Echoing Voices in Italian Literature

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Tradition and Translation in the 20th Century

Edited by

Teresa Franco and Cecilia Piantanida

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to explore 20th-century Italian literature as a key period for the (re)definition of Italian identity and language. Our intention is to bring to the surface the linguistic and historical kinship between "tradition" and "translation" as mutually defining concepts of Italian modernity. In the 20th century, Italy's linguistic and cultural closeness to classical antiquity is, for the first time, problematized and made to dialogue with the increasing interest in modern languages. As a result, classical texts stop being the preferred objects of literary translation, but continue to be translated along with texts from modern literatures. Moreover, social and technological developments propel changes in cultural values. While the classics are still perceived as foundational to Italian identity, the need for modernity invites a re-evaluation of the role of tradition and classical antiquity in contemporary culture. This shift also engenders new interpretations of the meaning of "classic" and "modern" as literary categories, thus triggering several questions.

To what extent is the reception of the classics in the 20th century to be considered a re-discovery? What are the modern filters Italians use to re-establish their traditional closeness to the classics? What do different forms of classical reception tell us about modern Italy and modern Italians? By the same token, what do translations from modern languages tell us about Italians' relationship with "the other"? And finally, how interdependent are the appropriation of the classics and of modern European literatures in shaping different kinds of identities: authorial, literary, national, and cultural?

These are just some of the issues that classicists and modern literary scholars address in this book. The various essays collected here use different methodological approaches in order to trace the complexity of the interaction between the classics and modernity in the Italian context. Textual criticism, stylistics, intertextuality, translation studies, historical analyses, cultural and classical reception are some of the methodologies which have proved necessary to address the topic.

The book is organised in two sections, which define complementary echoes of 20th-century literature, culture and thought: Forms of Classical Tradition and Forms of Literary Translation. However, the reader will see

that the discussion easily problematises this conventional divide. This is the case with authors who have been deeply engaged with translation of both classical and modern texts. For example, Chiara Trebaiocchi studies Pier Paolo Pasolini as translator of Plautus, while Federico Donatiello considers Salvatore Quasimodo, internationally known as the author of an anthology of *Lirici greci* (1941), as the translator and promoter of the Romanian author Tudor Arghezi (1966). Sometimes, connections appear less predictable, but nevertheless conducive to illuminating new aspects of the relationship between classical reception and translation from modern literatures. A telling instance may be found in Fabio Camilletti's and Marta Arnaldi's shared attempt to define "Italianness" and "Englishness." The former does it considering the academic debate on the classics and irrationalism; the latter poses the question through an analysis of transnational anthologies of Italian poetry.

As the essays in the first part of the book "Forms of Classical Tradition" show, in an unprecedented way, 20th-century Italian culture represents a crucial intersecting point of the classical heritage, pre-modern and modern literary formations. To actively engage with the classics in 20th-century Italy calls for an explicit positioning not only towards history, but also to the present and its conceptualisations. Carlo Caruso and Fabio Camilletti's essays are complementary in revealing different worldviews – charged with aesthetic, ethical and political meanings – emerging from the appropriations of classical antiquity. In predating the *Novecento* to the last decades of the 19th century, Caruso helps us to better understand both the cultural singularities and the continuities of modernity with its immediate past. In a circular movement, Camilletti extends the analysis from the second half of the 20th century to its conclusion.

Starting from the 1870s Caruso depicts the Italian classical tradition as a multidimensional object playing various roles in subverting or supporting the status quo. Looking at literature, art, academic scholarship, visual culture, as well as the development of public discourse on the classics, Caruso shows that the role of the ancient past in the *Novecento* is not limited to the debate on Classicism vs Modernism, or in other words, tradition vs innovation. The continuous re-definition of antiquity as "classical," "barbarian," "ancient" or "archaic" characterises both the classicist and modernist sides of the argument. In the last decades of the 19th-century as in the rest of Western Europe, the widespread presence of the classics is aided by the reformation of the educational system, which put the classics at the centre of the compulsory curriculum. Thanks also to the influence of Catholic institutions, and especially the Vatican, one of the greatest European cultural centres, the Roman tradition has always had

the upper hand over the Greek. This culminates in the Fascist project of re-foundation of Latin Romanitas only to be followed by the rediscovery of archaic Greece. Indeed, after the war, intellectuals of the calibre of Pier Paolo Pasolini start looking for alternative models rejecting the Fascist classical ideology. As Caruso notes, to isolate the classical past from the web of associations it shares with its modern afterlife is an impossible task. At the same time, he introduces the idea that a classically oriented predisposition is at the root of the Italian cultural debate even in times when classical culture seems to have survived only in a fragmented state.

The same classically oriented predisposition characterises "Italianness" according to Fabio Camilletti, who analyses the reception and development of ideas on "irrationalism" in post-WWII Italy. Camilletti considers the re-discovery of irrationalism by academics and intellectuals after the world conflict. The ensuing debate on the vice and virtues of rationalism and irrationalism, continuing until the 1980s, appears to be a mirror reflection of the way "Italianness" has been configured in the cultural landscape throughout the centuries. Camilletti compares the Italian reception of *Il mondo magico* (1948) by the anthropologist Ernesto De Martino with the fortune of the seminal work by Eric R. Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), which aimed at dismantling the image of Greece as the cradle of rationalism and the alleged continuity between "the Greeks" and "us."

Camilletti argues that the different positions on irrationalism of British and Italian cultures reflect the two countries' dissimilar relationship with antiquity. Italy is the only European country for which the continuity with classical antiquity is perceived as an unmediated *contiguity*, evidence of which is present throughout the Italian landscape, language and literature. For this reason, Italian culture views classical antiquity as an un-dead presence that shapes modernity. Italianness is configured as a tendency toward conservation and balance over innovation and rupture. Supported by Catholic principles, it has always shown a tendency to rationalise the abnormal, excessive and ultimately irrational. This is well exemplified in the controversial reception of De Martino's study. While other cultures have identified "origin" in pre-rational states, or in the language of magic and myth, Italy rejects this conceptualisation, favouring an idea of rational "origin" as found in Italy's ancient past. Camilletti finally argues that it is precisely this tension between rationalism and the seduction of the irrational that could produce works enlightening the world of "magic". The Italian difference is found in the tendency to negotiate between the rational and irrational, tradition and innovation.

The essays of this first part are concerned with tracing and analysing the varying forms of the reception of the Greek and Roman classics in the literary culture of 20th-century Italy. Giovanna Caltagirone and Dusica Todorović explore the classical world of two foundational writers of the first half of the *Novecento*, Alberto Savinio and Luigi Pirandello. In these analyses the classics are evoked as repositories of a shared cultural memory. Caltagirone considers Savinio's appropriations of Homeric myth in his short stories, focusing on the metamorphoses of Agamemnon and Achilles into war machines during WWI. Savinio's work aims at showing the semantic vitality of myth through time and cultures. Functioning according to ancient Greek scientific principles, Savinio's war machines deliberately establish continuity with the past. Savinio re-semanticizes the figure of the hero for the modern context, in a last attempt to preserve ideas such as "the human" and "the divine," so deeply compromised by WWI. He thus programmatically layers the Homeric myth with references to the contemporary world, adding also Christian overtones by reference to Dante's *Commedia* and Italian chivalric literature.

In an analogous way, Pirandello's use of the classics also aims at re-awakening forms of collective and individual memory in his audience, appealing to the foundational qualities of ancient literature. Dusica Todorović analyses the intertextual references to the classics in Luigi Pirandello's works, and especially the use of Lucian's menippean satire. Through the lens of Umberto Eco's theory of intertextual irony and Bakhtin's theory of genres, Todorović uncovers Pirandello's explicit and implicit use of menippean satire as well as his strategies to elicit memories of the classics in the reader through allusion and ekphrasis. It emerges that Pirandello's appropriation of the structures of the menippean satire is foundational to the creation of his worldview and in particular his treatment of indifference and disillusionment.

Fascism is a turning point for the reception of the classics in 20th-century Italy. The regime found in classical motifs an aesthetic and ideological model that became seminal to the Fascist identity and its propaganda. The Latin model and the cult of Romanitas was used at crucial times to justify Fascist politics. Indeed, Mussolini's promise to the people was to bring back the splendour of Augustan Rome, the illustrious mother of contemporary Italy. One of the key moments of this appropriation was the 1935-1936 campaign in Ethiopia, during which the Fascist expansionistic project was framed as the re-foundation of the Roman Empire and Mussolini portrayed as a modern Augustus.

Concetta Longobardi shows how during this time Horace's work and figure were subject to a total re-evaluation at the hands of Fascist scholars

and institutions. On the occasion of the poet's birth anniversary occurring at the same time as the Ethiopian invasion in 1936, the Institute of Roman Studies promoted a series of cultural initiatives championing Horace as the model of civic *Romanitas*. The *Roman Odes* in which Horace praises Roman customs over foreign populations were used to justify Fascist colonialism on racial terms; the invasions explained as pre-emptive actions to defend the Italian race from the threat of miscegenation. Similarly, Horace's early lyric works were quickly discarded for their "Hellenising" and "derivative" qualities. The *Carmen Saeculare*, commissioned by Augustus in 17 B.C. for the opening of the Secular Games, was deemed the poet's highest achievement as it celebrated Augustan power and values. A synthesis of the Augustan agenda, and a precursor of the Fascist programme, the *Carmen Saeculare* was even used as the first official hymn of the Italian State in 1935.

The Italo-Ethiopian war is in the background of Carlo Levi's novel *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (1945), here analysed by Martina Piperno. The novel is the account of Levi's exile as an anti-Fascist during the regime in the peasant world of Lucania. As a background to the story of Fascist colonialism and the peasants' disinterest in foreign conquest, Levi narrates a series of "national wars" that Lucanian peasants had fought throughout history to defend their own land. He starts his narration with the mythical account of Aeneas' invasion of Italy taken from Virgil's epic. However, Piperno shows that while Virgil's portrayal of the indigenous population is positive, with the Italics described as a mighty and powerful army, Levi seems to be more concerned with reproducing the power dynamic between native inhabitants and a foreign ruler, associating the Trojan's invasion with the Fascist colonisation of Ethiopia. Levi's account of the Trojan conquest of the Italic people is that of a struggle between a primitive peasant community and a superior civilised army. With an attitude that, as Piperno argues, seems to be inspired by Gian Battista Vico's notion of "mitologia istorica," Levi appears to be looking for the historical truth behind Virgil's mythical account of the Italics. Through his Vichian appropriation of the Latin classic Levi thus gives his account of the contemporary Lucanian civilisation as well as of the reasons for their sceptical reaction to the Fascist colonial war.

If Horace and Virgil were two of the favoured authors during Fascism, this was not the case for several other Greek and Roman classics. Martina Treu tackles the Fascist censorship of Aristophanes during the regime and the effects of the Fascist classical ideologies on the later reception of Greek and Roman authors. Echoing Caruso's and Camilletti's analyses, Treu shows that post-war Italy has had a paradoxical attitude to classical

antiquity, and is torn by classical and anti-classical attitudes. On the one hand, anti-Fascist movements have always deliberately avoided engaging with classical texts. On the other, the Classics have continued to be studied in schools and universities, gaining popularity thanks to new adaptations by both left-wing and right-wing authors. Despite this, as a remnant of Fascist censorship, Aristophanes' comedies were excluded from all major National theatres well after the end of WWII. They are only now being re-discovered in fringe festivals and as educational projects in underprivileged areas, showing the subversive potential the classics still hold today.

After the end of Fascism and WWII, Italy was on its knees. The devastation of war left the country in a void of power and values that characterised the 1950s. The confessional poetry of Giorgio Caproni speaks of these wounds, and wonders whether they will ever be healed. Laura Vallortigara enters the world of the poet and his relationship with Aeneas, who during Fascism had become the epitome of the self-sacrificing hero. But Caproni's Aeneas, at the centre of his most famous collection *Il passaggio di Enea* (1956), has nothing to do with the Fascist hero. The poet is above all interested in the family dynamics of the myth of Aeneas. The three figures of Aeneas, Ascanius and Anchises become a paradigm of the father-son relationship, as well as a representation of the different stages of life, overturned by the devastating power of war. In the aftermath of WWII this modern Aeneas resists final dissolution by admitting defeat. He stoically observes and accepts the course of history, the crumbling down of the past, and his own present condition of lonely man. As a new Desdichado, he has lost any hopes for the future and wanders the earth as in a perennial underworld, finding dignity in this act of resistance. Vallortigara detects Nerval's and T.S. Eliot's influence in Caproni's lament for the loss of a sense of belonging, of a tradition in which to identify. Once again classical myth is used to make sense of the present, to unveil the truth about reality and the human condition on earth. This time, the humanity of the Virgilian hero gives Caproni the opportunity to reflect on the fragility of existence.

These essays show that the concept of tradition is fundamental to Italian modernity, not merely as one of the embodiments of the establishment to be antagonised, but also as one of the vehicles through which the dialogue with one's origins and identity is articulated. The great epics of Homer and Virgil remain as bedrocks of the Italian tradition. Yet, as the essays in the volume show, the 20th-century re-evaluation of the classics is capillary, encompassing Greek Tragedy, the comedy of Aristophanes, Plautus, and Lucian, the odes of Horace. The 20th century continues to frame its most poignant political, ethical and social debates

through a dialogue with its past, embodied in the work of the ancient classics. Greek and Latin authors however are never standalone presences. They are continually revisited in a dialogue with the authors of the Italian vernacular tradition, from Dante and Petrarch, to Vico and Leopardi, as well as the great authors of European literature, giving the sense of a choral performance.

The relationship of Italian writers with the classics articulates the idea of a collective identity. As Caproni's transformation of Aeneas into a lonely hero exemplifies, authors, particularly in the second half of the century, felt the need to reaffirm their individual voice, partly emancipating themselves from the burdened past. Translation, in its inevitable confrontation with the other, provided a space for this voice to emerge and be heard. The second part of this volume, "Forms of Literary Translation," offers an insight into the translation practice of some of the most influential contemporary poets. The overview opens with Umberto Saba, who, until very recently, was considered the less interested in translation and the most stubborn believer in the myth of "untranslability."

Alessandro Giammei overturns this statement, shedding light on the context, the chronology and the cultural relevance of Saba's secret translation of *Macbeth*. Reconstructing Saba's complex interpretation of Shakespeare, Giammei detects a Freudian thread that unfolds through several essays and "Scorciatoie" (short pieces of prose that Saba started writing in 1935 and collected into a book in 1946). He convincingly argues that *Macbeth* offered a psychological and political paradigm through which Saba would read the rise and fall of Fascism. At the same time, Shakespeare's famous regicide engendered a non-binary analysis of Mussolini's fate and of the Italians' contradictory reaction at his execution in 1945. Giammei points out that the novelty of this translation lies, precisely, in the casualness towards stylistic and linguistic aspects, which Saba called "semplificicazione," and which emphasises even more the poet's concern with psychological and political implications.

Belonging to Saba's same generation, Salvatore Quasimodo, in the first half of the century, has been mainly concerned with the promotion of classical texts. Federico Donatiello considers his novel interest in modern literatures, focusing on the poetry of the Romanian Tudor Arghezi. With a thorough lexical investigation Donatiello points out the difference in register between the two poetics: on the one side, the Romanian of Arghezi, simple and concise, inspired by rural life, and on the other, Quasimodo's Hermetic poetry, lofty and sophisticated. The translator's infidelity is then seen as coherent with his free appropriation of the classics, as both practices seem to purport an anti-academic and militant stance.

As Benjamin's famous essay "The Task of the Translator" states, translation often makes translators painstakingly aware of the boundaries of languages. This is all the more true for Italian, a language developing from the classical heritage and profoundly enriched by regionalisms and dialects. Chiara Trebaiocchi's contribution addresses this issue, focusing on Pasolini's translation of the *Miles glorious* by Plautus into Roman dialect. As the peculiarity of this Latin comedy lies in the comic use of offensive language, the challenge for the translator is to find the perfect balance between expressiveness and faithfulness. Trebaiocchi's stylistic analysis underlines the originality of Pasolini's rendering, comparing his vocabulary to a vast array of solutions. The history of the Italian reception of the *Miles Glorious*, counting 19 translations from Renaissance to the contemporary era, and philological attention to Pasolini's linguistic variants are two perspectives that the author well combines.

Mattia Coppo introduces us to the vast panorama of "poeti traduttori" of the next generation, for whom the "translation notebook" becomes a widespread practice. Vittorio Sereni is one of the most prominent figures in this context, not only for his own production, but also for his work in the publishing world as an editor and promoter of foreign literature. His centrality in the field of translation poetry is well reflected in the copious scholarship that Coppo draws on to analyse the rendering of three foreign poets: the American William Carlos Williams, and the French René Char and Guillaume Apollinaire. Coppo's accurate investigation confirms once more Sereni as a "concise translator," intervening predominantly in the syntactical texture of a foreign poem.

Quite different from Saba's secrecy, there is Giovanni Raboni's unremitting activity, and his special devotion to Charles Baudelaire, the poet of modernity. Maria Belova's essay describes Raboni's long engagement with the poetry of *Le feur du mal* as an "infinite" and always "perfectible" task. Raboni's five editions are then compared and brought into the context of his original verse and vast critical interests. Belova claims that two concepts inspired Raboni's practice: the idea of transparency and that of interpretation. In the second part of the essay, she shows how these two principles are applied in translation, analysing the several Italian versions of the poem "La Fontaine du Sang." Underlying stylistic choices and major changes, Belova demonstrates Raboni's constant refining of the Italian text to let Baudelaire's authentic voice resurface.

The idea of translation as an endless and perfectible process could be easily applied to the work of Giovanni Giudici, a prolific translator who, for almost fifty years, committed to the rendering of *Eugen Onegin* into

Italian verse. Sara Cerneaz's knowledgeable essay makes us better understand Giudici's fascination for this masterpiece of Russian and global literature. Focusing on the first two chapters of Puškin's poem, she examines several published and unpublished editions, showing how Giudici gradually bridged his initial cultural and linguistic gap. Over time, and by means of reworking, he managed to embrace the oral dimension of the original, reproducing its complex metrical pattern. This same scheme would then serve to Giudici's innovative collection of verse, *Salutz* (1986).

In this volume, Giudici is also studied, together with Mario Luzi and Beppe Fenoglio, as one of the translators of S.T. Colerigde's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Laura Organte offers a comparative analysis showing the different strategies each of the translators adopts to render the romantic form into an equivalent "Italian ballad." Organte refers to Franco Fortini's theory on vanishing cultural codes in the modern era, and the consequent impossibility to ensure a system of valid correspondences between languages. In fact, according to the poet and critic Fortini, translation operates a fragmentation of a language into several "private idioms." Bringing to the fore the translators' "private idiom," Organte illustrates how each of the translators deal with Coleridge's quatrains, and contribute to the diachronic development of the English ballad in Italy.

After dealing with the Italians' relationship with foreign texts, the volume concludes by concentrating on how Italian literature has been exported, translated and canonised in the Anglophone world. Marta Arnaldi's essay amply discusses the role of anthologies, anthologists and publishers in shaping the Italian canon within the contemporary transnational context. The author applies Lawrence Venuti's categories of domestication and foreignisation to describe both the overarching structure of the anthology (and its implied agenda) and the specific rendering of poems. In the second part of her essay, Arnaldi narrows her analysis to the exemplary cases of Umberto Saba, Giuseppe Ungaretti and Eugenio Montale, showing how the editors of three different anthologies have contributed to redefine their canonical status within and outside the Italian poetic tradition. Finally, the appendix, featuring Saba's "La Capra," Ungaretti's "In memoriam," Montale's "L'anguilla" and their respective translations, demonstrates how poetry and translation ultimately become indistinguishable, contributing to an endless process of re-creation.

Teresa Franco and Cecilia Piantanida

PART I:

FORMS OF CLASSICAL TRADITION

CHAPTER I

CLASSICAL, BARBARIAN, ANCIENT, ARCHAIC: THE CHANGING PERCEPTION OF THE ANCIENT PAST IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ITALY

CARLO CARUSO

Character and periodization

The string of adjectives in the title reflects, *grosso modo*, the ways in which the perception of the ancient past has been characterised in Italy over the past 150 years. It may be tempting to interpret the list as a chronologically ordered sequence of responses to the challenge of redefining classical culture in a world that was progressively distancing itself from classical principles and ideals. According to this hypothetical pattern, the emergence of the *barbarian* element as a reaction to classical standards in literature and art would stimulate a broadening of the Graeco-Roman horizon to provide a wider and more diverse notion of the *ancient* world than previously postulated, with the result that classical civilisation would eventually be deemed as *archaic* as any other ancient society. But, attractive as it may seem – and perhaps even persuasive in more than one respect – this line of argument risks appearing overly deterministic. In fact, "classical," "barbarian," "ancient" and "archaic" may equally represent many different perceptions of a multidimensional object of enquiry. For all its diverse and changing faces, classical antiquity appears to have retained an uncanny ability to brand itself in a variety of ways without losing the prerogative of being perceived as *one* phenomenon: a considerably complex one in constant danger of being oversimplified in sweeping generalisations, but a singularity nonetheless.

By suggesting in the first paragraph that the examination of my topic should commence at a date around 150 years ago, I am deliberately stretching the chronological boundaries of its remit to begin in the 1870s. In so doing, I am following the illustrious example set by Carlo Dionisotti

in his memorable lecture "A Year's Work in the Seventies,"[1] and a suggestion first formulated by the Calabrian critic Francesco Salfi in his continuation of Pierre-Louis Ginguené's *Histoire littéraire d'Italie* (14 volumes, 1811-1835).[2] Salfi maintained that the 100-year spans or cycles ordinarily used for the periodization of literary history could be more effective if they began around the Seventies of each century, rather than – as ordinarily happens – at the turn of the centuries.[3] Why the Seventies should so often carry the seed of things to come, I honestly cannot say; suffice here to add that even the 1970s are often portrayed as the final phase of the Italian literary Novecento, to the extent that critics tend to qualify such works as Pasolini's *Petrolio* (1972-1975, first edition 1992), or Calvino's *Lezioni americane* (1986), as "posthumous literature" – posthumous also in the sense that they are now perceived by many as revenants from a bygone age. In this context, "Novecento passato remoto" is another expression which has met with great favour among twenty first century readers.[4]

The pattern "from the 1870s to the 1970s" will, therefore, serve well for the purposes of this paper, although, rather than attempt to cover the entire period, I shall confine myself in the main to discussing a number of significant figures and events from the period 1870s-1930s. I shall try, in particular, to highlight aspects that encourage an interdisciplinary approach to the question under discussion.

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[1] Carlo Dionisotti, "A Year's Work in the Seventies" (The Presidential Address of the Modern Humanities Research Association delivered at University College, London on 7 January 1972), *Modern Language Review* 67 (1972): xix-xxviii; also in Carlo Dionisotti, *Scritti di storia della letteratura italiana* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010), 3: 1-13.

[2] The point has been finely argued in Stefano Cracolici's "Dante in the century without poetry," (paper presented at the conference *Dante: The Author and His Image*, Durham, July 2010).

[3] Pierre-Louis Ginguené, *Histoire littéraire d'Italie*, continué par F. Salfi, son collaborateur, 14 vols (Paris: Machaud, 1811-1835). Cf. Benedetto Croce, "La *Storia della letteratura italiana nel secolo decimosettimo* di Francesco Salfi," *La critica* 29 (1931): 137-43, also in Benedetto Croce, *Nuovi saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Seicento* (Bari: Laterza, 1931), 3-11.

[4] Luigi Baldacci, *Novecento passato remoto* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2000). I am grateful to Stefano Cracolici for his comments on this point.

The barbarian within

Friedrich Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (*The Birth of Tragedy*), the book that strove to unveil the barbarian element at the core of the classical world, was published in 1871. One year later, Domenico Comparetti's *Virgilio nel Medio Evo* (*Virgil in the Middle Ages*) dared to offer a portrait of Virgil in the guises (often altered beyond recognition) under which the most classical of classical poets had been known and admired during the so-called Dark Ages. In the same year, 1872, the third and last volume of Michele Amari's *Storia dei Musulmani in Sicilia* (*A History of Muslims in Sicily*) appeared in print, completing one of the greatest historiographical works ever devoted to the encounter of Eastern and Western civilisations. In 1873 Graziadio Isaia Ascoli published his "Proemio" to the *Archivio glottologico italiano*, in which he replaced the idealised notion of a standard Italian language based on the Florentine model with that of a kaleidoscope of local tongues and dialects, many showing the survival of substantial relics of the pre-Roman substratum. On a different level, Raffaello Giovagnoli's historical novel *Spartaco*, first published in instalments in the daily paper *Fanfulla* in 1873-1874, offered a picture of ancient Rome from the point of view of the lowest of social classes – in fact, of a "non class" – and gave impetus to studies on ancient slavery that produced much valuable scholarship in Italy and elsewhere, notably in Socialist countries and among Marxist historians more generally.[5]

Then, in 1877, Giosuè Carducci published his *Odi barbare* (*Barbarian Odes*). The oxymoronic and partly antiphrastic title was explained by the author in a note appended at the end of the book:

> Queste odi poi le intitolai barbare, perché tali sonerebbero agli orecchi e al giudizio dei greci e dei romani, se bene volute comporre nelle forme metriche della loro lirica, e perché tali soneranno pur troppo a moltissimi italiani, se bene composte e armonizzate di versi e di accenti italiani.[6]
>
> I have called these odes barbarian, for that is how they would sound to a discriminating Greek or Roman ear, despite being deliberately composed

[5] On the significance of the 1870s in the broader context of European literature see Dionisotti, "A Year's Work." On Giovagnoli and the myth of Spartacus in nineteenth and early twentieth century Italy see Duccio Tongiorgi, *"Il mondo sottosopra". Spartaco e altre reticenze manzoniane* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2012).

[6] Giosuè Carducci (Enotrio Romano), *Odi barbare* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1877), 103. See also the standard critical edition, Giosuè Carducci, *Odi barbare*, ed. Gianni A. Papini (Milan: Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1988).

> in the metres of ancient lyric poetry; and because that is how they will sound, alas, to many Italians, despite being composed and attuned to the harmony and intonation of Italian verse.

Carducci's proud neo-classical stance was his reaction to the Romantic preference for facile ditties. But his provocative formulation, together with the experimental nature of his work, led to *Odi barbare* being branded as revolutionary and destabilising.[7] The earliest Italian *versiliberisti*, who would not or could not recognise any rules in Carducci's sophisticated classicising prosody, took his book as the first sign of revolt against the dominion of traditional Italian verse and as positive encouragement to dismantle the time-honoured rules of Italian versification.[8] That this was not Carducci's intention is confirmed by the book's respectful envoy "Alla rima" ("To Rhyme") and by his last book of verse, *Rime e ritmi* (*Rhymes and Rhythms* [= Rhymes and Classical Verses], 1899), where the title emblematically alludes to the peaceful coexistence of both styles of versification.[9]

The use of the word "barbarian" had a deflagrating effect, which reached its climax when it was appropriated by the Futurists. "Ebbene, sì, siamo barbari!" declared Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1914, while Umberto Boccioni claimed, "Noi Italiani abbiamo bisogno della barbarie."[10] Their war was being launched "contre l'art académique, contre les musées, contre le règne des professeurs, des archéologues, des brocanteurs et des antiquaires" [against academic art, against the museums, against the rule of professors, archaeologists, second-hand art dealers and antiquarians], that

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[7] Cf. Giuseppe Chiarini, *I critici italiani e la metrica delle Odi barbare: discorso* (Bologna: Zanichelli 1878).

[8] Cf. Gianfranco Contini, "Innovazioni metriche italiane fra Otto e Novecento," in *Varianti e altra linguistica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970), 587-99.

[9] Carlo Caruso, "Metri barbari, verso libero," in *Poétiques barbares – Poetiche barbare*, ed. Juan Rigoli and Carlo Caruso (Ravenna: Longo, 1998), 209-30; Carlo Caruso, "La nota carducciana alle *Odi barbare* (1877), la libertà metrica e la poesia di Leopardi," *Per leggere* 13 (2007): 109-24.

[10] The quotations are from, respectively, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Abbasso il tango e Parsifal!," *Lacerba*, 15 January 1914, reprinted in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), 96, and Umberto Boccioni, *Pittura scultura futuriste – Dinamismo plastico* (1914), quoted in *Per conoscere Marinetti e i futuristi*, ed. Luciano De Maria (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), 71. Both are discussed in *Poétiques barbares – Poetiche barbare*, 23.

is to say, against all classically-regulated expression in literature and art.[11] Ardengo Soffici's *BÏF§ZF+18 simultaneità e Chimismi lirici* (*BÏF§ZF+18. Simultaneity and Lyrical Chemistry*, 1916) took Marinetti's provocative *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914) one step further by interpreting the chemical metaphor as an actual decomposition of the poetic message into its "inorganic" components, while one of the leading critics of the Florentine journal *La voce*, Giuseppe De Robertis, theorised *frammentismo* as the foundational tenet of the new literary aesthetics. The invoked destruction of all conventional expressive patterns coincided ominously with the world going to pieces in one of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of mankind. The number of coeval titles alluding to fragmented realities is remarkable. One may cite Clemente Rebora's *Frammenti lirici* (*Lyric Fragments*, 1913), Giovanni Boine's *Frantumi* (*Broken Pieces*, 1914), Giuseppe Ungaretti's *Allegria di naufragi* (*Merriment of Shipwrecks*, 1916), Camillo Sbarbaro's *Trucioli* (*Wood Shavings*, 1920), Eugenio Montale's *Ossi di seppia* (*Cuttlefish Bones*, 1925); and T. S. Eliot's epitomising line, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (*The Waste Land*, 1922) is a suitable motto for that unsettled period. In 1919, in a parody piece about an imagined archaeology of the future written in the form of a mock academic report, Emilio Cecchi described the discovery in the year 3009 of a fragment bearing scraps of Futurist verse causing speculation about the degraded nature of a civilization that could inspire such a literary output.[12]

Poetics of fragmentation

For the reasons outlined above, poetics of fragmentation are usually perceived as distinctively non-classical, and even anti-classical. Twentieth-century aesthetics have encouraged the stance that readers and writers imbued with classicism should be, in principle, denied intelligence of a fragment *qua* fragment, even when – paradoxically – it is an ancient fragment under examination. In particular, it is often maintained that any attempt to translate fragments of ancient verse using traditional Italian versification would inevitably fail. Thus, early twentieth-century verse

[11] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Lettre circulaire aux journaux" (1910), reprinted in Giovanni Lista, *Futurisme: Manifestes, documents, proclamations* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1973), 90. Cf. *Poétiques barbares – Poetiche barbare*, 23.

[12] Emilio Cecchi, "Comunicazione accademica (Estratto dal fascicolo 2324 degli *Annali di Filologia*; maggio dell'anno 3009)," *La ronda* 1.2 (May 1919): 4-9; subsequently as "Una comunicazione accademica" in Emilio Cecchi, *Pesci rossi* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1920), 51-7.

translators such as Giuseppe Fraccaroli, Giovanni Pascoli and Ettore Romagnoli have been singled out recently for their alleged inability to render fragments of Sappho's verse into acceptable versions.[13] Yet isn't this a curiously anachronistic charge? Those three authors found it quite natural to transpose texts from one metrical system to another at a time when metrical systems still obtained. They were aiming at the preservation of certain specific properties of poetic discourse that included perceivable metrical patterns, in line with the majority of their contemporaries.[14] Recent theories and practices of verse translation are based on different premises that are, unsurprisingly, incompatible with those of a hundred years ago. If a mild rejoinder on behalf of the three earlier translators is permitted, they would have regarded the versions that are common in our own day as not merely unmetrical but flat beyond redemption. In other words, one can hardly expect to understand the poetics underpinning early twentieth-century translations of classical fragments by measuring those outputs according to our own standards. An excellent example of an informed and unprejudiced examination of Pascoli's approach to Sappho has recently been provided by one of the editors of this volume.[15]

Once the petition of principle of modernist thought has been removed, it becomes easier to adopt a less sectarian and more productive approach to the notion of the poetics of fragmentation, and Carducci's *Odi barbare* represents a very good, if unconventional, case in point. Questions of metrics and prosody have traditionally dominated the debate on *Odi barbare* in attempts to explain the transition from traditional metres to twentieth-century *verso libero* – not without some stretching and misinterpretation of the evidence.[16] To address that celebrated collection of poems from a different angle may help to reassess a number of aspects worth considering in relation to the topic under examination.

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[13] Carlo Carena, "'E io dormo sola' (Saffo)," *Domenicale – Il Sole 24 Ore*, May 31, 2015, 24, a review of *Lirici greci*, ed. Chiara Di Noi (Rome: Salerno, 2015).

[14] Incredulity and disbelief, often expressed in half-mocking tones, qualify comparisons of recent versions of Sappho's verse with the metrical versions of the past, including those by Foscolo, Leopardi and others. Cf., e.g., Carena, "'E io dormo sola' (Saffo)," 24; Alberto Arbasino, *Ritratti italiani* (Milan: Adelphi, 2015), 441-42.

[15] Cecilia Piantanida, "Pascoli and Sappho: Two Unpublished Manuscripts," *Filologia italiana* 10 (2013): 181-214.

[16] See in particular Alfredo Gargiulo, "Ragioni metriche: Carducci" (1931), in *Letteratura italiana del Novecento*. Nuova edizione ampliata (Florence: Le Monnier, 1958), 257; Contini, "Innovazioni metriche italiane fra Otto e Novecento," 593-94; *contra* Caruso, "Metri barbari, verso libero," 217-30, and Caruso, "La nota carducciana," 111-12, 116-19, 123.

As one of Carducci's earliest admirers and imitators, the young Gabriele d'Annunzio captured an essential feature of Carducci's language and style that has been rarely discussed or even recorded.[17] According to d'Annunzio, Carducci succeeded in highlighting the semantic and syntactic significance of purposely selected words by reviving their etymological meaning:

> Né mai è arbitraria la significazione che egli dà a certe parole, risalendo al senso etimologico, per ottenere un effetto di novità inatteso, quasi mondandole e rinverginandole.[18]
>
> Never does the meaning he attaches to selected words look arbitrary. He revives their etymological sense by cleansing and rejuvenating them, as it were, with the aim of obtaining novel and unexpected effects.

D'Annunzio's comment dates back to 1888 and was only noted and properly discussed, as far as I know, by Bruno Migliorini in 1937.[19] His remark helps supersede the vulgate and somewhat stale image of Carducci as an archaising author without further qualifications. As one would expect from a virtuoso of language expression, d'Annunzio's emphasis on Carducci's ability to simultaneously "age" and "rejuvenate" a word or phrase has technical relevance. It is reminiscent of what archaeologists call *spiazzamento*, that is, the displacement of ancient fragments incorporated into a more recent architectural structure that stand out as alien components. Applied to literature, the metaphor illustrates how the revival of ancient meanings within new contexts translates into a new meaning and a new significance – and a new life for the element *spiazzato*.[20] D'Annunzio also mastered this technique; the "aged" lexical gems he culled during his extensive reading campaigns, which he often conducted

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[17] A repertoire for the prose works has been recently provided by Lorenzo Tomasin, *"Classica e odierna". Studi sulla lingua di Carducci* (Florence: Olschki, 2007).

[18] Gabriele d'Annunzio, "Giaufrè Rudel," *La Tribuna*, April 9, 1888; subsequently in Gabriele d'Annunzio, *Scritti giornalistici: I. 1882-1888 II. 1889-1938*, ed. Annamaria Andreoli (Milan: Mondadori, 1996-2003), 1: 1119.

[19] Bruno Migliorini, "Gabriele d'Annunzio e la lingua italiana," in *Gabriele d'Annunzio: Letture tenute per il Lyceum di Firenze* [in 1937], ed. Jolanda de Blasi (Florence: Sansoni, 1939), subsequently in Bruno Migliorini, *La lingua italiana nel Novecento* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1990), 268.

[20] A characteristic technique of lyric poetry from that period, brilliantly illustrated by Manara Valgimigli, "Nausícaa dalle bianche braccia," in *Carducci allegro* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1968), 34.

directly through the pages of historical dictionaries, were set by him within exquisitely elaborate passages in the same manner as a skilled goldsmith operates on an intricate piece of jewellery.

What kind of demands did this approach to poetic language make on readers? They were being asked, in essence, to superimpose a powerful magnifier on the texts for the sake of slow and careful reading, to give modern poetry the kind of undivided attention required for the understanding of ancient verse. For readers inclined to enjoy song and ditty, it was hardly a welcome proposal. Carducci may not have cared much about the consequences of launching such a controversial new style since he, like his beloved Horace, would be quite content with satisfying a limited number of select readers, *contentus paucis lectoribus*. Yet, by the time his *Odi barbare* were published, Carducci's position on the national and international literary stage had become so prominent that any perceivable change of direction hinted at in his poetry was scrutinised and passionately discussed. It so happened that, following the publication of his classicising odes, those Italian readers impervious to the difficulties of the new style began to brand Carducci's work as "professorial poetry" and, in a further sign of estrangement and disapproval, used the German equivalent *Professorenpoesie*. The derogatory meaning of the term is clear enough and, as Carducci never bothered to reply to such accusations, appears to have crept unchallenged into the history of Italian literature. It is, however, interesting to note that one of the most prominent classicists in Germany, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, promptly took up the challenge of qualifying Carducci's *Professorenpoesie* as a perfectly legitimate attempt that demanded serious application from the author as well as his public:

> Carducci ist Professor an der Universität Bologna, und seine Dichtung ist insofern Professorenpoesie, als sie in Sprache und Verskunst, in den sachlichen Anspielungen und formalen Anklängen hohe Anforderungen an die Vorkenntnisse des Lesers macht.[21]
>
> Carducci is Professor in the University of Bologna, and his poetry can be described as *Professorenpoesie* insofar as it makes high demands on the

[21] Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "An den Quellen des Clitumnus (von Carducci)" (1885), in *Reden und Vorträge* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1913, first edition 1900), 370. Wilamowitz, together with his father-in-law Theodor Mommsen, had been among the first to promote Carducci's poetry in Germany through the publication of translations of his verse in 1879. On this episode see Carlo Caruso, "Genesi e prima fortuna di *Pianto antico*," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 183 (2006): 55-64.

> literary culture of readers on account of its language and versifying technique, its allusions of content and its formal resonances.

Wilamowitz's characterisation neatly describes a type of poetry that requires slow and attentive reading on the part of a sufficiently equipped readership capable of appreciating the finest detail of the craft.

Having discussed Carducci and d'Annunzio, Pascoli should also be mentioned. I shall confine myself to consider Pascoli's engagement with Latin poetry both as a scholar and a practising poet, indeed as the last great Latin poet of the Western world. His approach to ancient languages offers perhaps the best example of how new poetry can be forged out of traditional elements when these get aptly resemanticised within new contexts. It is well known that Pascoli's Latin presents unusual – that is, un-classical – traits. This effect of novelty is not so much due to neologisms, which hardly ever occur in his Latin oeuvre, but is almost entirely the result of Pascoli's habit of interspersing his poems with either words and idioms from the specialised vocabulary of ancient Roman crafts previously unused in verse, or with fragments of stage dialogue from Roman comedies equally alien to lyric or hexametric versification, or even with unexpected combinations of Latin and Greek phrases in the same line.[22] Surely this could be seen as another original inflection of the *spiazzamento* technique described above, and as a further example of the consummate art of exploring the potential inherent in single words and phrases without alteration of their external features. But there is an even more revealing case that is worthy of mention. Pascoli's mastery in stamping his seal on the texts he handled reached perhaps its ultimate accomplishment in the anthologies of ancient authors he edited for schools: *Lyra* (1898, first published as *Lyra Romana* in 1895) and *Epos* (1897). The anthologised texts encompass a wide range of authors from the archaic age to – at least in *Lyra* – Early Christianity. Yet, it has been observed – with intentional exaggeration but also with a grain of truth – that, by virtue of Pascoli's selection and analytic annotation, those ancient texts paradoxically read as if they had all been written by him![23]

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[22] Alfonso Traina found only two neologisms in Pascoli's entire Latin corpus. Alfonso Traina, *Saggio sul latino del Pascoli* (Padua: Antenore, 1961), 49-61. Cf. Giorgio Pasquali, "Poesia latina di Pascoli," in *Pagine stravaganti di un filologo*, ed. Carlo Ferdinando Russo (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994), 2: 176-89.

[23] Manara Valgimigli, "Poesia e poetica di Giovanni Pascoli," in *Uomini e scrittori del mio tempo* (Florence: Le Lettere, 1965), 142; Pasquali, "Poesia latina di Pascoli," 183.

Classical education

The mention of anthologies for schools raises the role played by classical culture in the educational systems of Western Europe. On this point, too, the vantage point of the 1870s may offer an enlightening perspective.

The restructuring of educational programmes envisaged by several European countries in the last decades of the nineteenth century shows the confessional element intricately intertwined with the notion of classical antiquity. In the aftermath of the conquest of Rome (1870) and the Paris Commune (1871), both Italy and France appear to have been tempted to reassign the organisation of national education to the hands of the Catholic Church. It is to the respective governments' credit that neither country surrendered to this temptation, despite a number of inevitable compromises. Germany faced analogous troubles, as Bismarck was waging his *Kulturkampf* against the power of the German Catholic Church around the same time. As for Great Britain, the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge were still, and would remain for a few decades, strongholds of the Anglican clergy – whose members' actions were, incidentally, decisive in securing the vote to maintain Greek as a compulsory requisite for admission to both universities until 1919. (In England, the First World War put an end to compulsory Greek, the Second World War to compulsory Latin.)[24]

The discussion of classical elements in education cannot be confined to examining the various national debates separately, as no enquiry into the classical presence in modern Italian scholarship and literature can, for example, avoid the question of Italy's relations with Germany and the different perceptions of classical antiquity that had developed south and north of the Alps. The conspicuous presence in Rome of the German Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica was made even more visible and effective in the 1870s by its transformation into the Istituto (Imperiale) Archeologico Germanico. The chairs of classical antiquity in post-Unitarian Italy became sufficiently attractive for scholars of the calibre of Julius Beloch (who had Gaetano De Sanctis among his pupils) and Emanuel Löwy, while Italian scholars such as, amongst others, Girolamo Vitelli, Ettore De Ruggiero, Ettore Pais, Enea Piccolomini, spent a finishing period in Germany before progressing to their academic careers in Italy. This sort of "German protectorate" invited a comprehensive reconsideration of priorities in the field of classical education, albeit not

[24] Christopher Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1, 265-70, 276-7, 293-7.

without exceptions and episodes of resistance which will be briefly outlined later.[25] The encounter of widely different approaches generated curious contrasts. As Marino Raicich observed reporting an opinion of Pasquale Villari formulated in 1872, during this transitional phase Italian teachers and students were simultaneously using the most disparate tools of the trade, with the old handbook for Latin versification *Regia Parnassi* (first published 1679) and Georg Curtius' *Greek Grammar* (first published 1852, first Italian translation 1855) often sitting next to one another on their desks.[26]

Scholars sharing an interest in texts written in the two classical languages came ordinarily from Classics or Theology. As such, they were moved by principles and aims dictated in part by their provenance from a specific discipline or context. This entailed an uneven relevance and weight being assigned to Greek and to Latin. Since the days of the Horatian "Captive Greece took her fierce captor captive" (*Ars poetica*, 156), Greek culture and Roman culture have hardly ever enjoyed parity of treatment – despite the fact that dispensing with one or the other has always been counterproductive for a proper appreciation of the ancient world and its legacy. In Italy, the overwhelming domination of the Roman tradition has always been of paramount importance. An equally important factor is the presence of Catholic institutions, which are also great cultural powerhouses, such as, for example, the Vatican Library, where the vision of the ancient world shows a tendency to consider Greek an Oriental language, albeit in a position of great importance – hence the study of Byzantine culture as one of the traditional strengths of that institution. On the other hand, the study of the intersections of Christian thought with the classical tradition in the age of Humanism is one of the great achievements of twentieth-century Italian studies. The Vatican Library, together with the Università Cattolica in Milan (founded by Father Agostino Gemelli in 1919-1921), has vigorously promoted works of vital importance in that area of study. In what specifically concerns Italian studies, the perception

[25] Marcello Barbanera, "Idee per la storia dell'archeologia classica in Italia dalla fine del Settecento al dopoguerra," in *Archeologia teorica: X ciclo di lezioni sulla ricerca applicata in archeologia*, ed. Nicola Terrenato (Florence: All'Insegna del Giglio, 2001), 39-56 (see pages 48-51 for discussion of German influence). See also Barbanera's classic monograph *L'archeologia degli Italiani* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 1998).

[26] Pasquale Villari, "La scuola e la questione sociale in Italia," *Nuova Antologia* 8 (1872): 477-512, cited in Marino Raicich, "Itinerari della scuola classica dell'Ottocento," in *Storie di scuola da un'Italia lontana*, ed. Simonetta Soldani (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzi, 2005), 189, 192, 212, 214.