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Chairman's Message

Denis V. Reidy

ISLG Chair

The British Library

One never wishes to sound complacent nor to appear to be smug, nor to be as repetitive as the proverbial “broken record”, however, over recent years, the attentive reader of these Chairman’s messages might have the impression, albeit a mistaken one, I assure you, that these are little more than self-adulatory and self-congratulatory statements or platitudes which merely “trumpet” the Italian Studies Library Group’s (ISLG) achievements. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is true that the ISLG does and in my view, quite rightly so, should trumpet its achievements abroad, because if we do not do so as a Group looking after the interests of Italianists and Librarians, then who else will? And also, in my view, and that of others, although the youngest of all the Foreign Language Studies Library Groups, the ISLG has a lot to be proud of. Despite having only been founded eight years ago, in 2001, the Group has organized some very successful and equally useful Workshops which members new (and also not quite so new) to the profession, found particularly helpful since one of the principal aims of the Group is to train new entrants, particularly Italianists, to the profession. Since its foundation the ISLG has also published its own journal, or Bulletin, to be more precise, which has grown in size and, dare I say it, in prestige, over the years. What started off as a fairly modest, yet perfectly respectable publication, has now developed into a much more “professional” journal which now has its own ISSN assigned to it, and contains several illustrations, some of which are now reproduced in full colour, and which now attracts original articles from scholars with a world-wide academic reputation such as Emeritus Professor John Woodhouse FBA, until fairly recently the holder of the Fiat Serena Chair of Italian in the University of Oxford, the celebrated author of a definitive biography of Gabriele D’Annunzio and author of countless scholarly books and articles (for which he was awarded a D.Litt.) who gave this year’s annual lecture on Gabriele D’Annunzio (held after the AGM). Professor Woodhouse’s lecture was excellent and it was made even more enjoyable by the addition of numerous slides which he has personally collected over many years, to illustrate his talk. Indeed, a new departure this year, Professor Woodhouse has

very kindly agreed to publish the text of his lecture in the present Bulletin which is a special issue devoted to Gabriele D'Annunzio. We are very grateful to John Woodhouse for recasting and considerably redrafting his lecture for inclusion at relatively short notice. This may well set a good precedent for the future. Three lectures in the series preceded Professor Woodhouse's: Dr Alison Wright, Reader in Art History at UCL spoke on *Relief and representation: the framing of honour in Italian art of the early to high Renaissance*; Professor David Forgacs who holds one of the five Chairs in Italian at UCL, spoke on *Neorealism and philosophy: document, reportage and film in Italy 1936-1962*; while Professor of Music Iain Fenlon, King's College Cambridge, spoke on *Italia in Iberia: Renaissance Music for the Spanish Market*. Indeed, the eminence of our previous speakers and the eruditeness of their lectures can, on occasion, prove a little daunting if not even a little "intimidating" when sending out invitations to potential new speakers. Fortunately, I am very pleased to announce that we have no problem with next year's lecturer, the eminent Professor Brian Richardson FBA, who is well known to many of you, who holds the Chair of Italian in the University of Leeds and who will be delivering an illustrated lecture on some aspects of the Italian Book during the Renaissance [the title is yet to be finalised] to be held after the AGM at the British Library Conference Centre (which, by popular request, will begin at 2.00 pm sharp, after the usual lunch in the British Library Restaurant – do please note the new time of the AGM) on Tuesday 29 June next year if you would like to put the date down in your diaries. Whilst on the subject of speakers, the Committee would welcome suggestions from ISLG members for future guest lecturers.

The Immortal Bard wrote that "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages" (*As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7) and this year there have been a few exits and entrances on the Committee. Anna Beasley, from the University of Reading, has been a very loyal and reliable Committee Member inputting the benefit of her wisdom, experience and pragmatism into our deliberations for many years now, and who has played a very crucial role in producing a very professional Bulletin, unfortunately announced that, owing to increased responsibilities at Reading, she will no longer be able to serve on the Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anna publicly for her

sterling contribution to the work of the Committee and especially for agreeing to stay on as long as possible to work with our new Editor Andrea Del Cornò and in making the transition from her Editorship to his as seamlessly and as faultlessly as possible. In view of Anna's speedy and unforeseen departure from the Committee and her not being able to attend the AGM, owing to her increased work commitments at Reading, we were unable to ask Anna, in person, what she would like as a small memento and appreciation of her work on the Committee because, for those of you who may not be aware of it, I have introduced the tradition of marking a Committee Member's service with a small item of jewellery etc., paid out of the pockets of Committee and General members, I hasten to add - so anyone wishing to contribute to Anna's collection should send their contribution to our Treasurer Hélène Fernandes at the Library of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge, CB3 9DA - by the time you read this I will have contacted Anna and asked her what she would like so that we can make a presentation to her in the near future. An announcement of this will be made to you as soon as possible. In the "entrances" column, I am pleased to welcome George Ferzoco, formerly Senior Lecturer in Italian Language and Literature in the University of Leicester and now a Research Fellow at The University of Bristol, who responded very quickly to our appeal for new Committee Members (please do not forget if you would like to have some experience about what serving on the Committee is like, "senza impegni, si capisce", please contact me so that you can test the water) - a very warm welcome to George who, I know, will play an important role on the Committee.

This year has been even better than last year for the ISLG with even closer collaboration with WESLINE - Hélène, William and I attended the excellent Conference at Durham University from 2-5 September (organized faultlessly by Dorothea Mieke, my colleague in the German Section at The British Library) on which William Pine-Coffin has produced a very useful and interesting report. Next year's WESLINE Conference, incidentally, is due to be held at the University of Manchester, again another entry for your diaries. For fear of being accused of appearing to be "intoxicated with the exuberance of [my] own verbosity" as Disraeli said of Gladstone, I must bring this screed to a close but not before thanking you, the membership, for your continued support and attendance at our AGM and lectures - it is a

source of some amazement and a little pride, that despite considerable hardships and obstacles, members such as Doris Fletcher and Emeritus Professor Corinna Salvadori Lonergan who travels all the way from Dublin to attend meetings (to name but two members) support us with their presence and make their views heard at our AGMs - since there has not been a “putsch”, as yet, hopefully, we might be able to conclude from this that we as a Committee, are doing something right. Last and by no means least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank publicly all the Members of the Committee Anna Beasley, Hélène Fernandes, Bettina Rex, Andrea Del Cornò, George Ferzoco, Chris Michaelides and William Pine-Coffin on my and on your behalf for their very hard work and unstinting support - it is a great privilege to work with such pleasant, professional colleagues who, fortunately, despite being very pragmatic and level-headed, all have a good and very pleasant sense of proportion, and equally important, of humour.

Italian Studies Library Group Annual General Meeting, 23 June 2009, British Library

Andrea Del Cornò
The London Library

The 2009 ISLG Annual General Meeting was held on 23 June at the welcoming venue of the British Library.

Ten members of the Group were available to attend: Denis V. Reidy (Chair), William Pine-Coffin, Corinna Salvadori Lonergan, Doris Fletcher, Bettina Rex, Hélène Fernandes, Clare Hills-Nova, Chris Michaelides, George Ferzoco and Andrea Del Cornò.

The present report summarises discussions on topics as covered at the meeting. Full-text of the minutes is available online at: www.bl.uk/collections/wider/italian/italstulib.html - the newly revamped ISLG website, hosted by the British Library's, offering information of relevance to members and Italianists, membership details and an electronic archive including past issues of the ISLG Bulletin.

The meeting welcomed two new members: Clare Hills-Nova, Oxford University Library Services, and George Ferzoco, Research Fellow in Medieval Religious Culture, University of Bristol. Professor Ferzoco has also joined the ISLG Committee having been recently elected. Anna Beasley, University of Reading Library, has stepped down from her role as Committee member. The ISLG remains deeply indebted to Anna for her sterling service over the past eight years and her editorial skills in preparing and overseeing the ISLG Bulletin.

Following the approval of the 2008 minutes the arrangements for the afternoon lecture were on the agenda. The proposal for re-arranging schedule and timing for future AGMs and lectures in order to facilitate and encourage attendance was put forward. A final decision was however postponed and further planning is expected at the next Committee meeting to be held in December.

Discussed at some length were the challenges faced by all the institutions represented at the meeting caused by the generally adverse economic climate. There has been an overall reduction in the capacity of purchasing new materials caused by rising costs and unfavourable exchange rates. Additionally, the VAT rate as applicable to purchase from foreign countries was considered.

The Treasurer reported the Group's finances to be in good order and sound. Funds stand at in excess of £1,000 with the 2009/10 subscriptions still due.

Following on, members of the Group present reported news of their institutions. At Oxford, the University has pledged additional funding for the libraries. Some of the current approval plans are to be reviewed as they can include material that is surplus to requirements. At Cambridge, the University Library is also reviewing approval plans, and the Modern Languages Library expects some rationalisation of library provision following a recent report on teaching and learning. At Trinity College Dublin proposals for new periodicals subscriptions are being closely scrutinised, and electronic versions would appear to be preferred to printed ones. At the University of Warwick the emphasis on strengthening resources on the Renaissance thought and writing continues, and a review of periodical subscriptions is currently under way. The British Library is engaged in a review of service and

staffing, and a de-duplication exercise with periodical titles is also under way. At the London Library the redevelopment project is making steady progress with more study-space made available to Library members. The retrospective conversion project is advancing too with the Fiction section (around 35,000 titles) now added to the online catalogue in its entirety.

The 2009 WESLINE Conference (Durham, 2-5 September) and its programme were discussed. Attention was drawn to concerns on the question of succession planning within Foreign Languages Studies Group, as raised by ACLAIR and the German Studies Library Group. Membership in the various Language Groups would appear to be decreasing.

Finally, the Italian Studies Library Group's plans for 2009/2010 were considered. Additionally, in view of the approaching tenth anniversary of the ISLG's foundation and successful activities (2011) it was felt an apt celebration would be in order to mark the occasion.

It was proposed to launch a fresh membership drive and the possibility of setting up a Facebook group was also considered. By general consensus it was decided that the 2010 Lecture should cover the subject of the History of the Book. The meeting was then adjourned and followed by Professor Woodhouse's lecture. "*The Poet as Pirate: Gabriele D'Annunzio at Fiume and on Garda*" was very well-attended and received. Professor Woodhouse captured the complete attention of the audience with an entertaining talk illustrated by an engrossing series of slides of rare photographs, mainly related to D'Annunzio's time in Fiume and at the Vittoriale, the Poet's last residence beside Lake Garda. Professor Woodhouse was thanked on behalf of the ISLG by Denis Reidy and granted life membership of the Group. The evening drew to a close with a relaxed and welcome evening reception.

The Poet as Pirate: D'Annunzio's Odyssey from Pescara to Fiume and beyond

Professor John Woodhouse
University of Oxford

On 12 September 1919 Gabriele D'Annunzio, at the head of a volunteer force of some two thousand irregulars, bolstered by a company of Sardinian Grenadiers, marched into and occupied the Adriatic port of Fiume (Rijeka), in what is present-day Croatia.¹ The diplomatic leaders of the allied powers, America, France, Italy, and Great Britain, regarded his operations there as piratical, and weak Italian administrations, fearful of revolution, and presided over by Francesco Saverio Nitti and Giovanni Giolitti, were particularly alarmed by events. The prime object of the remarks which follow is to trace what might be called the creatively predatory nature of D'Annunzio's attitude to life and art, up to and including his capture of Fiume.

Piracy has always been an equivocal calling: Somali pirates are regarded as heroes by their fellow-villagers and as pests by sea-traders, Elizabethan privateers were saviours for England, but piratical criminals for the Spaniards. D'Annunzio undoubtedly demonstrated his calibre as a pirate and commander of pirates in his capture of the enclave of Fiume, and revealed both positive and negative aspects in his activities. The negative or criminal aspect of piracy entered Latin (and Roman conservative society), to suggest a subversion of the status quo, weakening the broader etymology of the word's Greek origins. The Greek noun *peira* [πείρα] implied experimentation and trial, empiricism. Its underlying meaning suggested the kind of experience which Dante implied was so admirable in the free-thinking ambitions of Ulysses: not to rest content, but to follow *virtù* and *conoscenza* beyond the Pillars of Hercules, beyond the known limits of human endeavour.

¹ Ferdinando Gerra, *L'impresa di Fiume*, Milan, Longanesi, 2 vols., 1974-75, has the most complete account of the Fiume incident.

It was a sentiment summed up in one of D'Annunzio's favourite maxims, *Navigare necesse est, vivere non est necesse*, originally attributed by Plutarch to Pompey the Great.² The opening of D'Annunzio's remarkable autobiographical epic, *Maia* or *Laus Vitae*, echoed closely the episode of Dante's Ulysses in *Inferno* XXVI, and allied with that desire to go beyond human limits was D'Annunzio's later invention of *Energeia*, his personal tenth muse, the driving force of youthful exuberance.³ The years 1900-1910 also coincided with D'Annunzio's major theatrical productions, including the tragedy, *La nave* (1908) which anticipated uncannily his ambitions in Fiume. The involved plot includes the construction of a great ship, built by the Venetians in A.D. 552, and launched to break the Byzantine Empire's hold over Venice. Its irredentist programme chimed with the popular mood. After its triumphant production in Rome, D'Annunzio travelled to Fiume and organised a reading of the play there.

Comic-opera aspects of the occupation of Fiume are often seen by commentators (particularly British commentators) as a historical *divertimento*, but such an oversimplification ignores its serious consequences. The March on Fiume has been seen as a model for Mussolini's March on Rome in 1922, and D'Annunzio's enemies have always made much of what was in fact an inaccurate parallel.⁴ There were many differences between the ideologies of the two men. To mention just one, D'Annunzio's constitution for Fiume, the *Carta del Carnaro*, was a democratic programme, which insisted on universal suffrage, full rights for women, guaranteed freedom of the Press, the

² See Plutarch, *Lives*, 3 vols., ed. Ernest Rhys, London, Dent, 1939, *Life of Pompey the Great*, 2, p. 431. The original Greek reads: Πλεῖν ἀνάγκη, ζῆν οὐκ ἀνάγκη. Ironically in the present context, Pompey was famous for ridding the Mediterranean of pirates in 67 B.C.

³ *Maia* or *Laus vitae* forms the first volume of D'Annunzio's *Laudi del cielo del mare e degli eroi*, Milan, Treves, 1903. There have been many subsequent editions. Giuseppe Cellini's ornate design for *Maia*, a four-masted galleon had Plutarch's motto as its heading. The new muse *Energeia* appeared in 1920 in the Poet's constitution for Fiume.

⁴ Inevitably D'Annunzio's controversial life arouses divergent critical and political passions. Although there is no attempt or need here to defend the Poet, much still remains to be said about the prejudices from which he and his oeuvre have suffered during the century just past.

promotion of trade unions, and other liberal measures.⁵ What may have helped Mussolini's coup was the disdain generated by the Fiume crisis throughout Italy towards the worthless governments of Nitti and Giolitti in the period 1918-20, leading to widespread contempt for legally elected authority. Disdain for politicians was already endemic. Years earlier, "Dead men howling" was D'Annunzio's disillusioned description of his fellow M.P.s after his own election in 1897, when he deliberately moved his usual seat from the right of the House to the far left: "As a man of intellect I move towards life".⁶ His *Laus Vitae*, praises vitality rather than existence, and the sentiment caught the mood of the country, from schoolboys such as Gastone Canziani to disillusioned ex-soldiers of all ranks, including one of Italy's most revered Generals, Santi Ceccherini.⁷

In the library at the Vittoriale, is a French translation of Nietzsche's work by Henri Albert. On page 71, D'Annunzio had marked an aphorism, *Le genie de proie*, and in the right-hand margin, in his inimitable scrawl, printed the letters EGO with thick blue pencil. The volume lay there for eighty or so years, a kind of hostage to fortune, waiting to be discovered by an enemy, not untypical of D'Annunzio's nonchalance about others' opinions of him:

The predatory genius in art, able to deceive the most subtle intelligence, is created when someone from a very young age unscrupulously considers as undefended prey every good thing which is not deliberately protected by law as the property of a stated individual.⁸

The aphorism defines Nietzsche's *Raubgenie*, the Predatory Genius, *Il genio predone*. D'Annunzio first read about Nietzsche around 1886, in

⁵ Publicity is rarely given to D'Annunzio's presidency at this time of the Italian Seaworkers' Federation (FILM).

⁶ For this episode, see Paolo Alatri, *Gabriele D'Annunzio*, Turin, UTET, 1983, pp. 196-197.

⁷ See Gastone Canziani, *A Fiume con D'Annunzio: Lettere 1919-20*, ed. P. Cavassini, Ravenna, Longo, 2008; John Woodhouse, *Il Generale e il Comandante: Ceccherini e D'Annunzio a Fiume*, Bologna, GEDIT, 2004.

⁸ A presentation copy of the volume, *Le voyageur et son ombre: opinions et sentences mêlées: humain, trop humain, deuxième partie*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1902, its margins later heavily annotated by D'Annunzio, was sent to him "Hommage de respectueuse admiration" by Henri Albert. The aphorism at p.71 is no. 110.

Naples where the philosopher was then becoming a fashionable salon topic. But a good four years earlier, D'Annunzio's own life and attitude clearly anticipated many of the sentiments he was later to read about in Nietzsche's work. For instance, in 1882, his second collection of poetry, *Canto novo*, had included the ode, *Canta la gioia*, deliberately meant as revolutionary in style and tone:

Canta la gioia. Io voglio cingerti
di tutti i fiori perché tu celebri
la gioia la gioia la gioia
questa magnifica donatrice!
Canta l'immensa gioia di vivere,
d'essere forte, d'essere giovine
di mordere i frutti terrestri
con saldi e bianchi denti voraci
di por le mani audaci e cupide
su ogni dolce cosa tangibile
di tendere l'arco su ogni
preda novella che il desío miri.⁹

Hindsight critics have considered the poem to be an intimation of a pre-Nietzschean, even pre-fascist predation. Yet it was no physical prey that the young poet was describing. The next two stanzas make it clear that his desires were purely aesthetic, spiritual, even romantically naive: gazing with glowing eyes on the divine face of the world, listening to every music, adoring every fleeting form, every insubstantial symbol, every evanescent image, every transient grace, every briefly manifested phenomenon. The dynamic mode of expression visible here in *Canta la gioia* is also typical of stretches of *Maia*:

E io dissi: "O mondo, sei mio
Ti coglierò come un pomo,
ti spremerò alla mia sete,
alla mia sete perenne ..."
[*Maia* v. 463]

⁹ For the non-specialist, quotations here from D'Annunzio's poetry are available in Enzo Palmieri's edition of Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Crestomazia della lirica*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1944; the full poetic oeuvre is available in Palmieri's full 8-volume *Opere poetiche*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1944-49, the best annotated edition.

But *Maia* is twenty years on from *Canto novo*, after the disillusionment of his one and only spell as a Parliamentary Deputy, 1898-1900 (elected in 1897, for legal reasons he was not admitted to the House until 1898). The mood of the poetry has changed. He begins to spur on his readers to revive Italy's great past during the turn of a century when Risorgimento ideals were giving way to decadence and corruption:

Sù, svegliati! È l'ora.
Sorgi. Assai dormisti. L'amico
divenuto sei della terra?
Odi il vento. Sù. Sciogli! Allarga!
Riprendi il timone e la scotta:
ché necessario è navigare, vivere non è necessario.
[*Maia* v. 8394]

Predatory tendencies of a different kind in D'Annunzio's poetry had been obvious to his first reviewers. When he published *Primo vere* in 1879, it had quite a success for a first collection of verse, and he was, after all, only sixteen years old; it was soon reprinted. Its first reviewer, the influential Giuseppe Chiarini, praised the volume, not least because the poetry chimed with the Nobel-prize-winning lyrics of Giosué Carducci. D'Annunzio readily agreed; he had given the collection a Carduccian title and had dedicated one of its major poems to Carducci. More importantly, D'Annunzio was for much of his life interested in revolutionising the Italian language and in Renaissance concepts of dynamic emulation, visible to him particularly in the work of Pietro Bembo. For some twenty years after 1884, D'Annunzio consciously or otherwise set up literary targets, Dostoevsky, Shelley, Tolstoy, Dante, Shakespeare, with whom he attempted to compete, aiming to supersede them. Needless to say, he was not always artistically successful. The finest example of that *imitatio* or dynamic emulation, is the collection *Alcyone* of 1903, his attempt to go beyond Shelley's lyrical genius. There were, however, other accusations of plagiarism from jealous contemporaries, and these have been discussed at length elsewhere.¹⁰

¹⁰ John Woodhouse, *Gabriele D'Annunzio: Defiant Archangel*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.

Two blatant examples of piratical plagiarism are justifiably mentioned in this context. Pressed by his publisher to produce the libretto of his play, *La Parisina* in 1912, D'Annunzio, in unusually dire financial straits, simply copied from unreadable and probably unread editions of two medieval texts, the first edited in 1882 by Severino Ferrari, *Gli strambotti di Panfilo Sasso*, the second, *Cacce in rime del '300 e del '400*, edited by Carducci in 1896. This was certainly poetic predation, but it is probably one of the few times that those obscure texts had been given a brief and temporary publicity which they would otherwise never have enjoyed.

With a particular kind of emotional literary piracy, D'Annunzio also preyed inexorably on the world around him for subjects and characters. In this he never spared himself. All his work was autobiographical, notably in his depiction of the failed autobiographical protagonists of his novels. But following the abrupt jilting of his teenage fiancée Elda Zucconi, he was also uncaring about the emotions and feelings of others, particularly of his mistresses, even when the portrayal of others' weaknesses inevitably hurt the person concerned: descriptions of the barren Barbara Leoni, the mental breakdown of Giuseppina Mancini, the increasing decrepitude of Eleonora Duse, the chronic illness of Alessandra di Rudiní. The most glaring example of the predation, or exploitation of other people's feelings, was his portrait of the actress, Eleonora Duse, in the novel *Il fuoco*. There in the character of Foscarina, she is shown as an ageing woman of the world, desperate to keep the love of the young and vigorous Stelio-D'Annunzio. The book, published in 1904, broke up their relationship, though we now know they continued to correspond secretly for the next twenty years. His attitude to Eleonora seemed even more callous considering the large amounts of money that the actress had been paying out to subsidise the staging of D'Annunzio's plays.

After 1910 D'Annunzio's exploited mistresses were no longer immortalised in print because during the next five years D'Annunzio's literary vein ran out, at least in a conventional sense. The Great War gave him a new kind of creative outlet. Driven by his *daemon*, his *despota*, he wandered into perilous situations, sometimes unconsciously curious, with no apparent thought for personal danger, and he shared some astonishing feats of aviation and seamanship, acquiring, in the

process, eighteen medals for valour from most of the Allies, including the Military Cross from Britain in 1917.¹¹

One such heroic action is reported by the *Times* newspaper of 10 August 1918, headed *A New Ruggiero*:

Major Gabriele D'Annunzio, the intrepid Italian airman-poet, eclipsed his brilliant record last Friday by leading a flight of eight Italian aeroplanes over the Austrian capital. [...]. We have come to regard airmanship as the privilege of youth. Yet Major D'Annunzio is well past fifty [...]. Dropping leaflets the Germans may think is not war; but even they cannot deny that it is magnanimous and magnificent. The Allies of Italy wish Major D'Annunzio long life, and strength in future years to record in his inimitable verse *achievements that outshine in their poetic reality the legendary flights of Ruggiero and Astolfo on their winged horse. What Ariosto sang, D'Annunzio has accomplished.* (My italics).

The article refers to D'Annunzio's flight over Vienna in the passenger seat of his tiny SBAV biplane, clutching his canister filled with propaganda leaflets, which also carried the message: "We could have launched tons of bombs on you; instead we launch a simple tricolour - the three colours of freedom". The flight itself was record-breaking: seven hours non-stop over 1,000 kilometres in a single-engined plane. The *Times* had captured what D'Annunzio himself considered a new kind of artistic creativity - the heroic action, which *could* be immortalised in verse, but which D'Annunzio considered a creative poetic act in itself.

On the other hand, the *Times*'s augury of further poetry was not to be. D'Annunzio's literary inspiration had run out after a flying-boat accident in 1916 when he dashed his head against the cockpit machine gun and lost the sight of his right eye.¹² The way he next exploited his own injuries is typical of what was noted earlier. Forced to spend several months in complete darkness for fear of losing the sight in the other eye, he persuaded his daughter Renata to cut sheets of paper into strips, each

¹¹ Some of these, including the M.C., were deliberately solicited by D'Annunzio or his followers.

¹² Thereafter his writing was, with the exception of *Il notturno*, limited to recapitulation and consolidation.

wide enough for him to feel its edges. On these he wrote a sentence at a time, analysing the pain and its effect upon his imagination and memory. Put together, those ten thousand strips made up his final important literary work, *Il notturno*, a unique and revolutionary volume of prose. The book has intrinsic literary merit, but its importance lay in breaking for ever the classical, Ciceronian or Boccaccesque sentence structure of Italian, leaving the way open for the so-called *Notturmo* style which others were to exploit so successfully. The first, and most successful was probably Alberto Moravia in *Gli indifferenti*, composed a decade later (and, like D'Annunzio's work, from a convalescent bed), in staccato, unpunctuated sentences. Following D'Annunzio's recovery, driven by his tenth muse, he gave of himself more generously than before, speeding into hostile waters in his torpedo-boat leaving tricolour flags in bottles, and generally cocking a snook at the Austrians. Those actions, which some envious superiors described as *scampagnate*, were of immense propaganda value for the Allies.

After the armistice of 11 November 1918, D'Annunzio delivered fiery speeches concerning Italy's sacrifices during the fighting of the previous two years. They included the famous *Disubbidisco* (seen by critics as a deliberate contradiction of Garibaldi's famous "Ubbidisco").¹³ For this the Rome government ordered him back to Venice (he was still officially under arms). D'Annunzio resigned his commission and continued his diatribes from St Mark's Square. His message was clear: as agreed at the secret Treaty of London in 1915, the territories along the Dalmatian coast, including the port of Fiume, should remain Italian. Immediately after the Armistice of 1918, a battalion of fiercely patriotic Sardinian Grenadiers had marched into Fiume and held the enclave for Italy. They were to occupy the city until August 1919, at which point the Americans made one of their naive interventions, President Woodrow Wilson insisting that the city be handed over to Yugoslavia (as yet non-existent). The Granatieri were ordered by the Rome government to withdraw to Monfalcone and Ronchi, but clandestine negotiations, promoted by Captain Giuseppe Sovera, continued between his grenadier colleagues and the National Council of Fiume. Sovera, forgotten now by history,

¹³ Garibaldi's famous answer to his political masters was turned by D'Annunzio into a famous tirade against Nitti's disastrous policies in 1919. D'Annunzio's contrast with Garibaldi was well exploited by cartoonists.

acted as intermediary between the subalterns in his own Company and D'Annunzio.¹⁴

The young grenadier subalterns were the *Sette giurati di Ronchi*, who had theatrically, and half in jest, sworn an oath “O Fiume o morte”. Thanks to the efforts and determination of Sovera, a month later, just before noon on September 12, 1919, D'Annunzio entered the Italian enclave of Fiume leading a strangely assorted group of irregulars.¹⁵ His “legion” was made up of veterans from World War One, including contingents of *Arditi* (the shock troops whom D'Annunzio idolised), schoolboys, and two or three red-shirted survivors of Garibaldi's volunteers of sixty years earlier. The great allied victory had, in D'Annunzio's words, been for Italy a mutilated victory. The Quarnaro Gulf and Pola had been hallowed by Dante as the northern limits of Italy, and D'Annunzio, firm in the belief that Poets were the nearest thing to the Divine, was not slow to quote Dante's text to support the Dalmatian cause.¹⁶

By the afternoon of September 12, 1919, while the Italian Government was hesitating about its official position, D'Annunzio had entered the city, harangued the populace from the Palazzo del Governo, and draped over the balcony the flag of Fiume. It had previously covered the coffin of Giovanni Randaccio, a well known local hero who coincidentally had died fighting alongside D'Annunzio in 1917; D'Annunzio had made similar use of the standard for a speech in Rome. By now under further pressure from the Americans, the city was jointly occupied by the Allies, under the command of the Italian General Francesco Saverio Grazioli, and garrisoned by a force made up of Italians, Americans, French, British, and Yugoslavs. Rather surprisingly all the allied troops, except French and Yugoslavs were persuaded to leave the city as D'Annunzio marched in, and even

¹⁴ For more information on Sovera, see John Woodhouse, *L'ottavo giurato: Giuseppe Sovera con D'Annunzio a Fiume*, Bologna, GEDIT, 2008.

¹⁵ He was driven there in the latest FIAT tipo 4, which remained at the Vittoriale in its battered state for eighty years, until restored by Francesco Perfetti in 1998, forming another exhibit in the Poet's theatre of memory.

¹⁶ “Sì come a Pola, presso del Carnaro/ch'Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna”. (*Inferno*, IX, 112). In 1920 D'Annunzio commissioned from Adolfo de Carolis a portrait of *Dantes Adriacus* which he sent as a gift to the Accademia della Crusca, the ancient academy to which D'Annunzio had been elected a fellow in 1914.

France and Yugoslavia gradually agreed to withdraw. Four Italian ships in the harbour, including the cruiser *Dante Alighieri*, remained to form part of the Poet's navy. The Fiume adventure was for D'Annunzio the high point of his life and art.

There are too many accounts and recollections of the occupation to find places here, and not all touch the theme of piracy. Many anecdotes relate how campsite rhetoric and camaraderie alternated with hunting, fishing (sometimes using hand grenades), visits to local brothels, love affairs with Fiuman women, bizarre adaptations of military uniform, cocaine parties, harangues by D'Annunzio which were regarded as entertainment in themselves.¹⁷ There were also cultural visits by eminent people such as Toscanini and Marconi. Osbert Sitwell with tongue very firmly in cheek captured some of the atmosphere in his visit to Fiume as a correspondent for the *Nation* during the final days of D'Annunzio's Regency:

D'Annunzio had invited an eminent Italian conductor [in fact Arturo Toscanini, whom D'Annunzio nicknamed *Re Arturo*] to bring his orchestra over from Trieste and give a series of concerts, and had provided for him a fight for the orchestra to witness. Four thousand troops, among whom were the Garibaldian veterans whom we had seen - one aged seventy-eight and the other eighty-four - had taken part in the contest and one hundred men had been seriously injured by bombs. The members of the orchestra, which had been playing during the quieter intervals, fired by a sudden access of enthusiasm, dropped their instruments, and charged and captured the trenches. Five of them were badly hurt in the struggle.¹⁸

When it became difficult, because of the expected blockades, to provision the town, D'Annunzio found himself with starving children to look after. He organised refugee trains to Northern Italy where Fiuman children were welcomed enthusiastically, and instructed one of his officers, Lieutenant Mario Magri, to organise raiding parties, in order to acquire necessary food and material. To the men who made up these

¹⁷ An amusing and elegant account is Giovanni Comisso's *Le mie stagioni*, Milan, Longanesi, 1963.

¹⁸ Osbert Sitwell, *Noble Essences*, London, Macmillan, 1950, p. 123-124.

raiding parties D'Annunzio gave the old Croat name of *uscocchi*, originally the corsairs which had in previous centuries plagued imperial Venice's trade routes, and these reborn buccaneers ranged far and wide for D'Annunzio, re-routing to the docks of Fiume ships with fat cargoes. The *uscocchi* were privileged in many ways and had the honour of parading as a separate Company. Raids were sometimes carried out with torpedo boats, *motoscafi antisommergibili*, their Italian title usually abbreviated to MAS (which D'Annunzio soon boiled down to another of his mottos: *Memento audere semper*), the swift attack boats, that is, which D'Annunzio had himself favoured during the war. Tom Antongini, the Poet's P.A., secretary and general factotum, published a triumphant letter from D'Annunzio concerning the seizure in the port of Trieste of the Italian navy's newest destroyer, the *Agostino Bertani*, "Truly an operation of wonderful piracy", wrote D'Annunzio.¹⁹ For the Nitti government the most dangerous operation was the seizure of the *Persia*, bound for China with a cargo of arms and munitions, including field and mountain cannon, brought to Fiume without a struggle by a few armed members of D'Annunzio's Seaworkers Union. The richest prize of many was the steamer *Cogne*, captured in Catania harbour, bound for Argentina, laden with a cargo of silk, cars, watches, clocks, and other luxury goods, the whole having a total value of two hundred million lire - a vast sum in those days. When the re-routed ship sailed into the port of Fiume, D'Annunzio offered to sell its cargo to the Italian government. Understandably they declined to purchase, and denounced the act as piratical. D'Annunzio immediately put the lot up for auction on the quayside, as he had done with other booty, including all the equipment which the French contingent had unwisely left behind in the city. Eventually, after negotiations with the government and the ship-owners, D'Annunzio and his regime received a ransom of twelve million lire for the ship and its cargo. It was piracy in the name of Italy.

D'Annunzio considered himself a Renaissance prince as much as a socially benevolent pirate, and introduced measures to stress his unique political position. On 27 August 1920 he published his own Magna Charta, the *Carta del Carnaro*. Its obvious political statements are the antithesis of anything that was to be promulgated by Mussolini's

¹⁹ "E ieri ho portato via dal porto di Trieste un cacciatorpediniere nuovo fiammante, *Agostino Bertani*, sotto il naso delle Autorità. Fu veramente un'operazione di meravigliosa pirateria." Tom Antongini, *Vita segreta di Gabriele D'Annunzio*, Milan, Mondadori, 1938, p. 740.

government in the coming decades, and it is one of the documents which most strongly argues for D'Annunzio's indifference, if not hostility, to what he considered the vulgar regime which so often has been seen as a consequence of his actions. The remarkable document, in addition to measures noted earlier, insisted on schools free of political and religious propaganda and influence.²⁰ The text of the Charter itself was not without its little idiosyncracies. Its sixty-five clauses contain many references to the muses. One clause announced that "Il regno dello spirito umano non è ancora arrivato" and to create such a realm there was to be a cult of Music as a social and religious institution (*Una istituzione religiosa e sociale*) (statute no. 64). This rather impractical-sounding aspect is in keeping with D'Annunzio's character and outlook, but it had a logic of its own. Music and the arts were useful to society because they stimulated thoughts of a higher, more noble kind.

Osbert Sitwell is again a witness of such policies. When Sitwell was first admitted to the presence in 1920, D'Annunzio's first question to him was 'Well, what new poets are there in England?' Sitwell comments, "Not, you will notice", "What new generals are there?" or "Who plays centre-forward for Arsenal nowadays?" Sitwell, unlike most of his contemporaries was sympathetic to the genuine love of literary culture which D'Annunzio invariably showed. By contrast, Sitwell's contemporary comments on the barbarity of Eton, and of his fellow Brits. are well known. It is always worth comparing Sitwell's attitude with a report in the *Times* of 23 September 1919. The paragraph contained one of the *Times*'s usual eulogies of D'Annunzio's war career. Here it may suffice to limit the quotation to one sentence: "Signor D'Annunzio has proved himself as good a man of action as any healthy normal Englishman, who would no more read a line of poetry than he would write one."²¹

The *Carta del Carnaro* was published on 27 August 1920 and on 8 September D'Annunzio was elected Regent by the governing council. He issued postage stamps adorned with his own image and containing inspiring views of the countryside around. The anniversary of the capture of Fiume was celebrated on September 12 with military pomp

²⁰ For the text, see Ferdinando Gerra, *L'impresa di Fiume*, op. cit., 2, pp. 119-136. Until at least 1924, D'Annunzio talked of "so-called fascism" and used quotation marks to refer to "fascism".

²¹ Cfr. Osbert Sitwell, op. cit., p. 122.

and circumstance. Negotiations were also continuing among the Allies, until on 11 November 1920 the Treaty of Rapallo established an independent protectorate of Fiume. Nearly all D'Annunzio's demands had been met, but fearing that he would become a mere functionary, and, to the disgust of more reasonable factions in Fiume, he rejected the terms. Disaster followed. On Christmas Eve, Italian Government troops began their move. D'Annunzio had been issued with an ultimatum to evacuate the town, with a deadline of 6.00 pm on December 23 1920. There was stiff resistance, a hundred and fifty casualties and some fifty fatalities, evenly divided on both sides.²² When a naval shell from the *Andrea Doria* skilfully lobbed through the window of D'Annunzio's headquarters narrowly missed his head, he surrendered. He left Fiume on January 18 1920, said to be the last to leave - the adventure was over. But Fiume was in essence to stay Italian, until the Allies took it away from Mussolini's defeated Italy following World War Two.

It has already been noted that D'Annunzio's creative writing ceased in 1916 after *Il notturno*. His inner *daemon* had driven him to write in every genre, most of which he had revolutionised in his own particular way, and he had created one or two genres of his own. He surely believed that there was nothing new for him to attempt in the literary field. From the first of his publications it had been obvious that he had never made any clear distinction between life and art. A poet might immortalise, say, the heroic virtues of Garibaldi, but the heroism itself, as far as D'Annunzio was concerned, was an independent creative act, inspirational and of great value in its own right. By heroic actions and by surrounding himself with heroes, he considered himself a protagonist in a Renaissance work of art, helping physically to create that work.

During the Great War and at Fiume he believed that his creative energies were best expressed in impulsive adventures. And after Fiume, he dedicated himself with the same energy as before to creating, not new literary masterpieces in the accepted sense, but composing what might be considered a theatre of legend and memory. And this new creation involved one incidental act of piracy, which helped deplete the Italian treasury. According to the well known apocryphal story Mussolini

²² Giovanni Moscati, *Le cinque giornate di Fiume*, Milan, Editrice Carnaro, 1931, is the best account of the fighting and casualties from a Dannunzian angle; Enrico Caviglia, *Il conflitto di Fiume*, Milan, Garzanti, 1948, offers a balanced view from the Establishment's viewpoint.

suggested that D'Annunzio was like a bad tooth. He either had to be extracted or covered in gold. Mussolini was afraid of the Poet's national status and of the possibility of his carrying with him a potential electorate. After 1922 D'Annunzio took full advantage of the threat which the fascists believed he posed to their nascent regime, and by using their fears as a form of blackmail, he extracted vast sums from the fascist government to enhance his new home and lifestyle.

D'Annunzio devoted himself then to creating his own legend, his own physical obituary on Garda, in the house and grounds of the Vittoriale, to which he retired after the retreat from Fiume and where he was to spend his final eighteen years. If Fiume was the high point of his life and his greatest act of piracy, the Vittoriale was a repository of his spiritual booty. This was not materially valuable loot, but precious memories, all laid out with what he considered his own inimitable artistic skill. It is a striking fact that D'Annunzio never pillaged works of art or valuable artefacts from the areas he at various times dominated.

The residence itself can be seen as a good example of piratical acquisition and of poetic creativity. It was originally a modest farmhouse, the Villa Cargnacco, the Italian home of an Austrian engineer and art critic, Henry Thode, who had married the granddaughter of Franz Liszt. At the outbreak of the Great War, Thode was forced to return to Austria as a foreign belligerent. The abandoned property, requisitioned by the Italian Government was rented by D'Annunzio at the end of January 1921. He considered it a legitimate spoil of war, and he took over the place, lock, stock and barrel, including Thode's library of over 6,000 books (to which he added another thirty thousand of his own), musical manuscripts of Richard Wagner, Liszt's Steinway piano (to which he added his own live-in concert pianist from Fiume - Luisa Baccara). Some of those artefacts were returned to the original owners after litigation, but whether or not the property belonged to him, two years later, in 1923, D'Annunzio donated it to the Nation, thus giving the Italian tax-payer the privilege of maintaining it. By the time of his death in 1938 the estate, completely reconstructed and vastly enlarged, was designated a National monument, apotheosised as it were, into a personal shrine to D'Annunzio and the glory of Italy.

Of all the memorabilia which he gathered together here, none are more imposing than those which reflect his proprietorial affection for Fiume, Istria and Dalmatia. The former Venetian territories are evoked everywhere: by the *Piazzetta dalmata* in front of the house, or by the *Pilo dalmata*, which is crowned by the wooden statue of the *Vergine dello scettro dalmata*. Visitors wanting to see the Comandante had to wait, almost like penitents, in the austere *Oratorio dalmata*. The main residence was called the *Prioria*. Its rooms and courtyards were variously ornamented with reminders of his military activities in the region. One astonishing sight is that of the warship drawn up on dry land, poised above the lake a thousand feet below with its prow pointing towards the Adriatic. This is the *Puglia*, itself full of First World War relics, donated to him by the Italian navy in 1925. The ship also brought back memories of Dalmatia where its captain, Tommaso Gulli and the engineer Aldo Rossi had died in a brave attempt to rescue some Italian sailors under attack at Spalato (Split) in July 1920. It had also been one of the ships sent to Fiume by the Rome government in 1920 to spy on the poet. In its new life at the Vittoriale, the ship's deck also provided a stage for D'Annunzio's musical pioneering. He became very friendly with an admirer, Gianfrancesco Malipiero, whose reading of D'Annunzio's eulogy of Monteverdi in the novel *Il fuoco* helped convince the young composer to edit Monteverdi for a modern world. Malipiero also brought the famous *Quartetto Veneziano* to the Vittoriale in 1924, and thereafter promoted concerts of contemporary music at the Vittoriale.²³

There are many other mementos, including the blood-stained shirt of his companion Giovanni Randaccio, killed at D'Annunzio's side while leading an attempt to cross the Timavo river on 27 May 1917. And many objects, including several machine-guns, have been stolen. Since the 1960s other relics, for security reasons, have been put on show in display cases, including, most spectacularly now under the auditorium's dome, the aircraft in which he made his famous flight over Vienna in August 1918. The most piratical exhibit is probably his personal torpedo boat, in itself a wonderful example of the Italian shipwright's art, the *motoscafo antisommergibile*, which seemed to travel almost as fast as his aeroplane, and aboard which he carried out several daring raids against the Austrian

²³ Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il carteggio tra Gabriele D'Annunzio e Gianfrancesco Malipiero*, ed. Chiara Bianchi, Bergamo, Ferrari, 1997.

navy. After the war he kept the boat on Lake Garda, its forward machine-gun loaded with blanks supplied by Mussolini, and, in the early days anyway, he enjoyed scaring the tourists on the ferries by swooshing up to them at spectacular speed with machine-gun blazing.

The old urge to conquer the unknown led him to encourage others in the pursuit of heroic achievements. He promoted world water-speed records on the lake in 1927 (when Nino Bixio carried off the world speed record for Italy), and he invited Sir Henry Segrave to race on Garda, and funded the Segrave trophy. Segrave's widow later presented him with the twisted steering wheel from the speedboat on which her husband was killed on Windermere in 1930, and the grisly reminder now forms another exhibit in the Vittoriale's *Sala delle reliquie*. There is much unpublished correspondence on these Anglo-Italian enterprises in the archive of the Vittoriale. It is worth bearing in mind, incidentally, that by the time of these events, by 1930, D'Annunzio was 67 years of age, yet he was still driven by his youthful *daemon*. While pushing back the frontiers of novelty and excitement he was also living up to his old adage of *Navigare necesse est, vivere non est necesse*, and at the same time, he believed he was skilfully creating from his relics and memories new works of art, which would function in his Classical or Renaissance theatre of memory.

Some of his arrangements certainly produce pleasing works of design and art. His dining room for instance, *La sala delle chele*, is a brilliant example of art deco work. He arranged all those emblems, artefacts, mnemonic inscriptions, the corridors of the villa, the pathways in the garden, the stream and pools on the hillside, in such a way as to remind him and posterity of incidents in his life and career, and so of the risks, dangers, and exhilaration of life itself, and, of course, of dangers to Italy averted. The visitor to the *Prioria*, the novice as it were, underwent a learning experience, and as hundreds of Italian schoolchildren nowadays walk around the Vittoriale they are reminded not only of D'Annunzio's piratical career, but more importantly of a life lived excitingly for the greater glory of Italy.

The final chapter of his text formed among the relics of his campaigns, is another impressive souvenir, the mausoleum built after his death, constructed and inaugurated thanks to the enthusiasm (and fund-raising) of the ever-faithful Giuseppe Sovera. Here are displayed the tombs of

friends and of others who had been close to D'Annunzio at Fiume and elsewhere, the largest sarcophagus reserved for the Poet himself at the high point of the circle, facing Fiume and Dalmatia.

The D'Annunzio Collections at the Central National Library of Rome

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The D'Annunzio Collections at the Central National Library of Rome, together with the papers left by Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) at the Vittoriale degli Italiani, represent one of the primary resources for bibliographical and historical research on the *Vate*, as D'Annunzio was also known, and his work. The D'Annunzio Collections may be said to have begun through the acquisition of private collections to be later augmented as a result of specific and targeted additions. It is a history in itself as to how these Collections have come together in their present state.

In March 1942 the Library acquired, from Francesco Torrini of Milan, a sizeable collection of autographs by a diverse range of authors. Among them were several letters sent by Gabriele D'Annunzio to various female acquaintances, together with a facsimile of the autograph of *Il testo del nuovo patto marino* (classified in the "Autographs and miscellaneous" section with signature A. 140/5-17). Less than a year later, in January 1943, at a sale of autographs by various authors organised by E. Lucifero Di Federico, the Library acquired a corpus of correspondence related to D'Annunzio's adoptive uncle and aunt, Antonio and Anna D'Annunzio, sent from Pescara – the poet's hometown – dating from the years 1842-1845 to Francesco Antonini and Domenico Toppete (A. 187/1-24).

From the late 1960s onward, the Library pursued an acquisitions policy aimed at recovering documents historically pertaining to its collections and in order to supplement the existing testimonies relating to Italian cultural development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This

resulted in the acquisition of various collections of autographs and loose papers, including correspondence and documents of unique provenance, which were collated preserving their original structure and integrity within the newly created section “Archivi Raccolte Carteggi” (A.R.C.). In 1968, the Library acquired a letter dated 15 September 1926 by Gabriele D’Annunzio to his wife Maria (A. 198/1), which was sold by Ferdinando Gerra, a well known collector of Dannunzian material. A few years later, the Library purchased, from the same Ferdinando Gerra, the “Fondo Fiumano Gerra” (A.R.C. 6), a portfolio of rare and significant papers relating to the capture of Fiume in 1919. This has been strengthened further by the acquisition of several documents of various provenance (in June 1971, May 1972 and October 1976), among them autographs, propaganda material and photographs which relate to Gabriele D’Annunzio’s public activities.

Following on, the acquisition policy of the Library developed with the procurement of more specific additions. In May 1972, the Library bought a small collection of autographs of various Italian authors, including two letters by D’Annunzio to Giuseppe Saverio Gargano, dated 1903 (A. 219/45-46). At the same time, on 5 May 1972 to be exact, the Library acquired from the vendor Enrica Olivetti Bin and through the Ministry of Education, a collection of autograph manuscripts and letters by D’Annunzio. Its exceptionally interesting core represents the first section of the “Raccolta dannunziana” (A.R.C. 5. I). It comprises various letters, including the sizeable corpus of correspondence between the Poet and the Milanese editor Emilio Treves (1885-1915); loose papers representing drafts or final versions of works; important manuscripts, such as the dedicatory copy to Eleonora Duse, including the first wording of the play *Francesca da Rimini*, ready to be performed, as preserved in an original leather sheath from the Capponcina;¹ a first draft of the tragedy *Più che l’amore*, an autograph comprising 267 fols with watermark “Per non dormire”, with an annotation by the author on fol. 191: “Terminata la scena il 23 maggio 1906 mentre moriva Enrico Ibsen a Christiania nel pomeriggio (2 e ½ pom.)”; a manuscript entitled *I giorni funebri* and *L’apparizione* which represents a first draft of the *Notturmo*, containing

¹ The Renaissance villa in Settignano, near Florence, residence of the Poet. Cfr. *Tesori della Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Roma: 24-31 gennaio 1979*, Rome, BNCr, 1979, p. 9, n. 23.

numerous variations to the printed text. This collection has subsequently been augmented by a second section comprising several valuable printed works by D'Annunzio, acquired by the Library in 1971-1972 (A.R.C. 5. II; works obtained from the antiquarian booksellers Querzola and from Pregliasco of Turin). The Querzola purchase included the noteworthy edition of *La Gloria* (now in the Rare Book Collection, with signature R.C. 10), inscribed with an autographed dedication in French to Madame Romain Rolland, dated September 1899.

From the late 1970s onward the enhancement of the D'Annunzio Collections became a priority of the Library which - often with the financial support of the Ministry of Education - completed several specialist purchases in the space of a few years.² At the Christie's auction in Rome on 30 March 1976, the Library acquired the precious manuscript of *La fiaccola sotto il moggio* (ms. Vitt. Em. 1499), entirely autograph, comprising 231 fols, with watermark "Per non dormire", with numbering, amendments and additions in D'Annunzio's hand. At the end of each act dates have been added: 14 February 1905, 20 February 1905, 27 February 1905, 4 March 1905. In 1978, the outstanding manuscript *La figlia di Iorio* (ms. Vitt. Em. 1507) was acquired. This manuscript, as the preceding one, is on loose leaves, with watermark "Villa Borghese Nettuno nel Lazio". It is entirely hand-written, with annotation by the author who, in correspondence to the characters' names, has pencilled in names of the actors who were to play their respective parts. At the beginning of each act dates have been added, those of July and August 1903. An autograph paper, dated 2 December 1937, is enclosed with the manuscript, the authenticity of which D'Annunzio himself vouched for when he donated it to Francesco Paolo Michetti. The manuscript is preserved in a folder bearing the ex-libris of Giovanni Treccani degli Alfieri, who had himself acquired it in 1937 following the sale by the heirs of Michetti. Another targeted acquisition - this time of a letter D'Annunzio had written in 1924 (A. 229/49) - was realised at Christie's of Rome in an auction held on 29 January 1988. Additionally, an interesting collection of D'Annunzio autographs, mainly addressed to Piero Orsini (A. 230/17-21), was acquired on 28 June 1989 at the Italphil auction.

² Cfr. *Dannunziana: la collezione della Biblioteca nazionale centrale V. E. II*, Roma, 13 dicembre 1988 - 20 gennaio 1989, Rome, BNCR, 1988.

The further gilding of the already rich D'Annunzio Collections kept its momentum between the years 1988 and 1989, with several acquisitions and purchases completed by the Library. Among these were: a batch of letters sent by Gabriele D'Annunzio to various individuals, including his mother, together with some photographs (A. 230/1-14; acquired from the antiquarian bookseller San Bernardino of Florence), a facsimile of a letter sent by the Poet to Giovanni Pascoli on 7 September 1904 from Marina di Pisa (A. 230/23; acquired from the antiquarian bookseller Libreria Scevù). In the following years, the Library maintained its pro-active acquisition policy with numerous purchases including: a letter written by D'Annunzio to Arturo Labriola, bought in November 1989 from the antiquarian bookseller Gaspare Casella of Naples (A. 230/22); a few letters and photographs acquired in February 1990 from Adriana Camani of Milan (A. 230/24-30); a corpus of autographs written 1924-1928 and addressed to the actress Anna Fontana and her family (A. 247/58-85) purchased in 1991 from the Libreria Soave of Rome.³

A sizeable addition was completed in 1990 with the purchase through the antiquarian bookseller Pregliasco of Turin, of the valuable *Raccolta dannunziana Fanan* (A.R.C. 14. I-XVII), comprising more than one thousand documents relating to Gabriele D'Annunzio and his family.⁴ Originating from the private library of Giorgio Fanan, the *Raccolta dannunziana Fanan*, includes correspondence (mainly letters sent by D'Annunzio to Ugo and Fernanda Ojetti, to his sons Mario and Gabriellino, to Giovanni Rizzo), iconographic materials (mainly photographs illustrating various episodes in D'Annunzio's life), and diverse objects (such as: glasses, a leather cigarette-box bearing an autograph signature, documents, letters and official telegrams, propaganda placards and leaflets), and newspaper cuttings (some with annotations by D'Annunzio).

In 1994, the Library acquired from Pregliasco of Turin, the *Carteggio D'Annunzio-Calmann Lèvy* (A.R.C. 22. 1-48) comprising primarily the

³ Cfr. *Trent'anni di acquisizioni: catalogo della mostra, Roma, Biblioteca nazionale centrale 16 dicembre 1992 – 30 gennaio 1993*, Gaeta, Gaetagrafiche, 1992.

⁴ Cfr. *Antichi e rari: recenti acquisti in antiquariato per le biblioteche pubbliche statali: Torino, Biblioteca nazionale universitaria, 13 – 27 maggio 1991*, Gaeta, Gaetagrafiche, 1991.

interesting correspondence between D'Annunzio and the French editor Gaston Calmann-Lévy exchanged in the years 1898 to 1936. During this period the Italian Ministry of Education funded the acquisition of: various autographs addressed to several people, including D'Annunzio's son, Mario; newspaper cuttings; photographs and leaflets (A. 240/20-23, A. 241/19-38; at Christie's of Rome on 13 December 1994); autographs addressed mainly to Ernesto La Polla and to Giuseppe Brunati (A. 247/1-54, 58; at Christie's of Rome on 25 November 1995), and, finally, a few letters whose addressee was, in most cases, Giulio Ricordi (A. 247/55-57; again at Christie's of Rome on 16 December 1997).

In 1996, maintaining its energetic pace, the Library acquired, through the Italian Ministry of Culture, again from the Pregliasco of Turin, the magnificent autograph manuscript: *Aux bons chevaliers latins de France et d'Italie* (ms. Vitt. Em. 1670), which the Poet, with a view to reinforcing the Franco-Italian friendship, had dedicated to the President of the French Republic, Albert Lebrun. The work, written in French, is on loose leaves and headed paper "Sufficit Animus Prima Squadriglia Navale" and "Memento audere semper", is preserved in two fine folders, covered in imitation ancient Carolingian fabric, lined with silk and with silk ribbons, with leather clasps and fabric in the shape of a lily. The manuscript, in D'Annunzio's magnificent handwriting, in red and black ink, is dated "27 août 1935". At the Christie's auction in Rome on 13 December 1996, the Library acquired the *Raccolta D'Annunzio-Treves* (A.R.C. 23. 1-24) correspondence comprising exchanges with the editor Giuseppe Treves for the years 1896 to 1904 (the year of Treves's death) and the autograph of the poetical composition *Canto di festa per il calendimaggio*, in its revision for publication.

In the following year the Library, once again with the support of the Italian Ministry of Education, acquired its largest and richest collection from Christie's of London (*Raccolta dannunziana Gentili*, A.R.C. 21. 1-78). This collection, put together over several years by Federico Gentili Di Giuseppe, a personal acquaintance of D'Annunzio, who had met the Poet in Rome, comprises papers donated by D'Annunzio himself and several subsequent additions. It contains materials of different typologies: autograph manuscripts (including first drafts and preparatory papers, notes, page proofs with autograph amendments, a

sizeable corpus of unpublished letters), photographs and documents, some of historical relevance (pertaining to the Poet's political and private activities), invoices, bills and contracts. Also contained are objects of the finest quality, such as a fan inscribed with the autograph verses of the poem *Mattinata*, playing cards printed with the *Carmen votivum*, a silver enamelled snuff-box with a portrait of Gabriele D'Annunzio. The collection represents the multifarious activities of the Poet and covers his entire life. It includes some of D'Annunzio's first love letters, school notebooks and juvenile manuscripts, testimonies of his cultural development and early literary production.

At the Christie's auction in Rome on 15 December 1998, the Library acquired some interesting documents relating to D'Annunzio (mainly letters sent to his wife Maria, to Major Adriani, to the embroiderer and weaver Letizia De Felici, to Ernesto La Polla, to Ennio Talamini and his wife Lina), in addition to a corpus of papers of great historical value, concerning relations between D'Annunzio and General Enrico Caviglia during the Fiume period. In June 1999, Alessandro Cortese De Bosis sold to the Library a small batch of letters sent by Gabriele D'Annunzio to Adolfo De Bosis around the year 1896.

Again, in December 1999, the Italian Ministry of Education acquired, on behalf of the Library, at a Christie's auction in Rome, a sizeable collection of letters exchanged between D'Annunzio and Ildebrando Pizzetti in the years 1906–1936, providing valuable insight into the personalities of the two artists. Additional material has been acquired in more recent times, such as, the *Raccolta D'Annunzio-Corsi* (A.R.C. 38, acquired in 2002), which contains a corpus of letters sent by D'Annunzio to the Admiral Camillo Maria Corsi, Italian Navy Minister from September 1915 to June 1917.

Various other documents, though forming part of different holdings, fall within the scope and remit of the D'Annunzio Collections (for example the *Raccolta Falqui* and the *Archivio De Felice*) further enhancing the already extensive Dannunzian material held. Special reference is due to Ildebrando Pizzetti's autograph scores, purchased from the antiquarian bookseller L.I.M. of Lucca in 2000 and 2001. Among them the opera - albeit incomplete - *Gigliola* (Mus. 169), a tragedy based on *La fiaccola sotto il moggio* by Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Finally, the valuable material included in the large *Archivio Bruers* (A.C.R. 26) merits mentioning. The archive contains Antonio Bruers' papers and documents. Bruers, Vice Chancellor of the Accademia d'Italia, had been responsible for the reorganisation of the library and archive at the Vittoriale.

The Central National Library of Rome is not the only institution actively preserving materials relating to the Poet. Its collections however are renowned for their quality and richness, and for encompassing the entire life of Gabriele D'Annunzio and every field of his multifarious activities "*in terra, in mare e in cielo*". They combine to represent truly indispensable reference material for historical and bibliographical research on such a versatile figure who, as Enrico Falqui wrote, "*non fu comparsa ma protagonista e, in particolari momenti, di primo ordine*".⁵

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⁵ Enrico Falqui, *I manoscritti di D'Annunzio*, "Il Tempo", 2 June, 1968, p. 3.

Adventures of a narrator: Italo Calvino's scriptwriting

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There are no truly successful cinematic adaptations from Calvino's wealth of narrative experiments. Almost twenty years on, this article reassesses Lorenzo Pellizzari's *L'avventura di uno spettatore. Italo Calvino e il cinema*,¹ still an authoritative collection of essays on Calvino and cinema, referring to notions of film adaptation grounded in semiotic perspectives.² Only a few short stories or novels by Calvino received attention by film makers and were adapted into films, short films, or animated cartoons. Sampling scenes from *Avventura di un soldato* (directed by Nino Manfredi, 1963), an attempt is made to explain the reasons why Calvino's scriptwriting, as well as scriptwriting inspired by his work, have had limited success. The same argument could be used to review and analyse *Renzo e Luciana* (directed by Mario Monicelli, 1964, from the short story *Avventura di due sposi*), *Avventura di un fotografo* (directed by Francesco Maselli, 1983, from the homonymous novel), and of *Ti-Koyo e il pesceccane* (directed by Folco Quilici, 1964, written as a script by Calvino).³ Gian Piero Brunetta offered recently an overview of the inspirational cross fertilization between cinema and literati in Italy, in which Calvino's splendid *Autobiografia di uno spettatore* has a special place.⁴ Calvino's involvement in film scriptwriting reflects only partially his early passion for playwriting, an activity that eventually had an almost irrelevant part in the corpus of his work. Pellizzari's volume brings together several, near unanimous, voices, agreeing that Calvino's narrative had failed to make much of an impact on twentieth century Italian cinema. It emphasises the prevalence of adaptations from

¹ Lorenzo Pellizzari, *L'avventura di uno spettatore. Italo Calvino e il cinema*, Bergamo, Lubrina, 1990.

² The definition is borrowed from Nicola Dusi, *Il cinema come traduzione*, Turin, UTET, 2003, which defines the movement from the written sign to the adaptation in the multi-semiotic (language of images, soundtrack language, and script language) of the film.

³ Cfr. Lorenzo Pellizzari, op. cit., for the full list of adaptations.

⁴ Gian Piero Brunetta, *Gli intellettuali italiani e il cinema*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2004.

Calvino's realist vein, blaming the absence of Calvino's fantastic on traditional prejudice of literary poetics. Calvino's adventure as a viewer however is contrasted here with his limited success as a film writer. Only some introductory points can be made on what can be considered as Calvino's undoubted lack of influence on the Italian film industry. Calvino certainly knew he was living at a special time for literature and cinema: "the new Italian cinema and contemporary literature share something more than a common ground; new directors and new literati are young people from the same hatch, with taste, education, and readings in common".⁵ Which begs the question: why not *his* literature then? Gifted in story-telling, able to provoke and stimulate in his essay writing, Calvino's reluctance to engage in scriptwriting may be explained by his idea of language and – to paraphrase Northrop Frye – attention given to "fearful symmetries" in his written images that do not translate or transpose⁶ into the different semiotic system of films.

Aspirations of a playwright

At the beginning there were two teenagers: having attended the same Liceo Classico, one, Eugenio Scalfari, became a university student in Rome, and the other, Italo Calvino, in Turin, was forced into scientific studies that only partially "distracted" him from his passion for writing. In a letter dating from the winter 1941-42 Calvino talks about theatre, especially of a script he wrote for two scenes of *Teatro di rivista* which went horribly wrong in performance. Becoming a dramatist was however one of the young Calvino's aspirations:

I have not forgotten myself: I go to theatre, I refine my sensitivity, I find myself in the environment that I dreamt of for so long, I listen to the clapping, I see the authors taken by the actors' hands on the stage then I feel the bite of nostalgia for hopes that never died and for ambitions

⁵ "Il nuovo cinema italiano con la letteratura contemporanea ha qualcosa di più che un terreno in comune; i nuovi cineasti e i nuovi letterati sono per lo più giovani delle stesse covate, con gusti, educazione, letture in comune", in Italo Calvino, (1953), "Il realismo italiano nel cinema e nella narrativa", *Cinema Nuovo*, p. 262, now in *Saggi*, Milan, Mondadori, 1995, pp. 1888-1890.

⁶ Umberto Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa: esperienze di traduzione*, Milan, Bompiani, 2003.

that never became exhausted, which grabs me so I wander
daydreaming into the asleep and silent town. Ho-hum!⁷

Scalfari helped nourish Calvino's appetite for literary novelties from the *capitale*, as Rome is ironically referred to in Calvino's letters of the Fascist period.⁸ Playwriting and theatre were, in Calvino's almost Aristotelian perspective, the highest artistic signs. Signs, whose language and grammar the young Calvino was eager to learn and wanted to master *hic et nunc*. Despite a lifetime career of literary achievement and lasting influence at international level, Calvino's dramatic work remains less than marginal, the aspiration of the teenager almost non-existent among his writings. Pellizzari however noted no fewer than thirty-six entries of Calvino's work for or in analysis of cinema, a medium which he considered to be a poor surrogate for the more prestigious theatre, yet appreciating its importance and story-telling power as early as in 1953. The literary critic Romano Luperini in his 1998 lectures noted that Calvino did not enjoy the isolation of the researching intellectual and kept attempting to establish a connection with the physical reality and physical audience.⁹ Calvino's own view was expressed as follows: "cinema means sitting in a stall of people who puff, guffaw, suck sweets, annoy you, enter, go out, maybe even read the captions aloud as in mute cinema; cinema is about these people plus a story that happens on the screen".¹⁰ Calvino, in the same way as Alberto Moravia had done, shifted his original ambition from being a playwright to writing scripts for film adaptations of his novels. The connection with a live audience could have been made with a successful film adaptation of one of Calvino's popular short stories. Yet, the success of the two authors' film adaptations was

⁷ "Non ho dimenticato però me stesso: vado a teatro, affino la mia sensibilità, mi ritrovo nell'ambiente da me tanto sognato, sento gli applausi, vedo gli autori presentarsi alla ribalta tenuti per mano dagli attori e allora sento il morso della nostalgia delle speranze non spente, delle ambizioni non esauste che mi riprende e vago fantasticando per la città addormentata e silente. Bah!", in Italo Calvino, "A Eugenio Scalfari – Roma, 21 novembre 1941", *Lettere*, Milan, Mondadori, 2000, pp. 8-10.

⁸ Ibid. "A Eugenio Scalfari – Roma, 4 febbraio 1942", pp. 27-30.

⁹ Romano Luperini, *Dalla centralità del testo alla centralità del lettore*. Boccaccio, Manzoni, Tozzi, Calvino, Palermo, Palumbo, 2006.

¹⁰ "Cinema vuol dire sedersi in mezzo a una platea di gente che sbuffa, ansima, sghignazza, succhia caramelle, ti disturba, entra, esce, magari legge le didascalie forte come al tempo del muto; il cinema è questa gente, più una storia che succede sullo schermo", in Italo Calvino, 1995, op. cit., p. 1889.

significantly different. The potential double “marriage” of Calvino and its audiences, of his written signs and cinematic language, was not to take place.

Unadventurous adventures, or the disillusion of a playwright

In the nostalgic reflections of *Autobiografia di uno spettatore* that Calvino used as an introduction to Federico Fellini’s publication *Quattro film* (1974) he does not theorize on cinema but narrates the “adventure” of cinema-going. These pages remain a superb reading of the viewer’s experience, but stay away from simplified forms of film study. Calvino did not venture into film theories at all, but rather in his essays he interpreted films as an experiential viewer coming with his set of critical tools borrowed from his critical perceptions but not refined or nourished by formal theoretical training facilitated by studies of the likes of Bordwell and Thompson.¹¹ We could add, following Goffredo Fofi, that Calvino has been perceived as living life as a viewer: interpreting its signs from a *spettatore* position.¹² This starting point is not unconventional or adventurous. The same can be said of the film adaptations of his short stories; Nino Manfredi’s adaptation of *Avventura di un soldato* is by far the most accomplished, and Calvino defined it a “perfect sketch”. Yet it is a tableau, a circumstance for an *avventura*, not a real adventure with a full-blown plot and unforgettable characters that stay with the readers for years, such as Cosimo of the *Il Barone rampante*, the doubles of *Il visconte dimezzato*, or Agilulfo in *Il cavaliere inesistente*. Pellizzari pointed at the lack of respect for the fantastic as a genre in literature which explains the impossibility for Calvino’s stories to be represented in a film adaptation. Why did his story transpose so ineffectively to the viewer?

Visual geometries unfit for the camera

Calvino’s narrative has a geometrical flavour in its style, consisting of an architecture of sentences that tell the story via squares and corridors of thought. There is no better example of Calvino’s inspiration than Manfredi’s successful and enjoyable *Le avventure di un soldato*. The

¹¹ A reference book since its first 1983 edition, David Bordwell and Kirstin Thompson, *Film art: an introduction*, 8th ed., New York, McGraw-Hill, 2008, remains a must-read introduction for writers of cinema.

¹² Goffredo Fofi, “Presentazione”, in Lorenzo Pellizzari, 1990, op. cit., pp. 13-19.

piece was an episode included in the film *L'amore difficile* (1963), which had clearly a literary inspiration as it comprised Ercole Patti's story for *Le donne*, Alberto Moravia's story for *L'avar*, and Mario Soldati's story for *Il serpente*. Nino Manfredi, with the support of Fabio Carpi, wrote a dialogue for this film, as Calvino's story works on the geometrical narrative of hand and leg movements and the contrasting lightness and darkness that characterise Tomagra's clumsy approaches to seduce a widow who is sitting next to him on a train journey. The film however struggles to create the suspense of the sensual attraction that Calvino creates in the short story. It can be argued that the addition of dialogues for the background characters may have been responsible for this. There is a clash of semiotic systems though, when Calvino's silences in the short story dilate the narrative time in Tomagra's head and create a geometry of silence and description that the film had to change into cuts, scenes, and sequences, where time flows more in a linear way, despite the possibilities of flash-back and flash-forward and a careful and successful use of cuts (of the officer looking at Tomagra from the platform, of the train's motion, of the tunnel, of a sunny beach). According to Guido Fink, Calvino contributed to the scriptwriting of this episode as he did for the episode *Renzo e Luciana* directed by Mario Monicelli which was part of the film *Boccaccio '70*. Fink expresses a less than complimentary view of the film when he defines the Manfredi's rendition and Monicelli's adaptation of Calvino's short stories as "two marginal and scarcely relevant episodes in the author's career beside their results, which are positive in the case of Manfredi, an excellent sketch unfortunately put in an ugly multi-authored film with the Calvinian title *L'amore difficile*, and, not without a curious symmetry or a true chiasm, negative in the case of Monicelli".¹³ With regard to Manfredi's sketch, in terms of film timing it could have done with even sharper editing because the creation of sensual suspense is much reduced. The film adaptation then suffers from making a geometrical narrative on a medium that uses geometries of completely different kinds. Calvino, according to Guido Bonsaver, saw "writing as a system of signs, and

¹³ "Due episodi marginali e scarsamente rilevanti nella carriera dell'autore a prescindere dai risultati: che sono positivi nel caso di Manfredi, un ottimo sketch purtroppo inserito in un brutto film a più mani dal calviniano titolo *L'amore difficile*, e, non senza una curiosa simmetria o vero e proprio chiasmo, negativi nel caso di Monicelli" in Guido Fink, "Quel fascio di raggi luminosi in movimento", p. 80, in Lorenzo Pellizzari, op. cit., pp. 69-83.

the artist's language as an aesthetic idiolect, as his ability to 'lie' and, on a more general level, art as the place of utopia, as creation of 'other' worlds".¹⁴ The visibility of the written page leads to a different sign, or semiotic, representation of reality; when the dense short stories of the neo-realist or, more to the point, "naturalist" inspiration were transposed into films, the density of the two systems of representation shared, in the case of Calvino, too few elements to work. A multiple sign system as the one of the seventh art and the powerful written sign seemed to collide in a way by which Calvino tries to make the structure grow: syntactically clear sentences, getting more complex as the tension builds up, creating an excess of description with minimal descriptivism, his style depicts the scene of Tomagra's mindset in these terms:

Quando Tomagra s'alzò e sotto di lui la vedova restava con lo sguardo chiaro e severo (aveva gli occhi azzurri), col cappello guarnito di veli sempre calcato in capo, e il treno non smetteva quel suo altissimo fischio per le campagne, e fuori continuavano quei filari di vigne interminabili, e la pioggia che per tutto il viaggio aveva rigato instancabile i vetri riprendeva con nuova violenza, egli ebbe ancora un moto di paura d'avere, lui fante Tomagra, osato tanto.¹⁵

In Manfredi's sequence, the descriptive words become glances, movements and postures which link more to a mannerism of representation than to the simple syntax of Calvino's narrative. Calvino, the cinema goer, viewer of reality, stands as an outsider, an onlooker, observant and sharp in his comments but, maybe, ultimately disinterested in the physicality of reality. Fofi recalls that "Calvino did

¹⁴ "[L]a scrittura come sistema di segni e, di più, la lingua dell'artista come idioletto estetico, la sua abilità 'menzognera': e su un piano generale, l'arte come luogo dell'utopia, come creazione di mondi 'altri'", p. 56, in Guido Bonsaver, *Il mondo scritto. Forme e ideologia nella narrativa di Italo Calvino*, Turin, Tirrenia stampatori, 1995.

¹⁵ It is important to point out that Manfredi changed the setting season into summer, so Manfredi-Tomagra shows the signs of copious sweating and there is no rain ticking on the train window. Cfr. Italo Calvino, (1949), 'L'avventura di un soldato', in *Ultimo viene il corvo*, Turin, Einaudi; reprinted in Italo Calvino, *Romanzi e Racconti*, vol. I, ed. by M. Barenghi and B. Falcetto, Milan, Mondadori, 1949, pp. 319-28.

not like psychology and its explanations”,¹⁶ and Manfredi’s sketch finds some of its most effective moments in using the camera to depict the psychological reactions of his main character. Perhaps this very element explains some of the differences between the narrative success and the lack of transmission of this element of his style into film modes (for example when introducing secondary characters absent from the original work and having to add dialogue that contrasts with Calvino’s symmetrical silences). The construction of meanings – some sequences of *Ti-Koyo e il pescecane* also are affected by this - suffers from Calvino’s narrative relying on relativity of time: the cuts in the narrative sequence of his short stories are neater and more fluid than the cuts even good editors achieved in the films inspired by his short stories. Manfredi’s soldier Tomagra remains a two-dimensional character who moves within a three-dimensional carriage. Manfredi’s most successful shot in terms of semiotic adaptation from Calvino’s text to the screen is possibly the one depicting the widow’s left profile against the background of new characters. This scene is added to the film narrative. In Calvino’s original novel the other passengers remain invisible, they are the people who leave the train at minor stations, whereas Manfredi shows the distance between the soldier and the other passengers in the carriage, representing the physical distance between his tormented moment of frustrated passion and his repressed shame at being judged. Yet it is more psychological than Calvino’s obvious reference to the soldier’s shame and fear for his daring. The short sequence of frames that include this one is representative of the distance between the other characters view of his behaviour and Tomagra’s very clumsy attempt at hiding his intentions. The difficulty in recreating Calvino’s narrative geometries is also shown by Manfredi’s very clever attempt at producing a visual closure to the short film in line with Calvino’s geometrical descriptions of moving hands, moving legs, touching people and silent dancing of minds. The opening frame sees Fulvia Franco, playing the widow, coming slowly into the frame from the top right side of the shot. The medium-shot allows the viewer to enter immediately into the narration and acknowledge the dynamism of this character who never actively encourages Tomagra yet in her passive acceptance is paradoxically more mobile than he. As an illustration of this symbolism, the final

¹⁶ “Calvino non amava la psicologia e le sue giustificazioni”, in Goffredo Fofi, op. cit., p. 14.

shot shows a change to the story, where Tomagra is looking statically toward the widow being met at the station by two men and walking away arm in arm with one of them. The medium-shot is framing the closure in line with the character of Tomagra, referring back at the same shot of the beginning, but contrasting movement to stasis. However, a cynical critic would say that this reflection on the parallelism and contrast of dynamism and stasis comes after watching the film several times. Calvino's internal repetitions create a geometry based upon lexical density of the page and short, effective and minimalist syntax allowing the reader to follow the flow of this train journey and daring sensual journey at a first reading. In the film, the lack of pace in the sequences makes it quite difficult to capture the intensity of attraction that Tomagra is experiencing. The short story creates cuts and sequences that rest on silence, invisible passengers and a total lack of dialogue that the film could not convey.

No substantive conclusions are possible for two main reasons: 1) the passionate reader of Calvino remains confident that an adaption of his fables is likely to come at some point in the future; 2) this article is trying to avoid the traditional paradigm that sees the language of cinema, as lacking the nuances and shades in representing reality, in comparison to the written word. Yet the observations of this article engage with the shortcomings of some adaptations from the perspective in which film narrations are considered as multimodal texts. These texts are three-dimensional in their achievement, reproducing space, volume, and time against Calvino's four-dimensional aspirations including relativity of time. As a result Calvino's own vision and use of language as an interpretative tool struggles to function when translated into a different multimodal language such as the cinematic one. The two semiotic systems offer different languages, meaning that, if the transposition is simplified too far, the destiny of transposed literature is bound to be unsuccessful. Yet Calvino's trilogy of the *Ancestors* could, in its style of the fantastic and the fabulous, be the inspiration for adventurous, ironic stories that both passionate and less passionate readers of Calvino would surely welcome.

The archive of an “uncontainable” author: Cesare Zavattini

Giorgio Boccolari

Archivio Cesare Zavattini

The Cesare Zavattini Archive, which forms part of the Panizzi Library in Reggio Emilia, occupies a special place within the category of private archives. The striking feature of this outstanding patrimony, reflecting the artist's multifarious activities, is the extent and complexity of the material it includes. Glancing at Zavattini's intellectual *iter*, it is extraordinary to note how a single person could possess such numerous and varied skills of being a writer and a poet, a playwright and a painter, a creator of stories for the cinema (and for cartoon comics), a script-writer, a journalist, a literary critic, an editor and a film director – in addition to being the founder of newspapers and journals, and organiser of cultural events. He was accomplished in all these activities and successfully produced works of the highest quality. Cesare Zavattini appeared on the Italian literary scene in the 1930s, presenting a new kind of poetic humour, personal and evocative, later to become a genre of its own. The poetic and style of Zavattini as a writer was always closely connected to two of the most important means of mass communication: cinema and journalism. Cesare Zavattini was born in 1902 at Luzzara (Reggio Emilia). He began his career as a journalist with the *Gazzetta di Parma* in 1927. He moved to Milan in 1930 where, following various vicissitudes, his career took off.¹ Having completed an initial experience with the publisher Rizzoli, in 1936 Zavattini was employed by Mondadori as the editorial director for all periodical publications. It was a remarkable venture for the young Zavattini. In particular, he was directly involved with the “Walt Disney” section and created strip-cartoon stories which merit a place among Italian comic classics. An indefatigable creator of journals and producer of columns, he introduced weekly publications and other new formats which would later become accepted norms. In the meantime his first books had been published and achieved an immediate success: *Parliamo tanto di me*

¹ Cfr. Michela Carpi, *Cesare Zavattini direttore editoriale*, Reggio Emilia, Aliberti, 2002.

(1931), characterized by a new genre of humour in Italian literature, and *I poveri sono matti* (1937). Also at this time, Cesare Zavattini produced his first screenplay: *Darò un milione*, completed in 1935. During the war years, Cesare Zavattini published two additional books: in 1941 *Io sono il diavolo* and in 1943 *Totò il buono*, the latter representing an important development in his work. After the demise of the Fascist regime, in the years immediately following the war, Cesare Zavattini affirmed his interests in films and film production. The Neorealism – a gilded period in Italian cinema – bears Zavattini's imprint. Za (as Cesare Zavattini was affectionately known) was personally involved in introducing the Neorealism in Spain, Cuba and Mexico.

Miracolo a Milano (1950), the film based on the novel *Totò il buono*, remains a masterpiece of Italian cinematographic art. The work was the result of the extraordinary creative collaboration between Zavattini and the film director Vittorio De Sica.² Their endeavour – as two personalities who complemented each other – was, in great measure, the source of inspiration for the Neorealism, the thematic it addressed and its success. Four films capture the essence of the cinematographic thought of Cesare Zavattini. The fundamental characteristic was his interest in ordinary everyday life, always felt as an intense solidarity with the humble, the destitute and the victims of social injustice. The results are presented in the form of tales, as in *Miracolo a Milano*, or sentimental stories as in *Sciuscià* and *Ladri di biciclette*, or at other times, as in *Umberto D.*, in a more crude and realistic way. Cesare Zavattini thought of cinema not in terms of a business enterprise, but rather as a great civic means through which public conscience could be reached. An indefatigable worker and source of inspiration to others, Cesare Zavattini became the leading figure in a debate encompassing the entire world of film production in all its aspects. In particular, Zavattini fought against any form of censorship which could limit freedom of artistic expression. A fine example of this can be seen in his comedy *Come nasce un soggetto cinematografico*,³ written in 1958. He also produced films aimed at transposing reality to the screen, as in *L'amore in città* (1953) and *I misteri di Roma* (1963). Experimental

² Cfr. Paolo Nuzzi; Ottavio Iemma, *De Sica & Zavattini: parliamo tanto di noi*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1997.

³ Cfr. Cesare Zavattini, *Come nasce un soggetto cinematografico*, Milan, Bompiani, 1959.

productions anticipating the “candid-camera”, the “cinema verità” and the “cinema inchiesta” followed. However his concepts which later developed in to a new film genre of “film-essay” failed to achieve any significant success in Italy. This new form included the “film-viaggio”, the “film-lampo” and the “film delle confessioni”, a controversial genre utilised in *Siamo donne* (1953). Again, as an experimental and new venture, Cesare Zavattini presented the idea of the “cine-giornali della pace”, and of the “cine-giornali liberi”, starting a genre of political cinema productions distributed within independent circuits. As the great period of the Neorealism faded, during the second half of the 1950s, Cesare Zavattini was again active in the literary field. In addition to a “Diary”, published for several years in the journal *Cinema nuovo*, Zavattini completed new books, among which were: *Non libro più disco* (1970),⁴ a personal reflection on the grievous questions posed by the reality of that time; *Stricarm’ in d’na parola* (1973),⁵ a collection of poems written in his native dialect, and *La notte che ho dato uno schiaffo a Mussolini* (1976),⁶ a work which, like the *Non libro*, was written in a language inspired by contemporary experimental literary productions. Zavattini was an experimentalist in all his activities. He was an innovator in his first books, but particularly in the *Raccontini*, later collected in *Io sono il diavolo*, and in the column entitled *Cinquanta righe* part of the weekly satirical journal *Marc’Aurelio*, as well as in his later writings published in the column *Domande agli uomini*, which appeared weekly in the journal *Vie nuove*, between 1956 and 1957.⁷ This production, aimed at presenting a literary representation of Neorealism, included the daring *I telegrammi*, a series of short articles which appeared between 1978 and 1983 in the newspaper *Paese Sera*. Zavattini was also an opinion maker in Italy and abroad and an energetic enthusiast of cultural cooperation. In 1976, during the radio programme *Voi ed io. Punto e a capo*, directed and presented by himself, he pronounced the now famous swear-word (*Cazzo!*), the first in the history of Italian public broadcasting. It represented the acknowledgment of what were by then accepted changes in Italian custom, but was a real break with the past

⁴ Cesare Zavattini, *Non libro + disco*, Milan, Bompiani, 1970.

⁵ Cesare Zavattini, *Stricarm’ in d’na parola*, Milan, Scheiwiller, 1973. A book described by Pier Paolo Pasolini as “absolutely wonderful”.

⁶ Cesare Zavattini, *La notte che ho dato uno schiaffo a Mussolini*, Milan, Bompiani, 1976.

⁷ Cfr. Cesare Zavattini, *Domande agli uomini*, Florence, Le Lettere, 2007.

for the conservative RAI, the public Italian broadcasting company. At the age of eighty Zavattini directed a full-length film, *La veritàaaa*. The film, which should originally have featured the actor Roberto Benigni, was instead interpreted by Zavattini himself as the leading character. The script, written in 1962 and later revised, with a final version dated 1981, was preserved together with others in his personal archive. The first script of *La veritàaaa* represents a sizeable collection of annotations, drafts, amendments, notes, thoughts and preparatory materials. Once systematically scrutinised, this could provide the history behind the film, thought to be Zavattini's testamentary and personal legacy. Zavattini died in Rome on 13 October 1989, and was laid to rest in Luzzara, his native village in Emilia Romagna.

The Archive's topography

The Cesare Zavattini Archive can best be described as a paper and multimedia archive. It comprises a central core – its “heart” – composed of the historical and more traditional archival material of Zavattini's “sudate carte”, including various archival holdings, subdivided by subjects and additional special monothematic collections. Three of these monothematic holdings, the “Epistolario zavattiniano”, the “Raccolta dei lavori cinematografici”, and the “Echi della stampa”, include a copious corpus of documents, comprising cuttings and articles from various newspapers and journals. The holdings also include a photographic archive and a miscellany of cinema posters, play-bills and related items. The Archive preserves a notable collection of recordings and audio-visual material representing the multimedia side of Zavattini's great versatility. Associated with the Archive is a collection of paintings acquired by the Comune di Reggio Emilia, on display at the Musei Civici, illustrating the artistic path followed by Zavattini. There is also a specialist library containing the works of Zavattini in various editions and materials about the artist, in Italian and other languages.

Correspondence

The outstanding “Epistolario zavattiniano” is one of the special collections preserved at the Archive. It comprises over one hundred thousand documents catalogued electronically. Included in the “Epistolario” is correspondence exchanged between Zavattini and

various famous personalities: film directors, actors, producers, politicians, opinion makers, painters, writers, editors, etc. Among the names present are those of: Vittorio De Sica, Alessandro Blasetti, William Wyler, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Giorgio Strehler, Dario Fo, Renato Rascel, Totò, Arnaldo Mondadori, and other less prominent or even obscure individuals. The entire corpus of correspondence represents an important spiritual bequest and an interesting insight into Italian society and culture of the last century.

Cinematographic production

Another special collection covers Zavattini's cinematographic production.⁸ This is primarily made up of non-edited material and includes screenplays, scripts, drafts, bibliographical notes and other complementary documentation. Zavattini was renowned for his production of screenplays and for his efforts to prompt a resurgence in the Italian cinema industry. Zavattini was conscious of the market realities in which he had to operate but, for him, cinema remained a form of artistic expression and a tool to encourage civic renewal in society. Zavattini's own cinematographic work, collated in fascicules, amounted to over two hundred and twenty such items. Of these, only sixty-four were put into production. Zavattini's true output however was actually prolific. Taking into account films where Zavattini's contribution is documented, this figure rises to over one hundred and fifty. Additionally, to complete an exhaustive filmography, one should include that incredible "workshop of restoration of films"⁹ established by Zavattini in Rome. This collection is complemented by film reviews and other previously dispersed screenplays. Among the scripts which do not list Zavattini as one of their authors, despite his proven involvement, are various well known films such as: *Roman Holiday* (*Vacanze Romane*) by William Wyler (1953), *Farewell to Arms* (*Addio alle armi*) by Charles Vidor (1957), *L'oro di Roma* by Carlo Lizzani (1961), *Alta infedeltà* by various directors (1964), *Promise at dawn* (*Promessa all'alba*) by Jules Dassin (1971). To these several other films could be added, including various Cuban and Mexican examples.

⁸ Cesare Zavattini, *Basta coi soggetti!*, Milan, Bompiani, 1979.

⁹ Tullio Kezich, "Non dimentichiamo Zavattini, che trasformò la casa in un'officina di riparazione di copioni in panne", *Magazine del Corriere della Sera*, 8 December 2005.

It is less well known that Zavattini's involvement with cinematographic production began with *Orbis* and then with *Universalis*, two companies closely linked to the Vatican.¹⁰ The Archive preserves a few significant testimonies of this important association with the world of Catholic cinematographic production, which saw, for example, Zavattini working together with Diego Fabbri.

Zavattini's journalistic activities

The "Echi della stampa", preserved at the Panizzi Library, represents a collection of articles, chronologically ordered, written by Zavattini and about Zavattini. This material is specially significant as it relates to the less well-documented pre-second world war period.

The Painting collection

The so-called "Collezione Zavattini" comprises one hundred and twenty paintings acquired by the Museo Civico di Reggio Emilia,¹¹ embracing Zavattini's entire artistic production. Zavattini's paintings cannot be labelled in any artistic school or fashion, and he himself preferred to being spared any kind of restrictive classification. In this field, Zavattini revealed another aspect of his character, that of being a keen collector. Showing once again his originality, Zavattini put together an outstanding collection of art books (around 3500 in total), of great bibliographic and documentary value. He also collected with great perseverance and perhaps a grain of eccentricity, small format paintings produced by various artists. The "Collezione minima" numbers in excess of 1500 items, encompassing a full range of twentieth century Italian artists.

The photographic collection

The photographic collection comprises items originating from Zavattini's artistic production, portraits dedicated to Zavattini by various famous photographers (Avedon, Berengo Gardin, William

¹⁰ Cfr. Giorgio Boccolari, "Tracce di religiosità nell'attività artistica zavattiniana. Appunti per una prima ricognizione sul tema", in *L'Almanacco*, Reggio Emilia, nn. 48-49, June 2007, pp. 130-129.

¹¹ Cfr. Renato Barilli, *Una vita Za. Le opera e i giorni di Cesare Zavattini. Dipinti 1938-1988*, Parma, Guanda, 1995.

Klein, Duane Michals, Zanca, etc.), photographs of Luzzara, the lower Padania and the River Po, and photographs from the Zavattini family's private collection. Noteworthy was the collaboration between Zavattini and Paul Strand, the celebrated photographer and pioneer of artistic photography in the twentieth century. It was a successful partnership focussing on the transition from literary production to a cinematographic format. The outcome was the planned *Italia mia*, a series of volumes which should have been published by Einaudi. Disappointingly however only a single volume, entitled *Un paese*, was produced.¹²

The Cesare Zavattini Library

The Cesare Zavattini Library is a “documentation centre”, collecting works by and about Zavattini. In a broad sense it can be described as a “private library”, containing numerous works bearing interesting manuscript dedications. It preserves the entire corpus of Zavattini's work, in several editions, in Italian and other languages. Its holdings also include a collection of comics and PhD thesis on Zavattini and his work, as well as a collection of journals and periodicals – albeit in some cases incomplete – edited by Zavattini or regularly featuring Zavattini's contributions such as: *Cinema Nuovo*, *Tempo*, *Giornale delle meraviglie*, *Settebello*, *Novella* and *Milione*.

The Archive's website [<http://www.cesarezavattini.it>]

The Cesare Zavattini Archive's website provides access to the special collections electronic catalogues (Carteggi, Lavori cinematografici, Collezione dei dipinti). A comprehensive inventory is available in paper format and, at present, this remains the main catalogue. The Archive, in addition to representing the main repository of Zavattini's work and an essential source to researchers, has become an outstanding tool for the study of the artistic, cultural and social history of Italy during the course of the past century.

¹² Cesare Zavattini; Paul Strand, *Un paese*, Turin, Einaudi, 1955.

Fourth WESLINE Conference, Durham, 2-5 September 2009

William Pine-Coffin
University of Warwick Library

This excellent Conference was decidedly memorable, not only on account of its setting (Durham is a splendid location and is always worth a visit), but also because, firstly, the programme of visits to important libraries was uniquely fascinating, and, secondly, the papers given by academics and library staff from Durham were, without exception, extremely interesting. Everything ran very well, thanks to the impeccable organisation of Dorothea Mieke and Christopher Skelton-Foord and his colleagues.

It was a privilege to be shown the special collections of Durham University in the Palace Green Library, in particular the collections of Bishop John Cosin and Dr Martin Routh. Their contents are wide-ranging and are not confined to theology: we were surprised to learn that early editions of the works of Marsilio Ficino exist in both collections. We were also able to see some superb examples of early manuscripts in the Cathedral Library (in terms of age the library goes back as far as the time of the monastery founded by St. Aidan at Lindisfarne in the seventh century, which was later transferred to Durham); clear explanations of the manuscripts and their illuminations were given by Prof. Richard Gameson.

The other visits were to the main University Library, and to Ushaw College. Ushaw is a seminary for Roman Catholic priests, but also plays other wider roles in the church and academic communities. Its library holds a very splendid and important collection of (mainly) early rare books, some of which date from the period when the practice of the Catholic faith was prohibited in England, and clergy were sent from Douai in France.

The papers given on instructions to the illuminator of a medieval French manuscript (Prof. Jane Taylor), and on early modern commonplace books, based on annotations made in other books and then brought together systematically (Prof. Ann Moss) were both of

particular interest. Similarly, those on perceptions of Italy (Dr Stefano Cracolici), on theatre censorship in Franco's Spain (Dr Michael Thompson), on photography in the Weimar Republic (Dr Jonathan Long), and on the history of the Cathedral Library (Dr Sheila Hingley) were all very stimulating.

The Conference also included the annual meeting of WESLINE itself: most of this consisted of a discussion on forward planning, which, in the light of the preference for autonomy displayed by the Groups, the specialised interests which are their *raison d'être*, and the numbers and ages of the membership, is a subject with no immediate solution which will require further consideration.

Next WESLINE Conference is already being planned and will take place at the University of Manchester.

The ISLG mailing list is based at JISCmail; to join the list go to: **www.jiscmail.ac.uk** or contact Andrea Del Cornò at: andrea.delcorno@londonlibrary.co.uk

ISLG website is hosted by the British Library and can be found at: **www.bl.uk/collections/wider/italian/italstulib.html**
Please send any comments or suggestions concerning the website to Chris Michaelides at: chris.michaelides@bl.uk

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