which often clouds or occludes the more obviously expected emotion of the traveller and sometimes shapes it in various ways which can only be fully recognized many years afterwards. This psychological fact accounts not only for Mary Shelley's initial response to Venice but perhaps, at least in part, for her characterization of 'this hateful Italy' after the sudden death of William, her frequent claims that her heart was at Rome, her powerfully negative responses to La Spezia and Lerici, and her violent dislike for Albaro and Genoa.[33]

Her letters to Marianne and Leigh Hunt demonstrate very clearly that Mary Shelley was not an idle traveller in Italy or (in her own phrase, an 'English Butterfly'[34]) but was possessed of a strong political conscience (or consciousness). As the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, and the wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley, she could hardly have approached the realities of contemporary Italy without a sense of their implications for the future of the country which, in her day, was still not unified. Her political curiosity and the ways in which she expressed it were personal but it is hard to think that her view of the country was not influenced by the ideas of her husband (much as his concepts must have been, at least partly, informed by hers). On a visit to Naples within less than a year of her arrival in Italy, she used a suggestive image in a letter to Maria Gisborne:

> The Italians are so very disagreeable and you live in the same kind of solitude that we do—There is no life here—They seem to act as if they had all died fifty years ago, and now went about their work like the ghostly sailors of Coleridge's enchanted ship—except indeed when they cheat.[35]

Here one can find the customary traveller's knowing reference to 'cheating' and the characteristic recoil from the Italians ('so very

32. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, VIII. 269.
33. See particularly MWSL 182, 327
34. MWSL 130.
35. MWSL 85.

disagreeable') or, more accurately, from the Neapolitans. The judgement that contemporary Italians were lacking in life can be paralleled in the letters of Percy Shelley; writing from Naples, for instance, he informs Hogg: 'In Italy it is impossible to live contented; for the filthy modern inhabitants of what aught [*sic*] to be a desart sacred to days whose glory is extinguished, thrust themselves before you forever.'[36] She had once heard Coleridge himself recite *The Ancient Mariner*, and Percy Shelley had read the poem aloud in September and October 1814, but the prevailing simile and the inventive use of a Coleridge image are the product of Mary Shelley's own Gothic imagination. It seems, too, that she was primarily responsible for the political application of this image to an Italy uncertain of its future, and particularly to a Naples which had yet to achieve its political independence.

This awareness surfaces on a number of occasions and is often connected to her capacity for bluntly uncompromising judgement. For instance, there is the case of the Emperor of Austria, 'who they whisper wishes to take the Roman states into the keeping of the holy Roman Empire.'[37] When the Emperor arrives in Rome, preceded by an officer 'who rudely pushes the people back with a drawn sword', Mary Shelley reacts not only by rejecting, at least on the page, such unjustified pomposity, but by asserting her defiantly English credentials: 'Of course, we keep out of his track; for our English blood, would, I am afraid boil over at such insolence.'[38] Again, in a long letter to Leigh Hunt, written in Italian, she expresses her opinions without restraint: 'The Noblemen of Naples are independent and brave; but the populace is enslaved. Who knows if the army will resist the Austrian troops. How many Italians long for liberty, but as in every country, the poor do not have the power, and the rich never want to risk their money. The Italians love money almost more than the English do.'[39] Sometimes she may have felt like a passenger on a ship with a ghostly crew; certainly, she was sceptical about the strength of Neapolitan desire or capacity to change the political situation. On 17 April 1821 she reports to Hunt that 'All is at peace now in Piedmont' (after an ultimately unsuccessful attempt by constitutionalists to overthrow Victor Emmanuel I), but, much like the unfortunate

36. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, II. 69.
37. MWSL 95.
38. MWSL 93.
39. MWSL 165 (English translation). Cf. MWSL 88 to Marianne Hunt, which claims that 'the love of gain ... burns with zealous heat in the breast of every Italian'.

situation in Naples, this peace was probably a sign of weakness rather than an augury of immediate hope: 'Naples has shamefully fallen & Piedmont is but a step behind her—however the seed may be now sown the fruit of which we may reap some years hence.'[40]

Her much later return to Italy underlined the sad correctness of her earlier analysis. Opinions which had previously been protected by the intimacies of private correspondence now became public currency. In *Rambles* she is necessarily more discreet and more discursive; but the urge to be judgmental and blunt is not always denied. So she laments:

> The bane of Italy is the absence of truth, of honour, of straightforwardness; the vices opposite to these nobler virtues have now the additional culture which must ensue from the circulation of a system of *secret police*, of spies, of traitors.[41]

She could not abandon her aspirations for Italy but, more than twenty years after her letter to Hunt, she admitted that the signs were far from auspicious. The concluding rhetoric may have proved to be true (at least, up to a point) but Mary Shelley herself would not live to see the beginnings of what she hopefully but uncertainly predicted:

> We must not forget that the people are demoralised and degenerate. The present affords no glimmering light by which we may perceive how the regeneration of Italy will be effected. It is one of the secrets of futurity at which it is vain to guess. Yet the hour must and will come.[42]

As these final examples show, when Mary Shelley returned to Italy she scrutinized it with a knowledgeable eye and from a vantage-point which was very different from those provided by her first adventurous visit to the country. The meshing of those two perspectives, and their differences, deserves separate and extended study. Yet *Rambles* itself also provides, from time to time, a curious but recurrent sense of double vision since Mary Shelley sometimes reminds her readers (as well as herself) that she is revisiting scenes which she had first encountered in different circumstances and in different company. When she finally arrives at Venice, her immediate impressions are deepened by a powerful sense of having been there before: 'this road was as distinct in my mind as if

40. MWSL 189.
41. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 327 (Letter XV, on Florence).
42. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 367.

traversed yesterday.'[43] She repeats the strange sensation only shortly afterwards: 'the banks of the Brenta presented to me a moving scene; not a palace, not a tree of which I did not recognise, as marked and recorded, at a moment when life and death hung upon our speedy arrival at Venice.'[44] Only a few pages later, when she returns to her hotel, she sees the full moon in the sky and remembers previous Venetian occasions:

> Often, when here before, I looked on this scene, at this hour, or later, for often I expected S.'s return from Palazzo Mocenigo [which Byron had rented], till two or three in the morning; I watched the glancing of the oars of the gondolas, and heard the far song, and saw the palaces sleeping in the light of the moon, which veils by its deep shadows all that grieved the eye and heart in the decaying palaces of Venice. Then I saw, as now I see, the bridge of the Rialto spanning the canal. All, all, is the same; but as the Poet says – 'The difference to me!'[45]

This passage suggests a deep sense of the passage of time and a melancholy caused by a consciousness of change and decay but accorded its central significance by the loss of Percy and of Mary's children.

A similar engagement with the past shadows her visit to the Uffizi in Florence:

> With slow steps my feet almost unwillingly first moved to the collection in the Reali Uffizi. As I entered the Tribune I felt a crowd of associations rise up around me, gifted with painful vitality. I was long lost in tears. But novelty seems all in all to us weak mortals; and when I revisited these rooms, these saddest ghosts were laid; the affliction calmed, and my mind was free to receive new impressions.[46]

This relatively brief passage suggests a profound personal grief, although Mary Shelley chooses not to define it more precisely for the reader. At this point, her journal is interrupted by a gap but it does record that she had visited 'the Gallery' on 11 October 1819, after the death in Rome of her son William and before the birth on 12 November of her final child, who (for obvious reasons) was called Percy Florence and was to

43. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 269.
44. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 270.
45. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 271. The 'Poet' is Wordsworth; the reference is to ll.5-6 of 'She dwelt among the untrodden ways'.
46. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 308.

accompany his mother on the much later excursion commemorated in *Rambles*. In her composite entry marking the last day of December, she records that she had visited the 'Galleries—the Pitti Palace &c', but this note is not specific about the date (or dates) or the number of visits involved. Later entries register a visit to the Pitti Palace on 10 January 1820 and to the Tribuna on 22 January.[47] Whatever the frequency of visits, the gallery must have made a strong impression on her since, in a Paris letter of 13 August 1823, she imagined the Hunts happily arrived in Florence and associated the city with its works of art: 'Arrived in Florence well?—How do you like the Venus, how the Niobe how the St John in the desart—how all you have seen? Welcome—welcome to Fiorenza mia' (once again both her use of Italian and the possessive adjective is unmistakeably suggestive).[48] It is reasonable to assume also that she did not escape the enthusiasm which caused Percy to confide in Maria Gisborne that he planned to study the gallery 'piecemeal',[49] a plan which eventually resulted in 'Remarks on Some of the Statues in the Gallery of Florence', which was not published in his lifetime and whose *ad hoc* title does not reveal the passion and precision of its observations.

These personal associations are, perhaps, at their strongest and most poignant when she revisits Rome, which caused her to confess to Trelawny in April 1823 'how I loved that City—Now it contains my all.'[50] Once, when Percy Shelley was still alive, she had been aware of the ironies but there was still a serious prospect of making that pilgrimage as a grieving mother: 'It is a place I cannot think of without a sigh and yet I long to be there yet God knows when we shall.'[51] In the year after Percy Shelley's drowning and not long after the burial of his remains in the same cemetery, she confessed that 'all my actions will be bent towards a journey to that beloved city, whose blue sky is the tomb of those I best love.'[52] Now, many years after the drowning of her husband and the burial of his remains in the same cemetery, she approached the city again, a sacred journey reconstructed on the printed page: 'No one can look on this country as merely so much earth—every clod is a sacred relic—every stone is an object of curiosity—every name we hear satisfies some desire

47. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (eds), *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814–1844* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), I. 302, 305, 306.
48. MWSL 370.
49. *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* II. 126.
50. MWSL 327.
51. MWSL 127.
52. MWSL 312; see also 327, 329.

or awakens some cherished association.'[53] Slightly different versions of this statement might be discovered in many a book of travels; but Mary Shelley was not searching for traces of the classics but for something which was more immediately personal. It is certainly possible that 'cherished associations' might just fall within the categories of Roman history and literature; but 'cherished' has a ring which is suspiciously emotional as, in retrospect, is the whole sentence. These associations (cherished or tearful) must have been in her mind when she explained to Amelia Curran, 'Rome, dear name; I cannot tell why but to me there is something Enchanting in that spot'; in two earlier letters, also to Amelia Curran, she had admitted 'My heart—during all this time is at Rome'—a phrase which she used more than once and which acquires more horrifying resonance in view of the facts of Shelley's cremation.[54] The hidden subtext becomes painfully clear at the beginning of Letter XIX.

> 'What are the pleasures that I enjoy at Rome?' you ask. They are so many, that my mind is brimful of a sort of glowing satisfaction, mingled with tearful associations [that suggestive word once more, here linked with 'tearful']. Besides all that Rome itself affords of delightful to the eye and imagination, I revisit it as the bourne of a pious pilgrimage. The treasures of my youth lie buried here.[55]

Here the generalizations of the earlier sentence are brought to bear again but in a way which is obviously more directly intimate: associations which were mysteriously introduced as 'cherished' are now described as 'tearful', an adjective pointing to an experience which was inescapably personal, although still without explanation. The final sentence transforms even the procedures of archaeology to an excavation of the emotions; in this context, 'buried' takes its full literal force. Mary Shelley herself could not forget her 'lost treasures' which must always be associated with Rome and she regularly insisted that the Cimitero accatolico would also provide her own 'final home', that in due course she too would be buried in the same cemetery as her lost son and husband.[56]

It was not an accident that, during her visit to Rome, Mary Shelley chose to stay at 64 Via Sistina. On an earlier visit, she and her family had lived next door; this location remained on her mind since, in a letter to

53. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 342.
54. MWSL 462, 150, 127 (with only minor variations from 150); see also 327.
55. *Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* VIII. 347-8.
56. MWSL 460, 461.

Teresa Guiccioli of 30 December 1824, she mentions the fact that 'in that house whose balcony hangs over the street my dearest son died.'[57] A letter to Leigh Hunt also reveals that she had been concerned about the address in Rome of her friend Amelia Curran and had discovered that it was 64 Via Sistina.[58] Amelia Curran (to whom, as we have seen, she had sent a number of letters) was one of the daughters of the Irish politician John Philpot Curran, who had been a particularly close friend of Godwin, and whom she had even visited at Skinner Street (as had her father); she had strong associations with Rome and with Mary Shelley's family since they had frequently seen each other and, after Mary Shelley had left, they had corresponded about a suitable Roman tomb for the grave of William.[59] It had been Amelia Curran who had painted Mary Shelley's portrait as well as those of Percy Bysshe Shelley (which Mary Shelley later wanted her to correct from silhouettes by Marianne Hunt[60]), William Shelley, and Claire Clairmont. In staying at that particular address, Mary Shelley was very self-consciously and deliberately revisting the past. In 64 Via Sistina she might have hoped that she could, however briefly and impressionistically, recapture the treasures of her youth, both in the form of her sadly vanished family and in that of the city which, in another act of possessive passion, she had once celebrated as 'my Country', a nation at the heart of a nation.

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57. MWSL 459 (English), 458 (Italian).
58. MWSL 445.
59. MWSL 105, 150, 158.
60. *MWSL* 445.

'The Burning Bush': Browning's First Visit to Asolo, June 1838[1]

Sue Brown

Robert Browning first visited Italy in June 1838. He set sail on the *Norham Castle* which was conveying a steam locomotive to Trieste on behalf of the Rothschilds on Good Friday, 13 April. Exactly one month after, according to a summary diary of the voyage which he kept, he arrived at 1.00 a.m. at a place he called 'Goza'. Six hours later he was in Valletta. It is tempting to think that he might have set foot on Malta in 1838, the only occasion when he was in its waters. Such evidence as there is, however, makes clear that whatever the pressure on the captain, Mathew Davidson, to take on fresh water and supplies at this first potential port of call after a difficult journey, he preferred to avoid getting caught up with the Maltese customs and running the risk of quarantine. The *HMS Carysfort* which arrived the previous day with a cargo of 'sundry utensils' was not so lucky. All its officers and eighteen men were confined in the Lazarretto until 10th June.[2] Captain Davidson probably got what he could from the 'dgħajsa' men in the Grand Harbour before sailing on to Trieste where the *Norham Castle* arrived on 30th May. From Trieste Browning took the overnight steamer to Venice arriving at 7.00 a.m. in the morning on 1st June. From 2nd to 12th June he stayed in lodgings at San Moise and then set off to explore the Veneto for two weeks before

1. I am particularly grateful to Daniel Karlin, Michael O'Neill, Michael Meredith and Nicholas Roe for their encouraging comments on this paper.

2. Malta National Archive Customs Department registers of arrivals and departures of vessels, 1st January 1835–1831 December 1838 (CUS16), arrivals and departures 1st January – 24th June 1838 (CUS 18[44]) and Register of Collector of Customs 16th January 1838 – 28th January 1850 (CUS 8[1]).

returning to Venice on his way to Verona, Austria, Germany, the Low Countries and home.[3]

On the face of it, he had accomplished at least part of what he set out to do when he left for Italy almost on impulse in 1838. By then he had been working for four years on an ambitious long poem 'Sordello' which he hoped would consolidate his reputation. But though he regularly announced that it was nearly done, in practice he had become bogged down. He had immersed himself in book-learning about the historical background to Sordello, studying the wars between the Guelphs and Ghibellines and, in particular, the story of the Ecelini family which he read about in Verci's history. Now he needed a new stimulus and so, as he wrote to his friend John Robertson on Good Friday, 'I sail this morning for Venice—intending to finish my poem among the scenes it describes.' In fact he wrote only four lines of 'Sordello' on the journey and failed to visit Mantua, Ferrara and Goito, all of which are important locations for 'Sordello' and all of which he, nonetheless, describes in his poem. In Venice, however, and, above all, in Asolo and its surroundings, Browning saw all that he needed to fire his imagination. On his return to England he wrote as much as half of the final version of 'Sordello' and, probably, by spring 1840 had also completed his first mature masterpiece, 'Pippa Passes' which is largely set in Asolo.

Much has been written about the impact of Venice on Browning and, in particular, his rediscovery of Shelley's liberal idealism through the improbable medium of a beggar girl who accosted him in the market. The lyric warmth with which he writes about her stands out from the tangle of historical and literary allusions in much of the rest of 'Sordello' and its brilliant, often ironic tone. Another brief passage just before the end of 'Sordello' about a barefoot boy running up the hills outside Asolo has the same immediacy. What happened to Browning in Asolo in 1838, however, has been less discussed than his experiences in Venice, though it can certainly be argued that Asolo offered Browning the most profound poetic experience of his life. So profound was it that he said almost nothing about it for fifty years. While 'Sordello' and 'Pippa Passes' offer clues, only the poems Browning wrote in Asolo in 1889 and his letters at that time to family and friends fully explain what happened in 1838.

Browning was the only passenger on the *Norham Castle*. He welcomed his solitude arriving in Italy, as he later told Elizabeth Barrett,

3. Browning's travel diary is reproduced in Kelley and Hudson (eds), *The Brownings Correspondence*, (Winfield, Kansas: Wedgestone Press, 1984), Vol. 4, xi–xiii.

refreshed by 'the five or six weeks absolute rest of the mind's eye' on his sea voyage.[4] Nor, given the haste with which he set off, did he arrive with any of those helpful introductions to friends of friends and useful contacts without which few British travelers ventured abroad in the nineteenth century. As he explained to Euphrasia Haworth on his return, 'I saw very few Italians, "to know" that is. Those I did see I liked.'[5] The distinction between 'knowing' and 'seeing' is important. Browning first came to Italy as an observer. Though he came looking for places he also found people and for the first time perceived the vital connection between context and character that underlies all his great dramatic monologues. This was the only time in his life that Browning traveled entirely alone. The experience suited him. 'My liking for Italy was always a selfish one', he wrote to Isa Blagden in 1866, '—I felt alone with my own soul there.'[6]

It was not just selfishness, however, which made Browning so reticent about Asolo nor so proprietorial in his references to 'my very own of all Italian towns', 'my spot of predilection in the whole world, I think'[7] or, as he more usually called it, 'my Asolo.' It acquired its own adjectives too: 'delicious' or 'sparkling' as if he had discovered a crisp new white wine but one he wanted to keep for himself. On his return to England he told Euphrasia Haworth about some of the more dramatic incidents of his sea voyage but could only promise her that she would find 'all my places and castles' when his poems came out.[8]

Just as he was reticent about Asolo with Euphrasia Haworth so he was with Elizabeth Barrett. In his efforts in 1845 to encourage her interest in going to Italy he talked about Venice and the area round Naples and Sorrento which he visited in 1844 and vividly described in 'An Englishman in Italy', an affectionate, picturesque but, as its title implies, externalized account of what he had seen there. There is nothing, however, to suggest that

4. Browning to Elizabeth Barrett, 17th March 1846 in Elvin Kintner (ed.), *The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Barrett*, 1845–1846, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1969), 543.
5. Browning to Euphrasia Haworth, 24th July 1838 in Kelley and Hudson (eds), *The Brownings Correspondence*, (Winfield, Kansas: Wedgestone Press, 1984), Vol. 14, 68.
6. Browning to Isa Blagden, 19th May 1866, in Edward McAleer (ed.), *Dearest Isa,* (Austin: University of Texas, 1951), 269.
7. Browning to Mrs Kay Bronson, 17th July 1889 in Michael Meredith (ed.), (Armstrong Browning Library at Baylor University and Wedgestone Press, 1985), *More than Friend,* 97 and Browning to Rev. J.D. Williams, 14th October 1889 in *Browning Institute Studies* 4 (1976), 56.
8. Browning to Euphrasia Haworth [24 July 1838] in Kelly and Hudgson (eds), *The Brownings Correspondence,* Vol. 14, 68.

he ever talked to her about Asolo, an omission which is all the more surprising given that at the time of their courtship 'Pippa Passes', set in Asolo, was her favourite amongst Browning's works. In Browning's mind Venice and Asolo were always closely linked. Fancifully, he described Asolo as 'one step just from sea to land' or, as inaccurately, 'properly speaking . . . the first spot of Italian soil I ever set foot upon—having proceeded to Venice by sea—and thence here.'[9] Even so, when he, Elizabeth, and their son, Pen, spent a month in Venice in 1851 with Elizabeth delighting in the city and quite strong enough to venture to Padua, the question of going on to Asolo never arose. 'My Asolo' was not a place Browning wanted to share with his wife.

After her death this shying away from Asolo was displaced into a recurrent dream, one of only two Browning ever remembered having. He described it to several friends including William Allingham who wrote down Browning's words:

> I am traveling with a friend, [...] sometimes with one person, sometimes with another, oftenest with one I do not recognize. Suddenly I see the town I love sparkling in the sun on the hillside. I cry to my companion, 'Look! look! there is Asolo. Oh do let us go there!' The friend invariably answers, 'Impossible, we cannot stop.' Pray let us go there! I entreat. 'No' persists the friend, we cannot; 'we must go on and leave Asolo for another day, and so I am hurried away, and wake to know that I have been dreaming it all, both the pleasure and the disappointment.'[10]

Browning's determination to avoid places associated with loss is well-known. He never returned to Florence after Elizabeth's death there in 1861. He was reluctant to go to the family home after his mother's death, avoided the street where his late sister-in-law, Arrabella Moulton Barrett, had lived and indeed had some difficulty navigating his way round London late in life because there were so many places associated with dead friends that he could no longer bear to see. Clearly, Asolo had something of the same emotional charge for Browning though it was not associated with loss. It was forty years, a significant time span, before, very hesitantly, he went back to Asolo in 1878 in the undemanding company of his sister Sarianna.

They approached it from Treviso, as he had on his first arrival, and after a day there 'trudged' over to Possagno and back again, exactly as he had

9. Prologue to *Asolando* line 22 and Browning to Edward Moulton Barrett, 22nd October 1889 in Mrs Sutherland Orr, *The Life and Letters of Robert Browning,* (London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1891), 420.
10. Ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford, *William Allingham: A Diary*, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1907), 248.

forty years before. He was delighted to scramble up to the ruined Rocca above the town and to find, once again, the echo on the castle wall that he had used at a dramatic point in 'Pippa Passes'. His delight was all the keener when he discovered that the local boys knew nothing of it. Though they imitated his cries of 'Yes! Yes!' the echo did not answer them. He relished the pure air and attractive countryside, liked the rough but honest hospitality at the new inn and wryly noted the noise and bustle of the local market. But Asolo no longer had any special emotional resonance for him. It was, as he later told Mrs Bronson, 'more ordinary-life-like'. Perhaps, as he explained to her, he had been over-impressed by the place on his first visit: 'When I got my first impression, Italy was new to me.'[11]

It took a good deal of patient persuasion from Mrs Bronson to get him to return eleven years later. Indeed, this generous American hostess, Browning's last love, even bought a house there to tempt him back. This visit in September and October 1889, when he found Asolo 'even more beautiful to me' than in 1838[12] and relished the company of his 'Queen Kate', stimulated a final burst of creativity. He revised and assembled for publication his latest collection of verse renaming it 'Asolando', adding some new poems including 'Inapprehensiveness' inspired by his feelings for Mrs Bronson. That piece, and the Prologue to 'Asolando' are among his finest and most accessible late poems. The collection was published on 12 December, the day Browning died in Venice. He lingered long enough to hear Pen read to him a telegram from London confirming that the edition was almost sold out on its first day. 'How gratifying. My dear boy. My dear boy' were Browning's final words.[13]

In advance of his last visit to Asolo Browning had been completing in 1887 and 1888 revisions of his complete works, including 'Sordello' and 'Pippa Passes'. It is just possible too that he glanced through the letters he had sent his parents describing his first visit to Italy, before he burnt them as he destroyed most of his correspondence when he was moving house in 1887. With or without these stimuli, however, Browning's memories of his first visit to Asolo remained intense as his letters to family and friends when he was preparing to return show. First, was its

11. Browning to Mrs Fitzgerald, 28th September 1888 in *Learned Lady, Letters from Robert Browning to Mrs Thomas Fitzgerald, 1876–1889*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1961), 68–69 and Browning to Mrs Bronson 10th June 1889, in Meredith (ed.) *More than Friend*, 93.
12. Mrs Bronson, 'Browning in Asolo' reprinted in Meredith (ed.) *More than Friend*, 130.
13. This is a conflation of his last words recorded by Pen Browning in a letter to Mrs Bronson, 12th December 1889 and by Evelyn Barclay. See *ibid.*, 112.

location, landscape and historical associations which help to explain why he had gone there in 1838 and why he spent four out of his fourteen nights in the Veneto in Asolo. Though he would have known of it from Verci's *History of the Ecelini Family* the guidebooks barely mentioned it and not even Ruskin ever visited. Nor did it play a direct part in the story of Sordello. Indeed, as Michael Meredith has pointed out, what Browning saw in 1838 was the remains of a Renaissance, not a medieval city.[14] Perhaps he was attracted by the distant sight of the ruined castle protecting the hilltop town beneath. Maybe he expected to spend only a morning there. If so, he soon changed his mind. Quizzed by an Austrian guard about why he wanted to stay longer, he replied 'Because I find it so very beautiful.'[15] He took lodgings at the inn, devastated though it was by a recent earthquake, and having walked the twelve miles there and back to Possagno, stayed two full days in the tiny town and another afternoon after a morning walk to San Zenone. San Zenone, with its ruined tower, is the only site in the Asolo area directly connected with his epic poem. Here, Alberic da Romano, the last of the Eccelini, saw his wife and seven children starved and then tortured to death before he himself was torn to pieces tied to a wild horse. In Book 6 of 'Sordello' Browning describes with ghoulish glee his conversation with the local canon who had seen Alberic's huge skeleton when his tomb burst open in the earthquake.

Back in Asolo it was the view that entranced Browning and helps to explain why he felt no need to look further for locations associated with Sordello. 'Such a view over the whole Lombard plain,—not a site in view, or appropriate view at least, without its story.'[16] 'I have never seen its like—the Alps on one side, the Asolan mountains all round,—and opposite, the vast Lombard plain', he wrote to his brother-in-law '—with indications of Venice, Padua, and the other cities, visible to a good eye on a clear day; while everywhere are sites of battles and sieges of bygone days, described in full by the historians of the Middle Ages.'[17] From his high vantage point in Asolo, looking down on the Lombard plain, Browning found all that he needed in terms of location and historic

14. Stefan Hawlin and Michael Meredith (eds), *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), Vol. 15, 281.
15. Mrs Bronson, "Browning in Asolo" reprinted in Meredith (ed.), *More than Friend*, 129.
16. Browning to Mrs Skirrow, 15th October 1889 in de Vane and Knickerbocker (eds), *New Letters of Robert Browning*, (London: John Murray, 1951), 383.
17. Browning to George Barrett, 22nd October 1889 printed in Paul Landis (ed.) *Letters of the Brownings to George Barrett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), 329.

sensibility to enable him to complete 'Sordello'. In particular, Asolo became a surrogate for Goito, Sordello's birthplace, set, as Browning describes it, in its 'mountain cup'. The real Goito, which Browning never visited, was a more prosaic little town on the wide Mantuan plain.

It was not just historic places, but people too that Browning observed in Asolo as would soon become clear in 'Pippa Passes.' Even in 'Sordello', contemporary Italy makes an unexpected but striking appearance in the figures of the beggar girl, 'the sad dishevelled shape' who sleeps on Browning's shoulder, the flower girls from Asolo in the Venice market and the barelegged girl from Padua by the Giudecca Canal. In Browning's epic, Sordello is a failure both as a poet and a man of action but in almost the last lines of the poem his reputation appears redeemed through the unexpected sight of 'A child barefoot and rosy' running up a 'nameless hill/By sparkling Asolo' in the early morning light. So precisely does Browning describe him that, as with the girls in the market, it is easy to imagine that this is something he actually saw 'through the haze' as the boy 'crossed/The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost/Matting the balm and mountain camomile.' But the barefoot boy is not just an eye-catching but dispensable touch of local colour introduced to alleviate a grim story. As he runs he sings a snatch of Sordello's Goito Lay, the first poem that had made the poet famous.

> Up and up goes he, singing all the while
> Some unintelligible words to beat
> The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
> So worsted is he [...]

In the end, Sordello, the poet, a figure with whom Browning associated himself in various ways, gains immortality and outdoes God at his own creative game. The triumph is equivocal, however. Characteristically, the young Browning ends his long poem a few lines later not on a redemptive note but with a reminder that unpleasant smells like civet hang around longer than sweet perfumes like the rose. It is a way of staking his claim that his bracing, difficult poem will outlast the lyric sweetness that his readers might have preferred—a claim quickly rebuffed by the perennial popularity of 'Pippa's Song', a short lyric from his next major work, and the ridicule which greeted 'Sordello', blighting Browning's reputation for the next twenty years.

This same ambivalence is built into Browning's next important work, 'Pippa Passes', which is set almost entirely in Asolo. As Mrs Sutherland

Orr, Browning's first biographer and poetic amanuensis, memorably explained, however, the inspiration for these dramatic scenes came to Browning in an apparently very different place:

> Mr Browning was walking alone in a wood near Dulwich, when the image flashed upon him of some one walking thus alone through life; one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it; and the image shaped itself into the little silk winder of Asolo, Felippe, or Pippa.[18]

From Dulwich to Asolo was an imaginative leap facilitated not only by Browning's detailed memory of everything he had seen there, including young silk weavers like Pippa, but also by a physical similarity in the flora and fauna (including the birds), between the two places. Only the fig and pomegranate trees and the lizards, which Browning enjoyed attracting from their low walls by whistling softly to them,[19] would not have been found in a South London wood. As Mrs Bronson later wrote of Browning in Asolo: 'He observed everything observable by the way—the thick hedges that border all the roads and fields, the great chestnut-trees and apple orchards, which give an English character to the landscape, unknown in other parts of Italy already familiar to him.'[20]

'Pippa Passes' contains several precisely remembered descriptions of Asolo as the young silk weaver spends her annual day off from work walking around the town and singing some curious songs as she goes which, all unknown to her, have a profound impact on the lives of her hearers. There is the great stone house above the town with 'Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars/ Silent as death, blind in a flood of light' with bright geraniums in front of its greenhouse where the illicit lovers meet. Sebald is up early watching for signs of his mistress: '[...] as I strolled/On mornings through the vale here; country girls/Were noisy, washing garments in the brook /Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills.' When Ottima finally appears, she looks out of the window to catch a sight of St Marks in Venice, and Vicenza and Padua. Glancing down she finds Benet, the Capuchin, trudging past towards his accustomed seat under the stone wall by the south entry to the church. (It is still there.) In the most realistic scene in 'Pippa Passes' four young girls who are no

18. Mrs Orr, *A Handbook to the Workss of Roberrt Browing* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1880), 54.
19. Mrs Orr, *The Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, 414.
20. Mrs Bronson, 'Browning in Asolo' reprinted in Meredith (ed.) *More than Friend*, 131.

better than they should be lie in wait for Pippa on the steps above the duomo. They chatter noisily about what one expects from her sugar daddy, about getting their hair dyed and about the ease with which men can be duped. Interspersed with their heartless gossip are some extraordinarily beautiful evocations of nature: a beetle sparkles in the dust, wasps eat their way through the papers hung to scare the birds from a fig tree. High above the town Luigi and his mother try to discover the echo in the ruined Rocca, 'that mossy lair of lizards', where wallflowers wave above its broken tower.

The precision of these images helps to explain why Browning could never have set 'Pippa Passes' in Dulwich. He may perhaps have watched shop girls there chatting but never with the fascination that they had for him in Asolo where they represented not only the new and the exotic but the forbidden. Indeed, though 'delicious Asolo' has a primal freshness with Pippa as the pure, redemptive figure much beloved of the Victorians, what goes on there is far from Paradisal. Sebald and his adulterous lover Ottima have just murdered her elderly husband; the art students in Posagno have been plotting to humble the sculptor, Jules, by foisting on him an illiterate and impure young bride; Luigi is intent on going off to assassinate the Emperor; the girls are part of a plot to trap Pippa which is directed by the Sicilian bishop's blackmailing steward who wants to seize the property Pippa does not know she possesses by condemning her to prostitution in Rome.

Most of these are stock characters from Italian literature though Pippa herself is an original. But Browning's way of peopling paradise with evil was not exclusive to him. The English fascination with 'The Dark Heart of Italy' has a long pedigree. In the 1820s and '30s the British colony of artists in Rome found a new direction in their work moving away from the grand historical manner they had learnt in the RA Schools by going out into the Campagna, the Alban Hills and Tivoli where they discovered a harmony between landscape and people, and a continuity between the present and the Classical past. But they as readily responded to the market's keener demand for pictures of brigands and their molls, with their leader, the stiff, ambitious but self-aware Charles Eastlake finding himself embarrassed by the popularity of his depictions of murderers and their bold consorts in idyllic rural settings. Browning was less abashed. For him Italy always held the excitement of evil.

In 'Pippa Passes' place and people come together in his work for the first time. The author is everywhere skillfully marshalling his material but the direct authorial voice that frequently and often disconcertingly appears in 'Sordello' is absent. Character and circumstance dictate the

story. The poet as the ventriloquist of others has finally emerged or, as Mrs Orr wrote, the man and the poet are now in harmony.[21]

The few lines in 'Sordello' about Asolo and the whole of 'Pippa Passes' were the immediate products of Browning's first stay there. Fifty years later he wrote about the poetic processes that had produced them. Reluctant though he was initially, once the commitment to visit Mrs Bronson in September 1889 had been made, Browning's enthusiasm grew. He told her how 'inspiration seemed to steam up from the very ground' on his first visit to Asolo.[22] Warmed by his devotion to her and a fine spell of early autumn weather, he was again entranced by the town. The colours of the fruits and foliage, as brilliant as a rainbow, amazed him. Though he was in poor health he walked up to the Rocca every morning and in the late afternoon went for drives with Sarianna and Mrs Bronson, visiting Possagno, Bassano and San Zenone, where he insisted on climbing up the rickety steps of the tower to gaze over the historic landscape which had inspired him in 1838. With all his longstanding apprehensions about Asolo forgotten, he even started negotiations to buy a property there. In the comfort of Mrs Bronson's admiration he wrote for the last time about love, even though desire was inevitably frustrated and the 'good moment' offered companionship rather than passion.

Had Browning written the Prologue to *Asolando* at the end, rather than the beginning of his six weeks of intense personal and creative delight in Asolo, might it have been different? On the face of it, it is a poem about disillusionment and the loss of poetic perception: the brilliance of his first sight of Asolo and its surroundings is replaced with a more monochrome, objective vision. Where once 'natural objects seemed to stand/ Palpably fire-clothed' now 'a flower is just a flower:/Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man—/Simply themselves, uncinct by dower/ of dyes which, when life's day began,/ Round each in glory ran.'

Browning's letters in September and October 1889, by contrast, are full of descriptions of the vivid hues of the fruits and foliage he sees all around him. Unlike Wordsworth, who makes similar retrospective comparisons in 'Intimations of Immortality', the 'Elegiac Stanzas' or 'Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey', Browning's perception of the natural beauty of Asolo remains intense. He has 'but little regret for the surprise and delight of my visits to Asolo in bygone days.'[23] But the

21. Mrs Orr, *The Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, 109.
22. Browning to Mrs Bronson, 24th August 1889 in M. Meredith (ed.), *More than Friend*, 102.
23. Dedication to Mrs Bronson of *Asolando*.

Prologue to *Asolando* is not so much about what the poet sees, nor even how he sees it, as about his changed appreciation of the poet's task. The Prologue is a fine act of imaginative recovery, a precise recall of an intense poetic experience of fifty years before but it is not one that Browning looks back on in the same spirit as Wordsworth returning to Tintern Abbey or reflecting on a picture of Peele Castle. For Wordsworth the freshness of that early vision can never be recaptured but only gratefully recollected by 'the philosophic mind'. For Browning Asolo is still beautiful but no longer challenging, as it was when he first saw it.

In 'finding out' Asolo in 1838 he had discovered for himself not just the place that gave him the historical perspective to complete 'Sordello' and to make a connection with the contemporary scene which had till then been absent from his poetry, but, like sacred ground, a place of revelation and insecurity. In Asolo he first became aware of the scale of his poetic vocation but also of his inadequacy.

> How many a year, my Asolo,
> Since—one step just from sea to land—
> I found you, loved yet feared you so—

What Browning writes about here is what he once described to Elizabeth Barrett as that 'original hour (that is quarter of an hour) of confidence and creation' whose intensity is quickly overlaid by his consciousness of his inability to transpose it into words. As always with Browning the transition from poetic perception to execution is an uncomfortable one. He knows that he has the sensibility of a poet but doubts that he has the communicative capacity.[24]

> No mastery of mine o'er these!
> Terror with beauty like the Bush
> Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees
> Drop eyes to earthward! Language? Tush!
> Silence 'tis awe decrees.

If the Prologue to *Asolando* is, in part, Browning's answer to Wordsworth's poems on the contrast between youthful and mature poetic perception, it is also infused with another very familiar text, the story of

24. Quoted in Daniel Karlin *The Courtship of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), see 49–50 and 173–182. For an extended and illuminating discussion of the gap between conception and expression in Browning's work see 49–50 and 173–182.

Moses and the Burning Bush in *Exodus* chapter 3 where God calls on Moses to lead the Israelite people out of slavery into the Promised Land. Moses begs God to identify himself. God says only 'I AM THAT I AM.' Moses pleads his unfitness for leadership: 'I am not eloquent ... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.' God insists from the Burning Bush that Moses must act. Forty years in the wilderness follow on a journey to the Promised Land from which Moses is ultimately excluded. So Asolo was for Browning the place where he first recognized the immense possibilities open to him as a poet but also the likelihood that he would fall short. Hence the 'fear' as well as the 'love' of Asolo.

Looking on the same scene 51 years later his vision is more measured: 'Italia's rare/O'er running beauty crowds the eye—/But flame? The Bush is bare.' And yet the Voice still speaks to him and this time its message is a consoling one. 'Call my works thy friends./At Nature dost though shrink amazed?/God is it who transcends.'

At the end of 'Sordello', the poet's heir, the barefoot boy running up the hillside outside Asolo, outdoes God's messenger, the lark, in the persisting power of Sordello's song. In the Prologue to 'Asolando', by contrast, Browning accepts that he failed to meet the challenge that confronted him on his first visit to Asolo. But now he sees his task more modestly. It is not for the poet to outdo God. The Great I AM, unknowable but eternal, transcends everything.

Browning had come full circle. Fifty-five years before in 'Paracelsus' he had his poet, Aprile, say, God' is the perfect poet,/ Who in his person acts his own creations.' Now, though far more convincingly after a lifetime of poetic effort and achievement, he had arrived again at the same conclusion. The Prologue to Asolando is not about lost inspiration nor, in its beautifully precise and resonant language, is it about inarticulateness. It is a measured view, learnt from a lifetime's hard work as a poet, of his true vocation and the importance of seeing things clearly. Once again, after a gap of fifty-one years Asolo had inspired Browning to some of his finest poetry and to a keen sense of himself as both man and poet. Now he was 77 and aware that he was close to the end of life: then he had been 26, excited but awe-struck by the huge task ahead.

'This extraordinary apathy': Wilkie Collins, Italy and the Contradictions of the Risorgimento

Mariaconcetta Costantini

As is well known, Italy was a cultural magnet for the Victorians. Its language, lore and society became objects of growing intellectual curiosity during the nineteenth century, while the political debates over the Risorgimento directly involved the English public. Traditionally conceived as a setting for Gothic fantasies and a main destination of the Grand Tour, Italy also came to be perceived as a source of political and ideological contention in the age of Victoria, when the ideas of radical thinkers and political exiles stirred both English sympathies and fears. The convergence of different meanings turned Italy into a fluid, semantically unstable trope. As Annemarie McAllister observes, 'the Italian' was specifically constructed as a 'multifaceted and multivalent cultural object'.[1] This semantic complexity was due to the merging of two main concepts.

First of all, Italy was the southern land where wealthy Englishmen and artists journeyed to experience an 'other' reality. With its remains of a glorious past, its art treasures and its stunning landscapes, *il Bel Paese* encouraged meditation and refined the sensitivity of the northern traveller. Such a view was, however, inseparable from a range of cultural prejudices which had taken shape over the centuries and were still active in Victorian

1. Annemarie McAllister, *John Bull's Italian Snakes and Ladders. English Attitudes to Italy in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 1.

society. This 'residual culture'[2] associated Italy and its inhabitants with negative practices, values and relationships, such as indolence, primitivism, corruption, Machiavellian intrigue and servile submission to the Catholic Church. Instead of declining, such prejudices flourished in the age of Victoria, when England's self-construction as a nation of progress gained strength from the exposure of southern counter-myths.

A second—and partly different—concept of Italianness developed in relation to the political cause of the Risorgimento. This cause was mainly championed by Italian exiles like Giuseppe Mazzini, who had settled abroad and strove to gain their hosts' support. In addition to arousing interest in their native language and culture, these *émigrés* spread new political ideas. The role they came to play in England was complex. On the one hand, they provoked heated controversies over their campaign, which was either enthusiastically supported or viewed with suspicion. The general sympathy aroused by their bids for freedom and unification was counterbalanced by objections to their political radicalism, which increased in 1861, when the monarchical solution offered by Piedmont was opposed by irreducible republicans. On the other hand, Italian expatriates were perceived as members of a transnational coterie of radicals who lived on the fringes of Victorian society. As such, they embodied an ideal of cosmopolitanism that was strangely at odds with the nationalistic enterprise they promoted.

> By 1862 London was the place of refuge for most of the ardent radicals of Europe, who were very naturally objects of curiosity. People knew where these expatriates could be found—to be sure, always furiously discussing some point of revolutionary tactics or subversive gossip over their black coffee.[3]

Italian exiles became thus the pivot around which many contradictions revolved. Quite heterogeneous in their political views, they were nonetheless homogenized by their condition of *émigrés*. Fervent champions of nationalism, they were members of an international group collectively perceived as 'foreign'. These contradictions suggest that their agency increased, rather than solved, the semantic instability of the Italian trope within their hosting society.

2. For the concept of 'residual culture' see Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), 121-124. The same concept is applied to the cultural dynamic between Italy and Victorian society by McAllister, 20–21.
3. Harry W. Rudman, *Italian Nationalism and English Letters. Figures of the Risorgimento and Victorian Men of Letters* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 130.

Just as they adopted traditional stereotypes of Italy, most Victorians tended to racialize the charismatic men of the Risorgimento. This tendency emerges both in their disparaging and in their idealizing remarks on Italian fighters and ideologues. Whether they were exalted as heroes or accused of fomenting revolt, these problematic guests were largely seen and represented as 'disembodied' non-English entities: they epitomized abstract notions (valour or anarchy) which were not prevalent in the domestic reality. The novels and poems dedicated to Mazzini, the panegyrics written for Garibaldi, prove that their ardent militancy became a belated symbol of Romantic heroism, which was juxtaposed with the pragmatic heroism of Victorian champions of self-help. Even more distancing was the attitude emerging in literary pieces and newspapers which condemned exiles for their political fanaticism.

Confronted with this cluster of opposing meanings, English intellectuals often chose between the idealization or denigration of Italian radicals. There were, however, exceptions. One of them was the novelist and playwright Wilkie Collins. A good connoisseur of Italian art, Collins enjoyed the complexity of Italian culture and society, which he strove to represent in all their lights and shades. Similarly, he manifested a strong curiosity for the Risorgimento and its controversial activists. Both his fiction and non-fiction reveal a strong desire to explore the 'Italian Question' from an objective, unprejudiced viewpoint. Although he supported the bids for freedom and unification, he shunned from a naive idealization of the movement and studied its militants with the keen eye of a cultural anthropologist and a philosopher. In so doing, he betrayed a surprisingly modern frame of mind. Instead of endorsing stereotypical ideas, he attentively examined Italian culture and politics, detected flaws and points of strength, and used otherness as a thought-provoking vehicle for reflecting on human conduct and morality.

Collins was a frequent traveller to Italy. At the age of twelve, he accompanied his parents on a two-year visit to the Continent and spent a long time in Rome and Naples. In his adulthood he returned four times to the southern land.[4] As I have demonstrated elsewhere,[5] Collins's memories

4. In 1853, Collins went on a tour around Italy with Dickens and Augustus Egg, and returned to many places he had seen with his parents. He visited Milan and Rome again with Edward Pigott in 1866. And he chose Italy as the destination of two travels he made with Caroline Graves in 1863 and 1877.

5. Mariaconcetta Costantini, 'A Land of Angels with *Stilettos*: Travel Experiences and Literary Representations of Italy in Wilkie Collins', *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, 10 (2007), 13–33.

and letters bear witness to the impressions left on his mind by his Italian experiences. A significant text, in this regard, is *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins*, the biography of his father he published in 1848. In recollecting the two-year journey to Italy made as a boy, Collins describes a land of oxymorons which he was never tired of exploring and tasting. Although he mentions local flaws and limits, he expresses enthusiasm for the very ambiguities of the world he discovered under the guidance of his father, the painter William Collins. The observation of the models hired by William, for example, showed him the inherent ambiguity of human nature. Rather than personating one character, each model was 'provided with all dresses and disguises, ready for all attitudes and expressions',[6] puzzlingly capable of merging beauty with violence, corporeal with spiritual elements, into a single protean figure. Equally perplexing were the cases of unorthodox behaviour he witnessed on the spot, such as the 'sublime carelessness' of Neapolitans during a cholera epidemic.[7]

What *Memoirs* reveals, in general, is the sense of ethical and cultural relativity the young Collins developed by observing the beliefs and habits of a different population in their own environment. Later in his career, this sense would become an integral part of his fiction, as proved by his distinctive characterization of eccentrics, cultural hybrids, amiable villains and morally elusive figures.

If the encounter with natives freed Collins from the strictures of monoculturalism, the study of political refugees living in England offered him further chances for meditating on the volatility of borders. As a London bohemian, Collins must have been familiar with the stories of Italian exiles and probably met some of them. We can also surmise that, at the time of his co-operation with *Household Worlds*, he must have read the articles on Italian revolutionaries published in the journal, whose editor and staff sympathized with the cause.[8]

The influence these historical figures exercised on his imagination is confirmed by the peculiarities of his fictional *émigrés*. The challenging portrayal of Count Fosco and Professor Pesca, in *The Woman in White* (1859–1860), is not the only proof of his interest in the 'non-disjunctive'

6. W. Wilkie Collins, *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R.A.* 2 vols. (East Ardsley: EP Publishing, 1987), II, 93.
7. Collins, *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins*, II, 105.
8. Catherine Peters, *The King of Inventors. A Life of Wilkie Collins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 127.

personality of men like Cavour, Mazzini or Gabriele Rossetti.[9] Other Italian refugees featured in his less-known fiction and drama—'The Yellow Mask' (1855), *Rank and Riches* (1882), *Heart and Science* (1883)—play unusual roles that unveil the pretensions of orthodox Victorians.[10]

A recurrent element of their characterization is their ability to combine apparently incongruous principles together, such as political idealism with scoundrelism, cunning with intellectual honesty. Fascinating and open-minded, though often unscrupled, these figures—and the historical people on whom they were modelled—enabled Collins to substantiate two disconcerting notions. First of all, they epitomized ethical relativism, as members (or former members) of conspirational societies that used all means to overthrow established governments. Secondly, they incarnated a condition of cross-cultural hybridity which Collins insistently explored in his writings.

The former notion is effectively conveyed by an angry utterance of Professor Pesca in *The Woman in White*. An erudite, anglicized and apparently innocuous teacher of Dante, Pesca is actually a powerful member of an Italian secret society living under disguise in England. After revealing his identity to an English friend, the Professor vindicates the righteousness of their fight which cannot exclude acts of violence:

> It is not for you to say—you Englishmen, who have conquered your freedom so long ago, that you have conveniently forgotten what blood you shed, and what extremities you proceeded to in the conquering—it is not for *you* to say how far the worst of all exasperations may, or may not, carry the maddened men of an enslaved nation. [...] In the time of your first Charles you might have done us justice—the long luxury of your freedom has made you incapable of doing us justice now.[11]

His strong arguments provide a critique of the hypocrisy of most Victorians, who judged the morality of a campaign fought by others from a conveniently safe distance.

9. An analysis of these characters is offered in Costantini, 'A Land of Angels with *Stilettos*', 24–31. For the concept of 'non-disjunction' see Julia Kristeva, *Séméiôtiké: recherces pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1969).
10. On the role of these characters, see also Mariaconcetta Costantini, *Venturing into Unknown Waters: Wilkie Collins and the Challenge of Modernity* (Pescara: Edizioni Tracce, 2008), 180–198.
11. Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, Julian Symons (ed.) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 595–596.

The 'grey area' inhabited by political radicals offered an invaluable chance to question stereotypical views of lawfulness and anarchy. For this reason, Collins drew memorable portraits of Italian activists who, in confronting English conformism, gave voice to 'alternative', often perturbing, ideas. On an ethical plane, these figures do not fit into mutually exclusive categories of heroism or wickedness. Martyrs and villains, idealists and cynics at the same time, they represent an elusive, syncretic *morality*, which is provocatively set against the *moralizing* attitude of their English counterparts.

As migrant subjects, moreover, exiles were also interesting for the cultural dynamic they activated. Partly anglicized but still foreign in some mores and leanings, they had the *neither/nor* identity of 'cultural undecidables'[12]—an identity that challenged the stability of Victorian taxonomies. For a writer like Collins, who often called into question ethno-cultural categories, their hybrid nature was a clear focus of interest. In describing their interaction with English culture, Collins gave signals of the two-directional process of change they triggered. This process is evident in his characterization of a diasporic subject like Pesca.

In the first pages of *The Woman in White*, the Italian professor is derided for imitating his hosts 'in dress, manners, and amusements' and for misusing colloquial English.[13] A 'mimic man', who in some regards anticipates the anti-model theorized by Bhabha,[14] Pesca weirdly combines his anglophilic mimicry with high values (loyalty and affection) and menacing traits (as secret-society member). The result is an ambiguous, disconcerting figure that confronts Englishmen with the spectre of *familiar otherness*. His evocation of an age of blood-shedding in England, in particular, suggests the evanescence of the safe borders between Self and Other. By reminding his hosts of their long-forgotten past of violence, the foreigner invites them to reconsider their identity and perceive their own potential 'otherness'. His agency within English society is thus akin to the function fulfilled by migrants in today's world—a function which, in Kristeva's words, activates a process of self-scrutiny in the hosting subjects themselves:

12. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 56.
13. Collins, *The Woman in White*, 37, 39.
14. For a definition of the ambivalence of mimicry and of its strategic failure as a colonial model of 'civilization', see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 123 ff.

> Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of *being an other*. It is not simply—humanistically—a matter of our being able to accept the other, but of *being in his place*, and this means to imagine and make oneself other from oneself.[15]

In the main, Collins viewed Italy and Italians as fertile sources of inspiration for representing many aporias of life. What he drew, in his fiction and non-fiction, were pictures of a complex but captivating culture, which was worth exploring in its weak as well as strong points.

Such an attitude emerges also in those pieces that are most critical of aspects of Italianness. An interesting case is a little-known article which appeared in *All the Year Round*: 'The Dead Lock in Italy.' The article, attributed to Collins[16] but published anonymously in the December issue of 1866, might seem more censorious than other pieces on Italy he penned. As will be shown, however, the critical method chosen by the author confirms his genuine interest in the Mediterranean country. Even though he points to serious problems, Collins rejects popular clichés, provides first-hand knowledge, analyzes facts empirically and never refrains from expressing personal sympathy.

'The Dead Lock in Italy' is structured as a letter sent 'from an Englishman in Rome, to an Italian in London.'[17] The epistolary form is skilfully employed to strengthen the argumentative tone of the article, which deals with a vexatious question: the political standstill in Rome before the city's annexation to the new Kingdom of Italy. The presence of a receiver, who is said to elicit the strong response,[18] fulfils three important functions. First of all, it creates a communicative situation

15. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Leon S. Roudiez (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 13.
16. In a biography, the article is defined as 'the last probably' of 'around fifty such pieces' Collins contributed to the Dickensian journal—'a report on the progress towards Italian unification, sent back from Rome in November 1866 during the course of a Continental tour with Edward Pigott.' Graham Law and Andrew Maunder, *Wilkie Collins. A Literary Life* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 52. In the Introduction to a reprint of the piece for the Wilkie Collins Society (September 2012), Paul Lewis ties it to Collins on the basis of a letter dated 25 November 1866, written by Dickens to James Birtles, the printer of *All the Year Round*.
17. This is the subtitle of the article. [Anon.], 'The Dead Lock in Italy', *All the Year Round*, 16.8 (December 1866), 510–514 (510). All subsequent quotations will be from this edition with the page indication given in brackets.
18. The article opens with an extract from a letter by the Italian exile, anxiously asking his English correspondent to tell him 'how Rome looks' (510).

which enables the sender to use effective rhetorical strategies. Secondly, it brings into focus the political and cultural identity of London-based refugees, who are collectively represented by the figure of the anxious Italian exile. Thirdly, it raises questions about the effects that Collins (the 'real' sender) intended to produce on the readers of *All the Year Round* (the 'real' receivers), most of whom were his own countrymen.

The article opens with two brief pieces of information presented as empirical data: it is the 15 November, one month before the agreed date of the retreat of the French troops who were protecting the Pope's interests. Much awaited by political activists, the announced retreat was viewed as a great opportunity for the annexation of Rome to the Italian Kingdom. Against all expectations, however, the sender foresees the failure of this last step towards unification. His bleak 'prophecy' is based on his direct observation of the 'extraordinary apathy' (510) of the Romans, which is minutely described in the first half of the article.

His long account of the natives' apathy is anticipated by an admonitory passage: 'Must I tell you truly how Rome looks, under these circumstance? Prepare yourself to be astonished; prepare yourself to be disappointed' (510). The passage, which creates an effect of disappointment in the 'fictional' and the 'real' receivers alike, bears evidence of two linguistic strategies insistently used in the article: direct address and assertion of truthfulness. By personally involving his interlocutors and by underlining his eye-witnessing function, the sender performs an illocutionary act which questions the naive optimism of all supporters of the cause. What he makes clear from the beginning is the need for a new approach to the 'Italian Question', which neither prejudices nor quixotic fantasies could correctly interpret at the time.

His intention to convey the truth of the matter—harshly but honestly—is confirmed in the third paragraph of the article:

> Don't crumple up my letter, and throw it into the fire! Don't say, 'The priests have got hold of him! My friend is nothing better than a reactionary and a Jesuit after all!' No Englishman living, is a heartier friend to the Italian cause than I am. No Englishman living, desires more earnestly than I do to see this nation great, prosperous, and free, from one end of the peninsula to the other. But, there are two sides to every question—the shady side, and the bright. Italian liberals and English liberals have agreed long enough (in my opinion) to look at Italian politics on the bright side only. Give the shady side its turn. When an individual man is in a difficulty, it is universally admitted that his best preparation for getting out of it, is, to look the worst in the face. What is true of individuals, in this case, is

> surely true of nations—doubly true, I venture to think, of your nation. Suffer a barbarous Englishman to speak the rude truth. The very last thing you are any of you willing to do, is, to look the worst in the face. Give me your arm, and let us look at it together. (510)

Through a skilful use of rhetorical strategies (direct address, hyperbole, constatives), the writer announces his determination 'to speak the rude truth' by focussing on 'the shady side' of the question. He also gives clues to the identity of the potential receivers of his message—both 'Italian liberals and English liberals'—whom he aims to encourage 'to look the worst in the face'.

The excerpt clarifies Collins's approach to the matter. First of all, it substantiates the idea that a truthful analysis of the 'Italian Question' should be founded on observation rather than abstraction. Secondly, it reveals the author's limited trust of ideologues exiled in England, most of whom were unable to understand the Italian masses or mobilize them. A paramount case was that of Mazzini, who 'wrote constantly of "the people", but as an exile knew little about them.'[19] Not surprisingly, the unknown correspondent has many traits in common with the controversial Genoese activist, who was stubbornly anti-clerical, had returned to England at the time, and was originally from Northern Italy (a characteristic referred to later in the article).

Further insights into Collins's view are offered by the cultural identity of the people mentioned in the passage. The equation of English and Italian liberals, who share the same wrong convictions, challenges the hierarchy of ethno-cultural categories endorsed by most Victorians. What Collins suggests is that both groups of intellectuals are likely to misinterpret the reality of the Risorgimento. Neither of them is endowed with an innate superiority of judgment, which can only be acquired by adopting the right analytical method. In more general terms, this statement implies a tendency to perceive the Other as a possible mirror of one's Self, an important actor in a confrontation which, in Kristeva's terms, unveils limits and potentialities of both parts.

The writer's interaction with Italians *on equal terms* is evident in the article. In the above quoted passage, the anaphoric litotes 'No Englishman living' introduces two declarations of his closeness to the southern people and to their political campaign. Another statement that

19. Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 39. Clark also clarifies that Mazzini's notion of 'the people' 'deliberately excluded the mass of the population, not only the peasants but also the urban "plebs", too poor and ignorant to be trusted' (39–40).

blurs ethno-cultural borders is the self-diminishing application of the adjective 'barbarous'—a qualifier traditionally used by Victorians to racialize non-English peoples. Equally upsetting is the beginning of the subsequent paragraph: 'You have been twenty years in England; you are almost—though, fortunately for my chance of convincing you, not quite—an Englishman' (510). In addressing his interlocutor, the sender poses two thorny questions of identity. He configures the exile's hybridity in terms of assimilation ('you are almost [...] an Englishman'), thereby challenging the rigidity of Victorian taxonomies. And he attaches a negative connotation (stubbornness) to Englishness when he mentions the small difference 'fortunately' existing between each other.

All these premises demonstrate the complexity of Collins's approach to Italy. By rejecting stereotypes and basing his judgments on personal observation, he perceived the points of strength of the Other and was often critical of the presumed superiority of Englishmen. Yet, the very objectivity of his gaze was the spur for exposing the weaknesses of Italian culture and politics, which were not spared his saucy comments.

'The Dead Lock in Italy' bears evidence of this tendency. The unusual sympathy and the cultural openness of the early paragraphs are followed by a fierce critique of some problems that afflicted the land visited by the writer, who sustains his arguments with empirical proofs. The main targets of his criticism are the Roman Catholic Church, the paralyzing indolence of Roman citizens, and two vices deeply ingrained in the personality of Italians, which were most visible among the southern inhabitants of the peninsula. Let us examine these aspects in detail.

The power of the Roman Church and the political tyranny of its leader, Pope Pious IX, were recurrent objects of odium at the time. Overtly opposed by most men of the Risorgimento, papal control was also deplored by the Victorians, as shown by the negative sensationalism attached to Jesuits and Catholics in coeval literature. Disraeli himself, who disapproved of the Italian battle for unity, portrayed 'the Catholic Church as a tyrannical authority against which all high-minded lovers of freedom should unite.'[20] In his response to Catholicism, Collins was partly in line with his contemporaries. A man of 'liberal Christian faith' according to Carolyn Oulton,[21] he characterized a few scheming priests

20. Maureen Moran, *Catholic Sensationalism and Victorian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 198.

21. Carolyn Oulton, 'Wilkie Collins—An Interpretation of Christian Belief', *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, 1 (1998), 29–43 (29).

and Jesuits in his fiction, such as the villainous Father Benwell in *The Black Robe* (1881). Unlike other Victorians, however, he also drew nice portraits of Catholic clergymen, whose funny manners and humane disposition compensated for the evil of their dark counterparts. In both cases, his travels and personal encounters proved important sources of inspiration. The letters written on his Italian journeys and the memoirs based on those experiences offer unusual accounts of the Churchmen he met and the stories of criminal conduct he heard on the spot.

A first example can be found in the biography of his father. An entry from William's diary embedded in the text includes fierce stories of crime and murder committed by Neapolitan priests and monks when the Collinses were living in the area.[22] Such events must have influenced the imagination of the young Collins, who learned to perceive the ambivalences of individual behaviour beneath the social façade. A different critique of Catholicism is offered in a letter Collins sent from Milan in 1853. While deploring the luxury of the crypt of Saint Carlo Borromeo—whose 'priceless jemmed coffin' bears the motto 'Humilitas'—the author adds an ironic note on 'Roman Catholics [who] don't mind trifling little inconsistencies of this sort.'[23] Quite humanized is, instead, the portrait of Pious IX he drew on a later journey to Rome. In a missive sent to a friend on the occasion, Collins reports his encounter with the Pope whom he has seen indulging in a little pleasure: 'comforting himself with a pinch of snuff'. As he admits, the spontaneous act had made him feel strangely close to one of the most hated men in Europe: 'I had just closed my own [box]—and I felt sympathy with his holiness which no words can describe.'[24]

Such statements testify to Collins's freedom of thought in socio-political and religious matters. Although he was critical of the power and behavioural incongruities of Catholics, he preferred to base his opinions on observation, rather than clichés, and sometimes made remarks that upset stereotypes that were well established in England.

The political and cultural influence of the Roman Church is thoroughly examined in 'The Dead Lock in Italy.' 'What is the secret of this extraordinary apathy?' asks the writer, before assuredly pointing to

22. Collins, *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins*, II, 117–118.
23. Letter to Charles Ward, dated 31 October 1853. *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, William Baker and William M. Clark (eds.) 2 vols. (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), I, 107.
24. Letter to Charles Ward, dated 14 January 1864. *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, I, 245.

the responsibility of Catholic institutions: 'I take the secret to be, that the Roman Catholic Religion sticks fast—and that the people stick fast with it.' (510) The idea of a standstill in the process of political unification is explicitly related to the control exercised by a symbolic figure, the 'priest', whose tyrannical power has stifled innovation over the centuries:

> For generation after generation, and for century after century, the people have taken the priest's hand on those terms. The greatest of human writers, the noblest of human beliefs—patience under worldly trials, consolation under afflictions, the most sacred domestic ties, the very ledge of immortality itself—have all been held through century after century, for millions and millions of your people, in the priest's hand. In the priest's hand they are held still and you have got him against you.
>
> Yes! here, in his central stronghold, the priest's immovable composure has its old foundation, to this day, in the priest's consciousness of his power. The political tyranny that he administers—the infamous misgovernment that he permits—has alienated you, and thousands of men like you. But he has got your wives and your daughters; he has got the influence of the mothers over the children, and the other stronger influence yet of the women over the men. Nay, to come to individual instances of note and mark, he has even got your King. It is notorious to everybody out of England—though it has been carefully concealed *in* England—that there is a religious side to Victor Emmanuel's character, as well as a political side, and that he presents to this day the curiously anomalous phenomenon of a zealous Papist who is in disgrace with the Pope. (511)

A collective emblem of the many Popes and clergymen who had kept a strong hold on the population, the 'priest' evoked by the writer visibly incarnates the obscurantist forces of the *ancient regime.* There is, however, in the passage a hint at the responsibilities of other people who had failed to oppose the temporal and spiritual power of the Church. Together with great artists ('[t]he greatest of human writers') and common people, Collins mentions the King of Piedmont himself as a 'zealous Papist' forced to fight the Pope for mere political reasons.

Another blameworthy figure is the fictional exile. A champion of secularism like most activists, the receiver of the letter-article is criticized for his inability to free his own family ('wives and daughters') from the grip of the 'priest'. Instead of demonizing the Church as the only cause of stagnation, Collins thus denounces the guilt of many people who 'stick fast with it' and reproaches political activists themselves for being incapable of proselytizing.

The idea of collective responsibility is corroborated by a series of pictures which configure Rome as a place of immobility. In the opening paragraph, for example, the writer uses repetitive formulas to convey his personal experience of the city's standstill:

> *Rome looks as Rome looked when I was here* last, nearly four years since—*as Rome looked when I was here*, for the second time, eleven years since—*as Rome looked, when I was here*, for the first time, twenty-eight years since. New hotels have been opened, in the interval, I grant you; the Pincian Hill has been improved; a central railway station has been made; an old church has been discovered at St. Clemente; a new church has been built on the ruins of the Basilica of St. Paolo; Seltzer water is to be had; crinolines are to be seen; the hackney-coachmen have been reformed. But, I repeat, nevertheless, *the Rome that* I first remember in '38 is, in all essentials, *the Rome that* I now see in '66. (510, my italics)

The evidential nature of the passage is confirmed by excerpts from real letters Collins sent to his family and friends on his travels to the 'Eternal City'. 'This place seems, and really is, unaltered. [...] Rome is what it was when we saw it' he writes to his brother in 1853. Similar words are used for his Roman impressions in a missive to Charles Ward sent ten years later: '[...] all look as if I had left them yesterday. I see no change any where except on the Pincian Hill [...].'[25]

While Rome was affected by deadly immobility, the majority of the population were carelessly performing their daily trifling activities. With bitter irony, the writer alludes to the political passivity of men and women he watched in the streets:

> Were the men cursing in corners, and the terrified women trying to moderate them? The men were playing the favourite Roman game of 'morra' in corners—the men were smoking and laughing—the men were making love to their sweethearts—the men went out of the way into the mud, at a place where a cardinal's carriage was standing as an obstacle on the drier ground, without a wry look or a savage word in any case. The women, in their Sunday best—the magnificent Roman women of the people—sat gossiping and nursing their children, as composedly as if they lived under the most constitutional monarchy in the world. (511)

25. Letters to Charles Collins (13 November 1853) and to Charles Ward (4 November 1863). *The Letters of Wilkie Collins*, I, respectively 113, 234.

The people lounging around unaware of their own rights are the very subjects that the radicals had failed to involve in their propaganda. The result, in the writer's view, is a widespread apathetic inclination, which favours the Church's domination. As he adds one paragraph later, the 'unchanged attitude of the priests' draws nourishment from 'the unchanged attitude of the people', while political discontent is confined to a 'special class' unable to mobilize the masses (511).

This lucid political analysis is reinforced by two further considerations. First of all, the writer underlines the 'present dearth of commanding ability in the civil and military administration of the Italian Kingdom' (512). His praise of two great men who had been instrumental to unification—Cavour, the cunning politician, and Garibaldi, the idealistic warrior—is combined with the disconcerting awareness of their absence from the new political scene. With the death of Cavour in 1861 and the growing disempowerment of Garibaldi, the Risorgimento was in fact losing crucial forces that were needed to oppose conservative institutions. Although he voices his hopes for the emergence of new fighters and illuminated rulers, the writer realistically poses the problem of a fragmentation of the movement's leadership—a problem that few European liberals were willing to recognize at the time.

Alongside Collins's ability to recognize the problems stemming from the movement's leadership, a second and equally important consideration should be highlighted. The article brings into focus two inbred Italian flaws that contributed to maintain the status quo. Once again, Collins offers a well-documented description of native weaknesses he could observe on the spot, but avoids mentioning other cultural stereotypes. The two defects which, in his opinion, hindered the political and cultural growth of Italians were 'their apparent incapability of believing in truth' and 'their want of moral fibre and nerve in the smaller affairs of life' (512). The former defect, implicitly associated with Machiavellian notions of opportunism and scheming, is a deep-rooted persuasion that no one could simply tell the truth as long as there was 'an object which [a person] *might* gain by telling a lie' (512). The latter failing is exemplified by the image of a man walking along a road 'who, whenever he finds a stone in his path, skirts lazily round it, and leaves it to the traveller behind him, instead of lifting his foot and kicking it, once for all, out of the way' (512).

Two anecdotes are later mentioned to give flesh to these arguments. One of them is a personal experience made by the writer on a railway journey to Rome. While narrating the unacceptable delays of his train due to native indolence and disorganization, he repeatedly contrasts the

anger and impatience of foreigners on board (including himself) with the cheerful indifference of the Italian passengers: 'And what did the free Italians do? They sat talking and smoking in the sweetest of tempers' (513). An emblem of progress and speed for English people, the train is here used effectively to unveil some deficiencies of the 'other' country. Still, the writer traces no simplistic cultural antithesis between foreigners and Italians. In addition to referring to empirical data, he enriches his analysis with a micro-opposition which renders the complexity of the local system. As he explains to his correspondent:

> In Northern Italy, the railroad is excellently managed: in Northern Italy the railroad has taught the people the value of time. Advance through Tuscany, and go on to Rome, and I hardly know which would surprise and disgust you most—the absolute laziness of the official people in working the line, or the absolute submission of the passengers under the most inexcusable and the most unnecessary delays. (512–513)

The reference to the gap in railway services between North and South connotes Italy as a newly-made nation in which different cultures are dramatically forced to coexist.

Such a view confirms the novelty of Collins's critique. By examining Italian contradictions, he aims to represent the cultural *reality* of a heterogenous people, whose habits and aspirations had not yet merged into one national ideal. In spite of its negativity, however, the article points to a way out of the coeval deadlock in the final paragraph. 'A man who honesty tells another man of his faults has some hope in that man' (513) the writer confesses to his interlocutor. His encouraging words are followed by some practical advice for Italian activists, who are invited to deflate their own enthusiasm, pay more attention to reality and replace propaganda with doing: '[...] do the work first, and shout over it afterwards. On the day when Italy has learnt that lesson, you will be too strong for the Pope, and you will be a free people' (514).

Supportive yet down-to-earth, auspicious yet fault-finding, this article shows Collins's search for alternative views of Italian culture and politics. The peculiarity of his approach is most evident if we compare 'The Dead Lock in Italy' with other pieces published in England at the time. It suffices to consider *A Song to Italy*, a poem composed by Swinburne in 1867. While foretelling the liberation of Rome from papal power, the author hails Mazzini as a great leader of the Risorgimento, a prophetic figure that had nurtured Italians with his political propaganda.

The milk of life on death's unnatural brink
Thou gavest them to drink,
The natural milk of freedom; and again
They drank, and they were men,
The wine and honey of freedom and of faith
They drank, and cast off death.[26]

The celebratory tone of the poem eloquently renders Swinburne's idealized view of the 'Italian Question' and its chief ideologue. Its distance from Collins's realistic 'picture from Rome' could not be greater.

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26. *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (eds.) 20 vols. (London: William Heinemann; New York: Gabriel Wells, 1925–1927), II, 315–316.

The Italian Scenes in Anthony Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right*

David Farley-Hills

Anthony Trollope is so pre-eminently the novelist of Victorian England that it is easy to overlook the importance of Italy to the Trollope family and Trollope's intimate knowledge of Italy and Italian society. In 1846 his mother, the irrepressible Fanny Trollope, had persuaded her eldest son Thomas and his wife to settle in Florence and in 1850 she and Thomas's family had bought the Villino Trollope on the Piazza dell'Indipendenza with its formal garden and orange and lemon orchard. Thomas had already been living for some time in Italy and writing on Italian history and soon Anthony and his wife Rose were to join them. Fanny Trollope, Anthony's mother, had visited Italy first in 1841 and with her usual industry had published an account of her voyage. Anthony himself paid several visits to his brother's house in Florence and met there the English and American guests who included Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot and her husband George Lewes, and the American novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, authoress of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Few of Trollope's novels stray from his familiar territory of the British and Irish society of his day, but this exception is one of his finest novels, *He Knew He was Right*

He Knew He was Right has a particularly modern theme, the rights of women. For those who have not read the novel perhaps I should summarise the story, for it is a very long one, originally published in no less than 32 weekly parts in 1868–1869 and then in two volumes, totalling 768 pages in all. The Victorian woman reader, for whom it was primarily written, had the considerable leisure provided by resident housemaids,

cooks and children's nannies, to read in husbandless afternoons and long televisionless evenings. The first volume of Trollope's novel is set mostly in the familiar territory of contemporary Victorian England in which both Trollope himself and most of his readers lived: the England of the prosperous upper middle class. To this world the whole family of Sir Marmaduke Rowley, the governor of the exotic, but not very important Mandarin Islands, arrives in London for their summer holiday. As Sir Marmaduke has eight unmarried daughters, the purpose of the holiday is not merely sightseeing. Let me quote Trollope himself:

> And at the Mandarins, though hospitality is a duty, the gentlemen who ate Sir Rowley's dinner were not exactly the men whom he or Lady Rowley desired to welcome to their bosoms as sons-in-law. Nor when Mr. Trevelyan came that way, desirous of seeing everything in the somewhat indefinite course of his travels, had Emily Rowley, the eldest of the flock, then twenty years of age, seen as yet any Mandariner who exactly came up to her fancy. And as Louis Trevelyan was a remarkably handsome young man, who was well connected, who had been ninth wrangler at Cambridge, who had already published a volume of poems, and who possessed three thousand pounds per year of his own, arising from various perfectly secure investments, he was not forced to sigh long in vain. (I, 2).[1]
>
> ['ninth wrangler at Cambridge' means a student who has obtained a first class degree in mathematics and has been placed ninth in the year's order of merit].

Not only has the desirable Mr Trevelyan proposed and been accepted by Emily as her future husband, but he has also generously invited her sister Nora to live with them once the marriage has been solemnised.

The story of Emily and Louis Trevelyan goes to the heart of one of the great shibboleths of Victorian society: the rights of husbands over their wives. It is no accident that Trollope names his heroine Emily, because it is the name of Iago's wife, who, like her mistress Desdemona, is betrayed by her husband, and Shakespeare's story of the tragic consequences of the breakdown of trust between husband and wife is consciously echoed in the novel. But there are important differences between the two accounts of the unreasonable jealousy of a husband. Othello is essentially a man deceived by someone else, his trusted lieutenant Iago. Trollope internalises this theme to make it a psychological

1. All references are to Anthony Trollope, *He knew He was right*, edited by P.D. Edwards, (University of Queenslands Press, 1974).

study of a man who deceives himself and in so doing challenges one of the key assumptions of Victorian society: that men are psychologically as well as physically the stronger sex and therefore had a right to rule over and over-rule wives—not surprisingly this challenge to fundamental Victorian values was met with considerable hostility among the novel's critics—a hostility from which the novel has never fully recovered.

For the Rowley family Emily's marriage is a social triumph. Although Emily's family are gentry they are not rich and it is important therefore for their daughters to marry well. They have already been disappointed by Emily's sister Norah, who has preferred the clever but poor journalist Hugh Stanbury over the eminently desirable Mr Glascock: 'the heir to a peer, a rich peer, the heir to a very, very old peer' and 'he was in Parliament'. So when Emily accepts Mr Trevelyan's offer of marriage her parents are delighted. For Trevelyan is not only wealthy but he is 'of family', a man widely respected among the rich and famous in British society and as such supremely confident in the civilised values his society prides itself on—he is an English 'gentleman'. But this places a burden upon him, for he has above all to keep up appearances. Almost immediately after the marriage this begins to cause problems—or at least he begins to think it does—and problems soon appear. An old friend of Emily's parents, a highly respected elderly man called Colonel Osborne, feels that as a friend of the family he should keep in touch with Emily and he calls once or twice to pay his respects to the newly wedded lady he has known since she was a baby. Unfortunately Colonel Osborne is an elderly bachelor who has had in his day the reputation of being 'a lady's man'—with all the assumptions that that expression still conveys. This so worries Trevelyan that he feels it his duty to tell his wife not to grant the Colonel access to his home:

> He has said it with a flashing eye and an angry tone, and though she had seen the eye flash before, and was familiar with the angry tone, she had never before felt herself to be insulted by her husband. As soon as the word had been spoken Trevelyan had left the room and had gone down among his books. But when he was alone he knew that he had insulted his wife [...]. As he walked to and fro among his books down-stairs, he almost thought he ought to beg his wife's pardon. He knew his wife well enough to be sure that she would not forgive him unless he did so. He would do so, he thought, but not exactly now. (I, 7–8).

The truth is that unlike Othello, Trevelyan is a weak man, and cannot face up to a confession of weakness. He is caught between the need for

the Victorian male to show superiority and the realisation that his wife is psychologically stronger than he is and this begins a psychological breakdown which eventually takes him to the point of madness. So when the Colonel pays his next visit to his wife he is paralysed between confronting him and forbidding his entry and the realisation that to do so would show mistrust of his wife, in effect insulting her. The situation becomes a psychological dilemma he cannot resolve and when he learns accidentally at his club that the Colonel has been pulling strings to get Emily's father back to London he suspects (totally falsely) that his wife has been conniving with the Colonel. By the time a son is born to them the psychological tension has become so acute that trust has almost completely broken down between husband and wife and he decides that they must live apart. He arranges that she should take herself and her baby to Devon away from the temptations of London life. When she is settled with her son and her sister Nora in a rented house in Devon, the Colonel decides to pay her an uninvited visit, and when she informs her husband of this, Trevelyan loses all self control. He employs a seedy ex-policeman to spy on them and of course the policeman needs to feed him with more suspicion in order to keep his employment. Matters get so bad that Trevelyan decides Emily is no longer a fit mother for his son and arranges his spy to kidnap the boy and take him abroad. And this is where Italy comes into the story.

For Trevelyan decides to take his young son to a Tuscan farmhouse he has hired for his purpose. As I remarked earlier, one of the reasons for choosing Tuscany is that for Trollope it was familiar territory. The Villino Trollope in Florence had become an important cultural centre for English-speaking travellers and for the British Diplomats in Italy—hence the detailed knowledge Anthony Trollope shows of these expatriates in his novel. For Trollope was composing his story during that period between 1865 and 1870 when Florence had briefly become the capital of Italy and its cosmopolitan society is the ideal world for contrasting the brilliance of fashionable society with the arid misery that Trevelyan has brought upon himself by his obstinate stupidity. Trollope uses his knowledge of Florence and its environs in a series of subtle juxtapositions between the lively world of the Florentine expatriates and the desolation of the Tuscan farmhouse in which Trevelyan hides his son. There is nothing illegal incidentally about Trevelyan's behaviour because the Victorian father was thought to have preferential rights over his son's upbringing, but Trollope brilliantly uses the parched Tuscan landscape at the height of its summer heat as a contrast with the lively, bustling world of the Anglo-

Tuscan intelligentsia. The parched landscape in fact comes to stand for both the aridity of Trevelyan's life and the deprivation it inflicts on his son, both of which are powerfully invoked. The juxtaposition of the complex comedy of manners represented in this cosmopolitan world is brilliantly contrasted with the aridity of the Tuscan landscape in which Trevelyan has stupidly and cruelly exiled himself and his young son.

In Florence, we have a comedy of manners, where elegance and nuance are matched with opulence and comfort. Trollope's model is again Shakespeare in that comedy is used to contrast with and so heighten the tragedy of Trevelyan's stupidity. And in Florence we again meet up with the highly eligible Mr Glascock who having failed to win Norah Rowley has turned his attentions on to Caroline Spalding, daughter of the rich American ambassador in Florence. Trollope makes a great deal of comic play of the dilemma this creates for the Americans who are torn between their egalitarian principles and the prospect of a splendid marriage into a titled English family, a comedy heightened by the fact that Cary has an American Poetess as her mentor known as 'the American Browning', who is very eloquent on the subjects of American Democracy and European Decadence. This creates a dilemma for poor Carey especially as Mr Glascock proves a rather timid suitor, at least by American standards:

> She had felt the charm of his manner, his education and his gentleness; and had told herself that with all the love for her own country, she would willingly become an Englishwoman for the sake of being that man's wife. But nevertheless the warnings of her great friend, the poetess, had not been thrown away upon her. She would put away from herself as far as she could any desire to become lady Peterborough. There should be no bias in the man's favour on that score. The tinkling cymbal and the sounding brass should be nothing to her. But yet—yet what a chance was there here for her? 'They are dishonest and rotten at the core' said Miss Petrie, trying to make her friend understand that a free American should under no circumstances place trust in an English aristocrat. 'Their country, Carry, is a game played out, while we are still breasting the hill with our young lungs full of air.' (II, 41)

Of course the Honourable Mr Glasscock does propose and is duly accepted in spite of the poetess's dire warning.

But this comedy of manners, in true Shakespearean fashion, is merely one essential element of the 'chiaro oscuro', that makes the tragedy of Trevelyan's obsessions all the darker, for, not far away in the Tuscan

Hills, Trevelyan's nightmare existence is playing itself out. There are occasional subtle hints by which Trollope relates his themes. At one point in the polite conversation between the American Ambassador, himself, and Glascock, for instance, the Ambassador, rather desperate to find a topic of conversation to open with the taciturn Englishman, expresses his admiration for the English philosopher John Stuart Mill for his paper *The Subjection of Women* which, of course, has a direct relevance to Trollope's broader theme in the novel.

While all this is going on in Florentine High Society, Trevelyan, in London, has so persuaded himself that his wife is having an affair with the aged colonel that he arranges to have his son snatched from a London cab in which mother and son are travelling to meet up with her parents. Both Emily and her father appeal to a magistrate to have the boy returned but are told that they have no redress against the father, who has absolute rights over the care of his son. Trevelyan informs his wife by letter:

> Our child is safe with me and will remain so. If you care to obtain legal advice you will find that I as his father have a right to keep him under my protection. I shall do so; but will allow you to see him as soon as I shall have received a full guarantee that you have no idea of withdrawing him from my charge. (II, 95)

He also requires a written guarantee that she will have no further contact with the elderly Colonel and she of course refuses to comply with these absurd conditions. He begins to suspect (quite unjustifiably) that his wife is plotting to have her son returned to her by force and starts to make arrangements to take him aboard—choosing Italy as his destination, and we soon find he has set up house in a farmhouse in the Tuscan hills near Siena. As soon as Sir Marmaduke and lady Rowley hear of this, they use their Foreign Office connections to try to make contact and obtain the help of Mr Glascock as the Rowleys set off for Italy to seek the recalcitrant son-in-law.

Glascock agrees to help Sir Marmaduke find Trevelyan, and as they have heard he is living near Siena, they go to that city to seek him out and are informed by the police there that he is living in a remote farmhouse called Casalunga seven miles from the town. After a journey in the blistering heat (it is at the end of May) they arrive to find a large house isolated and seemingly desolate at the top of a hill:

> On this side of the house the tilled ground either ploughed or dug with the spade, came up to the very windows. There was hardly even a particle of

> glass to be seen. A short way down the hill there were rows of olive trees, standing in prim order and at regular distances from which hung the vines [...]. Olives and vines have pretty names, and call up associations of landscape beauty. But here they were in no way beautiful. The earth beneath them was turned up, and brown, and arid, so there was not a blade of glass to be seen. On some furrows the maze or Indian corn was sprouting, and there were patches of growth of other kinds,—each patch closely marked by its own straight lines; and there were narrow paths so constructed as to take as little room as possible. But all that had been done had been done for economy, and nothing for beauty [...]. The sun was blazing fiercely hot, hotter on this side, Sir Marmaduke thought, even than on the other; and there was not a wavelet of cloud in the sky. A balcony ran the whole length of the house and under this Sir Marmaduke took shelter at once, leaning with his back to the wall: 'There is not a soul here at all' said he [...]. I never saw such a place for an Englishman to come and live in before.' As he spoke the door of the room was opened, and there was Trevelyan standing before them, looking at them through the window. He wore an old red English dressing-gown, which came down his feet, and a small braided Italian cap on his head. His beard had been allowed to grow, and he had neither collar nor cravat. His trousers were unbraced, and he shuffled in with a pair of slippers, which would hardly cling on his feet. He was paler and still thinner than when he had been visited at Willesden, and his eyes seemed to be larger, and shone almost with a brighter brilliancy. (II, 221–222)

Trevelyan is reluctant to open the door, but when he does he tells his father-in-law he does not want visitors. Sir Marmaduke tells him his wife is in Florence to which he replies: 'I have come here to be free from her'. (II, 223)

> 'Your wife is free of all fault, Trevelyan', said Mr Glascock. (II, 223)

To which Trevelyan replies:

> 'Any woman can say as much as that; and all women do say it. Yet—what are they worth?' (II, 223)

Trevelyan's words get wilder and wilder, and the quarrel intensifies; he refuses to give his father-in-law permission to see his child, but is willing to let Glascock into the house who finds the boy 'silent, and very melancholy, but clean and apparently well.' Trevelyan tells Glascock he will neither return to England nor allow his son to go back to his mother,

and asked why, he says because he fears his wife would have him certified insane.

Emily has of course accompanied her parents to Florence and Trevelyan has agreed that she should be allowed to pay him and her son a visit so long as she is unaccompanied. Accordingly three days after Sir Marmaduke has returned, Emily Trevelyan arrives at Casalunga. Trevelyan's maid-servant answers the door and she is invited in and waits for her husband's appearance:

> In a few minutes the door was opened, and her husband was with her, bringing the boy in his hand. He had dressed himself with some care; but it may be doubted whether the garments which he wore did not make him appear thinner and more haggard than he had looked to be in his old dressing-gown. He had not shaved himself, but his long hair was brushed back from his forehead, after a fashion quaint and very foreign to his former ideas of dress. His wife had not expected that her child would come to her—had thought that some entreaties would be necessary, some obedience perhaps exacted from her before she would be allowed to see him; and now her heart was softened and she was grateful to her husband. But she could not speak to him until she had had the boy in her arms. She tore off her bonnet, and then clinging to the child, covered him with kisses. 'Louey, my darling! Louey, you remember mamma?' The child pressed himself close to his mother's bosom, but spoke never a word. He was cowed and overcome, not only by the incidents of the moment, but by the terrible melancholy of his whole life. (II, 228)

She turns to her husband in gratitude and embraces him asking 'Why do you treat me with such cruelty?' and then asks him 'Louis do you live me?' To which he replies 'Yes, I love you. But I am afraid of you.' Then follows an intervention by Trollope himself that seems to me not only to anticipate Freud a generation later, but reveals depths of understanding beyond the range of any other Victorian novelist:

> He shook his head, and began to think,—while she still clung to him. He was quite sure that her father and mother had intended to bring a mad doctor down upon him, and he knew his wife was in her mother's hands. Should he yield to her now—should he make her any promise—might not the result be that he would be shut up in dark rooms, robbed of his liberty, robbed of what he loved better than his liberty—his power as a man. She would thus get the better of him and take the child, and the world would thus get the better of him and take the child, and the world would say that

> in this contest between him and her he had been the sinning one, and she the one against whom the sin had been done [...]. Let it once be conceded to him from all sides that he had been right, and then she might do with him almost what she willed. (II, p. 22)

And so in his weakness he cannot concede anything to her. Emily is forced therefore to leave her son at Casalunga and only when Sir Marmaduke persuades Mr Glascock to intervene does Trevelyan finally yield and agree that his son should go back to his mother. Glascock finds him in a state of near collapse:

> Eighteen months ago he had been a strong walker and the snow-bound paths of Swiss mountains had been a joy to him. He paused as he was slowly dragging himself on and looked up at the wretched desolate abode which he called his home. Its dreariness was so odious to him that he was half-minded to lay himself down where he was, and let the night air come upon him and do its worst. In such case, however, some Italian doctor would be sent down who would say that he was mad. Above all, and to the last, he must save himself from that degradation. (II, 269).

So at last he yields, but returns to Britain as a broken and dying man. Edition used: Anthony Trollope, *He knew He was Right*, edited by P.D. Edwards.

University of Wales

Gendering Madness: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* re-visited by Verdi

Maria Frendo

> ... Come, you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
> Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> Th' effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry 'Hold, hold!'
>
> [I. v, 38–52]

The raving Orlandos and the antics of the various Cardenios, so popular in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century opera, disappear almost completely at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Now, operatic mad scenes usually fall into three categories—love-madness, guilt-madness, and madness after poisoning—of which love-madness is by far the most common, almost exclusively experienced by women. Intermittent flashes of madness for opera's men are not infrequent, but full-blown mad scenes for them are rare in nineteenth-century opera, and where they do occur, the madness tends to be guilt-induced, as in Auber's *La Muette de Portici* (1828) and Verdi's *Nabucco* (1842). The obvious inference, therefore,

would be that opera engages in a displacement onto women of the perilous potential inherent in its exploration of emotional extremes. In other words, while early nineteenth-century opera has both its men and its women indulge in passions that carry them dangerously close to the precipice of madness, those whom it finally plunges irremediably into the abyss are most likely to be women.[1]

If early nineteenth-century opera constructs the madwoman as passive and powerless, to do so it paradoxically needs to draw on a dazzling display of powerful female activity. The projection of madness onto the female body is intricately bound up with the ways in which women, with their dualistic systems of language and representation, are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind. Operatic madness is an audicle (to coin a term), as much as it is a spectacle, and in opera's mad scenes women are not situated on the side of silence at all. Rather, they are situated on the side of powerful vocal resonance. What is more, they are frequently even situated on the side of the most impressive, masterful, technically demanding vocal artistry that the period knows so well. With early nineteenth-century opera still heavily drawing on vocal improvisation, artistry goes beyond the mere reproduction of a text written by a male composer. The most famous, extraordinarily virtuoso cadenza of Donizetti's mad Lucia is probably created by the singer Teresa Brambilla in the 1850s. In exhibiting madwomen who have lost control, opera paradoxically also displays the artistic proficiency of female performers who are very much in control. Sopranos do have an irrepressible tendency to make of brinkmanship a fine art.

Madness made Musical

One of the questions that springs to mind here is: how are the excesses of madness translated into the operatic medium? Ironically, the most musical device of the spoken theatre is not readily available for opera, namely, song as reason's Other. The alliance between song and dementia is already

1. The 'mad woman in the attic' syndrome becomes a byword for female insanity in the late Romantic and early Victorian novel, with prominent examples in the works of Austen, Mary Shelley, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, and Emily Dickinson. Perhaps the most notorious of them all is Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. A landmark study of the concept was carried out by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their seminal work *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000).

prefigured in the *commedia dell'arte*, as in the case of the eponymous madwoman in a 1569 performance of *La pazzia di Isabella* who reportedly slips into foreign languages, imitates the accents of her fellow players, and sings. Here, then, music is bound up in a threefold instability of discourse, transgressing both boundaries of self and conventions of verbal signification. With regard to Ophelia's songs, Shakespeareans have too often concentrated on the verbal and visual signs of both her distraction and her loss of sexual inhibition manifested in her fragmented speech, the libidinous lyrics, and the loosened hair, but have tended to underestimate the centrality of the act of singing itself. Yet, in opera we move into a representational mode that crucially depends on musical organisation, nearly always and for nearly everyone. Actually, when song functions *as song* in opera, composers tend to emphasise rather than diminish its structural rationality to mark it as clearly different from the habitual mode of communication through singing. The judicious placement of singing-as-song as opposed to singing-as-speech can be effectively employed to highlight the theatricality of operatic madness and to reduce rather than heighten emotional audience involvement.

What, then, are the alternatives? The dramaturgical context could, of course, be sufficient by itself: the task might be left to the words alone or the visual inscription of madness onto the body. Yet, how does the musical language of nineteenth-century opera distinguish madness from sanity? The frequent dissociation from external sensory impressions is almost inevitably bound up with a retreat into an interior space fraught with memories and hallucination. Perhaps the most powerful musical evocation of memories are recurring themes, and early nineteenth-century mad scenes draw particularly heavy on such gestures, at a time when they are still comparatively infrequent in opera. Like recurring themes in the form of *leitmotifs*, most of the hallucinatory or semi-hallucinatory musico-dramatic devices are amassed in the more freely-structured recitative sections that lend themselves particularly well to compositional strategies of breaking up the vocal line with alterations of feverish agitation and unearthly calm, sudden changes of tempo, unforeseen changes of key and mode, unaccompanied singing, with the orchestra serving merely as intermittent punctuation. If the recitative sections are particularly suited to incoherence and discontinuity—not of but within the formal layout—the switch to the comparative regularity of the aria proper may occasionally signal the restoration of sanity, which is what clearly happens in the mad Cathérine's *cabaletta* in Meyerbeer's . . . *toile du Nord* (1854). More frequently, the

switch can be read as an even further progression into madness, the final severance of a formerly tenuous link with the external world and the retreat into the pseudo-safety of an imaginary fairyland.[2] In such instances, what endows the musical discourse with connotations of insanity is not discontinuity but the inappropriateness of a seemingly coherent musical language to the dramaturgical context. Opera, after all, is organised by composite signs, and the exploitation of clashes between individual semiotic components can be turned to a variety of purposes, including the depiction of madness. Tobias Klein simultaneously hits upon that strategy and fails to realise its significance when he points out that the mad Lucia's *cabaletta* and that of the Duca in the second act of *Rigoletto* (1851) have more structural similarities than their place in the plot would lead us to expect.[3] That is just the point. The exuberant setting is dramatically justified for the lecherous Duca, who has just realised that the woman he has been lusting after is finally in the palace, but it is curiously inappropriate to the morbidity of Lucia's lyrics, to her previous killing of Arturo, to the terror of the observers. As Ellend Rosand expresses it, the medium of opera itself can be said to be generically mad, for its double language provides a perfect model for the splitting or fragmentation of character.[4] The opposition between text and music naturally embodies the conflicting forces that disturb or undermine equilibrium.

Framing Lady Macbeth

Through its sheer duration and through the wealth of material that is cut to make room for it, Donizetti accords the madness of his Lucia a dramaturgical prominence entirely unprecedented in the novel. The madness of Lady Macbeth is similarly extended in relation to its source. It occupies a central position in the final Act of the opera, of which it

2. Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* is a case in point.
3. T. Klein, 'Il dolce suono', in *Gender Studies and Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Regensburg: Con Brio, 1998). Thus, both scenes rely on *settenari*, in both cases a prominent rhythmical figure in the orchestra is repeated throughout the strophe (a waltzing figure for Lucia, triplets for the Duca). Both shift the tonal centre to a key a minor third apart for a few bars (the submediant for Lucia, the mediant for the Duca), the melodic lines of both reach a climax at suitably stratospheric heights at the end of the strophe.
4. In *I Promessi Sposi*, Manzoni employs a similar strategy within a literary evocation of music. After the lengthy, grim description of plague-ridden Milan, it is not the fragmentation and irregularity of song that marks madness, but the inappropriateness of a happy and entirely regular song to its desolate surroundings [34: 731].

takes up about a third, while only about one eighth of Shakespeare's corresponding passages (taken from the cauldron scene, the last Shakespearean episode in Verdi's penultimate Act) are allotted to his sleepwalking scene. The *Gran Scena del Sonnambulismo* is clearly one of the high points of the opera and Verdi's letters tell us that he looked on it as such.

In the play, at this point, Lady Macbeth suddenly shifts into prose. Shakespeare uses prose for a number of dramatic purposes, and madness or near-madness is one of them.[5] What is more, the text of Shakespeare's somnambulist derives much of its dramaturgical effectiveness from the freely associative thought processes by which it enacts mental instability. Take, for instance:

> Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One, two. Why then 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie, a soldier and afeard? What need we fear? Who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? [*Doctor*: Do you mark that?] The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that. You mar all with this starting.[6]

If the more freely-structured recitative sections are particularly well suited to the musical expression of derangement, it comes as no surprise that they are, in such contexts, often greatly extended in length. Such extension is precisely what we would expect Maffei[7] and Verdi to have resorted to here. Which text could be more obviously amenable than this one to 'alterations of feverish agitation and unearthly calm', to 'sudden changes of tempo', to 'the appearance from nowhere, as thoughts gather, crystallise and dissolve in the mind', to 'unforeseen changes of key and mode', to stretches of 'unaccompanied singing, with the orchestra serving merely as intermittent punctuation?' The Shakespearean text almost cries out aloud to be set as recitative and, what is more, to be set as a highly unbalanced, fragmented, volatile one.

However, it is not. Once Verdi's Lady Macbeth begins to sing, the libretto switches into regular *ottonari*, a metre so common and standardised

5. cf. *Othello* IV. i, 35–43.
6. *Macbeth* V. i, 30–38.
7. One of Verdi's letters (to T. Ricordi, 11 April 1857) tell us that Maffei, not Piave, was responsible for the libretto's definitive version of the sleepwalking scene (as well as for the witches' chorus in Act Three and for some minor alterations).

in nineteenth-century Italian opera libretti that Arrigo Boito would, a few decades later, condemn it as the most tedious asset in the entire metrical repertoire. In fact, Maffei took care to arrange even the doctor's and the maid's interjections in such a way as to be immaculately integrated into the overall metrical order. Furthermore, the tight structure is reinforced by a system of interlocking rhymes, operating both within and between quatrains.

Lady:	Una macchia, è qui tuttora.	*a*
	Via, ti dico, o maledetta!	*b*
	Una . . . due . . . gli è questa l'ora!	*a*
	Tremi tu? No osi entrar?	*c*
	Un guerrier così codardo?	*d*
	Oh, vergogna! . . . Orsù, t'affretta!	*b*
	Chi poteva in quel vegliardo	*d*
	Tanto sangue immaginar?	*c*
Medico:	Che parlò	
Lady:	Di Fiffe il Sire	*e*
	Sposo e padre or or non era?	*f*
	Che n'avenne? . . .	
	E mai pulire	*e*
	Queste mani io non saprò?	*g*
Dama e Medico:	Oh terror!	
Lady:	Di sangue umano	*h*
	Sa quì sempre. . . . Arabia intera	*f*
	Rimondar sÏ piccol mano	*h*
	Co' suoi balsami non può	*g*
	Oimè!	
Medico:	Geme?	
Lady:	I panni indossa	*i*
	Della notte. . . . Or via, ti sbratta! . . .	*j*
	Banco è spento, e dalla fossa	*i*
	Chi morì non surse ancor.	*k*
Medico:	Questo ancor? . . .	
Lady:	A letto, a letto . . .	*l*
	Sfar non puoi la cosa fatta . . .	*j*
	Batte alcuno! . . . Andiam, Macbetto,	*l*
	Non t'accusi il tuo pallor!	*k*
Dama e Medico:	Ah, die lei pietà, Signor!	*k*

Four decades later, Verdi would reject the first, metrically orderly version of Jago's 'Credo' and settle only for what Boito calls a 'broken and asymmetrical metre.' Here, Verdi does not only accept the text, but reinforces the aria-style set-up and the strophic division in more than one

way. Musical rests and textual pauses coincide; rhymes are clearly audible; notable changes in the orchestral texture mark the beginning of each stanza; melodic climaxes, their sequence also arranged climactically, followed by cadential closure mark their ends, harmonically the three stanzas are worked into a design of modified symmetry.[8] Also, some of the characteristic ingredients of the early eighteenth-century mad scene are conspicuous only by their absence. There are no full-fledged recurring themes, although the Shakespearean text would have provided ample opportunity for them. There is very little melisma in the whole scene and certainly none of the extravagant coloratura effusions for which a number of the best-known contemporary mad scenes are famous. In view of all this, Jonas Barish has maintained that Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene is no mad scene at all. Verdi, he writes, 'makes no attempt to equate somnambulism with madness. He shuns the devices of musical discontinuity that correspond to the discontinuity of Shakespeare's prose.'[9] This, however, is a minority position. Others have pointed to the obsessive character both of the recurring cor anglais lament and the orchestral figure accompanying the Lady at her first words and beyond, the level of dissonance untypical of the period, the seemingly endless (not in the Wagnerian sense) vocal line that, most unusual for an aria at the time, heavily relies on curiously short-breathed, non-melodic phrases and almost completely dispenses with melodic repetition, finally the volatility of the specified vocal colouring. It is true that against that background of musical order a combination of obsessively repeated orchestral figures and an often oddly un-aria-like vocal line is played out. The co-existence of these two contradictory tendencies—metrical and musical regularity on the one hand, melodic oddity on the other—has occasioned wildly different appraisals of the whole piece. Yet, one is inclined to argue that the scene derives its power not from the supremacy of either musical regularity or musical transgressiveness, but from the tension between them. From the frame-excess-perspective, that tension does not come as much of a surprise. A disconcertingly odd musical rhetoric is placed inside the frame, but the frame's rationality as such remains ever present. What is being suggested, then, is that what Kimbell calls 'Verdi's inability to match the

8. Two 18-bar stanzas, the first in Db Major, the second modulating to E Major (notated enharmonically as Fb Major) followed by a 9-bar stanza modulating back to Db Major and a 16-bar coda in that key. Since this is not a bipartite aria, there is neither a *tempo di mezzo* nor a *cabaletta.*

9. Barish, J., *Madness, Hallucination, and Sleepwalking* (Itacha: Rosen & Porter, 1992), 114.

disconnected, prosaic character of Lady Macbeth's words'[10] is not so much a sign of technical incompetence, to be explained away as an awkward sign of compositional immaturity or lack of courage, but a dramaturgically significant factor.

However, this is not the whole story. In many operatic mad scenes of the early nineteenth century, aestheticisation and the presence of visible and audible representatives of reason play no less an important role than formal stability in shielding the audience from contagion. Yet, do they in Verdi's *Macbeth*? It is by now almost a commonplace of Verdi criticism to stress the revolutionary extent to which both the Act One duet between Lord and Lady Macbeth (what may be called the opera's first mad scene) and the sleepwalking scene emphasise declamatory singing, de-privilege *bel canto*, and subordinate vocal beauty to dramaturgical expressiveness. In the sleepwalking scene, as in the Act One duet, Verdi instructs his singers that everything is to be 'said [not sung] *sotto voce* and in such a way as to arouse terror and pity',[11] fully supporting Aristotle's claim for the arousal of these states of mind in the theory of tragedy as expressed in his *Poetics*.

It seems that while the sleepwalking scene retains some of its operatic context's characteristic dialectic of transgression and control, to a significant extent it also weakens the latter. Viewing the scene from the perspective of the entire opera's dramaturgy, however, complicates its reading even further. Lady Macbeth is in part dramaturgically framed by her husband, and the opera thereby inverts an earlier opposition, that both the initial opposition and its inversion are emphasised more forcefully than in the play, and that the restoration of gender categories that the inversion implies is only partial.

Hearing Voices

Macbeth's earlier dagger monologue in some respects functions as a dramaturgical complement to the sleepwalking scene. This is even more true of the opening recitative of the *Gran Scene e Duetto* in the opera's first Act. In the Shakespearean monologue, the blank verse Macbeth is given at this point suggests at least a modicum of sanity and contrasts with the prose muttering of his somnambulistic wife much later. In the libretto, the contrast

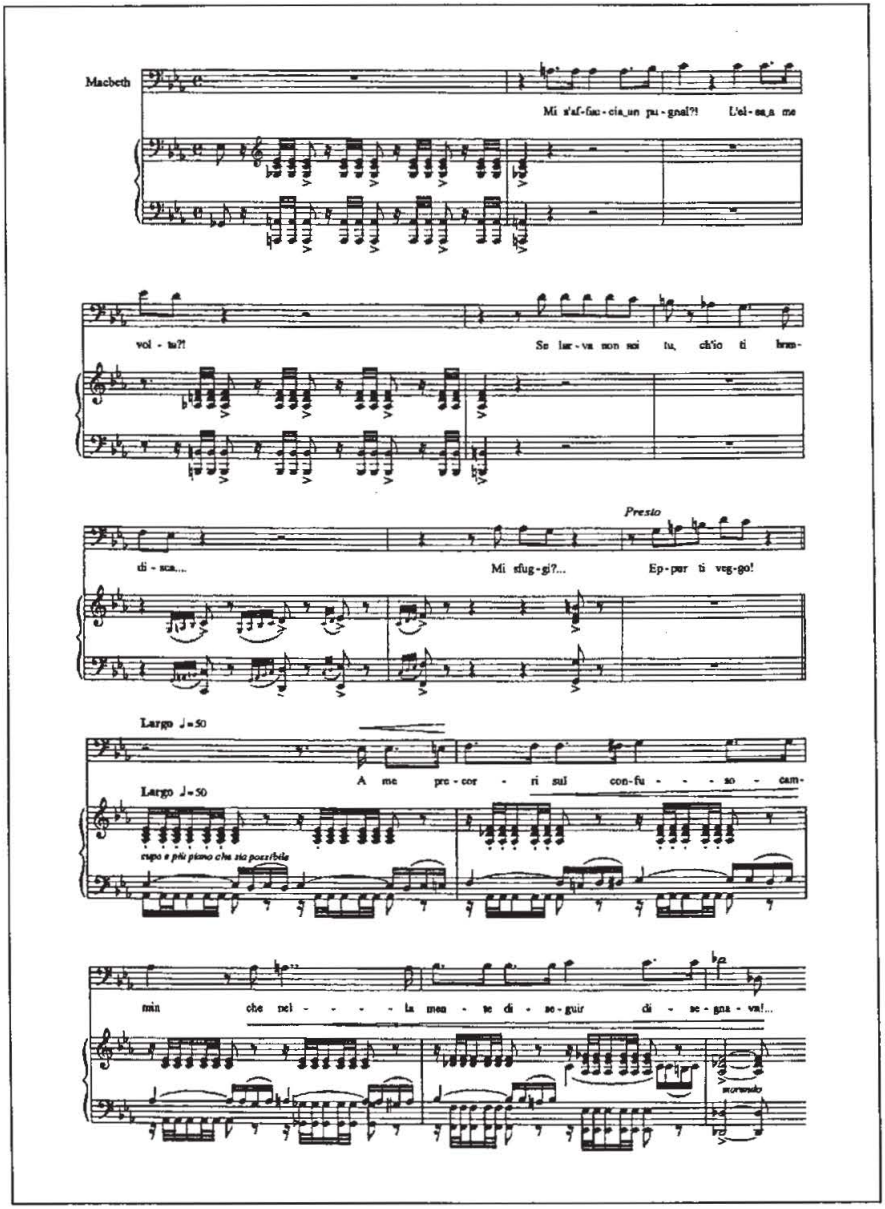
10. Kimbell, D., *Verdi in the Age of Italian Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 23.

11. 'Detto sotto voce ed in modo da incutere terrore e pietà.'

is precisely the other way round: Macbeth's text is translated into flexible, recitative-style metres, and Verdi makes liberal use of his freedom to conjure up by musical means a seriously unbalanced mind. This is accomplished through the appearance and disappearance of rhythmic figures, through jagged, unconnected vocal lines, through the alternation of frenzied turbulence and oases of sudden calm, through unpredictable shifts of key, through orchestral colour that is erratically dissembled and reassembled in ever-new configurations. Through music's own particular brand of indeterminacy it can construct an immensely nuanced, immensely flexible sonorous representation of the intangible dagger that intensifies rather than detracts the audience's imagination. Simultaneously, with opera using music as a habitual mode of dramatic communication, what is being represented will remain confusingly opaque. In a different dramaturgical context and to a different text, most of the orchestral devices in the dagger recitative could, at least initially, be read relatively straightforwardly as vaguely connoting mental agitation. However, in the present context, one of the possible readings that the scene allows for is that of a musically enacted dialogue between the dagger and Macbeth. The means are as effective as they are simple. The dagger suddenly and unexpectedly hammers itself into Macbeth's awareness with a stabbing regularity. As he doubts its existence, it emphatically reasserts its design.

It frustrates Macbeth's attempt to gain harmonic as well as physical and mental control; the move is recognised by Macbeth. The dagger teases him by seemingly leading him back to security only to jump away immediately after. It lulls him into pseudo-safety, before slyly and stealthily leading him to the premeditated destination. Macbeth, in other words, hears the dagger as much as he sees it.

Of course, the orchestral utterances in the recitative could just as well be read as musical embodiments of Macbeth's horrified reactions to the vision rather than embodiments of the vision itself. The impossibility to decide between these twin options has an interesting consequence. The audience does not only eavesdrop on but, to an extent, participates in Macbeth's uncertainty about the dagger's ontological status. In opera, after all, music is being used to represent external as well as psychological phenomena, an actual storm or a storm of passions, an actual battle or a mental one within a character's musically constructed interiority. There is an aural vision of music animated by multiple, decentred voices localised in several invisible bodies. These voices and bodies are not those of the specific singers and instrumentalists, nor are they 'voices' in the technical-musicological sense of the individual contrapuntal line within

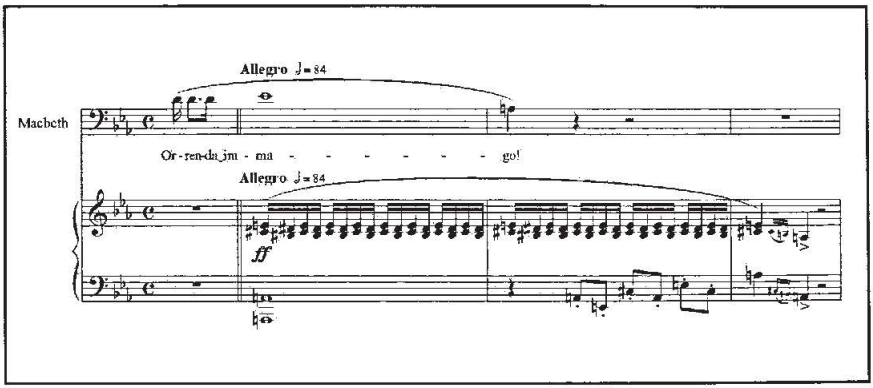

Macbeth
Mi s'af-fac-cia un pu-gnal?! L'el-sa_a me
vol - ta?! Se lar-va non sei tu, ch'io ti tras-
Presto
di - sca... Mi sfug-gi?... Ep-pur ti veg-go!
Largo ♩=50
A me pre-cor - ri sul con-fu - - - so - cam-
Largo ♩=50
cupo e più piano che sia possibile
min che nel - - - - la mea - te di - se-guir di - se-gna - va!...
morendo

a polyphonic structure, nor are they derived from concepts of 'voice' bound up with metaphysical fiction about a stable, autonomous and unified subject. What the aural vision does propose is an interpretation of music shaped by prosopopoeia, the rhetorical figure that grants human presence to non-human objects or phenomena, and one that traditionally entails a strongly visual fantasy in which one imagines faces and eyes upon non-human forms. By speaking of music's 'voices' one re-construes the trope in an auralised form, as it were, in which imagining human faces or bodies means figuring forth sounds from those faces, lips, and throats.

What the inherent ambiguity of opera's voices implies for Macbeth's encounter with the dagger is that the recitative can simultaneously embody the vision in acoustic resonance and exploit the audience's uncertainty about what it is that is being embodied: a voice internal or a voice external to Macbeth; 'but a dagger of the mind', an object of Macbeth's feverish fantasy, or an actual dramatic subject endowed with symbolic corporeality through sound, independent and capable of interacting with Macbeth?[12] The situation seems less ambiguous with Macbeth's sudden outburst 'Orrendo imago!' Taken by itself, and in view (or hearing) of what has come before, the hectic minor second *tremolo* on the strings, underscored by timpani, horns, and a selection of woodwind, could be read as an evocation of the dagger itself, dancing maddeningly before Macbeth's eyes: a voice external. However, the simultaneity of the harmonic rupture (from Db major to harmonically distant A major) in the orchestra and the vocal line would appear to mark the orchestral utterance as a voice internal to Macbeth, an audible mirror image of his horror.

Therefore, one may ask, are the orchestral voices in this recitative retrospectively revealed to have been voices of Macbeth all along, or are they shifting signifiers, initially depicting a voice external and relocated into the stage figure's musical interiority only a few bars later? What all this amounts to is an exercise in audience mystification, if only subliminally. Macbeth and the audience partially fuse. Are their ears made 'fool o'th'other senses or else worth all the rest?' To the extent that the audience participates in Macbeth's hallucinatory uncertainty, what they encounter is almost the opposite of a protective frame. So, who does frame Macbeth's derangement? There are no onstage mediators, there is

12. Here, the dagger turns into a partner, and achieves a quasi-substantial independence. One could also argue that part of this scene's fascination lies in the audience's uncertainty about the precise nature and extent of the uncanny independence it grants to its representation of the dagger.



no chorus, and there is no orchestral voice of unambiguous reason, either. Perhaps he frames himself: 'Ma nulla esiste ancora . . . il sol cruento/Mio pensier le dà forma, e come vera/Mi presenta allo sguardo una chimera' culminates in a tonally secure, albeit modally ambiguous, string-supported cadence.[13] In the speech that follows, does the aspiring murderer talk himself into the temporary madness he has briefly pulled himself away from?

> Now o'er the one half-world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtained sleep Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate off'rings, and withered murder,
> Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
> Hear not my steps. . . .
>
> [II. i, 49–57]

13. At the corresponding point in Shakespeare's text [II. i, 44–47] Edwin Forrest laughed in relief, Edmund Kean returned to tranquillity, and Tommaso Salvini, one of the most celebrated Macbeths in the Italian spoken theatre in the later nineteenth century, gave the appearance of suddenly awakening from a dream, rubbed his eyes and made a gesture of casting the illusion away. Other actors have played a Macbeth who struggles with hallucination throughout.

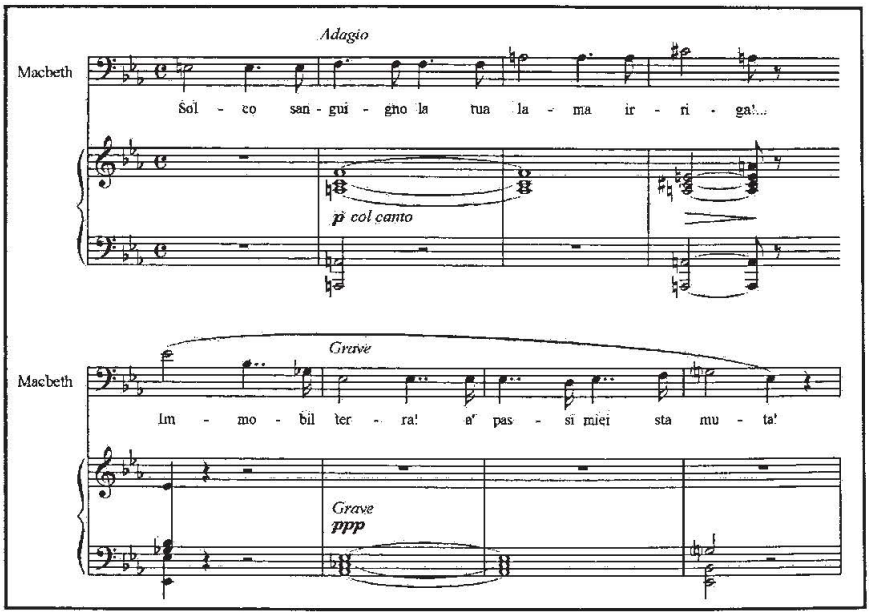
Sulla metà del mondo
Or morte è la natura; or l'assassino
Come fantasma per l'ombra si striscia,
Or consuman le streghe i lor misteri.
Immobil terra! A' passi miei sta muta.

[I. ii, 157]

In the opera, whether Macbeth ultimately succeeds in wrenching himself from his hallucinatory bout is, musically speaking, ambiguous. Whereas in Ex. 1 the clarinet/bassoon giving voice to a disembodied dagger slowly and irresistibly guide Macbeth towards his destination, it is now a combination of first clarinet and cor anglais that intones a similar lead-in to Macbeth's suitably mesmerised 'Sulla metà del mondo/Or morta è la natura; or l'assassino/Come fantasma per l'ombre si striscia.' One can justly point to the melodic analogies between the two extracts of Ex. 3, but one is concerned with their contribution to the scene's structural unity only, rather than their dramaturgical function. Yet, surely it is noteworthy that the former phrase is taken from a context where Macbeth is clearly in the grip of the hallucinatory dagger and the latter occurs after he has, by a violent effort of will, sought to shake the vision off. The attempt, it would seem, is not particularly successful.

If the success of Macbeth's attempt at framing himself is questionable, is there a more effective frame? Directly upon the first extract of Ex. 3, a bell is rung by Lady Macbeth. The bell is, of course, Shakespearean, but in the sound world of opera, it takes on an additional significance. It is an orchestral gesture that signals or, perhaps, precipitates, the beginning of Macbeth's hallucination; it is yet another non-vocal acoustic phenomenon that snaps him out of his musings. The death figures and the orchestral turbulence are re-invigorated, but their meanings seem to change, as Macbeth's 'Non udirlo, Duncano!' leads to an emphatic, confident, vocal line, marked *a voce spiegata* for the first time in the scene and culminating in secure cadential closure: 'È squillo eterno che nel cielo ti chiamo o nell' inferno!' These are no longer voices that threaten Macbeth; these are voices that threaten Duncan. However, if the bell frames Macbeth's semi-dementia and launches the murder, then through it Lady Macbeth, the ringer of the bell, ultimately does, as play and opera make equally explicit.

Thus far, the libretto has, from the beginning of the dagger monologue (dialogue?) onwards, stayed extraordinarily close to Shakespeare's



text, much closer than elsewhere. That being so, the few alterations that do exist may be particularly revealing. 'That which hath made them drunk, hath made me bold' are Lady Macbeth's first words on entering the scene in the play [II. ii, 1]. The line's lurking non-definition (what is 'That?') lingers on and frightens even after the audience realises Lady Macbeth refers both to the grooms' drugged drinks and to her own inebriated excitement. Whether Lady Macbeth is actually under the spell of alcohol or whether she metaphorically likens her excitement to drunkenness, she is in either case at least obliquely associated with the hallucinatory semi-madness the audience has just witnessed in Macbeth. After all, drunkenness, with its impairment of the grasp on external sensory impressions and its lulling of the rational faculties, is in some senses a sort of temporary semi-madness. Earlier, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth comes close to speaking of it in these terms:

> [...] his two chamberlains
> Will I with wine and wassail so convince
> That memory, the warder of the brain,
> Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
> A limbeck only.
>
> [I. vii, 62–67]

Certainly, some of the symptoms mentioned in the porter scene overlap with the symptoms of other Shakespearean mad or semi-mad figures: drink is allied to sleep as madness is with the sleepwalking Lady Macbeth. It can lead to a loss of sexual inhibition, at least verbally, as madness does with Ophelia; its disjunctive prose is fraught with incoherent associations as with the jailor's daughter, or with King Lear. To the extent that drunkenness and madness are related, Lady Macbeth's entrance line continues the transitory semi-madness of her husband.[14]

However, this is not so in the opera. Not only is the reference to inebriation cut, but the musical construction of the Lady has little in common with an overcharged hysterical note. Just before her entrance, the hectic minor second *tremolo* on the orchestra quietens and slows down to give way to a succession of calm, harmonically orderly string chords. Like her husband, Lady Macbeth reacts to an orchestral sound. Yet, while his reaction creates a synaesthetic confusion in the audience—an acoustic representation of a vision invisible to the audience—she reacts to the musical representation of a sound the audience will have much less difficulty to grant external reality: the owl's cry. Even more significantly, her reaction is completely different from his. Macbeth's first utterance after the servant's exit has been triggered by hectic orchestral commotion and insistent death figures. Thus, introduced, every singer would naturally invest Macbeth's first line 'Mi si affaccia un pugnal?! L'elsa a me volta!?' with that note of panic that the punctuation implies (see Ex. 1). By contrast, the impression given by Lady Macbeth's first utterance, both through the notable absence of orchestral turmoil and through its melodic contour, is much closer to that of a calm incantation.

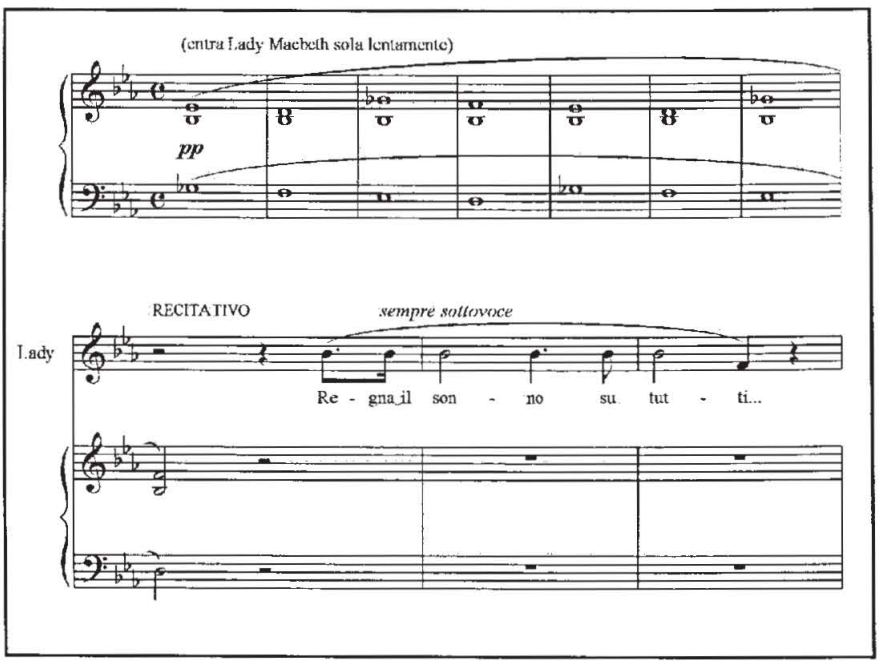
In performance, many singers accentuate and draw out the syncopated Db quaver in the following 'Oh, qual *la*mento' and the two dissonant suspensions[15] in 'Risponde il gufo al suo lugubre addio', varying their vocal colouring and quickening their vibrato. There is a marked contrast in this scene between the two solo appearances of Macbeth and the Lady. Macbeth's hallucinatory turbulence is thrust onto the audience through a well-stocked arsenal of musico-dramatic means. The sober Lady betrays some concern about the success of the enterprise, but her musical construction has precious little in common with the semi-mad, hysterical

14. See, respectively, *Macbeth* V. i; *Hamlet* IV. v, 47–65; *The Two Noble Kinsmen* IV. iii, 10–54; *King Lear* IV. v, 86–199.

15. A suspended minor ninth over C7 (on '"*gu*fo"') and a suspended augmented fourth over Db major (on '"ad*dio*"').

intoxication with which some actresses have invested the corresponding Shakespearean passage.[16] In this sense, Lady Macbeth frames her husband, if by a 'frame' one understands an authority of mental control acting as a foil to the loss of such control.

I have already suggested that in most early eighteenth-century mad scenes the predictable, standard formal layout into which individual movements are integrated, itself acts as a controlling frame. With Macbeth's semi-mad recitative, the same strategy obtains. After Macbeth's 'Tutto è finito', it is marked by the onset of the 'Fatal mia donna' section. The orchestral texture grows out of the minor second dissonance that has permeated so much of the recitative and it retains the volatility of orchestration. If that suggests dramaturgical as well as musical continuity, the devices are simultaneously domesticated by the regularity of the accompaniment pattern, the barcarolle rhythm, the tonal stability, and the orderly periodic structures (see excerpt below).



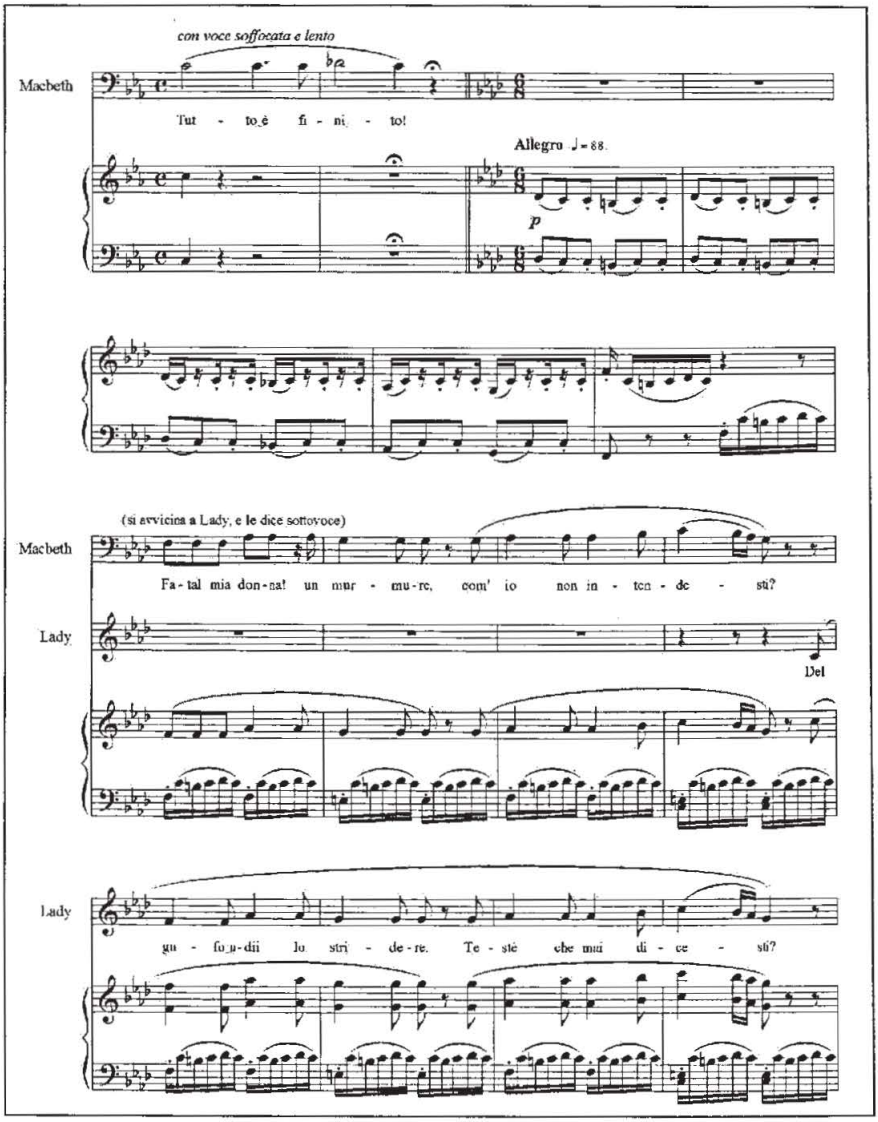
16. Vivien Merchant dropped her goblet; Francesca Annis tried to cast off her fears in a laugh bordering on hysteria; Sarah Bernhardt quivered long after.

Given that it is Macbeth who leads into the section, it might appear that the framing of his earlier temporary madness is a joint venture, in which the Lady and he have equal shares. However, the dominant shareholder, as it were, soon turns out to be the Lady. Macbeth's mental investment in the restoration of his sanity is insufficiently reinsured: first, looking at his bloodstained hands, his three *forte* outbursts *sforzato*-chord, to which the richness of the orchestration adds special emphasis,[17] chokes off and then twice struggles with the regular accompaniment pattern. This setting is suggestively reminiscent of Macbeth's delirious imbalance not long before. Shakespeare's 'This is a sorry sight' [II. ii, 23] does not necessarily read quite as dramatic, even though it can of course be rendered in a Macreadean ghastly wildness. Remembering the grooms muttering in their sleep and his inability to say 'Amen', Verdi's Macbeth returns to a less eruptive vocal line. However, if so far the two voices have been fairly balanced, Lady Macbeth soon comes clearly to dominate the duet. Resuming the wide leaps and rhythmic drive that have invigorated her earlier aggressive cavatina and reducing Macbeth's line to a rather uninspired accompaniment, she dismisses his musings as mere 'follie'. Verdi insisted that this word, on which the melodic structure bestows particular prominence, be retained in the French translation because he felt that 'the whole secret of the effect of this piece may well lie in these words and in the Lady's infernal derision.'[18]

Although the text is close to Shakespeare's, there is a telling alteration: 'Follie che sperdono i primi rai di dì', as opposed to 'These deeds must not be thought/After these ways; so, it will make us mad' [II. ii, 36f]. Who does Shakespeare's 'us' refer to, humankind in general, or the Macbeths? Ultimately, of course, it is not 'us' but the speaker's 'I' that will go mad. Is this one of the play's pieces of dramatic irony? Are we to imagine the Lady to betray a subliminal awareness of a hysterical panic she is already struggling to repress? In other words, are the Macbeths already partners in near-madness as well as partners in crime? The play allows for that possibility, but in the opera it is not an 'us' that the Lady seeks to frame but, by implication, clearly a 'you', After the reference to

17. The chord is a diminished seventh on f# (hence functionally, in this C major context, a dominant of the dominant). As for the orchestration, it is now for the first time in the *Gran Scena e Duetto* that almost its entire instrumental equipment, which the audience until now has only heard in various selective configurations, is used simultaneously: flute, cor anglais, first clarinet, horns, bassoons, timpani, strings.

18. 'Forse in queste parole ed in questa derisione infernale di Lady stà tutto il segreto dell'effetto di questo pezzo.' Letter to T. Ricordi 2 January, 1857.



the Lady's inebriation, this is the second subtle hint in Shakespeare's text that may join the Macbeths in madness, at least metaphorically. Again, the hint is eliminated in the opera.

Shortly after, the play has a brief indication that Macbeth might be relapsing into delirium, and this is one hint the opera highlights rather than obscures. Macbeth hears voices accusing him of having murdered sleep—

the opera's audience may remember that not long ago he possibly hears as well as sees the dagger. In the play, the Lady hastens to dismiss his aural visions as 'brain-sickly' and then immediately seeks to exorcise the hallucinatory through the physical, directing Macbeth's attention towards the practical exigencies of carrying back the tangible daggers and smearing the grooms with Duncan's blood [II. ii, 36–57]. In the opera, the transition is not quite as quick as that. First, the libretto inserts a combination of material from this scene and from an earlier soliloquy of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth.[19] The section culminates, both textually and musically, in a re-phrasing of some lines from Macbeth's Act One monologue in the play: 'Vendetta! Tuonarmi com angeli d'ira,/Udrò di Duncano le sante virtù,'[20] Macbeth's utterances are verbally marked as delirious by the Lady. At this point, the reference to his derangement is taken up even more explicitly than in the play: 'Quell'animo trema, combatte, delira . . ./Chi mai lo direbbe l'invitto che fu?' While Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth passes quickly over her husband's brain-sickness, in the opera these two lines cover thirty-eight bars. Together with Macbeth's continuing anxieties they are the textual basis of the section's musical climax. It is only after dwelling on them at length that the Lady exhorts Macbeth to carry back the daggers, and what in the play is a fluid transition is here marked by a clear musical rupture. Even though the musical domination that the Lady of the first *Macbeth* libretto here exerts over Macbeth is somewhat reduced in the revised version, the climactic placement of her lines, their temporal expansion and, thus, the momentary retardation of the dramaturgical pacing, highlight Macbeth's delirium and her framing of it to an extent that is unprecedented in the play.

In a sense, therefore, it is Lady Macbeth who—more clearly so than in the play—comes to provide throughout the murder scene what is absent during its opening recitative: a dramaturgical stabiliser. However, if this is so, the scene effectively dramatises what one might call the 'perversion' of the frame. The entire point of opera's dialectic of exhibition and confinement is to construct symbolic safeguards that would protect the audience from raw, unmediated exposure to madness and that would preferably also provide some identificatory models. Choruses are often crucial for the latter function, but Lady Macbeth hardly seems to qualify.

19. 'Ma dimmi, altra voce non parti d'udire?/Sei vano o Macbetto, ma privo d'ardire:/ Glamis, a mezz'opra vaccili, t'arresti,/Fanciul vanitoso, Candore, tu sei' (cf. *Macbeth*, I. v, 16–18; II. ii, 57f].
20. cf. *Macbeth* I. vii, 18f.

If hers is the musical and textual voice of reason, it is a voice that first launches Macbeth's murder of the King (the bell), then guards over the deed's success (waiting in front of the chamber), and finally seeks to shield Macbeth from his own admission of guilt, from faltering in his design, possibly from his remorse (the 'Fatal mia donna' section of the murder scene, the banquet scene). The corollary is an association of madness with an admission of guilt and at least a modicum of scruples, while sanity is implicitly defined as the absence of either. Within a cultural climate that increasingly comes to conceptualise madness in terms of morality, these are discomforting and destabilising associations.

Gendering Madness, Again

Both in the opera and in the play, Lady Macbeth explicitly associates madness with unmanliness. After the ghost's first appearance in the banquet scene, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth questions Macbeth's virility, 'Are you a man?' and then links his lack of being one to insanity 'What, quite unmanned in folly?' [III. iv, 58, 73]. In the opera, the words 'quite unmanned' are cut but the concept as such is retained, as the Lady's first utterance after her 'E un uomo voi siete?' is 'Voi siete demente'. Moreover, the very scene in which these lines are sung continues the opposition established in the murder scene between Macbeth's mental instability and his wife's mental control and again it does so more clearly than the play. In the banquet scene, the opposition is reinforced, not through the elimination of clues that may, however subtly, associate the Lady with semi-madness, but through the expansion of her dramatic presence. Both in the play and in the opera, the stage directions would seem to indicate that Banquo's/Banco's ghost is to be visible to the audience as well as to Macbeth, and to judge from Dr Simon Forman's account of 1611, so it was in the Jacobean theatre. However, the subtlety of Shakespeare's text does of course imply that the ghost is, more than anything else, an external manifestation of a guilty conscience, a projection of Macbeth's troubled soul in the second Senecan tradition. Unlike Hamlet's father whose posthumous existence even the arch-sceptic Horatio reluctantly acknowledges, Banquo's ghost never speaks, even if spoken to.

In the opera, Verdi clearly demands that the ghost be visible—there is an angry letter about a singer cast as Banco who considers it beneath him to reappear on the stage mute, and another letter that strongly recommends that the ghost enter via a trapdoor rather than from the wings lest it be mistaken for a living man. Yet, that does not by itself relieve the

audience of the ghost's ontological indeterminacy: revenant in one form or another of 'but a ghost of the mind', granted visual stage presence as the dagger may have been granted aural presence. Both in the play and in the opera the scene does not exclude a reading that sees Macbeth descending once more into a hallucinatory abyss. In either work, the possibility of Macbeth's insanity contrasts with the Lady's assured composure; she, who neither sees nor believes Macbeth to see an actual ghost. Textually, her scepticism seems less forceful in the opera ('Voi siete demente!' 'Vergogna, signor!') than in the Shakespearean passage the libretto cuts: 'the very painting of your fear' [III. iv, 62], 'A woman's story at a winter's fire' [65], 'You look but on a stool.' [68] However, musically, the contrast is reinforced through the Lady's extended, rousing drinking song, the *brindisi*, which the opera inserts before and after the first appearance of the ghost and that her vocal line keeps dominating even as the chorus of guests adds force to it.[21] We also know that drinking-songs, in both Shakespeare and Verdi, are an incitement to action (remember *The Tempest*, *La Traviata*). Here, the Lady's mental and musical hold remains securely intact. The song is an impressive example of the celebrated Verdian irony. Simultaneously, it demarcates a territory of self-control on which Macbeth's encroaching disintegration is played out, for the scene's aural impact crucially hinges upon the opposition between the Lady's ultra-regular musical profile, developed at great length, and Macbeth's terrorised, possibly demented idiom, with its clashing orchestral chords after the ghost's entrance, the unison accompaniment to Macbeth's chromatically descending supplication 'le ciocche creunto non scuotermi incontro', and the frantic repetitions of a single note, with one chromatic inflection both in the vocal line and on the strings, at Macbeth's fragmentary cries 'là... là... là... nol ravvisi? Là [...].' This incoherent, disconnected phrasing creates a mood of valueless detachment. The repeated wailings come across as a kind of muted, resigned desperation at the moment when techniques of minimisation have reached the vanishing point. The 'là [„„] là} exposes the descent to the very nadir of Macbeth's waste land that is his soul, the very heart of darkness. Here, in Virginia Woolf's words, 'music reaches a place not yet visited by sound'.

21. As noted above, operatic song-as-song as opposed to song-as-speech particularly tends to emphasise structural regularity. Forty years later, in *Otello*, Verdi very effectively employs the disintegration of song-as-song to mirror drunkenness (Cassio during Jago's *brindisi*) or anxiety (Desdemona's *Canzon del Salice*).

Unlike her husband, whose intermittent bouts of dementia she defines in terms of insufficient virility, the opera's Lady displays no such signs. The obvious interpretative options would be to read the sleepwalking scene in terms of the symbolic absorption of Macbeth's earlier derangement through the Lady, allowing him to re-emerge as a sane, tragic protagonist. As in the play, the Lady has earlier derided Macbeth's dread at having murdered sleep. Now it is she, not he, whose sleep is disturbed by nightmarish recollections. Also, as in the play, she has been convinced that a little water would wash the blood off their hands while he has feared than an entire ocean could not [II. ii, 63–66]. Now it is she, not he, for whom rubbing her hands as if washing them has become an obsessive gesture. By this time, therefore, it is Lady Macbeth who is unmanned in madness and the gender roles that a nineteenth-century audience might already have expected to see restored do indeed seem to be safely back in place. Like Ophelia, Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth returns mad after a long absence from the stage. The audience has last seen her at the end of the banquet scene, at which point she can and often has been portrayed as a woman profoundly exhausted and borne down by strain. After that, there has been the Hecate scene, Lennox's conversation with another Lord and with Macduff, the entire, extended cauldron scene, Ross' exchange with Lady Macduff, followed by her murder and that of her children, and the lengthy and variegated English Scene. Only then does Lady Macbeth reappear, sleepwalking and mad. In the revised version of the opera, not only does Lady Macbeth retain her vocal and dramatic posture until the end of the banquet scene, but the audience sees a distinctly sane Lady Macbeth imperiously interrogate her husband after the cauldron scene and lead him into a rousing *vendetta* duet, whose musical language spells belligerent determination but hardly encroaching dementia. After this, there is the chorus of the *Profughi*, Macduff's haunting lament, and the *La patria tradita* chorus as Malcolm and Macduff approach Birnam Wood. Then follows the *Gran Scena del Sonnambulismo.* Lady Macbeth, therefore, has simply been given too little time for her collapse to be absolutely credible. In John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), the ludicrously contrived last-minute rescue of Maceath works as a deliberate deflation of opera's various *dues ex machina.* After her impressive display of control, power, and fearlessness, the sudden madness of Verdi's Lady Macbeth may translate into a similar, although very probably unintentional, alienation effect. Moreover, in some respects, the gendered constructions of madness are further complicated by the dramaturgical circumstances of the *Gran Scena del Sonnambulismo* itself. The Lady's

own definition of Macbeth's guilt-driven, temporary madness as a lack of virility and early nineteenth-opera's implicit definition of guilt-driven madness as a typically male variety of insanity pull in different directions. By finally absorbing Macbeth's guilt-induced derangement, the Lady may be unmanned in madness on her own terms, but she is manned even in madness on the terms of the audience's earlier experiences with early eighteenth-century opera.

Most of the madwomen in Illica's—gloriosa tradizione—differ from Lady Macbeth, not only by their being love-crazed maidens but also by the prominence the musical construction of their madness gives to coloratura delirium. Particularly in combination with dance-like elements, coloratura here frequently writes a sonorous subtext of an overflowing female sexuality finding no outlet. Yet, in Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, coloratura is, practically, non-existent; nor does a performance tradition develop what might have turned the vague sketch inviting improvisation at the final cadenza into an extended display of vocal pyrotechnics. By contrast, the Lady does make liberal, although hardly excessive use of coloratura earlier in the opera, as in her entrance cavatina where the device mirrors her mixture of excitement and determination. Neither of these observations would be very remarkable in itself. Non-demented coloratura is a common vocal vehicle for female warriors in early nineteenth-century opera, particularly in the first quarter of the century with Rossini's various Amazon heroines, and also with some of Verdi's operas (Abigaille in *Nabucco*—1842; Odabella in *Attila*—1846). While most mad scenes of the period rely very heavily on coloratura, there are exceptions, of which Elvira in Donizetti's *I Puritani* (1835) is probably the best-known. In *Macbeth*'s sleepwalking scene, the absence of coloratura excess undoubtedly makes musical and dramatic sense, if only because it contributes to the hushed atmosphere in which the Lady's somnambulism is enacted and because it contrasts effectively with the overwhelming sense of musical energy radiated by some of her earlier appearances. Also, being a play strongly and explicitly concerned with sex and power, coloratura here would hardly serve the purpose it has served so far, namely, as an expression of repressed female sexuality.

Nevertheless, the absence has at least one noteworthy consequence. From about the 1830s onwards, in representations of sanity and madness alike, coloratura increasingly comes to be reserved for female singers. However, if the device gradually comes to be gender-marked, its frequent employment in nineteenth-century operatic mad scenes both tap and reinforce, even retrospectively, operatic associations of madness and

femininity. Yet, in Verdi's *Macbeth*, the very scene that we may have thought is in the business of symbolically unmanning the Lady almost completely dispenses with what at the time is increasingly being perceived as women's special musical reserve. From this perspective, the musical signifiers are confused and with it what they signify for the Lady.

In Shakespeare's text, the pseudo-nursery rhyme quality of the lines 'The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?' [V. i, 36f] can be read in terms of Lady Macbeth's infantilisation, that regressive note that many performances realise and that would point to yet another transference of selected symptoms from Macbeth to his wife: ''tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil' she has said to her 'brain-sickly' husband [II. ii, 49, 57f] in the play; 'Fanciul vanitoso' she calls her delirious husband in the first version of the opera. It would have been perfectly possible to set the line accordingly, to introduce a bar or two of some child-like ditty, an attempt to recapture lost innocence by regressing into a childlike state. Yet, the spilled blood keeps dripping out of her guilty conscience, forming an indelible 'damn'd spot', in the same way that the dagger keeps leaping out of Macbeth's subconscious to torment him to his doom. Instead of a nursery rhyme, Lady Macbeth utters in pathetic rhetoric 'Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?' What does happen is that directly upon Lady Macbeth's rhetorical flourish the orchestra and a little later the vocal line shift into a much more menacing idiom, a musical language suggesting both a terrorised and terrorising Lady Macbeth. This is where the observers in the opera, namely the doctor and the dame, are coerced into an 'O terror!'

In other words, what the play's Lady Macbeth calls the milk of human kindness returns only briefly in the opera's sleepwalking scene. Something similar occurs at the opera's equivalent of 'all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand' [V. i, 42f]. Lady Macbeth frames her own milk of human kindness. In this sense, she re-enacts both her own and Macbeth's parts during the murder scene, trying to bully herself out of compunction now as she has tried to bully him out of it then. It may be the resolvable hybridism of the scene, its unstable and destabilising mix of weariness, compassionate lyricism and the resurrection of Lady Macbeth's earlier fierce determination that helps to account for the wildly contradictory impressions the scene has occasioned in its listeners: what the listener gets is not so much a defeated, decomposed personality but a Lady Macbeth psychologically convincing by making her vivid and terrifying. What the audience is witnessing here is a veritable miniature drama, a vying of contradictory selves rather than the display

of a single, coherent self. Verdi's sleepwalking scene settles neither for the helpless, pitiable, compassionate remorseful woman, nor for the unfeeling monster, both horrified and horrifying, but for an ongoing, eminently dramatic battle between them.

By the end of this scene, and following Macbeth's subsequent derangement at the fulfilling of the prophecies he scoffs at during the cauldron scene, language crumbles and collapses, a process commensurate with the utter disintegration of consciousness and personality. In the play, Time is creepingly measured out 'to the last syllable' [V. v, 21] and life itself becomes an idiot's disordered and furious account [26–28], reduced, that is, to verbal nonsense. In the opera, Macbeth's last lines, like those of his Lady in the sleepwalking scene, come across as a flood of nouns without verbal relations.

In both the play and the libretto, the poetic language of the hero is used by Shakespeare and Piave respectively to project a vision of shapeless and inarticulate evil lodged far beyond the practical world of wars, titles and inheritance, at a point where the constraints of custom and culture can hardly penetrate and may be quite irrelevant. In the social present of Macbeth's history, such evil is conventionally thought of as belonging to the past:

> Blood hath been shed ere now, i' th' olden time,
> Ere humane statute purg'd the gentle weal;
> ... The time has been
> That when the brains were out, the man would die,
> And there an end.
>
> [III. iv, 75–80]

However, the uncivilised past, like the primitive mind, is never in fact 'purged' by social enactment. Here, the past, being uncivilised, fails in what it has traditionally been known to live up to, namely, providing a powerful source of emotional sustenance. This is a play that transcends time and oversteps cultural boundaries. Like the Weird Sisters, this past lurks in memory's empty spaces only awaiting recall. It is recalled into a present and into a culture where it finds itself not, as in *Hamlet*, a bizarre intruder into a modern scene, but fully aligned and at home, as if it were a disease colonising helplessly a co-operative host. Macbeth and his lady 'cancel and tear in pieces' the great bond of civilisation with its recurrent demand that men should live inside the understood restrictions of custom and accept the limitation on what is possible for the individual to achieve legitimately. The promise of the witches and of the imagination is a

promise of liberation from the petty present, but the achievable fulfilment is only liberation into a more archaic and inflexible system of gain and loss. The killing of Macbeth completes the play, as is formally required, but we cannot see the death as a disaster for one who is already marked (like his wife) as the victim of a far more terrible system of justice, from which death offers the only possible escape:

> Better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstasy.
>
> [III. ii, 19–22]

The vicious circle that Macbeth and his Lady have constructed for themselves tightens its iron grip until it squeezes the life out of them. What has started as a cry for freedom in Act One ends in a whimper of bondage in self in Acts V and IV of the play and opera respectively. The degenerative process starts right at the beginning of both play and opera. By the end, madness has de-gendered gender, leaving fragments not well shored up against ruin.

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John Ruskin, Venice, and the 'Stones' of an Italian Utopia

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I am fully aware that the investigation of the relationship between Ruskin and Venice is by no means original, and that *The Stones of Venice* is one of the most widely read, analysed and quoted texts of the Ruskinian canon. I am equally aware that my proposal of regarding Ruskin's discourse on Venice as a dialogue strongly marked by his aesthetic and moral utopianism delineates a territory which has been already trodden by scholars and Ruskinites.[1] Despite these discouraging considerations, I wish to say that I have based the motivation for my paper on the fact

1. In the last decades, many critical works have significantly contributed to the development of Ruskin studies. Here it may be worthwhile mentioning some monographs and collections relevant to the ongoing debate on Ruskin: Dinah Birch, *Ruskin's Myths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Sheila Emerson, *Ruskin: The Genesis of Invention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, reprinted 2010); Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, *Ruskin's Mythic Queen: Gender and Subversion in Victorian Culture* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998); Francis O'Gorman, *Ruskin* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), *Late Ruskin: New Contexts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); and Sara Atwood, *Ruskin's Educational Ideals* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011). Some collections of essays on Ruskin are also worthy of note: Dinah Birch (ed.), *Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). This book includes, among the many interesting essays, 'Ruskin and the Aesthetes' (131–151) by Nicolas Shrimpton. See also Toni Cerutti (ed.), *Ruskin and the Twentieth Century: The Modernity of Ruskinism* (Vercelli: Edizioni Mercurio, 2000); Giovanni Cianci and Peter Nicholls (eds), *Ruskin and Modernism* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001); Keith Hanley and Emma Sdegno (eds), *Ruskin, Venice and Nineteenth-Century Cultural Travel* (Venice: Cafoscarina, 2011). Finally, a richly annotated edition of Ruskin's autobiography in the 'World's Classics' (May 2012) can be regarded as a further testimony to the importance of his thought for the third millennium: John Ruskin, *Praeterita,* ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

that some new ideas could be elaborated, thanks to an intertextual methodology in the reading of *The Stones of Venice*. Considering the very lively contemporary debate on Ruskin's work, I would like to offer a contribution focused on the way he articulated his ideas regarding a better world in the future. Indeed, his style, far from being an anodyne linguistic medium, is the *locus* in which his voice tried to give expression to a message centred on the search of a fullness of Being and a fullness of Life. In this, he was waging war on the specialisms introduced by the new industrial structure of British society.[2] As a consequence, his world-view—apart from being against the grain—was always tinged with a line of utopianism which, in Ruskin's case, meant above all a holistic approach to culture.[3]

This peculiar relationship with the real involved a long-standing endeavour capable of subsuming a multiplicity of discourses under Ruskin's own discourse on art and society. In other words, his voice takes on the function of merging again what, from an epistemic viewpoint, the fast expansion of industrialisation had disaggregated. The spiritual and cultural model underlying this anti-industrial attitude was, of course, Carlyle who, paradoxically enough, stigmatised Ruskin's multifaceted culture in a letter to Emerson. Dissociating himself from Ruskin's wide-ranging discursiveness, Carlyle noted that the author of *Modern Painters* 'twisted geology into morality, theology, Egyptian mythology, with fiery cuts at political economy.'[4] Here the adoption of the verb *twist* is an index of the kind of ideological forcing Carlyle detected behind the Ruskinian interpretation of such phenomena as social degradation, unhealthy and muddled urbanisation, landscape ugliness, and alienated work organisation, not to mention a more general spiritual atrophy. On the other hand, it is true that, when observed from the perspective of our

2. It is well known that one of the most cited aphorisms coined by Ruskin is: 'There is no wealth but life.' This maxim is in *Unto This Last* (1860).
3. On Ruskin's lifelong utopianism, it is worth quoting A.L. Morton: 'From 1871 to 1884 Ruskin was writing his *Fors Clavigera*, "letters to the workmen and labourers of Great Britain" ', setting out the objectives of his Guild of St George, a scheme for a network of utopian communities in which life was to be very like that described in *News form Nowhere*, though Ruskin, with his aristocratic socialism, never envisaged the fellowship and democratic equality of life which was for Morris the crown of the work. See A.L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978), 204.
4. *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Charles Eliot Norton (Boston and New York: J.R. Osgood & Co., 1883–1884), Vol. II, 338.

ecological sensibility, Ruskin's overarching loquaciousness and vision seem to convey a different message which is brilliantly summarized by Jonathan Glancey:

> He represented, perhaps, the very last of a generation for whom everything connected—poetry, prose, geology, ancient myths, art, architecture, science, politics—and which was pushed into the shadows by the 20th century's mechanistic need for specialisms and pseudo-sciences [...] perhaps this is to be expected of a man who was fundamentally an artist with an eagle's eye, a secular prophet who wrote like an archangel might, if only an archangel could.[5]

In fact, as a prophet imbued with scriptural words and cadence, Ruskin envisaged a world whose roots were in the past, in an epoch when connection had a double meaning—the horizontal connection which merged all discourse into one, and a vertical connection which established a permanent dialogism between God and the individual, intended as a member of a long-standing community based on feudal principles.

As Alice Chandler has aptly noted with regard to nineteenth-century medievalism, one of its major aspects is represented by feudalism—'its harmonious and stable social structure which reconciled freedom and order by giving each man an allotted place in society and an allotted leader to follow.'[6] Roughly speaking, this was the utopia Ruskin was looking for while the constant flow of his writings was combining beauty and morality, biblical rhetoric and aesthetic research. This idea of an integrated community was the anachronistic society he imagined as the only escape from a deadening present, in which any form of sensibility seemed to be smothered—a present that is characterised, according to Carlyle's definition in *Past and Present* (1843), by 'the totalest separation, isolation. Or life is not a mutual helplessness; but rather [...] a mutual hostility.'[7]

In order to analyse to what extent Venice corresponded to Ruskin's conception of an urban model alternative to the British industrial cities, it is necessary to take into account a literary and cultural hypotext which

5. Jonathan Glancey, 'Only Connect', *The Guardian Weekend*, (February 5, 2000), 22; 24.
6. Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order. The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 195.
7. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Introduction by Douglas Jerrold (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1976), 141.

strongly determined his response to his first direct contact with the sea city in 1835, when he was only twenty-six.[8] Not only was his literary imagination already prepared to decode all the meaning from the 'stones' of Venice, but he was also provided with a precise aesthetic programme which, among other things, included the formative influence of Byron, whose aesthetic and literary example undoubtedly determined in Ruskin an early 'anxiety of influence'. It is not a coincidence that, in 1836, under the spell of a more general Byronism, a very young Ruskin made a significant declaration of love for the romantic poet: 'We do not hesitate to affirm that, with the sole exception of Shakespeare, Byron was the greatest poet that ever lived.'[9] If it is true that Byron was his hero,[10] it is equally true to say that the more Ruskin succeeded in finding his own autonomous theory on art and society, the more he strove to distance himself from his Byronic model.

At one point of his career as an art critic, Ruskin did his best to downplay the role of Byron in his formation. So, during his stay in Venice in 1851–1852, he commented: 'Byron's influence is for the most part on young and comparatively unformed minds.'[11] This was written in a letter to his father whose attitude towards Byron's works was conditioned by some typical Victorian moral scruples. As has been noted, '[...] his father did worry about the possibility of his son developing Byronic

8. As underlined by Hilton, Ruskin's first visit to Venice made a strong impression on him: 'From Innsbruck the crossed the Stelvio to Venice, which Ruskin now saw for the first time. They were in Venice in October [1835] [...] For Ruskin it was an extended period of pure delight, perhaps the most important of the early family tours and a model for those long sojourns on the Continent which produced so much of his writing.' See Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 33.
9. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (eds), *The Works of John Ruskin*, (London: Library Edition, 1903–1912), Vol. I,. 373. Henceforth references to this edition will be given in brackets after each quotation.
10. 'My father had trained me well in Shakespeare [...] From Byron though with less reverence, I had received even deeper impressions—nor can I to this day be enough thankful for the glorious ideal of Venetian womanhood and Venetian patriotism which he gave me in Faliero and the Foscari, as I became capable of receiving in later years [...] Romantic, innocent – and in full health—and brought to Venice by a father & mother who rejoiced in all my pleasure—there is no speaking of what Venice was to me in that year. With the sea—and boats—and the Alps, besides.' This is a fragmentary preface to St Mark's Rest, now in Princeton University's Firestone Library. Quoted by Jeffrey L. Spear, 'Ruskin in Italy', *Browning Institute Studies*, Vol. 12 (1984), 73.
11. John Lewis Bradley, eds., *Ruskin's Letters from Venice 1851–1852* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1955), 86.

faults.'[12] But, despite his moralistic oscillations, Ruskin honestly recognized the crucial role played by Byron in his autobiography, *Praeterita*, which he wrote between 1885 and 1889. More exactly, he confesses that his early visit to the city was mainly observed and enjoyed through a Byronically-oriented attitude: 'My Venice—like Turner's—had been chiefly created for us by Byron [...]' (XXXV, 295). Before being a city objectively studied by an art and social critic, and before being a city inhabited by real working people, and an important focus of a country in political turmoil, the Venice that Ruskin discovers is a literary Venice based on Byron's words and tropes, which were in their turn based on the words and tropes harking back, at least, to Shakespeare. It is crucial to emphasise here the extent to which the linguistic medium is a common element in the representation of Venice as well as in the configuration of diverse versions of utopia. The literary dimension which characterises Venice is part of an imaginary stance which transformed and continues to transform the city into a literary text flourishing in splendour while, paradoxically, the real city seems to be gradually sinking into its watery tomb.

In nineteenth-century England, this literariness of Venice was epitomised by Byron's verse which influenced many writers, poets and artists. Significantly, the young Ruskin tried to imitate his model in a spirit of *eamulatio* when he wrote a poem entitled 'Venice'. Indeed it was Byron that had provided Ruskin's imagination with an early image of the city in many passages of his poetical works. Apart from Byron's two Venetian dramas, *Marin Faliero* (1820),[13] and *The Two Foscari* (1821),[14]

12. Gregory Dowling, '"Trust Byron": Ruskin and the "Byronic Ideal of Venice",' in Sergio Perosa (ed.), *Ruskin e Venezia: una bellezza in declino* (Firenze: Olschki, 2001), 63.

13. *Marin Faliero* was inspired by the story of the Venetian doge Marino Faliero (1285–1355) who was sentenced to death for high treason. Possibly because of a typical *damnatio memoriae*, his biography is full of lacunae. His story attracted Byron's artistic sensibility and the result was 'an historical tragedy in five acts'. As Byron writes in the preface, the story of Marin Faliero was taken from the book *Le vite dei Dogi* by Marin Sanudo (1466–1536). Convinced that it was useful to give his historical sources to the reader, in the appendix to the drama, Byron presented a translation of the episode into English by F. Cohen.

14. The subtitle of *The Two Foscari* is 'An Historical Tragedy'. It is drama in verse based on the story of Francesco Foscari (Venice, 19 June 1373—Venice, 1st November 1457) and his son Jacopo who he is forced to sign the sentence for his perpetual exile. Jacopo dies with horror at the prospect of another banishment. Meanwhile, the Council of Ten require the abdication of the old doge. While descending the steps of the Ducal Palace, Francesco Foscari drops down and dies.

in which 'stones' means only anti-utopia and speaks of the destructivity of history and the gory horrors of the past, the lines relevant to our brief analysis are an oft-quoted passage from the first stanza of Canto the Fourth of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), which here I quote in brief just to convey the mythical and utopian dimension of Byron's description:

> I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;
> A palace and a prison on each hand;
> I saw from out the waves her structure rise
> As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
> A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
> Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
> O'er far times, when many a subject land
> Look'd to the winged Lion's marble piles,
> Where Venice sate in state, throned in her hundred isles![15]

This is the mythical city which the young Ruskin regarded as a powerful alternative to contemporary Britain, in which cities had been transformed into an infernal theatre where sin and corruption played the leading roles. Although Byron's interpretation of the *Serenissima* under the great doges' sway is never devoid of a denunciation of its political system which was too often based on intrigues and ruthless executions, Ruskin did not place emphasis on this aspect, nor was he interested in Marin Sanudo's detailed chronicles which had triggered Byron's imagination. Rather he considered the Fall of Venice as being almost exclusively due to 'the pursuit of pleasure'.[16]

From his mythopoeic perspective, the city was a literary utopia in the sense that it represented an imagined artistic topology transformed into a real place. In a way, Venice was a text on which Ruskin was prepared to write his own text, and whose history could be defined in terms of a cultural palimpsest—a stratification of discourses constituting an artistic and architectural utopia in which, as in every utopia, there was a strong element of exclusion of the real contemporary Venetians, who too often are seen by Ruskin as being inferior to the high morality of the

15. Byron, *Poetical Works*, ed. by Frederick Page. A new edition, revised by John Jump (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 227.
16. *The Stones of Venice*: 'The final degradation of the Venetian power appears owing not so much on the degradation of the principles of its government, as to their being forgotten in the pursuit of pleasure' (X, 428).

city in which they live. From his textualising angle, stones are much more important than people simply because on each Venetian stone he can read, as a shrewd decoding critic, the multiple verbal stratifications left by those interpreters who have already described them.

In this sense, those stones teem with artistic and poetic suggestions which pave the way to Ruskin's personal utopia of Venice as the centre of the world, despite the sad stories of such doges as Marino Faliero or Francesco Foscari, and despite its gory prisons and its vile conspiracies. This is not the version of the city which attracts Ruskin's mythicising mind, but on the contrary the Venice he had admired in Turner's oil-paintings, water-colours and drawings. It was the Venice of light—the Venice of light and beauty. In Peter Ackroyd's biography of Turner we may read a passage relevant to the idea of the city as a utopia:

> [Turner] stayed for only five days on this occasion [1819] but the city seized his imagination; he filled some 160 pages of his sketchbook with drawings and groups of drawings. He also executed some wonderful water-colours of the Venetian morning, where the translucent and ethereal light of the city is evoked in washes of blue and yellow. That sense of light never left him. It irradiates much of the rest of his work.[17]

If Byron gave Ruskin an image which established an explicit link between the Palace and the Prison, Turner evoked a different kind of image—one which united the City with the Heaven, a visual utopia in which there was no room for history. Turner's Venice is metahistorical, beyond history and politics and therefore beyond its own decline and fall[18]—each Venetian stone is precious because it is a locus of light and beauty and not because it has witnessed the splendour and decline of the city. At the same time, it is necessary to underline that in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) Ruskin expounded his conception of restoration in a very radical way:

> [...] indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, or its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in the deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, or mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation,

17. Peter Ackroyd, *J. W. M. Turner* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 97.
18. Apparently, Ruskin was anxious to connect the beginning of the decline with a precise date: 'I date the commencement of the fall of Venice from the death of Carlo Zeno, 8th May, 1418' (IX, 21). This date is repeated after a few pages in the wake of his obsession for a temporal definition of the history of Venice.

> which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity. (VIII, p. 233)[19]

In Ruskin's stratigraphic ontology, the stones of Venice are speaking stones because on their surfaces 'the passing wave of humanity' has written and is still writing its multifarious history. 'The Lamp of Memory' postulates an unflinching rejection of restoration work since this kind of refurbishing intervention destroys meaning and religiosity in monuments. That is why he may conclude that 'those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them' (VIII, 233). In other words, in his idealistic interpretation of architecture, those stones are a testimony of continuity in the discontinuities of human lives. Ruskin is very clear on this point in a passage from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*:

> It is in their lasting witness against men, in their quiet contrast with the transitional character of all things, in the strength which, through the lapse of seasons and times, and the decline and birth of dynasties [...] *connects forgotten and following ages with each other*, and half constitutes the identity, as it concentrates the sympathy, of nations: it is in that golden stain of time, that we look for the real light, and colour, and preciousness of architecture. (VIII, 234, italics mine)

Ruskin claims that a monument is meaningless and morally useless when it is deprived of the 'golden stain of time' (VIII, 234), since each stain of time means more than temporality, more than persistence. It is in these stains of time that Ruskin the utopian and idealist reformer succeeds in reading the great code of Western civilization. In this sense, a peculiar valence is attributed to the Doge's Palace in *The Stones of Venice*. In Ruskin's words, this palace is the cultural synthesis of the world—and this notion may be applied not only to its architectural history but also to the history of humanity. In every aspect, the Doge's Palace, which is defined 'the central building of the world' (IX, 38), seems to be the crowning moment

19. In another point of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, his Romantic notion of restoration was expressed in this significant words, by equating restoration to destruction: 'Neither by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word restoration understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with the false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture' (VIII, 239, italics in the text).

of Venice's history before its decline as well as a perfect example of cultural merging: 'The Ducal Palace of Venice contains the three elements in exactly equal proportions—the Roman, Lombard, and Arab.' (IX, 38)

The Ducal palace is described in its most minute details in Chapter Nine: it is a sort of *tour de force* since Ruskin's objective was that of decodifying a moral meaning behind the architectural text which the palace conveyed in its details as well as in its entirety. Ultimately, the story of the palace is also the story of Venice—and he complains that the paintings of Paolo Veronese and Tintoretto are now in a state of total ruin, as an index of the moral and political decadence of nineteenth-century Venice. But, despite this more general decadence, the final words of the chapter can be regarded as a reaffirmation of the Venetian utopia:

> [...] sometimes when walking at evening in the Lido, whence the great chain of the Alps, crested with silver clouds, might be seen rising above the front of the Ducal Palace, *I used to feel as much awe in gazing on the building as on the hills*, and could believe that God had done a greater work in breathing into the narrowness of dust the mighty spirit by whom its haughty walls had been raised, and its burning legend written, than in lifting the rocks of granite higher than the clouds of heaven, and veiling them with their various mantle of purple flower and shadowy pine. (VIII, p. 234 (italics mine).

What Ruskin tries to convey to the reader is the very gist of his own conception of Venice as a perfect combination of religious and aesthetic values.[20] For him, the Ducal Palace, when observed from the Lido, seems to configure a quintessential combination of the cultural code with the natural one. Significantly, Ruskin's words declare that the Alps as well as the stones of the Ducal Palace are both visible expressions of God's grandeur; the scene reveals to him a symbiotic embrace between the divine and the human which, in its uniqueness, can be regarded as an epiphanic albeit brief representation of a superior harmony.

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20. See Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Oxford University Press, 1982), 212: '*The Stone of Venice* is both Ruskin's first and foremost sustained effort to combine religious and artistic reading in a single activity.'

William Morris's Mediaevalism between Dante and Boccaccio: A Cognitive Approach to Literature

Eleonora Sasso

'I am really much excited at all I have seen and am seeing, though sometimes it all tumbles into a dream and I do not know where I am.'[1] Writing to Georgiana Burne-Jones from Verona in 1878, Morris reveals his fascination with Italy characterised by 'magnificent and wonderful towns'[2] that capture his imagination and draw him into a dream in which he feels a strange exaltation of spirit. What stirred Morris's interest was not the noble Italian art of the earlier Renaissance with which he had but little sympathy, but the natural beauty of Italy with its sublime Alps and Apennines and such wonderful lakes as the Lake Garda that gave him such a shock of delight that he 'really thought [he] had fallen asleep and was dreaming of some strange sea where everything had grown together in perfect accord with wild stories.'[3] For the Victorian dreamer of dreams whose 'work was the embodiment of dreams',[4] those 'bits of the great world',[5] as Morris calls them, gave him the impression that Italy was a

1. William Morris, letter to Mrs Burne-Jones, May 1878, in *The Collected Letters of William Morris: 1848–1880* Norman Kelvin (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), I, 484.
2. *Ibid.*
3. J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (New York: Longmans, 1922), I, 379.
4. William Morris, letter to Cornell Price, 1856, in *The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends* Philip Henderson (ed.) (London: Longmans, 1950), 17.
5. Mackail, 381.

'country like a garden',[6] an earthly paradise whose dream-like landscapes are fictionally reproduced in *The House of the Wolfings* (1889), *The Roots of the Mountains* (1890) and *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894).

But even before visiting Northern Italy (Florence, Oneglia, Genoa, Venice, Padua, and Verona) first with Burne-Jones in 1873, and later on with his wife in 1878, Morris was deeply affected by the Italian mediaevalism of Dante and Boccaccio and in particular by what Erich Auerbach calls 'the intensely vivid creatural medievalism',[7] that is, the mixture of the sublime with the low. This interest in Italian mediaevalism is expressed in Morris's review of Rossetti's *The Early Italian Poets* (1861), in which he reveals his appreciation of the figural realism of Dante's *Vita Nuova* and the fleshly mediaevalism of Boccaccio's lyrics: 'The book is complete and satisfactory from end to end [. . .] it gives to the very symbols the personal life and variety of mankind. [. . .] It deals wonderfully with all real things that can have poetic life given by passion.'[8]

Also very relevant in this sense is the copy of Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*, purchased by Morris in 1864, containing the biographies of more than 100 notable women, and full of woodcut illustrations printed at Ulm in 1473. That was a very fine clean crisp copy bound in sixteenth-century vellum stained yellow which was highly recommended by Burne-Jones: 'Buy the book by all means',[9] was Burne-Jones's advice, 'how much better worth it is that any number of books of less value.'[10]

It is my objective here to investigate Morris's indebtedness to Dante and Boccaccio through George Lakoff's notion of cognitive linguistics and conceptual metaphors as expressed in the *Philosophy in The Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*,[11] which provides an illuminating framework for discussing how Morris's mediaeval mind style was the result of a blending between Dante's figural realism and Boccaccio's creatural mediaevalism. For Morris, the Middle Ages

6. William Morris, letter to Jane Morris, 6 April 1873, in *The Collected Letters of William Morris: 1848–1880*, 183.
7. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Europe* William Trask (trans.) (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), 261.
8. William Morris, 'Review of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Poems', in *Art and Architecture: Essays 1870–1884* (Holicong: Wildside Press, 2003), 7.
9. Mackail, 200.
10. *Ibid.*
11. George Lackoff and Mark Johnson (eds), *Philosophy in The Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

were a conceptual metaphor, a correspondence between mediaeval concepts across conceptual domains, which projects an alternative world of beauty wherein the material and the spiritual are successfully integrated.

A paramount example of this cognitive process is expressed in *The Earthly Paradise*,[12] Morris's collection of twenty-four narrative poems into four volumes and more than 42,000 lines which are held together by a framework, after the fashion of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and employs occasionally the rhyme scheme of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, later fully adopted in *The Defence of Guenevere*. Morris's *The Earthly Paradise*, which according to Florence Boos 'aligns itself with a secular tradition of narrative and romance, [. . .] reworking earlier disclaimers, such as Boccaccio's in the Proem to the *Decameron*',[13] projects the mediaeval metaphors LIFE IS A QUEST for an earthly paradise, and LOVE IS A GARDEN of endless bliss which needs cultivation to produce its richest fruits.

These conceptual metaphors included in such Morrisian lines as 'we [wanderers] had reached the gates of Paradise / And endless bliss, at what unmeasured price / Man sets his life' ('Prologue. The Wanderers', ll. 913–915) and 'nearby on the grass did stand / Seven white-skinned damsels, wrought so fair / [. . .] That his heart sickened, and quick-fire, / Within his parched throat seemed to burn.' ('The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon', ll. 210–211, 235–236) are mapped on the target domain of mediaeval abstractions (such as quest, romance and dream) which could be easily ascribed to both Dante and Boccaccio. If the former set of verses recalls Dante's metaphorical projection of heavenly visions, the latter lines reflect Boccaccio's cognitive structures of pleasure in the mediaeval garden of love as envisioned in *Filocolo* (1336), *Teseida* (1339), *Ameto* (1341), *Amorosa visione* (1341–1342), *Ninfale fiesolano* (1344), and in the *Decameron*[14] (1349) whose gardens are used as framing devices.

Apart from the titular similarity between *The Divine Comedy*[15] and *The Earthly Paradise*, activated by Dante's use of indirect antonyms

12. Unless otherwise stated, Morris's poems are taken from *The Earthly Paradise* Florence Boos (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2002).
13. Florence Boos, *The Design of William Morris' The Earthly Paradise* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 29.
14. According to Naomi Miller, 'the gardens of the *Decameron* [. . .] are expressions of goodness, hope and joy—the earthly paradise' ('Paradise Regained: Medieval Garden Fountains,' in Elisabeth B. MacDougall (ed.), *Medieval Gardens*, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1986, 150).
15. For a masterly reading of Dante's *Divine Comedy* see Robert Hollander, *Dante: A Life in Works* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

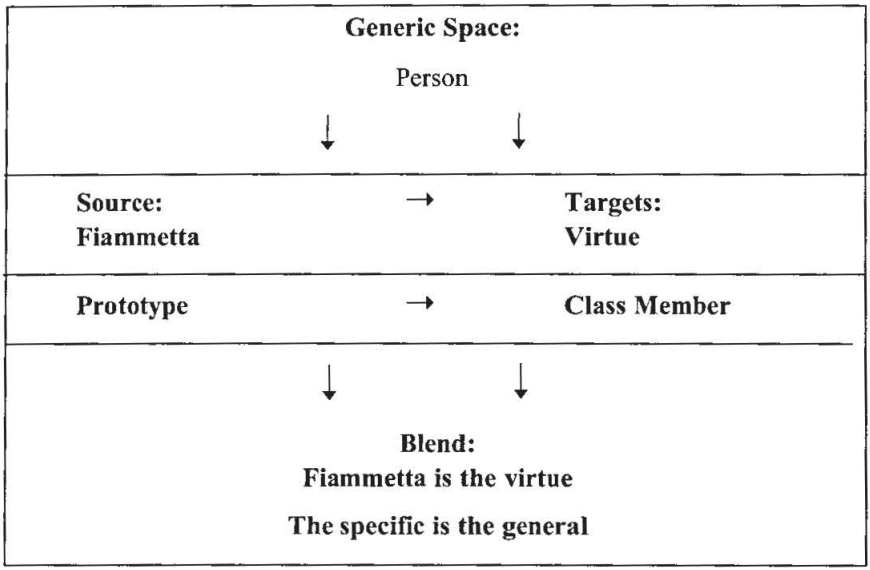
('disdegnoso gusto', *Inferno* XIII, 70; 'levate dal viso i duri veli', *Inferno* XXXIII, 112; 'arsura fresca', *Inferno*, XIV, 37; 'vergine madre', *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 1) and Morris's predilection for direct oxymorons,[16] there is no shadow of Dante[17] in the largest and most important of all Morris's poetical works as clearly expressed by the poet himself: 'Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing, / I cannot ease the burden of your fears', ('Prologue. The Wanderers', ll. 1–2).

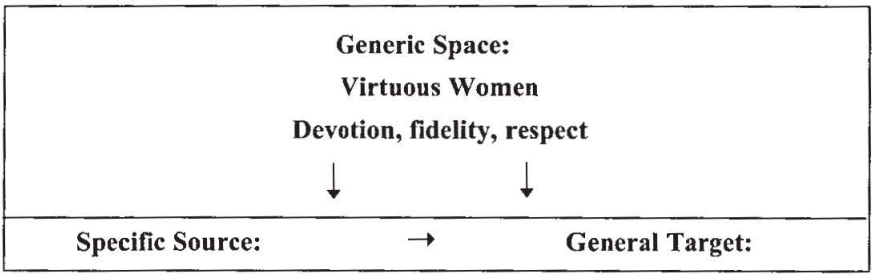
From this perspective, the process by which we cognitively reconstruct the meanings of Morris's *The Earthly Paradise* by making conceptual projections from the formal shape of the text's linguistic characteristics seems to be mapped out in close proximity to Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione*,[18] an allegorical poem in which, as John Dixon Hunt maintains, 'the garden of love topos is interwoven with the equally topical and complex theme of the journey/pilgrimage to narrate the palyngenesis and restoration provoked by love'.[19]

Both *The Earthly Paradise* and the *Amorosa visione* represent the quest for immortal love through allegorical figures, a popular mediaeval convention which reveals the balance between actions in the world and cultural patterns loaded with expectations in our minds. The subject of Morris's 24 tales and Boccaccio's 50 cantos is erotic love[20] achieved or failed, triumphant over or destroyed by fate, and woman is the pure anima, the preserver of man's morality whose cathartic arena is a mediaeval garden of love. Boccaccio's Fiammetta,[21] 'donna gentile e valorosa, / di biltà fonte, com di luce sole' (*Amorosa visione* L, 62–63), is the virtuous woman prototype on whom we would map numerous examples of Morris's women (Atalanta, the swan-maiden, Psyche, Morgan Le Fay, and so forth).

16. See Jerome McGann, '"A thing to mind": The Materialist Aesthetic of William Morris', *HLQ* (1992), 55–74.
17. See Francesco Marroni, 'The Shadow of Dante: Elizabeth Gaskell and *The Divine Comedy*', *The Gaskell Society Journal*, 10 (1996), 1–13.
18. For a bilingual edition see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Amorosa visione* (trans. Robert Hollander, Timothy Hampton, Margherita Frankel) (Hanover, N.H. and London: University Press of New England, 1986).
19. John Dixon Hunt, *The Italian Garden: Art, Design and Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 19.
20. See Tobias Foster Gittes, *Boccaccio's Naked Muse: Eros, Culture, and the Mythopoeic Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
21. For an article on the influence of Fiammetta on D.G. Rossetti's literary imagination see Eleonora Sasso, '"bocca baciata non perde ventura": D.G. Rossetti e la traduzione intersemiotica delle *Rime* di Boccaccio', in *I Rossetti e l'Italia*, Gianni Oliva (ed.) (Lanciano: Carabba 2010), 429–455.

Onto the Boccaccian source domain of individual member or prototypical member we can map classes of persons in the Morrisian target domain. However, when we map from a category's prototype (Fiammetta) to other members of the class (Morris's women), two more domains are introduced. That is, mapping from a person to a virtue, and from a prototype to a class member, suggests that four domains are involved. This is when blending theory[22] can be useful, as an integration in the mental network within whose structure a separate, blended mental space is projected from input mental spaces.





22. See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, 'Conceptual Integration Networks', *Cognitive Science* 22.2 (1998), 133–187, as well as Elena Semino and Jonathan Culpeper (eds), *Cognitive Sylistics: Language and Cognitivion in Text Analysis* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002).

Fiammetta	Women who are custodians of virtue
↓	↓
Blend: **Atalanta, the swan-maiden, Psyche, and Morgan Le Fay are like Fiammetta** **The specific is the general**	

If the *Amorosa visione* is the source story, then the 24 tales comprising *The Earthly Paradise* represent the target stories whose female allegories bring to life the metaphorical source domain through parabolic mappings. In Boccaccio's parable of love, the poet after entering 'un nobile castello [. . .] e alquanto tenebroso' (*Amorosa visione* I, 59, 62–63) whose allegorical murals depict the triumph of Love (as exemplified by the figures of Jason and Medea, Hercules and Dianira, Paris and Helen, Aeneas and Dido, Lancelot and Guinevere, Tristram and Iseult and so forth), is lead into a beautiful garden 'fiorito e bello com di primavera' (*Amorosa visione* XXXVII, 66) where he encounters his beloved Fiammetta. In this 'imaginative container',[23] as Lakoff defines the garden, Boccaccio projects his prototypical love story in which LOVE is closely associated with other concepts, such as DESIRE,[24] RESPECT and DEVOTION. Though moved by intense desire on seeing Fiammetta's 'bocca bella e piccoletta / vermiglietta rosa e fresca' (*Amorosa visione* XV, 64–65), the poet is urged to postpone erotic fulfilment by a reflective Fiammetta, whose virtuous attitude is reminiscent of Morris's virginal Atalanta, innocent Psyche, benevolent Morgan Le Fay, and the reluctant and apprehensive swan-maiden of 'The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon'.

Fiammetta and Morris's seductive women share the same conceptual structure of love which consists of a series of tests (ordeals) aimed at proving their lovers' ardour and commitment. In terms of love tests postponing pleasure, 'Atalanta's Race' is undoubtedly the Morrisian tale which best exemplifies the ritualistically codified practices of *fin amour*. Atalanta, daughter of King Schoeneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that they should run a race with her in the public place, and if they failed to overcome her they should die

23. Lakoff, *Philosophy in The Flesh*, 117.

24. For an interesting article on the declinations of desire see Gloria Lauri-Lucente, 'Absence, Desire and the Female Other in Petrarch and Wyatt', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* 8 (2006), 17–32.

unrevenged. The Arcadian hunter Melanion, struck by Atalanta's beauty ('Too fair for one to look on', 'Atalanta's Race', l. 81) as exemplified by her Fiammetta-like 'shining head' (l. 175) and shining eyes ('shine eyes glisten', l. 174), prepares himself spiritually for the race for sixty-two days. At last he is able to outrun Atalanta in the foot-race with the help of Venus, thereby gaining the virgin who is now wrapped in a sweet embrace, 'in new unbroken bliss' (l. 656).

More similar to Fiammetta's main stages of amorous relationship is the tale 'The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon,' in which the most beautiful swan maiden of a magical realm appears to John, a shepherd tortured by 'longings sweet / Piercing his heart' ('The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon', ll. 215–216). In constant fluctuation between denial and affection, the maiden, who recalls Fiammetta for the 'rosy flame of inner love / glowing through her' (ll. 335–336), tells John that he must make a painful choice to gain her love: he must renounce the mortal world to enter her own fairy land.

Likewise, albeit from a different perspective, Psyche, 'the soul of innocent desire', ('Cupid and Psyche', l. 915), the embodiment of Victorian passive virtues, earns the love of Cupid, a male of divine station, after accomplishing the tasks given her by Venus, as a prerequisite to recovering Eros. In the fair gardens of the palace in Cyprus, 'Hedged round about with woodbine and red rose' (l. 350), Cupid finds Psyche sleeping within a white-thorn shade; he is so ravished by the maiden's beauty that he wonders if his heart 'would e'er forget / The perfect arm that o'er her body lay'. (l. 373).

The last tale worth mentioning is 'Ogier the Dane', featuring the sensuous witch Morgan Le Fay who gives the knight Ogier the ring of perpetual youth in order to let him enjoy the bliss of immortal love, but only at the cost of great personal sacrifices, of what Boos calls 'great fragmentation of the heroic identity'.[25] In the garden scenario of Avalon, Ogier is mesmerised by Morgan's golden tresses tumbled luxuriously down her shoulders ('did he behold / The wandering tresses of her locks of gold / Upon her shoulders'; ll. 768–770). Though driven by a Boccacesque impetus, a desire for physical contact, 'For in his heart still burned unquenched the fire' (l. 805), Ogier is able to restrain his ardour and is gently led hand-in-hand by the fairy Morgan through a dreamy green place.

25. Boos, *The Design of William Morris' The Earthly Paradise*, 256.

With Boccaccio and Fiammetta in the source domain, and Atalanta and Melanion, John and the swan-maiden, Cupid and Psyche, Ogier and Morgan Le Fay in the target domains of courtly love, frames such as devotion, fidelity and respect provide a generic structure for this conceptual mapping. This generic background informs the construction of both Boccaccio's story and Morris's stories, and it is also vital for conceptualising the allegory of love. Indeed, we can see the blend of the general with the specific coming into action when we see Atalanta, the swan-maiden, Psyche, and Morgan Le Fay as members of the virtuous women category within which Fiammetta would be a prototype. This is a recurring theme in the *Amorosa visione* but this particular sequence can be listed as follows:

1. Boccaccio is seduced by Fiammetta in a garden.[26]
2. Boccaccio's desire is calmed down by Fiammetta's rationale.[27]
3. Boccaccio has become an accomplished practitioner of courtly love.[28]

The three narrative strands listed above offer enough data for a reader to see how the Boccacian tale relates to the Morrisian narrative poems:

1. Women seduce men in mediaeval gardens.
2. Women are erotic dominants (dominatrixes).
3. Women are custodians of virtues.

In term of cognitive linguistics and notion of motion event, Boccaccio, like Melanion, John, Cupid, and Ogier are *figures* whose *path* is contrasted with the *ground* (i.e. garden), which functions as a reference point or landmark for sexual orientation. Analysing the motion events of Boccaccian and Morrisian lovers in relation to gardens, we can determine their mapping scopes whose source concept or GOAL-ORIENTED

26. 'Dintorno a sé tutto il prato allegrava, / come se stata fosse primavera, [. . .] A rimirar contento questa onesta / donna mi stava, che in atti dicesse / parea parole assai piene di festa', (*Amorosa visione*, XV, 67–68, 85–87).
27. 'mille fiate credo la basciai / pria si svegliasse la bella angioletta. / Ma subito stordita a dir:—Che fai?—/ cominciò isvegliata,—deh, non fare! / se quella donna vien, come farai?—.' (*Amorosa visione*, XLIX, 26–30).
28. 'Dunque, donna gentile e valorosa, / di biltà fonte, com di luce sole, / rimirate alla fiamma che nascosa / dimora nel mio petto, ed ispegnete / quella con l'esser verso me piatosa' (*Amorosa visione*, L, 79–81).

MOVEMENT is metonymically related to a wider target concept or INTENDED ACTION. To put it into more simplified terms, the motion event that involves the motion towards a garden is related to the sole purpose of erotic love. Here is a list of occurrences of the word 'garden' and its lexical environment:

...A piè di lei sedevan molte genti/sopra un fiorito e pien d'erbette prato, ... (AV) ... ove con le man propie ella segava / le fresche erbette nel fogliuto prato / e con quelle medesme gliele dava. ... (AV) ...Com'io mirando andava quel giardino, ... (AV) ... Dintorno a sé tutto il prato allegrava,/come se stata fosse primavera,... (AV) (AV) ...-Entrian-, diss'io,- in questo orto vicino,... (AV) ... e quel sedesi / sopra la verde erbetta, di colore / sanguigno tutto, ... (AV) ...presi il sentiero per lo bel giardino,... (AV) ...Or mirando più là nel verde prato, / donne vi vidi una carola fare ... (AV) ... quella donna venir cui io caendo / fra quel giardino andava, ... (AV) ... vidi la bella donna, la qual voi / per lo giardin mi feste andar cercando ... (AV) ... tanto avea la mente/pure al giardin verdeggiante e fiorito... (AV)	...When in some garden, knee set close to knee,... (AR) ...And o'er green meads and new-turned furrows brown... (AR) ...About the garden to and fro,...(LESWM) ...she swept o'er me when I was laid/upon the grass beside her feet ... (LESWM) ...A meadow meet to make him glad/ Full oft because of its sweet grass,... (LESWM) ...Where Psyche dwelt, and through the gardens fair/Passed seeking her... (CP) ...beheld a garden like a paradise... (CP) ...Then in the gardens heard the new birds sing...(CP) ...Amidst the sweetest garden was she laid,... (CP) ...Ere midst the gardens they once more were met;... (CP) ...Entered a garden fit for utmost bliss,... (OD) ...gaze/Upon the garden where he walked of yore,/ Holding the hands that he should see no more;... (OD) ...Went through the gardens with one dame alone.....(OD) ...He heard a sudden lovesome song begun/'Twixt two young voices in the garden green,... (OD)

The verbs of motion *reach*, *enter*, *go through*, *pass through*, *meet midst* in relation to GARDENS as exemplified by such lines as 'presi il sentiero per lo bel giardino,' (*Amorosa visione*, XXXIX, l. 71) 'com'io mirando andava quel giardino,' (*Amorosa visione*, XXVI, l. 1), 'Entriam,— diss'io — in questo orto vicino' (*Amorosa visione*, XXXVII, l. 67) are always related to goal oriented movements which project the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A GARDEN. In Morris's 'The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon', 'Cupid and Psyche', and 'Ogier the Dane', just to mention a few tales, the courtly garden becomes laden with allegorical symbolism

both sacred and profane and is the locus of the lady's domain and the epitome of courtly love. The large collection of directional satellites ('upon', 'through', ''Twixt', 'to and fro', 'Amidst', 'o'er' and so forth) encodes a target path which always leads to the centre of the garden, a temenos-centre dimension in terms of spiritual renewal, a taboo area where the dreamer is able to meet his beloved and thereby activate what Morris calls 'the romance of the garden'.[29]

The cognitive process by which Morris's mediaevalism is created acquires a Dantesque mental scope in *News from Nowhere* (1890), whose allegorical[30] journey towards salvation recalls Dante's voyage into heaven's holy spheres. According to John Payne,[31] Morris's journey up the Thames consists of a sequence of nine stops, starting from London and stopping at the Costwold hamlet of Kelmscott (1. London; 2. Hampton; 3. Runnymede; 4. Windsor, Eton and Slough; 5. Cookham; 6. Reading; 7. Abingdon; 8. Oxford; 9. Kelmscott). The nine stops created by Payne might correspond with the nine spatial spheres which Dante visits in heaven (1. The Moon: The Inconstant; 2. Mercury: The Ambitious; 3. Venus: The Lovers; 4. The Sun: The Wise; 5. Mars: The Warriors of the Faith; 6. Jupiter: The Just Rulers; 7. Saturn: The Contemplatives; 8. The Fixed Stars: Faith, Hope, and Love; 9. The Primum Mobile: The Angels).

This hypothesis finds confirmation in Morris's description of a Beatrice-like guide, Ellen, 'the truest wisdom figure of the book',[32] who not only physically resembles Dante's first love on earth, but brings William Guest (alias Dante) to an earthly paradise on the upper Thames. In the countryside of Wallingford between the 6 and 7 stops, that is between the planet Jupiter of the Just Rules[33] and the Sphere of Saturn of

29. William Morris, 'Making the Best of It', in *William Morris On Art and Design* Christine Poulson (ed.) (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 98. For an article on Morris's representation of gardens see Eleonora Sasso, 'William Morris e la visione del giardino come dominio estetico', in Andrea Mariani (ed.), *Riscritture dell'Eden: il giardino nell'immaginazione letteraria dell'Occidente* (Venezia: Mazzanti, 2006), 147–168.
30. On Dante's use of allegory see Robert Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's 'Commedia'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).
31. See John Payne, *Journey Up the Thames: William Morris and Modern England* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 2000), 6–11.
32. Florence Boos, '*News from Nowhere* and Victorian Socialist-Feminism', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 14.1 (1990), 27.
33. On Jupiter, the sixth heaven, Dante sees those who administered justice faithfully in the world. Likewise, at the sixth stop in Reading, Guest addresses Dick, his Charon-like figure, questions about the morality of work and the social justice exercised within the new society.

the Contemplatives,[34] William is reached by Ellen whose angelic-like apparition on a 'a gay little craft [. . .] painted over with elegantly drawn flowers'[35] recalls Beatrice's arrival on a two-wheeled chariot amid a rain of flowers strewn by angels, at the edge of the river Lethe ('così dentro una nuvola di fiori / che da le mani angeliche saliva / e ricadeva in giù dentro e di fori', *Purgatorio*, XXX, 28–30). As Adriana Corrado aptly summarises:

> Dante and Beatrice, Guest and Ellen, are travel companions; together they pass through the anguish of reality in search of justice and freedom and in a vision the two men can see the world they had been dreaming of and seeking for years and years: the two women, their guides, lovers and mothers at the same time, were capable of regenerating them and, introducing them to real life, to give life to a new life.[36]

In the heavenly sphere of Wallingford, the Morrisian reader perceives that the major conceptual metaphors of *News from Nowhere* are HAPPYNESS IS UP, PARADISE IS UP, and SALVATION IS UP. In a metaphorical mapping of this phenomenon, the primary experience involved in the expression 'going up the river' is equated with 'going up to heaven.'Metaphorical statements based on up-going movements also reveal a luminous mapping space. For happiness, the boundaries involve the vertical plain of up and down, as well as the illuminated path towards heaven. In Morris's luminous utopia, where the sky is 'a vault so vast and full of light that it did not in any way oppress the spirits',[37] echoing Dante's 'fulgor' (*Paradiso*, XXX, 51) as exemplified by the line 'così mi circunfulse luce viva' (*Paradiso*, XXX, 49), the visual metaphor HAPPYNESS IS UP is referred to in a luminous language which acquires allegorical meaning. It is significant, therefore, that Ellen who takes

34. The sphere of Saturn is that of the contemplatives who embody temperance. Dante here meets Damian, and discuss with him monasticism, and the sad state of the Church. Beatrice, who represents theology, becomes increasingly lovely here, indicating the contemplative's closer insight into the truth of God. Coincidentally, at Abingdon, the town which grow around Abingdon abbey, Ellen is always by Guest's side, looking at him attentively, and showing the kind of loveliness that Beatrice extols.
35. William Morris, *News from Nowhere* David Leopold (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 155.
36. Adriana Corrado, 'Beatrice and Ellen: Ideal Guides from Hell to Paradise', In *William Morris Centenary Essays* Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (eds.) (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 93.
37. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, 157.

William up the river and makes him feel happy is allegorically associated with the sun. Like Beatrice gazing at the sun in the first canto of Paradise ('Quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco / vidi rivolta, e riguardar nel sole', *Paradiso*, I, 46–47), Ellen is described while 'shading her eyes against the sun'[38] ('her eyes like light jewels amidst her sunburnt face, which looked as if the warmth of the sun were yet in it'[39]), as if to convey the metaphor ELLEN IS THE SUN. The transcription in XML format containing information about word units including Part-Of-Speech tagging is useful to visualise the collocational, colligational and semantic occurrence of the word 'sun':

1. I saw Ellen, shading her eyes against the *sun*.[40]	<s n=01> <w PPIS1>I <w VVD>saw <w NP1>Ellen <w VVG>shading <w APPGE>her <w NN2>eyes <w RP>against <w AT> the <w NN1>sun
2. Her eyes like light jewels amidst her sunburnt face, which looked as if the warmth of the *sun* were yet in it.[41]	<s n=02> <w APPGE>her <w NN2>eyes <w II>like <w JJ>light <w NN2>jewels <w RP>amidst <w APPGE>her <w VVN>sunburnt <w NN1>face <w DDQ >which <w VVD>looked <w II>as <w CS>if <w AT>the <w NN1>warmth <w IO>of <w AT>the <w NN1>sun <w VBDR>were <w RP>yet <w RP>in <w PPH1>it
3. I walked up-stream a little, watching the light mist curling up from the river till the *sun* gained power.[42]	<s n=03> <w PPIS1>I <w VVD>walked <w RP-NN1>up-stream <w AT1>a <w DA1>little <c YCOM>, <w VVG>watching <w AT> the <w JJ>light <w NN1>mist <w VVG>curling <w RP>up <w RR>from <w AT>the <w NN1>river <w RR>till <w AT>the <w NN1>sun <w VVD>gained <w NN1>power
4. Happy-looking men [...] looked [...] like a bed of tulips in the *sun*.[43]	<s n=04> <w JJ-VVG>Happy-looking <w NN2>men <w VVD>looked <w II>like <w AT1>a <w NN1> bed <w IO>of <w NN2>tulips <w RP>in <w AT>the <w NN1>sun

38. *Ibid.*, 133.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.* 133.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, 132.
43. *Ibid.*, 180.

The lexical environments of the item 'sun' in sentences 2, 3 and 4 are aimed at emphasising the warmth, power and beauty of the most luminous star of the universe. Of particular interest are the concise analogies in sentences 2 and 4 which project the metaphors SEEING IS KNOWING, and SEEING IS BEAUTY. They are what Turner calls *xyz* metaphors[44] which involve three explicit terms (eyes *x*, jewels *y* , sun *z*; men *x*, tulips *y*, sun *z*) and one missing term *w* that we are to find by way of blending. We are to map the relation between *y* and *w* onto the conjunction of *x* and *z*. For example 'jewels' is a relational noun, and strongly suggests 'rays of light' as the unmentioned *w* we are to use, so that the jewel-ray relation is to be mapped onto the eyes-sun conjunction. Likewise, 'tulips' is a relational noun, and strongly suggests 'greenhouse' as the unmentioned *w* we are to use, so that the tulips-greenhouse relation is to be mapped onto the men-sun conjunction.

Among the 'illuminated' men (utopians) that William Guest encounters in Nowhere, Old Hammond, historian chronicler and kinsman of William Morris, appears to be a truly Dantesque figure for his resemblance with Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida. They both share the same affection towards their blood relatives by revealing to them the follies of history and showing them the way to salvation. If Cacciaguida tells Dante that Florence in the olden time was a peaceful place which 'abode in quiet, temperate and chaste', (*Paradise* XV, 99), then Old Hammond explains Guest that England was once a country where everything was 'trim and clean, and orderly and bright'.[45] This nostalgic association between a mediaeval Florence and a neo-mediaeval Nowhere is confirmed by a series of architectural references, functioning as attractors[46] in the visual field of cognition. It is no coincidence that the first dynamic movements of the Morrisian *homo viator* are always oriented towards a fourteenth-century Florentine utopia. The Ponte Vecchio[47] and the Baptistery of Florence are mentioned as spatial coordinates of models of trajectory

44. See Mark Turner, *Reading Minds: The Study of English in the Age of Cognitive Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 197–200.
45. Morris, *News from Nowhere*, 63.
46. On the function of attractors in cognitive linguistics see Peter Stwockwell, 'Surreal Figures' in *Cognitive Poetics* Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen (eds) (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 13–26.
47. 'Then the bridge! I had perhaps dreamed of such a bridge, but never seen such as one out of an dreamed of such a bridge, but never seen such as one out of an illuminated manuscript; for not even the Ponte Vecchio at Florence came anywhere near it. It was of stone arches, splendidly solid, and as graceful as they were strong; high enough also to let ordinary river traffic easily' (*News from Nowhere*, 7).

which emphasise the figural blending between Old Hammond and Cacciaguida. Of special interest is Morris's description of an octagonal building which recalls the Baptistery of Florence, famous for its bas-relief doors by Andrea Pisano (1290–1348/9) and Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378–1455):

> 'On the other, the south side, of the road was an octagonal building with a high roof, not unlike the Baptistry at Florence in outline, except that it was surrounded by a lean-to that clearly made an arcade or cloisters to it; it also was most delicately ornamented.'[48]

During his journey up the river, William Guest visits Hammersmith, a district in west Nowhere characterised by mediaeval houses and magnificent buildings representing the best qualities of the Gothic of Northern Europe. But his attention is attracted by a monument of mediaeval Florence which pleases his eyes and enraptures his mind with pleasure ('I fairly chuckled for pleasure'[49]). Praised by Morris for its 'narrative effect',[50] as clearly expressed in a letter to George Bernard Shaw, this religious building epitomises the city's history and art but it is also a focal point for Cacciaguida who entered the Christian faith in the Florentine baptistery ('e ne l'antico vostro Batisteo / inseieme fui cristiano e Cacciaguida', *Paradiso* XV, 134–135).

Old Hammond's individual conceptualisation of reality reflects Cacciaguida's mind style which is conveyed through a lamentation and complaint against the corruption of the Florentines. Like Cacciaguida, Old Hammond dreams about the happiness of Florence in those early days when the greatest lived in simplicity ('Florenza dentro la cerchia antica / on'ella toglie ancora e terza e nona, / si stava in pace, sobria e pudica', *Paradiso* XV, 97–99). In his role of explicator and historian, always complaining about the evils and follies of his day and thereby longing for what Morris calls 'the mirth and simplicity of earlier ages',[51] Old Hammond aligns with the realist figure of Cacciaguida who projects the conceptual metaphor PAST IS SALVATION.

48. *Ibid.*, 21.
49. *Ibid.*
50. William Morris, letter to George Bernard Shaw, 11 October 1894, in *The Collected Letters of William Morris: 1893-1896* Norman Kelvin (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), IV, 215.
51. William Morris, 'The Origins of Ornamental Art', in *William Morris on Art and Socialism* Norman Kelvin (ed.) (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1999), 162.

Deeply obsessed with the quest for earthly paradises, for locational conceptual metaphors reflecting the totality of human experience, Morris seems to operate a conceptual blending, a conceptual integration between Dante's figural realism and Boccaccio's creatural mediaevalism. The joint influence of those input domains may clarify the complex and multi-faceted representations of the Middle Ages in Morris's writings in which the dream of Italy is now embodied by a Fiammetta prototype to whose loyal and everlasting service Boccaccio religiously dedicates his heart and now by an angelic Beatrice 'la dolce vista / de la mia vita, e d'ogni ben radice' (*Canzone* XVIII, ll. 11–12)[52] who guides Dante to heavenly salvation.

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By the Southern Sea: Gissing's Meridian Flight from the Realm of Modernity

Luigi Cazzato

> I was at ramble in the lanes, when, from somewhere at a distance, there sounded the voice of a countryman—strange to say—singing. The notes were indistinct, but they rose, to my ear, with a moment's musical sadness, and of a sudden my heart was stricken with a memory so keen that I knew not whether it was pain or delight. For the sound seemed to me that of a peasant's song which I once heard whilst sitting among the ruins of Paestum. The English landscape faded before my eyes. I saw great Doric columns of honey-golden travertine…
>
> G. Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, 1903

From the 'Nether World' to the 'Land of Romance'

Around the turn of the 19th century, after the flocks of eminent Victorians had invaded Italy, but essentially stayed north-west of Naples, George Gissing rambled through the regions south-east of that city. It was that part of the Italian Mezzogiorno called *Magna Graecia*, which unlike the profoundly industrialised late Victorian England, was barely touched by the so-called Second Industrial Revolution underway at that time. The author of *Nether World* and *New Grub Street* was in flight from his second failed marriage, but above all in flight from the Victorian world. Apparently, those who reacted against the dominant Victorian culture, its cult of money and progress, its workhouses and asylums, its shops and

factories, needed to move towards the deeper South. George Gissing was certainly among these and probably the least biased.

By the Ionian Sea (1901), written towards the end of his tormented life, is one of his best known and most appealing books. Technically speaking, it is part of the tradition of travelling towards the classical ruins on the Mediterranean shores. In fact, it is more than that. From the very start of his travelogue, his objective is quite clear.

> Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Italy draw me as no others; they make me young again, and restore the keen impressions of that time when every new page of Greek or Latin was a new perception of things beautiful. The world of the Greeks and Romans is my land of romance.[1]

His project, then, was to escape the modern world—'life as he knew it'—and find refuge in the South of Italy, his land of dreams, where he had already been (although never south of Naples, except when he had sailed towards Greece through Brindisi) and where, as he wrote, 'the waters of two fountains [Greek and Latin cultures] mingle and flow together' (6). The Baedeker, on the contrary, urges that because of malaria, violence, extreme poverty and the ignorance of the people, 'no one should therefore attempt to explore the remoter parts of this country unless provided with letters of introduction to some of the principal inhabitants.'[2] But he was not scared by the travel guide's warning. Neither was he worried by his Neapolitan hosts' fear regarding the hardiness of a solitary journey through the wilder South:

> How shall I get along with people whose language is a barbarous dialect? Am I aware that the country is in great part pestilential? – *la febbre*! Has no one informed me that in autumn snows descend, and bury everything for months? (2)

No *febbre* or fear could oppose the sleepless night's epiphany he wrote about to his brother Algernon: 'My boy, your path lies to the shores of the Mediterranean. Go, in the name of all that is sensible and hopeful, and work there till next spring.'[3]

1. G. Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea. Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1901), 6. From now on the page reference will be given in the main text.
2. P. Delany, *George Gissing: A Life* (London: Phoenix 2009), 277.
3. Delany, 272.

The South and Incipient Modernity

So, on 22nd September 1897 Gissing leaves London and, after crossing France and Northern Italy, arrives at Siena where he writes his commissioned critical study on Charles Dickens. Tuscany for him is still North Europe and Venice is more enticing just because from its Adriatic shores he can feel the closeness of ancient, south-eastern peoples. In November, after visiting Rome and Naples, he sails towards Paola (Calabria). It will be a journey through the post-unification Mezzogiorno, when the so-called war on brigandage, considered an evil heritage of the old regime, was over and the process of Italian modernisation was about to start. The phenomenon of mass emigration Gissing observed was somehow part of that modernising project. As early as 1888, during his first journey to the South, Gissing writes to his sister that he is glad to have 'delayed no longer in seeing Naples, for every year it is becoming modernised and sanitarised. Enormous pullings and rebuildings are in progress. A pity, but inevitable.'[4] So he was eager to know Italy before it changed in its hurry to imitate hyperborean modern nations from where he was fleeing. What Gissing bore witness to were the so-called *sventramenti* of Naples, the disembowelling he will talk about again in his travelogue ten years later:

> What a contrast between that native picturesqueness and the cosmopolitan vulgarity which has usurped its place! '*Napoli se ne va*!' I pass the Santa Lucia with downcast eyes, my memories of ten years ago striving against the dullness of today. (3)

End-of-19th-century Naples was disappearing! Words that sound bizarre if read nowadays, with Naples still considered a capital of the European South by Northerners, entrapped as it still is in the same net of old southern problems. Gissing also hears the first stirrings of the 'the new age' in the Calabrian towns, where squalid railway stations and hideous railway bridges, he says, bring the towns into the European network. In Taranto he no longer found the great ancient heaps of murex shells—precious for their purple dye—that the 'discoverer' of *La Grande Grèce* François Lenormant had found. In their place he found the graceless new arsenal, the would-be pride and source of the prosperity of Taranto.

4. G. Gissing, *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1927), 235.

It is perhaps time to justify the word 'meridian' of the title. It refers to Franco Cassano's meridian thought,[5] and if one has to summarise it, at least four categories are to be listed:

- *Slowness* or an idea of time radically different from the idea dominating North-Western life;
- *Moderation* or the antidote to the Faustian hubris of endless progress;
- *Cultural autonomy* or giving back the South its ancient dignity of being a subject of thought;
- *Mediterranean Sea* or the sea between lands and borders, a sea that separates and links at the same time;

Surprisingly all these categories, though through different proportions, are entangled within Gissing's travel writing and his picture of the South.

Southern Belatedness and Slowness *vs* Northern Progress and Speed

Still more surprisingly, young Gissing was a devout advocate of Comtean positivism. However once he had realised that Progress, rather than Humanity, was the new religion of the Positivists, he distanced himself from them[6] and saw the discourse of progress as a merely imperial Gospel, which was trumpeted through the streets of Victorian Britain. As Raymond Williams points out, Gissing's disillusion with progress and social reforms is transmuted to an idea of culture connected to rural values, the old order uncorrupted by commercialism and industry.[7] That idea of culture, uncontaminated by the vulgarity of modern progress, could be cultivated in the ancient Magna Graecia, where, by the same token, his disbelief in the myth of progress rose reinforced, since 'one saw that history might equally well be of advance, or decline.'[8]

He sometimes met northern Italian travellers, mainly travelling for business, who scorned the South because everything was backward. Exactly one of the reasons why Gissing went there. But what for the northerners was belatedness for him was mute peace of the origins. To him, in Taranto the fishermen are 'the primitives of Taranto' (32) who

5. F. Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011, Italian edition *Pensiero meridiano*, Bari: Laterza 1996).
6. For his conversion from Comtean positivism to pessimism see 'The Hope of Pessimism', 1882.
7. R. Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780–1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 181.
8. Delany, 278.

were already there when Plato visited the schools of Taras. While a countryman, ploughing the mythically generous southern soil, was 'one of the ancestors of our kind'. (33)

> Never have I seen man so utterly patient, so primævally deliberate. The *donkey's method* of ploughing was to pull for one minute, and then rest for two; it excited in the ploughman not the least surprise or resentment. Though he held a long stick in his hand, he never made use of it; at each stoppage he contemplated the ass, and then gave utterance to a long 'Ah-h-h!' in a note of the most affectionate remonstrance. They were not driver and beast, but *comrades in labour*. It reposed the mind to look upon them. (my italics; 33)

His mind was reposed because it was not like a scene of modern alienated production. On the contrary, it was a primeval scene, that is to say a context of labour where man and nature are not at odds with each other but mutually cooperating ('comrades in labour'), according to a respectful rhythm which is not mechanical or unnaturally fast (the donkey's method of pulling for one minute, and resting for two). Could it be a scene any further from the scenes Gissing was used to seeing in London's bleak world of the working class people, so many times depicted in his novels? That is why he stated: it is better to 'die in a hovel by the Ionian Sea than in a cellar at Shoreditch', that is to say in London's miserable shallows (94). A couple of decades earlier, also another traveller, this time a southern Italian on English soil, the painter Giuseppe De Nittis, thought the same thing. Although De Nittis was a 'meridionale che vedeva inglese più di qualsiasi altro inglese',[9] the spectacle of Dickensian degradation of London upset him. He writes:

> Quando vado a Rotten-Row provo la crudele sensazione che lì l'uomo senza beni di fortuna, senza l'orgoglio dei grandi nomi e della ricchezza non è che un atomo disperso, un non valore schiacciato dalle ruote delle carrozze [...] e, scosso come sono, se cedessi ai miei nervi, non resisterei all'impulso di prendere il treno e di fuggire [...] Con il sole e la gaiezza i poveri del mio paese restano ottimisti, perfino allegri; l'aria, il cielo, la luce sono di tutti [...] Ma le miserie e le disperazioni di Londra sono un inferno che nemmeno Dante arrivò ad immaginare: se avesse conosciuto i bassifondi di Inghilterra vi avrebbe collocato i dannati dell'ultimo girone.[10]

9. Cit. in R. Causa, Introduction to G. De Nittis, *Taccuini* (Bari: Leonardo da Vinci, 1967).
10. *Ibid.*, 35.

Therefore, the suggestion is that the nether world is not only a question of class but also, in a 19th-century term, of 'race'. The brutality of hell depends on geography too.

Coming back to Italy, or rather to Naples, which is not a hell but a devilish paradise ('un paradiso abiato da diavoli'), as the saying goes. Gissing was also impressed by the way the Neapolitans walk: they 'saunter along at the rate of a mile an hour. Never do you see a person hurrying.'[11] Cassano, a century later, extolls southern slowness as one of its (vanishing?) features and tells us:

> Our way of life [north-western life] is, in fact, like a vehicle that is being continuously perfected and is becoming faster and faster, equipped with all the comforts (from air conditioning to telephone and radio), but utterly lacking brakes. Everything is based on the elimination of brakes.[12]

This passage is striking if juxtaposed with the passage in which Gissing pleasantly lingers on the chaotic and yet unhurried stream of carriages in Naples: 'Every moment you think you must be run over but there is really little or no danger, for everything goes on at such a leisurely pace' (Letters 235). In a city where the means of transportation are so slow, you can actually eliminate brakes without a threat to safety. On the contrary, in modern lives, where speed is dominant, one should not eliminate brakes but in fact that is exactly what one does. And life becomes a car race with all brakes removed and no chance to look or know where one is going. *À propos* of progress this is what Gissing thought about the arsenal in Taranto, the symbol of its modern prosperity: 'If only one could believe that the Arsenal signified substantial good to Italy! Too plainly it means nothing but the exhaustion of her people in the service of a base ideal.' (34) The base ideal is the cult of the 'mechanic triumph of today', (34) which in its hubris is regardless of an ancient past and crazily projected into the measureless race for progress.[13]

11. Gissing, *Letters of George Gissing*, 235.
12. F. Cassano, *Southern Thought*, 'Thesis Eleven' (67) 2001, 2.
13. Who knows what Gissing would have said of Taranto's history in the second half of the 20th century, when the 'mechanic triumph' did indeed triumph, with the establishment of the hugest steel factory in Europe, thus turning the capital of Magna Graecia into the most polluted town in Europe. Together with the extremely high death rate from cancer, the renowned economic activity of mussel farming has been damaged by the pollution caused by the Arsenal and ILVA, the steel factory. In this respect, Gissing was truly a prophet when he stated that the Arsenal was not 'substantial good to Italy'.

That is why Gissing is afraid that 'the glory of Italy is gone for ever. She is trying to rival Germany and England, and will ruin all the best part of herself in the process.'[14]

It is essential to remind ourselves here that the English novelist was just pointing to the fact that the South had renounced its ancient dignity of being a subject of thought, and was yielding to the standpoint of Northern civilisation. Since then, and even before, the historical outcome for the South's renunciation has been for it to be regarded as an error, a delay, or a negation; in short, a place which is yet not the modern North. Cassano states:

> We must reverse our point of view and believe that in the South of Italy, with all probability, modernity is not extraneous to the pathologies that, even today, some think it should cure. [... We must reverse] the relationship: not to think of the South in the light of modernity, but rather to modernity in the light of the South.[15]

So, what is impressive about Gissing's travelogue is that a century earlier he was quite lucid in seeing the direction Southern civilisation was taking. It was turning its back on its past and transmuting its present into something shameful, just because it was not similar to the modernity lived by Northern nations. In an 1889 letter from Venice to his German friend Eduard Bertz, he writes that Italy as a model is pursuing the vulgar side of England. A clear *j'accuse* towards the Italian leading classes who at that time, he says, were introducing English words into Dante's idiom. Therefore, Gissing's travelogue is a precious document in that, as Mauro F. Minervino says, it constitutes an ethnographic record beyond any existing procedure:

> In questa prospettiva *By the Ionian Sea* è forse il primo documento letterario credibile sullo stato di una società minore e periferica; così come si presentavano le regioni del Sud al cospetto di un ignaro intellettuale europeo all'indomani dell'Unità.[16]

14. G. Gissing, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing: 1889–1891*, edited by Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (Ohio University Press, 1993), 22.
15. Cassano, *Southern Thought*, 1.
16. M.F. Minervino 'La vita in un viaggio. George R. Gissing, il Sud di un vittoriano', *Viaggio nel Sud II. Verso la Calabria*, edited by E. Kanceff e R. Rampone (Geneve: Slatkine, 1992), 485.

Resisting Deculturation and Otherization: The Mediterranean Lesson

Although the Italian Mezzogiorno, as far as the British impact is concerned, is not a proper contact-zone in the sense that Mary L. Pratt talks about it in her *Imperial Eyes* (1992), the exogenous discursive formation of the English travellers and observers of the 18th and 19th centuries can somehow be considered a sort of *deculturation* process,[17] which the southerners have lived through like any other subaltern people. It was a process which, for example, crucially played a detrimental role in the making of Italian national identity (implemented by the North) during and after unification, conditioned as it was by the influence of French, German and British public opinion and diplomacy. Symptomatically, the cemetery keeper in Crotone, who travelled as far as London, thought that the journey from Calabria to England was understandable enough but not the other way around (68).

Gissing cannot be blamed for that sort of *deculturing* practice. On the contrary, although his good intentions were tried severely by the hard southern context, at each single step of his travel and travelogue the reader feels his effort not to yield to the feeling of national arrogance, which he thought to be a 'touch of tourist vulgarity'. He writes:

> Any northern person who passed a day or two at the *Concordia* [Crotone Hotel] as an ordinary traveller would carry away a strong impression. The people of the house would seem to him little short of savages [...]. In England their mere appearance would revolt decent folk.89)

After his negative experiences in Calabria hotels, especially during his illness at Crotone, he begged pardon for his silly irritation and insolent fault-finding. He asks himself:

> Why had I come hither, if it was not that I loved land and people? And had I not richly known the recompense of my love? Legitimately enough one may condemn the rulers of Italy, those who take upon themselves to

17. Serge Latouche refers to *deculturation* as the process where two cultures come into contact asymmetrically and the receiving culture is threatened in its very being by the massive flow of the giving culture. Historically speaking the West has decultured the Rest in the name of universal values such as reason, progress, the social betterment, which in fact were Western values. (*The Westernization of the World: Significance, Scope and Limits of the Drive Towards Global Uniformity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

> shape her political life, and recklessly load her with burdens insupportable. But among the simple on Italian soil a wandering stranger has no right to nurse national superiorities, to indulge a contemptuous impatience. (96)

Not only for the songs and music sounding under the Italian sky but also for their history, the Italians can be forgiven for their supposed flaws:

> One remembers all they have suffered, all they have achieved in spite of wrong. Brute races have flung themselves, one after another, upon this sweet and glorious land; conquest and slavery, from age to age, have been the people's lot. Tread where one will, the soil has been drenched with blood. An immemorial woe sounds even through the lilting notes of Italian gaiety. (95)

Therefore, the relationship he establishes between himself as a traveller and the southerners as 'travellees' is rarely asymmetrical because his perspective is historical rather than essentialist: the Italian condition at the turn of the 19th century was the product of history, not of nature.

Moreover, his contact with southern reality gives rise to a comparison between the British and the Italian character. Once back after his first of the three journeys to the Italian boot, he thinks with horror what a Continental man living in England may experience, since 'the English, as a people, excel all others in vulgarity and coarseness.'[18] The average English intellect in individuals may be far above all other countries but in Italy everything is made simple by the suavity of the people in all social classes. To Gissing, the nursing of the superiority of the English was the result of their isolation:

> On the Continent you never for a moment lose sight of the fact that there are other nations in the world besides your own; the average Englishman has to reflect before he can sincerely admit this. I mean that, in practice, he *never* reckons with reference to other nationalities.[19]

What he is doing here, thanks to his Continental and Mediterranean travelling experience, is reflecting upon the geo-condition of England, an isle whose borders do not touch other countries' land but its own waters. Cassano, *à propos* of borders and the Mediterranean, in turn suggests that this sea is

18. Delany, 153.
19. *Ibid.*

> the sea where, precisely because one encounters the others there, the real game begins, the one that can lead to hostility and confrontation, or to the road to peace. However, peace in the Mediterranean is not born from domination, annihilation and silencing of others, but from a balance, from mutual recognition, from respect for the dignity of others, from exchanges, from translations, from curiosity and knowledge.[20]

Gissing, a man who tried to flee Victorian imperial 'isolated' society,—and who called the empress of India's fiftieth anniversary celebration 'the most gigantic organised exhibition of fatuity, vulgarity and blatant blackguardism on record'[21]—came to the shores of the Mediterranean not only to romantically visit its vanished ancient world and its vanishing Mediterranean present on the brink of North-European modernisation. He also came to the Mediterranean, notwithstanding his solitary disposition, or maybe because of it, to *play the real game*, as Cassano puts it, to play the timeless game of the encounter with others in a spirit of mutual appreciation.

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20. Cassano, *Southern Thought*, 5.
21. Delany, 128.

Modernist Myths. A comparison between *La cognizione del dolore* and *Ulysses*[1]

Valentino Baldi

Following a typical scheme of the nineteenth-century novel, *La cognizione del dolore* begins in a traditional way by depicting the temporal, spatial and socio-economical background of the imaginary country Maradagàl. This traditional structure, however, is immediately contradicted by two digressions regarding the geographical location that deconstruct the consistency of the opening paragraph. Clearly, it is hard not to be distracted by such digressions. Some characters will return, even in secondary episodes, others will only live in these initial descriptions. A number of critics have given great importance to Gadda's decision to dedicate so much space to the story of Pedro Mahagones-Palumbo. Although different interpretations are quite convincing,[2] I believe one of the most important reasons for such a decision is represented by Gadda's relevance for our own times: he is, even if unwittingly, a modernist writer.

1. An earlier version of this essay has been published as *Fine dell'epifania tra l'«Ulisse» e «La cognizione del dolore»*, *Studi novecenteschi*, anno 2010, n. 1, gennaio–giugno.
2. I am referring, in particular, to Rinaldi's reading of the novel: the scholar exalts the crime novel's aspects of *Cognizione*, explaining that Gonzalo's and Palumbo's physical resemblance is the real cause of the mother's misunderstanding of her real killer. Rinaldi states that Palumbo is a double of Gonzalo and this also explains Gadda's digression in his war story; see R.S. Domsbroski, *Creative Entanglements: Gadda and the Baroque* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto, 1999), 83–120 and R. Rinaldi, *La paralisi e lo spostamento. Lettura critica de* La cognizione del dolore *di C.E. Gadda*, (Bastogi Editore: Livorno, 1977), 107–156.

The narrative organization of the first chapter of *Cognizione*, with all the space reserved for the night vigil story, recalls other modernist beginnings. I am referring to *Ulysses* that opens with the description of Buck Milligan's morning wash. Or, a more extreme example, *The Sun Also Rises*, a novel whose first two chapters concentrate on Robert Cohn, a loser and a secondary character. It is improbable that Gadda intended to directly quote these twentieth-century literary masterpieces. I believe, instead, that the nineteenth-century atmosphere I was alluding to at the beginning rapidly disappears and is replaced by a 'caleidoscopico Novecento'.[3]

It could be interesting to read *La cognizione del dolore* as a modernist *quête*. An adventure in search of the origins of the protagonist's grief. Gonzalo would be a mysterious hero-seeker, afflicted by his 'male oscuro'[4] and continuously humiliated the closer he gets to the cause of his inner disease.

Among the numerous literary references interspersed within the text, one of the most important is undoubtedly represented by *Hamlet*.[5] Gonzalo, without a father and far from a mother that distributes her affection to the *others*, is a Shakespearian character, as has been confirmed by those critics that have analyzed the intertextuality of this work.[6] However, I am not interested in looking into the connections between Gonzalo and Hamlet: this argument has been sufficiently investigated and Gadda's words in his preparatory notes to the novel seem explicit

3. C.E. Gadda, *San Giorgio in casa Brocchi. Romanzi e racconti II* (Garzanti: Milano, 2007), 658.
4. It is intersting to note that a year after the first publication of *Cognizione* in volume, Giuseppe Berto won both the Premio Viareggio and also the Premio Campiello for the novel *Il male oscuro*. It is not possible to study at length a comparison between these texts, but it is useful to remember that Berto's novel is a chronicle of the neurosis of a character after his father's death. The cardinal theme of this autobiographic work is the gradual approach of Berto to psychoanalysis. Gadda reviewed Berto's novel; see C.E. Gadda, *Saggi, Giornali, Favole e altri scritti I* (ed.), L. Orlando, C. Martignoni, D. Isella (Garzanti: Milano, 2008), 1200–1208.
5. See E. Manzotti, *La cognizione del dolore di Carlo Emilio Gadda. Letteratura italiana*, le *Opere* (Einaudi: Torino, 1996); R. Luperini, *L'allegoria del moderno* (Editori riuniti: Roma, 1996).
6. Emilio Manzotti, in fact, wrote: '[...] si può sostenere, schematizzando ma senza far troppa violenza alla verità, che la *Cognizione* si colloca nel campo di tre testi-modello, i quali intervengono in essa in modo diverso e complementare: e cioè, in ordine forse crescente di importanza, i *Karamazov, l'Amleto e i Promessi sposi*': E. Manzotti, 281.

enough: 'Nevrastenia: studiare e insistere, con misura, anche clinicamente (Amleto descrizione nevrosi)'.[7] Rather, the importance of Hamlet's character resides in the possibility of a comparison between *Cognizione* and one of the greatest modernist masterpieces: James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Contini's seminal essay which was published as a preface to the 1963 edition of the novel has almost become an intergral part of *Cognizione*'s structure and it has already compared Gadda's novel to another modernist work: Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Instead, with regard to Joyce there are no such explicit references. It is important to remember examples such as Roscioni's interpretation that relates Gadda's symbolism with Joyce's;[8] or Rinaldi's Junghian reading of the novel, in which the scholar does not hesitate to quote different *Ulysses* episodes seen as possible models for some chapters of Gadda's story.[9] Manzotti and Dombroski have also compared *Cognizione* to *Ulysses* and have highlighted the way in which the underlying lyrical structure makes both these works exemplary of a modern character's epic.[10]

Shakespeare's influence, however, could offer the first real clue in order to study more closely this proposal of drawing comparisons between Carlo Emilio Gadda and James Joyce. It is important to note, in fact, that Hamlet's theme has obsessed Gadda from the very beginning of his literary experiments up to his full maturity. In *Abbozzi di temi per tesi di laurea*, dating back to 1925, Gadda lists a series of *Temi quasi letterari, per una tesina* in which his very first reflections on Hamlet's figure are collected. The writer gives particular attention to the theme of doubt considered as a 'giudizio [accurato] e proceduralmente corretto'.[11] Almost thirty years later the writer retained the Hamletic dilemma as a 'tema difficilissimo da risolvere'.[12] As Giuseppe Stellardi has aptly noticed, it is in *Cognizione* that this model is prominently active. Gonzalo's position in the plot is similar, Stellardi argues, to Hamlet's: just as the Prince of Denmark, Gonzalo is 'in possesso ormai di inoppugnabili certezze [...]

7. See C.E. Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore*, edited by E. Manzotti (Einaudi: Torino, 1987), 546.
8. G.C. Roscioni, *La disarmonia prestabilita. Studi sul Gadda* (Einaudi: Torino, 1975), 19.
9. Rinaldi, 45.
10. Manzotti, *ibid.*, 208; Dombroski, *ibid.*, 75.
11. C.E. Gadda, 'Abbozzi di temi per tesi di laurea', in *Quaderni dell'ingegnere. Testi e studi gaddiani* (ed.), R. Stracuzzi, n. 4, 62.
12. C.E. Gadda, 'Intervista a più voci'. *Gadda al microfono. L'ingegnere e la Rai 1950–1955* (ed.), G. Ungarelli (Nuova ERI: Torino, 1993) 175.

che esigono azione, si trova a dover attaccare le parvenze non valide; questo è ciò che la verità inesorabilmente richiede, che la sua anima esige per affermarsi come sostanza non valida [...].'[13] The affinities become more and more evident if we consider the role played by the mother figure that operates similarly in both stories: 'La madre, in entrambi i casi, è al centro di una ragnatela di bugie che impediscono ai due protagonisti di vivere, e fanno della vita stessa una mostruosa commedia.'[14]

Even if Hamlet and Gonzalo do not directly commit matricide they both submit their mothers to outrage and offence, a necessary presupposition to the triumph of the truth.

It is possible to identify a similar working of the Shakespearean pattern in *Ulysses*. Stephen Dedalus, just like Gonzalo, is subjected to a Hamletic remorse with regard to his mother. From the very beginning of the Telemachus episode, the protagonist of the novel is accused by Buck Mulligan of indirectly killing his mother: '–The aunt thinks you have killed your mother, he said. That's why she won't let me have anything to do with you [...]. –You could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you, Buck Mulligan said.'[15] The sense of guilt will be one of Stephen's predominant psychological characterization: from the very beginning of the novel, he will in fact consciously imitate the behaviour and the clothing of the Prince of Denmark. Thanks to the insistent questions of Mulligan, the reader is also informed about Stephen's complex philosophical theories that he has elaborated on the Hamlet figure which confirm the protagonist's obsession with the Shakespearean model:[16] 'It is quite simple. He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson

13. G. Stellardi, 'Amleto...', in PGE, *The Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies*, n. 1, third edition, 2008.
14. *Ibid.*
15. J. Joyce, *Ulysses* (*The Modern Library Edition:* New York, 1992), 6.
16. Kenner has perfectly underlined Stephen's obsession with black clothes: 'Accordingly no other novelist is so preoccupied with clothes [...]. Stephen will imagine a Shakespearean actor dressed in "the cast-off mail of a court buck" [...] Stephen wears a "Hamlet hat" ' (H. Kenner, *Joyce's voices* (Dalkey Archive Press: London, 1978), 60. Joyce's preoccupation with clothes is an interesting clue that highlights the importance of the Shakespearean model in *Ulysses*. Amazingly, Gonzalo is always dressed in a Hamletic black suit: 'Vestito appena decentemente, con scarpe accollate di capretto, nerissime, a stringhe nere' (Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore*, *Ibid.*, 70), 'Le due scarpe a punte, lucide, nerissime, parvero due pepperoni neri, per quanto capovolti, puntuti' (71), 'L'alta figura di lui si disegnò nera nel vano della portafinestra, di sul terrazzo, come l'ombra di uno sconosciuto'265). Besides Gadda also elaborated interesting reflections on the relation Hamlet-Shakespeare that are very

is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father.'[17]

At the beginning of this essay I defined the structure of *Cognizione* as a *quête*. It is without doubt a search destined to remain incomplete, but maybe it is in this open structure that it will be possible to recover other interesting elements common to Joyce's and Gadda's novels. Both *Ulysses* and *Cognizione* end with the impossibility of a real reconciliation between the protagonists. The encounter between Bloom and Stephen takes place, but the two men are described as disoriented and drunk in the dregs of Dublin. Even the epiphanic hallucination of Mr Bloom's dead son in the episode of Circe is just a mute shadow that will not be able to communicate with his father:

> (Silent, thoughtful, alert, he stands on guard, his fingers at his lips in the attitude of secret master. Against the dark a figure appears slowly, a fairy boy of eleven, a changeling, kidnapped, dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet, holding a book in his hand. He reads from right to left inaudibly, smiling, kissing the page.)
>
> BLOOM
>
> (Wonderstruck, calls inaudibly.) Rudy!
>
> RUDY
>
> (Gazes unseeing into Bloom's eyes and goes on reading, kissing, smiling. He has a delicate mauve face. On his suit he has diamond and ruby buttons. In his free hand he holds a slim ivory cane with a violet bowknot. A white lambkin peeps out of his waistcoat pocket).[18]

Provocatively we could also state that *La cognizione del dolore* has a disappointing ending. The adjective expresses the *diminuendo* tone that unites this novel to the endings of *Ulysses*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Trial*. In *Cognizione* the country's dawn image repeatedly thwarts our attempt to identify the real killer of Signora and the apparition of the sun leaves the reader in a suspended and indefinite atmosphere:

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similar to Joyce's: 'Se no perché lo Shakespeare avrebbe chiamato Amleto il padre e Amleto il figlio? Forse era a corto di nomi propri?' (C.E. Gadda, *Scritti vari e postumi* [eds], A. Silvestri, C. Vela, D. Isella, P. Italia, G. Pinotti, Garzanti:Milano, 2008, 562). It is natural that both Joyce's and Gadda's games between biography and tragedy were based on the real figure of Hamnet, Shakespeare's dead son.

17. Joyce, 18.
18. *Ibid.*, 243.

> L'ausilio dell'arte medica, lenimento, pezzuole, dissimulò in parte l'orrore. Si udiva il residuo dell'acqua e alcool delle pezzuole strizzate ricadere gocciolando in una bacinella. E alle stecche delle persiane già l'alba. Il gallo, improvvisamente, la suscitò dai monti lontani, perentorio e ignaro, come ogni volta. La invitava ad accedere e ad elencare i gelsi, nella solitudine della campagna apparita.[19]

If we proceed to a more specific textual comparison, it could be possible to confirm the interpretative hypotheses just presented. One of the most symbolic moments in *Cognizione* is represented in the sixth chapter, containing a long episode of Gonzalo's stream of consciousness: mother and son are finally together inside Villa Pirobutirro after they have chased each other during the course of the first part of the novel. They are now ready for dinner, but their real encounter is still destined to fail again: in this chapter Gadda chooses to focus almost completely on mental images, which are so vivid that they seem real.

The sixth chapter of *Cognizione* does not describe an encounter between two characters, but an impossible commentary of two interiorities. Signora never talks to Gonzalo, but she interweaves an unconscious dialogue with her son in search of the origins of his grief. It is exactly at this point that the novel, just like a psychoanalytic investigation, turns to Gonzalo's interiority. It is not possible to entirely quote Gonzalo's stream of consciousness. I will try to follow the cardinal points of a highly figural writing:

> Maree d'uomini e di femmine! con distinguibile galleggiamento di parrucchieri di lusso, tenitrici di case pubbliche, fabbricanti di accessorî per motociclette, e coccarde. [...] E poi ancora femmine, femmine, dopo lo zinco e la Recoleta; femmine! come barchi di cabotaggio rimessi a nuovo, stradipinte, col riso delle bassaridi aperto su trantadue denti fino agli orecchi; una sottanella gualcita, di mezza lana, a tegumentare d'un mistero da diez pesos [...]. Oppure, agli antipodi, i salumai grassi, come baffuti topi, insaccatori di topi; torreggianti sul marmo alto, con mannaia, i macellai-scimitarra; o paonazzi sensali, nel foro, a bociare sobre el granado; o bozzolieri in marsina tumefatti dalla prosopopea delle virtú keltikesi al completo, con undici bargigli, se pure inetti a spiccare una sola zeta dai denti: elettrotecnici miopi come carciofi: preti (presbiteriani) in abito di ballo, droghieri brachischelici dalle brache piene di saccarina contrabbandata; ingegneri cornuti, medici delle budella, e dei rognoni, e specialisti del perepepè: guardie giurate, ladri, gasisti, ruffiane asmatiche, stuccatori e stuccatrici d'ogni risma! [...]

19. C.E. Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore*, 226.

> La sarabanda famelica vorticava sotto i globi elettrici dondolati dal pampero, tra miriadi di sifoni di selz. [...] Tutti, tutti! Turchi, frittellari, circassi, mendicanti ghitarroni d'Andalusia, polacchi, armeni, mongoli, santoni arabi in bombetta, labbroni senegalesi dai piedi caprigni, e perfino i Langobardòi di Cormanno, immigrati di Cormanno (Curtis Manni), a battere, anche nel nuovo mondo, il primato della ottusità e della mancanza di fantasia.[20]

Comparisons, metaphors and hyperboles are structured in a very long catalogue that articulates the entire discourse. The quoted passage demonstrates how it is no longer possible to identify clear relations between listed elements: the images follow one after another in an aggregate in which everything is on the same level. People's behaviour is described in an intense and exaggerated way. There are no confines separating Gonzalo's delirium and the realistic descriptions of Villa. External and internal realities are on the same level and this is exactly one of the five unconscious characteristics listed by Freud in his *Metapsychology*. It is important to point out the loss of boundaries between different class members: disparate nationalities mingle and become 'la sarabanda famelica' and, at the same time, 'macellai, elettrotecnici e santoni arabi' are drawn close to various types of animals and plants as much as they assume their behaviour and their features. All these delirious images are depicted in an absolute and motionless time. Rarely, as a counterpoint to this contest, the time of the story emerges and underlines how the external scene is always fixed in the inside of Villa Pirobutirro: 'La mamma, ora, dopo essere uscita e rientrata più volte, attendeva ella pure all'impiedi, quasi tremando, le mani ricongiunte sul grembo, che il figliuolo si mettesse a tavola'.[21] These *intermezzo* are a way in which Gadda expresses the simultaneity of Gonzalo's mental images. The reader could have the impression of travelling among infinite contexts but the time in the novel is fixed: only a few instants elapse in the chapter. By the end of this chapter Gonzalo's thoughts analogically move toward images of men in a restaurant:

> Camerieri neri, nei «restaurants», avevano il frac, per quanto pieno di padelle: e il piastrone d'amido, con cravatta posticcia. [...] Signori seri, nei «restaurants» delle stazioni, e da prender sul serio, ordinavano loro con perfetta sincerità «un ossobuco con risotto». Ed essi, con cenni premurosi, annuivano. [...] Dopo di che, oggetto di stupefatta ammirazione

20. *Ibid.*, 119–131.
21. *Ibid.*, 136.

> da parte degli «altri tavoli», aspiravano la prima boccata di quel fumo d'eccezione [...] E così rimanevano: il gomito appoggiato sul tavolino, la sigaretta fra medio e indice, emanando voluttuosi ghirigori; mescolati di miasmi, questo si sa, dei bronchi e dei polmoni felici [...].[22]

The numerous affinities with the Lyestygonian episode are quite surprising. I am referring to the sense of disgust in watching the animal voracity of the restaurant's customers that associates Leopold Bloom to Gonzalo, but also to Joyce's and Gadda's capacity of orientating their writings between mimesis and a high rate of symmetry:

> Men, men, men. | Perched on high stools by the bar, hats shoved back, at the tables calling for more bread no charge, swilling, wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food, their eyes bulging, wiping wetted moustaches. A pallid suetfaced young man polished his tumbler knife fork and spoon with his napkin. New sets of microbes. A man with an infant's saucestained napkin tucked round him shovelled gurgling soup down his gullet. A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle: no teeth to chewchewchew it. Choum chop from the grill. Bolting to get it over. Sad booser's eyes. Bitten off more than he can chew. Am I like that? See ourselves as others see us. Hungry man is an angry man. Working tooth and jaw. [...] Smells of men. His gorge rose. Spaton sawdust, sweetish warmish cigarette smoke, reek of plug, split beer, men's beery piss, the stale of ferment.[23]

In the Joycean episode, the customers in the restaurants seem monstrous and cruel beings that eat their kind like cannibals. In an analogous vein, in *Cognizione* the act of eating is so characterizing that it transforms the characters described in the restaurant into 'manichini ossobuchivori'. It seems that the narration, focalized inside Gonzalo's delirium, creates a hyperrealism in which everything is potentially recordable, even the peristalsis of the fellow dinner:

> mentre che lo stomaco era messo in giulebbe, e andava dietro come un disperato ameboide a mantrugiare e a peptonizzare l'ossobuco. La peristalsi veniva via con un andazzo trionfale, da parer canto e trionfo, e presagio lontano di tamburo, la marcia trionfale dell'Aida o il toreador della Carmen.[24]

22. *Ibid.*, 140–145.
23. Joyce, 169.
24. Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore*, 146.

The refined literary reference creates the effect of an entanglement because it is evocative of the description of the digestive process, an intimate and negligible particular of the everyday life that is superfluous from a purely literary point of view. It is the same literary effect that Joyce achieves with the description of Leopold Bloom in the Calypso episode: this illustrates how the modernist narrations of Joyce and Gadda are intimately related: 'Quietly he read, restraining himself, the first column and, yielding but resisting, began the second. Midway, his last resistance yielding, he allowed his bowels to ease themselves quietly as he read, reading still patiently, that slight constipation of yesterday quite gone.'[25]

The opening chapter of the Second Part of *Cognizione* is apparently the only symbolic passage of the text. The stylistic register moves on high and lyrical tones and the real protagonist of the story is finally introduced: Signora, Gonzalo's mother. The whole fifth chapter is focused on the description of the symbolic descent of the lady into the domestic nether world of the villa. The thought of the woman is constantly addressed to her first son, who died during the First World War, and who seems to accompany her during the diegesis. The darkness of the scene seems almost tangible: it is the blackness of the motionless present time. In Gadda's novel it is customary for expressions describing the stillness of time to be linked with black as a chromatic constant. Lighting a match, that for an instant brightens up the surrounding darkness, seems to be an objective correlative of thwarted hope. I believe that in this novel, even at such a dramatic moment, there is no space for epiphany that would have allowed the characters to recover their own past. The protagonists of *Cognizione* walk in the waste land of twentieth-century allegory where things are only things, the Montalian 'cocci aguzzi di bottiglia' are absent, and it is no longer conceivable to rip the dusty and dysphoric veil that lies on the surface of the text. I will define this kind of obscure allegory with the Gaddian periphrasis 'atti tutti adempiuti': it is no longer possible for the characters to critically recover their past in order to build a present identity. This writing is incredibly close, formally and thematically, to Joyce's literary solutions in the Third Part of *Ulysses*. If the smell of putrid cabbages was still able to penetrate Stephen epiphanically in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, showing him the emptiness of his own existence, the objects in the final part of *Ulysses* have a compact and impenetrable form: they are just catalogues according to which that laceration in the characters' interiority is not possible. In the Nighttown

25. Joyce, 69.

section Joyce no longer seems able to constitute a dynamic relationship between objects: his description of reality is usually pulverized in long paratactic listings in which no object deserves to comment on the others. In *Ithaca*, for example, Stephen and Mr Bloom finally come home and this chapter appears to be completely objective. The whole episode is in fact structured on an empty series of questions and answers capable of creating a deeply disconcerting effect on the reader:[26]

> What did Bloom see on the range?
>
> On the right (smaller) hob a blue enamelled saucepan: on the left (larger) hob a black iron kettle.
>
> What did Bloom do at the range?
>
> He removed the saucepan from the left hob, rose and carried the iron kettle to the sink in order to tap the current by turning the faucet to let it flow.
>
> [...]
>
> What concomitant phenomenon took place in the vessel of liquid by the agency of fire?
>
> The phenomenon of ebullition. Fanned by a constant up-draught of ventilation between the kitchen and the chimney-flue, ignition was communicated from the faggots of precombustible fuel to polyhedral masses of bituminous coal, [...][27]

The binary structure of question/answer is overloaded by mathematics, physics and thermodynamic notions, expressed in the form of long lists. These unnecessary objects never open a laceration in the characters' interiority, the way they do, on the contrary, in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* as analyzed by Auerbach. Objects leave just traces of pure matter on the page, and they are described in an increasingly independent and impersonal language. The characters, placed within this non significant and non communicative context, are destined to explode in a multiplicity of contradictions. As we have seen, Gadda uses a similar literary technique when he describes Gonzalo's delirium. The mind images of the protagonist of *Cognizione* are violently unleashed on the page: objects, persons, animals are all the detritus of a death allegorical reality in which it is impossible to hypothesize any luminous epiphanic rip.

26. See F. Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* (Verso: New York 2007), 167.
27. Joyce, 670–673.

It is Stephen himself that gives a definition of this new kind of art, so distant from the spiritual epiphany that Joyce was abandoning after his *Portrait*. In a dialogue with Mr Deasy, Stephen offers an allegory of a new poetics whose *radiance* is oriented only in contemplating things and their *quidditas*:

> He came forward a pace and stood by the table. His under-jaw fell sideways open uncertainly. In this old wisdom? He waits to hear from me.
> History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.
> From the playfield the boys raised a shout. A whirring whistle: goal. What if that nightmare gave you a back kick?
> The ways of the Creator are not our ways, Mr Deasy said. All history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God.
> Stephen jerked his thumbs towards the window, saying:
> That is God.
> Hooray! Ay! Whttwhee!
> What? Mr Deasy asked.
> A shout in the street, Stephen answered, shrugging his shoulders.[28]

Cognizione is not a novel that leaves much room for epiphanies. All the events have already taken place, the causes of Gonzalo's grief are not part of the story and even when they reappear in the present time, they do so through flashes and glimpses without mediation. The tense of memories, when a critical self-awareness would have been possible, or at least a dialectic confrontation with one's own past, is replaced by an almost motionless time where sudden traumas make their painful appearance. It is no longer an epiphanic time, but rather it is the time of the modern allegory, simply reduced to disphoric debris. Therefore *La cognizione del dolore* is a novel that has no evolving characters, just monads that are projected onto a motionless horizon where one no longer can recreate 'il tempo degli atti possibili' and live, critically, with one's own grief. In this literary context it is not possible to think of any sudden spiritual revelation. In Joyce's *The Dead*, for example, the sound of a melody during a Christmas party radically upsets the life of Gretta and Gabriel, bringing about the epiphanic re-emergence of the dead fiancé Gabriel Fury. Such a negative upheaval is no longer conceivable in *Cognizione*. Any attempt to recover the past—'favilla dolorosa del tempo'—is continuously destined to be thwarted by motionless time. Crucial evidence

28. *Ibid.*, 34.

of such a new poetics is contained in the penultimate chapter of the novel in which Gonzalo, surrounded by a group of *peones* that crowd the villa, abandons himself to his mental visions. Just like the model of *The Dead*, a childhood melody simultaneously connects past and present:

> Una musichetta nasale veniva fuori dal perno del macchinone, secoli di musica e bisognava fare onore alla tradizione musicale, come se la Miseria avesse preso il raffreddore. Più tardi negli anni quella musica celestiale gli ritornò con gocce di luna tersissime, ed era la Norma....Ma allora dalla giostra gli pareva la musica del cenciume, del naso brodoso, della rivolta, dei torroni, dei colpi di gomito, delle frittelle, delle arachidi brustolite che precipitano il mal di pancia alle merde.[29]

The epiphany, however, remains only a possibility and nothing else, it is annulled by the immense 'sciocchezzaio' of the past years. The passage quoted is a sample of paralysis without epiphany: the evoked images are just a 'scialo di triti fatti', dusty and empty, listed in a descendent hyperbolic movement that ends with the lowest degree: 'precipitano il mal di pancia alle merde.' Without time any recovery of lost circumstances is not conceivable. The Hamletic incapability of acting influences the entire structure of *Cognizione*: any recovery of classical and literary references does not lead to tragedy and is in explicit contradiction to modern life. Gadda's and Joyce's writings recall one another in their use of the myth as an authoritative model that at the same time has to be superseded.

This attempt to compare *Ulysses* and *Cognizione* is only the beginning of a critical discourse that should be examined more closely. Even if there is no biographical evidence of any type of contact between these two writers, I believe that their common attempt to overcome the symbol and the poetics of epiphany in order to embrace the obscure twentieth-century allegory brings them much closer than has ever been taken into consideration. It is evidently true as Di Martino writes, that 'Il bisogno di riscattare il valore etico della propria opera deve cioè aver spinto Gadda a rivendicare il suo legame col passato realistico ottocentesco, facendogli negare invece l'affiliazione con la scrittura moderna',[30] but it is an undeniable fact that in the long list of authors read and quoted by Gadda—

29. Gadda, *La cognizione del dolore*, 180–183.
30. L. Di Martino, 'Gadda-Joyce', PGE, «The Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies», n. 4, 69.

Shakespeare, Shaw, Dickens, Swift, Baudelaire and Dostoevskij—Joyce has a relevant place among them. I think it is suggestive that even if the stylistic differences between Gadda and Joyce are macroscopic, their literary trajectory follows similar aesthetic paths. These affinities are proof of what can still be unearthed on Gadda: a high modernist writer able to engage with the most important representatives of world literature.

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Mysterious Apparitions in the Land of Darkness: The Influence of Conrad in Buzzati's Short Fiction

Valentina Polcini

The existence of an intertextual relationship between Dino Buzzati and Joseph Conrad has been pointed out by scholars since the 1970s, even though in many cases they did not go beyond a cursory acknowledgement of similarities in the works of the two authors. For example, Antonia Arslan just lists Conrad's *Lord Jim* among Buzzati's juvenile readings which might have left their imprint in his creative mind.[1] Marcello Carlino makes rather unconvincing associations between Buzzati and other writers, one of whom is Conrad:

> Di Conrad si utilizzano, a scartamento ridotto, parvenze di immagini e climi di sospensione, denotati da un ambiguo rapporto tra personaggi, personaggio e ambiente; ma, per quanto attiene alle innovazioni stilistiche dell'esule polacco, al gergo e al disporsi allucinato del linguaggio, nessuna traccia si conserva nella scrittura di Buzzati.[2]

In general, when critics did not overtly accuse Buzzati of plagiarism, they brought to light only some similarities in the settings and characters, thereby confirming the Conradian influence but nevertheless deeming Buzzati a mere epigone.

1. Antonia Arslan, *Invito alla lettura di Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1974), 34.
2. Marcello Carlino, *Come leggere 'Il deserto dei Tartari' di Dino Buzzati* (Milan: Mursia, 1976), 54.

It is only in the mid-1980s that scholars began to apply an intertextual approach, resulting in a reassessment of Buzzati's work and its dialogue with other texts. In this respect, Judy Rawson's first-ever presentation of Buzzati to the English-speaking public in 1984 represents a landmark. Taking into account the link with Conrad that Buzzati himself mentions in the book-length interview *Un autoritratto*,[3] Rawson recognizes Conrad's *Lord Jim* as a hypotext for Buzzati's first novel *Bàrnabo delle montagne*. She draws a connection between the two protagonists and interprets Bàrnabo as an anti-hero because of his lack of courage and eventual understated redemption:

> He is a Lord Jim figure who fails his fellow forest wardens when they are under attack from bandits. He retreats to the tame peasant life of the plains, but returns finally to make good in his own unspectacular way as the solitary warden of an outpost in the high mountains near the frontier.[4]

Further investigation on this point has been carried out by Nella Giannetto, who writes:

> [...] entrambi sono in realtà degli antieroi, cui toccano in sorte soprattutto sconfitte e che riescono alla fine a riscattarsi parzialmente solo accettando con dignità e una nuova intelligenza delle cose un epilogo del tutto diverso da quello al quale hanno mirato per tutta la vita.[5]

In addition, Giannetto associates the protagonist of Buzzati's short story 'Il borghese stregato' with that of Conrad's *Victory* for their detachment from reality.

Starting from Giannetto's suggestion, in this article I will illustrate how Conrad's narrative inspired Buzzati's short fiction, precisely some African reportages with a conspicuous fictional component and short stories *tout court*. Whereas the influence of *Lord Jim* on *Bàrnabo delle*

3. Buzzati says: 'Quali sono i personaggi letterari che mi hanno più incantato?... Sono Lord Jim di Conrad, e quell'altro suo protagonista (di cui non mi ricordo più il nome) nel libro *Vittoria*, che è una vicenda molto simile a quella di Lord Jim'; Yves Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto. Dialoghi con Yves Panafieu. Luglio-settembre 1971* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973), 112.
4. Judy Rawson, 'Dino Buzzati', in *Writers and Society in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Michael Caesar and Peter Hainsworth (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1984), 191–210 (191).
5. Cf. Nella Giannetto, 'Dino Buzzati e la letteratura inglese', in *Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Felix Siddell (*Spunti e Ricerche*, 13, 1998), 38–58 (52).

montagne is recognizable mainly on a thematic level, the focus on Buzzati's short writings allows us to appreciate a variety of intertextual strategies he used, ranging from literary memory to direct and indirect allusion. This opens up new perspectives concerning Buzzati's creation of settings and characterization as well as the fictionalization of his experience in Africa and the dualism between journalistic and fictional writing dominating his career.

Before passing to textual analysis, it is important to contextualize Buzzati as a reader of Conrad's works. Buzzati first read Conrad in his youth and soon made him one of his favourite writers. A reference to Conrad can be found in the letter Buzzati sent to his lifelong friend Arturo Brambilla on 25th July 1925, when the writer was almost nineteen. After inviting Arturo to spend some days in the family villa outside Belluno, he writes about his summer reading and concludes with a telegraphic request: 'Portami Lord Jim'.[6] Many years later Buzzati acknowledges his youth predilection for Conrad:

> Nella mia giovinezza, nella mia adolescenza, ci furono gli inglesi: Oscar Wilde, Poe [...]. Naturalmente un po' Stevenson. Conrad, eh, Conrad, parecchio! Dickens, anche. Per esempio, ciò che in Conrad per me è il massimo della bellezza è *Cuore di tenebra*.[7]

Autobiographical evidence confirms Buzzati's profound literary interest in Conrad, thus partly explaining why Conrad became such an inspiring model when Buzzati set to write fiction. Moreover, from *Lettere a Brambilla* and *Un autoritratto* it is also possible to determine which Conrad books Buzzati read. They are: *Lord Jim* (first serialized in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1899–1900 and published as a book in 1900), *Heart of Darkness* (first serialized in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1898–1899 and published in book form in 1902), and *Victory* (1915).[8]

Tracing the possible intertextual archetypes for Buzzati's landscapes, Caspar talks of 'influence culturelle' and lists Conrad among those authors

6. Dino Buzzati, *Lettere a Brambilla*, ed. by Luciano Simonelli (Novara: Istituto Geografico De Agostini, 1985), 173.
7. Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto*, 28.
8. A clarification should be made that Buzzati could not read English, so he would generally read English books in either Italian or French translation. This must have been the case for Conrad's fiction too. As Giannetto points out, this linguistic issue is of some import when studying Buzzati's intertextuality (see Giannetto, 'Dino Buzzati e la letteratura inglese', 38).

—such as Hans Christian Andersen, the Grimm brothers, E.T.A. Hoffmann, R. L. Stevenson, E.A. Poe—, who inspired Buzzati with 'une prédilection très nette pour les paysages "nordiques" lui rappelant ses chères Dolomites.'[9] This link between Conrad—whose stories are mainly set at sea and in exotic colonial outposts in the Pacific—and Buzzati's literary preference for northern mountainous scenery may sound far-fetched, but it hints nonetheless at Buzzati's protean idea of landscape. In some passages of *Un autoritratto*, Buzzati compares the mountains of northern Italy (that he had known since childhood) with the African desert (where he spent some time as a war correspondent for the *Corriere della sera*),[10] not just for their morphologic likeness but, more specifically, because they aroused similar emotions in him:

> Effettivamente, quando sono stato in Africa mi sono reso conto che c'era molta somiglianza tra gli uadi del deserto, sempre secchi – pioverà una volta in cinquant'anni – e i greti dei nostri fiumi, che sono una delle poche cose che diano il senso della solitudine nella natura, almeno quale ce la vediamo intorno adesso [...][11]

> L'Abissinia allora, era come un western favoloso. L'Africa dei deserti mi ha fatto un'immensa impressione, che però si ricollega per infinite analogie alle esperienze di montagna.[12]

In the introduction to the collection of Buzzati's African writings, Caspar places him in the line of those authors who—since the late nineteenth century—have described Africa as a primeval, mythical and impenetrable continent. Conrad with his *Heart of Darkness* is obviously named among them.[13] It is also relevant to note that Buzzati enjoyed re-reading this novel when he was onboard the battle cruiser *Trieste* in 1941: 'D'altro, niente di speciale. Ho riletto con molto piacere *Cuore di tenebra* di Conrad; leggo qualche libro yogi e niente altro.'[14] The reasons why he picked from the shelf a book he had presumably read as a teenager

9. Marie-Hélène Caspar, *Fantastique et mythe personnel dans l'oeuvre de Dino Buzzati* (La Garenne-Colombes: Erasme, 1990), 146.
10. For a complete biographical account of Buzzati in Africa see Lorenzo Viganò, *Album Buzzati* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), 151–184.
11. Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto*, 48.
12. Quoted in *L'Africa di Buzzati. Libia: 1933; Etiopia: 1939–1940*, ed. by Marie-Hélène Caspar (Nanterre: Université Paris X, 1997), 33.
13. *Ibid.*, 60.
14. Letter dated R. Nave *Trieste*, 2nd August 1941, in Buzzati, *Lettere a Brambilla*, 262.

around fifteen years before may be various, but we can quite rightly assume that it was not just for pleasure. In all probability, Buzzati somehow associated Kurtz's story with his own African experience. He was trying to find a measure with which to compare the Italian colonial enterprise, or even an access key to the unfathomable mysteries of Africa, by juxtaposing his own response with the viewpoint expressed by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*—which is also based on its author's autobiographical experience.

Still, such implications can hardly be detected in the articles Buzzati wrote from Africa for the *Corriere della sera*, since they are mainly documentary pieces and did not escape the Fascist censor. There are nonetheless some rare occasions in which Buzzati's fictional vein takes over the journalistic restraints imposed by Fascist rhetoric and the image of an alluring Africa breaks through.[15] In this regard, the ending of a long article about *centurione* Bertoglio and his plan to rebuild the deserted city of Gildessa is a notable example:

> Ce n'andammo verso il tramonto, lasciando il regio residente ai piedi della bandierina tricolore che tra poco sarebbe stata ammainata. Allontanandoci si ebbe l'impressione che dietro a noi si chiudesse una porta invisibile. E che dietro questa porta fosse rimasto esiliato il centurione Bertoglio, più solitario e tranquillo che mai, mentre sipari neri si alzavano dai funesti valloni e i fuochi fatui uscivano fuori delle tombe per terrorizzare le iene.[16]

In this excerpt, the appeal of the exotic landscape is combined with the uncanny feeling that the Italian settlers will never penetrate the depths of Africa, although they have marked this land with familiar signs, such as the *tricolore*. This cultural divide is symbolized by the image of a door closing behind the group of visitors; since they cannot comprehend Africa, the natural scenery lying on the other side of the invisible barrier assumes a phantasmagorical connotation. Like Conrad's Kurtz, Bertoglio is among those very few Europeans who have found a key to the mysteries of the Continent and have thus embarked on a one-way journey into the 'heart of darkness'. The chosen ones have undergone a transformation that led them to abandon their former selves; for this reason, they have become

15. For further reading on the interconnections between journalistic and fictional writing in Buzzati's fantastic, see Luciano Parisi, 'Dino Buzzati: l'ambiguità della fantasia', *Forum Italicum*, 39, 1 (2005), 83–99.

16. Dino Buzzati, 'Un uomo bianco solo nella città morta' (1° gennaio 1940), in *L'Africa di Buzzati*, ed. by Caspar, 169–175 (175).

legendary figures—half mystic half mad—in the eyes of their fellows. In short, Bertoglio, marooned in such a lonely spot, is one of those inscrutable creatures produced by Italian colonialism, just as Kurtz can be regarded as a historical outcome of the contradictions of British imperialism.

If in Buzzati's reportages Conrad's shadow comes out only in the overlap between journalistc writing and fiction, it is more patent in his fictional stories. The short story 'Uomo in Africa', that Buzzati was commissioned to write by the journal *Primato* in 1940, deals with the idea of inevitably being dragged into the heart of Africa. The protagonist is an Italian whose name remains deliberately vague being alternatively spelt as Bondini, Bondrini and Brondini. Because of his unspecified identity, this man can be seen as embodying every European colonizer who went to Africa searching for personal fulfilment. The narrator first comes across the B-character in a hotel hall in Addis Abeba: the mysterious man in a grey suit is sitting in an armchair patiently awaiting his chance. Afterwards, he reappears in various places involved in different occupations: in Dassiè building new roads, in an unknown district of the interior working as a charcoal burner, and in the Ethiopian desert serving as an army officer. Moreover, the B-character eventually takes off his worn-out suit and puts on a Sahara tunic: this act is an index of his complete detachment from the homeland. For both Kurtz and the B-character, Africa triggers a process of self-discovery ending in a confrontation with their souls:

> Mano mano che l'Africa si andava impadronendosi di lui e della sua vita, i desideri di Bondini parevano ridurre progressivamente il loro respiro. Una volta era il ritorno in Italia ad apparirgli l'unica speranza. Poi fu l'Asmara che risplendeva alla mente sua – giù nelle solitudini dancale – come un conturbante miraggio, per nulla dissimile dalle grandi città dei romanzi, popolate di occasioni e di amori. Oggi niente più di Diredaua bastava ad appagare i suoi sogni mondani.
>
> Ch'egli si fosse veramente dimenticato l'esistenza dell'Europa, dell'umanità diversa ed immensa, accalcata tra meravigliosi palazzi (anche se tetri) lungo strade fiammeggianti tutta notte di candide luci? Erano le aspirazioni sue divenute in un certo senso provinciali e meschine? Oppure si era compiuta una sempre maggiore rinuncia, un fondo mutamento d'animo, lui stesso inconsapevole?[17]

17. Dino Buzzati, 'Uomo in Africa' (2 marzo 1940), *ibid.*, 320–326 (323).

Bondini/Bondrini/Brondini's one-way journey to Africa, like that of Kurtz, stands for a metaphorical journey into the darkness of the human soul. What he finds there is 'soltanto una specie di vuoto immobile e caldo',[18] but—similar to Kurtz crying out 'the horror' with his last breath—the discovery of this void will change him completely, because it represents the ultimate shocking truth about human existence.

Along with the mountains and the desert, the sea is another Buzzatian setting. However, as Lazzarin explains in relation to 'La corazzata Tod', Buzzati's personal experience of the sea was so limited that he had to resort to his literary memory. Conrad was of course one of the writers he recalled:

> D'altro canto, la descrizione dell'affondamento di una nave e della grande tranquillità dell'oceano subito dopo la catastrofe sembra essere in qualche misura canonica nella narrativa ottocentesca: si pensi ancora a *L'uomo che ride* di Hugo e a *Lord Jim* di Conrad. Può dunque risultare difficile, in tanto numero di riferimenti, e tanto 'nobili', ricostruire l'iter delle influenze testuali; tuttavia, al di là del dubbio sullo statuto della fonte, tra recupero diretto e materiale di genere, resta la conformità della descrizione buzzatiana a un canone.
>
> Nella narrativa buzzatiana il mare è contesto ambientale di scarsa rilevanza. Talora però criteri di coerenza ed economicità ne impongono l'utilizzazione: la memoria letteraria esercita in questi casi una funzione di supplenza, sostituendosi a un'esperienza biografica inesistente o poco marcata. Un certo coefficiente di convenzionalità della descrizione, che esibisce il suo carattere letterario, sembra inevitabile.[19]

Lazzarin's argument is backed by biographical evidence. Even though 'La corazzata Tod' first appeared in *Sessanta racconti* in 1958 and therefore was supposedly written after the war, Buzzati's direct involvement in ocean battles had been rather insignificant, as he himself admits:

> [...] Io non conosco il grande oceano, o meglio, essendo stato in marina con delle grandi navi, non è che io abbia combattuto con l'oceano... D'altra parte non ho mai assistito a grandi tempeste, salvo una volta di

18. *Ibid.*, 324.
19. Stefano Lazzarin, 'Immagini del mondo e memoria letteraria nella narrativa buzzatiana', in *Dino Buzzati. Immagini del mondo*, Proceedings of the Conference, Paris X-Nanterre, 28 May 1994, ed. by Marie-Hélène Caspar (Paris: Publidix, 1994) (= *Narrativa*, 6, 1994), 139–154 (153).

> notte, nel Mediterraneo, in cui delle navi erano andate a fondo... Ma per questo non posso dire di avere proprio assorbito la bellezza dell'oceano[...] Per il deserto invece è stato diverso. Ci sono rimasto abbastanza. Sia nel deserto piatto, quello del Sahara, sia nel deserto tipo *brousse* o savana. Lì è una cosa stupenda[...][20]

A similar case can be added to the one identified by Lazzarin. This is also linked to Conrad and the seascape but establishes a different type of intertextual connection, perhaps more explicit yet equally interesting. The protagonist of 'Lo scoglio' inquires into the legend of a father, whose sorrow of having lost his son at sea was so unbearable that he was transformed into a rock off the coasts of Lipari. The narrator is taken to the place by a strange boatman, who turns out to be the ghost of another father whose son had died twenty-five years before in the battle of Cape Matapan. The motif of the mournful parent undergoing sea change is doubly intensified by the use of the narrative frame of a story within the story. However, the mise-en-abyme structure is in turn interrupted by the historical-autobiographical reference,[21] thus resulting in a typical Buzzatian blending of genres: while the first story is a mythological tale, the second can be defined as semi-realistic. The sea, that constitutes the background for them both, is represented as the mysterious abode of awful creatures whose unheard-of stories at once frighten and intrigue. The two fathers are telling examples: one has become an unnaturally twisted rock covered with seaweed, the other looks like a dead jellyfish and:

> Era alto, scheletrico, intensamente pallido e gli si sarebbero dati per lo meno novanta anni se il volto, affilatissimo, avesse avuto una sola ruga. *Anche per il singolare cappello di paglia a tesa orizzontale larghissima ricordava certe meridiane apparizioni dei tropici cariche di fatalità, balenanti dalle pagine di Conrad.* Ma ciò che più colpiva era la sua totale 'assenza' quale è dei fantasmi, i quali ignorano tutto quello che avviene intorno.
>
> Notai che le scarne braccia terminavano in mani morbosamente nocchiute che si muovevano con fatica, a rivelare lunghi travagli di artrosi. Anche il passo era stento e alquanto tremulo. Se il mare non fosse stato così rassicurante, mai avrei accettato un accompagnatore tanto problematico.[22]

20. Panafieu, *Dino Buzzati: un autoritratto*, 48.
21. Buzzati took part in the battle of Cape Matapan on board Italian battle cruisers on 28–29 March 1941 (see Viganò, *Album Buzzati*, 176).
22. Dino Buzzati, 'Lo scoglio', in *Le notti difficili*, ed. by Domenico Porzio (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), 26–31 (29), my italics.

Instead of providing the readers with an imitative description, Buzzati appeals to their literary memory, taking for granted their acquaintance with Conrad's fiction, and especially with his characterization of certain seafaring figures. The passage quoted above offers a physical description of the boatman, which corresponds to the norms of the Buzzatian fantastic: a creature poised between reality and dream. If, on the one hand, his wasted appearance makes him a man of flesh and blood, on the other, his total unconcern for the world characterizes him as a ghost. As often happens in Buzzati, ambiguity is left unsolved thereby lingering on beyond the material boundaries of the text. What is quite unusual is the explicit allusion to Conrad in the narration. It seems almost as if Buzzati feels unable to reproduce the typical Conradian aura that surrounds the characters inhabiting the seascape and thus he resorts to mentioning his model directly. To say it in Harold Bloom's terms,[23] Buzzati might have felt the weight of his own *belatedness* and preferred to simply declare Conrad's superiority as master of sea narrative, instead of daring to confront him on a fictional ground.

More than other intertextual practices, allusion demands from the reader an adequate literary background as well as an active role in decoding clues and making connections with other texts. The figure picked out by Buzzati is a recurrent one in Conrad's fiction. The detail of the wide-rimmed pith hat is highly evocative of the paradigm of tropical heat, which causes hallucination—even madness—and which is related to the sense of fatality experienced in extreme weather conditions. The following extract from *Heart of Darkness* makes clear what Buzzati is hinting at:

> Through my glasses I saw the slope of a hill interspersed with rare trees and perfectly free from undergrowth. A long decaying building on the summit was half buried in the high grass; the large holes in the peaked roof gaped black from afar; the jungle and the woods made a background. There was no enclosure or fence of any kind; but there had been one apparently, for near the house half-a-dozen slim posts remained in a row, roughly trimmed, and with their upper ends ornamented with round carved balls. The rails, or whatever there had been between, had disappeared. Of course the forest surrounded all that. The river-bank was clear, *and on the water-side I saw a white man under a hat like a cart-wheel beckoning persistently with his whole arm.* Examining the edge of the forest above and below, I was almost certain I could see movements—human forms

23. My reference is of course to Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

> gliding here and there. I steamed past prudently, then stopped the engines and let her drift down. The man on the shore began to shout, urging us to land. 'We have been attacked,' screamed the manager. 'I know – I know. It's all right,' yelled back the other, as cheerful as you please. 'Come along. It's all right. I am glad.'
>
> His aspect reminded me of something I had seen – something funny I had seen somewhere. As I manoeuvred to get alongside, I was asking myself, 'What does this fellow look like?' Suddenly I got it. He looked like a harlequin. His clothes had been made of some stuff that was brown holland probably, but it was covered with patches all over, with bright patches, blue, red, and yellow – patches on the back, patches on front, patches on elbows, on knees; coloured binding round his jacket, scarlet edging at the bottom of his trousers; and the sunshine made him look extremely gay and wonderfully neat withal, because you could see how beautifully all this patching had been done. *A beardless, boyish face, very fair, no features to speak of, nose peeling, little blue eyes, smiles and frowns chasing each other over that open countenance like sunshine and shadow on a windswept plain.* 'Look out, captain!' he cried; 'there's a snag lodged in here last night.' What! Another snag? I confess I swore shamefully. I had nearly holed my cripple, to finish off that charming trip. The harlequin on the bank turned his little pug nose up to me. 'You English?' he asked, all smiles. 'Are you?' I shouted from the wheel. The smiles vanished, and he shook his head as if sorry for my disappointment. Then he brightened up. 'Never mind!' he cried encouragingly. 'Are we in time?' I asked. 'He is up there,' he replied, with a toss of the head up the hill, and becoming gloomy all of a sudden. *His face was like the autumn sky, overcast one moment and bright the next.*[24]

This long passage is worth quoting in its entirety. Indeed, it makes us realize how the sudden apparition of this bizarre man is not so incongruous as it might seem with the luxuriant and imposing landscape behind him. His large hat, harlequin-like appearance and changing countenance are, in fact, as cryptic as the tangled vegetation, which has obliterated the decaying signs of human presence.

Considering the element of the hat, what Buzzati alludes to in the excerpt from 'Lo scoglio' quoted above is perhaps a strong sense of unpredictability and the awareness of the inevitable appointment with

24. Joseph Conrad, 'Heart of Darkness', in *'Heart of Darkness' and Other Tales*, ed. by Cedric Watts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 101–187 (157–158), my italics.

fate, which always lurk in Conrad's landscapes—irrespective of whether it is the forest of Congo, the open sea, or a tropical island. Rather than being inscribed in Buzzati's landscapes, such uncanny feelings are embodied in the characters' indecipherable behaviour and unearthly appearance. Bertoglio, the B-character and the ghost of the boatman can be grouped with other 'meridiane apparizioni' *à la* Conrad inhabiting Buzzati's fiction, such as the characters presented in 'Ombra del sud' and 'Gli strani rumori di Peterborough.'

Both stories are set in Africa, where the two protagonists have mysterious encounters. The narrator of 'Ombra del sud' is on a tour around the Italian colonial settlements. During his journey from Port Said (Egypt) down to Massaua (Eritrea) and Harar (Ethiopia) he repeatedly notices the same white-clad figure[25]:

> [...] un uomo, un arabo forse, vestito di una larga palandrana bianca, in testa una specie di cappuccio – o così mi parve – ugualmente bianco. Camminava lentamente in mezzo alla strada, *come dondolando, quasi stesse cercando qualcosa, o titubasse, o fosse anche un poco storno.*[26]

The lines I have emphasized are repeated with slight variations throughout the narration, to mark with a peculiar rhythm each time 'l'arabo indecifrabile' appears. Notwithstanding a growing sense of anxiety, the narrator becomes acquainted with his visitor, as if the latter were a friendly yet enigmatic presence accompanying him through an unknown land. The narrator eventually gives his own explanation of the phenomenon:

> Considerato a distanza, quell'essere mi risultava adesso come una personificazione, racchiudente il segreto stesso dell'Africa. Tra me e questa terra c'era dunque, prima che lo sospettassi, un legame. Era venuto a me un messaggero, dai regni favolosi del sud, a indicarmi la via?[27]

25. The protagonist of 'Scorta personale' has a similar experience. On the outskirts of the various cities where he travels, he spots the same man staring and waving at him with a stick. These encounters go on throughout his life. This story can be considered a variation on the theme, since it has an urban setting and the mysterious figure represents death patiently waiting for every man to come to the end of life; see Dino Buzzati, 'Scorta personale', in *Paura alla Scala*, ed. by Fausto Gianfranceschi (Milan: Mondadori, 2006), 83–87.
26. Dino Buzzati, 'Ombra del sud', in *Sessanta racconti*, 47–53 (47), my italics.
27. *Ibid.*, 51.

> La faccenda non è molto chiara ma mi pare di avere capito che tu vorresti condurmi più in là, ogni volta più in là, sempre più nel centro, fino alle frontiere del tuo incognito regno.[28]

Apart from identifying the mysterious man with Africa, the conclusions drawn by the narrator are incomplete: the content of the secrets carried by the Arab are not revealed and his origins remain unknown. When the story ends, the narrator is still undecided whether to follow the visitor or not.

At the core of 'Gli strani rumori di Peterborough' is an encounter of Mr Austin Munsel-Dorr, an English doctor specialized in tropical diseases. During a scientific expedition in the Egyptian desert he bumps into a caravan and is asked if he will see a man suffering from malaria. The doctor saves the life of a soi-disant Arab prince, Sadi Ben Houssan, and receives from him a magic ring that, ten years later, will save him from death. The apparition of the prince is so striking that the doctor speculates about the identity of this man lying in a little tent in the middle of the desert and surrounded by luxurious carpets and objects:

> Chi era veramente? Un principe arabo? Ma cosa era andato a fare laggiù tra le sabbie eterne? *O era un europeo inabissatosi nelle tenebre dell'Africa per qualche dolente segreto?* Un mercante di schiavi? Un avventuriero? Avrà avuto una sessantina d'anni, piccolo e segaligno. Il volto sfuggiva a ogni decifrazione: arso dal sole e immobile, dolce e insieme inespressivo. Soltanto gli occhi parlavano di Oriente. Lenti e pigri sguardi ne uscivano, privi di intelligenza. Eppure dopo, ripensandoci, ci si domandava se dietro non ci fosse nascosta una energia indomabile.[29]

Buzzati's mysterious apparitions often carry incomprehensible secrets, obscure or saving messages, but they all reach beyond rational control. The indirect allusion to Kurtz shows once again the pivotal role Conrad played in the construction of Buzzati's exotic and sea imagery.

In presenting such an interesting case of intertextual and intercultural exchange, my analysis has stressed Buzzati's original treatment of the Conradian sources and his use of intertextual strategies in general. Moreover, it has offered new insights into Buzzati's fiction by describing

28. *Ibid.*, 52.
29. Dino Buzzati, 'Gli strani rumori di Peterborough', in *Le cronache fantastiche di Dino Buzzati*, ed. by Lorenzo Viganò, 2 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 2005), ('Fantasmi'), 261–270 (p. 264), my italics.

its interplay of appropriation and innovation. In particular, Buzzati's exotic settings and the colonizer type are borrowed from Conrad but at the same they are sourced from Buzzati's own experience of Italian colonialism in Africa, which is thus historically and symbolically connoted. What makes his short stories even more remarkable is the typically Buzzatian blurring of reality and imagination as well as the coexistence in his style of journalistic account and fiction.

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The Narrative of Realism and Myth in Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* and Michael Cimino's *The Sicilian*

Gloria Lauri-Lucente

The following paper takes its cue from Gregory Lucente's analysis of the process of narrativization of historical figures, which often involves a series of dynamic relations at various levels and in varying degrees between components of realistic and mythic discourse, rather than the discrete functioning of either one or the other.[1] In his analysis of such a process Lucente writes:

> Briefly, then, mythic components are those repeating elements of narrative which approach an existence apart from the specificity of space and time, which at their core involve unified and idealized figures, and which establish and depend upon a relationship of unquestioning belief. By contrast, realistic components are made up of those elements that claim a clear and definite position in space and time (and so in culture), that involve figures whose relation to experience is not idealized, and that invite an attitude of analysis or even skepticism rather than immediate faith. Again, the central interest of literary aesthetics lies not in the discrete and thus distorted functioning of these two series of elements, but in the dynamics of their requisite interaction.[2]

1. For both the title of this article and the analysis of the interaction between mythic and realistic discourse, I am indebted to Gregory L. Lucente's *The Narrative of Realism and Myth. Verga, Lawrence, Faulkner, Pavese* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).
2. *Ibid.*, 42.

Mindful of Lucente's observations, in what follows I will concentrate on the combination of realism and myth in Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* (1962) and Michael Cimino's *The Sicilian* (1987), two cinematic portrayals of the Sicilian bandit which could hardly be more different in style and ideology.[3] More specifically I will argue that in narrativizing the story of Giuliano and his men, the seemingly mystified knowledge of even the most rigorously documented investigation of historical facts does not originate in opposition with mythic discourse, but rather in interaction with 'an articulation and an interpretation that conform with the atemporal model of the heroic myth', as Mircea Eliade would call it.[4] Drawing on Lucente's analysis of Vico's notion of mythological historiography, I will also argue that the origins of mythic discourse are not to be located outside the temporal and spatial realm of history but rather within history itself.[5] Though this intricate relationship between myth and realism will serve as the centre of the discourse that follows, it will also act as a means of broaching other issues that are particularly insightful for each of these two films taken on its own terms.

Before turning to the analysis of the narratorial strategies deployed by Rosi and Cimino, the pivotal moments of Giuliano's biography which both directors refer to should be briefly recalled. While helping us place the bandit within a precise historical framework,[6] these moments may also shed light on why, in Lévi-Straussian terms, the Sicilian peasant sought to console himself by turning Giuliano into a mythic figure through

3. As will be discussed in the course of this paper, Rosi draws inspiration from historical facts while Cimino bases his film primarily on Mario Puzo's 1984 novel *The Sicilian*, a fictionalised account of Salvatore Giuliano.
4. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954, repr. 1974), 38.
5. For the treatment of the reversal of Aristotelian thought on myth by Giambattista Vico, who locates myths within a precise historical context instead of considering them as an ahistorical and therefore potentially universal phenomenon, see Lucente, 28–29.
6. Numerous books have treated the historical events surrounding the story of Salvatore Giuliano and his men. See, for example, Giuseppe Casarrubea, *Salvatore Giuliano. Morte di un capobanda e dei suoi luogotenenti* (Milano: Francoangeli, 2001); Francesco Renda, *Salvatore Giuliano. Una biografia storica* (Palermo: Sellerio, 2002); Lucio Galluzzo, *Storia di Salvatore Giuliano* (Palermo: Flaccovio Editore, 2007); Enzo Catania, *Salvatore Giuliano. Capostipite dei misteri d'Italia* (Roma: Aliberti Editore, 2011); Giuseppe Casarrubea and Mario José Cereghino, *La scomparsa di Salvatore Giuliano. Indagine su un fantasma eccellente* (Milano: Bompiani, 2013); Carlo Ruta (ed.), *L'affare Giuliano. I documenti che rivelano il primo patto tra Stato e Mafia nel tempo della Repubblica* (Milano: AccadeinSicilia Libri, 2013).

whom he could interpret his world and cope with it on a purely symbolic level.[7]

In 1943, when Giuliano was 21, he became an outlaw after killing a carabiniere and was himself wounded during a black market operation. It took Giuliano's mastery of the art of guerrilla warfare only a short while to earn him the title of 'il re di Montelepre'. Courted by journalists and film producers alike, as well as by high-ranking politicians and mafiosi, Giuliano rapidly began to take on the multifaceted cast of the common bandit myth of resistance to oppressive authority. His activities, however, were not limited to banditry. Immediately after World War II, Giuliano joined the Separatist movement and led guerrilla actions for E.V.I.S, the Volunteer Army for Sicilian Independence. On May 1st 1947, together with his men he was involved in the massacre at Portella della Ginestra in which eleven people were killed and many more were wounded.[8] Up till this very day, the exact involvement of Giuliano in this peaceful demonstration of Communist farmers who were celebrating their recent electoral victory against the Christian Democratic Party remains shrouded in mystery, and the debate continues as to whether the bandit had been recruited by the Mafia, the police, the Christian Democrats or the anticommunists with pro-American affiliations. Suffice it to say that because of the evidence pointing to the collusion between politics and organized crime, the massacre at Portella della Ginestra is frequently referred to as the first case of 'omertà di stato' following World War II in which practically all the key players either committed suicide or were assassinated.[9] A similar aura of ambiguity, treachery and betrayal surrounded the death of Giuliano and Gaspare Pisciotta, Giuliano's cousin and right-hand man. When the corpse of Giuliano was discovered in a

7. On the phenomenon of social banditry and its ability to transcend into myth, see Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Abacus, 1969, repr. 2010); Anton Blok, *Honour and Violence* (Oxford: Polity, 2001). For one of the earlier works on the mythic resonances of the figure of Salvatore Giuliano, see Gavin Maxwell, *God Protect me from My Friends* (London: Pan Books, 1958).
8. On the massacre at Portella della Ginestra, see Angelo La Bella and Rosa Mecarolo, *Portella della Ginestra. La strage che ha cambiato la storia d'Italia* (Milano: Teti Editore, 2003); Giuseppe Casarrubea, 'Strage di Portella della Ginestra', in Manuela Mareso and Livio Pepino (eds), *Dizionario enciclopedico di mafia e antimafia* (Torino: Edizioni Gruppo Adele, 2013), 401–406.
9. Michele Pantaleone, *Omertà di stato. Da Salvatore Giuliano a Totò Riina* (Napoli: Giulio Pironti Editore, 1993), 33.

courtyard in Castlevetrano on 5th July 1950, it took only a few hours for the official version that Giuliano had been killed in an ambush by the carabinieri to be seriously questioned. The title of Tommaso Besozzi's probing article which appeared just a few days after Giuliano's assassination in *L'Europeo* declared in unequivocal terms that there was only one incontestable fact: that the bandit was dead: 'Di sicuro c'è solo che è morto.'[10] The article went on to forcefully argue that everything else—how Giuliano was murdered and by whom, where and when the murder had taken place—was steeped in mystery. The circumstances leading to Pisciotta's death also raised numerous questions which seem destined to remain unresolved. During the mass trial in Viterbo in 1951 in which Giuliano's men were accused of the massacre at Portella della Ginestra, Pisciotta made three stunning revelations: that he was Giuliano's assassin; that a number of high-ranking officials whose names he would disclose in due course were directly implicated in Portella della Ginestra; and that Giuliano's men were not the only perpetrators of the massacre. On 10 February 1954, only a few days before he was scheduled to appear in court to provide testimony, Pisciotta was poisoned in mysterious circumstances in Palermo's Ucciardone prison. With Pisciotta's murder, the possibility of ever shedding light on the events surrounding the story of Giuliano and his men was forever dispelled.

In Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*, the chain of historical facts which has just been outlined takes on the cast of an unfinished thriller, in which each new turn in the labyrinthine puzzle tantalizingly calls for a fresh attempt at interpretation while highlighting the impossibility of ever unveiling the truth. Rather than being gradually dissipated, the vertigo of ambiguity is thus heightened as the plot unfolds. If, however, Rosi's film takes on the form of an inconclusive police report which raises doubts on the investigation at every step of the way, Cimino provides answers to the most obscure of events. Truth is provided in Cimino's film from the point of view of an intellectual, that of the Sicilian Professor Hector Adonis, who is both an onlooker and a participant, and whose perspective is more knowledgeable than that of the Sicilian peasant.[11] Following the opening sequence in which Giuliano's body is thrown out of a jeep by the carabinieri onto the steps of a Church and is then riddled with bullets,

10. See the insightful article by Tommaso Besozzi titled 'Di sicuro c'è solo che è morto', *L'Europeo,* July 12, 1950.

11. John Hess, '*Matewan. The Sicilian.* History, Politics, Style, and Genre,' *Jump Cut,* 4, 33 (February, 1988), 30–37.

Professor Adonis is seen riding in a car in Corso Vittorio Emanuele in Palermo, its walls covered with posters and its streets lit with candles paying homage to the recently murdered Giuliano. It is only in the film's concluding moments which picks up the narration where the opening leaves off that the viewer realizes that Professor Adonis is on his way to the Ucciardone prison to poison Pisciotta for having murdered Giuliano. Within this circular structure, the inner logic of Cimino's film arranges itself in the easily identifiable beginning-middle-end of chronological narrative sequence.

Rosi's film, like Cimino's, also begins at the end with the celebrated overhead shot on the bullet-ridden corpse of Giuliano. By presenting the consequence before the events which actually led to it, a dark logic of fatalism and inevitability therefore colours the opening of both films. However, as opposed to Cimino, Rosi eschews chronological linearity within this circular structure and removes the organizing intelligence of a controlling or more knowledgeable point of view. Indeed, the total effacement of a superior voice creates the impression of a decentred film that works from the inside against any apparent certainties that could be held by its characters. The congeries of irreconcilable voices which includes those of the carabinieri, the journalists, and the inhabitants of Montelepre, together with the constant shift of focus and the absence of the single focalization of a character gives rise to a representation of history that lacks cohesion and progressively leads to the definitive disintegration of a possible univocal truth.

Rosi himself explains that in adopting a structure that veers away from traditional narrative prerogatives, his intent was to convey the confusion encouraged by the establishment which withheld potentially disruptive knowledge so as to leave everyone in the dark. For Rosi, therefore, it is the content itself that determines the film's structure, that very same content which the establishment systematically buried under a veil of obscurity in its attempt to 'safeguard' order and preserve stability. In reformulating Rosi's comments in terms of the dialectical relationship between form and content as construed by Fredric Jameson, one can argue that it is through its formal aspect that the film's most essential and buried content may be brought to the surface which, in *Salvatore Giuliano*, would be mystification itself.[12] Perceived through this hermeneutic lens, form is to be grasped as 'the final articulation of the deeper logic of the

12. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form. Twentieth-century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971).

content itself.'[13] Or to put it in slightly different words, it is through the specific aesthetic shape given to the content that the film makes its most crucial statement which Rosi formulates in the following terms:

> There are many, many different facts, many, many different implications, many, many different collusions between the Mafia and the legitimate power. But in all these elements at my disposal, there are also many doubts, many uncertainties, so I have to communicate to the audience the *impossibility* of reaching the truth. This confusion in the film—of the facts, of the actions, of the different interpretations—is the same irritation that one feels in life when you realize the absolute impossibility of getting at the truth. And it's this feeling I want to convey to this audience.[14]

Ambiguity itself arising from 'the absolute impossibility of reaching the truth' is subsumed as the crucial object of inquiry. This is why, Rosi goes on to say, he chose not to filter the historical and political events through the conventional figure of the journalist whose role would have been to fit together the different pieces of the puzzle and shed light on the obscure entanglement between organized crime and the establishment.

> The traditional way, of course, would have been to have used a journalist as the main character [...] but I refused because it was clear to me that *I* was the journalist, the narrator, the camera lens was the journalist. I needed to convey to the audience the impossibility of being a journalist in this pit of vipers, this relationship between the legitimate power and the Mafia.[15]

In the light of these observations, the disembodied voice of the offscreen narrator impersonated by Rosi himself takes on a particularly significant cast. What we hear is the voice of neither an actively evaluative participant nor of authorial omniscience whose perception of the world could restore meaning to a seemingly random accumulation of data. Rather, it is a voice that serves to reinforce the unbridgeable gap between the characters and the world they inhabit, a world whose ultimate meaning will remain forever beyond reach as points of view multiply and efface one another. Consequently, if the narrating voice seems to come across as the voice of

13. *Ibid.*, 328–329.
14. See the Interview with Francesco Rosi titled 'The Audience should not be just Passive Spectators' which was conducted by Gary Crowdus and Dan Georgakos for *Cinéaste* 7 (1975), 4.
15. *Ibid.*

an indefatiguable investigator who relentlessly sifts through the evidence in his search for truth, at the same time the absence of an established viewpoint turns the narrator, at least in part, into a knowing victim of the untrustworthy evidence that he has been accumulating.

The all-pervasive uncertainty and scepticism resulting from the layered mound of evidence at hand is formally expressed through Rosi's distinctive use of the cinematic techniques of flashbacks and flashforwards. Inherent in the flashback as trope is a certain assumption of temporality and order since the device often serves to deliver missing narrative exposition.[16] Rosi's flashbacks present a different kind of semiotic complexity as they disconcertingly move the viewer through various temporalities and focalizations and deliberately leave the gaps unfilled thereby complicating the inner logic of linearity, chronology and causality.[17] Rosi himself describes the style of the flashback adopted in *Salvatore Giuliano* as 'a new kind of flashback', as a 'balance between the past and present and the future' which is 'not used only for the temporal, the time, aspect' but which 'involves the necessity to communicate to the audience the impossibility of reaching the truth.'[18] Taking one's cue from Maureen Turim's analysis of Gérard Genette's formulations on the combination of analepses and ellipses within narrative textuality, Rosi's flashbacks can therefore be construed as a series of analepses which refrain from retrospectively filling in the ellipses as flashbacks conventionally do.[19]

As P. Adams Sitney writes, the ideological implications underlying 'the morphology' of the different organizational strategies which the film's eleven temporal segments or zones deploy as they weave their way in time and space through flashbacks and flashforwards are not to be overlooked.[20] Adams Sitney goes on to say that this type of morphology also includes the setting up of an extreme range between close and deep in both interior and exterior shots as well as the sharp contrast between static montage and fluid camera movement.[21] While expressing the need

16. For my analysis of the function of flashbacks, I have drawn on Maureen Turim's *Flasbacks in Film. Memory and History* (Routledge: New York and London, 1989), 1–20.
17. See Rosi, 'The Audience should not be just Passive Spectators', 4.
18. *Ibid.*
19. See Turim's discussion of Gérard Genette's 'Discours du récit', 8–10.
20. See P. Adams Sitney's excellent essay on *Salvatore Giuliano* in *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 201–204.
21. *Ibid.*

to establish a view of historical causality and linkage between apparently disjointed events, as in the case of the abrupt shift from the first temporal block containing the overhead shot on Giuliano's corpse to the second segment set in Palermo in 1945, such a distinctive type of elliptical editing combined with Gianni Di Venanzo's pastiche of photographic styles has all the traits of a postmodern narrative structure that expresses the impossibility of ever reaching the truth and providing convincing answers.[22] Rather than being curbed, the interpretive faculty of the viewer is aroused—if also continuously derailed—by this active narrative development which proceeds by means of an increasingly obvious play of suppression and revelation, of openness and closure, of clarity and obscurity.

Within this type of methodological procedure described by Rosi as a 'movement of the pendulum between reality and a reflection on reality' itself,[23] it is the historical events that control the director's imagination and determine both the structure and the content of his film, rather than the reverse. Rosi writes:

> The inhabitants of Montelepre wrote scenes for me which I could never have imagined. The fact of shooting in the village where Giuliano was born and lived, or where his mother and his family still lived, where everybody could control my work, contained the enormous risk of plunging me into total despair. But at the same time I wanted to be submitted to this control because I did not want to invent. The episodes, the settings were authentic. I cannot afford to invent if I decide to deal with historical facts, but, on the other hand, I must *interpret* this reality.[24]

Clearly, as the historian Francesco Renda puts it, *Salvatore Giuliano* is essentially 'a historical film', whose main intent is the incessant search for the truth. At the same time, however, Rosi's film is also a work of art, in which facts demand to be 'interpreted' through style, or what Renda calls, 'il soffio della poesia'.[25]

22. For an insightful analysis of the way in which both formally and aesthetically *Salvatore Giuliano* contributed to the formation of revolutionary cinematic postmodernism in Italy, see Ben Lawton, '*Salvatore Giuliano.* Francesco Rosi's Revolutionary Postmodernism', in Carlo Testa (ed.), *Poet of Civic Courage. The Films of Francesco Rosi* (Wiltshire: Flicks Books, 1996), 8-41.
23. Rosi quoted in Michel Ciment, 'Rosi in a New Key,' *American Film* (September, 1984), 40.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Renda, 17–18.

Though real events may reach their aesthetic sublimation through 'the breath of poetry', Rosi explicitly states that he was particularly careful not to weave invented elements into his narrative on Giuliano. In a recent interview with Giuseppe Tornatore, Rosi reiterates this notion when he says that 'every single episode' portrayed in the film 'really happened', and that 'everything can be verified, literally everything.'[26] Instead, as Cimino himself puts it, despite the undeniable influences of Rosi's film on his own work, what propels his portrayal of Giuliano is not so much 'facts' but 'dreams'—the dreams making up the inner conflictual life of a bandit who is destroyed by the impregnable forces of an unchanging society which he strives to oppose but is incapable of understanding:

> In some respects, Rosi's film treats facts while mine has to do with dreams. Both are coherent, but in very different ways [...]. When one observes the documentation that exists on Giuliano's life, before he ever gave interviews [...], it is clear that he was a different young man: not just a common bandit, definitely not just a Sicilian; he was someone who had written his own life, nurtured a dream, and who had already a grandiose notion of his own destiny, of his role in history. If one looks at the way he posed for photographs, in particular those published in *Life* in 1948, his very attitude, the way he dresses, how he looks at the camera, everything reveals something special about him. It is someone who has a romantic notion of himself. I tried to address these elements in my film, the inner man, his dreams, his vanity, [...] his feelings. I believe that one can often capture the truth through dreams rather than facts. Facts never tell the whole truth [...].[27]

But what exactly is the nature of these dreams which are capable of capturing the truth more than facts? What stuff are Giuliano's dreams made of? Hobsbawm eloquently describes the typical dreams of the social bandit as extraordinarily powerful ones, capable of giving rise to myths which endow such a figure with 'superhuman power and the sort of immortality enjoyed by the great just kings of the past who have not really died, but are asleep and will return again.'[28] What propelled

26. See Francesco Rosi, *Io lo chiamo cinematografo. Conversazione con Giuseppe Tornatore* (Milano: Mondadori, 2012), 144 (translation mine).
27. See *Il Siciliano nel film di Michael Cimino,* ed. Domitilla Alessi (Palermo: Edizioni Novecento: 1987), 60; 62 (translation mine).
28. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels,* 25.

Giuliano's 'maniacal attraction'[29] towards the media might have been precisely its ability to immortalize such greatness and to guarantee that mythical figures may indeed lie dormant, but only for a while. In fact, when asked in an interview conducted by Roberto Andò what he thinks about Cimino's portrayal of Giuliano's vanity which seems to take on the cast of an 'unconscious form of Dannunzian aestheticization',[30] Leonardo Sciascia replies that even though he has not seen the film, he would subscribe to such a depiction that strives to capture an important aspect of the bandit's personality. Sciascia says:

> Non ho visto il film; ma se è così, indubbiamente Cimino è riuscito a cogliere un aspetto della personalità di Giuliano del tutto attendibile e meritevole di attenzione, di studio. Giuliano vedeva se stesso come personaggio 'letterario', con scarto minimo tra vita e letteratura: ma una letteratura da *feuilleton* (che peraltro credo fosse quella di cui si nutriva). I suoi comportamenti erano formalistici proprio nel senso di quella letteratura: comportamenti che pure si riscontrano in 'capi' che lo precedono nel tempo, e dunque prima dell'avvento dei *media*, che pure contribuirono ad acuire la sua vocazione a farsi personaggio letterario.[31]

> I have not seen the film; but if that is the case, Cimino has without doubt managed to capture an aspect of Giuliano's personality that is totally convincing, worthy of attention, and that deserves to be studied. Giuliano saw himself as a 'literary' character, with not much difference between life and literature: but literature *feuilleton* style (which I believe was what he lived on). His attitude was formalistic in ways that recall precisely that type of literature: an attitude that can actually be perceived in 'leaders' that came before him, before the advent of the *media*, which did much to encourage his vocation to become a literary character. (translation mine)

At this juncture, I would like to return to my point of departure and to reaffirm that 'mythic discourse does not originate in opposition to the seemingly mystified worldly knowledge of realism, but in interaction with it.'[32] Clearly, Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* and Cimino's *The Sicilian* can be construed as exemplifications of two entirely different ways in which this interaction occurs. Cimino's Giuliano incarnates 'the tragedy

29. For the analysis of Giuliano's attraction towards the media which Roberto Andò describes as 'maniacal,' see the chapter by Andò in Domitilla Alessi (ed.), 112.
30. *Ibid.*, 114.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Lucente, 40.

of the social bandit', or 'the paradox of the modern Robin Hoods', a figure that is created by the peasant society when it feels the need for a champion that can protect it against its oppressor.[33] Forever pursuing the desire for the American dream, for freedom and potentiality, Cimino's Giuliano is however a visionary who also represents 'trasformismo' and strives to provide an alternative to the traditional perception of Sicily, to the timeless comfort of mobility without change. This sort of stasis is epitomized by such characters as Prince Borsa who, at one point, tells the bandit: 'I am like the south wind from Africa. I've always been here. You haven't [...]. Nothing changes here.'

Prince Borsa's perception of time resonates with echoes from Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* and the novel's filmic version by Luchino Visconti, two of the 'hypotexts', as Genette would put it, which deeply influenced Cimino's cinematic formulation of the antinomies of change and stasis, of flux and motion, as the director himself acknowledges.[34] It is the tension arising from these antinomies that seals the concluding sequence of the film in which the Professor tells Don Masino, as they are leaving Giuliano's funera, that 'nothing will change' in Sicily, despite the death of the bandit. Giuliano himself accepts the truth of this unfathomable and indestructible enigma of Sicily when it is too late, when self-knowledge is destined to bring with it self-destruction at the hands of his cousin and right-hand man, Pisciotta.

One might argue that in indulging in an idealized picture of Giuliano, Cimino gives undue emphasis to the bandit's role as champion of the unprotected poor while downplaying his violent acts against the suppressed classes to which he himself had once belonged. In fact, Cimino portrays Giuliano as a multifaceted and ambivalent figure in different moments of his life by showing him through rapid change of focus and swift cuts not only as an outlaw capable of acts of violence, but also as a caring individual in his relations with the poor, with Giovanna his wife, a fictitious character introduced by Cimino, and with his followers. Taken in its entirety, the film's focus of attention lies primarily on the bandit's sense of justice and his moderation even when killing his adversaries. As a result of such a romanticized portrayal of Giuliano, historical facts are suppressed or entirely distorted in Cimino's film, as in the sequence depicting the massacre at Portella della Ginestra.

33. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 24; 27.

34. See Cimino's comments quoted in Massimo Benvegnù and Roberto Lasagna, *America perduta. I film di Michael Cimino* (Alessandria: Edizioni Falsopiano, 1998), 179–181.

A comparison between Cimino's and Rosi's portrayal of this most obscure event in the history of twentieth-century Italy is particularly useful in shedding light on the radically different methodological procedure adopted by the two directors. If Rosi draws inspiration from historical documentation in his portrayal of Portella della Ginestra, Cimino's primary hypotext in this specific instance is Puzo's fictitious account which not only completely exonerates the bandit from all blame but also portrays him as the victim of Don Croce, the real perpetrator of the massacre. Puzo describes an isolated and humiliated Giuliano who realizes in a startling moment of recognition that the massacre was not purely accidental but rather the result of a carefully orchestrated plan by the Mafia boss, whose intent was to disgrace the bandit's name in the eyes of the poor and strip him of any heroic qualities. As Giuliano questions his own men, he realizes that they had been bribed to commit the terrible slaughter:

> Giuliano next questioned the men in the squads and the men on the machine guns. He pieced the scene together. [...] After he dismissed them, Giuliano sat alone. He felt, for the first time since he had become a bandit, a sense of intolerable shame. In more than four years as an outlaw he could boast that he had never harmed the poor. That boast was no longer true. He had massacred them. In his innermost heart he could no longer think of himself as a hero.[35]

If Cimino, drawing on Puzo's account, portrays Giuliano as the victim of external forces and shows him helping the wounded and accompanying them to the hospital, Rosi refrains from actually showing the bandit on screen while the massacre is taking place. In Rosi, the bullets wounding or killing the peaceful demonstrators celebrating the Communist Mayday celebration come from an invisible source which is not identified. This does not mean, however, that Rosi, like Cimino, absolves Giuliano since prior sequences have already alerted the viewer to the bandit's plan to attack the demonstrators.[36] In fact, as Ben Lawton writes, 'by not showing him, Rosi is stating that he has become one of those who kill from hiding; he has become a tool of the state and of the Mafia; he has become like the very forces against which he had fought for so long.'[37]

It has been frequently argued that by turning Giuliano into an invisible presence or, at best, by only showing him from a distance, Rosi's

35. Mario Puzo, *The Sicilian* (New York: Random House, 1984), 290.
36. On Rosi's depiction of the massere in Portella della Ginestra see Lawton, 25.
37. *Ibid.*

representation 'refuses the spectacular rhetoric of cinema violence'[38] and veers away from the allure of mythologization.[39] As opposed to Cimino's Giuliano, who is presented in extreme long shots as an enigmatically powerful and untouchable figure, and in close-up as romantically exciting and seductive, Rosi's Giuliano takes on the corporeality of a tangible figure only in death, in the opening scene in the courtyard in Castelvetrano and, later on, when he is lying on a slab of marble in the morgue with his mother desperately weeping over him. But by allowing the camera to focus more on the mysterious forces which controlled Giuliano and less on Giuliano himself, as Cimino instead does, is the myth of the bandit really dispelled? In other words, does Rosi's montage convey the feeling that Giuliano is engulfed by barely perceptible forces which determine the destiny of both Giuliano and Sicily, as many critics and reviewers have argued?[40] Can the tragic story of Giuliano be construed as a 'collective tragedy', in which 'the chorus takes the role of the hero', thus depriving the 'legend' of Giuliano once and for all of 'charismatic power' in this 'Hamlet without the prince', as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith argues in his 1963 review of the film?[41] Or does the invisibility of Giuliano reinforce the enigmatic aura of impenetrability surrounding him? And finally, by withholding the camera's gaze from Giuliano while he is still alive, only to allow it to focus on his corporeality in the morgue, in one of the most intense sequences in the history of world cinema, does Rosi recreate the iconography typical of a Pietà which allows the audience to experience 'the cult of the heroic dead in all its poignancy?'[42]

Once again, the studies on banditry by Anton Blok and Eric Hobsbawm are particularly useful in shedding light on the dialectics of absence and presence and its role in the formation of myths and legends. Blok argues that the very fact that outlaws are physically absent from the grimness of ordinary, quotidian life facilitates the formation of myths and idealizes a career that is often harsh and unpleasant.[43] In a somewhat

38. Rosi makes this statement in the interview conducted by Gary Crowdus and Dan Georgakas, 3.
39. See, for example, Vittorio Albano, *La mafia nel cinema siciliano. Da 'Il nome della legge' a 'Placido Rizzotto'* (Manduria TA: Barbieri Editore, 2003), 23.
40. See for example Lawton, 9.
41. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Film Reviews: Salvatore Giuliano,* in *Sight and Sound*, 32, 3, 1963, 143.
42. John J. Michalcyzk, *The Italian Political Filmmakers* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 35.
43. Blok, *Honour and Violence*, 21.

analogous vein, Hobsbawm writes that the transmutation of a bandit into a public legend is made possible only if details are 'pared away, leaving him silhouetted against the horizon in the quintessential posture of his role, as Don Quixote is against his windmills, and the gun-fighters of the mythical West are, solitary in the white sunlight of their empty midday streets.'[44]

Perhaps the most perceptive analysis on Giuliano's invisibility is the commentary by Sciascia. According to the novelist, for a public made up of Sicilian peasants who live the legend of the noble and merciful bandit, Giuliano's invisibility reinforces the popular myth by lending it a cast of profound mysticism. Sciascia's words on the way in which the 'primitive' Sicilian peasant lives the movie experience as a sort of 'oneiric escape' that appeals to the emotions deserve to be quoted at some length:[45]

> Il film di Rosi noi l'abbiamo visto in mezzo a un pubblico straordinario [...] un pubblico in gran parte di contadini non abituati a frequentare i cinematografi [...]. In questo tipo di spettatore la comunicazione tra l'occhio che coglie le immagini e la mente che le riceve, le decifra, le organizza, è talmente lenta e discontinua che la storia finisce col rapprendersi, oltre che in situazioni confuse, in una massa di azioni diverse da quelle effettivamente raccontate [...]. Per Rosi, [...] l'invisiblità era una specie di dato immaginifico del giudizio [...] per il nostro spettatore l'invisibilità diventava invece un dato mistico: Giuliano come idea della rivolta contro lo Stato, della vendetta sociale, della redenzione del povero. Un impermeabile bianco e un binocolo, quasi attributi dell'idea: il bianco, la lontananza. E diventa corpo, il bandito, sulla polvere del cortile De Maria, sull'ovale marmo della squallida morgue, sotto il pianto e le mani della madre. Una deposizione dalla croce, un Cristo. [...] Relegandolo nell'invisibilità Rosi ha reso più dura l'accusa verso la classe dirigente che lo muoveva: ma al tempo stesso, per il pubblico siciliano, non faceva che confermare un mito.[46]

> We have seen the film by Rosi with an extraordinary audience [...] an audience largely made up of peasants who are not used to going to the cinema [...] In this type of spectator the communication between the eye that perceives images and the mind that receives them, deciphers them, organizes them, is so slow and uneven that the story ends up by being apprehended not only as a series of confused situations but as a mass of

44. Hobsbawm, *Bandits,* 138.
45. Leonardo Sciascia, 'La Sicilia nel cinema', in *La corda pazza. Scrittori e cose della Sicilia* (Milano: Adelphi, 1991), 284.
46. *Ibid.*, 286.

> events that are different from the ones which are actually being recounted [...]. For Rosi, [...] invisibility was a form of judgment conveyed through images [...] for our spectator invisibility instead was a form of mysticism: Giuliano as the very concept of a revolt against the State, of social vendetta, of the redemption of the poor. A white raincoat and binoculars, as if they were attributes of the idea: whiteness, distance. And he becomes corporeality, the bandit, on the dust of De Maria's courtyard, on the marble slab, in the squallid morgue, amidst the tears and in the arms of his mother. A deposition from the cross, a Christ [...]. By relegating him to invisibility, Rosi harshens the severity of his accusations against the ruling class; but at the same time, for the Sicilian public, it only reinforced the myth. (translation mine)

Sciascia therefore argues that because of a disjunction between the immediacy of vision and the critical sophistication of mental concepts, the uncultivated and primitive Sicilian peasant does not see the same film that Rosi had actually made. What the peasant sees conforms instead to his own notion of the legend of the heroic bandit, noble, merciful, indeed hagiographical and even mystical.[47] Had Giuliano been more visibile, he would have been depicted as 'an insignificant, sad character; without a legend, or a myth.'[48] And yet, Sciascia goes on to say, the mythic and mystic quality of Giuliano's invisibility capable of triggering in the peasant an intricate melange of emotions does not make Rosi's film any less truthful.[49] Rather, for Sciascia, the bandit's invisibility is actually one of the qualities that makes Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* one of 'the most truthful films cinema has ever made on the impenetrable enigma of Sicily.[50] This 'truth' exemplifies the way in which both mythic and realistic discourse can be endowed with meanings which, as Lucente would put it, are at one and the same time 'worldly and transcendent, empirical and imaginative, equally capable of reflecting and generating meaning.'[51]

At this point, taking my cue from Sciascia's analysis, and drawing on Fredric Jameson's reformulation of Claude Lévi-Strauss's notion of art as 'a symbolic act, whereby real social contradictions, insurmountable in their own terms, find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm', I would like to set forth the notion that the Sicilian peasant grasped

47. Leonardo Sciascia, 'La vera "storia" di Giuliano', in *La corda pazza,* 194.
48. *Ibid.*
49. Sciascia, 'La Sicilia nel cinema', 285.
50. *Ibid.*, 286
51. Lucente, 40.

Rosi's portrayal as a projection on the figure of Giuliano of real social contradictions, which they were incapable of articulating conceptually and of resolving on a social level.[52] In reformulating Sciascia's observations on Giuliano's invisibility in the light of Jameson's notion of the political unconscious, it thus follows that for the Sicilian peasant Rosi's portrayal of the bandit awakens the peasant's deepest fantasies of a Utopian or transcendent nature by giving symbolic expression and a mythic or imaginary resolution to the real problems created by the prevailing oppressive institutions in Sicily. Or to put it in slightly different terms, the mythic aura created by Giuliano's invisibility may be seen to express and, at the same time, to assuage, even if only temporarily through displacement, fabrication and illusion, the most intimate tensions of the psyche arising from its tormented relationship with the world.[53] The deeper logic of Rosi's film can thus be construed as an exemplification of the way in which the term myth which, as Lucente puts it, is traditionally associated with falsehood, retains at the same time a connotation of higher truth, thereby combining the functions of 'gnoscere' or knowledge with the privileged vision of narration.[54] In fact, in more than one instance, when Rosi seems to be moving towards realism, he is actually also imperceptibly moving towards lyricism and the mythical (the poignant sequence in the morgue is only one such example).

If Rosi's film derives its strength from the intricate interplay between realistic and mythic discourse, the same cannot be said for the way in which Cimino's *The Sicilian* fuses the network of one realm with the other. Many of the historical references either do not work at all, or work only partially, and any genuine historical complexity is simplified or even completely distorted. In short, history fails to function as a privileged subtext to a discourse which gives rise to the myth of Salvatore Giuliano. True, Cimino, unlike Rosi, is not concerned with the collusion between banditry, organized crime and politics. He is however concerned with the potentially compelling discourse on the relationship between America and Italy, between the ideologies of the New World which he yearns for and those of the Old World which he rejects, between progression and regression. It is in the portrayal of these antinomies that the strength of *The Sicilian* by Cimino primarily lies. As for Rosi's film, while being

52. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 79.
53. For the ability of mythic discourse to placate the psyche's inner tension, I am drawing on Lucente's theories, 39.
54. *Ibid.*, 26.

deeply rooted in realistic discourse, what makes it particularly 'truthful', to draw once again on Sciascia's description, is its ability to bring to the surface the hidden desires that shape the collective unconscious of the Sicilian peasant who strives to cope with a harsh reality through the creation of myths. Through its aesthetic sublimation, the realist sign in Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano* is recoded and relocated in an idealized realm beyond temporal and spatial coordinates in ways which allow the story of Giuliano to take on the transcendent qualities of myth while faithfully reproducing the historical situation that gave rise to such a myth.[55]

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55. *Ibid.*, 40.

Betrayal Italian Style

Sara Soncini

Marital infidelity is a recurrent *topos* in Harold Pinter's drama, one which has enabled various arrangements of three interrelated concerns underpinning his entire production: 'the impossibility of verification, the invasion of territory, and the masking of emotion in the deployment of language', to borrow Elin Diamond's well-known summary.[1] This presence becomes particularly intense in Pinter's memory plays, where adultery plays a crucial role in the characters' conflictive reconstructions of the past, and takes centre stage in *Betrayal* (1978), where it becomes the stated and ostensible topic of the whole plot. Here, unlike what happens in its cognate pieces *Old Times* and *No Man's Land*, Emma's past love affair with her husband's best friend and business associate is not only verified, but actually staged following a reverse timeline of its key phases.

There is, however, a second and related *topos* which is considerably foregrounded and expanded in *Betrayal*, again marking this play's peculiarity among the corpus. Representations of Italy as a figure of difference feature regularly in Pinter's texts: from *The Dumb Waiter*, written at the very beginning of his career, up to his last full-length play, *Celebration*, references to Italian people, food, places, and words pop up occasionally, but at the same time strategically, in the characters' conversations as they vie for power and control over others. Typically, though, Pinter's Italy remains an exclusively verbal construction, an imaginary elsewhere which is always entirely mediated by the characters' words, and which can be conveniently shaped and re-shaped according to their contingent needs. In this respect, *Betrayal* is unique in Pinter's drama

1. E.F. Diamond, 'Pinter's *Betrayal* and the comedy of manners', *Modern Drama*, 23:3 (1980), 239.

in that the central and pivotal scene of the play is set in Venice, thereby creating the conditions for an actual encounter with Italian 'otherness'. This characterisation of Venice as a gateway into Italy is replicated in the other notable exception to the rule of discursive distancing, that is to say Pinter's screenplay of Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers* for Paul Schrader's 1990 film. Here the Venetian setting, which is only implied in the narrative source, is made explicit and references to Italian culture are brought into much sharper focus, as if to corroborate the 'authenticity' of the Italian experience for the British couple in the story.[2]

In *Betrayal*, this promise of greater realism is sustained through the full integration of the Italian element into the adultery plot. Venice is the place where Emma's infidelity is allegedly discovered by Robert, and this scene would appear to be equally revelatory about Italy's connotations as a signifier of (lost) love, desire, and deceit, thus weaving together and adding symbolical consistency to associations only briefly intimated in *The Homecoming*, and ambivalently developed in *Old Times*.[3] That this unwonted directness should turn out to be just as deceitful as the stated theme of the play is but one among several types of betrayals perpetrated upon the audience by Pinter through his skilfully handled 'patterns of banality'.[4]

This essay considers the hetero-stereotypes about Italy and Italians woven into the plot of *Betrayal*, examining their intersection with various forms of infidelity, and discussing their features and functions within the characters' triangular memory game and their struggle to shape and control identities. In parallel, it explores a further level of 'betrayal', and one which has been made proverbial through the Italian dyad of *traduttore-*

2. The most relevant instance of this attention to minute cultural details in the film is the visual quotation of *Colpo Grosso*, a trash TV show broadcast on a minor commercial channel during the late 1980s where the losing contestants had to strip naked. A large share of these amateur strippers were unsuspected Italian housewives, as Pinter's screenplay is careful to specify: see H. Pinter, *The Comfort of Strangers*, in *Collected Screenplays 3* (London: Faber, 2000), 259.
3. In the second act of *The Homecoming*, when Ruth's intentions to take on her husband's family and settle as the madam/mother of the house become clear, Teddy feebly protests by reminding her that he had taken her to Venice on their way from America to London. In *Old Times* the mysterious Anna, who may have had a Sapphic relationship with Kate as a young woman, and has now returned possibly to lure her away from her husband, seems to owe much of her capacity for (sexual) disruption to her current residence on the 'volcanic island' of Sicily: see H. Pinter, *Old Times*, in *Complete Works: Four* (New York: Grove Press, 1981), 18.
4. Linda Ben Zvi, 'Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*: The Patterns of Banality', *Modern Drama*, 23:3 (1980), 227–237.

traditore, by examining some substantial changes in the construction and use of national identity in the Italian translations of *Betrayal*. The awkward process of retranslation whereby Italy as seen through British eyes is brought back to an Italian audience inevitably entails a significant shift in the way identity and difference are encoded and enforced. The double focus adopted in this essay is meant to throw light both on the difficulty involved in the linguistic and cultural transfer of the self/other opposition, and on the way this opposition is constructed, or rather deconstructed, in Pinter's discourse of Anglo-Italian difference.

The corpus of translations taken into account consists of the three versions of *Betrayal* which have so far mediated access to Pinter's play for Italian readers and audiences: the first published translation by Laura Del Bono and Elio Nissim (1982),[5] the subsequent retranslation by Alessandra Serra (published in 2005 by Einaudi, and currently the 'authorised version' for stage productions),[6] and my own transcript of the dialogues spoken in the dubbed version of David Jones's film (UK, 1983).[7] The analysis will be mainly based on the Italian film dialogues with collations from the two published versions, since the technical constraints specific to dubbing have prompted a number of significant and revealing modifications of the cultural coordinates, mainly triggered by the need to provide an Italian verbal score for a pre-existing performance of 'foreignness' that bears the stamp of Pinter's authorial licence.

Brits in Venice

In the course of nine scenes, moving roughly backwards through nine years, Pinter's adultery plot exposes a whole series of interlinked betrayals: from the more obvious marital infidelity, to the betrayal of lovers' trust, of male friendship, of literary ideals and above all, perhaps, showing the deceits perpetrated by time, the slow but inexorable shrinking of life's promise of fullness under the erosive and corrosive power of the hourglass.

The action takes entirely place in London with the notable exception of Scene Five, which is set in Robert and Emma's hotel room in Venice,

5. H. Pinter, *Tradimenti*, G. Davico Bonino (ed.) (Torino: Einaudi, 1982).
6. H. Pinter, *Teatro*, 2 vols. A. Serra (ed.) (Torino: Einaudi, 2005), I, 172–218.
7. *Tradimenti* (1984); translated by Tullio Kezich; adapted and directed by Filippo Ottoni; dubbing actors: Sergio Di Stefano (Jerry), Paola Bacci (Emma), Michele Kalamera (Robert).

during the summer of 1973, exactly midway into the time span covered by the plot. In this scene, Robert confronts Emma with her affair with Jerry, which he claims to have just discovered, and she eventually confesses that she and her husband's best friend have been lovers for five years.

The centrality of the Italian episode in *Betrayal* has been profusely commented upon.[8] Pinter arranges his nine scenes or stations symmetrically around this Italian enclave, so to speak. In terms of plot, 'everything leads either to or from the Venetian hotel scene.'[9] The disclosure of Emma's adultery is placed right at the centre of the scene, and is framed by the mention of Torcello in the opening and closing lines. Moreover, the climactic revelation is preceded by Robert's statement of the play's theme and title in a one-word line with overtly meta-literary resonances: Emma is reading a book by a writer called Spinks which Robert refused to publish but has turned out a success; both Emma and Jerry think the book is very good whereas Robert finds its subject trite. When Emma asks him what he considers the novel's subject to be, his reply is 'betrayal'[10]—a judgement to which Emma does not subscribe although she is unable to suggest an alternative since she is still only halfway through the story, just like the spectator of the play called *Betrayal*.

The two scenes that follow are, from a structural point of view, a conspicuous chronological anomaly in that they move forward, instead of backwards, as they follow the ramifications of the Venice episode. In Scene Six, Emma returns to Jerry, bringing back from Venice a new tablecloth for their clandestine love nest in Kilburn, as well as a stronger inclination towards double-dealing (she keeps silent about Robert's discovery, even though Jerry unwittingly provides what would have been a perfect cue to broach the subject). Scene Seven focuses instead on the repercussions of the Venice climax on the male side of the triangle: as is well known, Pinter once described *Betrayal* as being 'about a nine-year relationship between two men who are best friends.'[11] Jerry and Robert meet for one of their customary lunches, which as a rule exclude Emma, in a scene which is all the more tense because neither of them is willing

8. See e.g. L.S. Wells, 'A Discourse on Failed Love: Harold Pinter's *Betrayal*', *Modern Language Studies*, 13:1 (1983), 22–30; A. Quigley, *The Modern Stage and Other Worlds* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 230–231; R. Cohn, 'The Economy of *Betrayal*', in L. Gordon (ed.), *Pinter at 70: A Casebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 13–31.
9. M. Billington, *The Life and Work of Harold Pinter* (London: Faber, 1996), 261.
10. H. Pinter, *Betrayal* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), 78.
11. Pinter quoted in Billington, 263.

to give anything away about the current state of affairs and their respective knowledge of it.

In terms of dramatic conflict, the Venetian episode involves a momentous redefinition of the power relations within the triangle which also affects – and is played out through—their affiliations with Italy. The dialogue begins with Emma's apparently innocent mention of their trip to Torcello on the following day. For the audience, this immediately works as an intimation that the conversation is going to tread on dangerous ground, since the connection between Torcello and the theme of adultery has already been established in Scene Two, the chronological ending of the story. This initial warning sign is followed, in rapid succession, by Robert's inquiry after the subject of the book Emma is reading ('betrayal'), and the revelation that he has recognised Jerry's handwriting on a letter addressed to his wife which has been placed in his hands with deplorable carelessness at the poste restante office in Venice.

Robert reacts to Emma's reticence about the letter's contents, and her refusal to offer a plausible reason as to why Jerry should have written to her while on holiday with her husband, by switching the topic again onto Torcello. He asks Emma how many times they have been to Torcello, providing himself the answer: this is a place they first visited together as newly-weds on Jerry's recommendation. He reminds his wife of how she 'fell in love' with Torcello during their first trip, and wonders whether she will 'like it as much tomorrow'.[12] Emma shows unwillingness to corroborate Robert's narrative of the past, or to answer his questions: this a perfectly understandable conduct in tactical terms, since any answer at this stage could result in a further and dangerous leak of information. Robert, however, continues to move round her in ever closing circles until she breaks her reticence with the blunt revelation that she and Jerry are lovers.

Significantly, the only exception to the utterly composed handling of a potentially explosive situation by these two consummated players in the triangular contest is Robert's outburst against the Italian clerks who are responsible for the misplaced letter:

> ROBERT: To be honest, I was amazed that they suggested I take it. It could never happen in England. But these Italians ... so free and easy. I mean, just because my name is Downs and your name is Downs doesn't mean that we are the Mr and Mrs Downs that they, in their laughing Mediterranean way, assume we are. We could be, and in fact are vastly more

12. Pinter, *Betrayal*, 82.

likely to be, total strangers. So let's say I, whom they laughingly assume to be your husband, had taken the letter, having declared myself to be your husband but in truth being a total stranger, opened it, and read it, out of nothing more than idle curiosity, and then thrown it in a canal, you would never have received it and would have been deprived of your legal right to open your own mail, and all this because of Venetian je m'en foutisme. I've a good mind to write to the Doge of Venice about it.

Pause

That's what stopped me taking it, by the way, and bringing it to you, the thought that I could very easily be a total stranger.

Pause

What of course they did not know, and had no way of knowing, was that I am your husband.

Pause

EMMA: Pretty inefficient bunch.

ROBERT: Only in a laughing Mediterranean way.[13]

As in the rest of the scene, Robert's construction of Venice as a synecdoche of Italy works here as an instrument of aggression and control. On the one hand, by declaring war on Italy, Robert is declaring war on Emma, making manifest his hostility towards his one-time partner now turned foe. His bitter resentment at the strangers' careless assumption of relationships just because they are both named Downs is a way of casting himself as the wronged husband of an estranged wife. The charge of je m'en foutisme could well be levelled at Emma's careless attitude towards their marriage.

One is easily led to psychologise Robert's invective against the Italian national character: 'the more Robert spins out his mock-indignation', comments Michael Billington, 'the more we understand his emotional devastation.'[14] Yet, while the defensive irony is undoubtedly there, Robert's performance of British repulsion at the Italian slipshod way of doing things is more than a mere diversionary tactic—it is a performance which is deliberately aimed at illustrating, and thereby enforcing, the rules of

13. *Ibid.*, 80. The exchange is reproduced verbatim in Jones's film.
14. Billington, 262.

the game. Both Torcello and the slovenly indiscretion of the Italian staff at the poste restante are used by Robert as weapons to force Emma to confess without ever confronting her with a direct question. His censure of the insouciance with which the Venetians overlook and overstep the sanctuary of privacy is an implicit way of reasserting the cultural superiority of the British in handling personal relationships, an intimation that the disclosure of the truth must not disrupt their highly civilised 'comedy of modern manners'.[15] In this respect, Robert's angry outburst against the Italian national character functions, on another level, as a form of conflict management—it enables him to hold the power struggle inside the triangle at cold war temperature, keeping all the seething passions safely curbed under the lid of civilised behaviour. Intercultural references to Torcello, Venice and the Venetians ultimately come across as crucial assets in an intra-cultural information war in which Robert and the other characters are engaged.[16]

Perhaps predictably, the Italian renditions of Robert's tirade are generally marked by a tendency towards mitigation. In the dubbed version of Jones's film this strategy is deployed in a systematic and rather conspicuous way, as will be apparent from the italicised translational infidelities:

> ROBERT: Veramente mi sono meravigliato che volessero darmela, in Inghilterra non lo farebbero mai, ma questi italiani... sono così *faciloni.* Insomma, il fatto che il mio nome è Downs, e che anche il tuo è Downs, non vuol dire che io e te siamo quei Mr e Mrs Downs che loro, con *faciloneria mediterranea,* credono che siamo. Potremmo essere, come in effetti è molto più probabile che siamo, due estranei. Quindi diciamo che io, preso *con faciloneria* per tuo marito, avessi ritirato la lettera, dichiarando magari di essere tuo marito, ma essendo in realtà un perfetto estraneo, e che la avessi aperta e magari anche letta, spinto da *semplice* curiosità, e che poi l'avessi gettata nel canale. Tu non l'avresti mai ricevuta e saresti stata privata del tuo *pieno* diritto di aprire la tua posta, e tutto per questi *veneziani mezzi sciroccati.* Signor Doge di Venezia, protesto formalmente.

15. R. Cave, *New British Drama in Performance on the London Stage 1970–1985* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), 39.
16. I agree with Silvio Gaggi that by the end of the play we retrospectively see 'Robert's early ignorance, his discovery of the "truth" in Venice, Jerry's apparent naivete, his ignorance of Robert's knowledge of the affair, and Emma's deceptions of both men' as 'all part of an elaborate performance. The major danger is the destruction of the game itself [...].' See S. Gaggi, 'Pinter's *Betrayal*: Problems of Language or Grand Metatheatre?', *Theatre Journal,* 33:4 (1981), 515.

È questo che mi ha trattenuto dal prenderla e portartela. Il pensiero che potevo anche essere un perfetto estraneo.

Ciò che loro non sapevano e non potevano sapere è che sono tuo marito.

EMMA: Una banda di incompetenti.

ROBERT: *Gran sorrisi mediterranei e basta.*

What is considerably attenuated, here as well as in the two other Italian versions of this exchange, is Robert's cultural translation of *italianità*. In the source text, the denigration of the Mediterranean take on life is carried out by indirection, with the angry Briton infusing negative connotations into the usually positive clichés associated with the land of sun. In the Italian translation, instead, Robert's characterisation of Italians as 'so free and easy', followed by his insistence on their 'laughing' approach to life, is turned into an overt and reiterated criticism of their 'faciloneria' (sloppiness, carelessness).[17] This anticipation of Robert's final verdict of 'Venetian je m'en foutisme' obscures the process whereby the Italians' endemic nonchalance, the happy-go-lucky attitude which allows them to enjoy life as it comes, automatically takes on negative connotations in the eyes of a Puritan like Robert—his qualification of 'curiosity' as 'idle', and the emphasis on the '*legal* right to open your own mail' are also tellingly generalised ('*semplice* curiosità'; '*pieno* diritto') and thereby detached from a precise cultural vantage point.

This softening of the cultural friction culminates in the translation of Robert's denunciatory Gallicism as 'veneziani mezzi sciroccati'—literally, 'half-nutty Venetians'. The considerable shift whereby a don't-give-a-damn attitude is turned into a weird behaviour arguably originates from lip-synch constraints. The phrase is delivered by Ben Kingsley in close-up, rendering it necessary to match the sequence of lip movements produced by /v/ and /ʒə/ with correspondent Italian sounds: the more literal, although slightly normalised, 'menefreghismo veneziano' and 'menefreghismo mediterraneo' found in the two published version (Serra and Del Bono/Nissim respectively) would involve a too blatant infringement of the compulsory invisibility of dubbing. The turning of 'Venetian' into a noun and of 'je m'en foutisme' into an adjective also derives from the need to reconcile lip-synch with Italian grammar, which prescribes the postpositive adjective in the unmarked form.

17. Both Del Bono/Nissim (1982) and Serra (2005), taking a similar course, render 'free and easy' as 'faciloni'.

Technically speaking, then, 'Veneziani mezzi sciroccati' is an effective and also a creative solution to a problem that no dubbing translator and/or director can afford to dismiss 'je m'en foutistically'. The repositioning of the cultural conflict that it produces, though, is revelatory. Through Robert's judgment of Venetians, Pinter points to a deliberate individual will to act carelessly, violating the British taboo of privacy; whereas the behaviour of a *sciroccato* is, as the past participle also indicates, driven by environmental factors: literally, by the climatic conditions engendered by that most typical of Mediterranean winds, the sirocco, and by the aberrant, unpredictable mood that results from the wind's negative psychological influence.[18]

A similar suppression of agency is detectable in the translation of Robert's closing remark. 'Gran sorrisi mediterranei e basta' lacks the strength generated by the repetition of 'laughing' and 'laughingly', which adds up to the semantic attenuation of laughter into smile. What these Italianised Italians seem to be guilty of is simple inefficiency, which they try to make up for with a show of bonhomie,[19] without the aggravating circumstance of sneering at their victims. In Pinter's text, the Venetians' laughter has by then ceased to be simply the outward manifestation of a carefree way of life, and appears instead to be directed specifically at Robert—his resentment worsening as his mind goes back to his performance as the cuckolded husband who is unable to shake off a cultural obsession with form, and to the attendant hilarity with which the outsider's Britishness is greeted by the 'bunch' of Italian clerks and bystanders at the American Express office. By eliding the performative quality of the intercultural clash staged in *Betrayal*, the Italian versions considerably diminish the hetero-stereotype's capability for shedding light on the culture from which it issues.

Conversely, the difficulty involved in this retranslation of other into self throws into relief Pinter's own construction of Venice as a site of

18. With its slangy, juvenile overtones, *sciroccati* is not a particularly apt rendition, in terms of register, for the snobbish Gallicism used by Robert, the highbrow publisher who admittedly hates modern literature. The translator, though, might here seem to be aiming at another kind of functional equivalence: as applied to Venetians, the term *sciroccati* carries distinctly literary echoes, recalling the suffocating atmosphere that ensnares the protagonist of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*; Robert's use of French in the source text might similarly be meant to evoke the epitomic literary antecedent of Pinter's Emma, i.e. Flaubert's Madame Bovary.

19. As also surmised by Del Bono and Nissim's 'Solo con la tradizionale bonomia mediterranea.'

intracultural mirroring, rather than intercultural encounter. The fundamental irony underpinning Robert and Emma's Italian experience, of course, is the complete absence of Venice and Venetians from the picture: Pinter's displaced Brits never leave the comfort of their hotel room, and all contact with foreignness is mediated by Robert's verbal account and his inwardly directed gaze. Seen in this light, the artful centrality of the Italian episode in *Betrayal*, its encasement within a symmetrical structure and a pattern of regressive action, comes across as a powerful image of narcissistic mirroring which points to the unilateralism of the Anglo-Irish transactions in the play, and to cultural translation as the ultimate form of betrayal.

Venetians in London

In keeping with the self-referential pattern traced above, Scene Seven reverts to the customary domestication of Italian otherness by transporting Venice back into the heart of London, inside the Italian restaurant which both Jerry and Robert patronise. Predictably, Robert's contempt for Venetians has not subsided, and during his post-Venice lunch with Jerry he behaves rudely towards the obsequious Italian waiter. At the same time, though, he revives his ties with Italy through the incorporation of its food and wines, which he orders in fluent Italian. He also explains to Jerry that his foul mood derives from the fact that he is now back in the world of London publishing, which he loathes, whereas in Italy he was happy—not in Venice, but during a solitary dawn spent on Torcello, reading Yeats.

Unlike that between Robert and mainland Venice, then, on the small secluded island the intercultural marriage facilitated by Yeats would appear to be still free from the taint of betrayal. The connection is also thoroughly appropriate to the dramatic situation: as the advocate of a fine nonchalance in the face of the ravages of time, the Anglo-Irish poet is the perfect companion for a trip to Torcello, which has by now come to stand for Robert's lost happiness with Emma and, even more, with Jerry—we have learnt from Robert's conversation with Emma in Scene Five that in their early days as editors of literary magazines at Oxford and Cambridge, before they married and before they turned into 'parasitic literary middlemen',[20] Jerry used to write long letters to Robert about Ford Madox Ford, which his friend reciprocated with missives about his favourite poet, W.B. Yeats. Through the literary-topographical match between Yeats

20. Billington, 259.

and Torcello, then, Robert is expressing his mournful nostalgia for the friendship with Jerry and their lost youthful idealism, while at the same time antedating his friend's potential for betrayal: as we by now know, Jerry's affiliation with Ford also prefigures his subsequent career as a literary agent who discovers and pushes new writers that are too philistine for Robert, as well as hinting at his proclivity for adultery (a central feature in both Ford's biography and literary production).[21]

In cultural terms, Robert's recourse to Yeats as his Anglo-Italian go-between carries ironic implications. At this stage, Robert's relationship with Italy can only be consummated on a self-elected ivory tower (the picturesque loneliness of Torcello at dawn) and through the good offices of a poet who was himself deeply influenced by Italian literature and philosophy but, despite repeated visits to the land of Dante, Castiglione, Vico, Croce and Gentile, could not read Italian and had therefore to depend on the mediation of summaries and translations.[22] One would be tempted to detect here a veiled allusion to Pinter's own lack of Italian and consequent reliance, at the time of writing, on an agent/translator of questionable fidelity.[23]

If there are several reasons for subscribing to Robert's claim that Yeats and Torcello 'went well together',[24] the cross-cultural business taking place in the London restaurant is rather more ambivalent. The conversation between the two men at table is bristling with perils and traps which we (and Jerry) continually sense underneath the apparent ease of the occasion, with Torcello again playing a pivotal role in the characters' game of hide-and-seek. This underlying tension is comically

21. Discussing the allusion to Ford Madox Ford in *Betrayal*, Angus Wrenn points to a number of thematic and formal resonances between Pinter's play and Ford's *The Good Soldier*. See A. Wrenn, '"Long letters about Ford Madox Ford": Ford's afterlife in the work of Harold Pinter', in Paul Skinner (ed.), *Ford Madox Ford's Literary Contacts* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 225–235.
22. For a thorough account of Yeats's relationship with Italian culture, see Fiorenzo Fantaccini, *W.B. Yeats e la cultura italiana* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2009).
23. Pinter continued to avail himself of an Italian interpreter even when Italy, through intensified contacts, became a 'special place of intimacy and affection' (R. Canziani and G. Capitta, *Harold Pinter. Scena e potere* [Milano: Garzanti, 2005], 162; translation mine). On ever more frequent public occasions, his new (and this time highly reliable!) official translator, Alessandra Serra, was always at his side. In 1998, when he directed a production of *Ashes to Ashes* in Palermo, Serra acted as both his interpreter (neither of the two lead actors, Adriana Asti and Jerzy Stuhr, spoke English) and assistant director.
24. Pinter, *Betrayal*, 113.

set off by the polite interjections of the waiter who speaks Italian and conducts himself with the utmost formality, following very closely the cultural script prescribed by his role:

JERRY: How was Venice?

WAITER: Ready to order, signori?

ROBERT: What'll you have?

JERRY: I'll have melone. And Piccata al limone with a green salad.

WAITER: *Insalate* verde.

ROBERT: I'll have prosciutto and melone. Fried scampi. And spinach.

WAITER: E spinaci.

ROBERT: And a bottle of Corvo Bianco straight away.

WAITER: Si, signore. *Molto* grazie.

He goes.

JERRY: Is he the one who's always been here or is it his son?

ROBERT: You mean has his son always been here?

JERRY: No, is he his son? I mean, is he the son of the one who's always been here?

ROBERT: No, he's his father.

JERRY: Ah. Is he?

ROBERT: He's the one who speaks wonderful Italian.

JERRY: Yes. Your Italian's pretty good, isn't it?

ROBERT: No. Not at all.

JERRY: Yes it is.

ROBERT: No, it's Emma's Italian which is very good. Emma's Italian is very good.

JERRY: Is it? I didn't know that.

WAITER: Corvo Bianco, signore.

ROBERT: Thank you.

JERRY: How was it, anyway? Venice.

WAITER: Venice, signore? Is the most beautiful place of Italy.

He goes.

[...]

WAITER: One melone. One prosciutto e melone.

ROBERT: Prosciutto for me.

WAITER: Buon *appatito*.[25]

This unnamed waiter, unindividuated to the point that he can be easily mistaken for either his father *or* his son, is clearly there to authenticate the Italianness of the restaurant, together with the Italian names of the dishes on the menu, or the picture of Venice hanging on the wall.[26] Pinter, however, makes it quite clear that this is a performance of national identity specifically directed at the restaurant's London clientele. This is very evident in the film version, where the waiter's all too marked Italian accent, and his stereotypical physical aspect and gestures,[27] bear traces of a 'performative surplus' pointing to a conscious effort of self-presentation.

25. This is my transcript of the film dialogues. Apart from a few cuts, the script follows very closely the published play text, with slight variations in the waiter's grammatical mistakes or mispronunciations (here italicised): for instance, the film has 'molto grazie' instead of the correct 'molte grazie', while in the play the waiter ungrammatically adds an English suffix to the Italian plural ('molte grazies').
26. In the film, the waiter's implicit stage direction, 'You see that painting on the wall? Is Venice' has been cut. There are several framed pictures on the wall but they are barely discernible; some might be landscapes, while the painting that is reflected in the mirror behind Jerry and Robert has a suspiciously Magrittian look—possibly, an ironical *mise en abyme* of the treason of images (and words) in this scene.
27. In Jones's film the waiter was played by Ray Marioni, a London-born Anglo-Italian actor who often appeared in supporting roles as a waiter. In the original stage production he was instead played by a domestic alien: Artro Morris, a Liverpudlian of Welsh descent.

On the other hand, for all his flaunted *italianità*, the waiter's language verges on the macaronic: he messes up singulars and plurals (as in 'insalate verde', where salad is made to agree with 'verde', which is mistaken for plural), or stumbles upon grammatical interference ('molte grazie*s*'). The Italian spoken by the waiter is all but 'wonderful'—provided that Robert is actually referring to him and not to his son, given the instability of identity that results from the use of pronouns with unclear antecedents. Robert's misjudgement of the waiter's linguistic competence bears ironically on his subsequent assessment of Emma's Italian as 'very good'; one also wonders whether he or Jerry are really in the position to assess anybody's Italian, given that they are easily duped by a second-rate performance. Even more importantly, this ostensibly Italian waiter sounds all but native: linguistic and national identity come across as something that can be acquired, affected, performed for whatever strategic ends.

Complementing his dubious Italian with a stereotypically ungrammatical English ('Venice, signore? Is the most beautiful place of Italy'), the waiter is a masterpiece of cultural hybridism, the perfect counterpart to the improbable linguistic and culinary fusions which figure in the scene—from the quirky, and definitely un-Italian, match of fried scampi and spinach, to an Italian 'melone' stranded on English 'rocks'. From a macro-textual perspective, the waiter seems to be a conflation of two colleagues who precede and follow him: the dumb waiter in the eponymous play, whose impossible orders include a puzzlingly Italianate 'Macaroni Pastitsio. Ormitha Macarounada';[28] and the highly loquacious name-dropper who zanily intrudes on the conversations of the three couples in *Celebration*, listing his grandfather's connections with a bizarre assortment of literary, political and Hollywood celebrities.

In the published Italian translations of *Betrayal*, the waiter's medley of Italian and English entirely disappears, although Alessandra Serra's more recent version uses asterisks to point out to the reader (or potential director) that some lines were originally in Italian in the source text. As well as tacitly correcting the waiter's grammatical mistakes and misspellings, therefore, both Einaudi editions normalise Robert's and Jerry's code-mixing: Robert's 'prosciutto *and* melone' loses its English conjunction, whereas Pinter has the

28. Ben mistakes them for 'Greek dishes', and Gus resolves on sending up a very English pasticcio of 'Three McVitie and Price! One Lyons Red Label! One Smith's Crisps! One Eccles cake! One [Cadbury's] Fruit and Nut!'. H. Pinter, *The Dumb Waiter*, in *Plays: One: The Birthday Party, The Room, The Dumb Waiter, A Slight Ache, The Hothouse, A Night Out* (London: Methuen, 1989), 152.

waiter himself amend the pastiche by bringing over to the table 'One melone. One prosciutto *e* melone' (even though linguistic hybridity is then reintroduced through 'one' instead of the corresponding Italian numeral). Similarly, Jerry's request of a 'melone on the rocks', seemingly calqued from the 'scotch on the rocks' he orders upon joining Robert at the table, sheds its split Anglo-Italian identity by simply becoming a 'melone ghiacciato'.

In comparison, the dubbed film shows greater awareness of the dramaturgical relevance of linguistic difference and its bearing on the construction and performance of identities. Here, the waiter's Italian is initially free of pronunciation and grammar anomalies. However, when he butts in the conversation, taking his cue from Jerry's question 'How was Venice?', he suddenly dons the mask of a caricature Venetian and sings the city's praises with a very marked accent ('Venexia, segnor? Xe la più bea cità d'Italia, ghe lo digo me'). This is a very bold move on the part of the film translator, since the standardisation of dialects is one of the hard and fast rules of dubbing.[29] The priority given here to the reproduction of linguistic difference can be explained with the fact that unlike Del Bono/Nissim and Serra, the dubbing translator's choices are bound to be compatible with the pre-existing visual text, and in David Jones's film the waiter's speech is explicitly characterised as a well-rehearsed routine which he habitually puts on for his customers, as is also apparent from Robert and Jerry's facial expressions and exchanged looks. This technical constraint ultimately elicits a rendition that is more responsive towards the dramatic and cultural conflicts woven into Pinter's play, and to a relationship with the Italian language which, here and elsewhere in his drama, is never linear, never innocent.

Paradoxically, however, the Italian dubbed version, while preserving the waiter's linguistic difference, is forced to elide the metalinguistic dimension. In keeping with the dogma of invisibility, all references to the waiter's Italian must be omitted, since they would sound odd in a context where everyone speaks Italian, ultimately spotlighting the translatedness of the Italian dialogues. The linguistic stratagems used to sidestep this obstacle produce an appreciable readjustment of the conflict dynamics. The waiter's 'wonderful' command of Italian is changed into his occasional

29. Accents, especially regional Italian accents, entail a conspicuous breach in the illusion of non-translatedness and are therefore anathema to this most invisible of translation practices. See T. Herbst, 'Why dubbing is impossible', in T. Heiss and R.M. Bollettieri Bosinelli (eds), *Traduzione multimediale per il cinema, la televisione e la scena* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1996), 97–115.

doubling as cook or kitchen help ('È quello che qualche volta sta anche in cucina'). As a consequence, the following exchange over whether it is Robert's or Emma's Italian which is 'very good' must also go. In accordance with the waiter's fate, Emma's linguistic competence is turned into culinary skill. This is compatible with her characterisation in the play—it actually anticipates the image of Emma 'in a new apron cooking a stew'[30] for Jerry in their Kilburn flat—and, more in general, with the frequent representation of women as dispensers of food (and sex) in Pinter's dramaturgy. Still, by establishing this connection between Emma and the Italian language, while at the same time denying his own linguistic competence, Robert is here doing more than simply confirming these affiliations. By further severing his ties with Italy, following the Venice episode, he is indirectly notifying his friend and fiend that a reconfiguration of the triangular relations is underway. This habitué of Italian destinations and Italian restaurants, who, unlike Jerry in the film, can order Italian dishes from the menu without mispronouncing them, and his favourite brand of Italian wine,[31] now switches onto Emma his former cultural expertise concerning the land of the careless, with a malicious hint at Emma and Jerry's own carelessness as lovers. Even more crucially, he also authoritatively overrules Jerry's intelligence about his and Emma's respective proficiency in Italian, simultaneously dealing a heavy blow to his rival's informational status, and remoulding Emma's identity according to his strategic concerns.

Like the other forms of infidelity traced in this essay, this slackening of the dramatic tension revolving around the signifier 'Italy' points to the difficulty of handling Pinter's discourse of Anglo-Italian difference in a context that reverses the standpoint from which the performance of national identity is apprehended. While problematic in translational terms, the intercultural leftover produced in this uneasy barter is loaded with hermeneutic potential with respect to the source text. Looking at the renegotiation of the self/other opposition in the Italian versions of *Betrayal* enhances insight into the rationale of Pinter's hetero-stereotypes by unlocking their quintessential perform-ability, their rootedness in performance, and their concomitant ability to perform.

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30. Pinter, *Betrayal*, 123.

31. The rather bewildering replacement of Pinter's 'Corvo Bianco' with a generic 'vino bianco' was dictated by the fact that the Italian version of Jones's film was sponsored by a direct competitor, Cinzano. I am (as ever) grateful to Filippo Ottoni for sharing inside information on the dubbing process.

Counterfeit Classics: Shakespeare/Camilleri Joking with Masks, Translations and Traditions

Carla Dente

Literature and life: Shakespeare between England and Italy. Some years ago *Troppu Trafficu ppi nenti* was performed in Catania under the direction of Giuseppe Dipasquale. It was a translation, adaptation and parody of Shakespeare's comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing* written by Andrea Camilleri in Sicilian dialect. Camilleri and Dipasquale's adaptation was published in a book containing three texts of the same nature;[1] the other two were a stage adaptation of a previous novel by Camilleri, *Il birraio di Preston (The Preston Brewer),* first performed in Catania in 1999 with the same director, and recently revived, and *La Cattura,* already staged in 2001 with a splendid performance by the actor Turi Ferro. *La Cattura* was an adaptation for the theatre of a short story by Pirandello, an author who was a classic first of the Sicilian and then of the Italian stage. A second edition of *Troppu Trafficu* was published in the prestigious Oscar Mondadori collection, together with a translation into Italian by Masolino D'Amico only two years ago.[2] A translation is no doubt

1. Andrea Camilleri and Giuseppe Dipasquale, *Teatro*, Siracusa, Lombardi Editori, 2003. Recently the text has been republished in the series Oscar Mondadori (2011).
2. Masolino D'Amico is a well-known translator for the theatre and other media of both Shakespeare and contemporary works. Though he is an academic, he has particularly strong theatrical interests, as he is the son of the founder of the Academy of Dramatic Art and of one of the most important Italian screenwriters, and also the nephew of a renowned critic who contributed to the introduction of Anglo-Saxon literary culture in Italy after the war. His work as a translator of this text is absolutely unique.

necessary if the play is to be properly understood by an Italian audience. However, it changes the nature of the 'gesture' made by that first experiment, originally performed in the Catania Summer Festival of 2000.

The comedy is a game set up by the two Italian authors at a time when the possible Sicilian origin of Shakespeare had made the headlines in Italy. This was yet another fanciful manifestation of an obsessive interest[3] in the identity of Shakespeare the man and the somewhat mysterious field of the connections between his life and his works. The phenomenon, taken as a whole, can be seen as evidence of the public's desire to curb in some way or other the biographical and thematic elusiveness of a corpus of works that has traversed many cultures and dialogued with, and in, many languages.[4]

It is some time since Roland Barthes expressed the desire for 'the death of the author'[5] which would enable texts to yield a multiplicity of meanings that in some ways were fettered by the biographical seal—a seal which, by its very nature, tends to hinder the reader's hermeneutical exploration and directs it towards a definitive interpretation authenticated by the author's supposed intentions. Critical debate concerning the relationship between the author and his text has resulted in a proliferation of differentiated theoretical positions. As there is obviously no room to review all these positions here, I must appeal to Shakespeare's words in the prologue to *Henry V*, and ask the reader to:

> Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them,
> Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
> For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings. [*Prol.* 26–28]

3. The television program, *Voyager*, broadcast on prime time on a national channel, has dedicated much attention to the hypothesis which is here being discussed, I hope, with a healthy deal of necessary doubt. Lamberto Tassinari's monograph, *Shakespeare? È il nome d'arte di John Florio* (Montreal: Giano Books, 2008) contains on the other hand a well-argued overview of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Florio's knowledge and beliefs.
4. See, for example, the special issue of *Textual Practice* on *Early Modern biographies* (v. 23, 2, 2009) edited by Andrew Hadfield, and the first issue of *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 'On Authorship', edited by Donatella Pallotti and Paola Pugliatti; also, on the same subject *Memoria di Shakespeare* 8, edited by Rosi Colombo and Daniela Guardamagna, both still forthcoming when this paper was delivered, at the Anglo-Italian 2011 Conference in Malta.
5. Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. by S. Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 142–148.

I shall therefore only briefly touch on Michael Foucault's position,[6] which emphasized how interest in the author began somewhat late in the history of European literary culture, that is at a time when the writer had become someone who could be legally punished because of religious or social transgressions. It is only with New-Historicism[7] that critical biography has slowly come back into favour after an interval of years marked by savage theorizing based exclusively on the text. To judge by present results, this new school of critical biography is following pathways already authoritatively marked out by Coleridge in his various lectures,[8] where the sequence of the canonical texts was read as the history of the poet's psychological development.

Much more recently Anthony D. Nuttall,[9] adopting a professedly philosophical perspective, has attempted to reconstruct the creative itinerary of Shakespeare's mind by examining the texts in the order in which they were presumably written and taking into account anything around him which might have affected him. The result is of undoubted interest for the exegesis of the individual plays, but in his drive to rescue Shakespeare from formalist criticism, Nuttall occasionally falls into the trap of 'wild guessing'.[10]

Pierre Bourdieu,[11] with greater theoretical incisiveness, has sought to put the author back in the text by reconstructing instead the complex

6. Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology,* (ed.) J. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1998), 205–222.
7. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
8. Gary Taylor opportunely reminds us that it was during the Romantic period that interest in Shakespeare took a drastically biographical turn: *Reinventing Shakespeare. A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present (1989)*, (London:Vintage, 1991).
8. Anthony D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2007).
10. The connection between a Katherine Hamlett's death by drowning in 1579 and the similar fate of Ophelia in *Hamlet*, prompts the author to reflect on those passages most frequently anthologized (the so-called 'beauties from Shakespeare') and on the visual imagination which led to the work of the painter J. E. Millais. He comments: 'It might seem that the original, low-life incident has been wholly erased by this exercise in "heightening".' (p. 7). This episode also lies behind the legal discussion concerning the consequences of the death (whether accidental or self-inflicted) and the comment on Gertrude's description of Ophelia's death which is as follows: 'There is something eerie about Shakespeare's ability to anticipate our thoughts [...] I, a critic writing in the twenty-first century, was groping towards understanding how Shakespeare transformed, through the exalting agency of his high poetry, an almost squalid real death.' (p. 8).
11. Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: gènese et structures du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

network of social factors pressing in on the individual. The critic-sociologist has focused on the author's negotiation with his environment, with those elements he had to resist or oppose, or those whose influence he accepted. In this sense the text is reclaimed for the author, who in effect becomes the subject of his own artistic creation.

Historically, on the other hand, interest in Shakespeare's life was subsequent to interest in his works. Information first appeared in 1785 when James Wilmot[12] carried out an early field research in the environs of Stratford, though he achieved no appreciable results.

Critics have shown unceasing interest in the problem of the relations between literature and life, between the public and the private life of the author. These relations have been marked by a great variety of nuances, depending on the general perspective of the critic and on whether autobiography is an explicit theme of the work under examination or, as in Shakespeare's case, whether the little we know for certain about his life is to be seen in relation to the reading of the texts. Thus the authorship question has always proceeded in two different directions, though the starting point of both is that there is a glaring discrepancy between the profile that emerges from what we know about Shakespeare's life and the profile which his works enable us to reconstruct; one line of investigation aims to reconstruct Shakespeare's biography on the basis of solid facts in a way that is consistent with an appreciation of the texts; the other approach is concerned with various hypotheses about authorship, so that the works, either collectively or singly, are attributed to other authors, such as Bacon, Marlowe and Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, among those more frequently suggested.[13]

I shall take as my starting point the most recent reconstructions of Shakespeare's life, even if Camilleri engages with both. One cannot help being struck by the number of publications and the fame of the scholars who have applied themselves to this line of research. The importance of this body of work for Shakespearean studies cannot be overstressed. These studies evidence a basic attitude, variously expressed by well-known scholars, which seems to make the meaning of the work dependant on the events of the author's life. Such an approach gives only secondary

12. See James Shapiro, *Contested Will. Who Wrote Shakespeare* (London: Faber& Faber, 2010), 1.

13. The list is very long and includes Mary Sidney, the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Rutland, in addition to various hypothesized collaborations from Walter Raleigh to John Florio, from Southampton to the Queen herself.

importance to aspects such as the influence of society and culture in the construction of literary identities. According to Wolfgang Iser,[14] these aspects determine the textual choices made by the author, the only ones which can be tracked down and retraced by the reader, who in the act of reading marks out and reconstructs the authorial strategy that constitutes the real source of the text. What I wish to demonstrate is that Camilleri himself participates in this renewed ferment concerning the problem of the relationship between author and text. He does this by playing with the hypothesis that this text in Sicilian is the real text written by Shakespeare in his 'mother tongue'. This act by Camilleri, in itself, runs counter to the idea that the meaning of the text springs 'vertically' from the original author, and, on the contrary, privileges a practice of rewriting aimed at exploiting a form of horizontal fertilization that is intertextual and even boldly intercultural. Paradoxically, this cross fertilization might also shed some new light on the nature of the *authorial myth* which indirectly is being explored.

These first few years of the twenty-first century have witnessed in the Anglo-Saxon world a renewed outpouring of critical biographies of Shakespeare. Their object seems to be a replacement of the consolidated practice of the search for intertextual elements connecting with other texts in the contemporary cultural system with research focusing on the experience of the author, on his personality. This seems to me to imply a conception of the literary fact as something fundamentally realistic, to the detriment of the role played by the imagination in the creative act. In each of these investigations of the author's personality, emphasis tends to be placed on a totalizing isotopic interpretation, which necessarily ends up by minimizing any dissonant elements.

I would like to argue that Stanley Wells's biography[15] seeks to achieve a harmonious reconstruction of Shakespeare's personality, bringing together his love for the theatre, his homesickness for Stratford, where his real estate interests were concentrated, and his poetic afflatus. This is achieved at the expense of two significant elements which are neglected. One is the purchase Shakespeare made, after he had retired to Stratford, of a London house in the Blackfriars area. This certainly undermines the myth of a 'happy final retirement to family life.' The other discordant element is the role Shakespeare played together with others in the question of the

14. Wolfang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) (orig. German ed. 1976).
15. Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare: for all time* (London: Macmillan, 2002).

Welcombe Enclosures, which conjures up the image of a hard-headed businessman, pursuing his own interests, even at the expense of the rural community. His moral figure is also obscured by the episode in which 'opportunely' he did not 'remember' in court certain financial aspects of a matrimonial transaction he had contrived.

All this paints a picture that partly differs from the expectations normally entertained by the reader. For example, the historical plays suggest an unusually developed conscience on the part of an author attentive to the voice of the common people commenting on historical events and their consequences for ordinary people. But the biographer skirts over these awkward facts.

In a seminar discussion last year (at the ESSE Congress, Turin, 2010) Graham Holderness, reflecting on the reading Catherine Duncan-Jones[16] had given of Shakespeare the man, stressed an aspect that was ideologically the opposite of the reading given by Wells: Duncan-Jones depicts a wholly disagreeable person, a selfish land-owner, someone who was deaf to the implicit requests of poor people in his town, to whom in his will he made but a paltry bequest.

Jonathan Bate,[17] in his explicit aspiration to construct a biography of the author's mind along the lines traced out by Coleridge, proposes his academic view by seeking to harmonize textual data and objective biographical data. A good demonstration of Holderness's observation about the attitude of the biographer who, when he is both a man of letters and an academic, impresses his own form on his object of study.

Peter Ackroyd,[18] a non-academic biographer, instead, clearly emphasizes the discrepancy, at times disquieting, between the figure of the insatiable land-owner and that of the playwright directing his satire towards everything that is transitory.

Steven Greenblatt[19] also comments on Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford, agreeing with Wells and Bate that it may have been a planned move. He stresses Shakespeare's decline in social position and imagines a negative state of mind which made him tolerate rather than enjoy this retirement. Greenblatt's 'creative' approach, which involves so much

16. Catherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare* (London: The Arden Series, Routledge, 2001).
17. Jonathan Bate, *Soul of the Age* (New York: Random House, 2010).
18. Peter Ackroyd, *Shakespeare: the Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005).
19. Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World. How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (Cape 2004), (London: Pimlico, 2005).

guesswork about so many aspects of the author's life, is a factor that justifies us in claiming that this biography, perhaps more than others, errs too much on the side of imagination.

Graham Holderness[20] seems inclined to accept all of Shakespeare's masks as reflected by the biographical data; he imagines an author in whom there coexists a polyphony of voices. Last year, when Holderness felt obliged to explain his thought on a blogbeca use something he had said in a lecture that had been interpreted as a pronouncement supporting the claim that the author of Shakespeare's works was the Earl of Oxford, he wrote: 'My position in the Shakespeare Authorship Question is that I am interested in reasonable doubt, but not in alternative certainty.'[21]

The (reader's) unease when confronted with Shakespeare's contradictory choices and attitudes, the reasons for which must inevitably remain hidden though open to speculation, can be allayed if he turns to what is more interesting from a literary point of view, namely, the relationship between writing and real life, between self and the mask, or the masks worn by the author, between memory which reworks biographical experience and that necessary dose of impersonality in artistic expression which guarantees its communicability.

I believe there is good work yet to be done along the line of research concerning multiple and collective authorship, a natural feature of work in the theatre. This could help to explain that specialized knowledge (such as military and legal discourse, travel accounts [. . .]) which is sometimes evident in Shakespeare's language and which some people, for example, find incongruous in the boy from Stratford.

As regards the various hypotheses about authors who may have assumed Shakespeare's identity in their writings, I shall mention only those which concern relations between Italy and England. In particular mention should be made of John Florio (a hypothesis put forward by Lamberto Tassinari, with an entire group of supporters engaged in archive research, Panzieri's team, in Milan). Camilleri's play, on the other hand, is grafted on to the hypothesis put forward by Juvara, which connects Messina with Stratford.

Troppu Trafficu ppi nenti is a special type of 'adaptation', based not on any forms of *afterlife* of an original, influential Shakespearean story,

20. Graham Holderness, *Nine Lives of William Shakespeare* (London and New York: Continuum Ind. Pub. Group, 2011).

21. Cf. 'The Road to Oxford' on Michael Prescott's blog. Http://michaelprescott.typepad.com/michael_prescott_blog/2010/03/graham_holderness , May 5th, 2010.

but on a form of its fictitious *pre-birth*, the supposed original manifestation of the story. This is another symptom of the same basic interest: in the case in point the aim is to allay the feeling of unease experienced by the audience on account of the elusive nature of the way in which Shakespeare's texts have been handed down.

Camilleri took his cue from newspaper culture columns reporting a round table discussion at the 2000 Turin Book Fair, devoted on that occasion to cultural hybrids. The round table had discussed a hypothesis put forward by Martino Juvara,[22] a retired teacher of Italian, according to which 'William Shakespeare' was the pseudonym of a certain Michelangelo Florio, the son of Giovanni and Guglielma Crollalanza, born in Messina in 1564. The Florio in question is said to have fled from Sicily to Venice because his father Giovanni, a Calvinist, had published a brief pamphlet that was judged to be heretical. After a series of vicissitudes Michelangelo fled to England and took on a new identity,[23] that of a cousin on his mother's side, who had died prematurely and had lived in Stratford like the rest of the Crollalanza family, whose name was roughly translated as Shakespear. In support of his hypothesis Juvara points out that at least one half of Shakespeare's plays are set in Italy and of these as many as four are set in Verona or Venice, two cities visited by Florio in his exile. The argument is intriguing but hardly original or decisive, because it ignores the mechanism of the projection on to a geographical 'other' of what might be dangerous to set in a 'here' with its precise socio-cultural connotations. Furthermore, in the 1920s, it had been noted that the idiomatic expressions used by common people as well as the proverbs contained in *Hamlet* were the same as those collected in a volume dating from the sixteenth century and entitled *I secondi frutti (The Second Fruits)*, composed by a Calvinist

22. It must once again be pointed out how such fantastic biographical reconstructions and equally fantastic textual attributions regularly occur, both in England and in other countries, close to the time of the celebrations for Shakespeare's birthday which is around April 23, the date, also, of his death. In this particular case, as in others, the news was greeted by British academics and historians with the contempt these 'discoveries' customarily elicit.

23. The young man had studied Latin, Greek and History with the Franciscan friars. At the age of 15 he was forced to flee his homeland because his father had been condemned by the Holy Office to be burned at the stake on account of his anti-Catholic writings. Having escaped to Venice it is said that he lived in a 'palazzo' belonging to a certain Ser Otello, who had strangled his wife Desdemona out of jealousy. During this Venetian period he fell in love with Giulietta, the daughter of a Milanese nobleman, who, finding herself unequal to fight back against her family's opposition, committed suicide.

writer from Northern Italy, Michelangelo Crollalanza, and subsequently quoted by John Florio. One could continue with a whole series of parallel elements between Shakespeare's works and what we know of the two possible authors. All this is mixed somewhat alarmingly with documentary evidence already possessed by scholars concerning Michelangelo Florio, his father Giovanni, John Florio, and their respective works. One can only conclude that, to all appearances, the phenomenon of moving from an appropriation of Shakespeare's texts to the appropriation of his person has recently taken root also in Italy. The commercial advantages of this phenomenon had already been intuited and exploited by Garrick in the eighteenth century. The search for biographical confirmation based on the texts is a procedure that can lead to uncontrollable results. Here I shall only mention the question of language: according to Juvara, Shakespeare wrote in Italian and then had his first works translated by his wife before putting them on at *The Globe.*

Dramaturgy, Theatre and Dialect in Sicily

The fact that Camilleri, in the context I have described, should have decided to turn this issue into a literary game through language comes as no surprise. In the first place, translation into dialect of a canonical work belonging to a foreign culture is not just an amusing entertainment; it also acquires a profound meaning as a symptom of the need for appropriation.[24] In the case of *Troppu Trafficu ppi nente*, Camilleri's translation/adaptation at the turn of the twenty-first century was made in a local theatrical context, that of a Summer open air entertainment, that makes the aim of the text both ambiguous and contradictory, a fact which is inevitably taken into account, absorbed and problematized by the dialect text.

In the comedy the problem is rendered more complex by the fact that the materials are in no way culturally 'Sicilian'. We are dealing with the translation of a canonical text of a foreign author by a writer who has somehow become part of a culture that is primarily regional. In Italy Camilleri's 2000 play must be seen in relation to another translation/

24. Not a lot has been written on this subject: see for example, P. Newmark, *Approaches to Translation* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982); M. Bowman, 'Scottish Horses and Montreal Trains. The Translation of Vernacular to Vernacular' and B. Findlay 'Translating Standard into Dialect: Missing the Target?', both in C.A. Upton, *Moving Target. Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation,* (Manchester & Northampton: St Jerome Publishing, 2000); M. Carlson, *Speaking in Tongues. Languages at Play in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

rewriting, this time in Neapolitan dialect: Eduardo De Filippo's reworking of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.[25]

Arguably, Eduardo and Camilleri were both motivated by the same challenge: they wished not only to present the translation of a text of a world master of comic theatre but also to suggest a further meaning of particular significance for the contemporary world. Eduardo makes this clear in a translator's note[26] added at the end of the text.

> [. . .] there are many reasons that led me to decide in favour of *The Tempest* [. . .]; although he was treated unworthily by his brother, by the King of Sicily and by Sebastian, Prospero does not seek vengeance but rather their repentance. What more topical teaching could an artist have given to someone today, who in the name of a religion or an 'ideal' murders and commits unspeakable cruelties, in an escalation that will lead him who knows where. And among the 'ideals' I also place money and riches, which are regarded as ideals in this squalid consumer society of ours. (186).

Moreover, a revaluation of local languages can also come about as a result of the technical challenge of translating Shakespeare, for a 'universal' Shakespeare, in a Bradleian perspective, or a 'global' Shakespeare, in a post-modern perspective, is not necessarily in contradiction with a 'local' Shakespeare. Resistance to a 'local' perspective, that seeks to connect Shakespeare with a particular place or ideology, might seem to diminish his greatness; on the contrary, it is probable that an emphasis on specific characteristics enhances those texts which in the process of 'universalization' are made to 'conform' or to be 'uniform'. This specific case of literary translation, of great creative value, explores the possibility of Shakespearean writing to preserve its general distinctive features while at the same time drawing upon the repertoire of words and forms belonging to local popular cultures.

The act of staging *Much Ado about Nothing* in extremely broad Sicilian dialect means that it must be seen and evaluated in relation to the Sicilian theatrical tradition, which over the years has expressed essentially

25. *The Tempest* by W. Shakespeare, translated into Neapolitan by Eduardo De Filippo (Torino: Einaudi, 1984). I would like to thank Paola Pugliatti for pointing out to me F. Neri's *Scenari delle maschere in Arcadia* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1913), which contains the Commedia dell'Arte scenario *Il gran mago,* crucial in proving that *The Tempest* is the Shakespearean comedy which displays the clearest connection to the Italian Commedia dell'Arte.

26. De Filippo, 'Nota del traduttore', 185–187.

two different attitudes towards indigenous popular culture. One is manifested through realistic drama, which Camilleri supports with his writing and his adaptations aimed at the construction of a vast rich dialectal repertoire; the other is visible in the *Opera dei Pupi* (the Puppet Theatre), which bears affinities both with the mechanisms and the popular source of the story.

In Italy, furthermore, dialect theatre in the twentieth century was essentially a theatre of the body rather than a theatre of literary texts. The actor, especially if he was a great actor, played the central role in a theatrical context which was very close to the subjects favoured by the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Thus the two genres were brought even closer together.

Textual Interplay between Reality and Fable

Sicilian plays in dialect became popular towards the end of the nineteenth century (they had originated in 1863 with Giuseppe Rizzotto) as a late product of *Verismo*. That movement saw its greatest expression in Giovanni Verga in the field of the novel and the theatre, and in the scenic technique developed through the work of important actors such as Grasso and Musco. Ever since then an unusually close collaboration between the man of letters and the person responsible for staging his text has been a constant feature of the Sicilian tradition. This is reflected in the case under examination in the relationship between Camilleri, the playwright, and Dipasquale, the director and manager of the Catania repertory theatre. *Verismo* in fiction and *verismo*/realism in the theatre spread from Sicily to the mainland, attracting the attention of theatre lovers and scholars on account of both its themes and its style. In this pioneering phase there were still two distinct strands, the actorial and the dramaturgical. A prominent position in stage practice was held by Giovanni Grasso, an actor from Catania. Basically Grasso was a tragic actor, whose training had been decisively influenced by his experience in the Puppet Theatre, acquired under the guidance of his father, and by those forms of street theatre, germane to the *Commedia dell'Arte,* which never took real hold in Sicily. Grasso's great merit was that he succeeded in embodying themes close to the spirituality of his island[27] and in introducing them to the rest of Italy and the world through a form of theatre practice that concentrated

27. Grasso interpreted texts by Martoglio, Verga and Pirandello: the *Berretto a sonagli*, *Morte civile*, *Pietra su pietra,* and *Cavalleria rusticana.* He performed in Europe—Spain, France, England, Germany and Russia—and in South America.

on the actor and the role of the actor manager. Another man from Catania, Angelo Musco, had begun his career as his counterpart 'comic actor': at the end of Grasso's show he would parody the tragic elements, and was greatly appreciated by the audience who relished the sudden change of register brought about by the comedian's repertoire of movements and jokes, in the ancient tradition of the *Atellanae* and the *Mimes*. In a later stage of his career Musco founded a company which also performed texts in dialect.[28] Here he was able to make good use of his gifts as a colourful comedian together with his deep knowledge of Sicily and its complex spirituality. Relations were constantly strained with the authors whose works he staged because of the freedom with which he allowed his brilliant acting to take precedence over the original text. His most frequent conflicts were with Pirandello, who may even have been tempted by the idea of taking to the stage himself to avoid this characteristic of Musco's approach[29] and to exert even an ultimate control over dramatic texts. On his lips, however, the words of Pirandello were recreated, took on their 'reality' and were spoken with the accents of *truth*.

On the dramaturgical side, Pirandello's strong opposition to acting practices made sense in the context of the Sicilian theatre particularly as regards the way Sicily might be perceived on the mainland, but it was also relevant to the theatre elsewhere as it addressed more general questions of power relations in the organization of show business, the roles of the actor and the actor manager as well as the author's right to intervene in the staging. Only if these organizational problems were solved, could the Italian theatre conform to national standards in the rest of Europe.

Pirandello's work, which aimed at establishing a corpus of Sicilian theatre texts, was however, above all directed towards authors other than

28. Musco's earliest success was *Paraninfu* by Luigi Capuana, which brought him to the attention of the critic Renato Simoni. Simoni convinced Pirandello that Musco was an exceptionally talented, instinctively brilliant commedian. The most important Sicilian writers began to compose works especially for him, and he approached these roles as a tailor does with clothes he has been given to update for a particular client. Among his major theatrical successes one may remember *San Giovanni decollato* and l'*Aria del continente* by Martoglio, *La Patente, Pensaci Giacomino, Il berretto a sonagli, Liolà* by Pirandello, *Cavaliere Pedagna* by Capuana. These writers were the most prominent Sicilian representatives of the literary culture of the time. Musco also played a very successful Compare Alfio in the stage adaptation of Verga's *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

29. In his critical writing Pirandello is very harsh on the actors' theatre and in particular he attacks Sicilian actors. See especially *L'azione parlata* (1899), *Illustratori, attori e traduttori* (1908), *Teatro siciliano?* (1909), *Teatro e Letteratura* (1918).

himself. He was often more intransigent with actors grappling with his own texts, because of the rigid control which he believed the author should exert in the staging of his texts.[30]

Pirandello's dialect showed that it had internalized Sicily's atavistic disillusionment amid a host of contradictions which rendered the island fascinating despite the compromising bourgeois moral attitude, the aggressiveness of the mafia, and the ostentation of a mythic image, which held it prisoner of the past. Traditional conflict immobilized action and conscience, as Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa was later to demonstrate so forcefully. It is no accident that the above-mentioned names and attitudes, going from dramaturgy to social life, also often recur in interviews given by Camilleri.

That Pirandello is extremely important in Camilleri's professional and intellectual universe can be deduced from the fact that he has devoted so much attention to his plays both in specific productions from his theatrical repertoire and in his teaching at the acting school *Prima del Teatro*.[31] When Giorgio Prosperi, theatre critic of *Il Tempo* newspaper, who had noted the similarities between the two Sicilian authors, remarked that Camilleri's familiarity as a director with Pirandello would have allowed the former to use the familiar *tu* pronoun in addressing the latter, Camilleri replied that if he should meet him he would still address him with the appellation of 'voscenza' (Your Excellency) as a mark of the greatest respect. Furthermore, in a recent anthology of Pirandello texts compiled by Camilleri, the frequently reissued essay *L'umorismo* is accompanied by another entitled *Illustratori, attori e traduttori,*[32] which is not so well known but perhaps more relevant for someone interested in the profession of acting. This is a clear indication that Camilleri, in compiling his anthology, was seeing the play he was working on, *Troppu traffic ppi nenti,* in relation also to Pirandello.

30. Pirandello especially enjoyed working with Nino Martoglio, with whom he aspired to create a dramatic art which employed Sicilian dialect without remaining provincial. From 1907 Pirandello collaborated with the *Compagnia drammatica siciliana Martoglio-Marcellini* in what was defined as 'an effort of patriotic art'.

31. This drama school is organised by the Teatro di Pisa and has for some time been taking place each summer in S. Miniato. Here pre-selected students from various European acting schools exchange ideas in a series of residential seminars. In this context Camilleri has worked on *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* with English and Russian students and actors, each in his own language.

32. Luigi Pirandello, *L'umorismo ed altri saggi*, (ed.) by Enrico Ghidetti (Firenze: Giunti, 1994).

It might seem hazardous to claim that *Troppu Trafficu* was influenced by the *Opera dei Pupi.* Nevertheless, the main features of the beautiful story put together by Shakespeare suggest analogies with the typology of stories belonging to the popular repertoire of the *Opera dei pupi.* This form of marionette theatre presents a series of stories of epic-chivalric inspiration. Their influence can be glimpsed in the plot development of Camilleri's comedy. The traditional stories staged in this form of street theatre are centred around the Paladin *Orlando*, a marionette which, in all the versions, is dressed in the same way—a red tunic and a helmet with an eagle—, *Rinaldo of Montalbano*[33]—distinguishable by his green tunic and the lion on his helmet—who plays the role of the generous knights, *Angelica*, *Gano of Magonza*, *Orlando's* step-father and a 'marionette' who in every show embodies treachery, *Charlemagne*, the figure of authority, and *Ruggiero*, the noble warrior. Such actantial roles are to be found in Camilleri's reworking of Shakespeare's comedy: they include *Don Petru*, a somewhat cynical character who sets off the couples' game; the *Principi di Aragona, Claudiu e Beneditti, Giuvini Signuri,* who collectively embody the actantial role of the 'noble knight', while *Don Giuvanni, so' frati bastardu* (his bastard brother) is undoubtedly a realization of the prototype of the 'traitor', who, if he speaks does so sparingly and in Sicilian so as to allude to the stereotype of the *mafioso.* These roles mark out a story reminiscent of popular Sicilian theatre in the struggle between good and evil to be found in the **'sacred plays'**, here without traditional second leads such as demons and angels. It is not accidental that these shows were popularly referred to as **'intrallazzate'**[34] (ambiguously meaning both acts of illicit trading and short plays filling in the intervals in mainstream plays). Their function reminds one of the interludes in the Tudor period. A further hybridization I believe could be found in a second expression of popular tradition, that of the **'vastasate'**, or performances that originated in Palermo towards the end of the eighteenth century. Their protagonists were the *vastasi*, the porters, and the stage chosen for the performance of these stories dealing with humble people and servants was the little wooden theatre known as the *casotto,*

33. It is worthwhile noticing that Montalbano is the name of the protagonist of Camilleri's most famous detective stories.

34. The *intrallazzata* (a trick or illicit traffic) usually begins with a prologue which hints at the contents of the poem and begs the audience's attention; it customarily ends with a moral sentence of some kind. The 'lazzi' of the character Zanni, typical of the comedy known as Improvvisa, may well be an influence on the genre.

which allowed the people in the street to be actors and audience at the same time. The themes were simple and sometimes accompanied by the audience singing to well-known tunes. The main character was the archetype of the servant who followed along the lines marked out by previous analogous stock characters in the *Commedia dell'Arte* and created the first real Sicilian mask-characters, (Nofriu,Tofalu) even though at the end of the sixteenth century some Sicilian authors had already created the figures of the servants Tiberius, Catonzo and Nino, who were derivations from the *Commedia erudita.* As for Camilleri's play, one might mention this tradition of the *vastasate* in connection with the subplot of the three watchmen, which was a decisive element in the defeat of the 'bad guys'.

One feels that in this Shakespearean comedy Camilleri may have been intrigued by what he glimpsed beneath the surface: the playful engagement with the metaphorical lack of control over the character 'of the deceiver'. Paradoxically, this lack of control also concerns the movements of marionettes, for these are moved by a will, the puppeteer's, that is always wavering between the search for complete control over the object, and also the experimentation with the possibilities of guided movement and with unforeseen movements. The metaphorical value of all this seems to be in keeping with the social and political convictions Camilleri has expressed on numerous occasions.

In a story of 'the second degree' such as this creative translation is, attitudes towards the plot are supposed to be the incarnation of the relationship of a copy to its model. Here, however, the copy replaces the model, paradoxically becoming more real than its source, while expressing at the same time the disquieting voice of the copy, the 'pupo' (another ambiguous term in Sicilian), which parallels the relationship between the human and the marionette, the real free man and the 'picciotto'. The copy miming the original allows, because of its evident diversity, a vast range of psychological projections and identifications. Its disquieting power springs precisely from its ontologically ambiguous nature of copy.

Camilleri's text shows that the Sicilian vernacular can be considered a literary language in every respect, for it is capable of exhibiting certain fundamental features of language. The political and linguistic establishments may tend to degrade a dialect, which is generally regarded as an impoverished linguistic resource whenever it is compared to the standard language, but in *Troppu traffic ppi nenti* the reversal of roles has ideological, albeit parodic, value: it is the Sicilian dialect that becomes the

linguistic source of the standard English text, which thus becomes a mere act of *linguistic transportation*, comparable according to Juvara to the forced exile of its supposed author. The resources of Sicilian which are exploited are those of an extraordinary language, invented but nevertheless 'historicized', which seeks to relate to the Sicilian sources of the period and to represent the island's culture and geography. This has helped to shift attention away from the influence of Shakespeare's plays and onto 'Shakespeare's influence'. Commercial considerations, of course, have also played their part. One can agree with Cavecchi's observation, commenting on a film set in Palermo around a story inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*, that in these cases any explicit reference to the Bard functions more as a bait than as a source-text to be replaced.[35]

The Cultural Impact of the Vernacular

Certainly, if one keeps in mind that a text published today is, so to speak, a speech act that influences the contemporary literary debate, Camilleri's play becomes an act of cultural politics in that it chooses to create a synergetic relationship between authority (that of the author and the source-text) and the local linguistic medium, which has traditionally been downgraded but which he turned into a personal mark of success in his detective stories. The use of the dialect is an element that reinforces and renders more plausible the social and political mechanism lying at the heart of his crime stories.

In the case of the theatre, too, this choice suggests an identification between language and place, which is both the setting for the story and the environment in which the audience is rooted; it is an identification between language and a shared popular culture expressed by that language. There is something paradoxical about this process because in this way dialect becomes a monument to the language of the people, who traditionally remain silent, cut off for sociological, cultural and linguistic reasons from the literary milieu that really counts.

In the theatre the vernacular works as a further cancellation of the distinction between translation and adaptation, exalting the creativity of the resultant new text—its originality despite its mediated origin. Dialect gives the play a texture of relational meanings which are different from those of the source-text. The setting is given more sharply defined

35. See M. Thorton Burnett, 'Post-Millennial Parody', in *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace* (Chippenham/Eastbourne: Palgrave, 2007), 129–157.

geographical and socio-cultural contours, through what is culturally implicated and through the echoes of the local language. This dramaturgical choice makes a text written for the theatre in the vernacular the most 'local-oriented' example of an art which, on behalf of its close contacts with the audience, is already regarded as the most local of the arts. When, as in this case, beyond the vernacular one must perceive the canonicity of the source, a new dialectic is set up, which subtly reminds us of notions of heteroglossia and dialogism, thus enlivening the thematic and ideological picture. *Troppu Trafficu ppi nenti* creates a relationship not only between two disparate theatrical contexts which by intersecting with each other produce reception effects that define the underlying socio-political and cultural assumptions of the staging, but also between the author of the adapted text and the theatrical context to which he belongs and with which he negotiates a gesture of playful challenge. In the case of Camilleri's text the language is a social construct which, because it is displayed on the stage, is iconically defined by its distinguishing traits, rather than by any issues of comprehension on the part of the public. The vernacular used in the play is a variety of Sicilian dialect, altered only so much as is sufficient to meet the needs of temporal collocation, clarity of communication and dramatic interpretation.

The constant tension between the play's predisposition to use extra-theatrical material, on the one hand, and artificial codes and formal operational strategies which facilitate its reception by the audience on the other hand, is a recognized fact and usually takes place within the text. A character speaking in dialect is a striking example of the struggle between verisimilitude, the utilization of the real, and artistic convention, a struggle in precarious balance between consensual reception strategies. In this case therefore there emerges an example of heteroglossia which not even Bakhtin could deny.[36] When the entire adaptation is in the vernacular and the fame of the source-text is such that it is constantly present in the minds of the audience, the result is a strong tension, albeit *in absentia,* between mainstream tradition and the particular performance/ text. This tension places in a horizontal relationship not only the two texts, but also Camilleri and his text, because it has something to say about the socio-cultural context within which the author operates and from which he endeavours to emancipate himself. *Troppu Trafficu* tells us something

36. Bakhtin states that the theatre as an art is monoglossic in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* edited and translated by C. Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 17.

about socio-political determinants and the cultural data it prizes and profits by. At the same time, however, it sparkles with an independence and individuality that create a work both inimitable and original in its very 'derivation'.

University of Pisa

Conducting the Orchestra: Recent Experiences in Translating Italian Fiction into English

Silvester Mazzarella

I have translated four contemporary Italian novels for British publishers:

- Dacia Maraini: *Il treno dell'ultima notte* (Rizzoli 2008), published as *Train to Budapest* by Arcadia Books 2010;
- Michela Murgia: *Accabadora* (Einaudi 2009), published under the same title by Maclehose Press 2011;
- Francesca Petrizzo: *Memorie di una Cagna* (Frassinelli 2010), published as *Memoirs of a Bitch* by Quercus 2011; and
- Davide Longo: *L'uomo verticale* (Fandango 2010), published as *The Last Man Standing* by Maclehose Press July 2012.

In quoting from these books I have given two page numbers: the first refers to the original Italian text, and the second to my published English translation.

First, a couple of general remarks:

In a sense, literary translators have to recreate the book they are translating. A comment of Virginia Woolf's may be encouraging in this context:

> *I believe one should try to read books as if one were writing them; do not begin by being a critic, begin by being a writer.*
>
> (quoted by Jeremy Treglowan during his radio talk 'Literature as an academic subject', BBC Radio 3, 11 April 1999)

Unfortunately reviewers or adapters (e.g. for radio) of translated books are often tempted to omit the translator's name when they would never

fail to mention the name of the conductor of a choral or orchestral concert, or the director of a staged play. They need to remember that the literary translator's job is to make it possible, like a conductor or director, for a quality work written by someone else to reach a new audience.

Inevitably, the translator will run into problems of various kinds, and I shall give several examples from my recent work, in no particular order. Longo uses several general English words with very specific meanings in Italian, such as 'writer' with the restricted meaning 'graffiti artist', and 'water' to mean 'water closet' or 'WC'. More problematic is the word 'beauty' indicating a container for washing and make-up equipment, etc, not only for a woman but for a man. For instance, near the beginning of the book, Longo writes that his middle-aged male hero packs to leave a hotel room. Leonardo:

> *Andò in bagno, prese dalla mensola il beauty e lo mise nella sacca che aveva preparato sul letto.*
>
> He went into the bathroom, took his washbag from the shelf and put it into the holdall he was packing on the bed. (10–12)

And much later:

> *[Leonardo] prese il cuscino, il beauty, le coperte e il pigiama impilati sulla scrivania e tornò in soggiorno.*
>
> [Leonardo] picked up the pillow, his washbag, bedclothes and pyjamas piled on the desk and went back into the living room. (111–100)

But when he uses 'beauty' in a similar context for Leonardo's sixteen-year-old daughter Lucia, I translate 'vanity bag'.

Often a reference in the original may be unfamiliar for cultural and/or historical reasons, and the translator (and his or her publisher) may need to decide whether an explanatory footnote is desirable. Rightly or wrongly, no such footnotes were included in my translation of Longo.

At one point in the novel, two killers are summarily tried and shot against the wall of a *sferisterio*, a special court with at least one high wall, originally built for the sport known as 'pallone col bracciale', a variety of handball long popular in Italy (c. 1400–1900) until ousted early in the twentieth century by football. Longo himself pointed out to me that 'pelota' would be a close approximation but that this would suggest an irrelevant Spanish atmosphere. Similarly, I felt the English

word 'Fives' would not be particularly helpful. The point was the men were executed against a high wall, and the nature of the sport for which the wall had been built, though perhaps interesting, was scarcely relevant. So I thought it enough to translate, without further explanation, *the two outsiders were shot against the wall of the handball court.* (121–108)

Francesca Petrizzo's first novel, published at the age of twenty, is a lively and carefully-researched modern retelling of the life of Helen of Troy. The story contains the character known in Italian as 'Ulisse'. In English this can be 'Ulysses', as in George Chapman's pioneering sixteenth- to seventeenth-century English translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (which later inspired a sonnet by the poet John Keats) and provided a title for James Joyce's famous novel. The usual English practice for several centuries was to use the Latin versions of Greek names. Modern English usage tends to prefer versions closer to the original Greek, such as Odysseus. With most of the names in Petrizzo's text, for example Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Menelaus and Achilles, the difference is not significant, but in this instance I preferred to follow Petrizzo and use 'Ulysses', which is closer to the author's intention and in any case a name very familiar to English readers.

Another problem the translator must face is when to leave a word untranslated for local colour. In my first draft of Murgia's *Accabadora* I rendered 'mamma' and 'babbo' as 'Mum' and 'Dad' on the grounds that while 'mamma' would obviously be familiar to an English reader, 'babbo' might not be. This was overruled by my publisher in favour of a brief glossary, set at the beginning of the book where the reader could not miss it, explaining among other things that 'babbo' was dad or father. This glossary was in any case made necessary by the use in the text of a considerable number of specifically Sardinian terms for local food, as well as 'nuraghe', the local term for prehistoric Sardinian architectural remains. Longo also uses this term to describe a man's appearance: *Il signor Poli era un individuo nuragico.* I translated this—Signor Poli was a man of primitive appearance—without further explanation, since Longo's book, unlike Murgia's, is otherwise unconnected with Sardinia. (192/168)

Other words like 'autostrada' and 'carabinieri' are probably acceptable in a novel set in Italy. But more problematic is the woman selling 'panini', or bread rolls, to passengers at a railway station. Recent usage in at least British English has settled on 'a panini' as a singular noun with a plural form 'several paninis'. I for one cannot bring myself to write 'a seller of paninis'—especially when the action is not set in modern Britain. I would similarly hesitate to describe milky coffee as 'latte'. I

remember an extreme case of false exoticism from my days teaching English in Finland where the consonant 'g' is considered extremely exotic because it is hardly ever used in Finnish; I once saw the price list in a bar describe 'cognac' as 'gognag'.

It can also be difficult for the translator to know when, if ever, to interrupt a translated text by a footnote. In my experience, publishers of translated fiction do not generally welcome explanatory footnotes inserted by the translator, either at the bottom of the page or at the end of the book. Murgia, a Sardinian writing for mostly non-Sardinian Italian readers, on one occasion at least uses both the Sardinian (or Sard) term as well as the standard Italian form for a local variety of sweetmeat made from almond paste, e.g. 'gueffus' and 'guefi'. I omitted the distinction from my translation.

> *'Lo sai perché i gueffus si chiamano gueffus?'* [...] *Con grazia esibita prese un guefo dal tavolo infarinato.*
>
> 'Do you know why gueffus are called gueffus?'[...] she picked up one of the gueffus from the flour-covered table.
> (44–45—61–62)

It is easier where non-standard spelling can give local colour without causing confusion, as with 'tzia (for 'zia' or aunt), or 'Don Frantziscu- (Don Francesco). More confusing can be terms like the Sard word 'aranzada', which is not 'aranciata' (standard Italian for orangeade), but 'softened orange peel with honey, almond and sugar':

> *-cesti colmi di aranzada dal profumo speziato-*
>
> baskets full of aranzadas with their spicy aroma
> (46–63)

Most difficult of all in this book was the untranslatable title 'Accabadora'. Curious readers may like to look at an Internet website I had not seen when I translated Murgia's book and gave my paper in Malta. It illustrates a wooden club, now preserved in a museum in the village of Luras in the Gallura district in the far north of Sardinia, which is said to have been used for such mercy killings, apparently to drive a nail into the victim's head (visit 'L'ultimo martello della Femina Agabbadora' or, the same thing in a slightly eccentric English translation 'The last hammer of "Femina Agabbadora"').

A novel may contain quotations from or references to authors who may or may not be familiar to non-Italian readers. Longo, for instance, refers in passing (127–113) to Emilio Salgàri (1862–1911), an Italian writer of swashbuckling adventure stories and pioneer of science fiction; said by Wikipedia to have been the grandfather of the spaghetti western, and once to have been more widely read in Italy than Dante. Longo also quotes at length and without acknowledgement from a sonnet by Dante ('Guido, i' vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io[...]') perhaps assuming an Italian reader would recognize it, whereas most English readers presumably would not (74–67). It would probably have been better to include a footnote to the English translation, even if just to mention that the quotation came from Dante. Similarly, Longo anonymously quotes (in Italian) from a poem by the French-Rumanian poet Anna de Noialles (1876–1933). The lines are important, because Leonardo (the novel's main character) decides to quote them to an old and valued woman friend called Clarisse, who has asked him for some uplifting and memorable words that would be particularly relevant to herself. Though in this case it might be argued that to give the name of the real-life poet Anna de Noailles in a footnote might be intrusive, since Longo chooses to identify identify her in the novel simply as 'a woman, a century and a half ago' (363–317). In yet another context, Longo quotes from Voltaire's *Candide.*

Another problem for the translator may arise with events unfamiliar in everyday life. In one case I was fortunate in having once accidentally heard almost the exact English phrase I needed for a scene in Murgia's novel important in establishing the inflexibly incorruptible character of the 'accabadora', (also known as Tzia Bonaria). In her official capacity as a seamstress, she is measuring an arrogant local bigwig for a new pair of trousers. He has come to see her accompanied by a sixteen-year-old female employee:

> *Tzia Bonaria non si lasciò impressionare e misurò Boricco Silai con la cura che usava sempre, osservandogli le forme sotto la cintura con l'occhio esperto di chi dal poco capisce tutto.*
>
> *– Da che parte lo portate? – chiese alla fine secondo l'usanza dei sarti minuziosi, guardandogli la patta. Lui si voltò verso la ragazzina appoggiata al muro, facendo un cenno con la testa.*
>
> *– A sinistra, – rispose per lui Annagrazia, fissando la vecchia senza aggiungere altro. Bonaria sostenne per un istante gli occhi della serva, poi lentemente cominciò a riavvolgere il metro di pelle intorno allo stecco di legno di limone. Boricco aspettava risposta, ma quando parlò Tzia Bonaria non sembrava parlare piú con lui.*

– Eh, mi sa che per Sant'Ignazio non ce la faccio. Provate da Rosa Cadinu, che ha bisogno di lavoro.

Stettero fermi Boriccu Silai e Tzia Bonaria a fissarsi in silenzio. Poi l'uomo e la sua serva di cintura lasciarono la casa senza un saluto, che di parole ce n'erano state anche troppe. (11)

Tzia Bonaria was not at all intimidated and continued to measure Boriccu Silai with her usual care, noting his shape below the belt with the expert eye of one who needs very little information to understand a great deal.

Finally, eyeing his flies, she asked him with the air of a meticulous tailor, 'Which side do you dress?' He gestured with his head to the girl leaning against the wall.

'The left', Annagrazia answered for her employer, staring at the old woman without further explanation. Bonaria held the servant's eyes for a moment, then slowly began rewinding her leather tape measure round its lemon-wood stick. Boriccu waited, but when Tzia Bonaria spoke again she no longer seemed to be addressing him.

'Well, I'm sorry but I won't be able to get the job done by St Ignazio's day, Try Rosa Cadinu, she needs the work.'

Boriccu Silai and Tzia Bonaria stood still, summing each other up in silence. Then the man and his intimate servant left the house without another word; more than enough had already been said. (19–20)

A friend in England once told me that her father's tailor had once used the phrase 'Which side do you dress, sir' in similar circumstances.

In Longo's book, Leonardo and a friend visit a man called Cesare whom they find sitting on a white leather sofa in the front portico of his house:

Cesare prese il bicchiere poggiato a terra e ne bevve un sorso. Il cardigan gettato sul divano si mosse e Leonardo si accorse che si trattava di un certosino.

Certosino? My dictionaries suggested 'Carthusian monk', 'hermit', 'Chartreuse liqueur', even 'Bologna Christmas cake'. It took me some time to realize, with help from the Internet, that the object in question must be none of these but a short-haired blue-grey pedigree Chartreux cat. Even so, I felt 'Chartreux cat' might be an unfamiliar concept to many English readers beside myself. It seemed safer to translate:

Cesare picked up his glass from the ground and drank. What Leonardo had taken for a cardigan flung on the sofa moved and he realized that it was a grey short-haired cat. (75/68)

However, when all is said and done, I'm inclined to agree with Virginia Woolf that for me at least it is much more rewarding to 'rewrite' someone else's book than to try to analyse it!

Freelance Translator

Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies
Editor: Peter Vassallo

The *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* is an interdisciplinary Journal published by the Institute of Anglo-Italian Studies of the University of Malta. It is devoted to current research in the history of cultural relations between England and Italy from 1300 to the present.

Articles focus on cross-cultural literary and historical studies as well as on related disciplines such as History of Art and Architecture.

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