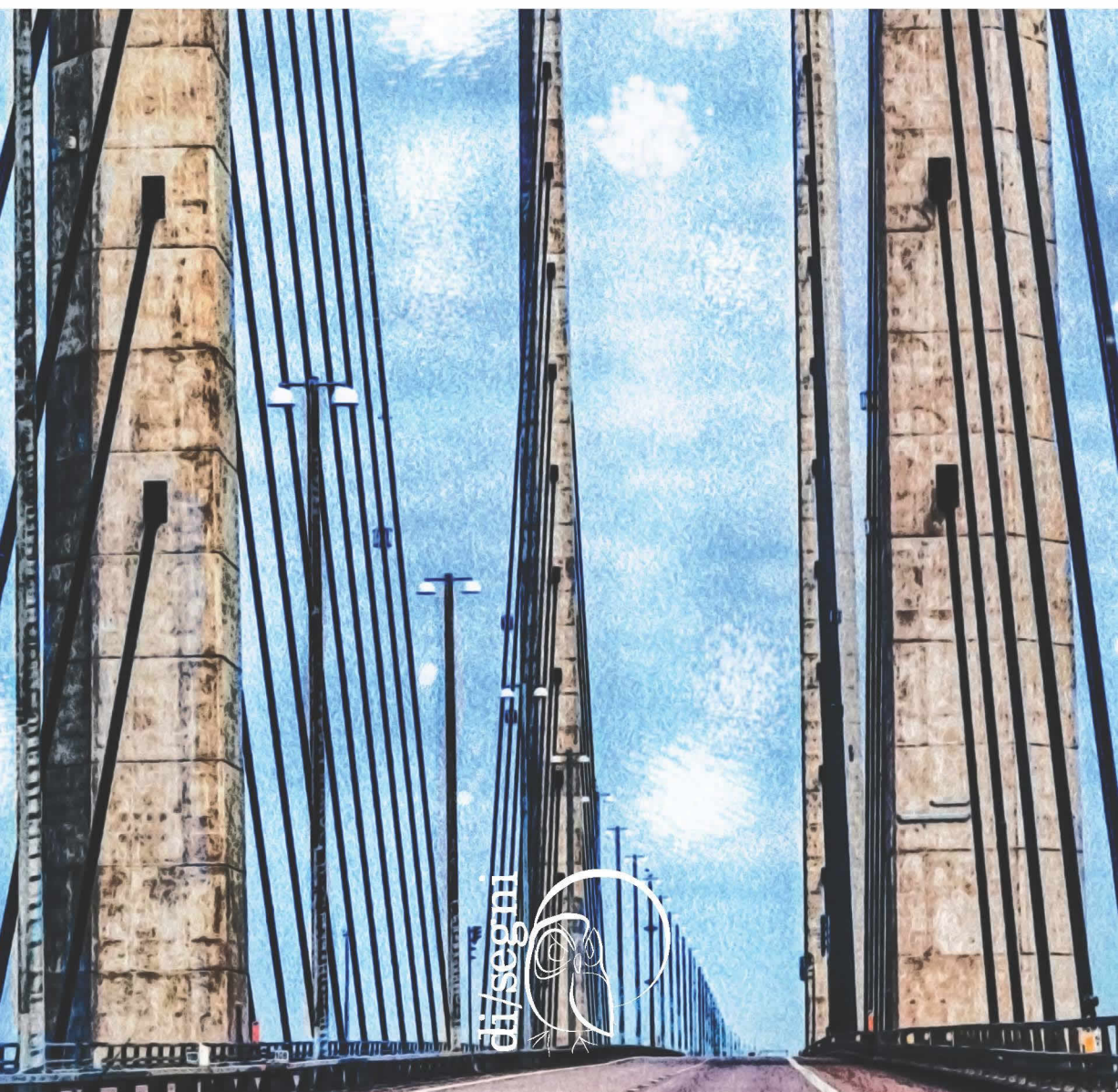


BRIDGES TO SCANDINAVIA

Edited by Andrea Meregalli and Camilla Storskog



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BRIDGES TO SCANDINAVIA

Edited by *Andrea Meregalli and Camilla Storskog*

di/egni

Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere

Facoltà di Studi Umanistici

Università degli Studi di Milano

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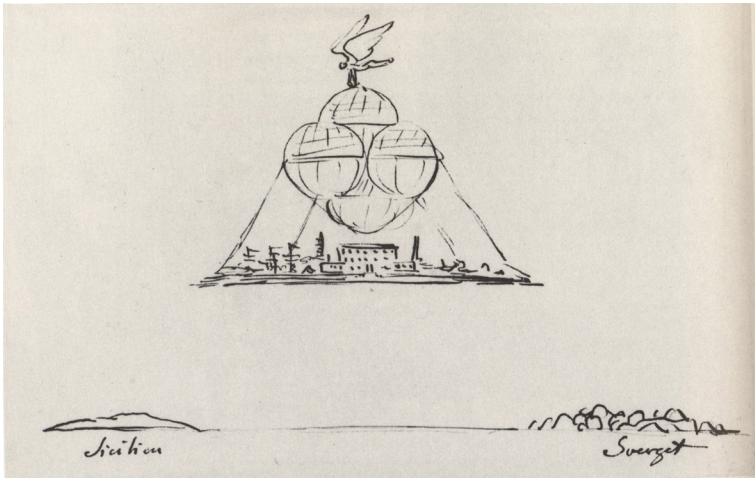
Contents

<i>Preface</i>	11
ANDREA MEREGALLI - CAMILLA STORSKOG	
<i>“der sagata mir ze wara”</i> : Iceland in the Merigarto	15
PAOLA SPAZZALI	
<i>Lübeck's Burgomaster Jürgen Wullenwever and Denmark</i>	27
ELENA DI VENOSA	
<i>Danesi e svedesi nelle Memorie di Jan Chryzostom Pasek e nel Diluvio di Henryk Sienkiewicz</i>	39
LUCA BERNARDINI	
<i>A Mock Old Norse Poem in Eighteenth-Century Milan: Francesco Saverio Quadrio's Versi in lingua runica</i>	53
ANDREA MEREGALLI	
<i>Scandinavian Scientific Learning in Eighteenth-Century British Writing: Linnaeus and the European Outlook on Nature</i>	71
ELISABETTA LONATI	
<i>Corinne in the North. Madame de Staël's Influence on Sophie von Knorring and August Strindberg</i>	93
ANDREA BERARDINI	
<i>L'Europa dei teatri e i barbari scandinavi</i>	105
FRANCO PERRELLI	
<i>Vildanden and Hanneles Himmelfahrt. Two Plays about Denied Childhood</i>	127
ELENA PUTIGNANO	

<i>The Temptation of a 'Nordic Consciousness'. On Rainer Maria Rilke's Approach to Scandinavian Literature and Society</i>	141
DAVIDE FINCO	
<i>L'Expédition historique finlandaise à Rome (1909-15) e la storiografia italiana novecentesca</i>	157
FEDERICO ZULIANI	
<i>La Scandinavia di Carmen de Burgos</i>	171
DANILO MANERA	
<i>Books of Innocence and Experience. Holden Caulfield's Scandinavian Brotherhood</i>	181
CAMILLA STORSKOG	
<i>Bridges between the Margins of Europe: Portugal in Tomas Tranströmer's Oeuvre</i>	197
MASSIMILIANO BAMPI	
<i>Iceland and Old Norse Poetry in Two Unpublished Texts by Tomas Tranströmer</i>	207
MARIA CRISTINA LOMBARDI	
<i>Nordic Topographies in Contemporary German Literature: Klaus Bödl's Studie in Kristallbildung and Südlich von Abisko</i>	217
MOIRA PALEARI	
<i>Nordic Crime Fiction in Italy. The Phenomenon Stieg Larsson and His Followers</i>	229
ALESSIA FERRARI	
<i>Mottagandet av Carlo Emilio Gadda i Skandinavien: en fråga om översättningssvårigheter? Med en översättning till svenska av ett utdrag ur Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana</i>	241
PAOLO MARELLI – SUSANN SILANDER	
ABSTRACTS	253
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	261
INDEX OF NAMES	267

PREFACE

Andrea Meregalli – Camilla Storskog
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO



C.A. Ehrensvärd, *Underdånigste Project att flytta Stockholm till Sicilien (A Most Humble Project to Move Stockholm to Sicily)*, pen and Indian ink
(Photograph ©Nationalmuseum, Stockholm).

Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745-1800) was a Swedish naval officer, architect, writer and painter – though he is perhaps best remembered as a sharp-witted lampoonist. Among the countless drawings he left behind is a roughly outlined sketch illustrating a project elaborated for the Swedish king Gustav

III pondering the possibility of transferring the city of Stockholm to Sicily, climatically (and culturally, in Ehrensward's view) better off, with the help of the Montgolfier brothers' recent invention. Although not much more than a doodle, the picture exudes Ehrensward's remarkable fascination with southern Italy, while raising a number of questions on the proportions that the attraction to distant cultures can take on. Used as a springboard for an introductory discourse to the present volume, this image may be read as an emblem of the cross-cultural relationships that provide the premises for the following essays.

Unsurprisingly, literary and cultural relations between the Nordic countries and Italy have traditionally been at the core of the range of research interests shared and cultivated by Italian scholars in the field of Scandinavian Studies. This was also the case with Margherita Giordano Lokrantz (1935-2004), who, in 1973, founded the section of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Milan, where she taught Swedish and Scandinavian literature for over thirty years. Margherita Giordano Lokrantz devoted some of her studies to those connections with Italy and the Italian culture which can be traced in works by various Scandinavian authors, such as Bridget of Sweden, Anne Charlotte Leffler, Henrik Ibsen, Knut Hamsun, Selma Lagerlöf, as well as to some more general forms of relations and mutual influence between these two geocultural areas.

This explains the theme chosen for the scientific project started in 2013 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Scandinavian Section of the University of Milan. On this occasion, the decision was made to enter the field by expanding its horizons in all directions through the collaboration of scholars of Scandinavian Studies from other Italian universities in addition to experts of other foreign cultures from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Milan. Thus, engaged in a variety of ways in the intercultural discussion at hand were aspects of all the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) dealing not only with the Italian context but also with a number of other European and non-European cultural and literary scenes, from Poland in the east to the United States in the west by way of Germany, France, Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal.

The first output of this project was the conference *Ponti con la Scandinavia / Bridges to Scandinavia*, held at the University of Milan on 13-15 November 2013, featuring twenty-seven speakers from the above-mentioned fields. For some of these scholars the conference marked the starting point for further investigation, the results of which are the essays collected in this volume.

The texts appear in approximate chronological order with regard to the subject of each study. The wide range of investigated themes includes: the perception of the Nordic countries, of their culture and people abroad, either through personal experience or indirect knowledge (Bernardini,

Manera, Paleari, Spazzali), and, conversely, the impressions of foreign countries and cultures encountered in works written by Scandinavian authors (Bampi, Lombardi); the influence of foreign literatures and models on Nordic authors (Berardini, Storskog), as well as the reception of Nordic works in other cultural systems through literary inspiration and rewrites, the theatre, or even the development of scientific discourse (Finco, Lonati, Meregalli, Perrelli, Putignano); the translation of literature from or into the Scandinavian languages (Ferrari, Marelli and Silander); diverse forms of historical contacts in specific moments and fields (Di Venosa, Zuliani).

The scientific project, the 2013 conference and the publication of this volume would not have been possible without the encouragement offered by a number of institutions and individuals. We wish to thank the following institutions for their patronage and financial support: the Embassies of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in Italy; the Danish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education; SIU Norway; the Swedish Institute; SWEA Milano. We are also grateful to the Rector of the University of Milan and to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures for their support, as well as to the scientific committee of the *Di/segni* series for accepting this volume and making this publication possible. Our thanks also to our students for their help and assistance during the conference; to Thomas Malvica for revising the essays written in English; to Flora Cusi for the original photograph on the book cover; to Nationalmuseum, Stockholm, for the reproduction of Ehrensward's drawing. Finally, our special thanks to the Lokrantz family, in particular to Annika Lokrantz Bernitz, who in the years 2004-13 established a legacy fund to provide travel grants for University of Milan students of Scandinavian languages and literatures, and to Henrik Bernitz, for honouring us with his presence during the 2013 conference.

None of this would have been possible if it had not been for Margherita Giordano Lokrantz. Our gratitude to her transcends the written word. This book is dedicated to her memory.

“DER SAGATA MIR ZE WARA”: ICELAND IN THE *MERIGARTO*

Paola Spazzali

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

The oldest description of Iceland in a vernacular language appears in the *Merigarto*, a fragment of a poetic work composed around 1080¹ in Old Bavarian.² This is also the first text to associate the name *Island* (Iceland) with an (up-to-date) description of Thule without mentioning this Latin toponym. In the same years Adam of Bremen also deals with Iceland in his *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, but he refers to the island by its Latin name.³

Unfortunately, the Bavarian description is incomplete. We have only two fragments of the *Merigarto* (the title of the work was given by Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben who discovered it in 1834), and these are preserved on a *bifolium* dating back to the first quarter of the twelfth century (Rädle 1987, 404). The beginning and the end are both missing,⁴ as is the

¹ The dating relies on the linguistic analysis and on the autobiographical references appearing in the text. The author mentions his flight from a diocese, which could not have happened later than 1077, if it was from Augsburg, or 1080, if it was from Constance (Voorwinden 1973, 122-23).

² The first mention of Thule in a German text is found in Notker: “Tánnân gât nórdert humana habitatio únz ze Tile insula [...]. Tie dâr sizzent, tie sízzent únder demo septentrionali polo. Dáz skínet tánnân, uuánda sô súmeliche cosmografi scribent, târ íst átaháfto tág per sex menses, fône vernali aequinoctio únz ze autumnali, únde átaháfto náht per alios sex menses, fône autumnali aequinoctio únz ze vernali” (II, 45; Notker Teutonicus 1986, 97); “From there human habitation goes as far north as the island of Thule. [...] Those who live there live below the North Pole. This is shown by the fact that, as some cosmographers write, there is continuous day for six months, from the vernal to the autumnal equinox, and continuous night for the other six months, from the autumnal to the vernal equinox.” Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

³ “Haec itaque Thyle nunc Island appellatur, a glacie, quae oceanum astringit” (IV, 36; Adamus Bremensis 1917, 272); “This Thule is now called Iceland, from the ice which binds the ocean” (Adam of Bremen 2002, 217).

⁴ It is evident that the *Merigarto* lacks the beginning, since the first fragment starts in the

section between the two fragments. Since the surviving *bifolium* is the external sheet of the quire,⁵ we have lost a portion of text corresponding to at least one internal *bifolium* (more likely three), the part where the description of Iceland continued.

From the extant lines we can establish that Iceland is mentioned in the *Merigarto* because of its *mirabilia*, which evoke the fascination of a Thule that is no longer mythical or inaccessible, but still distant. The *bifolium*, in fact, collects *mirabilia* related to the waters created by God: it describes seas, rivers and springs having extraordinary characteristics or properties, almost always favourable to mankind. The reference to God's action appears in the first preserved lines, quoting Psalm 104 and evoking the separation between water and land that God performed at the beginning of Creation. The author goes on to state that God did not leave the earth deprived of water and that he gave it springs, lakes and rivers. He then exemplifies this assertion by describing the seas. On the first folio he mentions the Red Sea and – in the north – the *mare concretum*, followed by the description of Iceland. On the second folio we first find the narration of an episode concerning a river in Tuscany 'reconciling' two lords,⁶ followed by a list of various rivers and springs with their prodigious properties. This last part follows most closely the author's literary sources, the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville or the very similar *De universo* by Rabanus Maurus.

The *Merigarto* – i.e., the two fragments that we refer to by this name – eludes definitions. It cannot be considered a geographic text because it does not describe regions and their boundaries nor does it list toponyms. On the other hand, although it dwells upon *wunter* (meant here as marvel, not as miracle),⁷ it is far from interpreting nature in a symbolic or paraenetic way, as is the case with other texts from the Early Middle High German period, for instance the *Physiologus*. The opening lines mention God, but the specific marvels are not expressly attributed to him. Nonetheless, when we compare the *Merigarto* with its sources, it is clear that the author has selected the kind of *mirabilia* that are most beneficial and has described them predominantly in relation to man, showing either the economic or social advantages

middle of a sentence ("... demo mere duo gab", l. 1). Both form and content indicate that the text continued on a new quire: the last word of the second folio ("chusit") is a catchword and the author would hardly have ended the poem without mentioning God or at least adding "Amen" as in most Early Middle High German texts.

⁵ Both the ruling and the presence of a catchword indicate that what we have is the outer sheet of the quire. Thirty holes left by the pricking can be clearly seen on the outer margins of fols. 1^r and 2^r. The *bifolium* was ruled in hardpoint from 1^r to 1^v and from 2^r to 2^v; each of the thirty lines is covered by script (Spazzali 1993, 7-9).

⁶ For the episode in Tuscany no written source has been found so far (Princi Braccini 2005, 296).

⁷ The word is used by the author himself: "daz ist ouh ein wunter, daz scribe wir hier unter" (l. 66; Spazzali 1995, 74); "this, too, is a marvel, we write it here below". The German language does not distinguish between 'miracle' and 'marvel'.

deriving from them or their therapeutic effects.⁸ The medieval audience, whose vision of the world was centred on God's signs, would have found in the *Merigarto* a confirmation of the substantial goodness of His Creation.

Indeed, the marvellous aspects are as revealing as the realistic ones, which were part of the audience's experience, and the author intertwines these two aspects especially in the first fragment. The more realistic aspect appears in the section where the poet introduces the waters, as he stresses the prosperity derived from seafaring, thanks to the creation of springs and rivers – an observation that was not suggested by the sources. According to him, rivers and seas "dei skef truogin" ("that carried ships") bring a "maningin nuz" ("great advantage")⁹ that would hardly exist otherwise, and a few lines later he states that people travelling for "werva" (trading) from Arabia to Egypt have to cross the Red Sea.¹⁰ Similarly, Iceland is visited for trade, as we will see.

The lines dedicated to Iceland are preceded by those dealing with the "giliberot" ("coagulated") sea, which disturbs the comforting picture of a benevolent nature. That sea, vaguely situated in the ocean "westerot" ("out west"), appears without geographical contiguity after the description of the Red Sea and before the section dealing with Iceland.¹¹ These lines evoke a menacing piece of Creation: in the poet's words, death will be ineluctable for the seafarers driven out into those waters by a powerful wind if God himself does not rescue them:

De Lebirmere¹²

Ein mere ist giliberot, daz ist in demo wentilmere westerot.
so der starche wint giwirffit dei skef in den sint,
nimagin die biderbin vergin sih des nicht irwergin,
si nimuozzin fole varan in des meris parm.
ah, ah, denne! so (ni)chomint si danne,
si niwelle got losan, so muozzin si da fulon.

(ll. 22-27; Spazzali 1995, 52)¹³

⁸ For a comparison between the *Merigarto* and its sources, see Voorwinden 1973, 77-104; Spazzali 1995, 101-57.

⁹ "wazzer gnuogiu, dei skef truogin, / dei diu lant durhrunnen, maningin nuz prungin, / der da chum ware, ub iz an demo skeffe dar nichome" (ll. 6-8; Spazzali 1995, 44); "enough waters, that carried ships, / that flowed across the countries [and] brought great advantage / that would have hardly existed, if it had not arrived there by ship."

¹⁰ "Der fone Arabia verit in Egiptilant in sinem werva [...]" (l. 18; Spazzali 1995, 50); "One who travels from Arabia to Egypt for his trading [...]". On that route Christians were not allowed to travel, though, nor is there any evidence of trading between western Europe and the East at that time (Spazzali 1995, 110).

¹¹ The order in which the two seas appear is not derived from the poet's sources: Isidore and Rabanus Maurus mention them in different books (Voorwinden 1973, 87).

¹² The title *De Lebirmere* was added by the rubricator. The toponym appears also in Adam of Bremen ("lingua nostra Liberse vocatur"; "in our language it is called Liberse") at the scholium 150 (IV, 36; Adamus Bremensis 1917, 270).

¹³ "There is a coagulated sea out west in the Ocean. / When the strong wind throws the

This disquieting, radically hostile marvel is all the more menacing as we do not know what causes the shipwreck. The author is mingling two traditions: the adjective *giliberot* reminds us of the *mare concretum* of the Graeco-Roman tradition,¹⁴ first described by Pytheas and mentioned in Isidore's *Etymologiae*, which in medieval times was believed to be a frozen sea or a sea thickened by salt (so for instance in the scholium 150 of Adam's *Gesta*),¹⁵ whereas the strong wind and the sinking of the ship have many points of contact with the fatal vortex that Adam of Bremen places beyond Iceland, a kind of *maelstrom* previously described by Paul the Deacon (I, 6; Paolo Diacono 1992, 18-23).

The connection between the “giliberot” sea and the next passage about Iceland was clear to those who knew the literature about Thule. Tradition located the *mare concretum* either beyond the island, at a day's journey, or around it (as in Isidore and Rabanus Maurus; cf. Mund-Dopchie 2009, 39-41). However, in the *Merigarto* the connection is not made explicit, for the *Lebersee* does not belong to the description of Iceland's surroundings: the “coagulated” sea and Iceland follow each other simply as *mirabilia* of the North and this might be a first sign of information being updated.

The author does not describe the surroundings of Iceland, nor does he even locate it, although geographical explorations had provided precise data by that time. Apparently he was interested in Iceland's characteristics, not in how to reach it.

What we have instead is an autobiographical preamble to guarantee the reliability of the information. The author states that he took refuge in Utrecht in order to flee from a conflict between two bishops, and there he met a priest, Reginpreht, a righteous and venerable man who – like other people – had told him “ze wara” (l. 35; “in truth”) that some time before he had been to Iceland and had made a fortune there:

De Reginperto episcopo
 Ih was z'Uztrehte in urluiegefluhte,
 want wir zwene piskoffe hetan, die uns menigi lere tatan.
 duo nemaht ih heime wese, duo skuof in ellente min wese.
 Duo ih z'Uztriehte chwam, da vand ih einin vili guoten man,
 den vili guoten Reginpreht. er uopte gerno allaz reht.

ships in that direction, / the skilful seafarers cannot prevent / their ending in the womb of the sea. / Alas, then! They do not get away. / If God does not want to free them, they will have to foul there.”

¹⁴ For the Graeco-Roman and Latin descriptions of the *mare concretum* see Mund-Dopchie 2009, *passim*.

¹⁵ “De oceano Britannico [...] magna recitantur a nautis miracula, quod circa Orchadas mare sit concretum et ita spissum a sale, ut vix moveri possint naves, nisi tempestatis auxilio” (IV, 36; Adamus Bremensis 1917, 270); “Sailors relate marvels about the British Ocean [...]: that in the vicinity of the Orkneys the sea is congealed and so thickened with salt that ships can hardly move except with the help of strong winds” (Adam of Bremen 2002, 215).

er was ein wisman, so er gote gizam,
 ein erhaft phaffo in aller slahte guote.
 der sagata mir ze wara, sam andere gnuogi dara,
 er ware wile givarn in Islant, da'r michiln rihtuom vant,
 mit melwe jough mit wine, mit holze erline.
 daz chouf[in]t si zi fiure, da ist wito tiure.
 da ist alles des fili, des zi rata triffit unt zi spili,
 niwana daz da niskinit sunna, si darbint dero wanna.
 fon diu wirt daz is da zi christallan so herta,
 so man daz fiur dar ubera machot, unzi diu christalla irgluot.
 damite machint si iro ezzan unte heizzint iro gadam.
 da git man ein erlin skit umbe einin phenning.
 damite ... (ll. 28-45; Spazzali 1995, 54-56)¹⁶

Scholars have long been investigating those historical references, trying to localise the *Merigarto* and to identify Reginpreht, without coming to conclusive results.¹⁷ There is, however, sufficient evidence that the circumstances of his stay in Utrecht are plausible and that it was possible to meet people there who were trading with Iceland (Voorwinden 1973, 113).

We read that his fortune comes from selling meal, wine and fire wood. The author then describes life in Iceland: there is an abundance of supplies and diversions, but the sun does not shine and the inhabitants are deprived of such joy. The absence of the sun makes the ice turn into crystal which, by glowing, helps to prepare food and to warm up the houses. The last piece of information is commercial: a log of alder wood is sold for one *phenning*. The fragment ends with the first word of a new sentence.

The first question that arises when reading these data – to which scholars have been trying to give an answer as recently as Dallapiazza (2006-07) – is about their reliability and their originality. What has not been derived from ancient authors and to what extent did the situation correspond to that of Iceland in the eleventh century?

¹⁶ "I was in Utrecht fleeing from a conflict / because we had two bishops who gave us various doctrines. / I could not stay at home, I established my dwelling in a foreign land. / When I arrived in Utrecht, I found a very upright man there, / the most worthy Reginpreht. He willingly fulfilled all that is right. / He was a wise man, [and] thus pleasing to God, / a venerable priest, upright in all respects. / He told me in truth, like many others there, / that he had once been to Iceland, where he had found great fortune / with flour and wine, too, with alder wood, / which they buy to make fire. Firewood is expensive there. / There is an abundance of supplies and diversions / but the sun does not shine there: they lack this joy. / Therefore the ice gets so hard that it turns into crystal / so that one lights the fire on it, until the crystal glows. / Thus they prepare their food and heat their houses. / There you sell a log of alder wood for one *phenning*. / Thus ..."

¹⁷ The diocese from which the poet fled might have been Augsburg or Constance (Voorwinden 1973, 120-23). It is more difficult to identify Reginpreht; according to Voorwinden (1973, 114-20) he might have been abbot Reginbert of Echternach, who probably went to Utrecht repeatedly.

Ancient texts are meagre. Except for Solinus, whom our author does not seem to know, Graeco-Roman sources are only concerned with the sun's presence or absence (perpetual days and nights during the solstice or the alternation of a day and a night lasting six months). In fact, the reference to the sun is the only element from which we can infer that the poet identified Iceland with Thule; this coincidence is not obvious since there were maps and authors presenting Iceland as distinct from Thule (Mund-Dopchie 2009, 93).

On this point, what the *Merigarto* says is problematic: an eyewitness cannot have said that there was no sun in Iceland. Therefore, the author has either uncritically copied only part of the information handed down by the *auctoritates*, leaving out the six-month-long day (or attributing to Iceland the absence of the sun that Isidore sets beyond Thule).¹⁸ Or perhaps we should not take the statement literally: the sun is not absent – it simply does not 'shine'.

The other data seem to derive mainly from oral sources and are plausible. Iceland did actually import flour and wine and, after felling large swaths of birchwoods in the first decades of the settlement period (Mehler 2011a, 255), timber had to be imported from overseas.¹⁹ Since alder was widespread around Utrecht, it might have been sold in Iceland (Voorwinden 1973, 113).

Besides these precise data, we also find the generic statement that on the island there was an abundance of supplies and diversions. Such prosperity is confirmed by archaeological research – Iceland did not lack meat, dairy products, bird eggs and fish, thus assuring a sufficient and balanced nutrition (Mehler 2011b, 173-76) – and saga literature testifies that there were various forms of entertainment (Spazzali 1995, 126-27). Adam, too, mentions forms of amusement (connected to "springs")²⁰ but he emphasises the frugal, idealised way of life of an uncorrupted people,²¹ in order to high-

¹⁸ "Thyle ultima insula Oceani inter septentrionalem et occidentalem plagam ultra Britanniam, a sole nomen habens, quia in ea aestivum solstitium sol facit, et nullus ultra eam dies est" (XIV, 6, 4-5; Isidorus Hispalensis 1911, 566); "Ultima Thule (*Thyle ultima*) is an island of the Ocean in the northwestern region, beyond Britannia, taking its name from the sun, because there the sun makes its summer solstice, and there is no daylight beyond (*ultra*) this" (Isidore of Seville 2008, 294).

¹⁹ According to recent research, however, Iceland imported timber from Norway (Mehler 2012, 75).

²⁰ "Nam [...] habent [...] fontes pro deliciis" (IV, 36; Adamus Bremensis 1917, 272); "For [...] they have [...] springs as their delights" (Adam of Bremen 2002, 217).

²¹ "Est autem insula permaxima, ita ut populos infra se multos contineat, qui solo pecorum fetu vivunt eorumque vellere teguntur; nullae ibi fruges, minima lignorum copia. Propterea in subterraneis habitant speluncis, communi tecto [et victu] et strato gaudentes cum pecoribus suis. Itaque in simplicitate sancta vitam peragentes, cum nihil amplius quaerant quam natura concedit, laeti possunt dicere cum apostolo, 'habentes victum et vestitum, his contenti simus'" (IV, 36; Adamus Bremensis 1917, 272); "This island, however, is so very large that it has on it many people, who make a living only by raising cattle and who clothe themselves with their pelts. No crops are grown there; the supply of wood is very meager. On this account the people dwell in underground caves, glad to have roof and food and bed in common with their cattle.

light the diocese of Bremen, to which the Icelandic clergy was subordinated (Dallapiazza 2006-07, 26).

There have been various attempts to explain the reference to glowing crystals used for cooking and heating. In the mid-twentieth century it was suggested that it might have been quartz or lignite (Jones 1936; Foote 1956, 414); from excavations and sagas we understand that homes were heated by burning driftwood, peat, dung and seaweed and that the hearth was used both for heating and cooking, as the *Merigarto* reports. More recently, however, Dallapiazza (2006-07, 23) has pointed out a contradiction (why would they use crystal to warm up their houses if they already bought wood “zi fiure”?) and he assumes that the author may have taken the information about crystal originating from ice from written sources and may have wanted to complete it in a utilitarian way (2006-07, 29-30). Adam of Bremen also mentions the glowing ice, but he does not talk of its use.²² It seems likely to me that encyclopaedic knowledge has been added to an imperfect oral transmission.²³

On the whole, the picture outlined by the author in the extant lines seems more oriented towards natural conditions²⁴ than towards the island’s inhabitants, unlike Adam’s *Historia*, with which it shares some elements. This depends on the significance that Iceland has in the *Merigarto*, in accordance to which the author has chosen and presented his information about it.

The author is critical in his role as mediator between the information available to him and the public: studies aimed at verifying the reliability of the description should focus on him and on his intention, while keeping in mind that the medieval concept of reliability differs from the modern one. Otherwise, we risk twisting our interpretation and we may be led to read, for example, the ambiguous statement that “the sun does not shine” as compatible with reality only because the other data concerning Iceland are trustworthy.

Here, as in other medieval works, natural elements and *mirabilia* coexist, more with the intention of creating sense than giving information (Boureau 1993, 34). In the eyes of both the author and the medieval audience, when constructing sense, the data regarded as truthful have the same dignity as

Passing their lives in holy simplicity, because they can joyfully say with the Apostle: ‘But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content’” (Adam of Bremen 2002, 217).

²² “De qua etiam hoc memorabile ferunt, quod eadem glacies ita nigra et arida videatur propter antiquitatem, ut incensa ardeat” (IV, 36; Adamus Bremensis 1917, 272) ; “About this island they also report this remarkable fact, that the ice on account of its age is so black and dry in appearance that it burns when fire is set to it” (Adam of Bremen 2002, 217).

²³ The author might have heard for instance of stones being taken out of the fireplace and used to heat water or milk in wooden tubs. “This was probably the most widely used boiling technique” (Mehler 2011b, 182). In this case, too, a material, although different from ice, both helped to keep warm and – when brought to a high temperature – to prepare food.

²⁴ Unexpectedly, we do not read of volcanoes or geysers, but they might have been mentioned in the part of text that has gone missing.

the plausible data, and an oral source may have the same value as a written source.

These categories will have to be taken into account if we wish to distinguish the data on the basis of reliability or originality, an operation that is important for historical purposes²⁵ or in order to understand how the author structured a passage. In the *Merigarto*, however, the problem of reliability is not only a concern for scholars. Interestingly, it is the author who raises it by not confining himself to giving an account of what he has heard: he also states that what he reports was told to him “in truth” (“ze wara”). The poet evidently wishes his description to be believed: the whole prologue that culminates in “ze wara” is intended to help to negotiate a “contrat de croyance” (Boureau 1993, 35)²⁶ with his audience, which is necessary for his ultimate goal.

How does the poet of the *Merigarto* confer authority to the text? We know that the reliability of the statements depended on the authoritativeness of the sources and their authors, the *auctoritates*, to varying degrees (Boureau 1993, 35-36): at the top was the truth revealed by the Sacred Scriptures, then – in a decreasing order – the authorised texts (i.e., those told by the Fathers of the Church) and the authenticated texts in which the narrator establishes the truth as a direct or indirect witness of the event he relates. Underneath lie facts reported without any guarantee, but which are true in their substance, and finally those passed on only in oral and unstable form.

The passage describing Iceland is authenticated by the author not as a direct witness, in the form of the *audivi*, which has the same value because the eyewitness (i.e., Reginpreht), whom the poet himself has listened to, is a priest deemed venerable for his virtues.²⁷ It is the same method adopted by Gregory the Great in the *Dialogues* and later by Bede, for example, but subsequently ignored, only to reappear in the collections of Latin *exempla* of the twelfth century (Zink 1985, 100). Additionally, the same qualities *erhaft* ‘venerable’ and *guot* ‘upright, good, worthy’ used by Gregory the Great, who attributed his accounts to “bonis ac fidelibus uiris” and to the words of “uirorum uenerabilium” (Gregorio Magno 2005, I, 10), appear in the description of the direct witness Reginpreht. The cleric’s trustworthiness is ensured by his status and qualities: he is a just and “wise” man, “pleasing to God” (“er uopte gerno allaz reht. / er was ein wisman, so er gote gizam”, ll. 32-33).

Authority is thus built up in a way that foresees a later usage. Equally unexpected are some other features that will characterise the vernacular *exempla* of the thirteenth century (Zink 1985, 100-01): the events narrated

²⁵ Gautier Dalché (2001, 131-43) has pointed out that scholars should approach medieval geographic texts by going beyond the criterion of originality and that they should consider the intellectual needs of their authors as well as those of their audience.

²⁶ “Contract of belief.”

²⁷ The *audivi*-model of text transmission appears in historical texts (Mula 2001, 163-64).

are said to have occurred recently; they appear to be historical and verifiable (the flight from a diocese, the cleric's name) and they are set in a well-known place (Utrecht).

Besides the contemporary, fully reliable eyewitness, a further and more relevant element of innovation is introduced once again to reinforce authentication. This is the most original aspect of the *Merigarto*: the author emerges in the three autobiographical lines to explain the circumstances that made him meet his oral source. The poet no longer confines himself merely to selecting the sources and making room for orality: he appears on the scene, he represents himself. The narrator becomes the object of the narration. It is not simply the passage from the indistinct *wir* of the first page ("Nu sage wir z'erist fon [demo mere, so iz i]st", l. 14; Spazzali 1995, 48)²⁸ to an *ih* that we can also find in the second fragment's formulaic line, "Daz ih ouh horte sagan, daz niwill ih nieht firdagan" (l. 46; Spazzali 1995, 58),²⁹ as significant as it may be.

The *ih* emerges from complete darkness by recounting his adversities in order to confer authority to a qualified source. Those three lines make clear that a new, self-conscious idea of authorship is beginning to show: the author is no longer disappearing behind the *auctoritas*, but on the contrary he authorises, he establishes the authority of others.

Here, the author becomes a homodiegetic narrator to guarantee the authenticity of the *mirabilia* – those of contemporary Iceland, not those of ancient Thule. Whether his data may be truthful or plausible, or whether they may go back to ancient traditions, they bring the audience closer to an island previously known to the author as a mythical and abstract boundary of the oecumene and they make it known as a place which – with its unusual and surprising aspects – is inhabited and is in prosperous conditions, a concrete and contemporary example of a Creation favourable to mankind.

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²⁸ "Now we first tell about [the sea, how it is]."

²⁹ "This too I heard, I will not conceal it."

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LÜBECK'S BURGOMASTER JÜRGEN WULLENWEVER AND DENMARK

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Jürgen Wullenwever¹ (Hamburg, before 1488 – Wolfenbüttel, 1537) was a famous burgomaster of Lübeck, whose place in history has not yet been clarified. He was in charge of the city for only two years (1533-35), but in the context of deep political, economic and religious changes in Europe, he contributed to a whole series of events, which affected the community of Lübeck both positively and negatively. Even the most recent evaluation of the facts (Postel 2010) has not led to a definitive assessment of Wullenwever's political activities. An analysis based on the documentation of the time could help us to understand these years.

1. Thanks to the historian Georg Waitz,² who edited a large number of archival documents written at that time concerning Wullenwever (Waitz 1855-56),³ we know many details of the burgomaster's life and conduct: he hailed from Hamburg, probably belonged to a family of merchants, and settled in Lübeck in 1524 as a result of his marriage.

At that time, the Reformation was spreading in central and northern Europe. Lübeck was a free imperial city; because of its direct subjection to

¹ Good summaries of Wullenwever's biography are Schäfer 1898 and Postel 2011. The spelling *Wullenwever* is in Low German. Sometimes it appears wrongly in modern sources as *Wullenweber*, but the correct High German form should be *Wollenweber* (Waitz 1855-56, I, 286).

² About Georg Waitz see Srbik 1950-51, I, 297-99.

³ Waitz expounds on and edits commercial treaties, city covenants, imperial notes, council ratifications, public and private missives, trial transcripts, coeval chronicles, and even a couple of political songs. The majority of the documents are written in Middle Low German, a few in Middle English. Latin texts are mostly summarised by Waitz. Quotations from his work will be indicated with the author's surname followed by the number of the volume and the page.

the Emperor, the City Council was reluctant to approve the new doctrine. Wullenwever is mentioned starting from 1530, when he began taking an active part in the citizens' uprisings in favour of Lutheranism and of greater popular participation in the Council's activities. He stood out among the protesters and soon became a member of and spokesman for the *64-Ausschuss*, a board of 64 citizens chosen among artisans and merchants, on occasion augmented by a further hundred citizens, who took part in the Council's resolutions. This democratic development and the fact that Wullenwever obtained recognition of the Reformation by the Council aroused the opposition of two of the four burgomasters who ruled in those years, Nikolaus Brömse and Hermann Plönnies: they abandoned Lübeck and took refuge at the Emperor's court.

The confessional question was only one of the problems of the age. After the Fall of Constantinople (1453) the Empire had to protect the southeastern border from the Ottoman threat. Depending on the political situation and the gravity of the menace, the Emperor imposed new taxes (*Türkensteuer*) at different times. In 1529 a new request for this tax was issued, and the Lübeck City Council was to enforce it. However, the citizens objected to it because they were not any richer than in previous decades. In fact Lübeck had once been the most important city of the Hanseatic League (Jahnke 2013, 54), benefiting from trade privileges on land, in alliance with Hamburg, and at sea, in the Sound. Indeed, as Lübeck enjoyed the staple right, it gained from opportunities to buy goods at favourable prices as well as from high taxation. To avoid such duties, since the previous century other cities and countries had been developing alternate routes towards new trading centres in Poland, in particular Danzig, and in the Low Countries (Gelderblom 2013, 34-35). Holland, too, tried to reach the eastern Baltic lands by bypassing Lübeck's staple port and by seeking other ports with lower freight costs, thus making their goods more competitive: Lübeck's flourishing time had long since come to an end.

The aggressive commercial policy of the Dutch resulted in frequent naval warfare.⁴ But all the Hanseatic cities now tended to defend their own interests instead of those of the league. Among them, Lübeck was the one most concerned with keeping Dutch ships out of the Sound in order to safeguard and re-establish its dominance. Wullenwever made this problem the focus of his policy, securing himself a large popular consensus, so that in 1533 he was appointed as one of the four burgomasters.

2. As soon as Wullenwever entered the field, he became very active in foreign negotiations. He considered Denmark the best partner to hinder Dutch ships, though Denmark was actually helping the Dutch to safely navigate around the Jutland peninsula, a route which brought Denmark new revenue from excise taxes. It was therefore difficult to loosen the close link between

⁴ For a good summary of the events of the time see Sicking 2004, 223-25.

Denmark and Holland. The two countries were bound by Christian II, the former king of Denmark and Norway, who had been deposed by his uncle Frederick I because of his despotic rule. He was thus exiled to Holland, a territory belonging to Christian's brother-in-law, the Emperor Charles V. In the autumn of 1531 Christian tried to regain the crown by sailing to Norway. There was a danger that the Emperor would send his fleet to support his brother-in-law, so Frederick asked for Lübeck's help and promised, in return, an alliance against the Dutch merchant ships. But when, in the summer of 1532, Christian was defeated and captured, Frederick did not need Wullenwever's help any longer and restored his commercial relationship with Holland. Lübeck reacted by sending privateers to make incursions in the Sound against the Dutch. These sea raids were financed by the treasures confiscated from Catholic churches and monasteries.

Frederick I ruled until his death on 10 April 1533. The vacant throne began the so-called Count's Feud (1534-36) among those noblemen who refused to accept Duke Christian of Gottorp, Frederick's son, as the new king (later called Christian III). In this dynastic conflict some aimed to secure the throne for themselves, while others took part in the feud as supporters of other aspirants. The feud takes its name from Count Christopher of Oldenburg, who started the dispute. With the aid of troops from Copenhagen and Malmö, he tried to help Christian II regain his crown. Christian II, although seen as a despotic king by many, had followed policies favouring the middle class and the peasants (Derry 1996, 82), with the result that he was well regarded by those who aimed to obtain greater democracy in Scandinavia. Wullenwever, who had been elected burgomaster one month before Frederick's death (8 March), thought he could take advantage of the feud in the hope of restoring Lübeck's commercial supremacy. He offered troops and ships to different parties, first to Count Christopher, who supported the 'democratic' Christian II, even though the exiled king was a Catholic and was the same man he had fought against a few months earlier together with Frederick. Wullenwever proposed a similar alliance to Duke Albrecht VII of Mecklenburg, whose family claimed a hereditary right to the throne of Norway and Sweden, and to the Elector of Saxony John Frederick I, the head of the Schmalkaldic League of Protestant cities.

Wullenwever felt sure of Lübeck's military superiority thanks to captain Marcus (Marx) Meyer, a cunning warlord, who was leading the sea raids against the Dutch. Meyer had also ravaged Holstein, both trying to capture Christian II and to rob the Catholic aristocracy, who were Lübeck's major enemy since the city had embraced Lutheranism and had expropriated all the Church's wealth. Meyer was arrested for piracy in England, but he gained the favour of King Henry VIII, who made him a knight. Meyer convinced him to enter a coalition with Lübeck against the Catholic Emperor Charles V, and as a reward for this he let Henry dream of the crown of Denmark.

But the most important figure in the feud was Frederick's son, the future Christian III, supported by Gustav Vasa of Sweden. Christian was the only party involved in the feud who did not make a pact with Wullenwever. His troops were able to defeat all adversaries. He had already been chosen as king in July 1534, but the Count's Feud only ended after the conclusion of all hostilities, in July 1535, and the peace treaty was signed on 14 February 1536.

3. The historical documents relating these years – during Wullenwever's political commitment to the *64-Ausschuss* and afterwards as burgomaster – include many letters of messengers and assembly reports which testify to Wullenwever's constant attempts to obtain financial or military help from the other Hanseatic cities; with little result, however, as Lübeck's foreign policy was considered reckless by most of them.⁵ Wullenwever's obsession with his Dutch commercial rivals had caused considerable dissatisfaction among his citizens: the naval wars had blocked all commerce by sea, and the city was increasingly impoverished for lack of income and goods. While Wullenwever's aggressive policy against Holland had at first been welcomed by the population, though at a heavy cost, it caused too many deprivations in the long term; and a siege of the city by Christian III during the feud, in the autumn of 1534, was the last straw. It resulted in a request for the restoration of the former City Council and the return of the two burgomasters who had fled.

The Emperor issued an ultimatum and, on 26 August 1535, Wullenwever resigned. He was offered a role as a clerk, but he refused and went on fighting with the help of mercenaries. Wullenwever was now considered a public danger. On 15 November 1535, the Archbishop of Bremen Christoph of Brunswick-Lüneburg and the burgomaster Nikolaus Brömse had him arrested on a charge of crimes against God, the Empire and the Church. In addition, Denmark accused him of theft and treachery. Wullenwever was tortured until he admitted that he had taken part in an Anabaptist conspiracy against the Lübeck council (Waitz III, 492, 517).⁶ On 24 September 1537 he was beheaded and dismembered in Wolfenbüttel at the seat of the court of justice of the Principality of Brunswick.

4. Lübeck has never forgotten its courageous and unscrupulous burgomaster. His character is glorified in different poems, plays and novels⁷

⁵ About the Count's Feud and monetary support from Stralsund and other Pomeranian cities, see Heyden 1966.

⁶ Anabaptists were a politicised heretical group, whose massacre in Münster on 24 June 1535 stirred indignation and fear (Scott 2013, 195; Iserloh [1980] 1982, 90-91).

⁷ Searching in library catalogues, the works found are: a historical poem by Hermann Neumann, *Jürgen Wullenwever, der kühne Demagoge* (*Jürgen Wullenwever, the Brave Demagogue*; Leipzig 1846), described hereafter (Neumann 1846); Ludwig Köhler's *Jürgen Wullenwever. Historischer Roman in sieben Büchern* (*Jürgen Wullenwever. Historical Novel in Seven Books*; 3 volumes, Leipzig 1856); a drama by Heinrich Kruse, *Wullenwever. Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*

starting from the age of *Vormärz* (Postel 2010, 26), when he was seen as a democrat who fought for enfranchisement and freedom from the power of the aristocracy. This is the subject of the long poem by Hermann Neumann *Jürgen Wullenwever, der kühne Demagoge* (1846), in which 26 strophic chapters describe the apotheosis of the burgomaster and narrate his nemesis, although the subtitle *der kühne Demagoge* leaves the judgement on his legacy open: he was audacious, but he became a demagogue. His execution is depicted here as martyrdom:

Zwei lange Jahre hatte überwunden
 Der edle Dulder in des Kerkers Nacht,
 Eh' sein Prozeß zu Ende ward gebracht,
 Und er den martervollen Tod gefunden.
 (Neumann 1846, 146)⁸

In 1922 the Lübeck municipality named a street after the burgomaster (Busch 2011), and in 1937 the artist Charles Derlien (Fink 1938, 29) painted his portrait without a description of Wullenwever's actual appearance, apart from a caricature painted in 1537 shortly after his death: a half-length portrait featuring a bearded head and a big nose (Wullenweber 1962, 95).⁹ The later painting has a similar aspect, but the hero displays a much nobler personality. This painting is still hanging in the Gallery at Lübeck City Hall. Wullenwever was idealised during Nazism for his tireless defence of Lübeck's commercial supremacy against foreigners. In 1938, Georg Fink, the director of Lübeck's archive in those years, wrote that Wullenwever was a captivating man of the people ("ein hinreißender Volksmann"; quoted in Wullenweber 1962, 96), and the renowned expert of Hanseatic history, Hans Pagel, depicted him in 1942 as a courageous man who never surrendered: "Wullenwever war seit den Niederlagen ein geschlagener Mann. Aber noch gab er nicht auf: 'Nun sind wir drin und müssen durch'" (Pagel 1942, 500).¹⁰

(*Wullenwever. Tragedy in Five Acts*; Leipzig 1870); Carl Gutzkow's *Wullenwever. Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen* (*Wullenwever. Tragedy in Five Acts*; Jena 1872); a historical drama by Fritz von Unruh, *Jürgen Wullenwever* (1910, ed. Berlin 1975); a Low German play by Franz Fromme, *Juergen Wullenwever unde Marks Meyer. Een nedderduetsch Spill* (*Juergen Wullenwever and Marks Meyer. A Low German Drama*; Lübeck 1924); a novel by Ehm Welk, *Gewitter über Gotland* (*Storm over Gotland*, 1926), which was adapted for the Berliner Völkshöhne by Erwin Piscator in 1927 (cf. Hammel-Kiesow [2000] 2008, 4); and a novel by Hugo Paul Schreiber-Uhlenbusch, *Jürgen Wullenwever* (Stuttgart 1937).

⁸ "Two long years had the noble silent sufferer / endured in the dungeon's night, / before his trial was brought to an end, / and he met a martyr's death." All translations are mine.

⁹ The two paintings can be seen in Busch 2011.

¹⁰ "After his defeat Wullenwever was a beaten man. But he did not give up just yet: 'We are in the middle of it and we must pull through.'" Pagel quotes a sentence said by Wullenwever in 1535 (Waitz II, 236).

Understandably, the burgomaster's image tended to be seen negatively by any opponent of Nazism. Thomas Mann, in a speech held at the BBC on 5 April 1942, reported on the bombing of his city and spoke about his family house, *Buddenbrook-Haus*, which had been renamed by the Nazis *Wullenwever-Haus* in order to erase all traces of the famous author, although the building was erected two centuries later:

Das dumme Gesindel weiß nicht einmal, dass ein Haus, das den Stempel des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts an seinem Rokoko-Giebel trägt, nicht gut mit dem verwegenen Bürgermeister des sechzehnten etwas zu tun haben kann. Jürgen Wullenweber hat seiner Stadt durch den Krieg mit Dänemark viel Schaden zugefügt, und die Lübecker haben mit ihm getan, was die Deutschen denn doch vielleicht eines Tages mit denen tun werden, die sie in diesen Krieg geführt haben: sie haben ihn hingerichtet (Mann [1987] 2013, 59).¹¹

According to Thomas Mann, Wullenwever is *verwegen*, which means both daring and aggressive; comparing him to Nazi war criminals, Mann underlines that he deserved the death penalty. After the Second World War another figure criticised Wullenwever: the new director of the Lübeck archives, Ahasver von Brandt (1954), referred to Wullenwever's bold but clumsy fist ("kühnplumper Faust"; quoted in Wullenweber 1962, 87). But it appears that the figure of the burgomaster could be used as a symbol to bolster any ideology; having fought against aristocracy in favour of popular participation, Wullenwever was idealised by socialists: in the same year – 1954 – the SPD founded the printing house *Wullenwever Druckerei*, which is still in operation today.

5. We have seen that Wullenwever defended his city strenuously against Lübeck's Dutch commercial rivals, but in trying to achieve this, his attempts to take advantage of the political weakness of Denmark failed miserably. While today he is seen either as a valiant man or as a demagogue, opposite factions dominated the social and political landscape of his age, too: there were violent contrasts between aristocracy and common men (the rising bourgeoisie and the peasants), and while Catholics had to face Lutherans, the imperial cities, in particular those with new democratic ambitions belonging to the Schmalkaldic League, conflicted with the Emperor.¹²

¹¹ "That stupid rabble does not even know that a house that bears the brand of the eighteenth century on its rococo pediment cannot have anything to do with the reckless burgomaster of the sixteenth century. Jürgen Wullenwever inflicted a lot of damage on his city by waging war on Denmark, and the citizens of Lübeck did to him what the Germans may one day do to those who have led them into this war: they executed him."

¹² For the connection between the Reformation, social changes and political conflicts after

In the documents collected by Georg Waitz it is possible to recognise all the conflicts of the time. The words that express them most clearly are *Freund* ('friend') and *Feind* ('enemy'), referred to persons, cities, nations. For instance, in a letter written on behalf of the *64-Ausschuss* to Rostock's Council in 1531, Wullenwever tries to convince this allied Hanseatic city to contribute, together with Lübeck, to Frederick I's fight against Christian II. The exiled king is simply described as an enemy: "konigk Christiern unser sampt vyenth" (Waitz I, 312).¹³ At the same time, Wullenwever calls his Rostock's addressees *Freunde* at the beginning of the same letter: "Unnsen fruntlicken gruth thovorn, Ersamen unde vorsichtigen gunstigen guden frunde."¹⁴

A song describing Lübeck's political situation in 1534, when the *64-Ausschuss* failed, now sees its members, former champions of democracy, as enemies:

Wor iß de Rhat der stede,
den du verdechtig hölst
der Meente in unfrede? [...]
Schla nu den fiendt vam door.

(Waitz II, 347)¹⁵

By contrast, King Henry VIII cements his alliance with Wullenwever, calling him his friend: in a letter to Bremen's Council, written in December 1535 or January 1536, he complains that the fallen burgomaster has been arrested and tortured: "mit offentligenn unrechten der frambst unnd unschuldigst mann unnsen besonnder guter freundt beladen und ihm zugefugt wirth" (Waitz III, 472).¹⁶

Wullenwever as a person is often depicted negatively from the beginning of his public life. Apart from *Feind*, he is described as evil, violent, a traitor, and a person with suspect behaviour.¹⁷ In 1530 a citizen of Lübeck, Jürgen Velth[eim], writes a letter of complaint to the City Council, in which he reports that Wullenwever is an "evidently overt enemy" ("apenbar entsechten viendt"), who brings "great injustice" ("des groten unrechtenn";

the Peasants' War see Blickle 1998.

¹³ "King Christian, the enemy of us all."

¹⁴ "First of all our friendly greeting [to our] honourable and attentive and favourable good friends."

¹⁵ "Where is the City Council, / which you suspect / [to have] spread strife in town? [...] / Drive the enemy out of the door."

¹⁶ "Charged and inflicted with clear injustice the most pious and innocent man, our particularly good friend."

¹⁷ Words of approval are quite rare in the documents; the most frequent adjective used with reference to Wullenwever is *ehrsam* ('honourable'), a common designation for the burgomaster and for the other functionaries in the City Council.

Waitz I, 288). A witness from Danzig, Johann Fürstenberg, who relates Wullenwever's journey to Copenhagen on 8 July 1533, says that his behaviour at sea is suspect and warns his city against his fleet: "Dusse punct is my suspect" (Waitz I, 386).¹⁸ In a missive by Christian III to Duke Henry V of Mecklenburg (Albrecht VII's brother) dated 6 July 1534, the future king writes about Wullenwever: "dat he by der stat Lubeck also ein deeff und vorreder gehandelt hadde" (Waitz II, 256).¹⁹ In a report of citizens gathering in front of Lübeck's City Hall on 3 July 1535, different voices say that it is necessary "den hasen sla dar he sittet [...] dath were h. Jurgen Wul., de vorreder, de bosewicht" (Waitz III, 404).²⁰ When Wullenwever is arrested on 15 November 1535, a report speaks of a violent burgomaster ("ein geweldigk burgermeister"; Waitz III, 469).

Wullenwever's reckless behaviour is often described by his opponents using the word *Aufruhr* ('riot') and its derivative *auführerisch* ('riotous'). When in January 1536 Christian III has Wullenwever tortured, the report of the interrogation states that Wullenwever started this riot and feud ("dieße aufroher unnd vheide angefangen"; Waitz III, 485), and that he, together with the Danish people of Copenhagen, had set in motion this treachery and riot ("dieße vorrethery und aufror haben zw werke gestelleth"). In another text, an emissary from Bremen, who took part in a gathering on 12, 13 and 14 March 1534 organised in Hamburg to appease the litigants, describes in his account that Wullenwever's henchmen are riotous ("sinen uprorisken kompanen"; Waitz I, 402). The *64-Ausschuss*, too, is described with the same words. At the same Hamburg meeting, a bill of complaint by one of Lübeck's escaped burgomasters, Nikolaus Brömse, is read in front of the attendees. Here he refers to the enlarged board: "dat uproriske regimente der hunderten und 64 muchte bygelecht und gedempet werden" (Waitz I, 392).²¹ In the aforementioned missive by Christian III to Duke Henry V, Christian warns Henry of Lübeck's intentions: "ein gemeine pewerische ufrhur durch die gantze seekant zu erweckenn" (Waitz II, 256).²² On 3 February 1535 it is an emissary from Danzig who uses these words about Wullenwever in a report to Christian III: "denn uproreschen freventlicken beginneren" (Waitz III, 359).²³ Afterwards, during the trial, these words are used more rarely and reappear only when reviewing the facts.

The words *Aufruhr* and *auführerisch* are used quite frequently in relation to Wullenwever, from the time of the Count's Feud onwards. Before that time we find them only referring to Lutherans and citizens who aspired to democracy, and not only in Lübeck. As regards Bremen, the local archive

¹⁸ "This point is suspect to me."

¹⁹ "That in the city of Lübeck he acted as a thief and a traitor."

²⁰ "To slay the hare that sits there [...] that was Mr. Jurgen Wul., the traitor, the evil."

²¹ "That the riotous regiment of the hundred and 64 may be abrogated and suppressed."

²² "To stir up a general riot of peasants along the whole coast."

²³ "The riotous outrageous provoker."

includes many documents about the democratic and Protestant movements that gathered strength in the city much in the same way they did in Lübeck. Here we find words such as “de mothwyllige unde wrevelicke upror” (Waitz III, 356).²⁴ In the previously mentioned account dating to the year 1530, it is said that the popular movement spread similarly in Lübeck: “gelickmetige uproryge handelinge” (Waitz III, 358).²⁵ Even the Protestant preacher Johann Oldendorp was accused of being *auführerisch*: in his self-defence he claims not to be the bloodthirsty riotous upstart and false libeller (“de mordgierigen uprorschen Schandtdichter und falschen Klegere”; Waitz I, 193) that others accused him of being.

6. These documents thus describe Wullenwever as a hot-blooded, unscrupulous but charismatic man. Similarly, if we follow the use of the words *Aufruhr* and *auführerisch*, we notice that along the coasts, from Holland to the Hanseatic cities on the Baltic, and from England to Denmark, the focus shifts from the social and religious question to the political one when the Count's Feud starts. These two words are the most frequently used to describe the age, and they follow historical events: the turning point is the death of Frederick I and the vacant Danish throne. Before that moment, Wullenwever rises and gains consensus with his ‘iron fist’ against Dutch commercial rivals; afterwards Wullenwever's fortunes go into a fast decline. Wullenwever is guilty of defending his adoptive city too strenuously, with the consequence that the community loses all its democratic achievements following the return of the former burgomasters and as a result of a renewed bond with the Emperor.

It was an age of upheaval in which the former powers, the aristocracy and the Church, were undermined by new forces and ideas of democracy conveyed by Lutheranism, which spread among the burghers. The Count's Feud shows that a balance had not been struck yet: Catholics were against Protestants, but the two denominations did not always correspond to definite social and political parties. The widespread use of the words *Freund* and *Feind*, applied to one or another without any clear distinctions, shows that the situation needed to become untangled, even though this limited word choice risked leading to a Manichean outlook on life. Against this background, the career of Jürgen Wullenwever epitomises all the social, religious, economic and political tensions and contradictions of the time.²⁶

²⁴ “The wilful and outrageous riot.”

²⁵ “Similar riotous actions.”

²⁶ I would like to thank Mike King (Down County Museum, Downpatrick, UK) for reading my paper.

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DANESI E SVEDESI NELLE MEMORIE DI JAN CHRYZOSTOM
PASEK E NEL *DILUVIO* DI HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

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Scrivendo in una delle *Letture facoltative* (*Lektury nadobowiązkowe*, 1997) Wisława Szymborska a proposito di un libro sui castelli in Polonia che, se furono costruiti in secoli diversi,

i loro ruderi (poiché purtroppo la maggior parte di loro è ridotta a rovine più o meno leggibili) risalgono invece prevalentemente a un'unica epoca, quella dell'invasione svedese. Ciò che infatti gli svedesi non avevano distrutto nel corso della loro marcia trionfale, fu fatto saltare in aria durante la ritirata. A dire la verità, è confortante pensare che popolo simpatico e pacifico siano divenuti al giorno d'oggi... (Szymborska 2008).

L'avvenimento storico a cui la poetessa alludeva nel suo *feuilleton* era il cosiddetto 'diluvio svedese', l'invasione del *commonwealth* polacco-lituano a opera delle truppe del re Carlo X Gustavo (1655-57) che avrebbe lasciato tracce indelebili sul paesaggio, nella cultura, nella mentalità e negli orientamenti confessionali dei polacchi.¹ E di conseguenza nella letteratura nazionale.

¹ D'altra parte, ha scritto Stefan Treugutt (1979, 101): "Non sono a conoscenza delle statistiche riguardanti le perdite e le distruzioni subite dalla Polonia nel corso della storia, ma ritengo che attribuirne la gran parte ai due anni di occupazione svedese (1655-1656) sia un'esagerazione. Ai tempi di Carlo XII, gli svedesi sono rimasti in Polonia quattro volte più a lungo, per non parlare delle truppe sassoni, di quelle polacche (tanto quelle alleate agli svedesi quanto quelle che li combattevano) e delle armate dello zar di Russia Pietro I. La presenza sul territorio nazionale di tutte queste truppe si rivelò in ugual misura disastrosa per il paese. Ciò nonostante, solo l'epoca del Diluvio, riportata in auge e resa popolare dal romanzo storico di Sienkiewicz, è divenuto il periodo delle guerre svedesi su cui si è incentrata la tradizione,

Che la poetessa in fondo non esagerasse lo confermano alcuni dati storici: il vescovo Jan Chrzyciel Albertrandi, inviato dal re di Polonia Stanislao Augusto a cercare in Svezia parte delle ricchezze asportate dagli svedesi durante il Diluvio, aveva ritrovato lastre tombali di nobili polacchi usate come pavimentazione per gli enormi camini nelle magioni degli aristocratici svedesi, mentre a suo tempo gli occupanti scandinavi del castello di Varsavia avevano strappato e rimosso – spedendoli a casa – persino i pavimenti di marmo dei corridoi della residenza regia (Dubiecki 1884, 169).

Tutto aveva avuto inizio quando nel 1563 gli svedesi dichiararono guerra alla Polonia per il possesso delle coste orientali del Baltico. L'ascesa di Sigismondo Vasa sul trono polacco nel 1586 e la successiva rivendicazione della corona svedese avrebbero comportato un riacutizzarsi del conflitto. La pace di Altmärk, siglata nel 1629, lasciava Riga e la maggior parte della Livonia sotto il controllo svedese. Durante la Seconda guerra del Nord (1655-60) il conflitto prenderà una piega ancor più favorevole agli svedesi. Nel 1655 saliva sul trono il bellicoso Carlo X Gustavo, che disponeva di un esercito di ben sessantamila reduci della guerra dei Trent'anni in un momento in cui la Polonia era impegnata contro i moscoviti, l'elettore del Brandeburgo e il principe Giorgio II Rákóczi di Transilvania, con la confederata Lituania sotto l'occupazione di truppe moscovite e cosacche. Al rifiuto di Giovanni Casimiro Vasa di rinunciare all'anacronistico titolo di re di Svezia e di cedere la Livonia, Carlo X rispose riprendendo le ostilità contro un paese che stava oramai per crollare sotto i colpi dell'insurrezione cosacca. Dopo una brevissima resistenza, nel luglio del 1655 le truppe polacche capitolarono a Ujście, lasciando l'intera Grande Polonia in mano agli svedesi. Nel mese successivo il gran etmano di Lituania, Janusz Radziwiłł, dichiarava conclusa l'unione con la corona polacca e legava il granducato a quella svedese: a settembre Carlo X faceva il suo ingresso a Varsavia, ad ottobre si arrendeva agli svedesi anche Cracovia. I successi delle armi svedesi avrebbero permesso la realizzazione di un'unione dinastica tra Svezia, Polonia e Lituania, dal momento che la casa regnante sui tre paesi era pur sempre la stessa, quella dei Vasa, ma la brutalità delle truppe di occupazione e la volontà di Carlo X di non addivenire a nessun compromesso politico resuscitarono nei polacchi le sopite volontà di resistenza. Ebbe così inizio una guerriglia partigiana che rese impossibile il controllo sul paese da parte dell'esercito svedese, peraltro vanamente impegnato nell'assedio all'ultima roccaforte lealista polacca, il monastero di Jasna Góra a Częstochowa. Dopo che nel luglio del 1656 le truppe polacco-lituaniche si reimpadronirono di Varsavia, ad agosto la città cadde nuovamente nelle mani degli svedesi, che la sottoposero a un

tanto nel linguaggio comune quanto nella memoria collettiva della nazione." Agli inizi del Novecento, lo storico Stanisław Zakrzewski si era detto convinto che, nella Polonia del periodo delle spartizioni, i veri insegnanti di storia fossero stati i poeti romantici e romanzieri storici come Kraszewski e Sienkiewicz (Tazbir 1967, 381). Se non diversamente segnalato in bibliografia, le traduzioni presenti nel testo sono mie.

devastante saccheggio: dal palazzo reale vennero rimossi non soltanto gli argenti e più di duecento quadri, ma persino il soffitto a cassettoni di cinque sale. Nel giugno del 1657 il re Federico III di Danimarca dichiarava guerra alla Svezia, provocando il precipitoso rientro in patria di gran parte delle truppe svedesi. Il Diluvio venne spostandosi dalla Polonia alla Danimarca, incapace, col suo piccolo esercito, di impedire l'invasione dello Jutland: in esecuzione del trattato di alleanza tra i due paesi, il re di Polonia Giovanni Casimiro vi inviò un corpo di spedizione al comando dell'etmano Stefan Czarniecki, fiancheggiato da truppe imperiali e brandeburghesi, nonché da una providenziale flotta olandese. Le sconfitte subite in Danimarca e la morte di Carlo X spinsero gli svedesi a firmare nel 1660 la pace di Oliva e a porre fine a un conflitto che solo due anni prima avrebbe potuto concludersi con una spartizione della Polonia tra Lituania, Svezia, Prussia ducale, cosacchi e principato di Transilvania. Per ironia della sorte, dal momento che il re di Polonia era senza figli, i delegati svedesi accettarono che fino alla morte si fregiasse dell'inutile titolo di re di Svezia. Alla Polonia il conflitto era costato un terzo della popolazione civile, con un crollo della produzione agricola doppio rispetto a quello provocato in Germania dalla guerra dei Trent'anni.²

È facile comprendere come, nell'immaginario collettivo polacco, danesi e svedesi occupino posizioni ben diverse, sostanzialmente antitetiche.³ Al consolidamento di una simile contrapposizione, valida almeno a tutto il XIX secolo, ha sicuramente contribuito un manoscritto, rinvenuto nei primi decenni dell'Ottocento, contenente le memorie di un partecipante alle vicende del Diluvio svedese, l'ussaro Jan Chryzostom Pasek:⁴ è probabilmente l'unico testo della letteratura antico-polacca scritto da un autore che era stato personalmente in contatto con entrambe le popolazioni scandinave. Purtroppo si sono perse le prime cinquanta pagine del manoscritto, dove Pasek aveva descritto l'invasione del 1655, ma dal testo si evince come l'autore non fosse interessato a dare un quadro dettagliato della prima fase del conflitto, preferendo fornire maggiori dettagli al riguardo della spedizione danese, che aveva l'indubbio vantaggio di connotarsi in termini più esotici e allettanti per l'eventuale destinatario del testo.⁵ Agli occhi del cavaliere polacco, la spedizione capitanata dall'etmano Stefan Czarniecki si configurava come un'impresa assai rischiosa per due motivi: da una parte, non sembrava troppo giudizioso "andarsene con un esercito di seimila uomini in casa

² Si vedano a questo proposito Podhorodecki 1985a e 1985b. I dati sulle distruzioni provocate dagli svedesi si trovano in Podhorodecki 1985a, 380, e 1985b, 403.

³ Per una bibliografia delle relazioni letterarie tra Polonia e Svezia durante il Rinascimento si veda Ślaski 1979.

⁴ Il manoscritto di J.Ch. Pasek venne pubblicato per la prima volta da Edward Raczyński nel 1836 a Poznań.

⁵ Ha scritto Władysław Czapliński (1968, xlix) che Pasek "tira via per quello che concerne i primi anni di guerra, e dà vita a una narrazione più diffusa soltanto al riguardo della spedizione danese. È evidente che proprio il racconto su quell'esotica impresa avrebbe trovato gli ascoltatori più attenti".

di un nemico alla cui potenza non fummo in grado di resistere nella patria nostra con tutte le nostre forze”, dall'altra, il terragno nobileto aveva qualche remora a “spingersi oltre il mare, andar là, dove mai piede polacco calcò la sua orma” (Pasek 1968, 11). Alfiere di un cattolicesimo vigorosamente controriformista, Pasek è costretto *malgré soi* a effettuare concessioni al protestantesimo degli alleati, soprattutto a causa del fascino delle belle devote danesi e di certe pratiche osservate durante il rito.⁶ A un certo punto, infatti, notava perplesso il cavaliere polacco,

i tedeschi si coprono gli occhi con il cappello, e le donne col velo e, chinatisi mettono la testa sotto il banco, ed era allora che i nostri giovini prendevano a rubar loro i libri e i fazzoletti ecc. Se ne avvide una volta il ministro, e così ferocemente prese a ridere, che pel riso non potea portare a fine la predica. E noi pure, ché tutto ciò vedevamo, avemmo a ridere. *Stupebant* i luterani che ridessimo e che il predicator con noi ridesse. [...] Dal quel tempo, quando avevano ormai a coprirsi il capo, celavano dapprima i libri e i fazzoletti, non senza riso, al solo essersi guardate (19-20).

Se c'è qualcosa però che il cavaliere polacco non riesce veramente ad accettare, sono i costumi femminili danesi, tanto in senso stretto quanto lato. Se infatti gli zoccoli di legno delle donne danesi “fanno un frastuono, da non sentir quando uno parla all'altro” (17), nei sentimenti le fanciulle “non sono riservate come quelle polacche”, giacché basta loro essersi intrattenute una volta con qualcuno, e averci scambiato qualche parola, “che subito si innamorano perdutoamente, né sanno celarlo” (17).

Ma è soprattutto la disinvoltura dimostrata nella vita di ogni giorno a stupire, persino indignare il buon cavaliere:

Dormono ignudi, così come la madre li ha partoriti, e non tenendolo in conto di vergogna alcuna si svestono e si abbigliano l'uno di fronte all'altro, e manco portano rispetto all'ospite, ma al lume della candela si tolgono ogni ornamento, finché in ultimo non si cavano la camicia e l'appendono a un piuolo, e solo allora così ignudi, chiuso l'uscio, spento il lume, se ne vanno a coricarsi nell'alcova. Quando dicemmo loro che era cosa orribile, che appo noi manco la consorte così si mostra al coniuge, quelle ci dissero che “appo noi non v'è vergogna alcuna e non è cosa il vergognarsi per le membra nostre che il Signore Iddio ci ha formato”. E di quel dormire ignudi dicono che “ne ho abbastanza

⁶ Nella sua volontà, prettamente ‘politica’, di trovare aspetti positivi nella spiritualità eretica degli alleati, l'ussaro arriva a decantare le lodi delle loro chiese, dal momento che – in quanto edifici ex cattolici – vi si tenevano servizi “più belli che presso i calvinisti polacchi”, ornate com'erano da altari e quadri (Pasek 1968, 19).

della camicia e della veste che mi servono durante il giorno, di notte è d'uopo risparmiarle alquanto, e di questa cagione a che pro portare la notte seco a letto pidocchi e pulci, e permetter loro di mordere, sì da averne il saporito sonno turbato?" (17-18).

Fonte delle maggiori preoccupazioni ma anche delle più forti emozioni per il rustico nobile polacco sarebbe comunque rimasto il mare.⁷ Incaricato di spingersi fino a Ebeltoft, scriveva che non poco gli era ripugnato

dovermi portare tra quei due grandi mari, ché oramai ci eravamo venuti a trovare sull'estremità stessa del capo, così che se uno guarda *ad meridiem* scorge il Baltico, quando *ad septentrionem* è come se stesse guardando le nubi, giacché seppur l'acqua sia sempre acqua, si capisce che la natura di un mare è diversa da quella dell'altro; e feci caso che se uno sembra esser azzurro, l'altro è nero, e che l'uno talvolta ha il colore del cielo, l'altro invece è sempre diverso, quando quello gioca, e onde alte come mura orribili vi danzano sopra, l'altro è quieto, e quando pure entrambi sono quieti, se spingi lo sguardo fin dove si incontrano, soprattutto di sera ti sembrerà di scorgere *visibiliter* stagliarsi un confine tra i flutti, sì che – come ho detto – non poco mi ripugnava recarmi colà, ma avendo sempre avuto un gran gusto di vedere il mondo, non mi ricusai (42-43).

Non è facile comprendere come Pasek abbia potuto scambiare Ebeltoft, dove era stato inviato, con la punta dove si incontrano Skagerrak e Kattegat, ma la sua descrizione corrisponde alle caratteristiche geografiche e oceanografiche di Skagen, inclusa l'eccezionale pescosità dei fondali.⁸ La varietà delle specie ittiche aveva finito però col mettere in crisi la *kalokagathia* del cavaliere:

Quando tirano le loro reti mirabilmente piene, i pesci che a me sembrano essere i più belli e i migliori, son cattivi sì che non si usa cibarsene, e li gettano sulla sabbia ai cani e agli uccelli; altri invece, sebben buoni da mangiare, son tanto deformi che disgusta anche solo il guardarli. C'è un pesce tanto orribile che

⁷ Ha giustamente notato Giovanna Brogi Bercoff, nel suo bel saggio *Il miraggio dell'Europa*, che il mare si presenta "come un elemento talmente attivo, potente, misterioso e fondamentalmente estraneo all'esperienza storica e psicologica dello *szlachcic* mazoviano e poi cracoviano, che acquista una valenza simbolica: quella di limite estremo del mondo accessibile, sia fisicamente che mentalmente" (1995, 328).

⁸ Sull'approccio alla tematica marina e marittima nella letteratura polacca a cavallo tra il XVI e il XVII secolo, si veda lo studio di Edmund Kotarski sui *I sarmati e il mare* (*Sarmaci i morze*, 1995).

al vederlo dipinto sulle pareti di una chiesa col fuoco che gli prompeva dalle fauci mi dissi: “Anche se morissi per la fame, quel pesce mai lo mangerei” (48).

Il cavaliere polacco sarebbe dovuto tornare sui suoi passi, allorché un nobile locale – invitato alla sua mensa – gli aveva servito un pesce “tanto gustoso, che ormai da solo me ne ero mangiato una zuppiera”, quando era stato crudelmente informato che “Hic est piscis, quem Sua Dominatio diabolum nominavit” (48). La notizia costernò a tal punto Pasek, convinto che “in un corpo così brutto non potesse esservi tanto gusto” (48), da impedirgli di mangiarne ancora, ancorché i commensali continuassero imperterriti.⁹

Al testo di Pasek avrebbe attinto Henryk Sienkiewicz, uno dei più grandi romanzieri europei, allorché nel 1880 intraprese la stesura di *Potop* (*Il diluvio*), il secondo volume della sua trilogia storica, dedicato all’invasione svedese del 1655 e pubblicato nel 1886.¹⁰ L’ambientazione esclusivamente polacca e lituano-ucraina del romanzo aveva permesso allo scrittore di inserirvi solo taluni passi attinti alle memorie dell’ussaro.¹¹ È singolare che il noto storico della letteratura Julian Krzyżanowski, affrontando il tema delle derivazioni pasekiane di temi ed episodi di *Potop*, si limitasse ad osservare che

per quello che riguarda l’assedio di Sandomierz, dove un centinaio di persone, nonostante gli ordini, erano entrate nella torre minata e conseguentemente saltate in aria, Pasek ricorda il si-

⁹ Pasek a più riprese si mostra convinto della superiorità dei propri usi alimentari, in quanto nobile polacco, rispetto a quelli dei suoi ospiti danesi. Vistosi servire un sanguinaccio fumante, “ebbi a dir loro, che non si conviene a’ Polacchi di mangiarne, sì che a cagion di ciò ci faremmo de cani nostri un nemico, ché questa è vivanda loro” (18). Ciò che il cavaliere polacco sembrerebbe voler insinuare è che i suoi omologhi danesi si accontentano di piatti non all’altezza del loro status sociale per una forma di inappropriata parsimonia. Una simile allusione non poteva certo sfuggire a Henryk Sienkiewicz, intenzionato a sottolineare, come si vedrà oltre, la congenita miseria degli scandinavi rispetto al presunto benessere dei suoi compatrioti.

¹⁰ Già Adam Mickiewicz (1952, 29) aveva notato, durante la seconda lezione tenuta nell’anno accademico 1841-42 al Collège de France, come Pasek avesse “preconizzato il genere del romanzo storico”: il poeta docente spiegava infatti come i memorialisti francesi dell’epoca si interessassero solamente alla strategia dei grandi condottieri, senza entrare nel dettaglio della vita militare, ma soltanto gli autori di romanzi storici come Walter Scott sarebbero scesi al livello dei particolari dell’esperienza del soldato sul campo. Le memorie di Pasek pertanto anticipavano “il fascino del romanzo storico”.

¹¹ Si può sottolineare come, al contrario di quanto è accaduto per i cosacchi – avversari dei polacchi nel romanzo *Ogniem i mieczem* (*Col ferro e col fuoco*) – gli svedesi non sembrano aver in alcun modo interessato la critica letteraria polacca nella loro funzione di antagonisti romanzeschi. Ne è una conferma il fatto che nel volume *Po co Sienkiewicz? Sienkiewicz a tożsamość narodowa: z kim i przeciw komu?* (*A che serve Sienkiewicz? Sienkiewicz e l’identità nazionale: con chi e contro di chi?*; Axer e Bujnicki 2007) gli unici riferimenti ad antagonisti ‘nazionali’ dei polacchi, nel contesto del romanzo *Potop*, riguardano i lituani, ma nessuna attenzione è stata fatta alla caratterizzazione degli svedesi.

gnor Bobola che “dall’esplosione [...] era stato scagliato con tutto il cavallo sull’altra riva della Vistola, e che vi era atterrato sano e salvo” perché ovviamente “i polacchi sono protetti dagli angeli” (1956, 323).¹²

Pasek aveva menzionato l’episodio allorché un’occorrenza analoga era accaduta quando i polacchi erano riusciti a impadronirsi della fortezza di Kolding, nello Jutland. Una volta penetrati nella torre, per disattenzione o sabotaggio qualcuno aveva dato fuoco alle polveri stipate nei sotterranei. Pasek aveva osservato come gli svedesi, scagliati in cielo dall’esplosione, dapprima fossero scomparsi tra le nuvole, poi avessero preso a ricadere, per precipitare in mare: “Volevano quei tapini sfuggir ai polacchi fin in cielo ma San Pietro serrò subito le porte dicendo: ‘ah traditori! Siete pur voi a dire che la grazia dei santi non porta a nulla, che le loro istanze presso il Signor Iddio non hanno valor o necessità alcuna’. [...] Bel servizio che vi hanno reso i demoni!” (Pasek 1968, 33-34). Sienkiewicz avrebbe infatti ripreso l’episodio, facendo esclamare in analoghe circostanze a Zagłoba, un Falstaff polacco, vero e proprio *alter ego* letterario di Jan Chryzostom Pasek: “Ho paura che uno di quegli svedesi che si sono fatti saltare con le polveri possa ricadermi sul capo, perché è certo che in cielo non li hanno fatti entrare!” (Sienkiewicz 1957, II, 511).¹³ È interessante notare come Sienkiewicz abbia fatto uso di alcune informazioni in possesso di Pasek, cambiando loro di segno. Nelle sue memorie, infatti, il cavaliere polacco aveva riferito come gli svedesi tenessero al loro servizio dei ‘diavoli’ come spiriti domestici: un polacco, ammalatosi in Svezia, avrebbe assistito ai festeggiamenti nuziali di un’intera famiglia di diavoletti, ma si sarebbe rifiutato di assaggiarne la torta nonostante il medico gli assicurasse che gli svedesi facevano regolarmente uso del cibo procurato da quelle servizievoli creaturine, senza che fosse mai capitato loro nulla di male (Pasek 1968, 84-86). Sienkiewicz capovolge l’orientamento assiologico dell’informazione, finendo con l’ascrivere le credenze degli svedesi a quella superstizione che apparentemente costituiva la loro unica arma spirituale contro la profonda fede religiosa dei polacchi. Troviamo infatti nel romanzo che gli svedesi hanno appreso dai finni l’arte di tenere al proprio servizio i diavoli, che li proteggono in battaglia: “ognuno di loro ne ha due o tre alle proprie dipendenze, ma ve ne sono anche di quelli che ne hanno sette” (Sienkiewicz 1957, II, 208). L’attribuzione agli svedesi di usi negromantici permette a Sienkiewicz di caratterizzarli come una po-

¹² Krzyzanowski ritrova lo stesso passo in *Potop*: “E la Santissima Vergine ci assisterà così come il signor Bobola, che le polveri scagliarono sull’altra riva della Vistola con tutto il cavallo e nulla gliene venne” (Sienkiewicz 1957, III, 122).

¹³ Nonostante l’edizione italiana pubblicata dalle Paoline nel 1968 sia asseritamente una “versione integrale dal polacco” non è né l’una né l’altra cosa. Tutti i brani del romanzo qui citati sono stati pertanto tradotti da me, dal momento che, nella quasi totalità dei casi, mancano nella traduzione italiana.

polazione estremamente superstiziosa: timoroso più degli incantesimi che delle armi del nemico, il generale Burchard Müller si troverà costretto a togliere l'assedio al monastero della Jasna Góra, protetto com'era dagli 'incantesimi' dei monaci paolini (II, 208-29). In questo senso, lo scrittore sembra condividere le convinzioni di coloro i quali – nella Polonia del Diluvio – ritenevano che gli svedesi non solo non credessero nei santi, ma nemmeno in Cristo e nella Madonna, o di chi vi ravvisava un popolo di lupi mannari abituati a nutrirsi di carne umana, possibilmente femminile (II, 241-42).

Fin dall'inizio del romanzo, d'altra parte, Sienkiewicz presenta gli svedesi come l'antitesi bellica di una nobiltà della Grande Polonia (*Wielkopolska*) non più usa a combattere dai tempi degli scontri con l'ordine teutonico, nel XV secolo. Gli svedesi, temprati nel fuoco della guerra dei Trent'anni, sono veri professionisti delle armi, avendo raggiunto nel mestiere livelli di maestria assoluta. Lo scrittore offre un'immagine quasi cinematografica del campo polacco come una sorta di mercato di ambulanti, "chiassoso, risuonante delle dispute sulle disposizioni dei capi, pieno di malcontento, composto da simpatici contadinotti temporaneamente trasformati in fantaccini" (I, 171), quando dall'altra parte del fronte "marciavano minacciosi i quadrati del nemico, silenziosi, [...] pronti a un cenno del capo dell'ufficiale a mettersi in riga o a semicerchio, a disporsi a cuneo o a triangolo" (I, 171). Mentre la fanteria e la cavalleria svedese appaiono armate dello stretto necessario, disponendo di strumenti tecnologicamente avanzati, la nobiltà polacca non è solo appesantita da una panoplia di armi antiche,¹⁴ ma anche di cucchiari e forchette, essendo assai più interessata a mangiare, bere e discorrere "di un nemico che non si era ancora fatto vedere" (I, 173) che non a spargere il suo sangue per conservare a Giovanni Casimiro "il vuoto titolo di re di Svezia" (I, 179). La spiegazione che Sienkiewicz dà del comportamento delle truppe svedesi è legata alle teorie delle influenze climatiche in voga durante il positivismo: gli svedesi, provenienti da "una terra caratterizzata da una natura selvaggia, povera e nuda" (I, 187), sarebbero stati *naturaliter* un popolo rapace e avido di bottino, incapace di frenare i propri istinti di rapina di fronte all'ubertosa Grande Polonia, una terra stillante latte e miele. In realtà, alcuni critici e storici della letteratura polacca hanno avanzato l'ipotesi che – nel contesto delle vicende storiche del Diluvio e delle relative conseguenze sullo stato polacco – gli svedesi del romanzo di fatto svolgano un ruolo 'surrogato'. Non nel senso in cui avrebbe potuto intendere lo storico Maryan Karol Dubiecki, per il quale l'elemento scandinavo, pur sempre coinvolto nelle vicende interne dei polacchi per esplicita volontà della *szlachta* (la nobiltà), non sarebbe stato altro che parte di quel *Drang nach Osten* di un

¹⁴ Può essere qui interessante notare come – nella caratterizzazione stereotipica delle due nazioni – Sienkiewicz accentui il carattere orientale degli usi e delle uniformi delle truppe polacche, troppo pesantemente e caoticamente armate, vestite con abiti di foggia turchesca.

germanesimo protendentesi verso la Warta nel corso dei secoli, vuoi sotto le spoglie delle schiere cinte di ferro in lotta contro i nostri Boleslai sull'Oder o sull'Elba, nelle terre dei Milceni e di Lusazia, vuoi avvolto nel manto dei cavalieri dell'Ordine Teutonico, e infine calcante le lechitiche zolle sotto lo stendardo di Gustavo Adolfo (Dubiecki 1884, 174).

Per Dubiecki, infatti, sebbene l'aggressione "avesse il nome di svedese, sebbene fossero svedesi gli stemmi che spiccavano sugli stendardi degli invasori, fosse il re di Svezia a condurli con sé, e fossero svedesi i reggimenti che costituivano il nucleo forte del campo di Carlo, la si sarebbe dovuta chiamare piuttosto un'invasione teutonica" (1884, 174). Anche se le fonti attestavano come solo uno su dieci armati al seguito di Carlo Gustavo fosse svedese, e gli altri fossero soldati tedeschi rimasti disoccupati, non si capisce da che cosa derivasse allo storico la sorprendente convinzione che "l'astro guida dell'invasione operata da Carlo fu l'idea della germanizzazione" (1884, 175).

Sulla falsariga delle ricerche dello storico Adam Kersten, il critico e storico della letteratura Julian Krzyżanowski segnalerà invece come quello trattato in *Potop* sia il periodo (1655-57) in cui di fatto furono i moscoviti – non certo gli svedesi – a infliggere le sconfitte più dolorose all'etmano lituano, Janusz Radziwiłł. Nel romanzo, però, di tutto ciò risuonano soltanto flebili echi, dal momento che, per problemi di censura, lo scrittore era stato costretto a denominare i conquistatori (e distruttori) di Vilno "septentrioni", uomini del nord, "nonostante che una simile espressione nel contesto dato potesse applicarsi anche agli altri avversari della Polonia in quel periodo, gli svedesi" (Krzyżanowski 1970, 136).¹⁵ Questo non sembrerebbe comunque autorizzare le conclusioni cui giunge il critico letterario Stefan Treugutt (1979, 101-06), per il quale *Il Diluvio* non è un romanzo su polacchi e svedesi, ma sui polacchi che affrontano un'invasione, dove gli svedesi rivestono il ruolo di personificazione collettiva dell'aggressore. Questo infatti è vero soltanto in parte. Come ha osservato Tadeusz Bujnicki (1973, 108), "la concezione di patria elaborata da Sienkiewicz presuppone un contrasto assiologico: tra la propria nazione e le altre". Anche se l'avversario nazionale, nel caso degli svedesi, viene presentato con maggior equanimità di quanto non avvenga, per esempio, in quello dei cosacchi, deve comunque connotarsi, se non come un rivoltoso, almeno come un aggressore, con l'aggravante di ulteriori e specifiche caratteristiche negative, quali la rapacità. La sottolineatura del valore dell'avversario serve d'altra parte allo scrittore per porre in risalto le straordinarie capacità di reazione e il coraggio dei suoi compatrioti.

¹⁵ In altre occorrenze, troviamo i moscoviti designati col nome di 'iperborei': "La *Respublica* è un canovaccio di panno rosso tirato dagli svedesi, [Bohdan] Chmielnicki, gli iperborei, i tatar, l'elettore e chi si trovi a passar di lì" (Sienkiewicz 1957, I, 486-87).

Si spiega quindi come Sienkiewicz riesca in un procedimento all'apparenza paradossale, quello di esaltare la disciplina marziale della nazione svedese (i reggimenti del generale Arvid Wittenberg si dispongono sul campo nella calma più assoluta, quasi fossero già sicuri della vittoria) definendo al contempo questo stesso popolo "smorto, giacché colà la terra è sterile oltre ogni dire e non hanno grano, così che sono costretti a macinare solo le pigne e di quella farina cuociono focaccine che puzzano di resina" (Sienkiewicz 1957, I, 262). E Zagłoba rincara la dose, proiettando sull'immagine del nemico svedese una luce ancora più sfavorevole di quella riservata all'epitome della ferinità umana, per un nobile polacco del periodo: il tataro.¹⁶ Sostiene infatti il Falstaff polacco, che

c'è chi se ne va a passeggio sulla riva del mare e, non appena l'onda getta qualcosa sulla sabbia, se la mangia, ed è persino pronto a battersi, per quella leccornia. Sono una teppaglia miserevole, motivo per cui non vi è al mondo nazione più avida delle cose altrui, giacché persino i tataro hanno carne di cavallo *ad libitum*, mentre quelli possono passare un anno senza vederne, e fanno la fame, a meno che la pesca non sia abbondante (Sienkiewicz 1957, I, 262).

D'altra parte, tanta frequentazione delle acque marine li avrebbe trasformati in "tuffatori *exquisitissimi*",¹⁷ dal momento che – si vantava il *miles gloriosus* polacco – "basta gettare una di quelle carogne in un'apertura praticata nel ghiaccio ed ecco che salta fuori da un altro buco, e per sovrammercato tiene nel grugno una bella aringa viva!" (Sienkiewicz 1957, I, 262).

Adam Kersten ha segnalato come quello compiuto da Sienkiewicz nel romanzo fosse in buona sostanza un falso storico, dal momento che, nella realtà dei fatti, le motivazioni svedesi per l'invasione della Grande Polonia non erano di stampo economico: "La questione non consisteva certo nella volontà di saccheggio di una ricca Polonia a opera di una povera Svezia, dal momento che né la Svezia era così povera come Sienkiewicz l'aveva ritratta in *Potop*, né la *Respublica* tanto ricca" (Kersten 1966, 154). Per altri aspetti, Sienkiewicz sarebbe stato più aderente al dato storiografico, allorché aveva voluto presentare gli svedesi nella loro veste di 'male minore' rispetto ai moscoviti, portatori di distruzioni maggiori persino di quelle provocate dai tata-

¹⁶ Il riferimento ai tataro in realtà nell'ottica del romanzo vuole essere doppiamente dispregiativo. Al riguardo del terrore superstizioso nutrito dagli svedesi nei confronti dei tataro e delle loro modalità di combattimento, vedi oltre.

¹⁷ Non è da escludere che la definizione di "nurkowie *exquisitissimi*" Henryk Sienkiewicz possa averla attinta alla descrizione che Pasek dà degli olandesi: "Hanno una tale *scientiam* e tuffatori così abili che, una volta che si sono immersi, camminano sul fondo e vi sistemano apparecchiature così da poter sollevare ogni cosa *ex profundo*" (Pasek 1968, 62).

ri.¹⁸ In questo senso andrebbero letti tanto i riferimenti al “polityczny naród szwedzki”, al “diplomatico popolo svedese” che l’etmano Janusz Radziwiłł avrebbe fatto entrare in Lituania per contrastare gli eserciti moscoviti, quanto la sottolineatura delle iniziali disciplina e correttezza dell’esercito di Carlo Gustavo.¹⁹ Se è pertanto vero che gli svedesi, per ciò che concerne la loro asserita rapacità, svolgerebbero un ruolo gregario, o surrogato, rispetto a coloro che *ex definitione* avrebbero incarnato gli aggressori (i moscoviti), occorre altresì notare che vi è sicuramente un campo in cui si connotano, senza apprezzabili sfumature o differenziazioni, come aggressori *tout court*: quello religioso. Nonostante gli storici in realtà abbiano segnalato l’estrema cautela del comando svedese nell’affrontare questioni confessionali, Sienkiewicz arriva a farli definire da un personaggio del libro “pagani”, il cui unico credo consiste nell’ululare alla luna nonostante la simulata fede in Cristo (II, 488). Il reale scopo della guerra voluta da Gustavo Adolfo, si afferma nel romanzo con scarso rispetto per la verosimiglianza storica, sarebbe infatti stato quello di permettere agli svedesi di bestemmiare la vera fede nelle chiese polacche. Al di là del dato religioso, comunque, la contrapposizione assiologica tra polacchi e svedesi che Sienkiewicz viene presentando nel romanzo si connota come uno schema incrociato alle cui estremità si trovano, sull’asse economico, l’abbondanza e la penuria (intesa come giustificazione della ‘rapacità’), su quello sociale l’inerzia e il valore, su quello militare il caos e la disciplina. L’iniziale collocazione della nobiltà polacco-lituana sul polo ‘negativo’ è comunque foriera di un’evoluzione nella direzione di quello ‘positivo’ nella misura in cui gli svedesi, dapprima avversari cavallereschi, gettano la maschera, rivelandosi infidi, rapaci, e soprattutto sacrileghi. La contrapposizione funzionale si riflette in una sarmatica antitesi di costumi, intesi in senso tanto letterale quanto lato. Agli stivali dal lungo gambale tondeggiante e ai dritti fioretti degli svedesi i polacchi si contrappongono non solo per le vesti di foggia turchesca, ma anche per tattiche di guerra dove è l’elemento dell’imprevedibilità orientale (orientalistica?) a risultare decisivo. In questo senso, alla razionalità tutta occidentale degli svedesi, capaci di disperdere gli esploratori nemici a cannonate, piuttosto che af-

¹⁸ Di fatto, la dimensione ‘esopica’ del libro non avrebbe avuto come riferimento allusivo i moscoviti del 1655-56, bensì i russi che dopo l’insurrezione nazionale del 1863-64 avevano represso con violenza ogni istanza – sociale, politica e culturale – polacca. Scriveva lo storico Janusz Tazbir (1967, 382) in un altro periodo difficile per l’idea nazionale: “La *Trilogia* [di romanzi storici di H. Sienkiewicz] ottenne il suo massimo successo nelle specifiche condizioni in cui si trovava la Polonia sul chiudersi del XIX secolo, allorché venne letta anche come un romanzo [sic] contemporaneo, dal momento che prendeva le mosse dall’illustrazione di una serie di spaventose disfatte nazionali e di una cattività... svedese, da cui non sembrava esserci scampo”.

¹⁹ È lo stesso protagonista del romanzo, nelle sue fasi iniziali, a ringraziare Dio per il fatto che Janusz Radziwiłł “abbia chiamato in nostra difesa un popolo sì politico” (Sienkiewicz 1957, I, 462).

frontandoli in singolar tenzone,²⁰ i polacchi contrappongono la propria capacità di approfittare a fini bellici di paure più istintive che culturali, quale il timore superstizioso nutrito dagli scandinavi nei confronti dei tatar, tanto feroci quanto elusivi. Sienkiewicz infatti riferisce come spesso gli irregolari polacchi si travestissero da tatar (anche se non spiega nel dettaglio in che cosa consistessero simili travestimenti) per attaccare i reparti svedesi, tra le cui fila circolavano le notizie più incredibili a proposito del valore, ma anche della crudeltà, di quegli indomiti “figli della steppa di Crimea”.²¹ Sienkiewicz si è sicuramente rivolto alle fonti storiografiche per attingere dati in questo senso. Lo stesso Pasek a suo tempo aveva affermato che i “tedeschi” (ovvero gli eserciti imperiali durante l’assedio di Vienna, nel 1683) avevano imparato a loro spese che cosa significasse combattere contro un popolo “nudo”, armato di sole sciabole, pronto a disperdersi alla prima salva di fucileria, contro il quale anche il cannone più grande ben poco poteva. Dacché il tataro, imprevedibile e inafferrabile, è difficile tanto da sfuggire, quanto da inseguire, succede che – spiegava Pasek (1968, 515) – “fuggendo pugnat, fuggendo vincit”.²² L’ussaro aveva fatto esperienza personale di una simile asserzione, dal momento che “non s’è mai vista una sì gran quantità di cadaveri tatar quale di tedeschi, moscoviti, o d’altre genti, sì che averne stesi tre o quattrocento è da tenersi per vittoria grandissima” (Pasek 1968, 515). Sienkiewicz va però al di là della mera segnalazione del progressivo orientalizzarsi delle tattiche belliche dei soldati polacchi, insistendo su quella che può essere vista come una vera e propria inversione di tendenza dei costumi. Il protagonista del romanzo, Andrzej Kmicic, suggella la propria conversione da sostenitore del *villain* Janusz Radziwiłł a servitore della causa del legittimo re Giovanni Casimiro mettendosi alla testa di un drappello di tatar, con i quali effettuerà operazioni di guerriglia. Allorché uno dei deuteragonisti, Michał Wołodyjowski, deve affrontare in duello il condottiero svedese Kannenberg, agli stratagemmi ‘occidentali’ di quest’ultimo (a cui un maestro di scherma fiorentino ha insegnato un colpo di fioretto tanto letale quanto poco cavalleresco),²³ si rifiuterà di opporre una “difesa tatar”,

²⁰ “E ci si indignava anche con Wittenberg, ché a dispetto di ogni uso bellico, contro agli esploratori non mandava esploratori, ma ordinava inopinatamente ai cannoni di far fuoco” (Sienkiewicz 1957, I, 209).

²¹ “E volentieri ci si travestiva da tatar, il cui solo nome riempiva gli svedesi di timore, tanto portentose erano le nuove e le fole sulla ferinità, il terribile e crudelissimo valore di que’ figli delle steppe di Crimea, con cui mai gli scandinavi fino ad allora s’eran battuti” (II, 379).

²² Da un punto di vista funzionale, all’opposto dei tatar, per modalità di combattimento, si trovano proprio i “tedeschi”. Quando questi infatti hanno il sopravvento – nota l’autore delle *Memorie* – non inseguono il nemico in difficoltà, quando hanno la peggio, non fuggono (Pasek 1968, 515).

²³ Sienkiewicz insiste in una polemica tutta sarmatica nei confronti dell’arte marziale occidentale, tanto poco cavalleresca quanto inefficace: nel romanzo, Zagłoba si fa vanto di aver sconfitto in duello ben sette maestri di scherma, italiani e francesi, del magnate Jerzy Lubomirski, che solo da lui in seguito avrebbe appreso la scherma e l’arte del combattimento (III, 64-65). Non è sicuramente un caso se Sienkiewicz fa, dell’unico magnate a non aver

basata sull'espedito di "scompare sotto al cavallo all'uso di Bilgorod", dal momento che l'onore non glielo avrebbe permesso (Sienkiewicz 1957, III, 57). Da buon cavaliere polacco, opporrà alla perfidia del suo avversario nient'altro che il proprio valore e un fideistico affidamento sulla protezione di entità celesti.²⁴ Gli svedesi sembrano quindi rappresentare un occidentale sinotticamente visto come al contempo miscredente, machiavellico e vandalico. È quindi vero che i personaggi svedesi nel romanzo – come sostiene Stefan Treugutt – si connotano precipuamente (e non del tutto in conformità col dato storiografico) come aggressori, ma non si può trascurare il fatto che comunque vi compaiono come portatori di una cultura nazionale, finanche sovranazionale (occidentale), al cui opposto si situa quella polacca. Non a caso, Zagłoba definisce il personaggio più rappresentativo delle diverse qualità sfoggiate dagli antagonisti nazionali, il generale svedese Arvid Wittenberg, un "bestemmiatore contro la fede, un carnefice di uomini e di donne, un incendiario, una carogna, un cerusico cavatore di sangue e danaro, un tagliaborse e uno scorticatore" (Sienkiewicz 1957, III, 176). Nel suo entusiasmo per la deriva sarmatica del personaggio più popolare del romanzo, Sienkiewicz lo rende il promotore di quella insubordinazione della nobiltà polacca (che, occorre ricordare, aveva spontaneamente giurato fedeltà a Carlo X Gustavo e al suo generale), allorché al momento della capitolazione della guarnigione svedese assediata a Varsavia venne garantito al suo comandante un salvacondotto. Nonostante le garanzie di libertà ottenute, infatti, il generale svedese nel giugno del 1656 verrà fatto prigioniero e morirà in carcere a Zamość l'anno successivo. Nella progressiva orientalizzazione dei suoi costumi militari, la nobiltà polacca celebrata da Sienkiewicz nel romanzo sembrava essersi dimenticata del principio giuridico latino per cui *pacta sunt servanda*. Non c'è da meravigliarsi se – a più di centotrenta anni dall'uscita del romanzo – gli svedesi vorranno prendersi una piccola rivincita con un film, *Mörkt vatten* (*Acque oscure*, regia di Rafael Edholm, 2012), dove una coppia di amanti clandestini viene perseguitata da un idraulico polacco la cui ossessione per la rettitudine morale è sicuramente superiore al rispetto della deontologia professionale.

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prestatato giuramento di fedeltà a Carlo X Gustavo, proprio un pupillo del più sarmatico tra i suoi personaggi.

²⁴ Al ritorno dall'azione vittoriosa, il suo reparto intona "L'angelo del Signore portò l'annuncio a Maria" (Sienkiewicz 1957, III, 59).

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A MOCK OLD NORSE POEM IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MILAN: FRANCESCO SAVERIO QUADRIO'S *VERSI IN LINGUA RUNICA*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1751 a young Pietro Verri (1728-97) published in Milan a collection of comic poetry by various authors under the title *Borlanda impasticciata* (*Pomace Pasty*).¹ The book includes a text by Francesco Saverio Quadrio (1695-1756) presented as *Versi in lingua runica* (*Verses in the Runic Language*; Quadrio 1751), which indisputably shows some knowledge of Old Norse literature and culture by its author, as well as his interest in, if not understanding of, the Old Norse language. The aim of this essay is to identify the author's sources and investigate their use and treatment by comparing and contrasting some of Quadrio's most significant passages with the material he had access to. This will lead to a better understanding of his work and purpose in the context of the miscellaneous volume it is part of.²

¹ For the complete title, see References under Quadrio 1751. The approximate English translation tries to convey some idea of the Lombard word *borlanda*, which indicates the remains of must or of distillation processes, also used to feed livestock ("broda, e specialmente quella che deriva dalla fabbricazione degli spiriti, e che si dà con biade a mangiare a bestie bovine"; Angiolini 1897, 126 s.v.). Cherubini explains the word as 'claptrap' or 'rambling speech', with explicit mention of *Borlanda impasticciata* (1814, I, 47 s.v.). The culinary metaphor is recurrent throughout the collection.

² I am grateful to Giovanni Bonfadini for first drawing my attention to this text. Some preliminary results of the present investigation are anticipated in his essay on Quadrio's linguistic works (Bonfadini 2010, 507-08).

2. FRANCESCO SAVERIO QUADRIO AND HIS *VERSI IN LINGUA RUNICA*

Born in the Valtelline, Francesco Saverio Quadrio joined the Society of Jesus in Venice in 1713. As a teacher and scholar, he mainly devoted himself to the study of history and especially literature, the field of his most significant contributions. After the publication of his first book, *Della poesia italiana* (*On Italian Poetry*, 1734), in which he advocated a return to Italian Renaissance models in contrast to seventeenth-century imitation of foreign works, he came into conflict with his superiors, and in the mid-1740s he fled Italy, travelling to Paris through Switzerland. After his return, in the late 1740s, he obtained the pope's permission to pass to the secular clergy.³

In 1741 Quadrio was authorised by his congregation to move to Milan in order to pursue his scientific interests. The Duchy of Milan was then under Austrian rule, and the city would soon become, especially from the 1760s onwards, one of the most significant centres of the Italian Enlightenment. Here, Quadrio had the chance to meet the most outstanding figures in contemporary Milanese culture and was granted access to the richest private libraries in town. He also became a member of the *Accademia dei Trasformati* (Academy of the Transformed), a literary society founded in 1743 at the urging of Count Giuseppe Maria Imbonati (1688-1768). It counted more than a hundred members, including significant intellectuals and writers, and its activities, periodically organised in private and public meetings, were quite popular. The institution, however, only prospered until Imbonati's death, then faced a rapid decline. The academicians cultivated diverse cultural interests, including poetry in Latin and in the Milanese vernacular, often following a Bernesque inspiration, more inclined to amusement than engagement: “una poesia fatta più di versi che di cose, eccellente intrattenimento per gentiluomini e gentildonne in vena di esercizi letterari” (Bezzola 1982, 358).⁴ In some respects, however, it did anticipate the Enlightenment ideas that were about to blossom around it (Gennaro 2000, 302-03; Capra 2002, 118).

Quadrio had been a member of the Academy since its birth in 1743, and after his death he was commemorated in a public meeting (Bezzola 1982, 359). It is in this context that he wrote his *Versi in lingua runica* as a contribution to Verri's *Borlanda impasticciata*, which collects texts by various academicians (Gaspari 1999). Pietro Verri, who would later become one of the leading voices of the Italian Enlightenment, was a member of the *Accademia dei Trasformati* in the 1750s (Barbarisi 1998, 205-06), though never a very active participant: “la sua presenza non fu particolarmente im-

³ On Quadrio's life see especially Monteforte 2010. The collection of essays edited by Claudia Berra (2010), at the urging of Gennaro Barbarisi, is the most extensive publication on Quadrio's life and works, with a detailed discussion of previous literature on diverse subjects.

⁴ “A poetry made more of verses than of things, excellent entertainment for ladies and gentlemen fancying some literary activity.” Translations are mine.

pegnata, visto che, portato com'era a lasciar memoria di ogni sua vicenda, non ne parlò più che tanto (e solo per dirne male!)” (Barbarisi 1998, 207).⁵ The later spokesman of Enlightenment ideas had not found his way yet, and scholars do not regard his early literary attempts as particularly successful. Unsurprisingly, *Borlanda impasticciata* has deserved only scant attention. It is described as an “esercizio di goliardia collettiva” (Arato 2002, 156),⁶ “prodotto tipico di un clima bernesco caratteristico di quegli anni ma pure documento di un’innegabile vocazione burlesca” (Anglani 1999, 652, and 2012, 22),⁷ a humorous vein that will give riper fruits in Verri’s later satirical production, in which the divertissement is combined with critical engagement to express a satirising intent and a moral perspective (Anglani 1999, 651-52, and 2012, 23-24). The author himself later discarded this book by not including it among the juvenile works collected in the hand-written volume known as *Cose varie* (*Diverse Things*) compiled in 1763 (Anglani 1999, 652, and 2012, 22; Capra 2002, 119-20).

Products of the literary taste of their times, the texts collected in *Borlanda impasticciata* ridicule the clumsy poetic attempts of a contemporary pleader called Plodes, here anagrammatised as Pedsol and presented as an Eritrean poet. Pedsol’s works are preceded by various encomiastic poems in his honour, written in various metres and in many Italian vernaculars and foreign languages, including Greek and Latin, most Romance languages, and English.⁸ This variety aims to farcically show how the poet’s fame could reach the farthest regions.

Quadrio’s *Versi in lingua runica* is one of these laudatory texts, and combines two interests of its author, literature and linguistics. To the latter Quadrio devotes his *Lettera intorno all’origine e alla propagazione delle Lingue* (*Letter on the Origin and Propagation of Languages*, 1756), a rather traditional compilation of various scholars’ opinions on the subject (Bonfadini 2010, 499-507). By contrast, the study of literature is far more significant in Quadrio’s scholarly activity, whose major achievement in this field is an extensive history of universal literature, *Della storia e della ragione d’ogni poesia* (*On the History and Reason of All Poetry*), published in five volumes (volumes II and III consist of two books each) between 1739 and 1752.

Scholars have underlined the limitations of Quadrio’s work: the author collects a large amount of data and details – presented in a learned, rather pedantic way – and yet lacks the ability to give a personal interpretation

⁵ “His participation was not very engaged considering that, keen as he was on keeping a record of every event in his life, he only talked little about it (and only to criticise it!).”

⁶ “Practice of collective witticism.”

⁷ “A typical product of the Bernesque climate of those years, which nevertheless documents an undeniable humorous vein.”

⁸ A Celtic poem is sometimes mentioned among the contents of the collection (cf. Gaspari 1999), but this is probably an erroneous reference to Quadrio’s ‘Runic’ verses, since the volume does not include any texts in a Celtic language.

and evaluation of this material within a coherent critical reading (cf., e.g., Monteforte 2010, 71-74, with further references). On the other hand, there is general appreciation of the author's vast knowledge of his field of studies, which is unequalled in his time and makes of his work an important source of information, especially on lesser-known foreign literatures. Arato describes Quadrio as "un erudito vero" with "inesauribile curiosità" (2002, 157, 172),⁹ even though his work is "minacciosamente prolissa" (2002, 166).¹⁰ Dionisotti underlines his "tendenza a semplificare e nei casi dubbi a sospendere il giudizio, e insomma a vincere i predecessori e competitori piuttosto per il numero che per la qualità dei reperti" (1985, 839),¹¹ but he praises his wide chronological and spatial perspective, which extends to otherwise unknown literary traditions, as in the case of northern and eastern Europe (1985, 859).¹²

As for Quadrio's use of his sources, it has been observed that his knowledge of foreign literature is mainly indirect, firstly because of obvious linguistic barriers – with the exception of Greek, Latin, and French texts – and secondly for his need to extract relevant, synthetic data from such a vast field. His work presents a large number of bibliographic references, though these are not always accurate and reliable. The opinions of other writers, such as Voltaire's dislike for Shakespeare, are often repeated without any critical analysis, more for practical reasons than on the basis of a shared stance (Dionisotti 1985, 861-62; Arato 2002, 176).

Quadrio's encounter with Old Norse literature can likely be traced back to his research for this extensive work.¹³ However, he is sometimes unable to distinguish clearly among various peoples and languages, and his conception of the 'northern' languages is very broad, expanding on a wide geographical area that also includes Slavic languages, like Polish. In the second volume, he discusses the Danes and Norwegians together with the Etruscans, Pelasgians, and Celts (Quadrio 1741, 30-32). His initial judgement echoes a wide-spread negative look on exotic literary traditions (Dionisotti 1985, 860):

Quanto all'altre settentrionali nazioni noi l'opera gitteremmo,
e l' tempo, se volessimo perderci a investigare la natura delle
loro Lingue, o de' loro Versi. Que' popoli rigidi, perchè sempre
in ghiaccio, e in gelate nevi giacenti; e quindi naturalmente di-

⁹ "Authentically learned"; "inexhaustible curiosity".

¹⁰ "Menacingly verbose."

¹¹ "Inclination to simplify and, in uncertain cases, to suspend judgement. Briefly, he stands out among his predecessors and competitors more for the amount than for the quality of his findings."

¹² See also Rinaldi 2010; Sinopoli 2010; Bonfatti 2010, 210-26.

¹³ A comprehensive analysis of the role of Nordic literature within Quadrio's work remains a desideratum, which transcends the limits of this contribution, although it would probably shed more light on the author's knowledge and appreciation of this subject.

sprezzatori d'ogni musica soavità, si recherebbono ad onta il lasciarsi dai vezzi della poesia addolcire [...]. Le loro favelle, dure, ferree, e incondite, ne manifestano da se stesse l'antipatia ad ogni concerto (Quadrio 1739, 639).¹⁴

Nevertheless, his attitude becomes more positive the more he gets acquainted with foreign traditions, and his work finally contributes to redefine and re-evaluate the role of distant literatures, enlarging and refreshing the scope of the discussion of literature in a wider European context (Dionisotti 1985, 860-62). This includes his finally more positive stance on marginal literary traditions, like the Nordic one: “Un simile allargamento modernistico, in qualche misura anomalo entro il panorama erudito settecentesco, si accompagna poi a uno speciale interesse per le zone irregolari o marginali della nostra tradizione; un interesse che sembra andare oltre l'esigenza documentaria” (Rinaldi 2010, 118).¹⁵

Quadrio's acquired expertise in Old Norse literature, among many other traditions, is at the basis of his contribution to *Borlanda impasticciata*. Against this backdrop, we can now turn our attention to his *Versi in lingua runica*,¹⁶ by first analysing the ‘Runic’ text itself and then considering the commentary that accompanies it.

3. THE ‘RUNIC’ TEXT

The ‘Runic’ poem is introduced by a title specifying that these verses, composed by a poet named Skogon Hnufa, were found, along with an Italian translation by Ser Ghirigoro di Val Mugello, in a codex of the Magliabechi collection. They are here published with annotations by the academician Geronzio Campanili, nicknamed “lo Stracotto” (*VLR*, xxxii),¹⁷ actually a pseudonym of Quadrio, who, like all contributors to *Borlanda impasticciata*, uses a pen name. The ‘Runic’ text and the Italian poem presented as its “versione” (*VLR*, xxxiii) are printed synoptically on two columns. Both the

¹⁴ “As for the other northern nations, we would waste our work and time if we decided to investigate the nature of their languages or poetry. Those rigid peoples – since they are always surrounded by ice and frosted snow and, therefore, naturally despise every musical sweetness – would consider it shameful if they were sweetened by the charm of poetry [...]. Their harsh, iron-like, and uncultivated languages themselves show their aversion to any harmony.” Unless otherwise stated, the use of italics and capital letters follows the original editions in quotations from Quadrio's works and his sources.

¹⁵ “This modernistic attitude, which is somehow anomalous in the context of eighteenth-century learning, is followed by a special interest in unusual or marginal areas of our tradition. This interest seems to transcend mere documentary needs.”

¹⁶ Henceforth *VLR* in references, followed by page or line numbers (the latter distinguished by ‘l.'). Line numbers always refer to the ‘Runic’ text on pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

¹⁷ “The Overcooked.”

title and the texts present a considerable number of footnotes, which contain the commentary and make up the longer part of Quadrio's work.

Here is the text in the 'Runic' language:

Syгур Pedsol folld dir
Men ranngrida dropar
Suarar er vvest kopar apur iafna

Na strondum i mar tafna
Leikur dan siot hymne
Arbisck, Turkstan, Persimne a yta komi

Kongs mapur sviom stromi
Na mordvargar thullù
Sumon thaktan lullu kvelur liora.

Sal vveit eg gulle shora
Nordur vid gullbiarta
Godheim skogul meth starta Alldurs ann morda.
(VLR, xxxiii-xxxiv)¹⁸

Obviously, the text as a whole is deprived of any meaning. However, it is quite easy to recognise single words, inflected forms, and expressions of the Old Norse language, which will be commented on below. Formally, the Old Norse words are combined so as to imitate a poem whose structure can be described with the traditional tools of Italian metrics: four tercets, each consisting of two shorter lines with six or seven syllables and a final longer line with ten to twelve syllables.¹⁹

This structure is likely to be derived from the contiguous Italian text, also written by Quadrio, and presented as the Italian 'translation'. In fact, this is an independent text, a prophecy foreseeing the birth of Pedsol, celebrated as one of the greatest poets of all times, in keeping with the general content of *Borlanda impasticciata*:

¹⁸ What is here transcribed as the final line is printed in two lines in the original, the second of which starting with "Alldurs", whence the capital letter (here retained). However, this word is preceded by larger indentation than the other lines, so it is meant as the continuation of the previous line, which is too long for the space available on the page. The rhyme scheme and the Italian 'translation' (with 12 lines) confirm this interpretation. With this final long line (l. 12), the tercet structure is respected consistently.

¹⁹ The number of syllables may vary slightly if we apply synalepha, as usual in Italian metrics (e.g., "Persimne a yta", l. 6; my italics), but the counting is obviously artificial, since it would be pointless to assume the use of metrical devices in this meaningless text. Quadrio's intention is apparent despite single details.

Pedsol nascerà un giorno,
 Che farà una Borlanda,
 Che non sarà vivanda d'ogni bocca.

Lungi la turba sciocca
 Da' nebbiati suoi versi:
 D'Arabi, Turchi, e Persi essa fia il sugo.

De Fisofoli un zugo
 In quella farsi io miro:
 Lui le Muse la ordiro in lettere d'oro.

Tessete a lui l'alloro
 Liete future etati;
 E ornatene de' Vati il Culattario.
 (VLR, xxxxiii-xxxiv)²⁰

This Italian poem consistently presents tercets of two seven-syllable lines (*settenari*) and one eleven-syllable line (*endecasillabo*), the two most common lines in the Italian poetic tradition. Both the 'Runic' and the Italian texts display the same rhyme scheme: all final lines in the tercets have an internal rhyme with the previous line and a final rhyme with the first line of the following tercet (l. 12 has only internal rhyme with l. 11).

The author's aim is to present an 'Italian translation' that formally abides by the metric characteristics of the 'Runic original'. To this effect, he produces a fake original text, combining words probably chosen for their number of syllables and, when appropriate, rhyme possibilities, and it is only reasonable to assume that he must have used some sources to collect the necessary lexical material. In fact, in his commentary, Quadrio explicitly refers to some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century editions and studies on the Old Norse language and literature, beginning with "l' *Edda* di Semundo Frode, e quella di Snorrone Sturlusons, amendue congiuntamente pubblicate in Copenhagen l'anno 1665. in 4. per opera e studio di Pietro Giovanni Resenio" (VLR, xxxii).²¹ This mention of Peder Hansen Resen (1625-88)'s 1665 editions of Snorri's *Edda* and of *Völuspá* and *Hávamál* is followed by references to other scholars and works: Thomas Bartholin the Younger

²⁰ "Pedsol will be born one day, / who will make a pomace, / which will not be food for every mouth. // The foolish mob may stay away / from his foggy verses. / It will be a distillation of Arabs, Turks, and Persians. // I see it become / a fruitcake of philosophers. / The Muses created it for him in golden letters. // Wreath laurel for him, / happy future ages, / and adorn with it the poets' cesspool." This is a literal rendition of the content of the poem, whose main quality, however, resides in the choice and play on words from the Italian literary tradition (as an example, see below, the remark on the word "Fisofoli").

²¹ "Sæmundr fróði's and Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, both published together in *quarto* by Peder Hansen Resen in Copenhagen in 1665."

(1659-90), Olof Rudbeck the Elder (1630-1702), Johann Georg Keyßler (1693-1743), Johan Peringskiöld (1654-1720), Henry Spelman (1562-1641), and Ole Worm (1588-1654). These names were certainly known to Quadrio from his work on *Della storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia*, and some of their books were probably at his disposal in libraries he could visit in Milan or during his journeys abroad. The index contained in volume V includes references to Bartholin, Keyßler, Rudbeck, Spelman, Worm, as well as to Snorri Sturluson (Quadrio 1752, 360, 543, 686, 716, 721, 775).

If we consider the orthographic characteristics of the words reproduced by Quadrio, it is possible to recognise precise correspondences, with occasional minor changes, between the lexical material combined in *VLR* and the excerpts from Old Norse texts available in one specific work that the author mentions, *Antiquitates selectae Septentrionales et Celticae* (*Selected Nordic and Celtic Antiquities*, 1720) by Johann Georg Keyßler,²² a relationship also confirmed, as will be shown below, by the information given in the commentary. This can be exemplified through some lines quoted by Keyßler from the eddic poems *Völuspá* and *Grímnismál*, as well as from *Hákonarmál*, a panegyric composed by the famous tenth-century skald Eyvindr Finnson, called ‘skáldaspillir’ (‘Plagiarist’), in honour of the Norwegian king Hákon góði Haraldsson:²³

Völuspá (Keyßler 1720, 120, 122, 124-25):²⁴ 57,2 “*Sygur folld i Mar*” (ll. 1, 4); 57,3 “*Hverfa aff himne*” (possibly l. 5, with *γ* for *i*); 57,7 “*Leikur haar hite*” (l. 5); 64,3 “*Gulle thaktan*” (ll. 9, 10); 64,7 “*Og vm Alldurs Daga*” (l. 12); 38,1 “*Sal weit eg standa*” (l. 10); 38,3 “*Ná strondum a*” (l. 4);²⁵ 38,4 “*Nordur horffa Dyr*” (l. 11); 38,5 “*Falla Eitur Dropar*” (l. 2); 38,6 “*Inn vmm Liora*” (l. 9); 39,3 “*Men mein suarar*” (ll. 2, 3); 39,4 “*Og Mordvargar*” (l. 8);²⁶ 39,7 “*Kvelur Nüdhoggur*” (l. 9); between lines 39,4 and 39,7, Keyßler prints in verse the insertion of Snorri’s *Edda* (Snorri Sturluson 2005,

²² Quadrio uses the form “Keysler” (*VLR*, xxxii), as on the front page of his source, while I adopt the now current form.

²³ The following quotations reproduce Keyßler’s text preceded by standard strophe and line numbers based on the following editions: for *Völuspá*, Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 9 (strophes 38-39), 13-15 (strophes 57 and 64); for *Grímnismál*, Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 58-59 (strophe 8), 64 (strophe 36); for *Hákonarmál*, Fulk 2012, 192. Italics are mine and signal words or expressions that can be found in Quadrio’s text, on the lines indicated in parentheses. Since the content of these texts is irrelevant for Quadrio’s use of them, no translation is given here. The study of Keyßler’s own sources and of his interest in them falls beyond the scope of this analysis.

²⁴ I follow the order in which Keyßler inserts the strophes into his discourse: 57, 64, 38-39 (the last two from Snorri’s *Edda*; cf. Snorri Sturluson 2005, 53).

²⁵ The diacritic *e* of *Ná* is, for typographic reasons, at a certain distance above the *a*. Quadrio may have overlooked it, or he simply ignored it.

²⁶ As for the ‘Runic’ text above, I have followed the copy available as pdf in the digital archive of Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in Milan (see References under Quadrio 1751) with the spelling “mordvargar” on l. 8. Other copies have the variant reading “Mardvargar” on l. 8, probably a misprint, while they retain the form with *o* in the commentary (*VLR*, xxxiv).

53) as “Enn i Huergelme / *Er West*, thni thar”, used by Quadrio on l. 3.

Grímnismál (Keyßler 1720, 135, 153): 8,2 “þars en gullbiarta” (l. 11); 36,3 “Skeggiolld ok *Skogul*” (l. 12); 36,7 “*Ranngrid* ok *Radgrid*” (l. 2, with addition of final *a*).

Hákonarmál (Keyßler 1720, 119): 20,2 “*A yta Siot*” (ll. 5, 6); 20,4 “*Aþur iafna goþur*” (l. 3, with *p* for *þ*); 20,6 “*Kongs Maþur komi*” (ll. 6, 7, with *p* for *þ*).

Other words are derived from prose quotations, like the initial section of chapter 9 of *Ynglinga saga* (Keyßler 1720, 141; cf. Snorri Sturluson 2002, 22), where Quadrio found the words “*Godheim*” (l. 12), “*Sviom*” (l. 7), “*sumon*” (l. 9). A few elements, which are meant to be recognisable for the reader, are obviously Quadrio’s own initiative, like the name “*Pedsol*” (l. 1) at the beginning of the poem, and the words “*Arbisck*, *Turkstan*, *Persimne*” (l. 6), meant as fake foreign forms corresponding to “*Arabi*, *Turchi*, e *Persi*” in the Italian translation. Some rhyming words, such as “*thullù*” (l. 8), “*lullu*” (l. 9), may simply have been created in order to stick to the rhyme scheme.

In *Della storia e della ragione d’ogni poesia*, Keyßler is only mentioned in the final volume (Quadrio 1752, 232; in no connection with Nordic literature), in the additions to the second part of volume III, which had been published in 1744, so it is possible that the work came to his knowledge only after this date. Undoubtedly, this is Quadrio’s main source for the composition of *VLR*, even though his name is not given any special prominence.

4. THE COMMENTARY

In the commentary on the text, Quadrio combines information derived from various sources with details of his own invention to create a network of historical, literary, and cultural references around the text.

As mentioned above, Quadrio’s knowledge of Old Norse literature can be traced back to his studies on the history of universal literature. As a matter of fact, in the commentary on the ‘Runic’ text, he sometimes reuses his own work, presenting similar facts with very similar formulations. For example, when introducing the fictional poet, Quadrio explains that “*Skogon Hnufa* poetava circa l’anno 930. dell’Era Volgare: ed era Consigliere d’Heroldo Rè

di Norvegia, che un gran numero di Adelruni, o Scaldi, cioè di Poeti aveva al suo Consiglio aggregati” (VLR, xxxii).²⁷ In this passage, the author combines data already presented in a short list of ancient Nordic poets contained in the first book of volume II of *Della storia e della ragione d’ogni poesia*. Some words and expressions are repeated literally:

Sono pure celebrati nelle storie Runiche, come poeti, ch’essi chiamavano talvolta *Adelruni*, ma volgarmente *Scaldi* [...].
ARALDO stesso, o EROLDÒ Re di Norvegia, poetava circa il 930 ed essendo sommamente amator de’ Poeti, ne aveva un buon numero al suo Consiglio aggregati, i nomi de’ quali erano THORBIORNO HORNKLOFE, HOLVERO HNUFA (Quadrio 1741, 32-33).²⁸

In inventing his ‘new’ poet, Quadrio uses the nickname of the ninth-century Norwegian skald Ólfr hnúfa (‘Snub-nose’; cf. Clunies Ross 2012, 125) and retains some information on king Haraldr hárfagri (c. 850-c. 932). The form “Skogon” might be based on a somewhat similar name, like “Skogul” (cf. VLR, l. 12), remodelled on names like “*Thoron*” (VLR, xxxiii), one of the occurring variants for the god Thor.

Among Quadrio’s easily traceable sources is Henry Spelman’s *Glossarium archaiologicum* (*Archaeological Glossary*), first published between 1626 and 1664, which he explicitly quotes about the etymology of the word ‘rune’: “dal Sassonico *Ryne*, che *Misterio* significa, perchè in essa [Lingua] scrivevano i Poeti di quelle Nazioni le lor Profezie, ed Oracoli. Veggasi Enrico Spelman nel *Glossario Archeologico*” (VLR, xxxii).²⁹ At the voice “*Runicæ literæ*”, Spelman derives this word “à *ryne*, aliàs *zerÿne*, Saxonico, quod *mysterium & rem occultam significat*” (1687, 493).³⁰

However, as for the ‘Runic’ text, Quadrio derives most of the material he uses in his commentary from Keyßler’s work. The latter’s name occurs soon after the above-mentioned reference to the *Eddas*, when the author explains that, after finding these fragmentary ‘Runic’ verses (“un semplice rottame d’un vaticinio”; VLR, xxxii),³¹ he examined Resen’s edition in the

²⁷ “Skogon Hnufa composed his poems around 930 of our era and he was councillor to Haraldr, king of Norway, who had included a large number of *Adelruni*, i.e., poets, in his council.”

²⁸ “[The following names] are also celebrated in Runic stories as poets, whom they sometimes called *adelruni*, but commonly ‘skalds’ [...]. / Haraldr himself, king of Norway, composed his poems around 930 and, since he loved poets very much, he had included a considerable number of them in his council. Their names were Þorbjörn hornklofi, Ólfr hnúfa.”

²⁹ “From Saxon *ryne*, which means ‘mystery’, because the poets of those nations used that [language] to write their prophecies and oracles. See Henry Spelman in *Glossarium archaiologicum*.”

³⁰ “From Saxon *ryne*, or *zerÿne*, which means ‘mystery’ or ‘secret thing’.”

³¹ “Simply a fragment of a prophecy.”

hope of finding the missing part of the text, but his efforts were in vain. This is why he concludes: “Perciò bene osservarono il Bartolini, il Rudbeck, il Keysler, ed altri, la mentovata Edizione Reinesiana [*sic*] esser molto mancante; e potersene quindi fare una più copiosa d’assai, e migliore a centinaia di migliaia di volte” (*VLR*, xxxii).³² Reading this, we have the impression that the editor is a fully informed, learned scholar, but in fact Quadrio derives both the information on the *Eddas* and the judgement about Resen’s edition from the passage in which Keyßler introduces these texts:

Edda [...] [d]uabus partibus absolvitur, quarum una Eddam Sæmundi Frode antiquissimam sistit in eaque 1) *Voluspam*, i.e. vaticinia, 2) *Haavamaal* sive præcepta Ethica, cujus Autor ipse Odinus, Deus a majoribus nostris cultus, perperam creditur. 3) *Runa Capitule* h.e. Scientiam vel magiam Odini. [...] Altera Reseniani operis pars absolvit recentiore *Snorronis* Eddam, veterum fabulas ac Mythologiam explicantem. [...] Perquam mancæ tamen hæ Eddæ Resenianæ, quod ex lectione Scriptorum Bartholini, Peringskioldi, Rudbeckii aliorumque patet, quare optandum, ut harum Antiquitatum peritus quispiam novam editionem majori cura & ex melioribus Codicibus MStis adornaret (Keyßler 1720, 19-20).³³

From this same passage Quadrio also derives the translation of the title *Vøluspá*: “*Voluspa*, cioè *Vaticinii*” (*VLR*, xxxii),³⁴ which probably gave him the inspiration for making the Italian text sound like a prophecy.

A topic Quadrio dedicates quite some space to is the god Thor. Ser Ghirigoro, the presumed author of the Italian version, is said to have translated another work from Old Norse, a treatise on the god Thor and his hammer: “Di questo Scrittore abbiamo ancora il Volgarizzamento del *Trattato sul Martello di Thoron*, composto in Lingua di Norvegia da Regnero Lodbrock, Letterato [...] che fioriva intorno all’anno 940” (*VLR*, xxxiii).³⁵ The mention of Ragnarr loðbrók as a poet echoes once again Quadrio’s own words in the

³² “Therefore, Bartholin, Rudbeck, Keyßler, and others were right when they observed that Resen’s mentioned edition is very deficient, and one could certainly make a much larger and a thousand times better one.”

³³ “The *Edda* [...] consists of two parts. The first one is the ancient *Edda* by Sæmundr fróði, including: 1) *Vøluspá*, i.e., prophecies, 2) *Hávamál* or moral precepts, mistakenly attributed to Odin himself, a god worshipped by our forefathers, 3) *Chapters on the Runes*, i.e., Odin’s science or magic. [...] The second part of Resen’s work consists of the more recent *Edda* by Snorri, which explains the tales and mythology of the ancient people. [...] However, these *Eddas* by Resen are very deficient, as one can read in Bartholin, Peringskiöld, Rudbeck, and others. Therefore, it is desirable that an expert of these antiquities will prepare a new, more precise edition, based on better manuscripts.”

³⁴ “*Vøluspá*, i.e., *Prophecies*.”

³⁵ “By this writer, we also have a translation of the *Treatise on Thor’s Hammer*, written, in the language of Norway, by the author Ragnarr loðbrók [...] who flourished around the year 940.”

above-mentioned list of ancient Nordic poets: “REGNERO LODBROC fioriva verso il 940” (Quadrio 1741, 33).³⁶

This treatise on Thor’s hammer is said to consist of three chapters, dealing, respectively, with the god Thor and his cult; with his hammer, here called “Miolnar”; and with representations of the hammer in carvings (VLR, xxxiii). The details mentioned in this context undoubtedly reveal that Quadrio is again using Keyßler as his source of information, picking up elements and nouns that he reassembles for his own purpose. From the discussion of a rejected Germanic origin of Hercules, Quadrio derives that Thor “male fu confuso da alcuni con *Ercole Magusano*, con *Ercole Sassano*, con *Odino*”³⁷ (cf. Keyßler 1720, 190-96, on “Hercules Saxanus”; 198-200, on “Hercules Magusanus”; 201-02, on the confusion with Odin), as well as the parallelism with Celtic mythology: “il culto lui dato da Celti, da’ quali era detto *Taran*, o *Taram*”³⁸ (cf. Keyßler 1720, 196: “*Thor Celtis est Taran vel Taram*”).³⁹ He also finds a mention of Thor’s “Duelli con *Hrugnero*”⁴⁰ (cf. Keyßler 1720, 196: “*Monomachia Thori & Hrugneris*”), with a summary of the episode on Thor and Hrungrnir from Snorri’s *Edda*. In this passage, Keyßler inserts a remark on Thor’s hammer, whose very title “*De Malleo Thoronis*” (196) is echoed by Quadrio’s own title. Quadrio retains Keyßler’s Latin word “clava” (196): “Clava, o sia Martello”,⁴¹ as well as the wrong version of the name Mjöllnir: “il qual Martello era chiamato con proprio nome *Miolnar*”⁴² (cf. Keyßler 1720, 196: “sua propria voce dicebatur *Miolnar*”),⁴³ and the description of the hammer as frightening and damaging, “spaventevole, e infesto” (cf. Keyßler 1720, 196: “*infestus ac timendus*”, in reversed order). Finally, he also finds here the notion that Thor’s hammer and the Christian cross were similar, and sometimes misinterpreted, in carvings: “alcuni Antiquarj [...] hanno così fatto Martello preso per una Croce, dalla cui figura non era molto dissomigliante; e quindi hanno riputato esser de’ Cristiani que’ Monumenti con esso segnati, ch’erano de’ Gentili”⁴⁴ (cf. Keyßler 1720, 138: “*non omnes cruce signatos lapides [...] a Christianis esse erectos. Malleus enim Thoronis Dei crucis figuram referebat*”).⁴⁵

Another Nordic god mentioned by Quadrio is Bragi, correctly designed

³⁶ “Ragnarr loðbrók flourished around 940.”

³⁷ “[Thor] was mistakenly confused by some people with *Hercules Magusanus*, with *Hercules Saxanus*, with Odin.”

³⁸ “The cult attributed to him by the Celts, who called him *Taran*, or *Taram*.”

³⁹ “For the Celts, Thor is *Taran* or *Taram*.”

⁴⁰ “Duels with Hrungrnir.”

⁴¹ “Club, i.e., hammer.”

⁴² “That hammer was called by its own name *Miolnar*.”

⁴³ “By its own name it was called *Miolnar*.”

⁴⁴ “Some antiquarians [...] took such a hammer for a cross, since it was not very different in shape. Therefore, they thought the pagan monuments presenting this symbol to be Christian.”

⁴⁵ “Not all stones marked with a cross [...] were erected by Christians. In fact, Thor’s hammer recalled the shape of the cross of God.”

as the god of poetry. Once again, the author derives his information from Keyßler, who describes him as “mansuetum, sapientem, eloquentem, promptum & Poëseos maxime gnarum [...] adeo ut ab ipsius nomine Poëtica *Bragur* dicatur” (Keyßler 1720, 352-53).⁴⁶ However, this time, Quadrio combines the details derived from his source with some personal additions totally devoid of any foundation:

da *Brago* il più benefico Nume, che riconoscessero i Settentrionali, chiamavano altresì *Bragonescks* i Poeti, e la Poesia *Bragur*; onde son venuti all'Italia *Bragone*, *Braga*, voci, che i Fiorentini, per adattarle alla gorgia lor propria, pronunziano *Bracone*, *Braca*. Ma il Mondo [...] non va più così. *Bragonesse* cioè *Poettesse*, sono in oggi le Donne: e per ciò è, che portan le brache (VLR, xxxii).⁴⁷

This passage obviously plays on a mock correspondence between Old Norse and Italian words, establishing false etymologies to enhance a comical effect. In this case, Quadrio starts from the correct meaning of the word *bragur* ‘poetry’. In fact, on the basis of information given by his sources as well as glossaries and Latin translations of Old Norse texts, he did have the opportunity to interpret Old Norse words correctly. But this is not always at the core of his interest, so on other occasions he rather picks up words that happen to be similar to Italian ones and attributes some invented meaning to them. One such case is the comment to “*ranngrida*” (VLR, l. 2), explained as “una cosa sì fatta [...] che *grida misericordia*” (VLR, xxxiii).⁴⁸ As seen above, Quadrio adds a final *a* to Old Norse “*Ranngrid*”, ultimately derived from *Grímnismál*, in order to approach it to the Italian verb *grida* ‘it cries’. Something similar happens in another remark on poetry, reported as a comment to Old Norse “*meth*” (VLR, l. 12), actually the preposition *með* ‘with’, on the basis of its assonance with the Italian word *matto* ‘mad’:

L'eruditissimo Anton Maria Salvini, a cui le Muse per immortal beneficio rivelarono tutte le vere origini delle voci, dal Runico *Meth*, che vale *Poeta*, [...] derivava non senza ragione il Greco *Matthos* (*ματθα*), e l'Italiano *Matto*: ond'è, che alcuni, che ritengono tuttora del parlar Runico, chiamano i Poeti anche in oggi *Matti* (VLR, xxxiv).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ “Mild, wise, eloquent, prompt, and the most expert at poetry [...] so that the poetic art is called *bragur* from his name.”

⁴⁷ “From *Brago*, the most benevolent god that the Nordic people acknowledged, they called poets *bragonescks* and poetry *bragur*; hence came to Italy the words *bragone*, *braga*, which the inhabitants of Florence, in order to adapt them to their own peculiar pronunciation, pronounced *bracone*, *braca* [‘breeches’]. But [...] this is not the way the world goes nowadays. Today, women are *bragonesse*, i.e., poetesses, and this is why they wear breeches.”

⁴⁸ “Such a thing [...] that cries for mercy.”

⁴⁹ “The very learned Anton Maria Salvini, to whom the Muses, as an eternal favour, revealed

Quadrio's interest in etymology is displayed, on more serious premises, in other works, such as his linguistic writings (Bonfadini 2010, *passim*). In *VLR*, by contrast, the several examples of mock etymology have the appearance of learned investigations, while they actually aim for a sarcastic or comical effect. In the case of “mordvargar” (*VLR*, l. 8; cf. Old Norse *morðvargr* ‘murderer’), the comment establishes a link to the general theme of *Borlanda impasticciata*: “La voce *Mordvargar* può significare benissimo anche *Pasticcio*: onde bene il Pedsol intitolò il suo Componimento *Borlanda Impasticciata*” (*VLR*, xxxiv).⁵⁰ Since Quadrio's comment normally disregards the meaning of authentic Old Norse words, invented ones are as good a pretext for his remarks. This is the case of “thullù” (*VLR*, l. 8), which gives the chance of a reference to the Italian literary tradition:

Thullù accorciato di *Thurlulù*, in quella guisa, che gl'Italiani *Mattino* accorciano di *Matutino*: e vale in Lingua Runica il medesimo, che *Speculativo*, o *Filosofo*. Il volgarizzatore scrisse *Fisofolo*, come quegli, che nato in Val di Mugello, parlava la Lingua del suo paese. E *Fisofolo* invece di *Filosofo* disse pure il Boccaccio (*Nov.* 29.) (*VLR*, xxxiv).⁵¹

Some of the passages quoted above show Quadrio's efforts to establish links, improbable as they may be, between the Old Norse world and the Italian culture, mentioning names that would sound familiar to his readers, like Salvini and Boccaccio. We can observe this same strategy in a more articulate episode. The above-mentioned tenth-century Norwegian treatise on Thor's hammer is said to have arrived, along some unknown paths, at a Capuchin convent in Radicofani, Tuscany, where the author was able to read it. The transmission of the ‘Runic’ poem is thus connected to the famous bibliophile Antonio Magliabechi (1633-1714), in whose library the codex “CC.4.” (*VLR*, xxxiii) with the poem and its translation was preserved. However, the editor informs his readers that the text now only survives in a transcription provided by a noblewoman, while the manuscript itself was stolen by a petty cleric (“*Chericuzzo*”; *VLR*, xxxiii), who sold it to a certain “*Milord Ktinktinkton, che facendo de' Manoscritti grandissima incetta, com'è*

all the true origins of words, derived not without reason from Runic *meth*, which means ‘poet’, the Greek word *matthos* (ματθα) and the Italian *matto*: hence to this very day some people, whose language still shows some Runic influence, keep calling poets *matti* [‘mad’].” Anton Maria Salvini (1653-1729) was a professor of Ancient Greek and a collaborator to the *Crusca* dictionary.

⁵⁰ “The word *Mordvargar* can perfectly mean ‘pasty’, as well, whence Pedsol deftly chose *Borlanda impasticciata* as the title of his poem.”

⁵¹ “*Thullù*, abbreviated from *Thurlulù*, in the same way as the Italians abbreviate *matutino* to *mattino* [‘morning’]. In the Runic language it means the same as ‘thinker’ or ‘philosopher’. The translator wrote *fisofolo* since, hailing from the Mugello valley, he spoke the language of his region. In fact, *fisofolo* instead of *filosofo* was written by Boccaccio, too (tale 29 [actually 19, in *Decameron*]).”

uso di tutti gl'Ingleſi, lo ſi ha trasportato nel ſuo paefe in Manchester” (VLR, xxxiii).⁵² On the other hand, the earlier arrival of this codex to Italy is linked to some famous names of fifteenth-century Italian literature in that we read that its story is recorded in a letter addressed to the poet Angelo Poliziano (1454-94) by Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), who explains:

facendo il celebre Lorenzo de' Medici ſtudioſa ricerca di Opere, e Libri d'ogni Lingua, per formare quella illuſtre ſua Libreria, fu-
rongli detti verſi dalla Lapponia inviati, con alcune altre coſuzze,
da un certo viaggiatore Bartolommeo de li Sonecti, di cui fa pur
menzione il Quadrio nella Storia, e Ragione d'ogni Poesia Tom.
VI. pag. 49, e che il prefato Lorenzo per miglior ſua intelligenza
ne fece pur fare la verſione da Ghirigoro di Val Mugello (VLR,
xxxii-xxxiii).⁵³

In this passage, Quadrio even includes a reference to his own work (1749, 48-49), in which he mentions a scarcely known fifteenth-century poet, Bartolomeo da li Sonetti, who described in a cycle of tailed sonnets the islands of the Aegean Sea, but whose voyages certainly did not take him as far as the Nordic countries.

5. CONCLUSIONS

As the analysed passages have shown, Quadrio makes a very free use of his sources, whose scientific value does not interest him in this context. While he often combines authentic information with invented details, one of his recurrent strategies is to establish connections between the Old Norse world and the Italian culture across time and space, thus embedding new material into a well-known tradition, which his readers feel part of.

As a whole, the text gives the impression of a very learned piece of writing, as shown by the rich information offered in the commentary and by the careful metric construction of the poem. The intent is to parody the habits and style of contemporary learning. Exploiting his humorous vein, Quadrio often obtains a comical effect, which sometimes becomes satirical. In doing

⁵² “Milord Ktinkinton, who, following the habit of all Englishmen, used to buy up huge amounts of manuscripts, took it to his country, in Manchester.”

⁵³ “When the famous Lorenzo de’ Medici learnedly went in search of works and books in every language in order to collect his illustrious library, these verses were sent to him from Lapland, together with some other smaller things, by a certain traveller, Bartolomeo da li Sonetti, who is also mentioned by Quadrio in his *Storia e ragione d’ogni poesia*, book VI, page 49. To better understand it, the said Lorenzo had it translated by Ghirigoro di Val Mugello.” The reference is obviously to the Laurentian Library (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana), to whose collections the Lord of Florence Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449-92), known as the Magnificent, contributed extensively.

this, he does not forget himself, making reference to his own *Della storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia*, an ironic self-representation that would certainly amuse his readers and friends in the Academy (Arato 2002, 156-57; Rinaldi 2010, 119). However, his aim is certainly not to express criticism of this learned literature, which he himself is an exponent of, but to contribute to the collective entertainment in the jesting tone typical of the whole *Borlanda impasticciata*.

The references to Old Norse literature and culture, as well as the use of some samples of the language, are only a pretext, but they do add an especially exotic taste, which certainly was far more unusual than most of the other languages found in the book. In fact, in *Della storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia*, Quadrio regards the Nordic peoples as the remotest inhabitants of the world: “Questi stessi [Bardi] fiorivano pure presso i Norvegi, presso i Dani, e presso gl’Islandi, per modo che luogo sì remoto non ci ha avuto nel Mondo, dove la Poesia non si sia fatta vedere per illustrarlo” (Quadrio 1741, 31).⁵⁴ This exotic effect would not have been possible without Quadrio’s expertise in this field, which was definitely rare, if not unsurpassed, among his contemporaries. Although his universal history is a far more significant step in the dissemination of Nordic literature in Italy, his ‘Runic’ verses still give us the chance to appreciate both his erudition and his wit.

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⁵⁴ “Those same [bards] also flourished among the Norwegians, the Danes, and the Icelanders, so much so that there has never been a place on earth, remote as it may be, where poetry has not shown itself to give it lustre.”

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SCANDINAVIAN SCIENTIFIC LEARNING IN EIGHTEENTH-
CENTURY BRITISH WRITING: LINNAEUS AND
THE EUROPEAN OUTLOOK ON NATURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the eighteenth century, a much investigated – and even fashionable – field of knowledge is natural history, a macro-domain including a vast number of disciplines and sub-disciplines. Most of them are emerging ones, not in the sense that they are completely new, but that the research perspective, the way they are investigated and discussed, is extremely innovative. On the one hand, cognate disciplines such as *materia medica*, *diaetetica*, agriculture, gardening, botany, etc. – considered as ‘part of’ and ‘dependent on’ the more prestigious and encompassing domains of medicine and natural history – establish themselves as autonomous, individual disciplines, with their own epistemological principles and values. On the other hand, new disciplinary communities originate and consolidate in an ideal ‘commonwealth of learning’ (cf. Cook 2012, 232). Renowned scholars and their assistants cooperate across nations to establish a solid scientific network throughout Europe (cf. Jönsson 2011), and communal correspondence, that is to say the practice of exchanging specialised information by letter, becomes the widespread method to propagate new ideas and discoveries, experimental results, and disciplinary research (cf. Gotti 2006a; 2006b and 2014). In this perspective, research alone – and especially its practical usefulness – can ensure human progress as well as national and Eurocentric welfare: a lively economic debate takes place in Europe on the applicability of scientific research in every-

day life and mercantilism is the principal economic approach as well as socio-political model adopted across nations. In general terms, governments support domestic manufactures and export activities, adopting protective regulatory measures to restrain imported goods.¹

If natural history represents a vast and clustered domain of sub-disciplines with a high degree of commitment among eighteenth-century scholars, one of the branches which best represents the ‘commonwealth of learning’ and its civil and utilitarian issues is botany (cf. Müller-Wille 2007; Lonati 2013).

On botany, or botanical knowledge, are based most of the eighteenth-century commercial interests and principles regulating global and colonial trade; moreover, it is considered the main source of individual wealth, national welfare and cultural renown. According to Schiebinger and Swan (2005b, 3),

[a] resilient and long-standing narrative in the history of botany has characterized its rise as coincident with and dependent on the development of taxonomy, standardized nomenclature, and ‘pure’ systems of classification. Indeed, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed key developments in the systematisation of many fields. But to isolate the science of botany is to overlook the dynamic relationships among plants, peoples, states, and economies in the period. [...] [E]arly modern science and especially natural history, of which botany was a subfield, remained strategically important in global struggles among emerging nation-states for land and resources.²

As a consequence, botany acts as a bridge towards other disciplines, other settings, other peoples, other countries, other traditions and, ultimately, other knowledge(s).

The contribution of Scandinavian scholars – particularly Swedish – to the elaboration of modern botany is extremely relevant, both at a theoretical and at a practical level. Two of these scholars, together with their works and their thought, are under scrutiny here: Carl Linnaeus (1701-78) and Fredrik Hasselquist (1722-52).

Linnaeus is the father of modern botanical taxonomy and nomenclature, physician and naturalist, professor of medicine and botany at the University of Uppsala. He revived the university ‘physic’ garden where he practised his activity as *botaniste de cabinet*, after having travelled extensively in Sweden and particularly in Lapland (less frequently in Europe and never beyond Europe). Botanical gardens

¹ Some relevant studies concerning continental and Scandinavian mercantilism deserve a mention here, in particular Tribe 1984; Magnusson 1987; Liedman and Persson 1992; Reinert 2005.

² On the relevance of botany in European and colonial economies, cf. Brockway 1979; Schiebinger 2004; Schiebinger and Swan 2005a; Lonati 2013.

were founded in the sixteenth century primarily as ‘physic’ gardens (gardens of medicinal plants) attached to universities and hospitals to cultivate ‘simples’ for medicines and to teach medical botany to physicians and apothecaries. By the eighteenth century, these gardens were networked with experimental colonial gardens [...]. Naturalists’ specimens not only enriched botanical gardens and European science but also served as a medium of exchange among naturalists. [...] Linnaeus, without money and noteworthy social standing, flourished in botanical networks, receiving much sought-after botanical specimens from correspondents all over the world in exchange for access to his international contacts. More important he offered adherents the sense of contributing to a higher cause – his universal system of classification – and [...] Linnaeus’s system of scientific botanical nomenclature (Schiebinger 2004, 57-59).³

Linnaeus established an international network of scientific correspondence throughout his whole life, both with other scholars across Europe, and with his disciples around the world: from the beginning of his career to the 1750s, his effort to make his new ideas accepted in Europe was the focus of his international relationships, whereas from the 1750s on his epistolary writing highlighted that his revolution was definitively accomplished and “that it was spread by a constantly increasing number of followers. Among them were Linnaeus’s own disciples from abroad whom he had taught in Uppsala” (Jönsson 2011, 182).⁴

Hasselquist, Linnaeus’s student and assistant, is one of the many *botanistes voyageurs* of “a generation of students [who travelled] as botanists aboard the ships sent out by Dutch, English, and Swedish East and West India companies and scientific academies [...] often sent with specific instructions to supply particular observations, seeds, or plants”, since this “allowed the naturalists at home in Europe to ‘see’ at a distance” (Schiebinger 2004, 57).

In the eighteenth century botany was a very young science, the interest of which was deeply felt and rapidly spreading among experts and non-experts in Great Britain. This emerging discipline “had received great impetus [...] from the expanding colonial activity [...] and the voyages of exploration” (Brockway 1979, 65); as a result, many original works in English, along with many translations and adaptations of foreign works and discoveries, were frequently published. A long and established tradition of con-

³ As for botanical gardens and their relevance in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific research, colonial exploration and the construction of national identity, cf. also Brockway 1979 and Schiebinger and Swan 2005a.

⁴ The Linnean Correspondence Collection may be browsed at linnean-online.org/correspondence.html and linnean-online.org/view/correspondence/ (The Linnean Society of London).

tacts and exchange between the most important academic institutions and scientific societies both in Great Britain and in Sweden reinforced such interest. Intellectual connections and epistolary exchanges between the two countries were so frequent and long-established that many Swedish scholars – such as astronomers, chemists, naturalists, physicians, etc. – sent their contributions to the Royal Society of London for oral delivery, and some of them were later published in the *Philosophical Transactions*. Some researchers were members of both Swedish science academies (Uppsala and Stockholm) and the Royal Society as well. Linnaeus himself founded the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm in 1739, inspired by the values of the Royal Society of London (established in 1662, First Royal Charter by King Charles II). The main issues of these two non-academic institutions were the promotion of science and scientific research with practical aims, the spreading of knowledge among specialists and non-specialists alike, and the vernacularisation⁵ of knowledge in civil society, though Latin was the *lingua franca* of science at the highest level of scholarly interaction (Linnaeus wrote his scientific works in Latin and only later were they translated into English and other European languages).⁶

In this context, the aim of the present study is at least threefold: firstly, to investigate the impact of Linnaeus's system and research experience on British culture; secondly, to investigate some of Hasselquist's passages in his letters to Linnaeus, to highlight the usefulness of first-hand accounts and the great relevance of correspondence for the construction of natural scientific knowledge; thirdly, to highlight how the Scandinavian – precisely Swedish – approach to the natural world may be representative of the European culture as a whole, as emerging from British writing of the period. The works under scrutiny here were written or translated by European scholars, published in Europe, and addressed to a European readership.

I.I. SOURCE WORKS

It is in the 1760s that Linnaeus's revolutionary system is firmly established in England, particularly through his correspondents and followers (Jönsson 2011, 183-84). The two works analysed in the present study represent his strong influence on British culture and writing in this period. They also exemplify the vernacularisation and popularisation processes so necessary

⁵ In particular, on the language policy of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, and the promotion of the study of sciences, cf. Anna Helga Hannesdóttir 2011; Teleman 2011, 63-87; Ralph 2011, 247-61.

⁶ His major works are *Systema Naturae, sive Regna Tria Naturae Systematice Proposita per Classes, Ordines, Genera & Species* (1735), *Genera Plantarum eorumque Characteres Naturales secundum Numerum, Figuram, Situm & Proportionem* (1737), and *Species Plantarum, exhibentes Plantas Rite Cognitas, ad Genera Relatas, cum Differentiis Specificis, Nominibus Trivialibus, Synonymis Selectis, Locis Natalibus, secundum Systema Sexuale Digestas* (1753).

to the spread of new ideas among amateurs, and the complex research network used by Linnaeus and his disciples to classify new species, gather new specimen, and communicate scientific discoveries. The first work is the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1768-71; henceforth *EB*), the second Fredrik Hasselquist's *Voyages and Travels in the Levant in the Years 1749, 50, 51, 52* (1766; henceforth *VTs*). The *EB*'s principal aim is to systematise knowledge, to establish principles and to give order to many multifaceted topics, for the benefit of mankind. The approach to botany is essentially theoretical, the treatise mirrors the activity of the *botaniste de cabinet* (armchair botanist), who hypothesises and experiments in his 'laboratory'-botanical garden, and then draws conclusions. The approach of *VTs*, instead, clearly represents the experience of the *botaniste voyageur* (voyaging botanist), as he travels, observes, collects first-hand material, documents and describes such experience in personal writing and communal correspondence (cf. Gotti 2014).

Encyclopaedia Britannica (1768-71). It represents the climax of British encyclopaedic experience and it is the first encyclopaedic work "to use a national allusion" (Yeo 2001, 177), though it originated in Scotland. Published in Edinburgh and strictly connected to the Scottish intellectual context, it emphasises its innovative plan including treatises devoted to individual disciplines, such as botany.⁷ The *EB* is the outcome of contemporary society and, since its "high scientific content [...] with its large treatises [...] catered to the interest of both gentlemen and literati [...] the *Britannica* can be viewed as an expression of the Scottish Enlightenment" (Yeo 2001, 172). Moreover, the "'diffusion of knowledge' and the emergence of 'public opinion' were crucial – not just because more minds were engaged in intellectual inquiry, but because this degree of participation guaranteed critical debate" (Yeo 2001, 173) and social interaction.

The treatise "Botany" is completely devoted to the exposition of Linnaeus's thought. The editor of the *EB* neither translates nor adapts any of Linnaeus's works (many had already been translated and adapted into English) but summarises instead his complex system, intuitions and key points as discussed in his major works: *Systema Naturae* (1735), *Genera Plantarum* (1737), and *Species Plantarum* (1753). In the *EB*, "Botany" definitely popularises Linnaeus's innovative taxonomy, binomial nomenclature and sexual system of plants.

⁷ It is no accident that the *EB* includes a treatise on botany, since many educated men and scholars in Scotland, and particularly in Edinburgh, were keenly interested in such a multifaceted and relatively 'new' domain. According to Brockway (1979, 66): "Scotland produced more gardeners, many of whom were employed on the great estates in England, and more botanists, both amateur and professional, than its population would lead one to expect. [...] Scotland was provincial, with all the political, social, and economic disadvantages of a province vis-à-vis the metropolis, but Lowland Scotland was also the seat of high culture centered in the Presbyterian Church, with a high rate of literacy throughout the population, and a distinguished university in Edinburgh".

Voyages and Travels in the Levant in the Years 1749, 50, 51, 52 (1766). The text is a translation of an original Swedish work, based on Hasselquist's "observations in Natural History, Physick, Agriculture, and Commerce" (VTs, title page) in the Eastern countries as well as on the correspondence with his master Linnaeus. These observations and letters were originally published by Linnaeus himself in Swedish in the year 1757 (Hasselquist died in Smyrna in 1752), and were only later translated into English as

[a]n Opportunity of furnishing the Learned of this Country [Great Britain] with so curious a Work, was not displeasing to One, who had been well acquainted with the Merits and Abilities of the Author, being himself a Pupil of the celebrated Dr. Linnaeus (VTs, Advertisement).

The work is organised in two main sections: the first reports his travels in the Eastern countries; the second includes many descriptions and personal considerations on the natural world – "Natural curiosities" (VTs, Contents) – directly derived from his exploring experience. Among these sub-sections are those on "Plants", "Stones", "Natural History of Palestine", "Materia Medica", "Observations on Commerce", etc. The work ends with "The Author's Letters to Dr. Linnaeus".

2. LINNAEUS'S BOTANICAL SYSTEM: THE SCANDINAVIAN OUTLOOK ON NATURE IN THE *EB*

The influence of Linnaeus and his approach to nature were profound in the British Isles throughout the eighteenth century. This fact was certainly due to his scholarly connections and his direct correspondence with British naturalists and plant collectors such as Hans Sloane (1660-1753), John Ellis (1710-76), and Joseph Banks (1743-1820). Moreover, the translation and adaptation in English of his works helped extend his repute among amateurs. In 1736, he also travelled to the botanical gardens of Chelsea and Oxford to collect plants for his own garden in Sweden (Gläser 2011, 193). Another important event in the promotion of the Linnean system is the presence in London of Daniel Solander (1735-82), one of his many students and disciples, who moved there in the 1760s and was appointed to catalogue the natural history collection of the British Museum. Solander also travelled to Australia with Joseph Banks – later president of the Royal Society of London – in the first expedition of James Cook in 1768 (Gläser 2011, 194).

Linnaeus had also many connections with Scottish academic circles, and his renown was so well established in Edinburgh that

he was acknowledged as an authority in the first *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1771. The breakthrough of the Linnean classification system for plants and animals and the nomenclature for their denomination came with the decision of the editors and authors of this nationwide reference work to prefer Linnaeus's system to similar attempts by competing contemporaries. This decision [...] further disseminated his work in western Europe (Gläser 2011, 193, 198).

In 1773, Linnaeus also became an honorary member of the Medical Society in Edinburgh, after having been appointed as a member of the Royal Society of London in 1762 (Gläser 2011, 195-96).

The treatise "Botany" (*EB*, 627-53) is organised in three sections with three different functions and aims. The first, titled "SECT. I. Uses of Botany", opens the discussion and introduces "what useful and ornamental purposes may be expected from the cultivation of it" for the benefit of mankind (*EB*, under "Botany", 627). "1. Food", "2. Medicine" and the "3. Arts" are the sub-sections in which such "useful and ornamental purposes" are exemplified, whereas the two remaining sections of "Botany" are completely devoted to the exposition and examination of Linnaeus's system: they are "SECT. II. *Of the Method of reducing Plants to Classes, Orders, Genera, and Species; and of investigating their generic and specific names by certain marks or characters*" (*EB*, under "Botany", 635), and "SECT. III. *Of the SEXES of PLANTS*" (*EB*, under "Botany", 643).

Linnaeus's approach to nature is introduced in the first section of the treatise, and the Scandinavian world is described as the background for more general issues on economic development. This means that, besides introducing the northern flora, what counts here is the emphasis on "an expanding interest in taking stock of the natural resources within the borders of a particular country" (Knoespel 2011, 207) both to describe "the land in which [Swedish] people live" (Knoespel 2011, 209) and to face a widespread and troublesome experience in contemporary Sweden: that is, scarcity and starvation. In particular, when discussing the benefit of botanical research on esculent plants and the way they can be used, a series of examples are directly taken from the Scandinavian flora. The Nordic world is thus embedded in a British work primarily conceived for the British readership:

Extract 1: Esculent plants

Convallaria polygonatum, or sweet-smelling Solomon's seal, grows in the cliffs of rocks. The roots are made into bread, and eat by the inhabitants of Lapland, when corn is scarce.

Polygonum viviparum, small bistort, or snake-weed, grows upon high grounds. The roots may be prepared into bread. In Lapland and the northern parts of Europe, it is principally eat along with the flesh of stags and other wild animals.

Spergula arvensis, or corn-spurrey, grows in cornfields, especially in sandy soils. In Norway, they collect the seeds of this plant, and make them into bread.

Crataegus aria, or the white bean-tree, grows in woods. The berries are eat by the peasants; and in Sweden they are prepared and used as bread when there is a scarcity of corn.

Ranunculus sicaria, pile-wort, or lesser celadine, grows in pasture-grounds, &c. The Norwegians collect the leaves in the spring, and use them in broth.

Hipocraesis maculata, or spotted hawkweed, grows on high pasture-grounds. The peasants of Norway use the leaves as cabbage.

Pinus sylvestris, or Scots fir. The Norwegians and others make bread of this tree in the following manner: They select such trunks as are most smooth and have least resin; they take off the bark, then dry it in the shade, and afterwards toast it over a fire, and grind it into meal. They generally mix with it a little oat-meal or barley. This bread, made of fir bark, is not only used in a scarcity of provisions, but is eat all times by the poorer sort.

Lichen islandicus, or eryngo-leaved liver-wort, grows among heath and upon high grounds. The inhabitants of Iceland have long used this plant, both boiled, and in the form of bread.

(*EB*, under “Botany”, 628-30 *passim*)

Most of the plants listed and commented on are grown in Lapland, Norway, Sweden and Iceland: they are frequently used as food to meet the needs of northern peasants when corn is scarce. According to Schiebinger (2004, 7) “Linnaeus’s goal was [...] to overcome Sweden’s devastating famines by finding new indigenous plants – fir bark, seaweed, burdock, bog myrtle, or Icelandic moss (lichen), for example – that could feed hungry peasants”. Endemic famines repeatedly starved the nation, though they were not exclusively confined to Sweden, since they periodically affected eighteenth-century Great Britain and Europe as well.

Linnaeus was very sensitive to the problem of poverty and “taught that the purpose of natural history [its exact study] was to render service to the state” and aggrandise national wealth (Schiebinger 2004, 7): he was inspired by and promoted cameralist principles and values aiming at “a national productive structure that would lead to [...] material welfare” (Reinert 2005, 280).⁸ Linnaeus’s ultimate goal was the creation of a dynamic system of classification “that could keep pace with the growing number of ‘new’ objects as yet unknown to Europeans in the course of early modern nation building and colonial expansion” (Müller-Wille 2007, 542): botanical exploration was economic in nature, and such perspective was strongly emphasised and popularised by the European nations as a whole (on economic botany cf. Wickens 1990). In this perspective, Linnaeus considered “economics as *his* subject, a field closely related to the natural sciences and with a heavy emphasis on its agricultural and thereby botanical aspect” (Liedman and Persson 1992, S262; italics in the original).

Domestic exploration was fundamental to scientific inquiry, Linnaeus travelled extensively within the boundaries of Sweden, and Sweden itself, alongside the botanical garden in Uppsala, represented his *cabinet*, his laboratory where to collect, examine and classify both indigenous and exotic plants. He was one of those naturalists who never left Europe, but also one whose activity closely depended on “colonial networks” and “colonial enterprises” (Schiebinger 2004, 57). Colonial exploration was necessary to support “a research enterprise whose main aim was the discovery of ‘new’ species and genera” (Müller-Wille 2007, 542): this led to a specific independent discipline known as colonial botany, concerning “the study, naming, cultivation, and marketing of plants in colonial contexts” (Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 2). Linnaeus’s system of classification is significantly based on global interconnections and “[b]y the end of his career, in fact, Linnaeus sat at the centre of a vast scientific empire where, in the comfort of his home and gardens in Uppsala, he received specimens and news of new discoveries from some 570 Swedish and foreign correspondents” (Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 2; cf. also Brockway 1979, 6).

⁸ On cameralism, cf. Tribe 1984; Reinert 2005; Liedman and Persson 1992. In particular, cameralism promotes “good order and happiness within the state” and “can be delineated as a set of discourses related to the maintenance of land and people which, when it considers trade, necessarily evaluates the benefits and drawbacks of relations with other states” (Tribe 1984, 266, 273). According to Magnusson (1987, 415), mercantilism in Sweden promoted economic growth and modernisation during the Age of Liberty (1718-72), and was influenced by “[c]ontinental mercantilist thinkers, especially German cameralists”. Magnusson (1987, 418) states that the principal aim, according to “books, pamphlets, and articles” of the time, was “to re-establish Sweden as a great power [...]. [...] [C]ountries like England and Holland had risen to power through commercialization and trade. [...] [A] kingdom economically weak, with a poverty-stricken population of peasants still chained to natural economy of barter, could not compete with the other European nation states. This aim also became the official policy. [...] At the same time the natural sciences flourished – the great Linnaeus was just one of the voices in this debate”.

The second section of “Botany” summarises and explains Linnaeus’s complex system of classification and denomination “which is perhaps the only one now taught in Europe” (*EB*, under “Botany”, 635). There were many systems being devised at the time, particularly in France and in Great Britain, but according to the editor of the *EB* “[i]t would be foolish to distract the attention of the reader by an explanation of all these methods” (635). The key point in Linnaeus’s approach is that by “means of the classical and generic marks [scholars are able] to discover the name of any plant, from whatever quarter of the globe it may be brought” (648). Just as botanical exploration is supported by colonial expansion (and may be considered itself as a tool of such an expansion), botanical denomination is part of what Schiebinger (2004, 19-20) calls “[l]inguistic imperialism” or “the politics of botanical nomenclature”. Linnaeus’s system standardised naming, particularly binomial nomenclature; and Latin – the language of learning in Europe – became itself a means to celebrate “the story of élite European botany” (Schiebinger 2004, 20) within his naming system. Even though Latin was used as a *lingua franca*, it was not “value-neutral” (Schiebinger 2004, 200); it was the medium of ancient Europe, whereas the languages of ancient Eastern countries were considered “barbarous” (Schiebinger 2004, 200), not adequate to express modern science. Latin and the European languages are then the most powerful consolidating tools for European science: if the Europeans are the producers of knowledge (cf. Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 10-11), this same knowledge may only be established by

a uniquely European system of nomenclature [...] that swallowed into itself the diverse geographic and cultural identities of the world’s flora. [...] “[M]odern science originated outside the tropics and [...] it is a reasonable assumption that it could not have originated within them.” (Schiebinger 2004, 224-25, quoting Stearn 1988, 777).

The third and last section is completely devoted to the exposition of the sexual system of plants and to “a pretty full historical view of the controversy” which ensued (*EB*, under “Botany”, 648). The focus shifts here from the scientific level – or the description of the sexual system of plants⁹ – to the socio-cultural one (cf. George 2005) – or the effects of such system on contemporary society. Most of the third section may be considered as a socio-cultural disclaimer:

⁹ Müller-Wille (2007, 546): “Classification according to this system starts from the assumption that all plants possess ‘sex’ or male and female organs, the stamens and pistils contained in the flowers, and that these can therefore serve as *fundamentum divisionis*. [...] Thus, a division of the plant realm can be effected in two successive steps: first a division into ‘classes’ [...] according to the number of stamens, and second, a division into ‘orders’ according to the number of pistils. The divisions are logically exclusive [...]”

Extract 2: Sexual theory

Having thus given a pretty full historical view of the controversy concerning the sexes of plants, we shall now lay before our readers a few observations that have occurred from the perusal of it.

It may be observed in general, that the facts and arguments adduced by the sexualists are by far too few to admit of any general induction. Nay, most of them are merely accidental, many of them not being uniform even in the same species; and the final causes of the whole are unnatural, and tortured so as best to answer the purposes of a theory, which [...] merits no higher appellation than that of a whimsical conjecture. [...]

Strange, that a man of Linnaeus's capacity, or indeed of any capacity at all, should seriously employ an argument pregnant with every degree of absurdity! – Stranger still that he should take up near twenty pages in illustrating and drawing conclusions from such an argument! [...]

Men or philosophers can smile at the nonsense and absurdity of such obscene gibberish; but it is easy to guess what effects it may have upon the young and thoughtless.

But the bad tendency upon morals is not the only evil produced by the sexual theory. It has loaded the best system of botany that has hitherto been invented, with a profusion of foolish and often unintelligible terms, which throw an obscurity upon the science, obstruct the progress of the learner, and deter many from ever entering upon the study.

Upon the whole, we must conclude, that the distinction of sexes among vegetables has no foundation in nature or, at least, that the facts and arguments employed in support of this doctrine, when examined with any degree of philosophical accuracy, are totally insufficient to establish it.

(*EB*, under “Botany”, 648, 653)

It is at this point in the treatise that the Presbyterian background of the Edinburgh milieu emerges (cf. Yeo 2001, 173-74). Disciplinary research and Linnaeus himself are assessed from a non-disciplinary and non-scientific perspective: the Swedish contribution to British learning is appropriate and reliable if –

and only if – the *pruderie* of British society is not threatened. According to the *EB*, the sexual theory thus obscures science and obstructs progress.

3. HASSELQUIST'S VOYAGES: FROM SCANDINAVIAN TO EUROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

The perspective of Hasselquist's *VTs* discussed here is completely different from the one characterising the *EB*. Not only *VTs* is originally written in Swedish, by a Swedish scholar, for a Swedish readership, but its approach to nature – particularly exotic nature – is mostly pragmatic, factual, experimental, in progress. Fredrik Hasselquist is one of those “[v]oyaging botanical assistants” (Schiebinger 2004, 46) collecting plants, seeds and data abroad. One of those scholars whose activity helped discover new items and verify *cabinet* hypotheses:

During this time [voyage in the Eastern countries] he corresponded diligently with his friends in Sweden, and filled his letters with curious Experiments and Observations, which were inserted in the papers printed twice a week in Stockholm under the title of Literary News, and all who read them, were prepossessed in favour of this attentive traveller (*VTs*, Account, iv, by Linnaeus).

Hasselquist's activity helped transform ‘local *exotic* knowledge’ into ‘global *European* science’, which ultimately means establishing “dominant European paradigms for understanding and organizing the natural world” (Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 6). It is in this work that the Scandinavian perspective becomes European, and that botanical research helps modify and interpret the outer world, since

Europe's naturalists not only collected the stuff of nature but lay their own peculiar grid of reason over nature so that nomenclature and taxonomies [...] often also served as ‘tools of empire’. The botanical sciences served the colonial enterprise and were, in turn, structured by it. Global networks of botanical gardens, the laboratories of colonial botany, followed the contours of empire, and gardens often served its needs. [...] [They were] experimental stations for agriculture and way station for plant acclimatization for domestic and global trade, rare medicaments, and cash crops (Schiebinger 2004, 11).

Plants may actually serve as new food and new medicine, that is “for meat, drink, and physic” (*VTs*, 256) or, in other words, “[e]very new plant was be-

ing scrutinised for its use as food, fiber, timber, dye, or medicine” (Brockway 1979, 74) to satisfy “the mercantilist and national spirit of the times” (Brockway 1979, 75): many small botanical gardens were rapidly established in the colonies to support (European) research and (European) economy.

Hasselquist’s *VTs* reflects the orientation of European explorers and collectors, since personal and practical experience abroad is strictly bound to institutional and theoretical experience at home:

Extracts 3 and 4: Practical knowledge vs. theoretical system

(3) 10. *Cicuta virosa*ⁱ. Water Hemlock.

This grows in plenty on the banks of the Nile, and on the coasts of the islands. [...]

I must in this place refer to the Dissertation de Viribus Plantar. In the first volume of Linn. Amoen. Acad. where I treated on the Marsh Hemlock and Water Hemlock.

The above circumstance confirms what I there asserted, and proves, that nature acts always consistently with her own designs.

ⁱ Lin. Syst. Nat. P. 336. I.

(*VTs*, 244)

Observation requires factual confirmation and evidence, and ultimately ‘acclimatisation’ to the European theoretical framework. Sometimes, this mechanism fails to uncover the gaps between the system archetype and first-hand experience:

(4) Smyrna, January 29, 1750.

I was this moment informed of a vessel’s going to Europe, and therefore must not omit the opportunity of writing to you. [...]

I have botanized here several times this winter, and never lost my labour. I shall without delay have the honour to transmit my whole collection of plants and descriptions; in the mean time, I send one inclosed, which I imagine to be new; at least, I cannot

range it under any genus in Syngenesia, Monogamia, though it belongs to the order. [...]

(VTs, 408-10)

In the early modern period and later, the academic study of plants in Europe undergoes dramatic changes: a clear divergence between scholarly approaches and practice-based tradition(s) emerges, since the natural world is constantly shaped and organised according to more and more standardising methods. Botanists are on their way to professionalisation and botany itself becomes more and more “text-based” and “learned” (Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 10).

Through botany, the Europeans lay their hands on immense wealth: their assumptions are supported by national governments and institutions; there is a “volatile nexus of botanical science, commerce, and state politics [...] from the earliest voyages of discovery, naturalists sought profitable plants for king and country, personal and corporate profit” (Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 2). Botanical gardens are the shrines where roots, seeds, and specimens are preserved and the laboratories where they are examined and classified. Plants migrate from the (sub)tropical biosphere to European botanical gardens to be adapted to new soils, be cultivated and transformed into food and medicines, and ultimately generate national benefit and welfare:

Extracts 5, 6 and 7: Botanical gardens and botanical exploration as national enterprises

(5) 2. Cornucopiae cucullatum^b. The Horn of Plenty Grass.

I found this plant the 22d of March, in the neighbourhood of Smyrna [...] this is one of those which I was very desirous of seeing. It is a grass, in appearance quite different from all of its tribe. I was the more rejoiced to find it, as it has been seen and described by very few botanists in its natural state. It is to be found in the vales round Smyrna, and has not been met with growing wild in any other place; nor has it ever entered any botanical garden.

I have described it well, gathered the roots of it, and used all my endeavours to have it sent to the botanical garden at Upsal, as Professor Linnaeus had thought proper to charge me with this in particular.

[Lin. Syst. Nat.]^b P. 79. N. I.

(VTs, 242)

(6) Smyrna, April 6.

I still continue in the place, from which I have several times had the honour of writing to you. [...] Each day brings to my knowledge new things in Botany [...]. Some time ago, I made a journey in Natolia to the town of Magnesia, eight leagues from hence, I botanized there on the mount Sypilus of the ancients [...]. I have got a quantity of *Cornucopiae*, the rare grass, which you were pleased to recommend so much to me, to search for round Smyrna; I have likewise described it; and inclosed, send you some specimens. I shall gather the seeds when they are ripe, and send them to the Academical Garden, which I hope will be the first that gets this fine plant.

This short account how I have employed my time, is all I can have the honour to impart to you at present. I shall not omit to give you a larger collection of my observations before my departure hence.

(VTs, 411-13)

Botanical research abroad and information sharing with the mother country are thus fundamental to ensure “honour and benefit”, national prestige, praise and wealth to the nation:

(7) Smyrna, April 28.

[...] May the Supreme Being let us see the time, when our country may acquire honour and benefit from those things, which foreigners have passed over on their travels, in which, as well as in almost everything else, we have been the last; but God be praised, we hope not the worst in the world.

(VTs, 415)

Science is thus created in Europe on the basis of experimental activity abroad. It is created for the Europeans who embed “treasures [once] unknown” to them (Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 2) in their own culture, and go on to ingest and absorb the knowledge systems of other peoples, before transforming “a great part of the riches of [a] country” into their own:

Extract 8: Knowledge systems of other peoples

Alexandria, May 18, 1750.

I have now the honour to write to you, from a different part of the world, than I have hitherto done. [...]

In the few days I have been in Egypt, even in the most barren places that I have seen, I find that this fine country can afford an infinity of curious subjects in Natural History [...].

The first thing I did after my arrival was, to see the *Date-tree*, the ornament and a great part of the riches of this country. It had already blossomed, but I had, nevertheless, the pleasure of seeing how the Arabs assist its fecundation, and by that means secure to themselves a plentiful harvest of a vegetable, which was so important to them, and known to them, many centuries before any Botanist dreamed of the difference of sexes in vegetables. The Gardner informed me of this, before I had the time to enquire, and would shew me, as a very curious thing, the male and female of the Date or Palm-trees; nor could he conceive how I, a Frank, lately arrived, could know it before; for, says he, all who have yet come from Europe to see this country, have regarded his relation either as a fable or a miracle. The Arab, seeing me inclined to be further informed, accompanied me and my French interpreter to a Palm-tree, which was very full of young fruit, and had been wedded or fecundated with the male, when both were in blossom. [...] Thus much have I learned of this wonderful work of Nature, in a country, where it may be seen every year. I shall have the honour to give a relation to the use, and divers other qualities of the Date-tree, at some other opportunity.

(VTs, 416-18)

Hasselquist, observing the fecundation of the date palm almost in amazement, declares to have learned a great deal from this practice known to the Arabs long before any theoretical explanation on the sexual system of plants were invented. The Eastern gardener himself, whose knowledge is practice-based, cannot conceive how a European (Frank) “could know it before”, without direct experience. The two knowledge systems seem to run parallel to each other between mutual admiration, wonder and perplexity. However, the relationship is not balanced and bidirectional: the Europeans have ‘invented’ the system and use it to assimilate and categorise practical knowledge, where-

as the reverse does not happen. In this context, natural knowledge almost always moves from the non-European practical experience of nature to the European taxonomic classification of plants and their possible uses.

Traditional non-European knowledge, whether strictly ‘botanical’ or more obviously ‘cultural’, opens to alternative issues: culture-bound habits concerning the use of plants may be both superstitious – “a kind of symbolick plant [...]” – and ‘scientifically’ recommended at the same time – “distil a water from this plant, [...] sold in the apothecaries shops”:

Extract 9: Superstition, tradition, science

13. Aloe perfoliata vera^m. Mitre-shaped Aloe.

This is a kind of symbolick plant to the Mahometans, especially in Egypt, and in some measure dedicated to religion; for whoever returns from a Pilgrimage to Mecca, hangs this plant over his street door, as a token of his having performed this holy journey. The superstitious Egyptians believe, that this plant hinders evil spirits and apparitions from entering the house [...]. I scarcely remember to have seen this custom any where but in Cairo. [...]

The Egyptians distil a water from this plant, which is sold in the apothecaries shops at Cairo, and is recommended in coughs. It is likewise given with good success in hysterics and asthmas. [...] This is a remedy unknown to our apothecaries, but it certainly merits their attention; nor is it difficult to obtain it, as the plant might easily be raised in the Southern parts of Europe. The Arabians call it Sabbara.

[Lin. Syst. Nat.]^m P. 458.

(VTs, 245-46)

The boundaries between superstition, tradition and scientific knowledge are not clear-cut, and confidence in accepting a new perspective is not spontaneous; rather, it always implies the European extra-scientific evaluation and socio-cultural bias. If traditional knowledge – or “the riches of [a] country” (cf. extract 8) – may be transformed into revenue for the nation, as well as into riches and commodities for its people, then it is worth assimilating it, regardless of any superstition connected with customs, “a kind of symbolick plant to the Mahomethans”.

The strategy of appropriation is recursive: Western scholars rout their cultural (and linguistic) opponents; it was “a time when European science

was establishing its power vis-à-vis other knowledge traditions” (Schiebinger 2004, 203) in the “consolidation of Western hegemony” (Schiebinger 2004, 198). Western-European apothecaries themselves should thus learn to produce this “unknown remedy [...]. [I]t certainly merits their attention [...] as the plant might easily be raised in the Southern parts of Europe”.

Botanical exploration led towards a ‘cultural history of plants’, where the term ‘cultural’ actually refers to Western European culture, scientific reference systems and language.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Unquestionably, Scandinavian learning hugely influences British and European culture in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Sweden, in particular, is extremely dynamic during the Age of Liberty (1718-72), which sees the elaboration of Linnaeus’s system of classification and denomination, the publication of his major works, and their vernacularisation in contemporary European languages. Indeed, scientific research and socio-cultural interest in natural history, and especially botany, is significantly expanding across nations within and beyond Europe. Even though only two works have been investigated and exemplified, and the discussion is a partial overview of European scientific research, Linnaeus (*botaniste de cabinet*) and his pupil Hesselquist (*botaniste voyageur*) may well represent the extraordinary botanical activity of the period at a theoretical and practical level. The two scholars also highlight how sharing first-hand experience and transferring essential information by communal correspondence over long distances acts as a strategic device to corroborate preliminary assumptions and working hypotheses.

Botany also becomes the bridge towards other branches of knowledge. Its applicability in solving practical issues (in agriculture, *diaetetica*, pharmacology, commerce, etc.) is rapidly converted into relevant and almost independent sub-disciplines, such as colonial botany and economic botany. In general terms, applied botany embodies eighteenth-century mercantilist principles and cameralist values across nations: the European “grid of reason” (Schiebinger 2004, 11), in addition to national needs and national ambitions of “honour and benefit” (extract 7), is used to give order to the outer ‘extra’-European world and aggrandise ‘intra’-European wealth.

Botany is more than a discipline restricted to specialists: its socio-cultural issues emerge both in the *EB* and in *VTs*. In the *EB*, Scandinavian learning and practical knowledge migrate to Great Britain and are embedded in a British work. In the treatise, botany embodies and popularises Linnaeus’s thought and exemplifies Scandinavian/Swedish habits, customs and needs; whereas the British ‘cultural bias’ manipulate the scientific na-

ture of Linnaeus's sexual system of plants and describes it as a "whimsical conjecture" and "obscene gibberish" (extract 2).

In VTs, the Scandinavian/Swedish perspective becomes Eurocentric: here botany is above all applied botany and the key principle is its economic usefulness, since plants are not only an object of intellectual interest but also "moneymakers" (Schiebinger 2004, 6). Plants, collected and observed abroad, are framed according to the European taxonomic and linguistic system.

Botany therefore emerges as "big science and big business [...]. Across Europe, eighteenth-century political economists [...] taught that the exact knowledge of nature was key to amassing national wealth, and hence power" (Schiebinger and Swan 2005b, 5). In conclusion, botany is exploited by the Europeans as a source of 'inter'-national wealth and of 'inter'-national power, both economically and politically.

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CORINNE IN THE NORTH. MADAME DE STAËL'S INFLUENCE ON SOPHIE VON KNORRING AND AUGUST STRINDBERG

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In a letter from 1832, the English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote that Germaine de Staël's 1807 novel *Corinne, ou l'Italie* is "an immortal book, and deserves to be read [...] once every year in the age of man" (Lewis 2003, 107). Barrett Browning was not alone in her admiration for Mme de Staël's work: her enthusiasm was shared – even though perhaps not to the same degree – by many nineteenth-century writers who assiduously reread and rewrote Mme de Staël's novel, as recent literary criticism has shown (among recent comparative studies, see for example Szmurlo 1999, 204-56; Lewis 2003; Vincent 2004). The influence of *Corinne* on later literature did not depend only on the richness and depth of its reflections on relevant philosophical, political and cultural issues; what made it 'immortal', especially for the following generations of women writers, was the way in which de Staël rewrote the myth of the Romantic artist from a feminine point of view. *Corinne's* talented and flamboyant heroine became a symbol of the struggles any aspiring woman writer had to face at a time when creative genius and femininity were defined in almost mutually exclusive terms (Battersby [1989] 1994, 103-30).

Corinne's influence, however, was two-sided: as Ellen Moers (1976, 174) points out, "the myth of Corinne persisted as both inspiration and warning": while it offered women writers an empowering example of a successful woman artist, it was also read as a cautionary tale, which showed what necessary renunciations had to be made in order to pursue an artistic career. As Evy Varsamopoulou (2002, 2) remarks, the only way in which de Staël could "accomplish the mythic union of genius and femininity" was by let-

ting her heroine be both a triumphant *improvisatrice* and a *belle souffrante*. The whole novel is thus structured around the opposition between art and love (spelled out by Corinne's ill-fated passion for Lord Nevil) and the contrast between different conceptions of femininity (exemplified by independent and resourceful Corinne and her submissive half-sister Lucile). These elements are so recurrent even in later rewritings of the story that they can be read as constituting what Fredric Jameson defines as 'ideologeme'. While Jameson ([1981] 2002, 61) analyses ideologemes in the context of class conflict, seeing them as "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes", in the case of the myth of Corinne we find a protonarrative solution to conflicts as to what role women could play in society, what the defining features of femininity were, and the extent to which gender-based stereotypes could be applied even to the domain of aesthetics. After *Corinne*, almost any *Künstlerinroman* would depict its heroine as having to choose between art and love, often favouring an unhappy ending.

Since its translation in 1808-09, with the title *Corinne eller Italien*, the novel gained a long-lasting success also in Sweden. For example, novelist Fredrika Bremer often depicts her most romantic characters reading it; even Selma Lagerlöf, towards the end of the century, pays homage to it, having Fru Uggla in *Gösta Berlings saga* (1891) choose it as the only book she wishes to save when her possessions have to be sold at auction. Mme de Staël, who, having been married to the Swedish ambassador in Paris, was already well-known in Sweden by the time *Corinne* was translated, and whose earlier works had partially already been translated into Swedish, became herself a literary character: her 1812 sojourn in Stockholm is mentioned in Sophie von Knorring's 1836 novel *Illusionerna* (*The Illusions*), where the French writer puts in an outrageously provocative cameo appearance.

It was once again Sophie von Knorring who penned what is in all probability the first Swedish text which engages in a continuous intertextual dialogue with *Corinne*. Her novel *Kvinnorna* (*The Women*), published in 1836, transfers *Corinne's* basic plot elements to a Swedish provincial milieu, illustrating, like the original, the conflict between different conceptions of femininity through the opposed destinies of its two leading female characters.

Kvinnorna centres on the learned and ambitious Thekla, who, like Corinne, is a woman of genius and many artistic talents: she can sing, act, paint as well as improvise verses and songs. If one compares the first descriptions of Thekla and Corinne, one can see how the two are presented, in a very similar way, as torn between ambition and modesty. When we first meet Corinne, she is on her way to be crowned at the Capitol. She is described as "la femme la plus célèbre de l'Italie [...] [é]crivain, improvisatrice, et l'une des plus belles personnes de Rome" (Staël [1807] 1843, 31).¹ At the

¹ "The most celebrated woman in Italy [...] poet, *improvisatrice*, one of the loveliest persons

same time, despite the solemnity of the occasion and the pride she derives from it, Mme de Staël attributes typically feminine character traits to her:

Son attitude sur le char était noble et modeste: on apercevait bien qu'elle était contente d'être admirée; mais un sentiment de timidité se mêlait à sa joie et semblait demander grâce pour son triomphe (33).²

When von Knorring introduces Thekla, she does so in a similar way; she is an extraordinary character, almost larger than life, but at the same time she shows typical feminine virtues:

Thekla var den skönaste flickan i landet, den rikaste, den snillrikaste, den kvickaste, den kunnigaste, den alla andra överlägsna. Dessutom var hon god och nästan anspråklös [...] hon tog emot väl den hyllning som alla gav henne; men hon tycktes aldrig fordra den, och det kanske även därför, att ingen nekade henne den (Knorring [1836] 2004, 35).³

The contradictory elements in both descriptions point straight to what the two heroines' main problem is: their unwillingness to draw a line between the male public world and a narrowing female private space. As Toril Moi (2001) observes, *Corinne* exemplifies a woman's quest for individuality in an ideological framework that confines her to a subordinate role within the hidden sphere of domesticity. Both characters' preference for the performing arts, their desire to appear in public, is a metaphor for their more general 'desire to be seen', in a society which equalled any attempt to show one's talent to showing off, thus breaking the norms of proper feminine behaviour.

In one of the first scenes in which Thekla makes her appearance, she is hosting a reception, entertaining her guests with exquisite singing. If it is evident to all that her gifts are extraordinary and the proof of uncommon talent, still not everyone is equally fascinated by her performance. Both Thekla's fiancé, Count Leonard, and his friend Doctor Jarno, are somewhat annoyed by her behaviour. Leonard appreciates Thekla's genius, but he also wants his soon-to-be wife to be "en vanlig flicka, en vanlig kvinna, med förlägenhet, blyghet, svaghet, brister och okunnighet" (Knorring [1836] 2004,

in Rome." All translations are mine.

² "Her attitude on the chariot was noble and modest: one sensed that she was content to be admired; yet a timid air mingled with her joy and seemed to apologise for her triumph."

³ "Thekla was the most beautiful girl in the country, the richest, the brightest, the most gifted and learned, superior to all the others. Moreover, she was good and almost unassuming [...] she accepted graciously the praise that everybody granted her; but she never seemed to ask for it, maybe because no one denied it to her."

65).⁴ Doctor Jarno, much more cynical and detached, cannot help but find Thekla theatrical and affected, and exclaims – making clear what the model for Thekla’s character is: “Ack, jag älskar inga Corinnor!” (29).⁵

Despite her ambition, Thekla is soon to realise that her identification with a Corinne-like ideal can cause her serious trouble. This happens when another woman comes into the picture: from her first appearance, it is evident that Linda, a destitute widow with two children under her care, perfectly modest and selfless, is the incarnation of Leonard’s dreams of domestic happiness. Noticing how Leonard is increasingly attracted to her rival, Thekla starts to tone down her most problematic traits, abandoning her artistic performances. At the same time, the narrator struggles to distantiate her from the stereotypical image of the woman of genius as unfeminine:

I hela hennes väsen var det ock något så kvinnligt, så behagligt, att ännu aldrig hade det fallit någon in att kalla henne *ett lärt eller vittert fruntimmer*; men nu insåg Thekla, att stunden var kommen, då hon mer än någonsin skulle akta sig för denna missfosterlika benämning, som dödar all känsla för och brer ett grått stoft över den kvinna, som det läggs till (Knorring [1836] 2004, 235; italics in the original).⁶

Despite this threat, Thekla still requires an outlet for her ambition. She seems to find it in a different kind of artistic practice. During Leonard’s prolonged absence, Thekla starts to write him long warm-hearted letters, which, without her noticing, soon grow into something more than mere declarations of love; they become longer and more poetic, until Leonard, in a significant reversal of traditional literary conventions, becomes a sort of distant source of inspiration, an absent muse for Thekla’s creative impulse. In a momentary overlap of the romantic and artistic plot, Thekla’s love feelings inspire and guide her writing, as her imagination nurtures her romantic passion – a burning, ‘southern’ love, as the narrator has it – all the more detached from reality and, certainly, different from Leonard’s ideals.

As Åsa Arping (2002, 215) points out, von Knorring seems to offer her readers the portrait of “en komplett hjältinna, en som är både talangfull och kvinnlig”.⁷ Thekla and Leonard get married, and she publishes – anon-

⁴ “A common girl, a common woman, with modesty, shyness, weakness, faults and ignorance.”

⁵ “Alas, I cannot stand any Corinne!”

⁶ “In all her being there was also something so womanly, so pleasant, that nobody had yet happened to call her *a learned woman of letters*; but now, Thekla realised that the time had come when she, more than ever, had to watch out for this monstrous definition, which kills all feelings towards and draws a grey veil over the woman it is attached to.”

⁷ “A complete heroine, both talented and feminine.”

ymously – her first work of fiction, with notable success. This compromise, though, is only momentary. The myth of Corinne was too strong, too overwhelming and radicated to be so easily surpassed.⁸ Thekla keeps on writing and, during a celebration for Leonard’s birthday, she even goes back to acting. In the same moment, she receives an enthusiastic review of her latest work. The party is immediately put on hold. In a melodramatic scene Thekla, overwhelmed with joy, exclaims: “Och på jorden har jag inte mera att *önska* – inte mera att *vinna*! Må jag få dö!” (Knorring [1836] 2004, 288; italics in the original).⁹ Poetic justice immediately grants her wish: that same night Thekla suddenly falls ill and dies a few days later in Leonard’s arms, having him promise he will marry Linda.

As if the opposed fates of the two women were not enough, the narrator makes the message quite explicit:

Skulle du slutligen och äntligen [...] vilja dra någon liten moralisk slutsats av hela denna lilla bok, så lägg de orden på ditt hjärta, antingen du är man eller kvinna, att: Kvinnan måste ettdera fullkomligt ägna sig åt konsten och konstnärslivet i den eller de grenar hon valt, eller ock åt husmoderliga och husliga plikter. Hon må aldrig tro sig om att förena både delarna, ty då blir det fusk av alltsammans (336).¹⁰

Thekla’s death, immediately following her artistic triumph, can be read as a capitulation to the current feminine ideal, in a sort of extreme conversion. Moving towards its tragic ending, the novel, much like *Corinne*, makes explicit use of narrative strategies derived from sentimental literature: the conflict between two opposed ethical ideals (the individualistic desire to affirm one’s will and the social pressure to renounce it) is mirrored in a love-plot that tends towards the reaffirmation of virtue over forces potentially destructive of a social order. Both Thekla and Corinne assume the pose of the *belle souffrante*,

⁸ The transition from performing to writing does not only mark a turning point in Thekla’s life; Carla Hesse (2001, 48-49) reads *Corinne* as a representation of the decline of aristocratic *salon*-culture. The novel’s tragic ending is caused not only by the character’s refusal of the domestic ideal, but also by the fact that the cultural model Corinne represents was already outdated at the time: “Corinne’s story is the story of a world in which female oral genius no longer has a central place in cultural life. [...] The cultural change that Staël recorded in her book was the downfall not of women writers, but of women as *virtuosi* of the spoken word, as *salonnières*”. von Knorring seems to have been aware of this, as her character tries to adapt to a changed cultural situation.

⁹ “And on this earth I have nothing more to *wish* – nothing more to *conquer*! May I die now!”

¹⁰ “Should you, last and finally [...] want to draw some moral conclusions from this whole little book, then commit these words to your heart, whether you are man or woman: / A woman should either commit herself completely to art and an artist’s life in that or those fields she has chosen, or to domestic and household duties. It should never occur to her that she might be able to conciliate the two, or her whole life will be but a sham.”

according an ethical value to suffering, atoning through agony for their faults. As Kristina Fjelkestam (2010, 82-88) notes, virtue for women was conceived in essentially 'negative' terms, as consisting in abstaining from reprehensible actions more than in performing good deeds; thus, any form of action was perceived as suspect, while the kind of forced inaction and passivity generated by illness became the supreme example of feminine virtue.

Nonetheless, one might be tempted to read Thekla's death not merely as a simple concession to bourgeois gender ideology. According to Toril Moi (2002), Corinne's agony and death at the end of de Staël's novel can be read as a kind of metaphorical suicide, an extreme vindication of her right to individuality. The same can be said in Thekla's case. In the course of the novel, Thekla's individuality is slowly eroded: from being, physically and symbolically, at centre stage in her social environment, she is gradually pushed back into domesticity, and her art as *improvisatrice* is replaced by the secluded and anonymous exercise of writing. Thekla's desire to die after the excellent review of her latest novel and her last performance during Leonard's birthday party sounds quite like a farewell to her extraordinary talent; instead of accepting to be completely subdued in her domestic role and having silence imposed upon her, she chooses to be silent.

The moralistic remark that closes the novel, then, can be read as an ironic commentary on the deadlock that neither character nor author are able to resolve. The alternatives the narrator proposes are not equally viable: choosing to ignore one's domestic duties does not only mean having to renounce every chance of romantic happiness; it is also, in a sense, a betrayal of a woman's very nature: it implies being covered in a 'grey veil', which, as Thekla knows very well, does not only mean having to face social ostracism, but also putting one's sense of identity into question.

Sophie von Knorring's (and Thekla's) intuition that being a woman of letters somehow blurred one's gender identity reflects a quite common attitude. In symbolically renouncing her 'procreative' role as mother in order to take up the 'active' role of the creative genius, women did not only break social constraints: they also seemed to be tampering with nature itself. Two main rhetorical strategies were used to attack women artists; as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out: "If becoming an *author* meant mistaking one's 'sex and ways', if it meant becoming an 'unsexed' or perversely sexed female, then it meant becoming a monster or freak" ([1979] 2000, 34; italics in the original). Thus, women writers could become masculine amazons and frigid manhaters, or overeroticised beings, as contemptible as prostitutes.

Later in the century, when the Woman Question became one of the most debated social topics and contemporary literature was deeply concerned with the theme of the relationship between the sexes, the discussion about women's role in society and within the literary and artistic professions was not only a matter of different ideological standpoints; it also involved the

reorganisation of the hierarchy of literary genres. As Boel Englund and Lena Kåreland (2008, 53-136) show in their gender-based analysis of the Swedish literary field between 1880 and 1920, if there ever was a battle of the sexes, it did not involve only husbands and wives; it was also fought between men and women writers.

August Strindberg shows clearly how the criticism of women writers and artists often took the form of censure on their (presumed) irregular sexuality. In an 1889 letter to writer Ola Hansson, Strindberg writes: "Författarinna och artistinna är hora. = en qvinna som förlorat könskaraktena [sic] = passivitet"¹¹ (quoted in Heggstad 1991, 191). A similar rhetorical and ideological move can be found in *Mot betalning* (*With Fee*), one of the stories published in *Giftas II* (*Getting Married II*, 1886), where Strindberg portrays a young woman with literary ambitions. Not surprisingly, he illustrates his point satirising the pervasiveness of the myth of Corinne.¹²

Helène is the daughter of a general and has lost her mother in early childhood. Her education is flawed by antiquated aristocratic values: her father has passed on old-fashioned masculine values to his daughter, causing her to regret being a woman. She is instinctively disgusted by anything that has to do with the body and with sexuality. In a dramatic scene, Helène's mare runs away to follow a black stallion; the young girl witnesses the horses' copulation, before turning away in horror. After that, she refuses to leave the house and takes refuge in the library; there she finds a copy of *Corinne*, which had belonged to her mother. Identifying herself with de Staël's heroine, Helène enters a dreamworld of beauty and purity:

Missnöje med livets prosa, naturens råhet, eldade fantasien att bygga en drömvärld där själarne levde utan kroppar. Denna värld var aristokratisk, ty det fordrades ekonomiskt oberoende för att endast kunna skänka tankar åt själen. Den var de rikes evangelium, denna hjärninflammation som kallas romantismen [...]. Av Corinne gjorde Helène nu ett ideal: skaldinnan, som tog ingivelser ovanifrån, som likt medeltidens nunna avlade kyskhetslöftet för att leva renliv, och som naturligtvis beundrad av en lysande mängd höjde sig över de små vardagsdödlige (Strindberg 1982, 235).¹³

¹¹ "The woman writer and the woman artist is a whore. = a woman who has lost her sex characters = passivity."

¹² In an expunged part of the foreword to *Giftas II*, Strindberg delivered a virulent attack on different women writers of the past and the present, combining arguments based upon gender ideology and discussions of literary value (Strindberg 1982, 352-66). The ideas expressed in these paragraphs, as well as the content of the short stories, in comparison to the first volume of *Giftas* (1884) and to Strindberg's earlier works, marked a radicalisation of his position on the Woman Question, causing a break with other progressive intellectuals whose ideas he had previously shared. For a detailed account of Strindberg's often contradictory positions on the matter, see Boëthius 1969.

¹³ "The dissatisfaction with the prose of life and the brutality of nature sparked her fantasy

Inspired by Corinne's example, Helène decides to become a poetess herself, although it is made clear that she possesses no talent whatsoever; Strindberg harshly satirises her poetic effusions: "En dag försökte hon på vers. Det lyckades. Raderna blevo lika långa och slutet rimmade" (236).¹⁴ It is the ideas that are lacking, and the content of her work is fully derivative of *Corinne*. Quite significantly, one of the poems Helène composes is entitled *Sappho*, another prominent figure in the pantheon of female genius, often portrayed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature as the poet of feminine sensibility and unhappy love (Vincent 2004, 52-56). Helène sends it to a literary review under the pen name of Corinne, but the answer she gets is not what she expected: the editor turns down her contribution, publishing instead a brief sarcastic note: "Corinne av 1807 skulle ha lagat mat och vaggat barn, om hon levat efter 1870. Men ni är inte någon Corinne!" (Strindberg 1982, 237).¹⁵

This first failure fuels Helène's resentment against men and inaugurates her social downfall; after her father's death, she accepts a post of lady-in-waiting, but her sympathy for the *Blåstrumpor* (Bluestockings) leads to an argument with the duchess she is serving, so that Helène is forced to leave. She then tries to gather around herself a circle of intellectuals, but she soon loses her influence to another woman. The only person who remains faithful to her is a lecturer in ethics whose ideas about marriage are noble enough to convince her to accept his proposal. The marriage is of course unhappy, with Helène still incapable of accepting the physical side of love, yielding to her husband's advances only as a way of enlisting his support for her feminist struggles.

This short story sums up many of Strindberg's attitudes towards the Woman Question and the social literature of his time. In it one can trace his criticism, fuelled by his anti-aristocratic bias, of the superficial education many women received, an education deficient in the practical knowledge that would have enabled them to make a positive contribution to society as wives and mothers. In his critique of Helène's behaviour one might also catch a glimpse of Strindberg's evolutionary thoughts: the girl's attitude towards men and sexuality does not only constitute a breach of social norms, it is also a sort of crime against nature, in that she refuses to take up her role in the reproduction of the species, posing a threat both on the social order

to create a dreamworld where souls lived without body. It was an aristocratic world, since it required financial independence to be able to direct every thought to the soul. It was the Gospel of the wealthy, this brain fever called romanticism [...]. Helène now made an ideal of Corinne: the poetess who drew inspiration from above, who like the nuns of the Middle Ages took the vow of chastity to live a pure life, and thanks to the admiration of a brilliant multitude could naturally rise above the common, petty mortals."

¹⁴ "One day she attempted verse. It succeeded. All lines were equally long and the last words rhymed."

¹⁵ "The Corinne of 1807 would have been cooking meals and rocking cradles had she lived after 1870. But you are no Corinne!"

and on the survival of mankind; it was not uncommon, as Elaine Showalter ([1990] 2010, 34-35) shows, to represent the New Woman as an anarchic figure, depicting her in apocalyptic terms. In Helène's case, hints at her unnatural, perverted sexuality are provided not only by her disgust for all things sexual, but even by references to the meretricious nature of her marriage (as stressed by the title). The disruptive potential of the kind of women typified by Helène is well symbolised by her refusal of motherhood, which, illogically enough, seems a characteristic inherited from her mother. Earlier in the story we are told that Helène's family on her mother's side has suppressed fertility in order to avoid splitting the property. When she finds her mother's copy of de Staël's novel, with her pencil annotations in the margins, the identification with the dead woman and the literary character proves to be equally infertile:

Arvet hon tog av modren i de postuma noterna började gro. Hon identifierade sig med Corinne och med modren och hon satte bort mycken tid på funderingar över sin kallelse. Att hon var kallad till att leva för släktet, att hon hade en skyldighet att befordra groning och växt av de frön naturen nedlagt i hennes kropp, det slog hon ifrån sig (Strindberg 1982, 236).¹⁶

Not only does the connection with her dead mother drive Helène to reject her reproductive role; contrary to her expectations, it does not inspire her to compose great poetry either. All she derives from it are surpassed ideals that can no longer be useful. The identification with Corinne becomes nothing more than a pose that only leads Helène to frustration and disappointment.

Whether Strindberg knew it or not, his depiction of the myth of Corinne as nothing more than a stale stereotype was far from being an original conception. It might have surprised him to know that his ideas were in tune with the attitude of many of the most prominent women writers of his time.

Towards the end of *Corinne*, de Staël's heroine gives up her art and retires into silence. As Toril Moi (2001, 165) points out: "There is no denying [...] that Corinne has come to think of her words as histrionic, artificial and violent". Many late eighteenth-century writers would have agreed. As Linda M. Lewis (2003, 243) writes: "by the end of the century, the would-be Corinnes [...] of the New Woman novel were failing to create great art and at the same time failing to create fulfilling alternative roles". Although Lewis is concerned with British literature, much the same can be said about Sweden: while some characters, such as Anna Charlotte Leffler's heroine in the play *Skådespelerskan* (*The Actress*, 1883) or Edel Lindblom's *Viola eller sångerskan*

¹⁶ "The inheritance she received from her mother through her posthumous notes began to germinate. She identified herself with Corinne and her mother, and spent a great amount of time meditating about her mission. That she was called to live for the species, that she was intended to let the seeds nature had buried in her body grow, she refused to think."

från Norden (*Viola or the Singer from the North*, 1888) still retain the tragic grandness of Corinne, one cannot help but notice a wider dissatisfaction with a Corinne-inspired triumphant genius. In most cases female artists appear not as triumphant deities or lovelorn women, but as crippled beings suffering under patriarchal oppression. In Vilma Lindhé's *Vid gassken och dagsljus* (*In Gas Light and Day Light*, 1885) and in Emilie Lundberg's *Ur tvänne verldar* (*From Two Worlds*, 1885) the world of the theatre is heavily criticised for its artificiality, while emphasis lies on the actual conditions of work and on the reality of social and marital relations more than on the depiction of the Romantic artist and the melodramatic conflicts that animate the myth of Corinne.¹⁷ Strindberg's *Helène*, then, does not only exemplify *Corinne's* waning influence; without the patina of irony and scorn the author laid over her, she could almost be the protagonist of a New Woman's tale: a girl whose dreams and aspirations have been stifled by a poor education and the lack of alternatives other than marriage.

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L'EUROPA DEI TEATRI E I BARBARI SCANDINAVI

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1. Non è la prima volta che ci si propone di mettere a fuoco l'affermazione sul continente dei grandi drammaturghi nordici alla fine dell'Ottocento, ma – anche se spesso si sono evidenziate le reazioni (e pure gli ostacoli) sul loro cammino – l'esito conclusivo della loro penetrazione nella cultura europea ha un po' attenuato il rilievo della contingente effettiva portata del loro successo, che, all'analisi, risulta quantomeno un processo faticoso, discontinuo e tutt'altro che condiviso a livello di critica e di pubblico.

Sarà opportuno quindi rivisitare alcuni passaggi di questa vicenda per disegnare con maggiore oggettività i problemi e i limiti di comprensione che, in Germania come in Francia, l'apparizione sulle scene di Bjørnson, Ibsen e soprattutto Strindberg comportò e per cogliere alcune interessanti scissioni identitarie e culturali dell'Europa fra il XIX e il XX secolo.

2. “Germania o Francia? Non ci sarebbe da scrivere un libro?”, così s'interrogava il filofrancese Strindberg, qualche anno prima di scegliere di stabilirsi in Germania (ASB VIII, 147).¹ Certo è che le aree culturali francese e tedesca, i tanti teatri delle loro capitali (e, in Germania, pure di centri importanti come Monaco, Dresda, Lipsia, Meiningen ecc.), i loro traduttori e le agenzie attive in quelle nazioni erano i canali obbligati per l'affermazione degli autori nordici sul continente.

La tendenza si era vieppiù configurata quando la nota compagnia del Duca di Meiningen (appassionato della drammaturgia scandinava fino a

¹ Le lettere e le opere di August Strindberg saranno d'ora in poi citate, nel testo, con i seguenti acronimi: ASB per Strindberg 1947-2001; ASV per Strindberg 1981-2013. Le traduzioni sono di chi scrive, ove non altrimenti specificato.

spingersi alla ripresa di Ludvig Holberg) aveva proposto nella prima tournée berlinese del 1874 *Fra le battaglie* (*Mellem slagene*) di Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson.² Pur presentato, con un evidente effetto di contrasto, in singolare accoppiata con *Le Malade imaginaire* di Molière, l'allestimento, secondo il programma dei Meininger, era stato un esempio del più attento realismo, e il Duca aveva chiesto allo scenografo Max Brückner “un basso fortilizio con porte strette e un pavimento coperto di canne”, curando che in scena ardessero autentici ceppi e che si udisse l'ululare del vento (Koller 1984, 156).

Insomma, ricorda l'attore Max Grube, nel suo volumetto di memorie sui Meininger del 1926: “Prima della leggerezza e della grazia mollièriane, la pesantezza, il ritmo grave e lento!”, e, se *Zwischen den Schlachten*, con la sua evocazione del “tenebroso brumoso mondo nordico”, non fu un successo (“interessò e tuttavia parve troppo strano”; Grube 1963, 68), restò comunque in repertorio. L'autorevole critico Karl Frenzel gli avrebbe quantomeno riconosciuto “il fascino e la fresca consistente originalità dei racconti” di Bjørnson, già noti in Germania (Osborne 1988, 72; Eller 1918, 23).

L'attenzione verso gli autori scandinavi si rafforzò allorché anche Ibsen (che soggiornò a lungo a Dresda e a Monaco) cominciò a farsi conoscere, in prima battuta con le opere giovanili, che – sempre per il loro romantico colore nordico-arcaico – potevano essere in sintonia con un certo gusto pittorico-antiquario diffuso nell'arte tedesca dell'epoca.³

Così, allo Hoftheater di Monaco, il 10 aprile 1876, fu allestita quella che si considera la prima rappresentazione ibseniana fuori della Scandinavia: *I condottieri a Helgeland* (*Hærmændene på Helgeland*, 1858). Il giorno dopo, Ibsen comunicava all'editore Hegel:

La sala era praticamente piena e il dramma è stato accolto da una tempesta d'applausi. Io ho seguito la rappresentazione dietro le quinte e poi sono stato acclamato cinque volte. Dopo lo spettacolo, i letterati monacensi hanno improvvisato una festa in mio onore che si è protratta nella notte (HIS XIII, 308).⁴

Sin dalla breve ma significativa premessa all'edizione tedesca del testo (*Nordische Heerfahrt*, tradotto da Emma Klingefeld) del marzo 1876, Ibsen ringraziava il suo “stimatissimo amico” istruttore dello Hoftheater, Franz Grandaur, e sottolineava (certo strumentalmente) l'affinità ‘pangermanica’ della propria opera:

² “Nel 1867, [i Meininger] avevano presentato la prima produzione tedesca di Bjørnson, *Fra le battaglie*, e, due anni dopo, il debutto assoluto e integrale della trilogia di *Sigurd Slembé*” (Koller 1984, 87).

³ Il primo dramma di Ibsen tradotto e pubblicato in volume in Germania era stato *Brand*, nel febbraio del 1872.

⁴ Citeremo, nel testo, le lettere ibseniane con l'acronimo HIS, traendole da Ibsen 2005-10.

Il fondamento sostanziale del mio dramma sta di fatto soprattutto nelle diverse saghe familiari islandesi che ci sono pervenute, nelle quali molto spesso le celebri colossali situazioni e gesta del *Nibelungenlied* e della *Saga dei Volsunghi* paiono ricondotte a dimensioni umane. Credo pertanto di poter concludere che le vicende e gli avvenimenti narrati in ambedue le opere citate siano stati caratteristici di tutta la nostra vita germanica nelle epoche protostoriche (Ibsen 1909, I, 300-01).

Il 30 maggio di quell'anno fortunato, Ibsen poteva ancora annunciare al suo editore:

Ho ricevuto in questo momento l'invito dal Duca di Meiningen di recarmi a Berlino, dove sabato la sua compagnia darà per la prima volta *I pretendenti alla corona*. [...] È falso quello che un giornale danese ha riportato ovvero che il dramma sarebbe stato rappresentato a Meiningen senza un applauso. Si trattava solo di una prova generale [tenuta il 30 gennaio 1876] priva della nuova scenografia e dei miei tagli (HIS XIII, 312-13).

I pretendenti alla corona (*Kongs-emnerne*), risalenti al 1863, avevano attirato l'attenzione dei Meininger, parrebbe, per suggerimento di Bjørnson (autore sempre molto vicino alla compagnia), oltre che per la loro pittoresca ambientazione medievale (Koller 1965, 101).

Il 3 giugno 1876, *Die Kronprätendenten* fu presentato a Berlino e, il 14, Ibsen poteva raccontare all'istruttore svedese Ludvig Josephson, che da poco aveva allestito a Christiania un memorabile *Peer Gynt*: "Al principio del mese, mi sono recato a Berlino per assistere alla prima dei *Pretendenti alla corona* montati con gusto splendido dalla compagnia di corte del Duca di Meiningen". Quindi:

Il dramma è stato accolto con grandi applausi e io sono stato acclamato parecchie volte. Essendo la maggior parte dei critici berlinesi dei drammaturghi, non credo che la cosa facesse loro troppo piacere. Il dramma, in ogni caso, è stato dato per nove sere di fila e sarebbe andato anche più a lungo se i Meininger non avessero dovuto concludere le rappresentazioni già il 15. Dopo la prima, sono stato invitato dal Duca nel suo castello di Liebenstein, nei pressi di Meiningen, dove mi sono trattenuto sino all'altro ieri per poi far ritorno qui [a Monaco]. Al momento del congedo, sono stato decorato con la Croce di Prima Classe del casato sassone-ernestino. *I pretendenti* saranno ora messi in scena a Schwerin e *I condottieri a Helgeland* sono programmati

al Burgtheater di Vienna, dove Charlotte Wolter reciterà Hjørdis (HIS XIII, 313-14).

Max Grube fu meno entusiasta di Ibsen e ricorda che “*I pretendenti* non ebbero più successo di *Fra le battaglie* di Bjørnson”, per il loro verboso stile epico e per l’equivalente peso morale dei due protagonisti in lotta per la corona, che impedisce al pubblico di schierarsi e simpatizzare con uno di loro. Ciò detto,

il Duca in persona aveva prodigato molta attenzione alla messinscena dei *Pretendenti*. Nel corso di un viaggio nella patria di Ibsen – all’epoca poco visitata – aveva studiato attentamente il carattere del paese. Alcuni dei suoi disegni sono rimasti. Lì aveva inoltre rinvenuto abbondanza di fonti per quanto riguardava i costumi. Questa peculiarità esotica esibita dalla rappresentazione sollecitò un così ampio interesse che, nonostante la debolezza del dramma, lo si diede sette volte (Grube 1963, 81).

(Ovvero due di meno di quelle indicate da Ibsen.) Dai bozzetti dello stesso Duca apprendiamo che le scene erano massicce e grigie e i costumi realizzati con pesanti tessuti dalle cupe sfumature blu e rosse (Koller 1965, 101). La Scandinavia, a livello figurativo e d’atmosfera, si fissava come un cosmo arcaico, immancabilmente grave e brumoso, affascinante per la sua intrinseca cupezza.

Nel complesso, anche la critica su *I pretendenti* si tenne riservata. Su *Deutsche Rundschau*, Karl Frenzel ritenne Ibsen un autore in grado di esprimere movimento e personalità drammatiche, carente tuttavia sul piano della costruzione dell’opera. Il giudizio del critico appare sostanzialmente negativo: “Si perde tempo, denaro ed energie a sforzarsi di presentare drammi che, nonostante il loro valore poetico, non potranno mai naturalizzarsi sulle scene tedesche a causa delle loro caratteristiche di fondo che ci sono assolutamente estranee” (Eller 1918, 32).⁵ Il tentativo di Ibsen d’integrarsi come tedesco incontrava così i primi ostacoli.

3. Sebbene l’esame della stampa berlinese faccia rilevare, in quell’epoca di nazionalismi ben rimarcati, delle radicate diffidenze verso la dilagante passione per gli autori nordici, con la relativa evidenziazione di affermazioni in fondo assai tiepide per Ibsen, l’autore norvegese cominciava comunque a farsi strada in Germania, come si evince da una lettera del 15 settembre 1876 al suo editore. In essa, infatti, Ibsen può confermare per ottobre-novembre le messinscene annunciate a Josephson e aggiungere:

⁵ In un articolo su *National-Zeitung*, Frenzel aveva invece lodato l’allestimento dei Meininger, caratterizzato da “figurazioni brillanti e scene avvincenti” (vedi Koller 1965, 102-13).

I condottieri a Helgeland saranno allestiti allo Hoftheater di Dresda entro un paio di settimane; lo stesso testo è in prova allo Stadttheater di Lipsia e, attualmente, replicato con successo a Monaco. Da ognuno di questi teatri riceverò a vita il 10% dei ricavi delle rappresentazioni e i miei eredi lo stesso per 15 anni (HIS XIII, 323-24).

Si trattava di condizioni vantaggiose, in una nazione nella quale il diritto d'autore era un principio ancora incerto. Per di più si stava profilando la prospettiva di vedere forse allestito, a Meiningen e a Monaco, un altro dramma giovanile, *Donna Inger di Østråt* (*Fru Inger til Østråt*, 1855), che di fatto sarebbe andato in scena al Nationaltheater di Berlino nel dicembre del 1878.

In questo periodo, tuttavia, Ibsen si stava proiettando al di là di quella produzione giovanile, che pure stava riscuotendo attenzione, e guardava al teatro con occhi diversi. Sempre nella sua premessa all'edizione tedesca dei *Condottieri*, puntualizzava, infatti:

Per la messinscena, le figure idealizzate e a un certo grado impersonali del mito oggi si prestano meno che mai; comunque prescindendo in assoluto da ciò, io avevo solo intenzione in generale di presentare [nei *Condottieri*] la nostra vita nei tempi antichi, non la nostra mitologia (Ibsen 1909, I, 301).

La vita e la storia contro le mitologie appare qui l'enunciazione di un intento realistico; comunque, non sarebbe stato lui, bensì, ancora una volta, il pioniere Bjørnson a rivelare ai tedeschi il primo serio esperimento di 'tragicommedia del denaro' con *Bancarotta* (*En fallit*) del 1874, opera che, dopo varie vicissitudini in Norvegia, era approdata prima al Nya Teatern di Stoccolma e, quindi, in Germania, nel 1875, "coronata da un indubbio successo" e allestita in quasi tutti i teatri della nazione: "La mano che aveva brandito la spada di Sigurd" – sentenzierà Georg Brandes – "non si sentì umiliata a contare il denaro del mercante Tjælde e a ricapitolare le voci dei suoi debiti" (Brandes 1977, 158). Quando *Ein Fallissement* giunse a Berlino (assieme a un antico dramma di Bjørnson come *Gli sposini*, *De nygifte*, del 1865) fu giudicato da Frenzel "un bozzetto 'grigio su grigio'", ma da Paul Lindau, su *Die Gegenwart*, un'opera che suscitava una forte impressione (Eller 1918, 24).

Nel giugno di quell'anno, anche Ibsen assistette a una rappresentazione di *Ein Fallissement* a Monaco e la circostanza probabilmente lo stimolò vieppiù a portare a termine *Le colonne della società* (*Samfundets støtter*), le quali, a loro volta, dai primi mesi del 1878, vennero rappresentate su ben cinque palcoscenici berlinesi, riscuotendo – come ebbe modo di rilevare la stampa – "un successo senza precedenti nelle cronache teatrali della città",⁶ nonché a casca-

⁶ Così su *Nationalzeitung*, cfr. l'introduzione bibliografica di Jens Braage Halvorsen (Ibsen 1898-1902, VI).

ta in decine di scene austro-tedesche, quantunque – va sottolineato – largamente in traduzioni scarse: “Tornavamo di continuo nel teatro in cui si dava il dramma e, quando era tutto esaurito, lo leggevamo nella tremenda versione di Wilhelm Lange”. Così rievoca Paul Schlenther, uno dei giovani intellettuali che volevano rinnovare il teatro tedesco e che era stato folgorato da *Stützen der Gesellschaft*: “I nostri occhi si aprirono sul falso ciarpame teatrale che ci veniva offerto. Eravamo entusiasti. [...] Ibsen fino ad allora era stato per noi un nome vuoto. Fu quest’opera che c’insegnò ad amarlo e fu un amore per la vita” (cit. in Meyer 1971, 441). Critici meno schierati, però, come l’autorevole Frenzel, riconobbero nel testo di Ibsen “ovunque la zampata leonina del poeta, da nessuna parte quella del drammaturgo”, ché *Le colonne* apparivano “un racconto ridotto a forza in forma drammatica” (Eller 1918, 33).

Un capitolo a sé dovrebbe poi costituire la storia della pirateria applicata diffusamente a questo testo in area germanica. Pirata era, del resto, “la tremenda versione di Wilhelm Lange”, letta da Schlenther, ma ci limiteremo a ricordare che il successo di Ibsen fu nulla rispetto a quello realizzato dallo “spaventoso bandito della letteratura” Emil Jonas (HIS XIII, 422, e anche 420-21), il cui rimaneggiamento del copione, conforme al “gusto tedesco” – come dichiarò su un giornale lo spavaldo adattatore – era stato adottato da ben trentadue teatri (Meyer 1971, 446-47).

4. Il successo di *Bancarotta* non fu duraturo e il decennio successivo si presentò piuttosto difficile per Bjørnson: i drammi realistici di Ibsen misero in ombra le sue opere per molti versi avanguardistiche e di assoluto rilievo storico, ma più sentimentali ed effimere. Anche in Germania, *Casa di bambola* (*Et dukkehjem*) ovvero *Nora oder Ein Puppenheim*, rappresentata per la prima volta al Fleensburg Stadttheater e sulle principali scene tedesche dal febbraio del 1880, suscitò un acceso dibattito, stimolando contingenti contributi critici (Lindau e Frenzel, pur dimostrando qualche considerazione per l’autore, trovarono il dramma poco credibile, se non sbagliato), ma anche più approfondite prese di posizione come l’intervento di Eugen Zabel su *Unsere Zeit* (che legava il norvegese a Goethe, al pessimismo, oltre che alla discendenza germanica) e di Ludwig Passarge, il quale, nell’83, pubblicò la prima monografia in tedesco di ben 310 pagine dedicata al drammaturgo, che sollevò la questione di “quanto importante fosse Ibsen per la Germania” (Eller 1918, 33-35, 43-45).

Un altro capitolo a sé costituirebbe la reazione degli interpreti a *Casa di bambola*, delle attrici protagoniste in particolare, le quali, proprio sulle scene tedesche, costrinsero Ibsen a contrabbandare un singolare lieto fine per il suo dramma, come fu preteso dalla diva Hedwig Niemann-Raabe, ma volentieri accettato pure da Maurice ad Amburgo e da Laube a Vienna (Eller 1918, 38-39).⁷

⁷ Ricorderemo incidentalmente che al Residenz-Theater di Berlino, nelle rappresentazioni dell’80, si manipolò ulteriormente il finale con l’ingresso dei figliolotti, che venivano abbracciati

Nonostante tutto questo clamore, Ibsen conobbe un certo rallentamento d'interesse da parte dei teatri a partire dal 1880, almeno fino al 21 dicembre 1886, allorché il Duca di Meiningen fece allestire i suoi scandalosi *Spettri* (*Gengangere*, 1881) nel locale Hoftheater, che non era ovviamente sottoposto a censura.⁸ Max Grube (interprete del Pastore Manders) ricorda che il solo annuncio della messinscena di *Spettri* aveva messo in subbuglio il piccolo ducato di Meiningen, dove non molti avevano letto il testo, ma “era universale opinione che il dramma fosse estremamente indecente e immorale”. Gli autori nordici, in fondo, piacevano più al Duca che al suo pubblico⁹ e, in questa occasione, si sollevò una vera e propria protesta e “veniva dato per scontato che tutte le signore sarebbero rimaste a casa”. Così non si vendettero biglietti, ma il Duca corse ai ripari distribuendoli tra i suoi funzionari e ufficiali e facendo presidiare il teatro dai pochi poliziotti in forza a Meiningen (Grube 1963, 109-10). Nonostante gli auspici negativi, “molta gente interessata afflù da ogni dove, specie da Berlino” (HIS XIV, 375-76), anche se, in sala, “con l’eccezione di Frau von Heldburg, erano presenti solo poche coraggiose donne del teatro di corte” (Grube 1963, 110). Lo spettacolo si tenne senza incidenti e, considerato che a capo della *claque* c’era lo stesso Duca, con inevitabile successo.

A parte Grube, Maria Berg interpretò la Signora Alving, Alexander Barthel Osvald e Karl Weiser, attore specializzato nella resa di “una certa brutalità”, Engstrand.¹⁰ Erano tutti artisti di turgida tradizione shakespeariana e schilleriana e ci s’interroga su come affrontassero lo spoglio copione ibseniano. Regine ovvero l’attrice Klothilde Schwarz fu comunque reclutata allo Hoftheater di Monaco. Per parte sua, Ibsen aveva fornito ragguagli realistici e pressoché visivi sull’ambientazione norvegese del dramma (cfr. HIS XIV, 365-66) e, in una lettera del 15 novembre 1886, il Duca invitò i suoi scenografi di fiducia, i fratelli Brückner, a realizzare un interno con, “sullo sfondo, la vetrata che dava su una serra, che di preferenza doveva ospitare

da Nora, fra i singhiozzi generali. Il dramma, nonostante questo, fu accolto con qualche imbarazzo, secondo Georg Brandes, soprattutto perché il Residenz-Theater era “corrotto da Sardou”. Lo stesso anno, l’esito fu contrastato anche al Residenz-Theater di Monaco, dove il ruolo principale fu tenuto da Marie Ramlo, ma almeno adottando il finale originale (cfr. il vol. di commento a HIS VII, 246-48).

⁸ La prima assoluta di *Spettri* fu data in Germania, per impulso di Felix Philippi, in forma privata, come prova in costume e senza vendita di biglietti, ma alla presenza di Ibsen, allo Stadttheater di Augusta, il 14 aprile 1886. Anche in questa occasione, qualche giornale ricondusse Ibsen al pessimismo di Schopenhauer e Hartmann, nonché soprattutto allo gnosticismo del *Manfred* di Byron (Koller 1965, 105).

⁹ Pare che il Duca stesso li considerasse delle ‘chicche’, genere cui apparteneva, tra l’altro, *Maria Stuart i Skotland* di Bjørnson che veniva rappresentata piuttosto spesso, “quantunque godesse dello stesso scarso favore di *Halte Hulda* dello stesso autore” (Grube 1963, 109).

¹⁰ Fu questo attore che, dopo lo spettacolo, chiese a Ibsen se “il falegname zoppo avesse dato davvero fuoco all’asilo, un punto non chiaro nel dramma, che Ibsen sembrò ponderare seriamente prima di rispondere: ‘Potrebbe essere così’. Si aveva l’impressione che parlasse non d’una figura d’invenzione, ma di una persona reale” (Grube 1963, 96, 110).

fiori veri. Attraverso la finestra posteriore si deve vedere un paesaggio norvegese, per il quale si può usare lo spezzato del [Wilhelm] Tell” (Koller 1965, 106), secondo una prassi di riciclaggio del materiale scenico tipica dell’Ottocento ed evidentemente non ignota anche ai pur prestigiosi e meticolosi Meininger.

Il Duca nutriva per *Gespenster* ambizioni di tournée che dovettero drasticamente ridimensionarsi di fronte ai ripetuti dinieghi della censura in varie e poco liberali città tedesche (la produzione fu comunque, nell’immediato, replicata a Meiningen e a Dresda; cfr. HIS XIV, 425). Infine, nel gennaio dell’87, si autorizzarono – piuttosto singolarmente, per beneficenza – il direttore del Residenztheater di Berlino, Anton Anno, e l’istruttore Franz Wallner (che veniva dai Meininger e avrebbe interpretato Osvald) a rappresentare in *matinée* il testo con Charlotte Frohn nel ruolo della Signora Alving. Qui pare si registrassero fino a 14.000 richieste d’ingresso (Koht 1954, II, 218) e il critico Alfred Kerr avrebbe avuto occasione di parlare di uno “dei più significativi eventi teatrali degli ultimi anni”, a marcare soprattutto il successo dell’Ibsen realista, per questo apprezzato da un pubblico pur sempre d’avanguardia (cfr. il vol. di commento a HIS VII, 467).

Non a caso, due anni dopo, il copione fu scelto da Paul Schlenther e Otto Brahm per inaugurare la Freie Bühne, la scena sperimentale che seguiva l’esempio del parigino Théâtre Libre di André Antoine. In gioco, tanto per Brahm quanto per Antoine, c’era l’emancipazione del teatro dal dominante modello commerciale francese, e Ibsen, essendo in fondo – secondo la discutibile convinzione del primo – “di sangue germanico”, poteva incidere sul teatro tedesco esattamente come aveva fatto a suo tempo Lessing (Meyer 1971, 579).

Il 1889 fu, del resto, un anno decisivo per la fortuna tedesca di Ibsen, poiché, a Berlino, in vari teatri, si realizzò una specie di festival delle sue opere, come il drammaturgo stesso relazionava alla moglie, il 5 marzo:

Ieri mattina, s’è tenuta la prova generale [della *Donna del mare* (*Fruen fra havet*), al Königliches Schauspielhaus], con mia piena soddisfazione. La sera si organizzò una festa maschile in mio onore, presenti 16-17 persone: Lindau, Bülow e Kainz, tra gli altri. Domani sera, sarà rappresentata *Wildente* [*L’anitra selvatica* (*Vildanden*)] al Residenztheater e dopodomani *Nora* al Lessing-Theater di Blumenthal. Sono ancora indeciso se congedarmi da qui o recarmi a Weimar [per *Die Frau vom Meere*], come mi stanno persuadendo a fare (HIS XIV, 536-37).

Calato il sipario su *Nora*, Ibsen ricevette un’enorme corona d’alloro, che possiamo considerare un simbolo dell’acme della sua fama in Germania. Dopo il colorito romanticismo dei drammi giovanili, il drammaturgo norvegese

imponeva adesso, nel clima decadente della fine del secolo, anche al di là di un realismo oggettivo, quella che Hofmannsthal definirà una poesia “delle esistenze che si consumano patologicamente”, contribuendo, nei paesi di lingua tedesca, all'affermazione di un teatro dall'ambigua cifra natural-simbolista, ritenuto moralmente e politicamente eversivo: “Una tendenza che non mi piace affatto”, avrebbe sintetizzato senza troppe sfumature Guglielmo II.¹¹

Tuttavia, dall'insuccesso di *Hedda Gabler* al Residenztheater di Monaco nel gennaio 1891 (che si replicò il mese dopo a Berlino), si avvia in Germania un certo declino della parabola dell'autore norvegese, che si avventurava peraltro, nei suoi estremi drammi, su una strada di scrittura vieppiù sperimentale. Nel 1902-03, Otto Weininger osservava:

Per chi si trova su posizioni più avanzate, quel nome indica qualcosa di banale, una parola d'ordine contrapposta agli epigoni del classicismo. Si crede di aver compreso ormai anche troppo bene ciò che egli ha detto, e di averlo fatto proprio da un bel pezzo. Per costoro egli ha annunciato un'epoca che di fatto è ormai iniziata, e conquiste che sono già patrimonio comune della scienza: e non c'è nulla che più di questo risulti fatale per un'opera d'arte (1985, 8).¹²

5. Fu in tale contesto che pure Strindberg, a partire dalla seconda metà degli anni Ottanta, cercò di farsi strada in Germania, dove – sulla scorta della sua narrativa, pubblicata da un editore di Budapest in odore di pornografia – era quantomeno considerato “uno scrittore svedese sensazionalista”, per di più d'ispirazione socialista (Ollén 1982, 109). Alla Freie Bühne, in recite private per i soliti pressanti motivi di censura, furono rappresentati *Il padre* (*Fadren*, 1887) il 12 ottobre 1890, con gli ottimi attori Emanuel Reicher e Rosa Bertens protagonisti, nonché *La signorina Julie* (*Fröken Julie*, 1888) due anni dopo, il 3 aprile, ancora con Rosa Bertens nello scandaloso ruolo della protagonista e Rudolf Rittner in quello di Jean.

La rappresentazione, già malaccortamente suddivisa in due atti, fu preceduta da una conferenza di Paul Schlenther, il quale si dimostrò imbarazzato di fronte al dramma strindberghiano, troppo spinto, e non evitò il raffronto tra lo svedese e Ibsen (peraltro frequente nella critica del tempo), nell'ambito del

¹¹ Si consideri che del 1889-90 sono anche *Prima dell'alba* (*Vor Sonnenaufgang*) di Hauptmann e *Risveglio di primavera* (*Frühlings Erwachen*) di Wedekind (cfr. Melchinger 1962, 31-34).

¹² In ogni caso, Ibsen – si è giustamente osservato – rimase, al di là della propria personale fortuna, un forte elemento ispiratore per quel movimento di rinnovamento realistico e sperimentale, in ambito letterario e drammaturgico, che corrisponde a *Junges Deutschland*, servendo addirittura come “prototipo per la localizzazione nazionale delle idee all'ordine del giorno”. Infatti, il drammaturgo, rendendo universale il microcosmo norvegese, aveva offerto per primo l'esempio di quella che poteva essere una *Heimatskunst* (Eller 1918, 125-26).

quale, a suo avviso, i personaggi della *Signorina Julie* presentavano, alla fine, il difetto di stagliarsi meno definiti e meditati di quelli del “maestro” norvegese.¹³ Nonostante queste cautele, grazie agli attori, i quali “dimostrarono”, come osserverà Adolf Paul (1930, 36), “che un buon dramma non ha bisogno di conferenzieri, ma di essere recitato per bene [...], l'effetto dell'opera fu forte”.

Per Strindberg, però, il vero successo berlinese (una settantina di repliche)¹⁴ giunse il 22 gennaio 1893, allorché il Residenztheater diede, sotto la direzione di Siegmund Lautenburg, *Creditori* (*Fordringsägare*, 1888). Ricorda ancora Adolf Paul che un esito così felice si verificò del tutto inaspettato:

In teatro non si era affatto convinti del successo del dramma. Durante le prove, gli attori scuotevano la testa e si esprimevano assai dubbiosi sulle possibilità sceniche delle tre lunghe sequenze di dialogo nelle quali si sviluppa il dramma. Alla prova generale, cui Strindberg presenziò, si era ancora titubanti [...]. Ma allorché si levò il sipario della prima, arrivò il trionfo. [Rudolf] Rittner, Rosa Bertens e [Josef] Jarno [che nel ruolo di Gustav fu ‘scoperto’ come attore in quella occasione!] realizzarono una recitazione d'assieme così ben bilanciata, ma nel contempo così ricca di temperamento, che di rado si era e si sarebbe mai vista a Berlino! (Paul 1930, 79-83).¹⁵

Ancora una volta, gli attori salvarono un copione anomalo rispetto alle convenzioni sceniche dell'epoca e, anche se la critica tedesca si tenne in generale più riservata del pubblico, già il 26 gennaio del 1893 Strindberg poteva scrivere:

Strana amabile nazione questa, che s'inchina al genio straniero, sinceramente, senza resistenza e senza barlume d'invidia. Noi – Drachmann, Heiberg, [il pittore Edvard] Munch, Paul ed io – siamo stati di recente a un banchetto da Lehmann, l'editore di [Hermann] Sudermann, il giorno dopo la *première* [di *Heimat*] dello stesso Sudermann. Drachmann ha brindato a Sudermann – il grande Sudermann – e costui ha ringraziato, riconoscendo i forti legami con gli scandinavi, i suoi maestri, che stavolta avevano portato *das Licht* [la luce] (*Berlinerwitz Nordlicht*) in Germania. Fu un momento memorabile per la storia della letteratura (ASB IX, 123).

“Das Licht kommt jetzt aus Norden!” già, la luce veniva dal Nord: la frase

¹³ La conferenza è riportata in Paul 1930, 190-99.

¹⁴ Insieme agli atti unici del 1892 *Di fronte alla morte* (*Inför döden*) e *Primo avvertimento* (*Första varningen*).

¹⁵ Rudolf Rittner aveva già interpretato Jean alla Freie Bühne.

di Sudermann fu ripresa dai giornali e diventò proverbiale ed emblematica di quel momento culturale (cfr. Paul 1930, 75), nel quale si diffuse addirittura la moda, fra gli intellettuali tedeschi, di attribuirsi pseudonimi nordici (Gravier 1949, 6). Parallelamente, è pur vero però che i nordici, alla fin fine, venivano accolti quasi bruciandosi a vicenda: Ibsen dopo Bjørnson e Strindberg dopo tutt'e due. Infatti, Stefan Zweig – confermando quel che scrive Weininger – ha rievocato che, nella sua gioventù (al trapasso del secolo, quindi), Ibsen già appariva confinato fra “i buoni e solidi maestri” di un'epoca tramontata:

Ogni giorno inventavamo nuovi metodi per utilizzare le ore più noiose della scuola in letture private; mentre il professore esponeva il suo logoro commento intorno alla “poesia ingenua e sentimentale” di Schiller, noi sotto i banchi leggevamo Nietzsche e Strindberg, i cui nomi non erano ancor giunti al vecchio insegnante (Zweig 1979, 38).¹⁶

Dopo questo picco di successo, però, anche a Strindberg capitò di registrare quella che avrebbe mestamente definito “una certa stasi” con la constatazione che “il dramma prese di nuovo a ripiegare su posizioni più o meno vecchie” (ASV LXIV, 12-13). Strindberg in Germania restò soprattutto affidato, a partire dal 1894, all'apostolato del fido quanto discusso traduttore Emil Schering, ma, ai primi del Novecento, Alfred Halm a Breslavia e Max Reinhardt a Berlino (quest'ultimo insieme alla coppia d'attori Emanuel Reicher e Gertrud Eysoldt) avrebbero rilanciato sulle scene il drammaturgo svedese con *Rausch* ovvero *Delitto e delitto* (*Brott och brott*).

Reinhardt, in particolare, terrà alte, ai primi del Novecento, le sorti dei drammaturghi nordici, con memorabili allestimenti gravidi d'atmosfera e polemici intenti nei confronti della tradizione naturalistica. Ricordiamo i suoi simbolistici *Spettri* ibseniani, con le scene di Edvard Munch, nel 1906, per l'inaugurazione dei Kammerspiele (vedi anche Fazio 1988, 86-87), assieme agli strindberghiani *Danza di morte* (*Dödsdansen*) del 1912 e *Un sogno* (*Ett drömspel*), realizzato per il Dramaten di Stoccolma, il 28 ottobre 1921.¹⁷

Strindberg, in particolare, si sarebbe sempre più imposto come un maestro delle nuove generazioni e – venerato da Kafka e citato, in quanto emblema antiborghese, da Ernst Toller nel suo primo dramma, *La svolta* (*Die*

¹⁶ Sul relativo declino di Ibsen sulle scene tedesche dopo il 1895, vedi anche Eller 1918, 114, che evidenzia tuttavia che ci si trova di fronte più a una crisi della sua centralità che della sua presenza. Infatti, “dove Ibsen era stato uno dei pochi drammaturghi moderni, ora era uno dei molti”, mentre era cresciuta una consistente drammaturgia nazionale.

¹⁷ Fondamentale in merito lo studio di Kvam (1974). La lezione di Reinhardt si può dire abbia inciso sulla stessa tradizione interpretativa scandinava (e, in prospettiva, abbia avuto, per molti versi, una portata europea). Il regista svedese Olof Molander fu, in particolare, influenzato da Reinhardt (cfr. Ollén 1982, 251, 371).

Wandlung) del 1919 – come uno dei padri riconosciuti della corrente espressionistica.

Certo il *Berliner Tageblatt* aveva avuto da ridire sull'infatuazione nazionale per la cultura scandinava (Holm 1957, 394); Ibsen, dal canto suo, aveva assunto – s'è accennato – difensivamente assai presto i panni di un tormentato pangermanista (cfr. anche HIS XIII, 113) e Strindberg aveva dovuto occasionalmente registrare che, in fondo, “gli artisti scandinavi erano particolarmente mal visti in certi influenti ambienti” tedeschi (ASV L, 33). Eppure i nordici, in alcune occasioni, avevano effettivamente tenuto il banco in una Germania che viveva uno straordinario momento di affermazione politica. Come mai?

Secondo Ola Hansson, perché “la Germania era grande, ma priva di letteratura” (Strindberg e Hansson 1938, 66); un'opinione estrema, non c'è che dire, ma che doveva essere abbastanza diffusa se lo Strindberg del *Chiostro* (*Klostret*, 1898), romanzo autobiografico in parte ambientato a Berlino, si può permettere di rimetterla sulla bocca di una giornalista austriaca (la sua futura moglie Frida Uhl): “Dopo la guerra del 1870, l'Impero germanico era carente di arte, scienza e letteratura. Lei stessa leggeva solo libri francesi e scandinavi e la giovane letteratura tedesca che stava fiorendo derivava dal Nord” (ASV L, 13).

6. Di contro, la Francia, umiliata proprio dalla potenza bismarckiana, era inevitabilmente più chiusa in se stessa e ciò si può ben rilevare, negli anni Novanta, nell'accanito dibattito (più acre ed esteso di quello tedesco) a proposito dell'influsso scandinavo sulla cultura e il carattere francesi; un dibattito sostanzialmente solcato dal solito sciovinistico pregiudizio verso una corrente che, non a caso, la splendida Sarah Bernhardt bollava, sprezzante, come “Norderie” (cit. in Meyer 1971, 573). La capitale francese, per di più, non era solo una splendida città con molti luoghi di spettacolo, ma un vero e proprio sistema teatrale. Un sistema abbastanza chiuso e autonomo, però. James Brander Matthews scrive nel 1880:

I teatri di Parigi, più o meno una cinquantina se includiamo le sale dei sobborghi, richiedono una fornitura costante di nuovi drammi.

Un drammaturgo francese ha oggi un grande vantaggio sui drammaturghi di ogni altro paese: non conosce concorrenza straniera. Grazie all'abilità degli autori francesi, il loro lavoro è stato esportato in ogni capitale del mondo civilizzato.

[... Ma] potrei ricordare appena due drammi stranieri recitati a Parigi lo scorso anno (1879), un'opera comica tedesca e una tragedia italiana. [...] Nonostante tutto il suo cosmopolitismo, Parigi non dà alcun segnale di disaffezione nei confronti della drammaturgia di casa. [...] E] quasi centocinquanta drammi originali

vengono presentati ogni anno nei venti principali teatri parigini (Brander Matthews 1880, 204-07).

Era difficile penetrare in questo mondo autoreferenziale, che, tuttavia, nell'ultimo scorcio del secolo, cominciò a essere percorso da fermenti d'inquietudine, rinnovamento e sperimentazione, che trovarono espressione, nel 1887, nel Théâtre Libre di André Antoine e, nel 1893, nel simbolista Théâtre de l'Œuvre di Aurélien Lugné-Poe. Non a caso, furono proprio queste scene a guardare a un repertorio internazionale e a spianare la strada agli autori nordici.

Fu indirettamente, attraverso l'apostolato di Edmund Gosse, che i francesi, nel 1873-74, ebbero le prime notizie su Ibsen, grazie agli articoli di Léo Quesnel su *La Revue politique et littéraire*. Teatralmente, invece (all'apogeo della fortuna tedesca di Ibsen), in Francia, cominciò André Antoine con *Les Revenants*, il 30 maggio 1890, cui seguì *Le Canard sauvage*, il 28 aprile 1891. Al di là del coraggio e della curiosità culturale di Antoine, che approccio aveva costui nei confronti di un fenomeno per tanti versi 'alieno' quale poteva considerarsi Ibsen?

Se prendiamo in esame la messinscena di *Spettri* (che furono, tra l'altro, presentati con tagli che risparmiavano solo il terzo atto), esiste un'attendibile lettera-relazione, inviata a un curiosissimo Strindberg da Ola Hansson, che fu testimone dello spettacolo:

Antoine stesso recitò assolutamente da maestro, con tutto lo spontaneo, illusorio naturalismo gallico e rese il cadavere, nel quale si compiva il processo di putrefazione. Gli altri erano proprio impossibili: Manders un *abbé* francese dell'*ancien régime*, la vedova Alving un'eroina tragica, patetica, declamante di un dramma classico francese; Engstrand e Regine recitavano in costumi folcloristici. Il pubblico ridacchiava, dove nel Nord e in Germania avrebbe pianto o avvertito indignazione morale; la stampa era incapace di comprendere come il pubblico (cit. in Ahlström 1956, 21).

Del resto, anche un corrispondente del giornale norvegese *Morgenbladet*, che aveva assistito alle prove, riferisce che la Barny, pur brava, era troppo melodrammatica come Signora Alving, e che gli altri attori erano in maggiore sintonia col testo, senza comunque apparire propriamente adeguati (Nyholm 1959, 29-30).

È chiaro che si trattò di uno spettacolo con degli sbilanciamenti piuttosto forti: a prescindere dalla lamentela di Sarcey che gli interpreti non si facevano intendere,¹⁸ la compagnia non doveva avere né riferimenti né maturità

¹⁸ "Antoine, che già non ha voce, parla dando le spalle e in tono basso. Si compiace di

culturale per affrontare l'inedita tessitura dello spartito ibseniano e si barca-menava – con un ardimentoso eclettismo, che si sospetta non infrequente al Théâtre Libre – fra le accettate convenzioni tragiche e le nuove esigenze di documentazione ambientale, quantunque nel finale degli atti primo e terzo riuscisse probabilmente a rendere, con qualche forza patetica, “le scene commoventi a livello mimico” (Pruner 1958, 80).

Fra il 1893 (a cominciare da *Rosmersholm*) e il 1897, sarebbe stato soprattutto il Théâtre de l'Œuvre di Aurélien Lugné-Poe a prodigarsi a favore del drammaturgo norvegese, con una fitta serie di allestimenti, peraltro sostenuti dalla competente, quanto gratuita, collaborazione di Herman Bang, patrocinata dal conte Prozor (Amsinck 1972, 7).¹⁹

In Francia, Ibsen tendeva ora a essere trasfigurato, secondo Maeterlinck (e le celebri versioni francesi del conte Prozor), in un maestro del “dramma da sonnambuli” (Maeterlinck 1896, 200). Se dobbiamo credere a Lemaître, già in *Le Canard sauvage* di Antoine, affiorava la tendenza (forse intuibile anche nei precedenti *Spettri*), che sarà attribuita ai simbolisti e a Lugné-Poe, di recitare Ibsen “troppo lentamente, troppo seriamente, troppo maestosamente” (Lemaître 1888-98, VI, 31), a riprova di una percezione insieme inevitabilmente esotica e grave del teatro nordico (che, a ben vedere, male si accordava sia con un testo come *L'anitra selvatica* sia con la percezione che l'autore aveva del suo stesso stile).²⁰

Herman Bang, collaborando con i simbolisti, avrebbe cercato di riportare il norvegese a una cifra nazionale, di “naturalizza e chiarezza”, che si sarebbe imposta lentamente e tardi, attorno al 1897 (Robichez 1957a, 31-33)²¹. Il regista danese riuscì così ad affermare un determinante interesse, “come principio dell'istruzione scenica, sull'uomo che sta dietro il ruolo”, nonché un nuovo conseguente criterio interpretativo, per il quale “l'arte della dizione”, tanto coltivata in Francia, “non coincideva con quella dell'attore”, sostanziata di ben altri valori umani (cit. in Amsinck 1972, 14, 16). Anche questa era “luce che veniva dal Nord” a rinnovare le più fruste convenzioni teatrali, già in autonoma sintonia con certe istanze stanislavskiane.

7. Nel 1893, l'anno in cui in Francia si registrò un picco di traduzioni di Ibsen (Shepherd-Barr 2012, 58), pure August Strindberg e Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson erano arrivati, sulla sua scia, al Théâtre Libre, rispettivamente con *Mademoiselle Julie* e con *Une Faillite*, transitando in seguito nel repertorio

risalire il fondo della scena, dove intrattiene a mezza voce lunghe conversazioni con il compagno. Sembrerebbe che fosse per cogliere più da vicino la natura, come se fosse più naturale mostrare le spalle piuttosto che il viso e discorrere a bassa voce invece di farsi sentire” (Sarcey 1900-02, VIII, 330-31).

¹⁹ Amsinck (1972, 13) evidenzia che, a Parigi, nei teatri da *boulevard* come in recite private, non si disdegnava l'occasionale rappresentazione degli autori nordici.

²⁰ Lo stesso Aurélien Lugné-Poe (1936, 80-81) non tace le riserve di Ibsen sullo stile dell'Œuvre.

²¹ Nel 1895, Bjørn Bjørnson, figlio di Bjørnstjerne, subentrerà a Bang come collaboratore di Lugné-Poe nell'allestimento degli autori nordici.

del Théâtre de l'Œuvre. Bjørnson, considerato “il rivale di Ibsen”, era stato tradotto in francese con l'antica commedia *Les Nouveaux mariés* ovvero *Gli sposini* fin dal 1884 (Antoine 1921, 293; Reque 1930, 26) e, già nel 1870, Schuré l'aveva considerato l'esponente più significativo della nuova letteratura nordica. Tuttavia, dopo l'affermazione della drammaturgia borghese di Ibsen, anche in Francia, quando si rappresenterà *Une Faillite* al Théâtre Libre, “fece la figura di non essere altro che un buon allievo di Augier” (Lescoffier 1932, 356).²²

Per contro, il 21 giugno 1894, l'allestimento di *Créanciers* di Strindberg, curato e adattato con cura sapiente da Herman Bang e con l'interpretazione di Lugné-Poe, Lucienne Dorcy e Philippe Rameau, noti attori dell'Odéon, fu reputato – sebbene preceduto dalla solita poco penetrante conferenza (che Strindberg, tra l'altro, non gradì troppo, visto che gli dava senza tanti complimenti del “barbaro”)²³ – un passaggio cruciale dell'avventura del teatro scandinavo in Francia, tanto da far decretare a *Le Figaro*: “La Scuola dei Nordici ha avuto la sua serata d'*Hernani*” (Ahlström 1956, 211, 323).²⁴

Soirée d'Hernani o meno, il caso della rappresentazione del 16-17 gennaio 1893 da parte di Antoine della *Signorina Julie* ci pare emblematico della difficoltà di cogliere storiograficamente la qualità della rappresentazione e il reale impatto delle opere dei nordici sulla scena francese del tempo.

Nell'allestimento di Antoine, la protagonista Eugénie Nau era affiancata da Alexandre Arquillière, che – a detta del suo direttore – fu “straordinario come servo della signorina Julie” (Antoine 1921, 288). Nel 1921, Antoine assicurava che il testo era stato allestito “tenendo conto nella maniera più scrupolosa delle indicazioni di Strindberg”, sicché la scenografia della cucina, nella quale è ambientata l'azione, “secondo il suo desiderio, ‘si perdeva nelle quinte’, in modo, secondo l'autore, che ci sia posto per le suggestioni e che l'immaginazione stimolata dallo spettacolo la completi da sé” (Antoine 1932, 232); appese c'erano pure 46 casseruole e a destra si notava una porta a vetri che lasciava intravedere un giardino; sopresse erano le bande laterali che incorniciavano la scena. La documentazione sulle tecniche di allestimento nei primi anni del Théâtre Libre è piuttosto carente, ma, nel caso della *Signorina Julie*, resta un disegno di Ernest Clair-Guyot, su *Le Monde artiste* del 29 gennaio 1893, che ci conferma l'accuratezza formale dell'allestimento e ci mostra la protagonista, nella conclusione, con in mano il raso-

²² Quantunque parzialmente si rifacesse, “nonostante un'interpretazione imperfetta nel suo fervore”, l'anno successivo, all'Œuvre con *Au-dessus des forces humaines* ovvero *Al di là delle nostre forze* (*Over Evne*, 1883) (Lescoffier 1932, 356).

²³ In un articolo su *Gil Blas* dell'8 agosto 1895, *Il barbaro a Parigi* (*Le Barbare à Paris*), Strindberg avrebbe reagito alla presentazione del letterato Henri Chantavoine, che riporta in questi termini: “Niente di speciale ciò che state per vedere, niente proprio: un orso polare, una foca, non saprei come dire: proprio un barbaro” (ASV XXXIV, 260).

²⁴ Il 13 dicembre 1894, il Théâtre de l'Œuvre avrebbe presentato con un certo successo anche *Le Père* di Strindberg, con un finale un po' attenuato.

io, irrigidita, di fronte al servo, che imita un po' platealmente i movimenti di un ipnotizzatore (cfr. Ahlström 1956, 177).

Mademoiselle Julie era stata presentata con *À bas le progrès* di Edmond de Goncourt e *Le Ménage Brésil* di Coolus, provocando, secondo Antoine,

in fondo una sensazione enorme. Tutto ha appassionato il pubblico, il tema, l'ambientazione, l'atto unico di un'ora e mezzo che stringe un'azione bastante ad alimentare una grande pièce francese. Certo ci sono state delle sghignazzate, delle proteste, ma, alla fine, ci si è trovati di fronte a ben altro (Antoine 1921, 286-88).

A differenza del testo di Coolus, quello di Goncourt fu accolto con indifferenza (pare che alla spicciolata il pubblico abbandonasse la sala) e si suppone che l'autore si fosse danneggiato da solo, facendo pubblicare, il 16 gennaio, su *L'Écho de Paris* e *Le Rappel*, una bellicosa dichiarazione contro Tolstoj e l'"idolatria dei giovani drammaturghi per il teatro scandinavo" in nome delle "qualità francesi: la chiarezza, lo spirito, l'ironia"; un attacco che – osserva tristemente Antoine (1921, 286-88) – lo faceva passare dalla parte dei suoi peggiori avversari, Sarcey e Pessard. L'intervento sollevò una polemica giornalistica, ma appariva in effetti tanto inopportuno quanto più Strindberg, nella prefazione distribuita al pubblico, aveva cavallerescamente indicato i Goncourt fra gli ispiratori del proprio lavoro (cfr. ASV XXVII, 109).

Con Birger Mörner, l'8 febbraio 1893, Strindberg avrebbe commentato così la sua avventura parigina:

Non è vero che *La signorina Julie* è caduta (che fosse abbattuta da quel 'vecchio somaro' di Sarcey e simili era ovvio); vero è invece che Goncourt ha fatto un tonfo con il suo stupido dramma *À bas le progrès* (indirizzato contro Ibsen e me). Così io ho battuto il primato di Goncourt e questo ha irritato i suoi amici – *hinc* (ASB IX, 128).

Da un'altra lettera di poco successiva allo stesso Mörner, risulta che anche Antoine si sarebbe "complimentato" con il drammaturgo "per il successo" (ASB IX, 134).

A un'analisi più attenta, però, è difficile sostenere che *La signorina Julie* fosse stata tanto bene accolta. Ciò che racconta Antoine, infatti, appare piuttosto roseo e Ginisty nota per contro: "Non è stata una gran serata per il Théâtre Libre" (cit. in Ahlström 1956, 168). Il conservatore Sarcey ribadì di non capire Strindberg e lo ribattezzò, ironico: "génie norvégien". Se questo non stupisce, le altre critiche furono in linea di massima piuttosto aspre: "Strindberg è riuscito a creare a Parigi lo stesso fenomeno che crea in patria:

conflitto” (Ahlström 1956, 312), fu il commento di un giornalista svedese. Su *La République Française* del 23 gennaio 1893, Ginisty puntualizza:

Il disastro è stato irrimediabile, nonostante il valore degli interpreti Nau e Arquillière, che hanno fronteggiato arditamente la tempesta. Immagino che Strindberg ora sia particolarmente interdetto. Perché si accetta Ibsen e non lui? Si riscontra subito una differenza essenziale tra i due scrittori: l'opera ibseniana è piena di poesia. Di contro, Strindberg sembra voler proscrivere la poesia dal suo teatro, respingendola come una seduzione pericolosa, indegna d'un uomo che ha le mani piene di verità amare (Ahlström 1956, 168, 313).

Il concetto di 'successo' per gli autori nordici e i laboratori d'avanguardia che li rappresentavano a Parigi, come si vede, poteva essere alquanto opinabile.

Nonostante un'obiettiva crisi di allestimenti a partire dal 1897 (la cosiddetta fortuna europea dei nordici si conferma sempre piuttosto alternata) e, nonostante lo spiritoso epitaffio di Maurice Muret ai primi del secolo (“Il polo è passato di moda”; Reque 1930, 203), almeno in certe correnti apparentemente laterali della scena francese, il teatro scandinavo ha mantenuto, nel Novecento inoltrato, un suo ruolo seminale. Soprattutto Strindberg, diremmo. Basti pensare al comunque eccezionale *Songe* allestito nel 1928 da Antonin Artaud, ma, oltre, al suo influsso sulla corrente del Teatro dell'Assurdo e segnatamente su Samuel Beckett. È emblematico, infatti, che, nonostante il riserbo che Beckett ha potuto dimostrare difensivamente nei confronti della scrittura del drammaturgo svedese,²⁵ Roger Blin (allievo di Artaud) abbia sottolineato che fu “grazie a Strindberg che era venuto in contatto con Samuel Beckett”, allorché, al Théâtre de la Gaîté-Montparnasse, nel 1949-50, aveva tentato un allestimento di *Sonata di spettri* (*Spök-Sonaten*):

Lo spettacolo non andava bene. C'erano pochi spettatori, ma, fra questi, una sera fece la sua comparsa Beckett, che per di più tornò una seconda volta. Dopo qualche tempo, ricevetti una visita di sua moglie Suzanne, che mi portò il manoscritto di *En attendant Godot*. Beckett aveva evidentemente apprezzato la mia interpretazione strindberghiana e ne aveva dedotto che fossi in grado di comprendere anche lui e di portarlo in scena (Blin 1967, 11).²⁶

8. “C'è qualcosa di Shakespeare in questo anarchico” (Reque 1930, 58), aveva scritto a proposito di Ibsen, il 30 maggio 1890, su *Le Figaro*, Paul Des-

²⁵ Nel 1967, Beckett ha dichiarato: “Non conosco bene il teatro di Strindberg e non posso esserne stato influenzato” (cfr. Swerling 1971, 26).

²⁶ Ricordiamo incidentalmente che, nel 1955, persino Arthur Adamov avrebbe pubblicato una discontinua monografia su Strindberg (Adamov 1955).

jardins, dopo *Les Revenants* dati da Antoine, e la rassegna di spettacoli degli ultimi decenni dell'Ottocento, che abbiamo delineato, dall'esito qualche volta luminoso e spesso contrastato, che si sono imposti comunque progressivamente alla memoria storica come un'affermazione di valori scenici nella coscienza teatrale europea, non dissuade dal fissare l'idea che l'epoca di Bjørnson, Ibsen e Strindberg costituì una specie di 'età elisabettiana' – 'oscariana' dovremmo definirla! – o di *siglo de oro* del teatro nordeuropeo che doveva inevitabilmente avere riflessi continentali.

Si trattò di un trentennio (dal 1870 circa) bene individuabile e fecondo, che, a fianco dei suoi Shakespeare e Marlowe, contò pure i più piccoli Greene o Beaumont e Fletcher, che ovviamente avevano più difficoltà a figurare sia in Germania sia nella luccicante vetrina parigina,²⁷ nonché i suoi grandi interpreti e allestitori (ingiustamente in ombra nella manualistica teatrale corrente). Questo momento segnò certo per la Scandinavia uno spartiacque: il suo ingresso nella cultura e nella coscienza europea moderna e il prospettico consolidarsi di uno stile che, a suo modo, con Lars von Trier o Jon Fosse, appare ancora oggi ben distinto.

La circostanza singolare è che tanta fioritura non aveva radici in un *humus* culturale o teatrale peculiarmente rigoglioso. Anzi. Nel Settecento, Ludvig Holberg aveva ammesso: "Noi nordici siamo i fedeli imitatori dei francesi" (Holberg 1969-71, XI, 247), e, dopo tutto, per trovare un'altra opera svedese rappresentata a Parigi prima di Strindberg, si deve risalire al 1803 ovvero a una commedia di re Gustavo III, *Siri Brahe ou les curieuses*, alla Comédie Française. Così, gli autori scandinavi di fine secolo dovettero fronteggiare e, ironicamente, condividere l'opinione corrente di essere dei 'Barbari della cultura', nell'accezione distruttiva, ma anche rigeneratrice, che il termine storicamente implica.

Nel 1893, Darzens, un intellettuale favorevole a Strindberg, rilevava che "i critici si scagliano contro questa invasione 'barbarica' che minaccia di scompaginare le sane tradizioni francesi", che costituivano la norma teatrale occidentale (Reque 1930, 148-49). Due anni più tardi, lo stesso Strindberg avrebbe pubblicato il menzionato articolo *Le Barbare à Paris* (vedi nota 23), sottolineando – da "Normand" pur accolto nella cerchia dell'Œuvre di Lugné-Poe – non solo la personale non facile integrazione, ma anche certi secolari rapporti culturali e politici che legavano il suo paese a "la Mecque d'Occident". L'Europa, pare insinuare saggiamente Strindberg, nasce comunque

²⁷ Per esempio, nel 1894, l'eminente critico e drammaturgo danese Edvard Brandes passò quasi inosservato con *Una visita (Et besøg)* sulla scena sperimentale de Les Escholiers. Lugné-Poe annunciò invece messinscena di Tor Hedberg e Knut Hamsun, ma, se si eccettuano *Delinquente (Förbrytare)* di Gustaf af Geijerstam, dato solo in *tournee* a Stoccolma nel 1894, e l'adattamento di un'oscura novella di Ellin Ameen firmato dal conte Prozor due anni dopo, giusto Herman Bang, con *Fratelli (Brødre)*, e il notevole drammaturgo norvegese Gunnar Heiberg, con *Il balcone (Balkonen)*, furono presenti, nel 1894 e '98, sui cartelloni dell'Œuvre (si veda in merito Robichez 1957b). Nessuno di questi testi peraltro sollevò echi memorabili.

dalla fusione dello spirito latino con la 'barbarie' nordica: "Comincio a sentirmi un po' a casa, fiero di sapere che i miei antenati hanno contribuito alla gloria scientifica e artistica della Ville-Lumière – che oggi mi tratta come un intruso, un pellerossa, da antropomorfo" (ASV XXXIV, 263).

Si può affermare che i grandi drammaturghi scandinavi – proprio dalla frizione e dal contrasto con la cultura continentale – avvertirono più acutamente e orgogliosamente l'eccezionalità della loro avventura scenica, che li portava a imporsi non solo su differenti e assai aliene sensibilità, ma addirittura in nazioni che avevano nutrito e, per certi versi, 'colonizzato' la non ricca storia teatrale che avevano alle spalle. In parallelo, gli autori nordici davano a un'Europa intellettuale, segmentata in arcigni nazionalismi quanto quella politica, una coscienza più aperta e più oggettiva della sua intima costituzione culturale e, anche per questo, l'affermazione di Ibsen o di Strindberg non poteva essere una marcia trionfale.

I drammaturghi scandinavi accettavano di norma, in Francia, di essere rappresentati senza alcun compenso, pur di comparire sui cartelloni di quei 'laboratori' poveri, ma prestigiosi per il loro riconosciuto ruolo d'avanguardia, che erano i teatri di Antoine e di Lugné-Poe (Amsinck 1972, 42-43). Va da sé poi che il successo garantito da queste scene restava d'*élite* e scalfiva il sistema degli spettacoli solo obliquamente: la vita teatrale parigina – quella commerciale che si articolava prospera nei tanti luccicanti teatri della capitale – era ben lungi dall'inclinarsi incondizionatamente ai nordici. Infatti, la Comédie Française arriverà a rappresentare Ibsen solo nel 1921 e – si è di recente giustamente notato – che al limite un'affermazione davvero 'popolare' del norvegese può considerarsi *Maison de poupée* con Réjane, nell'aprile del 1894, al Théâtre du Vaudeville, al di fuori cioè dei teatri sperimentali (Shepherd-Barr 2012, 62-63).

Questo solo potrebbe aprire un ampio discorso su che cosa s'intenda per 'affermazione' o per 'conquista' di una stabile posizione nei repertori internazionali riferita ai massimi rappresentanti della drammaturgia nordica. In questa sede, ci limiteremo a osservare che verosimilmente si trattò – sia in Germania sia in Francia – di un'acquisizione insieme cronologicamente concentrata eppure discontinua, rappresentabile in un grafico con picchi e lunghe depressioni. Peraltro, la ricezione di Ibsen, Bjørnson e Strindberg da parte degli intellettuali e degli uomini di teatro più avanzati, nonché da parte della storiografia stessa, non corrisponde (ancor oggi) al loro effettivo impatto sul pubblico (al di là, ovviamente, delle contingenti realtà locali norvegese e svedese, che non appaiono neppure 'costantemente' tanto ricettive, se analizziamo l'arco dell'ultimo secolo e mezzo).

Insomma, per intenderci, avranno avuto senz'altro ragione sulla lunga prospettiva i sostenitori del coraggioso Antoine che, nel 1889, prevedevano che "l'édifice vermoulu" (bell'aggettivo ibseniano) del teatro commerciale e tradizionale, sotto i colpi del Théâtre Libre, sarebbe crollato (così, nel 1889,

Maurice Lefèvre, cit. in Antoine 1979, 172), ma se vogliamo considerare la storia nel complesso ovvero nella sua infinita e paradossale complessità – almeno dal punto di vista del ‘successo di pubblico’ – non bisognerebbe mai dimenticare che non furono né *Spettri* né, peggio, *La signorina Julie* i testi più rappresentati e seguiti nell’Ottocento, bensì la riduzione di *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* di Jules Verne, che fra il 1874 e il 1898 totalizzò ben 1500 repliche (Weber 1990, 198-99).

Pertanto, sussiste inevitabilmente uno iato fra l’acquisizione di un fenomeno artistico particolarmente raffinato nell’ambito culturale e il successo diffuso e, in questo intervento, abbiamo avuto modo di trattare più dell’acquisizione che del successo, ma anche in fondo del sostanziale contributo dei ‘barbari’ nordici all’identità europea.

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VILDANDEN AND HANNELES HIMMELFAHRT.
TWO PLAYS ABOUT DENIED CHILDHOOD

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The importance of Henrik Ibsen's poetics in the development of Gerhart Hauptmann's early literary output has been investigated and documented in a number of studies.¹ The vast majority of these inquiries concentrate on Hauptmann's early naturalistic writings, since it is there that the most obvious echoes of Ibsen's theatre can be found. However, in the present essay I will try to show how – even in the years following Hauptmann's debut on the naturalistic scene – Ibsenian reminiscences and suggestions were still resonating throughout the Silesian writer's literary production, though in a subtle and more personally elaborated way. After contextualising Hauptmann's pièce briefly, I will focus my attention on Henrik Ibsen's *Vildanden* (*The Wild Duck*, 1884) and on Gerhart Hauptmann's *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (*The Assumption of Hannele*, 1893) through a comparative reading.

Whereas Ibsen's play is still known worldwide, Hauptmann's pièce is today a less remembered blend of naturalistic and oneiric-symbolic elements, which at the time of its publication seemed unique and groundbreaking.

A thorough reading reveals, in my opinion, a large number of correspondences with Ibsen's *Vildanden*. In particular, the analysis will bring to bear those thematic aspects that most strongly establish a clear and intimate connection between the two plays. Likewise, I will direct my attention to the way Ibsen and Hauptmann described the characters of Hedvig and Hannele, respectively, stressing the playwrights' use of a similar array of symbolic elements in portraying the two adolescents and their environ-

¹ Cf., e.g., Zander 1947; Sandberg s.a. (uncertain year in the 1950s); McFarlane 1964; George 1968; Oellers 1975; Campignier 1984.

ment. In addition, I will examine the aspects of dream-escape and dream-like transfiguration of space, focusing on the aquatic suggestions, which, in both cases, are strictly associated with the theme of adolescence.

Both plays are characterised by an innovative display of symbolic undertones and elements. It is also interesting to note how similar atmospheres and moods reappear in Hauptmann's oneiric drama almost a decade after *Vildanden's* publication.

A shared interest in the mysteries of puberty as well as the presence of a similar symbolic landscape and analogous choices in the characterisation of the theatrical space suggest a close connection between the two dramas, revealing how Henrik Ibsen's influence on Gerhart Hauptmann's theatre reaches far beyond the early naturalistic period of the latter.

I. HENRIK IBSEN AND HIS SCHOOL IN GERMANY

Hauptmann's contemporaries were already fully aware of the strong influence that Ibsen's plays had on coeval German literature, as shown by the Danish critic and man of letters Georg Brandes in a detailed and exhaustive article from 1890 (Brandes 2011). In his essay, Brandes thoroughly examines the work of the main German naturalistic playwrights, praising their will to bring new creative juice into the contemporary, stagnant, cultural scenario and applauding them for the courage they showed by drifting away from a worn-out late-romantic literary paradigm while focusing their interest on both current social problems and moral issues. At the same time, Brandes stresses how heavily dependent German naturalists were – both in the choice of dramatic subjects and in the structure of the dramatic plot – on the model offered by Henrik Ibsen's dramas. The whole fifth section of the article is devoted to Hauptmann – in the words of the Danish critic “[e]t udpræget dramatisk Talent, stærkt paavirket af Ibsen” (2011, part V)² – and to his debut pièce *Vor Sonnenaufgang. Soziales Drama (Before Sunrise. A Social Drama, 1889)*.

Although Ibsen was not a poet of the big city nor a singer of the poor, he deeply inspired German naturalistic literature with his realistic depictions of society and with his will to unveil the hypocritical emptiness of old dogmas. According to Brandes, the modern and innovative spirit that animated Ibsen's plays made him the greatest inspirer of German naturalism, the quintessence of modernity:

Naar Ibsen for store Kredse i Tyskland nu er rykket op i de ufejlbare Literaturpavers Klasse, saa beror det paa, at hans Væsen

² “An outstanding dramatic talent, heavily influenced by Ibsen.” All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

nøjagtigt svarer til den fremmelige moderne Bevidsthed i det store Rige. [...] [I] Tyskland er [Ibsen] bleven en Art Fører paa det dramatiske og almindeligt literære Omraade. Man opfatter ham der som *Realisten*; man har gjort hans Navn til et Banner, og en hel Ungdom flokkes nu under dette Banner [...]. Atter og atter nævnes Navnet Ibsen som det Tegn, i hvilket man vil sejre (2011, introduction, part VIII; italics in the original).³

Towards the end of the article, in its last section, Brandes alludes to how – due both to the late reception of Ibsen’s modern dramas and to the praiseworthy, yet quite unidirectional, interpretation and elaboration of his literary production within the German naturalistic circles – the Norwegian playwright had been saluted in Germany as the realist writer *par excellence*, paradoxically at a time when he was moving towards more symbolist poetic solutions: “I de senere Aar er [...] Ibsen [...] fra Virkelighedsgengiver [...] bleven Symboliker” (2011, part IX).⁴

Brandes could not know that very soon one of the most promising writers of German naturalism, Gerhart Hauptmann, would show with his dream-like pièce *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* how the influence of Ibsen could not be confined to the relatively narrow space of a literary movement.

2. HANNELES HIMMELFAHRT. A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAMA

In 1891, Gerhart Hauptmann returned to his birthplace in Silesia,⁵ after leaving the hallucinatory muse of modernity – Berlin. While in Berlin, he came into contact with naturalistic influences and the work of Henrik Ibsen, an influential playwright for many a young writer in that city, where his work was considered the ultimate expression of naturalism.

In 1893, while not completely abandoning aspects of social realism, the young playwright drifted away from the rigid poetics of the movement with his oneiric play in two acts, *Hanneles Himmelfahrt*, which was awarded the Grillparzer prize in 1896 and was nominated for the Schiller prize by politicians, artists, intellectuals and men of letters such as, among others, Gustav

³ “The fact that Ibsen has now reached the status of one of the infallible popes of literature within a great circle of critics in Germany depends on the way his nature corresponds with the innovative modern consciousness of this great nation. [...] In Germany [Ibsen] has become, in a sense, a leader within the dramatic and the literary field in general. Here, he is regarded as a *realist*. The name Ibsen is repeatedly mentioned as the sign in which one shall conquer.”

⁴ “In recent years [...], Ibsen has changed from being a realist [...] to a symbolist.”

⁵ At the time, Silesia was a region steeped in mysticism where many cults and gatherings thrived, such as the pietistic fraternities of *Herrnhut* and *Gnadenfrei* as well as the sect of the Moravian brothers. This sullen, rigid religiosity pervades the gloomy atmosphere of Hauptmann’s drama. For further information on Hauptmann’s life in those years, see Sprengel 2012, 226-44.

Freytag, Karl Kraus, Ernst Barlach and Lion Feuchtwanger. However, this prestigious German literary prize could not be presented to Hauptmann, mainly because of *Kaiser Wilhelm's* strong aversion to the Silesian writer.⁶

In reality, the coexistence of symbolic elements with more naturalistic ones was something that characterised Hauptmann's literary work from its very beginning: "Bereits die frühen [...] entstandenen Arbeiten [...] Gerhart Hauptmanns zeigen, dass sein Naturalismus naiver, d.h. schöpferischer Art war und sich deshalb nicht in einer Sackgasse totlief" (Alker [1950] 1969, 776).⁷ In fact, Hauptmann was never a "konsequenter Realist" (quoted in Sprengel 1998, 113), to borrow a definition that the playwright himself used referring to Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf, the two main theorists of German naturalism and the authors of the most important programmatic essay on modern – in other words naturalistic – German art, *Die Kunst. Ihr Wesen und ihre Gesetze* (*Art. Its Nature and Laws*, 1891). As a matter of fact, already one year before his drama *Vor Sonnenaufgang* debuted on the Freie Bühne's stage, the writer had published the short novel *Bahnwärter Thiel* (*Lineman Thiel*, 1888), where both naturalistic and symbolic suggestions were present.⁸

There is, however, something quite interesting and unique with *Hanneles Himmelfahrt*:

[obwohl] im Bemühen des Dramatikers, die Anlässe und Motive von Hanneles Fieberphantasien deutlich zu machen, [...] noch ein genuin naturalistischer Impuls wirksam [ist], [...] verschwimmen die Grenzen zwischen Traum und Realität und [...] zugleich werden die Weichen in Richtung jener Traumdramaturgie gestellt, die Strindbergs Schaffen (ab *Nach Damaskus*, 1898–1901) ebenso wie das expressionistische Theater kennzeichnen wird (Sprengel 1998, 507).⁹

The original title of the drama, *Hannele Matterns Himmelfahrt* (*The Assumption of Hannele Mattern*), was changed to the less specific *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* when the play was published by Fischer Verlag in 1893. A murmur

⁶ For further information cf. Tschörtner and Hoefert 1994, 132.

⁷ "Gerhart Hauptmann's early [...] works show that his naturalism was of a naïf, that is to say, creative kind, and for this reason it did not come to a dead end."

⁸ In his book on *fin de siècle* German literature, Peter Sprengel calls *Bahnwärter Thiel* "eher ein Psychodrama als naturalistische Schilderung eines Berufsmilieus" (1998, 338; "a psychodrama more than a naturalistic portrayal of a working-class milieu").

⁹ "[Although] a genuinely naturalistic impulse is still effective in the playwright's effort to display the reasons and causes for Hannele's feverish delirium, [...] the boundaries between dream and reality become blurred and [...], at the same time a new direction is set towards that oneiric dramaturgy which will characterise Strindberg's work (from *To Damascus*, 1898-1901, onwards) as well as the expressionist theatre." For an analysis of Hauptmann's dramatic work in relation to contemporary Scandinavian theatre, cf. Marcus 1932.

of indignation immediately rose among the critics, who claimed that the ascension into heaven of a poor orphan of humble origins was highly inappropriate.¹⁰ Not even the most liberal critics approved of the work, criticising Hauptmann for having indulged in a ridiculous and hypocritical representation of the lives of the poorest classes.¹¹

The tragic story of Hannele was inspired by an actual event, which had been reported in a local newspaper. A young girl from a Silesian village, who had been physically abused by her stepfather, was saved from certain death when she was pulled from an icy pond. She was then carried to the poorhouse where she died despite the efforts of a doctor.

Although neo-romantic and symbolist tendencies were undeniably more substantial in this play, the naturalistic essence and the elements of social criticism had not actually disappeared from Hauptmann's poetics. The contrast between the squalid reality and the colourful dreams of the young main character at death's door was interpreted in diametrically opposite ways.

Indeed, the play was ambiguous and controversial and revealed a strongly subversive potential beyond its dreamy *façade*, as John Osborne remarks in his monograph on Gerhart Hauptmann:

The attention to causal details and the consequent undermining of the authority of the religious insight is, if anything, even more scrupulous than in *Die Weber* [*The Weavers*]. The play falls into three parts, showing the objective world of the young Hannele Mattern's present situation, the nightmare world from which she has tried to escape by suicide, and her dream of heavenly bliss (2005, 156).

As already mentioned, the critique was mostly alarmed by the romantic escape represented by Hannele's dreams: the description of the girl's mystic visions places the work outside the dictates of social drama. On the other hand, her vivid hallucinations can easily be read as a delusive yet beneficial solace that relieved the dying girl's pain and the play as a strong accusation against a society where the agony of death had to be considered more merciful than life itself, as Carl David Marcus stresses in his essay on Gerhart Hauptmann and the modern Scandinavian drama:

¹⁰ On the occasion of the drama's première, Max Burckhard, the impresario of the Wiener Burgtheater, decided to change the title of the play to *Hannele*. It is clear that, at that time, Hauptmann's choice of words must have been perceived by a certain public as highly offensive and, to a certain extent, revolutionary (cf. Sprengel 2012, 241).

¹¹ Franz Mehring, notoriously affiliated with the German Social Democrats, bitterly criticised the play for the "verheuchelt[en] Mystizismus zu Ehren der ausbeutenden und unterdrückenden Klassen" (1961, 303; "hypocritical mysticism in honour of the exploiting and oppressing classes").

Om någonsin den romantiska flykten ur verkligheten är reallt motiverad, så är det i dramat om det plågade proletärbarnet Hannele; blott i sina sista ögonblick lever hon en människovärdig tillvaro, på gränsen till döden. Det hela är en [...] bitter anklagelse riktad mot hela det moderna samhället (1932, 367).¹²

3. TOWARDS NEW LITERARY SOLUTIONS. A SYMBOLIST REPRESENTATION OF SPACE

The title of the drama, *Hannele Matterns Himmelfahrt*, with its ironic contrast between the humble and celestial extremities, refers to the dualism between earth and heaven that is a characteristic of the whole text. The existence of pain and suffering in the ‘vale of tears’ contrasts with the promises of eternal joy and redemption. In a sense, the title also encapsulates Hauptmann’s new poetics, which balances between a truthful portrayal of reality and its symbolic interpretation.

As previously hypothesised, a similar literary tendency had been observed before in Ibsen’s late dramas.¹³ In particular, Hauptmann’s choice – at the time most unusual – to focus his attention on an adolescent girl’s destiny, recalls Ibsen’s more renowned *Vildanden*. As in *Hannele*, the main character is a fourteen-year-old girl, Hedvig, who dies prematurely. Although the two girls’ backgrounds are rather different, they both perish because of a lack of love that cannot be filled.

There are numerous analogies between the two dramas; conceivably, one of the most striking is the similar symbolic characterisation of the theatrical space. Both the first and the second act of Hauptmann’s drama are set at an almshouse. This is the external tangible scenery for Hannele’s agony. The play starts within a solid framework of reality, although it quickly diverges into the realm of dream and vision. The young girl’s hallucinations, which initially manifest themselves as shifting light,¹⁴ become more and more con-

¹² “If ever the romantic escape from reality has had a real motivation, this is just what happens in the drama of the oppressed proletarian child Hannele. It is only in her last moments, near to death, when she lives a life worthy of being called human. The entire work is [...] a bitter accusation directed against the entire modern society.”

¹³ In the aforementioned article, Georg Brandes (2011, part IX) mentions *Fruen fra havet* (*The Lady from the Sea*) and *Rosmersholm* as two examples of plays where the symbolic component is particularly strong.

¹⁴ Cf. “*Es ist fast ganz dunkel. [...] Von der Erscheinung geht ein fahles Licht aus*” (Hauptmann [1893] 1996, 562-63, italics in the original, here and in the following passages; “*It is almost dark. [...] A pale light envelops the apparition*”, Hauptmann 1914, 31-32); “*Ein Dämmerlicht erfüllt nun das ärmliche Gemach*” ([1893] 1996, 565; “*Twilight fills the room*”, 1914, 37); “*Jetzt erfüllt [...] ein goldgrüner Schein das Gemach*” ([1893] 1996, 567; “*A gold-green light suddenly floods the room*”, 1914, 41); “*Ein weißes, traumhaftes Licht füllt den Raum*” ([1893] 1996, 570; “*A supernatural dreamlike white light fills the room*”, 1914, 45); “*Ein helles Goldgrün erfüllt den Raum*” ([1893] 1996, 581; “*A golden green light steals into the room*”, 1914, 66).

crete. Light moulds the space, contorting the poorhouse's shabby features and shaping them into magnificent pictures of eternal spring. Dreams and visions demolish the walls of the almshouse, opening the way for an otherworldly procession of ghosts, which probably are nothing but the projections of Hannele's inner wishes and desires. Even when the hallucinations vanish, Hannele remains detached in her world of delusion. In a sense, Hannele's dreams redeem the loneliness and squalor of her own existence, allowing her to witness – in the very last moments of her life – the (illusory) triumph of God's justice and divine order on earth. While the girl is sleeping, the visions disappear, and the author shows to his audience the humble and inconspicuous reality of the setting. The rays of golden light, which had previously engulfed the room, dissolve into the dim light of a tallow candle that flickers in the dark room.

In Hauptmann's pièce, irrational elements are interwoven in such a way that, at a certain point, it becomes impossible to distinguish between reality and dream. In fact, as Marcus (1932, 367) has observed, "de två världarna äro skilda åt för åskådaren men ej för Hannele. I det arma barnets fantasi tar drömmen mycket konkretare former än den eländiga verkligheten".¹⁵ As already mentioned, the oneiric component plays an essential role in the drama, since only dreams and the anticipation of future joy can allow the child to die peacefully. The redeeming – or at least soothing – power of imagination and fantasy is evident.

The unbridgeable gap, which in *Hannele* divides the two worlds, is reminiscent of the more subtle, but nevertheless clear, separation between *rêverie* and prosaic reality in Ibsen's *Vildanden*. Here, although accurate stage directions describe the space in great detail, the room remains only vaguely outlined: the hidden heart of the play is an only partially visible garret, detached from the rest of the dramatic space; the strange shape of the room and the intricate effects of light and shadow do not provide an adequate description, as is evident from the stage directions:

Gennem døråbningen ses et stort, langstrakt, uregelmæssigt loftsrum med krinkelkroge og et par fritstående skorstenspiber. Der er tag-gluggen hvorigennem et klart månelys falder ind over enkelte dele af det store rum; andre ligger i dyb skygge (Ibsen [1884] 2009, 83, italics in the original).¹⁶

The black pipes of a stove, running up the walls, resemble the branches of a

¹⁵ "The two worlds are separate for the viewer, but not for Hannele. In the imagination of the poor girl, the dream becomes much more concrete than the miserable reality."

¹⁶ "Through the open doorway a large, deep irregular garret is seen with odd nooks and corners; a couple of stove-pipes running through it, from rooms below. There are skylights through which clear moonbeams shine in on some parts of the great room; others lie in deep shadow" (Ibsen 1905, 83; italics in the original).

spectral forest; sifted through the skylights, a lunar gleam bathes the room; the shadow on the floor soaks up patches of light. It is a disquieting realm of fantasy, where imagination tries to mimic life, but only manages to give a distorted image of it; the space resounds with tales, ancient memories and illusions. An ordinary garret – separated from the apartment by an old fishing net – reveals itself as a world of mirages and of escapism. Hemmer (2003, 324) sees it as a refuge for a mutilated humanity: “*Vildanden* handler om famlende mennesker i en mørk loftstilværelse. De fleste er blitt skadeskutt for lenge siden, men de overlever tross alt. Bare det uskyldige og uerfarne barnet i disse voksnes verden bukker under.”¹⁷

As is the case with the wounded and suffering characters in Ibsen’s drama, Hauptmann’s *Hannele* shows us a typical example of a tortured, crippled humanity, thus described by the writer in his diary: “Die Menschheit ist ein zählebiges, aber zu Tode getroffenes Wild. Es schweißt – rennt – bricht zusammen – blutet fort, rennt, weil es hofft oder gejagt wird, und bricht abermals zusammen. Möglich, dass es vor Sonnenuntergang nicht sterben kann” (quoted in Oberembt 1999, 127).¹⁸ According to Hauptmann, the human condition is deeply tragic; human beings are like wounded animals waiting for death to come as a long-awaited liberation.

In both dramas dream and imagination offer the young girls a chance to escape their gloomy existence. In the following section of this paper, I will shortly illustrate the oneiric component of these dramas.

4. ESCAPE INTO DREAMS AND IMAGINATION

In *Vildanden*’s partly hidden attic, a child’s imagination can thrive, sheltered from life’s routine by a worn-out fishing net. For Hedvig Ekdal, the frail adolescent, the garret is a world full of dreams that are destined to remain unfulfilled. It is an ambiguous, two-faced space. In a sense, the room almost represents a different sphere, a special place that the girl enters every time she slides away from her everyday duties. With her *rêveries*, Hedvig creates a space of her own, a personal and private place, where she can dream of journeys on the seven seas and where she tells herself whimsical and fanciful tales. The garret is therefore valuable as a refuge from her dreary daily life to the pleasant world of fantasy.

Although the room seems to some extent to have positive connotations, it appears, on the other hand, as a lunar realm of dusted shadows, where

¹⁷ “*The Wild Duck* deals with human beings who are fumbling in the darkness of a garret-existence. Most of them have been injured long ago, but they still manage to survive. In this world of adults only the innocent and inexperienced child perishes.”

¹⁸ “Mankind is like tough wild game that has been mortally wounded. It sweats, runs – collapses – bleeding, runs again, because it has hope or because it is being hunted, then collapses again. It may be that it cannot die before sunset.”

nothing new can penetrate, take root, bloom, or bear fruit. The grandfather's clock is broken, as if it has forgotten about the very existence of time; everything in this room is the exact opposite of life. Everything is dusty; every object comes from an ancient past or from the timeless world of fairytales.

The enchanted attic emanates an aura of mystery, though within the safety of the family. Still, from the very beginning a series of sinister premonitions are present, like the broken clock previously mentioned, whose stillness forewarns of Hedvig's imminent end. She will, in fact, not live through puberty, killed by the egoism and obtuse vanity of the adult world.

Hedvig is particularly attracted to an old book of tales, on the cover of which appears the grim reaper clasping an hourglass, while engaged in a sort of *danse macabre* with a maiden:

HEDVIG. [...] og så alle bøgerne. [...] Der er en svært stor bog [...], den er visst 100 år gammel; og den er der så umådelig mange billeder i. Foran står avbildet døden med et timeglas, og en jomfru. Det synes jeg er fælt. Men så er der alle de andre billederne med kirker og slotte og gader og store skibe, som sejler på havet (Ibsen [1884] 2009, 112-13).¹⁹

The sad end of the girl is already suggested through this book. The wild duck, the girl's most precious treasure, is the ultimate tragic symbol, a relic from the realm of the shadows. Reduced to captivity, the wild duck is a contradiction in terms. Instead of living free out on the open sea, the wild duck grows fat in a tub.

EKDAL (*søvnig, med tykt mæle*). [...] Gør altid så vildænderne. Stikker til bunds – så dybt det kan vinde, far; – bider sig fast i tang og i tarre – og i alt det fandenskab, som der nede find's. Og så kommer de aldrig opp igen (Ibsen [1884] 2009, 88; italics in the original).²⁰

This domesticated animal is a very complex, multifaceted symbol and I will not attempt to analyse it in its entirety, but I will limit myself to contextualising it briefly in relation to the present subject. In a sense, the maimed

¹⁹ "HEDVIG. [...] And all the books. [...] [T]here is one great big book called 'Harryson's History of London'; it must be a hundred years old; and there are heaps of pictures in it. At the beginning there is Death with an hourglass and a young girl. I think that is horrid. But then there are all the other pictures of churches, and castles, and streets, and great ships sailing on the sea" (Ibsen 1905, 117).

²⁰ "EKDAL (*sleepily, in a thick voice*) [...] always do that, wild ducks do. They shoot to the bottom as deep as they can get, sir – and cling steadfast to the tangle of seaweed – and to all the devils' own mess that grows down there. And they never come up again" (Ibsen 1905, 89; italics in the original).

duck stands for the existential state of denial and the lack of authenticity that inform the life of the whole Ekdal family. This point is heavily stressed by Gregers Werle, the staunch claimer of the ideal summoning, when he refers to the Ekdals' household as a marsh,²¹ implying a similitude between the Ekdals and the wild duck.²² They have bitten into the seaweeds that grow on the bottom of the sea and have grown accustomed to the dim twilight of half-truths: "Her er en vingeskutt and, og her er vingeskutte mennesker" (Ystad and Aarseth 2009, 35).²³

One breathes the still air of death in Ibsen's magical attic, a *Raritätenkabinett* full of books and fascinating dust-covered objects, left there by an old sea dog, the previous owner of the apartment, who had been given the sobriquet of 'The Flying Dutchman'. As with the legendary ghost ship, he disappeared during one of his crossings and was lost at sea. Similarly, the tideless and waveless sea in the garret will eventually engulf young Hedvig in its waters. The garret resembles a sepulchre where one's existence is destitute of energy and vitality. It is a smothering fantasy world, a diorama imitating life and offering the same images again and again to anyone contemplating it.

In the attic, Hedvig is alone with her dreams; her imagination tries to run wild but is blocked by the surrounding walls of the room. It implodes and sinks beneath the shadows of the room. Hedvig's eyes lose themselves in a myriad of fantastic images rising from "havsens bund",²⁴ the "depths of the sea", as she refers to the garret's floor. The attic is thus a marine environment in the girl's daydreams.

In a similar way, Hannele's visions and hallucinations also seem to emerge from the depths of water. At the beginning of the play, a minor character narrates the antecedent events: Hannele ventured on an ice-covered pond of her own accord; the thin layer of ice broke under her feet, causing the girl to fall into the gelid water where she almost died. The words that Hannele uttered in the poorhouse reveal that she was in a trance-like state when she sought death by drowning. On that cold fatal December night, Hannele heard both Jesus and Frau Holle calling her from beneath the pond. Frau Holle is a Silesian folklore character, an ancient goddess who welcomes deceased children into the realm of her eternal spring.²⁵ Her

²¹ "GREGERS. Jeg, for min del, trives ikke i sumpluft" (Ibsen [1884] 2009, 137); "GREGERS. For my part, I don't thrive in marsh vapours" (1905, 144).

²² "GREGERS. Du har dukket under og bidt dig fast i bundgræsset. [...] du er kommet ud i en forgiftig sump [...], og så er du gåt til bunds for at dø i mørke" (Ibsen [1884] 2009, 128-29); "GREGERS. You have dived down and bitten yourself fast in the undergrowth. [...] [Y]ou have strayed into a poisonous marsh [...], and you have sunk down to die in the dark" (1905, 134).

²³ "Here is a duck shot in flight, and here are human beings shot in flight."

²⁴ This unusual expression appears for the first time in the third act during a dialogue between Hedvig and Gregers Werle (Ibsen [1884] 2009, 115). The form *havsens* is a linguistic holdover from an old genitive (cf. Ystad and Aarseth 2009, 156) and conveys an even more mysterious tone to the expression.

²⁵ Frau Holle, known in English as Mother Hulda, is also a character from the Brothers

kingdom lies beyond the surface of a well or a pond. Hannele's suicide attempt is therefore justified by the call that arises from the two divine entities in the water – the Lord and Frau Holle, the latter representing the maternal spirit of Nature. Tales and sections from the Bible merge in the numb mind of the feverish girl. They create the condition for the dreamlike apparition of sacred and secular figures from Silesian folktales.

Because of her life of hardship, most of Hannele's dreams and visions of an afterlife have quite concrete and earthly characteristics. Heaven's treasures have the scent of flowers and fresh grass; they taste of bread and milk; they are the things Hannele could not enjoy in her life.

Although the suggestion of the dreamlike element is vivid and fascinating, the audience cannot forget that the play in question is a tragedy. Hannele's desperate desire to vanish among the figures in the dream is born of endless pain and solitude. Dreams of summer flourish in her dimmed eyes and burst in the squalid room, now filled with fruit and sunshine. Characters from German folktales gather together with celestial figures on the child's deathbed, forming a peculiarly assembled company of angels and characters from the Cinderella fairytale (*Aschenputtel*). In the fever-induced delirium the girl identifies herself with Cinderella, her sad destiny overlapping with the tale's happy ending. Hannele passes away shivering with fever and joy in a blissfully colourful and naively rich atmosphere, while heavenly hosts sing her a sweet lullaby. In Hannele's feverish dreams, the squalid room is saturated with incense, the poorhouse flows with sweet milk and rosy cherubs swing censers, while strewing flowers and all sorts of good things on the sordid floor.

After a choir of angels has sung the last lullaby, the drama ends with an abrupt return to reality. Once the magnificent visions have disappeared, the room appears as it was at the beginning: the tallow candle lights up the humble bed where Hannele, the beggar child, dreamt her most beautiful dream until her death.

A similar light pervades the epilogue of the two dramas; it is a dim light in an enclosed dark place, where the warmth of the sun cannot penetrate, a kind of limbo where the two girls are trapped forever.

5. TWO PLAYS ABOUT DENIED CHILDHOOD. THE SYMBOLIC VALUE OF WATER

Like *Vildanden*, *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* shows us the tragedy of a denied childhood. The young girl in Hauptmann's tragedy is alone in the world; deprivation and hardship caused her mother's death and left her at the mercy of a drunken and violent stepfather, who forces her into exhausting work and into the humiliation of begging. That is the reason why Hannele, re-

Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children and Household Tales*).

sponding to the oneiric call from the two divine entities, seeks refuge and solace for her grief in the pond's icy water, thus choosing death over life.

Just like Hannele, for *Vildanden's* Hedvig, too, freedom is only possible in dreams and in their fantasy world. Both girls seek death as an alternative to an unbearable life, which is burdened with the tragic guilt for uncommitted crimes. The end liberates them from the incomprehensible pain that afflicts mankind, especially its most vulnerable members, as Andersen (1986, 197) underlines: "Hos Ibsen forbliver den tragiske skyld uigennemsigtig og ubevidst, og det tragiske hænger ved livet, ikke ved døden".²⁶

It is quite significant how one finds in both plays the theme of an adolescent drowning. As an element of nature, water has different symbolic meanings, often contradictory. Though often seen as a beneficent life-giver, water sometimes demonstrates its deadly aspect. Water flows restlessly and, like puberty, it is impetuous, turbulent and, though sometimes calm on the surface, it is always moved by deep currents, and ever-changing. Like the sea, adolescence can evoke feelings of fear; it is a delicate moment in which girls leave childhood and embrace womanhood, with the risk of not surviving this phase of transition.

In the two plays the sphere of dream is linked to an imagery of limited and motionless expanses of water. Hannele's pond and Hedvig's garret are places filled with deep water, yet not comparable to the open sea, even though Hedvig has renamed the attic "the depths of the sea". The attic, despite evoking the sea, rather resembles the pond where Hannele sought death. Both are places of stagnant water conjuring up ideas of death. At the end of Ibsen's play, a dead girl rests in the depths of the sea, like a wild duck that had suddenly awoken to the darkness of a garret; in Hauptmann's drama, a sleeping maiden lies on the bottom of the pond; dying, she told herself the most beautiful story – the tale of a poor maiden who discovers herself as the young princess of a world that does not exist.

6. CONCLUSION

Whereas the great majority of the comparative studies on the works of Henrik Ibsen and Gerhart Hauptmann focus on the quite obvious importance of the Norwegian playwright for Hauptmann's early naturalistic literary output, I have chosen to concentrate my analysis on *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* by highlighting the strong, yet more personally elaborated, Ibsenian echoes that still resonate in this oneiric drama.

A thorough comparative reading of *Vildanden* and *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* has revealed the deep connection between these two dramas, while show-

²⁶ "In Ibsen, tragic guilt remains unfathomable and unconscious, and the tragic permeates life, rather than death."

ing how the work of Henrik Ibsen has influenced Gerhart Hauptmann's poetics more profoundly and for a longer period than generally believed. In particular, I have analysed the interest in the artistic representation of adolescence that characterises both plays, showing a similar choice of symbolic elements in the portrait of Ibsen's Hedvig and Hauptmann's Hannele.

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THE TEMPTATION OF A 'NORDIC CONSCIOUSNESS'.
ON RAINER MARIA RILKE'S APPROACH
TO SCANDINAVIAN LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

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I. SCANDINAVIA IN RILKE'S EXPERIENCE AND ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Rilke's relationship with Scandinavia is a wide and complex subject involving not only his interest in Nordic authors, but also his view of Scandinavian society. Even so, we can point out that his 'Nordic experience' knows its greatest intensity between 1901 and 1906 (Engel and Lauterbach 2004, 116). Scandinavia rightfully belongs to Rilke's spiritual geography in the same way that – for instance – Russia, France and Italy do. Indeed, Rilke was fascinated by different countries (or simply places) in different periods of his life and, when this happened, his curiosity was directed not only towards literature or the arts, but also towards people and landscapes. The way Rilke often idealised the cultures he came in touch with is one of the main aspects we have to consider when reviewing his writings (this is particularly true of those about Russia and Scandinavia), but at the same time his statements and notes can be seen as meaningful examples of the image those countries had acquired in the European context of that time. Furthermore, Rilke sometimes proved himself an acute observer of social trends and in many circumstances a refined critic of both literary and artistic works. He always tried to turn any phenomenon into part of his aesthetic research (see Schoolfield 2009, 199, as far as Scandinavian reviews are concerned); yet, he also showed a genuine desire to become acquainted with new cultures: we know that he read and researched extensively before leaving for a new

place and that he studied several foreign languages, not only French (which would be his second language besides German) or Italian, but even Russian and Danish, all of which he practiced by translating (mainly poems).

In Rilke's artistic development, the culmination of the Scandinavian experience was reached between the Russian and the French periods, which corresponded to the merging into a mystical and popular dimension and the striking and hard acquaintance with modernity, respectively. In his literature, this occurred after the collection of poems *Stundenbuch* (*Book of Hours*, 1905, written between 1899 and 1903) and the *Geschichten vom lieben Gott* (*Tales of the Good God*, 1904) and before the *Neue Gedichte* (*New Poems*, 1907-08) and his only novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (*The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, 1910, begun in 1904): in other words between his young and his middle periods. From another perspective, we can consider the first years of the twentieth century as Rilke's fundamental passage from the connection with his origins, perceived in eastern Europe (Rilke was born in Prague, though his family belonged to the German-speaking community), to his attempt to settle down and find his own place in western Europe's modern cities (Vienna, Munich, Berlin, and eventually Paris).

In Rilke's view northern Europe (*der Norden*) represents a vital area, where one's personality has a chance to develop and therefore all the arts enjoy a mature and educated public that can understand them (Engel and Lauterbach 2004, 116). As this short definition may suggest, Rilke's statements about Scandinavia deal on the whole both with literary (or generally aesthetic) and social evaluations. The word 'temptation' in our title is meant to concern two distinct but complementary aspects of the question: on the one hand, Rilke found that the Nordic countries set a very effective cultural and moral example for the rest of Europe and to him, both as a man and as an artist; on the other, while reading and studying Scandinavian literature, he mirrored himself in the contemporary works coming from the North and felt – with pleasure – that he was already gifted with a 'Nordic sensibility' towards life and art: somehow he already had a 'Nordic consciousness', that made him feel at home in Scandinavia. This sentiment becomes evident if we compare the words he uses to define the Nordic authors and works with what he writes about his own art and his idea of art. Indeed, we can notice that Rilke uses both the word *nordisch* and the word *skandinavisch* when writing about that area, though the former is used more frequently (Schoolfield 2009, 220): with *nordisch* he refers to anything related to the whole Scandinavian world, which meant that he perceived the Nordic countries – mainly the continental ones – as a common area (Engel and Lauterbach 2004, 117). In fact, although he visited only Sweden and Denmark, he felt that a Nordic view of life existed somehow. It was, however, Denmark that attracted him most, so much so that he studied Danish and translated from it into German.

2. SOME SUITABLE PERSPECTIVES: THE JOURNEY, THE FIRST READINGS, TRANSLATIONS AND ACQUAINTANCES

We can examine Rilke's Scandinavian experience from different points of view. First of all, the most obvious aspect is his journey northwards: Rilke was in Scandinavia from 24 June to 9 December 1904; he arrived in Copenhagen (where he would return on three more occasions), before visiting several Swedish towns: Borgeby (near Lund), Gothenburg, Jonsered and Furuborg. In other words, he became acquainted with the Danish capital and the Swedish countryside (in addition to Gothenburg). There Rilke found nearly everything he was looking for: the Swedish nature corroborated his ideal image of Scandinavia and, while in Copenhagen, he had the chance to meet a number of intellectuals and artists. However, not every plan was successful: if Rilke was helped many times by the people he met during his stay, the chief purpose of the journey – that is to say, his wife Clara Westhoff's project of an artistic career as a sculptress in Copenhagen – proved to be unfeasible. That was probably the main reason why Rilke and Clara travelled back to Germany, even though Rilke's fascination for Scandinavia remained alive. This also turned out to be Rilke's only journey to the North: none of the later plans for another stay, as letters testify, were ever realised.

Rilke's experience of the Nordic culture had actually begun some years earlier and was essentially based on literature: in 1897 he received from his friend Jakob Wassermann some works by Jens Peter Jacobsen in the German translation (Rilke 1996, 4, 651-52). This turned out to be fundamental in Rilke's artistic education, precisely because it happened at a crucial moment in his life: he had recently moved from Prague to Munich to continue his university studies and he had just met Lou Andreas-Salomé, with whom he would make two important journeys to Russia (in 1899 and 1900) and who would make him familiar with Nietzsche's philosophy and Freud's psychoanalysis. Those were also the years in which Rilke was becoming a European artist and intellectual, while he was eager to expand his knowledge and establish new contacts. Jacobsen, as previously mentioned, became his beloved author: Rilke would later read not only his narrative works but also his scientific writings,¹ and Rilke's interest in him, his world and his literature proved to be a lifelong affair, with over sixty statements about the Danish poet in letters and diaries from 1897 to 1925 (Finco 2010, 110-25). Indeed, some of these passages are full-fledged critical essays (e.g., Rilke 1937, 110-12, and [1942] 1973, 277-78). We find a meaningful presence of the Scandinavian atmosphere in *Worpswede* (1902), the monograph

¹ Jacobsen had been an esteemed botanist before fully devoting himself to literature because of health troubles. He contributed to spread Darwin's studies and his theory of evolution in Denmark, even discussing its social implications. About Jacobsen's influence on Rilke's writing and aesthetic education see Kohlschmidt 1948; Kunisch 1975; Stahl 1979; Destro 1987; Potthoff 1987; Sørensen 1988; Unglaub 2002; Finco 2009.

Rilke wrote about five young painters he lived with in a community in Worpswede, near Bremen. At the beginning of the volume Rilke reports a quotation taken from Jacobsen's novel *Niels Lyhne* (1880), but a more interesting aspect is the concept of *nordisch* as a recurring definition of the five painters' style, an idea that is sometimes exemplified by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's and Jacobsen's descriptions of nature and man (Rilke 1996, 4, 305-400). As the favourite subject of those painters was landscape, Rilke's observations help us to understand how northern Germany was for him an anticipation of Scandinavia, which in turn would become complementary to the German landscape and a sort of development of what Rilke already had experienced before leaving for the Nordic countries (Unглаub 2002, 36). This is, moreover, a good example of how Rilke's judgements about Scandinavia are related to different kinds of objects: from the vivid landscape to the paintings, from everyday life to the meeting with intellectuals and artists. It is very hard to distinguish among these levels of experience, as all of them contribute to his overall view of the Nordic world.

But this was just the beginning: in the following years Rilke became very fond of Scandinavian art, literature and society, as is shown by the number of authors whose works he read, commented on, appreciated, suggested to friends and tried to divulge in Germany. In strictly alphabetical order these included: Herman Bang, Carl Michael Bellman, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Georg Brandes, Gustaf Fröding, Gustaf af Geijerstam, Svend Hammershøi (painter), Verner von Heidenstam, Tora Vega Holmström (painter), Henrik Ibsen, Jens Peter Jacobsen, Ellen Key, Søren Kierkegaard, Selma Lagerlöf, Hans Larsson (professor of philosophy), Karin Michaëlis, Edith Nebelong, Ernst Nordlind (painter), Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Amalie Skram, August Strindberg. In his fascination for the North, Rilke undoubtedly followed the fashion of his time (in particular, from 1880 to 1910, Scandinavian personalities rose to the role of masters for the German and European public), but he was able both to make all themes, suggestions, views and styles his own and to become a sort of talent scout, as he was for the young Danish writers Edith Nebelong and, above all, Karin Michaëlis, whose first novels he considered really promising, long before she grew to become an international (literary and humanitarian) figure.

The journey to Scandinavia was the natural consequence of his great commitment, but – as we shall see – also of the effect of Rilke's fame and of the significant contacts he had managed to establish. He began to study Danish in 1904 in Rome, while he was preparing for the journey, and he did it on his own, with the help of a dictionary, a grammar and Jacobsen's works; he would translate some of his poems and some of Kierkegaard's letters to his beloved Regine Olsen (Rilke 1997, 1043-121). This effort allowed him to read Jacobsen's and Bang's works in Danish, though we must bear in mind that nearly all the Scandinavian works he read were in German. His experience of the Danish language provides us with a further perspective to explore his

attitude towards Scandinavia, as we can verify in a letter to Axel Juncker: "Wir haben uns mit Eifer und Freude ans Lesen und Lernen gemacht und finden, daß Ihre Sprache unvergleichlich ist: wie alte, köstliche Seide fühlt sie sich an [...]. Jacobsen hat, das fühlt man gleich, unsägliches aus dieser Sprache gemacht" (Schnack 1975, 186).² Statements like this show how sensitive and sensual Rilke's approach to Scandinavian literature was (he uses *fühlen*, 'feel', twice) and prove how he tried to understand the beauty of a culture from different points of views.³ Danish was without any doubt Rilke's linguistic key to Scandinavia and it probably helped him to become acquainted with Swedish (which he was able to hear during his stay) and to translate a poem by Gustaf Fröding, not quite coincidentally *Narkissos* (Narcissus being an important figure and theme in Rilke's poetry). In addition, Rilke wrote about ten 'Swedish poems' that drew inspiration from the Swedish landscape, especially the Scanian landscape (Fülleborn 1991).

Rilke was invited by his dear friend Ellen Key, whose work he had promoted and whose efforts to reform Swedish (but also European) society he admired and supported. She repaid his interest in her social struggles and her intellectual commitment by organising part of his stay in Scandinavia (she enlisted the help of some friends who hosted him for some weeks), thus attracting him to Sweden while widening his travel horizons. Before his arrival she had also divulged Rilke's poetry in a series of conferences. In Rome he had already met Edith Nebelong, while in Copenhagen he was able to spend some time with the influential literary critic Georg Brandes. Rilke had also wished to meet Herman Bang, but the meeting probably never took place (Schoolfield 2009, 213). Rilke's activity also involved establishing relationships with painters like Svend Hammershøi or Tora Vega Holmström, who was also Rilke's interpreter, and professors like the philosopher Hans Larsson, whose works Rilke helped to publish (Engel and Lauterbach 2004, 118).

3. EXPLORING RILKE, SCANDINAVIA AND RILKE'S SCANDINAVIA: HIS REVIEWS AS A PATH TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HIS 'NORDIC CONSCIOUSNESS'

From 1901 to 1905 Rilke's interest in the Nordic culture was fully and co-gently expressed in a series of reviews, most of which were written for the

² "With zeal and joy we [Rilke and his wife Clara] have devoted ourselves to studying and reading and we find that your language [Axel Juncker's, i.e., Danish] is incomparable: at the touch it feels like ancient and precious silk [...]. Jacobsen, one feels it at once, has made something indescribable out of it." Axel Juncker was a Danish editor (Rilke's, too) who worked in Berlin at that time and who provided Rilke with the works of several Scandinavian authors. All translations are mine.

³ His reading of Danish literature was of course a passive experience as far as the knowledge of the language is concerned, though we know – for instance – that in Rome he asked Edith Nebelong to read some passages aloud for him (Schnack 1975, 186).

Bremer Tageblatt.⁴ These peculiar kinds of publications, in which Rilke could, to a certain extent, organise his thoughts on some of his beloved authors while integrating them into his own poetic research, allow us to spell out the principal themes and approaches in Rilke's survey of the Scandinavian world.

3.1. CHILDHOOD

One of the main subjects his aesthetic and existential sensibility focuses on is childhood, seen not only as a blessed condition for the human being and a primary source of creativity, but also as an important dimension an artist should recover to expose the most painful aspects of life. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Rilke admires writers, such as Herman Bang, who have conducted this kind of research. About Jacobsen he had written: "Jacobsen hat keine Erfahrungen gehabt, keine Liebe, kein Erlebnis und keine Weisheit, nur eine Kindheit. Eine große, ungeheuer farbige Kindheit, in der er alles fand, was seine Seele brauchte, um sich phantastisch zu verkleiden" (Rilke [1942] 1973, 277).⁵ Childhood acquires in some circumstances mythical connotations and, as in *Malte*, it seems to be a privileged world (saved in memories), where an existential quest may be pursued again. This proves to be very helpful when writing, as Rilke remarks in his review on Bang's *Tine* (1889):

aus dem Dunkel der Kindheit kommt er [Herman Bang] zu ihnen [seinen Stoffen] wie aus ihrer eigenen Tiefe; er erlebt sie inniger, gerechter und ernster [...]. Jetzt, da so viele Fragen und Anforderungen gestellt werden, liegt vor diesem Schriftsteller eine einfache, große Aufgabe: er will seiner Kindheit wieder mächtig werden und fähig, mit schlichter Klarheit von ihren Eindrücken und Bildern und Begebenheiten zu erzählen. Er ruft Erinnerungen [...] denn vielleicht ist Schaffen nichts anderes als sich tief erinnern (Rilke 1996, 4, 552).⁶

⁴ Edith Nebelong, Mieke Wichmann, Nov. 1901 (Rilke 1996, 4, 188); Herman Bang, *Das weiße Haus*, Apr. 1902 (1996, 4, 259-62); *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* [on Ellen Key], Jun. 1902 (1996, 4, 262-68); *Zwei nordische Frauenbücher* [on Amalie Skram and Selma Lagerlöf], Aug. 1902 (1996, 4, 278-83); Karin Michaëlis, *Das Schicksal der Ulla Fangel*, Nov. 1902 (1996, 4, 300-02); *Nordische Bücher II* [on Herman Bang and Gustaf af Geijerstam], Feb. 1903 (1996, 4, 549-53); *Sigbjørn Obstfelder, Pilgerfahrten*, Nov. 1904 (1996, 4, 564-68); *Samskola*, Jan. 1905 (1996, 4, 576-82).

⁵ "Jacobsen had no experience, no love, no wisdom, just a childhood. A great, immensely colourful childhood in which he found everything his soul needed to disguise himself using his imagination."

⁶ "From the darkness of his childhood he [Herman Bang] approaches [his work] as from its own depth. He makes a more intimate, accurate and more serious experience of it [...]. Now that one must face so many questions and many demands, a simple and great task lies before this writer: he wants to have his childhood back and to become able to narrate its impressions, images and events with absolute clarity. He evokes memories [...] since creativity is perhaps

In these last words Rilke hints at a theme that he develops both in his letters to the young poet Franz Xaver Kappus (Rilke 1996, 4, 515-16) and in a chapter of *Malte* (Rilke 1996, 3, 466-67), as a proof of how his analysis of other authors is entwined with his own research. But childhood has even a more concrete, social aspect that Rilke shows he has taken note of: children in modern society are still neglected and their rights are not protected (not even recognised), just like women's. In both cases he welcomes movements that fight for them and that demand emancipation of these minorities. In Rilke's time, one of the most famous and resolute figures in that context was the above mentioned Ellen Key, whose efforts he witnessed and passionately commented on: "Sie ist der Anwalt und der Apostel des Kindes. Sie ist unzufrieden mit der Gegenwart und hofft auf das Kind, welches die Zukunft ist" (Rilke 1996, 4, 263).⁷ In his review *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* (*The Century of the Child*, 1902, about Key's study *Barnets århundrade*, 1900), Rilke acts as Key's spokesman in favour of children, (often) against adults: Key's contribution is rational and presented in her scientific essays, thus constituting (in Rilke's view, at least that is what we can infer) a theoretical reference for Rilke:

Sie will diese Zukunft groß und glücklich [...]. Aber sie hält es für aussichtslos, durch Reformen der gegenwärtigen Zustände, wie sie unter Erwachsenen herrschen, wirkliche Fortschritte zu erzielen. Die Kinder sind der Fortschritt selbst, und, was sie mit ihrem Buche lehren und sagen und raten will, ist immer wieder dieses: vertraut dem Kinde (Rilke 1996, 4, 263).⁸

3.2. THE INABILITY TO LIVE

A major theme that many European authors of that time dealt with is the inability to live and all the different strategies characters adopt to change their own situation or, conversely, to pretend to live. Rilke's only novel, featuring a Dane living in Paris as its main character (*Malte Laurids Brigge*), investigates such a typical modern situation through *Malte's* several notes (memories, present experiences, anecdotes and essays). Before writing this work, which would make him famous, Rilke found his models – among oth-

nothing but remembering oneself vividly." For the role of Bang's view of childhood for the writing of *Malte*, see Aarsleff 1966.

⁷ "She is the advocate and the apostle of the child. She is not satisfied with the present and hopes in the child, who is the future." It is no accident that Rilke dedicated his *Geschichten vom lieben Gott* to her: the (somewhat surreal) tales he presents in this book are told to some adults but are addressed to children they know, who should appreciate them more.

⁸ "She wants this future to be great and happy [...]. But she does not hope to achieve real improvements through social reforms, as they have been made by adults. Children are the future and what she wants to teach and suggest through her book is always this: trust the child."

ers – in Bang’s *Det hvide Hus* (*The White House*) and Jacobsen’s *Niels Lyhne*, whose protagonist shares some features with Malte’s. What Rilke wrote in 1902 about Bang summarises this question and foreshadows major themes in *Malte*, which Rilke would begin writing two years later:

Diese Hast, diese fieberhafte Tatenlosigkeit, die oft über besonders feinen und empfindsamen Menschen liegt, ist das eigentliche Thema im Werke Herman Bangs [...]. [I]n seinem letzten Buche [hat er] die Aufgabe gestellt, uns eine einzelne Gestalt zu zeigen, an der das Leben vorüberfliegt wie ein Traum und die mit tausend kleinen Liebkosungen, mit süßen mädchenhaften Schmeicheleien sich ihm zu nähern und es festzuhalten sucht; denn darin liegt die Tragik, daß dieser Mensch, dem das Leben mit fremden Lächeln vorbeigehen will, dieses Leben, ohne seiner mächtig zu sein, gerade in seinen starken und kraftvollen Erscheinungen liebt und anerkennt (Rilke 1996, 4, 259).⁹

Rilke perceives the Danish literature of his time as truly contemporary because it deals with those very same questions that affect him. Yet, we cannot overlook the fact that he had a partial knowledge of it, as he was acquainted with the intellectual life of the capital rather than with the tradition kept alive in the rest of the country (where Grundtvig was still the most widely read author; Unglaub 2002, 32).

3.3. EDUCATION

In Sweden Rilke had the chance to verify how Key’s dream of a new school had somehow come true in the *högre samskola* (Superior Common School, i.e., both for boys and girls) founded in 1901 in Gothenburg. He was able to visit that school twice and reported his experience in a passionate essay where he compared the new school with the traditional one, which he had harshly criticised in *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*: “Der Wille in den jungen Leuten wird verwirrt [...]. [S]ie [wissen] nicht mehr, was sie gewollt haben. Ratlos stehen dann die meisten vor dem Leben [und] ergreifen [...] einen jener zufälligen Berufe, die nicht Persönlichkeiten, sondern Maschinen verlangen, um erfüllt zu werden” (Rilke 1996, 4, 265).¹⁰ If this was the ordinary

⁹ “This hurry, this feverish lack of activity, often typical of very refined and sensitive people, is the real subject of Bang’s works [...]. In his latest book he has taken it upon himself to show us one character only; life flies over her like a dream and with thousands of small and sweet maiden-like caresses she tries to get closer to it to catch it. The tragedy is that, whereas life passes her by with a stranger’s smile, she loves and recognises just this life, without owning it, in its strong and powerful apparitions.”

¹⁰ “The willpower among young people has become muddled [...]. They no longer [know] what they desire. Facing life ahead, they remain puzzled and grab [...] one of those random jobs that do not require people with personality, but rather machines.”

situation in most schools, in this passage we can read his criticism both about tradition and about modernity: school as an institution has always tried to adapt people to society, but modern society, with all its complexity and its automatic procedures, has probably a particular need for adapted people; machines, not personalities. In the *högre samskola*, by contrast, Rilke witnessed the good effects of learning when it is carried out in freedom:

Die Kinder sind in dieser Schule die Hauptsache [...]. Das Wort Freiheit ist genannt. Es scheint mir, als ob wir, die Erwachsenen, in einer Welt lebten, in der keine Freiheit ist. Freiheit ist bewegtes, steigendes, mit der Menschenseele sich wandelndes Gesetz. Unsere Gesetze sind nicht mehr die unserigen. Sie sind zurückgeblieben, während das Leben lief. Man hat sie zurückgehalten, aus Geiz, aus Habgier, aus Eigennutz; aber vor allem: aus Angst [...]. Aber nun ist sie [die neue Schule] da. Ihre einfache Heiterkeit spielt vor einem Hintergrunde dunkelsten Ernstes [...]. Und es ist gar nicht vom 'Erziehen' die Rede. Es handelt sich gar nicht darum. Denn wer kann erziehen? Wo ist der unter uns, der erziehen dürfte?
Was diese Schule versucht, ist dieses: nichts zu stören (Rilke 1996, 4, 576-78).¹¹

3.4. WOMEN (WRITERS)

Rilke shows therefore that he trusts inborn human qualities and their ability to develop themselves. But this process requires courage, which in turn can benefit from particular social conditions. This is just what is happening in Scandinavia: women, for instance, have achieved a sort of independence, which is even more meaningful from a psychological point of view and which is reflected in the condition of women writers. Rilke's view of (prominent) Nordic women, however, must be considered in the light of his overall celebration of women (as human beings and above all as true lovers as against male hypocrisy and meanness), which once again seems to find its completion in the Nordic world. It is therefore crucial to understand the nature of Rilke's fascination for women's status in Scandinavia to trace both

¹¹ "In this school children are the main thing [...]. The word 'freedom' is known here. It seems to me that we adults lived in a world where there was no freedom. Freedom is a dynamic and progressive law, which changes according to the human soul. Our laws are no longer ours. They have fallen behind, while life has moved forward. We have kept them because of our avarice, our greed, our personal interest; but above all: because of our fear [...]. But now it [the new school] exists. Its simple cheerfulness is played out against a background of grey seriousness [...]. And there is no mention of 'upbringing'. This is beside the question. After all, who can bring someone up? Who among us should be allowed? / What this school strives to do is not upset anything."

its innovative and its conservative features. From a theoretical point of view, Rilke finds a quite suitable reference in Ellen Key's *Missbrukad kvinnokraft* (*Misused Female Power*, 1894):

Sie hat, eben weil sie weiter sah, im Weibe immer das zur Mutterschaft auserwählte Wesen gesehen, dessen Leben dann schön und harmonisch ist wenn es ihm gelingt, seine Tätigkeit mit jener ersten und wichtigsten Aufgabe in Einklang zu sein. [Keys Werk kommt aus] einem reifen, freien und hilfreichen Menschen, der, ganz ohne fremdes Ferment, aus einer Frau entstanden war, aus den Leiden, den Erfahrungen und Freuden einer Frau (Rilke 1996, 4, 263).¹²

Here Rilke shows himself to appreciate the part of Key's thought that had been criticised by the feminist movement, that is to say her observation that a woman's self-realisation should never neglect her fundamental diversity from man: motherhood. Furthermore, Rilke acknowledges a woman's self-sufficiency in intellectual life, even though he refers to this as a sort of purity that women – in Scandinavia better than elsewhere – proudly defend. That is why the review of Amalie Skram and Selma Lagerlöf is introduced by the following passages:

Im skandinavischen Schrifttum spielt die Frau eine andere Rolle als bei uns. Die Frau, welche über die Frauenbewegung so rasch hinausgekommen ist, konnte Schriftsteller sein, ohne Nachahmer oder Nebenbuhler des Mannes zu werden. [...] Sie und der Mann haben in den Kulturen des Nordens ein gemeinsames Ziel, das über die geschlechtliche Trennung hinausgeht, das Ziel auf dem Wege der Persönlichkeit zu erreichen. [...] Schriftstellerinnen wie Ellen Key oder Amalie Skram oder Selma Lagerlöf haben gar nie daran gedacht, dem Manne nachzustreben [...] und Bücher zu schreiben, wie Lie oder Hamsun oder Bang sie geschrieben haben. Der Weg ihrer Entwicklung [...] versuchte aus der Tiefe ihrer Weiblichkeit und aus ihrer Enge in ein weites und großes Menschentum hineinzuführen, in ein stilles Verstehen, ernstes Schauen und wehmütiges Lieben aller Dinge (Rilke 1996, 4, 278).¹³

¹² "Just because she could look beyond, she has seen in the woman the chosen creature for motherhood, whose life is therefore beautiful and harmonious when she succeeds in reconciling her activity with that serious and fundamental task. [Key's work originates from] a mature, free and charitable personality, which, with no interference from anything external, is born of a woman, of a woman's grief, experience and joy."

¹³ "In Scandinavian literature women play a different role from what they do here [in Germany]. Women, who have so rapidly come out of the feminist movement, have been able to become writers without imitating or competing with men. [...] Women and men have a

Female freedom from male imposition and conditioning makes women better suited to deal with the female experience of life, thus contributing to the work contemporary male writers are doing. Rilke imagines that such a society will lead to a very fruitful meeting of both genders in their comprehension of life (through literature) and will produce a new real person, not only for Scandinavia but for Europe as a whole: "Eines Tages (wofür jetzt, zumal in den nordischen Ländern, schon zuverlässige Zeichen sprechen und leuchten), eines Tages wird das Mädchen da sein und die Frau, deren Name nicht mehr nur einen Gegensatz zum Männlichen bedeuten wird, sondern etwas für sich [...] der weibliche Mensch" (Rilke 1996, 4, 538; to Franz Xaver Kappus).¹⁴

3.5. STYLISTIC INFLUENCES: LITERATURE AS A FAITHFUL BUT PROUDLY FREE MIRROR OF REALITY

Rilke appreciates Nordic authors not only for their artistic projects and the social questions they raise, but also as models of style. The main features that attract him can be defined by two words which often recur in his writings, i.e., *leise* ('light, faint, soft') and *werden* ('become'). Rilke admires the skilfulness of some Scandinavian writers in lightening things and reducing them to colours and nuances, a process that shows their sensitivity to how life is apt to change and be transformed, mollifying even the hardest situations to delicate tones. We have shown how this aspect of Jacobsen's style¹⁵ might have affected Rilke's writing of *Malte*, probably contributing to his use of hypothesis (Finco 2009, 53-66). Bang, too, seemed to possess a similar ability in shaping characters,¹⁶ but it is in Rilke's review of Sigbjørn Obstfelder's posthumous works that we perhaps have the most charming

common aim in the Nordic culture, which has nothing to do with difference in gender: to complete the development of their own personality. [...] Writers like Ellen Key or Amalie Skram or Selma Lagerlöf have never wanted to become like men [...] by writing books in the same way as Lie or Hamsun or Bang wrote them. Their own development began from the depth of their womanliness and from its narrow room and tried to reach a wide and great humanity, a silent understanding, a serious look at and a melancholic love for all things."

¹⁴ "One day (there are reliable and promising signs of it above all in the Nordic countries), one day there will be a girl and a woman whose name will no longer signify an opposite of the masculine, but something of its own [...] the feminine human being."

¹⁵ It is significant that in *Worpswede*, just before quoting a passage from Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne* (as mentioned above), Rilke (1996, 4, 306) remarks: "Die fünf Maler, von denen es handelt, sind werdende" ("The five painters this book is about are evolving").

¹⁶ "Er hat eine Technik, diese Figuren auszusparen, wenn er ihnen einen bewegten und wogenden Hintergrund giebt, er läßt sie weiß, und alle Veränderungen, die an ihnen vor sich gehen [...] sind unter verschiedene Art von Weiß, von blendender Helle bis zu der rätselhaften Unnahbarkeit, die diese Farbe annimmt in der Dämmerung" (Rilke 1996, 4, 551, about *Tine*; italics in the original; "He possesses a technique of sparing these characters: when he provides them with a background in motion, he leaves them *white*, and all the changes that happen before them [...] are realised in different degrees of white, from the blinding clarity to the enigmatic inaccessibility that this colour acquires in the twilight").

and subtle description of the way language can unite, and finally overcome, different forms of art:

Seine Worte *enthalten* nicht, sie *beschwören herauf*. Deshalb dürfen sie so leise sein. Wie Zauberformeln sind sie: man flüstert sie nur, aber die Berge gehn auf [...]. Und wie seine Sprache in dem einen Zustande ihres Wachstums fast Musik wurde, so verwirklichte sie sich in einem anderen bis in die Malerei hinein [...]. [So] stark war die Bewegung in seiner werdenden Sprache, daß sie nach beiden Seiten über die Ufer sprang; aber es ist bezeichnend, daß sie sich schließlich doch ganz in ihrem eigenen Becken klärte und darin zu tiefer, spiegelnder Ruhe kam [...]. Sie reicht bis dorthin, wo die Musik anfängt, und giebt, was die Malerei nicht geben kann: das Leben der Farben, den Farbenwechsel eines Sommerabends von sechs bis zwölf, der Farben Geburt, Kindheit, Verlöbniß, Hochzeit, Verbleichen und Tod (Rilke 1996, 4, 566-67; italics in the original).¹⁷

4. CONCLUSIONS

We have seen how Rilke approached Scandinavian culture to meet his own existential and aesthetic demands: several Nordic authors appeared to him so contemporary because they dealt with the same subjects that engaged him – like childhood, the inability to live, women’s emancipation – and because he became aware of it at an early stage of his education. Rilke perceived the Nordic countries as a completion of the German world, but also as a privileged area for social improvements, where people could understand art better and had more opportunities to develop their own personality. Rilke’s experience of Scandinavia was favoured by meaningful friendships and contacts; it concerned different forms of art and his commitment was best expressed in his love for the language, above all Danish. Denmark attracted Rilke to the North and his interest for Nordic writers (mainly Jacobsen) lasted a lifetime, encouraging new readings and projects, mostly unfinished, as a large amount of evidence testifies. His view of the Nordic world was affected

¹⁷ “His words do not *contain*, they *enchant*. This is why they may be so soft. They are like magic words: they are just whispered, but the mountains open [...]. And at one stage of its growth his language nearly became music, at another it turned into painting [...]. So strong was the movement of his changing language that it overflowed the banks on both sides, but it would eventually settle back into its bed and turn to a deep, reflecting calm; [...]. It arrives where music begins and gives what painting cannot give: the life of the colours, the changing colours of a summer night from six to midnight, the birth and childhood, the falling in love and getting married, the fading away and dying of the colours.”

by a certain degree of idealisation, which made Scandinavia a part of his inner world as well as a model to aim for, eventually leading to a remarkable combination of innovative and conservative features. The reviews on Nordic authors and events Rilke wrote in the first few years of the twentieth century may be seen as an informed view of and enlightened attitude towards Scandinavia, while showing how deeply the artistic side is linked with the social aspect in his 'Nordic' thoughts.

We may wonder how deeply this Nordic experience influenced Rilke's works and what the main consequences of this influence were. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the most evident Nordic elements are to be found in Rilke's novel, not only through its protagonist Malte, but also in the atmosphere of some passages, in the characterisation of some figures and even in the description of some places. We know that Rilke could probably read Danish sources, such as *Efterladte Papirer fra den Rewentlowske Familienkreds i Tidsrummet 1770-1827* (*Documents Left by the Rewentlow Family in the Period 1770-1827*, 7 vols., 1895-1906) and *Danske Malede Portrætter* (*Danish Painted Portraits*, 10 vols., 1895-1914) by Emil Ferdinand Svitzer Lund. In the novel we also find two passages (notebooks 14 and 26; Rilke 1996, 3, 467-68, 510-13) that are clearly, even though not explicitly, connected to Geijerstam and Ibsen, respectively. Two meaningful questions are dealt with here: first, the hypocrisy implied in the need of a third character as the underlying cause in the crisis between husband and wife (both in plays and in novels), this way concealing the disagreement between the two, and the modernity of authors who can do without it; second, the hard task modern dramatists undertake in showing reality on the stage while life is in fact withdrawing into the invisible. Furthermore, the characterisation of Obstfelder can be read as a work that prefigures the project of Malte.

As regards female characters, their deeper sensibility and Rilke's worship of the female nature, the apodictic statements reported above should not, however, let us forget that this is too complex a subject to be linked to one kind of source only. The question becomes even thornier if we consider other works, mainly because Rilke's Nordic period rapidly merged into the French one – which certainly was more important in his artistic development – and in general into all the other influences from different cultures Rilke had been and would be exposed to. While single instances of his connecting with Scandinavian culture can be charted, we suggest considering the situation in a converse perspective, i.e., to see how deeply Rilke's Scandinavian experience was influenced by his idea of art and society and, above all, by the aspects he was inclined to feel fascinated by or even caught up in. We could thus look upon Rilke's approach to Scandinavia as a successful attempt (one of many) to find an existing complement to his feelings and inclinations. To a certain extent – and at the risk of sounding pretentious – Rilke enrolled Nordic 'soldiers' in the 'army' of his view of the

world. This does not reduce in any way his contribution to a better understanding and spreading of Scandinavian culture, thus highlighting the role of the Nordic countries as the avant-garde in Europe at that time. As stated at the beginning of this paper, Scandinavia had an important place in Rilke's spiritual geography; now we can add that the contribution was mutual and that his commitment provided a fascinating way to connect and unify some Nordic peculiarities across his own cultural landscape and present them to the world in a faithful yet literary form, thus acting both as a journalist and a poet.

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L'EXPÉDITION HISTORIQUE FINLANDAISE À ROME (1909-15) E LA STORIOGRAFIA ITALIANA NOVECENTESCA

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1. La breve introduzione senza titolo datata “Rome, en juin 1909” (Biaudet 1910a, vi)¹ dello studio di Henry Biaudet *Les Nonciatures apostoliques permanentes jusqu'en 1648* (*Le nunziature apostoliche permanenti fino al 1648*) si apre non tanto menzionando una fatica appena conclusasi quanto annunciando ricerche ancora da svolgersi, non solo per l'autore ma anche per coloro che questi chiama “mes compagnons d'étude”:

L'Académie des Sciences de Finlande m'ayant confié la direction des recherches entreprises par un groupe d'historiens finlandais sur les relations entre le Nord-Baltique et l'Europe catholique au XVI^{me} et au XVII^{me} siècles, j'ai cru ne pouvoir mieux inaugurer ma mission qu'en mettant à la disposition de mes compagnons d'étude ces tableaux et l'index qui les complète, destinés à leur permettre l'identification facile et rapide de tous les nonces apostoliques permanents de l'époque qui intéresse nos recherches communes (Biaudet 1910a, v-vi).²

In queste poche righe si ritrova forse l'unica presentazione al pubblico eu-

¹ “Roma, nel giugno 1909.” Le traduzioni sono di chi scrive.

² “Avendomi, l'Accademia della Scienze di Finlandia, affidato la direzione delle ricerche intraprese da un gruppo di storici finlandesi sulle relazioni tra il Nord-Baltico e l'Europa cattolica nel sedicesimo e diciassettesimo secolo, ho ritenuto di non poter inaugurare meglio la mia missione che mettendo a disposizione dei miei compagni di studio queste tavole e l'indice che le completa, destinate a permettere l'identificazione facile e rapida di tutti i nunzi apostolici permanenti dell'epoca che interessa le nostre ricerche comuni.”

ropeo, incapace di leggere il finnico e lo svedese, di quella straordinaria impresa accademica che fu l'Expédition historique finlandaise à Rome (K.I. Karttunen 1945; Garritzen 2011; Hanska 2011; Lavery 2011). Nella ricca produzione dell'Expédition non si trovano infatti introduzioni propriamente dette volte a spiegare cosa si dovesse intendere con questo termine,³ né quali ne fossero gli obiettivi. Del resto non ce n'era bisogno. Con 'spedizione' era comune indicare, nel vocabolario specialistico dell'epoca, una missione all'estero di un gruppo di storici (normalmente giovani, in genere ancora da addottorarsi) che svolgevano indagini autonome, ma tra loro profondamente connesse, sotto la guida di uno studioso più esperto (le "nos recherches communes" di cui parla Biaudet). Si trattava di una introduzione al 'metiere della storia' che, da un lato, permetteva ai ricercatori più giovani di formarsi grazie al contatto diretto con un maestro già esperto di un dato settore e di alcuni fondi archivistici e, dall'altro, allo studioso più anziano, di avvalersi del contributo di collaboratori energici che lo aiutassero a indagare archivi e biblioteche spesso da poco aperte al pubblico e i cui contenuti erano infinitamente meno noti di quanto lo siano oggi, anche a causa di una catalogazione spesso molto lacunosa, quando non ancora da effettuarsi (cfr. Bilinski 1983; Gualdo 1994).

Come l'altro genere di missioni accademiche che si affermò tra la fine dell'Ottocento e l'inizio del Novecento – quelle archeologiche – si trattava di progetti da svolgersi in un arco temporale dato, grazie a finanziamenti erogati da università e istituti di ricerca tanto pubblici quanto privati. L'Expédition historique finlandaise fu attiva dal 1909 sino al 1915 quando, con la morte per tifo del capo indiscusso del progetto, Henry Biaudet (il 17 settembre) e con la di poco precedente (23 maggio) entrata dell'Italia nella Prima guerra mondiale, si spense ogni speranza che la Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia (Accademia delle Scienze di Finlandia) decidesse di riprendere a finanziare un progetto i cui fondi originari si erano esauriti l'anno prima.

2. Henry Biaudet nacque a Heidelberg nel 1869 all'interno di una famiglia svizzero-francese (Tapio 1987 e 1991; Mylly 2002, 230-34). Nel 1873, i genitori Marie Louise Gerber e Léon Gabriel Biaudet si trasferirono a Helsinki. Nella capitale dell'allora Granducato di Finlandia, i due coniugi aprirono la prima scuola femminile del paese in cui l'insegnamento si svolgeva esclusivamente in francese. Sette anni dopo il suo arrivo Léon Gabriel Biaudet vinse quindi il concorso di lettore di lingua francese presso l'Università di Helsinki.

³ Esiste una qualche incertezza circa l'impiego dei vocaboli *Expédition* e *Mission*. Cfr., ad esempio, "qu'il me soit permis de témoigner ici à M. Henry Biaudet, chef de la Mission historique finlandaise à Rome, ma reconnaissance [...]" (L. Karttunen 1912, viii; "che mi sia permesso di testimoniare qui a M. Henry Biaudet, capo della Missione storica finlandese a Roma, la mia riconoscenza [...]") di contro all'intestazione che si trova nel medesimo volume degli *Annales* (iii): *Études Romaines publiées par l'Expédition Finlandaise*.

Léon Gabriel fu poi tra i promotori della neonata Alliance française de Helsingfors oltre che traduttore dallo svedese (Aalto 1987, 80-81). Quest'ultimo aspetto non è insignificante. In anni di crescente tensione linguistica all'interno della società finlandese tra la componente finnica e quella svedese (Coleman 2010), la famiglia Biaudet optò per lo svedese, la parte che si mostrò, alla lunga, quella perdente, con una scelta che molto probabilmente – come è stato notato (Hanska 2011) – ebbe in seguito un qualche peso sugli insuccessi di Henry a livello concorsuale. A dispetto della propria, complessa, appartenenza culturale e linguistica, e di una certa pubblicistica anche contemporanea, Henry Biaudet fu un patriota finlandese a pieno titolo. Dopo gli studi inferiori in Finlandia e quelli liceali a Ginevra, Henry tornò nella sua patria d'adozione nel 1887 dedicandosi alla carriera militare sino a che, nel 1899, venne espulso dall'esercito per l'opposizione al cosiddetto 'Manifesto di febbraio', i dibattuti provvedimenti legislativi di Nicola II volti a limitare le larghe autonomie di cui godeva il Granducato (Sergeevskij 1899; Polvinen 1995). Fu allora che Biaudet riprese gli studi, addottorandosi nel 1906 sotto la guida di Ernst Gustaf Palmén (Melander 1922) con una tesi sui rapporti tra Santa Sede e Svezia nel Cinquecento (Biaudet 1906a) per la preparazione della quale, già dal 1902, lo studioso iniziò a compiere ricerche archivistiche nell'Europa meridionale, in particolar modo a Roma. Nel 1881 infatti, dopo una fase in cui l'accesso era stato concesso in modo occasionale e *ad personam*, l'Archivio Vaticano era stato aperto al pubblico degli studiosi nel loro insieme (Chadwick 1978; Martina 1981; Esch 2004; Pagano 2004). Gli inizi dell'esperienza italiana di Biaudet non furono senza difficoltà. In una lettera inviata il 13 dicembre 1902 allo storico della Chiesa Karl Gabriel Leinberg, lo studioso svizzero-finlandese raccontò che, essendo lui protestante, i documenti non gli venivano mostrati, ma letti. Solo una volta uscito dall'Archivio e raggiunta la propria pensione, Biaudet aveva l'occasione di trascriverli 'a memoria' (Leinberg 1903, 362).⁴ Abbastanza presto Biaudet dovette comunque guadagnarsi la fiducia degli archivisti vaticani, in particolare del prefetto (al tempo noto con la qualifica di 'sotto-archivista') Pietro Wenzel, in carica dal 1905 al 1909 (Chadwick 1978, 83-84, 132-133; Biaudet 1909b), che viene ricordato alla fine del già menzionato volume dedicato alle nunziature. In questa sede, dopo essersi detto riconoscente, "pour les précieux renseignements",⁵ nei confronti dei direttori degli archivi di Firenze, Torino e Venezia, Biaudet continuava ringraziando "surtout [...] Monseigneur Pietro Wenzel, le regretté préfet des Archives du Saint-Siège, pour les facilités toutes particulières qu'il voulut bien m'accorder dans mes recherches" (Biaudet 1910a, vi).⁶ Il gruppo finlandese dovette mantenere rapporti molto buoni anche con i successori di Wenzel se nel 1912 Liisi

⁴ Simili difficoltà di accesso non furono sperimentate dal solo Biaudet (Gualdo 1994).

⁵ "Per le preziose indicazioni."

⁶ "Soprattutto [...] Monsignor Pietro Wenzel, il compianto prefetto degli Archivi della Santa Sede, per le facilitazioni tutte speciali che mi ha voluto accordare durante le mie ricerche."

Karttunen – che aveva terminato una ricerca intrapresa proprio da Biaudet e portata a conclusione sotto la sua guida – ci teneva a “remercier tout particulièrement Mgr Mario Ugolini, directeur des Archives du Vatican, de la bienveillance qu’il m’a témoignée au cours de ces recherches” (1912, viii).⁷

Anticipata da alcuni significativi studi preparatori (Biaudet 1903; 1904-05 e 1905), la tesi di dottorato di Biaudet apparve nel 1906, seguita da un volume (1906b) in cui si editano fonti provenienti da biblioteche e archivi spagnoli (*in primis* Simancas; Biaudet 1912d), francesi (Archives Nationales), ginevrini (Biaudet 1912c) ma per lo più italiani (Milano, Ambrosiana; Firenze, Nazionale, Riccardiana e Marucelliana) e soprattutto capitolini. Grazie ad alcune borse di studio erogate sia dall’Università di Helsinki sia dall’Accademia delle Scienze di Finlandia, Biaudet rientrò quasi subito a Roma per continuare le sue ricerche e venne presto affiancato in archivio da altri studiosi finlandesi che, su incoraggiamento di Ernst Gustaf Palmén, avevano iniziato a svolgere ricerche tematicamente contigue. Biaudet fu raggiunto così in quegli anni da Per Olof von Törne – autore di una importante tesi di dottorato su Tolomeo Gallio, tra le più influenti personalità della curia romana della seconda metà del Cinquecento (von Törne 1907), ma che andò presto maturando interessi diversi da quelli di Biaudet, tanto a livello geografico quanto cronologico (von Törne 1907-08; 1908-09; 1911 e 1915-28) – e soprattutto da Liisi Karttunen (Mustonen 1997; Lotsari 2002; Garritzen 2011), la quale già lavorava alla propria tesi dedicata alla missione svedese del gesuita italiano Antonio Possevino e ai suoi antefatti e che sarà pubblicata nel 1908 (L. Karttunen 1908a). È su questo retroterra che, grazie all’intervento economico dell’Accademia di Finlandia, fu lanciata l’Expédition historique finlandaise vera e propria.

Agli studiosi già presenti a Roma si unirono così il fratello di Liisi, Kaarlo Iivari Karttunen (Jaatinen 1986); Johan August Pärnänen e Gabriel Rein. Biaudet, per usare ancora una volta le sue parole, era incaricato della “direction des recherches entreprises” (Biaudet 1910a, v).⁸ I risultati scientifici dell’Expédition vennero pubblicati in cinque volumi, le *Études Romaines*, usciti, con una sola eccezione (Biaudet 1912b), all’interno degli *Annales* della Academia Scientiarum Fennica. A questi vanno poi aggiunte diverse monografie, a firma dei vari membri del gruppo di ricerca, spesso a partire dalle loro tesi (con la sola eccezione di Rein), tra le quali spicca una nuova, importante, edizione di fonti curata da Biaudet (1912b), e infine anche alcuni testi più divulgativi apparsi in rivista in patria.⁹ Sebbene non furono pubblicati recando la dicitura della serie ormai defunta delle *Études Romaines*, e non saranno pertanto esaminati nel dettaglio in questa sede, bisogna comunque tenere presente che, dopo il 1914, vennero dati alle stampe non pochi studi

⁷ “Ringraziare in modo speciale Monsignor Mario Ugolini, direttore degli Archivi del Vaticano, per la benevolenza che mi ha testimoniato nel corso di queste ricerche.”

⁸ “Direzione delle ricerche intraprese.”

⁹ Si vedano, ad esempio, Biaudet 1906-08; 1907-08 e 1909a; L. Karttunen 1908b; 1909 e 1915; K.I. Karttunen 1910.

il cui materiale di partenza era stato raccolto a Roma durante gli anni in cui era stata attiva la missione (ad esempio K.I. Karttunen 1915). Di questa produzione successiva merita d'essere menzionato anzitutto il volume che raccoglieva tre studi postumi di Henry Biaudet e che uscì a stampa solo nel 1931 (Biaudet 1931a; 1931b e 1931c).

3. L'Expédition ambiva ad occuparsi delle “relations entre le Nord-Baltique et l'Europe catholique au XVI^{me} et au XVII^{me} siècles” (Biaudet 1910a, vi).¹⁰ Concretamente affrontò tre temi distinti, sebbene tra loro interconnessi. Il primo, che è il vero e proprio *fil rouge* della sua attività, si concentra sui piani e i tentativi romani imbastiti a partire dalla Riforma protestante sino alla fine della guerra dei Trent'anni al fine di riconvertire la Scandinavia al cattolicesimo.¹¹ Il secondo concerne lo studio del sistema diplomatico pontificio, che proprio a metà Cinquecento visse una trasformazione radicale con la creazione delle cosiddette nunziature permanenti.¹² Infine, il terzo riguarda la consistente presenza di italiani in Scandinavia, e in misura minore la moda italianizzante che vi si sviluppò, in particolar modo grazie alla regina Caterina Jagellona, figlia di Bona Sforza, e al suo seguito di dignitari originari dell'Europa centrale e meridionale.¹³ In aggiunta, l'Expédition concentrò diversi sforzi anche su due campi collaterali, lo studio dei cifrati diplomatici (Biaudet 1910c; L. Karttunen 1911a) e quindi il ruolo del Granducato di Polonia-Lituania nella storia della Scandinavia tra Cinque e Seicento (K.I. Karttunen 1912; Pärnänen 1912).

Le ragioni per cui gli studi prodotti dall'Expédition dovrebbero risultare importanti per la storiografia italiana, di oggi come di allora, risultano palesi. Anzitutto il filo conduttore di queste ricerche è l'Italia stessa in un momento di primaria importanza come quello in cui, dopo lo stordimento provocato dalla Riforma protestante, il papato, il più importante protagonista della politica della penisola tra Cinque e Seicento, serrava le fila provando a riconquistare il terreno perduto. Ma non solo, è italiano infatti il punto di vista stesso, che ha il proprio luogo di osservazione da Roma, piuttosto che dal Nord scandinavo. Si aggiunga poi che l'Expédition investigò fondi archivistici ignoti, facendo spesso scoperte significative (K.I. Karttunen 1911c), con competenze linguistiche e storiche di norma sconosciute in Italia, e ne rese noti i risultati non in svedese o in finnico ma in una lingua particolarmente accessibile agli studiosi italiani quale il francese.

4. Per alcuni argomenti specifici, diversi lavori dell'Expédition sono ancora oggi imprescindibili. È il caso delle monografie di Biaudet e Liisi Karttunen

¹⁰ “Relazioni tra il nord Baltico e l'Europa cattolica nel XVI e XVII secolo.” Con un'unica eccezione: Karmin e Biaudet 1912.

¹¹ Cfr. Biaudet 1909a; 1910b; 1911; 1931a e 1931c; L. Karttunen 1911b; Pärnänen 1911.

¹² Cfr. Biaudet 1906-08; 1910a; K.I. Karttunen 1911a e 1911b; L. Karttunen 1912.

¹³ Cfr. Biaudet 1912a; 1913a; 1913b e 1931b; L. Karttunen 1910.

sulle nunziature e del lavoro di quest'ultima su Antonio Possevino, sebbene l'opera di Oscar Garstein (1963) l'abbia reso in parte datato. Notare che simili saggi sono menzionati in contributi di studiosi italiani non è pertanto sufficiente per provare la diffusione della conoscenza dell'opera dell'Expédition in quanto tale. Altrettanto inadeguato, del resto, sarebbe esaminare il poseduto delle biblioteche italiane, spesso sfregiate dalla Seconda guerra mondiale, non catalogate nella loro interezza, oltre che troppo comunemente affette da un lento, quanto costante, saccheggio. Infine risulterebbe pure fuorviante effettuare sondaggi (che si sono comunque svolti in fase preparatoria) sulle opere dei più rappresentativi esponenti della storiografia italiana del primo e del secondo Novecento; sarebbe come voler studiare una regione alpina saltando da una cima all'altra, ma senza prestare attenzione al fondovalle, certo difficile da indagare, ma altresì imprescindibile per comprendere il quadro nella sua interezza. Al fine di rilevare quale fu l'impatto, se vi fu, dell'Expédition sulla storiografia italiana del Novecento si è deciso così di rivolgere l'attenzione a due lavori collettivi: l'*Enciclopedia italiana* (35 voll., 1929-37) e il *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (79 voll. sui 110 stimati, dal 1960).¹⁴ Si tratta di due 'grandi opere' cui hanno partecipato un numero particolarmente elevato di storici. Nello specifico l'*Enciclopedia italiana* risulta degna di attenzione perché realizzata una quindicina d'anni dopo il venir meno della missione, quando il ricordo di questa, anzitutto a Roma (dove aveva sede la redazione dell'*Enciclopedia* medesima), poteva forse non essersi ancora spento, tanto più che la Karttunen vi viveva e operava ancora (L. Karttunen 1941). Il *Dizionario biografico* è interessante invece perché copre gli ultimi cinquant'anni arrivando sino ai giorni nostri. In entrambi i casi – ma specialmente per il *Dizionario* – si è adottato, nel redigere le bibliografie, un approccio compilativo e inclusivo, che le rende particolarmente indicative della misura in cui gli studi qui esaminati siano conosciuti al pubblico specialistico italiano. Infine, nessuno dei due lavori può essere ricondotto a una sola scuola storiografica. Tutti questi aspetti permettono pertanto di studiare in che misura fossero, e siano, noti non tanto e non solo i volumi più famosi dell'Expédition (la cui conoscenza, come s'è detto, è in certi casi da darsi per scontata) quanto, soprattutto, i molti studi 'minori' e quelli preparatori, non solo di Biaudet e della Karttunen ma anche degli altri ricercatori.

5. L'*Enciclopedia italiana* mostra un panorama desolante. Al di là della scontata menzione dello studio di von Törne (1907), lavoro che fra l'altro non rientra in quelli dell'Expédition propriamente detta, come unico riferimento bibliografico alla brevissima voce anonima su Tolomeo Gallio (XVI, 1932,

¹⁴ Le si è esaminate giovandosi della loro digitalizzazione sul sito <http://www.treccani.it/>. Si citano le voci indicandone l'autore (quando disponibile), il volume in cui compaiono e l'anno di pubblicazione di quest'ultimo.

s.v.), l'*Enciclopedia* è sostanzialmente silente riguardo le opere della missione finlandese, se non per le menzioni obbligate del lavoro di Liisi Karttunen alla voce "Antonio Possevino" (Giorgio Candeloro, XXVIII, 1935, s.v.) e degli studi di questa e di Biaudet al lemma "Nunzio". Nella bibliografia di tale lemma si legge:

H. Biaudet, *Les nonciatures apostoliques permanentes jusqu'en 1648* a parte e nelle *Études Romaines des Annales de l'Académie des sciences de Finlandie [sic]*, Helsinki 1910, che contiene un ampio e quasi compiuto elenco di nunzi pontifici nelle varie nazioni cattoliche: il lavoro fu continuato da L. Karttunen, *Les nonciatures apostoliques permanentes de 1650 à 1800*, Ginevra 1912, nella stessa collezione dell'accademia delle scienze di Finlandia, benemerita per studi diplomatici e di storia romana, oltre questi segnalati (E. Al. ed E. C., XXV, 1935, s.v.).

Il commento finale è significativo se non altro perché dichiara la conoscenza di altri "studi diplomatici e di storia romana, oltre questi segnalati", per quanto la menzione dell'Accademia di Finlandia piuttosto che dell'Expédition lascia il dubbio che il ricordo di quest'ultima in quanto tale si fosse già spento.

Qualora si volga lo sguardo al *Dizionario biografico* ne esce un quadro più articolato, sebbene non per questo positivo. Nei 25.000 lemmi già editi del *Dizionario*, Pärnänen è citato una sola volta, in una voce dedicata a Germanico Malaspina, da uno studioso tedesco, Alexander Keller (LXVII, 2007, s.v. "Malaspina, Germanico"), con riferimento a un volume uscito negli anni Trenta (Pärnänen 1933). Allo stesso modo, anche Kaarlo Iivari Karttunen (1911a; 1911b e 1912) è menzionato in una sola occasione, da Domenico Caccamo alla voce "Alamanni, Domenico" (I, 1960, s.v.); von Törne otto volte, tutte con riferimento al suo lavoro su Tolomeo Gallio (a lungo l'unico presente su questa figura; cfr. G. Brunelli, LI, 1998, s.v. "Gallio (Galli), Tolomeo"); Liisi Karttunen trentotto volte, tutte soltanto per il suo volume sulle nunziature, mai ad esempio per quello su Possevino, che pure avrebbe sezioni importanti sul retroterra italiano della missione del gesuita. Henry Biaudet, infine, è citato novantuno volte, ma di queste solo una – da Laura Ronchi De Michelis, nella voce "Dal Portico, Vincenzo" (XXXII, 1986, s.v.) – per un lavoro diverso da quello sulle nunziature (Biaudet 1906b). D'altro canto, tanto Laura Ronchi De Michelis quanto Domenico Caccamo sono esperti di storia dei Paesi Slavi ed è pertanto probabile che la loro conoscenza dell'opera dei due ricercatori finlandesi sia stata filtrata dalla frequentazione della storiografia polacca piuttosto che di quella italiana. Particolarmente significativo, pertanto, diviene il fatto che la voce "Commendone, Giovanni Francesco" (Domenico Caccamo, XXVII, 1982),

dedicata al diplomatico che provò anche a recapitare i brevi convocatori del Concilio di Trento ai sovrani di Svezia e di Danimarca, pur molto ricca di rimandi bibliografici, non menzioni l'importante, e per molti aspetti insuperato, studio in svedese di Biaudet sul tema (1904-05).

Che le *Études Romaines* siano rimaste sostanzialmente sconosciute alla storiografia italiana risulta ancora più evidente da altre due omissioni del *Dizionario biografico*. Né Oliviero di Arco, né Carlo Brancaccio, due personaggi cui Biaudet dedicò due importanti studi monografici (1931b e 1912a) hanno avuto voci loro dedicate.

6. Le ragioni della sostanziale ignoranza di questi studi in Italia non risultano di immediata comprensione. Forse, si potrebbe avanzare come ipotesi il fatto che l'atteggiamento sostanzialmente filoromano e simpatetico degli sforzi cattolici della missione finlandese possa essere risultato troppo distante dagli approcci laici e positivisti di una parte significativa degli studiosi italiani di storia della Chiesa negli anni della crisi modernista e, al tempo stesso, di uno spiccato anticlericalismo del mondo intellettuale italiano, e romano in particolare. Inoltre, la difficoltà a reperire i testi (spesso usciti a ridosso della Prima guerra mondiale, e tutti pubblicati oltre confine) dovette contribuire in modo decisivo a rendere questi saggi inaccessibili in Italia. Oggi, specialmente grazie a internet, molti di questi studi sono divenuti disponibili e sarebbe auspicabile un ritorno di interesse per ricerche che, pur superate in alcune loro conclusioni, non lo sono ancora nel loro assieme e neppure per diverse questioni specifiche. Un ritorno di interesse potrebbe giovare anche per altre ragioni. L'*Expédition* rimane insuperata, ad esempio, per le competenze linguistiche dei suoi membri, che rendono pertanto il lavoro di spoglio compiuto da questi studiosi prezioso: alle lingue classiche e a quelle romanze e germaniche (padroneggiate grazie a una scolarizzazione di impronta classica, all'abitudine a impiegare francese e tedesco come lingue di cultura e alla conoscenza dello svedese) aggiungevano quella polacca grazie all'influenza del russo nella Finlandia zarista in anni di russificazione forzosa (Polvinen 1995). I lavori di Henry Biaudet si caratterizzano poi per una sensibilità rara, probabilmente da ascrivere alla biografia dell'autore, che li rende ancora oggi particolarmente utili per venire introdotti alle difficili dinamiche dei rapporti tra Nord e Sud dell'Europa così come a quelle della vita in un ambiente ostile di un membro di un gruppo minoritario, tanto linguistico (la lingua madre di Biaudet era il francese) che religioso (data l'origine calvinista e non luterana della famiglia dello studioso).¹⁵

¹⁵ Neppure in Scandinavia l'*Expédition* ha goduto di grande fortuna (all'epoca probabilmente a causa dell'atteggiamento filoromano di cui si è detto e, oggi, per l'uso della lingua francese). Significativo a questo riguardo è ad esempio un articolo di Vera Nigrisoli Wårnhjelm, una studiosa italo-svedese che insegna alla Högskolan Dalarna ed è autrice di lavori pregevoli sui rapporti culturali italo-scandinavi tra Cinque e Seicento. In un suo studio su Apollonio

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Menabeni, Vera Nigrisoli Wärmhjelm, proprio dopo aver consultato il *Dizionario biografico*, si è trovata costretta ad affermare di "non [essere] riuscita a trovare notizie" (2008, 104) su quell'Oliviero di Arco cui Biaudet aveva dedicato un articolo esaustivo cento anni prima. Segno che, anche in presenza di biblioteche più fornite, le *Études Romaines* non risultano l'opera di consultazione primaria che invece dovrebbero essere.

- rant la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle. Époque des relations officielles, 1576-1583.” *Études Romaines* III: i-xxxii, 1-563 (*Documenta historica quibus res nationum septentrionalium illustrantur* IV).
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LA SCANDINAVIA DI CARMEN DE BURGOS

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Carmen de Burgos (1867-1932) è una feconda poligrafa, nata nella città andalusa di Almería (per la biografia dell'autrice cfr. Castañeda 1994; Utrera 1998; Bravo Cela 2003; Castillo Martín 2003; Núñez Rey 2005). Formatasi come autodidatta nella biblioteca del padre, si sposa giovanissima con un marito che la maltratta e, dopo la morte di tre dei suoi quattro figli, si separa e inizia a lavorare come giornalista. Compie poi studi di Magistero e diventa insegnante di lettere, trasferendosi nel 1901 a Madrid con la figlia María. Nel 1903 entra nel *Diario Universal* con gli stessi compiti degli uomini (redazione e lavoro sul campo): è la prima donna giornalista professionale spagnola. Adotta allora lo pseudonimo 'Colombine' e inizia a pubblicare narrazioni, con l'appoggio tra gli altri del celebre scrittore ed editore Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. Crea un salotto letterario, *Los miércoles de Colombine*, che diventa presto una ribalta chiave della vita intellettuale madrilenica. Lì conosce nel 1908 lo scrittore Ramón Gómez de la Serna, di vent'anni più giovane, con il quale forma un sodalizio amoroso e professionale che durerà un ventennio (Utrera 1998; Núñez Rey 2005; Ubach Medina 2010). Nel 1909, per l'*Heraldo de Madrid*, si reca sul fronte marocchino della guerra del Rif, diventando la prima corrispondente di guerra donna spagnola (Pozzi 2000).

La sua opera conta un centinaio tra racconti e novelle, una decina di romanzi lunghi, numerosi saggi e traduzioni e una presenza assidua sulla stampa anche estera (specie portoghese e ispanoamericana). Oltre a occuparsi di formazione avanzata delle maestre, 'Colombine' pubblica manualistica pratica e testi divulgativi, in un cosciente impegno educativo femminista, interviene su molti temi politico-sociali, si batte per il voto alle donne, il divorzio e l'abolizione della pena di morte, fonda la *Cruzada de Mujeres*

Españolas ed è eletta presidentessa della Lega Internazionale delle Donne Iberiche e Ispanoamericane (sul femminismo dell'autrice cfr. Starcevic 1976; Establier Pérez 2000; Anja 2005). Fautrice della Repubblica, nel 1931 è membro del Partito Repubblicano Radicale Socialista. Muore però a Madrid nel 1932, durante una conferenza, e con l'ultimo fiato si dichiara felice di aver visto la giovanissima Repubblica promulgare le leggi a favore della donna per cui aveva sempre lottato. Il suo enorme prestigio anche internazionale viene misconosciuto dopo la guerra civile e solo da non molti anni è in corso un potente recupero della sua figura, grazie alla dedizione di Concepción Núñez Rey (cfr. 1989, 2005, 2006, 2009 e 2012) e alla fertile attenzione di molti altri studiosi.¹

I viaggi hanno un ruolo decisivo nell'evoluzione del suo pensiero e della sua creazione (cfr. Pozzi 1999; Navarro Domínguez 2007; Daganzo-Cantens 2010). Carmen de Burgos viaggia in Francia e Italia tra il 1905 e il 1906. Nell'estate 1911 è in Belgio, Olanda e Lussemburgo. Nell'autunno 1913 in Argentina. Vive a lungo in Portogallo e saltuariamente anche a Napoli con il compagno Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Nel 1925 va in Messico e a Cuba e nel 1927 in Perù e Cile. Ma a noi ora interessa l'avventura da lei progettata per l'estate 1914, grazie a una borsa di studio ministeriale: arrivare a Capo Nord per vedere il sole di mezzanotte, in compagnia della figlia. Durante quel viaggio visita Danimarca, Svezia e Norvegia, mandando cronache all'*Heraldo de Madrid*, poi riunite in un libro (Burgos 1916 e 1917), da poco ripubblicato (Burgos 2004 e 2012).²

In Norvegia la sorprende lo scoppio della prima guerra mondiale e il viaggio nel paradiso nordico si trasforma in un ritorno infernale (ricreato narrativamente in Utrera 1998, 259-63; cfr. anche Núñez Rey 2005, 362-66). Deve rinunciare a recarsi in Russia e attraversare invece la Germania. A Rostock la scambiano per una spia russa e rischia il linciaggio. Abbandona per precauzione un baule con guide della Russia e lettere di presentazione per personalità russe. Sulla strada per Amburgo, il treno viene fermato in campagna e i soldati tedeschi la minacciano con le baionette. Viene portata prigioniera dal console spagnolo. Carmen osserva che la guerra non solo distrugge il benessere, ma dissolve la dignità dei rapporti umani. È testimone di orrori e deportazioni, tutta la barbarie del patriottismo bellicoso che tanto disapprova nei tedeschi, nonostante la loro abilità tecnica. Anzi, gli articoli dalla Germania si riempiono di antimilitarismo: "Honrar a los que mataron

¹ Questo contributo informativo, incentrato su un singolo episodio della vita dell'autrice e un aspetto concreto della sua scrittura, deve ovviamente molto alla solida bibliografia esistente, in particolare ai lavori citati in fondo, tra cui vanno sottolineati il volume collettivo frutto di un corso almeriense del 1992 (Naveros e Navarrete Galiano 1996), il volume di Imboden (2001) e il numero speciale monografico della rivista del CSIC *Arbor* (Palomo e Núñez Rey 2010). In Italia l'unica opera di Carmen de Burgos tradotta è la novella *Pugnale di garofani* (Minesso 2005).

² Ci serviamo qui dell'edizione più recente (Burgos 2012), a cura di Concepción Núñez Rey, cui rimandano tutte le pagine indicate tra parentesi dopo le citazioni.

me parece una cosa perjudicial; la humanidad no podrá llegar a una mayor perfección ética mientras admire la gloria de los héroes” (214).³ Esasperata, coglie nei tedeschi atteggiamenti rozzi, stupidi, animaleschi e razzisti. Salva soltanto il suo amato Heine. Una nave mercantile spagnola la porta, con altri connazionali, in Inghilterra, da dove, con mille problemi, anche economici, riesce a salpare per La Coruña.

Ma andiamo con ordine (le tappe del viaggio in Scandinavia sono descritte e commentate in Núñez Rey 2005, 358-62, e 2012, 25-29; Daganzo-Cantens 2010, 103-18). Nel luglio 1914 l'autrice arriva a Copenaghen e la trova accogliente, moderna e tranquilla, piena di giardini, laghi, fontane, musei: “Pero todo esto con simplicidad, sin afectación, sin empaque, sin solemnidad. Como esas mujeres que a fuerza de vestirse bien no se preocupan de sus trajes ni de sus adornos” (91).⁴ Le piacciono le biciclette onnipresenti (senza che nessuno le rubi!), il gran numero di telefoni e il cielo blu cobalto. Adora la scultura di Bertel Thorvaldsen. Non manca di visitare l'amletico castello di Kronborg a Helsingør. Reso omaggio ad Andersen, informa intorno alla letteratura più recente sulla scorta del critico Georg Brandes. Ma soprattutto, estasiata davanti a un'organizzazione sociale di là da venire in Spagna, indaga il modello avanzato di benessere collettivo: la qualità dei servizi, la legislazione del lavoro, le scuole professionali, i piani di pensione e di viaggio, le cooperative, le sovvenzioni statali, la morigeratezza dei politici. In Danimarca vede realizzato il sogno dell'emancipazione femminile:

La mujer tiene ancho campo, abierto en todos los empleos y carreras, es electora y elegible y goza de un gran respeto y una gran libertad. Desde hace tiempo está establecido el divorcio, pero casi nadie recurre a él. No se hace necesario dentro de la vida de libertad y tolerancia, incomprensible para nuestro sentimiento español, que tienen ambos sexos en cuestiones pasionales (96).⁵

Passa poi in Svezia e a Malmö visita l'Esposizione Baltica. Consiglia di non comparare Stoccolma con Venezia come si suol fare, e non per le ovvie differenze, ma perché la bellezza di Venezia non risiede nella natura, mentre le cit-

³ “Onorare chi ha ucciso mi pare deleterio; l'umanità non potrà arrivare a una maggior perfezione etica finché ammirerà la gloria degli eroi.” Tutte le traduzioni in nota sono dell'autore del presente articolo.

⁴ “Ma tutto ciò con semplicità, senza artificio, senza petulanza, senza solennità. Come quelle donne che a forza di vestirsi sempre bene non si preoccupano più dell'abbigliamento o degli accessori.”

⁵ “La donna ha aperte molte possibilità in ogni mestiere e professione, è elettrice ed eleggibile e gode di un grande rispetto e una grande libertà. Il divorzio è stato introdotto da tempo, ma quasi nessuno vi fa ricorso. Non si rende necessario all'interno di una vita di libertà e tolleranza, incomprensibile per la mentalità degli spagnoli di entrambi i sessi in questioni passionali.”

tà del Nord sono sovrastate dalla loro immensa e intensa natura e, per quanto si sforzino, saranno sempre inferiori ai loro paesaggi. Tra il dedalo di isolotti e laghi, la colpisce l'allegria molto pacata del museo all'aperto di Skansen. Trova Stoccolma in generale una città silenziosa, che sembra abitata da muti. Ma anche qui la interessa specialmente la condizione femminile, illustrata da tante donne di talento: le svedesi sono libere e indipendenti, cresciute nella parità con l'uomo e disposte a giustificare e praticare l'infedeltà:

En cuestiones de moralidad la manga es ancha. Los padres no se cuidan más que de la infancia, después ellas aseguran su porvenir y hacen su vida. Pasean con sus amigos, viajan con el novio, lo visitan en su casa. Nada de esto tiene importancia. Todas las mujeres suecas son un poquito masculinas. Tienen un gesto algo hombruno cuando se les ve marchar por las calles con paso airoso, firme y resuelto, y con el sombrero en la mano. La mayoría son enemigas del matrimonio; se cansan pronto de una misma amistad y los maridos están obligados a ser tolerantes. Un marido celoso o despótico estaría en ridículo y se quedaría sin mujer. Pero hay que tener en cuenta que ellas y ellos tienen los mismos temperamentos y la misma educación; las mismas ventajas de ambiente. No hay Otelos ni Andrómacas. Ellos se entretienen con sus amigas mientras ellas hacen un viajecito de recreo con sus amigos. No se preocupan de estas pequeñeces a las que no les dan importancia, ni alteran la felicidad del hogar (132).⁶

Carmen evoca lo scrittore svedese che più ha chiosato il carattere, i difetti e persino le bassezze delle donne, August Strindberg, ma lo fa con ironia conciliante, suggerendo che il lettore spagnolo, aggrappato ai suoi atavismi romantici, comprende meglio del pubblico scandinavo la misoginia strindberghiana. In ambito letterario, cita Selma Lagerlöf, che vorrebbe conoscere – ma in quel momento è in Italia –, segnalando però soprattutto la femminista ed educatrice Ellen Key. Il viaggio prosegue con l'università di Uppsala, dove critica la separazione degli studenti in “naciones”, cioè per regioni di provenienza. A lei sembra divisionismo, laddove bisognerebbe cancellare

⁶ “In fatto di moralità la manica è larga. I genitori si occupano solo dell'infanzia, in seguito le donne stesse assicurano il proprio futuro e vivono la propria vita. Escono con gli amici, viaggiano con il fidanzato, gli fanno visita a casa sua. Nulla di tutto ciò ha importanza. Tutte le svedesi sono un po' mascoline. Hanno un'aria lievemente virile quando camminano per strada con passo energico, sicuro e risoluto, e con il cappello in mano. Sono in maggioranza nemiche del matrimonio; si stancano presto di un rapporto e i mariti sono obbligati ad essere tolleranti. Un marito geloso o tirannico risulterebbe ridicolo e perderebbe la moglie. Ma bisogna considerare che donne e uomini hanno lo stesso temperamento e la stessa educazione, gli stessi presupposti sociali. Non ci sono Otelli né Andromache. Gli uomini si divertono con le amiche mentre le donne fanno una vacanza con gli amici. Non si curano di queste piccolezze, cui non danno peso e che non alterano la felicità della famiglia.”

tutte le frontiere. Poi visita il sito archeologico di Gamla Uppsala, con le tombe reali vichinghe a tumulo, che associa con il tempio di Odino, ma anche le miniere di rame di Falun, riflettendo su come la prosperità si fondi sul duro lavoro di alcuni.

Da Stoccolma viaggia in treno fino a Kristiania (l'attuale Oslo), tra boschi e laghi. La trova calda e inondata di sole, con un'atmosfera da siesta meridionale. L'autrice preferirebbe un puro e tonificante inverno, che più s'addice a queste latitudini, dove il sole è un adorno falso: sembra di essere in una di quelle città addobbate e intonacate per la visita di un monarca. Sulle rive della baia ci sono stabilimenti balneari nudisti, ma solo gli stranieri puntano i binocoli verso le bagnanti stese sull'erba ad abbronzarsi senza costume, mentre i locali non le guardano nemmeno. Carmen nota il paradosso per cui le spagnole sognano il tono di pelle biancorosa delle norvegesi, e quest'ultime in cambio si mortificano per tostarsi e scurirsi, ostentando l'esposizione al sole. Constata in Norvegia un grande rispetto degli uomini per le donne e un'accentuata complicità tra queste ultime. Qui regnano la libertà individuale, la tolleranza e la solidarietà. La donna è integrata socialmente, ha tutti i diritti legali e contribuisce in modo determinante al fermento intellettuale e artistico. Fin da subito, sarà questo il paese che più rapirà e interesserà l'andalusa, per la natura ma anche per le genti:

Hay una vida muy pura, muy honrada; los hombres se avergüenzan, como las mujeres, de la falta de castidad, como debe suceder en un pudor real y una lógica perfecta. Unas y otros aman mucho los *sports*, la vida al aire libre, la pesca, la natación, las excursiones a las montañas y los juegos entre la nieve. Sus energías se gastan y se multiplican a un tiempo en estos ejercicios, y los hombres se envanecen de ser puros para crear una familia sana y dichosa (153).⁷

Preannunciata da monti e cascate, arriva Bergen, città che incanta la nostra scrittrice perché bella, innocente, operosa e sana di spirito. I suoi abitanti sono come i meridionali spagnoli, i “más alegres y de carácter más comunicativo y decididor de toda Noruega; son los andaluces de este país, porque son también los que disfrutan mejor clima” (160).⁸ A Bergen aleggia la leggenda dei musicisti locali, specie Ole Bull ed Edvard Grieg. E qui Carmen

⁷ “Si conduce una vita molto pura e onesta; gli uomini si vergognano, come le donne, della mancanza di castità, come deve accadere quando vigono un pudore autentico e una logica perfetta. Le une e gli altri amano molto gli sport, la vita all'aria aperta, la pesca, il nuoto, le escursioni in montagna o i giochi tra la neve. Le loro energie si consumano e si moltiplicano al contempo in questi esercizi, e gli uomini si vantano di essere puri per creare una famiglia sana e gioiosa.”

⁸ “I più allegri e di carattere più affabile e conversatore di tutta la Norvegia; sono gli andalusi di questo paese, perché sono anche quelli che godono del miglior clima.”

de Burgos trova spazio per offrire ai suoi lettori un'ampia carrellata sulla letteratura norvegese, poco nota in Spagna, soffermandosi in particolare su alcuni classici: Jonas Lie, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson e Henrik Ibsen.

Si delinea comunque una percezione contraddittoria della Norvegia, che muove insieme alla stima e alla compassione: da un lato onestà e vigore, dall'altro la disgrazia del clima e dell'ambiente rudi. In questo Carmen rimanda un po' al suo amato Leopardi del *Dialogo della Natura e di un Islandese*.⁹ Ma i due opposti si spiegano l'uno con l'altro: "esta misma rudeza parece que doma sus pasiones y los hace mejores, más leales, más puros. Todo el pueblo noruego da una impresión de honradez y nobleza" (162).¹⁰ I norvegesi non conoscono l'indolenza corruttrice, non cercano le comodità, ma sono ben poco raffinati anche in ambiti del quotidiano cui Carmen è molto sensibile. Ad esempio, i loro cibi sono malsani e ripetitivi, ignari di grazie gastronomiche: sembra non abbiano idea di cosa siano una salsa o un condimento, annota la nostra autrice.

Da Bergen il viaggio continua sul vapore *Nettuno*. Tra fiordi e grandiosi panorami montani, c'è Balholm, dove va in villeggiatura estiva il *Kaiser* Guglielmo II. Quell'anno, in lutto per gli arciduchi assassinati a Sarajevo, non dà feste e poi lo yacht imperiale e la scorta partono improvvisamente il 25 luglio per il precipitare degli eventi (il 28 luglio l'Austria dichiara guerra alla Serbia). Vederlo da vicino è per la pacifista Carmen una delusione. Lo vede tozzo, storto, d'aspetto volgaruccio e stanco:

La noticia de una guerra en medio de esta paz es una cosa desconcertante. No me explico bien que ese hombre bajito, insignificante, que se pasea por la playa como un buen burgués, preocupado en esconder en el bolsillo su brazo corto, pueda ser un árbitro de los destinos del mundo (188).¹¹

Passando per la cattedrale di Trondheim, la montagna forata di Torghatten e Tromsø, l'andalusa arriva a Hammerfest, capitale del bacalà, invasa dall'odore dell'olio di fegato di merluzzo e popolata da pescatori e marinai, con due mesi e mezzo di luce costante tra maggio e luglio, ma da novembre a gennaio altri due e mezzo sempre al buio. Nelle vicinanze, Carmen si reca presso una tribù di sami, dove compra oggetti d'osso intagliato, mentre i turisti provano il latte di renna. I presunti selvaggi, che mostrano dignità e

⁹ Al recanatese l'autrice almeriense dedicò un'imponente monografia e antologia (Burgos 1911), che collocò definitivamente Leopardi nel panorama letterario spagnolo.

¹⁰ "Questa stessa asprezza sembra domare le loro passioni e renderli migliori, più leali, più puri. Tutto il popolo norvegese dà un'impressione di rettitudine e nobiltà."

¹¹ "La notizia di una guerra in mezzo a questa pace è una cosa sconcertante. Non riesco a spiegarmi come quest'uomo bassino, insignificante, che passeggia lungo la spiaggia come un borghese qualunque, preoccupandosi di nascondere in tasca il suo braccio corto, possa essere un arbitro dei destini del mondo."

decenza, ispirando apprezzamento e fiducia, coronano la ricerca di pittore-sco, categoria principe dei reportage di viaggio dell'epoca, che nei norvegesi vedevano un popolo isolato, ospitale, robusto e dagli usi ancestrali e strani.

Il percorso culmina con un *finis terrae* sconosciuto: l'estremo nord dei ghiacciai e delle nebbie mitologiche, lattee e nevose, che si sfilacciano e si aprono formando archi e volte, come le smisurate porte della Valhalla. Poi il vento le dissipa. Finisce il continente e continua solo il mare. Carmen sale sul promontorio di Capo Nord e attende la mezzanotte sotto una pioggerellina. È un momento quasi religioso, panteista, il disco rosso che s'inabissava risale, solenne come un'ostia, su per il cielo cangiante. La sensazione d'infinito, ancora una volta leopardiana, è rotta solo dalla sirena del battello che richiama i viaggiatori.

Anche in Norvegia, de Burgos indica una propria simile, una maestra da emulare: Camilla Collett, ardimentosa iniziatrix del femminismo locale con il romanzo *Le figlie del governatore*. Ma quel che più le importa è veder incarnati i suoi ideali in ambito educativo, giuridico, lavorativo, e toccare con mano il delinarsi deciso di nuovi profili di donna, che rimarranno a lungo per lei un esempio da imitare (cfr. Burgos 1925; Núñez Rey 2005, 546). Le norvegesi si comportano con libertà senza che ne soffra la loro reputazione, operano in tutti gli ambiti, possono disporre delle loro ricchezze e del frutto del loro lavoro, ricoprire cariche pubbliche ed essere elette in parlamento. La Norvegia ha posto in essere la riforma agraria, gli operai sono tutelati e organizzati (persino la servitù domestica è regolamentata), l'istruzione è obbligatoria, il suffragio universale, l'igiene e la salute controllate e garantite, persino la religione appare meno rigida e fanatica che in Svezia. E comunque, la razionalità e mentalità positiva degli scandinavi, che fa fiorire le scienze sperimentali, rimanda al protestantesimo, mentre in Spagna la scienza è stata bloccata dal dogmatismo e dai roghi dell'Inquisizione. Insomma, Carmen prova una forte simpatia per la Norvegia, dove può studiare dal vivo gli obiettivi di quel moto *regeneracionista* di progresso civile e superamento dell'arretratezza immaginato dalla 'generazione del 98' e da lei sempre difeso e perfezionato, che sembrerà affermarsi con la Repubblica e verrà spazzato via dal franchismo (le donne in Spagna riavranno voto e diritti solo dopo la morte del dittatore). Nonostante la malinconia che avvolge questa terra, e che le fa provare nostalgia per la sua soleggiata e chiassosa Andalusia (di cui pure ha narrato i drammi), i paesi scandinavi rappresentano per Carmen de Burgos il modello di una società libera e democratica, da proporre anche in Spagna.

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BOOKS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE.
HOLDEN CAULFIELD'S SCANDINAVIAN BROTHERHOOD

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*My brother D.B.'s a writer and all, and my brother Allie, the one
that died, that I told you about, was a wizard.*
(Salinger [1951] 1994, 60)

Now he's out in Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute.
(Salinger [1951] 1994, 1)

I. INTRODUCTION

All readers of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* are bound to remember that Holden Caulfield has lost two siblings: his younger brother Allie to leukaemia and his older brother D.B. to Hollywood, where he has sold his writer's talent to the movie industry. Any effort to compensate for Holden's loss would be hopeless, his bereavement is immense and it is the very absence of his two brothers that makes their presence in the novel all the more acute. Yet, I would like to call attention to Holden's Scandinavian brotherhood, in an attempt to make a contribution to a greater critical discourse having as its object the charting of Holden Caulfield as a paradigmatic character in world literature. This essay will narrow an otherwise vast field of investigation of parallels down to the discussion of one of the features in Salinger's novel common to the Scandinavian works examined here, namely the way in which the adolescent protagonist reacts to and interacts with the ready-made bearings and behaviours provided by literature and cinema.

This aspect of the narration is a facet of the dominant and manifold theme of ‘phoniness’, with which Holden is more than concerned and which also engrosses the minds of his Nordic kinsmen. References to literary and cinematographic mannerisms, whether as to putting on a mask or unmasking, are found in all the three novels that we are about to examine. This aspect of the narrations can be interpreted in relation to Holden’s favourite game of ‘horsing around’ and ‘shooting the bull’, and as an activity functional to the adolescent grappling with the construction of an identity in the midst of his transition from childhood innocence to the world of adult experience.

Brothers (and sisters) of Holden Caulfield’s have been tracked all over the world. Part of the vast critical commentary devoted to *The Catcher in the Rye* has focused on the interrelations that Salinger’s protagonist establishes with characters in works of literature preceding and following the publication of the novel in 1951. In the Seventies, the literary theoretician Aleksandar Flaker (1975 and 1976) created the label ‘jeans-prose’, under which he discussed Holden as an archetype in the prose of central and eastern Europe; Thomas Feeny (1985) later identified a female Holden in Penny, the young narrator in the Italian novel *Con rabbia* (*With Anger*, 1963) by Lorenza Mazzetti; parallels between Holden and Njoroge, the central character in *Weep Not, Child* (1964), written by the Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, have been drawn by Sandra W. Lott and Steven Latham (Latham and Lott 2009) – for a quick trip around the world. According to the Swedish expert of children’s literature and adolescent fiction, Vivi Edström (1984, 46), Salinger’s novel soon became a weighty paradigm for the juvenile dissatisfaction with Western society, both in the U.S. and in Europe, and many a scholar agrees on the remarkable impact that the book had on Nordic literature after the Second World War, especially on two of our three novels:

The most popular American novel after the war has without a doubt been J.D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* [...] a work into which young high school students could project their sense of loneliness in a hostile adult world. It also immediately influenced young Danish writers like Leif Panduro and Klaus Rifbjerg with novels such as *Rend mig i traditionerne* (1958) and *Den kroniske uskyld* (1958), respectively (Secher 1998, 34).

Within a couple of years of its publication, *The Catcher in the Rye* was translated into the major Scandinavian languages. These translations were subsequently updated, not least for the peculiar and, at times, rather far-fetched choices of title. With the fanciful designation *Hver tar sin – så får vi andre ingen* (*When Each and Every One Has Made His Choice – There Is No One Left for the Rest of Us*), Salinger’s novel appeared in Åke Fen’s Norwegian translation in 1952, and was re-translated in 2005 by Torleif Sjøgren-Eriksen

as *Redderen i rugen* (*The Saviour in the Rye*). *Räddaren i nöden* (*The Saviour in the Crisis*), as the book is known in Swedish, was originally translated by Birgitta Hammar in 1953 and subsequently, in 1987, by the novelist Klas Östergren, who maintained the title. The first Danish translation by Vibeke Cerri entitled *Forbandede ungdom* (*Damned Youth*) was also published in 1953, while the aforementioned Klaus Rifbjerg produced the most recent translation (2004) of the novel into Danish, now entitled – quite literally – *Griberen i rugen* (*The Catcher in the Rye*).

2. HOLDEN'S HERITAGE

Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now. Happily, some of them kept records of their troubles. You'll learn from them — if you want to. Just as someday, if you have something to offer, someone will learn something from you.
(Salinger [1951] 1994, 170)

The two novels most often cited as texts reflecting the impact of *The Catcher in the Rye* on the Scandinavian literary scene are thus both Danish. Both were published in 1958: Leif Panduro's *Rend mig i traditionerne* ([1958] 1986; *Kick Me in the Traditions*, Panduro 1961) and Klaus Rifbjerg's *Den kroniske uskyld* ([1958] 1986; *The Chronic Innocence*).¹ Next to David, Panduro's young protagonist, and Janus, the narrator in Rifbjerg's work, I would like to place Erik, a third brother fathered by the Finland-Swedish writer Lars Sund as protagonist-narrator in *Natten är ännu ung* ([1975] 1998; *The Night Is Still Young*), a novel less widely known than the Danish works, today rightly considered twentieth-century classics. Sund's novel hence makes out for the contribution in Swedish to the upholding of the myth of Holden in Scandinavia.²

While Sund outspokenly acknowledges the influence of Salinger's model,³ the two Danish authors both deny any knowledge of *The Catcher in the Rye* prior to the composition of their own novels.⁴ Rifbjerg (though enrolled

¹ Rifbjerg's work has appeared as *La grande sbronza* in Liliana Uboldi's Italian translation (Rifbjerg 1966).

² Kirsten Kalleberg (2003), in an essay dedicated to the act of writing in Salinger, Panduro and the Norwegian author Saabye Christensen, mentions, without further specification, P.C. Jersild's novel *Barnens ö* (*The Children's Island*, 1976) as another example of Swedish prose that falls within the influence of *The Catcher in the Rye*. While some of the features in Jersild's text do support the parallel (the protagonist is an eleven-year-old exploring the city of Stockholm on his own), the narrative elements that interest the present analysis are irrelevant in *Barnens ö*.

³ In a short documentary film directed by Anders Engström (*Lars Sund* 1998), cf. also Stenwall 1996, 15.

⁴ See, e.g., Hesselaa (1976, 22): "J.D. Salinger's [sic] 'Catcher in the Rye' er ofte blevet

at Princeton in 1950-51) dismisses all obvious connections as coincidental, attributing any resemblance between his own novel and Salinger's to matters of *Zeitgeist*:

Så må man forsvare sig med at sige, at man på det tidspunkt simpelt hen ikke havde læst Salinger! Da jeg skrev *Den kroniske uskyld* var jeg iøvrigt stensikker på, at jeg var det eneste menneske i Danmark, som ville drømme om at skrive en opvækstro-man – så kom Panduro samtidig. Der er ingen tvivl om, at der er en åndelig temperatur i verden og at bestemte fænomener eksisterer på samme tid (Clausen 1974, 136).⁵

Given the numerous correspondences, the statements provided by the authors themselves (subsequently toned down, cf. Clausen 1974, 136) have not, however, discouraged several critics from asserting that *The Catcher in the Rye* does come across as a “fælles udgangspunkt” (Bredsdorff 1967, 160)⁶ for the two Danish novels.⁷

On the whole, though without neglecting the peculiarities of each text, what the three Scandinavian books share content-wise with Salinger's prototype is: 1) the frame of the (psychiatric) clinic; 2) the nervous breakdown of an adolescent protagonist; 3) the death of a family member or a close friend (followed by a dreadful sense of guilt); and 4) the motifs of rebellion, escape and the age-old opposition between innocence and experience. In addition, 5) the formal aspects – a retrospective account told in the first person singular and written in the seemingly slapdash language of teenagers – common to all three narrations and, again, reminiscent of Salinger's stylistics, push the stories towards Flaker's definition of ‘jeans-prose’ as a text presenting a “young narrator [...] who builds a style of his own, based on the spoken language of urban youth (frequently infused with elements of slang), and who denies traditional and existent social and cultural structures” (1980, 52).

In other words, a matter of style.

nævnt som inspirationskilde for dem begge, men både Rifbjerg og Panduro afviser teorien om direkte påvirkning” (“J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* has often been mentioned as a source of inspiration for the two, though both Rifbjerg and Panduro dismiss the theory of any direct influence”). All translations are mine.

⁵ “Well, in defence one must say that at that point one had not read Salinger! When I wrote *Den kroniske uskyld* I was also more than certain to be the only person in Denmark who would dream of writing a coming-of-age novel, and then Panduro came and did it simultaneously. There is undoubtedly a spiritual world temperature bringing certain phenomena into existence at one and the same time.”

⁶ “Common point of departure.”

⁷ The first scholar to investigate the parallels between Rifbjerg and Salinger was Poul Bager (1974), cf. Jørgensen and Olesen 1974, 21.

2.1. THE VOICE OF INNOCENCE. STYLISTICS

'Boy!' I said. I also say 'Boy!' quite a lot. Partly because I have a lousy vocabulary and partly because I act quite young for my age sometimes.

(Salinger [1951] 1994, 8)

The representation of adolescent *Weltschmerz* was nothing new to the domain of literature in 1951; Salinger's true novelty was instead to be found in his way of wrapping up young Holden's *mal de vivre*. According to the Ohmanns, what struck the first reviewers was indeed "Salinger's choice of a seventeen-year-old personal narrator and his matching of syntax and idiom to that choice" (Ohmann and Ohmann 1976, 19). As to the vernacular of the adolescent, Sund's novel, with its adoption of colloquial anglicisms (e.g., "ta't easy nu, cool down boys"; [1975] 1998, 8) and domestication of a few famous 'holdenisms' ("kornig" ['corny'], "mainda" ['to mind'], "cray-sig" ['crazy']; 8, 12, 133 respectively), is the one drawing closest to Salinger's model. The author's emulation of Holden's informal, oral teenage idiom is particularly striking in its rewriting of Salinger's famous first lines in small-town Finland-Swedish slang:

Sku ja skriva nån sorts uppsats nu, så sku ni väl vilja veta hela historien från början, hur jag föddes och vad min farsa gör och var min morsa är född och vad min farfar gjorde och var min morfar är född och hela stamtavlan i all oändlighet, ända tillbaks till Adam och Eva. Men det intresserar int en jävel, och dessutom sku väl farsan och morsan få hicka av rena skräcken om jag här sku börja kavera om en massa saker och ting som ändå int har nån betydelse. Så jag låter det vara. Det som intresserar er, hoppas jag, är mej och den story om mej som jag försöker dra. Resten får ni hitta på själv, om ni ids (Sund [1975] 1998, 7).⁸

Just like Holden, Erik begins his account by marking the distance from his parents and from the conventional autobiographical narration. The detachment from literary tradition, in Salinger synonymous with a repudiation of the coming-of-age novel ("that David Copperfield kind of crap"; Salinger

⁸ "If I was about to write some kind of school composition now, I guess you'd want to hear the whole story right from the start, how I was born and what my old man does for a living and where ma was born and what granddad did and where the other granddad was born and my whole pedigree for ever and ever, all the way back to Adam and Eve. But it wouldn't interest a damned soul, and I guess the old folks would get the hiccups for fear of knowing that I'm blowing the whistle on stuff that's of no importance anyway. So I'll leave it be. What interests you, hopefully, is myself and my own story, which I'm about to tell. You can make up the rest yourselves, if you bother."

[1951] 1994, 1), is transposed here as a refusal to kick off with an illustration of the family tree in the manner of the Bible and the Icelandic sagas.⁹ It is also worth noticing that as the wordy and talky narration is drawing to its end, Sund again mimics Holden's legendary understatement "That's all I'm going to tell about" (Salinger [1951] 1994, 192) with Erik's terse "Nåt mer tänker jag sen int berätta" (Sund [1975] 1998, 146).

Granting that the three novels would be worth exploring were it only for their linguistic codes (in Panduro and Rifbjerg the urban slang of 1950s Copenhagen), which, just like *The Catcher in the Rye*,¹⁰ caused a great hue and cry among the first reviewers, David Lodge's opinion, according to which it is but Holden's jargon that justifies an interest in Salinger's novel, is in my view unwarranted: "it is the style that makes the book interesting. The story it tells is episodic, inconclusive and largely made up of trivial events" (Lodge 1992, 20). It is my conviction that *The Catcher in the Rye* grabs hold of its readers not only because of matters of style, but also because of its content. Let us now take a closer look at how the three Scandinavian authors respond to one of the major themes in the novel – i.e., Holden's preoccupation with insincerity – by investigating what use is made of the schemes and behaviours suggested by mass culture: models that seemingly lead away from the unaffectedness of childhood.

2.2. THE TWO (CONTRARY) STATES OF THE HUMAN SOUL

*The one side of my head – the right side – is full of millions of
gray hairs. I've had them ever since I was a kid. And yet I still act
sometimes like I was only about twelve.*
(Salinger [1951] 1994, 8)

In an attempt to sum up the substance of Salinger's novel, it can be said that Holden's mission is to protect innocent children from falling into a corrupt adult world. Much in the same way, his Nordic peers perform as saviours: Erik describes himself as "nån sorts hustomte, som knatar omkring och håller reda på folk" (Sund [1975] 1998, 19-20),¹¹ fathering broken-hearted girls with whom he is secretly in love and cleaning up wrecked houses after wild parties; Janus is watching over the budding love affair between Tore and Helle ("det var som om de var mine børn. Jag havde siddet og passet på dem, mens de sagde farvel og var helt ubeskyttede"; Rifbjerg [1958] 1986, 76)¹² and is willingly playing the part of the initiated and depraved one,

⁹ According to Flaker (1980, 154), an ironic attitude towards canonised national literature is another trait distinguishing 'jeans-prose'.

¹⁰ Cf. Costello 1959, 172-73.

¹¹ "Some kinda house gnome, who scuttles around and looks after people."

¹² "It was as if they were my children. I had sat there guarding them while they were saying their good-byes and were so defenceless."

in order to let Tore's virtue triumph; David is, as we will see, concerned with shielding teenage Lis and little Lindy from stepping into falsehood and adulthood.

At first sight the dialogue between innocence and experience thus appears to resolve itself in a traditional, warring opposition between the true 'essence' of the child and the inauthentic 'façade' of the adult. What unsettles the conventional antagonism is Holden's – and his brothers' – inability to really choose sides. Being adolescents, they are in an unstable balance between a childhood to which there is no return and an adulthood that they fear to enter. Different strategies of transition from one state to another then have to be put to the test: strategies through which any flat opposition between innocence (here intended as imagination, play and creativity) and experience (war,¹³ death, sexual love) becomes impossible. In their adolescent quest for identity, the narrators' tactics involve a series of assaults on the 'phoniness' of adult conformity, whether identified as formulaic clichés in literature or as stagnant, off-the-rack human behaviour belonging to the repertoire of the cinema.

If growing up is a process of learning to adapt as well as of affirming one's individuality, how effective is this strategy as an attempt to make a statement for the narrators' own originality? How does it operate? While the protagonists declare themselves sickened by any conventional descriptions of love and human behaviour in books and films, they actually revel in that very same imagery and experiment with it. While marking their distance from standard adult behaviour, they really engage with it. My assumption is then that the playful episodes where the protagonists comment on or actually slide into the ready-made mannerisms they claim to despise allow them to hold on to an earlier, childish self by offering creative exits into a reality that is still to be discovered. It is an imaginative activity permitting the adolescent to maintain the value of naiveté while experimenting with the ways of the 'corrupt' adult: a clash between the contrary states of innocence and experience, which seems to release creative energy not only within the protagonist but also on the written page through its irresistible use of language.

2.2.1. REFLECTIONS ON LITERARY PHONINESS

I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot.
(Salinger [1951] 1994, 15)

Although the opposition between teenagers and adults is central to the works that appeared in the wake of *The Catcher in the Rye*, it is, according to

¹³ Sund's and Rifbjerg's novels are set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and the Second World War, respectively, while Panduro's David has a genuine obsession with the atomic bomb.

Flaker (1980, 153), a type of antagonism that does not give rise to an open generational conflict, since only the point of view of the youth is represented. In ‘jeans-prose’, Flaker states, adults (parents and teachers) are mostly absent or, at best, secondary characters, and the confrontation unfolds mainly on a cultural level. Like Holden himself, his Nordic disciples are on a collision course with the school environment but have, nevertheless, a talent for verbalisation and excel in composition writing. The quotation from Sund’s novel gave us a sample of the narrator’s distinctive stylistic skills and of a writing that clearly dissociates from the unreliable, standard language of the adults and from literary tradition itself. Erik’s comments on literature (whether scornful or appreciative) and his awareness of a literary tradition (whether synonymous with the great classics, poetry, romantic novels or pulp, and even if only to be disdained) actually reveal the extent to which the protagonist feeds on reads.

Many of Erik’s reflections on the world revolve around love. Like Holden, he fears that this fixation may bring his readers to take him for a sex maniac (Sund [1974] 1998, 132): love, in its sexual form, appears threatening to his universe of childhood friends, pleasant conversations and male bonding, and is outright scorned when wrapped up in deceptive, romantic and ‘literary’ descriptions. To Erik, the worst kind of double-dealer is the one who talks of doing “ni vet vad, medan fåglarna skvattrar och vågorna kluckar och vinden drar och all den där poetiska skiten” (11).¹⁴ The consequent withdrawal of his own brief, but inspired, concessions to lyrical, naturalistic description is also in line with his knowledge (and refusal) of the customary workings of literary writing: “Jag menade int nu spåra ut i sån där poetisk skit” (123).¹⁵ Erik is similarly able to put his finger on predictable “cinematographic” happy endings (43) and on the “idiotic” turning points typical of novels (67) and, while snarling at sentimental ‘chick lit’, he knows it well enough to quote from it (74-75, 79), just as he readily imitates the affected language of publicity (79) or refers to the trite accounts of sexual love in pornographic narratives (89). Erik, who writes poetry and is known as the “bard of the bunch” (“skalden i gänget”; 12), is highly concerned with stressing the authenticity of his own story and distancing it from the average run-of-the-mill novels, with their improbable adventurous epilogues or ridiculously dramatic endings:

sku dehär vara en sån där löjlig roman där en massa löjliga figurer gör en massa korkade saker, så sku jag väl vid dehär laget ha farit och startat en kålrotsfabrik eller blivit revolutionär teoretiker eller så sku jag ha blivit polare med morsan och farsan till sist med då sku det ren ha varit för sent, jag sku ha stått på

¹⁴ “You know what, while the birds are chirping and the waves are splashing and the wind is blowing and all that poetic crap.”

¹⁵ “I didn’t mean to veer off into that poetic crap.”

balkongracket och hotat att hoppa, och just som allt sku ha blivit ok så sku jag förstås ha halkat och trillat ner [...]. Men nu är dehär int nån sån där roman, utan verkliga livet, och där händer int nåsant (117).¹⁶

The point at issue is again the 'song and dance routine': although Erik cannot stand conformity in a novel, he cannot completely leave it be.

In his role as narrator Janus, too, is acutely aware of how a main character in a novel should behave according to standards, but, as protagonist, he is (in contrast) incapable of living up to these. When the man-eater Mrs Junkersen reappears with coffee and cigarettes after having tried to seduce young Janus, the story goes: "I bøgerne tager de altid en cigaret på sengekanten, når de har ordnet det, tænkte jeg. Men vi havde jo ikke ordnet noget. For øvrigt drak jeg meget sjældent kaffe" (Rifbjerg [1958] 1986, 131).¹⁷

2.2.2. REFLECTIONS ON CINEMATOGRAPHIC PHONINESS

The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I'm not kidding.
(Salinger [1951] 1994, 94)

In spite of their exuberant monologues filled with imaginative metaphors, the narrators pronounce themselves fed up with words, especially when uttered by adults. A case in point is David's rewriting of the Constitution: "Det er forbudt ethvert menneske over tredive at anvende mere end tyve ord om dagen" (Panduro [1958] 1986, 56).¹⁸ David's little niece Lindy (seemingly a romantic incarnation of innocence and alter ego of Holden's beloved sister, Phoebe) is instead voiceless, communicating almost exclusively without words. In response to the verbal masquerade of the grown-ups that David heavily criticises, he recoils into her silent communication. In contrast to Lindy, the language of adults, cinema and books boils down to clichés, emptying or covering up the very experience that they are trying to represent. In a world where everything seems to function in line with a pre-set model, in David's words: "Hollywood har lavet sådan en standardform for alle menneskers liv. Der er ingen, der helt kan sige, hvor Hollywood begynder og de selv holder op" (64),¹⁹ basic actions like establishing a relationship with

¹⁶ "If this was some kinda lame novel where loads of lame characters do loads of stupid things, at this point I would have left to set up a swede factory or become a revolutionary theoretician, or else I'd have gotten on friendly terms with the old folks except it'd already be too late and I'd be standing on the balcony rail threatening to jump, and when everything was starting to seem ok I'd slip and fall down [...]. But hey, this is not some kinda novel, it is real life, and in real life these things don't happen."

¹⁷ "In books they always smoke a cigarette on the bedside after making out, I thought. But we hadn't made out. Besides, I very rarely drank coffee."

¹⁸ "It is forbidden for every person over thirty to use more than twenty words a day."

¹⁹ "Hollywood has provided a standard form for everyone's life. Nobody can determine

the opposite sex seem inauthentic (cf. Lundbo [1973] 1974, 13), as shown by David's imaginary attempt to make a move on nurse Marianne at the mental hospital, which is fictionalised Hollywood-style: "Når Kim Novak står og retter på James Deans krave, kan der ske to ting. Enten si'r han som en vred, ung mand: – ta' og la' vær', eller også kysser han hende. Jeg kyssede hende [...]" (Panduro [1958] 1986, 65).²⁰

The reference to Hollywood introduces a motif common to all three Scandinavian novels. In Holden's footsteps, and crossing the national borders, the protagonists are confronted with specific 'American phoniness' through films, books, comics and music and, just like in Salinger, it is a love-hate relationship: even Panduro's David, with his severe case of movie-phobia, dresses as if he were in a Hollywood musical (93). Bernard S. Oldsey has observed that however much Holden spills out his hatred for the movies, he comes across as a great connoisseur of the imagery at work in Hollywood musicals and in the gangster movies of the Thirties and Forties (Oldsey 1961). When in a quandary or when feeling the need to escape from reality, Holden launches his performances as an actor, acting out movie roles and using them, as Alan Nadel (2009, 12) observes, "as a pool of allusion to help articulate his own behaviour".

Several Scandinavian counterproposals to Holden's recitals can be found in Rifbjerg's novel. Extremely ill at ease at a school ball, the two male protagonists, Janus and Tore, observe with great envy the boys from the countryside, who all behave gallantly with the girls. After Tore has set the example through his staging of a war scene from a Gary Cooper movie (Rifbjerg [1958] 1986, 62-63), Janus manages to disentangle his own embarrassment when he realises that everything is following a pre-set scheme ("alting gik efter et mønster, som var lagt ud i forvejen"; 66).²¹ As the orchestra starts playing the Bing Crosby song *Pennies from Heaven*, it seems to Janus that he is changing places. All of a sudden he is observing himself from the outside, as in a film: "Så spillede orkestret *Pennies from Heaven* rigtig slow, og jeg kunne se, hvordan jeg så ud, da jeg vendte mig om mod dansegulvet. Jeg så skide træt og overlegen ud, som om det var en smugkro i Jersey City, jeg så ud over, og ikke en rædselsfuld gymnastiksal på en pigeskole i København" (66).²²

The relationship between the two Danish novels and cinema has not yet been scrutinised, although American film is sometimes mentioned as

with certainty where Hollywood begins and he himself ends."

²⁰ "When Kim Novak stands there fiddling with James Dean's collar, the options are two. Either he answers like an angry young man: – quit it, or he kisses her. I kissed her [...]."

²¹ "Everything followed a preset scheme."

²² "Then the orchestra started playing *Pennies from Heaven* real slow, and I could see what I looked like as I turned towards the dance floor. I looked damned tired and imperious, as if I found myself overlooking a speakeasy in Jersey City instead of a horrible gymnasium in a girls' school in Copenhagen."

a source of inspiration to both Rifbjerg and Panduro (cf., e.g., Michelsen and Riis Langdal [2005] 2009: 103). On the subject of the numerous ways in which film has influenced the (Swedish) novel, Anders Ohlsson has published an interesting study (1998). Among the different integrations of the cinematographic medium into the narrative structure of the novel, Ohlsson mentions the occasions when “*tillvaron filmiseras*” (1998, 15; italics in the original), i.e., episodes in which a character’s life appears patterned after filmic scenes. This kind of “filmisering” (“filmicalization”, as Ohlsson puts it) of reality at work in *The Catcher in the Rye*, as previously mentioned, is evident also in Rifbjerg’s and Panduro’s novels, and plays, in my opinion, an important role in the quest for identity and authenticity in a world of clichés. To the adolescent protagonist, insecure of his masculine identity, slipping into a role and resorting to an attitude that is cool and *blasé*, as well as to markers such as beer, cocktails and cigarettes, increase his self-confidence. When lacking the means to interpret episodes related to the world of the adults, the staging of a scene as if on a movie set becomes a way of handling new emotions. If Holden, through the staging of platitudes extracted from Hollywood gangster movies, has found a way of giving vent to his sufferings, Janus, feeling overwhelmed and goofy as he is drawn towards his first love story, finds a way of dealing with this bewildering situation only by pretending to act out a scene: “Det var lige ved at være for meget, men pludselig følte det, som om vi allesammen spillede med i en film, og så gjorde det ikke så meget” (Rifbjerg [1958] 1986, 77).²³

Even Erik, although quite outspoken on the subject of his aversion for American imperialism and commercial culture (putting his interest for Harold Pinter and the theatre of the absurd on display), is similarly drawn towards this ‘holdenesque’ role-playing (be it Sven Hedin, Father Christmas, Richard Nixon or Mick Jagger). David, by contrast, refuses to take part in the deceitful recitals that go on around him, in which the girls are incarnations of Grace Kelly wearing “sådan et åndelig-grusomheds-ansigt, som man kan se på alle disse amerikanske film” (Panduro [1958] 1986, 41).²⁴ There is simply no Hollywood role, no Tarzan and no Don Juan, that can match the purity of Lis:

Der er noget over hende [...] som gør, at man har lyst til at være mægtig god ved hende. [...] Det er ikke, fordi jeg ikke har lyst til at gøre en hel masse ved hende, men jeg kan ikke få mig selv til at sige alle de åndssvage ord til hende, som man ellers har til det brug. [...] Ærlig talt, så er jeg meget forelsket i hende, men Hollywood kommer altid imellem. Jeg kunne selvfølgelig være

²³ “It was almost too much, but suddenly it felt as if we all were actors in a film, and then it wasn’t so bad.”

²⁴ “One of those viciously spiritual faces, which you can observe in any American film.”

den stærke mand, og tage hende uden ord, men det ville også være Hollywood (Panduro [1958] 1986, 73-74).²⁵

3. CLOSING COMMENTS

Associations and connections to Salinger's novel are many in all the three texts that have been under scrutiny here, but can be studied as a direct influence only in the case of Sund's *Natten är ännu ung*. Although, at the time of the publication of their novels, Rifbjerg and Panduro did not admit to any knowledge or reading of *The Catcher in the Rye*, a comparison still proves constructive if undertaken to explore variations on the coming-of-age theme in the historical moment of the Americanised Fifties, a decade often seen as "a golden age of innocence" (Miller and Nowak 1977, 5). Through a thematic comparison, this investigation has thus made an effort to enter the branch of comparative literature studies stemming from Matthew Arnold, according to whom "no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures" (quoted in Bassnett 1993, 1). When viewed side by side, these three texts then reciprocally shed light on variations on a motif that is central to Salinger's model, as I have tried to show. If books and movies seem to provide "definitions of manners and of emotional and psychological conventions" (Brookeman [1991] 1993, 72) to Holden and his peers, these adolescents are also caught in the struggle of trying to safeguard their integrity from standardised behaviour. How can these opposites combine? Through a few examples I have made an attempt to pin down the strategy of Holden's Scandinavian brotherhood. Very much in the manner of their big brother, they resort, on the one hand, to a personal idiom capable of ensuring the authenticity of their voices and, on the other, to the buoyancy of their imagination. Engaging in the adoption of a role and trying to disclose stereotypical behaviour while doing so are means that allow Janus and Erik to maintain the double identity of the playful, innocent child and the experienced man. To David, instead, playing a part is impossible:

Hun sad og kikkede på mig, og jeg tænkte, at sådan sad folk altid i Hollywood-filmene og kikkede, lige før de kyssede hinanden. Og i samme øjeblik, jeg tænkte det, var det ligesom det var skuespil det hele. Og så kunde jeg ikke kysse hende alligevel, for

²⁵ "There's something about her [...] that makes you want to be terribly nice to her. [...] I don't mean to say that I wouldn't want to do all sorts of stuff to her, but I can't bring myself to say all those insincere words to her that are normally used. [...] To tell you the truth, I'm very much in love with her, but Hollywood always intervenes. I could of course act like a real man and take her without a word, but that would also be Hollywood."

så skulle jeg gøre det på en bestemt måde og sige noget bestemt og smile på en bestemt måde. Og hundredmandsorkestret skulle spille denne hersens: Fascination. Og jeg kunne ikke sige, at jeg havde gjort noget, der var helt mit eget (Panduro [1958] 1986, 142).²⁶

Although Panduro's work is rich in comic scenes, it seems to me that the text is making a serious attempt at replying to some of the questions left open by Salinger's novel. In one of his virtual escapes from reality, a vain attempt at holding the corruption of the adults at stake, Holden is imagining himself living as a deaf-mute. When David makes it clear to the reader that the story he is telling is – curiously enough – directed at a deaf-mute, possibly a person unfamiliar to him or much older than him (as he turns to him with “hr” [Sir] and “De” [the polite form of address]), Panduro appears to be emphasising the impossibility of a communication that is both authentic and capable of bridging the generational gap between the child and the man:

Ordene har mistet deres betydning for længe siden. Der har været Hitler og Stalin og Hollywood og en hel masse andre, og i forening har de haft mægtig succes med at ødelægge ordene. Ja, hvad forbinder De med ord som lykke, frihed, kærlighed, demokrati, slaveri, elskov og længsel. Jeg forbinder i hvert fald ikke noget med det. Ikke andet end Hollywood (Panduro [1958] 1986, 69).²⁷

As if suggesting the possibility of a reconciliation of the two contradictory states, Salinger places the clinic where Holden has retired at the end of *The Catcher in the Rye* not far from Hollywood. With the insistence on the impossibility of a bi-directional verbal communication and on the need to fictionalise encounters belonging to the sphere of the adults (to which the only alternative seems to be Lindy's silence), *Rend mig i traditionerne*, instead, leaves the reader with the impression that Panduro, long after William Blake, is still “shewing the two contrary states of the human soul”.

²⁶ “She sat there looking at me and I thought that it was precisely the way people sat looking at each other in Hollywood movies just before they kissed. And as the thought crossed my mind it felt like we were acting. And then I was unable to kiss her anyway, since I was supposed to do it in a certain way, saying certain things and smiling in a certain way. And an orchestra of a hundred musicians was supposed to play *Fascination*. And I wouldn't have been able to say that I had done my own thing.”

²⁷ “Words lost their meaning long ago. Hitler and Stalin and Hollywood and many more have joined in a successful venture to destroy words. Well, what do you associate with words like happiness, freedom, love, democracy, slavery, passion and desire? I don't associate anything with them. Except Hollywood.”

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BRIDGES BETWEEN THE MARGINS OF EUROPE: PORTUGAL IN TOMAS TRANSTRÖMER'S OEUVRE

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The theme of travel plays a major role in Tomas Tranströmer's oeuvre both as a metaphoric element and as a real experience that gives the reader the chance to meet other places and cultures, filtered through the poet's eyes. Tranströmer's own description of his poems as meeting places ("mötesplatser"), in which "skilda kulturer och människor strömmar samman i ett konstverk" (Tranströmer 1993, 299-300),¹ points to the role of poetry as a driving force behind the creation of cultural bridges.

Among the poems written by the 2011 winner of the Nobel Prize in literature that originated from encounters with other worlds, two are dedicated to Portugal, a country that Tranströmer visited on more than one occasion. The first of these poems, entitled *Lissabon (Lisbon)*, was published in the collection *Klanger och spår (Sounds and tracks)*, 1966.² The second, *Funchal*, is the poem closing *Sanningsbarriären (The Truth Barrier)*, published in 1978.

In this article I will offer some observations on both poems as relevant examples of the broad range of themes in Tranströmer's poetic universe.

Tomas Tranströmer is unanimously acknowledged as one of the most influential Swedish poets of the second half of the twentieth century. His body of work has attracted enormous attention, both in Sweden and abroad, and the number of translations into over sixty languages no doubt testifies to the international renown he has achieved throughout the years. His concise

¹ "Separate cultures and people converge in a work of art." Translations are mine when no other source is named.

² The title *Klanger och spår* has been translated in fairly different ways in English. In addition to the title given above, one finds also *Resonance and Foot-tracks* (the title given by Robert Bly) and *Bells and Tracks* (the title given by Robin Fulton).

and essential style gives shape to a kind of poetry that has been praised for granting access to reality in its multilayered and multiform nature, combining images which pertain to widely separate domains of human experience.³

In his life, Tranströmer travelled the world far and wide, and his journeys certainly contributed to the inspiration for his poetry. From Kjell Espmark's seminal study, published in 1983, we learn that Tranströmer visited Portugal at least twice: the first time in 1956, during a trip that took him through Spain and Portugal and as far as North Africa; the second time in 1974, when he visited Madeira and its main city, Funchal (Espmark 1983, 11).

Although the titles of both poems on Portugal may at first seem to suggest that they share an interest in the urban landscape (i.e., Lisbon and Funchal), the two texts are quite different in terms of how they transform the travel experience into poetic images, as will be shown below.

Klanger och spår, Tranströmer's fourth collection of poems, elicited a heated debate in Sweden on the role of poetry in an age marked by a growing ideologisation of literature, which was understood by a number of younger left-wing intellectuals as a tool to take social action. For this reason, socially committed artists considered Tranströmer's rather contemplative and allusive attitude to the object of poetic observation in many respects too bourgeois and detached from the dramatic events that were taking centre stage throughout the 1960s, especially in Vietnam (cf. Espmark 1983, 7-8).⁴ Three years after the publication of *Klanger och spår*, Tranströmer defined his poems as "aktiva meditationer som inte vill söva utan väcka",⁵ thus implicitly countering the criticism levelled against his poetry as a contemplative act, while stressing the ethical and the cognitive value of the poetic word.

The collection includes poems whose titles point to travels to various places, including Africa, Berlin, Oklahoma, and of course Lisbon.

One of the major themes in *Klanger och spår* is the poet's relationship with time (past, present, and future), and the poem entitled *Om historien* (*About History*) is all about such relationship.

[...]

Alltihop liknar Historien: vårt NU. Vi är nedsänkta, vi lyssnar.

[...]

³ For a short description in English of Tranströmer's poetry see Orton 1999. In addition to Espmark 1983, major studies devoted to Tranströmer include Bergsten 1989 and 2011; Schiöler 1999.

⁴ On the same topic, Rochelle Wright (1996, 396) writes: "The fact that he pursued his own interests regardless of the prevailing political climate drew fire from more doctrinaire poets, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, when he was accused of being elitist and escapist. His work is not ideological, but in a broader sense it is often concerned with human history, with the world surrounding the contemporary individual, from which there is no escape."

⁵ "Active meditations whose aim is to wake us up, not to put us to sleep." Quoted from Schiöler 1999, 201.

III

Goethe reste i Afrika 1926 förklädd till Gide och såg allt.
Några ansikten blir tydligare av allt de får se efter döden.
När dagsnyheterna från Algeriet lästes upp
framträdde ett stort hus där alla fönster var mörkklagda,
alla utom ett. Och där såg man Dreyfus' ansikte.

IV

Radikal och reaktionär lever tillsammans som i ett olyckligt äktenskap,
formade av varann, beroende av varann,
Men vi som är deras barn måste bryta oss loss.
Varje problem ropar på sitt eget språk.
Gå som en spårhund där sanningen trampade!
(Tranströmer 2011, 149-50)⁶

This poem has been subject to diverging interpretations. Jan Stenkvist, for example, highlights the attitude of resignation to the course of history which, he claims, derives from Tranströmer's notion of history itself as repetition (on Stenkvist's view of Tranströmer's notion of history see Espmark 1983, 123-24). However, Kjell Espmark is able to demonstrate how such an interpretation does not do justice to the complexity of the poet's philosophical notion of time:

en rad dikter visar att historien i Tranströmers universum inte är cyklisk till sin natur utan är en gränslös process där skapelsen arbetar på att förverkliga sina dolda avsikter; den implicita framtiden och det längesedan realiserade skymtar här båda i det skapande nuet (Espmark 1983, 124).⁷

⁶ "[...] / It's all like History: our Now. We are submerged, we listen. // [...] / III / Goethe travelled in Africa in 1926 disguised as Gide and saw everything. / Some faces become clearer from everything they see after death. / When the daily news from Algeria was read out / a large house appeared with all the windows blackened, / all except one. And there we saw the face of Dreyfus. // IV / Radical and Reactionary live together as in an unhappy marriage, / molded by each other, dependent on each other. / But we who are their children must break loose. / Every problem cries in its own language. / Go like a bloodhound where the truth has trampled" (Tranströmer 2006, 80).

⁷ "A number of poems show that history in Tranströmer's universe is not cyclic by nature, but a boundless process in which the creation strives to realise its hidden aims; the implicit future and the distant achievement appear here both in the creating present." In *Elegi (Elegy)*, one of the poems in the collection *17 Dikter (17 Poems, 1954)*, Tranströmer writes: "Det finns en korsväg i ett ögonblick. / Distansernas musik har sammanströmmat. / Allt sammanvuxet till ett yvigt träd. / Försvunna städer glittrar i dess grenverk" (Tranströmer 2011, 44); "There's a crossroads in a moment. Music of the distances converges. All grown together in a leafy tree. Vanished cities glitter in its branches" (this translation is quoted from Orton 1999, 246).

The poet's call for action, which is evident in the previously cited section IV of the poem ("Men vi som är deras barn måste bryta oss loss"), testifies to the active role assigned to human beings as the medium through which the divine turns its hidden intentions into reality (Espmark 1983, 125). This demonstrates – quite conceivably – how reductive it is to see a passive resignation in Tranströmer's attitude towards history.

What has been observed so far about *Klanger och spår* provides the framework within which the poem about Lisbon will be analysed.

Lissabon

I stadsdelen Alfama sjöng de gula spårvagnarna i uppförsbranterna.
Där fanns två fångelser. Ett var för tjuvarna.
De vinkade genom gallerfönstren.
De skrek att de ville bli fotograferade!

"Men här", sa konduktören och fnittrade som en kluven människa
"här sitter politiker". Jag såg fasaden, fasaden, fasaden
och högt uppe i ett fönster en man
som stod med en kikare för ögonen och såg ut över havet.

Tvättkläderna hängde i det blå. Murarna var heta.
Flugorna läste mikroskopiska brev.
Sex år senare frågade jag en dam från Lissabon:
"Är det riktigt, eller har jag drömt det?"
(Tranströmer 2011, 137)⁸

The image of the yellow tramcar, i.e., one of the symbols of the city, introduces the reader to Tranströmer's Lisbon. The poet's attention is caught by two prisons located in the Alfama quarter, the oldest core of the city that managed to survive the terrible earthquake of 1755.

As Tranströmer visited the Portuguese capital when the country was still under the dictatorship of Salazar, the founder of the so-called *Estado Novo* ('New State'),⁹ the reference to imprisoned politicians is best understood as pointing to political dissidents who opposed Salazar's regime.¹⁰

⁸ "Lisbon // In the Alfama quarter the yellow tramcars sang on the steep slopes. / There were two prisons. One was for thieves. / They waved through the grilled windows. / They shouted to be photographed. // 'But here', said the conductor giggling like a split man, / 'here sit politicians.' I saw the façade the façade the façade / and high up in a window a man / who stood with a telescope to his eye and looked out over the sea. // Laundry hung in blue air. The walls were hot. / The flies read microscopic letters. / Six years later I asked a woman from Lisbon: / 'Is it true, or have I dreamt it?'" (Tranströmer 2006, 72).

⁹ As is widely known, Portugal was set free on 25 April 1974, during the so-called *Revolução dos Cravos* ('Carnation Revolution').

¹⁰ The prison for politicians named by Tranströmer could be the *Prisão do Aljube*, located

Unlike the thieves who show themselves through barred windows, politicians are kept hidden inside the prison, inaccessible to the observer's view. This distinction suggests that a 'crime of opinion' is punished more harshly than any other kind of offence in Salazar's Portugal. The invisibility of political dissidents as opposed to common robbers highlights the brutality of the regime in terms of repression of dissent. The difficulty to see behind the façade of the prison, marked by the threefold repetition of the word ("Jag såg fasaden, fasaden, fasaden"), gains indeed particular significance when referring to the political situation in Portugal at the time of Tranströmer's visit. As Espmark (1983, 146) points out: "detta är vad man tillåts se av oppositionen i fascismens Portugal, detta är dess möjligheter att nå ut till betraktaren på gatan".¹¹ The political dimension of the poem is further stressed by the closing lines of the second stanza, where Tranströmer refers to the conductor's *kluvenhet* ('duality') as he tells the observer about the prison for politicians. Espmark (1983, 146) interprets his giggling as expressing "kluvenheten mellan hemlig förbundenhet med motståndet och distans till 'desa politiker', som är det vanliga folket främmande".¹² In my opinion, though, the conductor's duality may point to another type of conflict, i.e., the one existing between what people were expected to say about the government and its opponents and what they really thought about it.

The details opening the third and final stanza signal typical summer weather and add to the description of the urban landscape: the laundry hanging in the air is a well-known scene to any visitor to the Alfama quarter. The image of flies reading microscopic letters is best interpreted against the background sketched in the first two stanzas. Here Tranströmer seems to suggest that, although the political prisoners are behind bars, subtle and almost invisible forms of communication are still possible in an effort to keep the resistance alive.¹³ At the same time, though, it is clear that the reference to the tiny dimension of the letters is meant to highlight the tight control under which any form of communication is held in Salazar's Portugal.

The final question ("Är det riktigt, eller har jag drömt det?"), though, casts some doubts on the reality of what has been described in the poem,

some metres away from Lisbon's cathedral, in the Alfama quarter. The prison was closed in 1965.

¹¹ "This is what is allowed to be seen of the opposition in fascist Portugal, this is its chance to reach out to the observer on the street."

¹² "The duality between a secret alliance with the opposition and the distance from 'these politicians', who are foreign to common people."

¹³ Talking about the poem *Hommages*, included in *Klanger och spår*, in an interview in 1982 Tranströmer says: "Life is occupied territory. Existence is locked into other people's decisions... all those people who put words in your mouth, who decide what you are supposed to see, what you are supposed to say. It's quite visible in a totalitarian state, but in a democracy... Yet there are tiny cracks of freedom, safety valves. The task of the poem is to tend to those cracks, to keep them open" (quoted from Bankier 1990, 592). Conceivably, these thoughts can be applied to *Lissabon*, too.

and leaves it up to the reader to decide whether it was a dream or not. This question appears to be a way to express the absurdity of the situation, something that the poet finds difficult to acknowledge as real, i.e., the lack of freedom and the criminalisation of political dissent.

In this connection, it is clear that *Lissabon* is not a poem detached from the poet's own time. On the contrary, it is a bitter commentary on the political circumstances in Portugal, a poem imbued with political commitment.¹⁴

A quite different atmosphere pervades the reader in the other poem dedicated to Portugal. As mentioned above, *Funchal* was published in 1978 as part of *Sanningsbarriären*, Tranströmer's eighth collection. The title of the collection refers to the notion of truth, one of the most important elements in Tranströmer's universe. In an interview given in New York on 13 October 1979, the poet explains what is meant by 'truth-barrier': "[...] I am always writing on the borderline – the borderline between the inner world and the outer world. I call this borderline the truth-barrier, the title of my latest book, because that is the point where you can see the truth". In the same interview, Tranströmer also says that his "poems come to life when a strong impulse from the outer world meets a strong impulse from the inner world" (quoted in Espmark 1983, 90).

The place where the inner and the outer worlds meet is thus where individuals have the chance to get to know themselves, as one learns in the second stanza of *Preludier (Preludes)*:

två sanningar närmar sig varann. En kommer innifrån,
en kommer utifrån
och där de möts har man en chans att få se sig själv.
(Tranströmer 2011, 185)¹⁵

Let us now consider the text of *Funchal*:

Fiskrestaurangen på stranden, enkel, ett skjul uppfört av skepps-
brutna. Många vänder i dörren men inte vindstötarna från havet.
En skugga står i sin rykande hytt och steker två fiskar enligt ett
gammalt recept från Atlantis, små explosioner av vitlök, olja som
rinner på tomatskivorna. Varje tugga säger att oceanen vill oss
väl, ett nynnande från djupen.
Hon och jag ser in i varann. Som att klättra uppför de vilt blom-
mande sluttningarna utan att känna den minsta trötthet. Vi är på

¹⁴ Cf. Espmark 1983, 147: "Stycket rymmer på det sättet ett politiskt engagemang som inte formuleras i klartext utan antyds med subtila medel och därför får en säregen styrka" ("The poem contains in this way a form of political commitment, which is not expressed in plain language but is suggested through subtle means and therefore acquires a singular strength").

¹⁵ "Two truths approach each other. One comes from inside / one comes from outside / and where they meet you have the chance to see yourself."

djursidan, välkomna, åldras inte. Men vi har upplevt så mycket tillsammans, det minns vi, också stunder då vi inte var mycket värda (som när vi köade för att ge den välmående jätten blod – han hade beordrat transfusion), händelser som skulle ha skilt oss om de inte hade förenat oss, och händelser som vi glömt tillsammans – men de har inte glömt oss! De blev stenar, mörka och ljusa. Stenarna i en förskingrad mosaik. Och nu händer det: skärvorna flyger samman, mosaiken blir till. Den väntar på oss. Den strålar från väggen i hotellrummet, en design våldsamt och öm, kanske ett ansikte, vi hinner inte uppfatta allt när vi drar av oss kläderna.

I skymningen går vi ut. Uddens väldiga mörkblå tass ligger slängd i havet. Vi går in i människovirveln, knuffas omkring vänligt, mjuka kontroller, alla pratar ivrigt på det främmande språket. "Ingen människa är en ö." Vi blir starka av dem, men också av oss själva. Av det inom oss som den andre inte kan se. Det som bara kan möta sig själv. Den innersta paradoxen, garageblomman, ventilen mot det goda mörkret. En dryck som bubblar i tomma glas. En högtalare som utsänder tystnad. En gångstig som växer igen bakom varje steg. En bok som bara kan läsas i mörkret (Tranströmer 2011, 267-68).¹⁶

This *prosadikt* (prose poem) – a form which recurs quite often in Tranströmer's poetry – has been described by its author as a religious poem, one in which he tries to give shape to an idea of the divine which transcends confessional distinctions (Espmark 1983, 53-54).

¹⁶ "Funchal / The fish-restaurant on the beach, simple, a shack built by ship-wrecked people. Many turn away at the door, but not the gusts from the sea. A shadow stands in his reeking cabin frying two fish according to an old recipe from Atlantis, small explosions of garlic, oil running over the tomato slices, every bite saying that the ocean wishes us well, a humming from the deeps. / She and I look into each other. Like climbing up the wild blossoming hillsides without feeling the least tiredness. We're on the side of the animals, we're welcome, we don't get older. But over the years we've experienced so much together, we remember that, also times when we were good for nothing (as when we queued up to give blood to the flourishing giant – he'd ordered transfusions), things that would've separated us if they hadn't brought us closer, and things we forgot together – but they have not forgotten us. They've become stones, dark ones and light ones, stones in a scattered mosaic. And now it happens: the bits fly together, the mosaic is visible. It's waiting for us. It's shining from the wall in our hotel room, a design both violent and tender, perhaps a face, we haven't time to notice everything as we pull off our clothes. / At dusk we go out. The cape's enormous dark blue paw lies sprawled in the sea. We step into the human whirlpool, pushed around in a friendly way, soft controls, everyone chattering in that foreign language. 'No man is an island.' We become stronger through them, but also through ourselves, through that within us which the other can't see, which meets only itself. The innermost paradox, the garage flower, the ventilator to the good darkness. A drink that bubbles in empty glasses. A loudspeaker that sends out silence. A pathway that grows over again behind each step. A book that can be read only in the dark" (Tranströmer 2006, 159).

Although the title of the poem refers to the capital city of Madeira, unlike *Lissabon* most of the setting is not urban. The island of Madeira is here represented, rather allusively, in its natural beauty and simplicity, a place whose roots go deep down into the history of mankind. Indeed, the identification of Madeira with the legendary Atlantis, suggested by the phrase “enligt ett gammalt recept från Atlantis”,¹⁷ is meant to emphasise its symbolic value as a place which bears traces of a remote past.

The story of a man and a woman and their relationship with the past acquires in this context a metaphysical meaning. Their memories form a scattered mosaic which all of a sudden becomes visible, seemingly outlining a face.¹⁸ A face that suggests something higher than human life, something that becomes apparent when the man and the woman meet through the union of their bodies. The last lines of the third part contain the religious core of the whole poem. In them the poet tries to define the indefinable, to grasp ‘the innermost paradox’ in words, one which “kan endast fångas i symboler för en kommunikation som är omöjlig – men fungerar” (Espmark 1983, 54-55).¹⁹ Such a paradox is the presence of the divine in human life. In Tranströmer’s poetry, the notion of the dual nature of God – a notion that has its roots in a long tradition influenced by Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy²⁰ – is widely present. The divinity is on the one hand an absolute entity outside of time and space, which is completely strange to human cognitive categories. On the other, it presupposes the existence of other beings and manifests itself in the multiplicity of the universe.

Thus, Madeira becomes a meeting place, the crossroads where the past – even the legendary past – and the present intersect. As such, the Portuguese island is one of those places, either physical or psychological, where – to cite the words from *Preludier* – an individual has the chance to see oneself.

Like any other place visited by Tranströmer, Portugal is a source of inspiration for his poetry, a liminal place where ends meet.

The two poems discussed above show some remarkable differences in tone and meaning. Whereas *Lissabon* is no doubt a poem about isolation and limitation, both represented by the prison in the physical and symbolic

¹⁷ The shadow (“skugga”) frying two fish, as described in the poem, might be intended by Tranströmer as an embodiment of a dead person from the legendary Atlantis. Another link with the legendary past is provided by the fish, which at the same time represent a union between the ocean, which “wishes us well”, and mankind.

¹⁸ *Minna ser mig* (*Memories Look at Me*) is both the title of a poem included in *Det vilda torget* (*The Wild Market Square*, 1983) and of Tranströmer’s autobiography (1993).

¹⁹ “Can be grasped only in symbols for a communication that is not possible, but which nevertheless works.”

²⁰ On the whole question see Espmark 1983, 39-54.

space of the city, *Funchal* is about freedom and solidarity.²¹

What these two poems seem to share about this distant country, lying at the westernmost extremity of Europe, is that both places described represent what is left of a remote past: Alfama has survived the terrible earthquake of 1755, while Madeira might be what is left of Atlantis. Thus, both places exude a symbolic depth as witnesses of a bygone world, an outer world that meets the inner world of the 'lyrical I'. The two places, so different and yet so similar, question the poet about different themes such as the lack of freedom on the one hand, and the presence of the divine in human life on the other. In addition, the theme of the poet's relationship with his fellow human beings and, more broadly, social beings, is connected with the reflection on the mysteries of the human soul. All these themes, however, are ultimately linked to each other by a common interest in the relationship between past and present, a relationship that both Lisbon and Madeira evoke in the poet's mind in a powerful way.

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²¹ It is tempting to explain the different atmosphere in *Funchal* as deriving from the end of the regime in 1974. However, from Espmark's note about Tranströmer's journey to Madeira we do not know when exactly the poet visited the Atlantic island, i.e., whether before or after the Carnation Revolution.

ICELAND AND OLD NORSE POETRY IN TWO UNPUBLISHED TEXTS BY TOMAS TRANSTRÖMER

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Among the unpublished texts Tomas Tranströmer gave me in May 2013, when I went to visit him in Stockholm, I have found the variants of some chapters of his memories *Minnena ser mig* (*Memories Look at Me*), some prose poems and two *tacktal*, thank-you speeches, which he delivered when he received two literary prizes: one in Sweden (in 1988) and one in Iceland (in 1995). As on other occasions, it seems to me that Tranströmer wanted someone to re-collect his own loose papers and notes and give them a sense. Therefore I intend to translate, study and very respectfully recompose these memories. Some are manuscripts, some are tapescripts, or tapescripts with manuscript additions.

I was pleasantly surprised when I realised that one of these two speeches, given in Reykjavík at the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award in 1995, contained fragments of poems. In this speech the author provides his audience with some valuable information about his sources and his poetics, thus confirming the hypothesis I raised in the critical introduction to my Italian translation of Tranströmer's *haiku* poems, *Den stora gåtan* (*The Great Enigma*). There I showed a possible influence on those texts by Old Norse poetry (Lombardi 2011, 8-9), an assumption which this speech supports by supplying some external criteria.

First of all, however, I will consider another thank-you speech, the acceptance speech for the Pilot prize in 1988, where Tranströmer points out the Eddic poems, in particular *Völundarkviða* (*The Lay of Völundr*), as his models and sources:

De fornordiska verserna var nämligen en sorts poesi som jag kunde stå ut med och ibland ryckas med av. I första bandet av Grimbergs *Svenska folkets underbara öden*, fanns det gott om citat ur *Eddan* och ur medeltida krönikor. Mycket intressant: jag kände mig via de verserna ofta transporterad direkt in i det jag föreställde mig var stämningen under forntid och medeltid.

Ensam satt Volund
i Ullvalarna,
slog guldets röda
kring glimmande sten.

Eller slutet på Volund kvädet: kung Nidud har gjort Volund till krympling. Denne hämnas genom att döda kungens söner och göra hans dotter med barn.

Till sist flyger han bort på hemmagjorda, hemmasmida vingar:

Leende Volund
i luften sig höjde,
och kvar i sorg
sänkt satt Nidud.

Lakonismen var mycket tilltalande. Omedvetet hade jag tillägnat mig en sanning om poesin: stämningen tättnar när man säger för lite (Tranströmer's unpublished manuscript, *Tacktal 1*).¹

Here the poet gives us four precious guidelines for understanding his poetry:

1. his early fascination for the Scandinavian Middle Ages and their atmosphere;
2. his interest in Old Norse poetry (in Swedish translation), by indicating the Swedish historical work *Svenska folkets underbara öden* by Carl Gustaf Grimberg ([1913] 1959) as his source.

¹ "Old Norse poetry was a kind of poetry I could be enraptured by. The first volume of Grimberg's *Svenska folkets underbara öden* [*The Marvellous Destinies of the Swedes*] contained several quotations from the *Edda* and from different medieval chronicles. Very interesting. I often felt as if I were carried directly to what I supposed were the ancient and medieval worlds. // 'Volund sat alone / in Ullvalen, / he beat the red gold / around shiny stones.' // At the end of Volund's poem, king Nidud has made him a cripple. But Volund takes revenge by killing the king's sons and by making his daughter pregnant. Finally he flies away with two wings he built himself: // 'Smiling Volund / rose through the air / and Nidud remained sitting / deeply in sorrow.' // The laconicism was very appealing. Unconsciously I had captured the true essence of poetry: the atmosphere thickens when one says too little." All translations are mine, if no other reference is given.

3. his preference for *Vǫlundarkviða* (Neckel and Kuhn [1914] 1983, 116-23), a poem about the mythical goldsmith Vǫlundr, who marries a valkyrie like his two brothers (though she flies away from him like the other two wives, longing for war, whereas he decides to wait). While his brothers go in search of their wives, he does not follow them, but instead waits for his own wife at home. But as Vǫlundr is left alone, the Swedish king Níðuðr cuts the tendons of his feet and forces him to work for him. Then Vǫlundr builds two wings and succeeds in flying away. Interestingly, Tranströmer does not choose one of the well-known Sigurðr Fáfnisbani lays. Instead, he quotes two stanzas from Grimberg's Swedish translation of *Vǫlundarkviða*, one of the oldest and most tragic Eddic poems.
4. He connects Vǫlundr's lay to what he considers the main feature of poetry: "lakonismen", concision:

Leende Volund
i luften sig höjde,
och kvar i sorg
sänkt satt Nidud.

The triumph of the marvellous craftsman over the violent king is expressed in a few words.

Here the value of craftsmanship is strongly emphasised. In the Nordic medieval world, poetry consisted both of *óðr* 'inspiration' (*Óðinn* being the 'inspiring god') and craftsmanship, as Snorri clearly shows in his *Edda* (with Bragi as the god of poetry; cf. Snorri Sturluson 1982, 25). But the peculiar aspect that Tranströmer seems to find in this stanza is a metaphorical allusion to a crucial opposition between art and political power as well as the capacity of poetry to fight for freedom and victory. Besides the interesting technical and formal qualities (density and compression of meaning as well as solemnity of rhythm), this stanza clearly shows the opposition between the artist's smile and the tyrant's sorrow and disappointment.

Tranströmer has exposed political abuses against art and literature in some of his interviews and articles as well as in his literary texts, advocating the right to free expression for poets and artists in all countries. According to his poetic method of hiding thoughts and ideas in images and rapid flashes rather than openly stating them, his texts are full of allusions and images expressing the obscure and destructive results of censorship and dictatorship. I quote some examples from different poems.

From *Östersjöar* (*Baltics*, 1974), the subject is the wind:

Det handlar om platser där medborgarna är under kontroll,
där tankarna byggs med reservutgångar,
där ett samtal bland vänner verkligen blir ett test på vad vänskap betyder.
Och när man är tillsammans med dem som man inte känner så väl. Kontroll.
En viss uppriktighet är på sin plats
bara man inte släpper med blicken det där som driver i samtalets utkant:
någoting mörkt, en mörk fläck.
Någoting som kan driva in
och förstöra allt. Släpp det inte med blicken!
(Tranströmer 2012, 216)²

From *Ur stigar (Outside Paths, 1973)*:

Till vänner bakom en gräns

II

[...] Nu är brevet hos censorn. Han tänder sin lampa.
I skenet flyger mina ord upp som apor på ett galler
ruskar till, och visar tänderna!

III

Läs mellan raderna. Vi ska träffas om 200 år
då mikrofonerna i hotellets väggar är glömda
och äntligen får sova, blir ortoceratiter.
(Tranströmer 2012, 195)³

From *Det vilda torget (The Wild Square, 1983)*:

Drömseminarium

[...] Utplåningen. Som när turisten hejdas
av misstänksamma män i uniform –
de öppnar kameran, rullar ut hans film
och låter solen döda bilderna:

² "It's about places where citizens are under control, / where their thoughts are made with emergency exits, / where a conversation between friends really becomes a test of what friendship means. / And when you are with people you don't know so well. Control. / A certain sincerity is in place / if only you don't take your eyes off what's drifting on the outskirts / of the conversation: something dark, a dark stain. / Something that can drift in / and destroy everything. Don't take your eyes off it!" (Tranströmer 2011, 107).

³ "To Friends behind a Border / II. [...] The letter is now at the censor's. He lights his lamp. / In the glare my words fly like monkeys on a grille, / rattle it, stop, and bare their teeth. / III. Read between the lines. We'll meet in 200 years / when the microphones in the hotel walls are forgotten / and can at last sleep, become trilobites" (Tranströmer 2011, 98).

så mörkläggs drömmarna av dagens ljus.
(Tranströmer 2012, 302)⁴

Völundr is therefore a symbol of victory on tyranny. Völundr's condition as a cripple is also noteworthy. He is an artist working in pain and under constraint like the god Vulcan, who, too, is a cripple, as if the abilities of an *artifex*, a manufacturer, were enhanced and reinforced by a compelling situation. In a way Tranströmer's preference for Völundr is strikingly premonitory, if we think of his serious illness, which constrained him to immobility and silence for 25 years.

As mentioned above, it is interesting to note that Tomas Tranströmer quotes his direct source, *Svenska folkets underbara öden*, a miscellaneous text where he finds ancient lays and fragments of poems translated into Swedish, as well as parts of chronicles of medieval Scandinavia. Here the Eddic lays are regarded as a direct and consistent part of the Swedish cultural heritage. Tranströmer accepts and uses this cultural viewpoint together with the form in which these thematic aspects are conveyed. In it he also finds what he thinks is the dominant quality of poetry: concentration. Density and concision are its kernels, as he expresses it: "lakonismen [...] stämningen tättnar när man säger för lite" (Tranströmer, *Tacktal 1*).⁵

The second thank-you speech, given in Reykjavík in 1995, as a recipient of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award, is a taped text (3 pages) with several handwritten additions. Here Tranströmer mentions two earlier trips to Iceland. On the second trip, which occurred in 1980, he spends only a few words to quote one of his most famous prose poems *Isländsk orkan* (*Icelandic Hurricane*, published in the collection *Det vilda torget*, 1983), written during that trip (Tranströmer 2012, 286).

In contrast, the poet devotes most part of his thank-you speech to his first trip to Iceland in 1951, at the age of 20, when he left from Gothenburg with a friend, Sven. He says that he had prepared for the voyage by reading Old Norse and Old Icelandic literature: "Sven och jag hade förberett oss för resan genom att läsa gammal isländsk litteratur" (Tranströmer, *Tacktal 2*).⁶

After leaving Gothenburg, a violent seastorm broke out, which lasted the whole voyage (four days). Tranströmer became sick and had to lie in his cabin the entire time. Then poetry came to his mind: he needed to escape from that precarious situation and did so by writing three poems.

In the first one he describes a green landscape of forests and trees:

⁴ "Dream Seminar / [...] Annihilation. As when suspicious men / in uniforms stop the tourist – / open his camera, unwind the film / and let the daylight kill the pictures: / thus dreams are blackened by the light of day" (Tranströmer 2011, 142).

⁵ "Laconicism [...] the atmosphere thickens when one says too little."

⁶ "Sven and I had prepared for the trip by reading Old Icelandic literature."

Jag låg i kogen och malde på en sapphisk strof. Jag föreställde mig att jag var i en stor och stilla skog en svensk sommarnatt. Ofta hade jag gått i skogen och längtat efter att vara ute på havet. Nu när jag var på havet längtade jag intensivt efter skogen. De sapphiska rytmerna rullade sakta fram:

Stilla vaktar skogsmyran, ser i intet
in. Och intet hörs utom dropp från dunkla
lövverk och det nattliga sorlet djupt i
sommarens canyon.

Granen står som visaren på ett urverk,
taggig. Myran glöder i bergets skugga.
Fågel skrek! Och äntligen. Långsamt börjar
molnforan rulla.

(Tranströmer, *Tacktal 2*)⁷

He describes himself while lying in the cabin and modelling a sapphic stanza. He actually reveals a peculiar feature of his creative method by stating that he composed the text imagining himself being in a vast and silent forest on a Swedish summer night. And he adds that, in this way, the sapphic rhythm came to him easily and slowly. Conversely, he says that once as he was walking in the woods, he felt a longing for the open sea and began composing poetry on the sea and other related subjects.

The text presents formal and metrical features (the sapphic stanza) as well as rhetorical figures typical of Tranströmer's first collection *17 dikter* (*17 Poems*), where it appears with the title of *Dygnkantring* (*Day-overturning*). The verse is classic but alliteration dominates the first part. The dominant sibilant sounds convey a sense of stillness and contribute towards a whispering effect. Like in all Tranströmer's early production, the word *jag* 'I' is carefully avoided, as the author has often stressed in interviews and speeches, as well as in the film recently shown at Nobelhuset, in May 2013, during the exhibition dedicated to his most precious editions and insect collections. The first personal pronoun will appear only later in his texts.

Here he describes a cosmic landscape where natural cycles flow and alternate, free from human presence, in a kind of telescopic imagery, where the extremely large and the extremely small meet and live together in har-

⁷ "I was lying in my cabin modelling a sapphic stanza. I imagined being in a vast and silent forest during a Swedish summer night. I had often been in a forest longing for the open sea. Now I was on the open sea and I deeply longed for a forest. The sapphic rhythms came to me slowly." (My translation) // "The wood-ant watches silently, looks into / nothing. And nothing's heard but drips from dim / leafage and the night's murmuring deep in / summer's canyon. // The spruce stands like the hand of a clock, / spiked. The ant glows in the hill's shadow. / Bird cry! And at last. The cloud-packs slowly / begin to roll" (Tranströmer 2011, 28).

mony. Seasons use trees as their chronological mechanisms. A dramatic distinction between the poet's inner world and the world around him is made and the artist, like Vǫlundr rising in the sky over the kingdom of Níðuðr, rises above all social and human surroundings.

The poem's inner correspondences and dynamics of meaning are emphasised by the absence of superfluous words. Experience is rendered in a compressed form and is transformed into poetry. Compression comes at the cost of narrative qualities, the construction of clauses is simple, and yet, through metaphorical passages, clauses are laid over rather than after each other.

An artistically productive paradox arises from the fact that the concreteness of details in the images expresses something elusive. We catch fragmentary glimpses of the life of the universe, which foreshadows *den stora gåtan*, the great mystery, his latest work.

The second very short poem he writes during his voyage to Iceland is particularly striking because of its opposite mood and swift turn to the poet's individual topology and chronology.

In the following passage of his thank-you speech, he goes on to describe the end of his stormy travel experience: "Till sist blev havet lugnt. Jag vacklade upp på däck. Islands kust siktades. En mås gled förbi och sneglade på mig. Likt en av de forntida skalderna yxade jag hastigt till en strof för ögonblicket och frammumlade" (Tranströmer, *Tacktal 2*).⁸

He then quotes a text, which has never been published:

Sjuk jag sitter
på styrbordssidan,
känner hur kölden klöser.
Måsen far
mysande
längs med skeppets sidor.
(Tranströmer, *Tacktal 2*)⁹

And he goes on to tell about his experience: "Som man ser, i stort sett frammumlat på versmåttet *ljóðahátt*, med stavsrimmen något överdrivna. Den harmlösa vers skrevs aldrig ner men har av någon anledning fastnat i minnet" (Tranströmer, *Tacktal 2*).¹⁰

When finally the sea is calm, he goes up on deck and sees the Icelandic

⁸ "Finally the sea subsided. I went up on deck and saw the Icelandic coast. A seagull flying along looked askance at me. Then like Old Norse skalds I improvised a stanza and muttered."

⁹ "Sick I sit / on the starboard side / I feel how the cold bites. / The sea-gull travels / smiling / along the side of the ship."

¹⁰ "As you can see, this innocuous stanza appears, mostly, as something murmured in *ljóðahátt*, with somewhat exaggerated alliterations. In fact, I never wrote it down but for some reason it stuck in my memory."

coast. A seagull flying along the side of the ship looks at him. Then he improvises the above quoted text: “Likt en av de forntida skalderna yxade jag hastigt till en strof för ögonblicket och frammumlade: Sjuk jag sitter...”. The verse is in *ljóðaháttir* metre with alliteration and internal rhymes. The beginning is partly reminiscent of the above-quoted Völundr lay: “Ensam satt Volund / i Ullvadalarna” (Tranströmer, *Tacktal 1*). The poet tells the audience where the protagonist is, through the use of an adjective to qualify him.

Tranströmer never wrote the stanza down, but he confesses that for some strange reason it stuck in his mind – unlike the third poem he composed, which he claims to have completely forgotten.

Only when he sees the Icelandic coast, does he fully recover and realise where he is. Therefore he uses the present tense and, what is more interesting, the pronoun *jag*, always carefully avoided in the previous as well as in all contemporary texts. Iceland inspires him Old Norse rhythms – the eddic *ljóðaháttir* – but the mood is rather skaldic. Eddic lays are anonymous, while skaldic texts are strongly I-oriented. Skalds willingly speak about themselves, even when praising the Norwegian kings. Moreover, skaldic poetry was quite often made of situational verse, improvisation being a typical element of that genre. This verse by Tranströmer is improvised, too. The poetic subject that abruptly creates the text embedded in the thank-you speech seems to seize the author, who describes it like being possessed. As if *landsvættir* – the mythical Icelandic land spirits whom settlers had to please and venerate when they arrived in Iceland during the Viking age (Clunies Ross 2009, 15-16) – were the inspiration for this verse. Their way of welcoming him.

The text has the structure of a *lausavísa* (*lausavísur* were loose stanzas usually spread in prose texts; they were improvised by poets on different occasions). Words are bound by internal rhymes and alliterations, which help to memorise the stanza. And Tranströmer stresses this aspect – alluding to the stability of skaldic stanzas committed to memory and passed down through the oral tradition – saying that he did not forget the text. After forty years he still remembers it for “some strange reason”, although, as already mentioned, he never wrote it down – and indeed he claims that he has also forgotten a third text composed during the same voyage.

Like skaldic poets who consider themselves artisans – and unlike anonymous Eddic poets –, he is aware of the uniqueness of his craft. The text is closely connected to his personal experience, giving an account of his arrival in Iceland. The interrelation between Icelandic nature (climate and animals) and the protagonist is also underlined by the words “kölden klöser” (“the cold bites”) and “måsen [...] mysande” (“the sea-gull [...] smiling”), which outdo, in sound symmetry, Iceland’s laconic welcome message.

In Tranströmer’s *haiku*, we can find echoes of these early verses and experiences, like the greeting seagulls: “Havet är en mur / jag hör måsarna skrika – / de vinkar åt oss” (Tranströmer 2012, 427).¹¹

¹¹ “The sea is a wall / I hear the seagulls cry. / They wave at us.”

Similarly, we have correspondences between elements in this thank-you speech and images in Tranströmer's later production:

Vi hade tagit oss från Siglufjörður till Akureyri och därifrån till Myvatn-området. Det blev den stora geologiska uppenbarelsen... nu var vi på en annan planet. Stenarna var färgsprakande som koraller. Marken kokade och stenarna levde. Man måste skriva om detta. Men nej... det var omöjligt. Alla utkast havererade (Tranströmer, *Taktal 2*).¹²

We find again the motif of the 'shining stones' in the poem *November*, belonging to the *haiku*-collection from 2006, where a verse reads: "Några stenar lyser som fullmånar" (Tranströmer 2012, 381).¹³ Or in *Nattbokblad* (*Nightbook Page*), in *Sorgegondolen* (*The Sorrow Gondola*), we find 'living stones': "[...] vita stenar / signalerade till månen" (Tranströmer 2012, 347).¹⁴

To conclude, these two thank-you speeches give us the opportunity to point out correspondences and analogies between and within Tranströmer's texts. Hidden patterns of meaning are shown here and we are led into the core of Tranströmer's poetic universe, its symbols and its mysteries.

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¹² "We had moved from Siglufjörður to Akureyri and from there to the Mývatn region. It was a great geologic revelation... now we were on another planet. Stones were shining with different colours like corals. The ground was boiling and the stones were alive. One should write about this. But no... it was impossible. All the notes perished."

¹³ "Some stones shine like full moons."

¹⁴ "[...] white stones / signalled to the moon."

NORDIC TOPOGRAPHIES IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN
LITERATURE: KLAUS BÖDL'S *STUDIE IN KRISTALLBILDUNG*
AND *SÜDLICH VON ABISKO*

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Klaus Bödl's 'topographical prose'¹ features the Nordic landscape as a remote and lonely place, while outlining and deconstructing stereotypes; at the same time, he describes natural and urban environments where the protagonists, German travellers, move about as displaced figures who question their position in a forlorn space and whose perception of the Nordic reality can merely produce fractal images of the immediate surroundings.

Readers approaching Bödl's landscape descriptions are confronted with a double perspective: on the one hand, the permanent depiction of 'true' Nordic places; on the other, the reduction of certain spaces to provisional and uncertain landscapes, which no longer correspond to the (ideal) image that the foreign traveller had of those areas.

The aim of my survey is to analyse the patterns of representation of spatial perception in the narrative construction of *Studie in Kristallbildung* (1997) and *Südlich von Abisko* (2000) in order to detect the functions of these typologies.

¹ Klaus Bödl represents a new voice in contemporary German literature. When approaching his work, one has no choice but to notice his constant attention over the years to the Nordic landscape and the Scandinavian culture. Bödl has often travelled to Scandinavia in his job as a researcher in Scandinavian literature (he is now professor of literature and cultural history of the Scandinavian Middle Ages at the University of Kiel, Germany). These travels represent a crucial experience for all his fictional writings, too. His first novel was *Studie in Kristallbildung* (*Study in Crystal Formation*, 1997) followed by a poetic travel account, *Die fernen Inseln* (*The Distant Islands*, 2003), for which he obtained the Brüder Grimm prize and the Hermann Hesse prize, the tale *Südlich von Abisko* (*South of Abisko*, 2000) and the novel *Der nächtliche Lehrer* (*The Nocturnal Teacher*, 2010), for which he was awarded the 2013 Friedrich Hebbel prize. The Nordic countries and their landscapes provide the settings for all these texts.

I. *STUDIE IN KRISTALLBILDUNG*, AN ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE SLOWNESS AND DESOLATION

Studie in Kristallbildung, Bödl's debut novel, presents a picture of Greenland and Iceland from the peripheral point of view of a foreigner, Johannes Grahn, who perceives and describes the places and his daily life in these two host countries in two booklets (corresponding to the two parts of the novel). The plot is not especially significant and is therefore a very simple one: Grahn is a German who has been working for two years as a driver in a unidentifiable, nameless little town (Freund 2001, 171) in Greenland, in an attempt to leave the past behind. His monotonous life changes abruptly when another foreigner, the Austrian Markus Brack, comes to the village and begins asking questions about Grahn. The reader finds out that Grahn spent the night with Brack's partner, Agnes, shortly before she died in an accident. The story ends unexpectedly for the reader: Brack suddenly leaves Greenland without discovering anything about the accident, whereas Grahn moves to Germany and goes back to his old life.

The first-person narrator focuses above all on the landscape and the interaction of natural and human factors in the Nordic locales, offering fragments of reflections, memories and descriptions: these seem to represent steps in the search for the pieces of a lost life, which – falling short of the reader's expectations² – will never be reconstructed.

The very beginning of the text provides a perfect example of the descriptive strategy used to present the characteristics of a Nordic landscape, as the following lines suitably show:

Das erste, was in mein Blickfeld geriet, war Schnee, der in der Morgensonne glänzte, als sei er mit einer Glasschicht überzogen. Ein Wanderer, der sich dort ins Gebirge hinauf verirrt hätte, stellte ich mir vor, bliebe unweigerlich mit den Sohlen an diesem zuckrigen Schnee haften, er schlüpfte vielleicht aus den Schuhen, um dann auf allen vieren den Fels wiederzugewinnen, doch die Handflächen fröhen ihm sofort fest, seine Lage wäre die des Insekts auf dem Fliegenpapier. Freilich: Wanderer kommen in dieses Gebirge kaum. [...] Über Geröllhalden und Flächen, die wie dicht mit Asche bedeckt aussehen, glitt der Blick dann zum Wasser hinunter. Das Eis auf dem Fjörd: Über der Oberfläche ist es von einem hellen Grau, wie das Weiße in Menschengen, unter Wasser leuchtet es türkisfarben. Kein Schiff ist um diese Zeit auf dem Fjörd zu sehen, nur ein kleines Fischerboot konnte

² The reactions of reviewers were diverse: some appreciated the subversion of the reader's expectations as a perfect example of the postmodernist deconstruction of the plot; others saw this as a mere play with postmodern theories and a lack of depth (for the reviews see Auer's final bibliography: Auer 2008, C; see also Auer 2008, 4).

ich zwischen den scheinbar reglosen Eismassen entdecken; aus der Ferne sah es so aus, als bewege es sich kaum (*Studie*, 7).³

The topography is made up of generalisations about the Nordic landscape, which is a typical way of presenting stereotypes (Rühling 2004, 288-91): the impression here is one of a cold and lonely place, of a hostile environment, and of extreme slowness and motionlessness.⁴ The elements of the description are part of our collective imagination concerning the Nordic landscape, though at first it is impossible to identify one specific country (i.e., Greenland) and one can only linger on the repeated descriptive patterns, as if the place did not need a chronicle: “Einen Chronisten scheint dieses Land allerdings nicht zu benötigen” (*Studie*, 9).⁵

The landscape is modelled on two principal features: the connection between the different descriptive elements made through comparisons and analogies – as if the Nordic landscape could be interpreted only through its referential aspects⁶ – and through Grahn, who imagines, from a distant and ironic viewpoint, what a hiker would experience in the mountains. In this way, space serves as a surface onto which Grahn can project his thoughts,⁷ and it soon acquires an emblematic function: to identify the protagonist’s position, his new position in a foreign land.

There is no empathy in Grahn’s approach to the landscape: he is no longer the romantic hiker (“Wanderer”), who describes the environment while on the move and who feels at one with nature and is moved by it. He is no longer the *flâneur* à la Baudelaire, reading the city space as an active part of it, constantly changing direction and searching for unconventional routes off the beaten track. Instead, Grahn is frozen in apathy. He does not walk: he simply drives tourists from the airport to the hotel.

Many of his landscape descriptions are ‘fictional’; they are not provided

³ From now on *Studie in Kristallbildung* (Bödl [1997] 2004a) will be cited as *Studie*, followed by the page numbers. “The first thing that got into my visual field was snow. It shone in the morning sun as if a coat of ice covered it. A hiker, who got lost in those mountains – I imagined – would invariably have his soles stuck to this soft snow; perhaps he would get out of his shoes to reach the cliff on all fours, but his palms would freeze immediately; his condition would be that of an insect stuck on flypaper. Admittedly, not many hikers come to these mountains. [...] Then my gaze turned down towards the water after gliding across scree slopes and expanses, which seem to be covered with ash. The ice on the fjord: over the surface it is light grey, as the white of the eyes, under the water it shines turquoise. No ships can be seen at this time; I could catch a glimpse of only a little fishing boat among the apparently motionless mass of ice; from a distance it hardly seemed to move.” All translations are mine.

⁴ In his novel Bödl often uses the words *Langsamkeit* (‘slowness’), *langsam* (‘slow’) and *Reglosigkeit* (‘immobility’) to convey the idea of silence and immobility. See for instance *Studie*, 8, 9, 12.

⁵ “This country does not seem to need a chronicler.”

⁶ See Hoffmann 1978, 267, who underlines the “Verweischarakter des Raums” (“referential character of space”).

⁷ Kraft 2003; also quoted in Schütte 2005, 421.

by direct observations but by looking at old maps or etchings or, intertextually, by reporting historical anecdotes or extracts written by landscape scientists:

Der Kupferstich stellt eine Karte der arktischen Gegend dar. Auf Island ist der Eingang zur Hölle eingezeichnet, für den man den Vulkan Hekla hielt. Wurde in jenen Zeiten eine Schlacht ausgefochten, irgendwo auf der Welt, den in der Umgebung der Hekla wohnenden Isländern konnte es nicht entgehen, waren dann doch die Lüfte erfüllt von den Seelen derer, die zur Hölle fuhren (*Studie*, 16).⁸

At the same time, the relationship between the protagonist and the landscape persists, even though from afar. Grahn looks through field glasses or out of the window, which makes the readers recognise a boundary between the character and the landscape, but also a correspondence, as effectively epitomised in the following passage, where both the landscape and the protagonist's face are motionless and surprisingly familiar:

Morgens, beim Aufstehen, streift mein Blick die Gegenstände im Zimmer. Es hilft, sie fest in den Blick zu fassen, wenn man wie ich morgens zu Schwindel neigt. Sie sind deutlich zu erkennen, vor dem Fenster befinden sich keine Vorhänge. [...] Während ich mir das Gesicht trockne, blicke ich aus dem Fenster. Die Aussicht ist mir längst vertrauter als mein Gesicht. Ganz im Hintergrund die Bergkette, die 'Nunatakken' genannt wird, dann das Eis auf dem Fjörd, mit grünblauen Rändern, die mit Müll bedeckte Landzunge, die über den Hang verstreuten Häuser, in denen noch alles schläft, einige Mütter mit Säuglingen an der Brust ausgenommen, die Grasflecken zwischen den Häusern, der rotgestrichene Turm an der alten Holzkirche, die leuchtend orangenfarbenen Container unten im Hafen, von hier oben aus betrachtet wirken sie wie wahllos verstreute Bauklötze (*Studie*, 14-16).⁹

⁸ "The copperplate represents a map of the Arctic region. The entrance to hell is marked as being in Iceland, and it was thought to be the volcano of Hekla. If at that time a battle was being waged anywhere in the world, the Icelanders living around Hekla would not have missed it: the air was filled with souls going to hell."

⁹ "In the morning, when I get up, my gaze caresses the objects in my room. It is helpful to fix one's eyes on them, if one tends to feel dizzy as I do. One can see the objects very clearly, the window has no curtains. [...] While I am drying my face I look out of the window. The view is more familiar to me than my own face. Far away, in the background, one can see the so-called Nunatakken mountains, then the ice on the fjord, with bluish green edges, the promontory littered with rubbish, the houses scattered over the hillside, where everything is still sleeping except for a few mothers nursing their babies, the patches of grass between the houses, the red

The relationship perceived here is represented by the room and the landscape, by the inside and the outside, which correspond to the perception of a near and a distant place, respectively. However, there is no hierarchy between these two dimensions, which excludes any spatial dynamism. The lack of action, supported by a descriptive style, gives the space a sense of slowness; time and space seem to be captured in one single moment, in which fragments of reflections, remembrances and observations merge as in a process of ‘crystallisation’, as the title of the novel already foreshadows.¹⁰

In the above-quoted lines one can make out the fundamental tendencies of the process of description that Philippe Hamon revealed in his work *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptif (Introduction to the Analysis of Description, 1981)*, namely the “tendance ‘horizontale’ d’exhaustivité” (Hamon 1981, 61-62),¹¹ which aims at descriptive extensiveness, and the “tendance ‘verticale’, *décryptive*” (Hamon 1981, 63-64; emphasis in the original),¹² which searches for a meaning of the described beyond the represented. The reader, who is not involved in the narration of a plot, is placed in front of a list of objects, the accumulation and interaction of which both play a central role in the description: the fjord is set in opposition to the rubbish, the houses and the church to the containers. Thus Grahn, looking out of the window, invites the readers to reflect on the juxtaposition of nature and civilisation, idyll and destruction, past and present, while indirectly raising their awareness of the processes underlying this desolate situation, yet without drawing a precise picture of the natural and the urban landscape.

The representation of the inhabitants of the remote little town highlights this desolation, too: the Nordic landscape is as barren as the people themselves, who are mostly jobless or alcoholics or have no future prospects; the foreigner’s point of view sees them as shadows lost in an ice desert and unable to act. The same impression is created by the inhabitants of the town – for instance by the local parliamentarian, who is fully aware that there are no alternatives for young people, and who tells Grahn that suicide is a leading cause of many deaths among them (*Studie*, 54) – and by old Doctor Rask, who underlines that it is almost impossible to escape from such negativity (*Studie*, 74-75; see also Schütte 2005, 422).

Therefore, as Gremler (2012, 189) has rightly observed, the Nordic landscape is only apparently an “Erkenntnisort”,¹³ a place of self-discovery; in fact, it is a place of refuge (Schütte 2005, 420) and an undefined dystopian

tower by the old wooden church, the bright orange containers down by the port; viewed from above, they look like building blocks haphazardly strewn about.”

¹⁰ About the motif of the ‘crystal’ and the crystallised structure of the novel see Auer 2008, 3. See also Schütte 2005, 422, who compares *Studie in Kristallbildung* with Adalbert Stifter’s tale *Bergkristall (Rock Crystal)*, from the collection *Bunte Steine (Colourful Stones, 1853)*.

¹¹ “A ‘horizontal’ tendency to exhaustiveness.”

¹² “A vertical *decrypting* tendency.”

¹³ Schütte (2010) uses this term to define the protagonist of Bödl’s novel *Der nächtliche Lehrer* (2010).

place with some Nordic traits – that of a cold, remote and unmoving land.

Another important association for the immobility of the reconstructed space is the repeated parallel between the landscape and the process of writing: by creating his Nordic landscape or, better still, by crystallising its desolation, Grahn often makes a comparison between the topography of the country and his approach to writing. At the very beginning, one is told that during his two years in Greenland, Grahn lived his life without writing (“eine fast vollständig schriftlose Existenz”; *Studie*, 8)¹⁴, although he had always written before, as if his ability to write had frozen along with his memories, and any present events could not be captured:

Auch wenn man alles aufschreibt, ändert sich nichts: Die Tage vergehen, lösen aneinander ab, sie wiederholen sich und verlieren sich zugleich in einem Meer von Zeit. [...] Ich wünsche mir keine Biographie. Es genügt, daß sich kleine Geschichten ereignen, die nichts anderes bedeuten als sich selbst (*Studie*, 89).¹⁵

In his state of desolation, Grahn comes to the following conclusion, again associating the landscape with the writing process; as the weather grows colder, words become looser and lose their intimacy:

Jetzt wird es kühl im Gras, wo ich sitze. Nicht daß ein Wind aufgekommen wäre; die Kälte, die das Eis auf dem Fjord vor mir ausstrahlt, nimmt zu in dem Maß, wie der Abendschatten sich über dem Wasser ausbreitet. Die Hand, die den Stift hält, wird klamm. Dadurch verändert sich meine Handschrift, sie wird eckiger und unregelmäßig. Die Worte werden breiter, das Geschriebene verliert seine Vertrautheit. Als könnte in der Kälte nichts beim alten bleiben (*Studie*, 128).¹⁶

2. SÜDLICH VON ABISKO, CAPTURING SLOWNESS

The juxtaposition of nature and civilisation represents the semantic paradigm of *Südllich von Abisko*, too. In it Bödl compares Abisko, a village in

¹⁴ “A life without any writing activity.”

¹⁵ “Even if one writes down everything, nothing changes: days go by, following one another and flowing into a sea of time. [...] I do not want a biography. I am happy with a few stories which mean nothing but themselves.”

¹⁶ “Now it is getting cold on the grass where I am sitting. Not because the wind is getting up; the cold coming from the ice on the fjord increases as the shadow of the evening extends over the water. The hand holding the pen becomes numb with cold. That is why my handwriting changes: it gets edgy and irregular. The words become wider and wider, the written page loses its familiarity. As if nothing could remain unchanged in the cold.”

Lapland, “ein Jenseitsreich” that does not differ from any other Nordic village (*Abisko*, 125),¹⁷ with any place south of Abisko, particularly with Stockholm.

This double contrast, north versus south and countryside versus urban space, is paralleled in the temporal sequence. Abisko is the image of the past, of the remembrances of Harald Behringer, the protagonist of the tale, a “Melancholiker mit misanthropischen Zügen” (Schütte 2005, 423),¹⁸ who spent some time in the loneliness of Abisko to finish working on a translation. Stockholm defines the present time, the three days after Behringer’s return from Lapland, in which three main occurrences intersect: the protagonist tells about his difficulty in his affair with Malin; he relates his desolate daily routine; and he recounts the short visit to Stockholm paid by Emma, the daughter of Miss Holmquist, who is the owner of the hotel where Behringer stayed in Abisko. The ending of the story is as unexpected and frustrating as in *Studie in Kristallbildung*: Malin thinks that Emma is Behringer’s lover and breaks up with him; Behringer does not deem it necessary to tell her that her suspicion is unfounded.

The past is therefore to the present as the countryside is to the urban space: in Abisko everything moves slowly and nothing seems to happen; in Stockholm the daily occupations fill the vacuum in Behringer’s life. On the narrative level, this very contrast corresponds to two different narration forms: the past is evoked through recollections and generalised spatial descriptions, whereas the present is narrated and determines the configuration of the story.

Both space and time are connected according to Behringer’s perspective; he remembers, imagines and reports, conveying a sense of bewilderment and desolation. He admits that he does not feel well in the urban space and realises that his stay in Abisko has changed him. Still, he chooses not to leave civilisation, or rather, he takes no decision and continues living an aimless life, a sort of absence.

Unsurprisingly, Abisko offers no real possibility of change; it is not an “Erkenntnisort” (Gremler 2012, 189), but only a “positive(n) Utopie” (Auer 2008, 5),¹⁹ an “Imaginationsraum” (Platen 2007, 79),²⁰ an uncertain space situated between dream and remembrance (*Abisko*, 31), a place which cannot be considered real (“Als sei es mit Hilfe eines solchen Schildes möglich, Abisko unter den Tatsachen einzureihen”; *Abisko*, 7),²¹ because it is only an imaginary place in Behringer’s eyes, which seems to be tuned out of time, or better still, to belong to a timeless uncertainty.

¹⁷ “A hereafter.” From now on *Südlich von Abisko* (Bödl [2000] 2004b) will be cited as *Abisko*, followed by the page numbers.

¹⁸ “Melancholic person with misanthropic traits.”

¹⁹ “Positive utopia.”

²⁰ “Imaginary space.”

²¹ “As if such a signboard made it possible to number Abisko among facts.”

Although the reader is tempted to identify Abisko as an ideal place, his expectations are disappointed by arbitrary signs, which can take on any signification, as well as by the representation of undefined places onto which the (apparent) desires of the narrator are projected.

Indefiniteness belongs to the Nordic narrative space despite the use of place names, which seems to offer the opposite sensation, as the following lines exemplify:

War in Abisko die ganze Natur beklommen von der Erwartung des Winters, der freilich eine über ein halbes Jahr währende Erstarrung und Verfinsterung mit sich bringen würde, so war es in Stockholm noch beinahe sommerlich. Es herrschte auch dieses ganz besondere Licht, ein Licht, wie es nur an Sonntagen vorkommt und vielleicht nur in Schweden. Alles wirkte wie mit einem Firnis überzogen: die Büsche, die glänzten, als habe es gerade geregnet, das hohe Gras zwischen den weißen Stämmen der Birken und den hellblauen der Kiefern, die Steine und unten die zimtfarbenen Häuser, deren Konturen man hinter dem Geäst erahnen konnte, dort wo das Blattwerk sich doch schon etwas gelichtet hatte. [...] Im Südwesten zogen graublau Wolken mit gleißenden Rändern auf. Das Laub in den Bäumen darunter glühte in der Sonne fast unwirklich. Es hatte schon die Farbe, die in manchen Romanen als golden bezeichnet wird (*Abisko*, 10-11).²²

Here one does not find a prose that longs for exactness;²³ on the contrary, if we took away the place names, we would hardly understand that the description refers to a Nordic landscape. In this way, Bödl's text shows a very careful and precise "selection of structures" (Iser's so-called "Selektionsstruktur"; 1976, 120); the combination of fictional locations with the names of real ones thus allows the construction of space as well as its deconstruction. The remote and forlorn Nordic world is no longer a reality but an image in our collective stereotypisation and in the perception of the protagonist, who represents the point of view of the contemporary displaced human being.

²² "In Abisko the whole nature was in a state of anxiety over the oncoming winter, which would bring more than six months of numbness and darkness, whereas in Stockholm the weather was still almost summery. There was a particular light, a light that appears only on Sunday and perhaps only in Sweden. Everything seemed to be varnished: the bushes, glistening as if it had just rained, the high grass among the white trunks of the birches and the light blue pines, the stones, and, at the bottom the cinnamon-coloured houses, whose outlines could be made out from behind the branches, just where the leaves had already thinned out. [...] Grey blue clouds passed with dazzling contours in the south-west. The leaves on the trees were aglow in the sun, looking almost unreal, and had already turned to what some novels describe as golden."

²³ On this subject I do not agree with Schütte's definition of Bödl's prose as a "genauigkeitsversessene Prosa" (2005, 422; "an excessively precise prose"). One should rather speak of an apparently precise prose.

This deconstruction is also evident in the artificiality of the representation – something that the narrating voice itself stresses in the last sentence of the above-quoted passage: “Es [das Laub in den Bäumen] hatte schon die Farbe, die in manchen Romanen als golden bezeichnet wird” (*Abisko*, 11). The following episode is artificial and frustrating, too: in keeping with the juxtaposition of distance and nearness, the protagonist, imitating a romantic idyll, presents an episode in which a personified magpie with long feathers and dark eyes catches the attention of Behringer by hopping at his feet (*Abisko*, 11).

Not only is the representation artificial; the description is also ‘old fashioned’, and the reader does not expect such a ‘conventional’ way of writing from a contemporary writer. Admittedly, there is a clear reference to the Biedermeier style, both in Behringer’s withdrawal to inactivity and in his poetic stylisation of reality. Yet, if Bödl, on the one hand, seems to take this epoch as a model to present the utopia of the remote land, on the other, he deconstructs this model by underlining that this positivity is only apparent, coming merely from the desolate perspective of the narrating voice.

Behringer’s hopeless attitude is clear even in his perception of the other characters, which goes hand in hand with his reading of the surrounding landscape. These characters are described through generalisations and contrasting descriptions aimed at emphasising the individual perspective of the protagonist, whose self is so insecure that he needs to be constantly compared to others.

In this connection, the narrator presents, for example, his partner Malin. Her very first introduction is already marked by negativity and is set in opposition to the space perception of the protagonist: he is sitting in front of a monument, the grave of an unknown person from the Iron Age, a sacred place for him, when she suddenly covers his face with her hands, thus preventing him from seeing *his* place (*Abisko*, 12-13) while making fun of his attitude (*Abisko*, 15). Malin invades Behringer’s space and their visions of the world soon prove incompatible: she is always active, while he seems to have replaced action with thoughts and contemplation. He perceives her dynamic presence as a displacement of his own perspective, as a kind of foreign experience: her nearness is threatening (*Abisko*, 12), her stature frightful (*Abisko*, 13) and her clothes awful (*Abisko*, 14).

Behringer’s and Malin’s spaces never overlap and their relationship seems to be founded on incommunicability, which is accentuated throughout the text by a connection between their frames of mind and spatial references, as the following passage, one of the many possible examples, effectively shows:

Der Zug erreichte das Ufer von Kristineberg und fuhr an dem menschenleeren Minigolfplatz vorüber, dessen Bahnen mit roten

Blättern übersät waren. Ich setzte Malin auseinander, dass ich mir das genaue Gegenteil von dem vorstellte, was sie sich vorstellte. Ich dachte mir selber das Ufer ohne Blocks. Und ich dachte es mir nicht nur so: Nachdem ich in Abisko gewesen war, hatte ich auch die Fähigkeit, es so zu sehen. Überhaupt die ganze Gegend zu sehen, wie sie im Grunde war, ohne den ganzen fragwürdigen Zierat, den die neuzeitliche Menschheit an ihr angebracht hat: ohne diesen lächerlichen Minigolfplatz (Leute, die Minigolf spielen!), ohne die Salkhalle, die Stadtautobahn, und das vollkommen überflüssige Hotel Kristineberg, ein rosa gestrichener barackenartiger Flachbau, der, wegen des Stacheldrahtzauns zum Bahndamm hin, mehr an ein Straflager erinnert als an ein Hotel (*Abisko*, 27).²⁴

Behringer's observations unveil the same rhetoric strategy as in *Studie in Kristallbildung*. The description is based on contrasting elements, which do not only stress the incompatibility of both characters, but also "die Auflösung der ursprünglichen Gebundenheiten" (Simmel 1913, 637),²⁵ the protagonist's awareness that he has lost his previous (and better) living conditions, so that he can only think of his past space without living it. This void is filled through the language, which is why the text shows a great insistence on *enumeratio* ("die Salkhalle, die Stadtautobahn, und das vollkommen überflüssige Hotel Kristineberg") and hyperbole ("ohne den ganzen fragwürdigen Zierat" and "das vollkommen überflüssige Hotel Kristineberg"), which the narrator uses to produce – textually – his own landscape perception (his own *Vorstellung*). Through the repetition of his reflections, Behringer constantly (re)defines his own relation to nature, but he also creates a counterpart to the fullness of contemporary spaces, the so-called "non-lieux" of Marc Augé (1992), such as motorways, crossroads, etc.

In conclusion, considering the peculiarities of the landscape representation and space perception in *Studie in Kristallbildung* and *Südlich von Abisko*, the following aspects of Böldl's approach to the Nordic topography are noteworthy and can be summarised as follows.

First, the representation of the Nordic space is characterised by a conscious dichotomy between the (re)appropriation and deconstruction of ste-

²⁴ "The train pulled in by the waterside at Kristineberg and passed near the empty miniature golf course, whose tracks were strewn with red leaves. I explained to Malin that my opinion was the exact opposite of hers. I imagined that waterfront without any buildings. And I was convinced of this: since I had been to Abisko, I had the capability to see it like that. I was able to imagine all the area as it had actually been, without all that showy decoration that modern people had brought: without this ridiculous miniature golf course (people who play mini-golf!), without the 'Salkhalle', the motorway, and the completely unnecessary Hotel Kristineberg, a shoddy block of flats painted in pink which, because of the barbed wire facing the railway embankment, reminds you of a prison more than a hotel."

²⁵ "The dissolution of original bonds."

reotypes belonging to our collective cultural tradition. On the one hand, through the use of traditional *topoi*, one can detect the need to build the textual space according to pre-existing semantic coordinates; on the other hand, the simultaneous undermining of these coordinates (through irony, juxtaposition of descriptive elements and rhetorical devices such as accumulation or repetition) shows the very awareness in Bödl's characters of the impossibility of this procedure. One cannot shape a forlorn space but only an uncertain and timeless fragmented idea of it.

Second, Bödl's way of writing tries to reduce the act of telling a story to its simplest terms; therefore the plot is not as important as the act of describing itself, through which the author wishes to create an alienation effect on the reader, who becomes frustrated, but who is also led to reflect on the immobility or the changes of the Nordic space.

Finally, the protagonists' perception of space is based on the traditional north-versus-south, countryside-versus-town contrasts; their attitude towards the urban space is negative and they show an apparent longing for a forlorn past, which can never eventuate. This position stresses the typically modernist attitude of individuals, whose uneasiness and apathy reduce them to a simulacrum of themselves.

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NORDIC CRIME FICTION IN ITALY.
THE PHENOMENON STIEG LARSSON AND HIS FOLLOWERS

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I. ITALIAN 'NEONNOIR' AS A PRE-EXISTENT GROUND FOR THE AFFIRMATION OF
NORDIC CRIME FICTION

To understand the reasons behind the positive reception of Nordic crime fiction in Italy from 2007 (when the first novel of Stieg Larsson was published) onwards, it may be useful to consider the Italian literary scene of the same period. Within the rich production of crime fiction at this time, a special mention should go to a particular trend called *neonnoir*, where 'neo' aims to stress the innovation within the classical *noir* tradition. Representative names of this literary trend are Pino Blasone, Sabrina Deligia, Paolo De Pasquali, Nicola Lombardi, Marco Minicangeli, Aldo Musci, Claudio Pellegrini, Ivo Scanner, Antonio Tentori, and Alda Teodorani. In an essay entitled *Il neonnoir. Autori, editori, temi di un genere metropolitano* (*Neonnoir. Authors, Publishers, Themes of a Metropolitan Genre*), the Italian scholar Elisabetta Mondello shows that the interest in the literary stream of *neonnoir* among publishers and readers alike in Italy has steadily increased since the second half of the 1990s (Mondello 2005, 15).¹ Even so, it is not easy to draw clear borders for this genre. As the *neonnoir* writer Ivo Scanner (alias Fabio Giovannini) states: “[i]l noir non può essere ridotto a una ‘categoria’ di libri o film. È una tendenza dell’immaginario che può attraversare generi e

¹ Though it must be said that the exponents refuse to recognise themselves as members of a cultural school or an organic movement, cf. Grimaldi 1996, 31; Giovannini 2000, 16; Mochi 2003, 25-26.

sottogeneri” (Giovannini 2000, 9).² Apart from any discussion of genre classification and definition, what is interesting in this context is to find some points of intersection between Italian *neonoir* and another literary genre, crime fiction,³ intended both in general terms and, more specifically, as the one originating in the Nordic countries.

One of the most important features that Italian *neonoir* shares with crime fiction is the primary subject, which is the dark side of human nature, and the way it acts in social contexts. Giovannini, while trying to define *neonoir*, observes:

Noir diventa così un'etichetta elastica che può coprire tutte le storie violente, cupe (ma non soprannaturali) e con personaggi centrali ambigui o negativi, spesso prive di lieto fine. Oppure può tramutarsi in sinonimo di 'giallo' (2000, 9).⁴

These words are interesting because they show that sometimes the terms *noir* (the French word for 'black') and *giallo* can be used synonymously, as they relate to the same literary universe, populated with similar characters – negative or ambiguous – acting in quite similar ways. As Mondello writes, “la nozione di noir ha tratti indistinti [...] che finiscono di volta in volta per coincidere con l'idea di atmosfere efferate, di delitti sanguinosi, di ricerche affannose di assassini crudeli” (2005, 18).⁵ The same definition can apply to crime fiction, featuring dark atmospheres, bloody murders and cruel murderers.

It could be argued that, in the well-known crime stories of Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the central character is a positive hero who lives in a world where rationality and balance unavoidably triumph in the end. But such novels, known as ‘whodunits’ or ‘puzzle mysteries’, are not the kind of crime fiction that the Italian *noir* can be compared to. It is in contemporary crime fiction, which goes back to the American hard-boiled school, where the common ground can be found.⁶ The massive presence of anti-heroes or not totally positive main characters, which brings into question the process of the identification between the hero and the

² “*Noir* cannot be reduced to a ‘category’ of books or movies. It is an inclination of the imagery that recurs across genres and subgenres.” All translations are mine.

³ See Grimaldi 1996; Maciotti 2006.

⁴ “Therefore *noir* becomes an elastic label, which can cover all violent, dark (but not supernatural) stories featuring negative or ambiguous central characters and often lacking a happy ending. Or it can become synonymous with *giallo*.” The use of the Italian word *giallo* (‘yellow’) as a synonym for the genre of crime fiction originated in the colour chosen for the covers of the first crime book series published by Mondadori (Grimaldi 1996, 10).

⁵ “The notion of *noir* has vague features [...] which from time to time have come to correspond with odious atmospheres, bloody murders and frantic searching for ruthless murderers.”

⁶ For the evolution of crime fiction from its origins to the present see Horsley 2010.

reader, illustrates this point. Laura Grimaldi (1996) states that the fundamental difference is that crime fiction focuses on the investigator's attempt to re-establish balance and order, while *noir* delves into the dark side of the culprit's mind. But this is true only when considering authors such as Doyle, Christie or Sayers: in contemporary crime fiction one hardly finds a neat Manichean division between good and evil.

With regard to happy endings, it can certainly be stated that such an ingredient is often lacking even in crime fiction, where the plot seldom concludes without further unresolved questions concerning unrestored justice (of a psychological, legal or ethical kind).

A final common thread between *noir* and crime fiction is that supernatural stories do not belong to their literary family.⁷

Even though Italian *noir* and crime fiction have much in common, it would be a mistake to think that they are one and the same thing. As a matter of fact, it is hard to define them in strict terms, in relation both to wider literary categories and to each other, since they are linked together by the choice of subjects, although they diverge in their treatment of it: as Mondello (2005, 19) points out, *noir* fiction and crime fiction are like relatives with independent identities.

Furthermore, publishers play a crucial role in the troubled question of genre definition as they have the power to label books 'noir novel' or 'crime novel' and to promote them consequently. Mondello writes:

‘Romanzo *noir*’ è la definizione che viene proposta dall’editore e/o soggettivamente percepita dal lettore. Poco importa se la struttura testuale sia piuttosto quella tipica del poliziesco, o la sua morfologia sia sostanzialmente identica a quella di un *thriller* declinato secondo i meccanismi della *detection* (2005, 19).⁸

This also applies when talking about crime fiction. When the Norwegian scholar Nils Nordberg states that “det viktigste av alle kjennetegn ved kriminal-litteraturen er at den markedsføres og selges som kriminallitteratur” (quoted in Gripsrud 1995, 218),⁹ he gets it exactly right, despite adopting quite an un-faceted point of view. The real situation is in fact fuzzier, as Jostein Gripsrud

⁷ An important exception should be mentioned: Swedish John Ajvide Lindqvist's *Låt den rätte komma in* (*Let the Right One In*, 2004), a vampire story commonly featured among crime books. In 2010, the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* sold, together with the newspaper, a selection of thirteen Swedish crime novels, including such authors as Lindqvist, Stieg Larsson, Henning Mankell, and Liza Marklund. This fact shows to what extent the definition of a book's genre depends on external labelling.

⁸ “‘Noir novel’ is the definition suggested by the publishing house and/or perceived subjectively by the reader. It is not that important whether the text has a structure typical of the crime novel or whether its morphology essentially equals that of a thriller by resorting to the mechanisms of detection.”

⁹ “The most important hallmark of crime fiction is that it is marketed and promoted as crime fiction.”

highlights when commenting on Nordberg's words. Gripsrud stresses the fact that the readers define the genre of a book through a number of characteristic features, which they recognise as distinguishing, a process that must be taken into account by publishers when they choose what label to put on a book to avoid falling short of the reader's expectations (1995, 218). Mondello uses the expression "un *loop* che si autoalimenta" (2005, 24)¹⁰ on the subject of the success gained by *neonoir* novels, a success which, in turn, makes the publishing houses pay more and more attention to the genre through the publication of an increasing number of novels capable of attracting an increasing number of readers. This is exactly the same process that Nordic crime fiction underwent in Italy at the beginning of the new millennium.

Therefore, a further common thread shared by *noir* and crime fiction is to be found in the extent of policies operated by publishing houses since the success of both genres has been inextricably linked with such marketing strategies. As regards Nordic crime fiction, a special mention should go to the Venetian publishing house Marsilio, for reasons I will explain later.

Hence, it can be argued that the wave of *neonoir* flourishing in Italy in the second half of the 1990s prepared the ground for the affirmation of Nordic crime fiction both in terms of literary subjects and climates. This means that by then the audience had become familiar with a certain kind of themes and atmospheres, finding it easier to accept and appreciate them when they later came from the Nordic countries in a different shape, now labelled 'Nordic crime fiction'.

2. THE STIEG LARSSON PHENOMENON AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LISBETH SALANDER AS A FEMINIST HEROINE

Scandinavian crime fiction existed in Italy long before Stieg Larsson, as several journalists and literary critics point out when discussing Larsson's books. Giuseppe Previti (2010) writes:

Un anno, due anni fa si pensò che quello che poi si è rivelato almeno in un caso un enorme successo editoriale, vedi la Trilogia di Larsson, abbia fatto da traino al lancio o al rilancio di tanti autori. Badate bene, per gli intenditori e gli appassionati di gialli era un po' come scoprire l'acqua calda, Sjöwall e Wahlöö, Mankell, Persson, Lindqvist, Läckberg, Holt, [Arnaldur] Indriðason, Marklund, Nesser erano e sono nomi noti con un loro pubblico di lettori affezionati. Con Larsson il fenomeno è esploso in maniera eclatante.¹¹

¹⁰ "A self-feeding loop."

¹¹ "A couple of years ago it was thought that what in at least one case turned out to be

Similarly, Gian Giacomo Migone points out that “[i]l fenomeno Stieg Larsson non nasce dal nulla” (2010, 1),¹² referring to a solid preexisting literary tradition. In fact with Larsson, Scandinavian, and in particular Swedish, crime fiction became a trademark, although this kind of literature from the Nordic countries was appreciated in Italy even before, as can be observed in an exhaustive website created and updated by Riccardo Marmugi, which lists all Scandinavian crime fiction translated into Italian from the 1970s to the present.¹³ As Aldo Garzia, an Italian journalist and writer interested in Swedish culture and a connoisseur of Ingmar Bergman, says, “[b]isogna [...] sfatare l’idea che il boom sia da collegare alla trilogia *Millennium* di Stieg Larsson” (2011),¹⁴ arguing that the quality of Swedish crime fiction had already been established in Italy with, e.g., the novels by the writing duo Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö.¹⁵ On the other hand, it is a fact that, with Larsson’s novels, Scandinavian crime fiction gained unprecedented visibility within the Italian book market.

In 2005 the Venetian publishing house Marsilio bought the rights to Larsson’s *Millennium* trilogy after hearing about this promising and politically active Swedish journalist at the Frankfurt book fair the year before (Fumagalli 2010, 40).¹⁶ Marsilio had already been publishing Swedish crime fiction for twelve years: it began with Henning Mankell in 1998, when its founder Cesare De Michelis heard about him being appreciated in Germany, a country that has always been keen on Nordic literature (Crispino 2011, 48). Mankell’s books feature what would turn out to be one of the main reasons behind the success of the genre: the strong emphasis on social engagement. As De Michelis states, “le trame erano intrise di violenze, omicidi, intrighi e misteri; ma si coglievano anche le tensioni di una società moderna, in trasformazione, permeata da corruzione, decadente” (quoted in Fumagalli 2010, 40).¹⁷

a huge publishing success stimulated the launch or relaunch of many authors. One should be careful, though, since for connoisseurs and keen readers of crime novels it was kind of like reinventing the wheel, Sjöwall and Wahlöö, Mankell, Persson, Lindqvist, Läckberg, Holt, [Arnaldur] Indriðason, Marklund, Nesser were and are famous names with their own loyal readership. With Larsson the phenomenon took on epic proportions.”

¹² “The Stieg Larsson phenomenon does not come out of the blue.”

¹³ Cf. <http://www.letteraturenordiche.it/giallonordico.htm>.

¹⁴ “One must debunk the idea that this boom is to be linked to the *Millennium* trilogy by Stieg Larsson.”

¹⁵ Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö were Swedish crime writers that wrote together, inspired by Marxist-socialist ideology. They are known for their ten-novel cycle *Roman om ett brott* (*The Story of a Crime*, 1965-75) featuring police inspector Martin Beck, where they wanted to show the dark side of the much-lauded Swedish welfare state.

¹⁶ The trilogy consists of *Män som hatar kvinnor* (2005), *Flickan som lekte med elden* (2006), *Luftslottet som sprängdes* (2007), published in Italy as *Uomini che odiano le donne* (2007), *La ragazza che giocava con il fuoco* (2008), *La regina dei castelli di carta* (2009). The corresponding English titles are *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl who Played with Fire*, and *The Girl who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest*.

¹⁷ “The plots were soaked in violence, murders, tricks and mysteries. But there were also

About the role played by Marsilio, the reviewer Alessandro Centonze writes:

Occorre segnalare come il giallo nordico rappresenta un genere che, nell'ultimo decennio, ha goduto di una grande fortuna, dando origine, grazie alla lungimiranza della casa editrice Marsilio di Venezia, a un fenomeno editoriale che non ha eguali nel mondo letterario nostrano. Grazie al grande successo ottenuto, dapprima, con la pubblicazione dei romanzi di Henning Mankell e, successivamente, con la pubblicazione della trilogia "Millennium" di Stieg Larsson, la Marsilio ha dato vita nel nostro Paese a un vero e proprio fenomeno culturale, creando una collana intitolata 'Giallosvezia' e ponendo le basi per una riscoperta del mondo scandinavo e della Svezia in particolare, che costituisce l'epicentro culturale ed editoriale di questo fenomeno (2012).¹⁸

The Italian translation of the first volume of the *Millennium* trilogy, *Uomini che odiano le donne*, was published in 2007 and immediately became a publishing phenomenon. The first volume was soon reprinted and the second part, *La ragazza che giocava con il fuoco*, followed the year after, preceding the third and last novel, *La regina dei castelli di carta* (2009), all of which have been translated by Carmen Giorgetti Cima. At the end of 2009, the trilogy had sold two and a half million copies in Italy (Bozzi 2009, 41).

The three novels tell the story of the young and troubled hacker Lisbeth Salander, an antisocial character and a victim of a conspiracy organised by various public figures within the Swedish state, and of the journalist Mikael Blomkvist, a sort of alter ego of Larsson himself. The main story concerns these two characters, but there are several sub-plots, which give the author the chance to treat subjects such as the disintegration of the patriarchal model and the consequent modification of the relationship between men and women,¹⁹ the trafficking of prostitutes from the former USSR to Scandinavia as well as far-right movements and xenophobia.

the tensions of a modern society undergoing a transformation. A decaying society imbued with corruption."

¹⁸ "It must be stressed that Nordic crime fiction represents a genre which in the last ten years has enjoyed a tremendous success and which, thanks to the foresight of the publishing house Marsilio, has laid the foundations for a publishing phenomenon quite unprecedented in our literary world. Thanks to the great success achieved with the publication of Henning Mankell's novels, first, and later with the publication of Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy, Marsilio has given birth to a true cultural phenomenon in our country by creating a book collection entitled 'Giallosvezia', thus laying the groundwork for a revival of the Scandinavian world and particularly of Sweden, which is at the heart of this cultural and publishing phenomenon."

¹⁹ Cf. Pasini 2009 for an analysis of the relationships between men and women in the trilogy.

The Italian journalist Antonio D'Orrico, in his article *Le undici strane ragioni di un successo inatteso* (*The Eleven Strange Reasons behind an Unexpected Success*), takes into consideration the strong feminist message underlying all of Larsson's work: "La Trilogia è forse il più grande romanzo popolare femminista mai scritto e Lisbeth Salander è la prima eroina femminista a tutto tondo nella storia del romanzo popolare" (2010, 41).²⁰ Feminism and women's emancipation are a hotly debated question in Italy. It is possible that the central role of this theme is one of the most appealing reasons behind the success of Larsson's books, especially among women, who read more than men in Italy.²¹ Sebastiano Triulzi, too, asserts that behind Larsson's success is the Lisbeth character, a pale and skinny girl who does 'masculine things': "C'è una logica di mercato, perché ci sono tante lettrici che devono identificarsi. Ma non solo. Perché il tema della violenza sulle donne, centrale in Larsson, è un dramma sociale" (2010).²² Triulzi also argues that the act of creating strong female protagonists represents a political instrument that can teach the new generations that violence against women and female subordination are unacceptable. Against this background, one should also mention the important literary sub-stream of Scandinavian female crime writers (e.g., Liza Marklund, Camilla Läckberg, Åsa Larsson, Anne Holt, Gretelise Holm), all of whom exploit the plot of the detective novel to redefine the actual condition of women.

If feminism triumphs, then an inevitable decline in male chauvinism is likely to occur. In D'Orrico's opinion, the sixth reason for the trilogy's success is in fact "il maschilismo, cioè la fine del maschilismo" (2010, 41).²³ He claims that if Lisbeth Salander is a strong and emancipated female heroine, then the main male character, Mikael Blomkvist, plays the role of the quite stupid blonde girl portrayed in classic hard-boiled novels. He is the sexual object of desire for several women and he seems rather comfortable with that. On the other hand, the Italian journalist Francesca Pasini (2009, 48) expresses herself more favourably about Mikael: in her opinion, he offers the readers a different behavioural model in his relationships with women, as he does not act like an unscrupulous Casanova, but instead can show

²⁰ "The trilogy is perhaps the greatest feminist novel ever written and Lisbeth Salander is the first tridimensional heroine in the history of the popular novel."

²¹ Official Istat data 2014, <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/108662>. The Norwegian crime writer Kjell Ola Dahl confirms that this interpretation is correct in Italy as well as in Scandinavia: "Il fenomeno *Millennium*, la trilogia dello svedese Stieg Larsson, pone [...] una domanda essenziale in letteratura: chi legge cosa? La risposta è che le donne leggono di più e *Millennium* racconta proprio la vendetta di una donna" (Raynal 2009, 49); "The *Millennium* phenomenon, the trilogy of the Swedish Stieg Larsson, raises [...] an essential question in literature: who reads what? The answer is that women read more and *Millennium* is precisely about a woman's revenge".

²² "There is the market principle. Because many female readers need to identify [with Lisbeth]. But there is more to it. Because the topic of violence against women, central in Larsson, is a social drama."

²³ "Male chauvinism, i.e., the end of male chauvinism."

respect and companionship.

Thus, in Pasini's and D'Orrico's interpretations, it is clear that an interesting and appealing element in Larsson's trilogy is the great deal of attention paid to the changes taking place in the relationships between men and women. While discussing an Amnesty International report from the year 2010, Nicoletta Tiliacos points out that, if in Sweden women have reached certain goals in the public sphere, violent and discriminatory attitudes still seem to survive in the private one:

Il gigantesco fenomeno editoriale dei 'gialli venuti dal freddo', a partire dal capostipite Stieg Larsson e dalla sua trilogia da trenta milioni di copie [...] può essere interpretato come il frutto letterario di un problema reale, di un malessere crescente nel rapporto tra i sessi (Tiliacos 2011).²⁴

3. NORDIC CRIME FICTION IN ITALY AS A FORUM FOR SOCIAL DISCUSSION

It seems that the Italian readership derives a voyeuristic pleasure in observing a socially emancipated nation like Sweden facing sexual discrimination, violence, corruption, organised crime, something the Italians themselves have been familiar with for a long time. It appears somehow comforting to know that the Nordic welfare paradise shares our troubles. Francesca Varotto is the literary scout who imported Stieg Larsson to Italy. According to her, “[f]orse intriga i lettori constatare che l’isola felice così felice non è, e che intrigo e crimine attecchiscono anche in una società di benessere diffuso” (Crispino 2011, 49).²⁵ It is also interesting to observe that a hint of *schadenfreude* is shared by Scandinavian writers themselves, who find that “è estremamente stimolante scrivere di un paradiso che cade a pezzi”,²⁶ as the Swedish crime writer Arne Dahl says in an interview (Oliva 2009).

This point of view can be true, though only partially. In fact, the picture of a disintegrating society coping with a variety of problems can also spark an interesting discussion on crucial social problems. Scandinavian crime authors write also to encourage collective reflection and deal with issues that their readership finds interesting to delve into. This is the most common

²⁴ “The huge phenomenon of the ‘crime fiction from the cold’, beginning with the ‘forefather’ Stieg Larsson and his trilogy that sold 30 million copies [...] can be seen as the literary product of a real problem, of an increasing discomfort in the relationship between sexes.”

²⁵ “Maybe the readers find it intriguing to observe that this oasis of happiness is not that happy after all, and that crime and deceit can take root even among widely shared prosperity.”

²⁶ “It is extremely stimulating to write about a paradise that is crumbling to pieces.”

interpretation among Scandinavian critics,²⁷ one that has reached Italy as well. In fact, Italian journalists and reviewers, too, agree that Nordic crime fiction stands out for the skilful manner in which these social matters are treated while still delivering a gripping mystery story.

Centonze focuses his attention precisely on the social dimension of the genre:

Gli autori che rappresentano [il giallo nordico] utilizzano modelli letterari *noir* per descrivere le crescenti insofferenze, sociali ed economiche, del mondo occidentale – di cui la Svezia ha sempre costituito un esempio di *welfare state* difficilmente comparabile con altre parti del pianeta – che influiscono sulla vita degli individui, alienandoli e portandoli a condizioni di disagio individuale tali da indurli a commettere un delitto (2012).²⁸

First, it can be observed that Centonze here uses “*noir*” as a synonym for “giallo”, showing once more that the line between these two terms is quite subtle. It is also interesting to note the way he links the social sphere of an individual to the private one by recalling Sjöwall-Wahlöö’s tradition of Marxist criticism.

Similarly, Francesca Varotto states: “Il giallo nordico è il giallo sociale per eccellenza, il plot poliziesco è il mezzo con cui coinvolgere il lettore per parlare di attualità e trasmettere un messaggio” (Crispino 2011, 48).²⁹ Roberto Iasoni expresses the same opinion when he writes: “Gli ingredienti del tradizionale giallo scandinavo [...]: il crudo realismo, la critica sociale, lo scavo nella realtà contemporanea” (2010, 34).³⁰ Whereas Previti points out:

È una costante tipica degli autori nordici, sapere ‘leggere’ la società, una società alle prese con infiniti problemi sociali, dal razzismo all’alcolismo, dalla violenza sino alla pedofilia, una società che qualche decennio fa era presa a modello da seguire e che poi si è rivelata ben diversa (2010).³¹

²⁷ Cf. Brodén 2008; Kärrholm and Bergman 2011; Tapper 2011.

²⁸ “The authors that represent [Nordic crime fiction] use *noir* literary models to describe the increasing social and economic intolerance of the Western world – where Sweden has always represented an example of a welfare state without equal on the planet – which affects the lives of individuals, while alienating them and bringing them to such individual discomfort as to lead them to commit a crime.”

²⁹ “Nordic crime fiction is social fiction *par excellence*, the crime plot being the means to engage the reader to discuss current events while sending a message.”

³⁰ “The ingredients of the traditional Scandinavian crime novel [...]: crude realism, social criticism, probing contemporary reality.”

³¹ “It is typical of Nordic authors to be able to ‘read’ society, a society facing endless social problems, from racism to alcoholism, from violence to paedophilia, a society that some decades ago was a role model and then turned out to be something different.”

Dina Lentini considers the possibility that crime fiction could work as a means to better understand reality: “La passione per il giallo in generale e per quello nordico sembra da riportare ad un’esigenza di comprensione della realtà che la finzione letteraria tradizionale fatica a soddisfare” (Lentini s.a.).³² Lentini thus believes that crime fiction tries to give an answer to a gnoseological need of the contemporary Western human being. Interestingly, Cesare De Michelis adds an ethical and moral element to this reflection: “Il giallo che viene dalla Svezia rappresenta la coscienza morale dell’Europa, una delle poche forme di letteratura che affronta domande di carattere morale, politico, sociale, ponendosi interrogativi sulla complessità della società globalizzata” (Fumagalli 2010, 40).³³

All these voices unanimously recognise that Nordic crime fiction aims to show the audience some relevant problems of contemporary society in order to stimulate a collective reflection. This fact is particularly interesting in the context of formula fiction, widely considered an entertaining and unengaged genre. It must be said on this score that some voices have expressed doubts about the literary quality of this kind of formula fiction. On the other hand, Italian critics seem to agree on the quality of the genre when coming from the Nordic countries. The Danish to Italian literary translator Bruno Berni talks about it in the following terms: “Una produzione letteraria ricca, di elevata qualità, tutto sommato non troppo distante dalla nostra cultura” (Agrosi 2012).³⁴ Francesca Varotto goes on to say that the Nordic crime authors are “capaci di unire qualità di scrittura al piacere dell’intrattenimento” (Crispino 2011, 48),³⁵ while Giuseppe Previti talks about “una buona prosa, con una buona calibratura dei personaggi e dell’ambiente” (2010).³⁶ Finally, Dina Lentini thinks that “[i] nordici sembrano dotati di una vena molto felice nel raccontare storie” (Lentini s.a.).³⁷

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this essay I have tried to shed some light on the successful publishing phenomenon of Nordic crime fiction in Italy. The first element is that the genre of the Italian *neonoir*, which has been flourishing from the second half of the 1990s onwards, created positive pre-conditions in terms of subjects and literary moods, bringing to the bookshop shelves dark atmospheres and

³² “The passion for crime fiction in general and for Nordic fiction in particular seems to refer to the need to understand reality, which traditional literary fiction struggles to fulfil.”

³³ “Swedish crime fiction represents the moral conscience of Europe, one of the few literary forms which deal with moral, political and social issues, while raising questions about the complexity of our globalised society.”

³⁴ “A rich literary production of high quality, not so distant from our culture after all.”

³⁵ “Able to combine quality writing with the pleasure of entertainment.”

³⁶ “A good prose, with well-calibrated characters and atmospheres.”

³⁷ “Nordic writers seem to have an inspired inclination for telling stories.”

violence. A crucial role has also been played by Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* trilogy, which features a good mix of innovation (within the frame of the classic crime plot) and social debate (with a particular mention for the main character Lisbeth Salander and her innovative feminist message). The most significant common thread between Larsson and all his numerous followers seems to be, in the opinion of several critics, the fact that Nordic crime fiction, while narrating riveting mystery stories in a masterly style, analyses and criticises the current globalised society, thus stimulating the readers to reflect upon what is happening in contemporary Europe.

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MOTTAGANDET AV CARLO EMILIO GADDA I SKANDINAVIEN:
EN FRÅGA OM ÖVERSÄTTNINGSSVÅRIGHETER? MED EN
ÖVERSÄTTNING TILL SVENSKA AV ETT UTDRAG UR
QUER PASTICCIACCIO BRUTTO DE VIA MERULANA

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Med en förhastad slutsats brukar man påstå att det svala mottagandet av Carlo Emilio Gadda i utlandet orsakas av hans invecklade prosastil och av språkliga svårigheter. I översättning anses Gadda alltså bli en svåräst författare som den stora publiken inte kan uppskatta och som ingen förläggare vågar publicera. Ändå har hans verk studerats av många utländska forskare¹ och översatts till flera språk, bland annat tjeckiska, polska, serbokroatiska, ungerska, grekiska, japanska, hebreiska, finska, rumänska och slovenska.

När det gäller mottagandet av Gadda är Skandinavien ett kapitel för sig. I Danmark är Conni-Kay Jørgensen den enda forskare som har ägnat sig åt Gadda. Jørgensen är författare till en monografi (Jørgensen 2001) och har nyligen publicerat en välgjord översättning till danska av romanen *La cognizione del dolore* (Gadda 1963 och 2013), medan den italienska författaren fortfarande verkar vara helt okänd i Sverige och i Norge.² Inte ens den rådande deckarvågen har väckt något större intresse för *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*, uppbyggd just som en detektivroman. Endast i ett par svenska litterära bloggar kan man stöta på enstaka inlägg³ där läsarna, efter att ha läst *Quer*

¹ *The Edinburgh Journal of Gadda Studies* är ett ypperligt exempel på bidrag till den internationella forskningen om Gaddas författarskap, se <http://www.gadda.ed.ac.uk/index.php>.

² Knappa upplysningar om författaren ges i *Aschehoug og Gyldendals Store norske leksikon* (http://snl.no/Carlo_Emilio_Gadda) och i *Nationalencyklopedin* (<http://www.ne.se/carlo-emilio-gadda>).

³ Se till exempel <http://ingridsboktankar.blogspot.it/2011/11/nyfiken-pa-carlo-emilio>.

pasticciaccio brutto i Weavers engelska översättning (Gadda 1985), påstår sig ha upptäckt en okänd författare som förtjänar större uppmärksamhet.

Denna nordiska (närmare bestämt svensk-norska) anomali kan inte förklaras med hjälp av det sedvanliga argumentet att Gaddas språk är obegripligt och oöversättligt. Man bör istället försöka identifiera de nordiska särdrag som kan komma i fråga.

Gadda framstår vid en första anblick som en författare som ifrågasätter – eller underminerar – alla de estetiska och sociala konventioner som nu råder inom skönlitteraturen och dess marknadsföring, från skrivakten till läsakten. Han tvingar alltså läsaren att acceptera estetiska principer som inte överensstämmer med de allmänna värderingarna. Detta är förstas en iakttagelse av allmänt värde och gäller inte enbart Skandinavien, men det handlar om konventioner och principer som uppenbarligen är djupare förankrade i den nordiska kulturen än till exempel i den italienska.

Särskilt i Sverige betraktas varje form av retoriskt eller konstlat språk med en viss misstro, vilket sedan länge påverkar inte bara den skönlitterära prosastilen utan också det politiska språket och tidningsspråket (se Hägg 1996, 413, om det politiska språket). Den svenska läsaren förväntar sig alltså att politiker, journalister och romanförfattare ska uttrycka sig på ett okonstlat sätt, utan onödiga retoriska utsmyckningar. Man bör dessutom beakta att nusvenskan fortfarande befinner sig inne i en lång utvecklingsfas, som språkvårdarna främjar och planerar på grundval av vissa demokratiska principer och som kommer att leda till en ytterligare förenkling och utjämning (mestadels neråt) av dess stilarter och språkvarieteter. Gaddas sammansatta prosastil, i vilken olika italienska stilarter blandas och stöter samman med främmande språkkoder och i vilken just sofistikerade eller gammalmodiga ord, (pseudo)termer och bildade nyord är väsentliga beståndsdelar, blir oundvikligen inte helt acceptabel när man försöker återge den på svenska. Om man vill förenkla och generalisera förhållandena kan man säga att svenskarna har en uppfattning om sitt språk som är mer pragmatisk än estetisk, vilket inte bara minskar graden av acceptabilitet av en så invecklad och barock stil som Gaddas, utan också förhindrar dess återgivande på svenska.⁴

Ett annat argument som gärna används för att förklara det uteblivna mottagandet av en författare är det kulturella avståndet mellan Italien och Skandinavien, men under årens lopp har ett sådant argument visat sig vara allt svagare. Det är snarare värt att betona att den italienska litteraturen inte är så känd i Skandinavien som till exempel den engelska, eftersom den bara kan läsas i översättning. Dessutom har de italienska forskarna själva fakt-

gadda.html eller <http://bodilzalesky.com/blog/2007/12/07/varldskroppens-saffyllad-medvetandestrom/>.

⁴ Man bör dessutom beakta att Gadda inte sällan uttrycker sig – eller får personerna att tala – med ord som idag betraktas som politiskt inkorrekta och avslöjar intolerans eller motvilja mot människor och institutioner.

iskt degraderat Gadda till en underordnad ställning i 1900-talets litterära panorama,⁵ så det är självklart att de nordiska läsarna ägnar större uppmärksamhet åt storsäljare eller åt författare som får större utrymme i antologier.⁶

Ett sista argument som ibland används för att förklara bristen på litterära översättningar från italienska till de nordiska språken är att dessa är alltför 'fattiga' för att lämpligt kunna återge italienskans ordrikedom, ordvariation och stilarter, framför allt i 'oöversättliga' verk som till exempel Gaddas romaner. I själva verket är de nordiska språken i sig inte fattiga, potentiellt föfogar de över de nödvändiga resurserna för att översätta alla slags texter,⁷ det är hellre en jämn och monoton användning av ett språk som kan medföra dess utarmning. Problemet är snarare att svensk och norsk litteratur saknar en lång och djupt rotad tradition vad gäller stil och uttryckssätt jämförbar med den litterära tradition som i Italien förenar Folengo med Gadda genom Dossi och Faldella (Contini 1963; Segre 1979; Isella 1984), och som översättaren kan rätta sig efter för att skapa en acceptabel 'Gadda-stil' på svenska.

Förutsatt att oöversättligheten, särskilt när det gäller en skönlitterär text, bara är teoretisk och idealisk,⁸ kan till och med den 'oöversättliga' Gadda hanteras genom att tillämpa olika översättningsstrategier.⁹ Översättningsstrategin rör sig mellan två motpoler, en som i detta fall kan definieras som 'lättbegriplig' och en som man skulle kunna kalla 'expressiv' (Nida och Taber 1969; Nida 1975 och 2001).

Den första strategin antas av till exempel William Weaver, Gaddas främste översättare till engelska, ett språk som passar bra för ett sådant ändamål. Weavers översättningar (Gadda 1969 och 1985) har den fördelen att de lyckats göra Gaddas verk kända utanför Italiens gränser, det vill säga de har tillåtit, som det har sagts, böckerna att existera på ett annat språk än italienska (Stellardi 1995) och gjort verken tillgängliga för en bred publik. På så sätt har man dock offrat stilen, som utjämnats och plattats till. Dessa översättningar återger mycket väl den denotativa betydelsen av ord, fraser och meningar, men utelämnar stora mängder konnotativ och affektiv betydelse. Detta förfaringssätt är alltså diskutabelt, eftersom det krångliga språket i Gaddas prosaverk inte är en ytlig utsmyckning, utan väsentligt för

⁵ Gadda tillägnas t ex bara 18 rader i Santoro 1980 (mot Bruno Cicognanis 27 och Ignazio Silones 45), 6 sidor i Cecchi och Sapegno [1965] 2005 (mot Beppe Fenoglio 8, Carlo Cassolas II, Vincenzo Cardarellis 15 och Umberto Eco 17).

⁶ Det är värt att påpeka att det inte har skrivits någon antologi som behandlar italiensk litteratur på de nordiska språken.

⁷ Conni-Kay Jørgensens översättning till danska av *La cognizione del dolore* visar detta (Gadda 2013).

⁸ Om man med översättning menar den exakta återgivningen ord för ord från ett språk till ett annat, så är i praktiken ingen text översättlig. Om man istället avser översättning som en omskrivningsprocess blir varje text översättlig på olika sätt. Om översättlighet i allmänhet se Wandruszka 1969 och Gullin 2002 samt, i ett bredare kulturellt perspektiv, Apel 1982; Hermans 1985; Lefevere 1992a och 1992b.

⁹ För frågor rörande översättningen av Gaddas verk se Renucci 1974; Altano 1988; Maldussi 1989; Weaver 1989; Stellardi 1995; Clerico 2007.

förståelsen av texterna, då det återspeglar författarens syn på komplexiteten i samhället och i de mänskliga relationerna.

Den motsatta strategin är den som i princip strävar efter att återge den härva av stilarter och språkkoder som utgör kärnan i Gaddas stil. Den här sortens stilöverföring (eller omskrivning) på ett annat språk än italienska kan inte alltid förverkligas och är lämpligast för experimentella översättningsförsök som inte är avsedda för den litterära marknaden.

En kompromiss mellan begriplighet och stiltrogen imitation kan vara enklare att genomföra, en strategi som antagits av till exempel Conni-Kay Jørgensen och som vi har försökt använda i nedanstående översättning av ett utdrag ur *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*.

Gaddas prosastil utnyttjar, som bekant, alla resurser som italienskan förfogar över genom att ständigt använda inte bara diafasisk, diastratisk, diatopisk¹⁰ och dessutom diakronisk variation, utan också anspelningar och ordvitsar, expressionistisk förvrängning av ord och konstruktioner (avsiktligt paronymiskt eller via kontamination), sammansatta eller avledda syntetiska nyord, också med hjälp av främmande leder. Resultatet av denna språkövning är en raffinerad och tilltrasslad arabesk, en förvirring av språk och stilarter (Rinaldi 2003) som översättaren ska reda ut i analyskedet och återskapa i överförings- och bearbetningsskedet genom att utnyttja mål-språkets hela potential.

I översättningen av ett utdrag ur fjärde kapitlet av *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (Gadda 1973, 102-05) har vi försökt – i mån av möjlighet – överföra alla stilistiska variationer och lexikala förvanskningar till svenska. Där det tycktes oss nödvändigt har vi anpassat sådana stilbrytningar till målspråkets konventioner eller eventuellt skjutit upp dem till andra ställen i texten, medan källspråkets uttrycksfullhet har förmildrats endast där översättningen skulle ha blivit obegriplig för den svenska läsaren. Huvudsyftet med denna översättning förblir i alla fall att återge komplexiteten i Gaddas prosastil på svenska, utan att försvaga dess expressiva och kognitiva funktion.

Paolo Marelli

¹⁰ Om användningen av dialekt i översättningar på konstprosa se Englund-Dimitrova 2001; Ingo 2007, 249-59; och, särskilt vad gäller Gadda, Renucci 1974 och Altano 1988.

UTDRAG UR CARLO EMILIO GADDAS
QUER PASTICCIACCIO BRUTTO DE VIA MERULANA

Valdarena hade fått genomgå upprepade förhör på Collegio Romano. De alibin som han producerat (kontor, springpojkar) visade sig hålla fram till 9.20, inte längre. Han sade sig ha gått omkring i staden. Omkring var? hos vem? Kunder? Kvinnor? Tobakshandlaren? Två eller tre gånger rodnade han, som för en lögn. Han hade till och med föreslagit frisören, men hade genast dragit tillbaka sitt påstående. Nej, han hade varit där föregående dag. I verkligheten hade ingen av hyresgästerna sett honom vid den tidpunkten. Först klockan 10.35, när han kallade på någon. Tösen Felicetti, ställd öga mot öga med honom, sa att hon inte hade stött på'n i trappen. Hon där som gick och sa godda' åt Bottafavi som hade träffat ostförsäljerskerna. "n...e...j...", sa hon, med plågade läppar som hon inte lyckades sära på, "den hära... va'nte där..." Sedan tystnade hon och pressad av nya och upprepade frågor, därefter av uppmaningar av alla de slag, böjde hon tårögd ner sitt huvud. Hon sökte säga ja men lyckades inte, hon öppnade inte munnen. Sen, med stora droppar på kinderna, tyckte alla att hon ville skaka på huvet. Hennes mamma, stående där på knä, ansikte mot ansikte med henne, strök henne över huvudet där vittnesmålen kommer ifrån och viskade i hennes öra mellan pussarna: "Säg nu, säj sanningen, lilla gumman. Få höra nu, visst har du sett han, unge herrn här, i trappen, ser du va blond han är?

Il Valdarena, al Collegio Romano, era stato sottoposto a ripetuti interrogatori: gli alibi da lui prodotti (uffici, fattorini d'ufficio) si palesarono validi fino alle 9,20, non oltre. Diceva di essere andato in giro per la città. In giro dove? da chi? Clienti? Donne? Tabaccaio? Due o tre volte arrossì, come d'una bugia. Aveva messo avanti anche il parrucchiere, ma s'era subito ritratto dall'affermazione: no, c'era stato il dì prima. In realtà nessuno degli inquilini lo aveva visto, in quell'ora. Soltanto alle 10,35, quando lui chiamò gente. La pupa Felicetti, messagli davanti, negò d'avello incontrato pe le scale: quella ch'annava a dì bongiorno ai Bottafavi ch'aveva incontrato le venditrici de caciotta: "n...o", disse, con gran pena dei labbri che non arrivava a spicciare: "questo... nun c'era...". Poi ammutolì: e stretta da nuove e da rinnovate domande, poi da esortazioni di ogni genere, chinò il volto in lacrime. Accennò a dir di sì, ma non si risolvetto: non aprì bocca. Poi, coi goccioloni a le gote, parve a tutti che volesse far segno di no. La sua mamma, inginocchiata là, viso contro viso, le faceva le carezze in testa, di dove vengheno fora le testimonianze, le sussurrava dentro un orecchio, baciandola: "Di', di' la verità, cocca mia: dimme un po', sì, sì è che l'hai visto, er signorino qua, su le scale, vedi com'è bionno? che pare un angelo? Di', di', pupa mia bella! nun piagne, che co te ce sta mamma tua che te vo tanto bene, tiè" le scoccò due bacioz-

ser ut som en ängel? Säj, säj nu, fina gumman! gråt inte, mamsen din är här me dej och tycker jättemycket om dej, här har du!” hon smackade iväg två blötpusslar “var inte rädd för den där farbrorn.¹ Herr Ingarballo är inte en sån där dum farbror doktor som är elak, en av dom där som gör illa dej på tungan. Han är en farbror i svart kostym men är jätteglo!” och hon kände på lilla magen under klänningen, som för att se efter om den var torr eller blöt. Det är inte uteslutet att vittnesmålet kan åtföljas av något slags leveranser.

“Säj nu, säj nu, kom igen, stumpan min, för herr Ingarballo ska ge dej en docka, en sån där som rör på ögena, med ett rosa förkläde med ljusblå små blommor på. Du ska få se. Säj nu i mamma-örat.” Hon böjde då på huvudet och sa “Ja”. Giuliano bleknade. “Och vad gjorde unge herrn? Och vad sa han åt dej?” Hon utbröt i tårar, skrek desperat mellan snyftningarna: “nu far vi, nu far vi”. På det snöt mamman hennes näsa: adjö! man fick inte ur henne något mer. Mamman “ja, jag säger då det!” framhöll att hon var ett ovanligt framåt barn för sin ålder: “det vet man ju... ungar måste man ha handlag med”. I Ingravallös tycke var hon istället en idiot, helt i klass med modern. Fallet Pirroficconi hade ännu inte retat upp Den Eviga Stadens nyhetsflöde. Dödskallen i svart båthatt törstade, för övrigt, redan efter den misstänktes påfågelsfjäder för att kunna stoppa den där han stoppade fjädrar, vare

zi, “nun te spaventà der dottore. Er dottor Ingarballo nun è un dottore de quei brutti, che so’ tanto cattivi, poveretti, de quei che ti fanno la bua su la lingua. È un dottore cor vestito nero, ma è tanto bono!” e le tastò il pancino sotto la vesticciola, come per appurare se fosse asciutta o bagnata: certi numeri del testimoniale non è escluso che accompagnino la testimonianza con adeguate erogazioni.

“Dimme, dimme: su, su, cocca mia, ch’er dottor Ingarballo te regala una pupazza, de quelle che movono l’occhi, cor zinale rosa co li fiorellini celesti. Mo vedrai. Dillo a mamma tua in un’orecchia.” Lei allora chinò il capo e fece: “Sì”. Giuliano impalidì. “E che faceva er signorino? E che t’ha detto?”. Lei ruppe in pianto, strillava disperatamente fra le lacrime: “’nnamo ’ia, ’nnamo ’ia”: dopo di che la mamma le soffiò il naso: addio! non si potè cavarne più nulla. Mammuccia, “ve dico!”, sosteneva che fosse una bambina straordinariamente sveglia, per l’anni sua: “se sa... che co li pupi bisogna sapecce fa”. A Ingravallo sembrò invece un’idiota, in tutto degna di sua madre. Il caso Pirroficconi non aveva ancora afflitto le cronache dell’Urbe: il Testa di Morto in feluca sitiva già, per altro, la penna di pavone dell’indiziato, da potersela infilare dove lui s’infilava le penne: de pavone o de pollo guasto che puzza.

sig från påfågel eller från ruten, stinkande höna.

Hur som helst var det lämpligt, redan då, att fortskrida med en viss försiktighet: don Ciccio kunde lukta sig till det och herr Fumi likaså, att den allmänna opinionen, det vill säga de kollektiva humörtvärsvingningarna, hade gjort sig till herrar över händelsen.

“Att bruka sig” av fallet – det där slumpmässiga fallet som Jupiter Niding, åskvädersmakaren, har flåsat² framför dig, plaff, plaff – för att upphöja en egen pseudo-etisk aktivitet, i praktiken utstickande scenisk och smutsigt teatrerad, är ett spel för envar, institution eller person, som skulle vilja tillskriva propagandan och sympatifiket dimensionen och allvaret hos en moralisk aktivitet. Psyket hos den dåraktiga politikern som uppvisats (pseudo-etiskt narcissistisk) klöser sig fast vid det främmande brottet, verkligt eller påhittat, och brölar över det som en korkad jävla best som meningslöst morrar över en åsnekäke.

Sålunda lyckas han genom detta fåfänga fall med en straffande myt trötta ut (lugna ner) den smutsiga spänningen som tvingar honom att agera, hur han än agerar, huvudsaken att han agerar, kosta vad det kosta vill. Det främmande brottet är “brukat” för att lugna den ormhåriga Megera, den galna hopen, som inte lugnar sig för så lite. Den gesget eller kid som offergåva och de uslingarna sliter den i bitar, skutande med håret på ända, allestädes närvarande och glupska i den

Comunque era opportuno, già allora, procedere con una tal quale cautela: don Ciccio lo intuiva a naso, e il dottor Fumi non meno, dopo che l'opinione pubblica cioè la mattana collettiva s'era impadronita del fatto.

“Adoperare” l'avvenimento – qualunque avvenimento che Giove Farabutto, preside a' nuvoli, t'abbifiantato davanti al naso, plaf, plaf – alla magnificazione d'una propria attività pseudo-etica, in facto protuberatamente scenica e sporcamente teatrata, è il giuoco di qualunque, istituto o persona, voglia attribuire alla propaganda e alla pesca le dimensioni e la gravezza di un'attività morale. La psiche del demente politico esibito (narcisista a contenuto pseudo-etico) aggranfia il delitto alieno, reale o creduto, e vi ruggia sopra come belva cogliona e furente a freddo sopra una mascella d'asino:

conducendosi per tal modo a esaurire (a distendere) nella inane fattispecie d'un mito punitivo la sudicia tensione che lo compelle al pragma: al pragma quale che sia, purché pragma, al pragma coùte que coùte. Il crimine alieno è “adoperato” a placar Megera anguicrinita, la moltitudine pazza: che non si placherà di così poco: viene offerto, come laniando capro o cerbiatto, a le scarmigliate che lo faranno a pezzi, lene in salti o mamillone ubique e voraci nel bacchanale che di loro strida si

backanal som flamar upp av deras skrin, som färgas purpurröd av plågor och av blod.³ Således får en pseudo-rättvisa, en pseudo-stränghet eller ett pseudo-godkännande giltighet i folkmun, något för vilket den vanvettiga förundersökningens arrogans samt den kinebalanitiska orgasmen för den förtida domen tycks vara tydliga kännetecken. Vänligen läs i Krig och Fred, tredje boken, tredje delen, kapitel 25, en smärtsam och förskräcklig berättelse. Här avses den summariska avrättningen av den olycksalige Veresjtjagin, oskyldigt anklagad för att vara spion. Greve Rostoptjin, guvernör i Moskva, kråmande sig på palatsets trappor inför massornas dystra förväntan, beordrar sina dragoner att hugga honom till döds med sina svärd, där framför folkmassan. På den vackra inre grunden, herrejösses, “qu’il leur faut une victime”.⁴ Det var morgon, klockan var tio. “Klockan fyra på eftermiddagen tågade Murats trupper in i Moskva.”

Mycket grymmare och mer teatralisk, chez nous, hos oss, det där Hårdansiktet med fjäderplymen: vi beviljar honom inte ens, som vi beviljade Rostoptjin, de omedelbara förmildrande omständigheterna i bävan (att också han ska lynchas) och ångesten och ilskan och tumultet (fullständig masspsykos) och fienden vid grindarna efter kanonknallarna och massakern (i Borodino).

accende, e dello strazio e del sangue s’imporpora: acquistando corso legale, per tal modo, una pseudo-giustizia, una pseudo-severità, o la pseudo-abilitazione a’ dittaggi: della quale appaiono essere contrassegni manifesti e l’arroganza della sconsiderata istruttoria, e l’orgasmo cinobalànico dell’anticipato giudizio. Rileggasi in Guerra e Pace al libro terzo, parte terza, il capo 25, doloroso atroce racconto: e intendasi la sommaria esecuzione dello sciagurato Veresciaghin, ritenuto spia non essendo; il conte Rostòpcin, governatore di Mosca, teatrando di sulla scalea di Palazzo davanti la cupa attesa della folla, ordina a’ dragoni di ucciderlo a sciabolate, lì astante la folla: sul bel fondamento interiore, madonnabona, “qu’il leur faut une victime”. Era di mattina, le dieci. “Alle quattro dopo mezzogiorno le truppe di Murat entravano a Mosca”.

Ben più vile e teatrale, chez nous, quel Facciaferoce col pennacchio: né gli concediamo, siccome a Rostòpcin, le attenuanti immediate della tema (di venir linciato lui) e dell’angoscia e dell’ira e del pandemonio (psicosi totale della folla) e del nemico in arrivo dopo le cannonate secche e la strage (di Borodino).

Översättarens anmärkningar:

1 I originalet är delar av detta avsnitt skrivna på romersk dialekt, i översättningen har valet fallit på att med olika medel försöka skapa ett allmänt folkligt språk då bruket av en svensk dialekt skulle placera situationen i en ologisk geografisk kontext. De dialektala avsnitten har översatts med tal-språkliga uttryck, ord som skrivs enligt uttalet och grammatiskt felaktiga former som förekommer i talspråk.

2 I originaltexten använde sig Gadda av det egenhändigt konstruerade verbet *fiantare*, en sammansättning av verben *fiatare*, 'andas, blåsa', och *piantare*, 'lämna, dumpa'. Med hänsyn till svårigheten att på svenska skapa ett motsvarande verb samt med tanke på att den som utför handlingen jämförs med Jupiter, den gud i den romerska mytologin som bland annat styr över himlafenomen och väder, har valet i översättningen fallit på verbet 'flåsa' som motsvarar endast ett av verben i Gaddas verk men som skapar en allitteration tillsammans med det efterföljande ordet 'framför' och därmed bidrar till att förstärka effekten av verbet.

3 Trots att syftet med denna översättning var att försöka återge Gaddas språk så exakt som möjligt finns det i detta avsnitt ett medvetet avsteg från den riktlinjen. I översättningen har originalets *mamillone*, 'storbystad', utslutits efter noggrant övervägande. I språk där substantiven har maskulint eller feminint genus är det lättare att attribuera könsbundna drag på ord som i det verkliga livet saknar kön eller, som i detta fall med ordet 'hop', *moltitudine*, kan bestå av personer av båda könen. På svenska riskerar man att felaktigt antyda att den galna hopen endast består av kvinnor om man ger den särpräglad feminina egenskaper.

4 I översättningen finns en medveten inkonsekvens när det gäller avsnitten på franska i originaltexten. Vi har utgått ifrån att Gaddas samtida italienska läsare med stor sannolikhet hade större kunskaper i det franska språket än en genomsnittlig svensk läsare idag. Därför har franskan översatts i de fall där läsaren riskerar att gå miste om sammanhanget medan den lämnats orörd där den använts främst för att skapa en stilistisk effekt.

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ABSTRACTS

P. Spazzali: *“der sagata mir ze wara”*: Iceland in the Merigarto (15-25)

The Old High German fragment known as *Merigarto* contains a description of Iceland that entwines ancient literary with modern oral data. Scholars have repeatedly tried to verify the originality and reliability of the data from a historical point of view. However, the question of authenticity is also a literary one, which is posed by the author himself and solved in a way that foreshadows usages in later Latin and vernacular *exempla*. The most innovative literary aspect of the passage dealing with Iceland can be found in a few lines in which the poet guarantees the authenticity of Iceland's *mirabilia* by briefly describing his oral source, a cleric, and the events that led to their meeting. The brief presence of a homodiegetic narrator is an important stage in the development of the author's self-consciousness in medieval German literature.

E. Di Venosa: *Lübeck's Burgomaster Jürgen Wullenwever and Denmark* (27-37)

Jürgen Wullenwever was a burgomaster in charge of the Hanseatic city of Lübeck in the years 1533-35. It was an age of deep changes in religion, society, and politics. New commercial routes brought wealth to the Dutch and damaged Lübeck, while new democratic claims arose from the spread of Lutheranism. The death of King Frederick I and the vacant throne of Denmark triggered the Count's Feud. Wullenwever became embroiled in it by pledging his word to different contending parts, while asking in return for their military support against the Dutch merchant ships. This war produced poverty and discontent in Lübeck. The citizenry and Emperor Charles V had him arrested, taken to trial and beheaded. An analysis based on the documentation of the time, collected by the historian Georg Waitz, can help to understand the events and the controversial role of Wullenwever.

L. Bernardini: *Danes and Swedes in Jan Chryzostom Pasek's Memoirs and Henryk Sienkiewicz's The Deluge* (39-52)

The image of Swedes and Danes in Polish literature has been conveyed by two closely intertwined texts, Jan Chryzostom Pasek's memoirs, written in the 1690s and first published in 1836, and Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *The Deluge*, published in 1886. Both texts are related to the so-called Second Northern War (1655-60) and the invasion of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by Carl Gustav of Sweden's armies. As Pasek took part in Stefan Czarniecki's expedition to Denmark in 1658, he had the opportunity to visit that country and get acquainted with the habits and customs of its inhabitants. Pasek's attention was drawn by Danish religious habits, some of which he found positively odd, but even more by their relaxed attitude towards nudity. Danish food was even more of a mystery to Pasek, a country-raised nobleman who could not possibly conceive to eat fish. A fierce Catholic and an arch-enemy of Swedish religious beliefs, Pasek was sure that a Polish knight thrown by an explosion onto the other bank of the Vistula could land safely and unscathed – himself and his horse! – because of the protection afforded to all Poles by the Holy Virgin, while the same fate could not be expected for the Swedes in a similar occurrence. Henryk Sienkiewicz made use of several episodes from Pasek's memoirs when writing his historical novel *Potop*, dealing with the Swedish invasion of Poland and Lithuania in 1655-56. At times, Sienkiewicz makes use of the information he could find in Pasek's memoirs for his own ideological goals. When Pasek mentions the Swedes' belief in the existence of servant spirits, he treats it with a touch of humour. From that episode, Sienkiewicz, in his turn, gathers evidence that the Swedes are not real Christians, but can only counter the deep religious faith of the Poles with some sort of pagan superstition. In Sienkiewicz's novel, the Swedes are mainly poor and therefore exceedingly hungry and greedy. Carl Gustav's armies would supposedly have invaded Poland, a land literally dripping with milk and honey, in order to make up for the poverty of their country. Historians have provided evidence that the reasons for the Swedish invasion were not economic, but rather strategic and political. Prevented by censorship from hinting at the real causes of the destruction suffered by Lithuania in 1655, i.e., the intervention of Muscovite armies, Sienkiewicz had to develop a narrative based on a scheme that would pit the Poles against the Swedes: at the beginning of the novel, the Poles are relatively well off but absolutely passive in their military stance, whereas the Swedes are poor, hungry, greedy but a well-disciplined fighting machine. The poorer and hungrier the Poles become, because of the spoliation of their country at the hands of the invaders, the more active and heroic they will be on the battlefield; while the initially greedy and aggressive Swedes will be forced to defend themselves and their booty from a veritable ocean of popular hostility. Against the well-disciplined and rational – but

unchivalrous – fighting tactics of the Swedes, the Poles employ the unpredictable and fleeing techniques of the Tartars, a population that struck irrational fear into their enemies. The Swedes are portrayed in the novel as having all the western characteristics the Poles are trying to distance themselves from: they are greedy, rational, treacherous, and are sceptical – if not altogether hostile in the way pagans would be – towards the real Christian (i.e., Roman-Catholic) faith. Drifting away from western habits, while under the pressure of an invasion that they have brought on themselves and on their country, Polish knights – in the novel, but also in the historical chronicle – seem, like peoples from the East, to be oblivious even of the Latin principle that *pacta sunt servanda*.

A. Merigalli: *A Mock Old Norse Poem in Eighteenth-Century Milan: Francesco Saverio Quadrio's Versi in lingua runica* (53-70)

In 1751 Quadrio published his *Versi in lingua runica* (*Verses in the Runic language*) as part of a collection of comic poetry edited by Pietro Verri. Quadrio is the author of an extensive history of universal literature (1739-52), which gave him the opportunity to acquire some knowledge of the Old Norse culture, reflected in his 'Runic' verses. The text consists of a meaningless poem composed of various single Old Norse words, and of a commentary which combines authentic information on Old Norse culture with the author's personal creations in order to build a network of historical, literary, and cultural references around the text. The aim of the present essay is to identify Quadrio's sources, among which Keyßler's 1720 book on Nordic antiquities plays a major role, and to study their use and treatment in order to understand the author's work. Quadrio assembles an apparently very learned text, but his real aim is to create a comic effect, in keeping with the general purpose of the collection. The Old Norse language and culture convey an especially exotic taste, the fruit of Quadrio's uncommon expertise in this field.

E. Lonati: *Scandinavian Scientific Learning in Eighteenth-Century British Writing: Linnaeus and the European Outlook on Nature* (71-91)

In the eighteenth century, a widely investigated – and even fashionable – field of knowledge is natural history, a macro-domain including a vast number of disciplines and sub-disciplines. Most of these are emerging disciplines not because they are completely new, but because the research perspective adopted (i.e., the way they are investigated and discussed) is extremely innovative. On the one hand, cognate disciplines such as *materia medica*, *diaetetica*, agriculture, gardening, botany, etc. – considered as 'part of' and 'dependent on' the more prestigious and encompassing domains of medicine and natural history – establish themselves as autonomous disci-

plines with their own epistemological principles and values. On the other hand, new disciplinary communities originate and consolidate in an ideal 'commonwealth of learning'. One of the branches which best represents the 'commonwealth of learning' and its civil and utilitarian issues is botany. On botanical knowledge are based most of the eighteenth-century commercial interests and principles regulating global and colonial trade; moreover, it is considered the main source of individual wealth, national welfare and cultural renown. As a consequence, botany acts as a bridge towards other disciplines, other settings, other peoples, other countries, other traditions and, ultimately, other knowledge(s). In the present study, the focus is on the contribution made by such Swedish scholars as Carl Linnaeus and Fredrik Hasselquist to the elaboration of modern botany, both at a theoretical and at a practical level.

A. Berardini: *Corinne in the North. Madame de Staël's Influence on Sophie von Knorring and August Strindberg* (93-103)

Since its publication in 1807 Mme de Staël's novel *Corinne, ou l'Italie* has become a fundamental reference point for many women writers, who have found in it a prototypical representation of the conflict between genius and current definitions of femininity. Translated into Swedish in 1808-09, *Corinne* inspired writers such as Fredrika Bremer and Sophie von Knorring. The latter offered, in her 1836 novel *Kvinnorna*, a rewriting of de Staël's novel, using it to reflect on a woman's place in a patriarchal society and on the relationship between art and femininity. Later on, when the Woman Question became a widely debated topic, echoes of *Corinne* can be found even in one of the stories that August Strindberg collected in *Giftas II*, this time deployed in a misogynist key. Studying the way in which the myth of Corinne is rewritten in different social and literary contexts provides an interesting key to analysing the ideological positions involved in the Woman Question and to discussing gender bias in aesthetic matters.

F. Perrelli: *European Theatre and Nordic Barbarians* (105-125)

While drawing a line between elitist success and widespread popularity, this essay aims to shine a more objective light on the rise of Scandinavian playwrights on the German and French stage at the end of the nineteenth century. What transpires is thus a highly complex and variegated picture, characterised by highs and lows, which nonetheless stands out as a particular chapter in the making of the theatrical and cultural identity of the European continent.

E. Putignano: *Vildanden and Hanneles Himmelfahrt. Two Plays about Denied Childhood (127-140)*

The present article offers a comparative reading of Henrik Ibsen's *Vildanden* and Gerhart Hauptmann's *Hanneles Himmelfahrt*. By giving a short description of the literary environment in which Hauptmann made his debut as a young playwright, I have illustrated the importance of Henrik Ibsen's work for the development of the German writer's own poetic. In doing so, I refer to Georg Brandes's article *Henrik Ibsen and his School in Germany*, which shows how strongly Ibsen's dramas contributed to and influenced the thematic choices of German naturalist writers and playwrights – Hauptmann amongst them. I have then explained how, even in the years following Hauptmann's naturalistic debut, Ibsenian echoes still resonate in the Silesian writer's literary output, albeit in a more personally elaborate way. In this regard, I have paused to reflect on Hauptmann's oneiric drama *Hanneles Himmelfahrt*. The play shows a large number of correspondences with Ibsen's *Vildanden*, which, curiously enough, have not been analysed yet. In this essay I have paid particular attention to certain themes that are well represented in both plays and that establish a strong connection between them. I have then directed my attention to the way Ibsen and Hauptmann described the characters of Hedvig and Hannele, respectively, by stressing the playwrights' use of a similar array of symbolic elements and by examining the aspects of dream-escape and dream-like transfiguration of space.

D. Finco: *The Temptation of a 'Nordic Consciousness'. On Rainer Maria Rilke's Approach to Scandinavian Literature and Society (141-155)*

Scandinavia rightfully belongs to Rainer Maria Rilke's spiritual geography. Scandinavia, which he visited for a few months in 1904, long remained a place of interest for the poet. Though being interested in anything Scandinavian was fashionable at his time, Rilke soon experienced an intellectual affinity with some Nordic authors, which he expressed in many letters and acute and passionate reviews. The Scandinavian period in Rilke's artistic development took place between the Russian and the French ones, playing no small role in the writing of *Malte* (1910). Even so, the poet kept the interest in that culture alive, while appreciating – not without a certain amount of idealisation – the tendency of the Nordic countries to be social laboratories. Many authors make up this constellation of significant references for Rilke, who saw in their works a model as well as a reflection of his own sensibility. In this paper we will try to point out the salient features of Rilke's relationship with the Nordic culture, its development and its paradoxical aspects, by focusing on those reviews which are best suited to understand his view of the Scandinavian world.

F. Zuliani: *The Expédition historique finlandaise à Rome (1909-15) and Twentieth-Century Italian Historiography (157-169)*

The article investigates the fortune in Italian historiography of the Expédition historique finlandaise à Rome, a Finnish historical expedition, which was active in Rome between 1909 and 1915, working especially in the Vatican Archives. The aim is to present the main interests of the expedition and of its members: Kaarlo Iivari and Liisi Karttunen, Gabriel Rein, Johan August Pärnänen, and especially its leader, the Swiss-born Henry Biaudet. These scholars focused primarily on: (1) the relationship between the Papacy and Scandinavia between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; (2) the establishment of the so-called ‘permanent nunciatures’; and (3) the presence and activity of Italians in early modern Scandinavia. In its second part, the article focuses on the reception of such works among Italian scholars, analysing the presence, or rather the absence, of references to them in the entries of the *Enciclopedia italiana* (1929-37, 35 vols) and of the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (1960-, 84 vols published out of 100 planned).

D. Manera: *Carmen de Burgos’s Scandinavia (171-179)*

Travelling is of great importance in the intellectual and literary experience of Carmen de Burgos (Almería 1867-Madrid 1932), a prolific educator, journalist, novelist and essayist who was strongly committed to feminist causes. In the summer of 1914 she visited Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden, and Norway), publishing articles later collected in a book. This study follows that journey and shows the author’s observations. The Andalusian writer is interested not only in landscapes and culture, but also in social organisation, the status of women and gender equality. She finds in these countries the paradigm of a modern, free and independent woman, with full rights, which could also be applied to Spain.

C. Storskog: *Books of Innocence and Experience. Holden Caulfield’s Scandinavian Brotherhood (181-195)*

Within a couple of years of its publication in 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* was translated into the major Scandinavian languages. A few protagonists of the Scandinavian novel of the twentieth century mirror, more or less overtly, the iconic character of Holden Caulfield with his finely tuned observations on the ways of the world: David in the novel *Rend mig i traditionerne* (1958) by Leif Panduro, Janus in *Den kroniske uskyld* (1958) by Klaus Rifbjerg, and Erik in the Finland-Swedish writer Lars Sund’s work *Natten är ännu ung* (1975). As to content, what the three novels share with Salinger’s prototype is the frame of the (psychiatric) clinic, the breakdown of an adolescent, the death of a family member or a close friend, the motives of rebellion and escape,

and the opposition between innocence and experience. As to form, all novels are retrospective accounts given in the first person singular and written in seemingly casual teenage slang. This essay discusses one of the features central to Salinger's book and common to the three Scandinavian novels, i.e., the way in which the adolescent protagonist reacts to and interacts with standardised behaviour and ready-made mannerisms provided by works of literature and films. This is seen as an aspect of Holden's concern with phoniness (a theme which also engrosses the minds of his Nordic brothers) and is interpreted as a strategy in the transition from 'innocence' to 'experience'.

M. Bampi: *Bridges between the Margins of Europe: Portugal in Tomas Tranströmer's Oeuvre* (197-205)

Among the poems written by Tomas Tranströmer that originated from encounters with other cultures, two are dedicated to Portugal, a country that he visited on more than one occasion. The first of these poems, entitled *Lissabon (Lisbon)*, was published in 1966 in the collection *Klanger och spår (Sounds and Tracks)*. The second, *Funchal*, is the poem closing *Sanningsbarriären (The Truth Barrier)*, published in 1978. This article offers some observations on both poems as relevant examples of the broad range of themes found in Tranströmer's poetic universe.

M.C. Lombardi: *Iceland and Old Norse Poetry in Two Unpublished Texts by Tomas Tranströmer* (207-215)

This article analyses two unpublished texts (thank-you speeches) of Tomas Tranströmer's, where the poet describes his experiences about travelling in Iceland and reading Old Norse literature. We show how the poet uses both the Icelandic landscape and Old Norse mythological beings in his poems by giving them new symbolic meanings and values. Specifically, eddic lays, in particular *Völundarkviða*, seem to have provided him inspiration for both images and metrical structures.

M. Paleari: *Nordic Topographies in Contemporary German Literature: Klaus Bödl's Studie in Kristallbildung and Südlich von Abisko* (217-228)

Klaus Bödl's prose works explore the Scandinavian North offering a narrative construction of a remote, lonely and forlorn place, which cannot produce any empathy. The characters featured in his writings are displaced figures, German 'travellers' whose perception of the Nordic reality can produce only fractal images of the immediate surroundings. By analysing two of Bödl's texts, *Studie in Kristallbildung* (1997) and *Südlich von Abisko* (2000), my paper aims at highlighting the recurring patterns of Nordic to-

pography starting from the descriptions of the environment and from the distinct ways in which the protagonists experience the landscape and map cultural geographies.

A. Ferrari: *Nordic Crime Fiction in Italy. The Phenomenon Stieg Larsson and His Followers* (229-240)

Following Stieg Larsson's *Millennium trilogy*, Italy has been reached by an extraordinary wave of Nordic crime fiction. Numerous Italian publishing houses have subsequently begun translating and publishing crime fiction written by Nordic authors and large numbers of copies have been sold. Why is the Italian reading public so attracted to Nordic crime literature? A possible answer may be found in the exoticism of the Nordic culture, quite foreign to the Italian reader if one sets aside the most common stereotypes. For most Italian readers the real characteristics of Scandinavian society and culture are obscure, nonetheless it can be interesting to observe how the social criticism – since a fundamental characteristic of contemporary Nordic crime fiction is to raise social issues and to discuss them in literary form – and the 'Nordic exoticism' work together to create a successful literary product.

P. Marelli and S. Silander: *The Reception of Carlo Emilio Gadda in Scandinavia: A Matter of Translation Difficulties? With a Translation into Swedish of an Excerpt from Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (241-251)

In this article the two authors focus on the reception of Carlo Emilio Gadda in Scandinavia and the possibility to translate his work into the Nordic languages. Paolo Marelli analyses the reasons for Gadda's lack of recognition, particularly in Sweden and Norway, while identifying a theoretically applicable translation strategy. Susann Silander puts this strategy into practice by translating – for the first time into Swedish – an excerpt from the novel *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*.

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INDEX OF NAMES

The index includes the names of authors and historical people that occur in the preface and in the essays, with the exception of names only mentioned in the final reference lists. Mythological figures and fictional characters are not included. Historical names are given here in their English version regardless of the actual variants in the single essays (e.g., Isidore of Seville). Patronimics and nicknames follow the first name (e.g., Snorri Sturluson, Sæmundr fróði). Scandinavian letters are listed after Z, as Þ, Æ, Ø, Å (AA), Ä, Ö (Q).

- Aalto, Pentti 159, 165
Adam of Bremen 15, 17-18, 20-21, 23
Adamov, Arthur 121, 124
Agrosi, Dori 238-39
Ahlström, Stellan 117, 119-21, 124
Albertrandi, Jan Chrzciel 40
Albrecht VII, Duke of Mecklenburg 29, 34
Alker, Ernst 130, 139
Altano, Brian W. 243-44, 249
Álvarez de Burgos, María 171
Ameen, Ellin 122
Amsinck, Hanne 118, 123-24
Andersen, Elin 138-39
Andersen, Hans Christian 173
Andreas-Salomé, Lou 143
Angiolini, Francesco 53, 68
Anglani, Bartolo 55, 68
Anja, Louis 172, 178
Anna Helga Hannesdóttir 74, 89
Anno, Anton 112
Antoine, André 112, 117-20, 122-24
Apel, Friedmar 243, 249
Arato, Franco 55-56, 68
Arco, Oliviero di 164-65
Arnaldur Indriðason 232-33
Arnold, Matthew 192
Arping, Åsa 96, 102
Arquillière, Alexandre 119, 121
Artaud, Antonin 121
Auer, Matthias 218, 221, 223, 227
Augé, Marc 226-27
Augier, Émile 119
Axer, Jerzy 44, 51

- Bager, Poul 184, 194
 Bampi, Massimiliano 13, 197
 Bang, Herman 118-19, 122, 144-48, 150-51
 Bankier, Joanna 201, 205
 Banks, Joseph 76
 Barbarisi, Gennaro 54-55, 68
 Barlach, Ernst 130
 Barny, Mlle 117
 Barrett Browning, Elizabeth 93
 Barthel, Alexander 119
 Bartholin, Thomas the Younger 59-60, 63
 Bartolomeo da li Sonetti 67
 Bassnett, Susan 192, 194
 Battersby, Christine 93, 102
 Baudelaire, Charles 219
 Beaumont, Francis 122
 Beckett, Samuel 121
 Beckett, Suzanne 121
 Bede, the Venerable 22
 Bellman, Carl Michael 144
 Berardini, Andrea 13, 93
 Berg, Maria 111
 Bergman, Ingmar 233
 Bergman, Kerstin 237, 240
 Bergsten, Staffan 198, 205
 Bernardini, Luca 12, 39
 Bernhardt, Sarah 116
 Berni, Bruno 238
 Berra, Claudia 54, 69
 Bertens, Rosa 113-14
 Bezzola, Guido 54, 68
 Biaudet, Henry 157-65, 167
 Biaudet, Léon Gabriel 158
 Bilinski, Bronislaw 158, 166
 Bjørnson, Bjørn 118
 Bjørnson, Bjørnstjerne 105-11, 115, 118-19, 122-23, 144, 176
 Blake, William 193
 Blasco Ibáñez, Vicente 171
 Blasone, Pino 229
 Blickle, Peter 33, 36
 Blin, Roger 121, 124
 Blumenthal, Oskar 112
 Bly, Robert 197
 Boccaccio, Giovanni 66
 Boëthius, Ulf 99, 102
 Bödl, Klaus 217-19, 221-27
 Bona Sforza, Queen of Poland 161
 Bonfadini, Giovanni 53, 55, 66, 69
 Bonfatti, Rossella 56, 69
 Boureau, Alain 21-23
 Bozzi, Ida 234, 239
 Brahm, Otto 112
 Brancaccio, Carlo 164
 Brander Matthews, James 116-17, 124
 Brandes, Edvard 122
 Brandes, Georg 109, 111, 124, 128-29, 132, 139, 144-45, 173
 Brandt, Ahasver von 32, 36
 Bravo Cela, Blanca 171, 178
 Bredsdorff, Thomas 184, 194
 Bremer, Fredrika 94
 Bridget of Sweden 12
 Brockway, Lucile H. 72-73, 75, 79, 83, 89
 Brodén, Daniel 237, 239
 Brogi Bercoff, Giovanna 43, 51-52
 Brömse, Nikolaus 28, 30, 34
 Brookeman, Christopher 192, 194
 Brückner, Gotthold 111
 Brückner, Max 106, 111
 Brunelli, G. 163
 Bujnicki, Tadeusz 44, 47, 51-52
 Bull, Ole 175

- Bülow, Hans von 112
 Burckhard, Max 131
 Burgos, Carmen de 171-72, 174-78
 Busch, Christel 31, 36
 Byron, Georg Gordon 111
- Caccamo, Domenico 163
 Campignier, Peter 127, 139
 Candeloro, Giorgio 163
 Capra, Carlo 54-55, 69
 Cardarelli, Vincenzo 243
 Cassola, Carlo 243
 Castañeda, Paloma 171, 178
 Castillo Martín, Marcia 171, 178
 Catherine Jagiellon, Queen of Sweden 161
 Cecchi, Emilio 243, 249
 Centonze, Alessandro 234, 237, 239
 Cerri, Vibeke 183
 Chadwick, Owen 159, 166
 Chantavoine, Henri 119
 Charles II, King of England 74
 Charles V, Emperor 29
 Charles X Gustav, King of Sweden 39-41, 47, 49, 51
 Charles XII, King of Sweden 39
 Cherubini, Francesco 53, 69
 Chmielnicki, Bohdan 47
 Christian II, King of Denmark 29, 33
 Christian III, King of Denmark 29-30, 34
 Christie, Agatha 231
 Christoph of Brunswick-Lüneburg 30
 Christopher of Oldenburg 29
 Cicognani, Bruno 243
 Clair-Guyot, Ernest 119
 Clausen, Claus 184, 194
 Clerico, Giovanni 243, 250
 Clunies Ross, Margaret 62, 69, 214-15
 Coleman, Michael C. 159, 166
 Collett, Camilla 177
 Conan Doyle, Arthur 230
 Contini, Gianfranco 243, 250
 Cook, James 76
 Cook, William J. 71, 89
 Coolus, Romain 120
 Cooper, Gary 190
 Costello, Donald P. 186, 194
 Crispino, Anna Maria 233, 236-39
 Crosby, Bing 190
 Czapliński, Władysław 41, 52
 Czarniecki, Stefan 41
- D'Orrico, Antonio 235-36, 239
 Daganzo-Cantens, Esther 172-73, 178
 Dahl, Arne (Jan Arnald) 236
 Dahl, Kjell Ola 235
 Dallapiazza, Michael 19, 21, 23
 Darwin, Charles 143
 Darzens, Rodolphe 122
 De Michelis, Cesare 233, 238
 De Pasquali, Paolo 229
 Dean, James 190
 Deligia, Sabrina 229
 Derlien, Charles 31
 Derry, Thomas Kingston 29, 36
 Desjardins, Paul 121-22
 Destro, Alberto 143, 154
 Di Venosa, Elena 13, 27
 Dionisotti, Carlo 56-57, 69
 Dorcy, Lucienne 119
 Dossi, Carlo 243
 Drachmann, Holger 114
 Dreyfus, Alfred 199
 Dubiecki, Maryan 40, 46-47, 52

- Eco, Umberto 243
 Edholm, Rafael 51
 Edström, Vivi 182, 194
 Ehrensvärd, Carl August 11-13
 Eller, William Henri 106, 108-10, 113, 115, 124
 Ellis, John 76
 Engel, Manfred 141-42, 145, 154
 Englund, Boel 99, 102
 Englund-Dimitrova, Birgitta 244, 250
 Engström, Anders 183
 Esch, Arnold 159, 166
 Espmark, Kjell 198-205
 Establier Pérez, Helena 172, 178
 Eysoldt, Gertrud 115
 Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnson 60
- Faldella, Giovanni 243
 Fallersleben, Heinrich Hoffmann von 15
 Fazio, Mara 115, 124
 Feeny, Thomas 182, 194
 Fen, Åke 182
 Fenoglio, Beppe 243
 Ferrari, Alessia 13, 229
 Feuchtwanger, Lion 130
 Ficino, Marsilio 67
 Finco, Davide 13, 141, 143, 151, 154
 Fink, Georg 31, 36
 Fjelkestam, Kristina 98, 102
 Flaker, Aleksandar 182, 184, 186, 188, 194
 Fletcher, John 122
 Folengo, Teofilo 243
 Foote, Peter 21, 24
 Fosse, Jon 122
 Frederick I, King of Denmark 29-30, 33, 35
 Frederick III, King of Denmark 41
 Frenzel, Karl 106, 108-10
 Freud, Sigmund 143
 Freund, Wieland 218, 227
 Freytag, Gustav 130
 Frohn, Charlotte 112
 Fromme, Franz 31
 Fröding, Gustaf 144-45
 Fulk, Robert D. 60, 69
 Fülleborn, Ulrich 145, 154
 Fulton, Robin 197
 Fumagalli, Marisa 233, 238-39
 Fürstenberg, Johann 34
- Gadda, Carlo Emilio 241-45, 249-50
 Gallio, Tolomeo 160, 162-63
 Garritzen, Elise 158, 160, 166
 Garstein, Oscar 62, 166
 Garzia, Aldo 233, 239
 Gaspari, Gianmarco 54-55, 69
 Gautier Dalché, Patrick 22, 24
 Geijerstam, Gustaf af 122, 144, 146, 153
 Gelderblom, Oscar 28, 36
 Gennaro, Erminio 54, 69
 George II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen 105, 107, 111
 George II, Prince of Transylvania 40
 George, David 127, 139
 George, Sam 80, 89
 Gerber, Marie Louise 158
 Gide, André 199
 Gilbert, Sandra 98, 102
 Ginisty, Paul 120-21
 Giordano Lokrantz, Margherita 12-13

- Giorgetti Cima, Carmen 234
 Giovannini, Fabio 229-30, 239
 Gläser, Rosemarie 76-77, 89
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 110, 199
 Gómez de la Serna, Ramón 171-72
 Goncourt, brothers 120
 Goncourt, Edmond de 120
 Gosse, Edmund 117
 Gotti, Maurizio 71, 75, 89
 Grandaur, Franz 106
 Gravier, Maurice 115, 124
 Greene, Robert 122
 Gregory I, Pope 22, 24
 Gremler, Claudia 221, 223, 227
 Grieg, Edvard 176
 Grimaldi, Laura 229-31, 239
 Grimberg, Carl Gustaf 208-09, 215
 Grimm, brothers 137, 217
 Gripsrud, Jostein 231-32, 239
 Grube, Max 106, 108, III, 124
 Grundtvig, Nicolai Frederik Severin 148
 Gualdo, Germano 158-59, 167
 Gubar, Susan 98, 102
 Gullin, Christina 243, 250
 Gustav I, King of Sweden 30
 Gustav II Adolf, King of Sweden 47, 49
 Gustav III, King of Sweden 11, 122
 Gutzkow, Carl 31
 Halm, Alfred 115
 Halvorsen, Jens Braage 109
 Hammar, Birgitta 183
 Hammel-Kiesow, Rolf 31, 36
 Hammershøi, Svend 144-45
 Hamon, Philippe 221, 227
 Hamsun, Knut 12, 122, 150-51
 Hanska, Jussi 158-59, 167
 Hansson, Ola 99, 116-17, 125
 Harald Fair-Hair, King of Norway 61-62
 Hartmann, Eduard von III
 Hasselquist, Frederick 72-76, 82-83, 86, 88, 90
 Hauptmann, Gerhart 113, 127-34, 137-39
 Hedberg, Tor 122
 Hedin, Sven 191
 Hegel, Frederik 106
 Heggstad, Eva 99, 102
 Heiberg, Gunnar 114, 122
 Heidenstam, Verner von 144
 Heine, Heinrich 173
 Heldburg, Baroness von (Ellen Franz) III
 Hemmer, Bjørn 134, 139
 Henry V, Duke of Mecklenburg 34
 Henry VIII, King of England 29, 33
 Hermans, Theo 243, 250
 Hesse, Carla 97, 102
 Hesselaa, Birgitte 183, 194
 Heyden, Hellmuth 30, 36
 Hitler, Adolf 193
 Hoefert, Sigfrid 130, 140
 Hoffmann, Gerhard 219, 227
 Hofmannsthal, Hugo von 113
 Holberg, Ludvig 106, 122, 124
 Holm, Gretelise 235
 Holm, Ingvar 116, 124
 Holmström, Tora Vega 144-45
 Holt, Anne 232-33, 235
 Holz, Arno 130
 Horsley, Lee 230, 239

- Haakon the Good, King of Norway 60
 Hägg, Göran 242, 250
- Iasoni, Roberto 237, 239
- Ibsen, Henrik 12, 105-13, 115-24, 127-29, 132-36, 138-39, 144, 153, 176
- Imboden, Rita Catrina 172, 178
- Imbonati, Giuseppe Maria 54
- Ingo, Rune 244, 250
- Isella, Dante 243, 250
- Iser, Wolfgang 224, 227
- Iserloh, Erwin 30, 36
- Isidore of Seville 16-18, 20, 24
- Jaatinen, Toimi 160, 167
- Jacobsen, Jens Peter 143-46, 148, 151-52
- Jagger, Mick 191
- Jahnke, Carsten 28, 36
- Jameson, Fredric 94, 102
- Jarno, Josef 114
- Jersild, Per Christian 183
- John II Casimir, King of Poland 40-41, 46, 50
- John Frederick I, Elector of Saxony 29
- Jonas, Emil 110
- Jones, T.D. 21, 24
- Josephson, Ludvig 107-08
- Juncker, Axel 145
- Jørgensen, Conni-Kay 241, 243-44, 250
- Jørgensen, John Christian 184, 194
- Jönsson, Ann-Mari 71, 73-74, 90
- Kafka, Franz 115
- Kainz, Josef 112
- Kalleberg, Kirsten 183, 194
- Kannenberg, Christoph von 50
- Kappus, Franz Xaver 147, 151
- Karmin, Otto 161, 167
- Karttunen, Kaarlo Iivari 158, 160-61, 163, 167
- Karttunen, Liisi 158-63, 167
- Keller, Alexander 163
- Kelly, Grace 191
- Kerr, Alfred 112
- Kersten, Adam 47-48, 52
- Key, Ellen 144-48, 150-51, 174
- Keyßler, Johann Georg 60-65, 69
- Kierkegaard, Søren 144
- Klingensfeld, Emma 106
- Knoespel, Kenneth J. 77, 90
- Knorring, Sophie von 93-98, 102
- Köhler, Ludwig 30
- Kohlschmidt, Werner 143, 154
- Koht, Halvdan 112, 125
- Koller, Ann Marie 106-08, 111-12, 125
- Kotarski, Edmund 43, 52
- Kraft, Thomas 219, 227
- Kraszewski, Józef Ignacy 40
- Kraus, Karl 130
- Kruse, Heinrich 30
- Krzyżanowski, Julian 44-45, 47, 52
- Kuhn, Hans 60, 69, 209, 215
- Kunisch, Hermann 143, 154
- Kvam, Kela 115, 125
- Kåreland, Lena 99, 102
- Kärrholm, Sara 237, 240
- Lagerlöf, Selma 12, 94, 144, 146, 150-51, 174
- Lange, Wilhelm 110
- Larsson, Hans 144-45
- Larsson, Stieg 229, 231-36, 239

- Larsson, Åsa 235
 Latham, Steven 182, 194
 Laube, Heinrich 110
 Lautenburg, Siegmund 114
 Lauterbach, Dorothea 141-42, 145,
 154
 Lavery, Jason 158, 168
 Lefevère, André A. 243, 250
 Lefèvre, Maurice 124
 Leffler, Anne Charlotte 12, 101
 Lehmann, Felix 114
 Leinberg, Karl Gabriel 159, 168
 Lemaître, Jules 118, 125
 Lentini, Dina 238, 240
 Leopardi, Giacomo 176
 Lescoffier, Jean 119, 125
 Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim 112
 Lewis, Linda M. 93, 101-02
 Lie, Jonas 150-51, 176
 Liedman, Sven-Éric 72, 79, 90
 Lindau, Paul 109-10, 112
 Lindblom, Edel 101
 Lindhé, Vilma 102
 Lindqvist, John Ajvide 231-33
 Linnaeus, Carl (Carl von Linné)
 71-82, 84, 88-89
 Lodge, David 186, 194
 Lombardi, Maria Cristina 13, 207,
 215
 Lombardi, Nicola 229
 Lonati, Elisabetta 13, 71-72, 90
 Lotsari, Katja 160, 168
 Lott, Sandra W. 182, 194
 Lugné-Poe, Aurélien 117-19, 122-
 23, 125
 Lund, Emil Ferdinand Svitzer 153
 Lundberg, Emilie 102
 Lundbo, Orla 190, 195
 Läckberg, Camilla 232-33, 235
 Maciotti, Maria Immacolata 230,
 240
 Maeterlinck, Maurice 118, 125
 Magliabechi, Antonio 57, 66
 Magnusson, Lars 72, 79, 90
 Malaspina, Germanico 163
 Maldussi, Danio 243, 250
 Manera, Danilo 13, 171
 Mankell, Henning 231-34
 Mann, Thomas 32, 36
 Marcus, Carl David 130-31, 133,
 139
 Marelli, Paolo 13, 241, 244
 Marklund, Liza 231-33, 235
 Marlowe, Christopher 122
 Marmugi, Riccardo 233
 Martina, Giacomo 159, 168
 Maurice, Chéri 110
 Mazzetti, Lorenza 182
 McFarlane, James Walter 127, 139
 Medici, Lorenzo de' 67
 Mehler, Natascha 20-21, 24
 Mehring, Franz 131, 139
 Melander, Kurt Reinhold 159, 168
 Melchinger, Siegfried 113, 125
 Menabeni, Apollonio 164-65
 Meregalli, Andrea 11, 13, 53
 Meyer, Marcus (Marx) 29
 Meyer, Michael 110, 112, 116, 125
 Michaëlis, Karin 144
 Michelsen, Knud 191, 195
 Mickiewicz, Adam 44, 52
 Migone, Gian Giacomo 233, 240
 Miller, Douglas T. 192, 195
 Minesso, Barbara 172, 178
 Minicangeli, Marco 229
 Mochi, Roberta 229, 240
 Moers, Ellen 93, 103
 Moi, Toril 95, 98, 101, 103
 Molander, Olof 115

- Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) 106
 Núñez Rey, Concepción 171-73, 177-78
 Mondello, Elisabetta 229-32, 240
 Nyholm, Kela 117, 125
 Monteforte, Franco 54, 56, 69
 Oberembt, Gert 134, 139
 Montgolfier, brothers 12
 Obstfelder, Sigbjørn 144, 151, 153
 Mula, Stefano 22, 24
 Oellers, Norbert 127, 139
 Müller, Burchard 46
 Ohlsson, Anders 191, 195
 Müller-Wille, Staffan 72, 79-80, 90
 Ohmann, Carol 185, 195
 Munch, Edvard 114-15
 Ohmann, Richard 185, 195
 Mund-Dopchie, Monique 18, 20, 24
 Oldendorp, Johann 35
 Muret, Maurice 121
 Oldsey, Bernard S. 190, 195
 Musci, Aldo 229
 Olesen, Erik 184, 194
 Mustonen, Kaisa 160, 168
 Oliva, Marilù 236, 240
 Mylly, Juhani 158, 168
 Ollén, Gunnar 113, 115, 125
 Mörner, Birger 120
 Olsen, Regine 144
 Orton, Gavin 198-99, 205
 Osborne, John 106, 125, 131, 139
 Nadel, Alan 190, 195
 Pagano, Sergio 159, 168
 Nau, Eugénie 119, 121
 Pagel, Hans 31, 36
 Navarrete Galiano, Ramón 172, 178
 Paleari, Moira 13, 217
 Navarro Domínguez, Eloy 172, 178
 Palmén, Ernst Gustaf 159-60
 Naveros, Miguel 172, 178
 Palomo, María del Pilar 172, 179
 Nebelong, Edith 144-45
 Panduro, Leif 182-84, 186-87, 189-93, 195
 Neckel, Gustav 60, 69, 209, 215
 Pasek, Jan Chryzostom 39, 41-45, 48, 50, 52
 Nesser, Håkan 232-33
 Pasini, Francesca 234-36, 240
 Neumann, Hermann 30-31, 36
 Passarge, Ludwig 110
 Nicholas II, Tsar of Russia 159
 Paul, Adolf 114-15, 125
 Nida, Eugene Albert 243, 250
 Paul the Deacon 18, 24
 Niemann-Raabe, Hedwig 110
 Pellegrini, Claudio 229
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 115, 143
 Peringskiöld, Johan 60, 63
 Nigrisoli Wärnhjelm, Vera 164-65, 168
 Perrelli, Franco 13, 105
 Nixon, Richard 191
 Persson, Leif G.W. 232-33
 Nordberg, Nils 231-32
 Persson, Mats 72, 79, 90
 Nordlind, Ernst 144
 Pessard, Hector 120
 Notker III the German 15, 24
 Novak, Kim 190
 Peter I, Tsar of Russia 39
 Nowak, Marion 192, 195
 Philippi, Felix 111

- Pinter, Harold 191
 Piscator, Erwin 31
 Platen, Edgar 223, 227
 Plönnies, Hermann 28
 Podhorodecki, Leszek 41, 52
 Poliziano, Angelo 67
 Polvinen, Tuomo 159, 164, 168
 Possevino, Antonio 160, 162-63
 Postel, Rainer 27, 31, 36
 Potthoff, Elisabetta 143, 154
 Pozzi, Gabriela 171-72, 179
 Previti, Giuseppe 232, 237-38,
 240
 Princi Braccini, Giovanna 16, 24
 Prozor, Moritz 118, 122
 Pruner, Francis 118, 125
 Putignano, Elena 13, 127
 Pytheas of Massalia 18
 Pärnänen, Johann August 161,
 163, 168
 Quadrio, Francesco Saverio 53-69
 Quesnel, Léo 117
 Rabanus Maurus 16-18
 Raczyński, Edward 41
 Rädle, Fidel 15, 24
 Radziwiłł, Janusz 40, 47, 49-50
 Ragnarr loðbrók 63-64
 Ralph, Bo 74, 90
 Rameau, Philippe 119
 Ramlo, Marie 111
 Raynal, Patrick 235, 240
 Reginbert of Echternach 19
 Reicher, Emanuel 113, 115
 Rein, Gabriel 160
 Reinert, Sophus A. 72, 79, 90
 Reinhardt, Max 115
 Renucci, Paul 243-44, 250
 Reque, A. Dikka 119, 121-22, 125
 Resen, Peder Hansen 59, 62-63
 Rifbjerg, Klaus 182-84, 186-87,
 189-92, 195
 Riis Langdal, Berit 191, 195
 Rilke, Rainer Maria 141-54
 Rinaldi, Rinaldo 56-57, 68, 70,
 244, 250
 Rittner, Rudolf 113-14
 Robichez, Jacques 118, 122, 125
 Ronchi De Michelis, Laura 163
 Rudbeck, Olof the Elder 60, 63
 Rühling, Lutz 219, 228
 Salazar, António de Oliveira 200-
 01
 Salinger, Jerome David 181-87,
 189-90, 192-93, 195
 Salvini, Anton Maria 65-66
 Sandberg, Hans-Joachim 127, 140
 Santoro, Mario 243, 251
 Sapegno, Natalino 243, 249
 Sarcey, Francisque 117-18, 120,
 125
 Sardou, Victorien 111
 Sayers, Dorothy L. 231
 Scanner, Ivo see Giovannini, Fabio
 Schäfer, Dietrich 27, 36
 Schering, Emil 115
 Schiebinger, Londa 72-73, 78-80,
 82, 84-85, 88-90
 Schiller, Friedrich 115, 129
 Schiöler, Niklas 198, 205
 Schlaf, Johannes 130
 Schlenther, Paul 110, 112-13
 Schnack, Ingeborg 145, 155
 Schoolfield, George 141-42, 145,
 155
 Schopenhauer, Arthur 111
 Schreiber-Uhlenbusch, Hugo
 Paul 31

- Schuré, Edouard 119
 Schütte, Uwe 219, 221, 223-24, 228
 Schwarz, Klothilde 111
 Scott, Tom 30, 36
 Scott, Walter 44
 Secher, Claus 182, 195
 Segre, Cesare 243, 251
 Sergeevskij, Nikolaj Dmitrievič 159, 169
 Shakespeare, William 56, 121-22
 Shepherd-Barr, Kirsten 118, 123, 125
 Showalter, Elaine 101, 103
 Sicking, Louis 28, 36
 Sienkiewicz, Henryk 39-40, 44-52
 Sigismund III, King of Poland 40
 Silander, Susann 13, 241, 249
 Silone, Ignazio 243
 Simmel, Georg 226, 228
 Sinopoli, Franca 56, 70
 Sjøgren-Eriksen, Torleif 182
 Sjöwall, Maj 232-33, 237
 Skram, Amalie 144, 146, 150-51
 Ślaski, Jan 41, 52
 Sloane, Hans 76
 Snorri Sturluson 59-61, 63-64, 70, 209, 215
 Solander, Daniel 76
 Solinus, Gaius Iulius 20
 Spazzali, Paola 13, 15-20, 23-24
 Spelman, Henry 60, 62, 70
 Sprengel, Peter 129-31, 140
 Srbik, Heinrich Ritter von 27, 36
 Staël, Germaine de 93-95, 97-99, 101, 103
 Stahl, August 143, 155
 Stalin (Iosif Vissarionovič Džugašvili) 193
 Stanisław II August, King of Poland 40
 Starcevic, Elizabeth 172, 179
 Stearn, William Thomas 80, 91
 Stellardi, Giuseppe 243, 251
 Stenkvist, Jan 199
 Stenwall, Åsa 183, 195
 Storskog, Camilla 11, 13, 181
 Strindberg, August 93, 99-103, 105, 113-23, 125, 130, 144, 174
 Sudermann, Hermann 114-15
 Sund, Lars 183, 185-88, 192, 195
 Swan, Claudia 72-73, 79-80, 82, 84-85, 89-90
 Swerling, Anthony 121, 125
 Szmurlo, Karyn 93, 103
 Szyborska, Wisława 39, 52
 Sæmundr fróði 59, 63
 Sørensen, Bengt Algot 143, 155
 Saabye Christensen, Lars 183
 Taber, Charles Russell 243, 250
 Tapio, Helen 158, 169
 Tapper, Michael 237, 240
 Tazbir, Janusz 40, 49, 52
 Teleman, Ulf 74, 91
 Tentori, Antonio 229
 Teodorani, Alda 229
 Thing'ò, Ngūgĩ wa 182
 Thorvaldsen, Bertel 173
 Tiliacos, Nicoletta 236, 240
 Toller, Ernst 115
 Tolstoj, Lev 120
 Tranströmer, Tomas 197-205, 207-15
 Treugutt, Stefan 39, 47, 51-52
 Tribe, Keith 72, 79, 91
 Trier, Lars von 122
 Triulzi, Sebastiano 235, 240
 Tschörtner, Heinz Dieter 130, 140

- Törne, Per Olof von 160, 162-63, 169
 Ubach Medina, Antonio 171, 179
 Uboldi, Liliana 183
 Ugolini, Mario 160
 Uhl, Frida 116
 Unglaub, Erich 143-44, 148, 155
 Unruh, Fritz von 31
 Utrera, Federico 171-72, 179

 Varotto, Francesca 236-38
 Varsamopoulou, Evy 93, 103
 Veltheim, Jürgen 33
 Verne, Jules 124
 Verri, Pietro 53-55
 Vincent, Patrick H. 93, 100, 103
 Voorwinden, Norbert 15, 17, 19-20, 25

 Wahlöö, Per 232-33, 237
 Waitz, Georg 27, 30-31, 33-36
 Wallner, Franz 112
 Wandruszka, Mario 243, 251
 Wassermann, Jakob 143
 Weaver, William 242-43, 251
 Weber, Eugen 124-25
 Wedekind, Frank 113
 Weininger, Otto 113, 115, 125
 Weiser, Karl 111

 Welk, Ehm 31
 Wenzel, Pietro 159
 Westhoff, Clara 143, 145
 Wickens, Gerald E. 79, 91
 William II, Emperor of Germany 113, 130, 176
 Wittenberg, Arvid 48, 50-51
 Wolter, Charlotte 108
 Worm, Ole 60
 Wright, Rochelle 198, 205
 Wullenweber, Heinrich 31-32, 37
 Wullenwever, Jürgen 27-35

 Yeo, Richard 75, 81, 91
 Ystad, Vigdis 136, 140

 Zabel, Eugen 110
 Zakrzewski, Stanisław 40
 Zander, Rosmarie 127, 140
 Zink, Michel 22, 25
 Zuliani, Federico 13, 157
 Zweig, Stefan 115, 125

 Þorbjörn hornklofi 62

 Aarseth, Asbjørn 136, 140
 Aarsleff, Hans 147, 155

 Ólvir hnúfa 62
 Östergren, Klas 183

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